

Examining the transformational leadership tendencies of serious and casual leisure participant sports management students

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Abstract. The present study aimed to investigate the transformational leadership tendencies exhibited by sports management students who engage in both serious and casual leisure activities. The study employed the relational screening model, which is a quantitative research technique. A total of 117 students from the Department of Sports Management at Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Faculty of Sports Sciences, participated in the study. The participants were selected using the simple random sampling method and willingly participated in the study. Data in the study were gathered through the utilization of the "Transformational Leadership Scale" and a personal information form created by the researchers. The scale comprises 8 questions that endorse a unidimensional structure. The data was analyzed using descriptive measures such as percentage, frequency, and cross-tabulation, as well as more advanced statistical tests including independent sample t-test, one-way analysis of variance test, and partial correlation analysis. The analysis results indicate that there were no significant differences in the participants' transformational leadership tendencies based on their gender and type of being serious or casual leisure participant. However, a significant difference was found based on the participants' class. First-year students exhibited a significantly higher inclination towards transformational leadership compared to second-year students. Furthermore, there was no significant correlation found between the ages of the participants and their tendency towards transformational leadership.

1 Introduction

Leisure activities are essential components that enhance individuals' quality of life and contribute to their overall well-being. Leisure participants are typically classified into two primary categories: serious and casual participants [1-3]. The serious leisure perspective encompasses individuals who voluntarily engage in activities for enjoyment and persist in these pursuits by assessing their knowledge and skills during their leisure time, separate from their jobs [4-6]. Leisure is regarded as a fundamental activity within the serious leisure framework, which is analyzed theoretically under three primary categories: a) serious leisure

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b) casual leisure and c) project-based leisure [7]. The term "serious " in the serious leisure perspective refers to attributes such as meticulousness, cordiality, sincerity, authenticity, significance, and reliability, in contrast to solemnity, heaviness, sadness, monotony, and depression [8].

Serious leisure participation denotes activities in which individuals possess profound interest and strive for mastery over time. This form of participation entails that individuals consistently utilize their leisure time in pursuit of long-term objectives. This period offers individuals opportunities to enhance their skills, articulate their identities, and forge social connections [9]. This form of participation frequently necessitates substantial motivation and dedication [10]. Casual leisure participation denotes activities in which individuals engage during their free time with minimal commitment and a relaxed demeanor. This form of participation encompasses activities in which individuals engage during their leisure time for stress alleviation, amusement, and relaxation. Casual leisure engagement typically necessitates minimal planning and investment [11].

Engagement in recreational activities may significantly contribute to the cultivation of individuals' leadership abilities. Leisure participation positively influences both academic achievement and personal development, particularly among university students [12]. Transformational leadership involves leaders enhancing their followers' performance and personal growth through motivation and inspiration. Transformational leaders endeavor to comprehend the needs of their followers, motivate them, and assist them in attaining their personal and professional objectives. This leadership style enhances organizational success by boosting the self-confidence and loyalty of followers [13]. Engagement in serious leisure can enhance individuals' transformational leadership attributes, including discipline, perseverance, and self-improvement [14]. Casual leisure activities also offer several benefits to participants, albeit they lack the endurance of serious leisure activities. The benefits, in summary, include the state of creativity and the discovery of the unknown, enjoyable and enriching education through television, magazines, and books, significant revitalization, and the enhancement of interpersonal relationships resulting from activities [3]. Nonetheless, alongside the aforementioned advantages, unrestricted leisure activities may also lead to adverse circumstances contingent upon the nature of the preferred activity. For instance, inappropriately selected casual leisure activities may lead problematic individuals to engage in abnormal pursuits [15].

This study aims to clarify the correlation between university students' engagement in serious and casual leisure activities and their proclivity for transformational leadership, as well as the implications of this relationship for leadership development. University students undergo diverse experiences that contribute to their personal and professional development during a significant phase of their lives. Engagement in recreational activities diminishes students' stress and fosters their social skills and leadership capabilities [16]. In this context, comprehending the influence of serious and casual leisure participation on students' transformational leadership tendencies can inform educational policies and leadership development programs, as college students' engagement in leisure activities can affect their leadership potential and future professional success. Consequently, research findings can offer significant insights for educators and managers, aiding young individuals in cultivating their leadership abilities.

In this study, we investigate how the personal attributes of university students and their engagement in serious and casual leisure activities influence their tendencies toward transformational leadership. The inquiry will be addressed. Four distinct hypotheses were formulated concerning the primary issue of the research.

- Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in transformational leadership tendencies based on the participants' gender.

- Hypothesis 2: There exists no significant difference in the transformational leadership tendencies of the participants based on the class variable.
- Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in transformational leadership tendencies based on the participants' classification as serious or casual leisure participants.
- Hypothesis 4: There exists no significant correlation between the ages of the participants and their tendencies towards transformational leadership.

2 Method

The present study was structured in accordance with the relational survey model, a quantitative research methodology. Relational screening models are research frameworks designed to ascertain the presence and/or extent of co-variation among two or more variables. Relational scanning models are categorized into two types: correlation and comparison models. The present study employed both correlational and comparative screening models.

The study population (N) comprises students from the Department of Sports Management at Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, Faculty of Sports Sciences. The sample (n) comprises 117 students chosen from the population using the simple random sampling technique. Specific sample sizes are deemed acceptable for certain populations in quantitative research. During the 2023-24 academic year, there are 165 actively enrolled students in the Sports Management department of the Faculty of Sports Sciences. Israel [17] indicated that a quantitative study requiring hypothesis testing at a 95% confidence interval necessitated a sample size of 122 units for a population of 175 individuals. According to the calculation based on Israel's formula, this figure is 116 within a population of 165 individuals. Consequently, it is presumed that the sample accurately represents the population.

The data collection instrument employed in the study comprises two components. The initial section includes participants' age (years), gender (female*male), class, whether they have completed a leadership course (yes*no), their self-assessment of being serious or indifferent leisure participants, and data regarding preferred leisure activities and participation frequencies. A six-question personal information form was utilized to gather data. The transformational leadership scale was employed in the second part.

The transformational leadership scale was created by Başıoğlu [18] and subsequently revised by Üstün [19] resulting in its final version. The scale endorses a unidimensional structure and comprises 8 items (e.g., I encourage my friends to consider problems from various viewpoints) utilizing a 5-point Likert scale (1 - Strongly disagree, 5 - Strongly agree).

All applications in the study were conducted in accordance with the 1982 Helsinki Declaration. The study obtained the necessary ethical approval from the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University Social and Humanities Ethics Committee (number: 2024/164, Date: 24/04/2024). Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was acquired from participants who completed the data collection instrument. Furthermore, institutional authorization was secured from the RTEU Faculty of Sports Sciences to gather data. The participants required an average of 10 minutes to receive information and complete the data collection instrument.

Data were analyzed utilizing the SPSS 26 software for Windows. The allocation of participants' personal information was ascertained through percentage, frequency, and cross-tabulation analyses. Internal consistency coefficients were computed for the data collection instruments, followed by an examination of the kurtosis and skewness values of the data to ascertain the hypothesis tests. The study employed independent samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and Partial correlation as hypothesis tests. Data analysis was conducted using a 95% confidence interval and a significance level of $P = 0.05$.

3 Results

Table 1. Distribution of participants' personal information.

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	57	48,70
	Male	60	51,30
Class	First class	39	33,30
	Second class	36	30,80
	Third class	10	8,50
	Fourth class	32	27,40
Did you take any lesson related to leadership?	Yes	74	63,20
	No	43	36,80
Would you characterize yourself as a serious or casual participant in leisure activities?	Serious leisure participant	68	58,10
	Casual leisure participant	49	41,90

According to the analysed results, 48.70% of the participants are female, 33.30% of the participants are first class students, 63.20% of the participants took lesson related to “leadership” and 58.10% of the participants define their selves as serious leisure participants.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis Results.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational leadership	4,05	0,52	-0,14	0,06

The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 2. The analysis revealed that the average score of participants on the transformational leadership scale was 4.05 ± 0.52 . Furthermore, the examination of kurtosis and skewness values indicates that they range between -2 and +2, showing no significant deviation from normal distribution [20].

Table 3. Transformational leadership tendencies of my participants according to their gender.

	Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Transformational Leadership	Female	57	3,97	0,50	-1,65	0,10
	Male	60	4,13	0,54		

Table 3 presents the results of an independent sample t-test performed to assess the differences in transformational leadership tendencies among participants based on gender. The analysis results indicated no significant difference in transformational leadership tendencies among participants based on gender ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4. Transformational leadership tendencies of my participants according to their classes

Class	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	F	p	Tukey
First	39	4,24	0,66	3-116	2,84	0,04	1>2
Second	36	3,92	0,36				
Third	10	3,92	0,19				
Fourth	32	4,01	0,50				
Total	117	4,05	0,52				

Table 4 presents the results of the one-way analysis of variance test performed to assess the differences in transformational leadership tendencies among participants based on their respective class variables. The analysis results indicate a significant difference in the transformational leadership tendencies of participants based on the class variable in which they are enrolled. The Tukey test results indicate a significant difference between 1st and 2nd graders, favoring 1st grade students ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Transformational leadership tendencies by serious/indifferent leisure participation.

	Type of Leisure Participant	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Transformational leadership	Serious leisure	68	4,03	0,56	-0,52	0,60
	Casual leisure	49	4,08	0,47		

Table 5 presents the results of the independent samples t-test conducted to assess the differences in transformational leadership tendencies among participants based on their leisure time participation styles. The analysis results indicated no significant difference in the transformational leadership tendencies of participants based on their leisure time participation styles ($p > 0.05$).

Table 6. Relationship between participants' ages and transformational leadership tendencies.

	Age	Transformational leadership
Age	1,00	-0,06
Transformational leadership	-0,06	1,00
Control variable = participation styles (serious/casual)		

Table 6 presents the partial correlation results, controlling for the variable of being a serious or indifferent leisure time participant, to investigate the relationship between participants' ages and their tendencies toward transformational leadership. The analysis results indicate that there was no significant relationship found between the ages of the participants and their tendencies towards transformational leadership ($p > 0.05$).

4 Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the transformational leadership tendencies among university students engaged in both serious and casual leisure activities. The analysis reveals that the participants exhibit strong tendencies toward transformational leadership. The participants' scores on the transformational leadership scale were computed as 4.05 ± 0.52 (Table 2). Given the maximum possible score on the scale, a score of 4.05 is considered high. Atan et al. [21] indicated in their research that students in sports sciences exhibited a significantly higher tendency for transformational leadership compared to students from other faculties. In a study involving 233 students from Trabzon University Faculty of Sports Sciences, Zengin and Somoğlu [22] found that the students exhibited the highest tendencies toward transformational leadership. According to the study conducted by Bayındır [23] involving 187 students from the School of Physical Education and Sports, the participants exhibited the lowest mean scores in the transformational leadership sub-dimension. In a comparable study, Yolcu [24] discovered that university students achieved the lowest scores in the transformational leadership sub-dimension.

The analysis of the current study's findings indicated no significant difference in transformational leadership tendencies between male and female students participating in serious and casual leisure activities (Table 3). Research indicates that women and men display distinct leadership tendencies and behaviors [25]. The lack of significant difference observed in the current study is attributed to the examination of only the students' transformational leadership tendencies, rather than a comparison of various leadership tendencies. Transformational leadership is recognized as an effective approach for implementing leadership. This approach highlights the importance of leaders forming personal relationships to motivate team members, cultivate their potential, and accomplish shared objectives [26]. While gender influences an individual's leadership capabilities or potential for transformational leadership [27], it may not serve as a primary determining factor. Transformational leadership depends on a leader's capacity to engage with individuals, provide support, inspire them, and cultivate their skills, which may not necessarily correlate with gender. Leaders of all genders can embrace and implement a transformational leadership style effectively. While gender does not significantly influence a leader's potential for success, factors such as personality [28] skills, experience, and leadership style may have a greater impact.

The current study's findings revealed significant differences in the transformational leadership tendencies of participants based on their class variable. First-year students attained significantly higher scores compared to second-year students (Table 4). It is presumed that variables such as student demographics, motivation, and the classroom environment and culture influence this outcome. Furthermore, the first academic year serves as a period for students to cultivate their social skills as new college entrants. Transformational leadership fosters social interactions and sharing by promoting positive relationships and collaboration among students. Moreover, first-year college students typically experience an increased sense of autonomy and accountability. Transformational leadership can underscore the significance of autonomy by encouraging students to make independent decisions and assume responsibility. Additionally, first-year students frequently engage in forming new friendships and participating in the community. Transformational leadership can enhance community cohesion and foster positive relationships by promoting robust connections and collaboration among students.

The analysis revealed no significant difference in the transformational leadership tendencies of participants based on their classification as serious or indifferent leisure participants (Table 5). Serious leisure participants are typically individuals who regard their profession with gravity yet seek self-improvement, enjoyment, or relaxation through various activities during their leisure time. Despite possessing specific goals or objectives, these individuals utilize their leisure time to attain these aims or enhance their personal development. Serious leisure participants are typically individuals who are receptive to knowledge, enthusiastic about learning, disciplined, and proficient in time management. Transformational leadership is a modern management paradigm that highlights the leader's employment of transformational traits, including vision, inspiration, motivation, and intellectual stimulation, to impact their team. This leadership approach fosters team members' potential and facilitates their growth. Consequently, serious leisure participants may exhibit heightened motivation, enhanced competence, and increased commitment as team members under transformational leadership. This leadership approach can enhance their personal and professional growth while augmenting the team's success. Conversely, indifferent leisure participants are individuals who eschew leadership positions. Transformational leadership is a leadership style wherein the leader employs techniques such as personal exemplification, inspiration, fostering challenges, and cultivating individual teams to impact their team. In this context, apathetic leisure participants may typically exhibit a deficiency in transformational leadership qualities. Transformational leadership necessitates active

engagement, with the leader endeavoring to foster a beneficial influence on the team. Nonetheless, these participants may cultivate transformational leadership attributes under specific circumstances. An effective leadership environment can motivate apathetic individuals to engage more actively in leadership positions through appropriate guidance and incentives. This process can facilitate the development of leadership skills, thereby enhancing transformational leadership tendencies.

The analysis of the study findings revealed no correlation between the participants' ages and their tendencies toward transformational leadership (Table 6). The relationship between age and transformational leadership is complicated, making it challenging to establish a conclusive connection between the two concepts. In fact, age may not be a major factor influencing leadership abilities. Although numerous young leaders may possess transformational leadership traits, an older leader may lack these attributes, and conversely. The correlation between age and transformational leadership remains ambiguous. Leadership skills are influenced by an individual's personal traits, experiences, and learning ability. Consequently, age alone may not be an inadequate core criterion for assessing transformational leadership capabilities.

5 Conclusion

According to the analysed results;

- No significant difference was observed in the transformational leadership tendencies of participants based on gender.
- A significant difference was identified in the analyses based on the class level, favoring first-year students over second-year students.
- No significant difference was observed in transformational leadership tendencies based on the types of leisure participation.
- The correlation between age and transformational leadership tendencies was analyzed while controlling for the variables of serious and casual leisure participation, revealing no significant relationship.

The findings indicate that tendencies toward transformational leadership do not vary based on demographic variables such as gender or leisure participation styles, but may differ according to the educational grade level. Moreover, leisure activities seemingly exerted no substantial influence on transformational leadership tendencies [29]. Present study findings can be considered in the formulation and execution of leadership development initiatives. Considering variations in educational attainment may be crucial for cultivating leadership qualities.

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