

FREE TIME ACTIVITIES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC*

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Abstract

The cultural changes that took place in recent centuries have led to the appearance of several models of spending free time that highlight the wish of an individual to dispose of his/ her own time organized in the most original way. Spending free time as well as recreation is often considered a state of mind, during which the individual experiences a process of transformation marked by freedom of choice and personal enrichment. If free time is used judiciously, it becomes a means of forming human personality and permanent education.

The moment the sanitary COVID-19 crisis appeared, humanity found itself in a new context, completely unusual, totally atypical for the existing civilization. Despite the unimaginable power of the new intelligent, sophisticated, advanced technologies it possesses, humanity has suddenly found itself powerless when faced with the new challenge, unprecedented in history. The concern came from the severity of the disease, but especially from its very aggressive contagion: a simple sneeze, even normal breathing in relation with other people can transmit the disease. However, the lack of means of prevention and treatment of the new disease accentuated the collective state of panic and confusion (Zamfir, Zamfir, 2020, p. 6).

There are studies that show that the first immediate impact of Coronavirus was recorded on the way of living/ lifestyle of people, by the sudden change of habits regarding the organization of professional and free time.

Key words: *Education for free time; Time budget; Sports activities; Pandemic.*

1. Introduction

The idea of free time has been talked about since antiquity. According to the definition given by J. M. Dumazadier, free time represents that segment of time when each individual has certain preoccupations to which he devotes himself voluntarily, after getting free from his/ her professional, family and social obligations.

The way free time is used as well as the types of activities engaged are different from one individual to another depending on its limits and size. Thus, we

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can talk about: *daily free time* dedicated to self-training, fun and sports activities, various meetings, reading, etc.; *free weekend time* (weekly) used for tourism, sports activities, watching shows, etc.; *free time reserved for rest leave* intended, as a rule, for practicing various forms of tourism, etc.

Nowadays, the concept of free time has a wide usage; called “loisir”, “leisure”, “freizeit”, translated as “leisure”/ “pleasant occupation”, the meaning is not differentiated too much from one person to another.

Sociologist Joffre Dumazedier (1974) defines free time as a set of activities to which the individual can devote himself fully, according to his preferences, either to recover, or to have fun, to develop his training or even information after fulfilling his professional, family and/ or social obligations.

The psycho-social side of free time is highlighted as far as the individual has different lifestyles or represents rationally and symbolically his way in life, the following day, he projects himself immediately or in perspective. In order to know a man, it is necessary to know his valences (what he likes, what he rejects, how he uses time).

According to the way he defines the socio-pedagogical concept of “loisir”, Joffre Dumazedier (1974) deduces the three “d”, namely: *detent*, *development*, *diversion* (délassement, développement, entertainment). By establishing these three functions, J. Dumazedier shows that, in their free time, people perform the activities with pleasure, and their choice is made by the individual.

Free time, in the most developed European countries, has exceeded the length of working time. This is not the result of a period of great prosperity, nor of a fashion, but it is the result of a social conquest that began with the introduction of technology into the societies, due to the development of productivity. Production may increase, while working time decreases.

Of all this free time, (J. Dumazedier, 1974) a percentage of 5 % is occupied by socio-political practices, 5 % socio-spiritual practices, and 90 % of the time is filled with a lot of various activities (static or dynamic) such as: watching shows or movies, sports activities, hobbies, reading, friendly or romantic meetings, participation in various groups or associations based on volunteering, in private or public institutions. This time is, in most cases, a social time for the self.

In contemporary societies a valorization of the relationship with the self is produced. It is about “self-care”, which is related to the valorization of a new type of relationship with one's fellow (the one close by) and even with nature.

More and more individuals organize their free time in a selective manner, tending to organize their pleasant activities in the same way as their professional activities. The relationship with the self has changed. A part of the individuality that was once repressed, expresses itself more freely.

2. The evolution of the concept of free time

In the context of "the new educations" and the conditions for the development of the information society, based on knowledge, the value of free time, implicitly the free time education, "is related to the result of a historical process associated with the phenomenon of modern civilization, to gain more freedom by the modern worker, of special allocation of a time for restoration and recreation", mentions C. Cucuș (2006).

Compared to how old local education is, never before have the students enjoyed a more generous rate of free time, hence the need for free time education. Free time is a global problem of the 21st century, and it requires a high level of culture and awareness of the value of time and freedom for the entire human society (Clichici, 2018).

The concept of free time has evolved over the centuries according to various socially organized models. Thus, it was found that mankind has always enjoyed a certain type of leisure organization, various forms and activities of organization (Clichici, 2018).

2.1. Positioning free time in the time budget

The dimension of free time is determined quantitatively by the component sizes of the people's time budget, and in quality, by the contents of individual or group activities, analyzed from the perspective of goals, objectives, methods and means of achievement, their needs, aspirations and interests, the socio-cultural and economic conditions human activity takes place in.

The time budget includes three major sequences: work time and physiological time, time for socio-cultural needs, household and free time.

For some researchers, free time is contrasted with time spent on professional work (which is usually mandatory), but also with other activities (time spent on household activities, physiological time, time spent on social activities, etc.), for others, free time is limited to the moments of transition from one activity to another, respectively the recovery of the body, or to the time for oneself (in which all non-imposed activities from the outside can be included).

All the activities that an individual carries out can be included in what we call *the time budget*.

The time budget refers, on the one hand, to the total time available to any individual (for example, during a day, week, year, etc.) and, on the other hand, to all the activities that are included in this time (physiological activities, professional activities, household activities, free time activities, etc.). Some activities remain in the time budget throughout life and retain the same name (for example, activities that address physiological requirements), while others are age-specific and have other names, although they are included in compulsory activities (school time, working time, free time).

The connotations of free time can be interpreted from several perspectives, not only from that of working time. For example, we can think of the free time of a pensioner, a housewife or a child (preschooler) - they have no way to relate to a so-

called work time, because they do not have it in their time budget. Not to mention the fact that there are societies in which work has become a free time activity. How people spend their free time is a problem related to age, sex, psycho-physical abilities, social class, religion, political orientation, professional activity, cultural level, geographical environment (weather phenomena), place of residence (urban, rural), technological level (individual/ societal), concerns, motivations, economic level, etc.

The diversity of projects carried out by the individuals who are part of the developed societies changes the theoretical standard of free time, transforming it into an activity difficult to delimit both as activity, duration, but also as a moment of development in time.

Free time activities can be classified as follows: family-domestic activities, cultural activities, religious activities, educational activities (other than compulsory), creative activities, sports activities, social activities, tourist and recreational activities, health maintenance activities and rest, hobby activities, rural activities, shopping activities, etc. Many of these activities intertwine. There may be different weights of some variables between the characteristics of free time activities. The most common variables of these activities refer to: the given time, the type of effort, the place of development, the type of activity, the number of participants, the means used and so on.

Compulsory activities do not always represent work activities for all individuals because they are people who work, not out of obligation, but do the work with pleasure. For them, work is what free time means to others. And, of course, it brings them satisfaction, balance, fulfillment. For other individuals, work is a way to earn a living, but also a means by which they can assert themselves. It also brings them a series of satisfactions, and for them, often dominance does not refer primarily to the economic aspect, but to vocation, to the call towards the respective field, to passion/ desire, a situation that determines different positive states characteristic of free time. These people cannot separate their free time from work. For them, work is not in opposition to free time, often saying that they do not have free time. In conclusion, free time is a component of the time budget.

Free time is related to other activities of the time budget, among which the most common is working time. In general, free time decreases with age. Most theories regarding free time consider that the particularity that differentiates the types of activities that are part of the time budget concerns their character, respectively the obligation or non-obligation of these activities. The characteristics of free time aim at: freely agreed attitude and behavior; physical and mental health; lack of thoughts that can disrupt their well-being; satisfaction, peace, joy, self-esteem, liberation, fulfillment, relaxation, etc.

Free time is a notion that can only be interpreted in a particular way, for each person, society, culture, in turn.

3. The investigative approach

The study on *the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on free time activities* presents the results obtained following a sociological survey based on an administered questionnaire.

The study aimed to identify the impact of the state of emergency on the correct management of time for professional, household and sports activities.

The research sample was represented by performance athletes, former performance athletes or graduates of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, people who, before the state of emergency, carried out sports activities in their free time. Personal data, such as gender, age or level of education have been processed in accordance with the law. The present study did not use the individual scores obtained by each participant, but the average scores of the entire research group.

The respondents were between 14 and 49 years old, a considerable number representing those aged between 22-26 years. Regarding the distribution by sex, the female respondents were the majority (54.1 %).

The elaborated questionnaire aimed to identify the perceptions of different categories of people (performance athletes, people who performed sports activities before the isolation period) regarding the development of sports activities during the pandemic and the state of emergency. 61 questionnaires were applied through online applications (google forms).

The questionnaires were applied between the 20th and the 30th of April 2020. We constantly considered establishing a comparison between the two periods: before the pandemic, under normal conditions of freedom of movement and during isolation, when restrictions were imposed.

More than half of the respondents considered that before the onset of the state of emergency they had enough time for their favorite activities, because they managed to complete their professional activities on time (60.7%), while 16.4% because they failed to complete all professional activities on time, did not have enough time to carry out their favorite activities.

The percentage of respondents who, during the pandemic, have enough free time to carry out their favorite activities is maintained, increasing, 73.8%, and of those who do not have enough free time for favorite activities, because they fail to complete in time their professional tasks, is the same as before the pandemic.

Before the isolation, more than half of the respondents used to spend 1-2 hours a day on sports activities, 21.3% of the respondents spent more than two hours, 18% spent 15-30 minutes doing sports, and 5% did not to practice sports activities.

During the isolation, the answers of the respondents show a decrease in the number of those who carried out sports activities more than two hours (11.5%) and between 1-2 hours (37.7%), registering a doubling of the number of those who give daily sports activities between 15-30 minutes, and the percentage of those who were not used to sports before the pandemic is maintained during the isolation.

The reasons why the 19% of respondents do not practice sports are: the lack of will, convenience, the lack of motivation, the poor management of their free time.

It should be noted that this percentage is also confirmed by the answers to the previous questions.

To this question they had the possibility to indicate several sports or recreational activities, the most indicated are sports games, then fitness activities, followed by jogging or aerobics, cycling, swimming.

During the pandemic, when some sports and recreational activities were banned or diminished, the number of those who played sports games decreased from 49.2% before isolation to 16.4% during isolation. The number of those who played fitness, jogging or aerobics remained the same (activities that can be done individually) and also the number of those who practiced swimming decreased.

4. Conclusions

The people who participated in the research were in the isolation required by the state of emergency for one month, during the application of the questionnaire. During this period, sports activities outside home could be carried out only near home, individually, respecting a series of very strict measures.

Thus, most of the respondents were able to carry out physical activities predominantly inside the home.

Referring to the hypothesis established at the beginning of the study we can say that this pandemic crisis caused by coronavirus produced major changes in sports activities, also at the beginning of the period most subjects had difficulty managing time, so they failed to include sports activities at the same level as they did before the isolation.

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