



Social Reflections of the Employment of Recreation Specialists in Turkey

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Abstract

Recreation specialists are crucial when helping to disseminate recreation to both the needs of the individual and the society. The aim of this study is to examine the increase in employment rates of recreation specialists in Turkey, looking specifically at the economic, social, and psychological dimensions. This research is structured using qualitative research methods and techniques and is designed as theoretical analytical research. A document analysis approach was used when collecting qualitative data, while a descriptive analysis approach was used in the solution of the data. In addition, a reflection on where the research was conducted was discussed within the scope of a potential increase in employment of recreation specialists and the impact it would have on the economic, social, and psychological dimensions of Turkey.

Key Words: Economics, Employment, Recreation, Recreation Specialist, Society.

Türkiye’de Rekreasyon Uzmanları İstihdamının Toplumsal Yansımaları

Özet

Rekreasyon, bireysel ve toplumsal ihtiyaçların karşılanmasında değer bulmuş bir kavramdır. Rekreasyon uzmanı ise bu değerın vücut bulmuş halidir. Dolayısıyla toplumun rekreasyon uzmanlarına, rekreasyon uzmanlarının ise istihdam artışına ihtiyacı ortadadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı; rekreasyon uzmanlarının istihdamının artırılması durumunu; toplum bazında ekonomik, sosyal ve psikolojik boyutlarıyla incelemek ve bu alt boyutların toplumsal yansımalarını ele almaktır. Bu araştırma nitel araştırma yöntem ve teknikleri kullanılarak yapılandırılmış ve kuramsal analitik araştırma olarak desenlenmiştir. Çalışmada nitel veri toplama yöntemlerinden doküman incelemesi kullanılmış ve verilerin çözümünde ise betimsel analiz yaklaşımı esas alınmıştır. Araştırma amaçları doğrultusunda, rekreasyon uzmanlarının istihdamının artması dahilinde toplumun ekonomik, sosyal ve psikolojik çıktılarının ve toplum açısından olumlu dönütlerinin neler olabileceği ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ekonomi, İstihdam, Rekreasyon, Rekreasyon Uzmanı ,Toplum.

INTRODUCTION

The word recreation is derived from the Latin word *recreare*, which means re-creation or refreshing. In the years that followed, it was expressed in various dictionaries as "reviving spiritual power or spirit, rebirth". In fact, recreation corresponds to experience of regeneration, escape from daily routine, revival, and change (15). Recreation is all about the needs of the people, it can give them a sense of freedom, the needs to gain success, to prove themselves, to express their personality, to be appreciated, to gain social status, and to gain new experiences (17). In addition, recreational activities can positively affect the individual, their relationships, and socio-cultural adaptation, by enabling the individual to get rid of many difficulties in life and to improve themselves (33). The first examples of the recreation movement were in the United States of America in the middle of the 19th century. This was initiated by the state to provide desirable social outcomes (29). Since the recreation movement became a state policy, pressure was put on relevant institutions to invest in leisure time resources, such as, parks and recreation areas, and to increase scientific studies on the outcomes of recreation on the individual (23).

When looking at the historical process of recreation in Turkey, it was found that Turkey planned to increase the worldwide importance of recreation. To provide public attention, the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (1990-1994), purposed that recreation education be mentioned under the title of principles and policies as follows: "A department of recreation will be opened in the physical education and sports schools of universities in order to train qualified personnel to carry out educational and organizational activities in the use of leisure time" (27). In 1996 recreation was evaluated within the scope of the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan (1996-2000) and it was decided that recreation departments at universities needed to be open to provide the manpower needed for the effective use of free time, to educate the personnel who will give trainings, and to conduct recreation organizations (28).

Recreation and leisure are some of the biggest and fastest growing industries in the world. When we consider the development process of recreation in

Turkey, we can see that educational recreation departments were first opened at the School of Physical Education and Sports. Then in 2010, Gazi University was approved to establish the Department of Management of Recreation within the Faculty of Tourism. Today, Turkish universities have a total of 76 recreation departments, 65 of which are State and 11 are Foundation (14), many students have graduated from recreation departments within the Faculty of Sports Sciences, Schools of Physical Education and Sports, and Schools of Science and Technology within the scope of education. With the number of programs and graduates many are finding it hard to get employed as a recreation specialist.

The scope of employment is quite wide, but at its core "employment, which means putting into service, using it in service" can be defined simply as "employing people and their being accepted to work" (35). However, employment policies, refers to the planning of practices aimed at solving the problems caused by the imbalance arising from the supply and demand of the labor force, by maintaining the growth and ensuring stability in an economy. Increasing the level of welfare by ensuring economic growth and stability, ensuring justice in income distribution and equal opportunities within the society, using the factors of production effectively, combating problems caused by unemployment because of poverty and deprivation, and making it possible for individuals to live their lives in a way that suits human dignity, involves rules and procedures (8). At this point in time, one of the most fundamental duties of states is to protect their citizens from the negativity of unemployment while using their political authority to create employment opportunities. For this reason, before examining the employment policies, it is thought to be useful to examine the dimensions of unemployment caused by the state policies, and the dimensions of unemployment in national and international terms today (18).

According to the October 2019 Labor Force Statistics, of the Statistical Institute of Turkey; the number of employed people throughout Turkey during October 2019 decreased by five hundred twenty-seven thousand persons compared to the same period of the previous year and became 28.343 million people. This means that the employment rate became 45.9% with a 1.6 percentage point decrease. As of 2020, we have nine hundred twenty-eight thousand unemployed university graduates, and nine hundred forty-seven thousand university graduates who do not even look for employment, as

they know there is no hope. This means that the total number of university graduates, as of 2020, is reported as one million, eight hundred seventy-five thousand (31). Üni-Veri is a national study that reveals the employment rates of the universities in Turkey based on departments, the rate of employment, and employment in the public sector in the first year, average wages, and sectorial distribution of employment and qualification mismatch. According to the Üni-veri 2019 data of the Presidential Human Resources Office of the Republic of Turkey; percentage rates of employment in sports sciences are as follows: on sectorial basis; education (31.1%), other service activities (15.0%), culture, arts, entertainment, recreation, and sports (12.5%), administrative support and service activities (8.0%), other (33.4%). Within the distribution ratios specified on a sectorial basis, it is important for the recreation department graduates to be employed in the sectors suitable to their education and training fields in terms of individual, social and industrial aspects. Article 49 of the Constitution of Turkey states that,

"Work is everyone's right and duty" ...
 "The state takes the necessary measures to increase the life level of the employees, to protect the employees and the unemployed, to support working, to create an economic environment conducive to prevent unemployment and to ensure work peace."

Therefore, while working is one of the social rights of individuals, protecting the unemployed and preventing unemployment are among the duties of the state (1). In other words, the education provided in the recreation-related departments of the universities should not be considered only within the scope of students. Every individual who graduates with the identity of recreation specialist must be knowledgeable about how to provide qualified leisure time, as well as be able to play an important role in maximizing the quality of life of other individuals within society. From this point of view, supporting the state is also inevitable, as they can help provide employment for recreation specialists, which in terms would increase the welfare and the qualified leisure time of the individuals in the society. On the other hand, failure to provide employment can cause social, economic, and psychological problems in all social dimensions as well as individual effects. Lack of necessary income in the economic dimension can cause individuals to lose

their sense of economic confidence. Moreover, individuals in the society may psychologically face negative factors such as unhappiness, anxiety, and depression.

The aim of this study is to examine how an increase in employment of individuals who graduate from recreation departments of universities in Turkey fits within the economic, social, and psychological dimensions on the social basis, and to consider the social reflections of these sub-dimensions.

Methods

In terms of the methods used, Creswell (9) expresses qualitative research, as a process of interpretation by questioning social life and human-related problems with unique methods. The research conducted in this study is structured using qualitative research methods, as well as, techniques and patterns, such as, theoretical analytical research. Theoretical analytical research is defined as a research pattern for determining and analyzing the current situation. In this context, with a qualitative approach, one can focus on the answer of "What is it?" to explain the historical and social development. Accordingly, answers are sought for questions such as "what is the situation?" (11). In this study particular study, document analysis was one of the qualitative data collection methods. It was used in accordance with qualitative research to reach the analytical analysis. In addition, document review was also used as document review is the analysis of written and visual materials containing information about the phenomena aimed to be investigated (37). Books, articles, statistics, theses, and pictures are among the first documents that help in providing information about the subject being researched (4, 5).

The data collection phase covered three months and consisted of corresponding with relevant institutions to obtain necessary information, examining the statistical data located on the institution's websites, and combing through written articles and books. In this study, a descriptive analysis approach was taken as basis for presenting the findings. Descriptive analysis is the presentation of data with a descriptive approach by making direct quotations from what people say, write, and the contents of the documents, by adhering to the original forms of the data used in the qualitative analysis (21).

Recreation specialists who have graduated from university recreation departments could be employed in the public sector, private sector, or take part in voluntary work. Since employment status and the framework for suitable employment is based on a sectorial basis, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, this study is limited to the public sector. By being limited to the public sector the study can focus on the responsibility that the state has on creating suitable environments to prevent unemployment.

Findings

Although employment and unemployment are two different concepts, they can be linked as different sides of a coin that looks at the individual as a common denominator, and in which individuals endure, influence and are affected (36). In this context, the issue of employment, should not only be considered individually, but should be also considered as an issue that concerns the public. In this section, in line with the research purposes, the economic, social, and psychological outcomes of the society and the positive feedbacks for the society are discussed within the scope of the employment of recreation specialists.

Economic consequences

Recreation can have a large effect on the economic landscape of a society. For instance, offering investment opportunities in private and public spheres, encouraging a reduction in general health expenditures by participating in regular recreation and sports activities, and creating new job opportunities contribute to economic growth and development (10). Political steps also add a different dimension to the issue when we think of society-oriented economic growth. For example, the Tenth Development Plan (2014-2018) is aimed at achieving a higher education system that is sensitive to the needs of the society and the economy, how it interacts with its stakeholders, and how the production information transforms into product, technology, and service. Thus, the Tenth Development Plan has decided that their main objective is to create a labor market where decent work opportunities are offered to all segments of the society, and the quality of the workforce is increased and used effectively (25). Nevertheless, when evaluating and analyzing the Üni-veri (2014-2018), graduate information, obtained from the Higher Education Institutions and the employment data from the Social Security Institution, the rate of employment in the public sector of

graduates of sports sciences is stated as 9%. Comparing this percentage to the amount of state universities within Turkey, the low rate of employment in the public sector of graduates of sports sciences is a red flag that employment is not being provided. However, within the framework of an effective labor market, and economic feedback of the society can be provided to help increase employment rates in the relevant field.

In Turkey, recreation department graduates can find jobs at universities, Youth and Sports Provincial Directorates, within the tourism sector (animation, water sports, recreational activities, etc.), in the social-cultural and healthy life recreational activities, within public and private organizations, local government agencies, and at federations and sports clubs in the field of coaching and coordination (20). When looking at the employment rate of recreation specialists who have received an education from a university with a recreation department, one can see that these individuals should be able to move to a stage where they transform their knowledge into production. According to Levine (22) when the economy operates in full employment conditions, the growth rate of potential output shows an improvement depending on the potential productivity and the growth rate of the labor supply. Thus, the importance of increasing the needs of employment will directly affect the economic growth within the society. When evaluating these needs from an administrative point of view, we can determine that political authority plays an important role in ensuring and developing the societal participation in recreation. The political authority also has certain responsibilities, such as, providing investments that will allow the use of leisure time, distributing recreational activities to the society, and taking economic and social measures that will facilitate the societies participation in leisure activities (16). The common denominator in all of this, is to increase the employment rate of recreation specialists, as they are qualified to perform these crucial functions.

Social consequences

Recreation contributes positively to the social structure of a society as it provides cooperation, helps develop team spirit, allows the society to understand each other, social connectivity, increases the quality of social life, and ensures the inclusion of all age groups within the social structure (10). Economic and social development within a society primarily focuses on the goals of achieving inclusive growth,

raising living standards, increasing sustainable employment, creating quality jobs, and promoting economic and social progress. Therefore, today's development approach considers not only the improvements in economic indicators, but also the advancements in the level of social development (26). Universities are among the institutions that are highly ranked in adding a different dimension to social development.

Universities can take on different forms and tasks when it comes to being a center with specific production factors. Such factors are, a mentally and physically forming environment, an intellectual field enlightening and directing the society, contributing scientifically to the development of underdeveloped regions, educating students with a scientific mindset for universities and high schools, and fostering critical thinking (6). If we consider these requirements when looking at recreation departments, we must first specify the number of

recreation specialists who have graduated from specific recreation departments. This data set will be the primary support of the study.

On April 12, 2000, a meeting took place of the Higher Education Institution at Muğla University, School of Physical Education and Sports. It was there that it was decided that a recreation department within the school would be opened in accordance with Articles 7 / d-2, 7/4 of Law No. 2547 amended by Law No. 2880. During the 2000-2001 academic year, the department opened its doors to 30 students (39), since the initial inception an evaluation has taken place over a seven-year period. This evaluation was based on the number of recreation specialist who graduated from the department, with data being stored in the Higher Education Information Management System (13) from the 2012-2013 academic year until the 2018-2019 academic year, see Table 1.

Table 1. Recreation Specialist Graduation Data Based on Academic Year*

Academic Year	Number of Students Graduated
2012-2013	435
2013-2014	649
2014-2015	632
2015-2016	743
2016-2017	721
2017-2018	963
2018-2019	1123
TOTAL	5321

*Data set is from the Higher Education Information Management System (13)

When looking at the increase of graduates on a yearly basis, it is expected that the rise is a direct proportion to the employment rate, since each employed recreation specialist is an important building block in creating equal conditions and contributing to social development. According to Tezcan (30) for many people, participating in leisure activities increases their social status. If we take this approach but look at it from a different perspective, we can say that individuals who can express themselves better through recreational activities contribute to social solidarity and integration because of their ability to participate in recreational activities under equal conditions, even if they have different personalities. The fact that individual and social benefits are so intertwined emphasizes why

recreation and recreation specialists play a large role in the social dimension.

Psychological consequences

In addition to industrialization, there have been changes in human relations brought on by competition for employment opportunities, employment problems, and job placement concerns. One issue that many people experience when it comes to these factors is loneliness. This tends to be brought on by the decrease in the amount of time that individuals devote to themselves and to their socialization needs. Loneliness can be defined as the lack of satisfactory interpersonal relationships and has been cited as one of the bases of psychological problems (12). In addition to providing the environment and experiences needed for the development of psychological and emotional health,

recreation also provides a psychological effect with its social and physical benefits (2). Due to this, it should be noted that increasing the employment rates of recreation specialists would provide positive outcomes regarding psychological benefits. As not only would the individual perspective change, but the effects would produce a more well-rounded social service. Therefore, it is expected that this need regarding human resources will increase and employment areas should expand. Steps on how this expansion might take place can be found in the following paragraph.

In the Special Expertise Commission Report, it is stated that "local administrations should be enabled to establish a recreation directorate". While in the Tenth Development Plan (2014-2018), creating programs to improve the mental health of individuals and improving the quality and quantity of community-based mental health centers are mentioned. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is within the scope of responsible institutions and organizations, in terms of developing mental health services (25). Employment of recreation specialists in relevant institutions and organizations is important as it can directly impact the mental well-being of individuals who constitute the society. The implementation of this approach is also an important step when protecting the mental health of individuals in the society. According to Yurcu (38) when recreation activities are consciously selected and carried out, it is possible to improve individuals physiologically, to ensure their intellectual development, to improve their social relations, to improve their mood and to increase their happiness level.

When looking at the results of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) "Life Satisfaction Survey" for 2018 the proportion of happy people among the citizens of our country decreased from 58 percent to 53.4 percent, and the rate of individuals who stated that they were unhappy increased from 11.1 percent to 12.1 percent. It is observed that the happiness rate, which was 53.6 percent in 2017 for men, decreased to 49.6 percent in 2018 and from 62.4 percent to 57 percent in women (32). It is possible to prevent negative emotions of individuals within the society by promoting and running recreational activities. For this study, conscious selection of recreational activities is a basic element for choosing the most appropriate recreational activity for individuals. When creating awareness throughout the society, it is necessary to increase the employment rate of

recreation specialists, as they trained to make recreational activities a life-style choice all Turkish citizens.

Conclusion

Recreation is a concept that consists of economic, social, and psychological dimensions, while exhibiting social gains. When it comes to economic gain, the income belonging to the individual comes to mind first, while social gains are perhaps ignored or not considered very important. However, increasing the welfare of the society is the most important gain of a country. Recreation specialists are a leading factor regarding establishing positive effects of a recreation-society combination. For the benefits of recreation specialists to be put into practice, we need the state, the right policies in place, and the importance of recreation to be completely understood within society. One of the most crucial steps to making this happen is to create new opportunities that will in turn increase the employment rates of recreation specialists in relevant public institutions. Recreation professionals can find employment opportunities in public, private and voluntary organizations such as Youth and Sports Provincial Directorates, tourism sectors, universities, federations, and sports clubs.

The impact on economic investments that are achieved by increasing employment rates and opportunities have a large effect on the earnings of the individual, the society, and the state. Thus, the issue of employment needs to be evaluated as it is an underlined issue when it comes to economic gain. When looking at the amount of qualified people in the field of recreation, one could argue that there is a direct correlation between employment in recreation and the economic growth and stability levels of welfare within the country. According to Kayhalak (19) the degree of possibilities a community has or develops can play a central role in bettering the future of the economy. This fact could cause industries to be interested in recreation and leisure services as an economic investment.

The integration of leisure and recreation services, with a concentration on daily commercial participation, enables the creation of new businesses and employment. Recreation is considered a necessity for a society because of its constructive and positive features. The need for recreation and their corresponding facilities creates a need where the results are generated by industrialization and urbanization (24). Today, certain values and

approaches have shifted within urbanization and have had a negative effect on the socialization level of individuals within the society. Therefore, while talking about the concept of recreation, it is necessary to emphasize its effects on socialization. Bucher and Bucher (7) emphasize that socialization, in relation to recreation, can be defined as getting rid of the boredom of daily life and gaining a social personality by interacting with other people through participating in social, cultural and sports activities that are suitable and enjoyable for the person (34).

In addition, recreation practices make the individual, who is a social entity, at peace with oneself, whose inner world is happy, productive, and extrovert. In this way, the individual involved in every stage of social life increases their productivity and happiness without being stuck between narrow patterns (3). Happy individuals tend to have a positive impact on social welfare at the point of solidarity and integration. Regardless of whether it is handled individually or evaluated in terms of social benefits, the importance of recreation has a significant place in providing socialization. Recreation specialists are responsible for making individuals understand the importance of a healthy relationship with recreation. However, this responsibility is an element that should be evaluated as a top priority to protect the field of recreation. This will ensure that the required fields of application are increased. At this point in time, necessary steps should be taken by management to increase the employment rate of recreation specialists. By increasing the employment rates of recreation specialists, the quality of social relations of individuals will rise and the foundations of a healthier society will be brought forth by social formations. These formations consist of a society that contributes to the creation of a healthy cultural structure in the social dimension, while also, taking into consideration the socialization of everyone within the society.

In addition to the economic and socialite outputs of recreation, the dimension of psychological development also has an impact on the society. For this reason, it is necessary to formulate policies to ensure all individuals' psychological moods are considered. To do so political authorities should primarily focus on how individuals are benefiting from society and how it relates to their mood. For this to occur, a public perspective is needed. In the Tenth Development Plan, which is also included in this study, it is thought that the development of

community-based mental health services is the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and that every individual in the society should receive equal service. However, through this study, it has been determined that increasing the employment of recreation specialists in relevant public institutions and organizations will help to meet the psychological need of the society.

When looking at all dimensions within the society, this study has concluded that recreation is a key point in meeting the needs of the individual as well as the society. It also plays a crucial part in contributing positively to social, economic, and psychological aspects. When determining who can help the most in all areas, recreation specialists stand out as they can take their training and turn it into a concept worth investing in. However, for this to take place, the employment rate of recreation specialists must increase. Once they increase, the rise of recreational activities that follows will affect the social feedback in a positive manner. Perhaps the most important thing one can gain from this study is that by increasing the employment rates of recreation specialists in Turkey, one can then offer services that can be appreciated by the society, and ultimately provide awareness on the benefits of recreation.

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