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Recreational Sport Participation of Women in Jyväskylä: Constraints and Motives Related with Women's Physical Activity

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Today's public sector in Finland has put an effort on promoting a healthy life style in all areas and populations. The public sector offers a considerable variety of activities. The prices are maintained low so that any interested party can afford to participate. This paper investigates if the opportunities offered by the municipality are adequately beneficial for all social and economical classes and especially for the female gender. It also investigates the motives that lead to participation in recreation activities in order to attract and maintain partakers, and explores certain constraints that affect participation. The focus of the study is women between the ages of thirty to sixty five and the sample is taken from Jyväskylä ($N=181$). The approach is quantitative and the women investigated are from sports activities offered by the City of Jyväskylä in Central Finland. The information is collected from the instructed fitness and water gymnastics groups. There were approximately 250 questionnaires given and about 200 were returned. 181 of them are valid.

The results of this study demonstrate that the majority of women believe that they have quite good opportunities to do sports in a recreational way. Matters like the price or the distance are not significant enough so as to keep women away from an active life and most of them take part in activities at least three times a week. Other constraint factors like time limits because of obligations are not considerable issues. The results are proven to be noticeably different from other similar studies made in other countries, as the majority of women in various locations seem to face many participation problems during the ages of 30 to 65. However, further comparative research will be needed in the future for women of the same age who do not take part in any organized activities offered by the public or any other sector.

Keywords: Recreation, Constraints, Motives, Participation, Women, Physical activity, Jyväskylä

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1 INTRODUCTION

In most developed countries, sports and physical activities have been an important issue and play a significant role for a country's society. Sports can be renowned as a way of initiation in society as they are considered essential for the preservation of health and well-being. Children and youth sports are regarded as central indication of a country's physical training level. Nonetheless, adults' physical education is also highlighted and taken into consideration quite extensively nowadays. Adult sports activities reflect a nation's health image and they can be utilized for prevention of social problems as well.

A survey on participation in sports can provide many interesting findings concerning a region's or country's image focusing on the sport system and the impact that sports have on the society of Finland. Most of the previous research about participation in sports with a leisure aspect has been conducted in North America. Since there is a limitation of studies, especially studies in English, for other countries, it would be a good opportunity to survey sports participation through the penetrating eye of another country. Such a country is Finland, a country adjusted in Nordic European systems and values, nonetheless with its own views on the sports world. Participation in sports is referred to the wider range of a nation, thus to the general population, when it does not have a competitive form. Therefore, in this research only recreation-leisure sports will be investigated. In order to make a clear differentiation between the recreation sports and the competitive sports, the definition of leisure activities is given as follows: One leisure product should contain some of the following conditions: a) health and well – being, b) resting c) socialization d) mental excitement. (Drakou, Glinia, Zourladani & Tzetzis 2006, 33)

Initially, this research introduces the general construction of the sport system in Finland as well as studies made in other countries in the field of sport participation. The main purpose at first is to introduce the reader to the theory of sport activities and the general concepts that already exist. The research review intention is to prepare the reader for the survey

results that follow this paper. However, not all relevant sources could be used because many of them are in Finnish thus minimizing the researcher's choice of sources who does not have the prerogative of being a native Finnish speaker. Finally, the discussion and conclusions are demonstrated with a view to some further research.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate women's participation in recreation activities, the factors that affect their choice of a specific activity (accessibility, interest, social milieu) and their decision of participation or non participation. There are measurements made in the activities of water gymnastics and fitness (aerobic, power yoga, show dance e.t.c.). Motives and their connection with participation are also examined. This study is orientated to the public sector in Finland inasmuch as the public sector is rather influential in this country and a considerable number of the Finnish population takes part in activities that are organized by the municipalities. The research also focuses on women's behavior in adopting recreation activities. In this study, women between the ages thirty to sixty five are examined. These ages are usually described as the ages of change in regards to the way of living as they differ from young women aged 20-29 or adolescents. Women in their thirty's up to their sixty's more often lead a life that combines career and family, therefore the whole pace of life starts altering when obligations start accumulating around the age of thirty.

The question that rises here is whether or not the women in Jyväskylä spend their free time in recreation activities. Do changes occur so remarkably at the age of thirty even though recreation has a significant value for people? Particularly in this country leisure is of great importance and public sector provides good chances for participation at a low cost. The survey questions could be defined as follow:

- What are the participation frequencies in terms of leisure sports among women from thirty to sixty five in the area of the city of Jyväskylä?
- What are the leisure related motives in participation among women and are they reinforced by the City of Jyväskylä Sport Services?
- What are the leisure related participation problems among women and in what degree are they caused by the City of Jyväskylä Sport Services?

Consequently, this research will help to comprehend how the public sector works in Finland and look deeper into the organizing of recreation activities for adult women. Furthermore, the study will be an indicator for the local sport organizations of whether activities provided for women are sufficient from the women's point of view. The organizations can reform their activities according to women's needs deduced from their responses.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The results and conclusions can attribute in understanding better women's behavioral attitudes in adopting a leisure activity. The aim is also to discover the constraints which adult women are faced with when starting an activity and what difficulties they might face and have to overcome in order to continue participating. Furthermore, the research is held in a regional area and not in a big city where opportunities are frequently greater. Therefore, the results can help the sports organizations of that area to plan leisure activities according to women's expectations and willingness for participation. There has been previous research about participation in Jyväskylä, yet, it was all about statistics and not very analytical. Moreover, it focused on a wider range of ages while both men and women were included. Last but not least, very few surveys about Finland were written in English as far as recreational sport research is concerned. Hence, there has not been such a survey in Jyväskylä before.

This study can be seen as intriguing and educational for the researcher as it gives a closer view to a foreign system for public physical activities. The knowledge can be transferred, maybe altered and used effectively as it provides both strong and weak points of the foreign organizational skills as far as recreation is concerned.

2 THE FINNISH PHYSICAL CULTURE

Before moving further into the investigation of leisure sports in the region of Jyväskylä one should look into the Finnish physical culture, which has undergone many changes the last few decades. It started the decade of the 80's when there was a transition from amateur sports and free-time activities to institutionalization (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 14). In the 50's and 60's competitive sports were the dominant sports in Finland. It was not until the 70's that "sports for all" became popular as well and their form changed from competitive to more recreational. Amateurism was the main characteristic of the 70's and there were no systematic facilities and organization in general. Instead, the function of physical activities was mainly carried out based on a traditional basis. After the 70's and with the onset of the 80's a new approach started with the growth of financial resources and the beginning of a more systematic operation. This activation resulted in the division of the physical culture into three levels i.e. the local sports clubs, intermediate regional organizations and national-level federations. This division was relatively the starting point for today's Finnish physical division into the three levels of voluntarism, public administration and private business. (Heikkala & Koski 1999)

However, it was not until the 90's that the Finnish system underwent through a major transition and change which led to today's sports system. The Finnish sport system moved from a centralized sports system to a polycentric physical cultural one (Ibid). Voluntarism was and still is an essential element in Finland as far as the sports world is concerned. Sports clubs mainly operate on a voluntary basis and there is quite a significant number of Finnish people, about half a million, that engage in voluntary sport services, otherwise sports clubs (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 23).

Private business that was a part of the transition in the beginning of 90's still plays a minor role in Finland. Lately, there was an endeavor to adopt foreign models from the area of the sports business. Even though the business world has some new organizational strategies to demonstrate, sports clubs and the public sector are still the major sources of providing sport activities. The main focus in private business is professional services and the fulfillment of customers' private needs. (Heikkala & Koski 1999)

The public sector is what will be mostly taken into consideration in this research. It is the sector that also refers to the recreational sport and health-related physical activities. Public administration is mostly management oriented and it continues occupying an important post in the Finnish sports culture. The development of public sector as far as the physical activity is concerned had a long-term effect on the sports organizations. The municipal subsidies gave the opportunity to organizations to utilize effectively the support provided by the state (Itkonen 2002, 41). The state values and components differ from the private business and voluntary associations. It could be mentioned here that public administration is guided by the public laws and political decisions. The main focus of the public sector is the general civic good and it attempts to provide equal sport services for all citizens. The citizens' needs are taken into serious consideration and therefore civilians evaluate how well the national needs are served, at what extend are goals fulfilled and key elements apparent. (Heikkala & Koski 1999)

The core elements, of the three dimensional Finnish physical culture, are illustrated in the table below (Table 1). This table demonstrates the three sport sectors in Finland in order for the reader to understand the main elements of public administration and how it differs from the other two sectors.

Table 1. Core Elements of Voluntary Associations, Private Business and Public Administration (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 41)

Unit:	Voluntary associations	Private business	Public administration
Mechanism of Coordination	Voluntary membership, Trust, Solidarity, Mutual Decisions, Traditions and shared meanings	Solvent customers, Economic Calculation, Markets, Competition, customers choices, Civil law	Centralised administration, Legal authority and coercive power, control and regulation, Political decisions, Public Law
Focus:	Members Mutual Interests, Concrete Activities	Customer's private needs, Professional Services	Collective Interests and Public Goods, Public Governance
Criteria of success:	Meaningful Activities, Togetherness, Social Well-being, Identity	Economic profit, Quality of Services, Efficiency, Professionalism	National Well-being, Equally available Services

The below figure illustrates the three dimensions of Finnish physical culture.

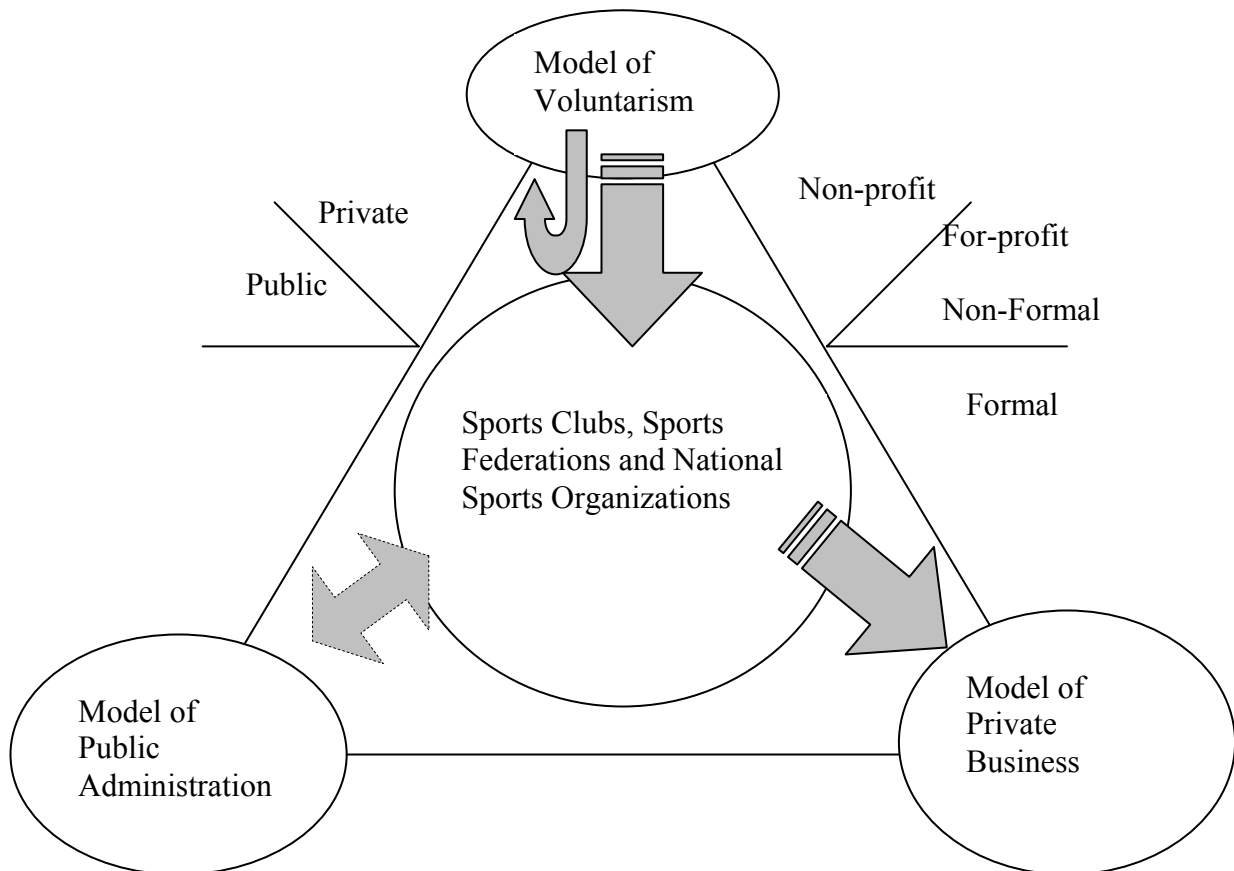


Figure 1. The Three Dimensions of Finnish Physical Culture in Transition (Heikkala & Koski, 1999, 39)

Obviously, the central challenges of the local public board of sports in Jyväskylä are to promote healthy living, to enhance physical activity, to guarantee the basic sport services and to follow the interests of the majority of people for sports and recreation. The focus is on the general population but also on groups that basically seek to preserve their good health or delay upcoming health problems, usually the elderly people and the working class whose free time is limited. The City of Jyväskylä offers group activities for children and teenagers as well. One core element that the Jyväskylä sport service has to offer is the low admission fees for participation which make the activities more appealing. However, the City of Jyväskylä by means of building and maintaining open-air facilities, gives the opportunity to people to exercise outdoors without joining a group. Some of the outdoor recreation activities are: walking, Nordic walking, jogging, cross-country ski, bicycling, and swimming in lakes. There are lanes for pedestrians and

cyclists as well as for indoor sports there are facilities for soccer, athletics, skating, ice-hockey, track and field events and swimming.

2.1 Ministry of Education-“A Major Instance in the Finnish Physical Culture”

The Ministry of Education is the representative of physical culture in Finland from the governmental point of view. There is no ministry of sports in Finland and the Ministry of Education is responsible for the physical culture. Its role is to provide physical education and sport activities for all citizens and to ensure that everyone has an equal right and opportunity in participation. The main concern of the Ministry of Education is to promote sport activities for the general health and well-being of the Finnish citizens. Children sports and youth sports, which are related to leisure and health, have become of vital importance to the Ministry's concerns with the onset of the 90's. (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 21–22)

The state (Ministry of Education) provides financial support in order to maintain the preconditions for physical activities to be carried out. One main concern of the state is to maintain citizens' physical health. Subsidies are provided by the Ministry and they have an impact on sports organizations. The sports organizations carry out the physical activities with the financial support of the state e.g. sports facilities, whereas the state is reimbursed with the accomplishment of Finnish people's aim for a vigorous life. Therefore, the role of the state harmonizes itself with the role of the public sector and thus these two parts coexist and cooperate to serve and promote the general good. Nevertheless, there are organizations in Finland that mostly aim to the competitive top-sport area e.g. National Sports Organizations (NSO) and they also receive financial support from the Ministry of Education. However, the subsidies that the state offers for top-sports are less than those provided for recreation sports. (Ibid)

2.2 Participation in Sport Activities in Finland in the Form of Leisure

The physical culture has evolved in such a direction in Finland so that it is considered as a very essential part of people's lives (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 22). Sports have almost become a necessity for the Finnish population, particularly for young people. About 84% of people between the ages of 3-18 do sports on a daily basis (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 22). This is a quite significant percentage if we contemplate that an early active life can have a positive impact on the later adult life. Additionally, sports are practiced in a recreational way, not necessarily in sports clubs but individually and this amounts to the noteworthy percentage of 82% of Finnish exercising adults (Ibid). It is also notable the fact that adults' participation has increased the last few years especially between the ages of 25-34 years old. Recreational sports are also supported by sports clubs as well as the public sector, as it is mentioned above, and one third of the adult Finnish population is involved in at least one sports club and holds a membership (Heikkala & Koski 1999, 22 & 24).

As far as women's participation is concerned, there has been an increase in their participation number as well. In the Heikkala and Koski's (1999, 25) book about Finnish physical culture, it is proven that the percentage has increased within ten years from 38% to 42%. What is more, women are actively involved in the administrative area of sports, holding leading posts in variable sports organizations. (Heikkala & Koski 1999)

All in all, it seems that the Finnish physical culture differs when compared with the Northern America model, where most of the studies have been made for sports participation. Contrary to northern America, in Finland the socializing aspect of sports commences at an early age through families and institutions. In North America for instance universities play a major role when it comes to sport organizing whereas in Finland it does not. Having such a special case in Finland it is interesting to investigate sports participation needs and motives within a particular group of people i.e. Finnish women.

3 SPORT PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS

Sport participation nowadays is a subject that is being discussed to a great extent. People have never before faced so many health problems, which specialists claim that are related to the lack of activity. The hectic pace of life has created frantic conditions in most communities and people have less time for sport activities as well as restrained time disenabling them to follow a healthier lifestyle.

Some previous research (P. Brown, W. Brown, Miller & Hansen 2000, Currie 2004, Little 2002, Lloyd & Little 2005) focuses on women's participation in sport activities and takes into consideration the factors that might have an effect on the choice of whether to be active or not. It is usually the case that people come up against with constraints when participating in sports. Some of the problems which often arise when adopting a physical activity might be connected with the opportunities that one has in the area of residence. It can also be related with the lack of interest about the activities organized in the region. The most common constraints that someone might be faced with are: long distance from the place that offers the activity, lack of time, lack of knowledge for the existing activity, as well as accessibility to the activity. The family or the social environment that one grows up in can contribute to someone's decision to participate in sports. The above were some general indications about what will follow next in this paper. The factors related to participation are explained more analytically in this chapter.

3.1 Factors Related to Participation in Sports and Recreation Activities

There has been previous research on factors which affect participation in sports and it has been mostly conducted in North America and many theories and models have been suggested. According to Jackson (1993) constraining factors in recreation can be regarded as the factors that restrict the free choice for recreation activities or prohibit participation in such activities. These constraint factors are divided in categories like internal – external, interpersonal – intrapersonal – structural.

Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991, as cited in Chick & Dong 2003) created a hierarchical model of constraints which contains three sectors/levels:

a) Intrapersonal: these are internal psychological situations and they differ in every individual e.g. lack of skills or time, stress.

b) Interpersonal: constraints which result from the every day interactions with other people e.g. family obligations, friends' influence.

c) Structural: these are constraints that are related with the lack of opportunities e.g. lack of facilities in the area, great cost of participation as well as environmental or weather conditions for outdoor activities.

Crawford et al. (1991) suggested that these levels have to be overcome by the individual in order to reach participation. The person has to deal first with the lack of time and the existence of stress. As soon as intrapersonal constraints are overcome then the second level of constraints follows. Those are interpersonal and derive from our relations with others or from everyday obligations. For instance, some people are willing to pay to start an activity and also they might have enough free time but they might lack partners to go with or friends. Consequently, they prefer either to start a different activity or not to start it at all. Finally, structural constraints are the last level. Usually this type consists of problems such as whether a certain activity or its facilities exist in the area or if there is accessibility. The hierarchical model of Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) of constraints in recreation activities can also be seen in Figure 2.

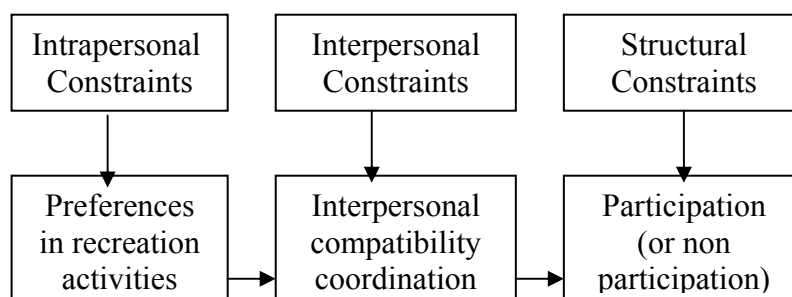


Figure 2. Hierarchical Model of Constraints in Recreation Activities (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey 1991 as Cited by Chick and Dong 2003, 339)

Previous research has observed that the biggest constraints centralize in lack of time and money, lack of interest, little support from the family and health problems (Blazey 1987; Crompton 1977; Lansing & Blood 1964, as cited in Chick & Dong 2003). All the above have been found to be the constraints that people deal with nowadays and maybe in an even larger degree than before. What is really interesting is the fact that the culture of a country may affect to a great extend and it can overrule the validity of the above model, resulting in different outcomes for different countries (Chick & Dong 2003). In addition, the factor culture can not be added to any of the above categories of the model. However, the study of Chick and Dong (2003) about constraint factors that was held in three different cultures, China, Japan and North America indicated that interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints are affected by a country's culture. Hawkins, Peng, Hsieh and Eklund (1999) were the first to propose that the old hierarchical model should be renewed. Therefore, Chick and Dong (2003) conducted the above research in 2003, about the influence of the culture in constraint factors and created a new model (figure 3).

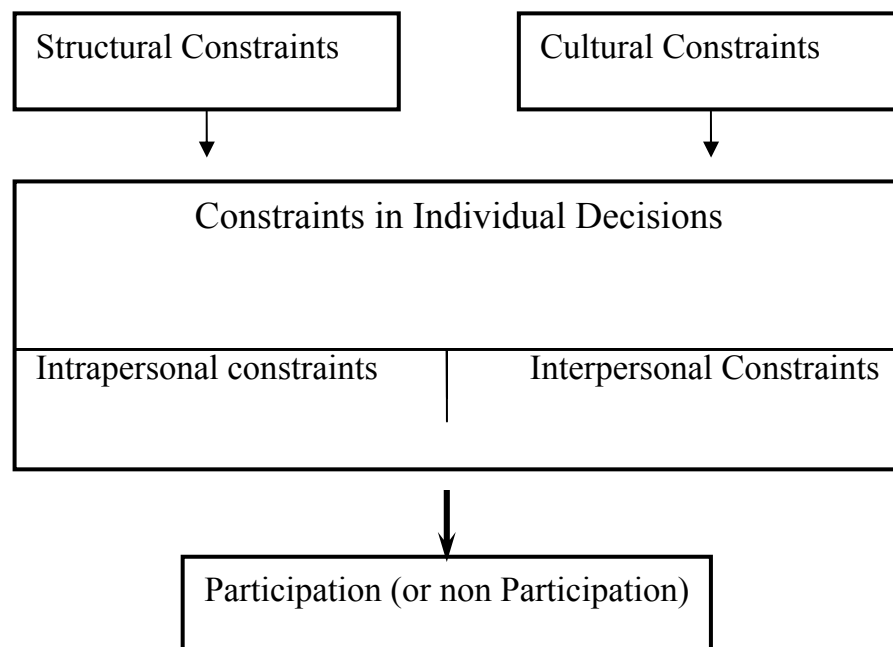


Figure 3. Improved and Renewed Model of Constraints (Chick and Dong 2003, 341)

When it comes to women, some other constraints have to be added like low self-esteem, gender role expectations and studies. Following a student's schedule can be an important constraint as it limits women's time and finance, mostly when they are mature students. What is more, especially women sometimes feel they lack the skills which will enable them to participate in activities. They can be very self-conscious and in constant need of boosting their self-esteem so as to be active. On top of this, although many things have changed through the years, sometimes certain activities are stereotypically established as male activities. Therefore people think that it would be odd and unnatural for women to start such an activity and opinions like this are of course discouraging for women. For instance martial arts in the western countries were considered to be a "man's" sport. Yet nowadays, women have their own clubs and at a professional level they have their own categories. (Little 2002)

The theory of planned behavior and the research of constraint factors (Alexandris, Barkoukis & Tsormpatzoudis 2007) explain at a large degree how much we can predict participants' behaviour and therefore satisfy their needs and demands. According to it:

The theory of planned behavior suggests that an individual's intention to engage in a specific behavior (e.g., participate in a specific activity) is determined by the individual's attitudes toward the behavior and the influence of perceived social norms. Intention, in its turn, was proposed to act as a determinant of the actual behavior (e.g., actual participation levels). (Alexandris, Barkoukis & Tsormpatzoudis 2007, 40)

Intrapersonal constraints are those which play a major role in individual's decisions. Consequently, these factors are those which we can be used to predict, to some large extent, the decision for participation, the frequency of participation and the partaker's loyalty to an activity. We also have to take into consideration the fact that interpersonal constraints can also include other people's influence in the decision of someone to take part in a leisure activity. Interactions with other people can have a decisive effect on participation. Joining an activity with a friend or making new friends there is essential. (Alexandris & Stodolska 2004). The results of Alexandris' and Stodolska's research

also indicate that intrapersonal constraints are the factors that have the bigger effect on people's mentalities and opinions as far as participation in recreation activity is concerned. However, the relation between behaviour that can be predicted and the actual behaviour is something that needs further research. One recent research (Alexandris, Barkoukis & Tsormpatzoudis 2007) about the theory of planned behaviour and its relation with constraints and intention of participation in sports revealed a strong connection between intentions in participating and the constraint factors. This theory defines in a large degree the individual's intention to continue physical leisure activities. This research was conducted among older individual participants i.e. retired people. The results also support the study conducted by Alexandris and Stodolska (2004).

Demographic Differences as Constraint Factors

Immigration nowadays is a phenomenon that can affect immigrants' life as well as inhabitants' lives. Changes in participation after immigration in a foreign country are visible in many cases. Moving in a different country relates with changes and adjustment in an unfamiliar cultural, physical and social environment and therefore triggers alternations in activities. Especially when the transition happens from poorer to richer environment then this can create negative results in participation due to the lack of money. Rich environments require rich residents and this is not always the case with immigrants. (Stodolska 2000)

Raymore, Godbey and Crawford (2001 as cited in Alexandris, Barkoukis, Tsorbatzoudis & Grouios 2003) studied about gender, self-esteem and social-economic conditions as constraint factors. Their research indicated that self-esteem is related with intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints because people with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to criticism. Frequently, they choose not to participate in order to prevent others from criticizing them in case of lack of skills or incapability. In addition, there are differences between the two genders self-esteem wise. Women presented to have lower self-esteem than men. Furthermore, there are differences between the intrapersonal and overall constraint factors. Self-esteem seemed to be according to social-economic status which is contrary to intrapersonal status. Yet, there does not seem to be a connection between structural constraints and social-economic status. It is also suggested that social-economic factors can affect women's participation in leisure activities. In most of the cases women take on most of the responsibility of a family and

this brings restrictions in their free time. What is more, another factor that should be taken into consideration is women's income which is usually lower than men's (Kay 2000).

A further explanation about women's sport participation is provided in P. Brown, W. Brown, Miller and Hansen's research (2000). The survey focuses on the factors that affect participation of women who raise young children. It is more likely that there are many problematic aspects of the diary life that women with children have to deal with. The results of the research suggest that the majority of mothers with young children had a desire to participate in recreational activities. However, most of them faced structural constraints e.g. lack of money, time and energy as well as gender expectations constraints e.g. the sense of obligation to constantly care for and serve others and the feeling of failing their beloveds' expectations. Nevertheless, support from other people from their social environment like family, friends, partner, had a positive effect on women's willingness for participation. Some women on the other hand, manage to find the power of will, time and money needed for participation regardless of their socioeconomic status or the support they might receive or not.

The study of Janke, Davey and Kleiber (2006) proves that sports activities can change in older adult life. The age of 50 is usually linked with changes in leisure participation. Especially women very frequently disclose a decrease in involvement in sports when they exceed the age of 50. Usually health problems occur in later life and it could be one of the reasons for this decline. Nonetheless at the age of 50, when people retire from work, most commonly they adopt new ways of spending their free time since they have quite a lot of it and usually they follow new recreation activities. The above research points out the last concept as a predictor for starting a new recreation activity. However men in that study show greater numbers of adopting leisure activity than women.

The study of Alexandris and Carroll (1999, 321), which was held in Greece about constraints that adults face, reports seven restrictions:

- Individual/psychological factors: Factors like low self – esteem, lack of interaction need with other people. These factors belong to the intrapersonal constraints category.

- Lack of knowledge: Restrictions like ignorance of the place and facilities that the activity is being organized as well as lack of skills.
- Facilities/services: Inappropriate facilities plus the probability that the activities that someone is looking for are not offered by the organization.
- Accessibility/costs: The facilities are far from individual's home therefore, one needs to consume a lot of time to get there. The cost is quite high too.
- Lack of partnership: Some people choose to start an activity only when they have some friends or partners to go with.
- Time: Lack of time because of working or family obligations.
- Lack of interest: Bad experiences in the past can create negative effect on motivation.

Sometimes people are motivated to participate in an activity from their social environment like friends or family. There might be easy accessibility and a lot of promotion of the activity, nevertheless if the person does not have any interest in it then there is no participation. In many cases people stated that they started one sport because most of their friends were involved in it. Therefore, they thought that it was also a good opportunity to meet new people as well and socialize with everybody during the activity. Social interactions can be a determinant cause to adopt a leisure activity. Another feature that is included in motives is service quality of an organization and how it can fulfill the expectations of the people participating. Satisfaction defines in a large degree motivation in order to continue taking part in a sport activity. (Alexandris & Carroll 1997a)

One more research was conducted by Alexandris and Carroll (1997b) in Greece about the constraint factors in several scopes like gender, age, education and family situation. From the interpretation of the results we can see that women face more repressions and intrapersonal constraints than men. Nonetheless, there is an affirmative relation between age and constraints. The older one gets, the more restrained one turns up in the end. Furthermore, people with low educational level present to be constrained more easily. Also, married people present more constraints than single people particularly when it comes to the factor 'time'. Looking deeper to the above, demographic differences are

also claimed to be in the position to have an influence in people's perceptions and ultimately decisions. Finally, factors that are related with cost appear to be overcome with the increase in age (Jackson 1993, as cited in Alexandris & Carroll 1997b).

Additionally, women who have young children seem to face several constraints to start or continue an activity and there are several reasons for that. To begin with, structural influences like lack of money, energy and of course time, are some of the constraints. Furthermore, support from the social environment like partners, family or friends make a difference in women's choice to start an activity (P. Brown, W. Brown, Miller, & Hansen 2000). In accordance to the above research, one major factor that played a major role in women's leisure actions was the lack of energy which came along with their obligations to their children. In particular, employment status or the number of children didn't have any great difference on their inactivity. However, women, who are encouraged to be physically active by their partners or family, present bigger rates in participation. It appears that the social– economical environment affects not only the frequency of participation within a year but also the choice of the activity. Women from low economical status naturally adopt low cost activities (Ibid).

In the same concept, knowledge is as an important constraint factor. As an example we can take snow sports. People who are not involved in snow sports are usually afraid of the activity itself whereas regular skiers face problems like lack of time to practice the sport as well as money deficit. (Nyaupane, Morais & Graefe 2004)

3.2 Motives and Their Relation with Participation in Recreation Activities

Motivation is a stimulating factor and it may vary its derivation. Iso – Ahola (1989 as cited in Alexandris & Carroll 1997a) agrees that there is nothing more important as far as willingness in participating is concerned, than the factors that prompt participation. These factors are called motives and they define partakers' choice to a considerable degree (Alexandris & Carroll 1997a). More recent research, (Alexandris, Tsorbatzoudis & Grouios 2002), has shown that motives are divided into two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic. What is more, external motives can be divided into external regulations, introjected regulations and identified regulations. The first category refers to the behaviour that an individual develops in order to receive the desired approval from his social environment. The second category refers to obligations that we encounter every day and actions that derive from these obligations. Additionally, the stress that daily routine is usually accompanied with comes to makes matters worse. The last category refers to the evaluation of the activity by individuals and the formulation of individuals' behaviour according to their preferences.

The categories of motives as intrinsic and extrinsic are not the only ones we should look into. There are also some special categories of motives and these are: rest (Markland & Hardy 1993, cited in Alexandris & Palialia 1999), health and fitness (Mathes et al. 1992; Frederick & Ryan 1993, cited in Alexandris & Palialia 1999), socialization (Davis et al. 1995, cited in Alexandris & Palialia 1999), competition and mental recreation (Alexandris & Carroll 1997a, cited in Alexandris & Palialia 1999).

The plan of Beard and Ragheb, (1980 as cited in Alexandris & Palialia 1999) about customers' satisfaction in recreation could be also applied to some extent in leisure activities. The planning consists of six dimensions however four of them could be taken into consideration that respond to motives that lead to leisure activities; educational, social, recreational and physiological–training dimension. (Alexandris & Palialia 1999)

Furthermore, motives are quite an extended field and several attempts have been made in order to find some ways to predict participation. We can also comprehend from the study of Alexandris et al. (2002) that constraint factors such as psychological, lack of knowledge, interest and time could be important parameters in predicting lack of motivation. In the same vein, the relation between the frequency of participation and the

presence of motivation is really strong. The results of the above research indicate that the group of people who took part in recreation activities on a daily basis presented higher motivation levels than those who participated once every week or even less regularly and more randomly.

Moreover, the interrelationship between attitudes and participation in physical activity is quite strong. The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior is believed to be successful by and large so as to predict participation in activities as these theories reflect the personal beliefs, wishes, opinions or socio-cultural conditions (Doganis & Theodorakis 1995). These certain beliefs and wishes in sports participation might be for instance how much someone is interested in a sport activity, how long an individual has been active or how important someone considers physical activity to be for a healthy and qualitative life style.

The research of Carroll and Alexandris (1997) about the power of motives and their connection with constraint factors proposed that the stronger the motive, the more it affects the elimination of constraints. Individuals who appeared to have really weak motives, they also had a much greater number of constraints and therefore the lowest participation in activities. This can lead us to think that people with high motivation have fewer chances to be affected or restricted by factors that could be thought of as constraints. On the other hand, frequent participation can augment motivation as the activity can gradually turn into a participant's need.

Many researchers agree on the fact that exercise can have really positive results on women's psychology and their feeling of well-being inasmuch they gain autonomy and they have their own free space and time away from the burden of childcare or housework for a few hours. (Currie 2004). It is mostly common that mothers, especially with young children, take little care of their physical and mental health as they put their own needs aside. Some women that were investigated by some researchers about their feelings and their life after starting leisure activities stated positive comments. Additionally, most of them declared that leisure activities had such an effect on their lives that they decreased the levels of stress. Participation in recreation activities also had an effect on their self-esteem which is of essential importance especially for a woman's mental balance. (Currie 2004). The above study indicated that women that

took part in leisure sport activities felt less stressed and less confined due to their duties and it also enhanced their feeling of accomplishment, their confidence, their morale and consequently their quality of life. The positive effects of exercise not only for physical well-being but also for mental health are taken into consideration by many doctors nowadays.

One more important reason that can affect people's choice is the area where someone resided practicing some certain activities. The place where someone lives for a long period, can affect the after choices of an individual. For instance, good memories of an entertaining participation in a sport in a certain place can contribute to the belief that the sport that was practiced there is worthwhile and creates positive connotations between a place and a sports activity, resulting in a person's practicing a sport wherever and receiving its beneficial aftermath. (Alexandris, Tsorbatzoudis & Grouios 2002)

Furthermore, social unwritten rules consciously and subconsciously determine the public's orientation towards a particular activity. Society can form perceptions of the approaches in sports, as people often tend to participate in a particular sport when it is considered to be appropriate for their gender. There are certain norms that still exist and some activities are considered to be male and some female as far as the bodily performances are concerned. People are sometimes too restricted by social perceptions and gender stereotypes to experience some new sports just for pleasure. (Wellard 2006).

3.3 Synopsis

This review aims to provide the reader with the necessary knowledge about constraints that women face according to some international research. Its principle is to prepare readers of what will follow in this paper. The above theories and surveys are quite significant to be mentioned as they are theories and results that give us the specific scope about women's society revealing the problems and restrictions that they usually face when it comes to sport activities. Women have been the weak gender also in the field of sports for quite a long time and while gaining their equality and emancipation, they also stated their birth right for equality in sport leisure activities.

There is a focus on the Finnish physical system and culture as well. It seems that Finnish physical culture differs quite significantly from the North American model and therefore any future survey should be adjusted according to that. The physical culture in Finland is polycentric. It exists via both organized and unorganized activities and many Finnish people engage in them independently and in a recreational way.

4 METHODOLOGY

The practical part of the study was implemented during autumn 2007 and spring 2008. The selection of the quantitative analysis was made because it is believed to be the best way of examining the attitudes of a certain population. However, language barrier was a major issue and therefore the questionnaire was translated into two languages, first Finnish and then English. The designing of the questionnaire was based on previous similar questionnaires and it was tested two times before it was delivered to the population sample.

4.1 Population and Sample

Initially before going into further analysis of the research questions, the below mentioned sample should be examined as well as its representation of the population of women in Jyväskylä. The sampling is *incidental* and that of course includes the risk of not being absolutely representative of the population as a whole and the results should not be generalized. The number of the sample which is used in this research is 181 women ($N=181$) between the ages 30 up to 65 years old. Because of the wide range of the afore mentioned ages it is good to divide them into three groups; first group 30 to 39 years old, second group 40 to 49 and third group 50 to 65. As it is indicated in Table 2 below, the observed sample in the first two cases of 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 is representative of the expected population. However, the 50 to 65 age range shows a deficit as the actual representation number should be 77 but in sample N there are 60 of them.

Table 2. Age Representation of Jyväskylä Population ($N=181$)

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	
30 – 39 years old	58	50	7.7	
40 – 49 years old	63	53	9.7	
50 – 65 years old	60	77	-17.4	

4.2 Basic Information about the Samples

An incidental sample of $N=181$ women is attained. Respondents had to meet inclusion criteria of being thirty to sixty five years old and taking part in a recreation activity organized by the City of Jyväskylä. The mean age of the sample is 46 years old. However, all the age groups of the sample are almost equal in number if we divide them

in three groups, (Table 3). About 10% of the sample has children under the age of seven years old, 19% has children between the ages 7–14 years old, 22% between 15–18 years old and the rest 48% has older children or no children at all. More than 78% of the female participants are employed which is quite a significant percentage, whereas the most frequent answer to the salary question is 20.000–30.000 €. Finally, the majority of the women are married and this is the highest percentage, about 82%.

Table 3. Age Groups within the *N* Sample

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	30 to 39	54	29,8
	40 to 49	59	32,6
	50 to 65	68	37,6
Total <i>N</i>		181	100,0

4.3 Ethics and Privacy, Confidentiality and Procedures of Collecting Data

Since this is a public survey, some certain rules of ethics and privacy are included. The survey comprises of some dimensions related to participation standards of the sample. These dimensions include explanations to participants about procedures of the survey and its purpose. Furthermore, according to the ethic rules the researcher was willing and able to answer any inquiries. The participants were instructed clearly about how to complete the questionnaires and also about the fact that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time without any other obligation.

The survey is done anonymously and no private information of the participants is obtained whatsoever. The women that took part in this survey were informed right from the beginning that they would fill the questionnaires secretly and anonymously.

The activities that are included in this research are water gymnastics and fitness activities. The respondents were taken from the activities' practices and they filled in the questionnaires immediately after the class of the fitness activities. Thus, most of the women participants are included in the research, i.e. those who are over thirty and participated that particular period when the questionnaires were delivered. This method resulted in collecting 80 questionnaires. In the water gymnastic activities the respondents took the questionnaire at home and returned it completed the following

week. Due to the fact that it was impossible to collect the questionnaires at the same day, some of the questionnaires were never returned. This method had as a result the assembly of 101 valid questionnaires out of the approximate 160 that were distributed totally. The reason for this diminish in number was attributed to the fact that since the women from water gymnastics filled in the questionnaires at home, the researcher could not answer to any possible queries that participants might have had at that time. Therefore some of the returned questionnaires are invalid. The whole procedure lasted 5–6 minutes for each respondent to fill in the questionnaire. This survey data collection was conducted in the middle of January–middle of February in Jyväskylä, Central Finland by the afore mentioned researcher.

4.4 Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is 5–paged which included an explanatory introduction and 46 questions and it is divided in three parts (see appendix). The first part consists of personal data and there is no certain scale applied because every question comprises of a different selection of answers. In this part participants were asked to answer about their age, their marital and working status, education, income, residence as well as to present their physical activity background.

The second part consists of questions related to the certain recreation activity they took part in that is organized by public sector i.e. distance from the activity, means of transportation, how many times per week, source of information about the activity. There is no certain item–scale used here either, because the answers vary in this respect as well.

The third part includes questions related to motivation reasons resulting in starting and participating in the activity and constraint factors that participants face while doing the activity. A 5–item scale is used (Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree–5=strongly agree). This part is divided into 2 sub–parts, the first one includes 15 motivation related questions and the second 13 constraint related questions. The questions from the third part are connected into a group of questions as there are issues that have common factors related with time constraints, opportunity, social and money constraints as well as health and well–being.

There are three main measurements held in this research: 1) participation in recreation sports in terms of frequency, 2) leisure related motivation in participation and the extend of the public sector's responsibility for reinforcing motivation and 3) leisure related participation problems, the frequency of their occurrence and their culpability.

Participation in Recreation Sports in Terms of Frequency:

Participants were asked to report how often they participated in the activity. The questions that were included to report this were: distance from the activity both from job and from home, means of transportation, how often they participate in a week's time, how long ago they have started the activity organized by public sector. The "how often" factor is very important as the frequency of participation and motivation are very closely related. There are also two different type of questions included in this part. The first one refers to the source of information the participants used to find out about the leisure sport activity and the second one aims to report if they took part in any other recreation sports offered by another sector.

Leisure Related Motivation in Participation:

These questions are made in Likert scale form, 1=strongly disagree–5=strongly agree. The main items here are measurements of the motives related to knowledge and consequently interest about the activity, social interaction, structural motives, recreational reasons as well as physiological reasons (health and well-being). The interest about the activity consist of two questions "The activity is very interesting for me" and "I always wanted to participate in this activity". The social motives include friends and family interactions and meeting new people i.e. how much the person participates in the activity because of the family or friends. Motives like recreation reasons are included in questions such as "escape from everyday routine" and "I had nothing else to do". The physiological motives have to do with how much the person is participating in an activity in order to keep fit or because of doctor's advice. The structural motivation reasons refer to the distance from home or work, the cost of an activity and good or bad transportation to the activity.

Leisure Related Participation Problems:

The participation constraint factors could be divided into the three categories mentioned in the review; intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural. The first category comprises of questions about lack of time because of distance and lack of interest for the activity. The interpersonal are related to the interactions with other people and this matter is expressed through the questions about lack of time because of family and work obligations, lack of support from the family and the friends. Finally, the structural constraints are stated through the questions about weather conditions, bad transportation conditions and the expense of the activity.

In all of the above measurement categories there was an open question at the end for the possibility that someone might want to declare another factor and those will be examined as well in the next pages.

Table 4. Questionnaire Parts

QUESTIONNAIRE PARTS	QUESTIONS DESCRIPTIONS				
Participation in recreation sports in terms of frequencies	Distance	Means of transportation	Frequency	Activity history	
Leisure related motivation in participation	Interest	Social Interaction	Structural motives	Recreation reasons	Physiological reasons
Leisure related participation problems	<i>Intrapersonal</i>		<i>Interpersonal</i>		<i>Structural</i>
	Distance problems		Family/Work obligations		Bad transportation
	Lack of interest		Lack of support from the family/friends		Cost Weather conditions

4.5 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

One principle that was followed is that the content of the questionnaire should be completely comprehensible by the participants. Therefore, it was translated into Finnish language. What is more, it was reviewed by specialists who have had previous experience in designing such questionnaires. Nonetheless, it should be taken into consideration that this questionnaire was designed for this research conducted in Central Finland for a specific population and therefore the use of it in another case could be invalid.

The quality of the conducted analysis depends on the accuracy and completeness of the numerical values and the validity of the models used. Although this is the right method to analyze population attitudes, quantification does have limitations and clearly it is not possible to measure all human experience. One of the major problems regarding the creation of indicators is that they attempt to summarize complex and diverse processes into a numerical form. When there is an analysis made it should always be taken into consideration that people do not function as numbers and there is always the possibility of various human conducts and numerous conclusions.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Participation in Recreation Sports in Terms of Frequencies

Importance of Activity and Length of Active Life

Initially the results of the following question should be examined; “Do recreation activities play an important role in your life and to what extend?” The majority of the women (53. 6%) answered that activities are a very important part of their life whereas the answer “not important at all” did not gather any percent (Table 5). This question is related to the Theory of Planned Behavior which is used to predict participation in sports. Internal motives such as the importance that someone places on a sport activity can show the level of intention to continue the activity.

Table 5. The Importance of Recreation Activities in Participants’ Life

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	very important	97	53.6
	important	65	35.9
	somehow important	16	8.8
	not so important	3	1.7
Total <i>N</i>		181	100.0

However, the following question is also related to the above Theory: “How long have you been physically active?” Being physically active from a very early age can be a very good determinant to adapt an active adult life as well. We can form the hypothesis here that someone who has been physically active in the past and still continues to be active, places much greater importance on sports than someone who has not been very active or not active at all. The majority of women in this case appear to be physically active all their life from a very young age. If we make the correlation between these two variables, the length of physically active life and the importance of recreation activities, we find a somehow significant connection. It seems, in most of the cases, that those who have been physically active for a long period in their life, they are the ones that also place a great importance on sport activities (Tables 6 & 7). The correlation in Table 7 can be seen from the two asterisks in the Pearson correlation.

Table 6. Length of Physically Active Life

	Frequency	Percent
Valid all my life	99	54.7
since adolescence	28	15.5
since adulthood	42	23.2
Mostly passive/not at all physically active	12	6.6
Total <i>N</i>	181	100.0

Table 7. Correlation of Importance and Length of Active Life

		Importance of recreation activities	Length of physically active life
Importance of recreation activities	Pearson Correlation	1	.239(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	<i>N</i>	181	181
Length of physically active life	Pearson Correlation	.239(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	<i>N</i>	181	181

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Past Participation and Interest in the Activity

There is also the hypothesis that participation in an activity in the recent past could probably have an effect on the interest in a specific activity. The question about the past participation is formulated as follows “How much did you participate last year in this or another recreation activity”. The last year’s participation does not necessarily include a very active life since childhood, adolescence or early adulthood. Consequently, it can provide some reliable indications about the individual’s active life in the last months related with the activity organized by the city of Jyväskylä.

The significance of the One-Way ANOVA analysis (Table 8) illustrates that the early participation in whichever recreation activity does have an effect on the interest in a specific activity ¹.

Figure 4 also shows that the women who answered participated last year 2–3 times per week in a leisure sport activity and that they are interested in sports almost to a “strongly agree” degree in the 5–Likert scale. We should note here that the most common answer in the frequency of participation in the past is the answer 2–3 times per week. We need also to add to the above that there is a quite noteworthy percentage of women that started an activity more than a year ago, about 76%.

Table 8. Earliest Participation and Interest for the Activity

Activity interest	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5	2.252	2.406	.039
Within Groups	175	.936		
Total N	180			

1. Statistical Significance:

$p < .05$ statistically almost significant

$p < .01$ statistically significant

$p > .001$ statistically very significant

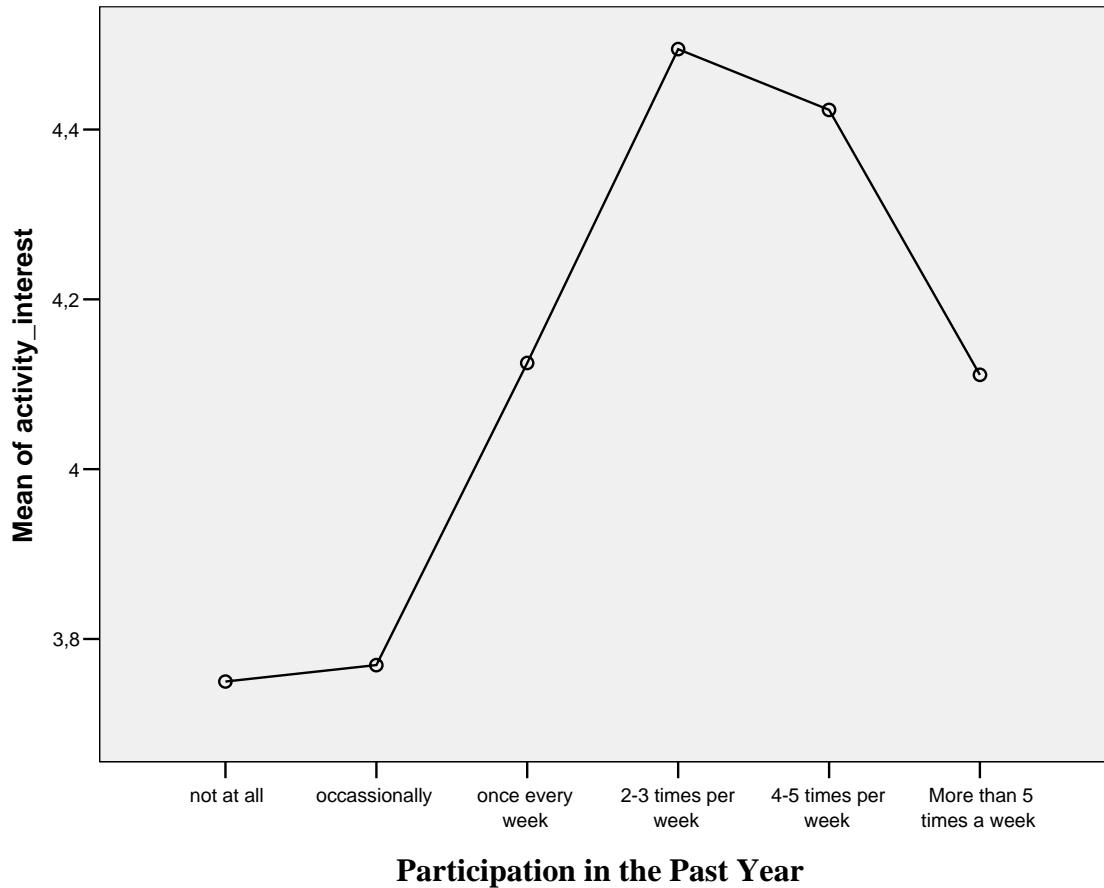


Figure 4: Effect of Past Participation on the Interest for the Activity ($N=181$)

Frequency and Motivation

In the same vein, we could also examine the result that emerges from the effect that the frequency of participation during this year has on the interest for the activity. As it was mentioned in previous research the relation between the frequency of participation and the presence of motivation is really strong (Alexandris et al. 2002). Therefore, we could also assume in this research that someone who participates more often within a week's time will also have an increase in interest in the particular activity. The ANOVA analysis supports significantly the above hypothesis as one can see from the result below Table 9. The indication of the significance is smaller than $p < .01$ and this can lead us to suggest that women who appear to have a more regular involvement in a recreation activity are more motivated to exercise. For the City of Jyväskylä, which is the main organizer, this could mean that in the cases of activities that are not too frequent within a week's time a possibility of revising the weekly schedule could be an option.

Table 9. Motivation and Frequency of Participation

Activity interest	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5	3.180	3.497	.005
Within Groups	175	.909		
Total N	180			

Equally significant is to explore the motivation for future participation. The question is stated as follows: “How much are you planning to participate in the future in this or another recreation activity?” The most popular answer given with quite a significant difference from the rest was 2–3 times per week, about 64% (Table 10). Since we are talking about recreation and health, the above frequency in participation is the desired one in order to have obvious results in health and well-being.

Table 10. Participation in the Future

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Occasionally	3	1.7
	Once Every Week	25	13.8
	2-3 Times Per Week	116	64.1
	4-5 Times Per Week	31	17.1
	More than 5 Times Per Week	6	3.3
	Total N	181	100.0

Distance from the Activity and Frequency of Participation

The following study is related with the correlation between the distance which the participants have to cover from their place of residence to the place of activity and the frequency of participation. It can be assumed that distance could also be a determinant factor for the frequency of participation especially in the cases of the participants with no convenient commuting or the absence of means of transportation. From the below figure 5 we can see where the highest percentages of answers for the distance from the activity were.

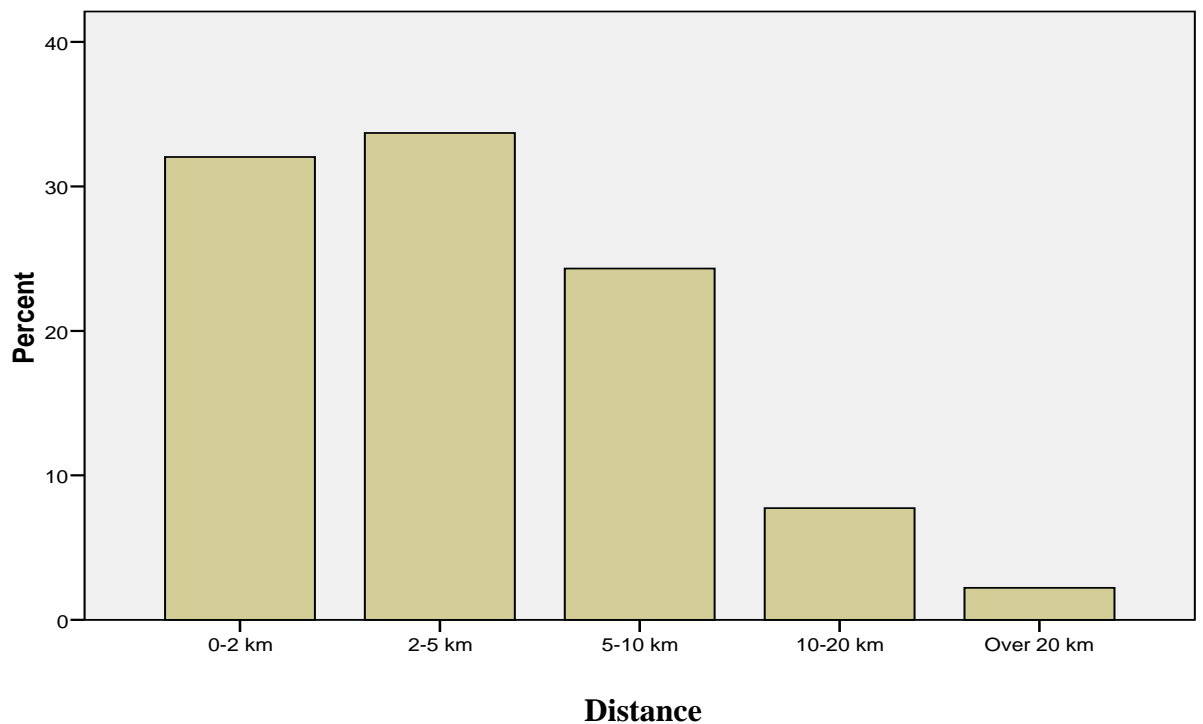


Figure 5: Distance from Home to the Activity ($N=181$)

However, from the correlative analysis it results that distance is not determinant for the frequency of participation. Yet, there should also be taken into consideration that this may not be the case in other studies because this study was, on the whole, made for women who are residents of the Jyväskylä area and the distances in the particular urban area are not immensely great. What is more, the majority of the women answered that they use a car in order to get to the activity, (63%).

5.2 Leisure Related Motivation in Participation

Motivation factors can be physiological and they can be defined as external e.g. in the case of a doctor's advice. There are two questions constructed to investigate this, "I wanted to do some exercise" and "Doctor said that I was lacking of physical activity". They were turned into a sum variable and the result from both was that 53% of the women gave the answer 3=neither disagree nor agree, in a scale from 1 to 5 (Table 11, 12). External physiology motives can be most of the times the main reason that people start an activity. It can also be the strongest motive for people who are not physically active leading them in a decision to start exercising. Subsequently, if we look at the question about motives for health and well-being "I wanted to exercise for health and well-being" there is a quite significantly high percentage in the "strongly agree" answer, 77.3%.

Table 11. Physiology Motivation¹

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	13	7.2
	somehow disagree	22	12.2
	neither disagree nor agree	96	53.0
	somehow agree	35	19.3
	strongly agree	15	8.3
Total <i>N</i>		181	100.0

Table 12. I Exercise for Health and Well-Being

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	5	2.8
	somehow disagree	3	1.7
	neither disagree nor agree	9	5.0
	somehow agree	24	13.3
	strongly agree	140	77.3
Total <i>N</i>		181	100.0

1. This is a constructed value which consists of two questions that are related to each other: 1) I wanted to do some exercise and 2) Doctor said that I was lacking of physical activity

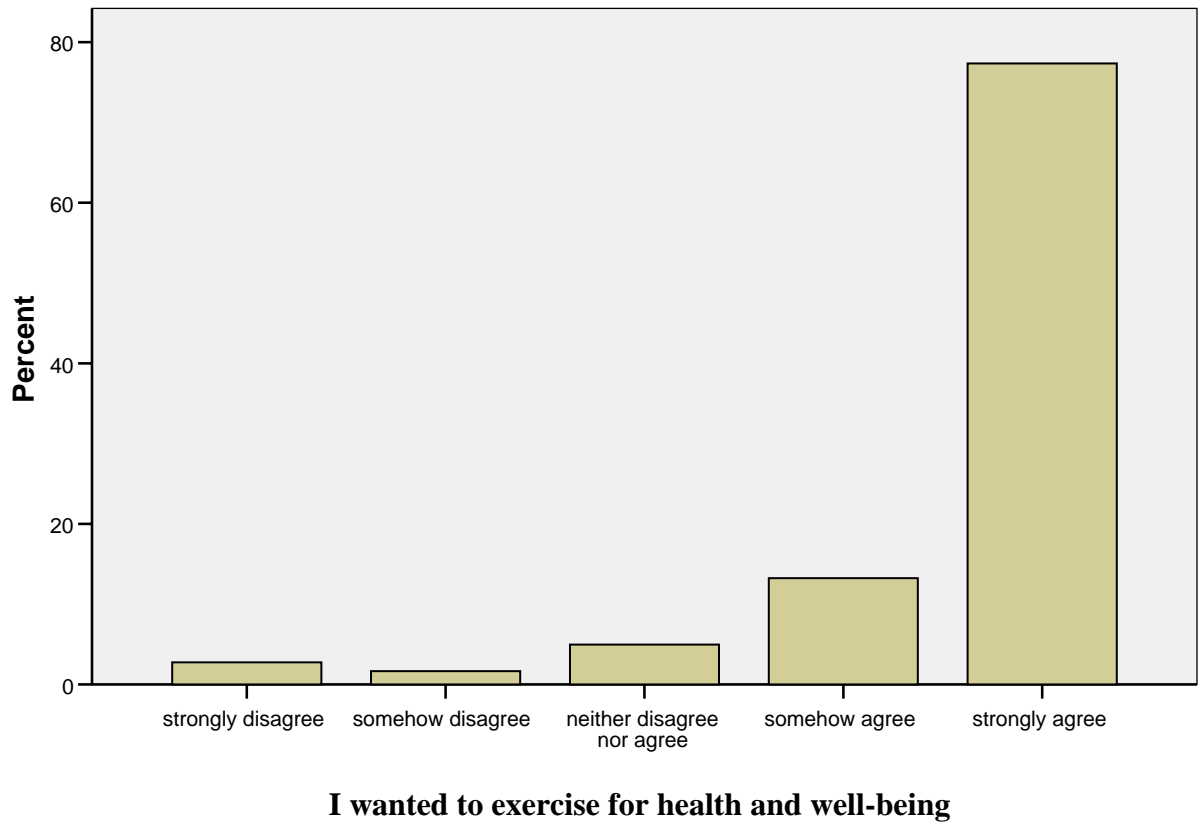


Figure 6: Motivation for Health and Well-Being ($N=181$)

Furthermore, the overall results of the questions about motivation factors indicate the questions that gathered the highest positive percentage. In this case, the questions included the interest in a particular activity that is offered by the city of Jyväskylä, “This activity was very interesting for me”, “I always wanted to participate in this activity”. There were also health factors mentioned “Doctor said I was lacking of physical exercise”, “I wanted to exercise for health and well-being” as well as other factors, for instance to escape from every day routine, to socialize with other people, to choose the most inexpensive option or the closer one to their home. The motives that gather the highest percentages are in fact the reasons mentioned for health and well-being as well as the interest in the activity itself, (Table13). This could be taken into consideration because according to these women, health, which derives from exercising recreational

activities, is a great priority. Furthermore, the activities offered in the city of Jyväskylä are highly taken into account by the participants. The percentages that are seen in the third column in table 13 are taken from the “somehow agree” and “strongly agree” answers. The “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” columns include the actual number from the *N* women who gave that answer.

Table 13. The Motives of Physical Activity (*N*=181)

	Agree ¹ %	Strongly Agree ²	Strongly Disagree ³
This activity is very interesting for me	84	103	5
I always wanted to participate in this activity	55	46	8
I wanted to do some exercise	72	82	16
Doctor said to exercise as I was lacking of physical activity	18	17	106
I wanted to escape from every-day routine	69	60	7
I heard from friends about this activity	32	34	74
I started participating because I wanted to meet people	36	18	43
I started participating because my family did	10	12	130
I started participating because my friends did	44	61	74
I had nothing else to do	13	15	109
I wanted to do an activity and it was the only option close to house/work	10	8	104
It was very cheap option	37	34	29
There is good transportation to get to the activity	43	39	35
I wanted to exercise for health and well-being	91	140	5

¹ Combination of “Strongly Agree” and “Somehow Agree” answers

^{2,3} Actual number from the *N* women

Some other factors that were stated in the open question box are as follows below:

- To lose weight
- Good scheduled hours of the activity
- Excellent gym and programs in Aalto Alvari
- It gives me pleasure
- Reduced prices comparing to other sectors

5.3 Leisure Related Participation Problems

Lack of time is a usual constraint factor when we talk about recreational physical activities. In the questionnaire it is stated in three dimensions; lack of time because of a) family obligations b) work obligations c) distance from the activity. Distance does not appear to be a very significant constraint as most of the women live in the Jyväskylä city or the outskirts. Family and work obligations however gathered a high percentage on the 3 level in the 5–Likert scale although not too high (see figure 7).

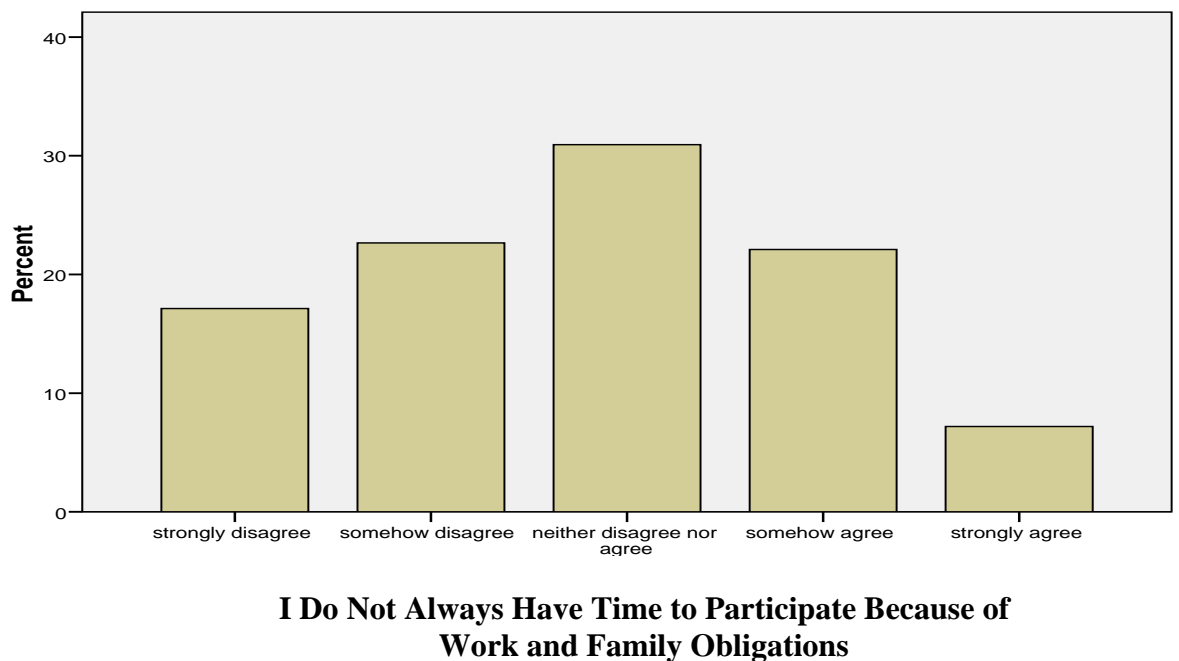


Figure 7: Time Constraints because of Work and Family Obligations (N=181)

From Table 14 we can see that the highest percentages in most of the questions about constraints factors are gathered in the “strongly disagree” answer. It seems that for most women participants, constraints such as cost of the activity is not an issue and, as we examined before in the motives’ section, reduced prices is one of the answers of the open question. What is more, neither social nor structural constraints seem to be significant problems for the women participants.

Table 14. The Constraints of Physical Activity (N=181)

	Strongly Agree %	Somehow Agree %	Neutral %	Somehow Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
I do not always have time to participate because of family obligations	14	18	18	14	36
I do not always have the time to participate because of work obligations	8	22	26	18	26
I do not always have the time to participate because it is very far	4	6	15	23	52
Transportation connections are not good to get to the activity	4	6	18	21	51
I do not find the activity that much interesting	4	3	9	17	66
I would like to do another activity but there isn't anything else around here	3	3	12	22	60
The activity is not as many times per week as I would like it to be	8	8	17	20	46
I don't have the physical endurance to do the activity many times per week	4	4	12	22	59
My family doesn't support me to do the activity	3	5	9	10	72
I want to participate but I don't have friends to go with	2	5	10	14	69
It is an expensive activity	7	35	35	18	35
The weather conditions in winter are not very motivating to do activities	4	1	11	8	76

As it was observed in one research mentioned above (Blazey 1987; Crompton 1977; Lansing & Blood 1964, as cited in Chick & Dong 2003), the biggest constraints happen to be lack of time and money, lack of interest and not enough family support. It was examined above that the interest in activities is proven to assemble a very high percentage in the group of women and it is one of the main motivation reasons for participation. Time constraints do not seem to have an effect on women's participation in general and on participation frequency, although almost 80% are in working condition and about the same percent live in marital state. The same applies for family support.

The cost of the activities is not a motivation factor as we mentioned before. However, it does not seem to cause a problem either in affecting the choice of activity or the frequency of practicing it as the percentages are equal in the "strongly agree", "strongly disagree" and "neither disagree nor agree" answer.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Discussion

This paper explores women's participation in recreational activities organised by one particular sector in Finland. This is the public sector and there is no comparison with any other sector in this country. The study is complementary to an existing research made by the City of Jyväskylä sport services and it assists in focusing on a more specific group of people that adopted recreational activities. Therefore we could say that it is a further step to previous made research which was constructed with a more general view to the numbers of participation of both men and women. This research however focuses on women from thirty to sixty five years old.

In order to investigate the factors related with participation, the hierarchical model of constraints by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) is used which contains three sectors/levels; Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Structural. The particular sample has in its majority an active background of many years of participation in sports in the form of recreation. It is noticeable the fact that most of them have a frequency of participation 2–3 times per week which is the common frequency in leisure oriented sports. The leisure sports background factor shows that it increased the positive feedback on women's positive attitude towards activities. One other factor that affected their choice to participate is the nature of the activity itself. Most of the women show an interest in doing a particular activity for keeping fit and healthy, for creating a state of well-being for them and for escaping from daily routine. As far as the cost of the activities is concerned, although it is not thought of as a problem, it is proven not to be a reason that affected their choice in a positive way since it is mentioned to be in the 3 level according to a 5–Likert scale. Yet the cost could be an issue if the average number of the annual income of these women were low. However, the average income is 20.000 – 30.000 Euros per year which represents the average salary in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2008).

On the other hand, time limits because of obligations (work, family) are not an issue either, although the majority of the women stated to be in working status. While we cannot generalize these opinions for the whole Jyväskylä population, nevertheless we

could say that the background in sports that these women have, helps to overcome possible obstacles that women of the above ages usually face when adopting leisure sport activities. The majority of the women place a great importance in sport activities and the results demonstrate that this is affected by the span of a physically active life.

For the sport organization of the City of Jyväskylä, there was the issue that came into question of whether or not the activities were sufficient for the participants in terms of how many times per week they were organized. There was also the issue of whether it was the only choice they had in their area and therefore this would have been a quite strong reason for participating. Nonetheless, the women participants replied that they had other options and that the scheduled times for the activities were convenient enough for each one of them respectively. Almost half of the sample women did not take part in any other activity offered by another sector, private or clubs. As for the rest, which were participating in some other activities, quite many of them mentioned that they do physical exercise on their own, usually outdoors. Some also mentioned that they do some exercise at the gym although it was not clarified if it was a private gym or the gym which is included in the Aalto Alvari swimming hall of Jyväskylä.

6.2 Conclusion

Previous research (Janke, Davey & Kleiber 2006) mentions that it is most common to notice a drop out from exercise and sports in women during their older adult life. The above sample from Jyväskylä differed in the way that the women who were mostly active in their life continued participating despite of work and family load. The interest for the activity was a quite considerable factor which gives credit to the organization. Quite few of the women who mentioned that they participate in other activities outside from the City of Jyväskylä, claimed that they are occupied individually with other sport activities or exercise in a gym offered by their work environment (39 out of 88).

However, there were some limitations in this study that should be mentioned in order to be overcome in a future further research. It is true that the sample is not a total representative of the Jyväskylä city women's population of the above mentioned ages, marital and working status. The reason for this is the method that was followed, the incidental sampling, which was a convenient method in this case. Because there was a limit of time for the research, the sample could not be chosen according to the

population of Jyväskylä. Consequently, although the sample appears to be representative of the ages 30 to 39 and 40 to 49, that is not the case for the ages of 50 to 65 nor for their marital and working status. Therefore, in this research, the sample which represents the participating women organized by the City of Jyväskylä is the one under discussion.

Nevertheless, if a future research is to be done and if the same number of samples is measured, it should first be taken into consideration how many people, of which age and of which status should be accepted to participate in the research in accordance to a more holistic sample of Jyväskylä's population.

One should also take into account that Jyväskylä is one of the considerably big cities in Finland and therefore the opportunities for physical activities can be greater than in a smaller town. One other issue is as well the fact that the country's only sports faculty is placed in this city which means more sport students who are willing to work and more choices for the City of Jyväskylä sport services amongst them. Consequently, there are quite many sport professionals specialized in sports or activities and therefore a wider choice for the women of Jyväskylä to participate. The choice is not wide only in terms of different activities but in terms of a broad schedule and a variety of exercise places that can cover everybody's needs. Hence, for further research there should be a smaller town included in the research where opportunities for activities organized by public, private sector or clubs are not as many. Although this research can provide much information about the City of Jyväskylä and its organizational customs and skills, it cannot be generalized for the whole public sector in Finland. A future research could also be conducted in a comparative way between two regions in Finland or two European countries.

The findings presented here offer a contribution to recreation activities organized by the public sector by exposing the current situation in Jyväskylä about some particular leisure sport groups. It supports previous studies about motives and their influence on the decision of participation and about constraints as reasons for abstinence and withdrawal from practicing sports. However, the particular group differs from groups of other studies inasmuch as the drop out level is not as high as it appears to be in other cases. The responsibility for this situation lies as it has been mentioned before, in the

variety of groups ready for activities and the wide selection of time schedules that make it convenient for many to participate. What is more, it is suggested that the abundant different places where activities take place can also result in this differentiation i.e. fitness groups were held in numerous gyms around Jyväskylä thus additionally promoting participation. The findings could be used as a means for a step beyond in the field of research into the augmentation of the public's exploitation of the offered sport activities in the form of leisure. Also, the public administration could focus on those groups who have not been physically active and search the constraint factors behind this fact in order to rectify this situation. It seems that if a new research were conducted with a target group consisting of both inactive and active women, the sample could possibly be retrieved from women's work places and from wherever they exercise individually. In that case, the focus would be on the pretexts and causes of motivation or lack of motivation.

Heikkala and Koski suggest (1999) that there is a constant cultural and social development inducing a continuous change and demand on sports. The demand on sports services increases. Consequently, the providing of sports must follow the lead of revolution, alternation and live up to people's expectations and desires. The state subsidies have so far been a very important means of creating and preserving the preconditions for organized activities. Preserving the preconditions for sport activities for the general population affects immensely the social health and well-being thus all necessary actions contributing to this direction must be done perpetually.

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Appendix



JYVÄSKYLÄN KAUPUNKI

Sivistystoimi
Liikuntapalvelukeskus

Jyväskylä

Kevät 2007

Naiset liikuntapalveluiden käyttäjinä

Hyvä vastaaja,

Tämä kysely tehdään Jyväskylän yliopiston tutkimuksena ja toivomme teillä olevan aikaa sen täyttämiseksi. Tällä kyselyllä pyritään selvittämään naisten osallistumisaktiivisuutta liikuntaharrastuksiin ja mahdollisia ongelmia osallistumisessa. Me uskomme vastaustenne auttavan tulevien liikuntapalveluiden suunnittelussa odotustenne mukaisesti. Tulokset analysoidaan osana liikuntasuunnittelun opiskeluja (Master of Sport Science and management Program, Alexandra Stvavropoulou).

Kyselyn tuloksia ei käytetä muuhun käyttötarkoitukseen ja kysely on täysin luottamuksellinen. Kyselyn tulokset käsitellään nimettöminä, joten vastatkaa täysin mielipiteidenne mukaisesti. Täytetty lomake palautetaan henkilölle, joka jakoi teille kyselyn.

Kiitokset yhteistyöstänne!

Questionnaire in Evaluation of Women's Participation in Recreation Activities

Dear participant,

The questionnaire that you are holding is for a research in Jyväskylä and we would really appreciate if you could take the time to fill it. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the rates of women's participation in recreation activities in the area of Jyväskylä with a view to find the possible problems that women face with while participating. We believe your answers will help in improving the planning of leisure activities according to your expectations. The results will be analyzed by one student of

the Master of Sport Science and Management Program, Alexandra Stavropoulou, as part of her master thesis.

No information given in this questionnaire will be used for any other purpose except the above mentioned research. The questionnaire is anonymous, so feel free to answer without any restrictions. The completed questionnaire may be returned today to the responsible person that gave it to you.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Alexandra Stavropoulou

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– Kyselylomake/Questionnaire

Taustatiedot/Personal Data:

Ympyröikää vain yksi vastausvaihtoehto /Please circle only one number of every question

- 1) Syntymävuotenne / Year of birth: _____
- 2) Aviosääty / Marital status:
1. Naimaton / Single
 2. Avio – avoliitossa / Married
 3. Eronnut / Divorced
 4. Leski / Widower
- 3) Jos teillä on lapsia, merkittää lukumäärät seuraaviin luokkiin / If you have children write down below how many of which age:
1. _____ alle 7 vuotiaita / under 7 years old
 2. _____ 7 – 14 vuotiaita / years old
 3. _____ 15 – 18 vuotiaita / years old
- 4) Mikä on nykyinen työtilanteenne/How would you describe your work situation?
1. ansiotyössä / Working
 2. työtön / unemployed
 3. eläkeläinen / retired
 4. kotiäiti / Housewife
 5. äitiyslomalla / maternity leave
 6. Muu, mikä /other, what? _____
- 5) Peruskoulutuksenne / Educational level
1. kansa -, perus -, keskkoulu / elementary school
 2. Lukio tai ylioppilas / Lyceum or secondary school
 3. ammattikoulu tai oppisopimuskoulutus / Vocational school or apprentice school
 4. Opistotason tai amk – tutkinto / Polytechnics degree
 5. yliopisto – tai korkeakoulututkinto / University degree
- 6) Mitkä ovat teidän bruttotulonne vuodessa / Annual income:
1. alle / Under 10 000 €
 2. 10 000 – 20 000 €
 3. 20 000 – 30 000 €
 4. 30 000 – 50 000 €
5. Yli / Over 50 000 €
- 7) Nykyinen asuinpaikkanne / In which area do you live?
1. Kantakaupunki (keskusta, Mattilanpelto, Mäki – Matti, Nisula, Viitaniemi, Taulunmäki, Mannila)
 2. Kypärämäki – Kortepohja
 3. Lohikoski – Heinälampi
 4. Huhtasuo
 5. Kuokkala
 6. Keltinmäki – Myllyjärvi
 7. Keljo (Keljo – Keljonkangas)
 8. Halssila
 9. Säynätsalo
 10. Muualla, missä? _____
- 8) Mikä seuraavista kuvaa parhaiten liikuntaharrastuksenne merkitystä/ Do recreation activities play an important role in your life and to what extend?
1. hyvin tärkeä/very important
 2. tärkeä/important
 3. melko tärkeä/somewhat important
 4. ei niin tärkeä/not so important
 5. ei ollenkaan tärkeä/not important at all
- 9) Kuinka pitkään olette harrastanut liikuntaa/How long have you been physically active?
1. Koko ikäni /all my life
 2. Nuoruusvuosista alkaen(12 – 18)/Since adolescence
 3. aikuisuudesta alkaen (18 - 29) / Since adulthood
 4. Satunnaisesti tai en ole aikaisemmin harrastanut liikuntaa/ I was mostly passive-have not been at all physically active
- 10) Harrastamanne liikuntamuoto/Activity that you participate in with the municipality
1. Water gymnastics
 2. Skating
 3. Fitness activities

Osallistuminen liikuntaharrastukseen/Participation in recreational sports
Ympyröikää parhaiten omaa tilannettanne kuvaava vastausvaihtoehto/Please circle only one number of every question that fits best to your personal experiences

- 11) Kuinka kaukana liikuntaharrastuspaikkanne sijaitsee/How far is the recreation activity, which you participate in the municipality:
 a) Kotoanne/from your home? b) Työpaikaltanne/from your workplace?
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. 0-2 km | 1. 0-2 km |
| 2. 2-5 km | 2. 2-5 km |
| 3. 5-10 km | 3. 5-10 km |
| 4. 10-20 km | 4. 10-20 km |
| 5. Yli 20 km/over 20 km | 5. Yli 20 km/over 20 km |
- 12) Millä tavoin kuljette liikuntaharrastuksiinne/ In which way do you usually go to the place where the activity is taking place?
- Kävelen/Walking
 - Pyörällä / By bike
 - Autolla / By car
 - Julkisella kulkuneuvolla / By public transportation
 - Muulla keinoin / Something else, what? _____
- 13) Kuinka usein osallistutte kaupungin järjestämään liikuntaharrastukseen /How often do you participate in the recreation activity offered by the municipality in a week time?
- Vähintään 5 kertaa viikossa / at least 5 times per week
 - 4 kertaa viikossa / times per week
 - 3 kertaa viikossa / times per week
 - 2 kertaa viikossa / times per week
 - Kerran viikossa / once per week
 - 2 – 3 kertaa kuukaudessa / 2-3 times per month
- 14) Koska olette aloittaneet liikuntaharrastuksenne /How long time ago did you start this activity?
- Tänä syksynä/ this autumn
 - Viime vuonna /Last year
 - Yli vuosi sitten /More than a year ago

- 15) Mistä saitte tiedon tästä liikuntaharrastuksesta / what was the source of information you used to find out about this activity?
- Joukkoviestintävälineistä /Media (newspapers, magazines, television)
 - Mainoksesta tai esitteestä /Advertisement
 - Ystävältä /Friend
 - Muualta, mistä /Something else _____

- 16) Osallistutteko muiden tahojen järjestämään liikuntatoimintaan? Jos osallistutte, niin mihin ja jos ei, niin miksi? / Do you take part in any other recreation activities offered by another sector (private, sport club)?/ If yes which and why not in the municipality

Kyllä/Yes _____ Ei/No

Syyt liikuntaharrastukselle Jyväskylän kaupungin liikuntaryhmissä /Reasons for starting the activity in the municipality of Jyväskylä

Ympyröikää omaa mielipidettänne parhaiten kuvaava vastausvaihtoehto (1= Täysin eri mieltä – 5= täysin samaa mieltä) /

Please circle only one number for each sentence according to the degree that you feel this represents you (1=I totally disagree – 5= I strongly agree).

Täysin eri mieltä ⇔ täysin samaa mieltä
 Strongly disagree ⇔ strongly agree
 1 ← → 5

- 17) Tämä liikuntaharrastus kiinnostaa minua suuresti / This activity is very interesting for me 1 2 3 4 5
- 18) Olen aina halunnut harrastaa tätä lajia/ I always wanted to participate in this activity 1 2 3 4 5
- 19) Halusin aloittaa harjoittelun/kuntoilun/
I wanted to do some exercise 1 2 3 4 5
- 20) Lääkäri suositti minulle liikuntaharrastuksen aloittamista/ Doctor's advice as I was lacking of physical activity
 _____ 1 2 3 4 5
- 21) Haluan vaihtelua jokapäiväiseen arkeen/ I wanted to escape from every – day routine 1 2 3 4 5
- 22) Kuulin tästä ystäviltäni/ I heard from friends about this activity
 _____ 1 2 3 4 5
- 23) Osallistun, koska haluan tavata ihmisiä/ I started participating because I wanted to meet people 1 2 3 4 5

- 24) Aloitin yhdessä perheen kanssa/ I started participating because my family did
 1 2 3 4 5
- 25) Aloitin yhdessä ystäväni kanssa/ I started participating because my friends did
 1 2 3 4 5
- 26) Minulla ei ole muuta harrastusta-tekemistä /I had nothing else to do
 1 2 3 4 5
- 27) Halusin aloittaa harrastuksen, mutta tama on ainoa vaihtoehto kotini lähellä/
 I wanted to do an activity and it was the only option close to house/work
 1 2 3 4 5
- 28) Tämä on edullinen vaihtoehto/ It was very cheap option
 1 2 3 4 5
- 29) Tänne on hyvät liikenneyhteydet/ There is good transportation to get to the
 activity
 1 2 3 4 5
- 30) Haluan harrastaa liikuntaa terveyden ja hyvinvointini vuoksi/ I wanted to
 exercise for health and well – being
 1 2 3 4 5
- 31) Jokin muu syy /any other reasons?

Syyt, jotka saattavat olla esteinä liikunnanharrastukselle/ Problems that you might face with while doing the activity

Ympyröikää vastausvaihtoehdot kuten edellä/ Circle the numbers as before (1= I totally disagree – 5= I strongly agree).

Täysin eri mieltä ⇔ täysin samaa mieltä

Strongly disagree ⇔ strongly agree

1 ←.....→ 5

- 32) Minulla ei aina ole aikaa perhe-elämän vaatimuksista johtuen/ I do not always
 have time to participate because of family obligations
 1 2 3 4 5
- 33) Minulla ei aina ole aikaa johtuen työkiireistä/ I do not always have the time to
 participate because of work obligations
 1 2 3 4 5
- 34) Minulla ei ole aikaa, koska etäisyys harrastukseen on pitkä/
 I do not always have the time to participate because it is very far
 1 2 3 4 5
- 35) Liikenneyhteydet eivät ole hyvät/ The transportation connections are not good
 to get to the activity
 1 2 3 4 5
- 36) Harrastus ei ole kovinkaan kiinnostava/ I do not find the activity that much
 interesting
 1 2 3 4 5
- 37) Haluaisin harrastaa muuta, mutta lähellä ei ole muuta
 liikuntaharrastusmahdollisuutta/ I would like to do another activity but there
 isn't anything else around here
 1 2 3 4 5

- 38) Tätä harrastusta ei järjestetä niin usein kuin haluaisin/ The activity is not as
 many times per week as I would like it to be
 1 2 3 4 5
- 39) Minulla ei ole riittävästi kuntoa harrastaa tätä liikuntamuotoa montaa kertaa
 viikossa/ I don't have the physical endurance to do the activity many times
 per week
 1 2 3 4 5
- 40) Minun perheeni ei tue liikuntaharrastustani/ My family doesn't support me
 to do the activity
 1 2 3 4 5
- 41) Haluan osallistua, mutta minulla ei ole ystäviä, joiden kanssa harrastaisin
 tätä/ I want to participate but I don't have friends to go with
 1 2 3 4 5
- 42) Tämä on kallis harrastus/ It is an expensive activity
 1 2 3 4 5
- 43) Sääolosuhteet eivät ole innostavat tähän harrastukseen/ The weather
 conditions in winter are not very motivating to do activities
 1 2 3 4 5
- 44) Muu syy /any other reasons?

- 45) Kuinka usein harrastitte tätä tai muuta liikuntaa viime vuonna/ How much
 did you participate last year in this or other recreation activity?
 1. En ollenkaan /Not at all
 2. Satunnaisesti /Occasionally
 3. Kerran viikossa /Once every week
 4. 2-3 kertaa viikossa /2 -3 times per week
 5. 4-5 kertaa viikossa /4 – 5 times per week
 6. Enemmän kuin 5 kertaa viikossa /More than 5 times per week
- 46) Kuinka usein suunnittelette osallistuvanne tähän tai muuhun
 liikuntaharrastukseen tulevaisuudessa/ How much are you planning to
 participate in the future in this or other recreation activity?
 1. En ollenkaan /Not at all
 2. Satunnaisesti /Occasionally
 3. Kerran viikossa /Once every week
 4. 2-3 kertaa viikossa /2 -3 times per week
 5. 4-5 kertaa viikossa /4 – 5 times per week
 6. Enemmän kuin 5 kertaa viikossa /More than 5 times per week