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## The features of leisure physical occupations on adults: a descriptive study

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify and evaluate the features of the leisure physical occupations at the adult age. We realized a descriptive study (N = 80, adults in the urban area), through which we tried to determine the relationship between the leisure physical occupations and the socio-demographics variables (gender, level of education, achieved incomes, parental status). The study's results offer us the possibility of identifying the social groups with the lowest chances of practicing leisure physical activities. Starting from these results, we should be able to propose possible strategies of people's involvement in this kind of activities.

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### 1. Introduction

People in different time defined the term leisure (eng.), loisir (fr.) or timp liber (ro.) in different ways (Brightbill, 1973, Braden, 1988; Butsch, 1990; Giamatti, 1991). Irrespective of its definition, the time for the leisure activity has increased for most of the people in most of the cultures. The time spent for leisure, spent with wisdom, brings benefits both for the individual and the community. Creative activities such as sports, music, art, hobbies, education and communitary services are more benefic than others such as watching TV, listening to the radio, attending some sports events or any other activities of this type as a passive spectator.

In the category of the leisure benefits one includes entertainment, happiness, creative expression, opportunity for self-development and personal achievement, trust, adventure and pure satisfaction spirit. The perception of the spare time and of the way it can be spent widely differs, depending on the peculiarities and needs of each individual.

Some people perceive the leisure activities as a recreation. Others see it as an attitude or as a feature of the mind. Many people consider that leisure activities are the most important goal of life. Recently, writers have defined the leisure as a mood of being free, as an attitude of the mind and a condition of the soul, which helps the individual to experience the world reality.

In the opposed sense, the physical activity represents a major problem in all the industrialized countries and it is responsible for the etiology of numerous diseases. Following some studies which were carried on, one established

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that the physical activity carried on regularly during the spare time has benefic effects on the body, assuring prophylaxis and the disease control in most of the chronic and debilitating diseases, considerably diminishing the risk of morbidity and mortality through diseases of the cardiovascular system or of different forms of cancer. Also, some studies evaluated the determinants of leisure time physical activity in rural compared with urban area (Wilcow, Castro, Kink, Housemann & Brownson, 2000).

At the present time, one produces a dynamic redefinition of the spare time concept, a reorientation of the spare time, moving the accent onto the human personality development as a goal itself. The leisure physical activities are practiced not out of interest but out of pleasure, not as means but as a goal in itself, not as a need, duty or snobbism, but for the sanogenetic effects and for the joy it creates. The characteristics of these sportive activities are explained through the fact that they are structured elements of the leisure, creative, plastic, free expressions of the human personalities (Filliard & Lévêque, 1990; Goma & Freixanet, 1991).

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. Purpose of the study

The theoretical objective of the paper aims at examining the significant elements regarding the place of the leisure physical activities in adults' life. One considered as being relevant for the chosen theme the following theoretical data: defining and characterizing the leisure activities, sport as a leisure activity and its role in people's socialization, relation between the leisure activities and socio-demographic variables.

As an applicative objective the paper tries to evaluate the variables which are associated with leisure physical activities at the adult age. We realized a descriptive study (N = 80, adults in the urban area), through which we tried to determine the relationship between the leisure physical occupations and the socio-demographics variables (gender, level of education, achieved incomes, parental status).

Starting from these results and considering the benefic consequences of the leisure physical activities, we should be able to propose possible strategies of people's involvement in this kind of activities.

### 2.2. Participants

We used a group made up of adults (N = 80), dwelling in the urban area that presents the following characteristics: age was between 30 and 50 years, with an average of 43.29 years; 34 (42.5 %) men and 46 (57.5 %) women; from the educational point of view 12 persons (15%) had primary studies, 38 persons (47.5 %) medium studies, and 30 persons (37.5%) higher studies.

Table no. 1 – Repartition on age groups of the studied lot

Age group	30-35 years	36-40 years	41-45 years	46-50 years	Total
No. of subjects	20	20	20	20	80
	25 %	25 %	25 %	25 %	100%

Table no. 2 – Repartition on gender of the studied lot depending on the age group

Age group	30-35 years	36-40 years	41-45 years	46-50 years	Total
Men	10 12.5%	9 11.25%	8 10%	7 8.75%	34 42.5%
Women	10 12.5%	11 13.75%	12 15%	13 16.25%	46 57.5%
Total	20 25 %	20 25 %	20 25 %	20 25 %	80 100%

We excluded the subjects who manifested physical unavailability (current diseases, tiredness etc.) or psychological ones (concentration troubles, depressions etc.) of participating to the study.

### 2.3. Measures

We achieved a correlational study, in which we tried to evaluate the relations existing among several variables:

- leisure physical activities (evaluated by the physical activity index – PAI),
- socio-demographic variables: gender (men or women); level of education (primary, medium or higher studies); achieved incomes (average income per one family member per month higher than 140 euro or lower than 140 euro); marital status (married / unmarried); parental status evaluated through the number of children (0, 1, 2 or more) and the children's age (0-5; 6-15; over 16 years).

In order to achieve this research we used an inquiry based on questionnaire. We used two questionnaires, one for the determination of the physical activity index (PAI) and one for the measuring of the medium energetic consumption for the leisure physical activities.

The evaluation questionnaire of the physical activity index (Dumitru, 1997) was calibrated on the Romanian population, and the Alpha Crombach coefficient on the whole questionnaire was of 0,853.

PAI is obtained multiplying the scores of each parameter:

$$PAI = Intensity \times Duration \times Frequency$$

### 3. Results

Regarding the relation between the belonging to a certain gender and the leisure activities, one notices that 29.5% of the male adults carry on leisure activities at a reasonable level and 35.3% of them have a very good and superior level. Leisure activities of a weak and very weak level are carried on by 35.2 % of the evaluated men.

At adult women 26% record leisure activities of reasonable level, and 26% record very good and superior values. Leisure activities of weak and very weak are carried on by 48% of the evaluated women.

We can affirm that there are differences regarding the leisure physical activities depending on the belonging to a certain gender. The results can be generalized since the distribution according to the mentioned criterion is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 10.15$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Almost half of the evaluated women tend to carry on leisure physical activities of a weak and very weak level, while only about a third of the men have the same difficult.

Referring to the hypothesis which affirms that there are differences in what regards the leisure activities carried on by the adults depending on the level of education, one establishes that we cannot reject the null the hypothesis because the distribution of the cases according to the mentioned criterion is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 2.75$ ,  $p \geq 0.05$ ).

Also, we can not affirm that there are differences regarding the leisure physical activities depending on the marital status (married / unmarried persons). Data seem to indicate that unmarried persons carry on leisure activities of a reasonable, very good and superior level in a higher percentage than that of married persons, but the differences among distributions do not have a statistical signification ( $\chi^2 = 1.23$ ,  $p \geq 0.05$ ).

Regarding the existence of some differences referring to the leisure activities depending on the parental status, data seem to suggest that more than 2 children in family and the presence of some children younger than 6 years (in the 0-5 years interval) associate with leisure activities of a weak and very weak level. These data cannot be generalized because the differences among distributions do not have a statistical signification ( $\chi^2 = 8.67$ ,  $p \geq 0.05$ ).

In exchange, in the case of leisure physical activities evaluation depending on the incomes per one family member per month (less than 140 euro and respectively over 140 euro), the differences among distributions are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 12.5$ ,  $p \leq 0.02$ ).

One remarks among those with incomes per one family member per month over 140 euro the percentage of 30.3% for very good participation to the leisure activities, 27.3% for the reasonable one and only 9.1% for the very weak one. In exchange, for the group of those with incomes per one family member per month less than 140 euro,

the highest percentages 33.3% and 30.8% characterize the very weak and weak participation to the leisure activities, and the lowest percentage corresponds to the very good participation (7.7%).

One notices the fact the income per member of family per month higher than 140 euro is obviously associated with a certain rate of participation to the leisure physical activities, a fact explained through the material resources and implicitly through the higher standard of living of this population group. An income higher than 140 euro permits the assurance of the needs found at the intermediary and superior levels of the needs' hierarchy. Thus, the person can involve in leisure activities in the context of meeting a need of affiliation, esteem and status or a need of self-accomplishment.

If the basic needs are not satisfied, just sometimes this person will manifest the availability of involving in leisure activities. In conclusion, the level of incomes is reflected in the way in which the person organizes his/her life, starting with the elements related to the food ration and finishing with the availability of practicing physical exercises, which finally improve his/her physical condition and health e.

One should remark also the existence of 8 persons who refused to indicate the level of income per one family member per month.

On the level of the whole group the most agreed form of leisure physical activity is walking in the air, then jogging, football, field tennis and cycling. There are obvious the preferences of the subjects depending on gender: with men, the first three places are football, walking and jogging, and with women walking, jogging and volleyball.

#### 4. Conclusions

The studied socio-demographic characteristics offer us the possibility of identifying the social groups with the lowest chances of practicing the leisure physical activities, despite the already known benefic effects. Thus, to be a woman and to come from a family whose average income per one family member per month is lower than 140 euro represents a significant difficulty in accordance with the spare time and the leisure physical activities.

Finally, one of the first steps for the learning of the way of spending the time for leisure is to understand that the option of each person is strictly individual. Starting with these results and having in view the benefic consequences of the leisure physical activities, we should be able to propose possible strategies of involvement of the persons in this type of activities.

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