ONE STEP BEFORE RETIREMENT - FREE TIME OF WORKING ADULTS

Abstract. The aim of this study is to describe the ways of spending free time by people aged over 50, working, with higher education. Free time as an element of the culture of everyday life accompanies man from the dawn of time. Free time should therefore be used for the regeneration of physical and mental strength, entertainment, and the development of individual interests and talents. The choice of forms of spending free time is influenced by interests, hobbies, age, gender and economic status. Technological progress, rapid urbanization, and stress-laden life constitute a challenge for modern society, motivating to take the initiative in organizing active leisure in free time, which may have a positive effect on the human body. Pilot studies for the international Polish-Ukrainian project "A step before retirement" were carried 20 inhabitants of Kiev Ukraine and 20 inhabitants of Wloclawek Poland.

Keywords: free time, working adults, active and passive forms of spending free time

Introduction

Free time as an element of the culture of everyday life accompanies man from the dawn of time. From the earliest times, cultivating saint holidays combined with rest has been associated with time off work. The term "free time" appeared and
became popularized when it was recognized by the UNESCO International Conference in 1957 [9]. According to the classic definition of Joffre Dumazedier, a French pedagogue and sociologist, free time includes all activities that an individual can devote himself/herself to out of his/her own will, either for recreation, entertainment, the development of his/her knowledge or his/her (selfless) education, his/her voluntary participation in social life, freeing himself/herself from professional, family and social responsibilities [4]. Among the most common forms of life activity of adults, the following activities can be distinguished:

– physical activity carried out through physical activities: walking, excursions, gymnastics, dancing, swimming pool;

– hobby, e.g. cultivation of allotment gardens;

– educational (acquiring new knowledge);

– family;

– cultural, inter alia, the presence in cultural institutions (cinema, theater, opera, philharmonic hall) [7].

Free time should therefore be used for the regeneration of physical and mental strength, entertainment, and the development of individual interests and talents. The choice of forms of spending free time is influenced by interests, hobbies, age, gender and economic status. Free time in the modern world, however, is a scarce commodity. Although we work shorter than our fathers, we have relatively less free time. In 2019, the longest working hours were recorded in Romania (40.5 hours a week) and Bulgaria (40.4 hours a week) [12], the shortest in France (35 hours a week) [13]. Rush, workaholism, and inability to manage free time contribute to the emergence of states of depression, an increase in morbidity and the development of civilization diseases. Technological progress, rapid urbanization, and stress-laden life constitute a challenge for modern society, motivating to take the initiative in organizing active leisure in free time, which may have a positive effect on the human body. With age these factors deteriorate physical and cognitive functions. One of the components of a healthy lifestyle and a factor that delays the aging process is physical and intellectual activity. Active spending of free time, especially among friends, promotes better well-being and at the same time influences physical health by improving immune functions.
Recreational activities are also a relatively inexpensive and easily accessible way to improve the health of people of all ages. Physical activity, devoid of constraints and limitations, compensates for the lack of physical effort, especially for white-collar workers. Regular exercise of physical activity contributes to the maintenance of a healthy body weight, reduces the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases or cancer, see [8]. However, according to research made in Finland, 63% of respondents engage in physical activity in places located approx. 800 m from home [6]. The intellectual and cultural spending of free time also contributes to the delay of the aging process. This idea is based on the so-called the "use it or lose it" hypothesis (think, know, experience, create, move, or do nothing and get older faster). Leading an active lifestyle through participation in sports, cultural events, interest circles, reading books is a universal and culture-independent measure contributing to successful aging, unchanged in different countries [10]. Despite the undeniable values of broadly understood activity, the Poles most often watch TV in their free time, spend time with their families or rest passively, although they would like to go out of town more often and take part in interesting cultural events. Professionally working people often notice a decrease in the amount of free time they have at their disposal, they also declare that they do not have free time for themselves during the week or that they do not even have enough time to fulfill all their duties. However, in their spare time, these people would like to rest, spend time with their family or... do outstanding household chores [11]. In 2019, they read a book for pleasure (61% of the respondents) but as many as 73% used the Internet for non-work related purposes. Reading books for pleasure was significantly more frequent among women than among men, 71% and 50%, respectively. Widespread or almost universal use of the Internet in free time is observed among people aged 18-44 (at least 96%), managers and specialists with higher education, as well as middle-level representatives and technicians (98% each group), administrative and office workers. (97%). Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) have participated in a leisure trip at least once. 36% of the respondents traveled abroad [2].

**Methodological notes**

The aim of this study is to describe the ways of spending free time by working
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adults. Research problems arise from the set goal, namely:

- what forms of spending free time dominate among the respondents?
- how much free time do the respondents spend actively and how much passively?
- what are the barriers to rational spending of free time among the respondents?

In this study, the diagnostic survey method and the survey technique were used. Pilot studies for the international Polish-Ukrainian project "A step before retirement" were carried out from August to November 2021. Intentional sampling with the use of the Snowball Sampling Method was used. The sample consisted of people aged over 50, working, with higher education. Due to the epidemic situation, the research covered 20 inhabitants of Kiev Ukraine and 20 inhabitants of Wloclawek Poland. The conducted analyzes constitute an introduction to a more complete study of the issue of spending free time by people in pre-retirement age. Due to the limited selection of the sample, they cannot be generalized to the entire population.

Characteristics of the studied group

Ukrainian group:

9 women: 4 married, 3 divorced, 3 single; 7 have children, but they are already independent,
11 men: 9 married, 2 divorced; 8 have children, of which only 2 are underage children.

Polish group:

15 women: 10 married women, 2 divorced women, 2 widows, 1 single, 14 have children, including 8 under age.
5 men: 3 married, 1 divorced, 1 bachelor; all have children, including 3 minors.

Research conclusions:

Level of the respondents’ satisfaction with the amount of free time

The number of methods of using free time is important from the point of view of the possibility of implementing health and development functions, and thus sustainable human development. On weekdays, we work, on average, 8 hours, additionally we spend about an hour commuting, we sleep from 6 to 8 hours, so theoretically we have (we should have) 5-7 hours of free time to ourselves. In the
case of women, in particular, the amount of free time associated with working in the proverbial second-time job is drastically shrinking. Often are we also unable to rationally manage our time, wasting it, e.g. watching TV programs that are not entirely interesting to us, or looking, as usually, at the website of social media. In the Ukrainian group, on weekdays, 6 people do not have free time, 6 people have approx. 1 hour of free time, 6 persons - 2-3 hours. On weekends, only 1 man does not have free time, 4 have approx. 6 hours, 2 ones - 3 hours, others - over 3 hours. Only 6 people are satisfied with their free time. In the studied group, the main barrier preventing spending free time in accordance with interests or predispositions are: professional work (8 responses), household chores (3) and the inability to organize time. In the Polish group, on weekdays, 1 man does not have free time, 4 respondents have approx. 1 hour of free time, 13 ones have 2-3 hours, the others - over 3 hours. On weekends, only 1 man does not have free time, three respondents have approx. 3 hours, the rest have more than 4 hours of free time. Only two are satisfied with the amount of free time. The main barrier in spending free time according to preferences was professional work (13 responses), excessive household chores (8) and the inability to organize free time (1) (Polish respondents indicated more than one answer). The results of our research were identical to the results of Eurostat (2015), which showed that satisfaction with the amount and use of time is strongly related to age. The working population declared the lowest average satisfaction with the use of time. Unpaid work at home related to childcare and house chores, small financial resources and the related need for additional work as well as increasing expectations of employers, reduce the respondents' satisfaction with the quantity and quality of free time [5].

Ways of spending free time

The resting culture can be seen as a means of maintaining well-being, health and emotional state. Contemporary forms of spending free time say a lot about the society of the 21st century. Despite the rich offer of cultural and sports institutions and the developing tourism, the media are still the first entertainment industry. The respondents devote most of their free time to passive rest, watching TV, searching the Internet and social web sides. In the Ukrainian group, 6 women and only 4 men
indicated that active ways of spending free time prevailed over passive ones. In the Polish group, active forms of spending free time are dominant in case of 4 men and 10 women.

**Passive ways of spending free time**

Free time becomes a luxury good, a new determinant of social status. However, those who have it most often stay in front of a TV or computer monitor. Every day, a TV set is turned on by 70% of the surveyed Ukrainians (14) and 95% of Poles (19). 5 respondents from Ukraine and 6 from Poland admit to watching TV for half an hour; to at least 2 hours, 7 and 9 subjects, respectively. For the rest of the respondents, the TV is turned on for 4 hours or more. Only 4 residents of Kiev never use a computer in their spare time. 4 Ukrainians and 8 Poles use a computer from 30 minutes for up to 2 hours outside of work. Others declared that they used the computer for more than 4 hours a day in their free time.

Reading books is an activity that has many aspects that positively influence a person's life. Unfortunately, many of us forget about it. We are completely absorbed in an ever faster lifestyle. On the other hand, books aren't just a way to relax. They also allow you to broaden our horizons and have a beneficial effect on health. While reading books we stimulate our imagination and, although not fully consciously, we must constantly use memory and stimulate the brain. It is encouraging that only 7 people in the study groups: 4 from Poland and 3 from Ukraine do not read books. However, on the other hand, it is disturbing that only two Polish women and eight inhabitants of Ukraine (including 5 men) read books every day and devote 1-2 hours to it. Participation in culture is not very popular either - the respondents rarely go to the cinema, and even less often choose the theater or opera. Today's times are marked by economic hardship, with many individuals facing economic hardship to make ends meet. Eurostat research shows that in 2013 EU residents spent 8.5% of their household spending on culture, less than in 2005. The respondents indicated that the main reason for the reduction in money spending for this purpose was the increase in prices, the lack of access to cultural institutions in the place of residence and finally - no time. Access to culture is more and more often recognized as a fundamental right, in the same way as education, health and life. The Universal
Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in art. 27 stipulates that everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, the right to enjoy art and share scientific progress and its benefits. However, this share varies from country to country. The absolute figures available for 2012 show that most of the eastern EU Member States and the Netherlands spent less on recreation and cultural activities than Western and Northern European members [5].

Currently, low cultural participation is closely related to the global epidemic situation caused by Covid-19. Despite the loosening of the restrictions, many people avoid clusters and / or do not want to see the show wearing a facial mask.

**Active ways of spending free time**

It is assumed that participation in recreational and cultural activities will contribute to the individual's well-being and overall life satisfaction. Despite the many advantages of actively spent free time, the fact of rising prices of services, no family tradition of practicing sports; habits, reluctance, laziness or the need to work on another job contributes to the choice of passive forms of rest. Although the awareness of the importance of physical activity is undoubtedly growing, only 1 Ukrainian and 1 Pole exercise every day. 2 men from Ukraine and 4 Poles (including 3 women) exercise 3-5 times a week, and 10 and 15 people, respectively, once a week. 7 inhabitants of Ukraine admit to being inactive. Regardless of the country, the majority of respondents engage in physical activity in green areas or at home (39 responses in total. The question about the forms of physical activity was a multiple-choice question). The sports facilities (swimming pool, gym, dance hall) are used by a total of 12 respondents. Most often, the respondents mentioned walking as physical activity: 19 people (10 inhabitants of Ukraine and 9 of Poland), cycling 13 (1 and 12, respectively), swimming pool 6 (3 and 3), home gymnastics 5 (3 and 2), running 5 (2 and 3), bodybuilding, dancing, fitness classes 6 (1 + 5). 3 residents of Kiev indicated shopping as a physical activity.

**Expectations of the respondents in terms of spending free time**

The organization of free time should support the realization of a given person's potential, stimulate personal development, and satisfy the need to learn new things and artistic expression. The respondents' expectations in terms of spending free time
are not varied. 11 residents of Ukraine would like to travel, 3 ones would like to spend more time with family and friends, 2 would tend to choose additional work, 2 would love to pick mushrooms, 1 would like to have more time to read books, 1 gave no answer. In the Polish group, 10 respondents did not answer, 4 would like to spend their time more actively, 3 dream of lazing around in their free time, 2 would like to travel, 1 woman would like to visit a spa more often than she does. The pandemic significantly changed many areas of our daily life, but also made us feel a greater need to spend time actively and pursue our passions and dreams without postponing them. Although a barrier to the realization of plans and dreams, at least for some of the respondents, financial independence has become a luxury nowadays.

**Summary:**

An important issue in considering the ways of spending free time by working adults is getting to know their interests, needs, desires and opportunities and their implementation. In many countries, a very wide range of recreational and sports activities is intended for children, adolescents and ... seniors. For example, dance clubs, swimming pools offer classes for the above-mentioned age categories.

The European Union is devoting millions of euros to developing the interests of retirees, and what about adults over 50 who are no longer youth, but also not seniors? Many of them experience the so-called empty nest syndrome, when adult children (and sometimes even a spouse) move out of the house. Observing the actions of decision-makers, one can get the impression that the group of people 50+ is discriminated against on the grounds of... age. For example, in Wloclawek, this age group has a chance to subsidize only English language courses. We live in the era of digitization and open borders - having the ability to communicate freely in a foreign language is an obvious advantage, but why are only courses in this one language subsidized? Why isn't there a wider choice of activities? Nowadays, we are dealing with a specific exclusion of adults from non-mass, educational and workshop forms of participation in culture. In addition, work fatigue, age, and often the lack of companionship discourage adults from leaving the house and favor the choice of passive leisure time, most often on the couch in front of the monitor. Extending youth by providing people with an ever wider range of games and fun has
become the domain of the twentieth century and is continued in the twenty-first century. In many countries, especially in Western Europe and North America, more and more people over the age of 50 are trying to maintain the culturally assigned way of life for young people. Caring for physical fitness, health, good mood, appearance, diet, interest in the world and culture is a phenomenon that brings many advantages not only to people, but also to society.

Get out of the house - joy is near.

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