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Life satisfaction and emotional intelligence of participants/nonparticipants in outdoor sports: Turkey case

Faik Ardahan a *

a Akdeniz University, School of Physical Education and Sport, Recreation Department, Antalya, 07035, Turkey

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to define the relation between Life Satisfaction (LS) and Emotional Intelligence (EI) of the outdoor sports participants (OSP) and the non participants of outdoor sports (NPOS) and comparison of LS and EI with respect to the gender, marital status, education level and age. Sampling group consists of OSP (n=1181) and NPOS (n=538). The data has been gathered via electronic questionnaire form and in this study EI scale developed by Chan and LS scale developed by Diener have been used. In this study, descriptive statistic methods such as Pearson Correlation and Mann-Whitney U have been used and results have been assessed according to significant level 0.05 and 0.01. As a result of this study, a positive impact of being an OSP has been found on LS, and a meaningful difference has been emerged between LS of OSP and NPOS. In addition to this, as EI increases LS increases.

Keywords: Outdoor Sports, Emotional Intelligence, Life Satisfaction

1. Introduction

For a long time, researchers have been interested in Life Satisfaction (LS) and it has been taken up with its many aspects. For centuries, LS or its other name “Happiness” has been the focus of humanity and philosophers have seen happiness as a motivation for behaviors. LS has been theorized by Neugarten first in 1961 and it has been a guide for many researchers. Satisfaction is defined as meeting needs, desires and wishes. LS includes whole life of individual and different aspects of life. Happiness which expresses LS from different moral satisfaction not only expresses specific satisfaction but expresses entire satisfaction in life (Aksayan, 1990; Ozer & Karabulut, 2003; Eren, 2008). While Ozdevecioğlu (2003), Sung-Mook ve Giannakopoulos (1994) define LS as individual’s emotional reaction out of work life, general attitude towards life; Telman & Unsal (2004, 12) defines LS as the pleasure someone has in life, Dikmen (1995) defines LS as subjective goodness and the beliefs related to the quality of life which someone reaches based on the facts in someone’s life.

The causes of LS are questioned by many researchers. LS is an outcome and there are a lot of independent variables which determine this situation. Diener (1984) has reached two results. First; the most advantageous persons are the happiest, and happy person is defined as young, healthy, well educated, secure economically, extrovert, optimistic, carefree, religious, married, moderate, having desires and smart. Second; since Greek
Philosophers’ intuitional development relating to happiness has been furthered a little bit. On the other hand, researchers like Dagdelen (2008, 12), Otacioglu (2008) and Schmitter (2003) line up the factors that affect LS as following; daily pleasure, finding life meaningful, reaching aims, having positive personality, feeling good physically, economic security and building stable relations; Sahin (2008) lines up the factors that affect LS as following; health, confidence, relationship with parents, siblings and relatives, having a child and raising him/her, helping others, taking others into consideration, joining events, learning, understanding him/herself, having a job, socializing, reading, listening to music, watching movies, and participating in entertainment.

Since 1990s, Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has caused great repercussions among academic circles. The root of this term is based on the Thorndike’s (1920) “social intelligence”. According to Salovey & Mayer (1990a, 185), EQ is a sub-dimension of social intelligence. Also, Salovey & Mayer (1990b) claim that social intelligence consists of three talent categories. First one is assessing his/her (oral, non-oral) and others feelings (non-oral, emphatic). Second one is ordering feelings (him/herself, others). Third one is using feelings when solving problems (flexible planning, creativeness, refocusing attention). In this respect, social intelligence is assessed as understanding people, managing and behaving wisely, known as have contributed to the development of EQ.

Then, Cooper and Sawaf (1997) claimed that EQ consists of four talent and inclination sub-dimensions. These are emotional literacy; the feeling of individual and having general knowledge about how feelings function, emotional fitness; emotional strictness and flexibility, emotional depth; emotional intensity and potential progress, emotional alchemy; and using feeling for furthering creativeness. (Schutte et al., 2006). Chan (2004, 2006) too has taken up EQ under four dimensions. These are emotional assessment (being able to assess a matter with its each ing its whole structure), positive emotional management (management of feelings and emotions) and using feeling positively (using all feelings and emotions positively).

2. The relation between LS and EQ

When the LS is seen as a measure of meeting expectations, it is related how someone defines life together with these factors herself/himself, all relationships, social capital, health capital, financial capital, education, profession satisfaction, job satisfaction and expectations. Since EQ is total of personality, management of emotions, understanding others, making a correlation between EQ and LS is quite meaningful.

Besides, there is a relationship between emotional situation and personality. While certain people see the current situation as a treat, others see the same situation as a motivation. Even it varies from person to person. Something which is seen as a treat for someone can be defined quite ordinary by another one. This affects LS directly someone feels at that moment (Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2005). Whether there is a meaningful relationship between EQ and LS or not have been questioned by many researchers and in the end a meaningful relationship has been presented (Bar-On, 1997; Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Martinez-Pons, 1997; Mayer et al., 2000). For a long time EQ and LS have been associated with human values such as the quality of relationship between individuals, creativeness, leadership, convincing presentable, psychotherapy, success in life and at work (Salovey and Mayer, 1990b; Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; 2007; Palmer et al., 2001).

3. The reasons for participating and not participating Outdoor Sports

Outdoor Sport (OS) is the total activities that participants join voluntarily, that nature is used as a resource, that there is a relationship between participant and nature, that organized events are held, that the relationship between individual and nature is important, (Ardahan, 2011b). In another definition, OS is the total activities that make
participants part of nature and create interaction between participant and nature and which is exercised totally for participant’s physical health, emotional, and social interests (Ardahan, 2012). The characteristics of OS are, such as because of its nature, that it is exercised in nature and it makes participants experience high risk and adventure feeling, which differentiates it from other sports. By making participants experience freedom inclination, OS is very successful at making participants experience different way of life (Ardahan, 2011a; Ardahan & Lapa, 2010).

The reasons for participating and not participating OS and the benefits participant gain by participating in OS have drawn scientists’ attention. While Crandall (1980) claims that the reason for participating in OS is the situation the individual in, Levy (1978) claims a behavior emerges after the interaction of personality and stimulus around someone. Then, researchers have worked on the causes of behavior and findings have been grouped as motivational factors and needs (Ardahan and Lapa, 2010). From this perspective, because of the subjective relationship between reasons for participating in OS and personality, there can be meaningful relationship between participating in OS and EQ.

The factors that motivate an individual to participate in OS are nature love, getting away from routine and family, escaping from responsibility, the need for physical activity, creativity, relaxation, realization of self, improvement and learning new skills, building relationships, making friends and observing them, meeting a famous person (if a known rock climber or somebody else is participating in the event, it draws people who want to meet him/her), spending time with family, the desire to be recognized, helping other people, social responsibility, motivating and inviting factors (e.g. a nice waterfall draws people there), gaining social status, realization of self, the desire for success, rivalry (within and out), spending time and relaxation, and intellectual aesthetics (Ibrahim & Cordes, 2002; Ardahan, 2011b; Ardahan & Lapa, 2010). The benefits of participating in OS for participants in the light of lined up facts are learning group dynamics, leadership, furthering self-confidence, making individual decisions, risk management, taking himself/herself and others responsibility, effecting the development of personality and physical fitness, effecting self-confidence positively and trusting others, feeling happy, and interacting with others and socializing (Burnett, 1994; Hilton, 1992; Levi, 1994; McKenzie, 2000; McRoberts, 1994; Wagner & Rowland, 1992; Yerlisu Lapa et al., 2010). In addition, the individuals’ reasons for going to nature are purring, progressing, and trying to reach to nirvana (Ibrahim & Cordes, 2002, 70). The EQ and LS of individuals who gain these benefits by participating in OS will get affected positively and naturally their level is expected to be high. An individual who is interested in one of the OS as to recreate, because of the nature of the recreation, will have positive LS (Ardahan, 2011a).

There can be a lot of reasons for not participating in OS. These are as following; not to be suitable mentally and physically, finding OS risky, negative effects of friends, relatives, society or exaggerations on media, lack of suitable area for doing OS, being far from suitable area, having not tried one of the OS before, even it has been tried before having a negative opinion about it or friends’ negative experiences, the existence of negative examples on media, finding OS unaffordable, lack of time and money, the hardships caused by the current situation, lack of desire for participating in OS, currently participating in other sports, the belief that participating in OS will have negative impact on friends, not finding outdoor sports interesting any more, lack of people who are interested in OS, lack of group which one can join, lack of time, education, health, career, having a child and hurdles.

After all above, the aim of this study is to examine the relation between LS and EQ with its sub-dimensions on the example of individuals who are participating and not participating in OS and compare the existence and direction of relationship by some demographic variables as gender, marital status, age and education.

4. Method

Sampling group of this study consists of mountain/rock climbers (n=426), cyclists (n=373) hikers (n=382), individuals participating in OS totally (n=1181) whose number are not known in Turkey, individuals not
participating in OS (n=538). In this study, sampling has been applied and an electronic questionnaire form has been sent to all members of mountaineering clubs and cyclist clubs bound to Turkish Mountaineering Federation and Turkish Cycling Federation. The findings have been collected by electronic questionnaire form and in the research EQ and LS scale have been used. The number of participants who consist of sampling group is as following; 1221 male (\(X_{age}=34.75\pm11.02\)) and 498 female (\(X_{age}=34.14\pm11.12\)) in total of 1719 (\(X_{age}=34.57\pm11.04\)).

In this study, LS Scale which was developed by Diener et al. (1985) and EQ Scale which was developed by Chan (2004; 2006) have been used. In order to analyze the data, the descriptive statistics methods such as frequency (f), percentage (%), average (M) and standard deviation (SD), nonparametric tests as Pearson Correlation Test and Mann-Whitney U Test have been used. Results have been assessed on 0.01 and 0.05 significance level.

5. Findings

The demographic data of individuals who are participating in OS and who are not participating in OS has been given in Table 1. As seen in the table; most of the individuals who took part in the research are male, single, above 35 years old and university graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic data of OSP and NPOS</th>
<th>OSP</th>
<th>NPOS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 or less</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and above</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master or Doctorate</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1181</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sub-dimensions of EQ and LS of individuals who are participating in OS and who are not participating in OS have been given in Table 2. As seen in the table; the sub-dimensions of EQ level of individuals who are both participating in OS and who are not participating in OS are high and there is a statistically meaningful difference between sub-dimensions such as emphatic sensitiveness and using feelings positively (p<0.05). On the other hand, LS level is average but the LS of OSP is higher than NPOS and this difference is important statistically (p<0.05).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ dimensions and LS level</th>
<th>OSP</th>
<th>NPOS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Assessment</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphatic Sensitivity</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sub-dimensions of EQ and LS of individuals who are participating and not participating in OS and the correlation between EQ and LS have been given in Table 3. As seen in the table; there is a positive correlation between the EQ and LS of individuals who are both participating and not participating in outdoor sports (p<0.01). In other words, there is a statistically meaningful correlation between EQ and LS. The correlation coefficient of OSP is higher than NPOS.

Table 3: Correlations between EQ sub dimension and LS of OSP and NPOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQ sub dimension</th>
<th>LS of OSP P</th>
<th>LS of NPOS P</th>
<th>LS Total P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Assessment</td>
<td>0.233*</td>
<td>0.136*</td>
<td>0.194*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphatic Sensitiveness</td>
<td>0.146*</td>
<td>0.122*</td>
<td>0.135*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotional Management</td>
<td>0.271*</td>
<td>0.257*</td>
<td>0.270*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Feeling Positively</td>
<td>0.080*</td>
<td>0.172*</td>
<td>0.114*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P = Pearson Correlation * p< 0.01**

According to certain demographic variables, the sub-dimensions of EQ and LS of OSP and NPOS have been given in Table 4. As seen in the table; the LS of OSP is higher than NPOS except individuals who are below 24 and above 55 years old and individuals who have masters or higher education level and this difference is statistically important (p<0.05). Besides, in sub-dimensions of EQ and demographic variables there are differences in favor of participants of OS and there are differences in favor of NPOS and this difference is statistically meaningful (p<0.05).

Table 4: Relationship Between LS and EQ sub dimension of OSP and NPOS with Respect to Some Demographic Variables.
6. Discussion

In general, LS is a measure of meeting expectations from life. The relation between meeting expectations and subjective being good and LS has been discussed by Diener et al. (1985). Ryen et al. (1996) claim that behaviors aimed internal needs like interest, sufficiency and autonomy lead to happiness over time and recreational activities which are maintained on suitable talent level lead to satisfaction. In this respect, it can be said that the process of recreative activity, the aims which are taken up in this process and achieving aims make people find their life satisfactory (Toros et al., 2010). It is certain that people who participate in recreative activities produce positive energy that affects their life favorably (Burnett, 1994; Hilton, 1992; Levi, 1994; McKenzie, 2000; McRoberts, 1994; Wagner & Rowland, 1992; Yerlisu Lapa et al., 2010; Ardahan, 2011a; Ardahan, 2011b). These mentioned overlaps with the findings of present research. According to results of present research, LS; in all demographic variables and sub-values of variables, there is a difference between OSP and NPOS except individuals below 24 and above 55 years old and individuals who have masters or PhD degree, and this difference is statistically important (p<0.05) and it is in favor of outdoor sports. Among the mentioned three parameters, there is difference in favor of NPOS but this difference is not important (p>0.05).

There is a statistically meaningful and positive relation between the EQ and LS of OSP and NPOS. Bar-On (1997) (P=0.41, p<0.01), Mayer et al. (2000) (P=0.11, p<0.05), Ciarrochi et al. (2000) (P=0.28, p<0.05) have found a meaningful and positive relation between the sub-dimensions of EQ and LS. These results overlap with the results of present study. In this study, there is a positive and statistically meaningful (p<0.01) relation between emotional assessment (POS+=0.233, POS-=0.136) and emphatic sensitiveness (POS+=0.146, POS-=0.111) and positive emotional management (POS+=0.271, POS-=0.257) and using emotions positively (POS+=0.080, POS-=0.172).

The sub-dimensions of EQ which were taken up by Goleman (Ismen, 2001) such as recognizing emotions, management of emotions, motivation, recognizing others and maintaining relationships are definitely related to
benefits someone gain by participating in OS. Even a relation can be built between participating in OS instead of participating another sports and personality and EQ and personality and it can be said that the EQ of OSP is high. The results of present study overlap with this general expression. According to the present study, in the sub-dimensions of EQ such as emotional assessment, empathic sensitiveness, positive emotional management, there is a difference between OSP and NPOS in favor of OSP but this difference is statistically important only in empathic sensitiveness (p<0.05). The difference in using emotions positively is in favor of NPOS and it is statistically meaningful.

Given these results it is not possible to say that participating in any outdoor sports has a positive impact on EQ or people whose EQ level is high prefer outdoor sports.

In conclusion, participating in OS has a positive impact on LS. In the all sub-dimensions of demographic variables which were included in this study there is a difference between the LS of OSP and NPOS. In addition, there is a positive and meaningful relation between the sub-dimensions of EQ and LS of OSP and NPOS. In this respect, the higher EQ is the higher LS.

Given these results, in order to increase LS of persons and society, local and governmental solutions must be organized such as adding outdoor activities in curricula in all levels of education process from primary school to university or later, the second and third age groups, singles and men must be supported and motivated to join outdoor activities by their job providers which is done by both in private and public sector, nonprofit organizations like outdoor sports clubs or other associations must be supported. Municipalities, universities, educational institutions, youth centers, nonprofit organizations, private and public sector must take responsibility and leadership to organize and deliver outdoor activities. Some activities must be organized for different parts of the society especially for the disadvantaged groups like the elderly, the disabled and their families, those with chronic illnesses, the homeless and the young in dormitories. Some activities must be done free of charge or with low costs to increase the number of participants.

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Dagdelen, M. (2008). The Comparison of Mental Healthy level, Distribution of Mental Signs, Perceived Health, Occupational Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction and Sociodemographic characteristics Among Workers of Production and Service Industry, Inonu University, Medicine Faculty, Specialization Thesis.


