



## An Investigation of the Relationship between the Benefits of Recreational Activity Participation and Social Commitment from the Perspective of University Students

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between the benefits of recreational activity participation and social commitment in terms of university students. In this direction, 314 university students (164 female and 150 male students) studying at different departments of Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University and Necmettin Erbakan University, which were determined by the appropriate sampling method due to the pandemic conditions, participated in the study voluntarily. In addition to the demographic data form, the Recreation Benefit Scale (Akgül et al., 2018) and the Social Engagement Scale (Duru, 2007) were used in the study. In the analysis of the data obtained, skewness and kurtosis values of the data were examined with the Kolmogorov Smirnov test to determine the distribution of the data, as well as the descriptive statistics (percentage and frequency). After it was determined that the data were suitable for the normal distribution parameters, ANOVA, T-Test and Tukey HSD test were used to determine the variables from which the differences were originated. In addition, correlation analysis was performed in order to determine the relationship between the data. As a result of the studies and analyzes, no significant difference could be determined between the benefits of participating in recreational activities and their social commitment according to the age of the participants, the adequacy of leisure time and the class variables they studied; It has been revealed that there is a significant difference in the participants' perceived welfare level, age, and difficulty in evaluating leisure time, according to their recreational benefit status. As a result of the correlation analysis, it was revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between recreational benefit and social commitment.

**Keywords:** *Leisure Benefit, Social Connectedness, University Students*

## INTRODUCTION

The role of leisure time in the social structure has become extremely important with the developing technology and changing living conditions (Aksu et al., 2021; Henderson, 2010; Serdar et al., 2018). As a result of this, increasing free time makes it necessary for individuals in today's society to spend free time effectively and beneficially (Aksu & Kaya, 2021; Güngörmüş, Yenel & Gürbüz, 2014). We come across activities that we do freely in our recreational free time (Demirel & Harmandar, 2009, Üstün & Üstün, 2020). Stebbins defined recreation as activities not forced to do in the spare time of individuals that individuals want to do using their skills and resources as contextually framed, satisfying activities (Stebbins, 2016). Good use of free time enables people to express themselves, develop creativity, gain new experiences, improve the social environment, and increase productivity (Güldür & Yaşartürk, 2020). The young university population also makes use of free time and participates in recreational activities in a semi-organized manner within the scope of the opportunities offered by the university. In this context, universities can also play a guiding role for their students to make good use of their time outside of their formal education (Aksu et al., 2021; Balcı, 2003; Bosna, Bayazit & Yılmaz, 2018; Er et al., 2021; Mendes et al. 2022, Ödemir et al 2018).

When the recent literature was reviewed, it was found that social engagement is defined as a different concept from social support, which is an effective variable in interpersonal relations (Lee, Draper & Lee, 2001; Lee & Robbins, 1995; Duyan et al. 2022). Although individuals who have a high sense of social engagement can participate more comfortably in new social environments, individuals who have a low sense of social engagement may not be able to manage their emotions and needs, and experience low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Lee & Robbins, 1998). The individual's ability to feel safe and comfortable without feeling threatened and to participate in large social environments and groups depends on the quality of the previous self-object relationships. According to Lee and Robbins (1995), empathic failures and

traumas faced at any point in development may cause the individual's sense of belonging to regress to earlier forms (Duru, 2008).

Bucher and Bucher (1974) defined recreation as "to eliminate the boringness of daily life by participating in social, cultural and sportive activities that are suitable for one's self and enjoy doing, and to gain a social personality by interacting with other people" and emphasized the socializing aspect of the concept (Yağmur & İçigen, 2016). In this context, an individual's personality, mood, the meaning of life, cultural symbols, adaptation to the environment, and social relations can be listed among the impact points on life perspectives (Shields, Price & Wooden, 2009). The point where all these factors affect and the person comes closest to self-expression as "free" and "voluntary" is considered leisure time (Kara et al., 2018; Sarol & Çimen, 2017; Watkins & Bond, 2007). In previous studies, the benefits of recreation such as physical, psychological, spiritual, social, educational, relaxation, and aesthetics that provide self-development were reported (Heintzmen, 2009). Free-time participants are encouraged by the environment and are stimulated by internal and external factors to receive greater physical, economic, environmental, social, and mental impacts in terms of the nature of the activity, time, and mental state. These effects are called "benefits" in people's self-evaluation (Mannel & Stynes, 1991, Ertüzün, Hadi & Fidan, 2020). In this context, the benefits of recreation can be broadly defined and studied by physiology, psychology, sociology, and economics.

Individual loneliness, especially ironically revealed by globalization and modernization, has great importance when recreational activities are considered a social need. Loneliness, which emerges as a result of the flats in which people live, the measures taken in response to the increasing need for security, the social limitations brought by working life, technological developments (e.g., computers and mobile phones), and the mental fatigue effect on people because of monotony, increases the socialization needs of individuals directly. As well as these, differences within the framework of factors (e.g.,

socio-economic problems, culture, religion, education, and ethnicity) cause individuals to distance themselves from each other and to become isolated by being introverted. However, when human nature is examined, it is seen that every individual is a social being, and for this reason, socialization is a basic need just like physiological needs. Recreation activities have great importance for people who act with a natural impulse to meet their socialization needs because recreational activities can bring people and groups together regardless of their culture, religion, race, and economic grade (Özil, 2016; Pinaroğlu, 2020).

In light of these, the purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the benefits of participating in recreational activities and social engagement in university students. Within the scope of the research, answers to the following questions were also sought:

Is there any significant difference between the gender variable of university students, recreational benefit levels and social commitment levels?

Is there a significant difference between university students' age variables, recreational benefit levels and social commitment levels?

Is there a significant difference between the perceived welfare level of university students and their recreational benefits and social commitment?

Is there a significant difference between the variable of university students' leisure time difficulties and the benefits of participating in recreational activities and social commitment?

## METHOD

### *Study Model*

In the present study, a non-random, Convenient Sampling Method was adopted for the selection of the study group. Büyüköztürk et al. (2010) defined the Convenient Sampling Method as the selection of the sample from easily accessible and applicable units because of limitations such as time and labor.

### *Population and Sample*

The sample of the research consists of undergraduate students studying at various faculties and departments at Necmettin Erbakan University and Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University. Participants to be included in the sample in the study were recruited using the appropriate sampling method and the sample group; It consists of a total of 314 university students, of which 164 are female and 150 are male.

### *Data Collection Tools*

As well as the personal information form that was used as the data collection tool, the "Recreation Benefit Scale", which was developed by Ho (2008) and adapted into Turkish by Akgül, Ertüzün, and Karakucuk in 2018, by conducting a validity and reliability study, was used in the study. The Recreation Benefit Scale is a 5-point Likert-type measurement tool that consists of 7 items in the physical sub-dimension, 8 items in the psychological sub-dimension, and 9 items in the social sub-dimension as a total of 24 items. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 125 and the lowest score is 25. The total Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.96. In sub-dimensions, it was determined that the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the physical benefit sub-dimension was 0.95, the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the psychological benefit sub-dimension was 0.93, and the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the social benefit sub-dimension was 0.96. To measure the social engagement levels of the participants, the Social Engagement Scale that was developed by Lee and Robins (1995) and adapted to Turkish culture by Duru (2007) was used. SES is a 6-point Likert-type scale that consists of 8 items. A score between 8 and 48 is obtained from the scale, and a high score indicates a high level of social engagement. The Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficient that was calculated in its Turkish adaptation study was 0.90. The Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficient was calculated as 0.96 for the data collected within the scope of this study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In the analysis of the data that were obtained in the study, percentages and frequency descriptive statistical methods were used to determine the distribution of the personal data of the participants, and skewness and kurtosis values of the data were checked to determine whether the data showed a normal distribution, and the Kolmogorov Smirnov Test was used. As a result

of the evaluations, it was found that the data had a normal distribution. According to Jondeau and Rockinger (2003), when the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the sub-dimensions vary between +3 and -3, these sub-dimensions meet the normal distribution assumption. As well as descriptive statistical models, t-test, Anova Test Analysis, and Tukey HSD Multiple Comparison test methods were used in the statistical analysis of the data ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

**RESULTS**

**TABLE 1; The Demographic Data of the Participants**

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	164	52.2
	Male	150	47.8
	Total	314	100.0
Age	17-20	101	32.2
	21-25	168	53.5
	26 and over	45	14.3
	Total	314	100.0
Grade	1st grade	93	29.6
	2nd grade	90	28.7
	3rd grade	97	30.9
	4th grade	34	10.8
	Total	314	100.0
Welfare Level	Poor	54	17.2
	Normal	211	67.2
	Good	49	15.6
	Total	314	100.0
Having Difficulty in Spending Free Time	Always	39	12.4
	Sometimes	194	61.8
	Never	81	25.8
	Total	314	100.0
Sufficiency of Weekly Free Time	Definitely Insufficient	21	6.7
	Insufficient	52	16.6
	Normal	129	41.1
	Sufficient	85	27.1
	Definitely Sufficient	27	8.6
	Total	314	100.0

As seen in Table 1, 52.2% of the participants were “female”, 53.5% were in the “21-25” age group, 30.9% were in the “3rd grade”, 67.2% of them were at “normal” income level, 61.8% of

them had difficulty in using their spare time “sometimes”, and 41.1% of them had “normal” weekly free time.

**TABLE 2:** The Distribution of the Scale Scores according to Gender Variable

Sub-Dimensions	Variable	Mean	SD	t	p
RBS Physical Benefit	Female	28.1768	6.99074	.314	.154
	Male	27.9333	6.73533		
RBS Psychological Benefit	Female	31.8354	8.01936	.305	.760
	Male	31.5667	7.52929		
RBS Social Benefit	Female	35.7866	9.04845	.466	.642
	Male	35.3267	8.38783		
SES Social Engagement	Female	35.5976	8.97831	.784	.434
	Male	34.7533	10.11208		

According to the gender variable, no statistically significant differences were detected according to the t-Test results of the participants' recreation

scale sub-dimensions and the social engagement scale ( $p>0.05$ ).

**TABLE 3:** The ANOVA Test Results of the Participants according to Age

Subdimensions	Variable	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
RBS Physical Benefit	17-20	27.7723	5.83418	1.785	.169	
	21-25	27.7560	7.38221			
	26 and over	29.8444	6.83891			
RBS Psychological Benefit	17-20	31.7030	6.51390	1.461	.234	
	21-25	31.2381	8.38679			
	26 and over	33.4667	7.93324			
RBS Social Benefit	17-20	35.1485	7.51051	1.764	.173	
	21-25	35.2143	9.33934			
	26 and over	37.8222	8.75237			
SES Social Engagement	17-20	35.1980	9.33276	3.095	.047	2*-3
	21-25	34.3571	9.75710			
	26 and over	38.3111	8.61769			

According to the results of the recreational benefit scale subdimension of the participants and the Anova Test for the social engagement scale, no statistically significant differences were detected between the RBS subdimension ( $p>0.05$ ) although a statistically significant difference was detected according to the social

engagement scale ( $p<0.05$ ). According to the results of the Tukey HSD Multiple Comparison Test that was used to determine from which age groups the significant difference originated, it was found that the significant difference stemmed from the "26 and over" age group.

**TABLE 4:** ANOVA Test Results of the Participants according to Welfare Levels

Subdimensions	Variable	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
RBS Physical Benefit	Poor	28.1296	6.87639	.017	.983	
	Normal	28.0806	6.82490			
	Good	27.8980	7.13047			
RBS Psychological Benefit	Poor	32.1481	7.43375	.114	.892	
	Normal	31.5829	7.75804			
	Good	31.7551	8.35796			
RBS Social Benefit	Poor	35.4815	9.09435	.025	.975	
	Normal	35.6398	8.52744			



	Good	35.3469	9.33977			
SES Social Engagement	Poor	31.4815	11.06881	5.171	.006	1*-2
	Normal	36.0853	9.06812			
	Good	35.4490	8.84369			

Although no statistically significant differences were detected between the recreational benefit scale subdimension according to the perceptions of the participants' welfare level and the RBS subdimension according to the results of the Anova Test for the social engagement scale ( $p > 0.05$ ), a statistically significant difference was detected according to the social engagement

scale ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to the results of the Tukey HSD Multiple Comparison Test, which was used to determine from which welfare levels the significant difference was caused, it was found that the significant difference stemmed from the participants whose welfare perception was "poor".

**TABLE 5:** ANOVA Test Results According to the Leisure Time Difficulties of the Participants

Subdimensions	Variable	Mean	SD	F	P	Tukey
RBS Physical Benefit	Always	27.3333	7.18307	.682	.506	
	Sometimes	28.4124	6.23421			
	Never	27.5679	8.06526			
RBS Psychological Benefit	Always	30.7436	8.19730	.692	.501	
	Sometimes	32.0979	7.13277			
	Never	31.2346	8.99899			
RBS Social Benefit	Always	33.8462	9.95659	1.528	.219	
	Sometimes	36.2010	7.79436			
	Never	34.8765	10.07520			
SES Social Engagement	Always	30.6667	11.03424	5.172	.006	1*-3
	Sometimes	35.8969	8.68503			
	Never	35.6914	10.20495			

Although no statistically significant differences were detected between the recreational benefit scale subdimension according to the participants' perceptions of Having Difficulty in Spending Free Time and the RBS subdimension according to the results of the Anova Test for the social engagement scale ( $p > 0.05$ ), a statistically significant difference was detected compared to

the social engagement scale ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to the results of the Tukey HSD Multiple Comparison Test, which was used to determine which variables caused the significant difference, it was found that the significant difference stemmed from the participants who had difficulty in making use of their spare time "always".

**TABLE 6:** The Correlation Table for the Recreation Benefit Scale and Social Engagement Scale

		RBS 1	RBS 2	RBS 3	SES	
RBS 1		1				
	R					
	p	.314				
RBS 2	N	.940**	1			
	R	.000				
	p	.314	.314			
RBS 3	N	.910**	.922**	1		
	R	.000	.000			

	p	314	314	314	314	
SES	N	.195**	.197**	.201**	1	
	R	.001	.000	.000		
	p	314	314	314	314	

0.01 \*\*( $p < .05$ )

According to the correlation analysis between recreational benefits and social engagement, a positive and significant relationship was detected between the two scales at a significance level of .01.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the present study, in which the relationship between the benefits of participation in recreational activities and social engagement was examined, no significant differences were detected between the gender variable and the Recreational Benefit Scale (RBS) and Social Engagement Scale (SES) (Table 2). It was found that the recreational benefit sub-dimension averages and social engagement levels of female participants were higher than male participants. According to a study that was conducted by Ertüzün et al. (2020) to examine the recreational benefit levels of individuals who were members of the sports centers in terms of various demographic variables, no differences were determined between the gender variable of the participants and the recreational benefit. According to the study conducted by Karademir (2022) to examine the relationship between recreational benefit, leisure satisfaction, and happiness levels perceived by individuals who played tennis for recreational purposes, significant differences were reported between the gender variable and recreational benefit of the participants, and female participants had a higher recreational benefit average than male participants. According to a study that was conducted by Bülbül et al. (2021), although no significant differences were detected between the gender variables of the participants and the recreational benefit, it was determined that male participants had a higher recreational benefit average score than female participants. According to the study conducted by Kara et al. (2018) to examine the perception of leisure time

boredom, life satisfaction, and social engagement levels of physical education teacher candidates, no significant differences were detected between gender variables and social engagement. According to the study conducted by Karaş (2019) conducted to examine the fear of missing out, sociotelism, personality, and social engagement levels of individuals who preferred the use of social media as a leisure time activity, a significant difference was detected between gender variable and social engagement and female participants had higher social engagement scores than male participants. In the study conducted by Başkan Saka (2019) to examine the social appearance anxiety and social engagement levels of physical education teacher candidates, it was found that the gender variable and social engagement differed at significant levels, and male participants had a higher social engagement average than female participants.

Although no significant differences were detected between the Recreational Benefit Scale (RBS) subdimension according to the age variable, a significant difference was detected in the Social Engagement Scale (SES) (Table 3). It was found that the social engagement levels of individuals who were aged 26 and over were higher than individuals who had other age variables, and they also had the highest average in the recreational benefit subdimension. It can be argued that this might have occurred because individuals who were aged 26 and over felt more belonging to their families, society, and social environment. It can also be argued that the positive physical, social, and psychological benefits of recreational activities on individuals might have occurred because they experienced more than other age groups. According to the study that was conducted by Kocaer (2018) to examine the relationship between physical education and sports teachers and candidates' attitudes towards the teaching profession, leisure time involvement, and benefit levels for

recreational activities, no significant differences were detected between the age variable of the participants and the recreational benefit scores. According to the study of Korkutata and Özavcı (2021) conducted to determine the recreational benefit level of tourists, no significant differences were detected between the age levels of the participants and the recreational benefit scores. According to the study conducted by Baş (2020) to determine the demographic characteristics of the employees, it was found that as the age levels of the participants increased, their social engagement levels also increased.

No significant differences were detected between the perceived welfare levels and the Recreation Benefit Scale (RBS) scores, but significant differences were detected in terms of the Social Engagement Scale (SES) (Table 4). It was also found that the social engagement levels of the participants who had poor welfare levels were lower than the participants who had other welfare levels. It can be argued that this may be because individuals who had poor welfare levels psychologically found it more difficult to reach social support and family support than individuals who had other welfare levels and stay away from activities that may increase their life and engagement in the social group or society they belong to. In the study that was conducted by Karakucuk et al. (2019) to determine the relationship between ecocentric, anthropocentric, and antipathic approaches in orienteering athletes with recreational benefits, significant differences were detected between the income status of the participants and recreational benefits. In the study conducted by Er (2021) to determine the effects of therapeutic recreational activities applied to substance addicts on quality of life and recreational benefit levels, it was found that the income levels of the participants did not make any significant differences in recreational benefit scores. According to a study conducted by Kalaç (2021), no significant differences were detected between the participants' perceptions of income status and social engagement. No significant differences were detected between the participants' difficulty in making use of leisure time and the recreational benefit scale, and a significant difference was detected in terms of the

social engagement scale (Table 5). It was found that individuals who always had difficulty in making use of their spare time had lower social engagement and recreational benefit scores than other participants. It can be argued that this may be because individuals who could use their time effectively were not aware of the positive effects of recreational activities, and therefore, they were not able to fully benefit from the individual, physical, psychological, and social benefits of recreation.

According to the results of the correlation analysis made between recreational benefits and social engagement, a significant and positive relationship was detected between the scales (Table 6). It can be argued that the increase in recreational benefits will increase the social engagement of individuals.

In conclusion, although no significant differences could be detected according to gender and weekly sufficient leisure time, a significant difference was detected according to Social Engagement Scale values according to age, welfare level, and difficulty in using leisure time. It was also found that the variables of age, gender, perceived welfare level, and the sufficiency of weekly leisure time did not cause any significant differences according to the Recreational Benefit Scale. In terms of gender, the recreational benefit and social engagement averages of the female participants were found to be higher than male participants, in terms of age variable, the recreational benefit and social engagement averages of the participants who were aged 26 and over were found to be higher than the participants in the other age groups. When the perceived welfare level was evaluated, the welfare level was found to be moderate. It was also found that the average of social engagement of individuals who had a high level of welfare was higher than individuals who had other welfare levels, and the average of recreational benefit (except for the social benefit sub-dimension) of the participants who had low perceived welfare level was higher than the other participants. It can be argued that the benefits obtained as a result of participation in recreational activities affect the social engagement of individuals positively.



The Convenience Sampling Method was used in the study. It is recommended to use different sampling methods for future studies planned to be conducted, the inclusion of more cities and universities in the scope of the study for the generalizability of the study results, providing access to a wider sample group, expanding the sample types of the study, preferring different sample groups, and to organize various educational programs to create sufficient awareness about the concepts of social engagement and positive benefits obtained as a result of the participation in recreational activities.

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