



# Tourism and Recreation

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## A study on the relationship between recreation benefit perception and frequency of participation in recreation activities

### *Rekreasyon fayda algısı ile rekreasyon aktiviteleri katılım sıklığı ilişkisi üzerine bir araştırma*

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#### ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between university students' perceptions of the benefits of recreational activities and their frequency of participation in such activities. This study employed a quantitative research method, with a preference for using a questionnaire as the data collection technique. A total of 683 undergraduate students at Harran University Osmanbey Campus participated in the study. The study revealed substantial differences in the frequency of participants' engagement in activities based on participants' gender, age, faculty, grade level, weighted grade point averages, monthly income, hometown region, permanent residence environment and place of residence. The study also revealed important discrepancies in the perceived benefits of recreational activities among participants stratified by age, institution of higher education or faculty, grade level, monthly income, hometown, and place of residence. Additionally, the study found a significant positive relationship between the frequency of participation in recreational activities and all sub-dimensions of the perceived benefits of such activities. Consequently, these findings contribute to existing literature on the relationship among demographic characteristics, participation, and recreational activity benefits. The study offers important implications for planning activities and facilities according to students' preferences and needs.

#### ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin rekreasyonel faaliyetlerin faydalarına ilişkin algıları ile bu tür faaliyetlere katılım sıklıkları arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmada nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış ve veri toplama tekniği olarak anket tercih edilmiştir. Çalışmaya Harran Üniversitesi Osmanbey Kampüsü'nde öğrenim gören toplam 683 lisans öğrencisi katılmıştır. Çalışma, katılımcıların cinsiyet, yaş, öğrenim gördükleri fakülte, sınıf düzeyi, ağırlıklı not ortalamaları, aylık gelir düzeyleri, geldikleri bölge, ikamet ettikleri yerdeki çevreleri ve öğrenim sürecince kaldıkları yere göre faaliyetlere katılım sıklıklarında önemli farklılıklar olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma ayrıca, katılımcıların rekreasyon faaliyetlerinden algıladıkları faydalarda yaş, yükseköğretim veya fakülte, sınıf düzeyi, aylık gelir, memleket ve ikamet yerine göre anlamlı farklılıklar olduğunu göstermiştir. Ek olarak, rekreasyon faaliyetlerine katılım sıklığı ile bu faaliyetlerden algılanan faydaların tüm alt boyutları arasında pozitif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak, bu bulgular demografik özellikler, katılım ve rekreasyonel faaliyetlerin faydaları arasındaki ilişkiye dair mevcut literatüre katkıda bulunmaktadır. Çalışma, faaliyetlerin ve tesislerin öğrencilerin tercih ve ihtiyaçlarına göre planlanması için önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the advancement of technology, the rise of industry, and the fiercely competitive commercial environment have considerable psychological, physiological, and sociological implications for individuals, causing feelings of stress and burnout (Üstgörül, 2021). This situation prompts individuals to engage in recreational activities that enhance their physical well-being and mitigate stress (Karakaya et al., 2021). In particular, the process of urbanisation has led to a

greater propensity among individuals to engage in outdoor recreational activities (Dirlik & Köroğlu, 2021). These activities confer benefits to the mental and physical health of those residing in urban environments, fulfil psychological needs and facilitate social interaction (Sevil, 2012; Torkildsen, 2005). It is also of considerable importance to provide recreational services that align with the leisure time preferences of university students. This study aims to investigate the relationship between university students' perceptions of the benefits of recreational activities and their

frequency of participation in such activities.

The term "recreation" encompasses the activities that individuals engage in during their leisure time, once their daily responsibilities have been fulfilled. It is a domain that offers a multitude of benefits, as evidenced by Akyüz (2020). These activities facilitate physiological and psychological renewal because they are tailored to the preferences and expectations of individuals and because they are voluntary. Furthermore, recreational activities have been demonstrated to enhance physical and mental relaxation, enjoyment, satisfaction, and overall quality of life (Üstgörü, 2021). The benefits of such activities can be classified into three main categories: physiological, psychological, and social. From a physiological perspective, recreational activities can alleviate sub-optimal health conditions and promote physical fitness. From a psychological standpoint, they can foster self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Social benefits include the expansion of social networks and an increase in trust (Geng et al., 2023). Bright (2000) emphasized that the benefits of recreational activities cover all aspects of human existence and defined the benefits of recreational activities as psychological (e.g. improved self-concept, the reflection of personal values, peak experiences), psychophysiological (e.g., cardiovascular health, disease control, mental and physical recovery), sociological (e.g., promotion of community stability, family solidarity, cultural identity), economic (e.g., employment, income, reduced health care costs) and environmental (e.g., conservation/preservation).

The benefits of recreational activities are discussed also according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Individuals can rest and recover physically and mentally by participating in activities addressing their physiological needs. In terms of safety needs, activities are carried out under the necessary safety measures and the voluntary participation of individuals in activities is ensured, thus increasing the self-confidence of individuals. Regarding affiliation and love needs, individuals may participate in group activities and engage with diverse individuals to foster social connections. Moreover, feelings such as love of nature, helping others, and desire for social responsibility fulfil the love needs of individuals. Regarding the need for prestige and status, participation in activities, success, and leadership satisfy the need for approval from others, status, and prestige in society. Finally, recreational activities fulfil the self-realization needs of individuals by activating emotions such as fighting spirit, rebellion, desire for success, and struggle with oneself and others (Ardahan & Kalkan, 2017).

It is extremely important that the choice of activities is compatible with the individual's abilities and needs. To achieve this, it is vital to cultivate awareness about the advantages of recreational activities and social needs (Öztürk, 2021). The concept of recreation awareness encompasses an understanding of the significance of activities for the individual and the benefits of participation. It is imperative to foster this awareness (Demirel et al., 2021). In the context of recreation businesses, it is essential to continuously develop the content of social, cultural, sports, health, art and education-oriented activities in accordance with societal expectations and the identified needs of the community (Şimşek, 2018). It

is incumbent upon municipalities and public institutions to consider the demands of individuals and the potential of the area when determining the quality of recreation areas (Öztürk, 2021). Recreation areas in universities and cities are important for the improvement of students' quality of life and the enhancement of their educational experience (Kement, 2019).

Participation in recreational activities is important for the happiness and general well-being of individuals (Soyer et al., 2017) and is associated with physical and mental health (Müderrişoğlu & Uzun, 2004). Continuing these activities after a university education depends on awareness and experience (Kozak & Doğantan, 2016). Recreational activities provide individuals with feelings and habits such as making good use of their free time, doing sports, sharing, solidarity, a sense of victory and defeat, appreciation, following the rules, group awareness and success (Eravşar, 2020). The ability of university graduates to continue these activities depends on how much they internalise awareness and experiences (Kozak & Doğantan, 2016). Despite extensive research on the benefits of recreational activities (Chen et al., 2013; Christensen et al., 2013; Demirbaş, 2020; Dirlık & Köroğlu, 2021; Duman et al., 2022; Ellis et al., 2002; Geng et al., 2023; Gümüş & Koç, 2019; Kırtepe & Uğurlu, 2023; Kozak & Doğantan, 2016; Yerlisu et al., 2012), there is a lack of studies examining the direct relationship between the perception of these benefits and the frequency of participation, particularly among university students. This study seeks to address the problem of understanding how university students' perceptions of the benefits of recreational activities influence their participation frequency, which has notable implications for enhancing student well-being through targeted recreational programming.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

The perception of recreational benefits is contingent upon the extent to which individuals are aware of the advantages of these activities. This awareness affects their participation and choices (Öztürk, 2022). Recreational activities have been demonstrated to confer a range of benefits, including cognitive, physical, health-related, social and psychological advantages (İskender et al., 2015; Karakaya et al., 2021). Such activities facilitate socialisation, personal development, physical fitness and the attainment of healthy living conditions, thereby enhancing life satisfaction and happiness (Eskiler et al., 2019; Güldür & Yaşartürk, 2020). Furthermore, they engender positive effects in the context of business life, enabling individuals to engage in self-care, renewal and the promotion of their physical and mental health, while simultaneously enhancing work efficiency (Can, 2015). Studies conducted on various samples concluded that individuals' perceptions of recreation benefits affect their body esteem (Bülbül et al., 2021), happiness (Chen et al., 2013; Parlak, 2023; Yalçınkaya, 2019; Yalçınkaya et al., 2022), academic self-efficacy (Ayhan et al., 2022), life satisfaction (Güldür & Yaşartürk, 2020; Öztürk, 2022), recreational well-being (Lee et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2019), leisure satisfaction (Eskiler et al., 2019), subjective and psychological well-being (Cuenca-Amigo et al., 2017; Geng et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2016), quality of life (Chin-Tsai, 2013; Ho, 2018; Kim et al., 2016) and job satisfaction (Chin-Tsai, 2013). Although

previous studies have explored the benefits of recreational activities, there is limited research on how these perceived benefits influence the frequency of participation among university students.

Recreational preferences and tendencies of individuals vary depending on their socio-demographic characteristics and the characteristics of recreational areas in their environment (Önaç et al., 2018). Furthermore, various studies conducted on diverse samples found that the frequency of participation in recreational activities differed noteworthy based on factors like gender, age, education level (İskender et al., 2015), gender, income level (Müderrisoğlu & Uzun, 2004), type of activity, college attended (Kement, 2019), gender, marital status, age, income level (Demirbaş, 2020), gender, grade level, income level, and length of residence (Önaç et al., 2018). Furthermore, the propensity of individuals to partake in recreational activities is subject to variation based on their demographic characteristics. To illustrate, while males are inclined to partake in activities that necessitate greater physical exertion (İskender et al., 2015), the Faculty of Theology exhibited the lowest monthly engagement in social activities. Students at the School of Physical Education and Sports exhibited the lowest rates of participation in reading books, while students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences demonstrated the highest rates of attendance at cinemas and theatres (Kement, 2019). These findings indicate that the frequency of engagement in recreational activities is influenced by socio-demographic characteristics. Based on this evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to demographic characteristics (H<sub>1a</sub>: gender, H<sub>1b</sub>: age group, H<sub>1c</sub>: school of higher education/faculty, H<sub>1d</sub>: grade level, H<sub>1e</sub>: weighted grade point averages, H<sub>1f</sub>: monthly income, H<sub>1g</sub>: hometown region, H<sub>1h</sub>: permanent residence environment, H<sub>1i</sub>: place of residence, H<sub>1j</sub>: duration of activity participation, H<sub>1k</sub>: the club membership status) of university students.

The benefits derived from participation in recreational activities are subject to variation contingent on the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual. Previous studies showed that individuals' perceptions of the benefits of recreational activities differ according to different variables, including gender, age, income level (Yalçınkaya et al., 2019), age, grade level, grade point average (Parlak, 2023), gender, grade point average (GPA) (Ayhan et al., 2022), gender (Chen et al., 2013), grade level, status of active participation in sports, perceived family income and participation in leisure activities (Akyüz, 2020), level of interest in sport and whether they are members of student clubs (Üstün & Üstün, 2020). The benefits that individuals ascribe to recreational activities are subject to variation according to socio-demographic characteristics, which in turn informs the design of strategies to enhance awareness. For instance, women (Ayhan et al., 2022) and individuals under the age of 21 (Yalçınkaya et al., 2019) are more likely to perceive the benefits of recreational activities than men and other age groups. Furthermore, students who express interest in sports or who are members of

student clubs demonstrate heightened awareness of the advantages associated with these activities (Üstün & Üstün, 2020). The findings indicate that the perceived benefits of recreational activities are subject to variation based on socio-demographic characteristics. Based on this evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference in the level of perception of recreation activities according to their demographic characteristics (H<sub>2a</sub>: gender, H<sub>2b</sub>: age group, H<sub>2c</sub>: school of higher education/faculty, H<sub>2d</sub>: grade level, H<sub>2e</sub>: weighted grade point averages, H<sub>2f</sub>: monthly income, H<sub>2g</sub>: hometown region, H<sub>2h</sub>: permanent residence environment, H<sub>2i</sub>: place of residence, H<sub>2j</sub>: duration of activity participation, H<sub>2k</sub>: the club membership status) of university students.

The abundance of available options for leisure activity evaluation and people's diverse physical and psychological needs result in changing leisure activity preferences. Participation, activity type, and frequency are all linked to individual needs (Eravşar, 2020). Previous studies concluded that there is a relationship between the level of participation in recreational activities and the perceived benefits of recreational activities (Chen et al., 2013; Geng et al., 2023) and that involvement in recreational activities affects the perceived benefits (Chin-Tsai, 2013; Li et al., 2021; Ho, 2018). Moreover, Dirlık & Köroğlu (2021) found a correlation between participating in recreational activities' purposes and the benefits obtained. The frequency with which individuals participate in leisure activities also increases the benefits they derive from the activities. Studies conducted on various samples concluded that increasing the frequency of participation in leisure activities has a positive impact on individuals' healthy lifestyle behaviours (health responsibility, physical activity, nutrition, spiritual development, relationships, stress management) (Kırtepe and Uğurlu, 2023), flow experiences (Duman et al., 2022; Kozak & Doğantan, 2016), happiness and quality of life (Demirbaş, 2020), life satisfaction (Yerlisu et al., 2012), psychological well-being (Gümüş and Koç, 2019), health and quality of life (Ellis et al., 2002), and depression levels (Christensen et al., 2013). The findings of the research indicate a correlation between the degree of participation in recreational activities and the perceived benefits derived from such activities. While previous studies have investigated the benefits of recreational activities and the relationship between various benefits and individuals' participation in recreational activities, there is a lack of research on how these perceived benefits affect the frequency of participation among university students. Based on this evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant correlation between university students' perception of the benefits of recreational activities and their frequency of participation in such activities.

Recreational activities promote social interaction and increase happiness while supporting physical health (Aksu, 2020). Therefore, recreation is considered a need for human well-being (Erol & Koçak, 2021). One of the theories developed to explain why individuals engage in recreational activities is Abraham Maslow's (1943) needs model (Eryılmaz & Akgündüz, 2017). According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs,

**Table 1.** Frequency of participation in recreation activities

Recreation Activities	$\bar{X}$
Intellectual Activities	3.9253
Activities with Friends/Relatives	3.7570
Travelling Activities	3.3792
Artistic and Cultural Activities	3.3441
Other Individually Performed Activities	3.2826
Nature-Based Activities	3.0717
Voluntary Activities	2.9619

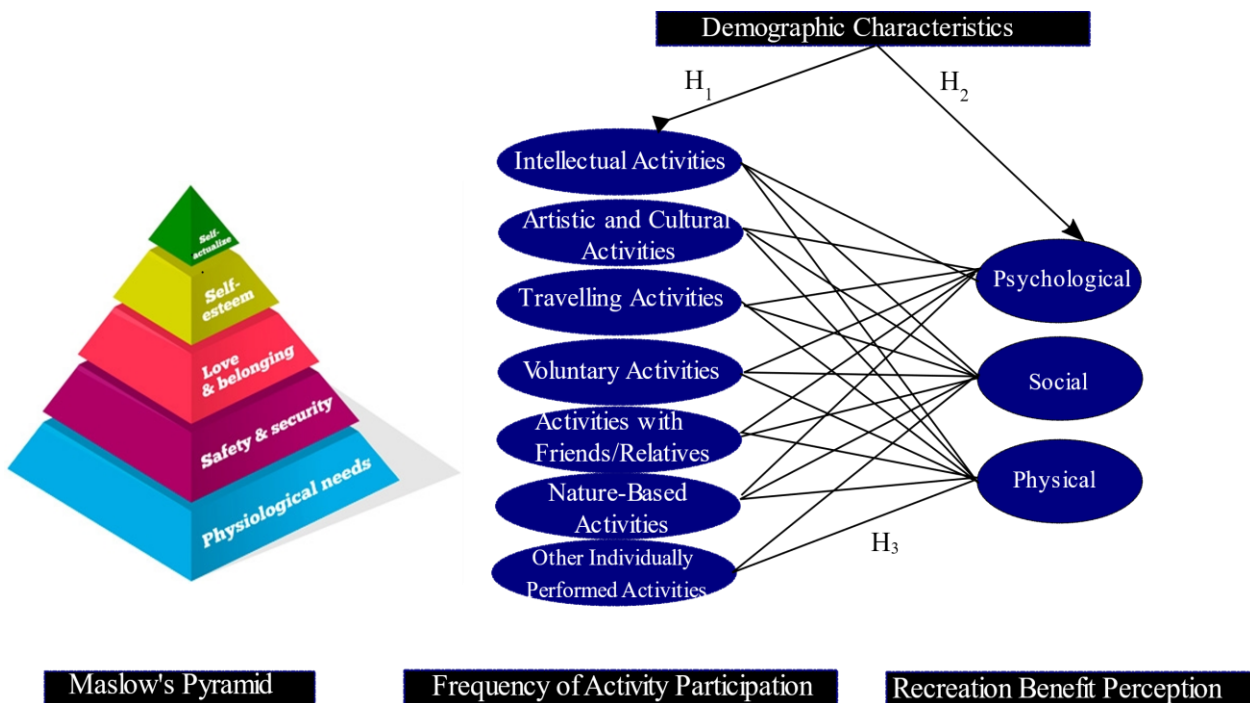
Source: Created by author

the needs for love and belonging, dignity and self-actualisation are directly related to recreation. Physiological and safety needs can also be satisfied through recreation in modern societies (Aksu, 2020). As a result, leisure activities address the entire hierarchy of needs. Gastronomic activities are generally undertaken to meet the need for eating and drinking, but they are more commonly undertaken as recreational activities to spend quality time (Karakan, 2021). The need for rest is also met both mentally and physically through recreational activities (Ardahan & Kalkan, 2017). The

need for security can be met through defensive sports and activities that provide fitness, confidence and agility (Aksu, 2020). Joint recreational activities create an environment of trust and tolerance by improving neighbourly relations (Öz & Ardahan, 2023). After meeting their mandatory needs, individuals begin to meet their social and psychological needs. Leisure activities facilitate socialisation, build new relationships, evoke positive emotions and support personal development. In terms of the need for respectability, leisure activities provide self-confidence and self-esteem (Aksu, 2020). Participation promotes respect in different social contexts. For example, an individual who participates in athletics and wins an award in a competition increases the respect of his or her peers (Gökçe, 2020). Individuals can express themselves through activities such as paragliding (Aksu, 2020). The research is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs model and was conducted according to the relational survey model. The relational survey model investigates the change of two or more variables together (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2018). The research model is shown in Figure 1.

### 3. Methods

The research is based on the experiences of undergraduate students enrolled at Harran University's Osmanbey Campus. Given the potential for discrepancies in the availability and perception of recreation facilities across different campuses, the largest and most comprehensive campus, Osmanbey, was selected for investigation. The campus comprises eleven faculties/schools with a total student population of 13,238. The sample size was determined to be 381, with a 5% margin of error, using the table of sample sizes for various population sizes (less than 50,000) (Balci, 2011). The data were gathered between November and December 2023 using convenience



**Figure 1.** Model of the research

Source: Created by author.

**Table 2.** Participants' perception of benefits of recreation activities

Benefits of Recreation Activities	$\bar{X}$
Psychological benefits (self-growth, mental stress relieving vb.)	3,9405
Social benefits (social relationship, family bonding vb.)	3,8814
Physical benefits (disease prevention, body fitness, bodybuilding, etc.)	3,8417

**Source:** Created by author.

sampling, due to limitations in terms of cost and time. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling method in which the sample segment to be selected from the main population is determined by the researcher. The representativeness of convenience sampling is constrained by the possibility of biased sample selection (Haşiloğlu et al., 2015). To address this issue, participants from all faculties/schools were included in the sample. The questionnaires were administered face-to-face by the surveyors in the central cafeteria, which is a common gathering area for the participants. The questionnaires were administered face-to-face in the central cafeteria, and 683 valid questionnaires were obtained due to incorrect or incomplete responses.

A quantitative research method was employed in this study, with a preference for utilizing a questionnaire as the data collection technique. The questionnaire has 44 questions, including 11 about demographics, 2 about field competence knowledge, 24 about the perception of recreational activity benefits, and 7 about participation frequency. In the questionnaire form, the scale measuring the frequency of participation in recreational activities was formulated by Güven (2018). The scale's sub-dimensions and dimensions are outlined in Table 1. The Cronbach Alpha reliability value of the scale was found to be  $\alpha:0.782$ . The version of the recreation benefit scale developed by Ho (2008), translated into Turkish by Akgül et al. (2018) and the validity and reliability study were used. The scale comprises three dimensions. The recreation benefit scale's sub-dimensions and dimensions are outlined in Table 2. The Cronbach Alpha reliability value of the scale was found to be  $\alpha:0.958$ . The alpha coefficient indicates that the scales are highly and very highly reliable (Kalaycı, 2006). Normality tests showed that the skewness and kurtosis values were less than  $\pm 1,500$  and the distribution was normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Therefore, parametric tests were used in the analyses. Independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were utilised to analyse the correlations between the participants' demographic characteristics, and their perception of recreational benefits, their frequency of participation in recreational activities. Correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between perceived recreational benefits and frequency of participation in recreational activities. The IBM SPSS 21.0 software was employed for the analytical procedures. The study's compliance with ethical principles was approved by the Harran University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee during its session on 14.04.2023, with board decision number 2023/54.

#### 4. Results

This section presents the results of the analyses. Table 1 offers

the average frequency of participation in different recreational activities categorised by type. The results indicate that the participants primarily engage in intellectual activities ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.9253) and activities with their close environment ( $\bar{x}$ : 3.7570), while voluntary activities ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.9619) are the least participated in.

Table 2 depicts the average data reflecting the participants' views on the benefits of recreational activities. Although the participants' perceptions of the psychological benefits of recreational activities are high, the mean perception levels of the benefits of recreational activities are similar.

Hypothesis 1a: There is a remarkable difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities gender of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in activities related to nature ( $t$ : -5.463;  $p$ : .000), volunteering ( $t$ : -4.583;  $p$ : .000), travel ( $t$ : -6.404;  $p$ : .000) and artistic and cultural pursuits ( $t$ : -3.488;  $p$ : .001) varies according to gender. Males tend to participate more frequently in activities related to nature, volunteering, travel, and arts and culture than females do.

Hypothesis 1b: There is a meaningful difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to age group among university of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in a range of activities, including nature ( $F$ : 10.561;  $p$ : .000), volunteering ( $F$ : 17.234;  $p$ : .000), travel ( $F$ : 15.243;  $p$ : .000), intellectual pursuits ( $F$ : 3.751;  $p$ : .024) and arts and culture ( $F$ : 9.946;  $p$ : .000) varies according to age group. Participation in these activities generally increases with age group (17-20, 21-23, 24+). Additionally, the 17-20 age group demonstrates a higher frequency of engagement with intellectual activities.

Hypothesis 1c: There is a significant difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the school of higher education/faculty of university students ( $p < 0.001$ ). Students enrolled in the School of Physical Education and Sports and the Faculty of Fine Arts demonstrate a greater propensity to engage in all types of activities. Students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences participate less frequently in nature-based activities, while students of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Tourism participate less frequently in volunteer activities. Students of the Faculty of Health Sciences participate less frequently in travelling activities, while students of the Faculty of Theology participate less frequently in artistic, cultural and other individual activities. Participation in friends and intellectual activities is high.

Hypothesis 1d: There is a notable discrepancy in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the grade level of university students ( $p < 0.001$ ). The frequency of participation in activities related to nature ( $F$ : 10.467;  $p$ : .000), volunteering ( $F$ : 9.936;  $p$ : .000), travel ( $F$ : 6.646;  $p$ : .000), and arts and culture ( $F$ : 6.789;  $p$ : .000), varies based on the participants' grade level. Participation frequency increases as the participants progress through their education until the 3rd grade. However, participation frequency decreases in the 4th grade, which may be due to participants preparing to enter the workforce.

Hypothesis 1e: There is a noticeable discrepancy in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the weighted grade point averages of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in voluntary (F: 5.469;  $p$ : .000) and travelling activities (F: 3.737;  $p$ : .005) note worthily differs based on the participants' weighted grade point averages. Participants with a GPA of 2.00 and below exhibits a notable decrease in activity participation in these two activity types. Conversely, individuals with higher averages demonstrate a higher frequency of activity participation.

Hypothesis 1f: There is a significant difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the monthly income of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in all types of activities varies by monthly income. Participation frequency increases with monthly income level in all activity types except intellectual activities. Participants with a monthly income of 1000 ₺ or less have a noteworthy lower frequency of participation in voluntary activities ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.5035) and activities in nature ( $\bar{x}$ : 2.6525).

Hypothesis 1g: There is a remarkable difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the hometown region of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in activities such as nature (F: 8.771;  $p$ : .000), volunteering (F: 5.400;  $p$ : .000), travelling (F: 6.187;  $p$ : .000), culture and arts (F: 7.230;  $p$ : .000), and other individually performed activities (F: 3.270;  $p$ : .004) varies note worthily according to the participants' home regions. Students from the Mediterranean and Central Anatolia demonstrate a greater propensity to engage in activities that are primarily oriented towards the natural environment. Students from the Marmara and Aegean regions are more likely to engage in volunteering activities. Students from the Mediterranean and Aegean regions participate more frequently in travel-related activities. Conversely, students from the Black Sea and Aegean regions engage more often in artistic and cultural activities. Students from the Black Sea and Central Anatolia participate in individual activities more frequently. Students from South-eastern Anatolia participate less in all activities than their peers from other regions, which may be attributed to living with their families (53.8%) or in state dormitories (37.2%).

Hypothesis 1h: There is a noteworthy difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the permanent residence environment of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in nature-related activities (F: 8.120;  $p$ : .000), travel activities (F: 5.477;  $p$ : .001), and artistic and cultural activities (F: 4.583;  $p$ : .003) varies based on the participants' permanent residence environment. Participants who grew up in rural areas participated less in these activities compared to those who grew up in metropolitan areas. Similarly, participants who currently reside in metropolitan areas also showed lower participation rates in nature activities.

Hypothesis 1i: There is a significant difference in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the place of residence of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in various recreational activities

varies according to the place of residence of the participants during their period of study at the university. Individuals residing with family or relatives are less inclined to engage in activities beyond their immediate vicinity and intellectual pursuits. Those residing in state-owned dormitories demonstrate a lower level of participation than those living in rented properties or private dormitories. Individuals residing in rented properties or private dormitories tend to exhibit a higher degree of social and economic autonomy, with 63.5% of this cohort and 62.9% of those residing in private dormitories, apartments, or hotels reporting a monthly income of 3.001 or above.

Hypothesis 1j: There is a notable discrepancy in the frequency of participation in recreational activities according to the duration of activity participation of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of participation in all activity types differs notably based on the time allocated by the participants for the activity. As the time allocated by the participants for the activity increases, so does the frequency of activity participation.

Hypothesis 2b: There is a noticeable discrepancy in the level of perception of recreation activities according to the age groups of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). Participants' perceptions of social benefits (F: 5.079;  $p$ : .000) vary by age group (17-20, 21-23, 24+). Social benefits perceived by the participant's increase with age.

Hypothesis 2c: There is a meaningful difference in the level of perception of recreation activities according to the school of higher education/faculty of university students ( $p < 0.001$ ). Participants' perceptions of all types of benefits, including physical (F: 11.284;  $p$ : .000), social (F: 8.236;  $p$ : .000), and psychological (F: 6.865;  $p$ : .000), differ note worthily based on their school of higher education or faculty. In parallel with the frequency of activity participation, the perceived level of benefit among students from the School of Physical Education and Sports and the Faculty of Fine Arts is higher. The perceived level of benefit from recreational activities among students of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Faculty of Medicine is lower in parallel with the frequency of activity participation.

Hypothesis 2d: There is a significant difference in the level of perception of recreation activities according to the grade level of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The participants' perceptions of the social (F: 5.753;  $p$ : .001) and psychological (F: 3.375;  $p$ : .018) benefits of recreational activities differ depending on their grade levels. Participants' perception of the benefits of recreational activities increases in tandem with their frequency of participation until the 3rd grade, after which it slightly decreases. This could be attributed to the fact that participants are preparing to enter the workforce, as previously mentioned.

Hypothesis 2f: There is a remarkable difference in the level of perception of recreation activities according to the monthly income of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). Participants' perceptions of all benefit types vary according to their monthly income. The perceived benefit of recreational activities by participants increases with the monthly income level in parallel with the frequency of activity participation.

Hypothesis 2g: There is a noteworthy difference in the level of perception about recreation activities according to the hometown region of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The psychological ( $F: 2.189$ ;  $p: .042$ ) and social ( $F: 2.332$ ;  $p: .031$ ) benefits perceived by the participants from recreational activities vary based on their hometown regions. Students from the Black Sea Region perceive higher psychological benefits and social benefits from recreational activities compared to students from other regions. On the other hand, students from the South-eastern Anatolia Region perceive lower psychological benefit and social benefits from recreational activities compared to students from other regions, which is consistent with their lower frequency of activity participation.

Hypothesis 2i: There is a notable discrepancy in the level of perception about recreation activities according to the place of residence of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The perceived physical ( $F: 2.770$ ;  $p: .041$ ) and social ( $F: 4.779$ ;  $p: .003$ ) benefits of recreational activities vary based on the participant's place of residence during their university education. Participants who live with family or in state dormitories perceive lower physical and social benefits from recreational activities as their frequency of participation increases. Moreover, participants who reside in rented houses, private dormitories, apartments, or hotels and participate in recreational activities more frequently tend to perceive greater physical and social benefits. This could be attributed to their increased social and economic freedom.

Hypothesis 2j: There is a noticeable discrepancy in the level of perception about recreation activities according to the duration of activity participation of university students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The physical benefits ( $F: 3.072$ ;  $p: .027$ ) perceived by participants vary based on the time they allocate to the activity. As the time allocated by the participants to the activity increases, the physical benefit perceived by the participants from recreation activities also increases.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant correlation between university students' perception of the benefits of recreational activities and their frequency of participation in such activities. The results from the Table 3 support this hypothesis ( $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation analysis showed a notable positive relationship between the frequency of participation in all types of recreational activities and all sub-dimensions of perceived benefits from such activities. The study found a positive relationship between the frequency of participation in artistic and cultural activities and the sub-dimensions of perceived benefits from recreational activities, with a medium-level correlation coefficient of 0.30-0.64. Similarly, a low-level positive relationship (0-0.29) was observed between the frequency of participation in other recreational activities and the sub-dimensions of perceived benefits from recreational activities. The correlation coefficient between 0-0.29 indicates a weak or low relationship, while a coefficient between 0.30-0.64 indicates a moderate relationship. The correlation coefficient between 0-0.29 indicates a weak or low relationship, while a coefficient between 0.30-0.64 indicates a moderate relationship (Ural & Kılıç, 2013). The correlation coefficients for voluntary activities and other individual activities are lower. Furthermore, when evaluating the

cumulative relationship between the frequency of participation in recreational activities and the benefits of recreation, a moderate positive relationship ( $r: 0.403$ ;  $p: .000$ ) was found.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

The study demonstrated that there were notable discrepancies in the frequency of participation in activities as a function of demographic characteristics, including gender, age, faculty, grade level, GPA, income, hometown, residence environment, and location. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies conducted in terms of demographic variables such as gender, grade level and income (Aslan & Karaküçük, 1997), gender, age and income (Demirbaş, 2020), gender and age (İskender et al., 2015), faculty (Kement, 2019), gender and income (Müderrişoğlu & Uzun, 2004), gender, grade level and income (Önaç et al., 2018). However, Aslan and Karaküçük (1997) posited that recreational participation is not contingent on environmental factors, economic status, field of education, or the academic success of the student. Furthermore, a notable discrepancy was observed between the time allocated for leisure activities and the frequency of recreational participation, which is consistent with the findings of Aslan and Karaküçük (1997). No statistically notable correlation was identified between club membership and the frequency of participation in activities.

The study revealed that there were notable discrepancies in the frequency of engagement in recreational activities contingent on the participants' hometowns and their permanent residence environment. For example, those residing in the Mediterranean and Central Anatolia regions engage more frequently in nature-based activities, whereas those in the Marmara and Aegean regions participate more in volunteer activities. Participants who grew up in rural areas engage in fewer recreational activities than those who grew up in urban areas. Furthermore, participants who currently live in urban areas participate less in nature-based activities. These findings offer new perspectives on how the place of residence during education and hometown region influence recreational engagement.

The study showed that there were notable discrepancies in the perceived benefits of recreational activities according to the participant's age, faculty, grade level, income, hometown, and place of residence. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies in terms of age and income (Yalçınkaya et al., 2019), age and grade level (Parlak, 2023), and grade level and perceived family income (Akyüz, 2020). No notable differences were observed in the participants' perceptions of the benefits of recreation according to gender, GPA, permanent residence circle or club membership status. Conversely, prior research has indicated that these perceptions are influenced by various factors, including gender (Ayhan et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2013; Yalçınkaya et al., 2019), GPA (Ayhan et al., 2022; Parlak, 2023) and club membership status (Üstün & Üstün, 2020). Furthermore, meaningful differences were identified in benefit perceptions according to the amount of time allocated to leisure activities. Similarly, Akyüz (2020) observed differences in perceived benefits according to participation in active sports and leisure activities.

The study demonstrated that there is a positive and statistically notable correlation between the frequency of engagement in recreational activities and all sub-dimensions of the perceived benefits derived from these activities. Furthermore, a moderate positive relationship was identified between the frequency of participation in artistic and cultural activities and perceived benefits. A low-level positive correlation was observed between the frequency of participation in other recreational activities and the sub-dimensions of benefits. Prior research has also demonstrated a correlation between the extent of engagement in recreational activities and the perceived benefits derived from them (Chen et al., 2013; Geng et al., 2023). Furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that participation in recreational activities exerts a direct influence on perceived benefits (Chin-Tsai, 2013; Ho, 2018; Li et al., 2021). This study offers a distinctive insight by elucidating the relationship between frequency of participation and perceived benefits among university students, along with the underlying sub-dimensions of this relationship.

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

The results of the study are consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Recreational activities may indirectly affect physiological needs by promoting general health and well-being. In terms of safety needs, the low participation rates of students living in government residences or host families may reflect safety concerns in these environments. Perceptions of social utility are related to the need for affection/belonging; group activities and social events promote a sense of community and belonging. Low participation in volunteer activities may indicate a gap in the fulfilment of the need for social connectedness. The prioritisation of psychological benefits is consistent with esteem needs; intellectual activities contribute to self-esteem and self-efficacy through skill development and personal achievement. Regular participation in recreational activities supports aspects of personal development and self-actualisation.

There are some inconsistencies between the findings and Maslow's theory. The study highlights notable differences based on demographic factors such as region, faculty and living arrangements. Students with more economic and social freedom perceived more benefits from leisure activities. This suggests that external factors such as financial independence may influence the ability to satisfy high-level needs. Furthermore, differentiating between types of activities and levels of participation provides a more detailed view of how particular activities contribute to the fulfilment of different needs. Maslow's theory does not cover these details.

The positive correlation between the frequency of engagement in recreational activities and the perceived benefits derived from them provides empirical evidence for the direct effect of frequency of participation on perceived benefits. By focusing on university students, the study offers unique insights into how faculty, region and living arrangements influence participation in recreational activities and perceived benefits. These findings contribute to the existing literature on the interaction between demographic characteristics, frequency of participation and perceived benefits of recreational activities among university students. They can inform future research, policy making and the development of recreation programmes in educational institutions.

### 5.2. Practical Implications

The findings of this study can be used to inform the planning of recreational activities and facilities that meet the leisure time preferences and needs of students. Developing targeted strategies for students from Southeast Anatolia and rural areas can increase participation by providing accessible and attractive options that meet their needs. Additionally, the promotion of psychological benefits associated with recreational activities can be effectively achieved through the utilisation of appropriate promotional materials and programme descriptions. The encouragement of group-based activities, social activities and team sports can facilitate the strengthening of social bonds. This consequently augments

**Table 3.** Relationship between recreation benefit perception and frequency of activity participation

Activities		Physical Benefit	Psychological Benefit	Social Benefit
Nature-Based Activities	Pearson Correlation	.247**	.203**	.268**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683
Voluntary Activities	Pearson Correlation	.206**	.180**	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683
Activities with Friends/ Relatives	Pearson Correlation	.256**	.210**	.197**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683
Travelling Activities	Pearson Correlation	.296**	.240**	.280**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683
Intellectual Activities	Pearson Correlation	.265**	.258**	.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683
Artistic and Cultural Activities	Pearson Correlation	.319**	.301**	.331**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683
Other Individually Performed Activities	Pearson Correlation	.196**	.202**	.213**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	683	683	683

**Source:** Created by author.



the psychological and social benefits derived from recreational activities. The implementation of time management workshops and leisure planning initiatives has the potential to enhance participation in recreational activities. A diverse range of activities, scheduled at varying times, could be adapted to suit the schedules of students. It would be beneficial to develop programmes for intellectual pursuits, such as workshops and seminars. It is recommended that students be encouraged to participate in activities on campus. It is important to monitor and evaluate programmes and adjust according to student preferences, considering demographic differences in evaluations. It would be beneficial to form collaborative alliances with faculties and local recreation organisations to integrate recreational activities into the academic environment. These recommendations will facilitate the development of more inclusive and beneficial recreation programmes that address the needs of university students and enhance their overall well-being.

### 5.3. Limitations and future research

The study is limited to undergraduate students enrolled at Harran University's Osmanbey Campus, with participants selected via convenience sampling. It is also important to note that the university is situated in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, with most participants hailing from this region. This suggests that there may be discrepancies between the views of the participants and those from other cultural backgrounds regarding the concept of recreation. In future research, it would be beneficial to analyse the frequency of participation in recreational activities and the perceived benefits of these activities according to different university types (urban and rural). Longitudinal studies may facilitate the assessment of changes in the frequency of participation.

**Ethics Statement:** For the questionnaire method used in this study, permission was obtained from the Harran University Ethics Committee with the decision numbered 2023/54 in its meeting dated 14/04/2023. In case of detection of a contrary situation, TO&RE Journal has no responsibility, and all responsibility belongs to the author(s) of the study.

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