



## **Analyzing the Differences in the Leisure Benefit Perceptions of Male and Female High School Students with Different Leisure Choices**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to analyze perceived leisure benefits of male and female high school students who had different leisure choices. The study was designed as a cross-sectional quantitative study and 335 high school students consisted study sample. In the study to collect data, the Turkish version of the Leisure Benefit Scale was used. The scale has three factors such as physical, psychological, and sociological leisure benefits. The data were analyzed with SPSS 23. Cronbach Alpha was calculated for internal consistency, the One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to check normality, and the Kruskal Wallis test was used to determine the differences between males and females at a 95% confidence level. As a result, this study showed no significant difference in the variable leisure benefit for male participants, on the other hand, significant differences emerged in favor of female participants who chose sports and exercise as a leisure activity.

**Keywords:** Leisure, Leisure Benefit, Recreation, Student

### **INTRODUCTION**

Rapidly increasing scientific and technological developments, the rise in people's living standards, the improved education level, the increase in personal freedom, the convenience of transportation, and all these developments let an increase in leisure time of individuals (Hsieh et al., 2004). However, this increase in leisure time came with some problems such as "valuation of the time" (Çebi et al., 2018). People have given importance to how to spend their leisure time to get away from the negative situations they live in, to struggle with the difficulties they encounter in business life, to get rid of the stress brought by the working environment, and most importantly to fulfill the desire for self-realization, and seek the discovery of how to spend leisure time most efficiently. The desire to seek solutions to the negativities experienced during this discovery and to realize the life satisfaction that can be obtained transformed leisure into recreation where people can spend their free time actively (Solakumur et al., 2019).

Adolescence is the period between the ages of 14-21. This period is a social phenomenon in which social and cultural personal development features accelerate as well as emotions and thoughts change (Hasırcı et al., 2009, pp.23-27; Aksoy, 2014, pp.288-304). For this reason, adolescence is considered a stage of "change" and young individuals can be affected by some negative situations during this period. Leisure activities are very important in overcoming the negative situations adolescents face (Hutchinson et al., 2006) and adolescents spend more than half their waking time in some form of leisure activities (de Bruyn & Cillessen, 2008). After completing the childhood stage and starting the adolescence period, activities such as reading books and magazines, engaging in sports take a large place (Kır, 2007).

Wisely usage of leisure time provides some benefits to participants, however, leisure time evaluated unfavorably can cause a wide variety of negativity. In other words, making use of leisure can have positive and negative effects on adolescents (Zorba et al., 2021). For instance, a study conducted on the leisure preference and personality development of adolescents revealed that sports made in leisure time help to control emotions (a positive effect) (Hansen et al., 2003), however, another study showed that watching TV negatively affects personality development in both men and women (Shaw et al., 1995). In another study, Afyon and Karapınar (2014) stated that senior high school students spend their free time passively and generally at home, and showed the reason for this situation as income level. But, there may be other reasons as well. Considering free time as

useless or a waste of time (Aslan & Cansever 2012) is perhaps the most important reason. However, Larson (2000) brings a different perspective to the subject and mentions that adolescents cannot find enough recreational opportunities due to their responsibilities such as school.

The concept of awareness appears in three different forms in the literature. It is used to describe three situations: first, a way of expressing a theoretical structure, second, practices aimed at raising awareness such as meditation, and finally, a psychological process as awareness (Germer, 2005 cited in Ari et al., 2020). In leisure, awareness may appear as a dimension or component of the leisure experience, as a precursor to the decision to participate in an activity, or as a valuable outcome of a leisure training program (Barnett, 2005). In other words, the prerequisite for an individual to have a positive leisure experience is to be aware of the positive and negative aspects of the relevant activity, and the benefits and risks that will be gained as a result of participation (Ryan & Deci 2000 cited in Barnett, 2005). Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive correlation between the benefit to be obtained from the activity and awareness.

Many pieces of research have examined the benefits of leisure. As cited in Cuenca-Amigo et al. (2017), initially leisure benefit was considered as the improvements or the advancements in the conditions of an individual, a group, society, or another entity as a result of leisure experience. However, this conceptualization was developed in the following years and leisure benefit was gathered under three headings: "the improvement of a condition or situation in the framework of generative or proactive leisure; the prevention of an unwanted condition and/or maintenance of the desired condition in the context of a preventive or sustained leisure; and the attainment of satisfactory psychological experiences in the framework of an adjusted or autotelic leisure."

Leisure benefits have been studied under different categories with different study groups by many researchers. For instance, Ekinçi and Ozdilek (2019) studied leisure benefits under three dimensions as Pleasure, Success, and Self-Development. Their categorization of leisure benefits was examined by the researchers with empirical studies in different samples. For instance, Üstün and Aktaş Üstün (2020) analyzed leisure benefits of university students and their research results showed that students interested in sports in various ways and who were the members of a social student club were more aware of the benefits of leisure activities than the other students. Demirel et al. (2021), investigated the relationship between leisure benefits and quality of life for university students, and their study resulted in significant correlations among variables. Another conceptualization of leisure benefits was made by Ho (2008) as Physical, Psychological, and Social benefits. In addition, studies are focusing on physical (Tinsley, 2005), sociological (Barnett, 2013), and psychological (Kim et al., 2016) benefits of leisure among different samples.

According to researchers' positive leisure is widely accepted as an experience that contributes to the development of autonomy, understood as the ability to self-organize, and to the well-being of young people in the transition to adulthood (Doistua et al., 2020). However, when the relevant literature in Turkey is examined, it is seen that the studies on leisure benefits are in minority and there is a lack of studies. Therefore, the present study aimed to examine whether gender makes a difference in the leisure benefit perceptions of young people who participate in different types of leisure activities. As, young people are described as the most energetic group of society and their lifestyles vary from going shopping, participating in sports and outdoor activities to playing video games. We think that the findings of the study will help to fulfill the gap in the literature in Turkey and will be a reference for future studies.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

**Study Design:** Present study was designed as a comparison-type cross-sectional quantitative study. The main argument of this type of study design is to make comparisons between groups according to study variable(s).

**Study Sample:** The study sample was consisted of 143 (% 42.7) males and 192 female (% 57.3) high school students (N = 335, % 100). The mean age of participants was found to be  $16.69 \pm 1.73$ .

**Data Collection Tools:** In the study to collect data in addition to personal information form, the Turkish version of Ho's (2008) "Leisure Benefit Scale" was used. The Turkish version of the scale was adopted by Akgül et al. (2018). The adopted scale includes 24 items and three factors as physical, psychological, and sociological benefits. The answers given to the scale are evaluated with a 5 Likert-type scale. Sample items include "Leisure activities can help people to maintain a good body shape" (Physical benefit), "Participating in leisure activities can help an individual relieve mental stress" (Psychological benefit), and "I can gain support from other participates in a leisure activity" (Sociological benefit) (Akgül et al., 2018).

**Procedure:** The participants were chosen with a convenience sampling method. Although has some limitations, this method was used to accelerate the data collection process. The data were collected in April 2021, when the lockdown limitations were minimized.

**Data analysis:** The data were analyzed with SPSS 23. First, Cronbach Alpha was calculated for internal consistency, then in addition to skewness and kurtosis values, the One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test was used to check normality, last Kruskal Wallis test was used to determine the differences between males and females at a 95% confidence level.

### Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha, Skewness, Kurtosis and Kolmogorov Smirnov test results

	Leisure Benefit		
	Physical Benefit	Psychological Benefit	Sociological Benefit
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	.917	.937	.938
<b>Skewness</b>	-1.561	-1.660	-1.156
<b>Kurtosis</b>	3.256	3.313	1.879
<b>One-Sample K. S</b>	.000*	.000*	.000*
	*p<0.05		

Description: According to analyzed results, it was concluded that the data were found to have a good internal consistency and had a non-normal distribution.

## RESULTS

**Table 2: Perceived leisure benefits of male participants according to their leisure preferences**

Leisure Benefit Factors	Leisure Preference	N	Mean	Chi-Square	p
<b>Physical Benefit</b>	1 Sports and Exercise based	55	73.29	3.855*	.278
	2 Home-based (TV. Video. Internet)	53	67.78		
	3 Education oriented	21	85.95		
	4 Entertainment oriented (Shopping Mall. Cinema etc.)	14	61.96		
<b>Psychological Benefit</b>	1 Sports and Exercise based	55	75.16	5.113*	.164
	2 Home-based (TV. Video. Internet)	53	66.24		
	3 Education oriented	21	86.33		
	4 Entertainment oriented (Shopping Mall. Cinema etc.)	14	59.89		
<b>Sociological Benefit</b>	1 Sports and Exercise based	55	78.30	5.472*	.140
	2 Home-based (TV. Video. Internet)	53	61.59		
	3 Education oriented	21	79.38		
	4 Entertainment oriented (Shopping Mall. Cinema etc.)	14	75.57		

\*p>0.05

Description: According to Kruskal Walli's analysis results, there was no significant difference in the variable "Leisure Benefit" of male participants according to their leisure preferences.

**Table 3: Perceived leisure benefits of female participants according to their leisure preferences**

Leisure Benefit Factors	Leisure Preference	N	Mean	Chi-Square	p	Difference
<b>Physical Benefit</b>	1 Sports and Exercise based	33	121.26	11.576	.009*	1 > 3 1 > 4
	2 Home-based (TV. Video. Internet)	97	95.28			
	3 Education oriented	55	88.93			
	4 Entertainment oriented (Shopping Mall. Cinema etc.)	7	56.21			
<b>Psychological Benefit</b>	1 Sports and Exercise based	33	116.52	12.169	.007*	1 > 2
	2 Home-based (TV. Video. Internet)	97	89.53			
	3 Education oriented	55	103.02			
	4 Entertainment oriented (Shopping Mall. Cinema etc.)	7	47.57			
<b>Sociological Benefit</b>	1 Sports and Exercise based	33	116.24	11.679	.009*	1 > 4
	2 Home-based (TV. Video. Internet)	97	91.07			
	3 Education oriented	55	100.84			
	4 Entertainment oriented (Shopping Mall. Cinema etc.)	7	44.57			

\*p<0.05

Description: According to Kruskal Wallis's analysis results there were significant differences in the variable "Leisure benefit" of female participants according to their leisure preference in all three factors. A separate Mann Whitney U test with Bonferroni correction was performed to identify in which groups the significant differences were between at an alpha level .0125. Analyze results revealed that leisure benefit perceptions of female students who chose sports and exercise as leisure activities were higher in all three factors.

## DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to analyze the differences in the leisure benefit perceptions of high school students who have different leisure choices. According to analyzed results male high school students mostly preferred sports and exercise as leisure. Home-based and education-oriented activities followed, respectively. The least preferred leisure activity type was entertainment-oriented leisure activities such as going to the mall or cinema (table 2). On the other hand, the most preferred leisure activity type for female students was home-based leisure activities and education-oriented leisure activities were the follow-up. Sports and exercise emerged as the third most preferred type of leisure activity. Similar to male counterparts, entertainment-oriented leisure activities were the least preferred activity type for females (table 3). There are several possible explanations for this result of the study. The first and the most essential explanation is the effects of Covid-19, as the Pandemic changed individuals' leisure behaviors. In this regard, in his study Anderson (2020) stated that it would take years for individuals to return to a normal leisure behavior. According to Sivan (2020) with the spread of Covid-19, individuals' leisure choices shifted to home-based activities. In support of the aforementioned study and current study results, Işık et al. (2021) stated in their study that, because of Covid-19 individuals aim to prefer home-based activities and especially exercising at home.

When we examine the differences in the variable "leisure benefit", we did not find any significant difference for male participants (table 2). On the other hand, significant differences emerged for female participants (table 3). For instance, female participants who chose "sports and exercise" as leisure had higher awareness of physical benefits than the female participants who chose "education-oriented" and "entertainment-oriented" activities as leisure. Besides, female participants who chose "sports and exercise" also had higher awareness for psychological benefits than females who chose "education-oriented" leisure activities, and higher awareness for sociological benefits than females who chose "entertainment-oriented" activities as leisure. So, it can be said that sports and exercise as leisure make a positive differentiation in the variable leisure benefit for female high school students. When we examine the literature we can see studies that mentioned positive effects of sports and exercise. For instance, Nielsen et al. (2021) mentioned that participation in community/social groups such as a sports association was positively associated with mental well-being. Eskiler et al. (2019) stated that leisure benefits are positively associated with leisure satisfaction for extreme sports participants. Although the aforementioned studies do not include any gendered differentiations their results are important as they explain the positive effects of sports and exercise on leisure benefits.

Leisure benefit is a subjective concept, and it is concerned with personal experiences and feelings. According to subjective evaluation, the benefits that people received from leisure activities may be varied. For instance, Ho (2018) study results revealed that leisure involvement affects both leisure benefits and quality of life as well as, leisure benefits directly affect the quality of life and training efficiency for varsity athletes. According to Lord and Patterson (2008) participating in physically active leisure experiences is a vital component that contributes to handicapped people's quality of life. According to Bülbül et al. (2021) regardless of the gender factor, participating in sports and exercising as leisure, individuals have a more positive attitude towards their bodies.

## CONCLUSION

Today, unlike in the past, the lifestyles of young people are varied from going shopping to participating in sporting and outdoor activities or playing video games. Besides, they are characterized as the most energetic group of the society as they are in the process of adaptation to adulthood. Therefore, being aware of the benefits of leisure activities, especially sporting leisure activities can help them to get through this process more easily as leisure time sports activity is associated with general life satisfaction and many other positive moods.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

At the time the current study was written (April, 2021), the effect of Covid-19 was still continuing on the world, and the pandemic has caused various physical and psychological problems in high school students, as well as in individuals of all ages. Previous study results showed positive correlation with participation in physical activity and psychological resilience and negative correlation with leisure boredom (Dursun et al., 2021) during the Covid-19 lock down. Therefore, increased participation in physical activity and exercise during this period will increase the physical, psychological and sociological benefits we will derive from our leisure experience especially for female high school students.

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