

Usage of leisure time by disabled males and females from the Lublin Region*

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Abstract

Introduction. Free time in the life of both the disabled and those who are able bodied is the time of leisure, recovery and entertainment. The disabled utilize more energy and strength for everyday functioning compared to the able bodied, therefore, an adequate managing of the leisure time they possess is of great importance. This is confirmed by the latest results of American studies.

Objectives. The primary objective of the presented study is the presentation of the various of managing and organizing leisure time among disabled males and females living in the Lublin Region, with the consideration of statistical significance.

Materials and method. A total of 360 disabled people were examined – 187 females and 173 males, with physical, mental, complex and sensory disability. The study was conducted by a diagnostic survey with the use of a questionnaire form.

Results. The results of own studies show small variation in the aspects of managing and organizing free time according to the respondents' gender. During their leisure time, both males and females watch TV, listen to the radio, read books and go for walks. They obtain information concerning offers for spending free time from the media, specialist institutions, associations and acquaintances, and expect assistance in the organization of their leisure time from specialist institutions, associations, and family members. The respondents are most interested in participating in a stay in a rehabilitation spa, permanent activities for the disabled, and trips. To-date they have participated in walking tours, bicycle tours, outdoor bivouacs and pilgrimages in the company of their family members and friends.

Key words

disabled males, disabled females, free time, forms of leisure, Lublin Region

INTRODUCTION

The disabled have a relatively large amount of free time at their disposal, because the majority of them are occupationally inactive. The lack of employment leads to resignation from social and cultural life, and even from socializing. Therefore, investigations about their free time are of special importance concerning their activity: low activity leads to a passive attitude which becomes pathological [1]. Opening-up to the disabled, a better understanding of them, including recognition of their needs during leisure time, provide a good opportunity to incorporate them into the sphere of social functioning.

Free time in the lives both of the disabled and able bodied is the time for leisure, recovery, and entertainment. It allows the regaining of strength, restoration of physical and mental balance, after the completion of personal, family-household and occupational duties. It fulfils many functions, such as rehabilitation, compensation, recreational and cultural. The disabled utilize more energy and strength for everyday functioning, compared to the able bodied; therefore, an adequate managing of the leisure time they have is of great importance. Inability to fill this leisure time in an attractive way, through lack of habits shaped in this direction, leads to boredom, frustration, multiplied discouragement, and escape in a world of seeming values [2].

According to A. Hulk [3], the leisure time of those who are mentally retarded should be considered from two aspects – the same values as for the able bodied, and additionally related with the type and degree of retardation. The disabled, considering various conditionings: objective (e.g. difficulties with mobility) and subjective (lack of conviction concerning the possibilities of leading an active life), have a large amount of free time. Generally, this time is not properly managed and used in the process of social rehabilitation.

In 1980, Z. Skórzyński [4] formulated a set of individual and collective demands of disabled students with respect to leisure time. The individual demands covered the need for recovery, participation in entertainment and playing, participation in cultural events, the need for obtaining and exchanging information, reflection and contemplation

During leisure time, the participation in motor activities occupies an important position [5, 6]. However, it should be kept in mind, that for them this participation is considerably hindered [7, 8, 9]. It is a welcome fact that the recent relevant literature provides the results of studies concerning the participation of the disabled in various forms of motor activities [10, 11]. The performance of motor activities considerably facilitates the regaining of efficacy [12, 13].

In the last decade, American and European researchers have undertaken many studies, the results of which show the determinants of the participation of disabled children in free

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time activities, and their relationship with the quality of life of the participant. American, Canadian, Dutch and Italian children and adolescents with cerebral palsy experience many limitations, also pertaining to participation in recreational activities. Although the possibilities of participating in recreation are determined by age, gender, own limitations, family preferences, motivations, coping, environmental resources, and possibility to obtain support, they contribute to the improvement in daily life functioning [14, 15, 16, 17].

The importance of physical activity among the elderly disabled is emphasized by researchers on various continents: in South America, based on the example of Brazil [18], Asia and the Pacific [19], Australia [20], and Europe [21, 22].

An effect of recreational exercises in the lives of the disabled is increasingly commonly perceived: their beneficial effect on bone mineral density [23], the role of mobile games in their activation [24], projects of hospital treatment [25], rehabilitation after cerebral stroke [26], and leisure with the use of recreational games [27].

Kerr et al. [28] draw attention to the fact that the main problem of the disabled is the considerably greater difficulty in finding a job, which creates a serious discomfort for their psychical wellbeing. In their studies, the researchers confirmed that participation in recreational activities favours relaxation and reduces stress in the disabled afflicted by unemployment.

According to W. Dykcik [29] any form of spending free time is an ideal platform for actions on behalf of integration, which allows the disabled to remain themselves while among others. Integration in this sense may apply to all spheres of the life of a disabled person – family life, general and vocational education, occupational activity, leisure time, and social activity.

The results of all-Polish studies within the 2002 National Population and Housing Census in the Lublin Region showed the highest intensity of the phenomenon of disability (18.6%) in Poland, compared to 14.3% for the entire country. It is also noteworthy that the majority of the disabled are rural inhabitants (58.9%), with a higher percentage of females (53.8%) than males (46.2%). The results of a 2011 study confirm this situation [30].

American researchers were the first to confirm in their report the relationship between physical and psychosocial components of the quality of life (QoL) of children with cerebral palsy and the pleasure from participation in recreational activities. They observed that entertainment and recreation adjusted to individual skills and preferences of the child are conducive to improving the quality of life [15].

The primary aim of the study was to present the various ways of managing and organizing free time among disabled males and females living in the Lublin Region. To achieve this aim, the following detailed research problems were posed:

1. What types of activity do the disabled males and females in the study use to manage their leisure time?
2. From what sources do the examined males and females obtain information concerning the offer of free time activities, and from whom do they expect assistance with the organization and management of their free time?
3. What forms of free time activities proposed by various organizers are of interest to the respondents?
4. In what forms of recreational and tourist activity did the respondents participate and who accompanied them?

MATERIALS AND METHOD

A total number of 360 disabled people were examined – including 187 females (51.9%) and 173 males (48.1%). The largest number of respondents were aged 45–54 (19.7%), whereas the smallest percentage of the disabled (7.2%) were aged over 75. The majority of respondents had elementary vocational education level (29.8%), followed by secondary school education (28.5%), university (6.6%), and post-secondary school education (5.0%). The highest percentage of respondents (60.6%) were occupationally inactive, 21.2% were occupationally active, and 94.2% of them declared that they performed non-agricultural work, while 18.2% were unemployed. As many as 75.5% of the disabled maintained themselves on non-earned sources, mainly health benefit, and 10.1% of respondents received unemployment allowance. As many as 33.9% of respondents declared a considerable degree of disability, 31.7% – moderate, and 34.4% – light degree. The respondents had the following types of disability: physical (50.7%), mental (26.9%), complex (14.0%) and sensory (8.4%).

The study was conducted by the method of a diagnostic survey, using a self-designed questionnaire developed by the team of researchers engaged in the research project ‘Social conditionings of participation of the disabled inhabitants of eastern Poland in tourism and recreation’. The questionnaire was completed during an interview with the respondents. The study group was selected by the method of stratified random sampling.

RESULTS

The results of own studies indicate the variation in the aspects of managing and organizing of free time according to respondents’ gender, and also reveal statistically significant differences concerning two variables. The data obtained were illustrated in the form of figures with detailed descriptions, and percentage values were subjected to descriptive analysis.

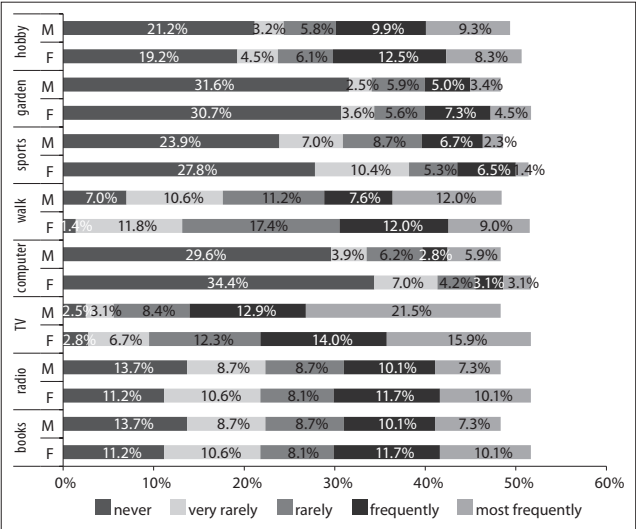


Figure 1. Ways of managing free time by disabled males and females from the Lublin Region (lack of differences on a statistically significant level).

The highest percentage of disabled males (21.51%) and females (15.92%) from the Lublin Region watch television during their free time. Every tenth woman in the study

(10.06%) most frequently listens to the radio or reads books. Considering physical activity during leisure time, 12.04% of the total number of males admit that they most often go for a walk, while among females this percentage is 12.04%. Every third male and female respondent never spend their free time in the garden or in front of computer, while every fourth respondent (M-23, 88%; F-27, 81%) never practice sports during their leisure time (Fig. 1).

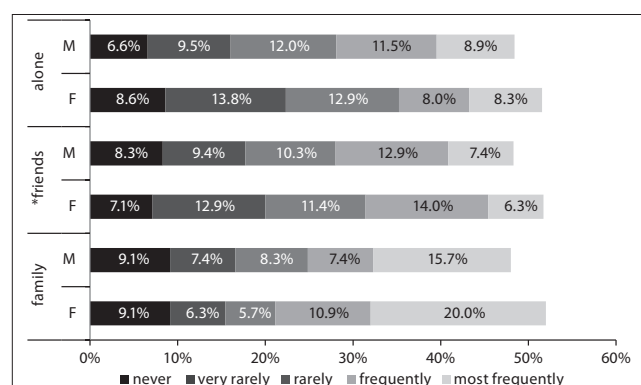


Figure 2. Sources from which the males and females in the study obtain knowledge concerning offers of free time activities.

Among the places and people who provide information concerning the possibilities of managing free time, the males in the study indicated as follows: mass media (17.70%), specialist institutions (14.16%), associations (12.39%), and own acquaintances (11.50%). Females obtained free time offers as follows: the media (15.04%), specialist institutions, leaflets and advertisements (13.27% each), associations (12.39%), and acquaintances (10.62%), (Fig. 2).

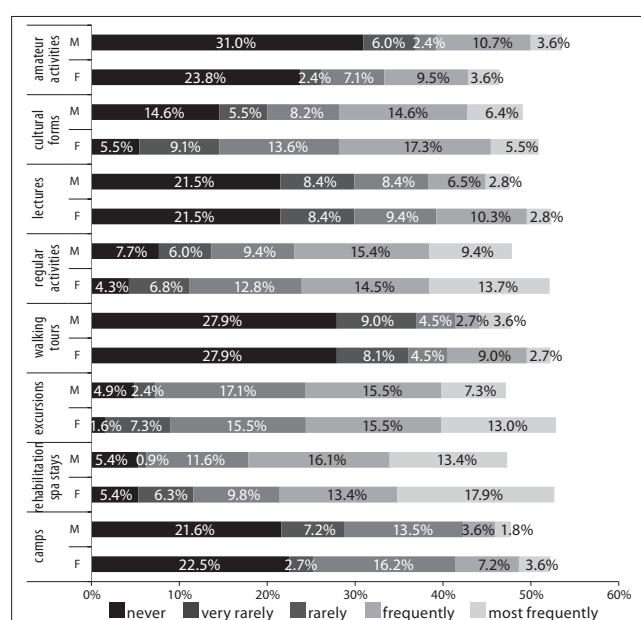


Figure 3. Institutions from which the males and females in the study expect assistance in the organization and managing of free time (at least 1, at most 5).
*A statistically significant difference concerns the employer – 0.04 ($p < 0.05000$, $N=283$).

Personal disability limited the respondents' organization and management of their free time; they were therefore asked to indicate from whom they expected assistance. Males expected the greatest support from specialist institutions

(16.24%), associations (13.80%) and family (9.46%), whereas the disabled females indicated as follows: from the family (15.19%), specialist institutions (14.81%) and associations (12.88%). Both groups of respondents counted the least on assistance in managing their free time from the employer (M-33.11%; F-35.76%), here, statistically significant difference was observed (*) (Fig. 3).

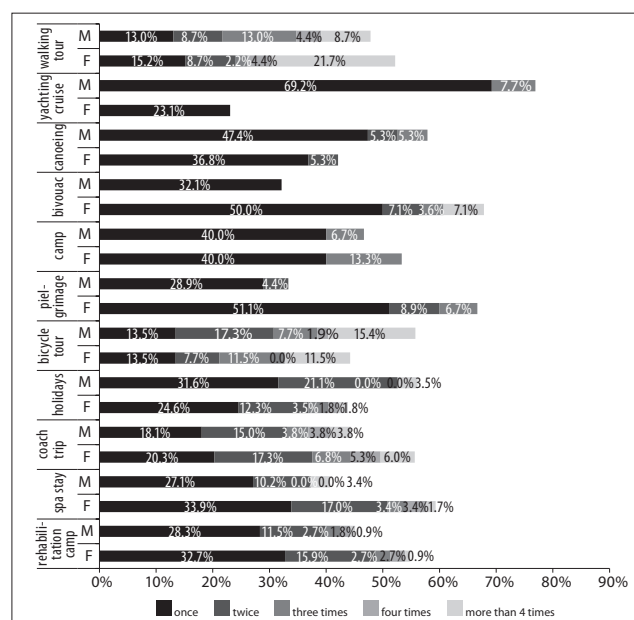


Figure 4. Forms of free time activities offered by various organizers in opinions of males and females in the study.

The specified forms of free time activities within the respondents' interests offered by organizers did not much vary. The largest groups of males (13.39%) and females (17.86%) were most frequently interested in stays in rehabilitation spas, followed by the possibility of regular participation in permanent activities (M-9.40%; F-13.68%) and excursions (M-7.32%; F-13.01%). Every third respondent had never been interested in tours and amateur activities, while every fifth – in camps and lectures (Fig. 4).

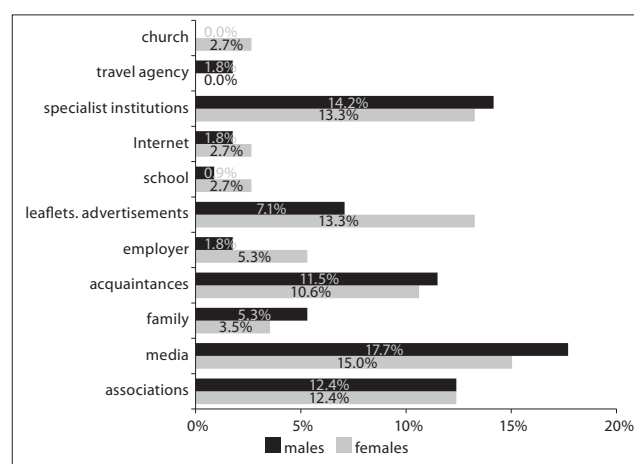


Figure 5. Participation of disabled males and females in various forms of recreation and tourist activities (no significant differences were observed).

The variety of the direct participation of the disabled males and females from the Lublin region in various forms of

recreation and tourist activities was relatively rich (Fig. 5). As many as 21.74% of the total number of females, had participated four times in walking tours, and 23.08% had been on a bicycle tour three times or more. Also, many women participated in camping and participating in pilgrimages. The results concerning going on bicycle trips by males are impressive (34.37%), also walking tours (34.79%) and camping (17.85%). A large group participated in water tourism in the form of canoeing.

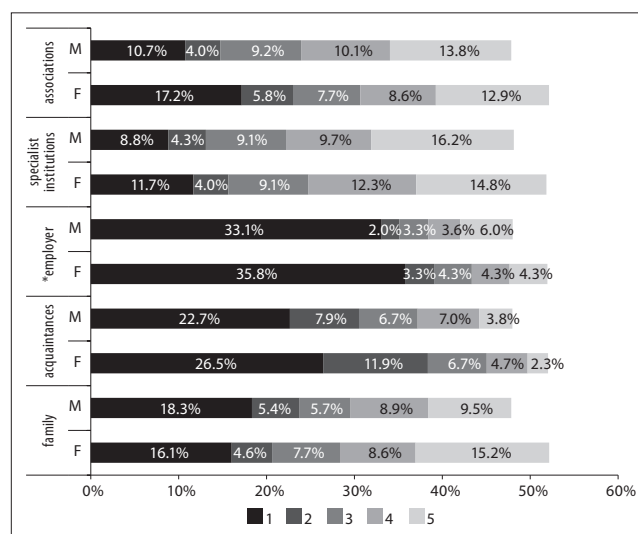


Figure 6. People with whom the males and females in the study spend their free time.

*A statistically significant difference concerned friends – 0.02 ($p < 0.05000$; $N=342$).

With respect to people who accompany the respondents during their leisure time, in the case of disabled males these are often and most frequently family members (23.14%) and friends (20.39%). Every third woman was often and most frequently accompanied by a family member (30.86%), and 23.14% of the total number of females in the study spend their free time with friends. Statistically significant differences were observed with respect to friends (*) (Fig. 6).

DISCUSSION

The results of studies of mentally retarded students by H. Borzyszkowska [31] confirm that they possess a large amount of free time. However, due to their multi-factor conditioned attitude towards life, this time is wasted. Only the proper actions by adults, good patterns and participation of the disabled in organized activities, may 'teach' them how to effectively manage their free time.

According to all-Polish data of 2008, among all the disabled who were active, the motor forms of spending leisure time, such as jogging, walking, and Nordic walking, enjoyed the greatest popularity. The percentage of respondents who performed such exercises in the total population examined was 43.9%. Bicycle riding occupied second position among the reported forms of motor recreation, and was declared by 43.5% of the disabled. Swimming, indicated by 18.1% of respondents, was placed in third position among the most popular disciplines practiced by the disabled who were active. Disabled males preferred the following forms of motor recreation: cycling or riding a bicycle – 46.4%,

mobile forms – 38.4%, swimming – 17.2%, football – 12.9% and fishing – 12.3%.

A slightly different situation may be observed with respect to participation of the disabled females in recreational activities. The largest group were women interested in mobile forms (49.2%), followed by bicycle riding (40.7%), swimming (19.0%), gymnastics (16.9%) and club-room games (15.7%) [32].

A positive effect of recreation in the life of adults with congenital disability has been confirmed by the results of many studies, according to which participation in recreation provides physical and psychological health benefits, evokes positive emotions, stimulates development and sense of self-esteem, and gives an opportunity to construct social relations [33].

American and European researchers show that the determination of individual preferences of spending free time by children with cerebral palsy it is an inseparable element of the evaluation process, because it allows the minimization of the barriers of participation in entertainment, such as fear of failure, low motivation and environmental obstacles [34, 35].

The results of international studies show the factors which directly determine the participation of disabled children in free time activities. These factors are: physical efficacy, happy temperament, younger age, female gender, and family support [16]. For Dutch children with motor disability motor, manual, and cognitive capabilities, as well as communicativeness, age and gender are important factors [17].

Studies conducted among the disabled also emphasize the role and benefits from performing physical exercises. It is increasingly more commonly adopted that among many activities on behalf of a greater activity of the disabled in daily life, the participation in motor activities plays an important role [12, 13, 15, 25, 36].

Participation of the elderly disabled in recreational exercises contributes to relaxation [28], better leisure [27] and social activation [24, 37], as well as practical health benefits in hospital treatment [25], and rehabilitation after cerebral stroke [26]. The results of the presented study indicate variable social and health effects of mobility exercises in the lives of the elderly disabled.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The sources from which the respondents obtain information concerning the offer of free time activities are mainly the media, specialist institutions, associations and acquaintances.
2. The types of motor activity most frequently practiced by the disabled males and females for managing their leisure time are: watching TV, listening to the radio, reading books, and walking.
3. According to the respondents, the assistance which they expect with the organization and managing of free time should be provided by specialist institutions, associations, and their family members.
4. Among the forms of free time activities offered by various organizers the respondents are most interested in stays in rehabilitation spas, regular activities and various excursions.
5. Among the forms of recreation and tourist activities in which the respondents have most frequently participated

during their free time were: walking tours, bicycle trips, camps and participating in pilgrimages.

6. Those who primarily accompanied the respondents in recreation and tourist activities were their family members and friends.

Finally, it should be concluded that the positive effect of recreational exercises on the improvement of physical, psychological and social health of the disabled is increasingly more commonly perceived.

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