

Constraints to Leisure-Time Physical Activity and Negotiation Strategies in Turkish Women

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Abstract

With the changing roles of women in Turkey, opportunities for leisure-time physical activity experiences appear to be increasing. Focus groups and individual interviews with active Turkish women were analyzed as part of a larger project aimed to examine cultural and social factors that influence Turkish women's participation in LTPA. These women experienced several constraints such as family responsibilities, ethic of care, time, social approval and economics. The study also revealed nuances of these constraints reflecting the tension between the traditional and contemporary Turkish society and, in particular, related to perceptions surrounding cultural and religious ideologies. Socioeconomic status coupled with stricter adherence to Islam seemed to underline the differences between these women and Western women studied in previous research.

KEYWORDS: *Constraints, Islam, leisure, negotiation, physical activity, Turkish women*

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Researchers studying women's leisure and physical activity are beginning to move outside hegemonic Euro- and Ameri-centric perspectives (e.g., Aitchison, 2003; Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, & Sheikholeslami, 2007; Demir, 2005; Juniu, 2000; Kay, 2005; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Taylor & Toohey, 2001/2002; Tirone & Pedlar, 2000). In addition, to fully understand the experiences of women from various cultures, interpretive studies have provided a better understanding of women's lives (e.g., Arab-Moghaddam et al. 2007; Shaw & Henderson, 2005; Taylor & Toohey, 2001/2002). Our paper adds to the growing body of knowledge about leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) by qualitatively examining the experiences of Turkish women in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey.

Information about leisure and LTPA is documented among middle class women in Western countries (e.g., Abbas, 2004; Brown, Brown, Miller, & Hansen, 2001; Currie, 2004; Little, 2002; Miller & Brown, 2005; Miller, Trost, & Brown, 2002). The growing literature also includes some information about cultural issues such as religion and ethnicity within these societies (e.g., Henderson & Ainsworth, 2003; Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Skowron, Stodolska, & Shinew, in press; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Taylor & Toohey, 2001/2002; Tirone & Pedlar, 2000). Henderson and Shaw (2006) challenged researchers to continue to make diversity a part of the feminist agenda and noted that "although feminist researchers have worked to make the lives of Western women visible, more work is needed to develop understanding of women and men from diverse backgrounds, different material conditions, and with varying degrees of access to power and resources" (p. 223). Therefore, the purpose of our study was to explore LTPA constraints and negotiation strategies among Turkish women from different social classes in order to contribute to both the global and local feminist agenda.

We focused on the constraints and negotiation strategies of women who already participated in LTPA and, therefore, did not include women who did not participate in LTPA. Two main research questions guided this analysis: (a) What constraints do Turkish women perceive for their LTPA participation? (2) What strategies of negotiation are used by Turkish women to pursue LTPA? The answers to these questions were bound to the sociocultural structure of the Turkish society and women's lived experiences.

Background

Turkey is a unique country unlike some other countries in the Middle East that espouse Islam as the central way of life. Turkey represents a secular country that embraces both Middle Eastern and Western values. The opportunities for and meanings of LTPA for Turkish women appear to be changing as a result of broader social transformations in Turkey. Therefore, the context of Turkey's culture and particularly socioeconomic issues provide an important background for understanding LTPA constraints and negotiation strategies.

Women in Turkish Society

The explanations for the women's status and participation in LTPA in Turkish society are connected to the modernization process of the new Turkish Republic. Prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Ottoman Empire was ruled

by Islamic law that institutionalized sex segregation and the unequal legal treatment of men and women (Rankin & Aytaç, 2006). The establishment of a new nation state provided ideological and legal bases for replacing the Islamic civil code with a secular code modeled on the Swiss code. In 1930 Turkish women were granted the right to vote in local elections and in 1934 they were given the right to vote and to be elected to public office in national elections. Turkey's articulated gender ideology encouraged women to become educated and act as visible ambassadors to challenge the perceived image of Muslim women in the world as well as in Turkey (Kandiyoti, 1989).

These reforms aimed at recognizing women as individuals with rights, however, did not bring equality to women. The Turkish social values continued to emphasize that marriage and children are the national duties of women. Several authors claimed that Turkish women are emancipated but unliberated (Arat, 1994; Kandiyoti, 1987). Muftuler-Bac (1999) argued, "it seems contradictory that despite modernization efforts and legal changes, Turkish women are still oppressed by the patriarchal system" (p. 304). Similar to other patriarchal societies, traditional attitudes about gender roles for women are imbedded in Turkish society (Dilek, 1997) and men and women have internalized their gender roles (Kandiyoti, 1995). Salman and Bayraktar (1997) found that women in urban areas who tended to be better educated favored personal fulfillment more than women in rural areas, but in both areas women placed great value on their traditional domestic roles.

The apparent contradiction between traditionalism and modernism has deeply influenced the life of Turkish women. Muftuler-Bac (1999) argued that on the surface a dichotomy exists between two types of women in Turkish society: the open Western emancipated woman and the closed traditional "unliberated" woman. Common to the two types of women is the belief that a Turkish woman's greatest duty is to be a good wife and a good mother. For example, Kulakac, Buldukoglu, Yilmaz, and Alkan (2006) studied motherhood among middle class employed women in southern Turkey and found that many women had to sacrifice their leisure time and freedom to defer to the needs of their children, and had feelings of guilt about their needs for leisure and freedom. The ethic of care for others in Turkish women's lives is evident. As Henderson and Allen (1991) emphasized, however, the ethic of care is only a problem if the self is not also addressed.

The primary engine of Turkey's ongoing modernization project has been the entrance into the European Union (EU). Within this Europeanization process, Turkey signed the United Nations Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW, 1993). Intensive lobbying and widespread campaigning by the Turkish women's movement resulted in reforms that have drastically changed the legal status of women in the family and in the promulgation of the new Turkish Civil Code, which was passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 22, 2001. The new code provides for the equal division of property acquired during marriage and assigns an economic value to women's hitherto invisible labor for the well-being of the family household (WWHR, 2002). As a result, for the first time in its history, Turkey has the legal framework of a post-patriarchal society (ESI, 2007). Although several successful campaigns have been organized by women organizations in Turkey since 2001, the important phase of the women's movement began after the

military's ferocious reassertion of power in the 1980 coup (Tekeli, 1998). Women activists founded feminist organizations that focused on violence against women and women's control of their bodies and sexuality. In 1990s, the focus of feminist movement included domestic division of labor, heterosexual relations, women's involvement in politics and elimination of discriminatory laws.

Despite these positive developments for all Turkish women, they continue to be subjected to various forms of patriarchal oppression. Women's status in the society has continued to be an issue of controversy between traditionalists and Turkish modernizationists. Kara (2006) argued that although the modernization process is still continuing and the status of women has improved in Turkey, women's status and employment are influenced by the polarization between Islamic cultural traditions and secular (i.e., Atatürk's¹) philosophy. A 2007 European Parliament report noted that the political participation by women in Turkey is too low and female role models are needed in positions of power and decision-making. Regarding gender equality in access to education and the labor market, UNICEF estimates that each year between 600,000 and 800,000 girls are either prevented by their families from going to school or do not attend because of logistical difficulties. The female employment rate in Turkey is just under 25%, compared to the average women's employment rate in the EU-25 of 55%². Therefore, members of the European Parliament have called on the Turkish government to ensure gender equality in access to education and the labor market, especially in the south-eastern regions (European Parliament, 2007).

LTPA and Turkish Women

Little information is available regarding the LTPA participation of Turkish women. Until recently scant attention was paid to Turkish women's sport, exercise, and physical activity experiences. Sport in Turkey has been a spectacle that attracts spectators and fans rather than a leisure activity in the sense of "sport for all" (Fasting & Pfister, 1999). However, an increasing number of women of diverse backgrounds and circumstances are actively participating in sports and fitness centers particularly in big cities. The Western media issues regarding a slim figure also are gaining ground in Turkey (Fasting & Pfister). Fitness and fitness studios appear to be increasingly popular among women especially in the middle and upper classes. The notion of LTPA, however, is a relatively new term that is associated mostly with sport and exercise.

Pfister (2000) pointed out:

In an analysis of the prospects and the barriers facing Turkish women in sport, one must take into consideration the great differences between orientations and the reality of living conditions in Turkey, which depend on where a person lives and to what social class he or she belongs. (p. 505)

Thus, although LTPA may be making some gains, the living conditions and ideological beliefs about the roles of women require greater understanding.

¹ Atatürk (1881-1938) is the founder and the first President of the Republic of Turkey.

² EU-25 is 25 Member States of European Union.

Constraints and LTPA

Constraints to leisure have been discussed from a number of perspectives (e.g., Jackson, 2005). Goodale and Witt (1989) suggested that virtually all studies of women and leisure have been studies about barriers. The significance of several commonly reported constraints affecting women's engagement in leisure time activities has been noted by researchers (e.g., Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). These constraints include money, facilities, marital and parental status, lack of time, and ethic of care. These factors tend to prevent or change the experience of women's opportunities for leisure experiences (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994; Harrington, Dawson, & Bolla, 1992; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Nies, Vollman, & Cook, 1999; Samuel, 1996). Constraints to leisure have also been compared between men and women. For example, a study of Turkish undergraduate male and female students (Demir, 2005) found that men had fewer barriers to leisure compared to women related to household responsibilities, expectations from life, cost, arrangement of working hours, and perception of opportunities as well as several other less important items.

Several scholars (e.g., Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Samdahl, 2005; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997; Shaw & Henderson, 2005) have criticized the leisure literature and particularly constraints research for its focus primarily on individual experiences of women and men with a lack of emphasis on social structures and the cultural context of people's lived experiences. Researchers are beginning to investigate leisure experiences of women from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Livengood & Stodolska, 2004; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Tirone & Pedlar, 2000). Leisure constraints and negotiation strategies are important elements, although not the same for all women, in research done in any cultural context.

Another criticism of the constraints research particularly relevant to women is an over-emphasis on constraint as an obstacle. Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey (1993) argued that leisure participation depends not on the absence of constraints alone but rather on negotiation through them. Jackson (2000) referred to this notion as "constraints negotiation" indicating that people will find ways around constraints if they are motivated and perceive that the benefits of the activity are important. Several researchers have explored how people negotiate existing constraints and continue to be active (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Jackson, 2000; Little, 2002; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). In her research on women, Little argued, "this phase of research development led to a progression away from viewing constraints as absolute barriers, toward a conceptualization recognizing a range of negotiation strategies and a range of interactions with constraints" (p. 158). Jackson et al. proposed behavioral strategies to negotiate constraints such as time management, skill acquisition, and improving finances as well as cognitive strategies such as ignoring the problem or changing one's outlook.

The appropriateness of the structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal constraints framework also has been criticized especially when structural constraints have remained primarily focused on the individual's relationship to environmental factors. Samdahl and her colleagues (Samdahl, 2005; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997) suggested that this constraint model narrows the analysis to a focus on leisure activity participation and fails to address the cultural context of individuals.

The categories of structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal constraints also overlap within women's leisure experiences and may not be as useful especially from cross-cultural perspectives (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Shaw & Henderson, 2005). For example, Stodolska and Livengood (2006) analyzed religion and leisure behavior of immigrant Muslims and suggested that care needs to be taken when employing the existing constraints framework to analyze behavior of diverse ethnic/racial groups: "... factors that appeared to constrain people's leisure were in fact not perceived as such by the participants themselves, and that adherence to religious norms during leisure was considered normal and appropriate within their religious framework" (p. 311). Consequently, the experience of women from a culture such as Turkey's requires acknowledging the complex sociocultural structure of society and the intertwining of religion, tradition, and modernism.

In summary, the presence of constraints research in leisure studies has led to the formulation of frameworks to understand the factors that constraint individuals from participation in various leisure activities. In addition, leisure constraints research is used to examine how these factors are distinguished by social differences such as gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Furthermore, evidence suggests that women from different ethnic groups may experience leisure constraints differently. In our study, we extended this research by investigating constraints and negotiation strategies of Turkish women in LTPA participation.

Methods

This paper presents data from an on-going project funded by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey that aimed to examine the nexus between cultural and social factors such as gender, social class, religion, family, neighborhood, working status, and motherhood status that have influenced Turkish women's participation in LTPA. The research design was influenced by feminist research focused on the following general tenets: to centralize women's experiences by acknowledging women's diversity, to describe the possibility of social change by focusing on LTPA negotiations and empowerment, and to potentially initiate change that improves the lives of women (Harding, 1987; Olesen, 1994; Ralph, 1988). The project took place in several sport centers and Ladies Locals (LLs) in different locations in Ankara.

A purposive sampling method was used to collect the desired data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three types of sport centers (i.e., private sport clubs, university sport clubs, and LLs) in Ankara were selected to represent women from different geographical locations and from different social class backgrounds. Data collected from four focus groups and individual interviews were used in this analysis.

The Sample

As part of the larger ongoing project, data were collected from about 100 individual interviews and eight focus groups. In the interviews, women were asked whether they felt constrained in their physical activity participation. For this analysis we identified women who reported that they were constrained in their LTPA. Therefore, a total of 43 women ages 27 to 55 years participated in this study. The sociodemographic information of the women interviewed in both focus groups and individual interviews is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Structural Path Estimates

Name	Age	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Number of Children	Household Income*	Membership
Focus Groups							
Aykiz	29	Married	Secondary	Housewife	2	1500 TL	Ladies Local
Aysun	39	Married	University	Director	2	6000 TL	Private Club
Berna	31	Single	Master	Academician	0	2500 TL	Private Club
Berrin	38	Married	Secondary	Housewife	3	1000 TL	Ladies Local
Damla	28	Married	High School	Housewife	2	1000 TL	Ladies Local
Derin	33	Single	Secondary	Housewife	2	700 TL	Ladies Local
Duru	46	Married	High School	Teacher	2	5500 TL	Private Club
Elif	47	Married	Doctorate	Academician	1	5000 TL	University Club
Esin	43	Married	Secondary	Housewife	3	1200 TL	Ladies Local
Esmâ	47	Married	Primary	Housewife	4	900 TL	Ladies Local
Feriha	39	Married	Secondary	Housewife	1	600 TL	Ladies Local
Gonul	31	Married	Primary	Housewife	2	1000 TL	Ladies Local
Gul	34	Married	Secondary	Housewife	3	1000 TL	Ladies Local
Gulum	36	Married	University	Housewife	2	3000 TL	Private Club
Ilknur	36	Married	Doctorate	Academician	1	5000 TL	University Club
Karya	42	Married	Doctorate	Academician	1	6000 TL	University Club
Leyla	44	Married	Doctorate	Academician	2	5500 TL	University Club
Nalan	42	Married	University	Teacher	2	4500 TL	Private Club
Nermin	47	Married	Secondary	Housewife	3	1600 TL	Ladies Local
Sayhan	51	Married	Primary	Housewife	4	1200 TL	Ladies Local
Semra	29	Single	Master	Academician	0	2500 TL	University Club
Serra	31	Single	Master	Lawyer	0	3000 TL	Private Club
Yeser	54	Married	Illiterate	Housewife	5	1500 TL	Ladies Local

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TABLE 1 — CONTINUED
Structural Path Estimates

Name	Age	Marital Status	Education	Occupation	Number of Children	Household Income*	Membership
Individual Interviews							
Ahsen	41	Single	University	Manager	0	4000 TL	Private Club
Didem	41	Married	Primary	Housewife	3	850 TL	Ladies Local
Erguvan	46	Married	Primary	Housewife	3	900 TL	Ladies Local
Fatma	27	Married	Secondary	Housewife	2	900 TL	Ladies Local
Feslegen	40	Married	Primary	Housewife	4	1500 TL	Ladies Local
Gonca	36	Married	Primary	Housewife	3	700 TL	Ladies Local
Hatice	41	Married	High School	Teacher	2	4000 TL	Private Club
Hercai	35	Married	Doctorate	Academician	1	7000 TL	Private Club
Karanfil	34	Single	High School	Housewife	0	600 TL	Ladies Local
Kuzey	36	Married	Master	Academician	1	4000 TL	University Club
Lale	40	Married	University	Housewife	2	3000 TL	Ladies Local
Nazan	44	Married	Primary	Housewife	3	1000 TL	Ladies Local
Nevin	31	Married	Secondary	Housewife	3	1200 TL	Ladies Local
Organze	42	Single	Master	Manager	0	7000 TL	Private Club
Sardunya	55	Married	Primary	Housewife	3	455 TL	Ladies Local
Sarmasik	54	Single	University	Teacher	0	1000 TL	Ladies Local
Siyam	51	Married	High School	Housewife	1	2300 TL	Ladies Local
Yagmur	52	Married	University	Manager	2	6000 TL	Private Club
Yaprak	51	Married	Primary	Unskilled staff	4	1170 TL	Ladies Local

* One Turkish Lira is equivalent to approximately .8US\$

Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

Henderson and Ainsworth (2001) and Kriska (2000) argued that conventional quantitative methods such as the use of questionnaire surveys might not result in fully understanding women's physical activity involvement. The phenomena related to Turkish women's LTPA experiences appeared in complex social and cultural contexts that were not easily quantifiable. Therefore, both focus group discussions and individual interviews were conducted to obtain the richest data.

In our study, two focus groups including six women from private sports clubs (PCs) and five women from university sports clubs (UCs), and two focus groups with 12 women from two different Ladies Locals (LLs) were conducted. The focus groups were conducted prior to individual interviews. All the women reported that they participated in physical activity at least two times in a week. The first author conducted the focus groups that averaged 50 minutes in length. An interview guide was used to structure the interviews (Patton, 1990). Although most of the questions were similar in both the focus groups and the individual interviews, the main purpose of focus groups was to gather the general opinions and beliefs on women's LTPA experiences by stimulating discussion. Further, focus groups were also useful to give the participants the opportunity to inform the design and direction of the ongoing research (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). For example, the constraints related to the family that arose from the focus groups informed the construction of individual interview questions.

Six individual interviews were conducted with women from PCs and UCs and 14 individual interviews were obtained with women from LLs. All these women also reported that they participated in physical activity at least two times in a week. Two interviewers experienced in qualitative research and women's physical activity participation conducted the individual interviews. The interviews lasted between 20-60 minutes. An interview guide approach was used to structure individual interviews (Patton, 1990) and semi-structured questions were used to allow women leeway in discussing issues important in their own LTPA participation. In addition to the some of the main questions that we used in the focus groups, several questions concerning the detailed past and present experiences of women in LTPA participation were included in the individual interviews. Table 2 outlines the semi-structured interview topic guidelines for individual interviews. Common questions were initiated around key themes. Follow up questions were used to probe issues more deeply.

TABLE 2
A Sample of Interview Questions

What types of physical activities do/did you participate in your leisure times now/past?
Why do/did you want to do these types of activities?
What types of factors (family life, working life...) do influence your participation?
What problems do you experience in participation in physical activity?
What have you done to overcome these problems?
Are you satisfied with the amount of your participation?

All of the focus groups and individual interviews took place during March and June 2007. All participants signed a letter of informed consent that outlined the purpose of the project. Both individual interviews and focus groups were taped, transcribed, and analyzed for theme categories. Participants were assured that their answers would be kept confidential. All personal names employed in the paper are pseudonymous used to protect the anonymity of the participants. Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in the setting of the women's choice such as the cafeteria in the LLs or an office for the women who were working in the university. All focus groups and individual interviews were conducted in Turkish, transcribed into Turkish, and the quotes related to the writing of this paper translated into English.

Data Collection Locations and Contexts

Ladies Locals (LLs) are community centers supported by the Municipality of Ankara. These locals are only for women and most of the members come from lower and lower-middle class families. At the time of this study, 12 LLs were located in Ankara and the number of members was around 35,000 (Ankara Government, 2007). The primary objective of the LLs is to provide a space for women to spend their leisure time by participating in activities such as sports (e.g., fitness, exercise class, table tennis, and swimming), educational support activities (e.g., computer and foreign language courses), and social and cultural activities (e.g., music and drama courses). Most of the LL women interviewed for this study were rural migrants to the city. Many had migrated to Ankara from villages in Central and Eastern Anatolia, which are the least economically developed regions of the country where semi feudal structures still dictate the organization of gender for the majority of women (Ilkcaracan, 2001). The socioeconomic status of the LL participants was generally lower class with most rural migrants residing in neighborhood squatter settlements.

Private fitness centers included both private clubs (PCs) and sport clubs in a private university (UCs). Women from these centers were highly educated and worked in professional occupations. Most were living in districts that were considered to be middle and upper class (Güvenç, 2001). Muftuler-Bac (1999) defined these women as the most visible Turkish women because they were educated, middle-class, working in public spaces, and were as close as Turkish women get to being emancipated.

Based on the previous research on women and social class in Turkey (Güvenç, 2001; Muftuler-Bac, 1999), we identified the participants from LLs as lower class women and from PCs and UCs as middle class women for this study. In addition, before the focus groups and the individual interviews, we asked the participants to complete Personal Information Form, which included questions about socio-demographic and economic levels of the participants. The data gathered by this form corroborated information about the class status of these Turkish women.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed inductively via individual-case and cross-case analysis (Patton, 1990). The analysis was done in three steps. First, to provide some degree of inter-coder reliability, three researchers (the first and the third authors of the study and one independent researcher who was experienced in issues pertaining to women and physical activity) performed a separate line-by-line open coding procedure, which was

followed by mutual comparisons and negotiated outcomes. Initial descriptive coding using the words or phrases of the participants involved looking for repetition within and across the transcripts. For example, the phrases about family responsibilities of the women were repetitively mentioned within and across the transcripts. In the second step, after the open coding was completed for each transcript, all researchers worked independently to identify common concepts that illustrated the participants' experiences and descriptions. Similar code terms and phrases were grouped together and then regrouped to include all of the identified concepts into categories of similar topics. In the third step, the researchers went back and forth between the data and the classification system to identify dominant categories by recognizing code words or phrases that were consistently repeated within and across the transcripts. In this step, for example, family responsibilities and ethic of care were categorized under one theme. The findings represent the consensus regarding the analyses.

To increase trustworthiness of the data interpretation process, a peer debriefing strategy was used to establish credibility for the data analysis. Peer debriefing was obtained by asking peers experienced in qualitative data analysis to review several transcripts and discuss the coding process to check for emergent themes and ideas (Holloway, 1997). We asked the interviewed women to compare their interview transcripts to ensure that the themes encompassed accurate representations of their views, but most were reluctant to participate in this member checking process. We also used the insight of one of the authors to address trustworthiness. She had been involved in LL as a member before and after data collection. In addition, to enhance the confirmability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), interviewers kept journals in which they noted their thoughts, interpretations, problems encountered, and the decisions that they made during the data collection process.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that trustworthiness can also be enhanced by triangulating the composition of the research team and the disciplines and expertise represented by each member. The research team for our study represented the fields of sport psychology, sport pedagogy, sport sociology, and leisure studies. The guiding research questions were developed in light of all these areas and the multidisciplinary nature of the team offered another strategy to address trustworthiness. In addition, the team included two Ph.D. candidates who were the facilitators of the individual interviews. These research assistants were selected, in part, because of their past experience with qualitative research and women's physical activity participation. However, all researchers came from middle class families. To develop a trusting relationship, great care was taken to empathize with women from different backgrounds. Further, regarding the triangulation of data analysis, the emerging analyses were cross-checked between the individual interviews and the focus groups and with extant literature.

Results

The findings of this study were divided into two groups based on the research questions. First, we report the constraints women faced in their LTPA participation. Second, we examine how Turkish women negotiated the constraints to foster their LTPA participation. The abbreviations of LL, PC, or UC were used to describe the location of the LTPA participation.

Constraints to LTPA Participation

Nearly all married women we interviewed emphasized *family responsibilities and ethic of care* as significant constraints to their LTPA engagement. Thus, they framed their LTPA around family responsibilities such as housework and childcare. For example, Ahsen (PC) spent most of her time aside from paid work in care giving duties. Her comment exemplified the typical daily routine of a woman:

You have to care for your kids and your husband. Every morning you have to prepare their breakfast and get them ready to go... Then, every night you have to welcome them and prepare their dinner. So it is not easy to find a time to work out.

Although most of our middle-class interviewees considered themselves modern women, nearly all of them were living in traditional heterosexual families and they were closely linked to caretaker roles and housework. Except for three unmarried women, all of the interviewees described themselves as primarily a mother. An LL focus group participant, Gul, stated that "First, you are a mother and a housewife. So, you are responsible for housework such as cooking, washing, cleaning, and your kids..." Fatma's (LL) comment showed how Turkish women often internalized and accepted their primary role as a mother and a woman:

You know, we are women. You know the life of women in Turkey. We have to feed children and a husband, cook for them, and clean the house. I mean you have to prepare your husband for tomorrow. You know (Laughs)... Sometimes I get very exhausted, but this is our life. I mean you are a woman.

Preserving the values related to the ethic of care was a priority for these women. We interpreted ethic of care as relationships that women have in which they care for and about the needs of others (Gilligan, 1982). Karanfil (LL) explained the care giving roles of women who were living in traditional lower class neighborhoods and the importance of their physical activity participation:

Sport is an important activity for women who are living in this neighborhood since all of their time is spent with children, husband, cooking, and cleaning. Sport is a kind of relaxation for them because 24 hours are spent in caring for the needs of the husband or the husband's family or our own family. If we can even spare 15 minutes to ourselves, we are happy.

Siyam (LL) was also responsible for the care of her parents and mother-in-law who suffered from Alzheimer and diabetes:

I am feeling like a guest in my home. I am visiting both my parents and my mother-in-law everyday. They are so demanding. For example, when I work out, one of them calls me, and I quit working out. I have to go and look after them.

Similarly, the comment of Erguvan (LL) who is a mother of three children highlighted that her physical activity participation was tied to her caregiver duties:

You know if you have a kid, everything is not going well sometimes. Your kids can become ill. My girl has been sick for 15 days and I have not participated in physical activity

for 15 days. I have been with her. I know that there is nothing I can do. But I could not leave her. [I need] to give her moral support.

Several women reported that they were able to participate in physical activity only after their retirement, leaving the job, or bringing up children. Yaprak (LL) and Gulum (PC), both focus group participants, said, respectively, "I worked 20 years. I brought up my children and grandchildren. I have just [now] found time to do something for myself" and "First, I left my job and then I devoted myself to bringing up my kids. After they grew up, I had a time to participate in physical activities."

The second constraint was *time*, which was often linked to the ethic of care. Time was highly related to family and work responsibilities and was one of the most frequently reported constraints to LTPA for the majority of interviewed Turkish women. Taking responsibility for constant care of the family was frequently reinforced when women described time pressure. As a mother of two children and a part time worker, Ayse (LL) stated,

After taking off the job, I dash off to home. I am sending the kid to the school and then I am able to come to the Local. I am coming here [LL] three times in a week. I am trying to leave the duties to the weekend ... But I still have to do daily activities: cooking, ironing, washing, getting your husband and kids to ready to go...

The third constraint identified in this study was related to *social support and approval*. Many women, and lower-class women in particular, were constrained in their leisure pursuits by the lack of family and social support. Although some women from LLs perceived that they were married to supportive husbands, other relatives with whom they lived influenced their commitment. They reported that family members did not understand the time they spent on physical activity and wanted them to take care of the family needs before worrying about themselves. A LL focus group member (Damla) illustrated this idea: "I think the important thing is having a supportive family or husband. I mean my father- and mother-in-law do not like my physical activity participation. They just want me to stay at home and do housework." Another focus group participant, Gonul (LL) also explained that her relatives said, "You are a bride [daughter-in-law]! Stay at home and give service to your family!" Gonca (LL), a focus group participant, further noted,

My mother- and father-in-law are against my physical activity. Actually, they don't know that I am exercising. They are living in the village. You know they are conservative. If I tell them, they will think that I am going to a bad place. They think that sport is not a good thing for a woman.

These comments indicated the importance of relatives in Turkish family life. Bolak (1995) stated that kinship relations play a particularly critical role in Turkey. Kin may easily get involved in the decision making process. Although many of these women migrated from rural areas to cities, they still were confronted with traditional values of rural life. Fatma (LL) explained that "rural people do not tolerate women doing sport. Most of the women have many children and they are living in big families. They don't have time to do something [like sport]." In another example, a single woman named Sarmaşık (LL) reported that her family did not want her to participate in physical ac-

tivity when they were living in the rural area: “My family didn’t allow me to do sport before. They said that it is not a good thing in this small neighborhood.” When this study was conducted, Sarmaşık had been living for a year in Ankara and was participating in sport because she was now living in the city away from the rural area. However, Erguvan (LL), a non-working woman and immigrant to Ankara, was still constrained by the traditional beliefs of her son about the city life:

My son doesn’t want me to come here [LL]. I mean he is afraid for me. You know, Ankara is a very big city. He is afraid for me that a bad thing will happen to me when I am coming here. I might be attacked.... So he thinks that I should not be traveling alone.

Another conversation from one of the LL focus groups showed the importance of husbands in terms of engagement in LTPA. For these women, their “jealous” husbands seemed to be one of the most important factors for why they chose LL:

Berrin: It does not matter if you are a headscarved women or uncovered women. The matter is having a jealous husband or not. The husband wants his wife to go to only-women places and spent time with only women. Thus, he feels more comfortable.

Esin: I mean at least when his wife wants to go to the Ladies Local, he [husband] allows her to go.

Feriha: My husband is really jealous. He does not allow me to go out on my own. I told him there are no men. Ladies Locals are only for women. Then he allowed me to come here. He warned me to go and come back by bus together [with other women]. (Laughs)

In addition to drawing attention to the impact of husbands on women’s LTPA participation, two women highlighted how they were able to engage in physical activity participation. Sardunya (LL) said, “If I had a husband, I could not come here. While he was alive, he did not allow me to go out. Now he is dead and I can participate in sport.” Feslegen (LL) was also aware that many women were not allowed by their husbands to participate in physical activity and she was thankful for her husband. She commented, “Thanks for my husband. He didn’t tell me anything when I was fat or when I was thin. I mean, he is pleased with me. Thank God, I have no problem with my husband.”

Obedience to husbands, restrictions on mixed-gender interactions, and females traveling unaccompanied significantly influenced LTPA for these women. Some women were restricted from traveling without a male (e.g., husband, brother, or father) or sometimes another family female companion. These requirements limited their physical activity out of their home. This constraint was mostly related to their husbands’ attitudes or jealousy. Some Turkish women expressed that they could participate in LTPA only after getting their husband’s permission and could go only to places like LLs. This behavior was similar to other Muslim women who felt they must obey their husbands and saw that household decision-making was the male domain (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). However, for the majority of Muslim women in Stodolska and Livengood’s study, these requirements were not considered constraints limiting their leisure because they believed that females traveling accompanied was a reasonable pre-

caution intended to ensure their safety. For several Turkish women in our study, these requirements were constraints limiting their leisure opportunities. This difference may be understood in terms of the women's interpretation of Islam. Women participants in Stodolska and Livengood's study might have been more religious than Turkish women interviewed in the present study since they expressed that this requirement was related to restrictions imposed by Islam on females traveling unaccompanied.

Five women described the social disapproval of physical activity participation from their neighbors. While these women described themselves as a Muslim, they separated themselves from other women who had strong religious beliefs. For these women, the religious beliefs of neighbors could be a constraint on LTPA. Yaprak (LL) described the religious beliefs of one of her neighbors:

I had a problem with one of my neighbors. She said to me "Why don't you go to Quoran course? What kinds of benefit can you get from sport?"...I worked hard at both work and home for 20 years with household duties, husband, and kids. I have done everything for them. Now I am feeling very good. Nobody should inhibit me from doing sport.

On the other hand, for some middle-class working women sport was part of their family life. Their children, husbands, and parents participated in sport in private elite sport and exercise clubs. Thus, for many of these women a lack of family support was not an important constraint. Yagmur (PC) stated: "...sport is a way of life. It is a kind of habit coming from the family." Further, Organze (PC) said, "I used to do sport in every stage of my life. I think sport is an important part of life. I can't imagine a life without sport." Because of the crucial role of sport in family life, these women received positive feedback from their family. However, they stressed that they had to be careful to keep a balance between their LTPA and family life. For example, Hercai (PC) stated,

My family is very positive about my sport participation. I mean they know that sport is a good thing. But if I exaggerate this, I mean if I work out at nights and neglect my child, they would not be positive. But if you arrange your time effectively, it would not be a problem for anyone.

The last constraint was *economics*, which was most evident among lower class women. Nearly all lower class women reported that they had no LTPA experiences before the LLs were launched. Due to the low membership fee and availability of these facilities within their living area, the LLs were important affordable places for LTPA. Ayse (LL) explained,

I have been participating in physical activity for a year. I didn't participate in any activities before. Ladies Local is a very appropriate facility for me. I mean it is close to my home and not expensive. You know, the economic condition of nonworking women in Turkey is not so good.

Although the LL offered good opportunities for many women, some complained about the extra cost of some activities. Siyam (LL) indicated that: "I want to go swimming. But when I reconcile our economic condition, I see that I cannot. Even if I come to the pool only one day in a week, it affects our budget."

Negotiating Constraints to LTPA

Nearly all the women had done some negotiating with LTPA constraints or they would not have been at the sports centers where they were interviewed. Patterns for negotiating constraints were somewhat different between lower class women who were at the LLs and middle class working women at the PCs and UCs.

The types of negotiation strategies varied for the four major types of participation constraints: *social support and approval, time and family responsibilities, and economics*. Although these constraints had some overlap in the ways that they might be negotiated, this section is divided based on the type of the constraint that is being negotiated.

Social support and approval

Women with lower incomes (i.e., mostly from the LLs) also tended to be the ones in the most traditional patriarchal family situations. Therefore, for many of these women one of the negotiation strategies was related to constraints of social support and approval. The women living in traditional families made references to the lack of support for their physical activity participation particularly from their father- and mother-in-laws and from their husbands. Nazan (LL) was constrained by the stereotyped beliefs of her father-in-law, but she was determined to defend her right to LTPA by arguing or ignoring him:

I always receive negative comments from my family. For example, I had a big argument with my father-in-law. He told me that my son has been married and I am going to be a grandmother...I think he has a traditional mentality. He has no right to say something about my life. I have a right to do [what I want]. I try to ignore him.

Gonca (LL) used a different negotiation strategy to persuade her mother- and father-in-law that she was not going to a bad place. They thought the LL was not a good place for a woman, so she wanted them to see it:

My mother-in-law objects to my sport participation. I have told her, but she said that if your father hears this, he would be angry. I wanted to bring my mother-in-law to the Local, but she does not want to come. Then, I brought the daughter of my sister-in-law. I wanted them to see the Local is not a bad place where there are only women.

The majority of lower class Turkish women in this study tried to incorporate the benefits of their physical activity participation into their family responsibilities and roles of the “good” mother and housewife. Didem (LL) was constrained by the lack of family support and tried to persuade her family that physical activity had positive effects on her performance of family responsibilities:

I am trying to explain the beneficial outcomes of my physical activity participation to my family. I tell them that after working out, I am stronger. I can easily clean the room and the carpet on my own. Exercise calms me down and helps me focus on my family responsibilities more easily.

Most of the women from LLs discussed the importance of women-only places for their LTPA. These women were more likely to participate in physical activity if the facilities that did not disrupt the gendered conservative beliefs of their husbands and relatives, and for some of them, their own religious beliefs. The LLs provided a

“safe” space free from the speculative gaze of males. Lale (LL) and Nevin (LL) stated, respectively:

If this place [Ladies Local] were not for women-only, I would not come here. I mean, every man is the same. Our Turkish men, especially some of them, are interested in watching women. I know that if there is a man, I don't feel comfortable. This is not related to my religion. Maybe women who are regarding the rules of Islam don't want to be in mixed-sex places because of their religion, but I just want to feel safe.

I come to the Ladies Local because there are no men...only women. No men. I am a *te-setturlu* woman [women who wear Islamic inspired forms of covered dress]. I feel more comfortable [at the LL]. I feel like I am in my home.

As these two quotes indicated, women in the present study were not a homogenous group of believers. For example, Nevin might have been very religious and internalized the restrictions of Islam on her behaviors, since she stressed that she perceived mixed-gender interactions to be a constraint to her LTPA in terms of the religion. For Lale, however, this requirement was not considered to be a constraint limiting her LTPA, but rather a reasonable precaution intended to ensure her safety. She also expressed her awareness of many women who were restricted by Islam in terms of mixed-gender interactions. Regardless of their reasons, these two women showed a strong understanding of the rationale behind their preference of women-only groups. On the other hand, they negotiated their needs to be in safe in women only groups whether by following the rules of Islam or not.

At the same time, some of the Turkish women objected to the stereotypical view of Islam for women. For instance, Yaprak (LL) who said she was constrained by the religious beliefs of her neighbors, negotiated the constraint by seeking out LTPA that provided her with a sense of self worth:

My neighbors object to my sport participation. They think that I am too old to do sport. But I think the important thing is how I feel. They have religious days. I have sport days (LTPA). I do not let them influence me. They have a different [traditional/religious] world. They are working for the hereafter, but I am working for this [modern] world. This makes me happy.

Time and family responsibilities

In this section, the strategies used to negotiate the two inter-related constraints; time and family responsibilities are discussed. Time management and the ability to fit physical activity participation into a daily schedule were important for all women. All women interviewed in this study made a marked effort to arrange their daily schedules so that they could spend time by both participating in LTPA and doing housework. For example, a focus group participant Elif (UC) worked out on weekdays and did housework on weekends. Kuzey (PU) was a working mother with a young child and told how she cooked easy foods that did not demand too much time. The need to organize and plan times for physical activity more effectively were reflected in the illustrative comments of two women, Sarmasik (LL), and Hatice (PC), respectively:

I don't spend too much time doing housework. I do cleaning and ironing once a week, mostly on the weekend. I don't stay too long in the kitchen. I make the lunches and dinners the night before or weekly. Thus, I find time for me.

I postpone my meetings and finish the lecture early so I can participate in exercise classes organized at lunchtime. Thus, I have a time after work to spend with my family.

Time pressure from combining paid work and household activities was evident in the comments of most of the working women. Therefore, physical activities organized in their work place or in more localized facilities saved time in traveling and made them "waste" less time. A UC focus group member (Ilknur) explained how she negotiated the time constraints:

Time is very important for working women. We have both workload and housework. Therefore, we have to work out in our work-place. I am participating in an exercise class at lunchtime. Having a fitness club in the university is a very big opportunity for us. Thus, you can save for your other responsibility area [in the home and with the family].

Kuzey (UC) worked at the university and indicated another negotiation strategy related to time constraints for working woman. She used to run regularly until she had a baby. In her own words:

I set myself a target to run 8 km at lunch times [after the baby was born]. I tried to run regularly, but I could not achieve my target. I was exhausted and could not adapt to the work easily. So, I decided to participate in Pilates, which is much easier than running. I am not sweating at least. I don't have to waste time by taking a shower.

As far as the lack of time was concerned, nearly all women managed to negotiate this constraint by arranging their daily schedules. The main negotiation strategy was used by working women is participating in physical activities in work environment, whereas arranging time for housework was the main negotiation strategy for non-working women.

Economics

As mentioned previously, the financial costs of LTPA were also found to be an important constraint for lower class women. These women stressed that the main reason of their LTPA participation in LLs was low membership fee. They managed to negotiate this constraint by participating in physical activity in LLs. As Ayse (LL) stated,

The membership fee of the Local is very low. That is why we preferred to participate in physical activity in here. You know, it is not possible for us to go other private sport centers.

After their LTPA participation, these women experienced positive changes in their physical and psychological health and this led them to consider the importance of LTPA in their life. Therefore, once these women recognized that they had benefited from LTPA, they were trying to convince their families, particularly their husbands, about the benefits of their LTPA and the affordable membership fees of the LLs. In-

stead of accepting the constraints of the lack of money, these women showed an ability to persuade their families to allow their participation

In summary, the Turkish women used different negotiation strategies to overcome the constraints they experienced in their life. For lower class women who were coming from traditional families, the most salient negotiation strategies were ignoring negative comments, trying to persuade their families about the benefits of their LTPA, organizing their time efficiently, and participating in physical activities in the LLs, which were more affordable places. For middle class working women who were living in modern families, finding time at work and organizing their lives efficiently were the most often used negotiation strategies. Although the negotiation strategies differed somewhat, these Turkish women were determined to work through constraints to continue their LTPA. Their determination seemed to be based on the benefits they derived from LTPA. They talked about how physical activity helped to maintain their physical and psychological health and enabled them to take a step back from their busy and stressful lives.

Discussion

The data from this study provided for a further understanding of Turkish women's LTPA participation in the context of their everyday experiences. The non-mutually exclusive constraint themes of family responsibilities and ethic of care, time, social approval, and economics are discussed together in light of negotiations and sociocultural issues.

Concerns about family responsibilities and the ethic of care confirmed Kulakac et al.'s (2006) conclusion that taking time for personal LTPA was not particularly acceptable for most mothers in the Turkish culture. When the women in our study talked about the constraints to LTPA they experienced and their negotiations of these constraints, they almost all emphasized the importance of their responsibilities as a woman that required devotion to the family. Moreover, traditional household division of labor and responsibilities for child caring directly affected both lower and middle class women's available time. Despite the positive developments for Turkish women in the 21st century, both the modern and the traditional women continued to face various forms of perceived patriarchal oppression. Even though, particularly in middle-class families, couples seemed to believe that domestic responsibilities should be shared in a dual-working household, women continued to be responsible for a disproportionate amount of housework. This finding is not different from earlier research done in the U.S. (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). These researchers argued that although attitudes had changed about household responsibilities, the behavioral reality indicated that women remained mostly responsible for the day to day duties of childcare and housework.

Interestingly, most of the lower class Turkish women in this study did not mention any negotiation strategies related to the division of labor in the family. Apparently, since participation in LTPA was markedly affected by the husband's approval for participation, no attempts were made to negotiate family responsibilities. The lack of spousal support, however, did not seem to be related to the husbands' workload, but more to the traditional gender roles of women. In Turkish society, as in other patriarchal societies, traditional attitudes about gender roles for women are put into practice by

socialization (Dilek, 1997), and men and women continue to internalize these gender roles (Kandiyoti, 1995). Parents encourage their daughters to be dependent and obedient, whereas boys are allowed to be more aggressive and independent since they are expected to cope with the outside world (Ataca, Sunar, & Kağıtçıbaşı, 1994). Turkish customs explicitly emphasize the family roles of women and deem secondary any work or career aspirations women may have (Orucu, 1996). Traditional Turkish law has endorsed a patriarchal family model in which the husband is the head of the family, has the first say concerning the family's place of residence, and has primary responsibility for taking care of his wife and children (Hortaçsu, Kalaycıoğlu & Rittersberger-Tilic, 2003). Although this law has been recently altered, changing the traditional patriarchal family structure in Turkey, particularly among lower class families, is not easy. Thus, the social disapproval for women can be strong in traditional Turkish families. As Karakitapoglu and Imamoglu (2002) argued that women in the traditional segments of Turkish society are in a dependent and subordinate position. Therefore, the household and caregiver duties do not seem negotiable with husbands.

The notions about the ethic of care as a constraint to LTPA among nearly all Turkish women in this study were aligned with a lack of a sense of entitlement to leisure as other researchers noted (e.g., Harrington et al., 1992; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Shaw, 2001). This previous research was conducted on Western women. This similarity between Western women and Turkish women indicates that the ethic of care is common to women regardless of their culture and place of residence. For example, many older Turkish women in our study reported that they had to sacrifice their leisure time and working life to defer to the needs of their children. They preferred to participate in physical activity after bringing up their children. Their entitlement to leisure and LTPA was markedly affected by the ethic of care. They put the needs of others first and negotiated this constraint by planning for the future.

Although time was seen as a significant constraint to leisure and LTPA for the majority of women in this study, it was most mentioned as a constraint in the interviews with middle class women. These women had both work and family responsibilities and wanted to use their time efficiently. Therefore, their negotiation strategies were mostly related to their time use such as in rearranging duties, participating in physical activity at lunch time, or becoming more efficient with their other responsibilities (e.g., lecture time).

For lower class Turkish women, however, the most common constraint to their physical activity participation was traditional gender stereotyped beliefs and social approval regarding their role in their families as well as in society. Even when these women organized time for both their family responsibilities and leisure-time physical activities, the issue of approval was a continual constraint to be negotiated. Other studies about women and LTPA have shown that lack of social support is an important constraint (e.g., Brown et al., 2001; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001; Nies et al., 1999). However, lack of social support and overt disapproval are two related but different issues. The extent to which social disapproval and social control influence women's leisure remains essentially unknown since little discussion has surrounded this type of constraint in most previous research (Shaw & Henderson, 2005). The findings of our study demonstrated how social disapproval impacts LTPA participation among lower class Turkish women from traditional (i.e., religious) families. Although the women

in our study were trying to negotiate this lack of social support constraint, we could argue that many other women are not allowed to participate in any leisure activities, particularly physical activity, in traditional segments of Turkish society.

Our analysis demonstrated that Turkish women often negotiated through their constraints on LTPA participation. The perceived importance of anticipated benefits of LTPA motivated them to attempt to negotiate the constraints. Most of the women in our study were successful negotiators to some extent, but these negotiations were not easy. Strategies used to negotiate constraints to LTPA required first their resistance to the traditional gender roles in their environments. Some women in our study said they negotiated gender roles by persuading their family that they had the right to time and space for their own enjoyment and their well-being. They refused to adopt the life of traditional Turkish women. Considering the proposition advanced by Jackson et al. (1993), these women used cognitive strategies such as ignoring the views of others or persuading others about the value of LTPA. The interviewed Turkish women were successful to some extent or they would not have been at the LLs, PCs, or UCs.

The lower income Turkish women, in particular, incorporated the benefits of physical activity participation into the role of the “good” mother and housewife. Even though constrained by the perceived lack of social support, they used the benefits as a negotiation strategy to convince their families about why they should be involved in LTPA. Similar to Miller and Brown’s (2005) findings, they justified their LTPA as good for the whole family. Further, they rationalized how they could incorporate their leisure participation into a traditional ideology of motherhood where the family remained the highest priority. They argued that engagement in leisure and LTPA was a means of embodying the ethic of care pertaining to themselves as well as the rest of the family. They used their personal ethic of care as a vehicle for resistance against prevailing ideologies around motherhood as strictly “other oriented.”

Although examining LTPA as resistance to traditional gender ideology was not the original intent of this study, it emerged as significant in the comments of the interviewed Turkish women. Lower class Turkish women appeared to both consciously and unconsciously challenge traditional family dynamics when they participated in LTPA for themselves. This challenge was a form of compromise and negotiation. They incorporated LTPA into family life by articulating its meaning and contribution for the family. Rather than reproducing normative gender relations by not having LTPA, these women negotiated gender constraints to access their leisure (Little, 2002). They simultaneously embodied traditional feminine characteristics in being good women and good mothers and also took advantage of LTPA. Wearing (1998) pointed out that “many feminist works show how women use leisure space to resist male definitions of women as wives, mothers, and housewives and to enlarge their sense of selves” (p.50). Women from traditional Turkish families were most challenged to use the LTPA space in refusing to adopt the traditional mentality. Wearing (1990) argued that these negotiations presented an opportunity to create a transformed discourse of motherhood, emphasizing the right of women to time and space for their own enjoyment and development. Therefore, it seemed obvious to emphasize that taking time-out for LTPA allowed these Turkish women to value themselves, and for some women, challenge restrictions on their family life. However, this study reflected the comments of the women who had been somewhat successful in negotiating the constraints and resist-

ing the traditional gender ideologies, and many other Turkish women probably have not been so fortunate.

In the interviews, the significance of Islamic beliefs in affecting Turkish women's LTPA participation was not emphasized. However, when some women explained why they chose to participate in LTPA in LLs, they referred to religion and culture and stated that their husbands and parents were traditional in their views about religion, and thus, physical activity. Even though Turkey is predominantly a Muslim country, great diversity exists regarding the way Muslims interpret Islam as is true in many other Middle Eastern countries (e.g. Carroll & Hollinshead 1993; Stodolska & Liven-good, 2006; Walseth & Fasting, 2003). Therefore, although some women did not see the veil or gender segregation as constraining their LTPA participation, some other women reported that the reason for their participation in LLs was because the LTPA was gender-segregated, which is required by their religion. Fewer perceived disputes between the Turkish women and their families were revealed in our study compared to Carroll and Hollinshead's analysis of young Muslim women living in Britain. Carroll and Hollinshead found that the Muslim community believed that restrictions such as not allowing girls to become involved in extracurricular activities and leisure interest were a positive action to protect the values and essential parts of the culture. Similarly, Walseth and Fasting found that Egyptian women were supporters of sporting activities as part of the fundamental interpretation of Islam. The constraints for Egyptian women included practical issues related to the use of the veil, gender segregation, the necessity for "non-sexual movements," and the power relationships between women and men, but these constraints did not preclude participation. Further, our analysis was consistent with Kay's (2006) research regarding Muslim young women in the UK. She found that if the family and relatives were uncertain about the suitability of facility in terms of conforming to Islam, they could prevent their daughters, wives, or brides from participation in sport and LTPA.

Our study provided some insight into LTPA participation among Turkish women and how they negotiated their constraints. However, several limitations were evident that may be useful to consider in future studies of this population (or any cultural group) and their LTPA participation. First, we described insights into the LTPA of Turkish women from different social class backgrounds, but generalizations cannot be made from these data. Second, this study only focused on women who already participated in LTPA since we wanted to understand the constraints and negotiation strategies employed by the participants. Women who did not participate in LTPA at all may have experienced different sets of constraints or similar constraints but with stronger intensity. Third, we did not examine the doctrines of Islamic religious beliefs. The effects of Islam on women's leisure behavior and LTPA participation of women may be quite different among Islam sects both in Turkey and elsewhere (e.g., Sunni/Hanafi Islam, Sunni/Shafi, Shi' I tradition or the followers of Alevi tradition). Ilkcaracan (2001), for example, found that compared to women belonging to other religious sects, the Alevi women had more autonomy regarding their behavior.

Despite these limitations, the study provided insights into LTPA experiences of Turkish women that may have important implications for future research on women and leisure. First, while this study focused on women who are able to negotiate

constraints for their LTPA and therefore participate in physical activity only, future research should examine women who do not participate in physical activity. Investigating the extent to which constraints actually limit participation would shed further light on the topic. Second, since the study used a heterogeneous sample in terms of class, religion, age, motherhood status, marital and working status, further investigation around these variables could illuminate the different experiences across diverse populations. For example, the findings of the present study indicated that in-depth studies are needed in order to further our understanding of how Islam affects the leisure behavior of different groups of followers in Turkey.

Our findings have several implications for physical activity providers that attempt to promote physically active lifestyles in Turkish women. The results suggest that physical activity and health promotion efforts should include the following components: develop approaches that use a family context including children and relatives, safety, support mechanisms at home, and child care. The provision of child care was viewed by Turkish women as a vital component of their LTPA, therefore the availability of child care should be considered in every effort to promote physical activity participation of women. Further, practical advice and guidance for both families and service providers should be delivered to ensure that women have a safe and appropriate environment that incorporates their needs and religious values. In addition, based on the comments of the participants in this study and previous studies of Muslims and physical activity and sport participation (e. g., Carroll & Hollinshead 1993; De Knop, Theeboom, Wittock, & De Martelaer, 1996; Kay, 2006; Pfister, 2000; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Strandbu, 2005; Walseth & Fasting, 2003), LTPA programs should be developed to offer single-sex activities to reflect the importance of gender-segregated provision for many Muslim women.

Conclusions

Henderson and Shaw (2006) advised the importance of paying attention to diversity as part of the feminist agenda. From this perspective, our study made a contribution to the literature on leisure and women by investigating Turkish women who represented both lower and middle class statuses. Despite recent legal changes in gender equality in Turkey, an overwhelming emphasis continues to be placed on the care giving and nurturing roles of women regardless of class.

Many Turkish women remain constrained by traditional gender stereotyped beliefs in Turkish society. Traditionalism and modernism deeply impact the lives of Turkish women (Kara, 2006; Muftuler-Bac, 1999) and this study showed the impact of these ideologies on the LTPA experiences of these women. The findings about constraints to leisure and LTPA were similar to Western studies in some ways, but also revealed examples of cultural specific constraints that woman experienced. Turkey is a complex society where culture, religion, social, and economic forces constantly interact in women's lives. Therefore understanding the place of LTPA seems to reflect on a broader cultural context in Turkey. Further research is warranted to confirm the results of this study as well as to examine the role of religion on both Turkish women's and men's leisure experiences.

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