

Research Article

DETERMINATION OF FITNESS CENTER MEMBERS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND REASONS TO GO TO FITNESS CENTERS: THE CASE OF PROVINCE OF ELAZIG

Cemal Gundogdu¹, Idris Akkoyun² and *Evrin Celebi³

¹*Inonu University, Physical Education and Sports School, Malatya, Turkey*

²*Firat University Faculty of Sports Science, Elazig, Turkey*

³*Firat University Faculty of Health Science, Elazig, Turkey*

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify overall demographic profiles of members of fitness centers of the local governments in the Province of Elazığ, Turkey. The study population of this descriptive study consisted 1885 members of 7 fitness centers of local governments in the Province of Elazığ; and, the study sample consisted of 503 individuals. A personal information form developed by the researchers was used for data collection. Data were evaluated by a statistical software package, and presented with numbers and percentages. Chi-square test was used in analysis. Of the fitness center members, 55.6% was aged 36 and over, 59.8% was female, 47.6% was high school graduate, 51.8% was employed, and 45.2% had a monthly income under 1000 TL. Of the members, 75.0% was not engaged in sports actively, and 59.8% stated that they go to fitness center for a healthy living. There was a significant difference between the reasons to go to the fitness center in terms of members' age, gender, employment and monthly income ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: *Fitness Center, Age, Gender, Level of Education*

INTRODUCTION

It's known by all segments of society that engaging in sports is necessary to be healthy, turn working out into a habit, and help people to improve their abilities (Ay, 2003). Sports is the most important activity which helps individuals to get physically, mentally, and socially healthy and balanced.

Masses can be reached through the sports and a peace, understanding and living together message can be given by making people experience the same feelings.

Being the common language of the world, sports has become a very important industry by means of its direct and indirect effects as well as its economic value.

As one of the development indicators of countries, sports is a very important factor in dealing with the impact of industrialization and accompanying rapid urbanization on the individuals and society (Ates, 2011).

In line with the transition from agricultural society to industrial society, migration from villages to cities has increased, and people have started to experience a sedentary lifestyle because of the lacking physical activities such as walking, gardening, and husbandry performed by people in villages. This has caused various health problems in people.

Sports facilities, sports businesses and sports fields have been established and continues to be established in order to prevent these health problems, and get away from the stress of daily life, in addition to other various reasons (Kutanis, 2015).

Despite the profits earned in exchange for the services provided, the sports businesses are mainly founded to meet the sporting needs of people going to these facilities.

Considering that sports is seen as a public service in some countries, the main goal of the sports facilities established and operated by the state is to make sports widespread and create social services and benefits (Ramazanoglu and Ocalan, 2005).

Wellness centers and sport centers have become a widespread service industry both in the World and Turkey.

Research Article

Especially it's known that people experiencing a busy work schedule and sedentary lifestyle are interested in sports centers and wellness centers substantially in order to complete themselves physically, socially and mentally (Ozturk *et al.*, 2011).

This study was conducted to identify the reasons to go to fitness centers and demographic characteristics of members of fitness centers of the local governments in the Province of Elazığ, Turkey.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study population of this descriptive study consisted 1885 members of 7 fitness centers of local governments in the Province of Elazığ; and the study sample consisted 503 individuals ($\alpha=0.05$ level of significance, $d=\pm 0.03$).

A personal information form developed by the researchers was used for data collection. Age, gender, educational level, occupation, income status, active engagement in sports and reasons to go to the fitness center was asked in the personal information form.

Questionnaires were applied via face-to-face interviews to the members who agreed to participate in the study.

Statistical Analysis

Data were evaluated by a statistical software package, and presented with numbers, percentages and means. Chi-square test was used in analysis. A probability level of $p<0.05$ was used to indicate statistical significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1: The Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of the Members Included in the Study

	Number (n=500)	%
Age		
15-25 years	85	17.0
26-35 years	137	27.4
36-45 years	161	32.2
46 years and above	117	23.4
Gender		
Male	201	40.2
Female	299	59.8
Education Level		
Primary Education	49	9.8
High School	238	47.6
Bachelor's Degree	169	33.8
Post Graduate	44	8.8
Employment Status		
Employed	259	51.8
Unemployed	241	48.2
Monthly Income Status		
1000 TL and below	226	45.2
1001-2000 TL	148	29.6
2001-3000 TL	86	17.2
3000 TL and above	40	8.0

Research Article

Table 1 shows the distribution of age, gender, educational level, employment and monthly income statuses of fitness center members included in the study. It was observed that 55.6% of the fitness center members was aged 36 and over, 59.8% was female, 47.6% was high school graduate, 51.8% was employed, and 45.2% had a monthly income under 1000 TL.

Table 2: The Distribution of Fitness Center Members' Active Engagement in Sports and Reasons to go to the Fitness Center

	N	%
Do you engage in sports actively?		
Yes	125	25.0
No	375	75.0
What is your reason to go to the fitness center?*		
Healthy living	275	59.8
Spending leisure time	168	36.5
Other	17	3.7

* Those who didn't respond were excluded from the analysis.

The distribution of fitness center members' active engagement in sports and reasons to go to the fitness center is shown in Table 2.

Of the members, 75.0% was not engaged in sports actively, and 59.8% stated that they go to fitness center for a healthy living.

Table 3: The Distribution of Fitness Center Members' Active Engagement in Sports in Terms of Age, Gender and Educational Level

	Do you Engage in Sports Actively?				Total		X ²	p
	Yes	No						
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Age								
15-25 years	39	31.2	46	12.3	85	17.0	29.184	0.000
26-35 years	38	30.4	99	26.4	137	27.4		
36 years and over	48	38.4	230	61.3	278	55.6		
Gender								
Male	85	68.0	116	30.9	201	40.2	53.581	0.000
Female	40	32.0	259	69.1	299	59.8		
Education Level								
Primary education	3	2.4	46	12.3	49	9.8	17.598	0.000
High School	52	41.6	186	49.6	238	47.6		
Bachelor's degree	70	56.0	143	38.1	213	42.6		
Total	125	25.0 ¹	375	75.0 ¹	500	100.0		

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

Looking at the fitness center members' active engagement in sports, a significant difference was found in terms of age, gender and educational level ($p < 0.05$, Table 3). Of the members who were not engaged in sports actively, 61.3% was 36 years old and over, 69.1% was female and 49.6% was high school graduate.

Research Article

Table 4: The Distribution of Fitness Center Members' Active Engagement in Sports in Terms of their Profession and Income Levels

	Do you Engage in Sports Actively?				Total	X ²	p	
	Yes		No					
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Employment Status								
Employed	76	60.8	183	48.8	259	51.8	5.407	0.020
Unemployed	49	39.2	192	51.2	241	48.2		
Monthly Income Status								
2000 TL and below	78	62.4	296	78.9	374	74.8	13.595	0.000
2000 TL over	47	37.6	79	21.1	126	25.2		
Total	125	25.0 ¹	375	75.0 ¹	500	100.0		

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

There was a significant difference between fitness center members' active engagement in sports in terms of employment and monthly income ($p < 0.05$, Table 4). Accordingly, 60.8% of the members engaged in sports actively was employed. Of the members who were not engaged in sports actively, 79.8% had a monthly income less than 2000TL.

Table 5: The Distribution of Reasons of Fitness Center Members to go to the Fitness Center in Terms of Age

Reasons to Go to the Fitness Center?*	Age Group				Total	
	36 years and Below		36 years and Above			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy Living	100	50.0	175	63.7	275	59.8
Spending Leisure Time	86	43.0	82	31.5	168	36.5
Other	14	7.0	3	1.2	17	3.7
Total	200	43.5 ¹	260	56.5 ¹	460	100.0

P=0.000 X²=20.185 SD=2

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

* Those who didn't respond were excluded from the analysis.

There was a significant difference between the reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center, according to distribution in terms of age groups ($p < 0.05$, Table 5). The percentage of members who were over 36 years of age and stated that they go to the fitness center for healthy living was 63.7%, whereas this percentage was 50.0% in the lower age group. The percentage of members who were under 36 years of age and stated that they go to the fitness center to spend their leisure time was 43.0%, however, this percentage was lower in the other age group (31.5%).

Table 6: The Distribution of Reasons of Fitness Center Members to Go to the Fitness Center in Terms of Gender

Reasons to Go to the Fitness Center?*	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy Living	94	51.9	181	64.9	275	59.8
Spending Leisure Time	81	44.8	87	31.2	168	36.5
Other	6	3.3	11	3.9	17	3.7
Total	181	39.3 ¹	279	60.7 ¹	460	100.0

P= 0.013 X²= 8.726 SD=2

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

* Those who didn't respond were excluded from the analysis.

Research Article

Looking at the distribution of reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center, there was a significant difference in terms of gender ($p < 0.05$, Table 6). The percentage of female members who go to the fitness center for healthy living was 64.9%, whereas this percentage was 51.9% for male members. The percentage of male members who go to the fitness center to spend leisure time was 44.8%, whereas this percentage was only 31.2% for female members.

Table 7: The Distribution of Reasons of Fitness Center Members to Go to the Fitness Center in Terms of Educational Level

Reasons to Go to the Fitness Center?*	Educational Level						Total	
	Primary Education		High School		Bachelor's Degree			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy Living	31	73.8	132	59.7	112	56.9	275	59.8
Spending Leisure Time	11	26.2	79	35.7	78	39.6	168	36.5
Other	0	0.0	10	4.5	7	3.6	17	3.7
Total	42	9.1 ¹	221	48.0 ¹	197	42.8 ¹	460	100.0

P= 0.248 $X^2=5.412$ SD=4

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

* Those who didn't respond were excluded from the analysis.

The reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center have a similar distribution in terms of their educational levels ($p > 0.05$, Table 7).

Table 8: The Distribution of Reasons of Fitness Center Members to Go to the Fitness Center in Terms of Employment Status

Employment Status						
Reasons to Go to the Fitness Center?*	Employed		Unemployed		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy Living	143	57.9	132	62.0	275	59.8
Spending Leisure Time	100	40.5	68	31.9	168	36.5
Other	4	1.6	13	6.1	17	3.7
Total	247	53.7 ¹	213	46.3 ¹	460	100.0

P= 0.012 $X^2=8.835$ SD=2

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

* Those who didn't respond were excluded from the analysis.

A significant difference was also found in the reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center in terms of employment status ($p < 0.05$, Table 8). The percentage of employed members who go to the fitness center to spend their leisure time was 40.5%, whereas his percentage was lower in the unemployed members group (31.9%).

Table 9: The Distribution of Reasons of Fitness Center Members to Go to the Fitness Center in Terms of Monthly Income

Monthly Income Status						
Reasons to Go to the Fitness Center?*	2000 TL and below		2000 TL and above		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Healthy Living	213	62.3	62	52.6	275	59.8
Spending Leisure Time	113	33.0	55	46.6	168	36.5
Other	16	4.7	1	0.8	17	3.7
Total	342	74.3 ¹	118	25.7 ¹	460	100.0

P= 0.010 $X^2=9.298$ SD=2

¹ Row percentage; others are column percentage.

* Those who didn't respond were excluded from the analysis.

Research Article

Looking at the distribution of reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center, there was a significant difference in terms of monthly income ($p < 0.05$, Table 9). Of the members who have an income 2000 TL and below, 62.3% was going to the fitness center for healthy living, whereas this percentage was 52.6% in the other group. Of the members who have an income 2000 TL and above, 46.6% was going to the fitness center for spending their leisure time, whereas this percentage was 33.0% in the other group who has an income under 2000 TL.

Discussion

Of the fitness center members included in the study, 55.6% was 36 years old and over (Table 1). This finding indicates that middle-aged and older individuals in the Province of Elazig prefer fitness centers more. Unlike our research findings, in a study carried out in the Province of Manisa, the percentage of members over 36 years of age was 17.1%, and in a study conducted in the Province of Eskisehir, the percentage of members over 36 years of age was found to be 14.7% (Besikci *et al.*, 2015; Katirci and Oyman, 2011).

The percentage of the female members participated in the study was 59.8% (Table 1). As a similar finding, 54.1% of the members was female in Ayas's (2013) study. The percentage of female members was 43.6% in a study by Ozturk *et al.*, (2011), and this percentage was 39.4% in Katirci and Oyman's (2011) study, 39.1% in Argan and Kose's (2009) study, and 38.1% in Yildiz's (2012) study. In a study by Yildiz and Tufekci (2010), 48.3% of the fitness center members was female. In the study by Solmaz and Aydin (2012), the percentage of female members was 27.0%. These findings were lower than our study findings. This difference may be due to the socio-demographic characteristics of the studied provinces.

When we look at the educational levels of the members surveyed, it was observed that about half of them (47.6%) were high school graduates, and 42.6% was college graduate (Table 1). In a study by Argan and Kose (2009), the percentage of high school graduate members was found to be 25.1%, whereas the percentage of university graduates was 74.5%. In Lapa and Bastac's (2012) study, the percentage of high school graduate members was found to be 40.4%, whereas the percentage of university graduates was 59.6%. In a study by Besikci *et al.*, (2015), 76.4% of the members was college graduate. In a study by Solmaz and Aydin (2012), the percentage of members graduated from high school was 19.0%, and the percentage of university graduate members was 67.3%. In Ayas's (2013) study, the percentage of high school graduate members was 27.1%, and the percentage of university graduate members was 70.6%. In the study by Katirci and Oyman (2011), the percentage of members graduated from high school was 9.2%, and the percentage of university graduate members was 90.8%. These results differ from our research findings.

Of the fitness center members, 51.8% was employed. Looking at the monthly incomes of the members, 45.2% of them found to have a monthly income under 1000 TL, and 54.8% had an income over 1000 TL (Table 1). The hunger threshold in Turkey was determined as 1.447 TL in January 2016. Accordingly, 45.2% of the members has an income below the hunger threshold (www.turkis.org). Looking at the literature, in Solmaz and Aydin's (2012) study, the percentage of members having an income less than 1000 TL was found to be 30.5%, and in Ayas's (2013) study, the percentage of members having a monthly income under 1000 TL was 42.2%.

Of the members included in the study, 75.0% was not engaged in sports actively, and 59.8% stated that they go to fitness center for a healthy living (Table 2). In Solmaz and Aydin's (2012) study, members were asked about the reasons for going to the fitness center, and 75.2% responded with the reason of a healthy lifestyle. This result is similar with our study findings. In Ayas's (2013) study, the percentage of members who go to the fitness center for a healthy lifestyle was 50.8%, which was lower than our study findings.

It was found that there was a significant difference between fitness center members' active engagement in sports in terms of age (Table 3). Of the members who were not engaged in sports actively, 61.3% was 36 years old and over. The frequency of working out decreases in line with the increasing age. In a study by Pepe and Kuru (2001), it was found that the majority of people engaged in sports were in the 16-21 age group, with a significant decrease after 24 years of age. This finding is in line with our study.

Research Article

The participation of women in sports in a society is an indication of the general status of women in that society. Considering the women's status and roles given throughout the World, it can be said that female athletes in sports are judged by their gender prior to their athletic characteristics. Of the female members included in the study, 32.0% was engaged in sports actively, whereas this percentage was 68.0% and significantly different in male members (Table 3).

Of the members engaged in sports actively, 56.0% was university graduate. This was followed by high school graduates and primary school graduates by 41.6% and 2.4% respectively (Table 3). It is observed that the importance placed on sports increases with the increased level of education. The study by Pepe and Kuru (2001) supports out research findings.

There was a significant difference between fitness center members' active engagement in sports in terms of employment and monthly income (Table 4). Accordingly, 60.8% of the members engaged in sports actively was employed. Of the members who were not engaged in sports actively, 79.8% had a monthly income less than 2000 TL. These findings indicate that socio-economic structure affects the level of participation in sports.

There was a significant difference between the reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center, according to the distribution in terms of age groups ($p < 0.05$, Table 5). The percentage of members who were over 36 years of age and stated that they go to the fitness center for healthy living was 63.7%, whereas this percentage was 50.0% in the lower age group. This finding suggests that protecting health becomes a priority with increasing age. In Ayas's (2013) study, the percentage of members who go to the fitness center for a healthy living was higher in the 46-55 age group, supporting our study findings.

Looking at the distribution of reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center, there was a significant difference in terms of gender (Table 6). The percentage of female members who go to the fitness center for healthy living was 64.9%, whereas this percentage was 51.9% for male members. The percentage of male members who go to the fitness center to spend leisure time was 44.8%, whereas this percentage was only 31.2% for female members. As a different finding, in Ayas's (2013) study the percentage of female members who go to the fitness center for a healthy lifestyle was 37.8%, whereas this percentage was found to be 66.9% in male members.

A significant difference was also found in the reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center in terms of employment status (Table 8). The percentage of employed members who go to the fitness center to spend their leisure time was 40.5%, whereas his percentage was lower in the unemployed members group (31.9%).

Looking at the distribution of reasons of fitness center members to go to the fitness center, there was a significant difference in terms of monthly income (Table 9). Of the members who have an income 2000 TL and below, 62.3% was going to the fitness center for healthy living, whereas this percentage was 52.6% in the other group. Of the members who have an income 2000 TL and above, 46.6% was going to the fitness center for spending their leisure time, whereas this percentage was 33.0% in the other group who has an income under 2000 TL. The members having a lower income were stating that they go to fitness centers for healthy living primarily, however, a trend towards social objectives is observed with increasing income. As a different finding, in Ayas's (2013) study the distribution of members' reasons to go to the fitness center showed a similar distribution according to monthly incomes of the members.

In line with these results, it's recommended that public and private organizations which provide services for sports should take necessary actions to popularize the sporting activities such as fitness, recreational sports, wellness, and life-long sports as well as the performance sports in order to create an awareness of sports in the society.

REFERENCES

- Argan M and Kose H (2009).** Attitude Factors Towards Sports Supplements: A Study on Fitness Center Participants. *Hacettepe Journal of Sport Sciene* **20**(4) 152–164.
- Ay O (2013).** The benefits and damages of using the exercise fields in parks this study about Burdur city center. *Master Thesis*, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Institute of Educational Sciences, Burdur, Turkey.

Research Article

Ayas S (2013). Rekreasyon Amaçlı Spor Tesisi Olarak Fitness Merkezlerinde Müşteri Profilini Belirlemeye Yönelik Bir Araştırma (Edirne İli Örneği). *Master Semester Project*, Trakya University Institute of Social Sciences, Edirne, Turkey.

Besikci T, Onag Z, Guzel P and Bilgic G (2015). Fitness Merkezi Müşterilerinin Müşteri Değerinin Müşteri Tatmini Aracılığıyla Marka Sadakati ve Müşteri İlişkileri Yönetimi Performansı Üzerindeki Etkilerinin İncelenmesi: Manisa İli Örneği. *International Sports Management Student Congress*. Available: www.sporbilimleriuk2015.com, [Accessed 2 February 2016].

Ates Y (2011). Mahalli İdarelerin Sporla İlgili İşlevleri ve Spor Kulüplerine Yardımlar. *Dış Denetim Dergisi*. Available: <http://docplayer.biz.tr/117567-Mahalli-idarelerin-sporla-ilgili-islevleri-ve-spor-kuluplerine-yardimlari.html> [Accessed 2 February 2016].

<http://www.turkis.org.tr/OCAK-2016-ACLİK-ve-YOKSULLUK-SINIRI-d981> [Accessed 2 February 2016].

Katirci H and Oyman M (2011). Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Sport Centers. *Nigde University Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science* 5(2) 90-100.

Kutaniş OR and Cakal M (2015). Are Sports Industry Employees Workaholic?: The Istanbul Case. *Suleyman Demirel University The Journal of Visionary* 6(12) 20-26.

Lapa TY and Bastac E (2012). Evaluating The Service Quality Assessment of Individuals Attending Fitness Centers in Antalya According to Age, Gender and Education. *Pamukkale Journal of Sport Sciences* 3(1) 42-52.

Ozturk H, Adilogullari I and Ay SM (2011). An Investigation of Satisfaction Levels of Customers in Healthy Lifestyle and Fitness Center in terms of Some Demographic Variables. *Journal of Celal Bayar University Physical Education and Sport Sciences* 6(2) 31-38.

Pepe H and Kuru E (2001). Spor Yapan ve Yapmayan Bayanların Sosyo-Ekonomik Seviyelerinin Araştırılması. *G.Ü. Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 21(3) 209-221.

Ramazanoglu F and Ocalan M (2005). Administating and Personnel Management Perspective in Sports Institutions. *Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi Araştırmaları* 36-40.

Solmaz B and Aydın BO (2012). A Research on Popular Culture and Sport Centers Abstract. *Gumushane University E-Journal of Faculty of Communication* 1(4) 67-81.

Yildiz Y (2012). Investigation of the Affect of the Customer Satisfaction on the Customer Loyalty in Fitness Centers. *Selçuk University Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science* 14(2) 217-222.

Yildiz SM and Tufekci O (2010). Assessment of Expectations and Perceptions of Fitness Center Customers for Service Quality. *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 13(24) 1-11.