

Free time of the younger school age pupils and their parents

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Abstract:

Children’s free time should be fulfilled with the activities that they love and that will contribute to their development, while parents are those responsible in taking role of choosing activities for their children’s free time. The goal of the research was to determine eventual statistically significant differences between parents of younger school age children from the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria in relation to the attitude about free time of their children. The research had transversal character and it involved 62 parents from the Republic of Serbia and 62 parents from the Republic of Bulgaria. The instrument applied was a survey questionnaire with ten questions. IN the processing of data acquired by the empirical research apart from the procedures of descriptive statistics for the determination of the significance of differences between the parents’ attitudes about free time of their children Pearson’s χ^2 test was also applied. Statistically significant difference was also stated in three out of ten claims, which indicates the need for parents to have more active role in organising their children’ free time.

Keywords: free time, pupils, younger school age, parents

Introduction.

In the first human community, free time arose in the circumstances of struggle for self-preservation and it was fulfilled with work. Work itself was largely interwoven with activities, which had religious and entertaining character (Ilic and Stankovic, 2006.).

Free time emerges by division of society into classes, which became a privilege of ruling class in further social development. The aim was to increase free time in quantity, while nowadays the most important aim is to increase the quality of free time. The question is not how to have free time but how to use it in a better way.

Free time can be seen as a field of freedom and in some way as the escape from reality (Postrak, 2007: 119). For young people these are the hours when they are not engaged in school, house or other working activities, activities that they freely choose, and consider it as their discrete right (Irby & Tolman 2002: 213). If there is no determined sense, the aim and the value of free time, it becomes dead time (Bozovic, 1979).

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Free time has three important functions: rest, entertainment and leisure, personal development (Dumazedier, 1974). Socializing of young people is mainly done through free time – the part which makes them closer to themselves and also to the society in which they live. According to Caplan, free time is antithesis to work, hope or nice memory and expectation, psychological perception of freedom, and it is closely connected with cultural values, which is often but not necessary interwoven with the element of games and includes wide scale from irrelevant and unimportant to valuable and important. According to Caplan, each activity can be leisure activity and it is not determined by its content, but with the relation that an individual maintains with this activity (Bozovic, 1979:25).

Kokovic (1997) describes free time as the time which is completely free of immediate working duties - it represents end of work, while Trnavac and Djordjevic (1997) define free time as the time which is left to us when we finish all our work, school, family and social duties and we can do with it as we wish, without outside force and coercion, as it suits us and in the way it suits us best.

The parents as main participants of socializing are insufficiently active and still less creative while choosing contents and directing the children. The question is what children should do in days of rest, holidays, which activities and duties should them fulfil their free time and what is the role of parents in all that.

Contemporary studies indicate that 40% of free time children spend in family background (Jebric, 1975). Different manifestation of social behaviour of children can be explained by the way and content of spending their free time. Sitting in front of a computer became one of the most frequent ways of spending free time. The data show that on average children spend 2.47 hours every day in front of computers and there is no difference in sexes (Zumarova, 2013).

The goal of this research was to determine eventual statistically significant differences between parents of children of younger school age from Serbia and Bulgaria in relation to their attitude towards free time of their children.

Methods.

The research had transversal character and it included 62 parents from the Republic of Serbia and 62 parents from the Republic of Bulgaria. As an instrument questionnaire was applied with ten questions. The questions were as follows: 1) When do you have free time?, 2) Who is planning free time of your child?, 3) Your child spend its free time most often in:, 4) Where do you most often spend your free time with a child?, 5) How many times a week do you exercise?, 6) How many timse a week does your child exercise?, 7) If sport prevails in free time of your child , what character does sport have?, 8) Do you spend enough free time with your child?, 9) Do you think that you spend quality free time qualitatively with your child?, 10) Which activities should prevail in free time of a child and a parent?. In the processing of data that were acquired by empirical research apart from the procedures of descriptive statistics for the determination of significance of differences between the attitudes of parents about free time Pearson's test was applied χ^2 .

Results.

Out of ten questions only those with the statistically significant difference in parents' answers were presented.

Table 1. Descriptive parameters and analysis of differences in relation to free time

			When do you have free time?					Total:
			I always have free time	At weekends	After work	During holiday	I do not have free time	
State	Serbia	<i>f</i>	16	6	35	3	2	62
		%	25.8%	9.7%	56.5%	4.8%	3.2%	100%
	Bulgaria	<i>f</i>	9	22	24	5	2	62
		%	14.5%	35.5%	38.7%	8.1%	3.2%	100.0%
Total		<i>f</i>	25	28	59	8	4	124
		%	20.2%	22.5%	47.6%	6.5%	3.2%	100.0%

Legend: χ^2 – value of Xi square test, *df* – difference and *p* – level of statistical significance.

By the insight in Table 1. It can be seen that the answers of parents from the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria to the question “*I do not have free time*” are identical with numerical and percentage representation. The largest percent of parents in the Republic of Serbia 56.5% and the Republic of Bulgaria 38.7% shows that parents have free time after work. Percentage difference is evident for the weekend, where 35.5% parents from the Republic of Bulgaria have more free time in relation to parents from the Republic of Serbia 9.7%. On the basis of the values of χ^2 test it can be stated that there is statistically significant difference between the parents from the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria in relation to free time with the level of statistical significance of $p=0.008$.

The second question, “*Who plans free time of your child?*” (I plan, my child plans, my partner and I plan, we do not plan free time and we plan as a family) shows that there are no numerical and percentage differences between the answers. The most frequent is the answer – we plan as a family with 59.7% for parents in the Republic of Serbia and 67.7% for the parents in the Republic of Bulgaria. The differences in answers did not make statistically significant differences as the level of statistical significance is $p=0.536$.

How children spend their free time most often was shown in Table 2. Significant numerical and percentage differences are in the answer where 62.9% from the Republic of Serbia say that their children spend their free time playing with friends in comparison to 30.6% of parents in the Republic of Bulgaria. The largest percent of parents from the Republic of Bulgaria (45.2%) indicate that children spend their free time with a parents. This percent in the Republic of Serbia is significantly smaller and it is 21.0%.

On the basis of the value χ^2 test it can be stated that there is statistically significant difference between the answers of parents from the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria in the way of spending free time of children, with the level of statistical significance of $p=0.006$.

Table 2. Descriptive parameters and analysis of differences in relation to child's free time

		Your child spends most often free time:					Total:	
		Doing homework and studying	Reading optional literature	Playing with friends	In front of a computer	Spending time with parents		
State	Serbia	<i>f</i>	2	3	39	5	13	62
		%	3.2%	4.8%	62.9%	8.1%	21%	100.0%
	Bulgaria	<i>f</i>	5	2	19	8	28	62
		%	8.1%	3.2%	30.6%	12.9%	45.2%	100.0%
Total		<i>f</i>	7	5	58	13	41	124
		%	5.6%	4.0%	46.8%	10.5%	33.1%	100.0%

$$\chi^2=14.56 \quad df=4 \quad p=0.006$$

What are the places in which the parents spend most of their free time with their children? The answers are very interesting and indicate that most of the time is spent in family circle, with 41.9% in the Republic of Serbia and 67.7% in the Republic of Bulgaria. It is interesting that parents in the Republic of Serbia spend more time in a park or on sport courts in relation to the parents from the Republic of Bulgaria. The least percent of free time is spent in theatres, cinemas, and library. Numerical and percentage representation did not influence statistically significant differences in the answers of parents from the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria to the question “*Where do you most often spend your free time with a child?*” since the level of statistical significance is $p=0.363$.

Statistically significant difference was not stated in answers of parents to the question “*How many times do you exercise weekly?*” The situation is very different, so 54.8% of parents in the Republic of Serbia do not exercise, in the Republic of Bulgaria, this percent is smaller and it is 48.4%. One or two times in the Republic of Serbia 24.2%, and in the Republic of Bulgaria 29.0% of parents. Three times a week in the Republic of Serbia 11.3%, and in the Republic of Bulgaria 29.0% of parents. Five times a week in the Republic of Serbia 3.2% and in the Republic of Bulgaria 1.6% and every day in the Republic of Serbia 6.5% and in the Republic of Bulgaria 3.2 of parents ($\chi^2=2.41 \quad df=4 \quad p=0.660$).

When we analyse the number of weekly activities of a child, the values are far from recommendations of the World Health Organisation that children should have at least one moderate activity every day for 60 minutes and a number of weekly activities is significantly smaller. In the Republic of Serbia and in the Republic of Bulgaria children most often exercise one, two or three times. Concerning data are that 16.1% of children in the Republic of Serbia and 24.2% of children in the Republic of Bulgaria do not exercise. Between the answers of parents in relation to the question about the number of weekly exercises of their children there were no statistically significant differences because the level of statistical significance is $p=0.132$.

Table 3. Descriptive parameters and analysis of differences in relation to the character of child sport activities

			If sport prevails in free time of your child does sport have:		Total
			Professional character	Recreative character	
State	Serbia	<i>f</i>	5	57	62
		%	8.1%	91.9%	100.0%
	Bulgaria	<i>f</i>	14	48	62
		%	22.6%	77.4%	100.0%
Total		<i>f</i>	19	105	124
		%	15.3%	84.7%	100.0%

$\chi^2=5.03$ $df=1$ $p=0.025$

The numerical and percentage values in Table 3. show that in the Republic of Serbia larger percent of children practice recreative sport with 91.9% in relation to 77.4%. In the Republic of Bulgaria is larger percent of children practise professional sport and that is 22.6% in relation to 8.1% in the Republic of Serbia. The difference in character of sport practice between children made statistically significant difference with the level of statistical significance $p=0.0025$.

Parents from Serbia (72.6%) think that they spend enough time with their children, as well as parent from the Republic of Bulgaria (65.5%). There are fewer parents in the Republic of Serbia. There are fewer of those in the Republic of Serbia (27.4%) and in the Republic of Bulgaria (35.5%) who think that they do not spend enough free time with their children. The values did not make statistically significant differences since the level of statistical significance is $p=0.334$.

Statistically significant difference was not stated between the answers of parents to the question “Do you think that you spend quality time with your children?” since 74.4% of parents from the Republic of Serbia and 74.2% of parents from the Republic of Bulgaria think that the time spent with their children is of good quality. Significantly smaller percent of parents from the Republic of Serbia (22.6%) and from the Republic of Bulgaria (25.8%) state that there is space for improving the quality of free time with children. ($\chi^2=0.18$ $df=1$ $p=0.675$).

The smallest percentage of answers is the attitude that the least time with children should be spend watching television, playing on a computer and surfing the internet. Some more time should be spent on the development of personality (studying, reading books, and acquiring knowledge) and they think that spent time in school can adequately support the needs of children in this area. The parents from the Republic of Serbia think that most free time should be spent with children doing entertaining activities (33.8%), while the parents from the Republic of Bulgaria apart from entertainment point out the importance of rest after hard work and school duties (59.7%) Statistically significant difference between the parents in relation to the kind of activity in free time was not stated $p=0.182$.

Conclusion.

The parents from the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria have most free time after their work. Free time is planned in the circle of a family. The largest percent of children in the Republic of Serbia spend their free time playing with friends, and the Republic of Bulgaria in spending time with parents, while parents spend most often their free time with children in a family circle. The largest percent of parents do not exercise or exercise one or two times a week. In addition, there is a concerning fact about the number of children who do not exercise, one or two times. In the Republic of Serbia larger percent of children is involved in amateur sport, while in the Republic of Bulgaria, larger percent of children is in professional training process. The parents think that they spend enough quality time with a child and according to their views on the first place stands quality rest, after which follows entertainment and leisure, activities for the personality development and in the end the rest can be spend watching television or on the internet. General statement indicates that there is no statistically significant difference for three statements between the parents in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Bulgaria.

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