

HEALTH-ORIENTED ROLE OF LEISURE TIME: SELECTED ASPECTS

Leisure time plays an important role in life of every human and performs many functions. Although forms of spending leisure time might vary, the most valuable for humans is active spending this time. Active relax and physical recreation allows for recovery of both physical and mental strength and development of abilities, interests and learning social skills. This study focuses on health-oriented role of leisure time i.e. preventive, therapeutic and compensatory functions.

Key words: leisure time, health, health-oriented function, forms of spending free time, educational and social aspect, family, peer group.

Introduction. Leisure time is particularly good time for promotion of health and healthy lifestyles: it is the process that helps people control and improve their health. Health promotion represents the pillar of health policies implemented by WHO and consists in activities aimed at improving health status and social awareness. These activities are oriented so that political, social, cultural, economic and environmental measures have a positive effect on health of citizens¹.

Health promotion includes the most of health-oriented initiatives which are aimed at improving physical, psychical and social fitness of the people with different health potential in order for them to function better in everyday life².

Health promotion is implemented at all levels of education of children and young people during extracurricular activities and among employees in various enterprises through media, institutions and social organization.

Sociocultural transitions that were observed in Poland caused also changes in lifestyles, including more focus on care for the health of families and entire communities. The changes also raised awareness of the fact that being successful depends on psychophysical fitness of the human. On the other hand, adults, young people and children are overloaded with professional, school and extracurricular duties which broaden knowledge, classes that prepare for attractive studies at universities, which causes that these persons feel the deficit of the leisure time. The progressing technologization, computerization and motorization caused that the contemporary human has little physical exercise and movement, which leads to a variety of diseases of affluence. Nowadays, leisure time and management of this time have become an important social and pedagogical problem and the focus of investigations carried out by numerous researchers. Doctors, pedagogues and psychologists are emphasizing the need for

¹ B. Woynarowska, *Edukacja zdrowotna*, Warsaw 2007, p. 129.

² A. Gniazdowski, Promocja zdrowia, [in:] *Zdrowie publiczne: wybrane zagadnienia*, ed. J.A. Indulski et al., Łódź 2000, pp. 334–338.

organization and purposive education and preparation of people to relax actively i.e. «education for leisure time». The aim of these initiatives is to organize recreational situations which would release and establish positive habits of mental health and relaxing, and would stimulate development of models of valuable games and activities and skilful using the cultural goods, which consequently leads to active participation in social life.

With respect to the relations between lifestyles and human health a term «health-oriented» has been used, which means a set of everyday behaviours of individuals or communities that are conducive to maintaining and reinforcement of physical, social and spiritual health. People are more and more often taking conscious activities oriented towards increasing their health potential and eliminate behaviours that endanger their psychophysical status. They understand that care for body, physical activity, rational diets, sleeping and safe behaviours positively affect professional careers and achievement of higher position in the society. This is particularly noticeable among young people, who are well-educated and have high aspirations for their future.

The most important period where health-oriented habits are established is childhood and youth, with the most essential effect on such behaviours being from the family, school, peer group and the mass media. They form the model of a slim person with attractive exterior, caring for health and environment, involved in sports and travels, and approaching other people with optimism.

Biopsychical development of human necessitates creative acting, relaxing, entertaining and meeting the social needs according to tastes and hygienic requirements. The desirable health behaviours are most effectively established during leisure time and education for recreation should start in early childhood.

In everyday leisure time, which represents an essential form of family life, the first means of recreation are playing and games.

Physical recreation in families is not only the pleasure but it helps learn active lifestyles, stimulates interest in physical exercise, represents a model for reference for children and reinforces family ties. Spending time together actively helps integrate the partners of recreation, who include not only children but also mothers, parents and grandparents. Parents' and children's participating together in physical activity helps familiarize with their own bodies, develop postural habits and coordination, improve health status, immunity and level of physical fitness of parents¹.

The aim of this study is to emphasize the health-oriented role of leisure time, its importance in psychophysical development of children and young people as well as adults and seniors.

Physical culture is not an alternative for the leisure time but it should become the duty of every contemporary human and a guarantee for their physical and mental health.

¹ U. Parnicka, *Rekreacja fizyczna w rodzinie*, Bielsko-Biała 2000, www.eid.edu.pl, *Czasopismo*, luty 2000 [24.01.2014].

1. Leisure time and its health-oriented and recreational functions

Leisure time, i.e. all the activities that an individual is involved, on their own, either for entertainment or self-development, represents an element of social life and is a component of culture and carrier of cultural values that determine the quality of life¹. Leisure time is not the intrinsic value. However, it helps take the activity which an individual finds valuable².

The amount of leisure time in developed societies has increased due to the statutory shortening of the working time, similarly to the number of holidays a year. Therefore, leisure time has become a mass phenomenon that consequently leads to development of entertainment, sports and recreation sectors, oriented at attracting consumers and selling new services.

Nowadays, leisure time is becoming the need which has to be met, forming the quality of life and connected with various health aspects. Fatigue caused by working, fast and unhealthy eating, being in a hurry, noise, insufficient time of sleeping and addictions cause deterioration of health status of society³.

Leisure time has its historical, social and cultural grounds, with the form to manage this time changing substantially over the centuries. Life of primitive people depended on conditions of the nature, which caused cyclic changes in physical and psychical activity and relax, with a determining role played by the cycles of sunrise and sunset. By day, people hunted and collected food, whereas at night, they rested in caves and shelters⁴.

In antiquity, leisure time represented the privilege of higher social strata which spent this time individually or in groups on short rides, races, hunting, playing, theatrical and poetry performances. However, this time was not the privilege of slaves.

In the Middle Ages, the forms of spending the leisure time developed and permeated to lower social strata, which was connected with development of literature, music, architecture and theatre.

During the times of feudal economy and social stratification, landowners had a lot of leisure time and used the goods of culture, whereas peasants usually spent their leisure time to rest and recover physical strength.

In the Age of Enlightenment, the focus was not only on the human labour but also on the culture of spending the leisure time which was the privilege of all the citizens.

The most of the people living in the 16th and 17th century were devoid of the leisure time since the border between the leisure time and working time was not clearly defined. In the households, where

¹ K. Danek, *Edukacja pozalekcyjna i pozaszkolna*, Poznań 2011, p. 89 and further.

² B. Milerski, B. Śliwerski (ed.), *Pedagogika*, Warsaw 2005, p. 90.

³ B. Woynarowska, *Edukacja zdrowotna i promocja zdrowia w szkole*, Warsaw 2006, p. 11.

⁴ K. Danek, *Ku pedagogice czasu wolnego i jego wartości*, «Lider» 2010/1, p. 6.

working was the basic source of income and the way to survive, leisure time was treated as wasting time. Relaxing and playing was often connected with working, whereas dancing and singing were a part of everyday chores¹.

In the modern times, organization of leisure time was usually managed by the Church, whereas the church services were organized in decorated chapels, filled with music, Nativity plays and scenes. Townspeople took part in masses, processions, pilgrimages or celebrations organized by municipal authorities e.g. enthronements, homage's, funerals, marches and, in the 17th century, one of the forms of entertainment were public executions.

With the development of humanistic and economic sciences, the problems of leisure time started to be discussed in various aspects. After the World War I, the efforts of numerous organizations and trade unions to sanction shorter working time for workers were realized and, in 1919 in Washington, the postulate was proposed for organization of holidays for employees. In the interwar period, modern forms of spending leisure time started to be formed.

In the Polish People's Republic, leisure time became a part of social policy of the state, with programs for leisure time. A system that organized collective forms of relax, holiday, company's trips, integration camps, camps for children and young people and extracurricular activities financed by the state were also developed.

Contemporary legislation also deals with the problem of the leisure time e.g. Art 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that children have rights for the leisure time and relax and the member states are obliged to create conditions for proper management of the leisure time with consideration for children's development through cultural, artistic and recreational activities.

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) defines that the child should be provided with opportunities for playing and entertainment which should positively affect psychophysical development².

Leisure time meets a variety of functions which can be divided into the two types: social and educational. Leisure time is an essential element in society. Without this element, society cannot function properly. It performs the recreational (recovery of strength) function, helps eliminate negative emotions, develop skills necessary for proper functioning within society, talents, passions and hobbies. Furthermore, it integrates individuals with each other, and, among young people, allows for emphasizing individual independence and separateness from adults³.

In pedagogy, leisure time has a particular value since it performs a number of functions, with particular focus on preventive, therapeutic and compensatory functions. In the health aspect, leisure

¹ B. Geremek, *Człowiek i zabawa: Kultura ludyczna*, [in:] *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV-XV w.*, ed. B. Geremek, Warsaw 1997, pp. 511-513.

² S.P. Manson, C. Prince Cohen, *Dzieci w prawie o edukacji*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 21.

³ R. Winiarski, *Rekreacja i czas wolny*, Warsaw 2001, p. 146 and further.

time protects the body from the excess load resulting from school or professional duties, thus performing the preventive role by protecting health, releasing the excess of energy, providing oxygen to organs (thus improving cardiac and pulmonary performance and helping the body remove the toxins accumulated as a result of unhealthy diets or using drugs) and accelerates metabolism¹.

Physical activity stimulates human brain and helps improve intellectual performance and concentration, reinforce body immunity through adjustment to changing atmospheric conditions. The speed and precision of movements improve, muscle mass increases while the silhouette is becoming more attractive and positively affects the appearance².

Ability of relaxation connected with proper breathing reduces stress and hyperactivity and helps reduce tension and control emotions.

Good leisure time management prevents risky behaviours, addictions and educational difficulties, thus orienting human activity at demanded forms. Recreational activity delays the processes of ageing, prevents a variety of illnesses and represents one of the factors which predict longevity. The World Health Organization proposes promotion of programs which concern activity of senior citizens, which positively affects their quality of life. The organization emphasizes that the activities should be highly individualized and matched to the capacity level of seniors. WHO recommends a variety of types of exercise to prevent blood clots, cardiac infarctions and ageing-associated diseases, such as stretching, walking, swimming, cycling, gymnastics, balance and flexibility training. Various forms of recreation, e.g. tourism, games, club activities might be effective in preventing physical and mental changes and open up the opportunities for stopping the monotony of the everyday life and enjoying healthy and attractive spending leisure time³.

Active recreation in leisure time also performs a therapeutic role as it treats and reduces different psychophysical problems⁴. Movement and properly selected physical exercise represents a therapeutic factor, whereas treatment with movement has been recommended by doctors in supporting treatment of many illnesses, such as cerebrovascular incidents, cardiac infarctions, obesity and metabolism disorders, postural problems, nerve root problems, disorders in the area of hip, knee and elbow joints.

Physical exercise represents a cure which affects the whole body and allows for recovery of previous fitness but it is merely the first step in the therapy and it re-educates in terms of social behaviours.

¹ T. Sidor, *Sport i rekreacja ruchowa jako czynnik profilaktyki resocjalizacyjnej*, [in:] *Profilaktyka i resocjalizacja*, ed. F. Kozaczuk, B. Urban, Rzeszów 2001, p. 79 and further.

² I. Iwaniec, *Czas wolny młodzieży licealnej*, [in:] *Formy spędzania czasu wolnego*, ed. M. Banach, T.W. Gierat, Kraków 2013, p. 42.

³ G. Orzechowska, *Aktualne problemy gerontologii społecznej*, Olsztyn 1999, p. 28 and further.

⁴ E. Karpuszenko, A. Marzec, *Sport w resocjalizacji nieletnich*, Częstochowa 2008, p. 51 and further.

Recreational activities in leisure time, such as aerobics, jogging, stretching, yoga, Nordic walking, zumba or salsa might contribute to improvement of good mood.

Valuable forms of spending leisure time are hiking, cycling, skiing, horse-riding and automotive tourism. It should be emphasized that tourism plays an important role in rehabilitation of people with disability and those chronically ill since it improves health status through supporting the processes of recovery, regaining strength and compensation for the damaged bodily functions. Exercise connected with participation in trips motivates for overcoming weaknesses, increases self-confidence, removes stress, tensions and frustration states connected with an illness and might be both an adventure and cure, both exercise and relax¹.

Proper and skilful organization of leisure time, with regard for actual needs and abilities, might be one of many therapeutic factors which are helpful in the process of treatment. Providing the ill with proper literature, CDs, relaxation exercise program and helping them participate in events and performances improves their mood, thus having a positive effect on the treatment².

During their leisure time, people participate in a number of situations that make us laugh and happy. Laughter positively affects the function of many internal organs and helps improve our mental health. When people laugh, they inhale greater volume of air to their lungs, thus providing more oxygen to the body, heart and the cardiovascular system. Laughter causes physiological changes in function of the immunological system, thus improving its performance, elevating production of endorphins, helps unwind and enjoy better mood. Therefore, it is often used during treatment of depression and psychosomatic disorders. Laughter is a form of massage as it stimulates strong vibrations in the body, intensive movements of the diaphragm and muscles of the chest. Skin also becomes supple and affects the muscles of the palate and throat, which is useful in treatment of speech disorders.

Laughter therapy (or gelotherapy from Greek *gelos* meaning laughter) has been used all over the world for treatment of the chronically ill in hospital wards. There are also «laughter clubs» where participants take part in group sessions of laughter therapy, which is also an attractive element during various parties³.

The observation that «the better patient's mood the more effective the treatment» has been widely appreciated by contemporary doctors.

The therapeutic function of leisure time is closely correlated with the compensatory function, which consists in compensation of the deficiency to supplement developmental potential, meeting the needs and perceived deficiencies that affect proper function of personality.

¹ S. Stasiak, *Rola krajoznawstwa i turystyki w życiu osób z niepełnosprawnością*, Warsaw 2008, p. 3 and further.

² M. Banach, J. Kuźmicz, *Czas wolny a jakość życia pacjentów w opiece paliatywnej*, [in:] *Formy spędzania czasu wolnego...*, p. 42.

³ [http://treningantystresowy.pl/terapia śmiechem](http://treningantystresowy.pl/terapia%20śmiechem) [2014.09.01].

2. Forms of spending leisure among for contemporary young people: example of studies

The survey which is discussed in this study was carried out among 100 pupils from junior schools in Częstochowa, Poland, and concerned the budget and spending the leisure time.

Young people living in urban areas have at least 3 hours of leisure time a day (60%), 28% have more leisure time, whereas 8% of the students have less than 1 hour of leisure time a day. The most of them (66%) have too little leisure time, 42% of them choose the forms of spending this time on their own, in 18% of the respondents this decision is made by parents, in 12% by friends and in 10% by school.

Young people (78%) spend their leisure time with peers, 14% alone and 8% with families.

The place where the young people like to spend their leisure time the most is family home (38%). Some 34% of them spend this time at friend's place, 33% in the playground and nearest neighborhoods, 18% in shopping malls, 18% in the cinema, 17% on the pitch, 8% in the swimming pool. The most frequent forms of spending leisure time declared by the students (with multiple choice in the questionnaire) is listening to the music (39%), surfing the Internet (36%), computer games (36%), watching the TV (27%), meeting friends (23%), reading (22%), walking (20%), sleeping (7%), inactivity (3%).

The most of the respondents (88%) spent their leisure time in a useful manner, whereas 12% declared that they wasted their leisure time.

Young people spend their leisure time in front of the computer from 1.5 to 2 hours a day (23%) and 18% of them for 3 hours. They also watch films and listen to the music (32%), communicate with others (23%) and do their homework (19%).

They rarely watch the TV for 1 hour a day (43%) and 9% of them watch the TV for more than 3 hours. The most frequent TV programs include serials, entertainment, news and films. The low level of physical activity is also indicated by the fact that 43% of the students spend ca. 1 hour a day exercising, with 29% not being involved in any sports at all.

The substantial contribution to organization of leisure time is from school, which promotes various forms of activity. The most frequent forms are subject clubs, which was indicated by 43% of the students, school sports clubs, trips organized by schools (28%), going to cinema or theatre, participation in activities of social organizations, competitions and artistic performances.

The study showed that leisure time was associated by young people mainly with the time outside the school, including also the household duties they have to do every day. Although students have a wide choice of spending their leisure time, they usually choose passive relax in their family homes, not using it rationally. A small part of young people spend leisure time actively, choosing the activities proposed by the school. Leisure time is mainly associated with passive relax and quiet (20%) and young people do not realize the health benefits.

The biggest obstacle in better organization of their leisure time was lack of money (48%), necessity of commuting to recreational places (42%), laziness and passivity (34%). Undoubtedly, families have the greatest effect on development of models of spending leisure time and such conditions as: financial conditions, intellectual and moral status of parents, family climate, habits and interests of the members of family. Amount and forms of leisure time have essential effect on the quality of human life and the fundamental role in education for recreation in early childhood is played by mother, father, siblings and grandparents. Leisure time represents a specific form of family life and one of the benefits is integration of families. For families, being involved in active recreation together has educational values, whereas pleasant and healthy spending leisure time stimulates the passion for physical exercise, helps establish models of behaviour for children and positive, healthy habits.

Through contacts with adults during physical exercise classes, children learn why exercising is so important and which benefits it might bring, which causes that physical exercise is a form of health-oriented education. Family recreation programs are more and more often implemented, created by the employees of local institutions, associations, churches and parishes. Their goal is to equip families in the skills of using the opportunities offered by proper management of leisure time in performance of the health, socialization and emotional function of the family. It is also essential to develop the family's ability to relax, care for body and equip the family in information and skills that allow for lifelong participation in sports and integration i.e. reinforcing the ties between family members. The forms to be implemented during the school year include outdoor forms i.e. games and activities for stimulation and recreation, marches, gymnastics, «health routes», cycling and skating elements, swimming and playing in water, general strength conditioning.

During days off from school, the most attractive forms of family relax include walking, cycling, activities in theme parks, during feasts and picnics.

Another environment that forms the model of behaviour in leisure time is school since one of the goals of education is development of interests and liking for recreation and sports, which result from the natural need for movement and are a characteristic developmental property of children and young people.

The extracurricular classes organized by schools and institutions present in local environments promote various forms of activities adjusted to the age and interests of students. They represent a voluntary form of participation in special activities, taught by instructors, such as increasingly popular tennis, dancing, classes in fitness clubs and gyms, playing knights, football, volleyball, basketball, climbing walls or various forms of tourism.

Among the centers of extracurricular education are «youth palaces», youth community centers, local community centers, community halls and clubs which offer more and more attractive recreational activities, also for working young people.

Various associations and foundations are becoming more and more important for organization of leisure time, similar to mass media which promote healthy lifestyles, raising social awareness in terms of health-oriented behaviours.

Conclusions

We are living in the times when human work needs more responsibility and requires good psychophysical health of both employees and students. Sedentary lifestyles connected with working and development of motorization has caused limitation of physical activity, which consequently has led to deterioration of health among contemporary people living in Poland. A substantial percentage of children and young people suffer from postural disorders and reduced motor fitness and a number of problems connected with the lack of physical exercise can be observed among adults. Nowadays, leisure time plays an important role in lives of any human, regardless of age, economic and health status. It might be used for promotion of health and healthy lifestyles. Recreation might represent pleasure, entertainment, a game and allows for strengthening and developing of biological, mental and social area of life of any human and it is also the most efficient form of psychophysical rehabilitation. Movement stimulates development and compensates the occupational load and household duties, whereas in seniors, it delays the ageing processes and is used in treatment of many illnesses.

Benefits of active relaxing are undisputed and more and more often appreciated by the most of people, while social awareness of these benefits is increasing.

An important task for contemporary families and school is to prepare children for rational spending leisure time and stimulate the need for active relaxing and orientation of their activity at demanded behaviours that bring measurable benefits.

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У житті кожної людини дозволя вiдiграє важливу роль i виконує багато функцiй. Форми проведення вiльного часу досить диференцiйованi, однак найцiннiшим для людини є активне проведення дозволя. Активний вiдпочинок та фiзична рекреацiя дозволяє регенерувати фiзичнi i психiчнi сили, а також розвивати здiбностi, зацiкавленостi i набувати суспiльнi вмiння. У статтi зосереджено увагу на оздоровчiй ролi дозволя, тобто на профiлактичнiй, терапевтичнiй i компенсацiйнiй функцiях.

Ключовi слова: дозволя, здоров'я, оздоровча функцiя, форми проведення вiльного часу, фiзична рекреацiя, виховний i суспiльний аспект, сiм'я, школа, група ровесникiв.

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Spośród wielu problemów, przed którymi stoi współczesna szkoła, do najważniejszych i jednocześnie najbardziej złożonych należą zagadnienia dotyczące roli i miejsca mediów w procesie kształcenia. Złożoność tej problematyki determinowana jest kilkoma czynnikami, wśród których do najistotniejszych zaliczam: tempo rozwoju samych mediów; nieprzewidywalność, w dłuższej perspektywie czasowej, kierunku i zakresu rozwoju mediów oraz interdyscyplinarność problematyki.

Słowa kluczowe: media, komunikowanie, komunikaty medialne, proces kształcenia, współczesna szkoła, działania edukacyjne.

Media obecne we wszystkich dziedzinach życia społecznego są zjawiskiem, które, nawet gdybyśmy mieli taki zamiar, nie sposób zatrzymać. Stały się one nie tylko naturalnym elementem środowiska człowieka, narzędziem jego pracy intelektualnej i zawodowej, czynnikiem likwidującym bariery czasu i przestrzeni, ale również istotnym czynnikiem kształtującym system wartości i postaw współczesnego człowieka. T. Goban-Klas stwierdza, iż media stały się jednym z najważniejszych instrumentów władzy społecznej, narzędziem zarządzania i kontroli społecznej, pobudzania innowacyjności, środkiem transmisji i źródłem informacji niezbędnych do funkcjonowania instytucji publicznych. Stanowią forum, na którym prezentowane i rozważane są sprawy życia społecznego, są kluczem do sławy i zdobycia pozy-