

# Research Paper: Relationship Between Family Participation in Sport/Recreational Activities and Marital and Life Satisfaction



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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study aimed to investigate the relationship between family participation in sport/recreational activities and marital satisfaction and life satisfaction.

**Methods:** The study was survey-correlational research. The statistical population included all families living in Mashhad City. Using the cluster sampling method, six parks were selected from the different regions of Mashhad. Then, the researcher referred to the selected parks and distributed the questionnaires to families who came together for recreation in the park. Considering the unknown number of populations, the statistical sample was determined as 384 individuals, based on the Morgan table. To reach the sample size, 500 questionnaires were distributed, however, 430 questionnaires were returned. Data collection tools included the Handrich marital satisfaction questionnaire and the Newgarten life satisfaction questionnaire. Using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, the reliability was calculated as 0.82 for the marital satisfaction questionnaire and as 0.88 for the life satisfaction questionnaire. Also, we used descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the Cronbach alpha, the Pearson correlation test, and linear regression for data analysis, in SPSS V. 22.

**Results:** The findings showed that 54.18% of the respondents were female. Besides, most of the participants (75.8%) were in the age range of 30 to 60 years. The results of the hypotheses testing showed a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and the weekly, monthly, and annual participation of families in sport/recreational activities. Also, life satisfaction was significantly associated with the weekly, monthly, and annual participation of families in sport/recreational activities.

**Conclusion:** Totally, 19.99% of the total variance of life satisfaction is predicted by marital satisfaction

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## 1. Introduction

**A**

family is a unit created by marriage. From the beginning of its formation, the family keeps human life secure, blows a new spirit into the relatives' network, and connects more relatives [1]. A healthy society cannot exist without healthy families. None of the social harms are unaffected by family.

Thus, it is crucial to consider the health of the first social unit, ie, the family to have a healthy society. Marital satisfaction is one of the health determinants of the family. Also, family stability and consistency depend on the stability of the marital relationship. In other words, insecurity in marital satisfaction or having an unsuccessful marriage not only interferes with the couples' mental peace but also puts the survival and durability of families at risk [2].

One of the most important aspects of the marital relationship is the satisfaction experienced by couples within the marriage. Marital satisfaction is one of the common concepts indicating the happiness and the sustainability degree of the marital relationship [3]. Marital satisfaction is a positive and enjoyable attitude that is experienced by couples in the various aspects of their marital relationships, such as communication, personality issues, conflict resolution, financial problems, sexual relations, and children [4]. Moreover, marital satisfaction is one of the most important factors in the couple's relationship. Marital satisfaction is a compromise between the individuals' expectations of marriage and what they experience in their life [5]. Marital satisfaction is an indicator reflecting the normal nature of marriage as well as the level of individuals' expectations in marital life. It plays a key role in the stability of marriage and indicates the stability and happiness of marriage [6]. The nature and quality of interpersonal relationships change over time, thus, marital satisfaction is a dynamic concept that enables the identification of factors affecting satisfaction with a relationship [7].

Another concept related to mental health is the construct of psychological subjective well-being, which has received much attention in the last two decades. Subjective well-being is important for several reasons: 1. Providing mental/physical health and longevity; 2. Proving the value of happiness to humans; and 3. Measuring the quality of life index along with economic and social indicators. This construct is examined in three areas: positive affection, negative affection, and life satisfaction. Since individuals have different needs to be met to achieve satisfaction, it is difficult to define life satisfaction [8]. Life satisfaction is the individuals' conscious cognitive assessment based on their criteria about their life quality as a whole [7]. Cameron found that life satisfaction is influenced by job satisfaction, leisure time satisfaction, and health [9].

Sport/recreational activities may play an important role in increasing life satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Besides, many sport/recreational activities occur in leisure time. Thus, leisure and family researchers pay particular attention to family leisure. Many researchers have studied the benefits of family leisure, concerning some factors, such as family satisfaction and family bonding. Researchers believe that family leisure experiences maintain the family bonds in a family system, enhance family cohesion, promote collective interests, and increase the relationship between the family members, which are the prominent factors of family solidarity [10].

According to Chesworth, despite the demographic and structural changes of family, family life is still important to the Americans, and family trips are considered important for family peace. Concisely, family leisure trips have become a necessity. According to a survey by Expedia Institute, one-third of the studied people reported that they had spent their vacations with their first-degree relatives. The Family trips market has grown by about 20%, since 2001. Also, interaction, solidarity, and family peace are particularly associated with family vacations [11, 12]. Research on family recreation in North America showed that most Canadians usually spend their free time at home or with their family members far from home, thus, family life reflected by leisure activities is important to them. Family leisure provides opportunities for families to develop fundamental attitudes, improve quality of life, and strengthen the relationships between spouses and also between parents and children [13].

Family leisure includes recreational activities that require the interaction and participation of family members with each other. Family leisure consists of leisure engagement (duration and frequency) and leisure satisfaction (quality) [14]. Such activities weaken daily commitments and work stresses and increase satisfaction as well as overall life satisfaction [15]. Researchers have found a positive relationship between the satisfaction of family leisure time and satisfaction from family life [16]. Neil et al. were among the first researchers who investigated this phenomenon; they concluded that satisfaction from leisure time directly influences overall life satisfaction [13]. Karami et al. showed that resilience and happiness can predict the satisfaction of life among elderly people.

Moreover, Narimani et al. reported that female athletes had a better quality of life and more marital satisfaction, compared with nonathlete women. Also, Zhang et al. indicated that a diversity increase in the levels of leisure time linearly promotes subjective welfare among elderly people.

Oren stated that the life satisfaction of students who were engaged in recreational activities was higher than those of the other students. Brajsa et al. reported that participation

in leisure activities increased the quality of life, improved well-being, and increased satisfaction with life. Also, Wang declared that elderly people who participated in volunteer activities were more satisfied with their life. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effect of family participation in sport/recreational activities on marital and life satisfaction.

## 2. Methods

In this correlational research, data was collected using questionnaires as a survey. The statistical population included all families living in Mashhad City. Using the cluster sampling method, six parks were selected from the different regions of Mashhad City. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to families who had come to those parks for recreation. Also, the participants were above 18 years of age. Out of 500 distributed questionnaires, 430 were usable for this study, indicating a response rate of 86%. The following questionnaires were used to collect data.

### Handrich marital satisfaction questionnaire used by Sada in 2002

This questionnaire is scored on a 5-point Likert scale and includes seven questions about the amount of need met by the spouse, satisfaction with the spouse, nostalgia for the spouse, and love for the spouse.

### Newgarthen life satisfaction questionnaire used by Wang [17]

This questionnaire consists of 13 closed questions with the options of agree, disagree, and uncertain. The scores of 2, 1, and 0 are devoted to each answer on “agree”, “uncertain”, and “disagree” options, respectively.

Using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, the reliability for the marital satisfaction questionnaire and life satisfaction questionnaire was 0.82 and 0.88, respectively. We used descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the Cronbach alpha, the Pearson correlation test, and linear regression to analyze the data in SPSS V. 22.

## 3. Results

According to Table 1, 54.18% of respondents are female and 45.82% of them are male. Also, the adults and middle-aged participants comprised 47.2% and 28.6% of respondents, respectively. Among the respondents who participated with their families in sport/recreational activities, 49.06%, 30.46%, 11.19%, and 9.53% participated for one day, 2 to 3 days, 4 to 5 days, and more than five days per week, respectively. Also, 5.81% of respondents did not participate in such activities.

Moreover, 23.72% of the respondents participated with their families in sport/recreational activities for 3 to 4 days, 20.93% for 1 to 2 days, 26.97% for 5 to 6 days, and 23.95% for more than seven days per month. Also, 4.41% of the respondents did not participate in such activities.

**Table 1.** Descriptive population characteristics of the respondents

Population Characteristics		No. (%)
Gender	Female	233 (54.18)
	Male	197 (45.82)
Age group	Young	92 (21.39)
	Adult	203 (47.2)
	Middle-aged	123 (28.6)
	Elder	12 (2.79)
Education	Under diploma	92 (21.39)
	Diploma	99 (23.02)
	Associate/bachelor degree	136 (31.62)
	Master degree or above	103 (23.72)



**Table 2.** The mean scores of marital and life satisfactions

Variables	Gender		Age				Education			
	Male	Female	<30	30-45	45-60	>60	Under Diploma	Diploma	Associate/Bachelor Degree	Master Degree and Above
Marital satisfaction	19.96	19.86	20.36	18.69	18.89	19.16	18.18	18.87	18.56	20.12
Life satisfaction	13.62	13.23	13.12	13.43	14.01	13.93	12.93	13.42	13.63	14.35



Furthermore, 5.81% of the individuals participated with their families in sport/recreational activities for less than four days, 22.99% for 4-12 days, and 24.41% for more than 24 days annually. Also, 0.69% of respondents had no participation.

Table 2 presents the mean scores of marital satisfaction and life satisfaction according to the respondents' demographic characteristics.

The results of the hypothesis testing showed a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and weekly, monthly, and annual family participation in sport/recreational activities. Also, life satisfaction was significantly associated with weekly, monthly, and annual family participation in sport/recreational activities.

Based on the significance level of 0.05, there was a significant relationship between the marital satisfaction and life satisfaction of participants in family sport/recreational activities.

The linear regression test was used to determine the relationship between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. The results indicated that the variable of life satisfaction was predictable through marital satisfaction ( $B=0.26$ ). Besides, 19.99% of the total variance of life satisfaction was predicted by marital satisfaction.

#### 4. Discussion

The results indicated a significant relationship between family participation in sport/recreational activities and marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. Also, marital satisfaction can be considered as a predictor of life satisfaction. In line with these results, Wang reported that elderly people who participated in volunteer activities were more satisfied with their life [17]. Also, Brajsa et al. confirmed that participating in leisure activities increases the quality of life and life satisfaction [18]. Auron (2015) stated that life satisfaction in students who were engaged in recreational activities was higher than in other students. Narimani et

al. showed that female athletes had a better quality of life and more marital satisfaction, compared with their non-athletes counterparts [19].

The results of the abovementioned studies are in line with the results of the present study, indicating a significant relationship between participating in sport/recreational activities and research variables. The family as a social group unit encompasses the highest, deepest, and most fundamental human relationships, which are formed by marriage. Family leisure preserves family bonds, enhances family cohesion, promotes collective interests, and enhances the interrelationships among family members, all of which are the prominent factors of family solidarity. Family leisure makes opportunities for families to develop fundamental attitudes, improve the quality of life, and strengthen the relationships between spouses as well as the relationships between parents and children.

Among the various sports activities, recreation is of special importance, because it requires no special skill or strong will and is freely selectable by anyone. When family leisure time is deliberately targeted, it is referred to as a purposeful recreation, which is more likely to enhance family cohesion, interaction, communication, and learning new skills and values. Also, marital and life satisfaction increase when family members and especially spouses engage in fully voluntary and optional activities, in their leisure time with their family as a group, because of their interests and pleasant and appropriate events occurring during their leisure activities.

During recreational activities, individuals get away from their daily stresses; it lets them enjoy the moments of their life together. The effect of such exciting feelings will last and consequently increase the satisfaction of the family members. In this study, most of the participants had the correct perception of family participation in sport/recreational activities as well as marital satisfaction. However, some cases did not properly understand life satisfaction; this may be caused by the long questions of the questionnaire.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of the present study reveal that family participation in sport/recreational activities increases marital and life satisfaction in families. This issue should be considered in planning and managing leisure time. Managers and leisure planners should pay special attention to the sports and leisure activities of families and provide opportunities, such as creating suitable parks as well as sport/recreation facilities for families to spend their leisure time. Furthermore, it is recommended that the media and managers create and develop the culture of sport and family recreation at the community level.

## Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

This project (No. 10421407961002) has been approved by Islamic Azad University, Shahrood Branch. The participants were entirely free to complete the questionnaires. Besides, the questionnaires were completed anonymously. Ethical approval for this article has been also registered (No. 99/021, on May 17, 2020).

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### Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to preparing this article.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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