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Investigation of Sports Habits of Pilot Candidates

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the sports habits of pilot candidates. The survey prepared by the researcher as a quantitative research method was applied to 60 pilot candidates studying at a flight school providing pilot training in the Aegean Region. During the data collection process, percentage and frequency methods were used to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and cross-tables were created. The data were analyzed in the SPSS 25 package program. According to the results of this research, which focuses on the sports habits of pilot candidates, which is an important factor in protecting both their physical and mental health and preparing for their aviation careers, 78.7% of the participants do sports regularly, while 21.3% do not do sports. Accordingly, it is seen that the majority of pilot candidates have regular sports habits, most of the pilot candidates who do sports have been doing sports 2-3 days a week for 4 years or more, and a significant portion of them have been doing sports from past to present. It has been understood that the most preferred sport among the sports types is fitness. It has been concluded that the most prominent reason for pilot candidates to do sports is to be healthy and fit. Those who do not do sports stated that they could not find the time, which was put forward as the reason for not doing sports.

Keywords: Pilot candidate, Sport habits, Sport.

Introduction

One of the main purposes of life is to have a healthy body and to live a quality life. Quality life is a way of life that makes you feel healthy, good and happy physically and spiritually. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have habits that are generally good and beneficial for our body and soul. Having a habit of doing sports is one of them.

Sports is a vital, educational and social issue that is beneficial to people both physically and psychologically and develops them socially (Yetim, 2015). Exercising has important effects on both physical and psychological health. For this reason, it is necessary to make exercising a habit and include it in our daily routine. Becoming a habit of doing sports at an early age greatly contributes to people's determination of sports as a lifestyle throughout their lives.

Although exercising is an important concept for all people, it is becoming more essential for some professional groups. One of these professions is pilots working in the aviation industry. Air transportation is becoming more common day by day. Therefore, the number of people choosing this profession is also increasing. With the development of the aviation industry, the number of schools that train pilots has also increased in order to provide the needed employment.

Pilot training is provided by flight schools authorized by the General Directorate of Civil Aviation or universities that provide academic education in the field of piloting.

Pilot training is a high cost training. In order to prevent school dropouts and failures in education, good selection criteria must be applied before starting education. Three important factors were identified in the pilot selection criteria: intelligence, psychomotor and personality (Yazgan & Erol, 2016). The piloting profession requires being knowledgeable, being able to make the right decisions, having a balanced psychology, being talented and skillful (Çetingüç, 2019). In their study, Kantor and Caretta (1988) stated that a good pilot should have very good psychomotor abilities (hand-eye coordination). emphasized (Kantor & Caretta, 1988).

Motor skills can be achieved with a sufficiently developed nervous and muscular system, and they develop well with sports and exercise. A wide variety of physical movements are more effective in the development of motor skills. The indicator of a healthy, well-developed motor skill is good coordination, fast reaction and balance (Orhan & Ayan, 2018). This shows that doing sports has an important place in the development of psychomotor skills.

It has long been predicted that flight performance is related to psychomotor ability. Research conducted in this direction has shown that candidates who have better hand-eye coordination and make faster decisions are more likely to become pilots (Şimşek, 2010).

In addition to all these, determination, quick thinking and the ability to remain calm under stress are among the characteristics that pilots must have. It is very important for pilots to have a healthy body and psychology in terms of flight safety. As stated by Imboden et al. (2022) in their study, individuals who regularly engage in physical activity have lower stress levels (Imboden, Claussen, Seifritz, & Gerber, 2022). In addition, piloting is a tiring profession due to the variability in flight hours. Exercising is also an effective tool for increasing endurance, delaying fatigue and shortening rest time (Demir & Filiz, 2004).

It is an undeniable fact that pilot candidates who choose the pilot profession, where being physically and psychologically healthy is so important, have a habit of doing sports, which will be beneficial both for the individual and for flight safety.

Material and Method

Research Group

The research group is pilot candidates studying at flight schools that provide pilot training in the Aegean Region. 61 pilot candidates participated in the research voluntarily.

Data Collection Tool

A survey prepared by the researcher was used as a data collection tool in the study. In the survey, participants were asked about their gender, age, whether they do sports regularly, for how many years they have been doing sports regularly, which type of sports they do, how many days a week they do sports, whether they do sports as a competitor or not, if so, which type of sports they do as a competitor, why they do sports, and if not, why they do not do sports. It was aimed to determine the participants' relationship with sports by asking questions about them.

Analysis of Data

During the data collection process, percentage and frequency methods were used to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and cross-tables were created. The data were analyzed in the SPSS 25 package program.

Findings

Frequency Analysis of Participants According to Demographic Characteristics

Table 1. Distribution by Gender

Gender	Number of People (n)	Rate (%)
Female	10	16,4
Male	51	83,6
Total	61	100,0

According to the frequency analysis results in Table 1; 16.4% of the participants are "Female" and 83.6% are "Male".

Table 2. Distribution by Age

Age	Number of People (n)	Rate (%)
20-25	5	8,2
26-30	33	54,1
31-35	14	23,0
36-40	9	14,8
Total	61	100,0

According to the frequency analysis results in Table 2; 8.2% of the participants said "20-25 years old", 54.1% said "26-30 years old", 32.0% said "31-35 years old", 14.8% said "36-40 years old" It falls within the age range.

Frequency Analysis of Participants' Responses to Scale Sub-Dimensions

Table 3. Frequency Analysis of Regular Exercising Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Doing Exercise Regularly	I do exercise regularly	95	78,7
	I don't do sports	105	21,3
Total		**61**	**100,0**

78.7% of the participants "do sports regularly" and 21.3% "do not do sports".

Table 4. Frequency Analysis of the Duration of Exercising Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Exercise Times	1 year	13	21,3
	2 years	5	8,2
	3 years	4	6,6
	4 years and more	26	42,6
	I don't do sports	13	21,3
Total		**61**	**100,0**

21.3% of the participants have been doing sports for "1 year", 8.2% for "2 years", 6.6% for "3 years", 42.6% for "4 or more" years. 21.3% do not do sports.

Table 5. Frequency Analysis of Sport Type Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Sport Type	Fitness	27	44,3
	Running/walking	9	14,8
	Bicycle	1	1,6
	Swimming	2	3,3
	Other and miscellaneous	9	14,8
	I don't do sports	13	21,3
Total		**61**	**100,0**

While 44.3% of the participants are interested in "fitness", 14.8% "running/walking", 1.6% "cycling", 3.3% "swimming", 14.8% "other/miscellaneous". 21.3% of them "do not do sports".

Table 6. Frequency Analysis of the Frequency of Exercising Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Frequency of exercise	I don't do it at all	13	21,3
	1 day/2 hours	3	4,9
	2 days/4 hours	17	27,9
	3 days / 6 hours	18	29,5
	More	10	16,4
Total		**61**	**100,0**

21.3% of the participants "do not do sports", 4.9% "1 day/2 hours", 27.9% "2 days/4 hours", 29.5% "3 days/4 hours". 6 hours" and 16.4% exercise "more".

Table 7. Frequency Analysis of the Sub-Dimension of Doing Sports with a Past/Current License

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Past/current Licensed Sports	Yes	30	49,2
	No	31	50,8
Total		**61**	**100,0**

While 49.2% of the participants have been or are currently doing licensed sports, 50.8% do not.

Table 8. Frequency Analysis of Licensed Sports Type Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Licensed Sports Type	Individual sports (Tennis, swimming, table tennis, etc.)	10 5	16,4 8,2
	Combat sports (Taekwondo, Judo, Karate etc.)	13 2	21,3 3,3
	Team sports (Volleyball, basketball, football etc.)	31	50,8

Total	**61**	**100,0**

16.4% of the participants have done/are doing "individual sports", 8.2% "combat sports", 21.3% "team sports", 3.3% "other/various" sports. while 50.8% "do not/have not done sports as an undergraduate".

Table 9. Frequency Analysis of the Reason for Doing Sports Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Reason for doing sports	Lose weight	3	4,9
	Relieve stress	6	9,8
	To enjoy	3	4,9
	Bodybuilding-aesthetics	12	19,7
	For health	24	39,3
	I don't do sports	13	21,3
Total		**61**	**100,0**

4.9% of the participants said "losing weight", 9.8% said "relieving stress", 4.9% said "have fun", 19.7% said "bodybuilding-aesthetic appearance", 39% said "esthetic appearance". While 3 of them do sports for "health", 21.3% do not "do sports".

Table 10. Frequency Analysis of the Reason for Not Doing Sports Sub-Dimension

Scale Subsize	Variable	N	%
Reason for not exercising	I can't find time	12	16,7
	I can't find a place to exercise	1	1,3
	I don't like doing sports	4	3,3
	I am doing sports	44	78,7
Total		**61**	**100,0**

While 16.7% of the participants do not do sports because they "cannot find time", 1.3% "cannot find a place to do sports", 3.3% do not like "doing sports", 72.1% do sports.

Table 11. Cross Table of Regular Exercising by Gender and Age

		Doing sports regularly		
		I exercise regularly	I don't do sports	**Total**
Gender	Female	7	3	10
	Male	41	10	51

Age	20-25	3	2	5
	26-30	27	6	33
	31-35	11	3	14
	36-40	7	2	9
Total		**48**	**13**	**61**

According to the cross-table results in Table 11; While 7 of the 10 female participants do sports regularly, 3 of them do not. While 41 of the 51 male participants do sports regularly, 10 of them do not. While 3 of the 5 participants between the ages of 20-25 do sports regularly, 2 of them do not do sports. While 27 of the 33 participants between the ages of 26-30 do sports regularly, 6 do not. While 11 of the 14 participants between the ages of 31-35 do sports regularly, 3 of them do not do sports. While 7 of the 9 participants between the ages of 36-40 do sports regularly, 2 do not. It is thought that the reason why pilot candidates who do sports regularly are mostly in the 26-30 age group is because the participants in the sample group are mostly in this age group. In his research, Akkaya (2021) states that in the differences in sports practices based on gender, men generally have the potential to gravitate towards sports more than women, and the expectation of men to do sports is higher. The study supports the results of this research.

Table 12. Cross Table of Reasons for Doing Sports by Gender and Age

		Reason for doing sports						
		Lose weight	**Relieve Stress**	**To enjoy**	**Body building**	**Health**	**I don't do sports**	**Total**
Gender	Female	0	1	0	2	4	3	10
	Male	3	5	3	10	20	10	51
Age	20-25	0	0	0	0	3	2	5
	26-30	1	3	2	8	13	6	33
	31-35	1	2	1	3	4	3	14
	36-40	1	1	0	1	4	2	9
Total		**3**	**6**	**3**	**12**	**24**	**13**	**61**

According to the cross-table results in Table 12; While 1 in 10 female participants do sports to relieve stress, 2 do sports for bodybuilding, 4 do sports for health, 3 do not do sports. Among the 51 male participants, 3 do sports to lose weight, 5 do sports to relieve stress, 3 do sports for fun, 10 do sports for bodybuilding, 20 do sports for health, while 10 do not do sports. While 3 out of 5 participants between the ages of 20-25 do sports for health, 2 do not do sports. Among the 33 participants between the ages of 26-30, 1 does sports to lose weight, 3 do sports to relieve stress, 2 do sports for fun, 8 do bodybuilding, 13 do sports for health, while 6 do not do sports. While 1 of the 14 participants between the ages of 31-35 does sports to lose weight, 2 do sports to relieve stress, 1 for fun, 3 for bodybuilding, 4 for health, 3 do

not do sports. While 1 of the 9 participants between the ages of 36-40 does sports to lose weight, 1 does it to relieve stress, 1 does it for bodybuilding, 4 does it for health, 2 do not do sports.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aviation industry is a sector where physical and mental health is at the forefront. Pilot candidates need regular physical activities to both cope with challenging situations in the cabin and maintain their general health. The findings obtained from this study, in which we focused on the sports habits of pilot candidates, reveal that the effects of these habits on their aviation careers are important.

Pilots need physical endurance as well as coping with stress during long flight hours. Sport is an effective tool in reducing stress levels. Physical activity releases endorphins, which improves mood. Başar (2018), in his research on two groups of 120 people who do sports regularly at least 3 times a week for at least 3 months and 119 people who do not exercise regularly, found that the group that exercises regularly has higher happiness and psychological well-being scores than the group that does not exercise regularly. It was determined that (Başar, 2018). In another study, Demir and Duman (2019) conducted a survey to examine the relationship between individuals' sports activities and their self-esteem and happiness levels. A survey was conducted on 520 people, 238 of whom do sports and 282 of whom do not do sports. Research results revealed that participants who do sports have higher self-esteem and happiness levels than participants who do not do sports (Demir & Duman, 2019). In this research, 78.7% of the participants "do sports regularly" and 21.3% "do not do sports". It can be said that the positive effects of the research results in the literature on individuals who do sports regularly can be considered as general acceptance for pilot candidates who do sports regularly.

It is obvious how important regular exercise is for pilot candidates in a profession such as piloting, which requires skills to cope with stress and where psychological well-being, self-esteem and physical fitness are important. Zhang and Lin (2013) determined, through the fitness test, literature review and mathematical statistics method they conducted to determine the physical fitness index of civil aviation trainees, that the physical fitness index of civil aviation flight trainees was higher than adults aged 20-24 across the country in 2010. They found that there was no significant difference in physical test index values when compared with undergraduate students in other departments of the same university. According to the results obtained from the frequency analysis of the regular sports sub-dimension of this research, it is thought that the fact that 78.7% of the pilot candidates participating in the research do regular sports will contribute to fulfilling their duties as pilots more. effectively in the future and will ensure physical fitness.

According to a study conducted by Doğan and İmamoğlu (2023), it was determined that the exam anxiety of sports sciences faculty students varies according to the year of doing sports. According to the results of the research, test anxiety decreases as the number of years of doing sports increases. In order to reduce exam anxiety, it is recommended that students who

do not do sports should do sports and those who do sports should be directed to sports at an earlier age. Reducing exam anxiety through sports is extremely important for pilot candidates who will serve as pilots in the future and are receiving pilot training. 21.3% of the participants of this study have been doing sports for "1 year", 8.2% for "2 years", 6.6% for "3 years", and 42.6% for "4 or more" years. It appears that he did. Pilot candidates being encouraged to do sports at an early age and having the habit of doing sports will make a significant contribution to pilot training. Factors such as long flights and varying working hours require pilots to maintain their physical and mental endurance. Therefore, pilots who have a habit of exercising can perform their aviation duties more effectively. Additionally, regular exercise can help pilots better cope with effects such as fatigue and jet lag that can occur during long flights. Pilots who have been in the sport for more than 4 years perform their duties in a healthy, ready and professional manner.

It is known that regular fitness exercises have a positive effect on anthropometric and skin-to-body fat ratios (Geri & et al., 2015). It is seen that individuals have more recreational flow experience as their age and time devoted to fitness activity increases (Yazıcı & et al., 2023). 44.3% of the participants said "fitness", 14.8% said "running/walking", 1.6% said "cycling", 3.3% said "swimming", 14.8% said " "other/miscellaneous" are interested in the branch, while 21.3% are "not doing sports". In this research, it can be said that a significant portion of pilot candidates attach importance to ensuring physical fitness by doing fitness. Fitness increases body coordination and improves reflexes. This can make it easier for pilots to deal with unexpected situations and make quick decisions. Regular aerobic exercise improves cardiovascular health and increases blood circulation. This helps pilots get oxygen more effectively at high altitudes.

Sarıkan (2021), it is important to carry out some studies that direct people to do regular sports in order to have individuals in society who are healthier both physically and mentally, have higher life satisfaction, and are more positive in terms of mood (Sarıkan, 2021). In this research, 21.3% of the participants "do not do sports", 4.9% say "1 day/2 hours", 27.9% say "2 days/4 hours", 29.5% say "3 days". day/6 hours" and 16.4% do "more" sports. The fact that a significant portion of pilot candidates do sports regularly may indicate that their physical and mental professional readiness levels have improved. Exercising 3 or more days a week helps pilot candidates maintain their physical and mental health and continue their aviation careers more effectively. Therefore, it is important that sport is an integral part of the lifestyle of pilot candidates. Studies can be carried out to direct the 21.3% of people who do not do sports to do sports.

According to the findings of this research, 49.2% of the participants have been or are currently doing licensed sports, while 50.8% do not. The fact that pilots have done sports in the past provides an advantage in terms of physical, mental and emotional health today. Therefore, it is important for individuals who are starting or preparing to start an aviation career to adopt sports as a part of their lives and exercise regularly. Although there is no study in the literature on pilot candidates who have a sports background and still continue to do so, a study examining the duration of sports activities of university students from past to present revealed that as the duration of sports increases, there may be an increase in political

leadership and leadership orientation towards the structure (Güler et al., 2020).). In this case, it can be expected that pilot candidates who have been doing sports for a long time and have been licensed sports in the past will have more political leadership and leadership orientation towards the structure.

In the research conducted by Asan and Cingöz (2021) with 316 athletes, the cognitive behavioral physical activity levels of individuals doing team and individual sports were compared and it was determined that athletes interested in team sports had a higher perception of cognitive physical activity than athletes interested in individual sports. In another study conducted by Şahinler and Beşler (2021) with a total of 337 athletes, 229 of whom were women and 108 of whom were men, who had done sports in different branches for at least 1-3 years, the mental endurance levels of those involved in team and combat sports and the years of doing sports, Differences were detected in the variables of the number of weekly training sessions. In this research, 16.4% of the participants said "individual sports", 8.2% said "combat sports", 21.3% said "team sports", 3.3% said "other/miscellaneous" sports. While 50.8% of them "do not/have not done sports under license". In order to cope with stressful situations that arise during competition, pilots undergo rigorous training, which makes it easier for them to cope with stress in aviation missions. Some competitive sports encourage teamwork and communication. This improves pilots' collaborative skills and enables them to better interact with aviation teams. Elite sports increase pilots' self-confidence. Succeeding in a challenging competition allows pilots to approach aviation missions with more confidence.

Yıldırım et al. (2006), in their study on university students' perspectives on sports and their participation in sports, found that the main determining factor for students' participation in sports activities is their circle of friends. They concluded that their students tend to do team sports because they enjoy sports activities and love sports. In another study conducted by Var (2018) with 1981 women, the main reasons for women doing sports were 'losing weight and health'. In this research, 4.9% of the pilot candidate participants said "losing weight", 9.8% said "relieving stress", 4.9% said "having fun", 19.7% said "bodybuilding-aesthetic appearance". ", 39.3% do sports for “health”. The research results are similar to the studies in the literature.

In the study conducted by Var (2018) with 1981 women, it was seen that the main reasons for women not doing sports were 'lack of time and health problems'. Abakay et al. (2023), in their study examining the relationship between the reasons for doing or not doing sports and sports awareness among university students, concluded that students do not do sports mostly due to physical reasons and lack of time. In this research, 16.7% of pilot candidate participants do not do sports because they "cannot find time", 1.3% do not do sports because "they cannot find a place to do sports", 3.3% do not do sports because they "do not like doing sports", while 78.7% do not do sports. It was determined that most of them were doing sports. In this respect, the research is parallel to the research results in the literature.

According to the cross table of reasons for doing sports by gender and age, 8 out of 33 participants between the ages of 26-30 do sports for bodybuilding and 13 for health. Among the 14 participants between the ages of 31-35, 1 said it was about losing weight, 2 of them

wanted to relieve stress, 1 of the 10 female participants, 2 of them were doing bodybuilding, 4 of them were doing sports for health, while 10 of the 51 male participants were doing bodybuilding. 20 of them do sports for health. In his research, Akkaya (2021) determined the purpose of doing sports as 'building muscle' for men and 'losing weight' for women, and stated that the understanding of sports for consumption purposes can be considered as a reflection of gender roles. In both genders, the 'ideal body' is indirectly emphasized. This is demonstrated by the importance men attach to appearing muscularly strong, and women to not being overweight and thin. The belief that an overweight woman may be more strange than a man, that women should be 'weak' and 'delicate' individuals, and that men should always look strong, reveals this result (Akkaya, 2021). The results of this research revealed that among the participants, male pilot candidates do sports to "improve their body" more than female pilot candidates. In this respect, the research is parallel to the research results in the literature. In addition, it is seen that most of the pilot candidates who do sports for bodybuilding are in the 26-30 age group. According to the results obtained from the research findings, it was determined that the participants mostly did sports for health purposes. It can be said that pilot candidates do sports with this awareness in a professional group where health is at the forefront. It is seen that pilot candidates who do sports for health purposes are in the 26-30 age group.

As a result, according to the results of this research, which focuses on the sports habits of pilot candidates, which is an important factor in protecting both their physical and mental health and preparing for their aviation careers, 78.7% of the participants do sports regularly, while 21.3% do not do sports. . Accordingly, it is seen that the majority of pilot candidates have regular sports habits, most of the pilot candidates who do sports have been doing sports 2-3 days a week for 4 years or more, and a significant portion of them have been doing sports from past to present. It has been understood that the most preferred sport among the sports types is fitness. It has been concluded that the most prominent reason for pilot candidates to do sports is to be healthy and fit. Those who do not do sports stated that they could not find the time, which was put forward as the reason for not doing sports.

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