

## REVIEW

# Leisure and Recreation Activities for Disabled People

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## Abstract

All regulations around us that are made for human needs are possible only through a good design and practice-integrity by covering all people and by considering all needs that emerge from such factors as age and physical conditions and that require a general and special sensitivity. In this sense, one of the most important issues in the transformation of recreational open areas into livable environment is the accessibility. This study basically aims at reviewing those studies that discussed restrictors that prevented the disabled people from accessing to recreational activities in urban areas. Therefore; a search was made by using such key words as recreation, leisure, disabled, physical activity and the relevant studies were studied in detail. As a result of the review, the most important factor that restricted the disabled people was identified. In light of the findings, such classifications as environmental and structural, psychological and emotional, economical and legal/procedural factors were explored. In sum, it was concluded that environmental and structural factors were the most restrictive factor for the disabled people. In order to eliminate these restrictors identified, recommendations were made with physical environment solutions.

## Keywords

Recreation, Leisure, Disability, Physical Activity

## INTRODUCTION

15% of the global population –namely, 1 billion- is consisted of people with disabilities. In the survey done by Turkish Statistical Institute, almost 9 million disabled individuals are estimated and this figure corresponds to nearly 13% of Turkish population. According to the figure, these disabilities included difficulties of vision, auditory, speaking, slower learning than peers, simple arithmetic calculation difficulties, memory/attention deficiencies and mobility difficulties (walking, carrying, holding and climbing up/down stairs). The survey put those expressing to have a big difficulty in -at least- one of these domains or did not succeed in any of these

above- mentioned domains into the population with –at least- one disability (EYHGM, 2020).

According to the definition; disability covers those who have long physical, mental, cognitive or perceptual disorders appearing as a barrier to a complete and effective participation in society under equal terms (SUET). According to World Health Organization (WHO), disability is defined as a restriction or a lack of ability to perform normal activities manifested as behaviors, skills and tasks expected from body as a whole or humans or as a restriction of movements or inability to perform movements caused by a handicap or disability but expected from one according to gender, age, social and cultural factors (WHO 1980).

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According to the findings of Turkey Disability Survey; it is suggested that the disabled people's living under conditions away from normal life, normal educational and working areas and living dependent on others have been their "normal" and they have literally been isolated from the society in Türkiye. Aids, supports and services that will enable the disabled to lead a normal life should be different from each other. Disability is a social disadvantage caused by impairments occurring in physical functions and is a reason for social exclusion (Koçman & Tufan, 2005; Genç & Çat, 2013). Throughout human history, the disabled have been a part of society and have always been subjected to social exclusion and their social cohesion has been a topic of dispute in the society where they live. Exclusion from social life and inaccessibility to basic services, cultural and social activities, close social circles and economical fields are considered as a second disability for the disabled individuals. Therefore, social inclusion and integrity are critically important for the disabled people (Genç & Çat, 2013).

## DISABILITY AND SOCIALIZATION

The disabled individuals have a restricted social life and leisure activities and physical activities physical activities are very effective in their socialization process. In particular, the number of those who play individual sports or team sports under the federations proves that most of the individuals with disabilities who participate in sportive activities are male individuals. Considering the positive effects of sports and physical activities upon socialization; they are more important socialization and leisure tools – especially- for the disabled (Erbaş & Gumus, 2020; Güven et al., 2019). Sports and physical activities are regarded as a crucial tool for all individuals during the socialization process. In this sense, sports and physical activities are seen as ideal domains for socialization studies (Richard et al., 2015).

Disabilities restrict one's numerous activities in his/her daily life. They become interested in fewer productive and leisure activities and therefore, their social participation decreases. Thus, in our country it is necessary to maximize artistic, cultural and sportive activities to be performed by the disabled individuals or to be

performed for the disabled individuals and to broadcast and to encourage these activities by mass media for their social inclusion (Akyürek, 2011). Participation in social life by disabled people will make them citizens with a feeling that they are a part of the society. During this process, such an external social environment should be built up so that disabled children can continue their education and physical activities in the outdoors and their families can rest and take a short break. "Eskişehir Recreation Park for the Mentally Disabled Children" is a good example of this objective.

This community service project with a recreation park for the mentally disabled children aimed at developing independent life skills of these children as well as creating an external social environment where their family members can rest and provided an opportunity to play with non-disabled children and thus, their integration, which played a crucial role in their mental development, was achieved (Öztürk, 2010). The parents with disabled children encounter problems like not being recognized by other families, communities, society, socialization difficulties and not being considered as an individual unlike those children with normal growth. These problems affect the disabled children and their parents negatively. A disabled child who has just joined the family or an individual who has later become a disabled person is a source of extra stress for the parents (Karakaş & Yaman, 2017).

## THE EFFECT OF FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENT

Having a disabled child may affect the whole life in this period during which parents may delay or give up many things that they want to do and this negative exposure of parents accompanied by anxiety, depression and stress limits their basic psychological needs such as family's motivation to hold on to life, opportunities to get pleasure out of life and devotion and influences their quality of life negatively. Therefore; among the rehabilitation objectives should be the improvement of quality of health life of both the disabled individuals and those who provide care to the disabled individuals (Karakaş & Yaman, 2017).

Although it is known that physical activities show positive effects upon improving health and functioning among the disabled people, they still

continue to be one of the least active and the most obese populations in the society. A study done by the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention revealed that nearly half of the disabled individuals are physically inactive and do not participate in any physical activity. The rate of having a chronic disease for the disabled people who cannot lead an active life style is more than 50% (James & Rimmer, 2019; Kaya & Sarı, 2018). A disabled individual who joins physical activities gets higher satisfaction from his/her life, feels more energetic, becomes stronger in personality and suffers less from secondary health problems (fever, cold, etc.) and the number of painful, depressed, anxious and sleepless days goes down, his/her expectation from life increases, his/her cardiovascular health and fitness is improved and his/her positive athletic identity develops.

Participation in any kind of sports gives positive contributions like getting satisfaction from life, performing activities of daily life in an entertaining manner and elevating positive interaction and quality of life. Additionally, it is argued that joining any physical activities or sports maximizes one's physical fitness as well as his/her independence. Also, the physically disabled people's participating in sports produces social outcomes (Aslan et al. 2017). Leisure activities have been a significant element in rehabilitation process for the disabled individuals. Thanks to leisure activities; these individuals elevate their sense of success, satisfaction, professional carrier, socialization, self-confidence, self-respect, making self-decision and level of sports ability (Munusturlar, 2016; Seviç & Eskiler, 2020). In the studies done with the disabled individuals who played sports and those who did not; it was identified that the disabled individuals who played sports demonstrated higher level of self-respect (Koçak, 2016; Aslan et al. 2017) and showed a positive socialization and significant difference in neurotic and behavioral problems (İlhan, 2010; Yancı, 2010) as compared to those disabled individuals who did not play sports.

In a study done with physically disabled and visually disabled individuals; when the rate of those who played sports and those who did not play sports was investigated, it was seen that the rate of those who played sports was bigger and attitudes of the disabled participants who played sports towards leisure activities were more positive (Kaya & Sarı, 2018). Besides; theses and articles

written about physical activities of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (OSD) in Turkiye and the world between 2004 and 2014 were studied and it was identified that the most preferred physical activities were walking, swimming, cycling and trekking (Görgün & Melekoğlu, 2016).

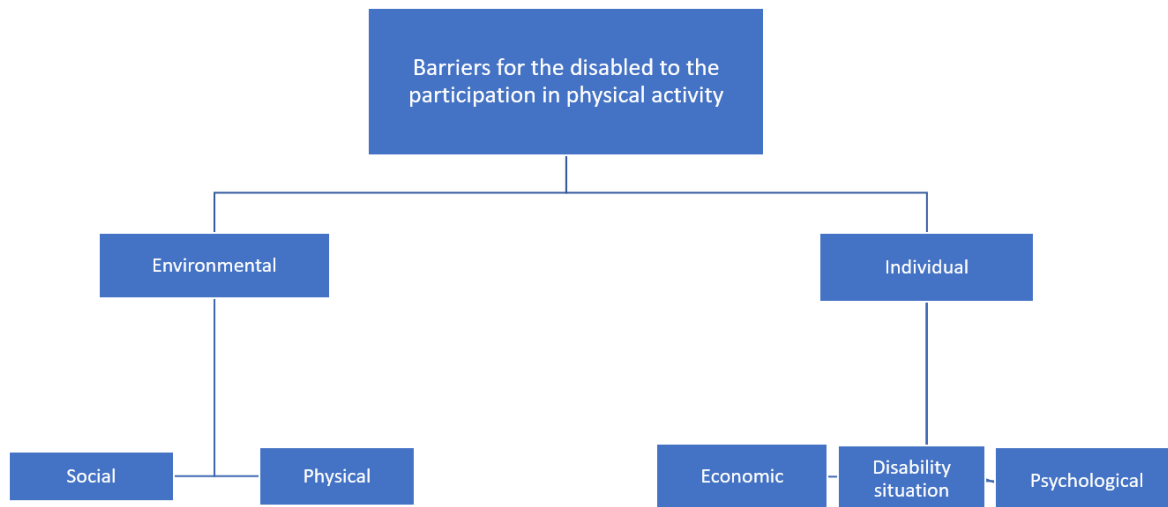
Problems encountered by the disabled individuals in recreation areas cause them to keep away from social life and to lose self-confidence (Kaya & Sarı, 2018). Factors that complicate physical activity participation are computer games, watching TV, listening to music, feeling tired, lack of activity partner and parents' inability to find time (Isık et al., 2014). Factors that facilitate physical activity participation are preference for individual sports or couples sports like tennis, Wii sports, popular figures and interests, wish to get rewards and supports from friends and parents (Görgün & Melekoğlu, 2016).

As a result of the study done to determine the disabled individuals' barriers to participation in physical activities; these barriers were classified into two main themes: the first theme includes environmental factors: Social factors and lack of support from friends, family, society, partners or restrictive behaviors. Physical factors are associated with transportation difficulties, unsuitable and inadequate facilities and materials. The second theme includes individual factors: economic difficulties, disability status and psychological factors (Esatbeyoğlu & Karahan 2014).

Arrangement and organization of environmental conditions, which is one of the primary issues that affect the disabled individuals' activities in their free time, is important to achieving opportunities offered (Kaya & Sarı, 2018). In the study of Ayan and Ergin (2015); reasons of lower rate of participation in physical activities were examined among individuals with special needs. They concluded in the study that economic factors, poor transportation and lack of physical capacity were the common barriers to participation in physical activities.

Özer and Şahin (2010) reviewed reports of two workshops held between 2009 and 2010 and pointed out that the number of academic studies should be increased and legal regulations should be made so that physical activities for the disabled individuals can be improved as a profession, service and right in our country. Meanwhile; they emphasized that economical difficulties are the

basic barrier for the disabled individuals to join physical activity programs, government policies are inadequate in physical activity participation, fees of activity programs and price of sports equipments are higher; which is considered as barriers to joining activities (Görgün & Melekoğlu, 2016; Kuripek et.al., 2017).



**Figure 1:** Themes that prevent the disabled individuals from joining physical activities (Esatbeyoğlu & Karahan, 2014).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Benefits of physical activities are universal for all children including the disabled ones. Disabled children's participation in sportive and recreational activities promotes social inclusion and minimizes conditioning, optimizes physical functioning and increases general welfare. Despite these benefits; the disabled children are more restricted in participation, do not have enough competence and have higher level of obesity as compared to those non-disabled children (Toptaş Demirci, 2019; Ayyıldız & Gökyürek, 2016). Numerous situations similar to these appear as restrictions for the disabled people to benefit from recreational opportunities. Recreational opportunities, which offer people refreshment and renewal both physically and psychologically, are today a requirement –rather than a luxury or a free time activity. This requirement makes people to live their lives more energetically, socially and actively (Durhan & Karaküçük, 2017; Koçak et al., 2017). Considering the fact that disabled

individuals suffer from many restrictions – particularly- in the developing countries even when they meet daily life needs, it may be argued that (answering) recreation needs are important necessity for them. According to the studies conducted, physical inactivity is seen 4.5 times more among the disabled individuals than non-disabled ones (Demirel et al., 2014; Yagmur et. al.,2020). Therefore; places where disabled individuals remain physically active are very important to their health. Among these places are parks and recreational areas and designing and building these places in line with accessibility conditions of the disabled people will improve their physical activity level considerably. Recreation areas play another key role not only in physical activity but also socialization of the disabled individuals. Recreation areas support and back social inclusion and integration of those disabled people who are socially isolated. According to the findings, the disabled individuals watch TV more than 4 hours a day; which is twice higher as compared to those non-disabled ones. It

is necessary for the disabled people to use recreation areas more actively for their social interaction.

As such, the following recommendations were made for local governors, law-makers and non-governmental organizations:

- Parks and recreation areas allocated to the disabled people according to their disability levels should be more accessible to the disabled people through mobile applications and smart technologies.
- Qualified personnel who will provide the disabled people with psychological support and encourage them to use recreation areas during their social integration process should be employed in recreation areas,
- Group exercise programs should be arranged in recreation areas for the disabled people on certain days of the week with qualified staffs,
- Public transport vehicles that run to recreation areas should be designed in a way that the disabled people can use them,
- Enough cultural and artistic activities should be organized for the disabled people in recreation areas,

It is recommended that taking disability classification and disability levels, different age groups and socio-economic status and factors into consideration; new studies should be done to understand problems of the disabled individuals more clearly.

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