

# Physical activity motivations in individuals over 65 years of age participating in European Sports Week activities

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**Abstract.** As the global population continues to age, there is a growing trend in the development of age- and health-specific adapted sports activities for older adults. Prior research indicated a surge in the demand for adapted sports activities among older individuals, and European Union (EU) countries have also been swift in implementing new policies in response to this growing demand. The European Week of Sports is a collaborative initiative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Directorate for EU Affairs. It is celebrated concurrently in 81 provinces of Turkey with the motto #BeActive, which reflects the EU's commitment to promoting physical activity among its citizens. The present study attempts to examine the motivational factors underlying the physical activity participation of individuals aged 65 years and older participating in the European Week of Sports activities. We administered the Motivation Scale for Physical Activity Participation, developed by Tekkurşun-Demir and Cicioğlu (2018), to 1,567 individuals, 605 females and 962 males, aged 65 years and older. In addition to descriptive statistics, we adopted inferential statistics - independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) - to analyze the data. The findings indicated that participants' physical activity motivation did not significantly differ by gender. However, participants' respective motivational factors significantly differed by their body mass index values. We can assert that participants of the European Week of Sports exhibited high levels of motivation and positive perceptions of health. Besides, we found that the primary motive for physical activity engagement among our participants was individual ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .41$ ), followed by environmental ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .77$ ). Overall, we concluded that participants' physical activity motivation was not affected by gender and that perceived health and income status emerged as the most significant parameters in physical activity motivation.

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## 1 Introduction

People around the globe engage in physical activity daily as a means of maintaining optimal health and well-being. The extant literature indicates that older adults derive many benefits from physical activity, including a reduction in the prevalence of cardiovascular disease, enhanced physical performance [1,2], improved mental health, lower rates of depression, better cognitive functioning [3], and the maintenance of physical health and control of weight [4]. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of scholarly interest in the effects of exercise on older adults. Daily movements and activities decrease with age; however, it does not necessarily negate the necessity of exercise for older individuals. Incorporating physical activity into one's daily routine is crucial for the prevention of future health issues [4,5].

It is imperative to promote physical activity to combat sedentary behaviors by encouraging one to engage in more leisure activities [6,7]. It is widely accepted that regular physical activity is an essential component of maintaining optimal health, particularly in older ages [8]. As posited by Taylor and Johnson (2008), the activities offered to older adults should be aligned with their interests, physical capabilities, and lifestyles. For example, exercise for older adults should encompass essential activities of daily living, interests, and hobbies. They are advised to participate in at least two sessions of flexibility and strength training per week [10,11].

The dramatic global aging of the population leads to a concomitant increase in the demand for improvements in older adults' health, with a particular focus on enhancing the quality of their longevity, resulting in a rise in interest worldwide in encouraging them to engage in physical activity. There has also been a notable increase in scholarly efforts to elucidate the health benefits of exercise for older individuals [12,13].

As the global population ages, there is a growing trend in the development of age- and health-specific adapted sports activities for older adults. Prior research indicated a surge in the demand for adapted sports activities among older individuals [14,15]. European Union (EU) countries have also been swift in implementing new policies in response to this growing demand. One outcome of such policies may be the European Week of Sports. The events in this organization involve a diverse array of sports activities accessible to all, irrespective of age, gender, status, social background, or fitness level. As in European countries, this week is held simultaneously in 81 provinces across our country in indoor and outdoor settings, with the motto of #BeActive, between September 23-30 each year. Despite Turkey's lack of membership in the EU, the event has been held in our country since 2015 under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Directorate for EU Affairs, with the authorization of the International Sports for All Federation (ISAF) and the recognition of the European Parliament. This project ultimately aims to mobilize individuals and encourage sustained engagement in physical activity and sports throughout the year. It seeks to engage 4.5 million people in this initiative through physical activity and sports.

One's occupation, physical activity participation, and income level may be altered with age, leading to changes to their means of recreation. For the aging population, maintaining optimal health, engaging in regular physical activity, maintaining emotional stability, and living independently without severe illnesses or disabilities represent a significant personal and social challenge [16]. In addition, it is essential to consider older adults' physical activity motivation. In other words, one's reason for participating in physical activity may change over time, largely due to evolving values, life objectives, and health conditions. With age, adults tend to prioritize the ability to perform physical tasks competently and maintain their abilities rather than focusing on their physical appearance through physical activity [17].

Despite a plethora of studies on physical activity motivation, the literature hosts a paucity of research examining motivation to engage in physical activity among older adults. Therefore, this study attempts to address this gap by investigating the motivational factors influencing the participation of older adults in the European Week of Sports events by gender, body mass index (BMI), health status, and income level.

## 2 Method

The sample initially consisted of 1,575 voluntary individuals aged 65 years and older, 605 females and 962 males, who participated in the European Week of Sports events throughout Turkey. Participants were asked, “How do you evaluate your overall health status given Turkish standards?” and “How do you evaluate your income status given Turkish standards?” Only the divergent responses to these questions (n = 8) were excluded from the data set to ensure homogeneous distribution, and we considered the data of 1,567 participants in the main analyses.

We elicited participant demographics (e.g., age, gender, and income status) through a demographic information form and assessed their physical activity motivation using the Motivation Scale for Physical Activity Participation (MSPAP). The data were collected online from participants throughout Turkey for the 2022 European Week of Sports. Participants filled out questionnaire forms on a website dedicated to the data collection process and were awarded a certificate of participation as an incentive.

### 2.1 Demographic Information Form

We developed this form to elicit participant demographics. It consists of questions related to the independent variables of age, gender, region of residence, frequency of exercise, health status, and income level.

#### *Motivation Scale for Physical Activity Participation (MSPAP)*

Tekkurşun Demir and Cicioğlu (2018) designed the MSPAP a 16-item scale within three components: individual motives (items 1-6), environmental motives (items 7-12), and motivelessness (items 13-16). Items 3, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are reverse scored. In this study, we removed item 9 (“Reduces my academic achievement”) and revised items 2, 7, 8, 11, and 12 without altering their intended content. Internal consistency coefficients calculated for participants’ scores on the MSPAP following the item revision are presented below

**Table 1.** Setting Word’s margins.

Scale	$\alpha$
Individual motives	81.63
Motivelessness	80.21
Environmental motives	84.96
MSPAP	82.27

## 2.2 Data Analysis

We explored skewness and kurtosis values to examine the normality of distribution. We presented descriptives and performed independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to seek relationships between the variables. All analyses were run on SPSS 27.0, and we considered a p-value < .05 statistically significant

## 3 Results

This section presents findings of physical activity motivation among older adult participants of the European Week of Sports by gender, BMI, perceived health status, and income level.

**Table 2.** Participant Demographics

Variable		N	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	605	38.6
	Male	962	61.4
<b>Region Of Residence</b>	Mediterranean	282	18.0
	Eastern Anatolia	296	18.9
	Aegean	152	9.7
	Southeastern Anatolia	102	6.5
	Central Anatolia	362	23.1
	Black Sea	121	7.7
	Marmara	252	16.1
<b>Frequency Of Exercise</b>	1 day and less	185	11.8
	2-4 days	896	57.2
	5 days and more	486	31.0
<b>Health Status</b>	Very good	255	16.3
	Good	708	45.2
	Normal	604	38.5
<b>Income Level</b>	Good	659	42.1
	Poor	236	15.1
	Average	672	42.9
<b>Total</b>		1,567	100

More than half of the participants (61.4%) were males, 23.1% were from the Central Anatolia region, 57.2% engaged in exercise 2-4 days a week, 45.2% had good health status, and 42.9% reported good income status (Table 2).

**Table 3.** Participants’ Physical Activity Motivation by Gender

VARIABLE	GENDER	n	M	SD	t	p
<b>Individual Motives</b>	Female	605	4.150	.4145	-.491	.624
	Male	962	4.160	.4086		
<b>Motivelessness</b>	Female	605	3.780	.7874	-.027	.978
	Male	962	3.781	.7549		
<b>Environmental Motives</b>	Female	605	3.386	.7972	-.753	.451
	Male	962	3.418	.8376		
<b>Total</b>	Female	605	3.320	.4605	-.519	.604
	Male	962	3.333	.4568		

Our findings revealed that participants’ physical activity motivation did not significantly differ by gender.

**Table 4.** Participants’ Physical Activity Motivation by BMI

VARIABLE	BMI	n	M	SD	F	p	Diff.
<b>Individual Motives</b>	Underweight <sup>1</sup>	156	4.177	.426	1.66	.155	-
	Normal <sup>2</sup>	750	4.179	.379			
	Overweight <sup>3</sup>	97	4.128	.452			
	Obese <sup>4</sup>	425	4.122	.426			
<b>Environmental Motives</b>	Underweight <sup>1</sup>	156	3.839	.818	2.61	.034	2-3
	Normal <sup>2</sup>	750	3.830	.708			
	Overweight <sup>3</sup>	97	3.664	.987			
	Obese <sup>4</sup>	425	3.705	.750			
<b>Motivelessness</b>	Underweight <sup>1</sup>	156	3.466	.846	2.51	.040	2-4
	Normal <sup>2</sup>	750	3.358	.777			
	Overweight <sup>3</sup>	97	3.389	.924			
	Obese <sup>4</sup>	425	3.415	.805			
<b>Total</b>	Underweight <sup>1</sup>	156	3.373	.492	1.87	.113	-
	Normal <sup>2</sup>	750	3.343	.420			
	Overweight <sup>3</sup>	97	3.270	.550			
	Obese <sup>4</sup>	425	3.289	.449			

Anova results in Table 4 show that participants with normal weight had significantly higher environmental motives scores than overweight participants but significantly lower scores on the motivelessness subscale than obese participants ( $p < .05$  for both).

**Table 5.** Participants’ Physical Activity Motivation by Perceived Health

VARIABLE	HEALTH	n	M	SD	F	p	Diff.
<b>Individual Motives</b>	Very good <sup>1</sup>	255	4.000	.4975	46.38	.001*	1-2
	Good <sup>2</sup>	708	4.117	.4004			1-3
	Normal <sup>3</sup>	604	4.267	.3486			2-3
<b>Environmental Motives</b>	Very good <sup>1</sup>	255	3.510	.8617	40.41	.001*	1-2
	Good <sup>2</sup>	708	3.711	.7523			1-3
	Normal <sup>3</sup>	604	3.977	.6912			2-3
<b>Motivelessness</b>	Very good <sup>1</sup>	255	3.685	1.003	18.35	.001*	1-2
	Good <sup>2</sup>	708	3.372	.7264			1-3
	Normal <sup>3</sup>	604	3.329	.8200			
<b>Total</b>	Very good <sup>1</sup>	255	3.237	.5354	22.91	.001*	1-3
	Good <sup>2</sup>	708	3.279	.4459			2-3
	Normal <sup>3</sup>	604	3.424	.4191			

\*p < .05

Table 5 shows that participants with perceived very good health scored significantly higher on the individual motives and motivelessness subscales than those with perceived good and normal health ( $p < .05$  for both). However, these participants scored significantly lower on the subscale of environmental motives than others and on the MSPAP compared to those with perceived normal health ( $p < .05$  for all). On the other hand, those with perceived good health had significantly lower scores on the individual motives and environmental motives subscales and the MSPAP compared to participants with perceived normal health ( $p < .05$  for all).

**Table 6.** Participants’ Physical Activity Motivation by Perceived Income

Variable	INCOME	n	M	SD	F	P	Diff.
<b>Individual Motives</b>	Good <sup>1</sup>	659	4.195	.4172	6.312	.002*	1-3
	Poor <sup>2</sup>	236	4.164	.3936			
	Average <sup>3</sup>	672	4.115	.4071			
<b>Environmental Motives</b>	Good <sup>1</sup>	659	3.876	.7128	8.889	.001*	1-2
	Poor <sup>2</sup>	236	3.711	.7799			1-3
	Average <sup>3</sup>	672	3.711	.8047			
<b>Motivelessness</b>	Good <sup>1</sup>	659	3.481	.9399	5.303	.005*	1-2
	Poor <sup>2</sup>	236	3.301	.6451			1-3
	Average <sup>3</sup>	672	3.370	.7448			
<b>Total</b>	Good <sup>1</sup>	659	3.397	.4678	13.083	.001*	1-2
	Poor <sup>2</sup>	236	3.279	.4305			1-3
	Average <sup>3</sup>	672	3.27	.4497			

\*p < .05

We found that participating older adults reporting good income status had significantly higher scores on the environmental motives and motivelessness subscales and the MSPAP

than their counterparts with perceived poor and average income ( $p < .05$  for all). Moreover, they scored significantly higher on the subscale of individual motives than those with average income ( $p < .05$ ; Table 6)

**Table 7.** Participants' MSPAP Scores

<b>MSPAP</b>	<b><i>M</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>
Individual Motives	4.156	.410
Environmental Motives	3.781	.767
Motivelessness	3.406	.822
Total	3.788	.758

Participants' scores on the MSPAP imply that the most prominent factor motivating their participation in physical activity is individual motives, followed by environmental motives (Table 7).

### 3.1 Curriculum

The present study explores physical activity motivation among older adult participants of the European Week of Sports by gender, BMI, perceived health status, and perceived income. The findings revealed no significant difference between participants' physical activity motivation by gender. Similarly, the studies by Güvendi and Serin (2019) on classroom teachers and Sabah (2022) on male and female students found no significant difference between participants' physical activity motivation by gender, overlapping our results.

There was a notable discrepancy in the psychical activity motivation of participants with average weight compared to those with obesity in the environmental motives and motivelessness components of the MSPAP. Participants with normal weight may have enjoyed higher physical activity motivation thanks to external factors, such as relative comfort with their weight and positive external reactions.

Participants with perceived very good health had significantly higher physical activity motivation with individual motives and motivelessness than those with perceived good and normal health. However, these participants had significantly lower physical activity motivation with environmental motives than others. Moreover, they had poorer overall motivation compared to those with perceived normal health. On the other hand, those with perceived good health had significantly poorer physical activity motivation with individual and environmental motives compared to participants with perceived normal health. Their overall motivation was also significantly lower. The relevant literature hosts some research findings that overlap with our result that individual motives may be the most prominent determinant of physical activity motivation. To illustrate, physical health and psychological factors considered within individual motives frequently emerge as two significant determinants of motivation to engage in physical activity [21,22]. As reported by Dipietrao et al. (2019), regular physical activity is an efficient method of improving or delaying the loss of physical function and mobility in older adults while simultaneously reducing the risk of injuries resulting from falls. The slowing of movement, the reduction of strength, and the increased risk of falling and subsequent injuries can combine with other factors to give rise to further physical health problems in older age. While some older individuals may be reluctant to engage in physical activities due to preexisting health concerns, others may view

exercise as a means of managing these issues or enhancing their overall well-being. In a study by Brunet and Sabiston (2011), older adults aged 50 years and older reported motivation to engage in physical activity as being driven by several factors, including the desire to maintain movement skills, enjoyment, pleasure, vitality, and the aspiration to mitigate the impact of aging. These considerable public health benefits, therefore, underscore the significance of physical function among older adults and individuals with chronic health conditions [17].

We found that participating older adults reporting good income status had significantly higher overall physical activity motivation and motivation with environmental motives and motivelessness than their counterparts with perceived poor and average income. Moreover, they had significantly higher motivation with individual motives than those with average income. It can be posited that those with a higher income tend to be influenced by environmental factors to a greater extent, have greater access to physical activities, report higher levels of well-being, and derive more enjoyment from these activities than those with a lower or average income.

Overall, participating in older adults' MSPAP scores suggests that the most prominent factor motivating their engagement in physical activity is individual motives, followed by environmental motives. Older adults' interest in physical activity is associated with their general mood and motivation. It was previously reported that routine physical activity is linked to positive psychological and social outcomes and is conducive to improved behavioral regulation [24]. While conditions such as depression or anxiety can have a detrimental impact on engagement in physical activity, positive mood states and general life satisfaction are likely to enhance physical activity motivation. Besides, accessibility and obstacles are often identified as key environmental factors for physical activity motivation [25,26,27]. The dearth of adequate sports facilities in public settings may lead to a decline in one's inclination to engage in physical activity [28]. In their study, Nadri et al. (2016) documented that the availability of sports facilities, parks, walking trails, and bicycle paths is associated with an increased motivation to participate in physical activity.

## 4 Conclusion

Physical activity motivation is sensitive to both ease of access and barriers to physical activity [30,31,32]. The combination of accessibility of gyms, the appropriateness of the equipment available, and the safety of exercise areas tailor older adults' motivation to engage in physical activity. In a nutshell, we concluded that motivating factors for older adults to engage in physical activity may not be influenced by gender; instead, the prominent factors affecting such motivation are perceived health and income. It should also be noted that we carried out this study with the data of older adult participants of the European Week of Sports; thus, the present research design with other age groups may uncover significant findings to affect the quality and predictability of physical activity practices. In other words, the development of efficacious sports policies may potentially be achieved by explicit manifestation of factors for physical activity motivation amongst disparate age groups at the national level. Further research may be recommended considering the motivational effects of participant-centered parameters on physical activity participation.

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