

## **A Study on University Students' Leisure Habits and Interest in Sports**

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### **Abstract**

This study, which aims to understand university students' leisure habits and interest in sports, is the result of a survey of 512 students that were randomly selected from the elementary education undergraduate programs of four universities. According to the survey data, 53.1 % of the research group consisted of female students and 46.9 % of male students.

In this study, prospective classroom teachers are evaluated in terms of how they use their leisure time left over from their daily chores, what kind of activities they are engaged in, how many hours a day they spend for these activities, and what kind of activities they do in long periods of vacation. Also, the students evaluate the recreational areas, activities and organizations of their universities. Another point the study focuses on is the students' interest levels in sports. In addition to these, the students assess the sufficiency of their universities' sport facilities and declare what kind of facilities should be created on their campuses. According to the results of the survey, it is apparent that university students cannot fully participate in recreational and sports activities for various reasons, the most important being the fact that universities fail to offer adequate amount of social, cultural, athletic and other similar activities. Universities should take on the responsibility and duty of offering such activities that students need.

**Key words:** *University Student*

*Recreation,*

*Sport*

## **Introduction**

Recreation is the voluntary participation of individuals or groups in leisure activities that will make them feel better, healthier, in addition to helping them improve their various skills (Young, Potgieter, Madiba, 2004).

Participation in leisure activities should be amateur, voluntary and hobby-oriented (Spector, 2004). High levels of interest, freedom and efficiency are essential in such activities. (Carlson, Deppe, & MacLean, 1972; Atara & Ruth, 2004).

According to Colfer and et al., recreation can be defined as voluntary activities that people take up in their free times to derive pleasure, satisfaction and comfort while improving their health, having fun and socializing (Capel, 2000; Siedentop 2001).

In their project on education through recreational sports which investigates human development and integration in rural areas, Giustolisi et al. (2004) discuss the application of recreational sport activities and programs in rural areas and their social contributions. In their research, they first distinguish how the experiences of young people and other participants in rural areas differ from people in urban settings. Then they focus on the influence of improving athletic skills and techniques on social adaptation through recreational programs specifically designed for the participants. Their study concludes that schools, athletic clubs, voluntary and local organizations can create a synergy and increase social awareness through sport activities.

Regarded by Marx as “a chance to further human development”, the use of leisure time is considered even today a significant tool in “social integration and transformation”. In developing countries where social change cannot progress in positive ways on its own, economic and cultural integration and national unity can be strengthened by following a planned social change program (Kilbas, 1995).

In a study, Klazine van der Horst states that Dutch adolescents are more likely to engage in leisure time sports if chances of physical activity are readily available at home, parents participate in sports activities and they have a rule in their household that the child has to play a sport. This indicates that parents are important actors in shaping the environmental factors of interest by making sports activities accessible and a family routine. Therefore, not only adolescents but also parents should be targeted in interventions aiming to improve availability of physical activity among young people (Van der Horst, & Anke Oenema, & Saskia J te Velde & Johannes Brug, 2010).

In explorative research, more effort needs to be made to construct better scales that examine all aspects of the perceived environmental factors. More qualitative research is needed to improve the existing measurement instruments and scales. In addition, only a limited set of perceived environmental variables was used in the past study. Other social environmental influences such as encouragement of parents and friends might especially be important in explaining the availability of physical activity behaviors (Ferreira, & Van Der Horst, & Hohepea, 2007).

### **Research Method**

The research sample consists of 512 students randomly selected among the elementary education programs of education faculties of four universities. The distribution of these students per university is as follows: 69 from Inonu University, 174 from Gazi University, 52 from Gaziosmanpasa University and 217 from Celal Bayar University. The data collection method is a survey comprising of 23 items 5 of which are personal and 18 content questions. The survey was prepared and conducted by Soyer and Can (2003). Test-retest method was applied to 50 students from Elementary Education Department of Demirci Education Faculty,

Celal Bayar University with a fifteen-day interval. Reliability coefficient of the survey was  $\alpha=0,72$  (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation).

The raw data obtained from the survey was entered to SPSS 11.00 For Windows package program for analysis. The rates of the students' answers were tested with Chi-Square Test at the significance level of 0,005 ( $\alpha=0,05$ ) based on the participants' genders and universities.

### **Results**

Of the students that responded to the survey, the percentage of females is 53.1 while that of males is 46.9, and 60% of the whole students are graduates of regular high schools. It is observed that the participants prefer to spend their free time with like-minded friends regardless of what university they are attending ( $P>.05$ ). This shows us that university students have a developed sense of what their worldview and political leanings are and that they are choosing their friends among those who share the same concerns so that they can engage in free time activities related to their beliefs.

The distribution of leisure activities reveals that the students spend the most of their free time listening to music (23.9%) and the least using computer (0.9%). As to sports, it has a rate of 12.2%. Additionally, it is seen that the range of free time activities vary from one university to another ( $P<.05$ ). Below are the findings obtained from the survey.

Looking at the distribution of daily average hours the students spend on leisure activities in Table 1 reveals that Inonu University and Gazi University are leading with 46,4 % (between 3,01 and 4,30 hours) and 40,8 % (between 1,31 – 3,00 hours) respectively.

**Table 1. The university-based distribution of daily average hours the participants spend on leisure activities**

Average Hours Spent on Leisure Activities	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
0,00 - 1,30 hours	4	7,7	15	6,9	20	11,5	4	5,8	43	8,4
1,31 - 3,00 hours	8	15,4	72	33,2	71	40,8	24	34,8	175	34,2
3,01 - 4,30 hours	20	38,5	66	30,4	57	32,8	32	46,4	175	34,2
4,31 – 6,00 hours	14	26,9	37	17,1	19	10,9	7	10,1	77	15
6,01 – 8,00 hours	2	3,8	21	9,7	7	4	2	2,9	32	6,3
8,01 and over	4	7,7	6	2,8	-	-	-	-	10	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 45,065$        $df = 15$        $P < .05$

In Table 2, to the question of “Are there enough recreational areas on campus?” Gaziosmanpasa University replied “No” with 88,5 %, Gazi University with 82,2 %, and Celal Bayar University with 81,6 %. The students from Inonu University replied “Partly” with 63,8%.

**Table 2. The university-based distribution of whether the participants think the recreational areas on campuses are sufficient**

Are there enough recreational areas on campus	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	1	1,9	5	2,3	-	-	7	10,1	13	2,5
No	46	88,5	177	81,6	143	82,2	18	26,1	384	75
Partly	5	9,6	35	16,1	31	17,8	44	63,8	115	22,5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 107,758$        $df = 6$        $P < .05$

In Table 3, to the question of “Are there enough leisure activity organizations at your university?” Gaziosmanpasa University replied “No” with 82,7 %, Gazi University with 81 %, and Celal Bayar University with 81,6 %. Inonu University replied “Partly” with 55,1 %.

**Table 3. The university-based distribution of whether the participants think the leisure activity organizations at their universities are sufficient**

Are there enough leisure activity organizations at your university?	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	-	-	4	1,8	1	0,6	7	10,1	12	2,3
No	43	82,7	168	77,4	141	81	24	34,8	376	73,4
Partly	9	17,3	45	20,7	32	18,4	38	55,1	124	24,2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>100</b>

$\chi^2 = 69,845$        $df = 6$        $P < .05$

According to Table 4, which shows the recreational activities the students would like to be organized at their universities, cultural activities have the highest percentage with 27,5 % and artistic activities have the lowest with 6,6 %.

**Table 4. The university-based distribution of the recreational activities the participants wish to be organized the most at their universities**

Recreational activities the participants wish to be organized the most at their universities	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sports activities	7	13,5	57	26,3	23	13,2	8	11,6	95	18,6
Cultural activities	14	26,9	63	29	48	27,6	16	23,2	141	27,5
Touristic and recreational trips	13	25	16	7,4	22	12,6	12	17,4	63	12,3
Social activities	13	25	49	22,6	54	31	12	17,4	128	25
Artistic activities	1	1,9	12	5,5	13	7,5	8	11,6	34	6,6
Skill gaining activities	4	7,7	20	9,2	14	8	13	18,8	51	10
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$\chi^2= 41,389$        $df=15$        $P<.05$

In Table 5, among the reasons the participants take part in recreational activities, having fun and excitement has the highest percentages with Gaziosmanpasa University at 48,1 %, Gazi University at 43,7 %, and Celal Bayar University at 43,3 %. Dispelling daily stress has the second second highest percentage with Gaziosmanpasa University at 28,8 %, Inonu University at 27,5 %, Gazi University at 16,1 %.

**Table 5. The university-based distribution of the main reasons why the participants take part in recreational activities**

Reasons for taking part in recreational activities	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
To relax	3	5,8	20	9,2	13	7,5	2	2,9	38	7,4
To have fun and excitement	25	48,1	94	43,3	76	43,7	14	20,3	209	40,8
To improve creativity	-	-	23	10,6	13	7,5	12	17,4	48	9,4
To dispel daily stress	15	28,8	42	19,4	28	16,1	19	27,5	104	20,3
To socialize	2	3,8	3	1,4	10	5,7	1	1,4	16	3,1
To improve social relations	4	7,7	16	7,4	18	10,3	9	13	47	9,2
Because they are instructive	3	5,8	14	6,5	15	8,6	12	17,4	44	8,6
To maintain my well-being	-	-	3	1,4	1	0,6	-	-	4	0,8
Others (To lose weight etc.)	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	0,4
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$\chi^2= 48,935$        $df=24$        $P<.05$

In table 6, touristic and recreational trips make up the 36,5 % of the total recreational activities that the students wish to participate but are not able to. Sports activities have the second highest percentage with 21,9 %.

**Table 6. The university-based distribution of the recreational activities the participants wish to participate but are not able to**

The recreational activities the participants wish to participate but are not able to	Gaziosmanpa asa University	Celal Bayar Universit y	Gazi Universit y	Inonu Universit y	TOTA L					
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sports activities	7	13,5	52	24	34	19,5	19	27,5	112	21,9
Cultural activities	9	17,3	24	11,1	20	11,5	5	7,2	58	11,3
Touristic and recreational trips	18	34,6	77	35,5	69	39,7	23	33,3	187	36,5
Social activities	7	13,5	19	8,8	22	12,6	1	1,4	49	9,6
Artistic activities	7	13,5	24	11,1	11	6,3	12	17,4	54	10,5
Skill-getting activities	4	7,7	19	8,8	18	10,3	9	13	50	9,8
Others	-	-	2	0,9	-	-	-	-	2	0,4
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$\chi^2= 24,931$        $df=18$        $P>.05$

Table 7 shows the students' level of interest in sports. Accordingly, "to make use of my free time" received the highest percentage of answers from the students: Inonu University 50,7 %, Gaziosmanpasa University 51,7 %, and Celal Bayar University 42,9 %.

**Table 7. The university-based distribution of the participants' level of interest in sports**

Interest in sports	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Not interested at all	713	,5	19	8,8	16	9,2	6	8,7	48	9,5
To make use of my free time	23	44,2	93	42,9	90	51,7	35	50,7	241	47,1
I am a certified amateur athlete	3	5,8	29	13,4	12	6,9	5	7,2	49	9,6
I am a member of the national team	-	-	3	1,4	1	0,6	1	1,4	5	1
A viewer	15	28,8	55	25,3	35	20,1	20	29	125	24,4
I do it regularly for health	4	7,7	18	8,3	16	9,2	2	2,9	40	7,8
Others (I am a professional athlete etc.)	-	-	-	-	4	2,3	-	-	4	0,8
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$\chi^2=22,814$        $df=18$        $P>.05$

Table 8 shows that the participant university students are mainly taking part in sports activities in order to have fun (36,5%) and make use of their free time (%21,1).

**Table 8. The university-based distribution of the main reasons why the participants participate in sports activities**

What are the main reasons you participate in sports activities?	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
For fun	24	46,2	82	37,8	63	36,2	18	26,1	187	36,5
To make use of my free time	11	21,2	50	23	35	20,1	12	17,4	108	21,1
To rid myself of stress	9	17,3	26	12	31	17,8	13	18,8	79	15,4
To maintain my health	5	9,6	28	12,9	22	12,6	17	24,6	72	14,1
To increase my athletic performance	3	5,8	24	11,1	18	10,3	7	10,1	52	10,2

To social network	-	-	3	1,4	5	2,9	2	2,9	10	2
Others (to lose weight etc.)	-	-	4	1,9	-	-	-	-	4	0,8
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$X^2= 23,076$        $df=18$        $P>.05$

Table 9 shows whether the students think the sporting environment on their campus is sufficient. According to the figures, 73,1 % of the participants from Gaziosmanpasa University, 71,9 % from Celal Bayar University and 69,5 % from Gazi University replied "No". 55,1 % of the students from Inonu University answered "Partly" to this question.

**Table 9. The university-based distribution of whether the participants think the sporting environment on their campus is sufficient**

Is the sporting environment on campus sufficient?	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	2	3,8	3	1,4	1	0,6	13	18,8	19	3,7
No	38	73,1	156	71,9	121	69,5	18	26,1	333	65
Partly	12	23,1	58	26,7	52	29,9	38	55,1	160	31,3
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$X^2= 84,234$        $df=6$        $P<.05$

Examining in Table 10 whether the participant students think the sports facilities at their universities are sufficient, it is seen that 80,8 % of the students from Gaziosmanpasa University, 84,3 % of Celal Bayar University and 76,4 % of Gazi University replied "No" to this question. On the other hand, % 50,7 of Inonu University replied "Partly".

**Table 10. The university-based distribution of whether the participants think the sports facilities at their universities are sufficient**

Are there sufficient sport facilities at your university?	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	3	3,8	1	0,5	-	-	15	3,5	18	3,5
No	42	80,8	182	84,3	133	76,4	19	27,5	376	73,6
Partly	8	15,4	33	15,3	41	23,6	35	50,7	117	22,9
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$X^2= 130,803$        $df=6$        $P<.05$

To the question of "which sports organization would you like to be organized at your university?" in Table 11, 23,2 % of the participants replied "camping activities for nature sports" and 20,3 % "sports practices for fun".

**Table 11. The university-based distribution of which sports organization the participants wish to be organized the most at their universities**

Which sports organization the participants wish to be organized the most at their universities	Gaziosmanpasa University		Celal Bayar University		Gazi University		Inonu University		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Tournaments between departments and faculties	17	32,7	50	23	21	12,1	12	17,4	100	19,5
Sports practices for fun	18	34,6	68	31,3	55	31,6	14	20,3	155	30,3
Sports programs for health	2	3,8	25	11,5	20	11,5	11	15,9	58	11,3
Camping activities for nature sports	9	17,3	44	20,3	48	27,6	16	23,2	117	22,9

Athlete training programs	2	3,8	14	6,5	16	9,2	13	18,8	45	8,8
Folk dance	3	5,8	15	6,9	14	8	3	4,3	35	6,8
Others (for relieving stress)	1	1,9	1	0,5	-	-	-	-		
<b>TOTAL</b>	52	100	217	100	174	100	69	100	512	100

$X^2= 45,850$        $df=18$        $P<.05$

## Discussion and Conclusion

18 items in the survey were tested with chi-square test at the 0.05 significance level based on the answer rates of the students from each gender. Accordingly, it was observed that there was a significant level of gender-based difference at 12 items in the survey.

18 items in the survey were tested with chi-square test at the 0.05 significance level based on the universities that the students are studying at. Accordingly, it was found that there was a significant level of difference among 11 questions in the survey.

It is also observed that university students spend most of their time listening to music (23.9 %) and spare the least time on using computers (0.09 %). As to sports, the rate of the time spent is 12.2 %. The data collected by Oluobur from a mixed group of first generation university students in South Nigeria shows that students spend 23.58 % of their weekly time on listening to music, which has the highest percentage compared to other activities (Oluobur, 2007).

Furthermore, it is observed that there is a difference among the universities with regards to the variety of activities their students can do in their free time ( $P<.05$ ). The rate of playing sports in Turkey is %0.8 (Acikada, 1990). This figure reflects the percentage of certified athletes in overall population.

The time that university students spare for leisure activities varies from 1.31 to 4.30 hours with the percentage of 68.4 % (Table 1). In a research conducted by Ekici, this figure changes between 0 and 4 hours at 70.8 % (Ekici, 1997).

75 % of the students answered “No” to the question whether they thought the recreational areas on campus were sufficient (Table 2), and 73.4 % of them said “No” to the question whether they thought the leisure activity organizations at their universities were sufficient (Table 3).

Sports and cultural activities, together with touristic and recreational trips, are at the top of the list of the recreational activities the students wish to have at their universities (58.4 %, Table 4); however, it is observed that the students does not have access to these activities (69.7 %, Table 5) . This shows us that universities are not able to employ effective methods to canalize their students to these useful activities. In a study done by Aydogan et al., 52 % of the students state that they do not have access to necessary facilities to make use of their free time (Aydogan & Aral, 2007).

Looking at why the students take part in recreational activities reveals that 40.8 % does it for fun and excitement (Table 5) while 20.3 % for ridding themselves of stress. It is seen that their reasons for participating in sports activities are to have fun, make use of their free time and dispel stress- with a total of 73 % (Table 8). Karakucuk argues in his book that sport activities can successfully satisfy the recreational needs of people. Recreation, in return, plays an important role in recognition and acceptance of sports throughout the society, and it can bring about bigger sportive successes in the long run (Karakucuk, 1999).

Looking at Table 7 for the students’ interest levels in sports, we can see that the university youth is intensely interested in sports be it actively or passively. 47.1 % of the total 71.5 % engages in sports as a leisure activity and 24.4 % as viewers. Likewise, in the conclusion of his study titled “The factors that affect the interest of university students in sports”, Guclu indicates that university students in general are highly interested in sports (Guclu, 1996).

65 % of the students indicated that their universities did not have sufficient areas for sport activities (Table 9); similarly, 73.6 % replied “No” to the question whether there were sufficient sport facilities on their campus (Table 10). This result shows that there are very few opportunities for students to engage in sports in Turkish universities. In a study by Ergul, it is found out that 56.8 % of the students did not believe they were quiet able to participate in sport activities at their universities. In another study, Con observed that 18.67 % of the students surveyed used the sport facilities in their schools, while 33.33 % partly used them and 48 % did not use them at all (Con, 1995). In their 1993 article titled “University Students’ Views and Expectations about Sports” Yalcinkaya, Saracoglu and Varol found out that 63.4% of the students did not make use of the sport facilities in their schools while 21% partly made use of them, and 5,6% used them regularly (Yalcinkaya, 1993). These findings are compatible with and supportive of our research. Also, a 1994 survey of junior high school students by Goktas found that 63.8 % of the students were actively engaged in sports while 36.2% were not involved in sports regularly (Goktas, 1994, p.29). This shows that sports activities tend to decrease with the start of college life (Guclu, 1996). The current study also suggests that those students who previously took part in sports activities stopped doing so at college.

In their study conducted among the students registered in health and kinesiology courses at a South American university, Kilpatrick et. al. found out that the participants had differing motivations for either taking part in sports or doing exercise. The primary motivations for taking up sports were found to be competition and challenge, establishing friendship and socializing, having fun and desiring to be succesful. On the other hand, the reasons for doing exercise were stated as being related to health and physical fitness (Kilpatrick& Hebert,& Bartholomew, 2005).

In another study, Kroupova focuses on the relationship between students’ interest in sport and their participation in physical activities. The study concludes that the most popular sports

activities are the ones that are not organized but are taken up by students in their leisure time (Kroupova, 2002).

In 2001 Gauthier and his friends observed that “adult males prefer doing exercise and fitness in their free time while women choose passive activities in their leisure” (Gauthier, 2001).

In conclusion, the education level of a student was found to have a positive influence on the issues such as use of leisure, participation in recreational activities and interest in sports. Comparing the findings of our research with other works, it can be concluded that university students are more conscious than other groups in terms of making use of leisure time, and they are also more active and selective in recreational activities. Additionally, they follow sport activities with great interest. It is understood that although university students have high levels of interest in sports and other activities, recreational areas and sports facilities are not sufficient to satisfy this interest. It is found out that even though university students are very eager, they are not able to participate in sports or recreational activities due to lack of organizations, facilities and incentives. It is seen that students from different universities have varying degrees of interest in various recreational activities.

If young people in higher education can make use of their leisure time in constructive ways and participate in or organize recreational activities, this will play a positive role in the development of their personalities. It is among the major duties of university administrators to create necessary recreational areas for young people who are the safeguards of our future. Therefore, in order to ensure that college students participate in recreational and sport activities regularly, various recreational activities should be planned and organized, more importantly, incentives should be created for all socio-cultural activities, and these activities should be supported.

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