

## The Study of the Relationships among Participation in Recreation Activities, Life Satisfaction and Happiness in University Students

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**Abstract:** The aim of the present study is to examine the relationships among university students' participation in recreation activities, life satisfaction and happiness. The study was conducted with 460 university students based on the causal comparison pattern. The Survey of Participation in Recreation Activity, Life Satisfaction and Happiness scales were used to collect the data of the study. According to the research findings, no significant difference was found in terms of university students' life satisfaction and happiness levels depending on their participation in sports activities. On the other hand, it was observed that the happiness levels of the students who participated in social activities and those who participated in artistic and cultural activities were significantly high. Finally, significant differences were found in terms of the number of students participating in recreation activities regarding their happiness levels.

**Keywords:** University students, recreational activities, life satisfaction, happiness

### Introduction

Recreational activities are a universal need that takes an important place in people's lives and, are activities that add meaning to life by raising the standard of living. People participate in recreational activities due to their physical, psychological and social benefits (Sevil et al., 2012). The need for recreation, consists of the benefits of recreational activities to individual and social development (Kleiber, 1999). Temel and Tukul (2020) emphasized that active sports and participating in activities with recreation content, increase individuals' self-esteem and, affect them positively.

Recreation activities are activities that can be performed individually or in groups, as active or passive, by women - men, as young - old, at any time, in open or covered areas. For this reason, recreational activities are activities that enable individuals to have fun, relax and develop them which do not have limited coverage and, which can address to people in any place and at any time. In this case, by participating in the activities, people express themselves and can reveal their unknown aspects. In this context, individuals have the opportunity to protect their physical and mental health by increasing their life satisfaction and happiness.

Joudrey and Wallace (2009) conducted a study that demonstrated statistically the importance of leisure activity. In passive leisure, individuals show psychological symptoms but, on the other hand, quite high levels were observed in the mental health status of the individuals participating in active leisure. It is natural for individuals have high life satisfaction who can provide close relationships with people in the society, socialized and integrated into social life and who are at peace with their environment.

In addition, it is expected that the life satisfaction and happiness level will be high of each other engaged in sports and physical activities, interested in art and culture. In this context, individuals increase their leisure with different activities and increase their life satisfaction and happiness by this way. In the States, it has been found that attending club meetings in regular manner, taking part in voluntary work, attending monthly entertainments, have an equal effect on satisfaction of life and on their happiness like doubling their income (Lapa, 2011; Tekgöz 2001).

There are many studies in the international literature on the effects of participation in leisure activities on individuals' life satisfaction and happiness (Coleman, 1993; Kern et al., 2014; Kuykendall, Boemerman & Zhu, 2018). However, few studies have been made systematically in the university students sample in Turkey. In this study, in terms of life satisfaction and happiness levels of university students, their participation in active sports, artistic, cultural and social activities was examined.

## Method

This study is organized regulated to the causal comparison pattern. Based on the causal comparison pattern, the relationships between university students' participation in leisure activities, life satisfaction and happiness were examined in this study.

## Population and Sample

The study group of this research consists of university students studying at different faculties of Necmettin Erbakan University and Selçuk Universities. The scales of the study were reached to 460 students by choosing an easily accessible sampling method. 53.27 % (n = 245) of the students are female and 46.73 % (n = 215) are male students.

## Data Collection Tools

Within the scope of the research, personal information form, Leisure participation survey, life satisfaction and Happiness Questionnaire were applied to university students.

## Life Satisfaction Scale

The Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted to Turkish by Köker (1991) was used to determine the life satisfaction of university students. The Cronbach Alpha value used to calculate the reliability of the scale is 0.87. Life Satisfaction Scale is a one-dimensional scale consisting of 5 items. Getting high scores on the Life Satisfaction Scale means that the individual's satisfaction with life is high.

## Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form (OHQ-S)

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire with 29 items developed by Hills and Argyle (2002), is a Likert type measurement tool consisting of 8 items adapted to Turkish by Doğan and Çötök (2011). The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the Oxford Happiness questionnaire on this research data was calculated as 0.82.

## Data Analysis

Within the scope of the research, data were analyzed by using independent sample t test and one-way analysis of variance.

## Findings

When Table 1 is examined, it was observed that there was no significant difference in life satisfaction and happiness score averages due to active sports ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 1. Comparison of Life Satisfaction and Happiness Scores of University Students according to the Status doing Active Sports

	Active Sports Status	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Life Satisfaction	Doing active sports	309	3,54	1,08	-,129	,898
	Not doing active sports	351	3,55	1,13		
Happiness Level	Doing active sports	309	3,05	0,54	1,245	,214
	Not doing active sports	351	2,99	0,53		

When Table 2 is examined, it was observed that there was no significant difference in happiness score averages depending on active artistic and cultural activities ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, a significant difference was found in life satisfaction score averages based on active artistic and cultural activity ( $p < 0.05$ ). Life satisfaction of university students doing active artistic and cultural activities, is significantly higher.

Table 2. Comparison of life satisfaction and happiness scores of university students according to their participation in cultural and artistic activities

	Active Artistic and Cultural Activity Status	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Life Satisfaction	Yes	215	3.67	1.18	2.012	.045
	No	445	3.48	1.06		
Happiness Level	Yes	215	3.07	0.57	1.649	.100
	No	445	3.00	0.52		

When Table 3 is examined, it was observed that there was no significant difference in life satisfaction score averages based on active social activity ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, there was a significant difference in happiness score averages depending on social activity ( $p < 0.05$ ). Life happiness of university students performing active social activities, is significantly higher.

Table 3. Comparison of life satisfaction and happiness scores of university students according to their participation in social activities

	Active Social Activity Status	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Life Satisfaction	Yes	368	3.60	1.14	1.649	.100
	No	292	3.46	1.06		
Happiness Level	Yes	368	3.09	0.54	3.670	.000
	No	292	2.93	0.52		

When Table 4 is examined, it was observed that there was a significant difference in the mean score of university students depending on the frequency of participation in recreation activities at their leisure time ( $p < 0.05$ ). Participants performing 4-5 hours or more leisure activities per week, were found to have higher average happiness scores compared to participants who performed these activities less frequently.

Table 4. Comparison of happiness scores of university students according to the frequency of their participation in recreation activities in leisure times

Average frequency of weekly participation in recreation activities in leisure time in a month	n	Mean	f	p
1 hour	148	2.943	6.340	.000
2 hours	177	2.949		
3 hours	180	2.994		
4 hours	95	3.220		
5 hours +	60	3.171		

When Table 5 is examined, it was observed that there was no significant difference in life satisfaction score averages depending on the frequency of participation of University Students in recreational activities in leisure time ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 5. Comparing life satisfaction scores of university students according to the frequency of their participation in recreation activities in leisure time

Average frequency of weekly participation in recreation activities in leisure time in a month	n	Mean	f	p
1 hour	148	3.43	1.185	.316
2 hours	177	3.48		
3 hours	95	3.57		
4 hours	180	3.64		
5 hours +	60	3.69		

## Results and Discussion

In this study, life satisfaction and happiness levels of university students were analyzed comparatively according to the status of active sports, arts, cultural and social activities. In the study, it was observed that there was no significant difference in terms of happiness variable depending on active sports and social activity. However, it has been observed that the participants who carry out active artistic and cultural activities have a high level of happiness. These findings contradict the research report of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), De Rezende et al. (2014). According to the findings of these studies, while there is a significant relationship between social, physical activity and active sports habits and individuals' levels of happiness, however, there is a decrease in negative psychological symptoms.

Another finding reached in this study is that, it has been observed that active sports and social activities do not cause a significant difference in terms of life satisfaction. These findings contradict research findings by Grant N, Wardle J, Steptoe A (2009), Maher et al. (2013). It has been shown in the literature that regular social, sports and physical activity can be associated with increased life satisfaction among all age groups. In addition, Soyer et al. (2017) stated in their study for university students that, not participating in sports activities will have a negative impact on life satisfaction. In general, the concept of life satisfaction is related to all aspects of an individual's life. In this context, the relationship between active sports and life satisfaction can be examined in depth with qualitative research methods.

Another finding of the research is about the frequency of leisure activities of university students, their relationship with life satisfaction and happiness levels. In the study, it was observed that as the frequency of leisure activities of the students increased, their level of happiness increased accordingly. However, there was no significant relationship between leisure frequency and life satisfaction. These findings are similar to the research findings of Janke et al. (2011), Lloyd and Auld (2002) and Yavuz and Sünbül (2004). Bailey and Fernando (2012) have demonstrated that, the participation and frequency of leisure activities affect the happiness of individuals positively. According to Broughton and Beggs (2007), intense leisure activities positively affect the individual's psychological satisfaction and happiness level. When the results of the studies are examined, it is seen that leisure activities have an important contribution in increasing the positive psychological status of individuals. However, in some studies, it was found that there was no significant relationship between life satisfaction and leisure participation, in particular (Gökçe 2008). Tükel (2020) stated that, university students provide high satisfaction with their leisure activities regardless of their gender. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended to examine the variables of participation in leisure activities, life satisfaction and happiness in different age and sample groups.

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