

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Perspectives of women decision-makers over the participation and recreational events in sports: a turkish perspective

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**The purpose of this research is to put forth the role of the leisure and recreation events awareness including women decision-makers effects on their fellow women. Three main themes were recognized: Past; "Process of leisure and recreation events of women in Turkey", Present; "Model of Turkey for women on leisure and recreation", Future; "Process of women' leisure and recreation in the near future". At the end of this research, it is expected to give new ideas to the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), academic institutions, local governments and private sectors who are in the aim of supporting women's participation in leisure and recreation.**

**Key words:** Leisure, recreation, women, decision-maker.

## INTRODUCTION

As described in oxford english dictionary (2015) leisure can be defined "as the state of having time at one's own disposal; time which one can spend as one pleases; free or unoccupied time" and recreation means "the action of recreating (oneself or another), or fact of being recreated, by some pleasant occupation, past time or amusement". As a result of these, two concepts leisure time can be defined as the time that remains after the working time, physiological essential needs with a basis of voluntary participation. The motives for participating in leisure and recreational activities has long been a subject of query in this field. The investigation of various aspects about barriers to participation in leisure and recreation represents an important datas in recent development. Leisure and recreation events have become a product of

social and economic dynamics throught the historical process. From the second half of the 20th century, studies on this area increased steadily, and leisure forms have altered a new and different lifestyle (Dumanzedier, 1974).

According to the leisure constraints theory (Jackson et al, 1993), girls and women have lots of constraints to participate in leisure and recreation acitvities. As seen in the study of Bari (2005); all around the world -including Turkey-, traditional customs, education, economic and social factors, politics and gender discrimination are the most encountered constraints. Although women's participation in sports and leisure activities have a long history, it has not reached the place it deserves. Women competed for the first time at the 1900 olympic games

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in Paris, 22 women out of a total of 997 athletes competed there. And now the number is increasing rapidly day by day like in the 2012 London olympic games. There were 4676 female athletes out of 10568 athletes (The International Olympic Committee, 2012).

As a result of the increasing awareness about the importance of women studies, the need to understand gender differences in sport, leisure and recreation has caught the attention of researchers. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is committed to gender equality in sport. The olympic charter states that:

“The IOC’s role is to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women” (Olympic Charter, Rule 2, paragraph 7).

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, article 1) “The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all”. With this article United Nations Millennium Development Goals-3, there is a specific importance for promoting gender equality and women empowerment (International Year of Sport and Physical Education, 2005).

The participation of girls and women in sport challenges gender cliches and discrimination, and can therefore be a vehicle to encourage gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. In particular, women leaders in sports can shape attitudes towards women as leaders and decision-makers, especially in traditional male domains. Women’s involvement in sports can make a significant contribution to public life and community development (United Nations, 2005). Despite the growing participation of women in sports in recent years, and increased opportunities for women to participate in domestic and international arenas, increased representation of women in decision making and leadership roles within sports is not adequate. According to Brighton Declaration (1994) on women and sport (1994), women are significantly under-represented in management, coaching and officiating, particularly at the higher levels. Without women leaders, decision makers and role models in sports, equal opportunities for women and girls will not be achieved. Specific studies on women, leisure and recreation became more important for the last two or three decades. There are many reasons for this interest but one of the most important is the equal participation to leisure and recreation of the communities. The inequalities in the participation to leisure and recreation events came from the subjects of gender, culture, patriarchal society understanding, the role of women in society (example, mother, wife, house-women), religious and race and so on.

According to Ozbey and Guzel’s (2011) research, the recent promotion of gender equality and girls’ and

women’s participation in sportive recreation and leisure activities has started to take place at the desired standards. Public and private institutions are making great effort to satisfy the gender balance in these activities, encouraging women, young girls and children to join in all areas and at all levels. Henderson’s (1990) analysis, showed that women who shared a common world in their inequality regarding the opportunities for leisure were focused on social relationships in leisure, had fragmented leisure time, found the predominance of leisure in the home and through unstructured activities, and lacked a sense of enticement to leisure (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007).

According to Livengood and Stodolska (2004), discrimination has affected leisure of Muslim immigrants directly through experiences in leisure-related settings while engaged in leisure activities. This study found that discrimination affected them by restricting the range of available leisure options and co-participants, by affecting their willingness to participate in leisure activities, and by restricting their freedom of movement, travel, timing and location of activities. This result shows the importance of effects of religion in participation of leisure and recreation events on women.

Women are more constrained than men with regard to household obligations and family commitments (Shaw, 1999). They are not accommodated equally in decision making positions in most of the sports organizations especially in decision-making positions. According to Acker (2000), there is a disconnection between the development of gender equality policies and programmes, and how gender relations or socially constructed ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman, are actually expressed and played out (Betzer-Tayar, 2013).

The Leisure Constraints Theory based on Jackson et al. (1993), was used as the theoretical framework for this study. There are many studies about women’s barriers to leisure and recreational activities like Riot (2015), Tekin (2011), Green (2010), Reichert et al. (2007) and Muratidou et al. (2004), but a few studies have focused on factors that could be considered interpersonal constraints on women’s leisure and recreation rights with the perspectives of women decision-maker’s. According to Keshkar et al. (2012) this can be explained by the tendency of women toward having a greater number of social relationships than men. With this research, it is expected to give new ideas to the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), academic institutions, local governments and private sectors who aims to support women’s participation in leisure and recreation.

In the light of all this important subjects, the purpose of this research is to put the role of the leisure and recreation events awareness including women decision-makers effects on their fellow women;

The study attempted to answer the following research

questions:

1. How do you interpret the process of assesment about women's leisure and recreation education and/or events until today?
2. What have you done as a decision-maker about women's leisure and recreation education and/or events? What do you think tare the future perspectives for womens' leisure and recreation events in Turkey?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Population and sample of the study (participants and profiles)

Case study method which is one of the qualitative research techniques was used in this study. Exploratory qualitative research methodology was used to conduct this research. This article does not generalize but rather explores the issues with a hope to have a better understanding of this subject. Qualitative research model was preferred because it is effective at eliciting participants' thoughts, experiences, expectations, suggestions and concerns. According to Neuman (2010), a qualitative approach gives emphasis to the social context because "the meaning of a social action, event, or statement greatly depends on the context in which it appears".

The interviews of the study were done face-to-face with six women decision-makers and three online respondents contacted through e-mails. The nine respondents -who are influential women and have a great chance for women participation in leisure and recreational events- personal information is presented in Table 1. They were selected and limited because they are closely related to women's studies and were the persons has the spesific knowledge about physical education and sports.

### Data collection and interviews

'Interview approach' was used in the data collection process. The interviews consisted of two parts: the first part covered the personal information of the respondents and the second part of the interview consisted of thematic focus which is related to the purpose of this article that is past, present and future of women's leisure and recreation in Turkey. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder, with permission of the participants. For online interviews, a written request was sent to the respondents via e-mail. The participants were then asked to fill out the forms through a server-service on the internet. As Thomas (2009) notes:

"The semi-structured interview provides the best of both worlds as far as interviewing is concerned, combining the structure of a list of issues to be covered together with the freedom to follow up points as necessary".

### Ethical clearance (approval)

"Ethics are the rules of conduct in research" (Walliman, 2006). That is especially important when conducting research with humans. The major principle for making sure that no harm is done to any participants in the research. Because of these reasons first of all 'ethical clearance number' was taken from the Celal Bayar University, Ethical Commision with the date of 18 November, 2014 and number of 2014-11. Also 'permission form' and 'voluntary

confirmation letter' were taken from all the participants.

### Data analysis

Data gathered through the interviews were transcribed and then analysed using relational analysis, which is a type of content analysis approach. Huckin (2008), suggests that relational analysis in qualitative inquiry should focus on both explicit and implicit concepts available in the data. Different concepts were derived from the data and analyzed by exploring their roots and relationships. Nvivo-10 programme was used for coding and theme development in this research. The interviews were done by the researcher and analyze with two different person who has a knowledge about the article and the qualitative research model. The participants were informed what Nvivo programme is and why it is used in qualitative research.

### Validity and reliability of the study

Validity was established in terms of the claims made and the process of data gathering that provided the grounds for these claims. The research design showed regard for ethical considerations; therefore, as part of gaining informed consent to participate in the research, the purposes of the research, confidentiality and the right of the setting to anonymity were explained.

As for the concept of reliability, drawing on Scaife (2004), this was thought of as a part of the data-gathering process: "In a carefully controlled scientific experiment, for instance, conditions are tightly specified so that, in principle, any researcher in the field could replicate a particular data gathering process and expect to obtain the same data as any other researcher." Richards (2005) and Silverman (2014), have demonstrated the measures to meet the issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. In this research, different steps were adopted to reach this goal. Initially, formal consent was sought from all participants before interviewing. Confidentiality was assured to all participants and acquired data were only used for research purpose and dealt as confidential document.

The kappa statistic is used for testing interrater reliability. The importance of rater reliability lies in the fact that it points out the extent to which the data collected in the study are correct representations of the variables measured. The formule used for calculating the Kappa factor gave the result of "*r:0.88*" and that mean research reliability has the range of "*almost perfect*" according to Landis and Koch (1977).

$$\text{kappa} = \frac{(p_o - p_e)}{(1 - p_e)}$$

where  $p_o$  is the observed proportion of agreement  
and  $p_e$  is the proportion expected by chance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the answers given by the women decision-makers included in the study were analyzed for finding the main themes. Results show that the 9 respondents who participated in the study have ages varying between 33 to 55, and all respondents had, at least, a bachelor's degree (Figures 1 and 2). According to research questions, the findings have been gathered under three main themes:

**Table 1.** Profile of the respondents.

No.	Age	Education	Position title	Experiences in area
P1	37	BA	*P.E. Teacher *Member of technical committee	Was a former World and European champion Turkish female Karate practitioner. Holding three world champion titles, seven European champion titles, and three Mediterranean games champion titles. She is the most successful Turkish sportsperson in the history of Turkish's sports. Member of Turkish National Women Technical Committee
P2	48	PhD	*Academics *Vice-director of faculty	Turkish female athlete who was a former champion in the World and European Taekwondo Championship. She coached the women national team of Turkey. The first women championship in Europe and World. She is an Assis. Prof. in sports science
P3	33	BA	*Paralympic Athlete *Member of IPC and EPC	Was the first women gold medalist in Paralympic Games. She is working for the Turkish Ministry of Sport. She is a member of the International Paralympic Committee, and Board of Director of the European Paralympic Committee and Turkish National Paralympic Committee
P4	54	PhD	*Turkish NOC General secretary *Member of IOC women and sport	Was a former Athletics National Federation member. Also a volunteer for different international organizations, especially for women. The first female member of the Board of Directors and General Secretary of NOC of Turkey. She wrote articles on women like "Women and Sport in Turkish society". She is also a member of International Olympic Committee "Women and Sport Commission"
P5	47	PhD	*Academics *Director of women research center	Is a Director of Center of Women Studies at University. She has been teaching epidemiology, biostatistics and women studies in graduate and undergraduate courses, as well as continuing education courses for clinical residents
P6	46	PhD	*Academics *Vice-Director of women research center	Is a Vice-Director of Women Research Center. PES Erasmus and International Relations Coordinator. Manisa Chamber of Commerce Executive Board Member of the Women Entrepreneurs. Instructor of Women Political School. She has specific projects about girls/women on sports
P7	39	MA	* Erasmus Coordinator EU Project Expert	Is an Erasmus Coordinator at a University and was a Project Coordinator in Directorate of Education. She has many projects about women and university students and she is the member of Sports Federationan Project and R&D Commission
P8	53	PhD	*Vice rector *Head of PES. Department	Is a professor in sports science. She has a number of studies about motor development, disabled children and youth and their life quality. She is a Middle East Representative IFAPA
P9	55	PhD	*Academics *Member of Turkish NOC	Is a professor in sports science. She is the first woman researcher who studied on the subject of fitness. She is a member of Turkish NOC Olympic Academy Commission. And also a member of International Council of Health and Physical Education Recreation and Dance and Turkish Sports For All Federation. She has the expertise on the area of nutrition and sport.

\*Codes were used to protect the identity of the respondents.

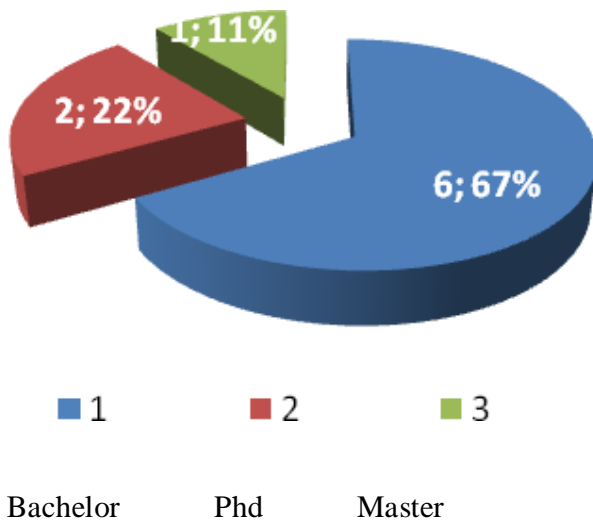


Figure 1. Respondents' education.

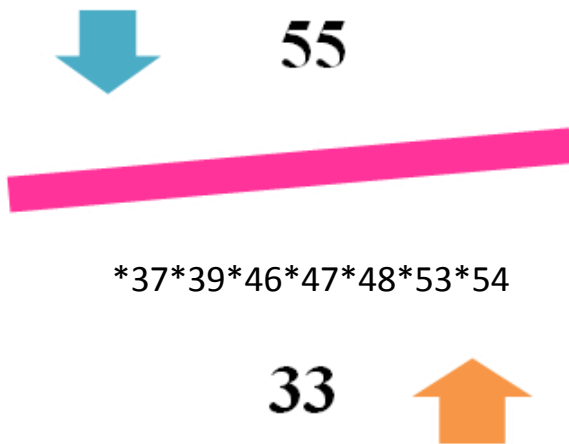


Figure 2: Respondents' age profile.

“Process of leisure and recreation events of women in Turkey”, “Model of Turkey for women on leisure and recreation” and “Process of women' leisure and recreation in the near future” (Figure 3).

**Theme 1 “Past”; Process of leisure and recreation events of women in Turkey**

After analysing the research question 1 two themes; ‘educational aspect’ and ‘procedural aspect’ and 19 codes were found according to the responders (Model 1). As given in Model 1, among these ideas for the educational aspect were such views saying that there were not enough gender awareness in Turkey. Along with this, lack of perception, education and importance for recreation

and leisure were also seen. The most important reasons for this negative perspective were cultural impact, country policy and lack of adequate local governments support. As a result of these reasons, there were not sufficient voluntary participation of women to leisure and recreation events. For the procedural aspect views, they were collected around eleven codes such as psychological and cultural development, politics and religious perspective and urban development and lack of facilities.

Some participants' views on these concepts according to question 1;

*“I do not think that there is an awareness or deep knowledge about women’s leisure and recreation activities in Turkey” (P4).*

*“Especially political viewpoint and religious repression to some women could not participate in sports” (P6).*

*Unlike the past, today women are seen in the labour and do not have much leisure time (P7).*

According to Turkey official site statistics agency 2013 data while the ratio of non-literate men was 1.9%, female ratio was 9.4% (TUIK, 2015). This situation is consistent with study and in Turkey education from past until present. and although not improve in terms of the living process it also shows that the traces were still pending.

**Theme 2 “Present”; Model of Turkey for women on leisure and recreation**

The results of the analysing leisure and recreational events organized for women by decision-makers in question 2 datas were collected under four themes; ‘Kinds of events’, ‘Benefits’, ‘Target group’ and ‘Instiutual Co-operation’ with the codes of 16 according to the responders (Model 2). As seen in Model 2, all decision-makers pointed out that the target group of their effort are girls, house-wives, working women and also disabled girls and women. For achieving this target group decision-makers cooperate with the Ministry of Sport and Education, Local Governments, Turkish National Olympic Committee (TMOK) and Universities. They pointed out that recreative activities such as sports for health and fun, music, dance which are free of charge are important supports in encouraging low and middle-income school-age girls and women. Behind these, academic studies such as seminars, mentoring, leadership and entrepreneurship education are the factors that paved the way

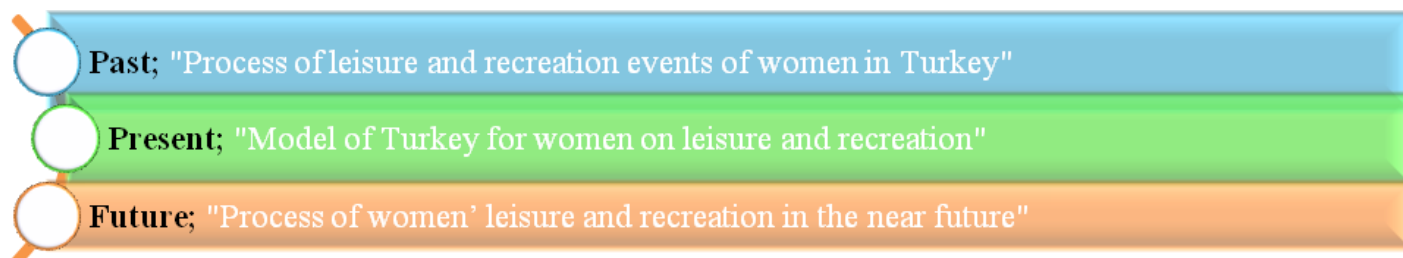


Figure 3. Main themes of the research.

Table 2: Research questions and themes.

Research question	Findings (Themes)
How do you interpret the process of assesment about women's leisure and recreation education and/or events until today?	Process of leisure and recreation events of women in Turkey
What have you done as a decision-maker about women's leisure and recreation education and/or events?	Model of Turkey for women on leisure and recreation
What do you think think are the future perspectives for womens' leisure and recreation events in Turkey?	Process of women' leisure and recreation in the near future

of girls and women and their perspectives. According to the decision-makers these studies are positive efforts to minimize the negative effects of the past. Gaining decision-making ability, increasing self-confidence and self-awareness, coping with stress and physical development can be noted as some of the benefits from these developments.

Some participants' views on these concepts according to question 2;

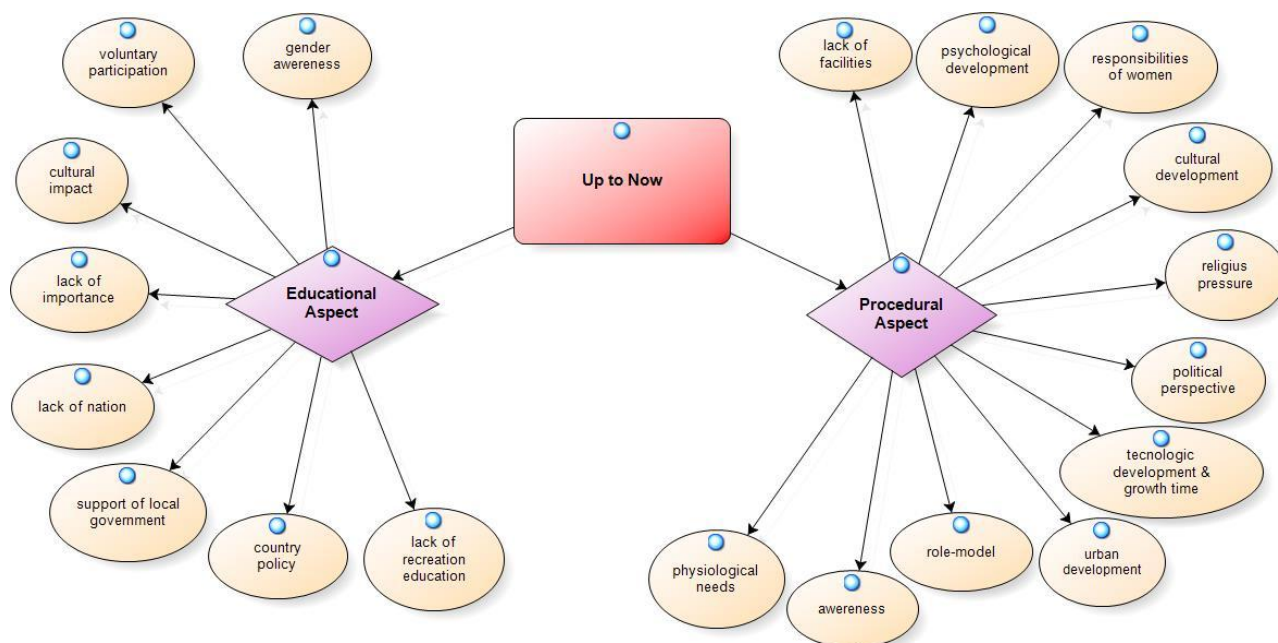
*"I am active in sports and recreational activities for in need of care" (P1).*  
*"I have been working in projects particularly related to mental disabilities and autistic children" (P8)*

The results obtained covers views of the participants, the end result shows girls and women are seen as a mass of unwanted people. Indeed to be addressed as a priority issue for this group after the process began with the establishment of the Health and Welfare Ministry in 1920 (T.R. Ministry of Health Official web site, 2015), Turkey has included The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) established by the United Nations (UN Women, 2015).

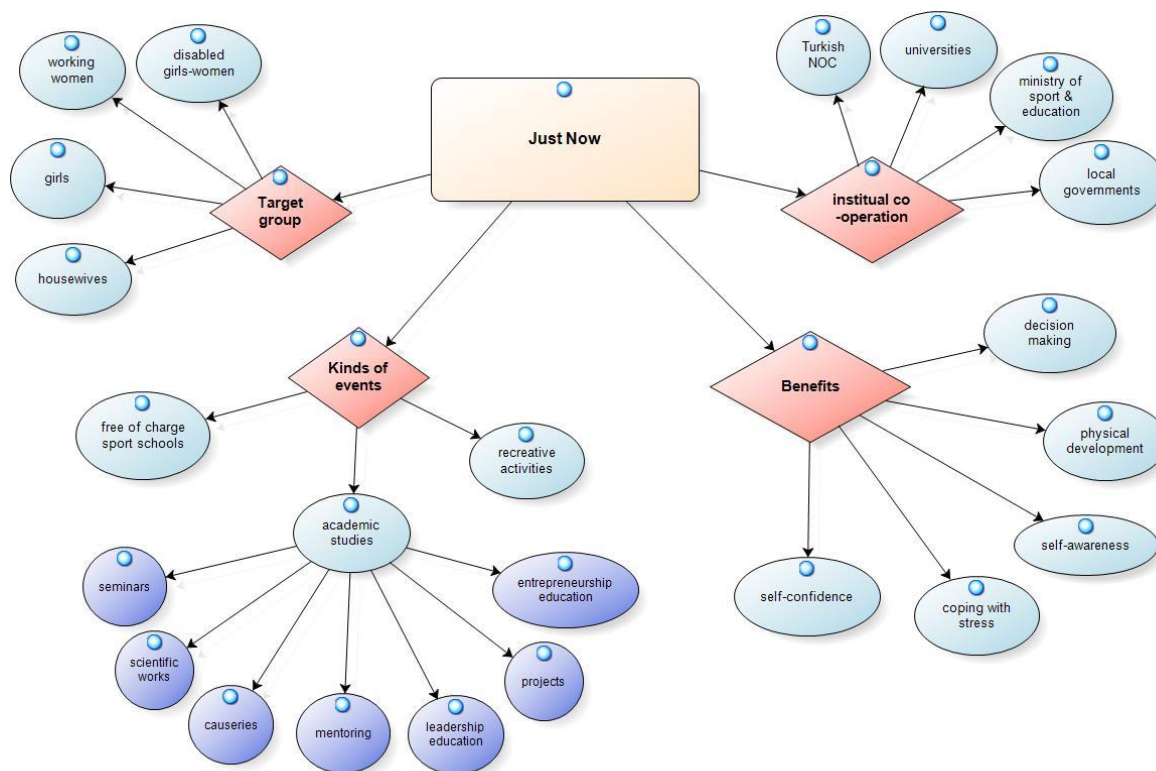
State Ministry of Women and Family Affairs was established (T.R. Ministry of Family and Social Politics, 2015). The first "Women's Problems Research and Application Centre within universities was established at Istanbul University in 1989 (Istanbul University, Women's Studies Center, 2015). There has been academic and government support (seminars, mentoring, leadership and entrepreneurship education, etc.) particularly in sports, in the national and international level with a noticeable increase since 2000 (Koca and Hacisoftoglu, 2011).

### Theme 3 "Future"; Process of women' leisure and recreation in the near future

After resolving the process of women' leisure and recreation in the near future there were two themes like 'Decision-makers' negative perspectives' and 'Decision-makers' positive perspectives' with the 12 codes carried out according to the responders (Model 3). As given in Model 3, decision-makers expressed five positive views while there were seven negative ideas. After this analysis process, the results show that participants have difference of opinions for the main themes. Some decision-makers telling that the social development has started recently and rising positively whilst some others' thoughts show the near future with a continuing social pressure and expressing negativite feelings. As well as



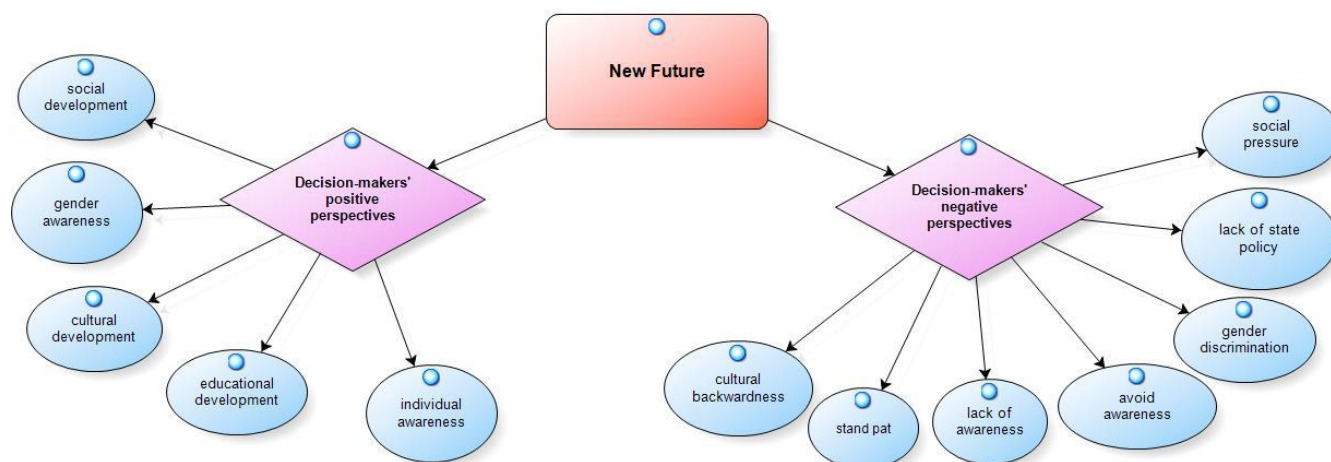
**Model 1.** Findings related with the process of leisure and recreation events of women in Turkey.



**Model 2.** Findings of leisure and recreational events carried out by women to decision-makers.

this result, decision-makers expressing that there will be a rising cultural development in Turkey in the near future.

Against this view, some other participants thoughts show that there is a cultural underdevelopment now, and



**Model 3.** Findings about the process of women' leisure and recreation in the near future

also will continue soon. Some participants pointed out that the process of individual and gender awareness started with a increasing momentum. Against this argument, other decision-makers results set out that there will not be enough awareness seen anytime soon in Turkey. According to the participants views, there is an educational development in the country. Despite this view, the thoughts of other decision-makers show that society is not ready for changing their mind and perspectives soon.

Thus, lack of general state policy and environmental deficiencies are the aspects that will not amend in near future in Turkey as stated in negative thoughts of the participants.

Some participants' views on these concepts according to question 3

*"I would say that the perception of leisure and recreation is not very easy to to change in this society" (P2).*

*"In recent years, gender roles became more questionable in our society" (P3).*

*"I think the Ministry of Education and municipal authorities have crucial roles to increase physical activity level of these groups" (P5).*

With this research, negative and positive opinions revealing the situation regarding the near future of women in Turkey and perspectives has been identified. This situation holds light relating to participation in leisure and

recreation activities of women, also relating to general situation in the country. According to Koca et al. (2007) although there is a significant increase observed in participating in recreational activities, participation of women in leisure time events is fairly new.

Majority of the population of Turkey are Muslims, but unfortunately it is a country still working on the progress, protection and the rights of women. Turkey is one of the country having 13 million young people out of 77 million population (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2015)- having the tendency to be part of the European Union Country. But the number of women decision-makers in the Turkish Parliament is only 98 in total of 550 (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2015). This statistical data is similar to the situation of Turkish sports management. For example in Turkish National Olympic Committee which is the most important organization in local sports management there has been no female director from 1908 to 2015 (Turkish Olympic Committee, 2015).

Accordingly, this study has features indicating that women decision-makers will go into action to actualize their plan. And also, this study has the quality data for Turkey that women decision-makers needs to reflect their thoughts, explain their projects, introduce their study areas and to reach their target audience. And the importance of small steps to be taken as a big step forward is enormous.

In addition to that, the results coincide with the study of Tekin (2011) that Turkish women is affected by leisure approaches, and women decision-maker's have a chance to overcome the barriers and take precautions.

## CONCLUSION

So the data obtained also covers the results which are



set forth in previously conducted study. In addition, these studies with perspective and support of women to female participation facilities are provided to conduct a more detailed data analysis. So with women decision-makers' who participated in this research, perception relating to issues, thought and perspectives was reached to determine the general condition. Drawing attention to results and submission of informative report of the competent authorities (NOCs, Academic Institutions, Local Governments and Private Sectors, etc.) by preparation has been the ultimate goal of research.

### Conflicts of interest

The author has none to declare.

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