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## The relationship between perceived freedom, leisure involvement, and happiness of individuals participating in physical activities

Emrah Serdar

*Faculty of Sports Science, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Turkey, serdar-emrah@hotmail.com*

Duygu Harmandar Demirel

*Necmettin Erbakan University, Turkey, duyguharmandar@gmail.com*

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## Abstract

Background: This study is aimed to determine the relationship between the perceived freedom, involvement and happiness of individuals participating in physical activities. Material and Methods: The sample of the study consisted of 523 members. The Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale, the Leisure Involvement Scale and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form were used as data collection tools. In analysing the data, independent t-test, ANOVA, MANOVA and Pearson Correlation analysis were used. Results: Independent t-Test results determined a significant difference between OHQ-SF scores according to the participants' gender. MANOVA analysis result showed that the main effect of the gender variable on the sub-dimensions of LIS was significant, and there was a difference in all sub-dimensions. The main effect of marital status on the sub-dimensions of LIS was significant, while there was a positive and low-level relationship between age and OHQ-SF. Conclusions: The levels of OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS differ depending on the individuals' socio-demographic characteristics. Moreover, there was a positive and low level of relationship between OHQ-SF and PFLS-25 and LIS, and a positive and low level of correlation between PFLS-25.

## Keywords

Oxford happiness, perceived freedom in leisure, leisure involvement, physical activities

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# The relationship between perceived freedom, leisure involvement, and happiness of individuals participating in physical activities

**Authors' Contribution:** Emrah Serdar<sup>1</sup> ABCDEF, Duygu Harmandar Demirel<sup>2</sup> ABCDEF

**A** Study Design  
**B** Data Collection  
**C** Statistical Analysis  
**D** Data Interpretation  
**E** Manuscript Preparation  
**F** Literature Search  
**G** Funds Collection

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Sports Science, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Turkey

<sup>2</sup> Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education, Necmettin Erbakan University, Meram/Konya, Turkey

## abstract

**Background:** This study is aimed to determine the relationship between the perceived freedom, involvement and happiness of individuals participating in physical activities.

**Material and methods:** The sample of the study consisted of 523 members. The Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale, the Leisure Involvement Scale and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form were used as data collection tools. In analysing the data, independent t-test, ANOVA, MANOVA and Pearson Correlation analysis were used.

**Results:** Independent t-Test results determined a significant difference between OHQ-SF scores according to the participants' gender. MANOVA analysis result showed that the main effect of the gender variable on the sub-dimensions of LIS was significant, and there was a difference in all sub-dimensions. The main effect of marital status on the sub-dimensions of LIS was significant, while there was a positive and low-level relationship between age and OHQ-SF.

**Conclusions:** The levels of OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS differ depending on the individuals' socio-demographic characteristics. Moreover, there was a positive and low level of relationship between OHQ-SF and PFLS-25 and LIS, and a positive and low level of correlation between PFLS-25 and LIS.

**Key words:** Oxford happiness, perceived freedom in leisure, leisure involvement, physical activities.

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**Corresponding author:** Emrah Serdar, Faculty of Sports Science, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Turkey; e-mail: serdar-emrah@hotmail.com

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the International Sociological Association (ISA), leisure includes a series of activities in which individuals participate voluntarily after they can relax, rejoice and improve their knowledge or receive non-profit education and meet their professional, family and social needs [1, 2]. Kraus [3] has defined leisure as the time in which individuals choose their activities freely, satisfy their feelings of emotion, pleasure and fun, and realize their potential [4]. Beard and Ragheb [5] have stated that leisure time plays a dynamic role in individuals' lives, and it can be useful to know how satisfaction gains resulting from leisure participation are related to personal and social harmony, mental health and general happiness [6]. Again, it is stated that leisure activities have positive effects on individuals' social relations, physical and psychological health [7, 8]. Iso-Ahola [9], on the other hand, has stated that effective leisure has two conditions: the perception of freedom and intrinsic motivation, and the most important of these is the perception of freedom [10]. Moreover, perceived freedom has emerged as an important dimension for understanding leisure behaviour [11].

Neulinger's [12] paradigm is among the first to conceptualize leisure as a psychological experience that uses perceived freedom-constraints and intrinsic-extrinsic motivation as the main constructs that define it. Paradigms are "pure-leisure" (freely engaged and done for their own sake), "leisure-work" (freely engaged but providing satisfaction only in terms of its results or returns), "pure work" (obstructed but purely internal provides rewards) and "pure job" (satisfaction occurs only through results or returns, while under constraints) [13]. Neulinger [12, 13] has evaluated the first two categories, which are characterized by the basic criterion of perceived freedom, as possible situations in which leisure occurs. In this context, perceived freedom in leisure is explained as a cognitive motivational structure that includes individuals' perceptions about leisure activities related to their choices [14]. Individuals who believe they have more freedom in their leisure time experience tend to show higher levels of competence, locus of control, intrinsic motivation, and gameplay [15, 16]. On the other hand, individuals who have a low level of perceived freedom in leisure time can perceive desperation and rely on others to find leisure time opportunities [17, 18].

The concept of involvement is defined by Rothschild [19] as a state of motivation, arousal or interest [20]. Kyle and Chick [21] conceptualized involvement as "Personal Involvement" that activity carries for a person [22]. Involvement has emerged as an important concept for understanding leisure time behaviours of individuals [23]. In this context, leisure time involvement refers to individuals' emotional interest in certain leisure activities, leisure time environments, leisure facilities and products [24–26]. In other words, leisure involvement refers to a long-term and continuous involvement with multifaceted self-awareness and motivation [27]. Ragheb [28] defines leisure time as positive feelings about an activity that one believes can add value to their life [29]. Kyle et al. [30] divided leisure time involvement levels into five groups: attractiveness, giving importance, self-expression, social interaction, and identification. Attractiveness refers to the degree to which an activity is evaluated as enjoyable, fun and interesting for an individual [22, 31]. Self-expression refers to the degree to which a certain activity has a symbolic meaning for an individual [22]. Giving importance is explained as to how much leisure time activity plays a central role in individuals' lives [31–33]. While social interaction refers to the social bonds that connect individuals to a leisure activity. Identification is explained as the state of self-confirmation by individuals through leisure time activities [30, 34].

Happiness is conceptualized as an internal state obtained by individuals thinking about their life experiences and evaluating it as well [35,36]. According to Diener [37], happiness is explained as the emotional evaluation of well-being, which requires the superiority of positive effects over negative effects [38]. Happiness, which is also defined as positive impact

and subjective well-being, is also expressed as a product of participation, environment and attitude [39, 40]. In the happiness theory, it is accepted that judgments of happiness are subjective in nature and inevitably affect ratings, and emotional self-evaluations are involved in all aspects [41, 42]. Veenhoven [43] mentions that happiness has two meanings [44]. The first of them is objectively called happiness and has components such as good living conditions, peace, tranquillity, and freedom. The second is defined as happiness in a subjective sense and is related to subjective happiness, a spiritual state and emotions [43, 44].

When the studies in the literature are examined, it was seen that leisure involvement and leisure benefit [27, 38], happiness [38, 45], leisure constraints [46], motivation [47], leisure satisfaction [48], and job satisfaction [29] are discussed. Moreover, perceived freedom in leisure and leisure benefit [49], job satisfaction [50], leisure satisfaction [18, 51, 52], work stress [10], leisure constraints [53], leisure perception [54], leisure attitude [18] are examined together. Finally, happiness and leisure [36, 55, 56, 57], leisure satisfaction [41, 58, 59, 60] are examined together. It is thought that for individuals who participate in physical activities, to use their leisure, perceived freedom levels as a result of the activities they participate in, and the level of interest in the activity they participate in, as well as the happiness levels they achieve, are important. From this point of view, this study aimed to determine the relationship between the perceived freedom, involvement and happiness of individuals participating in physical activities.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

*Research Model:* According to the aim of the study, the relational scanning model was used in the research. In the relational survey model, questions such as the degree of change between variables or the level of the examined situation were clarified with relational survey patterns [61].

*Research Group:* The sample of the study consisted of 523 members, 320 male (Meanage =  $33.29 \pm 10.65$ ) and 203 female (Meanage =  $31.22 \pm 11.69$ ), who were members of a private fitness centre in Istanbul and selected by a purposeful sampling method. 47.6% of the participants were "university graduates", 58.3% were "married", 44.7% of them had a "normal" welfare status; 43.4% of the participants used the fitness centre between "1-2 days" per week, while 32.5% of them had "6-10 hours" of leisure time per week.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

*Personal Information Form:* The "Personal Information Form" was prepared by the researcher to collect information about the individuals who participated in the study. It consisted of questions regarding gender, age, marital status, frequency of going to the fitness centre, and weekly leisure time.

*The Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale-25 (PFLS-25):* The Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale-25 (PFLS-25), which was developed by Witt and Ellis [62] to determine the perceived competence, perceived control and perceived intrinsic motivation of individuals in leisure, was first adapted to Turkish by Lapa and Ağyar [63]; the later construct validity of the scale as tested by Lapa and Kaas [64] was used. The scale has 25 items and a single sub-dimension, and the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.93. In this study, the reliability coefficient was determined as 0.92. Items in the scale were scored as (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

*Leisure Involvement Scale (LIS):* The "Leisure Involvement Scale (LIS)", which was developed by Kyle et al. [30] to determine the level of individuals' involvement in leisure activities and adapted to Turkish by Gürbüz et al. [65] was used. The scale consists of 5 sub-dimensions

and 15 items: "Attractiveness" (3 Items), "Giving Importance" (3 Items), "Social Interaction" (3 Items), "Identification" (3 Items) and "Self-Expression" (3 Items). The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.89. The internal consistency coefficients for sub-dimensions determined as respectively, 0.80 for Attractiveness sub-dimension, 0.66 for Giving importance sub-dimension, 0.70 for Social Interaction sub-dimension, 0.58 for Identification sub-dimension and 0.67 for Self-Expression sub-dimension. In our study, the internal consistency coefficient for the sub-dimensions determined as 0.95, 0.96, 0.95, 0.95 and 0.96, respectively. Items in the scale were scored as (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree.

*Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form (OHQ-SF)*: To determine the individuals' happiness levels, "Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form (OHQ-SF)", developed by Hills and Argyle [66] and adapted into Turkish by Doğan and Çötök [67], was used. The scale consists of 7 items and a single sub-dimension, and the reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.85. In this study, the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.77. Items in the scale were scored as (1) Strongly agree to (5) Strongly agree.

## DATA ANALYSIS

SPSS 20.0 package program was used to analyse the data. The percentage and frequency method was used to determine the distribution of the participants' personal information. In order to determine whether the data showed normal distribution, the skewness and kurtosis values were examined, and it was understood that the data showed normal distribution. In this context, in the analysis of the data Independent t-test, ANOVA, MANOVA and Pearson Correlation analyses were used.

## RESULTS

When the mean scores of the participants in Table 1 were examined, the mean scores of OHQ-SF were determined as (3.24). The mean score of PFLS-25 was determined as (3.61). It was determined that the highest average of LIS sub-dimensions was in the "Attractiveness" (3.43) sub-dimension, and the lowest average was "Self-expression" (2.27).

Table 1. Distribution of scale scores

	Sub-dimensions	Items	n	Mean	Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
OHQ-SF	Oxford Happiness	7	523	3.24	0.78	0.12	0.23
PFLS-25	Perceived Freedom in Leisure	25	523	3.61	0.70	-0.29	0.44
	Attractiveness	3	523	3.43	0.99	-0.50	-0.29
	Giving importance	3	523	3.34	1.00	-0.38	-0.46
LIS	Social interaction	3	523	3.40	0.95	-0.50	-0.20
	Identification	3	523	3.42	0.93	-0.42	-0.14
	Self-expression	3	523	2.27	0.66	-0.40	-0.25

In Table 2, the analysis results were given according to the subjects' gender. According to the analysis results, a significant difference was found between the OHQ-SF scores according to the participants' gender ( $t=-2.896$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Happiness levels of females were found higher than of males. According to the independent t-Test results, there was no statistically significant difference between the PFLS-25 scores according to the participants' gender ( $t=-.298$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). MANOVA analysis results showed that gender had a significant effect on the sub-dimensions of LIS [ $\lambda = 0.969$ ,  $F_{(5,517)}=3.304$ ;  $p<0.05$ ]. The mean scores of the female participants were higher than the scores of the male in the sub-dimensions as "Attractiveness" [ $F_{(1-521)}=9.519$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], "Giving importance" [ $F_{(1-521)}=10.898$ ;  $p<0.05$ ],

“Social Interaction” [ $F_{(1-521)} = 13.658; p < 0.05$ ], “Identification” [ $F_{(1-521)} = 13.095; p < 0.05$ ] and “Self-expression” [ $F_{(1-521)} = 14.140; p < 0.05$ ].

Table 2. Analysis results of OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS scores according to gender of participants

Scales		Male (n=320)		Female (n=203)	
		Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
OHQ-SF	Oxford Happiness	3.16	0.75	3.36	0.80
PFLS-25	Perceived Freedom in Leisure	3.61	0.70	3.63	0.69
	Attractiveness	3.32	1.04	3.60	0.87
	Giving importance	3.23	1.03	3.52	0.93
LIS	Social interaction	3.31	1.00	3.62	0.84
	Identification	3.30	0.99	3.60	0.81
	Self-expression	2.19	0.68	2.41	0.61

In Table 3, analysis results were given according to the subjects’ marital status. There was no significant difference between OHQ-SF scores according to the individuals’ marital status ( $t = -.588; p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the PFLS-25 scores according to the participants’ marital status ( $t = .825; p > 0.05$ ). The results of the MANOVA analysis showed that the main effect of marital status on the sub-dimensions of LIS was significant [ $\lambda = 0.973, F_{(5,517)} = 2.909; p < 0.05$ ]. A significant difference was found only in the "Attractiveness" sub-dimension [ $F_{(1-521)} = 6.180; p < 0.05$ ]. It was determined that participants who were single had higher mean scores in the attractiveness sub-dimension.

Table 3. Analysis results of OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS scores according to marital status of participants

Scales		Single (n=218)		Married (n=305)	
		Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
OHQ-SF	Oxford Happiness	3.21	0.76	3.25	0.79
PFLS-25	Perceived Freedom in Leisure	3.64	0.64	3.59	0.73
	Attractiveness	3.56	0.96	3.34	1.00
	Giving importance	3.42	0.97	3.28	1.02
LIS	Social interaction	3.46	0.97	3.41	0.94
	Identification	3.48	0.93	3.37	0.93
	Self-expression	2.32	0.65	2.24	0.66

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis according to the frequency of weekly fitness centre usage by the study participants. According to the analysis results, it was determined that there was a significant difference between the participants’ OHQ-SF scores according to the frequency of weekly usage of the fitness centre ( $f = .825; p < 0.05$ ). It was determined that the happiness levels of individuals who used the fitness centre for 5 days or more a week were higher. Similarly, a statistically significant difference was found between the PFLS-25 scores ( $f = 3.273; p < 0.05$ ). Individuals who used the fitness centre 3–4 days a week had higher perceived freedom levels in leisure. The results of the MANOVA analysis revealed that the main effect of participants’ weekly fitness centre usage frequency on sub-dimensions of LIS was significant [ $\lambda = 0.961, F_{(10,1032)} = 2.100; p < 0.05$ ]. At the sub-dimensions level, “Attractiveness” [ $F_{(2-520)} = 5.694; p < 0.05$ ], “Giving importance” [ $F_{(2-520)} = 4.375; p < 0.05$ ], “Social Interaction” [ $F_{(2-520)} = 3.309; p < 0.05$ ], “Identification” [ $F_{(2-520)} = 3.525; p < 0.05$ ] and “Self-Expression” [ $F_{(2-520)} = 3.018; p < 0.05$ ] sub-dimensions were found to be significantly different. In all sub-dimensions, it was determined that the sub-dimension scores of the



individuals who used the fitness centre 3-4 days a week were higher than the sub-dimension scores of the other individuals.

Table 4. Analysis results of OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS scores according to the frequency of weekly fitness centre usage by the participants

Scales		1-2 days (n=227)		3-4 days (n=190)		5-6 days (n=106)	
		Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
OHQ-SF	Oxford Happiness	3.26	0.74	3.18	0.83	3.48	0.77
PFLS-25	Perceived Freedom in Leisure	3.55	0.71	3.72	0.67	3.57	0.70
LIS	Attractiveness	3.32	1.00	3.62	0.88	3.33	1.09
	Giving importance	3.24	1.00	3.51	0.96	3.25	1.05
	Social interaction	3.39	0.95	3.56	0.88	3.28	1.05
	Identification	3.37	0.89	3.55	0.88	3.27	1.07
	Self-expression	2.25	0.65	2.36	0.61	2.16	0.75

In Table 5, analysis results were given according to the scores of OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS according to the participants' ages. According to the analysis results, it was determined that there was a positive and low-level relationship between the participants' ages and OHQ-SF. Moreover, it was determined that there was no statistically significant relationship between the participants' age and the PFLS-25 and LIS. A positive and low-level relationship was found between OHQ-SF and PFLS-25. Besides, there was a positive and low-level relationship between OHQ-SF and LIS, and a positive and low-level one between PFLS-25 and LIS.

Table 5. Analysis results according to age and OHQ-SF, PFLS-25 and LIS scores

	Age	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
Age	1							
F1	.125**	1						
F2	-.031	.206**	1					
F3	-.066	.220**	.267**	1				
F4	-.049	.243**	.237**	.737**	1			
F5	.015	.246**	.271**	.838**	.706*	1		
F6	-.047	.251**	.293**	.831**	.810**	.825**	1	
F7	-.031	.237**	.269**	.792**	.698**	.790**	.822*	1

(P<0.01)\*\* (p<0.05)\* F1= OHQ-SF, F2=PFLS-25, F3=Attractiveness, F4=Giving Importance, F5=Social Interaction, F6=Identification, F7=Self-Expression

## DISCUSSION

This research aimed to determine the relationship between the perceived freedom, involvement and happiness of individuals participating in physical activities. In this context, the obtained results are discussed and interpreted in this section.

A significant difference was determined between the happiness levels of female participants and male participants in favour of the female participants. In other words, it can be said that females who participate in physical activity gain more happiness from the activity than males. These results are parallel with the results of a study conducted by Chen et al. [38], while there is a conflict between results of the study conducted by Serdar [55] and Aydın [34]. Although the levels of freedom perceived by females in leisure were higher than males, no significant difference was found. This can be explained as the gender variable was not an important factor in determining the level of freedom that individuals perceive at the end



of the activity. In this context, while it was parallel with the results of the studies conducted by Serdar [49], Demirel et al. [53] and Harmandar Demirel et al. [54], there was a conflict between the results of the study conducted by Kara [68] and Lapa [69].

It was determined that the participants' gender had a significant effect on their leisure involvement. At the level of sub-dimensions, the mean scores of females in the sub-dimensions of "Attractiveness", "Giving Importance", "Social Interaction", "Identification" and "Self-expression" were found to be higher than the scores of males. In this context, it can be said that females participating in physical activity had higher levels of involvement in the activity in which they participate than males. The results of studies conducted by Chen et al. [38], Ekinçi and Yalçın [7], Chang [8], and Demirel [45] were parallel with the results of this study.

There was no statistically significant difference between the participants' happiness according to their marital status. In other words, it can be said that the happiness levels of single and married as a result of the physical activities in which they participate did not differ, and marital status was not an important factor in determining their happiness levels. This was in line with the results of the studies conducted by Demirel [45], while it did not coincide with the results of the studies conducted by Aydın [34]. Although the mean scores of single participants were high, there was no statistically significant difference between the levels of perceived freedom in leisure according to the participants' marital status. Whether individuals were married or single can be interpreted as not an important variable in determining their perceived freedom level in leisure. Besides, there was a significant difference only in the "attractiveness" sub-dimension between married and single participants' leisure involvement levels. In other words, it was determined that the attractiveness sub-dimension scores of the single individuals were higher than the married participants. This can be explained by the fact that single participants find the activities more attractive. As a result, the results of the study conducted by Demirel [45] did not match the results of this study.

It was determined that there was a difference between the participants' happiness levels according to the frequency of fitness centre usage, and the participants who went to the fitness centre 5 days or more per week achieved a higher level of happiness compared to other individuals. In other words, physical activities in which individuals participate following their interests and desires contribute to their continuity towards activity and thus to their happiness. In the study conducted by Aydın [34], it was stated that there was no difference between the happiness levels of the participants according to the frequency of the fitness centre usage. Aydın's [34] did not match the results of this study. A statistically significant difference was found between the perceived freedom levels of the participants according to the frequency of the weekly fitness centre usage. The perceived freedom levels of individuals who went to the fitness centre 3-4 days a week were higher than other individuals. In other words, individuals who participated in physical activity 3-4 days a week had higher perceptions of freedom and intrinsic motivation levels than other individuals. The main effect of the frequency of the weekly fitness centre usage on the level of individuals' involvement was significant, and there was a significant difference in all sub-dimensions. The level of involvement of the participants who went to the fitness centre for 3-4 days a week were higher than that of other individuals. In other words, the type of physical activity that the participants participate in meets their expectations and wishes. The results of the study conducted by Aydın [34] showed parallelism with the results of this study.

A positive and low-level relationship was found between the participants' age and their level of happiness. In other words, as the participants' age increased, their happiness also increased. The results of Demirel's research [45] were not in line with the results of

this research. It was determined that there was no statistically significant relationship between the ages of the individuals and their leisure involvement. In the study conducted by Ekinçi and Yalçın [7] on leisure Involvement of individuals aged 40 and over, no difference between the individuals' leisure involvement according to their ages was determined. It was found that there was no significant relationship between age and the perceived freedom in leisure. Finally, it was found that there was a positive and low-level relationship between OHQ-SF and PFLS-25. Moreover, it was determined that there was a positive and low-level relationship between OHQ-SF and LIS, and a positive and low-level relationship between PFLS-25 and LIS.

As a result, as individuals' perceived freedom in leisure increased, their happiness increased. This situation can be interpreted as the benefits gained by individuals as a result of using their leisure in line with their wishes and desires positively affect their happiness levels. It was observed that as the leisure time interest of the participants increased, their happiness increased. The results of the study conducted by Demirel [45] are parallel with the results of this study. Moreover, in the study conducted by Chen et al. [38], it was stated that leisure involvement and its benefits predicted happiness in a positive way. It was observed that as individuals' perceived freedom in leisure increase, their involvement also increased. When individuals gain pleasure, satisfaction or benefit from the activity they participate in line with their preferences, the perceived freedom in leisure increased. In parallel with this situation, it can be explained that the individuals who reach the goal they want to reach as a result of the activity may have higher involvement at the point of participation or preference in the next activity.

## CONCLUSIONS

It was determined that females' leisure involvement and happiness were higher than those of males. It was observed that the leisure involvement of single participants was higher than married participants. It was determined that as the age of individuals increased, their happiness increased. Besides, it was determined that there was no relationship between age and the perceived freedom in leisure and leisure involvement. Finally, it was found that there was a positive and low-level relationship between OHQ-SF and PFLS-25. Moreover, it was determined that there was a positive and low-level relationship between OHQ-SF and LIS, and a positive and low-level relationship between PFLS-25 and LIS.

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