

Leisure activities of university college staff

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Summary

Study aim: To determine the participation of academic teachers in leisure activities for that group contribute to shaping habits of a large percentage of young people.

Material and methods: A group of 52 staff members (about 30%) of a private university college, aged 25 – 70 years, were interviewed with respect to their participation in sports, recreation and tourism in the recent year. Chi-square function in the logarithmic form was used in data analysis.

Results: Over two-thirds participants declared practicing recreational activities (43% regularly); 80% or more declared short- or long-lasting local trips and 50% declared journeys abroad.

Conclusions: The knowledge of benefits brought about by motor activities and the awareness of their necessity stimulate the activities, especially the tourism and recreational ones of people.

Key words: Sport activity – Recreation – Tourism – Teachers

Introduction

Political and social transformations in Poland two decades ago brought about profound changes in the life quality, including leisure time and the modes of its use by Polish population. Various social groups exhibit diverse patterns of free-time sport and recreational activities and data regarding teachers are disquieting – about 70% of various categories of teachers declare practicing no recreational activities whatever [5].

The aim of this study was thus to assess the participation of teaching staff of one of private university-level colleges – The Maria Skłodowska-Curie Warsaw School in sports, motor activities and tourism. That knowledge would be of importance as the motor habits and behaviours of university teaching staff might be followed by a large proportion of young people [6].

Material and Methods

A group representing 30% of the entire teaching staff of The Maria Skłodowska-Curie Warsaw School were randomly selected. That group included 12 professors, 12 associate professors, 15 doctors and 13 assistants (M.S.), the age range being 25 – 70 years. The subjects were interviewed at the school by a qualified interviewer.

The questionnaire contained questions pertaining to participation in leisure time in sports, recreational activities (e.g. gardening) and tourism in the recent 12 months.

Participation in activities for at least 5 months, at least once weekly, was defined as regular; for several or more consecutive days, over 10 times in a season, as seasonal; several or more times a year, as occasional. Sport activities were defined as organised participation, i.e. training in a club and participation in competitions. Local trips (within Poland) were classified as lasting one day, short- or long-lasting as defined by the Central Statistical Office.

The results were subjected to analysis by chi-square function in logarithmic form [8] using Excel calculation sheet, the level of $p \leq 0.05$ being considered significant.

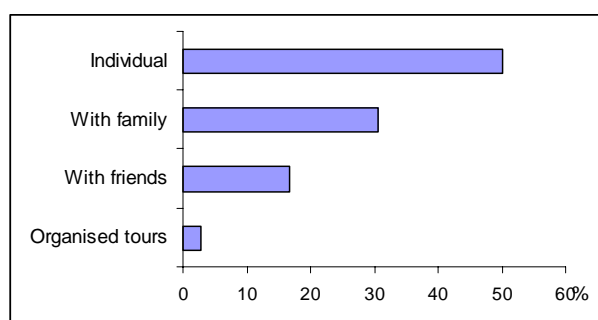
Results

Only one person declared practicing organised sport. About 70% of all studied subjects declared practicing leisure activities, women participated in regular activities significantly ($p < 0.001$) more frequently than men (59 and 29%, respectively), no significant differences being detected in other activity modes (Table 1).

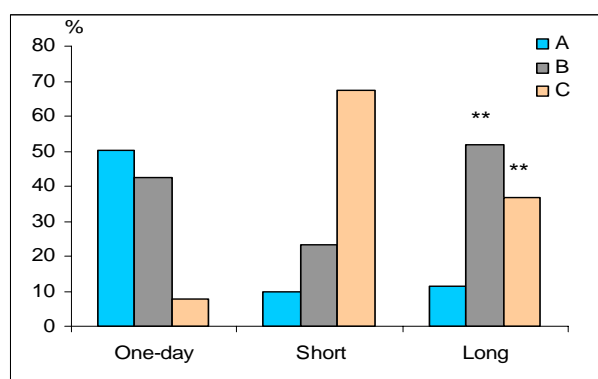
Table 1. Percentages of university college teaching staff declaring participation in leisure activities

Activity mode Gender	Reg.	Se.	Occ.	None
M (n = 35)	29	29	8	34
F (n = 17)	59*	18	0	23

Legend: Reg. – Regular; Se. – Seasonal; Occ. – Occasional;
* Significantly ($p < 0.001$) more than men

**Fig. 1.** Percentages of university college teaching staff declaring various modes of spending leisure time (n = 36)

Among those who declared participation in leisure activities, individual practices prevailed (Fig. 1), the most frequent ones being cycling, swimming, skiing and tennis. About 39% of respondents declared spending leisure time in their garden plots. No significant between-gender differences were noted, therefore the frequencies were shown for men and women combined.

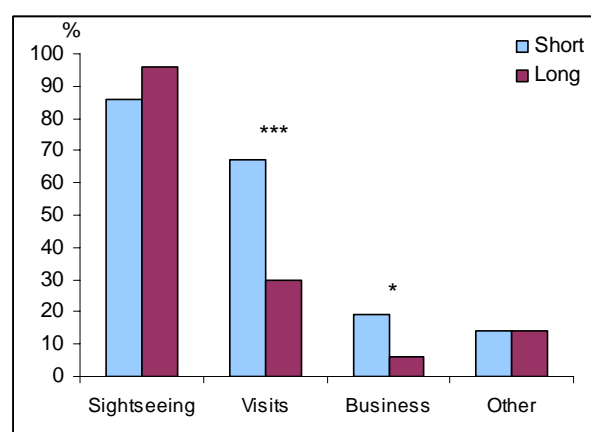
**Fig. 2.** Percentages of university college teaching staff declaring tourist trips locally (n = 52)

Legend: A – Less than 10 one-day trips a year or one short/long trip a year; B – Ten – twenty one-day trips a year or two short/long trips a year; C – More than 20 one-day trips a year or over 2 short/long trips a year; ** Significantly ($p < 0.01$) different from the respective frequency of short trips

Tourist trips were classified into one-day, short (2 – 4 days) or long (over 4 days), those with at least one night

spent abroad – into trips abroad. No significant between-gender differences were noted with respect to frequencies in either category of trips, therefore the frequencies were shown for men and women combined (Fig. 2).

The declared frequencies of short and long trips classified by their objectives are presented in Fig. 3. Significantly more private or business visits were noted for short than for long trips ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.05$, respectively). Apart from those, about 50% of all respondents declared having travelled abroad.

**Fig. 3.** Percentages of university college teaching staff declaring various objectives of short and long trips (n = 52)

Percentages do not total 100 since the respondents could indicate more than one answer; Significant difference between short and long trips: * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Discussion

The presented results suggest that the awareness of necessity of motor activities and the knowledge about them stimulate the activities of people, as 70% of respondents declared practicing various forms of leisure tasks. It is difficult to compare our results with those reported by others since data concerning that particular social group are scarce. Vaz and Bharathi [10] reported that 12% of teachers in India were sedentary and 10% exhibited high motor activity; this was markedly less than reported for Polish university teachers [3], 94.5% of whom practiced leisure activities. The latter report seems, however, optimistic since about 70% of teachers from diverse schools were found not to participate in any motor activities [5]. In addition, a higher proportion of the studied university college teachers declared participation in leisure activities (43%) compared with physicians (29.4%; [7]) or retail trade workers (35.2%; [1]). Yet, competitive sports seemed too time- and effort-consuming for the studied teachers as only one subject reported being engaged in trainings once weekly. This is alarmingly less than reported for a representative Polish cohort of

adults [4] – 8% of men and 7% of women aged 35 years, and 9 and 3%, respectively, of subjects aged 50 years practiced sports.

Tourist activity of the university teaching staff was high and amounted to at least 80% and 50% for trips abroad. In contrast, the comparable figures for Polish population aged over 15 years were below 30 and 12%, respectively, and for those having higher education – about 50 and 31%, respectively [7]. Our results are comparable with those obtained for other universities in Warsaw [2,3].

All health-directed programmes unequivocally recommend emphasising the indispensability of motor activities, including leisure time. That necessity dramatically gains importance in view of technological progress aimed at making our life easy and comfortable. Academic teachers, whose knowledge and awareness of those issues are supposed to be above average, are in a highly responsible position of supporters of the governmental and non-governmental efforts aimed at promoting active life styles, as well as educators of students who, in turn, would spread the ideas of health-directed habits.

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