

# Relationships between participation in recreational activities and leadership behavior: a study on the secondary school students\*

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## Abstract

Recreation is defined as the optional and voluntary activities that are carried out individually or in a team in leisure times other than obligatory ones, and that give satisfaction to the individuals, by eliminating the adverse effects of the industrial society. As is seen, recreation becomes a dynamic lifestyle and culture element which remains widespread in the modern society. Emphasizing the concept of recreation and its important role on personal development in general on leadership attitudes in particular, it is aimed to reveal the effects of the participation of the secondary students in the recreational activities on the leadership attitudes. To reach this end, a survey is conducted on 289 secondary school's students in Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir. Data is submitted to factor, frequencies, reliability and ANOVA analyses through SPSS 13.0 demo version. The findings reveal that students who are engaging in sports activities have higher scores on transformational leadership traits while students who are not engaging such activities mainly exhibit transactional leadership behaviors. Moreover, the findings reveal that the scores for both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors of students who are engaging sports activities are higher than the scores of students who are not carrying out these activities. The results underline the fact that participation in sports activities as recreational activities plays an important role on the development of leadership attitudes for secondary school students

**Keywords:** Recreation, personal development, leadership.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the industrial revolution, the life style of the human beings has been dramatically changed. The intense work load, routine life style and environmental contingencies that emerge as a result of this change, have affected the individuals and society in a manner that today it is an imperative for the individuals to gain back and maintain their physical and mental health. This need of today's modern societies is met with recreational activities (12). Recreation is basically identified as a set of activities which enables the individuals to protect themselves from the negative impacts of industrial revolution. Individuals, participate in the recreational activities just by willingly within their leisure time, active or passive, outdoors or indoors. Individuals may carry out recreational activities communal or solitarily. Recreational activities also

result with satisfaction for the participants. Therefore, according to the widely held assumption, recreational activities gradually become a vital component of the life and culture within the modern societies.

Participating in recreational activities has shown to have important effects on personal development as well as physical and mental health. Particularly within the adolescence period in which the personality traits such as leadership become more visible, the implications of recreational activities on the adolescent development are a matter of concern (7,8,11).

In this paper the effects of sports activities as recreational activities on the leadership behavior of the secondary school students are theoretically and empirically investigated. The paper is organized in five sections. After the introduction, the concept of

recreation and its effects on modern society and personal development are discussed. Then on third section the methodology is presented; following the third section, the analysis and the findings take place on the fourth section. The findings with the implications are discussed in the final section.

### The Concept of Recreation

Human beings need and want to go out, get rest, feel excited, socialize, visit new places, and by doing so keep and improve their mental wellbeing. In this vein, they participate in many different activities indoor or outdoor, actively or passively, individually or within a team, in the city or in the country. Recreation is a concept that involves all these optional and voluntary activities and it is related with the individuals' leisure times. Here we are talking about activities carried out daily, at weekends, per year or at retirement leisure periods. These activities gain a meaning and purpose through the individuals' perceptions. This subjective feature of the recreation makes it a challenge to reach a consensus regarding an ultimate definition of recreation (5).

Recreation, takes its root originally from the Latin word "recreatio" which means to recreate or restructure. Today we generally use the term recreation to express the leisure activities. These leisure activities involve any activity that the individuals voluntarily or optionally engage in order to rest or entertain in their leisure time (10).

According to the classical approach, which considers it as a re-creating activity, recreation is composed of any activities that renews and comforts the individuals after obligatory work hours. To take the advantage of the leisure via recreational activities is indeed related with the life philosophy of the individuals and societies (15).

On the other hand, the modern approach considers recreation as a social institution, a knowledge body and a profession. Here recreation arises as a tool towards happiness that meets a vital need of the modern society. From the modern perspective, recreation is conceptualized as the leisure activities that individuals engage in voluntarily and optionally, and through these activities they get satisfaction (13). Similar with the classical approach, which emphasizes re-recreational aspect of recreation, this modern approach underlines the fact that human beings need to restart and be renewed after the work time in order to

become happy and healthy both physically and mentally (8). According to this definition, individuals are renewed and developed through voluntary and optional leisure activities which take place in different locations. The routine work environment and the monotonous of the daily life lead to the burn out syndrome. People are got bored more and more and their satisfaction and happiness levels dramatically incline. So recreational activities play a role as a renovator which can provide a change, renewal and excitement to the monotonous lives of the common people. In this sense, it is assumed that recreation and recreational activities are the musts of modern life which is becoming more and more complicated day by day (11).

Recreation which is recognized as basic need of modern human being, involves any activity, training, opportunity and counseling related with the leisure (9). According to Beyer, recreation implies gaining physical and mental wellbeing through pleasurable and enjoyable events and activities (2). Another definition highlights personal development aspect of recreation by arguing that recreation involves participation in any activity that results with gaining new knowledge and skills, renewal, entertainment and relaxation (7).

Recreation can be categorized into many types and dimensions based on the aim and type of the activity it involves. In this direction, there are some differing opinions regarding what really fits into the umbrella of recreation. It is a challenge to clearly draw the boundaries of recreation and categories of recreational activities and decide what really recreation is. For example, a professional soccer player carries out this sport based on monetarily gains; so it is completely a part of his job. On the other hand, the same soccer player can play soccer game just for fun, relaxation and socialization with his friends in his leisure time. This time, this game is a recreational activity. Moreover it is also possible to claim that someone watching that soccer game is passively engaging in a recreational activity.

A music teacher may offer his/her students to participate in informal guitar lessons after the formal school time. The students may optionally and voluntarily engage these lessons just for fun, entertainment and socialization. This willingly and voluntarily participation indeed composes a recreative activity. However if the same teacher declares that students should participate in these after school guitar lessons, these lessons transforms

into obligatory education. In this sense, the freewill of the students is hindered and they are obligated to take this guitar lesson. So this given guitar lesson is no longer a recreational activity (8).

Recreation, involves both a social wellbeing, and personal improvement purposes. In order to understand these two different but interrelated purposes, one should look at the historical development of recreation;

➤ Recreation, originally aims to enable the individuals to entertain and rest,

➤ With the recognition of the educational role of recreation, the personal development and dissemination of societal values becomes the main issue for the recreation studies (10).

The first perspective takes recreation into account as a complementary component of the work life (6). Individuals put behind the work stress and exhaustion by engaging sports, arts, music and likewise activities communal or solitarily (14). However the ends of the twentieth century have witnessed the rise of a new health consciousness which attaches great important on mental, physical or societal wellbeing and strong social bounds. Accordingly the content of the recreation moves from the complementary component of the work life to the vital part of a healthy society. This perspective provides new directions to the recreation studies. For instance the role of recreation on learning, personal development and motivation, the link between recreation and crime rates are the popular subjects for today's recreation literature (3).

Based on the given arguments the effects of recreational activities on the adolescents of modern societies, who haven't completed their personal development and started a professional life, may contribute to the individual and social wellbeing and thus enrich the recreation literature. The crime rates of the adolescents are increasing day by day in addition to spreading bad habits among these young individuals. These given threads prevent the individuals from completing their personal developments. So, the question of whether the recreation may take a part as a barrier among the increase of the crime rates of the adolescents and spread of bad habits like drugs through healthy activities has long been a concern for the policy makers, teachers and families. Particularly, the role of recreational activities in shaping the personal traits of the adolescents, such like leadership, is the

main subject of this paper. We try to put a light to this area by examining the interrelationships between participation in recreational activities and leadership behaviors of the adolescents at secondary education.

## MATERIAL & METHOD

### Research Model

This research uses relational screening model study which aims to investigate the relationships between the participation of secondary school students in sports activities and their scores in leadership behaviors. Relational screening model is a research model aiming to detect the existence and/or level of covariance between two or more variables. We decided to use relational screening model, because we aim to expose whether there is a difference or not on the leadership behaviors between the students who are engaging in sports activities and who are not. In parallel with the existing literature, we take the leadership behaviors into account with two types as transactional and transformational. Indeed transactional and transformational are the two modes of leadership that tend to be compared the most. Burns (4) distinguishes between transactional leaders and transformational by explaining that: transactional leader are leaders who exchange tangible rewards for the work and loyalty of followers. On the other hand, transformational leaders are leaders who engage with followers, focus on higher order intrinsic needs, and raise consciousness about the significance of specific outcomes and new ways in which those outcomes might be achieved. Transactional leaders tend to be more passive as transformational leaders demonstrate active behaviors that include providing a sense of mission. Accordingly our null and alternative hypotheses are;

H0a: The transactional leadership behaviors of the secondary school students do not differ according to their participation in sports activities.

H1a: The transactional leadership behaviors of the secondary school students differ according to their participation in sports activities.

H0b: The transformational leadership behaviors of the secondary school students do not differ according to their participation in sports activities

H1b: The transformational leadership behaviors of the secondary school students differ according to their participation in sports activities

### Sample

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of recreation on the development of leadership behaviors by comparing the leadership behaviors of the adolescents who are engaging in sports activities with the ones who are not. In order to empirically investigate the given relationship, the students of secondary schools are chosen as the universe. However because of reaching such a great amount of population, 350 students of two boarding secondary schools –one in Izmir and the other in Istanbul- are chosen as the target group of the research because of their availableness. E-mail and face to face interviews are used for gathering data. Total of 289 questionnaires among 350 has returned. The ratio of participation is approximately 82.57 %. The 41.2% of the participants are at the age of 16; the 39.6% of the participants` family income level is at 1500-3000 YTL; 60.2% of them have a family member who support them to engage in sports activities; 52 % of them had engaged sports activities before the secondary school; and finally 61.6% of the participants are actively engaging in sports activities in the secondary school (Table 1).

### Data Collection Tools

In order to get demographic information of participants, individual information form was used, and in order to assess the leadership behaviors, existing leadership scales are adopted to the student level. All items were measured on a seven point Likert-type scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Data is evaluated through SPSS 13.0 demo version. The relationships between the variables are tested using factor, frequencies, and reliability and ANOVA analyses.

**Individual Information Form:** An individual information form developed by the researcher is used to collect students` demographic information.

**Leadership Behaviors:** In order to measure the leadership behaviors of the students, four questions for the transactional leadership and four questions for the transformational leadership adopted from the Bass and Avolio`s (1) leadership scale.

### Reliability and Validity

Since the scales were used with a new sample, 8 items are submitted to exploratory analysis. A

principal component analyses and scree plot indicates that three factors should be retained (eigenvalues above1.0). The best fit of data is obtained with a principal factor analysis with varimax rotation.

**Table 1.** The characteristics of the sample.

	n	%
Age		
14	10	3.5
15	53	18.3
16	119	41.2
17	77	26.6
18 and higher	30	10.4
Total	289	100.0
Income level		
< 500 YTL	3	1.0
501 – 1000 YTL	24	8.3
1001 – 1500 YTL	48	16.6
1500 – 3000 YTL	114	39.4
3001 and higher	100	34.6
Total	289	100.0
A family member encouraging to engage in sports activities		
Yes	174	60.2
No	115	39.8
Total	289	100,0
Sports before secondary education?		
Yes	123	52.6
No	166	57.4
Sports at secondary education?		
Yes	178	61.6
No	111	38.4

**Table 2.** Factor analyses of the leadership measures.

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Transactional Leadership		
Transactional 1	.712	
Transactional 2	.748	
Transactional 3	.662	
Transactional 4	.758	
Transformational Leadership		
Transformational 1		.723
Transformational 2		.795
Transformational 3		.688
Transformational 4		.706

The results of factor analyze shows that the variables are gathered in two factors. Factor 1 consists of four transactional leadership items with an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Alpha) of 0.70. Factor 2 includes four transformational leadership items with an internal consistency

reliability coefficient of 0.71. Reliability coefficients are at and just above (0.70 and 0.71) the threshold value of Nunally (0.70). So we come to the conclusion that our scales are valid and reliable. Table 2 shows the factor loadings of transactional and transformational leadership behaviors while Cronbach's Alpha values are shown in table 3.

Variable	$\alpha$
Transactional leadership	0.70
Transformational leadership	0.71

## RESULTS

The data is submitted to ANOVA analysis in order to determine if the secondary school students' the leadership scores are varied with their participation in sports activities. The analysis revealed a significant differences between the groups' means ( $F = 5.141$   $p < 0.01$  for transactional leadership, and  $F = 7.011$   $p < 0.01$  for transformational leadership) both for transactional and transformational leadership behaviors. Thus, the results demonstrate that the secondary school students' the transactional and transformational leadership scores are varied due to their participation in sports activities, rejecting  $H_0$  and fully supporting  $H_1$ . This important finding addresses that participation in sports activities as recreational activities is an important factor to determine leadership behaviors within the personal development of secondary school students.

In addition to the ANOVA analysis, we compared the means of the leadership behavior scores of the students who participated in the sports activities with the ones who are not participated, in order to find the answer to question of in which direction are the leadership behavior scores of the students distributed due to their participation in the sports activities. The differences between the means reveal that the students who are engaging sports activities have higher scores on transformational

leadership traits while students who are not engaging such activities mainly exhibit transactional leadership behaviors. Moreover the findings show that the scores for both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors of students who are engaging sports activities are higher than the scores of students who are not engaging these activities.

## DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the concept of recreation that is considered to be an important way of gaining and maintaining the physical and mental wellbeing for the members of modern societies who are suffering from today's routine and monotonous life style, intense work load and effects of environmental conditions; and that has a vital role on personal development. Recreation enables individuals to take pleasure and enjoy their life as well as preventing the negative impacts environmental threads. Individuals engage in recreational activities voluntarily and optionally in their leisure time, communal or solitarily. Moreover, the ends of twentieth century witness the involvement of recreational activities to the education system in addition to the social life. Especially there is trend to prepare the curriculums of secondary schools in a way that they include higher amounts of recreational activities. The reason underlying this trend is that recreational activities; (i) support the personal development of the adolescents, (ii) contribute to decrease the crime rates among the adolescents, and (iii) help to protect the adolescents from bad habits like drug addiction. Accordingly this study aims to enrich the existing literature by revealing the differences between the adolescents who are and who are not participating in the recreational activities. In order to demonstrate the effects of engaging in such activities, this study takes the students of secondary school as the main target and investigates the effects of engaging sports activities as recreational activities on the personal development of students based on the leadership behaviors.

Leadership Behaviors	Variance K.	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Transactional	Btw. G	4.446	2	2.223	5.141	.006
	Inside G.	153.209	286	.432		
	Total	128.105	288			
Transformational	Btw. G	6.604	2	3.302	7.011	.001
	Inside G.	134.711	286	.471		
	Total	141.316	288			

**Table 5.** The distribution of the mean scores across the participation in sports activities.

	Students engaging in sports activities					Students not engaging in sports activities				
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	s.d.	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	s.d.
Transformational	111	1.00	4.00	1.8964	.65785	178	1.00	4.67	2.0896	.75117
Transactional	111	1.00	4.00	1.9865	.65146	178	1.00	4.00	2.0373	.75368

According to the findings, engaging in sports activities raises as an important determinant for development of both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors, in line with the existing literature. Specifically the findings reveal that students who are engaging in sports activities have higher scores on transformational leadership traits while students who are not engaging such activities mostly show transactional leadership behaviors. This means that the students who are engaging in sports activities are showing a leadership behavior that is open to change and innovation, and that attach importance on the development of other friends –followers- than transactional leadership behavior. On the other hand the students who are not carrying out any kinds of sports are mostly demonstrating a transactional leadership trait which involves rewarding their friends –followers- in order to reach their aims. Moreover, the findings reveal that the scores for both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors of students who are engaging sports activities are higher than the scores of students who are not carrying out these activities. These results underline the important role of recreational activities on adolescents' personal development as the ones engaging in sports activities are more social and innovative and sensible to their environment. In this sense, the findings of this paper provide empirical evidence in support of the positive implications of recreational activities on personal development and education system. In particular these results should be considered for the adolescence period in which the individuals are more open to bad habits and are more likely to engage in crime activities. So there is no doubt that the curriculums of secondary schools should involve higher amounts of sports and other kinds of recreational activities. Here there is a great responsibility for the teachers, politicians and decision makers to integrate the recreation in to the education system and fund these developments in a successful manner.

The findings of this study cannot be taken as definite evidence, because several limitations to the study results deserve commentary. First, this study

is conducted on the students of just two boarding schools –one in Izmir and other in Istanbul-; a more homogeneous sampling may provide more generalizable results. Second, there was not a sport branch separation while evaluating data; results may differ for kinds of branches. Finally our sample size is relatively small (N=289). Despite these limitations, this study provides important implications from theoretical and practical perspectives. In sum, this study indicates that participation in sports activities as recreational activities is an important determinant if personal development of the secondary school students in general, leadership behavior development in particular.

In terms of suggestions for future research, the authors would like to see a larger and more homogeneous sample –not limited with Izmir and Istanbul-. As noted above, a separation concerning the sport branches would be insightful for developing a model of the variation of the leadership behaviors. Finally, extending the model with different variables motivation, self-respect and discipline is also encouraged. This research has just scratched the surface of this important but understudied subject. Future researchers will find the subjects of crime rates or drug addictions to be a rich source of questions for the recreation field.

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