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The relationship between leisure activity types selected by older adults and their income

Abstract. This study focused on investigating the relationship between leisure activity types selected by individuals aged 65 and older and their income. The target population included inhabitants of Mersin Province aged 65 and older. A purposive sample of 228 individuals was recruited to participate in the study. The questionnaire consisted of a demographic information form and the “Leisure participation scale”, including six different activity types for which the respondents were asked to determine the frequency of participation. The collected data were analysed for normality, and by applying the independent T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). In order to discover the cause of the inter-group differences (e.g. education level), Fisher’s LSD test was used. Significance was set at 0.05. The respondents’ participation in cultural activities was found to be positively correlated with their income level. Individuals in the low income group preferred “volunteering activities”, while individuals in the high income group preferred “cultural activities such as watching TV, going to cinema, concerts, museums”. Individuals in the moderate income group usually opted for “hobbies and indoor activities such as painting, reading, playing musical instruments”. Elderly people with moderate incomes, who tend to prefer indoor activities, should be encouraged to engage in outdoor activities that are more beneficial for their mental, physiological and psychological health. This results of the study can be used as recommendations concerning leisure activity types for private elderly care centers, ministries responsible for the health of elderly people, local authorities and other institutions that plan leisure activities for this social group.

Keywords: recreation, leisure, older adults, income

JEL Codes: I31, J11, J14

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1. Introduction

With technological advances in medicine and their widespread use, birth and death rates have decreased, causing an increase in average lifespan and in the size of the elderly population, not only in absolute terms but also in proportion to the general population. The growing number of elderly people is associated with economic, social and health problems that the society is not ready for and exposes the society to old age problems [Amuk, Oğuzhanoglu 2003]. In order to minimize the loss of physical strength, functional decline and difficulties of adapting to the changing body structure as a result of old age, it is necessary to take preventive measures. Negative experiences faced by elderly people may lead to psychological breakdowns, causing them withdraw into themselves. Given the physical, psychological and social changes experienced by elderly people, it is essential to understand factors that determine life satisfaction so that they can lead a healthy life [Çabuk 2019].

At the beginning of the 20th century, life expectancy for men and women in the USA was 46.3 and 48.3 years, respectively, while in 2000 it rose to 73.5 and 80.4 years. In the USA, during 1900s only 4.1% of the whole population lived beyond the age of 65 but by 2000 this share had risen to 12.8% [Amuk, Oğuzhanoglu 2003]. In 2014 the elderly population in Turkey was around 6 million but within the next four years, it increased by 16%, exceeding 7 million. The share of the elderly population was 8% in 2014, which rose to 8.8% in 2018. According to population projections, the elderly population is estimated to account for 10.2% in 2023, 12.9% in 2030, 16.3% in 2040, 21% in 2050 and 28% in 2075 [Turkish Statistical Institute 2013].

According to statistical data, elderly populations are growing faster in developed countries [Shrestha 2000]. Therefore; efforts to keep the elderly population in these countries socially active and healthy are not a privilege but a necessity. With each day increasing stress, inactive and unhealthy lifestyles promoted by modern technology are increasing the demand for health facilities. Consequently, the effect of leisure activity type on health and welfare has attracted growing interest among researchers in different countries and in different fields. Many authors have linked leisure activities to health and concluded that leisure activities are a source of fun and entertainment [Brooks, Magnusson 2007; Güngör, Kurtipek, Yenel 2018; Heo, Lee 2010]. Theoretical considerations and empirical studies indicate that leisure activities are not transient and do not increase the quality of life only momentarily but influence a person's emotional state for a long time [Mannell 1999].

The gradually increasing life expectancy raises the question about how to maximize the length and quality of healthy years. Many countries, particularly

developed ones, have taken steps in this area and designed policies to provide for healthy aging. This goal is described as the protection and improvement of health and physical, social, psychological wellbeing, as the ability to live independently as well as to improve the quality of life and as permanent optimization of sources in order to obtain successful transitions from one life period to another [Aydın 2006].

Lifestyle plays a key role since it influences large masses in achieving healthy aging objectives and involves elements that can be changed. These include nutrition, physical activities, smoking and alcohol use, participation in social activities and leisure activity. Studies have shown that elderly adults' participation in leisure activities affects their wellbeing [Chang, Wray, Lin 2014; Köse, Uzun 2019; Lampinen et al. 2006; Menec 2003]. Many empirical studies suggest that elderly adults who engage in leisure activities experience numerous positive psychological effects. Additionally, personal participation in leisure activities that are important to individuals may positively affect their wellbeing and healthy aging [Çetin, Kara, Kitiş 2014; Toptaş Demirci 2019; Dupuis 2008; Kelly 1993; Lalarni, Kushartanti 2019]. In other words; participating in leisure activities plays a key role in the lives of elderly people. Although the literature provides evidence to support the claim that some leisure activities contribute to wellbeing and healthy aging of elderly people, the number of studies on certain types of activities is very limited [Paillard-Borg et al. 2009]. New insights about the correlation between income and leisure activity types in old age could be useful for private and public institutions that organise leisure activities for elderly individuals. The study described in this article identifies leisure activity preferences of elderly persons and factors which could increase their participation in these activities. It can be expected that by increasing their participation in leisure activities, elderly people will get more involved in social life, which in turn will improve their overall life satisfaction, strengthen their relations with family and friends and increase their psychological wellbeing.

2. Methodology

The survey questionnaire consisted of basic demographic questions (about age, sex, income) and the "Leisure Participation Scale". The literature provides various instruments to measure participation in leisure activity. The most widely accepted version is the "Leisure Participation Scale" developed by Chun et al. [2012], which is a modified version of the scale used by Ragheb [1980]. The scale measures the level of participation in different leisure activity types [Ryu, Heo 2018]. This version has been used in many international studies [Iso-Aho-

la, Jackson, Dunn 1994; Kimball, Freysinger 2003]. The activity types include: 1) outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and fishing; 2) physical activities, such as doing sports and exercise; 3) hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument; 4) cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums; 5) home-based and social activities, such as socializing with friends, eating out, and/or family time; and 6) volunteering activities. Participation in each type of activity is measure on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 10 (almost every day).

Study group: The questionnaires were filled during face-to-face interviews made by the author at shopping-malls, old people's homes, parks, recreation areas and public education center courses. After the survey was completed, 34 forms were rejected owing to incorrect, missing or unsuitable information and were not included in the analysis. The final sample consisted of 228 respondents.

Data analysis: The coefficients of kurtosis and skewness were between -1.5 and $+1.5$, which are considered to be acceptable for normally distributed data [Tabachnick, Fidell 2013]. In order to find the differences in terms of income; one way ANOVA was used for the comparison of more than two group. In order to check which group was significantly different the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was used.

3. Results

In this part of the study, the analysis results and comments of the quantitative data obtained are included.

When Table 1 was examined, it was observed 55.26 % ($f = 126$) of the participants were male and 47.74 % ($f = 102$) were female. In age distributions, it was seen that 38.60 % were 65-71 years, 37.73 % were 72-78 and 23.68 % were older than 79 years. When the distributions were analyzed in term of educational status, it was determined that 81 % were primary school, 65 % lower secondary school, 45% upper secondary school and 38% university graduates. It is determined that 65.35% of the elderly have income below 1000 dollars. In addition 57.89% of participant were single and 42.11% were married.

Table 2 shows mean frequency ratings of respondents' participation in leisure activities. The most preferred activities were home-based social activities ($\bar{x} = 6.35$), followed by cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums, and hobbies and indoor activities. The least frequently undertaken activities included physical activities ($\bar{x} = 3.83$) and volunteering activities ($\bar{x} = 3.53$).

Table 3 shows the popularity of different types of cultural activities depending on the respondents' income. The most popular activity in the lowest in-

Table 1. Demographic information about the respondents

Variables		<i>n</i>	%
Sex	female	102	44.74
	male	126	55.26
Age	65-71	88	38.60
	72-78	86	37.72
	≥ 79	54	23.68
Education level	primary school	81	35.53
	lower secondary school	64	28.07
	upper secondary school	45	19.74
	university	38	16.67
Average monthly income	≤ 500\$	66	28.95
	501-1000\$	83	36.40
	≥ 1001\$	79	34.65
Marital Status	married	96	42.11
	single	132	57.89
Total		228	100.00

Source: author’s own research.

Table 2. Frequency of respondents’ participation in leisure activity types

Leisure activity types	Mean rating (\bar{x})	Standard deviation
Home-based and social activities, such as socializing with friends, eating out, and/or family time	6.35	2.21
Cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums	5.38	2.22
Outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and fishing	4.01	2.21
Hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument	3.90	2.28
Physical activities, such as doing sports and exercises	3.83	2.33
Volunteering activities	3.53	2.16

Source: author’s own research.

come group were volunteering activities, while those with in the highest income grouped showed a preference for cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums. The majority of respondents with moderate incomes opted for hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument.

Table 3. Respondents' preferences for leisure activity types by income

Leisure activity types ≤ 0\$		Income			Total
		≤ 0\$	501-1000\$	≥ 1001\$	
Outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and fishing	<i>n</i>	15	15	20	50
Physical activities, such as doing sports and exercises	<i>n</i>	9	14	7	30
Hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument	<i>n</i>	4	21	5	30
Cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums	<i>n</i>	8	10	23	41
Mome-based and social activities such as socializing with friends, eating out, and/or family time	<i>n</i>	14	17	14	45
Volunteering activities	<i>n</i>	16	6	10	32
Total	<i>n</i>	66	83	79	228
	%	29	36.4	34.6	100.0

Source: author's own research.

Table 4. Respondents' preferences for leisure activity types by sex

Variable		<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>ss</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sex	male	126	4.35	0.88	224	1.02	0.325
	female	102	4.29	0.91			

Source: author's own research.

When participants' average scores were examined in terms of sex it wasn't found that there were significant differences (Table 4).

Table 5. Respondents' preferences for leisure activity types by education level

Variable		<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>ss</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Education level	primary school	81	3.95	0.85	2.06	0.861
	lower secondary school	64	0.398	0.82		
	upper secondary school	45	4.02	0.92		
	university	38	4.07	0.96		

Source: author's own research.

When participants' average scores were examined in terms of educational level it wasn't found that there were significant differences (Table 5).

4. Conclusion

It was found that individuals aged 65 and older showed a preference for home-based activities, such as visiting friends, spending time with family, and for volunteering activities. Activities like watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts or visiting museums were also relatively popular in contrast to volunteering activities, which turned out to be the least preferred option. This is in line with findings reported in other studies. For example; a study done in China concluded that for elderly Chinese people the preferred leisure activity was watching TV or listening to the radio, followed by reading books or magazines, while playing card games was the least popular option [Chou, Chow, Chi 2004]. In another study, it was reported that people in western countries preferred watching TV or listening to the radio [Ayyıldız Durhan 2019; Strain et al. 2002]. There are many studies concluding that recreational physical activities are not very popular with the elderly, who generally opt for passive activities that do not involve mobility [Brown, Frankel, Fennell 1991; Peppers 1976; Ragheb, Griffith 1982; Zuzanek, Box 1988]. A study of elderly people in Malaysia found that the most popular leisure activities were resting, watching TV and reading while doing sports and playing a musical instrument were the least preferred ones [Minhat, Amin 2012]. The fact that the changing world encourages people to lead immobile lifestyles and discourages them from socializing may be one of the causes of many physical and psychological disorders [Çabuk 2019]. Therefore, we believe it is important to promote leisure activities that will enhance the quality of life of the elderly.

Leisure activities are generally believed to have beneficial effects but these effects differ depending on the type of leisure activity [Ryu, Heo 2018]. Certain leisure activities may have a more positive impact on their physiological and psychological condition. For example, a study conducted in Taiwan investigated the effects of leisure activity types upon mental health and found that walking, gardening, etc. affected respondents' mental health the most [Weng, Chiang 2014]. Our study demonstrated respondents' different preferences for leisure activities depending on their income. This information can be used to encourage certain groups of elderly to take up different and more useful activities. For example, there are many studies emphasizing that outdoor activities are more helpful for people than indoor activities [Bath, Morgan 1999; Gümüş, Özgül 2017; Ryu, Heo 2018; Huston et al. 2003; Pasanen et al. 2018; Weng, Chiang 2014]. Therefore, elderly people with moderate incomes should be encouraged to choose outdoor activities instead of indoor activities, which will be more useful for their mental, physiological and psychological health.

“Leisure plays a key role in the quality of life as people face important transitions, such as retirement, empty nests, and widowhood” [Nimrod, Janke 2012, after Liechty, Genoe 2013]. “Therefore, leisure researchers have called for increased exploration of the leisure experiences of older adults including their perceptions of aging, their definitions of leisure, and their activity participation” [Gibson 2006; McGuire 2000, after Liechty, Genoe 2013]. It can be said that individuals with above average monthly income have more possibilities of accessing social and cultural activities.

Elderly people who do not experience economic limitations can engage in more leisure activities [Cerin, Leslie 2008; Ragheb 1980]. The independent effect of income on the engagement in physical activity can be explained by analogy with educational attainment. The main difference between these two factors consists in the fact that a person’s income level largely determines their access to health care resources, recreational facilities and opportunities [McNeill, Kreuter, Subramanian 2006]. “Individuals with higher discretionary income can choose to live in environments that are more conducive to an active lifestyle as well as more readily obtain social and material resources that help to maintain an active lifestyle even in adverse conditions (e.g., lack of family support; lack of facilities in the neighborhood). In contrast, the effects of educational attainment on physical activity are likely to be, by and large, channeled through psychological and social pathways” [Winkleby et al. 1992, after Cerin, Leslie 2008].

In the present study respondents’ sex and education level were not found to be significantly correlated with the level of participation in leisure activities. This finding can be due to the average age of the respondents. Activities that older people can get engaged tend to be limited by their limited mobility. They prefer passive and non-challenging activities, regardless of their sex. This means that it is accessibility rather than sex or education level that has an impact on activity preferences [Gümüş, Alay, Karakılıç 2017; Karakullukçu, Karaküçük 2017; Köse et al. 2020].

Insights from the present study can be used as recommendations concerning leisure activities for private elderly care centers, ministries responsible for the health of elderly people, local authorities and other institutions that plan leisure activities for this social group.

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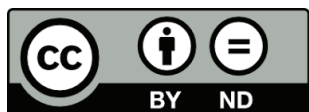
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Związek między rodzajami aktywności rekreacyjnych wybieranymi przez osoby starsze a wysokością ich dochodów

Streszczenie. Celem badania było ustalenie związku między rodzajami aktywności rekreacyjnych, jakie wybierają osoby w wieku od 65 lat wwyż, a wysokością ich dochodów. Badania populacja obejmowała mieszkańców tureckiej prowincji Mersin, z której została wybrana próba celowa licząca 228 osób. Kwestionariusz badania, oprócz informacji demograficznych respondentów,

zawierał pytania służące do oceny stopnia wykorzystania czasu wolnego, w tym sześciu różnych rodzajów aktywności, odnośnie do których respondenci mieli określić częstotliwości uczestnictwa. Po sprawdzeniu, czy zebrane dane miały rozkład normalny, zastosowano test t-Studenta dla prób niezależnych oraz analizę wariancji (ANOVA). Aby odkryć przyczynę różnic między grupami (np. ze względu na poziom wykształcenia), zastosowano test LSD Fishera. Przyjęto poziom istotności wynoszący 0,05. Stwierdzono, że udział respondentów w działaniach rekreacyjnych jest pozytywnie skorelowany z poziomem ich dochodów. Osoby z grupy o niskich dochodach preferowały udział w działaniach o charakterze wolontariackim, podczas gdy osoby z grupy o wysokich dochodach preferowały aktywność kulturalną, np. oglądanie telewizji, chodzenie do kina, na koncerty lub do muzeum. Osoby z grupy o umiarkowanych dochodach zwykle wybierały zajęcia hobbystyczne realizowane w domu, takie jak: malowanie, czytanie, gra na instrumentach muzycznych. Osoby starsze o umiarkowanych dochodach, które preferują aktywności rekreacyjne w domu, powinny być zachęcane do aktywności na świeżym powietrzu, która jest bardziej korzystna dla ich zdrowia psychicznego, fizjologicznego i psychicznego. Wyniki badań można potraktować jako zalecenia w kwestii wyboru aktywności rekreacyjnych dla prywatnych ośrodków opieki nad osobami starszymi, ministerstw odpowiedzialnych za zdrowie osób starszych, lokalnych władz i innych instytucji planujących aktywności rekreacyjne dla tej grupy społecznej.

Słowa kluczowe: rekreacja, czas wolny, osoby starsze, dochód



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