

Effect of Outdoor Activities on the Life Satisfaction: Turkey Case

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the participation in recreational outdoor activities as cycling (CYG), mountaineering (MTG), trekking (TRG), recreational hunting (RHG), and recreational fishing (RFG) on the life satisfaction (LS) level and to compare the LS level of participants of these activities (PR) and non-participants (NP) of these activities in relation to some demographic variables in Turkey. This descriptive study includes PR of these activities given above and NP in any outdoor activities. The number of outdoor recreation participants according to the sport branches is not known exactly in Turkey. There were 12 females (11 in RFG and 1 in RHG) answered the survey. Because of the lack of numbers of females in RHG and RFG for statistical analyzing, all females in MTG, CYG, and TRG, RHG, and RFG were excluded. Finally, sampling of this study are 326 male mountaineers (MT) (age=36.25±10.15), 331 male cyclists (CY) (age=31.72±9.79), 280 male trekkers (TR) (age=40.04±10.37), 183 male RF (age=35.96±10.53), 359 male RH (age=35.90±9.80), and 284 male NP (age=31.35±11.60), totally 1763 males (age=35.11±10.74). An electronic questionnaire form was sent to all members of MTG, CYG clubs under Turkish Mountaineering Federation and Turkish Cycling Federation, the RF and/or RH who are members of RHG, and/or RFG groups and NP through social media as www.facebook.com by using the website www.docs.google.com to gather data. The link was open for getting answers between the dates 01-12-2011 and 01-05-2012. In the process of assessing data, the descriptive statistic means such as frequency (f), percentage (%), average (M), standard deviation (SD), and to examine the correlation between LS and activities in relation to some demographic variables Pearson Correlation test; to examine the differences between marital status and activities Independent Samples T-Test and to examine the difference between activity groups in relation to LS level One-Way ANOVA test have been used. Results have been assessed according to significant level 0.01 and 0.05. As a result of this study, it was found that there is statistically significant correlation between LS and participating in outdoor activities in relation to some demographic variables. LS was found the highest for RF, but the lowest for NP and there is statistically significant difference between activities in relation to LS. According to results, it can be concluded that LS level is affected by participating in different outdoor activities as well as demographic variables as age, income, and education.

Keywords: *Life Satisfaction, Cycling, Mountaineering, Trekking, Recreational Hunting, Recreational Fishing, Outdoor Recreation, Turkey.*

* Presented as an Oral
Presentation at XII th World
Leisure Congress, Transforming
City, Transforming Leisure,
30/09 – 03/10 2012, Rimini,
Italy

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In generally activities which take place in outdoor recreation, particularly outdoor sports can be defined as free time activities which create interaction between participants and nature and activities which enhance individual's health, spiritual and social benefits (Ibrahim and Cordes, 2002). According to another definition, all sport exercised in nature are defined as outdoor activities (Ardahan and Yerlisu Lapa, 2010). Recreational outdoor activities are total of activities which are done in the sea, in the air, on ice, land and snow. Some examples of these activities are picnicing, MTG, rock climbing, hiking, bird watching, upland festivals, trainings in nature, water activities, parachuting, flying kites, hunting, fishing and so on.

Outdoor activities which are studied in the present study are MTG (including rock climbing), TRG, CYG, RHG, and RFG. Outdoor sports are the sports which need organized or wild areas and can be grouped in two parts as nature based and nature related. TRG and recreational CYG are the nature related outdoor sports. If physical and mental qualification of a person is adequate, participating in trekking and recreational cycling activities in every age is possible. The term of "recreational CYG" is used for recreational usage of mountain bike, downhill bike, city bike, touring bike, cross country bike, racing bike, comfort bike and road bike. RHG, RFG and MTG and rock climbing are nature based outdoor activities and participating nature based outdoor activities needs being fit psychologically, physically and mentally (Ardahan, 2011b).

Life Satisfaction (LS), the main subject of this study, has many definitions. LS has been defined as the global judgment of a person's life. This judgment is individualistic and is often based on a person's self-imposed standards and the degree to which standards are satisfied. Individuals who are able to decrease the gap between their current situation and where they wish to be often indicate higher life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1985; Pavot and Diener, 1993). Tekin et al. (2010), Sung-Mook and Giannakopoulos (1994) define LS as "individual's emotional acts out of life and as a general attitude towards life". Telman and Unsal (2004) define LS as "generally the pleasure an individual feels in his/her life" and according to Dikmen (1995) "LS is judgments relating to quality of life and subjective prosperity which an individual reaches on the facts in his/her life".

Individuals make their own choices about what to do in their leisure time or recreational usage of this time and satisfaction with these choices is individually determined (Trottier et al. 2002). Recent literature indicates that although leisure and especially being a participant in outdoor activities may be an important indicator of subjective wellbeing, LS and quality of life, there is very little understanding as to how this occurs (Rodriguez et al., 2008; Baker and Palmer 2006; Iwasaki 2006).

The factors which affect individual's LS are ordered as getting pleasure from daily life, finding life meaningful, harmony in reaching goals, positive individual personality, confidence in physical health, economic security and positive social relationships (Schmitter et al. 2003; Otacioglu, 2008). The other factors are mental and physical wellness, health and confidence, relation with family and relatives, having a child, close relation in marriage, having close friends, helping others, participating in domestic and national activities, participating in recreational activities, learning, understanding him/herself, working, reading, listening to music, watching movies and matches, age, occupation, income level, education opportunities and level, quality of life (Bruce et al., 1976; Sung-Mook and Giannakopoulos, 1994; Palmer et al., 2002; Schmitter et al. 2003; Ngai, 2005; Augusto et al., 2006; Sahin, 2008; Ardahan, 2011a, 2011b; Faullant et al, 2011).

In the last four decades, the reasons for participating in outdoor activities have drawn attentions of scientists. While Crandall (1980) claims that the personality and conditions in which individual's life make a person participate in outdoor activities, Levy (1979) claims that a behavior emerges as a result of interaction between personality and social conditions. Many researchers have examined the cause of individual acts and the emerged data have been classified as motivational factors and needs (Ardahan and Yerlisu Lapa, 2010). Scientists who have worked on the motivational factors agreed that needs motivate people to act.

Being a participant in outdoor activities help learning group dynamics, gaining self confidence, making individual decisions, learning risk management, taking responsibility of self and others, improving physical and mental fitness, feeling healthy, making friends and socialization (Burnett, 1994; McKenzie, 2000; Yerlisu Lapa et al. 2010). The LS level of the persons who gain these benefits from outdoor activities will be affected positively.

The benefits of the Turkish MT/rock climbers, CY and TR participate in outdoor activities are feeling happier, healthier and powerful, feeling relaxed and refreshed, feeling the nature deeply, getting physical and mental fitness, learning new skills, improving skills, getting environmental consciousness, meeting new people, spending time with friends, getting self-confidence, belonging to a group, feeling more important and spending time with family. LS is the

level of satisfaction which individual gains in return for what s/he does throughout life (Ardahan, 2012).

As people used natural sources for nutritional purposes in ancient times, RHG and RFG can be accepted as the oldest outdoor activities which were at the beginning obligated activities. Today in modern society, people participate in these activities because of very different reasons. Main reasons for recreational fishing can be ordered as pleasure, enjoyment of nature, relaxation, doing something different from work, excitement, being with the family, challenge, and physical health or exercise (Government of Alberta 1994). Burger (2002) stated in her study some reasons as relaxation, to be outdoors, get away from demand, challenge or sport, commune with nature, to be with friends, to eat, to give away, for fries and socials, to sell, and recreation. Hunt and Ditton (2001) pointed out some other reasons as to be close to water, to experience adventure and excitement, for the experience of the catch, for the fun of catching fish, to develop one's skills and to test one's equipment besides same reasons of Burgers' (2002). It is claimed that recreational fishing provides numerous social benefits as providing a vehicle for family cohesion (Hunt and Ditton 2002; Toth and Brown, 1997; Dann 1993; Buchanan 1985; Knopf et al. 1973), releasing stress and mental relaxation (Toth and Brown 1997; Driver et al. 1991; Knopf et al. 1973), being away from others (Fedler and Ditton 1994), and nature enjoyment (Ditton 2004; Toth and Brown 1997). Hunt and Ditton (2001) developed a scale to measure the perceived benefits from recreational fishing under four constructs as "escaping, individual, and stressors", "being in a natural environment", "interacting with fish", and "achievement". These constructs have eleven items which are very similar to the benefits given above and is also basis of our study to measure strength of the reasons for RFG and benefits from RFG.

On the other hand, according to the results of the studies made by Safak et al. (2010), Safak (2009), Igircik et al. (2005), Ay et al. (2005), "love of nature", "to make exercise", "to be with friends", "to shoot", "to accommodate one's to friends", "to hunt", "to be alone in nature", "to obtain food", and "to make benefit" were found as the factors motivating people for hunting.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the participating in recreational outdoor activity as MTG, CYG, and TRG, RHG, and RFG on LS level and to compare the LS level of PR and NP of these activities in relation to some demographic variables in Turkey.

METHODS

This is a descriptive study which aims to examine the LS levels of recreational outdoor activity participants as MTG, CYG, and TRG, RHG, and RFG and NP of these activities in relation to some demographic variables in Turkey.

Instrumentation and Gathering Data

An electronic questionnaire form was used to gather data which involves demographics questions and LS Scale which was developed by Diener et al. (1985).

Sampling

Sampling group is not defined exactly in Turkey for mountaineers, cyclists, trekkers, hunters and fishers. So electronic questionnaire form was prepared by using the website "www.docs.google.com" form has been sent to all members of outdoor sport clubs bound to Turkish Mountaineering Federation, Turkish Cycling Federation and to the RF (as angling, spearing, hand gathering, and trapping), and/or RH enthusiasts who are members of RHG and/or RFG groups and NP through social media as www.facebook.com and fishing or hunting clubs. NP were selected randomly. Link was open for getting answers between the dates 01-12-2011 and 01-05-2012.

There were 12 females (11 in RF and 1 in RH) answered the survey. Because of the lack of numbers of females in RF and RH for statistical analyzing, females in MT, in cyclists and in trekkers were excluded. Finally, sampling of this study are 326 male mountaineers ($\bar{X}_{age}=36.25\pm 10.15$), 331 male cyclists ($\bar{X}_{age}=31.72\pm 9.79$), 280 male trekkers ($\bar{X}_{age}=40.04\pm 10.37$), 183 male RH ($\bar{X}_{age}=35.96\pm 10.53$), 359 male RF ($\bar{X}_{age}=35.90\pm 9.80$) and 284 male NP ($\bar{X}_{age}=31.35\pm 11.60$), totally 1763 males ($\bar{X}_{age}=35.11\pm 10.74$).

Statistical Analyses

In the process of assessing data, the descriptive statistic means such as frequency (f), percentage (%), average (M), standard deviation, and to examine the correlation between LS and activities in relation to some demographic variables Pearson Correlation test; to examine the differences between marital status and activities Independent

Samples T-Test and to examine the difference between activity groups in relation to LS level One-Way ANOVA test have been used. Results have been assessed according to significant level 0.01 and 0.05.

RESULTS

Demographic findings of participants are given in Table-1. As it seen in the table; majority of the participants are single (%61.1), graduated from university or above (%73.6), still young age between 25-34 (%37.0), and majority of them have monthly income between 401-800 €.

Table-1: Demographic Findings of Participants

	MT		CY		TR		RH		RF		NP		All	
Marital Status	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Married	146	44.8	119	36.0	152	54.3	71	38.8	116	32.3	82	28.9	686	38.9
Single	180	55.2	212	64.0	128	45.7	112	61.2	243	67.7	202	71.1	1077	61.1
Education Level	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
High School and below	58	17.8	103	31.1	74	26.4	68	37.2	123	34.3	40	14.1	466	26.4
University and over	268	82.2	228	68.9	206	73.6	115	62.8	236	65.7	244	85.9	1297	73.6
Age Range	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
24 and below	42	12.9	77	23.3	20	7.1	21	11.5	36	10.0	102	35.9	298	16.9
25-34	121	37.1	141	42.6	70	25.0	84	45.9	138	38.4	98	34.5	652	37.0
35-44	81	24.8	73	22.1	84	30.0	34	18.6	123	34.3	28	9.9	423	24.0
45 and over	82	25.2	40	12.0	106	37.9	44	24.0	62	17.3	56	19.7	390	22.1
Max-Min _{age} M _{age} ± SD	19-62 36.25 ± 10.15		15-64 31.72 ± 9.79		18-60 40.04 ± 10.37		18-60 35.96 ± 10.53		16-65 35.90 ± 9.80		15-65 31.35 ± 11.60		15-65 35.11 ± 10.74	
Monthly Income €	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
0 - 400	76	23.3	138	41.7	40	14.3	39	21.3	79	22.0	114	40.1	486	27.6
401- 800	99	30.4	99	29.9	112	40.0	64	35.0	114	31.8	74	26.1	562	31.9
801-1200	84	25.8	53	16.0	58	20.7	40	21.9	94	26.2	50	17.6	379	21.5
1201 and over	67	20.6	41	12.4	70	25.0	40	21.9	72	20.1	46	16.2	336	19.1
Total	326	100.	331	100.	280	100.	183	100.	359	100.	284	100.	1763	100.

Correlations and differences between LS and demographic variables are given in Table-2. As it seen in the table; it was found a positive statistically meaningful correlation between income and LS of MT, CY, RH, RF, and NP, as income increases, LS increases, too. Same as in education, as education level increases, LS level of MT and NP increases, too. It was also found a positive statistically meaningful correlation between age and LS of RF, as age increases, LS level of RF increases. There were found statistically meaningful differences between marital status and LS of MT, CY and RF ($p < 0.05$). The difference in MTG, and CYG is in favor of married, namely, being married affect LS level of MT, and CYG positively. The difference in RFG is in favor of singles which means single RF have higher LS level.

Table-2: Correlations and Differences between LS and Demographics Variables

Correlation Between LS and →		MT	CY	TR	RH	RF	NP
Income	P	0.249**	0.271**	0.074	0.310**	0.196**	0.159**
Age	P	0.094	0.068	0.019	0.126	0.124 ⁺	0.018
Education	P	0.112 ⁺	0.083	-0.024	0.137	0.054	0.193 ⁺
Marital Status	t	2.440 ⁺	2.320 ⁺	0.117	0.100	-2.647 ⁺	1.101

*= p< 0.01 level, **= p< 0.05 level

LS level of PR and NP are given in Table-3. As it seen in the table; RF have the highest and NP have the lowest LS level. Differences were examined by three groups. D1 represents the difference between each outdoor activity participants and NP of LS level. D2 represents the difference between PR and NP of LS level. D3 represents the difference between PR of LS level. It was found statistically meaningful differences in D1 (p<0.05) which is in favor of RF and disadvantage of NP. It was found a statistically meaningful difference in D2 (p<0.05) in disadvantage of NP. It was not found statistically meaningful difference between LS level of CY and NP. The differences caused by the difference between CY and RH, RF and NP and MT, TR, RH, RF. There was found a statistically meaningful difference in D3 (p<0.05) which is in disadvantage of CY.

Table-3: Differences between PR and NP of LS Levels

LS Level of →		MT	CY	TR	RH	RF	NP
LS	Mean	3.23± 0.83	3.15 ± 0.82	3.32 ± 0.78	3.36 ± 0.67	3.38 ± 0.71	2.98 ± 0.93
D1= Difference between each outdoor activity participants and NP of LS Level							F= 10.548*
D2= Difference between outdoor activity participants (mean 3.28 ± 0.78) and NP (2.98 ± 0.93) of LS Level							F= 33.048*
D3= Difference between outdoor activity participants of LS Level							F= 5.20*

*= p< 0.05 level

DISCUSSION

This descriptive study which aimed to examine the effect of the participation in recreational outdoor activity as CYG, MTG, TRG, RHG and RFG on LS level and to compare the LS level of PR and NP of these activities in relation to some demographic variables in Turkey.

In general, LS is a measure of meeting expectation from life. The relation between meeting expectations and subjective being good and LS has been discussed by Diener et al. (1985). Ryan 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 accepted that the process of recreational activities as CYG, MTG, TRG, RHG, and RFG, 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 (Ardahan, 2011a; Ardahan, 2011b; Yerlisu Lapa et al., 2010; McKenzie, 2000; Levi, 1994; Burnett, 1994; McRoberts, 1994; Hilton, 1992; Wagner & Rowland, 1992). These mentioned statements overlap with the findings of present research. According to the results of the current study, there is a difference between PR and NP of outdoor activities in all demographic variables and sub-values of variables in relation to LS. The results of this study support these conclusions.

Even in literature the relationship between participating in outdoor activity and marital status hasn't been studied sufficiently, many studies emphasize the contribution of good marriage to LS. it can even be thought that having meaningful and satisfying marriage can motivate people to participate in recreative activities and help building relations (Ardahan and Yerlisu Lapa, 2010; Hicks and Platt, 1970; Laws, 1971). The results which were reached in this study are supporting this conclusion for MTG and CYG, but not for RFG.

The relation between participation in outdoor recreation and variables such as age, income and education has been examined in detail. While Lee et al. (2001); Solop et al. (2001) claim that progress in education and income affect participation in outdoor recreation positively, White (1975) claims that the main determining factors are age, income and education for participating in outdoor activities. Similarly; Scott and Munson (1994) emphasize the affect of income on participation in outdoor recreation. In a study which conducted by Ardahan and Yerlisu Lapa (2010) the effect of these three variables on participation in outdoor recreation has been emphasized. In this study, as monthly income increases, participating in MTG, CYG, RHG, and RFG increases, too. As age increases, participating in RH increases, too. As education level increases participating in MT increases, too. This conclusion overlaps with studies of many other researchers (Ardahan 2011a, 2011b, 2012; Ardahan and Yerlisu Lapa, 2010; Yerlisu Lapa et. al., 2010; Lee et al., 2001; Solop et al., 2001; White, 1975).

The results of this study are considerably clear that participating in any of outdoor activities affect LS level of participants positively. From this perspective 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 both in private and public sector. Nonprofit organizations like outdoor sports clubs, and 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 people in dormitories. Some activities must be done free of charge or with low costs to increase the number of participants.

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