



The effect of leisure benefits on happiness

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to examine the effect of leisure benefits on happiness.

Method: In the study, the “Leisure Benefit Scale” developed by Ho (2008) and adapted in Turkish by Akgül, Karakucuk and Ertüzün (2018) was used to measure the recreational benefit perceptions of the participants. In addition, the “Oxford Happiness Scale”, developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) and adapted into Turkish by Doğan and Akıncı Çötök (2011). Convenience sampling in the selection of the sample and face-to-face survey method was preferred in the collection of data. The analysis of the data was performed through the SPSS program, and descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, and Regression analyzes were used.

Findings: The research group consisted of 1342 university students, 739 males (55.1%) and 603 females (44.9%), between the ages of 18-25 (21.07 ± 2.24) studying in sports sciences faculties across Turkey. When the results of the analysis were examined, a positive relationship was determined between the leisure benefit perceptions of the participants and their happiness levels. Besides, it was observed that the perception of leisure benefits had a positive effect on happiness.


Conclusions: Accordingly, a positive change was detected in happiness levels as the level of benefit perceived by the participants from recreational activities increased.

Keywords: Recreation; leisure benefit; happiness, leisure.

1. Introduction


Following the increasing mechanization with technological developments, a great increase occurred in the leisure periods of individuals (Karakuş, 2008; Kılbaş, 2010). Situations such as the increase in living standards, perception of health, increased education level and the feeling of personal freedom have placed leisure in an important place in the lives of individuals (Hsieh, Spaulding, & Riney, 2004). Recreational activities participated in this time period provided recreational benefits such as personal harmony, social balance, happiness, and mental health for individuals (Beard & Ragheb 1980).

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Recreational utility is defined as the positive effects experienced by the participants during leisure activities (Driver, 1990). The concept of recreational utility has been extensively researched in the fields of physiology, psychology, sociology, and economics and has been studied as a subjective experience for individuals in this field (Chen, 2001). Hung (2012) has discussed leisure benefits under three headings as psychological benefit, physical benefit, and social benefit. Physical benefits mean maintaining body composition, improving recreational abilities, improving resting state, increasing extra energy release, and relieving fatigue. Psychological benefits are related to situations such as avoiding the stress of daily life, developing creative thinking awareness, enjoying life, increasing happiness levels, and having mental and physical relaxation. On the other hand, social benefits include benefits situations such as individuals' establishment of new friendships and relationships through recreational activities, developing leadership and entrepreneurship characteristics, gaining the feelings of trust of other people, etc. (Chen, 2001). Besides, recreational activities are extremely important to lighten financial and individual responsibilities of individuals (Peirce & Ranson, 2018). Individuals participating in recreational activities gain benefits such as physical, mental, social, relaxation and aesthetics (Crandall, 1980; Manfredi, Driver, & Tarrant, 1996; Kim et al., 2005; Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Hills & Argyle, 1998; Diener, 2000).

The positive contributions of sportive activities to physical and mental health and the material aspect of inactivity were documented by the World Health Organization and hospitals in the USA (Allender et al. 2007; Sari, 2009). While individuals only gain mental and physical benefits in the leisure activities they participate in, they also gain social benefits when they participate in a recreational activity with a previously planned group or community (Chang et al., 2018; Yeh ark., 2017). Coleman and Ahola (1993) stated that recreational activities in leisure time can contribute to good interpersonal interaction between individuals, friends, family members, and neighbors, to the continuation of psychological health, and to increase the perception of happiness in life.

Happiness is defined as a great deal of satisfaction with life and an intense experience of positive emotions (Arvas, 2017; Sapmaz & Doğan, 2012). Spiers and Walker (2008) discussed the concept of happiness with its cognitive and emotional aspects and stated that happiness brings life to a better and higher quality level. In addition, they reported that the recreational activities that individuals participate in during their free time have a positive effect on their happiness levels.

There are studies in the related literature that support the findings of this study. Baldwin et al. (1986) have determined that participation in recreational activities and perceived benefit are important factors in increasing the happiness level of society (Lee et al., 2016). In another study, it has been determined that the satisfaction level of individuals in leisure contributed positively to their quality of life (Lloyd & Auld, 2002). In a study conducted by Chao et al., (2013), it was observed that primary school teachers' participation in recreational activities positively affects the happiness of individuals. In their study, Eskiler et al. (2019) stated that individuals experience more satisfaction in leisure and gain this satisfaction with the recreational activities they participate in. Parallel to the results obtained in related studies, it has been seen that individuals' happiness levels increase following the positive emotions they get from recreational activities. Accordingly, the following hypotheses form the basis of the research.

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between the perception of leisure benefits and happiness.

H2: Perception of leisure benefits has a positive effect on happiness.

2. Purpose

In line with the above theoretical framework, this research aimed to examine the effect of the leisure benefit perceptions of the students of the faculty of sports sciences on the level of happiness.

3. Method

3.1. Research Model

In this study, the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research approaches, was used. In such studies, the existence of the change between two or more variables and, if there is a change, the degree of this change was aimed to determine (Yıldırım, 1999; Karasar, 2014).

3.2. Research Group

A total of 1342 students, 739 males (55.1%) and 603 females (44.9%), between the ages of 18-25 (21.07 ± 2.24) studying in sports science faculties across Turkey participated in the study voluntarily and selected by convenience sampling method.

3.3. Data collection

The research was analyzed in three parts, namely the Leisure benefit Scale, the Oxford Happiness Scale, and the Personal Information form.

Leisure benefit Scale: The leisure benefit Scale, which was used to measure individuals' perceptions of leisure benefits, was developed by Ho (2008), and its Turkish adaptation was conducted by Akgül, Karakucuk, and Ertüzün (2018). The Leisure Benefit Scale was a 5-point Likert-type (1= Strongly Disagree, ..., 5= Strongly Agree), and had 24 items under 3 subscales as Physical benefits (7 items), Psychological benefits (8 items), and social benefits (9 items). Items 1 - 7 were questions about physical benefits, items 8 - 15 were questions about psychological benefits, and items 16 - 24 were questions about social benefits. In the validity and reliability analysis of the leisure benefit scale, Akgül, Ertüzün, and Karakuş (2018) found the internal consistency coefficient, Alpha = 0.83 for the overall scale, and reported it as 0.81, 0.80, and 0.86 for the physical, psychological and social aspects of leisure benefit. Reliability values obtained in this study were determined as .92, .92, and .93, respectively, and the Cronbach Alpha value for all expressions of the scale was calculated and found as .96.

Oxford happiness scale: In the second part, the Oxford Happiness Scale was used to determine the happiness levels of the students. This scale was developed by Hills and Argyle (2002), and its Turkish adaptation was conducted by Doğan and Akıncı Çötök (2011). The internal consistency coefficient for the reliability of the scale, which was adapted into Turkish, was found as .74, and the test-retest reliability coefficient was found as .85 (Doğan, Akıncı Çötök, 2011). The scale has 7 items, one dimension, and a five-point Likert type, and the items of the scale were listed as "(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) partly agree, (4) agree, (5) completely agree". In this research, the Cronbach Alpha value of the Oxford Happiness Scale was found as .63.

3.4. Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics 24 program was used in the analysis of the data. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the demographic information of the participants. Skewness and Kurtosis values were taken as a reference to determine whether the data showed normality distribution. It was determined that the data was set in the range of $-2 > \dots < +2$ and showed a normal distribution. In this context, parametric test techniques were used (George Mallery, 2016). Descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, and Regression analysis were used. To determine whether there was a multicollinearity problem in the data, Durbin-Watson coefficient values for the regression model, binary correlations ($r < 0.80$), tolerance values ($1 - R^2 > 0.20$), variance amplification factor ($VIF = [1 / (1 - R^2)] < 10$) and the highest case index value ($CI < 30$) was used for analysis, and it was determined that there was no autocorrelation problem between the variables (Altunışık et al., 2012; Büyüköztürk, 2016). The Cronbach α internal consistency coefficients for each variable were determined as $\alpha = 0.96$ for leisure benefit and $\alpha = 0.63$ for the happiness variable and were determined to be at an acceptable level (Altunışık et al., 2012; Büyüköztürk, 2016).

4. Results

The results of the research findings are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Results of Correlation Analysis of Participants' Perceptions of Leisure Benefits and Happiness Levels

Variables		Leisure Benefit	Happiness
Leisure Benefit	r	1	.368
	p		.000
Happiness	r	.368	1
	p	.000	

When the correlation analysis results of the leisure benefit perceptions of the participants and their happiness levels were examined, a moderate positive relationship was determined between leisure benefits and happiness (Table 1).

Table 2. The Effect of Participants' Perceptions of Leisure Benefits on Happiness Levels

Model	B	Std. Error	B	t	p
(Constant)	15.605	.669		23.336	.000
Leisure Benefit	2.259	.156	.368	14.494	.000
R ² =.136, adj.R ² =.135					
F=210.083, p=.000					
Dependent variable: Happiness					

Linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of leisure benefits on their happiness levels. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that leisure benefits predicted the happiness variable by approximately 14% (adj.R²= .135). In other words, it was determined that the leisure benefit perceptions of the participants affected their happiness levels positively and significantly (β =.368; p <.001).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the effects of university students' perceptions of leisure benefits on their happiness levels. Discussions and suggestions regarding the results obtained within the scope of the research were presented below. When the correlation analysis results of the research were examined, a moderately positive relationship was observed between the leisure benefit perceptions of the participants and their happiness levels. Therefore, as the level of benefit perceived by the participants from recreational activities increased, their level of happiness also increased. This result supports the H1 hypothesis.

When the analysis results for the main hypothesis of the research were examined, it was determined that the perception of leisure benefits affected the happiness variable positively and significantly. This result supports the H2 hypothesis.

Individuals participate in activities to realize some physical and mental expectations. Meeting the expectations for the emotion to be obtained from the activity will contribute to the formation of a sense of satisfaction in individuals and increase the level of happiness, which is the hedonic effect.

University students consider recreational activities as a means of relaxation to get away from the pressure created by intensive courses and exams. The psychological, physiological, social, and educational benefits they obtain through these activities contribute to their happiness by increasing their level of satisfaction (Kao, 1995; Lewis, Cooper, Smithson, and Dyer, 2001).

Physical benefits such as body weight control and protection of physical health, which individuals obtain through recreational activities (Bammel & Burrus-Bammel, 1996), a sense of freedom, and mental benefits such as reduction in depression-anxiety-nervousness (Wankel &

Berger, 1991; Mannell & Stynes, 1991), the discovery of new information and technologies, educational benefits such as the desire for originality and potential talent (Chen, 2001), and social benefits such as the acquisition of sociocultural identity, development of family bonds, social relations and skills (Bammel & Burrus-Bammel, 1996; Bright, 2000) contributes to the development of the individual's sense of satisfaction and happiness.

Within the scope of flow theory, intense pleasure from recreational activities contributes to the formation of happiness by increasing the level of satisfaction and interest (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

It can be stated that the results of the study were compatible with the existing literature. In the study conducted by Alanoğlu, Işık, and Ayhan (2020) on women who regularly participate in recreational activities, it was determined that participation in recreational activities has a positive effect on happiness. In the study conducted by Eskiler, Yıldız, and Ayhan (2019) on extreme athletes, it was reported that leisure benefits had a positive effect on leisure satisfaction. In the study conducted by Demirel (2019) on fitness center members, it was determined that leisure time involvement had a positive effect on happiness. In the study conducted by Berger and Wankel (1991), it was reported that participation in recreational activities created a feeling of happiness and satisfaction in individuals.

Briefly, this study revealed that recreational activities in which university students participate to rest, have fun, relax, socialize and improve their physical and mental health increased their happiness levels. University administrations, health, culture, and sports departments of related universities, youth sports centers, and municipalities should aim to increase the happiness level of young people with the activity areas and practices they will implement.

It should not be overlooked that research data were evaluated following various constraints. The study data has been applied only to sports science faculties of universities throughout Turkey, and the existing model can be applied in other departments of universities as well. In future research, depending on the theoretical framework, current variables that mediate the interaction between variables can be determined and new research topics can be created. Moreover, new models can be developed by testing structural models on other determinants of leisure benefit and happiness variables.

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