

# Investigation of Service Quality Perceived by Fitness Center Consumers

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** This research aims to examine the service quality perceived by fitness center consumers.

**Methods:** This research, which has a descriptive nature, was carried out according to the survey model. The sample of study consists of 332 people who go to fitness centers in Trabzon. The "Personal Information Form" created by the researchers and the "Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale" developed by Uçan (2007) were used as data collection tools in the research. The dependent variable of the research is the perceived service quality, and the independent variables are gender, education level and income level. The findings obtained as a result of the data collection process were transferred to the computer environment, and descriptive statistics (frequency, arithmetic mean, standard deviation), t-test and single-factor analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) test were used in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Results:** As a result of the analyses made, it was determined that the service quality perceived by the fitness center consumers included in the research differed significantly according to gender, education level and income level.

**Conclusion:** Fitness centers appear as businesses that provide services to people both in terms of physical appearance and health. The fact that fitness centers undertake these missions paves the way for the participants to form a sense of belonging to these centers. Therefore, facility managers working in these businesses should strive to meet the demands necessary to ensure the continuity of people, taking into account the intense competitive environment. Based on the findings, although the perceived service quality of the participants is above the average level, it is recommended that public and private businesses that provide sports services regularly apply surveys to their customers that measure the service quality level of the business and take managerial measures by determining their thoughts.

**Keywords:** Fitness Center, Service Quality, Fitness Center Consumers

## INTRODUCTION

Although it is known that the importance of movement in human life is an indisputable fact<sup>1</sup>, it has been revealed that physical activity and sportive activities contribute to the development of physical fitness level not only for healthy individuals but also for those with specific learning disabilities<sup>2</sup>. The socio-cultural changes experienced today and the developments in the field of technology have brought the concepts of healthy life and physical activity to the fore by causing individuals to become more aware of this issue.

Although physical activity degree is the basic element of health and physical development in childhood, physical activity degrees of children decrease day by day<sup>3</sup>. However together with the information age, rapid changes and developments in information and communication have increased the awareness of individuals<sup>4</sup>. This situation means that the recreational activities that individuals participate in their spare time periods can help individuals in their lives. It is also known that it provides benefits such as contentment, satisfaction, happiness, and healthy life<sup>5</sup>. In addition, it is important for life satisfaction<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the leisure time of individuals and the activities they perform during this period are very important<sup>7</sup>. For this reason, people have started to turn to sports centers in order to benefit themselves both psychologically and physically in their spare time.

Fitness centers, which are considered as service businesses, can be expressed as places where needs such as healthy life, fitness, weight loss and strength

development are met<sup>8</sup>. In fitness centers, services can be provided for different activities such as cardiovascular exercise, combat sports, gymnastics, racquet sports, walking and running, aerobics, swimming and weight training<sup>9</sup>. In addition, fitness centers appear as one of the institutions that undertake important tasks in order to be widespread in all parts of the society and to be able to do it regularly throughout the whole life, regardless of gender, age, education level and some physical competencies<sup>10</sup>. In this case, it has increased the sensitivity shown to fitness centers.

With the increasing interest in fitness centers, a competitive environment has emerged among businesses that provide fitness services, as in every sector. In this competitive environment, businesses have to develop customer-oriented approaches and strategies and meet customer expectations in order to survive and maintain their existence. It is absolutely necessary to measure customer expectations in order to direct or meet expectations<sup>11</sup>. While the quality of a tangible good can be measured with objective indicators, service quality can only be measured through the perceptions of customers<sup>12,13</sup>. As services are intangible, service quality also has an intangible structure. Therefore, the term 'perceived service quality' is used instead of service quality<sup>14</sup>.

Quality seems to be a systematic method by producing goods and service factors that can meet the needs of customers, increasing the activity effectiveness of businesses and reducing costs with effective cost control<sup>15</sup>. Perceived service quality is consumers' perceptions of

service quality<sup>16</sup>. This determines the satisfaction level of consumers to a great extent. Parasuraman et al. define “perceived service quality” as a general judgment of the consumer related to the advantage or perfection of a product or service<sup>17</sup>.

The concept of quality in service businesses is of greater importance when compared to other businesses engaged in production. The main reason for this is that services cannot be stocked and it is very difficult to achieve quality standards in the service sector. As a result of such reasons, the correct management of the perception of quality in service businesses where production and consumption are simultaneous processes is accepted as a basic factor for the survival of the business<sup>18</sup>. In addition, the tendency to serve at the organizational level is considered as an important factor in creating customer satisfaction<sup>19</sup>.

In recent years, many studies have been carried out to measure service quality and customer satisfaction. The purpose of measuring service quality and customer satisfaction is to increase customer satisfaction and service quality by activating all units of the business to meet the expectations of customers<sup>20</sup>. In the light of this information, the aim of this research is to determine the service quality perceptions of the participants in the fitness centers and to examine them in terms of variables such as gender, educational status and monthly income. In addition, it was thought that the research would be a guide for future studies and it was considered important in terms of eliminating the lack of information in the literature.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Research Model:** This research, which aims to evaluate the service quality perceptions of the participants who go to fitness centers, was carried out according to the survey model. Survey models are research models that aim to describe a situation that exists in the past or the present as the same<sup>21</sup>.

**Research Group:** The study group consists of 332 people who go to fitness centers in Trabzon in 2021. Easily accessible sampling method was preferred in the selection of the study group. It is because in the related method, researchers choose a situation that is close and easy to reach<sup>22</sup>.

**RESULTS**

Table 2: Distribution of Scores for the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale

Dimensions	Number of Item	n	Mean	Sd	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min.	Max.
Service Quality	31	332	116.56	21.07	-0.600	-0.811	59.00	155.00

Table 2 shows the distribution of the scores of the measurement tool used. According to the findings in the table, the mean values obtained by the participants from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale were determined as 116.56±21.07. When the skewness and kurtosis values of the scores obtained from the

Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Group	(n)	(%)
Gender	Female	129	38.9
	Male	203	61.1
Educational Status	Primary	36	10.8
	Secondary	169	50.9
	Higher	127	38.3
Income level	1000 TL and lower	57	17.2
	1001-3000 TL	191	57.5
	3001 TL and higher	84	25.3
Total		332	100.0

Looking at the personal information of the participants, it was determined that 38.9% were female and 61.1% were male. When the education level is examined, it is seen that 10.8% of them are primary school, 50.9% are secondary school and 38.3% are higher education. In addition, when looking at the income level, it has been determined that 17.2% of them are 1000 TL and below, 57.5% are 1001-3000 TL, 25.3% are above 3001 TL.

**Data Collection Tools:** In the data collection stage, “Personal Information Form” and “Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale” were preferred.

**Personal Information Form:** In order to obtain information about the service quality perceptions of the participants towards fitness centers, a "Personal Information Form" was prepared and independent variables such as gender, income level and education level of the participants were included in this form.

**Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale:** “Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale” developed by Uçan consists of 31 items and 6 sub-dimensions<sup>23</sup>. These sub-dimensions are physical environment quality, environmental conditions quality, exercise equipment quality, interaction quality, output quality and program quality. The total score of the 5-point Likert-type scale varies between 31-155. A high score indicates satisfaction with the service.

**Analysis of the Data:** Statistical analyses for the obtained data were made using the SPSS 25.0 statistical package program. When the skewness and kurtosis values obtained in the research are examined, it is seen that they are between (-1.5) and (+1.5). Accordingly, the applicability of parametric tests was decided<sup>24</sup>.

measurement tool used in the research were examined, it was seen that the data ranged from -1.5 to +1.5. Therefore, it can be said that the data are normally distributed (Table 2). In this direction, parametric tests were used in the analysis of the data.

Table 3: T-Test Results to Analyze Whether Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale Scores Differ according to Gender

Dimensions	Gender	n	Mean	Sd	Sd	t	p
Service Quality	Female	129	112.00	21.67	330	-3.184	0.00
	Male	203	119.46	20.21			

\*p<.05

The analyses show that the scores obtained from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale ( $t = -3.184$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) differ significantly according to the gender of the participants. It was determined that this difference was in

favor of male participants. In other words, it was concluded that the service quality of the sports-fitness centers perceived by the male participants was higher (Table 3).

Table 4: ANOVA Results to Determine Whether Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale Scores Differ according to Education Level

Dimensions	Factor	KT	sd	KO	F	p	SD
Service Quality	Intergroup	4256,492	2	2128,246	4,903	0.03	2-3
	Ingroup	142817,050	329	434,094			
	Total	147073,542	331				

SD: Significant Difference, Groups: 1: Primary Education, 2: Secondary Education, 3: Higher Education

\* $p < 0.05$  The analyses show that the scores of the participants from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale ( $F_{2,329} = 4.903$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) differ significantly according to the education level variable (Table 4). According to the results of the Scheffe test to determine where the difference between the groups originates, a

significant difference was found between the participants at the secondary education level and those at the higher education level in favor of the participants with secondary education. In other words, it can be said that the service quality perceptions of the participants who graduated from secondary education are higher.

Table 5: ANOVA Results to Determine Whether Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale Scores Differ according to the Variable of Monthly Income

Dimensions	Factor	KT	sd	KO	F	p	SD
Service Quality	Intergroup	13623,222	2	6811,611	16,793	0.00	2-3
	Ingroup	133450,320	329	405,624			
	Total	147073,542	331				

SD: Significant Difference, Groups: 1: 1000 TL and lower, 2: 1001-3000 TL, 3: 3001 TL and higher \* $p < 0.05$

The analyses show that the scores of the participants from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale ( $F_{2,329} = 16.793$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) differ significantly according to the monthly income variable (Table 5). According to the results of the Scheffe test to determine where the difference between the groups originates, a significant difference was found between the participants with an income level of 1001-3000 TL and those with a income level of 3001 TL and above, in favor of the participants with a monthly income level of 1001-3000 TL.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, it was aimed to determine the service quality perceived by the participants from the fitness centers they go to. For this purpose, 332 people who went to fitness centers were included in the study. In the research, the "Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale" developed by Uçan was used to measure the perceived service quality of the participants<sup>23</sup>. In the research, the independent variables that are thought to affect the perceived service quality of the participants were considered as gender, education level and income level. In this direction, the results obtained for the purpose of the research are given below.

In terms of gender variable, it was determined that the mean scores obtained by the participants from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale differed significantly. In the results of the research, the fact that female

participants have lower mean scores is thought to be a result of them being more reluctant and more detailed than male participants. When the literature is examined, similar findings are encountered. In the research by Cengiz and Özen, a significant relationship was found between perceived service quality and gender<sup>25</sup>. Similar to our study, a difference was found in favor of male participants. In addition, in the research by İslamoğlu, Çebi, Eliöz, Yamak and İmamoğlu, which aimed to determine the perception of service quality in private sports centers, a significant relationship was found between gender and perception of service quality<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, the findings are consistent with our research.

In terms of the education level variable, it was determined that the mean scores obtained by the participants from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale differed significantly. According to the results of the Scheffe test to determine where the difference between the groups originates, a significant difference was found between secondary education and higher education in favor of those with secondary education. In other words, it can be said that the service quality perceptions of the participants who graduated from secondary education are higher. When the literature is examined, similar results are encountered. The fact that the high school graduate group has a higher perception of service quality than the university graduate group in the study by Yerlisu-Lapa and Baştaç and Yıldırım's conclusion that the quality perception decreases as the education level increases, is similar to this research<sup>20,27</sup>. In addition, in the research conducted by Cengiz and Özen a significant relationship was found

between education level and perceived service quality<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, these findings support our research.

In terms of monthly income status variable, it was determined that the mean scores obtained by the participants from the Sports-Fitness Centers Service Quality Scale differed significantly. According to the results of the Scheffe test to determine where the difference between the groups originates, a significant difference was found between the participants with an income level of 1001-3000 TL and those with a income level of 3001 TL and above, in favor of the participants with a monthly income level of 1001-3000 TL. It is thought that this situation is due to the higher expectations of the participants with higher income levels. Similar results are found in the literature. In the study of Türksoy and Aycan, in which they aimed to determine the perceived service quality in sports centers, a negative relationship was found between monthly income level and service quality<sup>28</sup>. In other words, as the income levels of the participants increased, their perceived service quality decreased. In the study of Yüzgeç, it was determined that the quality perceptions of the participants with low-income levels were higher<sup>29</sup>. These results support our research.

## CONCLUSION

As a result, it was determined that the service quality perceptions of the participants were above the average level. In addition, it was determined that variables such as gender, education level and monthly income differed significantly on perceived service quality. In the globalizing world where borders have disappeared with today's technological developments, facilities in the field of communication and the increase in population in the world, organizations, businesses and institutions need to keep up with today's conditions in their structures and operations in order to carry out their activities perfectly and to survive<sup>30,31,32</sup>. From this point of view, the concepts of healthy life and physical activity came to the fore. Fitness centers appear as businesses that provide services to people both in terms of physical appearance and health. The fact that fitness centers undertake these missions paves the way for the participants to form a sense of belonging to these centers. Therefore, facility managers working in these businesses should strive to meet the demands necessary to ensure the continuity of people, taking into account the intense competitive environment. Based on the findings, although the perceived service quality of the participants is above the average level, it is recommended that public and private businesses that provide sports services regularly apply surveys to their customers that measure the service quality level of the business and take managerial measures by determining their thoughts.

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