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An Examination of Positive and Negative Reciprocity Norms as to Serious Leisure Activities and Demographic Variables

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ABSTRACT

Research conducted on positive and negative reciprocities mainly aims to determine the variables that impact this phenomenon. To this end, this study sought to ascertain the influence of participation in trekking and kickboxing as serious leisure activities along with several other variables on the positive and negative reciprocity attitudes. The study utilized a descriptive survey design and a random sampling method. The findings revealed a significant difference between the choice of serious leisure activities and demographic variables such as gender, age, and education level. Additionally, the mean scores of positive reciprocity attitudes increased proportionately to age and education level. Furthermore, the mean scores of positive reciprocity attitudes of the trekking participants were significantly higher than those of kickboxing participants.

Keywords: Serious Leisure Activities, Positive and Negative Reciprocity, Kickboxing, Trekking



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INTRODUCTION

Harming others might trigger feelings of anger and revenge (Eisenberger et al., 2004). Rewarding good behaviors and punishing bad ones is one of the most basic attitudes observed since the emergence of humans on the historical stage (Uymaz, 2019). According to Aristotle, contempt for people brings out anger and a sense of revenge, the fulfillment of which can be pleasurable (Aristotle, 2001). The damage inflicted against the one received at specific intervals in history has manifested itself as a socially displayed attitude for revenge. This attitude is characterized as “tit-for-tat” in the Code of Hammurabi, considered as the oldest written law in history (Barmas, 2020). This expression indicates that human beings have adopted the attitude of reciprocity as a social rule. As a matter of fact, the books of the monotheistic religions (i.e., Torah, Bible, and Qur'an) state that good behaviors should be rewarded, and bad ones should be punished. This punishment or punitive system is described in the Torah as follows: “¹⁹If anyone maims his fellow, as he has done so shall it be done to him. ²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another shall be inflicted on him. ²¹One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death.” (Torah-Leviticus, 24:19-21). In response to the tit-for-tat phenomenon expressed in the Torah, such statements as: “³⁸You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' ³⁹But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴¹Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.” (Holy Bible-Matthew, 38-41) in the Holy Bible suggest that individuals should also react positively in the face of adverse situations. Unlike the Holy Bible, such statements as: “O ye who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered; the freeman for the freeman, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. And for him who is forgiven somewhat by his (injured) brother, prosecution according to usage and payment unto him in kindness. This is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord. He who transgresseth after this will have a painful doom.” (Qur'an-Al Baqarah, 178) “The guerdon of an ill deed is an ill the like thereof. But whosoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of Allah. Lo! He loveth not wrong doers.” (Qur'an-Shuraa, 42) in the Qur'an signal the phenomenon of reciprocity. That is, reciprocity is the act of response to any situation (good or bad).

Reciprocity is generally categorized into three types: *generalized*, *balanced*, and *negative reciprocity* (Cherry, 2022). Generalized reciprocity manifests itself in relationships between family or friends. Individuals do not expect favors from each other in this type of reciprocity. They act by assuming that any good they have done will return to them by their family or friends (Yamagishi and Kiyonari, 2000). In balanced reciprocity, the good that individuals do is assumed to return within a certain period of time. This type of reciprocity shows itself mostly in business relations (Cherry, 2022; MacCormack, 1976). Negative reciprocity, on the other hand, refers to the punishment of bad actions or selfishness (Shaw et al., 2019). Human beings definitely respond to every situation. However, whether this response is positive or negative depends on the individual. So, in which situations do individuals respond positively or negatively? Although there is no definite answer to this question, Gouldner (1960) reported that the main reason behind individuals' norms of negative responses is the culture they grow up in and their anger tendency. As a matter of fact, Eisenberger et al. (2004) determined that angry individuals are more likely to respond negatively. Walster et al. (1978), on the other hand, stated that individuals experience the feeling of injustice when giving more than they receive emotionally or physically, and feelings of guilt, indebtedness, and shame when receiving more than they give. Hence, a tendency to respond positively or negatively arises. Concerning this, Gang and Stukas (2015) reported that individuals tend to have less

positive responses when experiencing insufficient benefits compared to excessive benefits and equity.

Many factors affect the tendency to respond positively compared to the phenomenon of negative response. These can be listed as gender, perceived income status, age, education level, and the culture to which an individual belongs (Aksu and Varol, 2022; Aksu vd., 2021; Aksu vd., 2022; Atilgan and Arslan, 2022; Demirel et al., 2021; Eisenberger et al., 2004; Gouldner, 1960; MacCormack, 1976; Merton, 1957; Kaya et al., 2020). In addition to these variables, we believe that recreation and serious leisure activities also impact the tendency to respond positively and negatively. Indeed, studies conducted on recreation and serious leisure activities have shown that participation in such activities contributes positively to an individual's physical, mental, and mental health (Trice and Wood, 1958; Knetsch, 1963; Burt and Brewer, 1971; Street et al., 2007; Thomsen et al., 2018; Lackey et al., 2021; Lieberman et al., 2022). Stebbins (1992) defines serious leisure as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling for the participant to find a career there acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience”. Self-actualization by developing skills and abilities, self-expression through the developing skills and knowledge, connecting with serious leisure participants, contribution to the group's success, continuity, and progress, and winning individual and social rewards provide serious leisure participants with satisfaction (Stebbins, 2001).

Research has shown that serious leisure activities directly impact positive and negative moods (Eryılmaz and Unur, 2019). It has been reported that serious leisure activities support subjective well-being and thus might prompt positive emotions in individuals (Stebbins, 2006; Heo et al., 2010). The study by Eisenberg et al. (2004) revealed a higher tendency of angry individuals to respond negatively. Additionally, serious leisure activities are reported to reduce anger tendency (Stebbins, 2006; Eryılmaz and Unur, 2019; Brymer et al., 2010). Accordingly, participants in serious leisure activities performed in the open field might have a higher tendency to respond positively than those who do not. The literature review revealed no studies on whether serious leisure activities affect the tendency to respond positively or negatively.

Based on the information provided, this study aimed to examine the positive and negative reciprocity tendencies of serious leisure participants in relation to gender, education level, age, and choice of serious leisure activities. In this context, it sought answers to the following research questions:

- ❧ Is there a significant difference between the gender of serious leisure participants and their positive and negative reciprocity tendencies?
- ❧ Is there a significant difference between the age of serious leisure participants and their positive and negative reciprocity tendencies?
- ❧ Is there a significant difference between the education level of serious leisure participants and their positive and negative reciprocity tendencies?
- ❧ Is there a significant difference between the activity chosen by serious leisure participants and their positive and negative reciprocity tendencies?

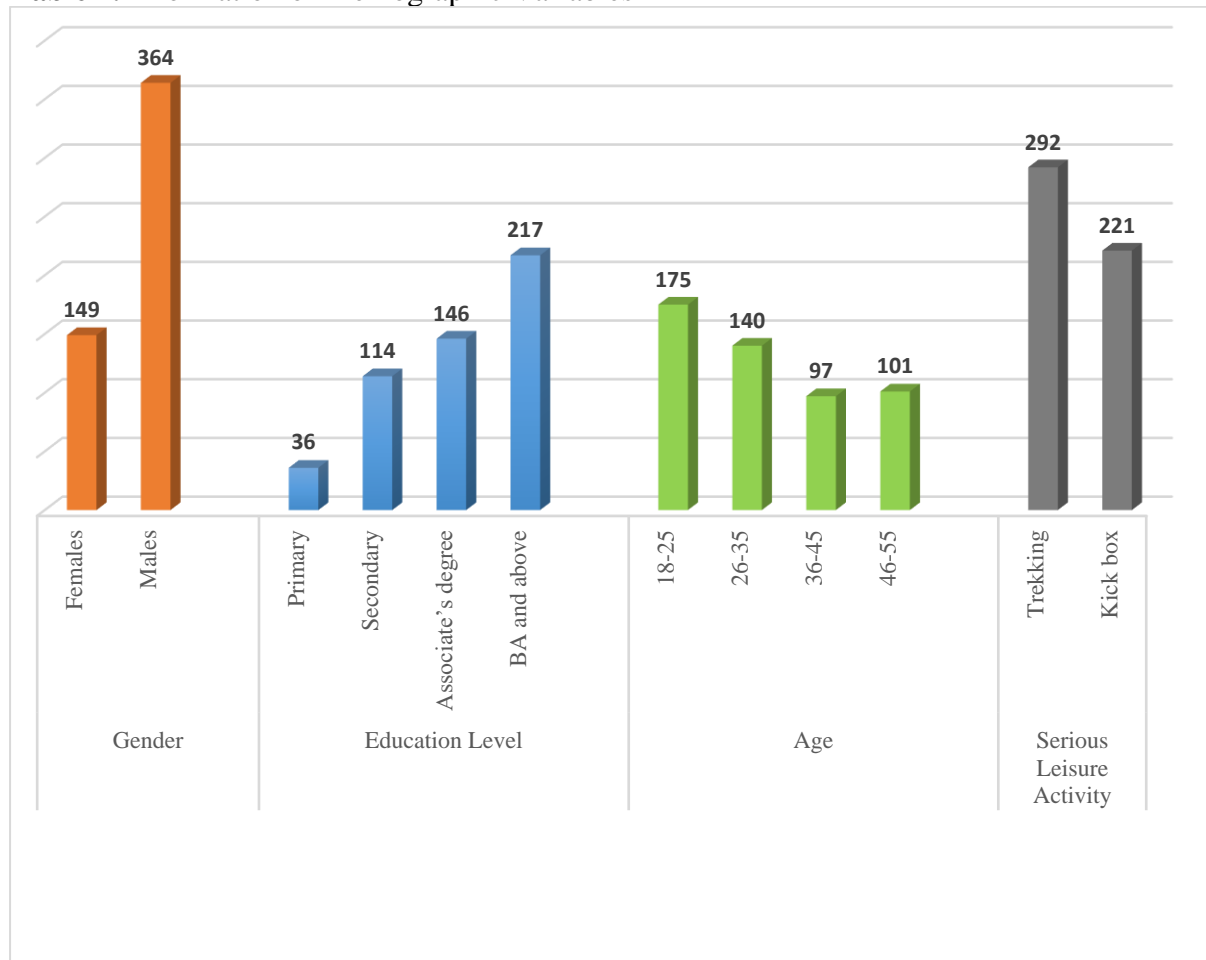
METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study adopted a descriptive survey design as one of the quantitative research designs since it aimed to determine the differences between the choice of serious leisure activity and positive and negative reciprocity attitudes in addition to such demographic variables as gender, age, and education level.

Population and Sample

The research population comprises wellness centers and nature clubs offering kickboxing and trekking activities in Çankaya, the largest central district of Ankara. The wellness centers (for kickboxing participants) and nature clubs (for trekking participants) in Çankaya were determined through Yandex Maps. The search on the application suggested 41 wellness centers with kickboxing activities and 21 nature clubs with trekking activities. Face-to-face interviews with the managers of wellness centers and nature clubs revealed the existence of 1866 active members registered in wellness centers and nature clubs. 71% of the individuals participating in nature clubs and wellness centers were males. As a result of the 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error formula, 319 people were found to have the power to represent the population as the sample. The study adopted a random sampling method, which is a nonprobability sampling method.

Table 1. Information on Demographic Variables



The participants were 149 females (29%) and 364 males (71%) aged predominantly between 18-25 ($n=175$; 34,1%), with an undergraduate degree or above ($n=217$; 42,3%). As Table 2 illustrates, 292 were trekking (56,9%) and 221 were kickboxing participants (43,1%).

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

This study utilized two data collection instruments: the participant form created by the researchers and the Positive and Negative Reciprocity Norm Scale (PNRNS) (Uymaz, 2019). The participant form includes items about gender, age, education level, and serious leisure activities as a response to the research questions.

The second instrument was the PNRNS, developed originally by Eisenberger et al. (2004) and adapted to Turkish by Uymaz (2019). The scale comprises 24 items in the original version and 23 items in the Turkish one (due to one item with a very low factor loading) and has two subdimensions as Negative Reciprocity (13 items) and Positive Reciprocity (10 items). In the adaptation study of the scale, Uymaz (2019) determined the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.88 for the first and 0.82 for the second subdimension. The relevant values were 0.80 and 0.79 respectively in our study.

Data Analysis

The Ethics Committee of Selçuk University Faculty of Tourism granted ethics committee approval with decision number 283772 before the administration of the instruments (i.e., the participant form and PNRNS). The data were collected between 07.01.2022 and 25.03.2022 using face-to-face surveys. Of the 541 scales, 28 were miscoded. The miscoded scales were excluded, and the remaining 513 were analyzed.

The data were analyzed through Jamovi 2.2.5 Solid statistical program. A skewness-kurtosis analysis was performed to determine whether the data showed normal distribution. The values between $\pm 1,5$ indicate normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) (Table 2). Accordingly, t-test and ANOVA were conducted in this study.

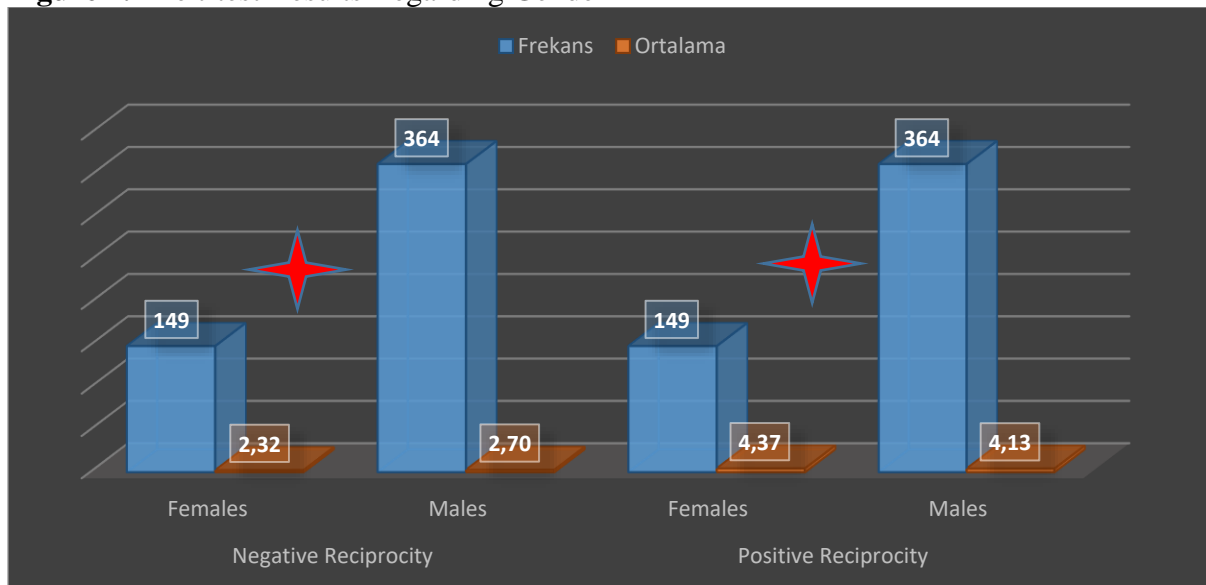
Table 2. Skewness-Kurtosis Test Results

| Subdimensions | | Statistic | Std. Error |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Negative Reciprocity | Skewness | 0,901 | 0,108 |
| | Kurtosis | -0,401 | 0,215 |
| Positive Reciprocity | Skewness | -1,337 | 0,108 |
| | Kurtosis | 0,999 | 0,215 |

FINDINGS

The t-test revealed a significant difference between gender and the positive and negative reciprocity attitudes. The mean scores of males ($x=2,70$) ($t_{(-12,51)}=p<0,05$) were significantly higher than those of females ($x=2,32$) in the negative reciprocity subdimension. However, the females had higher mean scores ($x=4,37$) ($t_{(7,42)}=p<0,05$) than males ($x=4,13$) in the positive reciprocity subdimension. This showed that gender directly impacted positive and negative reciprocity attitudes. (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The t-test Results Regarding Gender



*p<0,05

Additionally, a statistically significant difference was discovered between the age and positive and negative reciprocity attitudes of the participants. The Bonferroni test indicated that negative reciprocity decreased (*p<0.05), while positive reciprocity increased in proportionate to age (*p<0.05) (Figure 2).

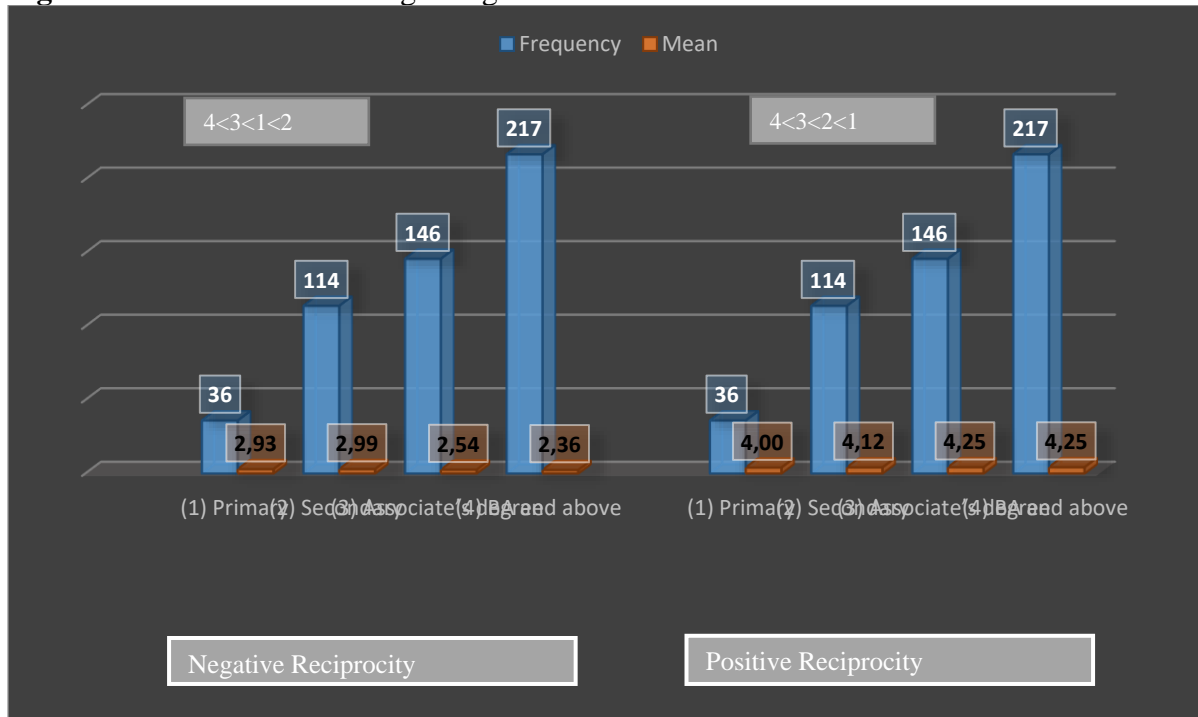
Figure 2. ANOVA Results Regarding Age



*p<0,05

The one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant difference between the education level and the positive and negative reciprocity attitudes of the participants. A post-Hoc Bonferroni test indicated a negative correlation between the education level and negative reciprocity attitudes. This means that negative reciprocity attitudes decreased as the level of education increased (*p<0,05). On the other hand, positive reciprocity attitudes increased linearly with the increasing education level (Figure 3).

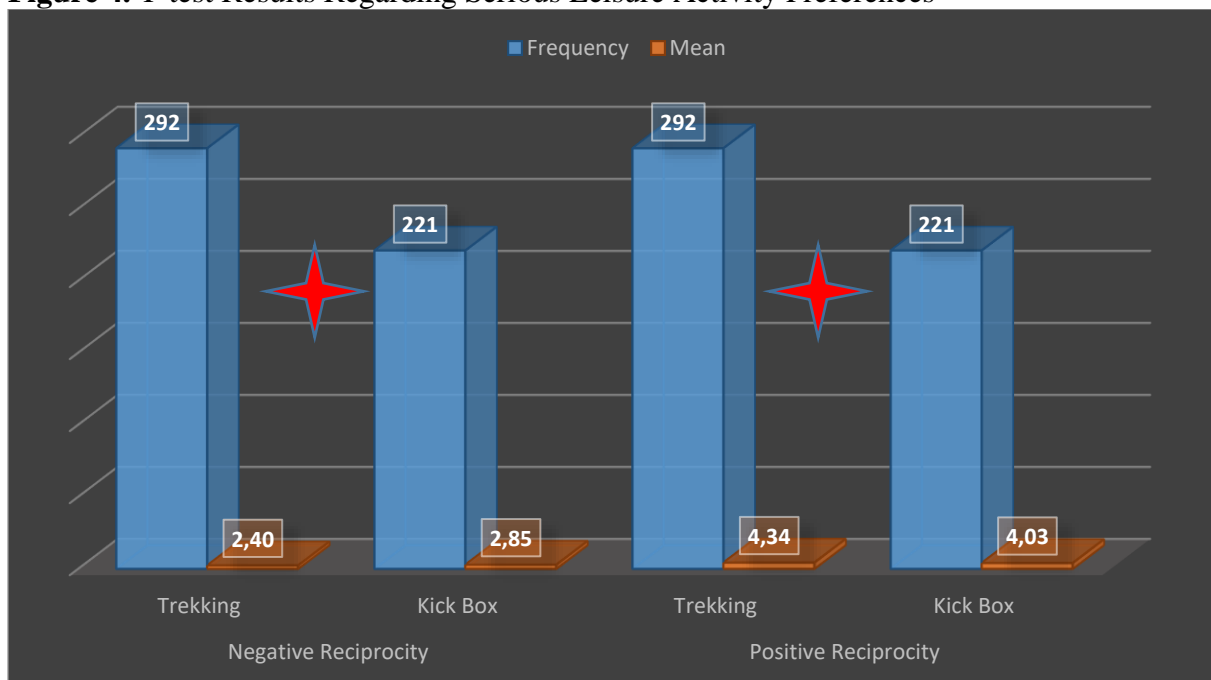
Figure 3. ANOVA Results Regarding the Education Level



*p<0,05

The results of the t-test performed between the relevant scale subdimensions and choices of serious leisure activities indicated a statistically significant difference between the kickboxing (x=2.85) (t (-5.98) =p<0.05) and trekking participants' (x=2,40) negative reciprocity mean scores. The mean scores of trekking participants (x=4.34) (t (-0.40) =p<0.05) differed significantly from those of kickboxing participants (x=4.03) in terms of positive reciprocity attitudes. This demonstrated that preferred serious leisure activities significantly impacted positive and negative reciprocity attitudes (Figure 4).

Figure 4. T-test Results Regarding Serious Leisure Activity Preferences



*p<0,05

DISCUSSION

Research on positive and negative reciprocity mainly aims to determine the variables that affect positive or negative reciprocity (Berkowitz & Green, 1996; Crossley, 2005; Eisenberger et al., 2004; Umphress & Bingham, 2011). Following their determination, the necessary solutions are expected to be proposed according to the implementation areas and considered by lawmakers and business managers (Greco et al., 2019; Gonzalez-Mule & Aguinis, 2017). This study aimed to determine the impact of serious leisure choices on positive and negative reciprocity attitudes besides diverse demographic variables.

The study found a significant difference between gender and positive and negative reciprocity attitudes as a result of the test conducted. The mean scores of positive reciprocity were significantly higher in females, while males had higher negative reciprocity mean scores. The body of literature reveals both convergent (Dohmen et al., 2008; Karadeniz et al., 2019) and divergent findings (Chaudhuri & Gangadharan, 2003; Dittrich, 2015; Garbarino & Slonim, 2009). In an experimental study that designed for the element of trust in economic preferences, Chaudhuri and Gangadharan (2003) concluded that women had less confidence than men, resulting in a positive impact on negative reciprocity tendencies. The researchers thought this might be due to the women's tendency to save more as far as economic circumstances are concerned. In parallel with our study findings, Dohmen et al. (2008) conducted a survey study with more than twenty thousand participants in Germany about positive and negative reciprocity attitudes. The study found that females had higher reciprocity mean scores than males. This demonstrates that despite circumstances, women may have a more positive outlook than males. The researchers argued that this might stem from the personality differences in men and women, suggesting that the level of conscientiousness of women was higher than that of men and that the level of neuroticism was higher in men than in women. Personality differences, as claimed by Dohmen et al. (2008), might account for the similar finding in our study.

The analysis results regarding the age variable suggested that the mean scores of positive reciprocity attitudes increased significantly in parallel with age. Previous studies indicated that positive reciprocity attitudes increased with age (Bülbül et al., 2021; Dohmen et al., 2008; Müftüler, 2018) and that age was not a significant predictor (Chaudhuri & Gangadharan, 2003). In a study conducted on negative reciprocity attitudes in adolescence and early adulthood, Kim et al. (2001) found that negative reciprocity attitudes constantly increased from early to middle adolescence. Another study by Laursen et al. (1998) revealed a continuous increase in the intensity of negative emotions depending on age, from early adolescence to early adulthood. According to the findings of our study, the negative reciprocity tendencies of the participants in the 18-25 age group were much higher on average than in other age groups. This might be, as shown in their research, due to the continuous rise in negative thoughts in adolescence and the gradual decline in early adulthood (Kim et al., 2001; Laursen et al., 1998). Another finding regarding age was that positive reciprocity tendencies increased averagely with age. This might stem from several factors (like considering the afterlife more, weakening of the body, become more emotionally sensitive) (Bülbül et al., 2021; Dohmen, 2008; Müftüler, 2018). Additionally, maturity with age, the development of the ability to examine events from different perspectives, and life experiences might positively affect the negative reciprocity attitudes.

The test results related to the education level revealed a decline in negative reciprocity tendencies with a rise in education level. This finding was both supported (De Naeghel et al., 2021; Eisenberger et al., 2004; Torkildsen, 2012; Kovar et al., 1992) and contradicted (Konecni & Doob, 1972; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996) in earlier studies. In a study investigating the

relationship between university students and violence, Nisbett and Cohen (1996) concluded that individuals previously exposed to violence by their peers or law enforcement officers had a higher tendency to reciprocate negatively. The researchers stated this was not because there was no correlation between the education levels and negative attitudes but rather the negative experiences of the individuals. In a study that supports our findings, Eisenberger et al. (2004) concluded that the education level of individuals affected their positive and negative reciprocities. In an experimental study including individuals with high and low education levels, the researchers found that individuals with low education levels were more likely to display angrier behavior in the face of adverse situations. In our study, the underlying reason for a similar finding was the increase in individuals' high-order thinking skills and the capacity to evaluate situations from different perspectives (Caprara et al., 2015) in parallel with their education levels.

The last test regarding serious leisure activities suggested a significant difference in the mean scores of trekking and kickboxing participants concerning positive and negative reciprocity attitudes. The participants' mean scores in trekking, one of the outdoor activities, were high in positive reciprocity. However, the participants had high mean scores of negative reciprocity in kickboxing, one of the indoor activities. It was emphasized in field and experimental studies that participation in outdoor leisure activities was significantly higher than participation in indoor activities as to positive reciprocity attitudes (Bowler et al., 2010; Thompson Coon et al., 2011). In a study supporting our findings, Bielinis et al. (2019) concluded that leisure activities performed in forest areas reduced negative mood and negative thought markers and prompted positive thinking. The researchers believed this might be due to the positive effects of interaction with nature on individuals. As our findings indicated, the mean scores of negative reciprocity of individuals participating in kickboxing were higher than those of the trekking group. In their studies on sporting activities, Milovanović et al. (2020) and Wankel and Berger (1990) claimed that factors such as sudden changes in pre- and post-game anxiety and expectation states and parental and trainer pressure, which are inherent in the sportive branch, sometimes increased the stress factors of serious leisure participants and hence resulted in negative reciprocity attitudes. On the other hand, there is no winning or losing in trekking, another serious leisure activity. It is, therefore, expected to create a growing awareness of the positive impact of exposure to natural environments on mental well-being (SDC, 2008). Experimental research has shown that exposure to natural areas might improve people's health and well-being by relieving stress and mental fatigue, thereby impacting positive reciprocity (Hartig et al., 1991).

Consequently, our study concluded that there was a significant difference between the demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, and education level) and the preferred serious leisure activities (i.e., trekking and kickboxing) and their positive and negative reciprocity attitudes. There has been frequent discussion in the literature that serious leisure activities generally positively affect physical, emotional, and mental health, contributing to their rise in the long run (Stebbins, 1982; Stalp, 2006; Elkington & Stebbins, 2014; Patterson & Pegg, 2009; Lyu & Oh, 2015; Hsu & Liu, 2020). However, our study determined that the mean scores of negative reciprocity attitudes of trekking participants were lower than those of kickboxing participants. This demonstrates that those who engage in trekking have a stronger tendency to respond positively to occurrences than kickboxers do.

RESULT

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study on the positive and negative reciprocity attitudes toward trekking and kickboxing, which are serious leisure activities. Therefore, it is expected to contribute to the literature. However, the study has several limitations. Firstly, this study was conducted using only such variables as gender, age, education level, and preferred serious leisure activity. The second limitation is that the research only a single scale was employed to reveal the current situation. The recommendations based on these situations are as follows:

☞ This study compared trekking and kickboxing activities, which are serious leisure activities, in terms of positive and negative reciprocity attitudes, along with demographic variables. The literature contains studies comparing serious leisure activities undertaken indoors and outdoors. However, studies that specifically compare activity types are rare to encounter. Hence, researchers wishing to work on the subject are assumed to obtain net results if they compare specially selected serious leisure activities and consider the participation time in addition to these activities.

☞ This study employed only a quantitative method. It is well-established that quantitative methods do not provide information about the causes but help determine between-group differences, relationships, or effects. Quantitative research is recommended to determine the causes of positive or negative reciprocity attitudes of serious leisure participants. In this way, the underlying reasons for the related phenomenon can be examined in depth and might provide more information about the subject.

☞ Recreation professionals and trainers leading serious leisure activities should diversify their activities by considering the positive and negative reciprocities of the participants. As it is known, the diversity of activities positively affects mental and physical health (Özal, 2020) and leads to an increase in positive reciprocity tendencies.

This study was carried out in the Çankaya district of Ankara, the capital of the Republic of Turkey. The results can therefore be generalized to only this population.

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