

Strategies of High School Students to Cope With Stress through Leisure Time

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Abstract

It was aimed in this study to reveal and compare strategies of students of three types of high schools to cope with stress through leisure time. The research population consisted of high school students in Konya province, Turkey. The sample consisted of 280 male and 224 female vocational high school, Anatolian high school and sports high school students. In the study, the Demographic Personal Information Form was used to collect personal information. The “Strategies to Cope with Stress through Leisure Time Scale” (SCSLTS) was used to identify the leisure time strategies. This scale was developed by Iwasaki and Mannell (2000). It was translated into Turkish, and its validity and reliability studies were conducted by Çevik, Özcan and Munusturlar (2018). No difference was found in the strategies of the students to cope with stress through leisure time according to the grade level, income, and maternal and paternal educational level factors. Statistical variations were observed based on the gender and sporting factors ($p < .05$). There was no statistically significant difference in the mood enhancement dimension depending on the school type factor. However, it was found that the mean scores of the vocational high school students in terms of the dimensions of leisure time friendship and temporary coping ability were higher than those of the students of the other schools, and these differences were also statistically significant ($p < .05$). The vocational high school students had higher mean scores in the leisure time strategies sub-dimension than the students of other schools. Accordingly, it can be said that the leisure time strategy scores may differ according to the school type and that the students receiving vocational education were more optimistic in determining leisure time strategies than the students of Anatolian high school and sports high school.

Keywords: leisure time, strategy, high school student, school area

1. Introduction

Indispensable technological tools of our era are able to carry out work for us hundreds of times faster, possibly error-free, in a short period of time, and with less effort. In spite of technological improvements and the benefits they provide for people, many people complain about the insufficiency of time. However, if people misuse time, they get the burden of paying a heavy price (Atkinson, 1997). Everyone has 24 hours a day and 7 days a week (Kılıç, 2015). Tutar (2003) has emphasized that time is the most valuable treasure in the universe, and it is the only source that cannot be recovered or purchased.

Time is defined as the duration, a part of the duration, a specified moment, an era, a season, a period or a cycle, in which a job or a phenomenon takes place, or as the hour spared for or customary for a job (TDK, 2018). Sabuncuoğlu (2000) described time as something that is the longest and shortest in the world, that is the slowest and the fastest, that may not get attention at all but that can hurt, and without which nothing can be done. It is important how we spend our time, and it is also very important how children and young people perceive the concept of time and how they make use of time. In describing time, Güven and Yeşil (2011) used the words “a value that irrepressibly flows at a constant speed and is possessed equally by all individuals.” In order to serve effectively and efficiently for the goals of individuals in their lives, time must be well planned, organized, directed, coordinated and controlled (Erdem, Pirinçci and Dikmetaş, 2005).

The saying “using time effectively” is often encountered in the daily life. Every individual makes use of the concept of time according to his or her living space and level of cognition, based on sociological, physiological, psychological, economic and cultural factors. In the literature, the etymological origin of the concept of leisure is

described in Latin as “Lyceum, Licerre” (Wichasin, 2007). The term “leisure” in English, which is the equivalent of the term “free time,” originates from the term “loisir” in French, which means free time; and in English, the words “license,” which means “allowing,” and “liberty,” which means “freedom,” originate from the word “licere” in Latin (Jenkins and Pigram, 2003). The concept of leisure time is defined as a concept that individuals can use and dispose of their own free will in line with their desires and feelings (Parker, 1995). Although the concept of leisure time is included in various definitions and groups in different sources, what is important is the way we look at the concept of leisure time; it is even more important how we interpret the concept. Godbey (1999) defined leisure as personal freedoms that carry relative variations without being forced or physically oppressed by the influence of any factors.

Leitner and Leitner (2004) have defined work as a compulsory time frame, whereas free time as a non-compulsory time frame. Free time is the ability of an individual to freely choose between the alternatives that he or she encounters. Work involves restriction or commitment, and personal care is the time devoted to an individual’s basic well-being. Free time is related to an individual’s basic well-being, whereas personal care is a basic need of life and has to be performed before work or free time. Any activity that an individual participates in must be performed of the individual’s own free will (Leitner & Leitner 2004).

It is of great importance how we fill in our leisure times and what kind of activities we do in such time frames. The most important factor to improve our quality of life is perhaps related to the choices we make to realize ourselves. Many activities that we do in our leisure times of our own free will are called recreational activities in the literature. Lundberg (1980) has defined recreation as activities that people passively or actively carry out individually and collectively in sporting, cultural, nature-related, and historical actions and events, in order to get physical and mental pleasure, completely of their own free will, and without being subject to any oppression or pressure personally. Parker (1979) has defined recreation as activities that give happiness, satisfaction, mental balance, character, competitiveness, mental tranquility, freedom, physical and social activity and intellectual viewpoint to participants of the activities.

In recent years, it has become harder to fulfil sufficient levels of physical activity since most daily environments have changed considerably. Physical inactivity mainly results from systemic and environmental factors which make everyday life and working environments increasingly more immobile. The extended distances between houses, workplaces, shopping places and leisure-time locations have increased the use of cars and reduced walking and the use of cycling. However, the road safety has been seen as a source of concern as it has begun to be unsafe or perceived as unsafe to use active transportation. Children and youth spend more time than ever before in schools or day care facilities; thus, academic demands increase, decreasing the amount of time allocated for physical education and active game play (WHO, 2007 - Accessed 07/29/2018).

Each age group has its own characteristics, and leisure time perceptions of people in each age group vary at a great extent depending on this factor. The 14–18 age group, in particular, is called adolescence, that is, puberty, and this period has a very special place for recreational activities. Tekgöl, Dirik, Karademirci, Bıçakçı and Öngel (2012) have defined this period as the period of transition to life, in which physical and sexual development, and psychosocial maturation take place, and in which - among the developmental periods of the individual - social factors are most important for the individual. This period corresponds to the second stage of secondary education. It is seen that students taught in different learning domains in different types of educational institutions have different emotions and reactions. Revealing stress and the factors causing stress, which adversely affect lives of individuals, and discussing solutions to them will once again reveal the importance of leisure activities in our lives.

In this study, it was aimed to examine the differences in the strategies of Anatolian high school and sports high school students to cope with stress through their leisure times. Today, the fact that social sharing is performed through technological equipment has made this sharing method a problem on its own with the unlimited use of technological equipment such as smartphones, computers and tablet computers. It is believed that the number and scope of such studies should be increased in order for our youth to be able to gravitate towards sportive and recreational activities instead of sharing posts that are stationary, apathetic, and that do not involve real touch and emotions.

2. Method

2.1 The Concept of the Study

It was aimed in this study to reveal and compare strategies of vocational high school, Anatolian high school and sports high school students to cope with stress through leisure time. The research population consisted of high school students in Konya province, Turkey. The sample consisted of 280 male and 224 female vocational high school,

Anatolian high school and sports high school students. In the study, the demographic personal information form was used to collect personal information, and the “Strategies to Cope with Stress through Leisure Time Scale” (SCSLTS) was used to identify leisure time strategies.

2.2 Strategies to Cope with Stress through Leisure Time Scale (SCSLTS)

The original version of the scale developed by Iwasaki and Mannell (2000) consisted of 18 items. Çevik, Özcan and Munusturlar (2018) decided to remove 3 items from the scale by considering the factor loads. The scale was adapted to Turkish and consisted of 15 items. In the scale, 5 items constituted the leisure time friendship sub-dimension, 6 items constituted the temporary coping ability sub-dimension, and 4 items constituted the mood enhancement sub-dimension. The scale had 7-point Likert type items where 1 was strongly disagree and 7 was strongly agree.

2.3 Statistical Analysis

The homogeneity of the data and the homogeneity of the variances were checked. The Mann-Witney U test was used in pairwise comparisons, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test in multiple comparisons. The Tamhane’s T2 test was used to identify to which groups the differences belonged. The Cronbach’s Alpha value for this study was calculated as .76.

3. Results

Table 1. Differences in strategies to cope with stress through leisure time based on the gender factor

Gender	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Temporary Coping Ability		Mood Enhancement	
			x	SD	x	SD	x	SD
Male	280	55.6	21.83	6.61	27.13	5.85	18.16	4.50
Female	224	44.4	19.64	7.19	27.51	6.16	17.88	4.32
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.000*		.373		.412	

* Significant difference between groups ($p < .05$).

Considering Table 1, it was found that there was no difference in the dimensions of temporary coping ability and mood enhancement based on the gender factor, whereas the score of males (21.83 ± 6.61) in the leisure time friendship dimension was higher than that of females (19.64 ± 7.19), and this difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Table 2. Differences in strategies to cope with stress through leisure time based on the sportive activity factor

Sportsmanship	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Temporary Coping Ability		Mood Enhancement	
			x	SD	x	SD	x	SD
Does Not Do Sports	255	50.6	20.17	7.00	26.96	5.88	18.16	4.57
Does Sports	249	49.4	21.55	6.85	27.64	6.09	17.91	4.26
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.036*		.250		.423	

* Significant difference between groups ($p < .05$).

As seen in Table 2, there was no difference in the temporary coping ability and mood enhancement dimensions based on the sporting factor. In the leisure time friendship dimension, the score of those who were doing sports (21.55 ± 6.85) was greater than the score of those who were not doing sports (20.17 ± 7.00). This difference was also found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Table 3. Differences in strategies to cope with stress through leisure time based on the school type factor

School Type	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Time	Temporary Ability		Coping	Mood Enhancement	
			x	SD		x	SD		x	SD
Vocational High School	170	33.7	23.98	6.19 ^a	29.34	6.24 ^a	18.52	4.65		
Anatolian High School	215	42.7	19.66	7.07 ^b	26.47	5.84 ^b	17.77	4.44		
Sports High School	119	23.6	18.55	6.19 ^b	25.86	5.09 ^b	17.82	4.01		
Sig.			.000*		.000*		.211			

*, ab = Significant difference between groups (p<.05).

As seen in Table 3, there was no difference in the mood enhancement dimension based on the school type factor. In the leisure time friendship dimension, the mean score of the vocational high school students (23.98 ± 6.19) was greater than that of Anatolian high school students (19.66 ± 57.07) and that of sports high school students (18.55 ± 6.19). This difference was also found to be statistically significant (p<.05). It was also observed that in the temporary coping ability dimension, the mean score of the vocational high school students (29.34 ± 6.24) was greater than that of Anatolian high school students (26.47 ± 5.84) and that of sports high school students (25.86 ± 5.09), and this difference was found to be statistically significant (p<.05).

Table 4. Differences in strategies to cope with stress through leisure time based on the grade level and family income level factors

Grade	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Time	Temporary Ability		Coping	Mood Enhancement	
			x	SD		x	SD		x	SD
9th grade	202	40.08	21.25	7.55	27.16	6.19	18.03	4.63		
10th grade	231	45.83	20.65	6.62	27.42	5.92	18.01	4.05		
11th grade	71	14.09	20.38	6.23	27.28	5.70	18.14	4.98		
Chi-Square			.558		.903		.977			

Family Income Level	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Time	Temporary Ability		Coping	Mood Enhancement	
			x	SD		x	SD		x	SD
500–1500 TL	98	19.4	20.79	7.00	27.31	6.39	18.22	4.41		
1501–2500 TL	224	44.4	20.77	7.00	27.25	5.84	17.64	4.37		
2501–3500 TL	65	12.9	21.51	7.31	26.35	5.99	18.72	4.62		
3501 TL and over	117	23.2	20.70	6.68	27.90	5.93	18.26	4.40		
Chi-Square			.880		.424		.283			

Considering table 4, no statistically significant difference was observed in the leisure time strategies among high school students depending on the grade level and family income level factors.

Table 5. Differences in strategies to cope with stress through leisure time based on the parental education factors

Maternal Educational Level	Educational	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Time	Temporary Coping Ability		Mood Enhancement	
				x	SD		x	SD	x	SD
Elementary School		215	42.7	20.81	7.39	27.44	6.23	18.36	4.23	
Secondary School		191	37.9	20.67	6.69	26.84	6.01	17.61	4.66	
High School		89	17.7	21.29	6.33	27.72	5.41	17.94	4.24	
Master's Doctorate	and/or	9	1.8	21.44	8.46	29.44	4.88	20.33	4.77	
Chi-Square				.906		.418		.142		
Paternal Educational Level	Educational	n	%	Leisure Friendship		Time	Temporary Coping Ability		Mood Enhancement	
				x	SD		x	SD	x	SD
Elementary School		174	34.5	21.80	6.15	27.59	6.17	18.43	4.42	
Secondary School		146	29.0	20.38	7.48	26.77	5.79	17.46	4.52	
High School		150	29.8	20.75	7.22	27.70	5.73	18.20	4.05	
Master's Doctorate	and/or	34	6.7	18.50	6.74	26.29	6.91	17.82	5.37	
Chi-Square				.059		.365		.249		

Considering table 5, no statistically significant difference was observed in the leisure time strategies among high school students depending on the parental education factors

4. Discussion

No difference was found in the strategies of the students to cope with stress through leisure time according to the grade level, income, and maternal and paternal educational level factors (Table 4-5). Research results can differ depending on the structure and scope of samples. In our study, the leisure time friendship scores of the male students were found to be statistically greater than those of the female students (Table 1; $p < .05$). There is a great deal of research studies in the literature in which differences have been found according to gender (Son, Kerstetter and Moven, 2008; Demir C and Demir N, 2006; Balcı and İlhan, 2006; Tcha and Lobo 2003; Özşaker, 2012; Çoruh and Karaküçük, 2014; Gürer, Bektaş and Kural 2018). The gender-related findings of these studies show similarities with our research findings. It is Possible to see that females' stress ans stress perceptions are higher than males in literatüre (Yurtsever, 2009; Şahin, 2018). It is thought that the reason why the scores of the male students were greater than those of the female students was due to the social role and status that the social structure imposes on women and men besides the socio-cultural structural difference. Based on the social structure and norms, men's freedom to spend more time with their friends can be seen as the reason for the high levels of the leisure time friendship scores.

There was no difference in the temporary coping ability and mood enhancement dimensions based on the sporting factor, whereas in the leisure time friendship dimension, the score of those who were doing sports was greater than the score of those who were not doing sports, and this difference was also found to be statistically significant (Table 2; $p < .05$). Karamelik and Aktop (2009) have reported that recreational activities that do not involve physical activities do not affect physical perception and self-respect. Emir, Gürbüz and Öncü (2014) reported in their study that participants who were not interested in a sports branch had a greater mean score of constraints to leisure activities than those who were doing sports activities. The psychological and physical effects of sports on individuals are unequivocally apparent. The optimistic trends in the mean scores of the students who were doing sports in this study are similar to those found in the literature. Karaküçük and Başaran (1996) have reported that in order to be able to cope with stress or to reduce its effects to a minimum, time other than study time should be determined as leisure time to perform various recreational activities through a good time planning. They reported that evaluations should be carried out especially through leisure-time sports which include activities to eliminate immobilization. Recreational sports activities, which young people can do in addition to their educational activities, are an important

factor that will help young people get physically and psychologically healthier and improve their quality of life. There is a wide range of literature on the benefits of sportive and recreational activities for individuals (Bakırcıoğlu, 2010; Balcıoğlu, 2003; Penedo and Dahn, 2005; Churilla and Fitzhugh 2012; Godin, Sheeran, Conner, Belanger-Gravel, Gallani and Nolin, 2010; Arslan, 2013; Elkins, Beggs and Choutka, 2007; Emir, Gürbüz and Öncü, 2014; McEwen, 2001; Dindar, 2018; Lautenschlager, Cox, Flicker, Foster, Van Bockxmeer, Xiao, Greenop and Almedia, 2008; Penedo and Dahn 2005; Kılıç and Arslan 2018; Akyürek, Kars and Bumin 2018; Kurt, Bayazıt, Keskin and Taşkıran 2018). Bakırcıoğlu (2010) has stated that sports have an important effect on the socialization of individuals, and that the body energy increased in adolescence is channeled through exercises with the help of sports. Balcıoğlu (2003) has stated that young people have to do physical activities in order to steer their power, that an organism's needs for movement have to be satisfied, and that a child's constantly being in the school restricts his or her freedom of movement. Penedo and Dahn (2005) have reported that regularly doing physical activities significantly affects mental health as well as physical health. It is more prominent through these studies that recreational activities positively influence leisure time strategies of students of secondary schools where vocational skills predominate.

There was no statistically significant difference in the mood enhancement dimension depending on the school type factor. However, it was found that the mean scores of the vocational high school students in terms of the dimensions of leisure time friendship and temporary coping ability were statistically higher than those of the students of the other two high school types (Table 3; $p < .05$). Çağlıyan and Göral (2009) have reported that there is no significant difference in the time management skills of students according to the type of high school of graduation. The differences in student recruitment criteria and special talent selection criteria of schools can be seen as the source of this difference. It is seen that certain gains fall short in sports education and in students who study in such schools. Özer, Gelen ve Öcal (2009) reported that students' problem-solving skills varied significantly from one another in terms of courses which they attended outside the school, and that problem-solving skills of students who attended folk dance courses were better than those of the others. It should not be forgotten that sportive and recreational activities are some of the elements that keep different emotions and behaviors of students under control and ensure that they use time effectively and develop leisure time strategies. Elkins, Beggs and Choutka (2007) have reported that satisfying free time enables individuals to cope with constraints, which enhances participation in free-time activities.

Hacıoğlu (2003) has emphasized that recreational activities should bring happiness, satisfaction, creativity, mental balance, character, competitiveness, mental capacity, freedom, a physical and mental fitness, and therefore, a broader worldview to the participants. Türkoğlu (1998) emphasized the importance of free-time education in his study. He defined the free-time education as a process that helps an individual's harmony with the society and helps him live a proud and useful life for himself and the society. He also sees social movements as a starting point for determining the free-time education to be offered to individuals, improving the quality of the education, educating sufficient number of qualified staffs in the field of free time, determining the amount of equipment, and investing. Curriculum planners and practitioners have a unique role in identifying leisure time strategies. Leisure time education is a long and perpetual concept. If strategies, methods and techniques are purposefully adapted based on time, it may be easier for learners to internalize strategies for coping with stress through leisure time.

In conclusion, as the mean score of the vocational high school students in terms of leisure time strategies sub-dimension was higher than that of the Anatolian high school students and that of the sports high school students, it can be said that leisure time strategies may differ according to school type. And, the vocational education students were more optimistic than the students of other school types in terms of determining leisure time strategies. It is thought that extending the scope of studies for coping with stress through leisure time activities in different age groups, teaching levels, departments and areas is important in terms of creating an awareness of recreational consciousness.

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