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The influence of gender and family educational background on leisure satisfaction among Spanish adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of gender and family educational background on the leisure satisfaction of Spanish secondary school-age students (12–16 years). The research design consisted of a quantitative study in the form of a questionnaire (the reduced version of Beard and Ragheb's (1980) Leisure Satisfaction Scale), which was completed by a sample of 1887 secondary school students in Galicia (Spain). The results indicate a moderate level of satisfaction with leisure activities among the teenagers surveyed, with significant variations observed in relation to gender and parental educational level. Girls from families with a low level of educational attainment were found to be more likely to pass up leisure opportunities than boys, revealing a double gap (educational and gender-based) with regard to leisure satisfaction and a greater risk of precarious leisure. Future research in this area should focus on the development of Leisure Education programmes for children and adolescents.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 31 March 2021

Accepted 16 August 2021

KEYWORDS

Leisure satisfaction; leisure constraints; adolescents; family; educational level; gender inequality

Introduction

The importance of leisure among adolescents has been the subject of a number of recent studies (Caballo et al., 2017; Caldwell & Witt, 2011; Gómez-Granell & Julià, 2015; Pronovost, 2013; Roberts, 2019). Adolescence is the stage of life when people construct their 'leisure capital', understood as the set of skills, tastes and interests on which they base their hobbies and future experiences (Roberts, 2012; Roullet et al., 2016). While the experience of leisure can have a positive effect on personal development, it can also be associated with unhealthy or potentially dangerous practices. While leisure is a protective factor for some adolescents, therefore, for others it may be a source of risk (Navarro et al., 2003).

In a society in which being permanently busy is seen as a sign of success and social status, simply enjoying one's leisure time or doing an activity for pleasure is treated with suspicion. This article analyses the experience of leisure in adolescence in terms of 'precarious leisure', a concept coined by Batchelor et al. (2020) as an analogy of the precarious working conditions affecting young people in particular. Their thesis highlights the fragmentation and anxiety that frame how young people organize their free time as a result of what the authors refer to as the 'de-differentiation' of productive (work, study) and unproductive time. The imposition of neoliberal values has created a sense of fear and rejection of free time among young people and, by extension, the image of pure, autotelic leisure (i.e. leisure as an end in itself) as a waste of time. As a consequence, they attempt to

fill their free time with an array of intentional, structured, non-autotelic activities designed to keep them active and productive. The precarity found in other aspects of their lives, and other traditional patterns of inequality, thus become part of their leisure activities as well.

Although Batchelor et al.'s (2020) study focuses on a slightly older demographic than ours (16–25 years), the concept of 'precarious leisure' is equally applicable to younger age groups, especially adolescents (Figure 1). Adolescence is a time of transition in which young people break with the leisure habits of their childhood and start to develop new, more autonomous patterns, focused on their relationship with their peers rather than on the values and routines of family life (Kleiber et al., 2017). Often, this includes passing up leisure activities they enjoy in favour of other, more utilitarian pursuits, owing to their and their family's sense of the need to use their free time 'productively'. This dynamic and the social, political and economic forces behind it are undermining the right to leisure of the youngest members of society and widening the gap between the leisure haves and have-nots.

As one recent study observes, '[t]he old perception that time is the same for everyone is being shattered by the network society' (Caride, 2018, p. 18). Traditional material inequality has been compounded by temporal inequality, particularly in relation to leisure. This precarity of life arrangement, combined with inequality of leisure time (Carbonell, 2008; Sintés, 2019), can lead to experiences that have a detrimental impact on adolescent well-being and the well-being of those around them (Cassidy, 2005). Obstacles such as lack of time, financial cost, family attitudes and difficulty accessing leisure activities locally increase leisure access inequalities generally and particularly among young people at risk of social exclusion (Fraguela-Vale et al., 2018; Rodríguez et al., 2018).

In early adolescence, participation in leisure activities is still negotiated within the family (Dorado, 2016; Roa, 2018), which remains the central focus of young people's leisure experiences and itineraries. One clear example of this is the influence of parents on habits such as reading (Fraguela-Vale et al., 2016; Stevanović et al., 2020), physical activity (Del Moral et al., 2017; Ruiz-Juan et al., 2017; Valdemoros-San-Emeterio et al., 2014) and digital leisure (Hohepa et al., 2007). Given the prominent role of the family in the construction of leisure habits and values, the challenge is to ensure both sufficient education on the part of parents and guardians in order to understand the value of leisure, and an environment that provides accessible, stimulating resources for all (Caballo et al., 2020; López, 2015; Varela & Maroñas, 2019). Shared family leisure time has also been shown to improve cohesion within the family, and promote skills and attitudes among young people that impact positively on their education and development (Kleiber, 1999; Offer, 2013; Sanz et al., 2018).

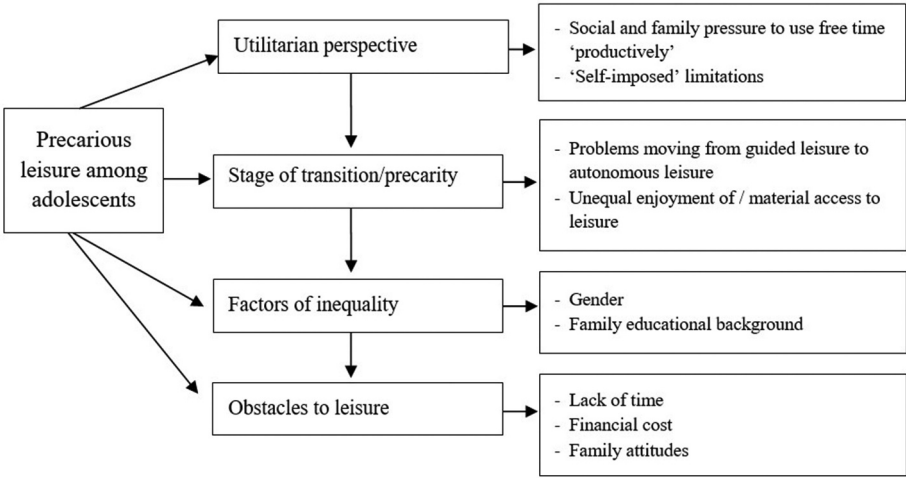


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Precarious leisure among adolescents.

Despite the benefits of leisure on the development of adolescents, lack of time (often associated with school workload) is a significant obstacle to leisure among young people in this age group, especially girls, who tend to devote more time to their studies than their male peers (Aciego & Domínguez, 1998; Madariaga & Romero, 2016). Apart from their different experience of leisure, however, even at this early stage there is also evidence of significant inequalities of access, which persist into adulthood. Studies on the impact of leisure on satisfaction and well-being show differences in relation to sex (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2011; Monteagudo et al., 2017; Shin & You, 2013), including bias on the part of parents regarding the amount of freedom granted to sons and daughters, with stricter parental control over the hours female children keep and the friends they choose (Megias & Ballesteros, 2006). The gender gap thus impacts on female adolescents' leisure time and the opportunities they have to enjoy it freely (Henderson, 2002; Samdalh, 2013), which in turn affects their expectations, as low self-esteem leads to a greater perception of difficulty and 'self-imposition' of constraints on leisure (Raymore et al., 1994, 1993).

In a neoliberal capitalist context in which adolescents are expected to be 'always available' and leisure is seen as a means to utilitarian, instrumental ends, the sense of lack of freedom and loss of control over personal time has become a growing social problem. Traditionally vulnerable groups, such as adolescents and families from poorer sociocultural backgrounds, have been hit especially hard by this phenomenon (Santos et al., 2004; Zeijl et al., 2000). This study analyses the impact on their leisure satisfaction of these different forms of precarity, specifically in relation to gender and parental education

Aims and hypotheses

The main aim of the study is to measure the level of leisure satisfaction among junior-cycle secondary school students, and to assess the influence of gender and family educational background. The study also examines the abandonment of or non-participation in leisure activities by adolescents and the reasons for this. Finally, the study looks at adolescents' perception of the value placed on leisure by their families and its impact on their experience of leisure.

The analysis sought to test the following hypotheses:

- (1) Students from families with higher levels of educational attainment and boys in general show higher levels of leisure satisfaction;
- (2) Girls from families with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely to pass on leisure opportunities; and
- (3) Leisure satisfaction correlates positively with the value placed on leisure by adolescents' families.

Materials and method

The research design consisted of a quantitative questionnaire study based on the reduced version of Beard and Ragheb (1980) Leisure Satisfaction Scale. The sample size and data set were sufficient to meet the aims of the research.

Sample

The sample for the study was selected using stratified random sampling with proportional allocation (sampling error = 2.3%; confidence level = 95%). The sample comprised 1887 Galician secondary school students with an average age of 13.8 years ($SD = 1.264$), 49.1% girls and 50.9% boys. The proportion of students in the different year groups was as follows: 25.2% first year; 25.6% second year; 25.5% third year, and 23.7% fourth year.

Procedure

The survey was conducted between October 2017 and January 2018. The student participants were visited at their schools by two members of the research team, who carried out the survey in the classroom. The average response time taken by participants was 21 minutes. Parents and school management were informed in advance of the objectives of the study, and the survey was conducted with their knowledge, anonymously and on a voluntary basis. Since the participants were under 18 years of age, informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of each participant, in accordance with local legislative requirements and the regulations of the schools involved in the study.

Measurement

Participants were asked to state their sex and to answer questions on the following variables:

Parental educational level

Participants were asked to indicate the level of educational attainment of both parents based on the following options: none, primary, secondary, higher/university. In view of the impact of parental educational background on young people's experience of leisure, a variable was created to encompass families in which both parents' level of educational attainment corresponded to the first two options (no education or primary education only), since this may be considered a 'risk factor' with respect to their children's experience of leisure. All of the other families were grouped together in the second variable (i.e. at least one parent with a secondary school education or higher).

Leisure satisfaction

Leisure satisfaction is defined as the positive perceptions or feelings generated in a person as a result of their leisure decisions and activities, and their general degree of contentment with their leisure experiences. Satisfaction with leisure activities was assessed in this study using the reduced version of Beard and Ragheb (1980) Leisure Satisfaction Scale, which measures the extent to which individuals feel their leisure activities help to satisfy their personal needs. The six dimensions of the Leisure Satisfaction Scale are: psychological, educational, social, relaxation, physiological and aesthetic.

Non-participation in enjoyed leisure activities

Participants were asked to indicate if they had opted not to engage in leisure activities they enjoy (yes/no). Participants who answered 'yes' were further asked to indicate the reason for their decision based on the following options: lack of time, lack of money, no one to do them with, not available locally, too much schoolwork, not allowed by my parents, timetabling problems, transport difficulties, other.

Perception of value placed on leisure by family

Participants were asked to indicate the value they believe their families place on leisure based on the following options: none, not a lot, quite a lot, a lot.

Data analysis

A descriptive analysis of the variables was carried out using frequencies and measures of central tendency. An inferential analysis was run using the Mann-Whitney U test to examine the differences in leisure satisfaction and perception of the value placed on leisure in relation to sex and parental educational level (independent variables). A chi-squared test was used to examine the relationship between non-participation in leisure activities and the independent variables, and finally Spearman's Rho was calculated to test the correlation between leisure satisfaction and participants' perception of the value placed on leisure by their families.

Results

The results of the study are divided into four parts: the psychometric properties of the Spanish version of the scale; satisfaction with leisure activities; non-participation in leisure activities; and participants' perception of the value placed on leisure by their families and its impact on their experience of leisure.

Psychometric properties of the Spanish version of the scale

Owing to the absence of a valid Spanish version of the scale, the psychometric properties of the scale were analysed in relation to the sample for the study to test their equivalence to the original scale. An exploratory factor analysis was carried out using a main components extraction and varimax rotation. Satisfactory values for Bartlett's test of sphericity (13,632.798; $p < 0.001$) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.904) confirmed the statistical suitability of the method. Using the criterion of self-values greater than 1, the analysis generated six factors, the same as the original scale. The percentage of variance explained by these six factors was 61.12% and each factor was associated with four items. Items were assigned based on their factor loadings, so that the items included in each factor were those with the highest factor loading for that factor. The six factors correspond to the six dimensions of the Leisure Satisfaction Scale: psychological, educational, social, relaxation, physiological and aesthetic. Since the items associated with each factor based on their factor loading are the same as in the original scale, the adapted scale may be considered functionally equivalent to the original and a valid instrument for the measurement of leisure satisfaction in its different dimensions. Reliability was assessed by calculating the scale's internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole scale (0.894) and for each of the six factors (psychological = 0.754, educational = 0.682, social = 0.744, relaxation = 0.749, physiological = 0.870, aesthetic = 0.760), and was found to be satisfactory (Merino & Lautenschlager, 2003; Viladrich et al., 2017). All of the results confirm, therefore, that the Spanish version of the scale used for this study is valid and reliable, and that its functionality is similar and comparable to the original version.

Satisfaction with leisure activities

As mentioned, the Leisure Satisfaction Scale comprises six dimensions, the importance of each of which varies from person to person. Figure 2 illustrates that the main needs satisfied by the participants' leisure activities are relaxation and social interaction, while physiology (health, fitness) scores the lowest of the six dimensions.

The comparison of leisure satisfaction among girls and boys (Figure 3) reveals similar results for both groups, with girls showing a slightly higher preference for leisure activities associated with learning (educational dimension) and slightly lower satisfaction with leisure activities associated with fitness (physiological dimension).

In view of the significant role played by parents in their children's leisure and the negative association between low parental educational attainment and access to meaningful leisure, participants were also surveyed to find out if their leisure satisfaction is affected by their parents' educational background. In keeping with the gender perspective of the study, results for girls and boys were analysed separately. As Table 1 illustrates, leisure satisfaction was only affected by parental educational level in the case of female students. All of the girls from families with a higher level of education showed higher leisure satisfaction levels than their female peers from families with no education or primary education only. This relation was not observed among male students: no significant differences were observed between the two groups of male participants, indicating that parental educational level is not a significant determinant of leisure satisfaction in their case.

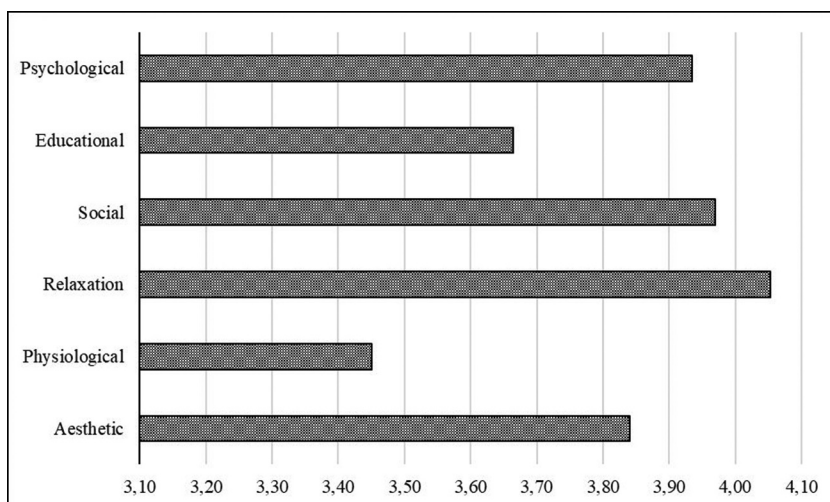


Figure 2. Satisfaction with the different dimensions of leisure.

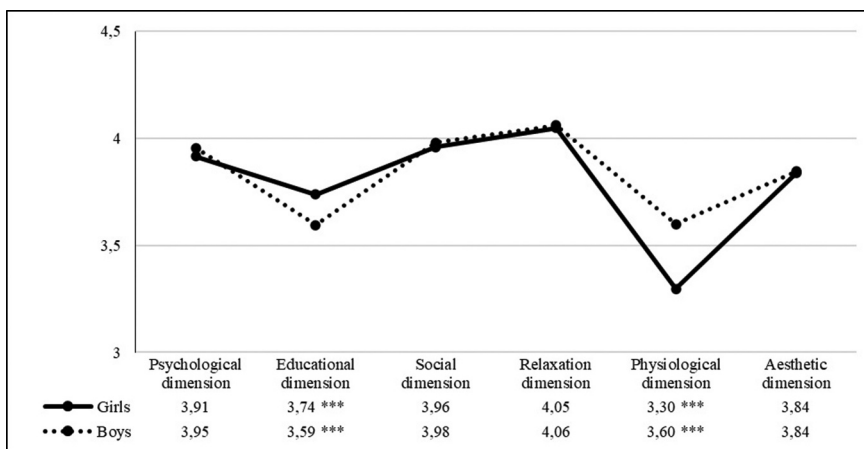


Figure 3. Leisure satisfaction: comparative analysis of girls and boys (Mann-Whitney U test). Dimensions with significant differences (Mann-Whitney U test): Educational, $Z = -3.885$, $p < 0.001$ and Physiological, $T = -5.240$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 1. Leisure satisfaction among girls and boys in relation to combined parental educational level (Mann-Whitney U test).

	Girls			Boys		
	Both parents, no education or primary education only	vs	At least one parent with secondary school education or higher	Both parents, no education or primary education only	vs	At least one parent with secondary school education or higher
Psychological	3.58 (1.03)	<<<	3.99 (0.77)	3.90 (0.84)	ns	3.99 (0.82)
Educational	3.45 (0.87)	<<<	3.79 (0.81)	3.53 (0.92)	ns	3.62 (0.85)
Social	3.72 (0.91)	<<<	4.02 (0.87)	3.98 (0.90)	ns	4.01 (0.81)
Relaxation	3.81 (1.00)	<	4.09 (0.82)	4.07 (0.89)	ns	4.07 (0.86)
Physiological	2.91 (1.27)	<<<	3.37 (1.22)	3.53 (1.06)	ns	3.63 (1.15)
Aesthetic	3.65 (0.87)	<<<	3.87 (0.83)	3.72 (0.89)	ns	3.88 (0.82)

<<< = higher satisfaction among students with parents with secondary school education or higher, $p < 0.001$; < = idem, $p < 0.01$; ≤ idem, $p < 0.05$; ns = not significant (Mann-Whitney U test).

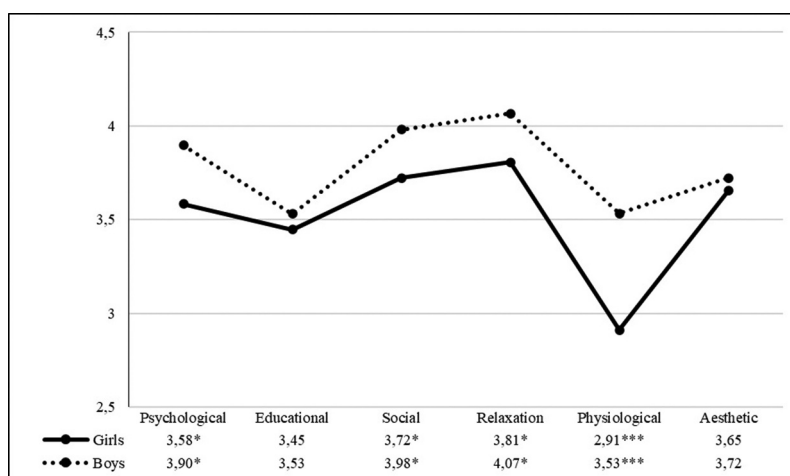


Figure 4. Leisure satisfaction: comparative analysis of girls and boys with parents with no education or primary education only (Mann-Whitney U test). Dimensions with significant differences (Mann-Whitney U test): Psychological, $Z = -2.252$, $p < 0.05$; Social, $Z = -2.448$, $p < 0.05$; Relaxation, $Z = -2.143$, $p < 0.05$ and Physiological, $Z = -3.948$, $p < 0.001$.

After assessing the influence of family educational background on the participants' leisure satisfaction, male and female responses were compared again, this time between participants from families with lower levels of educational attainment only. As Figure 4 shows, while the boys' scores remain largely unchanged, the levels of satisfaction reported by the girls in this group decrease in all of the dimensions, and significantly lower leisure satisfaction is observed in four of the six dimensions relative to their male counterparts.

Non-participation in enjoyed leisure activities

The experience of leisure is determined not just by the leisure activities performed but also by those which individuals find themselves forced to give up or in which they would happily engage if they could. Non-participation in enjoyed leisure activities was reported by 42.2% of the total sample, compared to 57.8% who answered that they have not passed up opportunities for leisure participation.

Figure 5 illustrates the strong influence of gender in this matter, with significant differences observed across the total sample ($X^2 = 39.55$, $p < 0.001$) and among the group of respondents from families with lower levels of educational attainment ($X^2 = 12.64$, $p < 0.001$). In the second group, the proportion of girls reporting non-participation in enjoyed leisure activities was six points higher, an increase not observed among male respondents.

To test whether family educational background affects non-participation in leisure activities differently for girls and boys, a separate comparative analysis was carried out for both groups. The results show that girls from families with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely to give up or pass up leisure activities they enjoy than girls from families with a higher level of education ($X^2 = 3.769$, $p = 0.05$). This phenomenon is not observed among their male peers, where the level of non-participation in leisure activities was found to be similar across both groups, regardless of their parents' educational background, and much lower in both cases than that reported by female students.

Regarding the reasons provided for not participating in enjoyed leisure activities (Figure 6), no significant differences were observed between girls and boys ($X^2 = 6.344$, $p > 0.05$). Time was shown to be one of the main determining factors, with the options 'lack of time', 'timetabling problems' and 'too much schoolwork' accounting for 56.2% of the total sample.

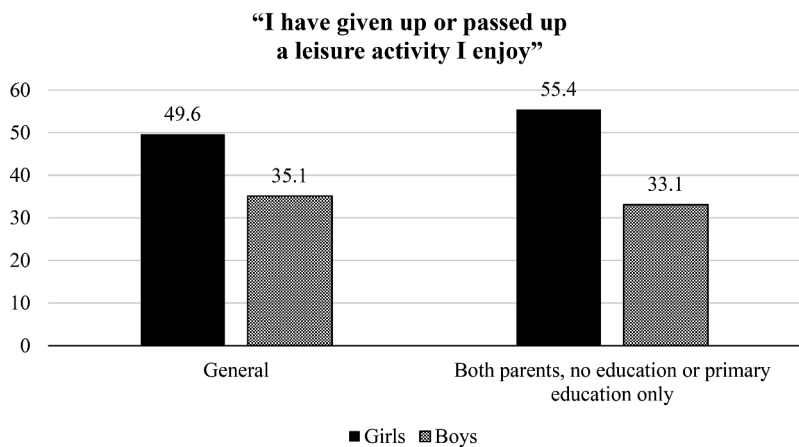


Figure 5. Non-participation in enjoyed leisure activities: total sample and participants from families with lower levels of educational attainment.

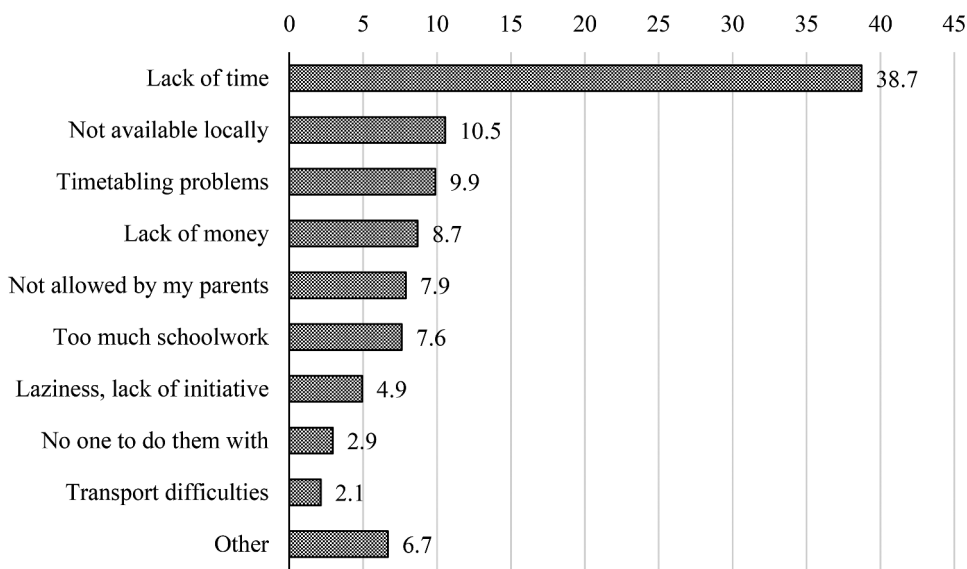


Figure 6. Reasons for giving up or passing up enjoyed leisure activities.

Perception of value placed on leisure by family

When asked to rate their perception of the value placed on leisure by their families, 22.5% responded 'not a lot' or 'none', while the remaining 77.5% opted for 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'. Despite the generally very positive perception reported, a significant difference in this result was observed between male and female participants ($Z = -2.246$, $p < 0.05$): nearly 80% of girls (79.8%) reported a positive family attitude to leisure, compared to 75.4% of boys. The difference only applies in the case of families with a higher level of educational attainment, however ($Z = -2.047$, $p < 0.05$). In families with no education or primary education only, the perception of the value placed on leisure by their families is similar among girls and boys ($Z = -0.918$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 2. Correlation of dimensions of leisure satisfaction and value placed on leisure by family (Spearman's Rho).

Dimension of leisure satisfaction	Value
Psychological	0.236***
Educational	0.219***
Social	0.201***
Relaxation	0.114***
Physiological	0.241***
Aesthetic	0.205***

*** $p < 0.001$.

Parental educational level was shown to be a highly significant determinant of the value placed on leisure ($Z = -5.791$, $p < 0.001$). The proportion of participants who reported that their families place quite a lot or a lot of value on leisure increases from 61.6% in the case of families with no education or primary education only, to 81.2% where at least one of the parents has a secondary school education or higher.

A positive and highly significant correlation was found between participants' perception of the value placed on leisure by their families and satisfaction across all of the dimensions of leisure (Table 2). The results also showed that students from families that place less value on leisure are more likely to pass up leisure opportunities ($Z = -3.604$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess leisure satisfaction among junior-cycle secondary school students in Galicia (Spain), and its correlation with gender and family educational background. The study also explored the main obstacles to the participants engaging in leisure activities they enjoy and their perception of the value placed on leisure by their families. The discussion in this section is divided into four parts: the first deals with the relationship between leisure satisfaction and the concept of precarious leisure, before moving on in the remaining subsections to assess the accuracy of the three hypotheses proposed by the research.

Leisure satisfaction and precarious leisure

Satisfaction with leisure activities was found to be moderately positive on the whole, with average values across the six dimensions studied ranging from 3 to 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. These findings are in keeping with the results of previous studies applying Beard and Ragheb (1980) Leisure Satisfaction Scale to groups of adolescents and young adults (Ayyildiz et al., 2016; Cetinkaya et al., 2017; Yaşartürk, 2019). Considering that leisure activities are chosen by the individuals themselves, the fact that the satisfaction scores are not higher would seem to indicate that there may be other factors preventing adolescents from feeling completely satisfied with their experience of leisure. Adolescence is a stage of transition from family-determined leisure habits towards greater autonomy and self-management. It is consequently also a time of conflict for young people between family-influenced leisure preferences, including activities which have been part of their lives for many years but which they are now starting to move away from (or devote less time to), and personal preferences, where the influence of the peer group is more apparent and increasingly dominant (Fraguela-Vale et al., 2020). The findings of the study thus suggest that the concept of 'precarious leisure' (Batchelor et al., 2020) may also be applied to young people in early adolescence, owing to the overlap during this life stage between fully satisfying leisure experiences and new, imposed (or self-imposed) ones.

Hypothesis 1: students from families with higher levels of educational attainment and boys in general show higher levels of leisure satisfaction

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed in part, since boys were found to have higher levels of leisure satisfaction. However, leisure satisfaction was only affected by parental educational level in the case of female students. When the girls in the sample are compared on the basis of family educational background, the results reveal lower levels of leisure satisfaction among participants from families in which both parents have a low level of educational attainment relative to their peers from families with a higher level of education. This result is not observed in the comparative analysis of the boys in the sample, who report similar levels of leisure satisfaction regardless of their parents' educational level. When overall male and female responses are compared, no major differences in leisure satisfaction are observed. However, when this comparison is repeated in relation to the groups of participants from families with lower levels of educational attainment, satisfaction scores for the girls in the sample fall while those for their male counterparts remain stable.

As noted in the introduction, numerous studies have examined the different leisure constraints and inequalities between girls and boys, including both the structure and amount of leisure time available, and the freedom granted by parents to their sons and daughters, with stricter control over the hours and company female children keep and the places they go, especially during adolescence (Henderson, 2002; Megias & Ballesteros, 2006; Samdalh, 2013). This inequality is particularly apparent among girls from lower educational backgrounds whose parents place less value on leisure, since this represents an additional obstacle to their engaging in activities they enjoy during their free time.

Hypothesis 2: girls from families with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely to pass on leisure opportunities

Hypothesis 2 was also confirmed in part, with a more pronounced gender gap observed in relation to non-participation in leisure activities, both across the total sample and in particular among girls from families with lower levels of educational attainment. For male students, on the other hand, family educational background was not found to be a determining factor with regard to the decision to pass up leisure opportunities. The fact that girls are more likely to pass up enjoyed leisure activities makes it much harder for them to access satisfying leisure and maintain continuity of participation (Ahedo & Macua, 2016). The main reason given is lack of time, which implies a context of priorities in which leisure is subordinate to other occupations. Once again, the situation created is one of 'precarious leisure' (Batchelor et al., 2020), in which productive, utilitarian concerns undermine and restrict leisure as a full and positive experience, especially for girls.

Huppertz et al. (2017) have shown that children and young people from families with higher parental education are more likely to engage in physically active leisure activities than their peers from families with lower levels of education. Their study also revealed that this pattern and the influence of parental educational level is even more pronounced among the adolescent children of parents with a university education, as they are more likely to be involved in organized activities.

In families with a lower educational background, this translates into lower participation in enjoyed leisure activities, particularly in the case of girls. In Lori-Ann et al.'s (2010) study of leisure constraints for students in disadvantaged secondary schools, parents were identified as the main interpersonal constraint to leisure in most of the focus groups conducted. Another potentially negative factor is the continuous school day operated in most secondary schools in Galicia and Spain, since many students are unable to avail of extracurricular activities in the afternoon owing to factors such as high cost, lack of local resources, etc. As a result, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular are left without the possibility of engaging in educationally enriching activities outside of school hours, and spend most of their free time on unstructured activities at home or with their peer group (Badura et al., 2021, 2017; Tahull & Montero, 2019).

Hypothesis 3: leisure satisfaction correlates positively with the value placed on leisure by adolescents' families

The findings of our study confirm evidence elsewhere of a highly significant, positive correlation between family attitudes towards leisure activities and adolescent habits, motivation and satisfaction in this regard (Offer, 2013; Valdemoros et al., 2011).

Our research has found that families with lower educational attainment are less likely to value leisure, the doubly negative impact of which is especially apparent among female adolescents. The results of the present study show that girls from families where less value is placed on leisure are more likely to give up or pass up leisure activities they enjoy. The same is not true of boys, however, for whom abandonment of enjoyed leisure activities is not influenced by the value their families place on leisure. The negative influence transmitted by parents appears to apply only to daughters, therefore, not to sons.

Conclusions

Overall, the study showed a moderately positive level of satisfaction among adolescents with their leisure activities, although significant inequality of access to satisfying, meaningful leisure was observed based on gender and parental education. Girls were found to be more influenced by their families than boys in relation to both leisure satisfaction and failure to engage in enjoyed leisure activities. Girls from lower educational backgrounds, whose situation may be described as one of leisure precarity, were observed to be particularly vulnerable in this regard. Specific measures are needed to tackle the existing situation of inequality and precarity and to ensure access to meaningful leisure experiences for girls from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Fundamentally, the results of our study highlight the need to develop Leisure Education proposals as part of the curriculum and extracurricular provision of schools, to help children and adolescents interiorize the value of leisure and its benefits as part of their basic, compulsory education, and, in turn, to help reduce the unequal experience of leisure between families with different educational backgrounds and between girls and boys. Three lines of action are proposed to achieve this: 1) to develop Leisure Education programmes for children and adolescents within the compulsory school curriculum in order to establish leisure as a present and future priority; 2) to promote actions aimed specifically at increasing and improving the participation of girls in leisure, by increasing equality of access to existing leisure activities, and by organizing participatory processes where they can talk about their leisure constraints and preferences, so that their needs and interests are taken into account when designing leisure activities; and 3) to create Leisure Education proposals for parents which highlight the benefits of leisure and equip them with strategies to negotiate with their children regarding their desires and interests.

Limitations and future research

As in all studies, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The first relates to the quantitative nature of the present study and the use of a single measurement instrument (questionnaire), which does not allow for closer analysis of the perceptions reported by participants regarding their experience of leisure time and the reasons behind the gap in access to meaningful leisure experiences. More insight into the study findings could be gained from the addition of a qualitative component.

A second limitation of the study is the absence of data from the perspective of the parents, whose attitudes and opinions on the subject are only surveyed indirectly through the perceptions expressed by their children. Although the sample is taken from compulsory secondary school-age students in Galicia and cannot, therefore, be generalized to the rest of Spain, the data presented do reveal constraints and limitations that often remain hidden in studies on adolescent leisure and free time use.

Finally, it would be very interesting to explore the persistence among the adult population of leisure precarity and the obstacles to leisure satisfaction observed in adolescence. Such an analysis could compare and contrast the results for both groups in relation to gender and developments in social and political policy.

Data availability statement

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethics statement

As the participants were under 18 years of age, written informed consent was obtained from their parents or guardians.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competition and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the National R&D&I Plan (grant number EDU2015-65638-C6-1-R).

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