

Full Length Research Paper

Availability and use of leisure time in students of an Argentinean Medical School: a contribution pursuing wellbeing

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Abstract

Leisure time particularly comprises the lapses preceding and succeeding usual activities as eating, sleeping and those related with personal hygiene and education, when compulsory. This paper aims to analyze the availability and use of leisure in a group of Argentinean medical students, correlate it with demographic data, compare the obtained results with those in other societies, and to formulate a challenge to design related strategies. The study, descriptive and transversal, was performed through a poll applied to 82 medical students of both sexes coursing 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year. Males and females evidenced higher availability when days of the week and coursed year were respectively considered, seemed to prefer social and cultural daily activities and sports ones when carried out twice or thrice per week. 60% of them performed sports activities, specially walking, gym and running whilst 85% of them carried out cultural and social activities prevailing respectively watching TV and listening music as well as mobile phone communication, sharing time with friends, being in family and on line chat. The remarkable period of leisure time of the analyzed students makes possible a systematic planning for increasing their wellbeing.

Keywords: Availability, Use, Leisure time, Undergraduate, Medicine, Argentina.

INTRODUCTION

Leisure (or free) time, analyzed by leisure studies, particularly comprises the lapses preceding and succeeding usual activities as eating, sleeping and those related with personal hygiene; moreover, it may also cover education, when compulsory. Consequently, it represents time spent away from work, domestic cores and/or business and especially dedicated to freely eligible practical activities. Synthesizing, it is a recreational period of discretionary use for satisfying personal needs and pursues rest, amusement, creative labors or subject development (Rodríguez Suárez et al., 1999).

However, the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory ones are not strict and depends on each person since studying, cooking or doing music may be unpleasant activities to be done for some people but render pleasant ones for others (Goodin et al., 2005).

In fact, the use of leisure as a healthy behavior not only allows neutralizing stress situations but as a main result, may facilitate personal growth (Sharp et al., 2005).

Different authors have communicated studies on this topic with distinct results focusing it on university students in general and medical ones in particular in their respective societies (Rodríguez Suárez et al., 1999; Czabak-Garbacz R et al., 2002; Lemp Paredes M et al., 2008; Gayo et al., 2009; OECD, 2009; Sharp et al., 2009; Goodin et al., 2009). Furthermore, two recent publications give to leisure time a significant role. One of

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Table 1. Daily (from Monday to Friday) and weekly availability of leisure hours according to sex.

	Females	Males
From Monday to Friday	17.05* \pm 9.19	20.24* \pm 10.07
Weekly	27.48 \pm 12.50	31.24 \pm 13.56

*Significant differences $p < 0.05$

Table 2. Availability of leisure hours according to coursed year and sex

	Females (n = 48)	Males (n = 34)
1st	21,30* \pm 8,603 (n= 10)	27,57 \pm 17,878 (n= 7)
2nd	26,00 \pm 9,381 (n= 12)	31,31 \pm 9,375 (n= 13)
3rd	23,20 \pm 6,812 (n= 10)	36,50 \pm 18,574 (n= 4)
4th	35,13* \pm 16,342 (n= 16)	31,60 \pm 15,371 (n= 10)

* Significant differences $p < 0.05$

them, revealing a concern: at present Canadian young people put the accent more in physical activities than in cultural and social ones during their leisure time (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2011). The other, rescuing the role of Sociology for treating leisure time (Roberts, 2011)

Taking into account these reports, the present paper aims to: (a) analyze the availability and use of leisure in determined Argentinean medical students performing their studies in a city whose population exceeds 1.000.000 inhabitants; (b) correlate it with demographic data (gender and coursed year in medical career, among others); (c) compare the obtained results with those in other societies, and (d) formulate a challenge to design appropriate strategies primarily oriented to these students and eventually to others living in a similar social situation not only in Argentina but out of our country, too.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Following a descriptive transversal study, a poll was designed, validated and applied personally, anonymously and voluntarily, as ethical rules establish for keeping confidentiality, to a representative sample (82/312) of medical students of both sexes (48 females and 34 males) coursing 1st , 2nd , 3rd and 4th years of a six-year medical career in the Interamerican Open University (Rosario, Argentina). All the polled students have time enough to complete their challenge.

Data were analyzed with SPSS 15.0 for Windows and a value of $p \leq 0.05$ considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

A.- Demographic data: 79.3 % of the polled students were not original from Rosario; 80 % did not live with their

parents and 85.4% did not have working demands. Number of females and males coursing from 1st to 4th year were 10 and 7, 12 and 13, 10 and 4 and 16 and 10, respectively.

B.- Data not related with leisure time

Outlining that results are expressed as mean \pm SD (standard deviation) and hours/week, no differences were recorded among sexes in relation with time dedicated to eat: 19.5 ± 6.19 and to sleep: 54.25 ± 6.00 . Conversely, significant differences appeared in relation with personal care, domestic core and compulsory procedures (12.35 ± 6.07 in males vs. 16.54 ± 7.57 in females, $p < 0.05$) as well as with study and travel time (44.58 ± 16.29 in males vs. 50.03 ± 13.03 in females, $p < 0.05$).

C.- Data related with leisure time: Data are registered in Tables 1 and 2. Results are expressed as mean \pm SD

Complementarily, weekly leisure hours did not differ between these students who live with their parents and those did not. In contrast, statistical differences were registered in that regard when students who needed to work for living (21.83 ± 6.53) were compared with those who did not (30.27 ± 13.72) ($p < 0.05$)

D.- Data related with frequency and main sports cultural and social activities performed by students in their leisure time Data are shown in Tables 3 to 6. Results are expressed in percentages.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Exceeding its no direct relation with leisure time, no sex differences were registered in hours/week devoted to eating and sleeping whilst significant higher ones were detected in females in relation to personal care, domestic core, compulsory procedures, study and travel time. These two last data were in agreement with reported by Lemp Paredes et al., (20089 where the availability of

Table 3. Frequency of sports, cultural and social activities performed by students in leisure hours according to sex.

	Females n = 48			Males n = 34		
	Sp	C	S	Sp	C	S
Daily	37.5	50.0	54.2	44.1	51.8	58.8
Twice or thrice/ week	41.7	35.4	29.9	44.1	36.5	29.4

Sp: Sports; C: Cultural; S: Social

Table 4. Main sports activities performed by students during their leisure hours

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	%
Walking	24.9
Gym	17.6
Running	18.5
Football	9.3
Tennis	5.4
Rugby	2.9
Basketball	2.4
Athletics	2.4
Table tennis	2.4
Swimming	2.4
Other sports	11.7

Table 5. Main cultural activities performed by students during their leisure hours

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES	%
Watching TV or video	7.8
Listening music	7.5
Searching info not related with medical study in the web	7.0
Reading e-newspapers	6.7
Reading books	6.5
Listening radio	6.3
Going to the cinema	5.7
Reading magazines	5.7
Reading traditional newspapers	5.7
Watching sports activities	5.7
Other cultural activity	35.5

Table 6. Main social activities performed by students during their leisure hours

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES	%
Mobile phone communication	7.4
Sharing time with friends	7.3
Being in family	7.1
On line chat	6.8
Dancing	6.2
Staying at bars	5.9
Drinking mate in Rosario's gardens or at the Parana's River shore	5.5

Table 6. Continue

Going for a walk	5.5
Visiting shoppings	5.4
Being with a boy or girlfriend	5.4
Other social activity	37.6

weekly leisure hours was lower.

Focusing on results directly related with leisure time, males and females revealed higher availability when days of the week and coursed year were respectively considered. Moreover, students who needed to work for living significantly had less hours/week of leisure time at their disposal than those who did not.

Examining the frequency of sports, cultural and social activities performed by students in leisure hours according to sex, no significant differences were identified in each activity among sexes though males and females seem to prefer daily social and cultural ones and sports activities when carried out twice or thrice per week.

Regarding all the referred variables no specific data from other authors were found.

More than 60% of the students performed sports activities along the week being.. walking, gym and running the more frequent, Thus, they practically doubled that reported in Oviedo's (Spain) students by Rodríguez Suárez et al., (1999) and by Wodjdak-Haasa et al., (2002) in Gdansk's (Poland) ones. This result also agrees with those communicated by Haase et al., (2004). In this regard, it results appropriate to emphasize the parental and peer influences on leisure-time physical activity, investigated by Anderssen et al., (1992).

85% of them performed cultural activities prevailing watching TV and listening music. In contrast, there was not much difference among the preferences for other cultural activities. These results are congruent with reported by Rodríguez Suárez et al. (1999) and Gayo et al., (2009). It is worthwhile to outline that culture in medical students constitutes a real concern for curricular planners (Cultural Competence Education, 2005).

Finally, social activities were performed by 85% of the students. As formerly occurred, mobile phone communication, sharing time with friends, being in family and on line chat appeared to be the more frequent activities whilst the rest showed not many differences. These data are also in agreement with informed by Cultural Competence Education (2005) and Lemp Paredes et al., (2008).

To sum up, our students have a relevant period of leisure time.

This conclusion leads us simultaneously to a proposal and a question.

The first of them relates with feasible planning and achieving actions directed to optimize its use, searching for policies promoting and improving a healthy lifestyle (Wodjdak-Haasa et al., 2002; Czabak-Garbacz et al., 2003; Angyán, 2004) In this sense, it must be recalled concerning: (a) with physical activities that physicians

must practice what they preaches, (b) with cultural ones that, as Mark Twain and José de Letamendi quoted, the physician who knows only Medicine, knows not even Medicine and, finally, (c) with social activities, that Medicine is stressing even in undergraduate stages and necessarily requires different types of entertainments far from medical studies but not inevitably and entirely different to them.

The abovementioned question is: may our data, suitably representative for our institution, be extrapolated to Rosario's and Argentina's medical students and also to international ones? Some former references may be pointing out that, at least, in Rosario and Argentina do exist similarities whilst from an international standpoint there are common behaviors in some senses and different ones in others according to the considered societies (Rodríguez Suárez et al., 1999; Czabak-Garbacz R et al., 2002; Horwitz et al., 2007; Lemp Paredes M et al., 2008; Gayo M et al., 2009; Haleh et al., 2008; OECD, 2009; Sharp et al., 2009; Goodin RE et al., 2009; Lotfi et al., 2011; Masrour et al., 2012). Nevertheless, similarities and differences do not undermine relevance to the availability and use of leisure time.

To conclude, this specific contribution coming from an Argentinean medical school humbly intends to be indicative of what is happening in this regard during this postmodernity and technological era particularly in our city and in our country. Furthermore, it also intends to put this topic in scene not only for increasing related papers with university and medical students, relatively limited nowadays in the specialized bibliography, but for stimulating medical and university curricular planners and authors interested in it.

The challenge remains to be faced.

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