Leisure Time Sport Activities of the Students at Resita University

Andrade Bichescu a*

“Eftimie Murgu” University, Traian Vuia Square, No. 1-4, Resita, Romania

Abstract

The problems caused by the limited time available for leisure time sports activities these days have become an increasingly interesting subject for specialists in various fields of science. This paper analyses this sensitive topic, which is always on the map of scientific research, from an interdisciplinary perspective, trying to identify the typical features of the students’ lifestyle at the “Eftimie Murgu” University in Resita and the extent to which sports activities are included in the time budget of the students’ leisure time activities.

This is an exploratory study that has included undergraduate students at the “Eftimie Murgu” University in Resita. The sample was selected by stratified sampling, using the “step” method, with a margin of error of ±5% and a safety margin of 95%. The questionnaire included 23 questions. The study we have carried out has highlighted the fact that many of our university’s students lead a rather sedentary life, 34.38% among them do not practice any sports activities, which correlates with the negative consequence that over half of the students, 54.98%, are overweight.

Keywords: leisure time, sports activities, sedentariness, quality of life;

1. Introduction

Nowadays most people try to make sure they have a good living standard and they stay in good health, and in that context they also get appropriate health insurance and life insurance. All this contributes to improving their quality of life, which is however a more complex concept that includes several other factors, as shown in the specialist literature (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

According to David and Năstase (2012), quality of life “is an evaluative concept, which is defined by setting the living conditions and the activities making up human life against human needs, values and aspirations.” In other words, individuals can influence their quality of life, if by that we mean strictly the main features of their way of life, those features being determined by the way in which they spend their leisure time.

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* Andrade I. Bichescu. Tel.: +40745534429;
E-mail address: a.bichescu@uem.ro
There are many studies that have highlighted the role of sports activities in influencing the body’s health status (Birkeland et al., 2009; Honaria et al., 2010; Lindström, 2011), and the importance of those activities in the socialization of the younger generation (Jin, 2009; Min and Jin, 2010). As we all know, all societies are dependent on their members, on their intelligence and creativity, on their overall progress. The quality of each individual’s upbringing, development and education is in close relation with the way in which they spend their leisure time, and in that context sports activities can be genuine sources of health and energy for future activities. “For the spare time, leisure sports are the most ideal activities that can adjust body states, driving the harmonious development of bodies and minds. … Compared with other leisure activities, leisure sports activities can help leisure subjects realize the unification and harmony of bodies and minds, which is more in accord with the leisure subjects’ requirements in modern society” (Li and Gao, 2008).

Latest research has again reconfirmed that statement. According to Ron Kalil, neuroscience professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, “the proofs are indisputable. I have known for many years that physical exercises are good for the articulations, for the heart, for maintaining an optimal weight. Now, we can add that they are also good for the brain” (Zaleski, 2012).

Engaging the students in various sports events, making them participate regularly in activities that could offer them an active lifestyle, is both a need and a challenge, not only for the students themselves, but also for those who are in charge of their education and training as future members of a society that can rely on them. “Compared with other leisure activities, leisure sports activities can help the subjects realize the unification and harmony of bodies and minds, which is more in accord with leisure subjects' requirements in modern society” (Li and Gao, 2008).

2. The hypothesis and the purpose of research

Our general assumption in this research is that including sports activities in the students’ leisure time budget stimulates a more rational use of that time, thus enhancing their chances to achieve a better quality of life.

The two main purposes of this research were:
to define the leisure time budget available to students at the “Eftimie Murgu” University in Resita and to understand the place of leisure time sports activities in that overall time budget;

• to collect information on the place held by sports activities in the leisure time of the students at the “Eftimie Murgu” University in Resita.

3. Research methods

For this study, we have used the following research methods:

• studying specialist literature;
• conducting a questionnaire-based survey;
• performing statistical-mathematical measurement and processing;
• presenting data using graphical methods.

This is an exploratory research that was conducted at the “Eftimie Murgu” University Resita during the period March-April 2012, the purpose being, as mentioned above, to gather information on the place held by sports among the students’ leisure time activities. We have collected that information by means of a questionnaire that contained 23 questions.

By applying the questionnaire we aimed at:

• Identifying the leisure time budget of the students at the “Eftimie Murgu” University in Resita;
• Identifying the typical features of the students’ life style;
• Measuring the interest manifested by students for the practice of sports activities during their leisure time.
• Establishing the connection between the practice of sport activities in the students’ leisure time budget and the socioeconomic status of their family.
• Calculating the share accounted for by sports activities among the students’ leisure time activities.

4. Research design

Our research included undergraduate students at Resita University. We obtained our sample via stratified sampling, using the “step” method. We started from a total number of 1,634 students over 19 years of age, out of which 961 boys and 673 girls. The sample was selected with a margin of error of ±5% and a safety margin of 95% and it included 311 students, with a representative gender representation: 59% boys and 41% girls. (Fig. 2 and 3).
5. Results and discussion

Although the students appear to have quite busy programs with all the courses, seminars, laboratory work or extracurricular activities they participate in, the data we have collected actually indicate that many of the students have a significant amount of leisure time available, which they could use constructively to lead an active life. We have found that 25% of the students have 2-4 hours available per day, while 19% have 4-6, 15% 6-8, 11% 8-10 hours available. Moreover, 17% of the students have stated that they can have free time whenever they want. In other words, except 13% of the students, who stated that they did not have any free time available, all the others had various lengths of time available that they could use as they wished.

![Fig. 4. The average of free time available for our students on a daily basis](image)

![Fig. 5. The practice of a sport activity by our students during the last week](image)

By correlating the answers for question no. 5 “How often did you practice a sport activity during the last week?” with the answers to question no. 10 “What do you prefer to do in your free time?”, we have found that many students lead a sedentary life style judging by the way in which they spend their free time (Fig. 5, 6).

![Fig. 6. Our students’ preferences of spending free time](image)

![Fig. 7. Our students’ favourite sports activities](image)

When asked about their favorite sports activities, football has emerged as a clear preference, as shown in Fig. 7, most probably due to the large number of boys in the sample. Fitness has also started to catch the interest of students who want to spend their free time in an active manner.

According to the students, the main factor that impacts their decision to practice sports activities is their financial situation. 43.41% of the students have ranked this factor first, while 37.94% have indicated the pleasure
of doing exercise and 18.65% the free time available as factors that can influence their involvement in sports activities during their free time (see Fig. 8).

If we consider that 50.48% of the respondents do not have a job, that 60.95% of the students come from families with incomes falling short of RON 2,000/family and 51.13% do not have their own income, it is easy to understand why many of them cannot afford to spend money in order to be able to practice free time activities. They need that money because jogging on a stadium or in the park are no longer in fashion, and the things to do these days are going to the gym for fitness workouts or renting a sports field – which obviously need to be paid for (Fig. 9, 10, 11).

6. Conclusions

Based on the statistical evaluation and the interpretation of the questionnaires, we have reached the following conclusions:

- This research has proved that the students of the “Eftimie Murgu” University in Resita have a sedentary lifestyle, one of the effects being that 54.98% are overweight.
Our students have a low interest in practicing sports activities during their free time, an important share of them (34.48%) stating that they do not practice sport activities in their free time or they consider these activities a mere waste of time.

The decision to practice sports activities during the students’ free time is influenced, before everything else, by their financial situation (43.41%). The pleasure of doing exercise and the free time available are two other factors that impact the practice of sports activities.

Although our research has found that sports activities are not in the top list of the students’ preferences, it is also true that students are aware about the need to practice such activities on a daily basis as well as the need to use their free time in an effective way, which could help them benefit from all the positive effects of practicing physical exercise, and implicitly improve their quality of life.

In order to avoid the consolidation of such harmful practices among students, we have formulated the following recommendations:

- Active life programs need to be developed for the students, making sure that they implement those programs;
- Preventive action needs to be taken as soon as possible in order to avoid potential crises that can appear later in life;
- A media campaign needs to be developed and implemented in order to present the negative impact of a sedentary life style on the human body and to stimulate the student population to practice physical exercise.

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