

## CURRENT STATUS AND ANALYSIS OF RECREATION MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENTS IN TURKEY

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### ABSTRACT

The advances in science and technology and the problems in individuals' lives have caused an increase in free time. This increased free time has led to the desire of individuals to spend their time more efficiently and with better quality. Therefore, it has become clear that the needs of individuals should be met in an appropriate manner so that they can evaluate this time correctly and effectively. This process has led to the concept of "recreation" gaining importance in order to use free time valuably. The need for specialized and educated people in this field has increased in order to evaluate free time effectively. In order to meet this need, "Recreation Management" departments have been opened in universities and this field has become an important field of education and consultancy. The existence of this department in universities has provided individuals with information on how to evaluate their free time. The aim of this study is to contribute to the field by examining the curricula of Recreation Management departments in Turkey. As a result of the examinations, it has been determined that there are Recreation Management departments in a total of 21 faculties and colleges in 20 universities in Turkey. Although it is a department where there are master's programs in 8 different universities and doctoral programs in 5 different universities and where 109 academicians work, it is expected to develop further.

**Keywords:** recreation, recreation management, environment, University.

### INTRODUCTION

Time is of central importance in everyone's life because in a period when life passes by quickly, how time is used, what is done, with whom it is spent and to what extent it is used efficiently carries great sensitivity for individuals. When time is not used correctly, this loss is irretrievably lost. Therefore, people try to use their time in the most efficient way. Time is a concept that cannot be compensated; once it has passed, it never comes back. The life of individuals is a process that has a certain beginning and end, is measured in a certain period of time and is impossible to repeat (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2005; Güçlü, 2001).

Time consists of various areas such as both essential needs, work and entertainment. While people spend time on their basic needs such as eating and sleeping, they also spend time on business and entertainment (Wang, 2019;

Scout, 1997). Business life usually has a busy and stressful tempo, which leads individuals to want to spend their free time with relaxing and enjoyable activities such as entertainment. This free time is the time period that people use for activities such as resting themselves, participating in social activities or spending time on their hobbies. The time spent in this way is defined as "recreation" activities (Torkildsen, 2005). Recreation is the result of individuals' efforts to use their free time in a more quality, fun and relaxing way. The increase in free time in people's lives shows that the share of welfare increases. The increasing quality of life together with the share of welfare has enabled individuals to turn to recreational activities. In this case, recreational activities have continued to gain importance (Festjens & Janiszewski, 2015; Lewis, 2003).

Individuals engage in various activities to relax socially, psychologically and physically. They usually turn to recreational activities to socialize, gain new experiences, discover themselves and add color to their lives. The benefits of recreational activities on individuals are quite diverse. From a physical perspective, these activities provide healthy development and physical recovery. Psychologically, they improve individuals' mental health, reduce their stress and provide emotional balance. From a social perspective, they help individuals socialize, encourage social solidarity and integration. In addition, they increase work and study efficiency, allow individual skills and talents to develop, and generally contribute to individuals' happiness. From a social perspective, they contribute to the creation of a democratic society structure (Karaküçük, 2008). It is clear that there is a need for people who are educated and specialized in the field of recreation in order to achieve these benefits. The contribution of professionals who are educated in this field plays a major role in the correct evaluation of free time. Individuals who have received recreational training help people make the most of their free time by using the concept of time in the most efficient way. This provides significant benefits for both the individual and the society (Broadhurst, 2001).

The increase in the level of welfare has also led to an increase in free time. With this increased free time, individuals want to spend their time more effectively and enjoyably (Carr, 2017; Veal, 2020). This trend has increased interest in the concept of recreation and as a result, priority has been given to opening departments in the field of recreation management in universities. In Turkey, it is emphasized that the curriculum of recreation management departments in academic units such as the School of Tourism Management and Hotel Management, the Faculty of Applied Sciences and the Faculties of Tourism should be planned in a way that will train qualified personnel who can provide recreation services professionally (Tütüncü, 2008). In this way, individuals will be able to spend their free time more efficiently and will contribute to the training of professionals specialized in the sector. Recreation Management Department education is increasingly being offered in universities and different faculties in Turkey and it is aimed to train individuals specialized in this field. The education in this department should cover the theoretical and practical aspects of recreation, which has a wide range of application areas.

### ***Theoretical framework***

Recreation, along with areas such as health, citizenship, and environmental education in general education, covers various applications that play a functional role in achieving goals in these areas (Karaküçük, 2008). It has been observed that recreation, most commonly known as "free time evaluation" in Turkish, has been developed and enriched by individuals over time (Tütüncü, 2008). Recreation education was first given in sports science colleges and sports faculties, and with the expansion of educational activities in this field, recreation management education began to be offered in the field of tourism. The inclusion of recreation management education in tourism faculties became possible with the opening of these faculties (Kızanlıklılı, 2014).

Recreation education aims to ensure that individuals use their bodies correctly, adopt healthy lifestyle habits and accept these values as a philosophy of life thanks to the habits they have acquired since childhood (McLean & Hurd, 2015). This goal, expressed by Zorba etc. (2013), aims to increase the welfare levels of individuals in all age groups and to create creative and healthy individuals and societies.

Recreation education contributes to the development of the physical and mental health of individuals and has a significant impact on the general welfare of society. Considering the wide scope of the recreation field, it is emphasized that education should be provided for students graduating from this field to have certain knowledge and skills. This education will increase the job opportunities of graduates and enable them to catch career opportunities (Lekies vd, 2015; Jensen & Naylor, 2000).

In this context, various sectors and institutions that can be employed in the field of recreation management can be listed as follows:

- Non-Profit Service Organizations
- Commercial Institutions
- State and Public Recreation Institutions
- Recreation Facilities
- Sports Centers
- Entertainment Centers
- Pre-School Education Institutions
- Nursing Homes and Care Homes
- Animation Companies
- Entertainment (Theme) Environment parks
- Theater and Drama Workshops
- Accommodation Businesses
- Businesses in Health Tourism and Treatment Areas

These employment areas expressed by Zimmermann et al. (2014) show that individuals who graduate from the field of recreation management can create career opportunities for themselves in various sectors and that a wide variety of services can be offered in this field. Therefore, addressing a wide range of education will ensure that students have the skills and knowledge to work in different fields. Tütüncü (2008), in his study titled "A Curriculum Proposal at University Level for Recreation Management", discusses the elements required for a department of the field of Recreation that can be established in Turkey. In the study, the structured examples in the world are also mentioned, the situation of recreation in Turkey, goals, objectives, career opportunities and information about education are emphasized, and possible curricula are suggested for the establishment and development of this field. In addition, a curriculum proposal is also discussed in this context (Albena vd. 2017).

In the research conducted by İskender and Demirbağ (2023), in addition to the important effects of education on individuals such as self-development, socialization, benefiting people and managing their lives, its great importance in becoming a business owner is emphasized. The aim of the study is to determine the current employment and career opportunities for students graduating from these departments based on the curriculum of the Recreation Management department on the official websites of university institutions.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

**Method.** This study aims to analyze the current status of the Recreation Management department in universities in Turkey. In line with the purpose of the study, firstly the concept of recreation was defined and the educational status of the recreation management department was examined. Then, information about the academicians working in the Recreation Management Department in universities in Turkey, their characteristics, graduations, working units, administrative duties and the courses they teach was examined.

The research aimed to analyze the current status of the Recreation Management Department, the status of the academic staff and the structure of the departments. In the study, universities with Recreation Management Departments in Turkey were examined and 20 universities providing undergraduate education were determined. The recreation management departments in these 20 universities were examined between October 2024 and December 2024.

In addition, the profiles of the academicians working in these universities, their fields of study, the courses given, the status of the students and the status of their postgraduate education were analyzed. The limitation of the study is that the research was limited to the evaluation period conducted over the internet and the information was based only on the university websites and the data of the YÖK academic systems. Therefore, the data and findings used in the study are limited to the information obtained through the content analysis method of web pages.

**Findings**

Table 1. Recreation management undergraduate programs.

University Name	Type	Located Province	Student Admission Year	2024 Base Scores
Akdeniz University	State University	Antalya	2015	368,300
Akdeniz University (Manavgat)	State University	Antalya	2018	371,682
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	State University	Ankara	2010	343,333
Balıkesir University	State University	Balıkesir	2018	306,305
Giresun University	State University	Giresun	2019	286,350
Harran University	State University	Harran	2020	376,410
Isparta Uygulamalı Bilimler University	State University	Isparta	2023	410,668
Karabük University	State University	Karabük	2020	302,400
Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University	State University	Karaman	2018	358,350
Kırklareli University	State University	Kırklareli	2019	389,950
Kütahya Dumlupınar University	State University	Kütahya	2021	313,250
Mersin University	State University	Mersin	2020	387,172
Necmettin Erbakan University	State University	Konya	2015	299,861
Osmaniye Korkut Ata University	State University	Osmaniye	2019	301,650
Pamukkale University	State University	Denizli	2021	421,749
Sakarya Uygulamalı Bilimler University	State University	Sakarya	2020	465,690
Selçuk University	State University	Konya	2020	323,953
Siirt University	State University	Siirt	2019	330,200
Sinop University	State University	Sinop	2019	372,500
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University	State University	Tokat	2021	401,063
Van Yüzüncü Yıl University	State University	Van	2019	308,333

Source: YÖK Atlas

The undergraduate programs of the Department of Recreation Management are examined, it is seen that it is included in 20 universities and 21 faculties and colleges. It is understood that 19 departments continue their education in faculties and 2 departments continue their education in colleges.

The first opened undergraduate program of the Department of Recreation Management started its education life in 2010 in Gazi University in Ankara. This department has been opened in 18 different places since 2018. It was last opened in Isparta University of Applied Sciences in 2023. It is understood that all of these universities have the status of state universities and provide free education. When the base score status of the Department of Recreation Management is examined, it is understood that Giresun University has the lowest score with 286,350 points, while the highest score is Sakarya University of Applied Sciences with 465,690 points.

Table 2. Analysis of Recreation Management Departments.

University Name	Number of Academicians	Number of Faculty Members	Number of Teaching Staff	Number of Students	Number of Graduates
Akdeniz University	4	4	-	296	52
Akdeniz University (Manavgat)	4	4	-	223	39
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	13	10	3	355	69
Balıkesir University	5	4	1	181	32
Giresun University	5	5	-	118	17
Harran University	3	2	1	159	
Isparta Uygulamalı Bilimler University	4	3	1	31	
Karabük University	4	3	1	92	
Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University	4	2	2	137	33
Kırklareli University	5	4	1	185	4
Kütahya Dumlupınar University	4	3	1	102	
Mersin University	5	5	-	119	

Necmettin Erbakan University	6	4	2	302	32
Osmaniye Korkut Ata University	5	4	1	127	
Pamukkale University	3	3	-	58	
Sakarya Uygulamalı Bilimler University	7	5	2	219	
Selçuk University	4	3	1	86	
Siirt University	5	3	2	143	3
Sinop University	6	5	1	153	40
Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University	6	4	2	88	
Van Yüzüncü Yıl University	7	5	2	172	13
TOTAL	109	85	24	3122	354

Spource: YÖK Akademik- YÖK Atlas

The information of academicians working at universities where the Department of Recreation Management is located has been examined. In the examined academician information, it is seen that many academicians have doctorate degrees. When the titles of academicians working at universities are examined, it is seen that a total of 85 people are faculty members and 24 of them work as lecturers.

It is understood that the highest number of academicians is at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University (13), while the lowest number of academicians is at Pamukkale University (3) and Harran University (3). When the educational backgrounds of academicians working at the Department of Recreation Management and their administrative positions at universities are examined, some important findings have been reached. It has been observed that the majority of these academicians completed their education at universities such as Gazi University, Akdeniz University, Selçuk University and Hacı Bayram Veli University. The main fields in which they received education have been determined as Social, Human and Administrative Sciences. When the academicians' master's and doctorate programs are examined, it is understood that they generally graduated from programs such as tourism and hotel management, business, recreation management, physical education and sports, coaching and economics. However, it has been determined that there are also academicians who graduated from fields such as fisheries engineering, office management, public relations and hairdressing, apart from these programs. This situation shows the existence of some academic backgrounds that are not directly related to the Department of Recreation Management.

When the number of students is examined, it is seen that there are 3122 students in this department. The highest number of students was Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University with 355 students, while the lowest number of students was Isparta Applied Sciences University with 31 students. As a result of the research on graduation status, it is seen that 11 universities graduated a total of 354 students. When the courses of the universities where the Recreation Management Department is located are examined, it is seen that they consist of recreation, tourism, sports and general courses. It is understood that the areas of expertise of the current academicians are especially effective in the formation of the courses. It can be said that there are similar practices in terms of determining the courses among universities.

Table 3. Recreation Management Graduate Programs.

Üniversity Name	Master's Degree	Doctorate	City
Akdeniz University	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Antalya
Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Ankara
Batman University	Master's Degree	-	Batman
Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Karaman
Mersin University	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Mersin
Necmettin Erbakan University	Master's Degree	Doctorate	Konya
Sinop University	Master's Degree	-	Sinop
Trakya University	Master's Degree	-	Edirne

Source: University Institute Web Addresses

The master's and doctoral programs of the Department of Recreation Management are examined, it is seen that only 8 universities out of 20 have master's programs and 5 universities have doctoral programs. The universities with master's programs are Akdeniz University, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Batman University, Mersin University, Necmettin Erbakan University, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Sinop University and Trakya University.

When the table is examined, it is striking that Batman University and Trakya University have thesis-based master's programs, although there is no undergraduate program. The universities with doctoral programs are Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Mersin University, Necmettin Erbakan University and Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University.

## RESULTS

In this study, undergraduate programs of the Department of Recreation Management in Turkey were examined in detail. As a result of the study, it was determined that the Department of Recreation Management continues to provide education in 20 universities and 21 faculties and colleges. 19 of these departments are located in faculties and 2 in colleges.

The Department of Recreation Management was first opened in Turkey in 2010 at Gazi University in Ankara. This opening at Gazi University was the beginning of the department's spread throughout Turkey. After this, in line with the interest and need for the department, Departments of Recreation Management were established and started operating in 18 different universities over time. This situation shows that academic interest in the field of Recreation Management has increased and that educational programs in this field have spread to a wide geographical area in Turkey. These universities are; Akdeniz University, Balıkesir University, Giresun University, Isparta University of Applied Sciences, Karabük University, Kırklareli University, Kutahya Dumlupınar University, Mersin University, Necmettin Erbakan University, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Pamukkale University, Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Selçuk University, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, Harran University, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Siirt University, Sinop University and Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University.

Educational background of the academicians working in the Department of Recreation Management is examined, it is understood that the majority of them have doctoral degrees. This situation reveals the expertise and in-depth knowledge of the academicians in the field. In addition, it is seen that the majority of the academicians working in universities have the status of faculty members. This shows that the people working in the Department of Recreation Management generally continue their academic careers as faculty members and engage in teaching activities in this field. When the status of the academicians is examined, it is seen that the most frequently leaving position is Associate Professor.

When the education information is examined, it is concluded that the majority graduated from Gazi University, Akdeniz University, Selçuk University and Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University. While the master's and doctoral programs that the academicians graduated from include tourism and hotel management, business, recreation management, physical education and sports and coaching programs, there are also academicians who graduated from unrelated programs such as aquaculture engineering, hairdressing education, office management. It has been observed that the departments and graduation areas of the academicians who graduated from different fields do not match.

When the base score status of the Recreation Management Department is examined, it is understood that the lowest score is Giresun University with 286.350 points, while the highest score is Sakarya University of Applied Sciences with 465.690 points. According to the information obtained from the data, it is thought that the score differences are related to the location of the university. When the information of the students studying at the universities is examined, a total of 3122 students are registered to these programs and the total number of students graduated is 355.

The universities where the Department of Recreation Management has master's and doctoral programs were examined. Among the 20 universities examined, 8 universities have master's and 5 universities have doctoral programs. When the universities with master's degrees are examined, it is seen that Batman University and Trakya University have thesis-based master's programs although they do not have undergraduate programs. Although this situation is due to a special exception, it is understood that there are not enough master's programs in Turkey.

## CONCLUSION

- The course curricula of the universities where the Department of Recreation Management is located are examined, it is observed that the courses are generally focused on the fields of recreation, tourism, sports and general education. It is understood that these courses aim to develop the knowledge and skills of students in the field of recreation in both theoretical and practical contexts in academic programs. According to the research results, while recreation-based courses are at the forefront in some universities, sports-focused courses are more common in some universities.
- The main courses that stand out among recreation-based courses are: Recreation, Recreation and Game, Recreation Activity, Recreation Economics, Recreation Management, Eco-recreation, Recreational Leadership, Recreation Psychology, Animation, Introduction to Recreation, Recreation Theories, Therapeutic Recreation and Recreation Management.
- The status of compulsory or elective courses related to recreation varies from university to university. While some universities require recreation-related courses, other universities offer these courses as electives. This situation varies according to each university's own curriculum and educational approach.

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