

# The Meaning of Leisure and Life Satisfaction: The Sample of University Students

Yusuf Er

Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey University

Turkey

Mustafa Can KOÇ (Corresponding author)

Faculty of Sports Sciences, Mersin University

Turkey

E-mail: mckoc@mersin.edu.tr

Mehmet DEMİREL

Necmettin Erbakan University

Turkey

Abdullah ÇUHADAR

Necmettin Erbakan University

Turkey

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the study is to examine the meaning of leisure time and life satisfaction levels of university students in general and students studying in faculties of tourism and sports sciences specifically. The sample group was determined from Recreation and Recreation Management students in the faculties of Tourism and Sport Sciences of universities by using

appropriate sampling method based on voluntariness. The study included a total of 1345 university students, 507 women (37.7%) and 838 men (62.3%). In the study, Leisure Meanings Inventory (LMI), which included 35 items and 8 sub-dimensions and which was adapted into Turkish by Gürbüz, Özdemir and Karaküçük (2007), and the Life Satisfaction Questionnaire, which was developed by Diener et al. in 1985 and adapted into Turkish by Yetim (1993) and which included 5 items, were used. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistical methods such as percentage and frequency were checked to determine the distribution of the personal information of the participants, and Skewness and Kurtosis values of the data were checked to determine whether the data showed normal distribution. In addition, t-test and Anova test and correlation analysis methods were used ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The limitations of the study and evaluations for future studies were discussed in this sense.

**Keywords:** Recreation, Meaning of leisure, Life satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

The concept of time is defined as “the period in which an action or process occurs or will occur”. In the axis of this definition, there are some features of the concept of time. The most important of these features are the fact that time cannot be rented, bought, borrowed, stored and saved (Belli and Gürbüz, 2012). The concept of time is separated into various groups depending on the conditions people are in. One of these groups is the concept of “leisure time”. In literature, “leisure time” is defined as the “period of time outside individuals’ professional life or working hours” (Metin et al, 2013). In literature, the concept of leisure time is frequently used synonymously with the concept of recreation. However, these two concepts have different meanings. While the concept of leisure time refers to the period of time outside individuals’ working hours, the concept of recreation refers to activities individuals participate in to assess their leisure time (Albayrak, 2012). According to the definition of “World Leisure Time and Recreation Organization”, leisure time is a special area of human life with its benefits leading to entertainment which includes alternative, creativity, pleasure and which increases personal satisfaction (Demirel and Harmandar, 2009, Çakır et al., 2016).

Parallel to recent technological developments, individuals’ levels of adapting a monotonous life style, rapid urbanization and increase in population have made cities uninhabitable. In parallel with these factors, people’s needs for resting and having time for fun have also increased (Müderrişoğlu and Kutay, 2005; ; Gümüş et al, 2019). These developments have also increased people’s needs to participate in leisure time activities. This, in turn has increased the significance of recreational activities (Balıcı and İlhan, 2006) preparing a basis for the increase in scientific studies to be conducted on the concept of leisure time. In general, leisure time can be defined as the time in which an individual is free of all obligations or connections for both himself/herself and others and deals with an activity that he/she chooses voluntarily (Soyer et al., 2017).

With the increase in studies conducted on the concept of leisure time in literature, a great number of new concepts can be seen to develop about leisure time. The most important of these concepts are leisure time satisfaction, leisure time constraints and leisure time

motivation. In recent studies conducted about the concept of leisure time, the concept of “meaning of leisure” has also been developed. The concept of the meaning of leisure time is a concept which expresses “what individuals feel when they participate in leisure time activities” (Kara et al, 2018).

Recreational activities point out to psychological and physical regeneration of participants, causes them to relax, refresh and helps them to deal with monotone and difficulties by providing them reality in their life styles (Sarol and Çimen, 2017). Recreational activities individuals participate in have a significant role in dealing with physiological and psychological problems which occur as an inevitable result of daily life and in keeping the organism healthy and energetic (Güngörmüş et al., 2014, Rhodes and Dean, 2009; Gümüş and Işık, 2018).

Life satisfaction is one of the most important factors influencing individuals’ social relations and mental health (Aydiner, 2011). The concept of life satisfaction is seen as a subject in which philosophical thoughts about life generalized since first age philosophers have become specialized in psychological science of our day (Toy, 2015). Life satisfaction is known as “happiness” in literature and it is one of the issues that have been the focus of humanity for ages. In order to define life satisfaction, it is first of all necessary to define “satisfaction”. Satisfaction means the meeting of the expectations, needs, wishes and wants humans have. Life satisfaction is a state or a result which is obtained by comparing people’s expectations (what they want) with what they hold (what they have) (Özer and Karabulut, 2003). According to another definition, life satisfaction is “an integration of individuals’ own life pattern, standards and the related processes” (Avşaroğlu et al., 2005).

Life satisfaction can both be assessed as the satisfaction one gets from specific areas of life and also for the whole life in general. In other words, it is how much an individual likes his/her own life and this concept expresses positive feelings about life. Life satisfaction is the degree of the positive assessment of a person’s own life as a whole in general. The concept of life satisfaction is frequently used synonymously with some concepts. The most important of these concepts are quality of life, happiness, subjective well being and well-being. This is due to the related concepts’ being in close relationship with each other and intertwining. When literature is reviewed, it can be seen that the aforementioned concepts are used interchangeably most of the time (Göker, 2013).

When studies about the concept of life satisfaction are assessed, an increase can be seen recently in the number of studies discussing life satisfaction of university students. It has been stated that there are too many studies in literature which are conducted on the life satisfaction of young people and university students (Güllüoğlu-Işık and Koçak, 2014). However, it can be seen that studies conducted on life satisfaction of university students in Turkey are limited when compared with studies conducted abroad. In addition, it is also known that studies about the meaning of leisure time, which is a new concept in Turkey, are more insufficient. Within this context, the aim of the present study is to examine university students’ meaning of leisure time and life satisfaction according to some demographic variables and to examine the association between meaning of leisure time and life

satisfaction.

## 2. Method

The universe of the study consists of students studying in Recreation departments of universities. The participants included in the sample were taken by using suitable sampling method and the sample group consisted of a total of 1345 university students, 507 female (37.7%) and 838 male (62.3%). In the study, Leisure Meanings Inventory (LMI) which consisted of 35 items and 8 sub-dimensions (Active-passive participation, Social interaction, Perceived competency, Availability of leisure, Freedom, Internal motivation, Goal orientation and Business relation) and The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. in 1995 were used in order to assess what individuals felt when they participated in leisure time activities. Leisure Meanings Inventory was adapted into Turkish by Gürbüz, Özdemir and Karaküçük (2007). The participants were asked to assess the items in the inventory on a 6-point Likert type scale (“Completely disagree” = 1 and “Completely agree” = 6) (Kara et al., 2018; Gürbüz et al. 2007; Esteve et al. 1999). The Satisfaction with Life Scale was developed to find out the satisfaction individuals get from their lives. It is a 7-point Likert type scale (1: Completely disagree – 7: Completely agree) and consists of 5 items. In the original study, Diener et al. found the reliability of the scale as Alpha = .87 and criterion referenced reliability as .82. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Yetim (1993).

In the analysis of the data obtained from the study, percentage and frequency descriptive statistical methods were used to find out the distribution of the participants’ personal information, while Kurtosis and Skewness values were checked to find out whether the data were normally distributed. As a result of the analysis conducted, the data were found to have a normal distribution. Jondeau and Rockinger (2003) stated that when Kurtosis and Skewness coefficients differed between +3 and -3, sub-dimensions also were normally distributed. For the statistical analysis of the data, in addition to descriptive statistics, t test, Anova and correlation test analysis methods were used to test the association between meaning of leisure and life satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). Cronbach Alpha total internal consistency coefficient of the scales were found as .88 for The Satisfaction with Life Scale and as .88 for Leisure Meanings Inventory.

### 3. Results

Table 1. Internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale

Sub-dimensions	Original Study (Gürbüz et al. 2006)	Present Study
Active-passive participation	.69	,865
Social interaction	.83	,872
Perceived competency	.73	,863
Availability of leisure	.77	,864
Freedom	.87	,860
Internal motivation	.72	,876
Goal orientation	.86	,865
Business relation	.81	,854
The Satisfaction with Life	.86	.861

Table 1 shows internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions of Leisure Meanings Inventory (LMI) and The Satisfaction with Life Scale for the participants within the context of the study. According to the results, the highest internal consistency was found in the sub-dimension of “Freedom” with .87 for LMI, while internal consistency was found as .86 for The Satisfaction with Life Scale since it has only one sub-dimension.

Table 2. Distribution of scale sub-dimension scores

Sub-dimensions	Number of items	N	Ave.	Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
Active-passive participation	5	1345	4.14	.903	-.737	.605
Social interaction	5	1345	4.30	1.01	-.750	.543
Perceived competency	4	1345	4.47	.958	-.636	.363
Availability of leisure	5	1345	4.14	.924	-.397	.158
Freedom	5	1345	4.26	1.00	-.467	.111
Internal motivation	3	1345	4.05	.989	-.322	-.084
Goal orientation	3	1345	4.14	1.06	-.675	.352
Business relation	5	1345	4.26	.944	-.614	.359
The Satisfaction with Life	5	1345	21.03	7.23	-.303	-.746

Table 2 shows the average scores of participants from sub-dimensions of LMI and SWLS within the context of the study. According to the table, while the highest average was found in “perceived competency” sub-dimension with 4.47, the average was found as 21.03 in The satisfaction with life scale.

Table 3. Demographic information of the participants

<b>Variables</b>		<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	507	37.7
	Male	838	62.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	17-20 Years of age	476	35.4
	21-25 Years of age	784	58.3
	26 and older	85	6.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Department</b>	Tourism F. (Recreation M.)	376	28.0
	F. of Sport Sciences. (Recreation)	969	72.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Year of study</b>	First year	487	36.2
	Second year	374	27.8
	Third year	301	22.4
	Fourth year	183	13.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of welfare</b>	Very bad	74	5.5
	Bad	197	14.6
	Normal	535	39.8
	Good	448	33.3
	Very good	91	6.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Sufficiency of leisure time</b>	Completely insufficient	84	6.2
	Insufficient	207	15.4
	Normal	530	39.4
	Sufficient	420	31.2
	Completely sufficient	104	7.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1345</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be seen in Table 3, 62.3% of the participants are male, while 58.3% are between 21 and 25 years of age, 72% are studying at Tourism Faculty, Department of Recreation Management, 36.2% are in their first year of study, 39.8% have a normal level of welfare and 39.4% answered sufficiency of leisure time question as normal.

Table 4. Distribution of scale scores in terms of the variable of gender

Sub-dimensions	Variable	Ave.	Sd	t	p
Active-passive participation	Female	4.20	.848	2.129	.033
	Male	4.10	.932		
Social interaction	Female	4.31	1.00	.247	.805
	Male	4.30	1.02		
Perceived competency	Female	4.51	.985	1.01	.311
	Male	4.45	.941		
Availability of leisure	Female	4.14	.941	-.089	.929
	Male	4.14	.914		
Freedom	Female	4.27	1.04	.424	.672
	Male	4.25	.982		
Internal motivation	Female	4.00	1.06	-1.49	.136
	Male	4.08	.940		
Goal orientation	Female	4.23	1.04	2.56	.010
	Male	4.08	1.06		
Business relation	Female	4.32	.927	1.81	.070
	Male	4.23	.952		
The Satisfaction with Life	Female	21.42	6.85	1.50	.133
	Male	20.80	7.44		

In terms of the variable of gender, significant difference was found only in the sub-dimensions of “active-passive participation” and “goal orientation” according to t test results conducted on the sub-dimensions of LMI, while no significant difference was found in The satisfaction with life scale in terms of gender factor ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 5. Distribution of scale scores in terms of the variable of faculty

Sub-dimensions	Variable	Ave.	Sd	t	p
Active-passive participation	Tourism F.	4.13	.900	-.094	.925
	FSS	4.14	.904		
Social interaction	Tourism F.	4.32	.922	.436	.663
	FSS	4.29	1.05		
Perceived competency	Tourism F.	4.45	.929	-.500	.617
	FSS	4.48	.969		
Availability of leisure	Tourism F.	4.14	.896	-.018	.986
	FSS	4.14	.935		
Freedom	Tourism F.	4.23	.946	-.612	.541
	FSS	4.27	1.03		
Internal motivation	Tourism F.	4.01	1.02	-.877	.381
	FSS	4.06	.976		
Goal orientation	Tourism F.	4.15	1.09	-.508	.611
	FSS	4.22	.874		
Business relation	Tourism F.	4.22	.874	-.933	.351
	FSS	4.28	.969		
The Satisfaction with Life	Tourism F.	20.45	7.13	-1.85	.064
	FSS	21.26	7.26		

Table 5 shows that there were no significant differences between the sub-dimensions of LMI and The satisfaction with life scale in terms of the variable of faculty according to t test results conducted ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 6. ANOVA Test results according to participants' level of welfare

Sub-dimensions	Variable	Ave.	Sd	F	p
Active-passive participation	Very bad	3.98	.961	19.67	.000
	Bad	3.73	.939		
	Normal	4.13	.858		
	Good	4.26	.877		
	Very good	4.59	.800		
Social interaction	Very bad	4.06	1.03	10.97	.000
	Bad	3.90	1.11		
	Normal	4.37	.960		
	Good	4.41	.912		
	Very good	4.40	1.34		

Perceived competency	Very bad	4.55	1.00	5.499	.000
	Bad	4.19	.968		
	Normal	4.50	.978		
	Good	4.53	.898		
	Very good	4.62	.971		
Availability of leisure	Very bad	4.03	1.02	17.44	.000
	Bad	3.75	.965		
	Normal	4.14	.883		
	Good	4.24	.843		
	Very good	4.61	1.043		
Freedom	Very bad	4.12	1.24	17.74	.000
	Bad	3.77	1.05		
	Normal	4.30	.989		
	Good	4.36	.901		
	Very good	4.66	.938		
Internal motivation	Very bad	3.89	1.13	7.31	.000
	Bad	3.75	1.03		
	Normal	4.08	.957		
	Good	4.11	.959		
	Very good	4.30	.948		
Goal orientation	Very bad	4.13	1.16	13.02	.000
	Bad	3.70	1.17		
	Normal	4.12	.989		
	Good	4.35	.924		
	Very good	4.14	1.40		
Business relation	Very bad	4.18	1.11	18.36	.000
	Bad	3.76	1.05		
	Normal	4.32	.878		
	Good	4.40	.858		
	Very good	4.40	.964		
The Satisfaction with Life	Very bad	16.60	7.68	54.24	.000
	Bad	16.46	6.98		
	Normal	20.66	6.54		
	Good	23.32	6.75		
	Very good	25.49	6.10		

According to ANOVA test results conducted between the sub-dimensions of LMI and The

satisfaction with life scale in terms of the variable of level of welfare, significant difference was found between all sub-dimensions and participants' life satisfaction levels ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 7. Correlation test results conducted for the analysis of the association between meaning of leisure time and life satisfaction

		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	Life satisfaction
F1	r	1								
	p									
	N	1345								
F2	r	,617**	1							
	p	,000								
	N	1345	1345							
F3	r	,531**	,558**	1						
	p	,000	,000							
	N	1345	1345	1345						
F4	r	,459**	,379**	,502**	1					
	p	,000	,000	,000						
	N	1345	1345	1345	1345					
F5	r	,455**	,357**	,503**	,641**	1				
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000					
	N	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345				
F6	r	,316**	,250**	,348**	,452**	,499**	1			
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000				
	N	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345			
F7	r	,440**	,440**	,443**	,425**	,505**	,489**	1		
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000			
	N	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345		
F8	r	,524**	,480**	,554**	,558**	,634**	,478**	,615**	1	
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		
	N	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	
Life satisfaction	r	,373**	,259**	,266**	,325**	,329**	,216**	,317**	,326**	1
	p	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345	1345

Correlation coefficient between the participants' scores from the sub-dimensions of LMI and "Life satisfaction" were found to be positively significant.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

Leisure time is in a continuous development and it is the result of innovations and trends (Pronovost, 2015). Although individuals assess leisure time similarly, it is thought that there are differences between leisure time participation preferences, behaviours and meaning of leisure time as a result of some factors brought along with culture (Gürbüz and Handerson, 2013; Roberts, 2010). From this point of view, when the data of the study, which was conducted to examine the meaning of leisure and life satisfaction in university students, are analyzed;

No significant difference was found in life satisfaction of university students in terms of gender. When literature is reviewed, many studies indicate that there is no significant relationship between life satisfaction and gender (Hampton ve Marshall, 2000; Hintikka, 2001). Also it was found that in similar studies conducted with university students studying in different departments, life satisfaction of students did not differ in terms of the variable of gender (Işık et al., 2014; Karavardar and Korkmaz, 2018; Güllüoğlu-Işık and Koçak, 2014; Demirci et al., 2007; Kabasakal and Uz-Baş, 2013). The reason for this can be the fact that the study group consists of individuals who are living in the same geography and who have similar socio-economic and socio-cultural structure. With the parallel results between the present study and similar studies, it can be said that gender is not a significant determinant of life satisfaction.

In our study, it was found that score averages of the sub-dimensions of LMI “active-passive participation” and “goal orientation” differed in terms of gender and in both sub-dimensions, female students had higher score averages when compared with male students.

The meaning of life is used to express what individuals feel when they participate in leisure time activities. Within this context, it can be thought that the reason why meaning of leisure time perceptions of the participants differed is different purposes and different expectations of male and female students from participating in leisure time activities. In addition, it can be said that another reason is the fact that men can have a more active participation in any kind of activity and environment when compared with women. When the studies conducted in different cultures are examined, it is seen that the meaning attributed to women and men in free time is different (Henderson and Gibson, 2013; Lee and Zhang, 2010).

Similar studies conducted in the field have shown that meaning of leisure time perception showed significant difference in terms of the variable of gender (Kara et al., 2018). In a study conducted by Kara et al. (2018), female participants were found to have higher score averages when compared with male participants in the sub-dimensions of goal orientation and availability of leisure time in adults with an average age of 27-28. In another study conducted by Lakot-Atasoy et al. (2015) on students studying in physical education and sport departments of universities, it was reported that the meaning attributed by students on the concept of leisure time showed significant differences in terms of the variable of gender. Thus, the present study and the literature are similar. When the studies conducted in different cultures are examined, it is seen that the meaning attributed to women and men in free time is different (Henderson and Gibson, 2013; Lee and Zhang, 2010).

In terms of the variable of faculty, it was found that there were no significant differences between the average scores of students from LMI sub-dimensions and The satisfaction with life scale in terms of their faculty. In a study conducted by Güllüoğlu-Işık and Koçak (2014), it was reported that life satisfaction of university students did not differ significantly in terms of the variable of their faculty/department. In this context, it can be said that the results of the study are in parallel with the literature. It can be thought that the reason why students' life satisfaction levels did not differ in terms of the variable of faculty can be because they preferred to study in these departments and faculties of their own accord. In fact, in some of the studies in literature conducted on university students (Demirci et al., 2007), it has been reported that students who did not prefer their departments of their own accord had low life satisfaction. In terms of the level of welfare, it was found that there were significant differences between the average scores of students from LMI sub-dimensions and The satisfaction with life scale.

According to the results, average scores from LMI sub-dimensions and The satisfaction with life scale were significantly high in favour of students with high level of welfare. The results show that increase in students' level of welfare causes increases in both meaning of leisure and life satisfaction. According to the research conducted by Searle and Jackson (1995), Jackson (2000), Burton et al. (2003), it was found that free time perceptions decreased as income increased.

It can be thought that the reason why students with good level of welfare had high meaning of leisure can be because students with high level of welfare have a higher budget for leisure time activities and can participate in the activities they want easily and accordingly, and they take more pleasure from free time activities.

Results of studies in literature show that there is a significant association between level of welfare and meaning in leisure (Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007; Kara et al., 2018; Lakot-Atasoy et al., 2015). It can be thought that the reason why low level of welfare has a negative influence on life satisfaction results from the fact that people with low socio-economic structure also have low life standards. Since the study group consists of university students, it can be said that this result is obvious.

Studies conducted on university students in literature have reported that level of welfare is a significant predictor of life satisfaction and students with low levels of income also have low life satisfaction levels (Güllüoğlu-Işık and Koçak, 2014; Yıkılmaz and Demir-Güdül, 2015; Tepeli-Temiz and Tarı-Cömert, 2018). Within this context, it can be said that the results of the present study are in parallel with the literature. When the associations between dependent variables were analyzed in the study, a positive significant association was found between meaning of leisure and life satisfaction. The results found show that high meaning of leisure has a positive effect on life satisfaction. It can be thought that the reason of this result may be the fact that students who assess their leisure time effectively have a higher meaning attributed to leisure time activities and in addition, having more effective leisure time increases their life satisfaction.

As a conclusion, it was found that life satisfaction of university students did not differ

significantly in terms of the variables of gender and type of faculty; similarly, it was also found that meaning of leisure did not show significant difference in terms of the faculty type. On the other hand, it was found that students' meaning of leisure perceptions showed significant difference in terms of the variables of gender and level of welfare, while their life satisfaction levels showed significant difference in terms of the variable of level of welfare. When dependent variables were assessed, it was found that meaning of leisure perception had a positive effect on life satisfaction.

## 5. Suggestions

The present study did not go beyond the limits of targeted study group. Within this context, it is thought that diversification of the study group and addressing individuals with different ethnic origins and different variables will make serious contributions to literature.

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