

FEATURES OF WORKING STUDENTS LEISURE

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Anotacija

Straipsnyje aptariami dirbančių studentų laisvalaikio ypatumai. Laisvalaikį galima nusakyti kaip laisvą nuo/po apmokamo darbo bei studijų veiklą, skirtą visuomeninių bei asmeninių poreikių tenkinimui: rekreacinį laiką, laiką kūrybai, laisvą laiką kitiems tikslams. Tyrimo metodas – internetinė apklausa, respondentai – studentai – virtualios bendruomenės nariai bei kiti „sniego gniūžčių“ atrankos būdu į tyrimo imtį patekę respondentai.

Šio straipsnio tikslai:

- Pateikti laisvalaikio sampratą;
- Aptarti virtualios tyrimo aplinkos bruožus;
- Aptarti dirbančių studentų laisvalaikio ypatumus.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: laisvalaikis, dirbantys studentai, virtuali bendruomenė.

Abstract

The features of working students' leisure are discussed in this article. Leisure of working students is defined as the time free of paid work or studies/after paid work or studies, intended for the fulfillment of social and personal needs: recreational time, time for creative work and free time intended for other purposes. The applied research method is an internet questionnaire survey. The respondents of the survey are students – members of the virtual community - and other respondents who have been selectively chosen for the research by sampling them on the grounds of the snowball sampling method.

The objectives of this article are as follows:

- To present the concept of leisure;
- To discuss the characteristics of virtual research environment;
- To discuss the peculiarities of working students' leisure.

KEYWORDS: leisure, working students, virtual community.

Introduction

Leisure is frequently defined as the time left over after paid work. This definition is somewhat misleading for those people who do not have paid work: women at home, the unemployed, and the elderly [1].

J. Leonavičius defines leisure as „a part of time of a person, a group of people and community, devoted for optional activities of a person (or people), which aid him or her (them) in regaining and developing strength [5]. In a narrower sense leisure is time, spent not at work and without performing any obligatory activities. In a broader sense leisure is the activity selected by people themselves.

The concept of leisure is defined by several variables: time, free time, work (paid and unpaid), and etc.

The study subjects when asked about their leisure, often state that they have no leisure time at all or attribute leisure to the time intended for finishing tasks not performed at work. Therefore, attention should be paid to divergent perception of time. This is exactly the point, i.e. to establish how the whole society or an individual perceive time, how significant time is in one or another culture, where to start discussing leisure planning: development and support of leisure infrastructure. Leisure quality evaluation is especially relevant in the conditions of today's modern life, when, as many sociologists tend to

notice, there is a feeling of increasing lack of leisure time of subjects, and time planning in general becomes more inefficient [4]. Given that work activities are more or less regulated, people often define only holiday activities or have no holidays altogether. Since there are no laws regulating the quality of leisure, these are private concerns of individuals.

There are 3 free time areas to be defined:

1. Recreational time: various trips, attending cultural events, entertainment, sports, and doing nothing.
2. Time for creative work: artistic work, collecting, technical creative works and public work.
3. Free time intended for other purposes: participation in politics, education of children, repair works at home, interaction with other people, and other activities.

What is work? In a narrow sense work is an activity, which is paid for, and in a broader sense, it is the employment of physical and mental powers in attaining a certain objective. Thus, two concepts originate: paid and unpaid work. Unpaid work covers such areas of productive activities as household activities; housekeeping; taking care of children, elder members of the family; voluntary work in such communal

organizations as the church, nursing-home, hospital; and etc.

Such internal factors, which are independent of a person, as the climate, political situation, economic state, natural and cultural activities, and etc., can fundamentally alter the needs of a person.

Some researches identify public and personal leisure. According to them, public leisure is the time, which is devoted by each and every society for planning leisure of the society members (in order to satisfy intellectual, spiritual and physical needs), and personal leisure which is free personal time of each.

Individual free time pertains to likes and dislikes of a particular person, his/her needs, interests and opportunities on offer in the society for spending one's free time.

Leisure is a rather important factor for cultural development of people. Still, leisure has to be evaluated as only one of the prerequisites, although very important, for cultural development of a person. However, it is even more important to remember that leisure has no significance without developed cultural infrastructure. In order to perceive leisure as a certain time intended for perfection and development of a person, we need to understand the significance of cultural measures and development of cultural infrastructure in the process of leisure planning.

The object of this research is leisure of working students.

In summary of the above-mentioned it may be maintained that leisure of working students is defined as the time free of paid work or studies/ after paid work or studies, intended for the fulfillment of social and personal needs: recreational time, time for creative work, and free time intended for other purposes.

The main question which is to be answered when discussing leisure is to identify whether it is sufficient for the fulfillment of spiritual and physical needs of a person.

The scientific problem of this research has been based on several research questions:

- What social cultural factors are influencing the leisure of working students?
- Do respondents consider leisure as a value, i.e. is it used purposefully?

The main research goals are as follows:

- To present the concept of leisure;
- To discuss the characteristics of virtual research environment;
- To discuss the peculiarities of working students leisure.

Research methods:

- Review of scientific literature;
- Anonymous survey of extramural students on the Internet. They have been selected using the snowball method, and they filled the questionnaire form developed in communication and cooperation by KTU extramural students in the virtual space (available at: <http://distance.ktu.lt/kursai/webreg/?a=229>).

The main variables are family, work, income, leisure, and cultural events.

Some Insights about Virtual Environment

Prior to discussing characteristics of leisure of working students, we should define the virtual environment, in which questionnaire survey of the respondents was performed.

Virtual means possible and apparent; able or due to express itself in certain circumstances: this is the explanation proposed in the international dictionary. In everyday language this word normally means something that should be (but is not) real or actual, however it has the same effect and performs identical functions – it is some kind of a mirage. The community is a sort of a direct link to community relations between persons and objects. The community of qualities, characteristics, identity or ideas is significant. Virtual communities originated soon after appearance of the first computer networks in the 1950s. But only in the end of the 1960s there was a sufficient amount of computer users in order to develop any user society. „Virtual communities“ are the communities of various types having specific regulations and dynamics and interacting with communities of other types [3].

Some researchers maintain that the Internet users have particular motivation to enter networks and they do this on the basis of their interests and values. It namely provides the basis for self-creation of virtual communities. They are not physical communities; however they are not “unreal”, since they do exist on the other level of reality. Virtual communities act as interpersonal social networks, which are based on specialized and miscellaneous weak associations which can create the atmosphere of reciprocity and support at the time of communication [2].

The most important factor in the self-creation process of virtual communities is not the physical environment, but common interests or objectives. It is a group of people who have no physical existence and have almost no physical contact. It can only exist with the mediation of technologies. Howard Rheingold proposes the following definition of the virtual community: *virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace* [7].

The virtual community has discussion on certain topics, which are relevant to the whole member group: they play games, develop group projects, work in a virtual organization, spend free time, and have fun. Below there are several considerations by David Porter, mentioned in his book „Internet Culture“, on the definition what a virtual community is:

1. It is sharing of communicative space with invisible others. It is a crowd which gathers in virtual textual reality of postmodern culture, where the struggle for attention goes on between the party and art exhibitions discussion groups. It is a synergetic total of individuals, who perceive themselves as the citizens of the Net with the capital N. They create the so called Internet culture.

2. Virtual community is an illusion of a community, where there are no real people and real communication. It is a term used by idealist technophiles, who find it impossible to perceive that reality can not be transferred through technologies.

3. Virtual community is a blooming garden in the cobweb of technologies; democratic values and the feeling of “intimate” communication thrive herein.

Results & Discussion

The sample consists of 491 respondents, most of whom are students of Lithuanian higher education university and non-university institutions, combining both studies and work. 70 percent of the respondents were women. Their age varied from 19 to 56 years, and the age average was 32.2 years. The largest share of the respondents were the residents in cities (66 percent), others lived in smaller towns (26 percent), villages and settlements (8 percent of all the respondents). The analysis of the family situation revealed the following facts: 237 (48 percent) of the respondents were married, half of the respondents had less children and only 17 of them were families with three children and more.

The respondents employed in the research were working students of various study forms; however most of them (72 percent) were extramural students. There were two groups of students distinguished, daily leisure of which amounted to no more than 3 hours a day.

Despite the variety of activities, most of the respondents (302; 62 percent) have a full-time work to do; others work overtime, part-time or on a shift basis. The respondents exercise various functions at work; however managers (87), administrators, secretaries-referents, consultants (36), educators (28), accountants (23), salespersons (16), directors, superintendents (13), caregivers (13) and consultants were predominant. One priest also participated in the research.

What is the average monthly income of a family? Considering the knowledge that many young families in Lithuania, especially those with children, manage with difficulty, it is amazing that 367 respondents (75 percent) have a monthly income that exceeds LTL 1000, and 47 percent of them have an income that exceeds LTL 2000.

What is the monthly amount of money budgeted by respondents for leisure?

Only 67 respondents (14 percent) indicated that they reserve the amount up to LTL 50, and 107 respondents invest more than LTL 300 into leisure (every fifth of the respondents). The remaining respondents reserve more modest amounts for entertainment.

Is leisure planned by the respondents in advance?

23 percent of the respondents answered “Yes”, they do plan leisure in advance, and every fifth of the respondents answered “No”. The largest group of respondent (56 percent) plan leisure from time to time.

What are the ways for spending leisure common for working students? (It should be noted that the respondents could choose more than one answer in this question)

As the data reveals respondents find various acceptable leisure forms, however the most favorite ones are communication with relatives and friends (417 respondents), watching TV (272 respondents), reading books and going to movies (179 respondents), sports (143 respondents) and other leisure activities (see Figure):

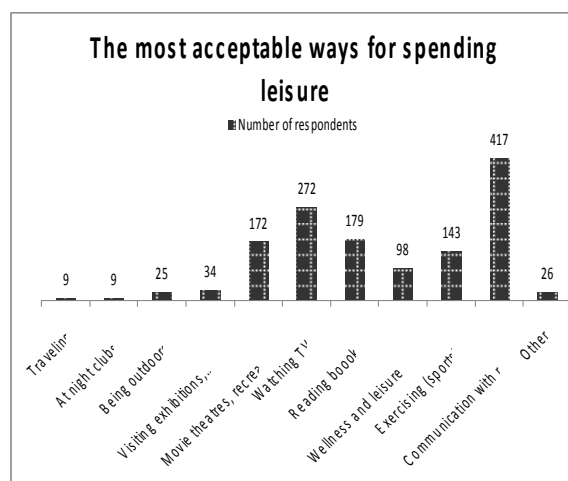


Figure. The most acceptable ways for spending leisure

**Source: created by authors*

These leisure options are supplemented by the answers to another question: What kind of leisure do working students prefer?

Most of them combine active and passive recreation (67 percent), 23 percent enjoy active sports and the remaining 9 percent of the respondents are the lovers of passive recreation.

Is there a sufficient amount of cultural events for working students in their place of residence?

More than a half of all the working students state that there is a sufficient amount of cultural events in their place of residence (57 percent); other respondents tend to search for cultural impressions in other cities. However, only every tenth student does it, and 68 percent do this only occasionally, and culture in other cities is not sought by every fifth of the respondents. The fact that actually one fourth of all the respondents provided no answer to the above-mentioned question allowed the assumption that leisure to them was of no value.

And finally, When do the working students study? Most of the respondents (230; 47 percent) replied that they studied on their own at weekends, 261 respondents (53 percent) indicated that they studied during other time. Can it be that working students have opportunities to learn at the workplace? The answer “Yes” has been indicated by 246 students. It is interesting what kind of tasks they perform. This may be identified by another research.

Going back to the results of the presented research the question is whether the results surprised us.

While answering this question we tried to present the picture of working students.

Work and studies in the institutions of higher education are combined by both men and women; however the number of the latter is significantly higher. People in their thirties are ready to accept such challenges of life (working and studying at the same time), including those who have families or are single. Approximately a half of them have children, and the number of children is usually 1 or 2. The monthly income of working students noticeably exceed the income of an average resident in Lithuania, from which up to one third of the amount is

intended for leisure. In order to have a good salary, it is necessary to combine work and studies. Therefore, most working students chose extramural form of studies. The most popular positions are those of a manager, administrator, consultant, salesperson, and etc. Knowing what giants of service industry have been established in Lithuania, we would find no difficulty to recognize workplaces of our respondents: Akropolis, Maxima, Senukai, and etc. It is perhaps the reason why most of them live in larger cities and regional centers, spend most of their leisure with relatives and friends, enjoy "home culture" watching TV, reading books, going to cultural events in other cities, and also like to participate in sports activities.

For comparison we present the description of a student referring to the social situation and cultural needs of full time students at Kaunas higher education institutions almost 10 years ago:

„Full time students are people financially dependent on their parents, not working or unable to subsist on their income (most of them have no their own accommodation). Uncertainty of financial situation has an impact on attitudes of the respondents (even of postgraduates) towards marriage and family by postponing it for some future date. Therefore, the surveyed students may be evaluated as a marginal group that needs an exceptional attention from the state institutions through balanced system of lending and social security“ [6].

It may be maintained that a modern young working person striving for higher education becomes more oriented towards financial independence from her/his parents, searches for fullness of life, invests into entertainment, however his/her leisure is for the most part related to the home culture.

Conclusions

Leisure, often referred to as free time, is the time spent out of work and essential domestic activity.

The object of this research is leisure of working students, because they often state that they have no leisure time at all or attribute leisure to the time intended for finishing tasks not performed at work

The students have prepared a questionnaire for investigating leisure activities of working students, which was prepared in communication and cooperation in the virtual environment.

During the research it has not only been established where and how working students spend their leisure, but also the picture of a working student has been drawn. The individual can not be seen as only the subject of certain needs: a person is the subject and the object of social interactions. Considering this viewpoint the individual should be valued both as the member of the actual community and the member of the virtual community.

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DIRBANČIŲ STUDENTŲ LAISVALAIKIO BRUOŽAI

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S a n t r a u k a

Kas yra laisvalaikis? Į šį klausimą nelengva atsakyti ne tik tiriamiesiems, apie tai diskutuoja tyrinėtojai. Suvokdami laisvalaikį kaip laisvą, po apmokamo darbo bei studijų veiklą, keliam klausimą - ar jo pakanka tenkinti dvasines bei fizines žmogaus reikmes? Kadangi užimti žmonės neretai teigia neturį laisvo laiko, nusprendėme pasidomėti dirbančių studentų, ypač studijuojančių neakivaizdžiai, laisvalaikio ypatumais.

Pagrindinis tyrimo uždavinys – išsiaiškinti bei aptarti minėtos kategorijos žmonių laisvalaikio ypatumus internetinės apklausos būdu. „Sniego gniūžčių“ būdu buvo suformuota 491 respondentų imtis. Tyrimas buvo atliktas virtualioje aplinkoje, bendraujant ir bendradarbiaujant neakivaizdinių studijų studentams. Jo metu buvo išgylinta į dirbančių studentų laisvalaikio struktūrą bei jo raiškos ypatumus.