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Life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom of park recreation participants

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure of sports recreation activities participants and to compare leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom according to certain variables. The sampling of the study consisted of a total of 397 individuals participating in recreation sports activities. In conclusion, it was found that there was a positive linear relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure. There was no difference between leisure satisfaction according to gender, however there was a significant difference between perceived freedom according to gender. A significant difference between Leisure Satisfaction and Perceived Freedom according to age and income was found.

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Keywords: Life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction, perceived freedom in leisure;

1. Introduction

There is a large body of research on individuals participating in leisure activities. Many studies have examined the effects of different variables in leisure constraints; negotiating constraints; life satisfaction, quality of life; leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom etc. of the individuals who participate in leisure activities and who fall into different groups, and the relationships of these concepts. A review of the literature on life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure reveals that previous studies examined the effect of different demographic variables on the concepts of leisure satisfaction (Ashby et al., 1999; Berg et al., 2001; Borke et al., 2009; Lu & Kao, 2009; Misra & McKean, 2000) and perceived freedom in leisure (Munchua et al., 2003; Samuel, 2003; Stelzer, 2000). Similarly, a large body of research has examined the relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction (Brown & Frankel, 1993; Griffin & McKenna, 1998; Huang & Carleton,

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2003; Nimrod, 2005; Wang et al., 2008), the relationship between leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure (Munchua, 2003; Robinson, 2003; Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2000) and the relationship between life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure (Poulsen et al., 2007; Poulsen et al., 2008).

According to the literature, life satisfaction generally refers to the satisfaction of an individual from his/her life; it can be defined as “emotional reaction of an individual to life, which is defined as work, leisure and other non-work time” (Hong & Giannakopoulos, 1994). On the other hand, Diener et al. (1985) defined life satisfaction as a positive evaluation of one's whole life according to the criteria determined by that individual. Additionally, life satisfaction is related to the level of participation in social activities, change in participation in social activities, arrangements in the individual's life, important life events, age, gender, retirement, education level, income level, health condition, marital status, family life and societal life (Sener et al., 2007).

Leisure satisfaction is a satisfaction dimension which is included in life satisfaction and social satisfaction. Beard & Ragheb (1980) defined leisure satisfaction as positive satisfaction or emotions that an individual shows, achieves or obtains due to participation in leisure activities. This is the satisfaction level the individual obtains from general leisure experiences. An individual's ability or inability to meet his/her individual needs is associated with the level of positive results of his/her satisfaction status. Leisure satisfaction indicates the extent to which the individual is satisfied with leisure experiences. Satisfaction of positive feelings is achieved by satisfying individual needs (Du Cap, 2002). Measuring whether the individuals gain the desired benefit from the leisure activities they take part in, whether they can satisfy their needs, and whether they are happy to participate in these activities can provide important data to take measures to make them happier and more satisfied and to develop leisure activities provided in line with their satisfaction level and even to enhance activity options (Karlı et al., 2008).

The concept of perceived freedom in leisure is another subject handled in leisure literature; it appeared as an important dimension in measuring leisure behavior. Neulinger suggested that perceived freedom is the only principle criterion of leisure, and defined perception of freedom as the feeling of an individual as to doing what he/she does willingly and by his/her own choice (Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2000). Based on the studies on perceived freedom in leisure, Witt and Ellis suggested that to achieve maximum benefit from leisure activities, individuals should have competency and should be involved in a structure in which they can control the initiatives and outputs of their experiences and participate in the activities with internal desire rather than external award expectations (Witt & Ellis, 1985). Perceived freedom in leisure reflects an individual's evaluations towards his/her skills in participating in leisure activities and therefore is influenced by the events in their lives. The individuals who believe that they have more freedom in leisure experiences tend to show higher levels of competency, locus of control, internal motivation and playfulness feelings (Janke et al., 2011).

Today, making use of leisure has turned into a life style. Individuals make use of various leisure activities in different areas and spaces. Parks are one of the most popular areas for individuals participating in recreational sport activities. Directorates of Parks and Gardens under Municipalities provide walking tracks, cycling tracks, sports areas and green areas within the parks to serve adults, young people and children. As for the general population of Turkey, it was observed that individuals intensively use walking tracks, cycling tracks and fitness equipment in sports areas inside the parks constructed by the municipalities. For this reason, this study aims to examine whether leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure scores of the individuals participating in leisure activities in these parks varied according to gender, age and income variables, and whether there was a relationship between life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure scores.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Population of the study consisted of the individuals residing in Antalya who participated in park recreation. Since the number of the population is not exactly known, in formula $n = t^2 pq/d^2$, $t=1.96$ (t table value at $\alpha=0.05$ for $n>30$), p =likelihood of the event, q =unlikelihood of the event $1-p$ was replaced with the values of 0.05 which will provide the highest sampling. Obtained n value was 384.16; however, it was taken as $n=385$. Accordingly, considering the likelihood of loss data, the sampling of the study consisted of a total of randomly selected 397 ($M_{age}=45.67\pm 15.79$) participants who were participating in sports recreational activities in fitness equipment, jogging tracks and similar areas ($M_{frequency}=2.93\pm 2.02$) in the parks constructed by Antalya municipality Directorate of Parks and Gardens. Of the participants, 174 were male ($M_{age}=50.18\pm 16.52$) and 223 were female ($M_{age}=42.15\pm 14.27$); 41.3% were in low-income group; 37.5% were in medium income group and 21.2% were in high-income group.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Personal Information Form

A personal information form was developed in the study to determine participants' gender, age, marital status, income level, participation time in sports activities, the people with whom they participated in sports activities and the reasons for performing these activities.

2.2.2. The Satisfaction with Life Scale

"The Satisfaction with Life Scale" developed by Diener et al. (1985) was used to determine life satisfaction of the participants. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991). Participants responded to items on a 7-point Likert Scale. In the present study, internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .90.

2.2.3. Leisure Satisfaction Scale

"Leisure Satisfaction Scale" developed by Beard & Raghd (1980) was used to determine leisure satisfaction levels of the participants. Participants responded to items on a 5-point Likert Scale. The subscales were: (a) psychological (b) education (c) social (d) relaxation (e) physiological and (f) aesthetical. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Gökçe (2011). For the present study, while internal consistency of the general of the scale was .91; internal consistency coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale were found to be .78, .69, .82, .74, .75 and .76 respectively.

2.2.4. Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale

"Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale" developed by Witt & Ellis (1985) was used for data collection to determine participants' levels of perceived freedom in leisure. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Yerlisu Lapa & Agyar (2011). For the present study, internal consistency coefficient for the general of the scale was found be .91; while internal consistency coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale were calculated as .84 and .87.

2.3. Data Collection

“Personal Information Form”, “Leisure Satisfaction Scale” and “Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale” were administered to the individuals who participated in sports and recreational activities using fitness equipment, jogging track and similar areas in the parks constructed by Antalya Muratpasa Municipality Directorate for Parks and Gardens in November-December 2011 and January 2012. Prior to the application of the scale, the participants were informed about the scales and were explained the importance of giving honest answers to the questions. The scale was completed for approximately 15 minutes per person.

2.4. Data Analysis

Pearson’s Correlation Analysis was used to determine the relationship between life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure of the participants and Multivariate analysis of variance (Manova) was used to test the variance of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom scores of the participants according to gender, age and income level.

3. Results

Correlation values between The Satisfaction with Life Scale, Leisure Satisfaction and Perceived Freedom in Leisure scales of the participants are presented in Table 1. According to Pearson’s Correlation Analysis, there was a positive linear relationship between life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Correlation between life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure scales of the participants

	Life Satisfaction	Leisure Satisfaction	Perceived Freedom in Leisure
Life Satisfaction		$r = .479^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .359^{**}$ $p = .000$
Leisure Satisfaction	$r = .479^{**}$ $p = .000$		$r = .706^{**}$ $p = .000$
Perceived Freedom in Leisure	$r = .359^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .706^{**}$ $p = .000$	

Correlation is significant at the level $^{**}0.01$ (2 tailed).

Mean and standard deviation values of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure sub-dimensions according to gender of the participants are presented in Table 2.

Multivariate analysis of variance conducted to test leisure satisfaction sub-dimensions of the participants according to gender showed that there was no statistically significant difference between leisure satisfaction scores of female and male participants (*Hotelling’s* $T^2 = .032$, $F_{(6,390)} = 2.049$; $\eta^2 = .031$; $p > 0.05$).

Analysis performed to compare perceived freedom in leisure sub-dimensions according to gender of the participants showed that there was a statistically significant difference between perceived freedom in leisure scores of male and female participants (*Hotelling’s* $T^2 = .032$, $F_{(2,394)} = 6.230$; $\eta^2 = .031$; $p < 0.01$). Perceived freedom in leisure scores showed significant difference according to gender only in excitement/amusement sub-dimension ($F_{(1,395)} = 6.735$; $\eta^2 = .017$; $p < 0.05$). Based on this result, it can be stated that females have higher levels of freedom perceptions in this sub-dimension.

Table 2. Evaluation of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure of the participants according to gender

<i>Leisure Satisfaction</i>	Woman (n=223)	Men (n=174)	Total (n=397)
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Psychological	3.61 (.75)	3.49 (.74)	3.55 (.75)
Education	3.97 (.61)	3.92 (.63)	3.95 (.62)
Social	3.74 (.67)	3.63 (.72)	3.69 (.69)
Relaxation	4.37 (.53)	4.26 (.52)	4.32 (.53)
Physiological	3.53 (.67)	3.61 (.69)	3.57 (.68)
Aesthetic	3.91 (.61)	3.90 (.59)	3.91 (.60)
<i>Perceived Freedom in Leisure</i>			
Knowledge/Skills	3.78 (.56)	3.74 (.62)	3.76 (.59)
Excitement/Amusement	4.00 (.55)	3.84 (.66)	3.93 (.60)

Mean and standard deviation values of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure sub-dimensions according to the ages of the participants are presented in Table 3. Analysis of results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between leisure satisfaction scores according to the ages of the participants (*Hotelling's* $T^2=1.02$, $F_{(6,390)}=3.308$; $\eta^2=.049$; $p<0.001$). It was found that leisure satisfaction showed a significant difference in psychological ($F_{(2,394)}=7.696$; $\eta^2=.038$; $p<0.01$), social ($F_{(2,394)}=3.534$; $\eta^2=.018$; $p<0.05$) and physiological ($F_{(2,394)}=9.328$; $\eta^2=.045$; $p<0.001$) sub-dimensions. Based on this result, leisure satisfaction scores were found to be higher in the group consisting of age 40 and below than in the two other age groups.

Comparison of perceived freedom scores according to the ages of the participants showed a statistically significant difference (*Hotelling's* $T^2=.075$, $F_{(2,394)}=7.370$; $\eta^2=.036$; $p<0.001$). This difference was found between knowledge/skill ($F_{(2,394)}=4.727$; $\eta^2=.046$; $p<0.05$) and excitement/amusement ($F_{(2,394)}=4.727$; $\eta^2=.046$; $p<0.05$) sub-dimensions. According to this result, the group consisting of age 40 and below had higher perceived freedom in leisure.

Table 3. Evaluation of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure of the participants according to age

<i>Leisure Satisfaction</i>	under 40 years old n = (155)	ages from 41-60 years n = (165)	61 years old and higher n = (77)
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Psychological	3.71 (.71)	3.52 (.76)	3.31 (.72)
Education	4.01 (.64)	3.94 (.62)	3.83 (.56)
Social	3.81 (.73)	3.62 (.71)	3.60 (.56)
Relaxation	4.39 (.54)	4.30 (.49)	4.22 (.54)
Physiological	3.72 (.66)	3.53 (.66)	3.33 (.66)
Aesthetic	3.90 (.65)	3.90 (.54)	3.93 (.62)
<i>Perceived Freedom in Leisure</i>			
Knowledge/Skills	3.94 (.55)	3.68 (.61)	3.60 (.53)
Excitement/Amusement	4.12 (.60)	3.83 (.59)	3.77 (.55)

According to the results of the test performed to compare leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure sub-dimensions according to income levels of the participants a statistically significant difference was obtained in leisure satisfaction scores of the participants according to income levels (*Hotelling's* $T^2=.135$, $F_{(6,390)}=4.367$; $\eta^2=.063$; $p<0.001$). Leisure satisfaction showed a significant difference according to income in psychological

($F_{(2,394)}=12.861$; $\eta^2=.061$; $p<0.001$), education ($F_{(2,394)}=13.557$; $\eta^2=.064$; $p<0.001$), social ($F_{(2,394)}=16.071$; $\eta^2=.075$; $p<0.001$), relaxation ($F_{(2,394)}=4.051$; $\eta^2=.020$; $p<0.05$), physiological ($F_{(2,394)}=9.409$; $\eta^2=.046$; $p<0.001$) and aesthetic ($F_{(2,394)}=10.070$; $\eta^2=.049$; $p<0.001$) sub-dimensions. According to this result, the participants with a high-income level had higher leisure satisfaction scores than two other income groups (Table 4).

Analysis performed to compare participants' perceived freedom sub-dimension according to income levels showed a statistically significant difference (*Hotelling's T^2* =.092, $F_{(2,394)}=9.053$; $\eta^2=.044$; $p<0.001$). It was found that perceived freedom in leisure scores showed a significant difference in knowledge/skill ($F_{(2,394)}=16.583$; $\eta^2=.078$; $p<0.001$) and excitement/amusement ($F_{(2,394)}=15.435$; $\eta^2=.073$; $p<0.001$) sub-dimensions. According to this result, it was found that the high income group had higher perceived freedom in leisure scores than the two other income groups.

Table 4. Evaluation of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure of the participants according to income levels

<i>Leisure Satisfaction</i>	Low Income Level n = (164)	Middle Income Level n = (149)	High Income Level n = (84)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Psychological	3.35 (.77)	3.63 (.65)	3.82 (.75)
Education	3.80 (.64)	3.95 (.57)	4.22 (.59)
Social	3.51 (.72)	3.71 (.66)	4.02 (.58)
Relaxation	4.23 (.52)	4.38 (.52)	4.40 (.53)
Physiological	3.40 (.68)	3.64 (.60)	3.76 (.73)
Aesthetic	3.76 (.63)	3.95 (.54)	4.11 (.57)
<i>Perceived Freedom in Leisure</i>			
Knowledge/Skills	3.59 (.57)	3.82 (.55)	4.01 (.58)
Excitement/Amusement	3.76 (.64)	3.97 (.54)	4.19 (.53)

4. Discussion

Statistical analysis showed that there was a positive linear relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction ($r=0.47$, $p<0.001$); leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure ($r=0.70$, $p<0.001$); and life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure ($r=0.35$, $p<0.001$) of the participants. A review of the literature reveals that there is a large body of research on the relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction; leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure; life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure. As for life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction, Griffin & McKenna (1998) and Gökçe (2008) found a significant relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction; Brown & Frankel (1993), Huang & Carleton (2003) and Kovacs (2007) reported that there was a positive linear relationship between these two satisfactions. Based on a review of the literature on leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure, Munchua et al. (2003) carried out a study on young convicts hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital and found a significant negative linear relationship. The researchers explained this reversely correlated result with the fact that these young people might have lacked different recreational activities due to the socio-economic status of their families. Similarly, Siegenthaler & O'Dell (2000) carried out a study on university students and found a positive linear relationship. This result is consistent with the findings of our study. Even though the relationship between life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure was not much dealt with in the literature, the literature contains studies on this subject. Poulsen et al. (2007) found that there was a strong positive linear relationship between life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure in 10 to 13 year-old males with and without developmental coordination defect ($r=0.66$, $p<0.01$). Although the relationship between life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure in the present study ($r=0.35$, $p<0.001$) did not show such a strong positive linear relationship as that in the study of

Poulsen et al. (2007), the result shows a parallelism. In our study it was found that there was a positive, linear relationship between life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction; leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure; and life satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure. These results support the findings in the literature that these concepts are related to each other.

When leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure were tested according to gender, there was no difference in leisure satisfaction ($p>0.05$) and perceived freedom in leisure ($p<0.001$). Based on this result it can be stated that females have higher freedom perceptions. Although leisure satisfaction differed from those in the studies of Gökçe (2008), Vong Tze (2005) and Kabanoff (1982), it was observed that the majority of previous studies did not show a difference according to gender variable. Misra & McKean (2000) carried out a study on college students; Lu & Hu (2005) carried out a study on Chinese university students; Siegenthaller & O'Dell (2000) and similarly Berg et al. (2001) carried out a study on couples and concluded that there was no significant relationship between leisure satisfaction levels of female and male individuals. Boley (2001), Broughton & Beggs (2006) and Griffin & McKenna (1998) conducted a study on older individuals and obtained similar results since they could not find a difference according to gender variable. Similarly, Ateca-Amestoy et al. (2008) carried out a study on leisure experience and found that there was no significant difference between females and males.

In the present study, the fact that perceived freedom scores according to gender showed a significant difference according to gender ($p<0.01$) can be explained by the findings of Unger & Kernan (1983) who defined perceived freedom as one of subjective determinants of leisure and stated that age, gender and social status variables interacted and affected perceived subjective leisure dimensions.

Analysis of leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure of the participants according to age showed that there was a significant difference between leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom ($p<0.001$). According to this result, as age increased, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom level decreased. A review of the literature revealed that while leisure satisfaction did not cause a variation in the study of Griffin & McKenna (1998) and Riddick (1986), it appeared as a variance-causing variable in the study of Gökçe (2008), which is consistent with the findings in this study. The fact that perceived freedom in leisure scores cause a variation according to age in this study is not consistent with the findings of Stelzer (2000). This might have resulted from the fact that Stelzer (2000) included very young individuals in the study and kept age range rather low.

Another finding obtained in study was that leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom in leisure scores significantly varied according to income ($p<0.001$). Leisure satisfaction increased as income increased. In parallel to these results, Borke et al. (2009) found that there was a positive relationship between economic satisfaction and leisure satisfaction. The literature contains studies which are similar to or differ from the findings of the present study. For example, Mancini (1978) carried out a study on the elderly and found that leisure satisfaction level was not affected by income level. Vong Tze (2005) carried out a study on a total of 993 participants in Macao region of Peoples Republic of China and reported that leisure satisfaction level did not vary according to income. The fact that perceived freedom in leisure did not vary according to income is consistent with the study of Samuel (2003).

This study aimed to determine participation in sports recreation activities, particularly under all conditions of life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and perceived freedom levels in leisure, how some demographic variables affected these levels, and to ensure that the municipalities offering these activities provide appropriate programs and services. It is recommended that the scales used in this study be used on the groups participating in various recreation activities in the Turkish population.

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