



Examining the Impacts of Recreational Participation in Terms of Healthy Life Perception and Different Variables

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Abstract

Recreational participation is the actions that aim at mental and physical regeneration in the leisure of individuals, as well as related to social, cultural, physiological and economic opportunities, determined by factors such as age, gender, economic status and social position. This study aimed to draw attention to the effects of participation in leisure activities on the healthy life of the individual with a holistic view rather than a single activity and group, by highlighting the diversity of recreational activities. In this study, in which the people of Eskisehir province formed the target population, the sample involved 405 people living in Eskisehir, all selected by simple random sampling method. The study used the "Leisure Activity Participation Scale" (LAPS) developed by Şimşek and Çevik (2020). The Leisure Activity Participation Scale consists of eight subdivisions and 34 items: relaxing activity, developmental activity, socializing activity, activity with an attractive environment, productive activity, aesthetic activity, entertaining activity, and exciting activity. Participation of the partakers recreational activities was evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. SPSS-23 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program was used for statistical analysis. According to the Levene test results for making the decision to either apply parametric or non-parametric tests, the variances were homogeneous ($p>0.05$); and according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results, groups showed normal distribution ($p>0.05$). In the light of this information, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used in order to determine whether the dependent variables differ compared to the independent variables. According to data obtained from the study; recreational participation was affected in all its dimensions especially by the health perception variable. It is possible to interpret this effect in favour of the increase in recreational participation in parallel with the increase in the perception of health. Furthermore, the gender variable had a great impact on recreational participation, following health perception, except for its socializing and activity with an attractive environment dimensions. In the gender variable, results were all in favour of women in all subscales and in the total recreational participation score with a significant difference. In addition to these, the educational status affected the relaxing and developmental dimensions of recreational participation in favour of increasing the educational level. There was no statistically significant effect of occupation and income variables on recreational participation.

Keywords: Leisure, Recreational Activity, Participation

INTRODUCTION

The importance and value of the concept of leisure, which is argued to be as old as human history, is increasing day by day. Many studies on leisure show that regular physical activity and participation in leisure activities play an important role in maintaining mental and physical health.

Increasing work-study tempo in social life has revealed the necessity of people to spend their limited leisure time with more creative activities. In the 21st century, people living in metropolitan cities, which have become crowded and overbuilding asphalt jungle in parallel with industrialization, have reached the point where they regulate their behaviour both in their working time and in their spare time, based on individual and social resources, in order to get away from the factors that negatively affect the quality of life such as traffic, noise and stress, to revitalize and to protect their health (Şahin and Kocabulut, 2014; Saruhan and Göksoy, 2015).

While the concept of leisure represents a structural feature of modern industrial society today, it constitutes a product of this society type (Karaküçük, 1997). As for it is important for the individual to meet his physiological and physical needs and make a living, it is also extremely important for the individual to create leisure time and make the best use of it. Leisure activities, or recreational activities, also contribute to the life of the individual at the point where they coincide with the social, psychological and physical values of the individual, and the activities one prefers to participate in help positively escaping from many problems in life, to self-realization, relationships and socio-cultural sharing (Tütüncü et al., 2011; Hacicaferoğlu et al., 2013).

The fact that preferences differ from person to person has led to the diversity of recreational activities. This diversity offers individuals various activity options based on their cultural, educational or artistic interests (Meeras, 2010) . The active use of leisure time gives the person the opportunity to have health, fun, relaxation and self- improvement, as well as the chance to live humanely in a society where he/she feels valuable as a human being (Tel and Köksalan, 2008).

When we look at today, the increasing advances in technological and scientific fields together with social and cultural changes reveal the idea that individuals have lost control of their lives. Along with this idea, feelings such as anxiety and fear make an appearance and bear the condition called stress. Stress, which affects the entire organism of a person, who is a psycho-social being, can cause ulcers, migraines, diarrhoea, constipation or allergic conditions; presence of diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity in the person leads enhanced effect on stress (Gökler and Işıtan, 2012; Matsuda and Shimomura, 2013).

Considering all these negative effects on the person, it is of grave significance to be able to maintain both mental and physical health for many years. The importance of making sport, one of the leisure activities, a habit has been emphasized by studies (Rooth, 2011; Iulian-Doru and Maria, 2013; Uliann-Doru et al., 2014) has physiological contributions to the person such as

being healthy, having a fit appearance and a controlled weight as well as positive psychological and sociological effects (Karlı et al., 2008). In support of this idea, Bright (2000) suggests that the benefits of participation in leisure activities for the individual are in 5 ways: psychological perspective, biological and psychoanalytic perspectives, sociological perspective, economic perspective and environmental perspective.

Benefits of Participation in Leisure Activities for the Individual				
Psychological Perspective	Biological and Psychoanalysis Perspective	Sociological Perspective	Economic Perspective	Environmental Perspective
Improvement of the concept of self, reflection of personal worth, and achievement experiences,	Cardiovascular health, disease management, and mental and physical rehabilitation,	Improvement of social stability, unity of family and cultural identity,	Employment, Income,	Environmental care and protection.

Figure 1. Bright 2000

In addition to the positive effects of benefiting from leisure activities, which have a wide range of diversity, according to Atmaca (1997), not being able to benefit from these activities can produce negative psychological and sociological consequences in individuals. As a social feature, leisure time creates a feeling of being reborn in that person, as it consists of activities in which people convert their negative energies into positive ones and have fun and rest, and this feeling is actually an indication that there are new behaviours gained (Atmaca, 1997).

The current health status of individuals, the continuity of their well-being and the perception of health, which emerges for the purpose of providing better conditions is actually an approach that expresses the past, present and future of a society. Good management of the current process for healthy individuals and healthy society, or conditioning it better by making improvements is closely related to the behaviours that must be acquired for a healthy life, as well as to remain free of diseases (Özer and Yılmaz, 2020). Regular physical activities, one of the habits for a healthy life, have a great role in improving the quality of life of the individual (Öztürk, 2019). There are many services offered in local governments and the private sector in order to actively engage in physical activities. According to a study conducted in 2014, the sports services provided by the municipalities to the public are now seen as a need that must be met. One of the interesting results of this research is that, when the quality of the sports services offered by the municipalities is considered as successful, it will have an effect that can change the political preferences (Sarıkaya et al., 2014).

These days, as the meaning of the concept of leisure and the benefits of leisure activities have started to be discussed more, developments and changes experienced socially become worthy to mention (Sevin and Şen, 2019). Long-term investment in the general maturity and mental health of the population will be achieved by providing education and opportunities for quality leisure time suitable for the socially young audience, and developing social and emotional competencies

in individuals (Larson and Verma, 1999). There may be individuals who are physically and mentally good in a society, as well as those who are prone to crime, harm themselves and their surroundings as a result of the unfortunate course of their life. Studies have shown that the physical activities, in which these individuals regularly participate during the process of reintegrating into society, help them to avoid violence, excessive alcohol use and drugs (MacDougall and Cameron, 2000; Crabbe, 2000; Kelly, 2013)

Being healthy is as important to society as it is to the individual themselves. Good health will bring along a good education, a good workforce, a good social relationship and an increase in the welfare level. According to the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), what life brings to a person is directly related to the health he/she has. It is stated that having the longest life expectancy, which will be spent in a healthy way, will actually contribute to the development of that country in all aspects. According to the OECD (2021); a life expectancy of 80 years is seen as an average. While Switzerland has the highest life expectancy with 84 years; Australia, Spain and Italy have 83 years, France 82, Germany 81, Mexico 75 years and finally, Turkey has 78 years of life expectancy, slightly below the average. OECD analyses in recent years have shown that rising living standards, environmental improvements and the improved education system draw individuals into a system that offers opportunities to be healthier (2021). In this created system, the individual's consciously increasing participation in physical activities and exhibiting healthy lifestyle behaviours will directly affect the quality of life and life span (Bozkuş et al., 2013).

According to the physical activity and entertainment model presented by Henderson and Ainsworth (2002); if people engage in entertaining activities when they are younger, they are more likely to engage in activities and live an active life as they get older. Therefore, young people need to acquire skills and positive (i.e. playful) attitudes about physical activity. In this context, considering the appropriate nutrition, hygiene, life and environmental conditions in today's settings, the issue of efficient use of the leisure time required by a healthy and quality of life is the basis for the following years. In addition to studies that reveal the positive effects of leisure activities that lead to a healthier life for the individual, there are many studies that expose the obstacles in participating in these activities. However, it is seen that studies have focused on an activity or group specifically. With this research, by drawing attention to the diversity of leisure activities, it is aimed to point out to the effects of participation in leisure activities on the healthy life of the individual with a holistic view rather than a single activity and group.

METHOD

Sample Group

In this study, in which the people of Eskisehir province formed the target group, the sample involved 405 people living in Eskisehir, all selected by simple random sampling method.

Data Collection Tools

“Leisure Activity Participation Scale” (LAPS) developed by Şimşek and Çevik (2020) was used in the research. The Leisure Activity Participation Scale consists of eight subdivisions and 34 items: relaxing activity, developmental activity, socializing activity, activity with an attractive environment, productive activity, aesthetic activity, entertaining activity, and exciting activity. The scale is in the form of a 5-point Likert type and rated as “Strongly Disagree=1”, “Disagree=2”, “Agree Slightly=3”, “Agree=4” and “Strongly Agree=5”. SPSS-23 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program was used for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

According to the Levene test results for making the decision to either apply parametric or non-parametric tests, the variances were homogeneous ($p>0.05$); and according to Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results, groups showed normal distribution ($p>0.05$). In the light of this information, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used in order to question whether the dependent variables differ according to the independent variables.

RESULTS

In this part of section, first of all, a table showing the distribution of frequencies according to the demographic characteristics of the research group is given.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of participants for demographic variables

Variable	f	%
Gender	Male	267
	Female	138
	Total	405
Educational Status	High School	93
	Associate/Bachelor's Degree	239
	Graduate	73
	Total	405
Occupation	House Wife	26
	Worker	38
	Civil Servant	96
	Retired	48
	Student	92
	Self Employed	40
	Athlete/Trainer	44
	Unemployed	21
	Total	405

Table 2. Comparison of the recreational participation levels of the participants by the gender variable

Variable	Gender	N	\bar{X}	ss	Med	min	max	Z	p
Relaxing	Female	259	4,68	0,61	5,00	1	5	-2,422	,015
	Male	138	4,53	0,75	4,90	1	5		
Developmental	Female	259	4,65	,60	5,00	1	5	-4,134	,000
	Male	138	4,37	,80	4,70	1	5		
Socializing	Female	259	3,97	1,11	4,40	1	5	-1,795	,073
	Male	138	3,82	1,04	4,00	1	5		
Activity with an attractive environment	Female	259	4,23	,80	4,50	1	5	-1,732	,083
	Male	138	4,10	,81	4,25	1,25	5		
Productive	Female	259	4,11	,86	4,25	1	5	-3,748	.00**
	Male	138	3,72	,98	4,00	1	5		
Aesthetic	Female	259	4,11	,92	4,25	1	5	-4,423	.00**
	Male	138	3,68	,99	4,00	1	55		
Entertaining	Female	259	4,55	,69	5,00	1	5	-3,892	.00**
	Male	138	4,28	,80	4,50	2	5		
Exciting	Female	259	4,18	,94	4,33	1	5	-2,753	.00**
	Male	138	4,00	,85	4,00	2	5		
Total Recreational Participation	Female	259	4,31	,64	4,44	1,47	5	-3,829	.00**
	Male	138	4,06	,68	4,06	1,53	5		

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

According to the results of the Mann Whitney-U Test, which was conducted to determine whether the recreational participation levels of the participants and the scores of their sub-dimensions differ according to the gender variable, there was a significant difference between the groups. This significant difference was found in both total recreational participation level scores ($Z = -3.829$, $p < 0.01$) and recreational participation sub-dimensions: relaxing ($Z = -2.422$, $p < 0.01$), developmental ($Z = -4.134$, $p < 0.01$), productive ($Z = -3.748$, $p < 0.01$), aesthetic ($Z = -4.423$, $p < 0.01$), entertaining ($Z = -3.892$, $p < 0.01$), and exciting ($Z = -2.753$, $p < 0.01$) scores. All of these significant statistical differences were in favour of female participants. No statistically significant difference was found between the groups in socializing and activity with an attractive environment sub-dimension scores (Table 2).

Table 3. Comparison of the recreational participation levels of the participants by the educational status variable

Variable	High School (Group 1)			Associate/Bachelor's Degree (Group 2)			Graduate (Group 3)			X2	p	Sig. diff.
	Med	Min Max	\bar{X}	Med	Min Max	\bar{X}	Med	Min Max	\bar{X}			
Relaxing	4,80	1,00	4,48	5,00	1,00	4,81	5,00	3,20	4,63	19,842	,00**	3-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				2-1
Developmental	4,60	1,00	4,41	5,00	1,00	4,70	5,00	3,20	4,55	6,512	,03*	3-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				2-1
Socializing	4,20	1,00 5,00	3,84	4,20	1,00 5,00	3,87	4,20	1,00 5,00	3,91	,483	,78	-
Activity with an attractive environment	4,50	1,25 5,00	4,14	4,50	1,00 5,00	4,15	4,50	2,25 5,00	4,19	1,937	,38	-
Productive	4,00	1,50 5,00	3,84	4,00	1,00 5,00	3,97	4,25	1,00 5,00	3,97	2,516	,28	-
Aesthetic	4,00	1,75 5,00	3,93	4,35	1,00 5,00	3,89	4,00	1,00 5,00	3,96	,764	,68	-
Entertaining	4,75	1,00 5,00	4,37	5,00	1,00 5,00	4,50	4,75	3,00 5,00	4,46	1,067	,58	-
Exciting	4,00	1,33 5,00	4,01	4,33	1,00 5,00	4,21	4,33	1,67 5,00	4,12	3,034	,21	-
Total Recreational Participation	4,21	1,47 5,00	4,13	4,27	1,53 5,00	4,26	4,34	2,95 5,00	4,22	2,488	,28	-

* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01

According to the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test, which was conducted to determine whether the recreational participation levels of the participants and scores of their sub-dimensions differ according to the educational status variable, there was a significant difference between the groups. As a result of the statistical analysis, this difference was found to be statistically significant between the groups in the recreational participation sub-dimensions; relaxing ($X(2)=19,842$; $p<0.01$), and developmental ($X(2)=6,512$; $p<0.01$). Bonferroni Correction was used to determine which groups made the difference (Table 3).

When the difference in both relaxing and developmental sub-dimensions of recreational participation by educational status variable was examined, it was determined that there was a significant difference in favour of those who received education at the associate/undergraduate level and those who received education at the graduate level than those at the high school level. In line with these findings, it can be stated that the level of recreational participation is positively affected, especially if the educational level is associate/undergraduate or above.

Table 4. Comparison of the recreational participation levels of the participants by the health perception variable

Variable	Low Level of Health Perception (Group 1)			Medium Level of Health Perception (Group 2)			High Level of Health Perception (Group 3)			X2	p	Sig. diff.
	Med	Min Max	\bar{X}	Med	Min Max	\bar{X}	Med	Min Max	\bar{X}			
Relaxing	4,40	1,00	4,03	5,00	2,00	4,71	5,00	3,80	4,90	89,878	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Developmental	4,00	1,00	3,89	4,80	1,80	4,62	5,00	3,80	4,86	92,101	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Socializing	3,40	1,00	3,17	4,20	1,40	4,01	4,60	1,00	4,25	47,506	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Activity with an attractive environment	3,87	1,00	3,65	4,50	2,50	4,27	4,75	1,50	4,40	42,577	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Productive	3,25	1,00	3,29	4,25	1,75	4,05	4,50	2,00	4,29	53,135	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Aesthetic	3,50	1,00	3,36	4,25	1,00	4,04	4,50	1,50	4,24	41,561	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Entertaining	4,25	1,00	3,94	4,75	2,25	4,50	5,00	2,00	4,72	51,834	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Exciting	3,66	1,00	3,64	4,00	1,67	4,09	5,00	1,00	4,43	42,419	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2
Total Recreational Participation	3,80	1,00	3,62	4,32	2,065	4,29	4,70	2,83	4,51	79,209	.00**	2-1
		5,00			5,00			5,00				3-1
												3-2

* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01

Statistical analysis was carried out to determine whether the recreational participation levels of the participants and the scores of their sub-dimensions differ according to the health perception variable, and a significant difference was found between the groups. This statistically significant difference was in the total recreational participation score (X(2)= 89.878; p<0.01) and its sub-dimensions; relaxing (X(2)= 89.878; p<0.01), developmental (X(2)= 92.101; p<0.01), socializing (X(2)= 47.506; p<0.01), attractive (X(2)= 42.577; p<0.01), productive (X(2)= 53.135; p<0.01), aesthetic (X(2)= 41.561 ; p<0.01), entertaining (X(2)= 51.834; p<0.01) and finally, exciting (X(2)= 42,419; p <0.01). Again, Bonferroni Correction was used to determine which groups made the difference (Table 4).

When it is examined where the difference between the groups in recreational participation scores by health perception variable derives from, it was found that there was a significant difference in

favour of the 3rd group, which had a high health perception score in the total score and in the sub-dimensions. Meanwhile, between the 2nd group, which had a moderate perception of health, and the 1st group, which had a low perception of health; it was found that there was a significant difference in favour of the 2nd group. In accordance with these findings, it can be stated that the increase in health perception scores positively affects the level of recreational participation.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the aim is to discuss and conclude the effects of recreational participation in terms of healthy life perception and other variables in the light of the findings. For this purpose, evaluations were made by taking into account the health perceptions, gender, educational status, occupation and income variables of the individuals living in Eskisehir province, which constitutes the study sample. During the evaluations, the concepts of causal leisure, serious leisure, barriers to leisure, motivation to participate in leisure, health perception, health belief, life satisfaction, recreation, recreational participation and studies on these subjects were examined in detail. It should be emphasized that the “Leisure Activity Participation Scale” (LAPS) developed by Şimşek and Çevik (2020) was used in this study for the first time in the literature. For this reason, the results discussed below compare our measurement inventory and measurement inventories in other studies in the literature, which are considered to be equivalent and similar.

According to the results of the study; it can be stated that recreational participation is affected in all its dimensions, especially by the health perception variable. It is possible to interpret this effect in favour of the increase in recreational participation in parallel with the increase in the perception of health. Schwarzenegger, Chrisman, and Coleman (2005) emphasized that recreational activity and recreational activity resources positively affect the mental, physical and social health of individuals. This emphasis reciprocally supports our findings that the individuals with health perception awareness are affected by all dimensions in recreational participation. The study Tütüncü et al., (2010) conducted on students reports that feeling healthy is one of the most important factors affecting recreational participation. This situation is parallel to the effect of health perception on all dimensions of recreational participation, which is the finding of our study. In the study with another sample group by Dinç (2020), it was found that leisure participation had a statistically significant effect on health perception, in a similar manner to our study. In addition, various studies in the literature can be associated with and can support our findings (Rousseau, 2008; Yurcu et al.,2017; Yurcu, 2017; Elçi et al., 2019). The general conclusion can be extracted from this is as follows; studies conducted on various sample groups show that there is a positive two-way relationship between individuals' awareness of being healthy and their desire to be healthy, and recreational participation. The answers given by the individuals in our sample group are also in line with the general opinion in the literature.

Furthermore, it is seen that the gender variable has a great effect on recreational participation, except for its socializing and activity with an attractive environment dimensions, coming second after health perception. In the gender variable, it is striking that the results are all in favour of women in all dimensions and in the total recreational participation score with a significant

difference. Many studies in the literature have demonstrated that gender variables are one of the most important factors affecting the recreational participation of individuals (Altergott and McCreedy, 1993; Alexandris and Carroll, 1997; Culp, 1998; Demir and Demir, 2006). In the study of Altunay and Baltacı (2018), which is equivalent to our study, the motivational factors affecting leisure activity participation were investigated. When gender variability was taken into consideration, significant differences were observed in all sub-dimensions, and it was underlined that this difference was in favour of women. This result is in line with our findings. Additionally, the fact that men's amotivation rates were higher and significantly different than women's in Kaya's (2003) study correspondingly supports our findings. Consequently, it is seen that female individuals are more likely to be affected by recreational participation factors than male individuals. This can be interpreted as the reason why women are more affected when it comes to making use of an opportunity to have leisure time, is because they have more diverse and more responsibility demanding roles than men in today's settings. As a result, it can be assumed that women are affected more in direct proportion to the use of opportunities for recreational activity according to their needs and priorities. It is possible to support this interpretation with the findings of Koparan and Öztürk's (2002) study.

Moreover, it has been observed that the educational status also affects the relaxing and developmental dimensions of recreational participation in favour of increased educational status in recreational participation. The findings of the educational status variable in Eraslan's (2017) study are in line with the findings in our study; as there was a significant difference in similar sub-dimensions. Yet, according to the findings of the relevant study, the increase in educational status was not in favour, in contrast to our case. As stated by our findings, it is thought that with the increase in the educational status of individuals, their own personal development efforts and/or the efforts of educational institutions to raise awareness, create positive changes in the developmental and relaxing sub-dimension of recreational participation. In addition, with the increase in educational level, it is assumed that individuals face more triggering situations such as stress, uneasiness, and anxiety, which all lead to amplified necessity of relaxing and developmental sub-dimensions of recreational participation.

There was no statistically significant effect of occupation and income variables on recreational participation. In the literature, there are findings supporting our results that economic differences do not affect recreational participation in terms of income variable (Aslan and Aslan, 2001). Also, as an opposite view in the literature, income variable is stated as one of the important factors affecting recreational participation (Meeras, 2010; Ardahan and Yerlisu, 2010; Akyıldız Munusturlar and Munusturlar, 2016). According to Eraslan (2017), the study conducted on sports centre members found significant differences when the income variable was taken into account, and it does not support our findings. As a result, it is concluded that the factors influencing recreational participation of the individuals in our sample group do not respond to the situations such as income and occupation classification, but are affected by the personal views and opinions of individuals belonging to each occupation and income group. In support of this idea, Akyıldız (2015) mentioned in her study that the expectations of individuals from recreational participation

change in connection with their personality traits. In the context of this situation, it can be considered that variables such as occupation and income can be excluded. Moreover, it may be that the recreational activity conditions in Eskisehir province offer equal settings for individuals from all occupation and income backgrounds, in terms of factors affecting participation in activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Individuals' health perceptions affect recreational participation. Individuals' awareness of being healthy and their desire to be healthy affect recreational participation. The gender variable has an effect on recreational participation. The elements of participation in recreational activities affect women more. The increase in the level of education of individuals causes them to approach recreational activities with a developer and relaxing aspect. Profession and income variables do not have an effect on individuals' recreational participation.

Due to the higher levels of impact of recreational participation factors on individuals with high health perception and awareness of being healthy, it can be recommended to carry out comprehensive studies in order to increase the health awareness of individuals throughout Eskisehir province.

By investigating the reasons why male individuals are less affected by recreational participation factors, studies can be conducted to eliminate these reasons.

The fact that individuals are more affected by the relaxing and developmental dimensions of recreational participation in proportion to the increasing educational level may indicate that they have developed a way of coping with the problems encountered, but also may mean that their problems escalate with the increase in the educational level. For this reason, it is recommended that individuals be offered with other practices that can ease their stress apart from recreational activities.

Since this study is the first time in the literature to use the “Leisure Activity Participation Scale” (LAPS) measurement inventory, it can shed light on future studies.

In this direction, future studies can be conducted by focusing on different and larger sample groups, different cultures and variables. Moreover, comparative studies can be carried out with other measurement inventories that are equivalent and similar to the measurement inventory used in this study.

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