

LEISURE TIME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS*

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Abstract

This study highlights the interpretation given to leisure time and the changes that have brought us to the current understanding of leisure practices. The study begins with the evolution of the concept of leisure time and deals with various perspectives on the interpretation of leisure time in the theoretical substantiation part, which help to build an overall picture of the topic. A series of research results are specified for understanding leisure time in relation to quality of life, non-formal and informal environments, the relationship with technology, age, gender and socio-professional status. The purpose of our research aims to identify the dominant leisure practices in young people and adults. We used an interview to find out the answers about leisure time, using a sample of young people and adults. We started by identifying the differences between young people and adults in terms of spending their leisure time and we narrowed our concerns to the specifics of it in young people with higher education in urban areas. We identified aspects related to leisure practices, involvement in leisure activities and their duration.

Key words: *Free time, Young people, Adults, Free time practices.*

1. Introduction

Since leisure is an idea consonant with scientific inquiry, researchers have explored how people spend their free time, and the historical perspective provides data on the evolution of the meaning of the concept.

In ancient Greece, leisure (lat. *otium*) was seen as an opportunity for contemplation, education, and personal development, not as simple relaxation. The ideal citizen was supposed to use his free time to improve himself morally and intellectually, contributing to the good of the city. Plato was a friend of the school (the precious gift of a privileged few), but when he occasionally ventured into the controversial realm of idle time, he turned from a supporter of leisure into one of its harshest critics. Like Plato, Aristotle believed that happiness is not entertainment, but should be pursued in accordance with virtue. Leisure was, in fact, the purpose of

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work and the condition of happiness. As in Greece, concerns about degraded leisure, idleness, and laziness preoccupied Roman thinkers and politicians (Zuzanek, 2020).

In the Middle Ages, leisure was rare and often linked to religious holidays or community activities. Influenced by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas sought a compromise between contemplation and active life. In the Renaissance, the Greco-Roman ideal of *otium cum dignitate* was rediscovered. Leisure became a cultural luxury, in which masterpieces were written, and people met at balls, musical evenings and plays. These forms of refined entertainment were supplemented by meetings in public spaces, where people conversed and relaxed. If in the societies of classical antiquity, inactivity was a specific attribute of class and there was a social separation in the work-inactivity relationship, in pre-industrial societies there were the same cleavages between the inactive classes and the broad mass of serfs dedicated to work.

Conducting an analysis on the evolution of the meaning of leisure, Zuzanek (2020) refers to theorists who marked the history of their era. Durkheim, for example, analyzed the social implications of the division of labor, but also social time, a concept that indirectly entered Weber's discourse, concerned with the depersonalizing effects of the bureaucratic system and a potential loss of initiative and personal freedom. If in traditional society free time was considered a privilege of the rich, in modern society, the term "free time" has become a common part of everyday language. In the 20th century, free time was seen as an appropriate reward for those who worked. In post-industrial society, the appreciation of free time is manifested through leisure practices, forms of human emancipation and appreciation of social relationships. In the digital age, free time has not disappeared, but it has become more difficult to recognize and value. Leisure is a state of mind opposed to utilitarianism, based on contemplation, on the ability to look at reality without manipulating it. The practice of philosophy is closely linked to leisure, but its inclusion in the world of work is a challenge (Pieper, apud Rundell, 2022). It follows that the notion of time is inscribed in all human societies, in the continuum of collective history and the lived experience of people. Today we are talking about the emergence of the leisure society, saturated with leisure practices that instill in the population the development of individual fitness, health and external beauty. In this sense, we support a society that increasingly considers leisure time a fundamental need.

2. The theoretical foundation of the topic

2.1. Perspectives on free time

Free time has been defined in the literature as time not allocated to paid/unpaid work or personal activities and obligations (Kenneth, 2006), it has been associated with other concepts, such as well-being or quality of life (Haworth & Veal, 2004) and has been included in public community development policies (apud the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, 2019). Silveira and Santos (2019) refer to Dumazedier who "defined leisure time (the one after being freed from professional, family and social obligations) as a set of occupations that each individual can use freely. These can be used either for rest, for fun, recreation or

entertainment, to develop their information or disinterested training and for their free creative capacity” (p. 28).

The economic perspective focuses on productive work activities because they have monetary value and therefore contribute to the gross domestic product. In traditional economics and in today's mainstream economics, the idea of leisure is usually residual. In Becker's conception, leisure time is treated as an economic resource, alongside work and consumption. Questions like “Is commuting work or free time?”, “Does an afternoon nap make you more productive the rest of the day?” are both useless and irrelevant (Chiappori & Lewbel, 2015). Finances are one of the reasons why different kinds of leisure activities are found across social classes. People in non-manual occupations often earn the highest incomes; therefore, they can afford a much wider range of leisure activities. The diversification of leisure offers has led to an increase in consumption in this sector, transforming leisure into an economic engine.

The political science perspective approaches leisure time both as a result of public policies and as a space for politicization. Examining the relationship between leisure time and international relations, Davies and Niemann (2002) found that during leisure time most people are interested in world affairs. In relation to neoliberalism, there is a tendency to blame passive relaxation in favor of “active” leisure time, which produces results (material, spiritual or social).

The educational sciences perspective values the role that leisure education could play in addressing complex social problems. The results of Neulinger's (1974) research suggest that the more educated person shows a greater desire for vacations than the less educated person. Although the more educated person demonstrated a greater “affinity for leisure”, they tend to identify more with work than the less educated person. This could reflect the fact that the more educated person finds more meaning in their job.

The psychological perspective on leisure focuses on its impact on mental health, cognitive functioning, and personal identity. Psychology treats leisure not simply as a break from work, but as an essential space for self-regulation, personal development, and psychological well-being. Studies of leisure have influenced work in the social psychology of leisure. For example, Kleiber (2000) describes the role of occasional leisure in facilitating relaxation, Haworth (1997) notes that leisure helps generate psychological well-being, and Mannell (1993) studied the contribution of engagement and serious leisure to life satisfaction during leisure among older adults (apud Stebbins, 2018, p. 258).

The sociological perspective has insisted in recent years on understanding leisure as a set of human activities of variable complexity, which motivate participation through a range of personal and social rewards. Correlations between participation in certain leisure activities and social class or occupation are important. For example, “family class origins make a lasting difference in terms of participation in leisure activities outside the home and in community associations” (Roberts *et al.*, 2019, pp. 14-15). Gender differences, according to data from the 2019 Cultural Consumption Barometer (Sandu & Oană, 2019), matter significantly for many of the

cultural practices of leisure. Women, more than men, prefer frequent church attendance. Men are the ones who go more on trips, to entertainment shows, sports competitions, to the cinema and club/ discotheque. They are also, more than women, practitioners of sports in public spaces. Men tend to associate themselves with certain leisure interests. For example, men attend sporting events more frequently than women and are often involved in political associations: “There seem to be profound differences between the leisure patterns of men and women in our society, and often these differences reflect variations in the roles that have traditionally or historically been assigned to men and women” (Van Ackeren, 1977, p. 24).

Leisure is also approached from *other perspectives*. Geography influences the way leisure time is spent through access to recreational spaces depending on the relief, namely rural or urban area. This shapes local traditions, which can become forms of loisir. It is argued that the new cultural geography, with its emphasis on space as relative and symbolic, rather than absolute and material, enhances the “geographic imagination” by offering “alternative ways of seeing” leisure (Aitchison, 1999). Philosophically, leisure is that portion of the day that is not used to satisfy the demands of existence (Weiss, 1965, apud Stebbins, 2018). Recently, leisure has become an end in itself and the most convenient way to eliminate the tensions created by the conditions and experiences of everyday life. This can no longer be perceived as a time of unproductivity – it has become an end in itself and the most convenient way to eliminate the tensions created by the conditions and experiences of everyday life.

From an axiological point of view, we are interested in cultural leisure practices (e.g. going to cinemas, musical performances – practices that are largely specific to young people in large urban communities). Sandu and Oană provide details about the relationship between leisure practices and cultural areas within the historical regions of Romania. The cultural model of leisure practices in current Romanian society has the following content: “excursions-entertainment-mall-parks, cinema and music, sports-restaurants, meetings with relatives and friends, going to the theatre-museums-monuments, going to public libraries, participating in local celebrations and going to discos, going to church or prayer houses” (2019, p. 42). Cultural areas turn out to be, for the most part, cultural matrices with a well-specified profile for the practices of using leisure time in public spaces.

2.2. Landmarks in leisure research

Leisure capital is built in youth through participation in various activities, while in adulthood it becomes centered on home and family. It is observed that the social relationships that work involves condition the activities carried out in leisure time. In the situation of young people who neither work nor are enrolled in studies in a formal environment, the situation of unemployment, inactivity and precarious experienced employment reduces the importance of work time and gives greater value to leisure time in the formation of identity. In fact, “leisure time itself does not give young people an identity when they do not study or work. (...) Young people show more satisfaction and give greater importance to spaces and types of practices

in which they acquire greater autonomy and opportunities for self-management together with their peer group” (Moreno-Colon *et al.*, 2020, p. 989).

The results of a study on the leisure time of single adults (Godbey and Stanley, 1976) show that single people engage in a wider range of activities outside the home than married people and that there is a greater degree of homogeneity and equality in the leisure practices of the sexes (apud Van Ackeren, 1977). Another study on the use of leisure time by young single adults in the southern and eastern Mediterranean provides information on the ways they spend it: “The most common form of leisure time spent outside the home is going out with friends. Visiting cafes or teahouses came in second place, followed by playing sports among men” (Roberts, 2019, p. 7).

Previous research has focused mainly on adults in formal educational settings (e.g. universities and colleges), but recently there has been growing interest in spending leisure time in non-formal and informal settings. For example, research by Thoidis and Pnevmatikos (2014) showed that, despite the fact that all those who participated in non-formal education activities have limited free time, people prefer to dedicate some of it to learning opportunities.

There is considerable interest in quantifying and tracking the activities, movements and time-use patterns of millennials. In terms of technology use, “older millennials significantly reduce ICT time use as they age and become quite similar to Generation X in their early 30s. Younger millennials, however, are found to devote significantly more time to ICT use than older millennials in early adulthood (18–24 years of age)” (Garikapati *et al.*, 2016, p. 579).

In an investigation of leisure activities (Vilhelmson *et al.*, 2017), the results indicate that online time has increased significantly, adapting to the increase in leisure time. In addition, offline time spent on social activities, reading books and newspapers, and offline hobbies has steadily decreased. Sturm and Cohen (2019) find that the group of people with higher education and higher incomes report less free time than other groups, but more physical activity and less time spent in front of the screens.

A recent sociological survey conducted in Romania on the situation of young people and their expectations provides information on how leisure time influences the perception of one's own life. Regarding the way respondents spend their leisure time, the majority are satisfied or very satisfied (75 %) (Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, 2024, p. 19).

The way women spend their available leisure time is considered to be of lower quality, given the frequency of multitasking among them. This is highlighted in a recent study (Yerkes *et al.*, 2018), which states that: “In relation to leisure, women may place less value on having equal amounts of leisure time but more value on other outcomes, such as having high quality family leisure” (p. 381). This may be an effect of the internalization of gender differences in leisure time (e.g. women continue to assume greater caregiving responsibilities than men, reflecting gender expectations that caregiving tasks are women's responsibility). Women and men experience leisure differently. From a gender perspective, in adulthood, the unequal

division of labor persists for most couples (Cera *et al.*, 2024), and this suggests that gender is a source of inequality in time use (Matud *et al.*, 2024).

Leisure is commonly considered a matter of personal preference, a commodity that one chooses to have more or less of. Research in recent years has focused on the diversity of forms of leisure (from cultural activities to personal development and volunteering), but also on differences between sexes and genders, ages, environment (urban or rural), and professional status in spending leisure time.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research objectives and hypothesis

We started from several questions generated by the changes that have occurred in recent decades in the perception of leisure time (e.g. “To what extent is leisure time determined by socio-professional status?”, “What about gender or age?”, “Are there differences between the way young people and adults spend their leisure time depending on the specifics of the environment?”). These secondary questions arise from a *general question*, the answer to which we aimed to find: “How do individual and social variables influence the spending of leisure time?”. We narrowed the question to leisure time practices according to three variables: age, residential environment and level of education.

Closely related to these, *the purpose* of our research aims to identify the dominant leisure practices among young people and adults. *The objectives* of the research relate to both the theoretical part of the study and the hypothesis testing part. The objectives in the first category aim to create a brief history of the evolution of the term, specify the meaning of the term, identify perspectives for approaching leisure time and highlight the results of research on the topic. Added to these is the investigation of leisure practices among young people and adults and the formulation of conclusions based on the data obtained in the research.

Based on these coordinates, we formulate *the general hypothesis* according to which there are differences between young people and adults in terms of spending their free time. As a *particular hypothesis*, we started from the assumption that young adults with higher education who live in urban areas resort to diversified leisure practices for personal and social development.

3.2. Sampling, variables and research methods

The research was conducted in the first half of 2025. The sample of subjects includes 127 adult participants from Dolj County (Table 1 and Table 2). We note that we divided adulthood into two categories and grouped the respondents into young adults (20–35 years old) and mature adults (36–65 years old). In this study we did not set out to differentiate the periodization of ages, which is influenced by biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors. For example, most people between the ages of 18 and 25 do not consider themselves adults, so we can rather talk about emerging maturity. On the other hand, many adults consider that old age begins around the age of 75, especially in the context of an active life and a higher life expectancy. Therefore, age limits are set for analytical purposes.

Table 1. General individual characteristics of participants in the research

Age		Area of residence		Education level		
20–35	36–65	Urban	Rural	Compulsory education (*)	High school Vocational school (**)	Higher education (***)
73	54	85	42	25	45	57

As shown in the previous table, we have centralized the data regarding the general individual characteristics of the respondents (age, area of residence and level of education). It is observed that the highest percentages are among young adults (57.48 %), and those who reside in urban areas are present in a higher percentage (66.93 %). Regarding education, 44.88 % have higher education, while 55.12 % of the participants have completed compulsory education and high school/ vocational school.

Control variables include the gender of the respondents, marital status and employment status (Table 2).

Table 2. Control variables at the level of individual characteristics

Gender		Marital status			Employment status		
Female	Male	married	Single	Divorced	Widowed	Employed	Unemployed
76	51	68	34	13	12	98	29

It is found that the highest percentages are among female individuals (59.84 %), married (53.54 %), employed (77.17 %). Regarding parenthood, 73 (57.48 %) are parents and 54 are non-parents (42.52 %).

The individual characteristics we are interested in, in relation to the hypothesis, allow a comparative analysis of the personal data of the respondents (Table 3):

Table 3. Analysis of individual characteristics of young people and adults

Young people 73 (57.48 %)						Adults 54 (42.52 %)					
Urban 46 (63.01 %)			Rural 27 (36.99 %)			Urban 39 (72.22 %)			Rural 15 (27.78 %)		
*	**	***	*	**	***	*	**	***	*	**	***
N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%	N/%
4	13	29	8	3	16	2	27	10	11	2	2
8.70	28.26	63.04	29.63	11.11	59.26	5.13	69.23	25.64	73.34	13.33	13.33

The content sample covers the range of leisure activities that a young adult and a mature adult can cover. We divided leisure time into categories, each corresponding to different leisure practices: time for cultural, artistic or entertainment activities (e.g. reading), time for visits, walks and travels, time in front of screens (watching shows), time for physical and sports activities (exercising outdoors) and other activities (e.g. volunteering, religious activities).

We used *the interview*, firstly for an exploratory purpose, to identify the variables and the relationship between the variables, and secondly for the purpose of collecting information to test the hypothesis. We used a face-to-face interview

(direct, personal) with pre-established questions which were structured in a precise order. It was carried out in a limited time interval, with a single meeting being focused on the study problem. The indicators to which we reported the items are: the meaning of the term leisure time, self-assessment of the volume of leisure time, the degree of involvement in leisure time activities, the duration given to leisure time activities and the most enjoyable activity in the respondents' free time.

The interview guide includes, in the first part, data on the individual characteristics of the interviewees and it is structured, in the second part, based on the following questions:

1. *What do you understand by leisure time?*
2. *How much leisure time do you usually have?*
 - a) *Quite a lot;*
 - b) *A lot;*
 - c) *Moderate;*
 - d) *A little;*
 - e) *Very little.*
3. *Below are listed a series of leisure time activities. Indicate how you position yourself regarding these activities, using the values of the given scale (1 – very involved, 2 – involved – 3 – moderately involved, 4 – a little involved, 5 – not involved).*
 - a) *Activities that emphasize mental effort, such as studying, attending continuing education courses (1, 2, 3, 4, 5);*
 - b) *Activities that involve active participation in social affairs, such as volunteer work, club activities (1, 2, 3, 4, 5);*
 - c) *Activities that involve creative and/ or artistic endeavors, such as writing, painting, or playing an instrument (1, 2, 3, 4, 5);*
 - d) *Activities that involve productive effort, such as certain hobbies like woodworking, leatherworking, sewing, knitting, gardening (1, 2, 3, 4, 5);*
 - e) *Activities that involve physical exercise, such as sports and calisthenics, hunting and fishing, or simply walking (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).*
4. *What activities do you spend the most time on?*
 - a) *Cultural, artistic or entertainment activities;*
 - b) *Visits, walks and travels;*
 - c) *Screen activities;*
 - d) *Physical and sports activities;*
 - e) *Other activities.*
5. *What do you like to do most in your free time?*

An interview on leisure time can be an effective way to understand a person's preferences, habits, and values. After conducting the interview, we centralized the answers given to each question and interpreted them by referring to individual characteristics in relation to the mentioned variables, in order to test the research hypothesis.

4. Results and Discussion

Meanings given to leisure time

The responses received cover a wide range of meanings. Thus, leisure time means: an antidote to boredom (12 responses – 9.44 %), a way of socializing (27 responses – 21.26 %), a means of recovery and relaxation (34 responses – 26.77 %), a tool for personal pleasure (22 responses – 17.32 %), a context for development and self-actualization – realizing personal potential, living a meaningful life (19 responses – 14.97 %), an indicator of well-being and quality of life (13 responses – 10.24 %).

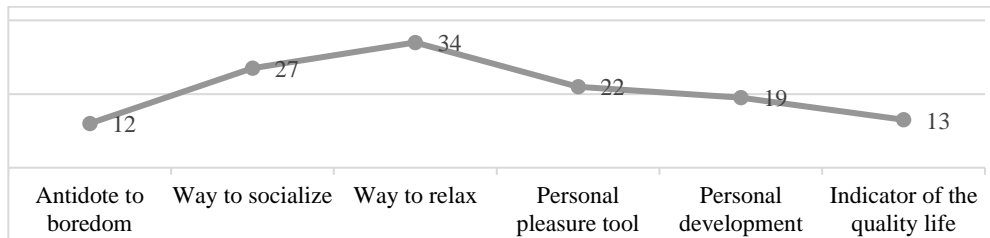


Figure 1. Meanings of leisure time

Young people and adults from urban areas with higher education gave free time the meaning of context and pretext for development and self-actualization in a proportion of 26.92 %, of a way of socializing in a proportion of 25 %, but also of ensuring well-being and quality of life in a proportion of 23.07 %. Of the 98 employees, 79 are from urban areas (36 are young adults and 43 are mature adults). We found that young adults with higher education from urban areas devote most of their leisure time to personal and social development, an aspect encountered in recent years in Romania (Sandu *et al.*, 2014; Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, 2024). In fact, for young people in the Y generation the need for socialization is acute, which is why in their free time we frequently meet them in the company of friends or work colleagues, with whom they have made friends or discovered that they enjoy common hobbies.

Self-assessment of the amount of leisure time

Self-assessment of leisure time varies significantly from one person to another. The answer to the question “How much free time do you have?” highlighted the fact that leisure time is undervalued (mostly in urban environments and especially by mature adults who are employed, married and have at least one child). Thus, out of the total number of respondents, 44.88 % assessed that they have very little free time, while only 7.87 % stated that they have a lot of free time. Young adults from urban areas stated that they have little and very little free time, this may also be due to the need for permanent connectivity (telephone, email, social networks) which makes free time seem shorter or more fragmented.

A comparison between people from urban areas (85) and those from rural areas (42) highlights a difference related to the leisure time that respondents believe they have (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

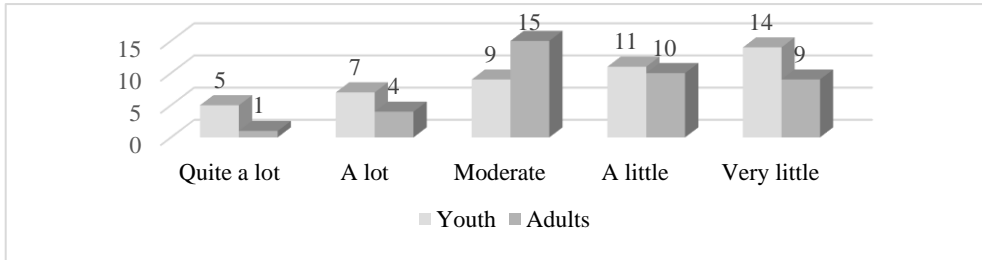


Figure 2. The amount of leisure time that young people and adults from urban areas declare

The data in Figure 2 highlight the fact that young people from urban areas consider that they have quite a lot and a lot of leisure time in a proportion of 26.09 %, and adults from urban areas have quite a lot and a lot of leisure time in a proportion of 12.82 %. This may be influenced by the parental status of adults, which involves childcare, coordinating the family schedule and several household activities. On the other hand, the mature adult is at the age when their own parents need support and divides their leisure time between them and their own family.

Figure 3 presents statistical data regarding the amount of leisure time that young people and adults from rural areas consider they have. A small percentage difference is found between young people and adults who appreciate that they have quite a lot and a lot of leisure time: 3 young people (11.11) and 2 adults (13.33 %), but this is not significant.

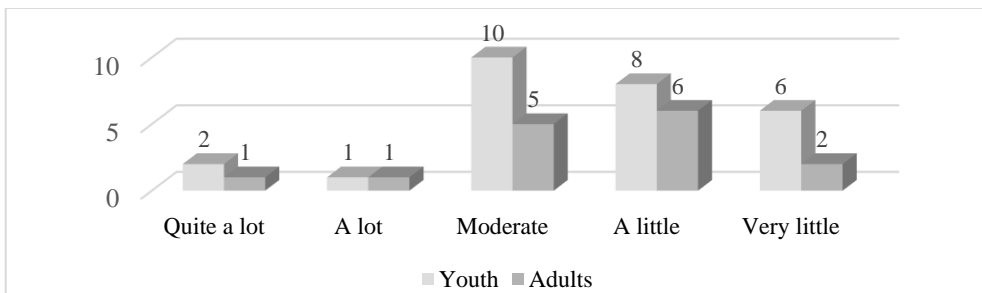


Figure 3. The amount of leisure time reported by young people and adults in rural areas

Although it is important to identify and analyze the causes or reasons for these differences, we did not set out to do so, but we were interested in the responses of young people with higher education in urban areas. They (N = 29) have less leisure time compared to those in rural areas, but also to adults (from both geographical areas).

Degree of involvement in leisure time activities

Regarding the degree of involvement in leisure time activities, we found that there are differences between leisure time activities in young people compared to adults, as shown in Figure 4.

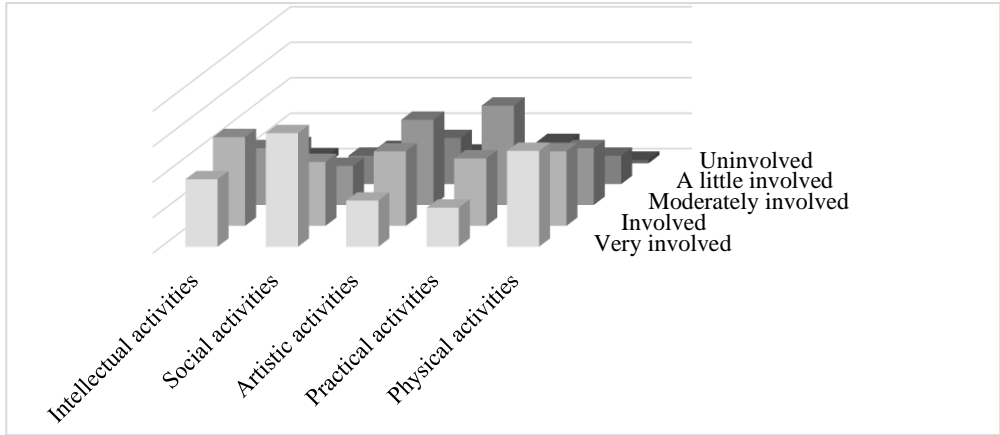


Figure 4. Youth involvement in leisure activities

Young people are more involved in social activities, with the specification that involvement in intellectual activities comes next for urban youth while in practical activities comes next for rural youth.

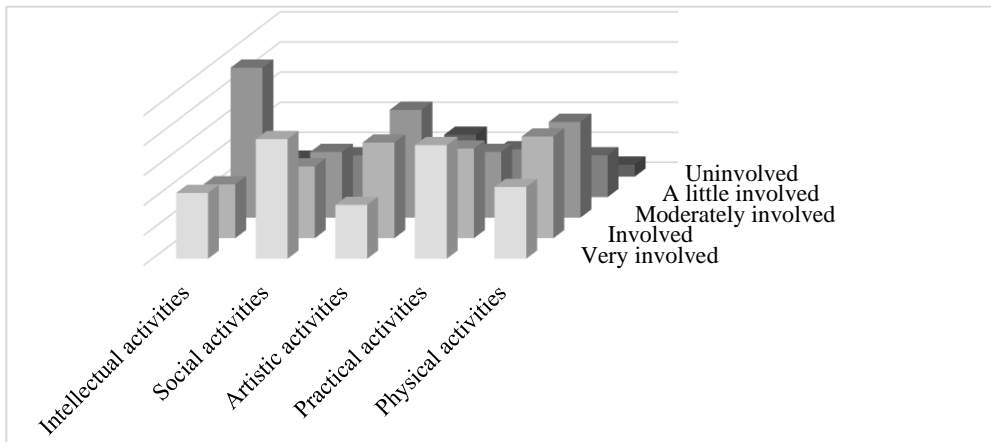


Figure 5. Involvement of adults in leisure activities

As for adults, it results from the previous figure that they are involved a lot and very much in practical and social activities, physical activities also having an important role in adults' leisure time. We find that young people and adults are more involved in social activities (young people in a percentage of 69.86 %, and adults in a percentage of 37.03 %). Young people with higher education in urban areas are involved in intellectual and social activities to an approximately equal extent.

Duration given to leisure activities

We wanted to find out which types of specific leisure activities respondents give the most time to and we found that most of their time is dedicated to activities

in front of screens. As for young people with higher education in urban areas, the answers are distributed as follows:

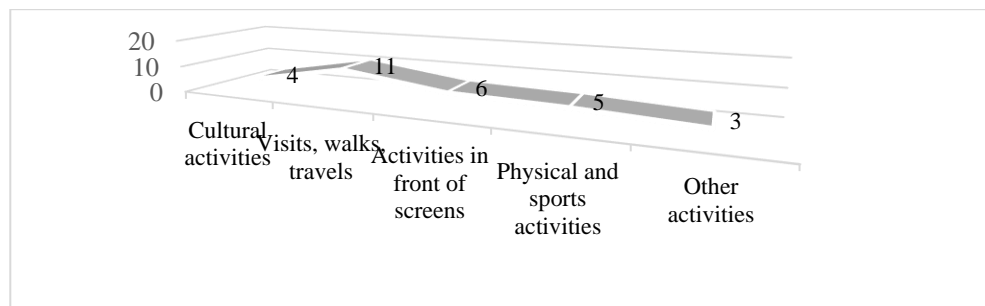


Figure 6. The amount of time urban youth spend on leisure activities

The conclusions of a study conducted by Leovaridis and Antimiu show that “young people prefer passive ways of spending their free time: watching TV shows, listening to the radio and music, surfing the Internet, to the detriment of physical exercise and cultural consumption – going to the theater, opera, cinema” (2017, p. 291). The data in the diagram above show that the young people with higher education, whom we interviewed, allocate the most time to visits, walks and travels (37.93 %). All other leisure activities have much smaller and approximately equal percentages, and activities in front of screens are chosen in a proportion of 20.68 %.

Respondents' most enjoyable leisure activity

The time people spend outside of their work-related activities is considered to have a major impact on their sense of well-being, happiness and life satisfaction (EUROSTAT, 2024). Therefore, what we like to do in our free time matters, although it is influenced by social pressures and professional challenges, marked by increasing constraints.

We followed, as a secondary objective, whether social activities are considered more enjoyable than those related to time spent personally, individually and independently. To the open-ended question “What do you like to do most in your free time?”, we received a series of vague answers: “I don't know”, “What could I like?”, “I have no idea” etc. We received the most elaborate answers from young people with higher education in urban areas. Most people choose to escape into nature, travel and learn about other cultures, but also participate in cultural events (e.g. shows, watching plays or movies).

We note the option for social activities, an aspect also highlighted in other recent research: “Transcending traditional divisions between formal and informal, public and private, physical and digital, space, several youth cultures interact with parks, squares, shopping malls, bedrooms, and online platforms as potential contexts of leisure where space does not merely serve as a backdrop but becomes an integral component of practices, belongings, identities” (Genova and Tolonen, 2025, p. 1). Health and cultural activities (walking and listening to music), as well as family and social life were the most notable among socialization activities.

5. Limitations

Based on the responses received, we made some findings about how young people with higher education in urban areas spend their free time. However, there are some aspects that we did not analyze and that deserve more attention. It may be important to consider the combination of socio-professional status with other defining socio-demographic characteristics, such as class and ethnicity. It is also interesting to observe whether there are differences between leisure practices of women and men. We did not analyze all the individual characteristics of the respondents, but comparisons can be made between young people and adults based on several criteria (e.g. the main obstacles affecting both the amount of leisure time and its quality include technology addiction in young people and work or raising/educating children in adults). It remains to be investigated whether young people, who have more leisure time, effectively use it. In addition, the focus could be placed on selecting the most relevant dimensions and practices of leisure.

6. Conclusions

Researching subgroups without understanding their motives is of little value in drawing conclusions about the meaning of leisure in society. Leisure should not be seen simply as time free from obligations and worries, but should be understood in the context of the meanings that individuals in contemporary societies attribute to it. In addition to the main functions of leisure time (rest, entertainment and personal development), there are also particular ones, which are related to psychological and socio-cultural characteristics. We found that there are differences between young people and adults in terms of spending leisure time and we reached some conclusions regarding how young people with higher education in urban areas spend it. Firstly, they devote most of their leisure time to personal and social development. Secondly, they have little and very little leisure time, which may also be due to the need for permanent connectivity (telephone, e-mail, social networks) and that makes it seem shorter or more fragmented. Thirdly, they have less leisure time compared to young people in rural areas, but also to adults (from both geographical areas). Fourthly, we note that young people in urban areas are involved in intellectual and social activities to an approximately equal extent and allocate the most time to visits, meetings with friends, walks and travels. Young people with higher education in urban areas choose to escape to nature, travel, and learn about other cultures, but they participate in cultural events and socialize more than adults.

Youth policies should recognize that young people spend their leisure time in a diverse range of contexts and access different leisure practices. Leisure practices play a vital role in human development, well-being and social cohesion, and societies with equitable access to leisure time report higher levels of life satisfaction and civic engagement. Far from being just “leisure time”, they serve as essential components of a physically, mentally and socially balanced life.

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