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The Relationship Between Perceived Freedom in Leisure, Perceived Health Outcomes and Psychological Resilience: Physical Activities Participants

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the relationships between perceived freedom, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience of individuals participating in physical activities. The research sample comprised 449 participants selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted using the Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale-25 (PFLS-25), the Perceived Health Outcomes of Recreation Scale (PHORS) and the Brief Psychological Resilience Scale (BPRS). Statistical analyses included independent samples t-tests, ANOVA, MANOVA and Pearson correlation tests. The independent t-test results revealed a significant difference in BPRS scores according to gender. ANOVA results revealed a significant difference in PFLS-25 scores according to participants' weekly frequency of physical activity. MANOVA results indicated that the main effect of weekly physical activity frequency on the subdimensions of PHORS was significant and significant differences were found particularly in the subdimensions of psychological experience realization and ımproved condition. Correlation analyses indicated a low but significant negative relationship between age and the variables of perceived freedom in leisure, realization of psychological experience, and improved condition. Additionally, positive but low correlations were found between BPRS and PFLS-25, as well as between BPRS and all PHORS sub-dimensions. A moderate positive correlation was also observed between PFLS-25 and the sub-dimensions of PHORS.

Keywords: Perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, physical activities participants, psychological resilience

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, due to rapid urbanization and technological advancements, there has been a decline over time in the number of tasks requiring physical labor. Although this has led to an increase in individuals' leisure, the decline in physical activity levels has significant implications for health (Ding et al., 2015; Elçi et al., 2019). In today's rapidly evolving world, leisure and recreation have emerged as important means of maintaining health (Kula et al., 2020). The literature suggests that leisure activities are becoming increasingly widespread, and individuals tend to engage in leisure pursuits as a means to detach from their routine work life and to relax (Sağıroğlu et al., 2022). However, it has been emphasized that for an activity to be considered a true leisure activity, the element of free choice must be fundamental (Turkmani et al., 2023). In parallel with this perspective, Iso-Ahola (1980) emphasized that while intrinsic motivation and the perception of freedom are both crucial for an effective leisure experience, the perception of freedom represents the most essential condition (Yalçın, 2020).

When examining the explanations of the concept of perceived freedom in leisure in the literature, it is defined as individuals' self-evaluation of the activities they engage in, based on their previous experiences (Siyahtaş et al., 2025). According to Mannell and Kleiber (1997), perceived freedom is a matter of degree. They emphasized that although individuals often face certain constraints on their leisure, they still experience a sense of freedom in their leisure choices (Gürer, 2022). Moreover, individuals with a high level of perceived freedom in their leisure are more inclined to participate in activities that reflect their personal interests. In addition to having more discretionary time, they believe they can better control their own course of action (Dumazedier, 2008; Almedia et al., 2018). In addition, individuals with a high perception of freedom during their leisure tend to feel more competent and perceive themselves as having control over their leisure before, during, and after participation in an activity (Kara, 2019).

Recreational activities have been gaining increasing importance as a means of supporting individuals' physical health while also providing social and psychological benefits (Koç et al., 2024). Moreover, recreational activities are recognized as behavioral engagements that serve as a vehicle for achieving various psychological and physical goals. When individuals experience a deficiency or unmet need in these areas, participation in recreational activities is often pursued as a means of addressing that need (Manfredo et al., 1996; Beşikçi et al., 2021). In addition, recreational activities are perceived as a means of achieving positive health outcomes (Edwards & Rowe, 2019; Temel & Tükel, 2021). From this perspective, the concept of perceived health in recreation refers to how individuals perceive their own health status during participation in recreational activities (Gomez et al., 2016; Doğan et al., 2023). The perceived health outcomes of recreation scale is theoretically base on Driver's (1998) framework concerning the benefits of leisure (Berry et al., 2019). According to Driver, the benefits of leisure are explained through three core dimensions: improved condition, prevention of worse conditions, and the realization of psychological experience. These three dimensions form what Driver termed the typologies of leisure benefits, which serve as the foundation for the structure of the "PHORS" (Yerlisu Lapa et al., 2020). Furthermore,

perceived health outcomes of recreation encompass goal orientation, positive emotions, coping with negative emotions, developing relationships, and promoting a sense of peace (Acha-Anyi & Acha-Anyi, 2021; Sarol et al., 2024). Numerous studies have demonstrated that participation in leisure and physical activities has positive effects on individuals' psychological health (Weyerer & Kupfer, 1994; Caldwell, 2005; Acun & Yıldırım, 2022). Psychological resilience, which plays an important role in human life and constitutes one of the main concepts of positive psychology (Durak, 2021), is defined as an adaptive process that enables individuals to cope with changes in their lives through the interaction between protective and risk factors when faced with adversity (Ağırkaya & Erdem, 2023). In order for psychological resilience to manifest, protective factors must be activated during high-risk situations such as the loss of a loved one, divorce, illness, poverty, or natural disasters (Güloğlu & Karaırmak, 2010). Generally, psychological resilience refers to one's capacity to withstand, cope with, and continue daily functioning despite life's difficulties and stressful conditions (Mandleco & Peery, 2000; Ulukan, 2020). In other words, it can be described as the ability to adapt and manage effectively after encountering adversity (Block & Kremen, 1996; Yazıcı Çelebi, 2020).

Previous research has revealed a significant positive relationship between perceived freedom in leisure and psychological resilience (Siyahtaş et al., 2025; Yalçın & Altındöker, 2025), as well as between perceived health outcomes of recreation and psychological resilience (Beşikçi et al., 2021; Avcı Taşkıran & Gürbüz, 2021; Sarol et al., 2024; Genç, 2025). However, the review of the existing literature indicates that there are only a limited number of studies examining the relationship among perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience. Investigating these variables specifically among individuals who engage in physical activities is expected to make a significant contribution to the literature. In this context, the aim of the present study is to determine whether perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience differ according to various demographic variables among individuals participating in physical activities, and to examine the relationships among these variables. Based on this purpose, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There are differences in perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience according to participants' gender.

H**2:** There are differences in perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience according to participants' weekly frequency of physical activity.

H3: There are relationships between participants' age and their perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience.

H4: There is a relationship among perceived freedom in leisure, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience.

METHOD

Research Model

In accordance with the aim of the study, a relational survey model was employed. This model is used to examine the degree of relationships between variables or to determine the level of a particular condition. Relational survey designs aim to clarify questions such as the strength and direction of relationships among variables (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016).

Research Group

The sample of the research consisted of 449 individuals who were members of private fitness centers in Istanbul and selected using purposive sampling. Of the participants, 339 were male (Meanage=32.63±10.35) and 110 were female (Meanage=29.80±10.65). The purposive sampling method aims to select information-rich cases that can provide in-depth understanding of the problem being studied. In this regard, purposive sampling is often useful in the exploration and explanation of various phenomena and events (Tarhan, 2015; Koç Başaran, 2017). Accordingly, individuals aged between 18 and 63 years (Meanage=32.96±10.44) who engaged in physical activity during their leisure time participated in the study. Among the participants, 57.9% reported engaging in physical activity 1-2 days per week, while 27.4% had 1-5 hours of leisure time per week.

Data Collection Tools

Perceived Health Outcomes of Recreation Scale (PHORS): PHORS was developed by (Gomez et al., 2016). The Turkish version of the scale was adapted by (Yerlisu Lapa et al., 2020). The scale consists of 16 items divided into three subscales: Realization of psychological experience, prevention of a worse condition, and improved condition. The original reliability coefficient of the scale was reported as 0.91. The internal consistency coefficients for the subscales were 0.89 for the realization of psychological experience, 0.81 for the prevention of a worse condition, and 0.91 for the ımproved condition. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated as 0.94, 0.90, and 0.91 for these subscales, respectively.

Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale-25 (PFLS-25): PFLS-25 was developed by Witt and Ellis (1985) and was first adapted into Turkish by (Yerlisu Lapa & Ağyar, 2011). Subsequently, Yerlisu Lapa and Tercan Kaas (2019) validated the construct of the scale. It comprises 25 items and measures a single factor. The original reliability coefficient was reported as 0.93, while the Cronbach's alpha for this study was found to be 0.96.

Brief Psychological Resilience Scale (BPRS): BPRS was developed by (Smith et al., 2008). The Turkish version of the scale was adapted by (Doğan, 2015). The scale consists of 6 items and there is no sub-scales. İtems 2, 4, and 6 are reverse-scored. The original reliability coefficient was reported as 0.83, whereas in the this study, Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.76.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from 449 participants who were members of a private fitness center in Istanbul, both through face-to-face surveys and google forms. The data were analyzed using

SPSS 20.0 software. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined, indicating that the data were normally distributed. Accordingly, independent samples t-test, ANOVA, MANOVA, and Pearson correlation analyses were employed in the statistical analysis. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the reliability of the scales used in the study.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Analysis results of BPRS, PFLS-25, and PHORS scores by participants' gender

Scales	Male (n:339)		Female (n:110)	
	Mean	Sd.	Mean	Sd.
BPRS	3.41	0.70	3.20	0.82
PFLS-25	3.61	0.71	3.65	0.57
PSYC	5.22	1.26	5.45	1.20
PREV	5.32	1.28	5.28	1.19
IMPV	5.77	1.18	5.80	1.03

*p<.05; PSYC: Realization of a Psychological Experience, PREV: Prevention of a Worse Condition, IMPV: an Improved Condition

The results of the analysis based on participants' gender are presented in Table 1. According to the findings, there is a statistically significant difference in BPRS scores between male and female participants (t=2.619; p<.05). However, no significant difference was found in PFLS-25 scores based on gender (t=-0.506; p>.05). The MANOVA results indicated that gender had no significant main effect on the sub-dimensions of the PHORS, nor were there any significant differences at the sub-dimension level [Wilks' λ=0.989, $F_{(3, 445)}$=1.666; p>.05].

Table 2. Analysis results of BPRS, PFLS-25, and PHORS scores by participants'weekly physical activity frequency

Scales	1-2 Days (n=260)		3-4 Days (n=122)		5 Days or more (n=67)	
	Mean	Sd.	Mean	Sd.	Mean	Sd.
BPRS	3.34	0.78	3.35	0.66	3.46	0.67
PFLS-25	3.50	0.72	3.73	0.53	3.88	0.64
PSYC	4.97	1.34	5.56	1.01	5.96	0.83
PREV	5.18	1.32	5.41	1.14	5.60	1.19
IMPV	5.59	1.21	5.92	1.07	6.23	0.81

*p<.05; PSYC: Realization of a Psychological Experience, PREV: Prevention of a Worse Condition, IMPV: an Improved Condition

According to the ANOVA results, there was no significant difference in BPRS scores based on participants' weekly physical activity frequency (F=0.649; p>.05). However, a significant difference was observed in PFLS-25 scores according to weekly physical activity frequency (F=10.960; p<.05). The MANOVA results indicated that participants' weekly physical activity frequency had a significant overall effect on the sub-dimensions of PHORS [λ=0.899, $F_{(6.888)}$=8.109; p<.05]. At the sub-dimension level, significant differences were found in psychological experience realization [$F_{(2.446)}$=22.579; p<.05] and ımproved condition [$F_{(2.446)}$=9.962; p<.05]. Participants engaging in physical activity five days or more per week had higher mean scores in these sub-dimensions compared to other participants.

Table 3. Analysis Results of the Relationships Between Age and Scores on BPRS, PFLS-25, and PHORS

Variables	Age	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Age	1					
F1	.058	1				
F2	-.165**	.200**	1			
F3	-.253**	.169**	.573**	1		
F4	-.067	.149**	.448**	.575**	1	
F5	-.190**	.123**	.507**	.619**	.714**	1

**p<.01; F1: BPRS, F2: PFLS-25, F3: PSYC, F4: PREV, F5: IMPV

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis results based on participants' age and their scores on the BPRS, PFLS-25, and PHORS scales. According to the results, there was a low-level and negative relationship between participants' age and their PFLS-25. Likewise, negative and low-level relationships were observed between participants' age and the PHORS subdimensions of "PSYC" and "IMPV". A positive and low-level relationship was identified between BPRS and PFLS-25. Additionally, positive and low-level correlations were found between BPRS and all subdimensions of the PHORS. Furthermore, positive and moderate-level relationships were determined between PFLS-25 and all subdimensions of the PHORS.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results indicated that male participants had higher mean scores in psychological resilience compared to female participants. This finding suggests that men may exhibit higher levels of psychological resilience than women. These results are consistent with the findings of Hoşoğlu et al. (2018), Aydın et al. (2019), and Beşikçi et al. (2021), whereas they do not align with Ulukan's (2020) study. No significant differences were found in perceived leisure freedom according to participants' gender. This suggests that male and female participants did not differ in their perceptions of freedom obtained from engaging in leisure activities. These findings are in line with the results of Serdar and Harmandar Demirel (2021), Serdar and Mungan Ay (2016), Harmandar Demirel et al. (2017), Demirel et al. (2017), and Tükel and Temel (2020), but contradict the findings of Kara (2019). Similarly, participants' gender did not have a significant main effect on perceived health outcomes in recreation, nor were significant differences observed at the sub-dimension level. Although female participants scored higher than males on the realization of psychological experience sub-dimension, this difference was not statistically significant. These results align with previous studies by Yurcu (2017), Berry et al. (2019), Yüzgenç et al. (2023), and Elçi et al. (2019), but not with the study of Hill and Gomez (2020).

No statistically significant differences were found in psychological resilience according to participants' weekly physical activity frequency. In other words, although participants engaging in physical activity five days or more per week had higher psychological resilience scores than others, this difference was not significant, suggesting that weekly physical activity frequency is not a crucial variable in determining psychological resilience levels. However, participants engaging in physical activity five days or more per week exhibited significantly higher levels of perceived leisure freedom than others, indicating a positive association between increased physical activity frequency and perceived leisure freedom. Weekly physical activity frequency also had a significant effect on perceived health outcomes in

recreation. Specifically, participants engaging in physical activity five days or more per week scored higher in the realization of psychological experience and ımproved condition sub-dimensions than other participants. This indicates that higher frequency of physical activity is associated with greater perceived health benefits in these sub-dimensions.

No significant relationship was found between participants' age and psychological resilience, suggesting that age is not an influential factor in psychological resilience levels. A negative, low-level correlation was observed between age and perceived leisure freedom, indicating that younger participants perceived higher levels of leisure freedom. These findings contrast with Serdar and Harmandar Demirel (2021), who reported no relationship between age and perceived leisure freedom, but are consistent with Ağyar (2013), who found that younger individuals reported higher perceived leisure freedom than older individuals. Additionally, age was negatively and weakly correlated with the realization of psychological experience and ımproved condition sub-dimensions of perceived health outcomes, suggesting that younger participants experienced greater psychological benefits and improvements from recreation. These results align with Serdar (2021), who reported a positive relationship between age and the realization of psychological experience sub-dimension and negative relationships with other sub-dimensions.

A positive, low-level relationship was found between psychological resilience and perceived leisure freedom, indicating that higher levels of psychological resilience are associated with greater perceived leisure freedom. Similarly, psychological resilience was positively and weakly related to perceived health outcomes in recreation, consistent with the findings of Beşikçi et al. (2021), which reported positive associations between psychological resilience and all sub-dimensions of perceived health outcomes. Furthermore, perceived leisure freedom was positively and moderately associated with all sub-dimensions of perceived health outcomes, suggesting that higher perceptions of leisure freedom are related to higher perceived health benefits.

In conclusion, the study found that men exhibited higher levels of psychological resilience than women. Participants engaging in physical activity five days or more per week demonstrated higher levels of perceived leisure freedom and health outcomes in recreation compared to others. No relationship was observed between age and psychological resilience. Psychological resilience was positively associated with perceived health outcomes, and perceived leisure freedom was positively associated with perceived health outcomes. Overall, individuals who participate in physical activity during their leisure time reported higher perceived leisure freedom and health benefits. Given the limited number of studies examining the relationships between perceived leisure freedom, perceived health outcomes, and psychological resilience, future research should increase sample sizes and include diverse age groups, socio-economic levels, and cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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Statement of Ethics Committee	
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