

Department of Hygiene, Medical University of Lublin

ANDRZEJ BORZĘCKI, BARBARA NIERADKO,
BOGUMIŁA GNAŚ, MARIA SIEKLUCKA-DZIUBA

Leisure time activities in teenagers in urban and rural areas

The style of living and patterns of health-preserving behaviour are being formed from the first years of human life. They determine the health condition of an individual in about 53% (7). Thus, it is an issue of great importance to develop them properly in children and teenagers with the help of parents at home, teachers during the lessons as well as at leisure time. In this work we used the definition of leisure time given by Czajkowski (2): "The leisure time of children is the period of the day, that is left for their own disposition, with exception for the time spent at school, having meals, sleeping, doing homework, or necessary domestic chores. The leisure time is also the time spent volunteering in a scout organisation, school government, community centre, etc." The time off can be spent resting, entertaining, or for individual interests (1, 5).

The aim of this work was to analyse the ways of spending leisure time by the teenagers from the country and from the town.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey was conducted on 100 randomly selected schoolchildren, 50 of them living in the country (attending the State Primary School in Czerniejów) and another 50 living in the town (attending the State Primary School No 5 in Chełm). All the questioned pupils were aged 11 to 15 (grade V-VIII). The examination method used was a questionnaire. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The questioned schoolchildren had a complete freedom of statement .

RESULTS

The children were asked to answer the questions about the way of spending their free time during the week (on the days when they had classes at school), on weekends, and during winter and summer holidays. They enumerated a wide variety of activities. On the weekdays the town teenagers spend most of their leisure time doing some indoor activities (Fig. 1). 76% of the questioned civic group spend the time watching TV, 14% – reading, 38% – listening to the music, 18% – doing hobbies, and 16% – voluntarily helping their parents. On those days they spend little time doing outdoor activities. 28% of them mention playing games in teams, 36% declare some individual exercises (cycling, roller skating), 44% – walk. The country teenagers spend their time off after school

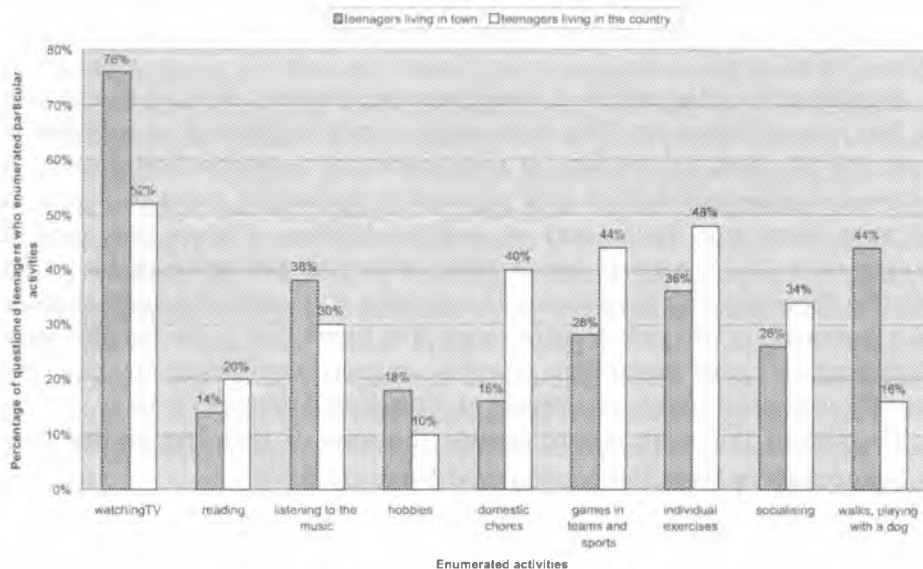


Fig. 1. Indoor and outdoor leisure time activities of teenagers living in town and in the country on weekdays when they attend school

mostly watching television (52%), reading books and newspapers (20%), listening to the music (30%), and doing their hobbies (10%). Many country kids (40%) write about helping their parents after school. There is a significant difference between those two groups in the duration of time spent doing outdoor sports and playing games. Very often the country group teenagers play games in teams (44%), cycle and walk (48%).

During the winter and summer holidays 78% of the town group and 58% of the country one leave their homes to travel. At that time 42% of the first group and only 26% of the second one rest watching TV. Computer games, cinema, and some other passive forms of rest fill the time of 58% and 40% of the examined groups, respectively. Concur-

rently, 66% of children in the country and 44% in the town help their parents. However, very few of the respondents, in both groups exercise or do outdoor sports at that time. 39% in the town and 16% in the country go for a walk, train sports, play games, dance or swim. There is an equal percentage (4%) in both examined groups of those who attend services at churches or participate in some other religious activities on weekends and holidays. 24% of the civic group and 14% of the country one spend the days studying at home (Fig. 2).

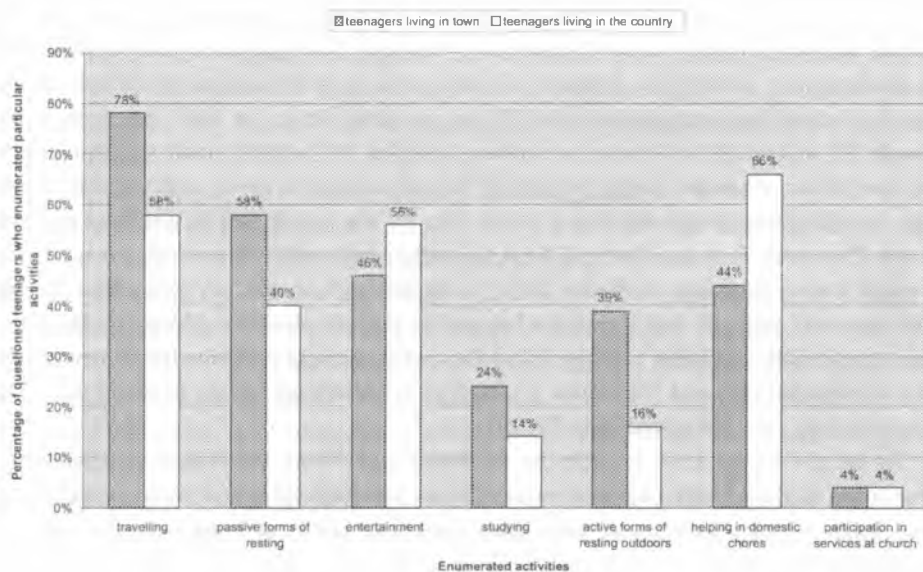


Fig. 2. Leisure time activities of teenagers living in town and in the country on weekdays, during winter and summer holidays

DISCUSSION

The leisure time plays an important role in creating personalities and behaviours in children and teenagers. It serves as the time for rest and entertainment. It is the time for developing our own interests and doing things we are gifted for as well as for socialising and finding our own place in the society (4, 6, 11). A pupil aged 7 to 15 should sensibly share the time for sleep, school education, homework and leisure time activities (community centre, domestic chores, meals, etc.) (3, 5). The survey done shows a distinction between two categories of leisure time: on the weekdays when children attend school and on the days free from school (weekends and holidays). The results obtained in this work indicate that the country kids have more rational daily schedules than their counterparts from town, as 44% of them do team sports and outdoor games, 48% exercise individually (cycling or skating). The town children admit to doing these activities in 28% and 36%, respectively. Steckiewicz et al. (10) described in their work the present health condi-

tion of children and teenagers and underlined that there was a significant increase in the percentage of kids with posture defects qualified to the X dispensation group within last ten years. The materials published by Woynarowska et al. (12) represent the statistics that every second schoolboy and schoolgirl spend over 4 hours a day watching TV, and about 4 hours a week playing computer games. Similar results were obtained in our survey.

Additionally, we found out that watching television was the most popular way of spending the free time in both examined groups. Lack of physical activities and posture defects resulting from it require therapeutic gymnastics. Within last ten years the number of children who need it has doubled (8). Disquietingly more and more children apply negative behavioural patterns seen on TV or computer screen to their own lives, even though TV and access to Internet are meant to widen the horizons, increase their health self-confidence, promote health preserving behaviours and hygienic style of life. However, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the civic population and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the country one spend their leisure time in front of the TV screen. It is also alarming from the orthopaedic point of view: as it is a passive form of resting (frequent 'television sitting' with distorted knees), the locomotive system does not work properly and it may lead to severe posture disorders. Moreover, the electromagnetic radiation has a negative influence on the eyesight and circulatory system (7). The information obtained from mass media does not make up for the health loss arising from too long time spent watching TV (9).

As for the leisure time activities on weekends and during holidays, many more children living in the country help in domestic chores and husbandry and oddly enough, they have much less opportunities to travel away from their places of living compared to children living in towns.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Both: children living in the country and children living in the town spent their leisure time mostly watching television.
2. The children living in the country spend more time helping their parents in domestic chores and husbandry than those living in towns.

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SUMMARY

The work aimed to determine the leisure time activities in teenagers on weekdays, weekends, during winter and summer holidays. Vast majority of teenagers spend their leisure time resting in a passive way, i.e. watching TV or playing computer games irrespectively of the season. As a result of this, the number of kids with posture defects increase. On weekdays the country teenagers spend much more time doing outdoor sports and games than town children. They also more often help their parents and less frequently travel away from their homes than children living in towns.

Sposób wykorzystania czasu wolnego przez młodzież w mieście i na wsi

Współczesne społeczeństwa dążą do maksymalnego skrócenia czasu pracy i nauki szkolnej. Środki masowego przekazu w coraz większym stopniu wpływają na życie wielu rodzin i pochłaniają czas wolny, szczególnie młodzieży. Mogą one działać dwojako: destruktywnie na rozwijające się organizmy lub przeciwnie – promować zachowania prozdrowotne. Z medycznego punktu widzenia czas wolny powinien być wykorzystywany na relaks psychiczny i wysiłek fizyczny, w szczególności sport.

Celem pracy była analiza oraz sposób wykorzystania czasu wolnego przez młodzież na wsi i w mieście. Jako metodę badawczą wybrano ankietę składającą się z pytań otwartych i zamkniętych. Przeprowadzono badanie w grupie 100 dzieci ze szkół podstawowych (50 z miasta i 50 ze wsi) w wieku 11-15 lat. Dzieci udzieliły odpowiedzi na pytania zawarte w ankiecie, dotyczące rozkładu zajęć w ciągu dnia. W dniach nauki szkolnej młodzież miejska spędzała czas wolny głównie w domu (oglądanie telewizji, czytanie, słuchanie muzyki, hobby). Młodzież wiejska natomiast spędza więcej czasu wolnego na aktywnych zajęciach sportowych na świeżym powietrzu. Pomoc w domu jako zajęcie w dni wolne od nauki szkolnej wymienia 42% dzieci z miasta oraz 56% dzieci ze wsi. Zdecydowanie różni się sposób spędzania ferii i wakacji przez obie badane grupy dzieci. 78% młodzieży miejskiej i tylko 58% wiejskiej deklaruje wyjazdy poza miejsce zamieszkania.

Wnioski z przeprowadzonych badań przemawiają za mało aktywnym spędzaniem czasu wolnego przez dzieci w mieście, zbyt długim oglądaniem telewizji przez wszystkie ankietowane dzieci i niewielkimi możliwościami spędzania czasu wolnego poza miejscem zamieszkania przez dzieci wiejskie.