

Time use in daily activities of working class children from 9 to 12 years of age*

O uso do tempo nas atividades cotidianas de crianças de classe popular de 9 a 12 anos

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ABSTRACT: This is a cross-sectional, descriptive, quantitative study performed at four public schools from a medium sized municipality located in the country area of the State of São Paulo. This article aims to describe how working class children use their time in everyday activities. The data was collected through the Activity Log – children’s version, an instrument developed by the authors to collect information about the use of time by that population. The statistical software SPSS®, version 21, was used for the analysis of the results, which pointed that most of the children’s time during the week and weekends was dedicated to basic daily activities related to self-care, household chores and taking care of other children. The results also indicated a balance among working time, free time and self-care time. The study verified the necessity of greater investment on leisure activities, complementary education and sports activities, and its findings reaffirm what the literature has been pointing, that is, greater investment and attention from the government authorities to periphery and low income children’s population.

KEYWORDS: Child rearing; Social class; Child; Occupational therapy.

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RESUMO: Este é um estudo transversal, descritivo e quantitativo, realizado em quatro escolas públicas estaduais de um município de médio porte localizado no interior do estado de São Paulo. O objetivo deste artigo é descrever como crianças de classe popular usam seu tempo em atividades cotidianas. Os dados foram coletados por meio do Diário de Atividades – versão infantil, instrumento elaborado pelas autoras para coletar informações sobre o uso do tempo dessa população. Para as análises dos resultados foi utilizado o Software estatístico SPSS® versão 21, e esses apontaram que a maior parte do tempo das crianças durante a semana e nos finais de semana foi dedicada às atividades básicas diárias relacionadas ao cuidado com elas mesmas, com a casa e com outras crianças. Os resultados apontaram ainda equilíbrio entre os tempos de trabalho, o tempo livre e os tempos de dedicação aos cuidados com elas mesmas. Verificou-se neste estudo a necessidade de maiores investimentos em atividades de lazer, educação complementar e atividades esportivas, e os resultados encontrados reafirmaram o que a literatura da área tem apontado, ou seja, maior investimento e maior atenção das instâncias governamentais para a população infantil periférica e de baixo poder econômico.

DESCRITORES: Educação infantil; Classe social; Criança; Terapia Ocupacional.

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INTRODUCTION

Children, just like adults, organize their everyday life through their involvement in regular activities like sleeping, ordinary activities, school, leisure and resting, and conventional time systems that structure the life of adults have an equal importance in children's life^{1,2}.

The capacity of having temporal orientation is gradually developed, and it starts with the structures that rule the time of the parents. These capacities are sharpened with the beginning of the occupational role as a student, which occurs as the child begins preschool and become more elaborate as the child is asked to exercise it in their daily lives. In this sense, daily occupations help in the process of temporal structuration of children^{1,3}. Birthdays, national holidays, school start and finish times, school events and holidays, weekends at friend's and relative's houses and favorite TV shows are examples of everyday occupations that help children's time perception³.

The investigation on time use in everyday human life is very important, because ordinary life is what we know as the real world⁴, and time is a fundamental parameter for the organization of daily life⁵.

Daily activities allow for discovery, learning and development of new skills, helping the expansion process of the individual's repertoire of experiences. During childhood, these experiences will possibly help to construct personality and contribute to the development of the capacity of facing various situations and to the real view of the world^{2,6-8}.

Daily occupations make children more active and creative, that is, permits them to be the protagonist of their own lives as individuals⁹. Those occupations also provide a solid base for children to become the best within their possibilities – within a certain context (social, economic, environmental). It is through daily activities that children acquire internal resources necessary for their growth and maturity in all spheres of life¹⁰, which is an important tool for the development of the feeling of belonging to a certain group or community, since engaging in activities with other children is one of the most powerful mechanisms of socialization⁷.

However, the impacts of the activities are not only positive for the development and for the quality of life of children. According to Mandich and Rodger⁷, there are also negative dimensions in childhood when these activities are not typical of this life period or are absent in the child's everyday life.

The environment also has a strong influence on the development of positive or negative occupations – it can

welcome the child and give support to their actions, as well limit and stimulate negative exchanges that may be harmful to the child's psychiatric, cognitive and emotional development^{2,6}, which can affect the perception that they have about themselves, and about their abilities and capacities.

Investigations that intend to comprehend the behavior of contemporary childhood are important, and the study of occupations and time spent on them are important tools in the process of understanding daily life and the behavior of a specific population.

Studies about the time use have been contributing to the knowledge regarding frequency and duration of human activities¹¹ and are a source for the analysis and knowledge of behaviors of various social groups, since these studies allow data collection about the habits of a population, as well as about the changes that occur in it, in addition to contribute to the orientation of public policies and social planning¹²⁻¹⁵.

Although the first studies about the time use started in the social sciences field, they were incorporated by several areas of knowledge, such as sociology, education, economics and health sciences – areas that, within their own specificities, seek to understand the relationship of human beings with time.

Studies on time use have been incorporated by statistics research institutes of several countries in Western Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. In Latin America, such studies started in the 1990s. Countries such as Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Cuba, Ecuador and Uruguay have also incorporated in their National Institutes of Statistics studies regarding time use^{15,16}.

Brazil still does not have an official national study about the Brazilian time use. The study of time with the greatest range was conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)¹⁷ in 2009/2010, in a pilot study that investigated time use in five states, 10,092 households, with participants with more than 10 years of age. Since 1996, IBGE has been including questions related to this sphere in the National Home Sample Research (PNAD). Other studies of smaller proportions have been conducted in some Brazilian states like Minas Gerais^{5,15,18}, Rio Grande do Sul¹³, Rio de Janeiro^{19,20} and São Paulo²¹.

The Brazilian scientific production on time use of children and adolescents is still incipient and has been focusing on the time use with gender relations and social class¹³, the differences between the time use of children with and without disabilities¹, the use of everyday time

focusing on time spent on playing and the free time of adolescents from the low-income classes^{19,20,22}.

In Occupational Therapy, although time is a dimension considered to prepare and manage activities, there are few studies that put it as a central axis of investigation. In some countries in Europe and in countries such as Canada, the USA and Australia, Occupational Therapy already uses time as an important dimension in the comprehension of the nature and quality of people's life^{12,23-26}.

In Brazil, the study group about Time Use and Occupational Therapy,* has tried to achieve this dimension in studies that relate time use with everyday occupations. The entanglement of time with the human occupations has been the theme of several articles, dissertations and scientific initiations^{1,27-29}, which involve the organization of everyday life and the time use associated to variables such as health, quality of life, occupational roles and human development during the life cycle.

In the Brazilian Occupational Therapy scenario, we found an article about the occupational engagement of adolescents in a public school of a medium-sized town in the state of Minas Gerais¹⁸, and an abstract of a systematic review of the literature was presented in a congress about time use of older adults³⁰.

Beyond data survey on habits and behaviors, the importance of studies regarding time use in childhood and adolescence may also be represented by their relations with variables that increase or decrease quality of life, and the macro- and micro-consequences of this increase or decrease on its collective and individual unit. Therefore, the objective of this article was to describe how children from the low-income classes use their time in everyday activities.

METHODOLOGY

This was a cross-sectional descriptive and quantitative study, with a non-probabilistic sampling (by convenience), conducted in four public state schools of a medium-sized town located in the central region of the state of São Paulo.

The sample was composed of 108 children of both genders (60 girls and 48 boys), between 9 and 12 years old (average of 10.4 and a standard deviation of 1.1 points).

To compose this sample, in addition to age range, the child needed to accept participating in the study and to return with the Informed Consent Form (ICT) signed by their parents/legal guardians; they needed to be enrolled and to attend the school where the study was being conducted, to know how to read and write, to know how to locate themselves temporally in the periods of the day (morning, afternoon and evening) and to fill the two steps of the activity log.

The children were invited to participate in the study during class. After questions and doubts were clarified, an envelope was given to those interested in participating, which had an invitation to the parents, ICT and the child's identification record.

The ones that returned with the signed ICT were selected to participate in the study. Two instruments were established for data collection: the Identification Record, to collect data on participants of the study (age, gender, race, contact address, family composition and income) and the *Activity log – children's version*, to collect data on time use of infant population.

The *Activity log – children's version* is a form that contains a series of activities, in which the time spent each day with each activity should be written. The elaboration of the Activity log that originated the children's version** has as a reference the document from the Occupational Therapy Association – AOTA³¹ – that deals with human occupation – and also from studies about measurements on the time use^{11,32}.

From these references, the instrument applied in this research was composed of 8 categories as shown in Chart 1.

The activity log created by Emmel is part of the category of logs for time calculation that Aguiar called "stylized". These, according to the author, are types of log that use questions to "estimate the time spent in certain activities" (65)³³. It is also a pre-coded log, that is, it contains a list of activities for each category and, for not having a "time rule" or a "clock" (as it is commonly found in other types of time-measuring logs), the registration of the duration of activities must be done according to the perception of the subject about the duration of the specific event, where the subject "estimates" the time spent with each activity performed in one day.

* The group was created in the Department of Occupational Therapy of UFSCar (in São Carlos, SP) with the purpose of deepening the studies regarding the use of time and its relations to the quality of living and Occupational Therapy. It is led by Professor Dr. Maria Luísa Guillaumon Emmel and it is formed by occupational therapists, graduate students and undergraduate students of Occupational Therapy of UFSCar.

** Emmel, M.L.G. Ocupação humana e uso do tempo em atividades significativas ao longo do ciclo de vida: implicações para a qualidade de vida. Projeto de pesquisa, CNPq; 2012.

Chart 1 – Categories and activities that are part of the Activity log – Children’s version

Categories (AOTA, 2008)	Example of activities listed in the log:
AVD and AVP – activities related to the care that individuals have to their own body. They are essential for survival and life in society, supporting daily life at home and at the community.	AVD: sleep and resting; body care; getting dressed; feeding, etc. AVP: preparing meals; home chores; commuting, etc.
Religious and spiritual activities – have to do with beliefs, rituals, religious symbols that make easier the bonding of people to what they consider sacred.	To practice a religion (to attend religious services) and dedication to spiritual practices (prayers, reflection, etc.).
Professional and productive activities –involve the participation in a paid or voluntary activity.	Paid or voluntary work.
Educational activities –all activities that are necessary for learning and participation in various environments.	To attend regular schooling; tuition classes; language lessons; homework, etc.
To take care of family members – includes selection, supervision or providing direct care to a family member.	To take care of children, adults or older adults.
Sporting activities –involve performing physical activities that through regular and organized practice intends to balance and preserve the mind and the body structures and functions.	Walking; running; soccer; handball; cycling, etc.
Leisure/fun activities – non-mandatory activities performed during free time.	Going to the movie theater; take a walk; watch TV; use the computer; sing; dance; rest; play; read, etc.
Behaviors –actions or behaviors that people use to identify, manage and express feelings while they get involved in interactions with others.	Crying; feeling anxious, upset; date someone; argue; fight; miss someone; be happy, etc.

Each participant provided information related to 2 days: one weekday (from Monday to Thursday) and one weekend day (Saturday or Sunday). The data was collected with the help of three auxiliary interviewers that were previously trained by the researchers, and the log was filled according to what the interviewers recalled from the interviews between October and November 2013, and February and March 2014, according to the availability of each school.

For the statistical analysis, we used statistical software SPSS® version 21, and the results were described based on centrality measurements (average) in hours, and separated in two categories: weekdays and weekends. The study was approved by the Committee of Ethics and Research with Human Beings of the Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), with protocol number 434,350.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected regarding socioeconomic profile of the participants indicated that 82.4% of them declared an income of up to 2,712.00 BRL, which is equal to 4 Brazilian minimum monthly wages. Of these, 43.5% declared family income of up to 1,356.00 BRL (2 Brazilian minimum monthly wages) and only 15.7% declared family income of up to 6,780.00 BRL (10 Brazilian minimum monthly

wages). The Brazilian minimum monthly wage at the period when the data was collected (2013) was 678.00 BRL.

Table 1 presents the average time spent by children on the various log categories during weekdays and weekends.

It can be noted on Table 1 that, during the week, the activities that required more time from the participants were the AVD (11 hours and 49 minutes), followed by educational activities (5 hours and 40 minutes) and leisure (5 hours 31 minutes). The activities that required the least time were the religious (33 minutes) and productive (57 minutes) ones.

On weekends, the AVD continued to be the ones that occupied more time of the individuals (12 hours and 20 minutes), followed by leisure activities (8 hours and 1 minute), both with a longer dedication on weekends than during the week. The educational activities, as expected, had a decrease of more than 5 hours on the weekend (34 minutes).

Other activities that took more time during the week than on weekends were AVP (2 hours and 4 minutes during the week and 1 hour and 44 minutes during the weekend), and the behaviors that were more expressed during the week (1 hour and 27 minutes during the week and 0 minutes during weekend). Religious activities, activities of taking care of others and sporting activities did not show significant changes during the week and weekend.

Table 1 – Average time (in hours) spent in daily activities on weekdays and weekends (n= 108)

	Total Average time (week)	Standard Deviation	Average total time (weekend)	Standard Deviation
AVD	11:49	2:17	12:20	2:43
AVP	2:04	1:14	1:44	1:36
Religious Activities	0:33	0:59	1:34	1:35
Professional or productive activities	0:57	1:04	1:27	1:24
Educational Activities	5:40	0:57	0:34	0:38
Care for others	1:03	1:02	1:29	2:09
Sporting Activities	1:26	1:08	1:26	1:47
Leisure	5:31	3:45	8:01	6:25
Behaviors	1:27	2:31	0:00	0:00

Through the analysis of everyday activities of the participants, it was possible to identify that most of the children's time during weekdays and on weekends is dedicated to basic daily activities related to self-care, household chores and taking care of other children. Although, as a general rule, a balance between work hours (school, household chores, AVP, paid and volunteer work), free time (sporting activities, leisure and entertainment) and activities of personal care (sleep, feeding, care for the body).

Separate analysis of data allows the elaboration of a detailed map of children's daily time participating in the study and identification of positive and negative aspects for their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development.

Tables 2 and 3 present activities with higher participation rates, as well as the average time spent in each of them, for each category of the activity log.

The analysis of table 2 allows us to affirm that most of the available hours of the children on weekdays are used at school and, besides these school activities, this population seems to have little opportunities for investing in their own future, given that extracurricular activities, like language or computing lessons, presented a participation rate below 10%, and therefore, are not part of their everyday activities.

It can be noted from Tables 2 and 3 that sporting and leisure activities for this population are restricted to low cost activities, and physical activities that are present in their everyday life can be done in a ludic way. Passive leisure was the most present, both on weekdays and weekends, and the influence of economic factors can be observed in sporting and leisure activities with greater participation rates (cycling, soccer, walking, running, watching TV, reading, playing and social networks in the Internet) that do not need high expenditure to be frequently done.

Even the activities that were not listed in the log, classified in the category "others" followed the same tendency; reports included ball games, stretching, jumping rope, skateboarding, roller skating, table tennis and listening to music.

With little possibilities of free leisure to enrich the culture of these children's daily lives, watching TV and playing were the most preferred leisure activities of this population, both on weekdays and weekends. The presence of passive leisure on the daily life of this economically disadvantaged population becomes evident with the analysis of the participation rates in activities like reading, resting, using a computer or cell phone (to watch shows, to play games, to access social networks) and to receive visitors/to visit people, both on weekdays and weekends.

Although researches with Brazilian children with the categorization of activities and times similar to those here presented could not be found, some similar results appear in national researches about the time use of children and adolescents^{1,2,13,18-20,22}.

The study by Martins and Gontijo¹⁸ was the one that presented activity categories closer to the ones presented in this study; however, the age of the participants ranged between 12 and 16 years. The authors identified in their study an occupation imbalance between participants, and they called attention for the consequences that this imbalance may have in the quality of life of these adolescents. For the authors, intersectorial actions that favor and value the participation and the knowledge of individuals in the elaboration of proposals and solutions that may allow the interaction and engagement in healthy occupations, and that promote a balance between work, leisure, education and rest, may give the opportunity to them to be the protagonists of their own lives and to have autonomy and self-satisfaction in the occupational performance.

Table 2 – Participation rate and average time (in hours) spent in daily activities (n =108) – Week

Category	Item	N	%	Average	Standard Deviation
AVD	Sleep and resting	108	100.0	9:25	1:42
	Body care	108	100.0	0:57	0:47
	Clothing	108	100.0	0:27	0:31
	Feeding – breakfast	85	78.7	0:11	0:09
	Feeding – lunch	102	94.4	0:17	0:15
	Feeding – snacks	89	82.4	0:17	0:17
	Feeding – dinner	105	97.2	0:17	0:13
	Using the phone/ cell phone	44	40.7	0:15	0:22
AVP	Preparing meals / cooking	67	62.0	0:11	0:11
	Home chores	79	73.1	0:33	0:28
	Taking care of an animal	71	65.7	0:18	0:25
	Mobility	107	99.1	1:11	0:43
Religious and Spiritual activities	Spiritual service	56	51.9	0:12	0:12
Professional or productive activities	Voluntary work	7	6.5	0:24	0:25
Educational activities	Regular schooling	104	96.3	4:59	0:31
	Homework	66	61.1	0:37	0:30
Care for others	Care for children	43	39.8	1:06	1:02
Sporting Activities	Soccer	30	27.8	1:14	1:00
	Cycling	27	25.0	0:33	0:27
	Walking	16	14.8	0:47	0:32
Leisure and fun	Watching TV	101	93.5	2:31	2:13
	Playing	65	60.2	0:35	0:33
	Resting	54	50.0	0:43	1:02
	Using the computer / cell phone to watch audiovisual programs	53	49.1	0:38	0:43
	Reading	56	51.9	0:24	0:19
	Using the computer / cell phone to access social networks	51	47.2	1:18	2:02
Behaviors	Feeling anxious	29	26.9	1:01	1:36
	Feeling upset / depressed	21	19.4	0:35	1:13
	To be quiet / reflexive	41	38.0	0:29	1:00
	To argue	22	20.4	0:13	0:14
	To be chastened/corrected	17	15.7	0:05	0:05
	Feeling bored/restless	24	22.2	0:50	1:36
	Other behaviors	23	21.3	1:10	1:26

Carvalho and Machado¹³ conducted in the city of Porto Alegre a comparative study of time use by children of the same age who belong to low-income and high middle classes. Although with activity categorizations and different times, the study also indicated the inexistence of extra-school activities, presence of household chores and leisure activities restricted to the surroundings of homes of the children from low-income class group.

Sarriera et al.²⁰ in a study about the free time of low-income class adolescents found that most of the time they had was occupied with daily hygiene, feeding, resting and schooling activities. They also discovered that there was little diversity in their free time and little involvement with cultural, artistic, social-recreational and sporting activities, both on weekdays and on weekends, and called attention to potential dangers that the lack of proper locations and activities for the free time could bring to the life of juveniles.

Table 3 – Participation rate and average time (in hours) spent in daily activities (n =108) – Weekend

Category	Items	N	%	Average	Standard deviation
AVD	Sleep and resting	108	100.0	9:34	2:09
	Body care	108	100.0	0:58	0:44
	Clothing	108	100.0	0:29	0:32
	Feeding – breakfast	86	79.6	0:16	0:14
	Feeding – lunch	105	97.2	0:25	0:18
	Feeding – snacks	65	60.2	0:17	0:16
	Feeding – dinner	100	92.6	0:22	0:16
AVD	Preparing meals /cooking	43	39.8	0:19	0:23
	Home chores	67	62.0	0:38	0:36
	Taking care of an animal	56	51.9	0:20	0:20
	Mobility	86	79.6	0:57	1:00
	Using the phone/ cell phone	35	32.4	0:41	1:17
Religious and spiritual activities	Spiritual services	33	30.6	2:25	1:29
	Dedication to spiritual services	45	41.7	0:15	0:13
Professional or productive activities	Paid work	7	6.5	1:57	1:41
Educational activities	Homework	13	12.0	0:39	0:37
	To teach something to somebody	11	10.2	0:26	0:22
Care for the others	Taking care of children	29	26.9	1:19	1:44
Sporting activities	Football	24	22.2	1:07	1:02
	Cycling	22	20.4	0:36	0:24
	Running	10	9.3	0:30	0:18
Leisure and fun	Watching TV	97	89.8	2:15	2:21
	Playing	60	55.6	1:24	1:47
	To be visited / To visit	50	46.3	3:10	3:13
	Using the computer / cell phone to access social networks	46	42.6	1:24	1:46
	Resting	37	34.3	0:48	1:06
	Using the computer / cell phone to watch audiovisual programs, to play games, etc.	32	29.6	0:42	1:05
Behaviors	Feeling anxious	21	19.4	0:49	0:50
	Other behaviors	18	16.7	0:53	1:38
	To be quiet / reflexive	16	14.8	0:39	1:06
	Feeling bored / restless	14	13.0	1:04	2:18

Barros et al.¹⁹, after concluding an epidemiological study with adolescents of the low-income classes in an urban community of Rio de Janeiro, indicated that it is necessary to assess the decline in the participation costs in cultural and leisure activities, since, according to these authors, this appears to be the limiting factor for the practice of activities such as going to the movie theaters,

theaters, concerts or any other activities that depend on money that are not accessible to this population.

Studies such as the ones conducted by Carvalho and Machado¹³, Sarriera et al.²⁰ and Martins and Gontijo¹⁸, as well as our study, which was developed after the studies of Barros et al. in 2002, reaffirm such necessities and also indicated the need for more investment in leisure, sports

and additional education for the young population of low-income classes.

Studies regarding time use of low-income populations also reinforce the need for more involvement of schools in providing cultural activities and to promote the idea about the having healthier habits and lifestyles, through the regular practice of physical and leisure activities.

Expanding the reflections here presented, the need for public services (health, education, social assistance) located in low-income communities is highlighted, to stimulate well-being, with games and sports that favor creative and low-cost leisure activities to the youth, with resources available in their own community.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The locations that children are used to go to and occupations they assume in their ordinary life provide maturation, physical, emotional and cognitive growth in their development; thus it is important to consider occupational deficits found in this study, which reinforce what was indicated by previous studies, regarding time use by the young population: the need for more investment and attention of government institutions, private sector and civil society to low-income populations.

Investigations about time use in daily activities may be an important tool for Occupational Therapy, since they

are excellent means for the diagnosis and make possible the comprehension of the relationship between individuals and their time, and the consequences that this relation may have to their health and well-being. As diagnosis tools, these studies may orientate the professional occupational therapist on practices that intend to achieve occupational balance and engagement in significant and satisfactory occupations²³.

In addition to efficient diagnosis tools, studies about time use can provide a greater visibility to the profession, because people may get involved and need to get involved in occupations daily and throughout their lives²³. Occupational therapists may, based on a precise occupational diagnosis on investigations regarding time use, stimulate people to spend more time in significant activities and help them to discover satisfactory activities in which they need and desire to be involved, therefore promoting physical and mental health and well-being.

In a more comprehensive way, occupational therapists may also participate in the planning and execution of community actions that intend to teach active, creative and low-cost activities that promote the community's integration, the sense of social-environmental responsibility and that favor the participation of people in various cultural and educational activities, therefore promoting an increase in consumption of social goods by low-income populations.

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