

Relationship between Leisure Time Activities and Academic Achievement: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract – Leisure holds a great importance in students' timetable during their academic progress. With passage of time and evolution of technology new ways of involvement in leisure have emerged and can have both positive as well as negative impact on their academic performance. This study attempts to find the link between the time spent in leisure activities and the academic performance of students who have freshly passed class 12th examination and have been enrolled in different courses in colleges and universities. The differences in terms of gender are also examined. It is found that there is a negative relationship between leisure time activities of undergraduate students and the grades they obtain in their pre-college classes. Implications for education are also presented.

Keywords: Active leisure, passive leisure, academic achievement, structured leisure, unstructured leisure, productive-nonproductive activity, undergraduates.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The studies on the brief history of leisure suggest that the notions of leisure and leisure time emerged in Victorian Britain, in late nineteenth century, late in the industrial revolution (GNU, 2008). During 1870's the emergence of trade unions and efficient machinery reduced working hours and workers were given weekends off from work. The Victorian concept- weekends off, paved the way for developments of leisure time as it is today. The etymological meaning of the word leisure is *licere*. This is a Latin word which means "to be permitted" or "to be free". The Webster's third new international dictionary says that leisure is a time at one's own command that is free of engagements of responsibilities of any sort. The extensive review of related literature reveals that leisure is a state of mind, which ordinarily is characterized by unobligated time and willing optimism (Australian council for health, 1980). Leisure is activity - apart from the obligations of work, family, and society. For leisure individual turns at will, for relaxation, diversion, or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, the free exercise of his creative capacity (Dumazedier, 1974). Leisure makes it possible for the individual to leave behind the routine and stereotype forced on him by workings of basic and social institutions and to enter into a world of self-transcendence where his creative

powers are set free to oppose or to reinforce the dominant values of his civilizations (Gale, 2008).

A glance on the subjective definition of leisure shows that leisure must be understood as a mental and spiritual attitude and not simply the result of external factors (Pieper, 1965). It is a form of inward silence, which means not being busy but letting things happen. A very famous quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson goes like "Guard well your spare moments, they are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known, improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life." Leisure is a time when a person is free from work and certain class of obligations such as housework, personal care, eating and sleeping. It is a time which people set aside to relax, socialize and exercise mind and body or pursuing personal interests. Aristotle in both *Politics* (1981) and *Metaphysics* (2002) suggests that leisure is the centre point around which social life revolves. Leisure provides an opportunity to renew the self and allow us to do better in performing everyday activities. Broadly describing leisure is an experience of freedom, exploration and calmness, which subsequently paves the way for creative life expressions and self-actualization. The use habit of spending this leisure time in productive or right kind of activities can boost the academic achievement of students

besides impacting their other characteristics. The present study attempts to examine the relationship between LTA and Academic Achievement of undergraduates. Also, this study will examine the differences in LTA with respect to gender.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In the Indian education system the achievement of a school pass out in the form of academic performance (high school and senior secondary school marks) becomes one of the important bases for ranking of students. It tells a lot about an individual's skills; competencies and overall intelligence. Pannu (2010) states that higher academic achievement is of paramount importance for progress and promotion in any field, students with higher level of achievement can have a better chance to get jobs of higher level and the type of work that is given to them provides still better chance in their respective field.

However, academic performance may not be the only criterion to decide the worth of a student and predict his future attainments. Still, in many Indian schools and colleges academic percentage becomes a base to decide and predict about the future step of a child and is used as a proxy for *Academic Achievement*. It decides the streams a student will choose, whether he will drop further education and start working, whether he has the caliber to study further towards achieving high status jobs such as medicine, engineering, philosophy, administrative jobs etc. Iso-Ahola (1989) noted that participation in recreational activities is used as a mechanism to cope with constant demands in college. In a recent study by DeMers (2015), it was found that those who have successful career path and professional life, indulge in active leisure comprising of exercise for physical and mental health, reading for vocabulary and communication skills, taking classes for learning new skills, social work, meeting people for healthy networking, practicing hobby and spending time with family and close friends

Leisure activities can be categorized in productive and non-productive activities. There cannot be a simple bifurcation of productive and non-productive activities due to the complex human behavior and psychology of humans. Productive activities can be non-productive for some in certain scenario and non-productive may become productive in certain situations. In active leisure lifestyle a person uses leisure time in a health promoting manner (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). In passive leisure a person indulges in passive leisure activities such as sleeping, watching T.V., chatting or spending time in non-productive activities. Iso-ahola (1989) cites evidence to indicate that participation in various forms of active leisure have a direct impact on individual's life. However, productive activities are those that make us feel more complete of a human

being (mentally or physically enhanced). They can be more fulfilling, meaningful and beneficial in the long run. A study on Australian retirees showed that meaningful leisure had latent benefits and was positively related to quality of life (Read, Muller & Waters, 2013). Non-productive activities are the ones that are brain-draining and pile up to nothing. People might enjoy non-productive activities but their net effect is not constructive (Mayer, 2013). This varied influence can lead to better academic achievement in students and needs to be examined in current context. Moreover, in developing countries like India, the male and female students usually do not participate in similar kind of activities when it comes to leisure. Hickerson & Beggs (2007) state that girls involve in passive leisure time activities which increase boredom amongst them and boys perform active leisure and experience less boredom. They further state that students do not know how to manage leisure time and how to have necessary leisure skills. Beggs, Elkins, and Powers (2005) found that females were more likely to participate in non-competitive recreational sports programs and activities in which they could avoid conflict.

It is evident from research findings that engaging in productive and active leisure is psychologically rewarding. In a study by McDonald et.al. (1949) it was reported that children use leisure to prepare for further upward mobility. In yet another research by Caldwell and Witt (2011) it was reported that involving in active leisure has contributed to their overall development and positive outcomes in personal, social and emotional areas. However, they did not specifically cover the area of school achievement. They focused on positive outcomes such as relief from stress and positive psychological adjustment and well-being. Miller et al. (2003) also quoted that the youth who have higher self-expectations for their future career, engage in more structural leisure activities. Structured leisure is engaging oneself in activities related to personal interests and hobbies. Structured leisure demands more serious attitude and time devotion. Some students also look for future prospects in the activity they consciously engage in during their free time. This scenario is not very common amongst Indian youth. It has been reported that more and more adolescents engage in sedentary activities such as watching T.V., internet surfing, listening radio and music (Tangney & Fehbach, 1988; Congo, et. al., 2015). This situation is common nowadays and Indian as well as international research provide evidence in this direction. Engaging in too much passive leisure activities do not contribute to youth development.

Leisure time in India is viewed through many different perspectives. Mostly it is viewed as a time to relax. The activities youth involve themselves into are mainly to escape boredom and parental

pressures to excel academically. Another interesting outcome of review of related literature is that there are not many researchers conducted on studying students' leisure time and its impact on school performance especially in India. Most researches study a sample of adolescents. The current study focuses on a sample of fresh school pass outs who have recently joined college or universities. This study is a unique attempt in this direction and it is interesting to find out leisure interests and academic achievement of students.

Based on the above discussion it is hypothesized that:

H: There is no significant relationship between LTA and Academic Achievement of undergraduates.

H: There is no significant difference between LTA of male and female undergraduates.

3. METHODS

3.1. Measures

a) *Leisure Time Activities (LTA):* A behavioral self-report measure was used to assess the amount of time spent by undergraduates on active (productive) and passive (non-productive) leisure time activities. It was administered in the form of a *questionnaire* using scaling procedure through 5 point Likert type summated ratings.

b) *Academic Achievement:* The variable Academic Achievement was measured by taking the percentage of marks obtained by a respondent in class 12th final examination respectively.

3.2. Data collection

With the help of survey method the questionnaires were distributed among 700 fresh school pass outs who recently took admission in undergraduate courses of art, commerce and science. After preliminary screening there were 551 questionnaires finally selected for analysis. The respondents belonged to Moradabad, Bareilly, Aligarh, and Gautambudh Nagar areas of Uttar Pradesh. The students were from both public as well as private universities such as Amity University, Sharda University, Aligarh Muslim University, Galgotias University and Wilsonia College.

3.3. Validity & Reliability analysis

In order to examine the content and face validity of leisure time activity tool, the first draft was distributed to 20 experts, mostly professors, of Aligarh Muslim University. The experts were briefed to write 'P' in front of those activities that they think are productive (active), 'N' in front of those that seemed non-productive (passive) and 'C' for those that they

cannot say anything about. They were also requested to enumerate the different categories of leisure time activities and provide suggestions for improving scaling procedure. Tally marks were prepared for each item (total 75 items) on the LTA draft for each expert. Items carrying equal tally scores for all the three categories were dropped. Items with uncertain, indirect and inappropriate language were dropped and some of the items were merged. The LTA scale was subjected to Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha (α) values. The Cronbach's alpha (α) value of the LTA scale was found to be 0.698 and thus showing an acceptable level of reliability. After content and face validity the LTA draft was subjected to construct validity which was examined by running exploratory factor analysis. A total of 8 components were extracted which was quiet conforming to the theoretical standards and preliminary drafts of LTA scale. Again the reliability analysis of the draft was done and Cronbach's alpha value (0.748) was found to be in acceptable range. The number of items were reduced to 39. Item-total correlations were calculated for each component and items carrying correlations below .30 were deleted. The final draft consisted of 35 items assessing the time spent on productive and non-productive leisure time activities. For the interpretation of raw scores, z score norms were also calculated for the variable leisure time activity and academic achievement scores as well.

3.4 Probability distribution of leisure time activity (LTA) scores of undergraduates

In order to check the normality of summated scores of the undergraduates on the variable leisure time activity, the values of skewness and kurtosis were calculated using a statistical program called SPSS (statistical package for social sciences). It was found out that the skewness and kurtosis values (0.187 and -0.231 respectively) were within the accepted range and there is no problem with the normality of LTA scores. The results of the frequency distribution for LTA of undergraduates are presented in *table 1.1* and *figure 1.1*.

Table 1.1 Frequency distribution of LTA of undergraduates

N	Valid	551
	Missing	0
Mean		102.28
Median		103
Mode		120
Std. Deviation		21.732
Skewness		0.187
Kurtosis		-0.231

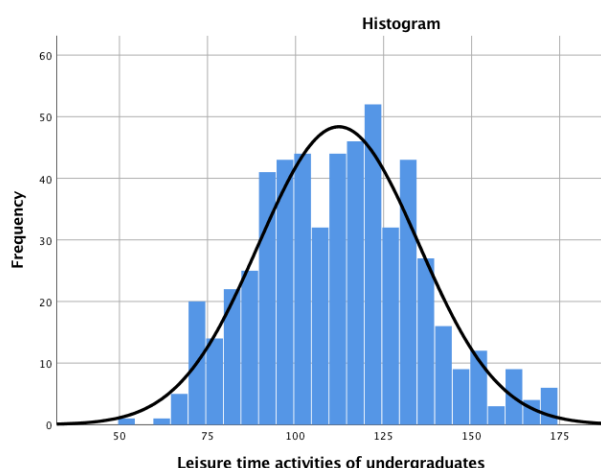


Figure 1.1 Frequency distribution of LTA of undergraduates

3.5 Probability distribution of Academic Achievement (AA) scores of undergraduates

The variable academic achievement was measured through the school passing percentage of 12th grade. In order to check the normality of the scores, skewness and kurtosis values were calculated for the current sample using SPSS. It was found out that the skewness and kurtosis values (-0.195 and 1.379 respectively) were within the accepted range. This shows that the scores of AA are normally distributed. The results are presented in table 1.2 and figure 1.2.

Table 1.2 Frequency distribution of AA of undergraduates

N	Valid	551
	Missing	0
Mean		63.71
Median		62
Mode		73
Std. Deviation		11.167
Skewness		-0.195
Kurtosis		1.379

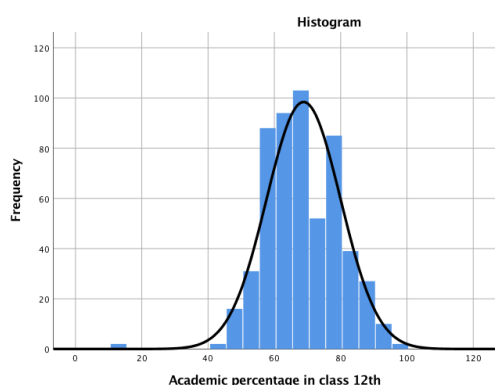


Figure 1.2 Frequency distribution of AA of undergraduates

3.6 Descriptive analysis for leisure time activity

The descriptive analysis for leisure time activity and academic achievement was done using percentage analysis. In case of leisure time activity it was found out that most undergraduates have an average level of leisure time activity. They spend 6 hours per week on an average on both productive and non-productive activities. Undergraduates who belong to 'highly productive' and 'productive' categories of leisure time activities perform activities such as reading books, visiting libraries, exercising, using internet for learning purpose, going for walks etc. A detailed description of time spent on different categories of leisure time activities is discussed in table 1.3 and 1.4.

Table 1.3 Time spent on different leisure time activities (in 4 categories)

Levels of LTA	Time spent on activities	Categories			
		Reading and writing	Internet and T.V.	Sports and exercise	Relaxing
Highly productive	More than 2 hours per day	Reading books, visiting libraries, academic activities, reading news	Learning through internet, watching informative channels	Exercising, yoga, playing sports, meditating, jogging, running.	-
Productive	0-2 hours per day	Watching news for awareness, watching documentary movies	Watching good T.V. channels (such as news, history or the like)	Going for walks, exercising	-
Average	6 hours or more per week	Reading magazines and newspapers	Learning through internet, using Facebook	Going for walks	Sitting idle
Non-productive	0-2 hours per day	-	Browsing internet aimlessly	Going for walks	Sleeping, sitting idle
Highly non-productive	More than 2 hours per day	-	Facebook for fun, watching any T.V. channel (music, daily soaps, movies)	-	Sleeping, sitting idle

Table 1.4 Time spent on different leisure time activities (in remaining 4 categories)

Levels of LTA	Time spent on activities	Categories			
		Socializing and recreational	Mental	Hobbies	Other
Highly productive	More than 2 hours per day	Healthy discussions with friends, spending time with family	Practicing reasoning, solving puzzles and mind games, solving question papers	Involving in fruitful hobbies and cultural activities, social work.	-
Productive	0-2 hours per day	Visiting friends and neighbors, healthy discussions with friends.	Practicing logical reasoning	Involving in hobbies	-
Average	6 hours or more per week	Visiting friends and neighbors, involving in healthy discussions	-	Practicing hobby	Chatting with friends
Non-productive	0-2 hours per day	Passing time in chatting with friends, watching movies, visiting malls for passing time	-		Chatting on whatsapp, listening to any music
Highly non-productive	More than 2 hours per day	Passing time in chatting with friends, visiting malls and movie theatres, going to restaurants for passing time.	-		Chatting on whatsapp, playing video games, listening to any music, passing time roaming around

The above tables show that undergraduates who involve in productive leisure, regularly perform activities such as visiting libraries, watching news, reading newspapers, exercising and yoga, going for walks, having healthy discussions and learning through the internet. They spend on an average 2 hours or more per day on such activities. On the contrary, undergraduates who involve in non-productive leisure, regularly visit shopping malls, watch movies, watch T.V., visit restaurants, sleep and sit idle, chatting with friends, using whatsapp and facebook for fun. They spend more than 2 hours per day on an average on such activities. Whereas undergraduates who involve in average level of leisure time activities perform both productive and nonproductive activities and spend on an average 6 hours or more per week.

There are approximately 37 percent of undergraduates who have an average level of leisure time activity and approximately 33 percent undergraduates spend time on productive leisure time activities. Approximately 19 percent of undergraduates spend time on non-productive leisure time activities. There is almost negligible percentage of undergraduates whose leisure time

activities are highly non-productive and highly productive. The results of this descriptive analysis are shown in table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Percentage of undergraduates in different levels of LTA

Levels of LTA	No. of undergraduates	%
Highly productive	44	7.98
Productive	180	32.66
Average	204	37.02
Non-productive	106	19.23
Highly non-productive	17	3.08
Total	551	

3.7 Descriptive analysis for academic achievement

The descriptive analysis of academic achievement was done using percentage. It was assessed that most undergraduates belong to an average category of academic achievement (46.82%). The undergraduates in high and low categories were 24.86% and 18.14% respectively. There were approximately 9% of undergraduates having high level of academic achievement and only 1% had very low level of AA.

Table 1.6 Level of academic achievement of undergraduates

Levels of academic achievement	No. of undergraduates	%
Very high	50	9.07
High	137	24.86
Average	258	46.82
Low	100	18.14
Very low	6	1.08

3.8. Correlation Analysis

To investigate the link between LTA and Academic Achievement, Bivariate Correlation analysis was performed between the said variables. The results of the analysis revealed that the correlation between the two variables was significant ($p=0.007$). The value of Pearson Correlation coefficient, r was equal to -0.115 (table 1.1). The negative sign of the r indicates that there is a negative relationship between LTA and Academic Achievement. This result indicates that as the students spend more time in active leisure time activities; their academic achievement tends to go in opposite way and vice versa. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in table 1.7.

Table 1.7: Correlation analysis between LTA and Academic Achievement.

	Leisure time activities of undergraduates	Academic achievement
Leisure time activities of undergraduates	1.000	-0.115
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.007
N	551	551
Academic achievement	-0.115	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007	
N	551	551

Further, the small value of r indicates that relationship between LTA and Academic Achievement is significant but of very weak magnitude.

3.5. One-Way ANOVA

The difference in means of LTAs for males and females was checked with the help of one-way ANOVA. As indicated in *table 1.8*, the significance value ($p=0.471$) is well above the cut off level and hence the null hypothesis is accepted which states that there is no significant difference between males and females based on LTAs.

Table 1.8 ANOVA: LTA of males and females

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	779.01	2	389.505	0.754	0.471
Within Groups	283153.505	549	516.703		
Total	283932.515	551			

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results from the correlation analysis clearly indicate that there is a negative and significant relationship between the time spent by undergraduate students and the grades they obtain in their pre-college classes. Students who spend on an average 2 hours per day on activities such as sleeping, passing time in canteens/restaurants, browsing internet for relaxing, listening to music/radio, watching any T.V. channel score better in academics. Involving in relaxing and passive leisure time activities provide students time to recharge self. They have helped in regaining mental and physical energy after attending school and performing other obligatory activities. Schools pose a lot of pressure in terms of excelling in school marks and scoring high grades. This has become a major source of worry among senior secondary school children and they find solace in performing relaxing and passive activities in their free time. Studies conducted in

developed countries show that there is a positive impact of performing active leisure activity, on a regular basis, on school and college achievement of adolescents and college going girls and boys. However, the way school achievement is assessed in developed countries might have lot of variations with that of developing countries. In developed countries, emphasis is given to an overall development of personality of students while in Indian schools emphasis is given to marks obtained in schools subjects. So, the scenario is that unnecessary pressure on involving in only academic activities after school or involving in active leisure only, does not necessarily assist in having good school grades in most Indian schools. The students might have been nurtured in a more mechanical way with more emphasis being laid on the curricular activities and lesser importance being given to pursuit of leisure. However, the impact of LTA on Academic achievement has not been tested in current study. The primary observation shows that the relationship is not that strong and the academic achievement is being affected by some other variables, which have not been captured in current context. Hence, undergraduates performing more relaxing and passive activities score better in academics. Moreover, the ANOVA test results show that the male and female undergraduates do not differ in terms of LTA and spend similar sort of time in productive and non-productive activities of leisure. This might be the case due to the leisure mind set of Indian undergraduates. Leisure time is viewed only as a time away from school and responsibilities. It has been evident from the research conducted in developed countries that girls and boys have different interests and inclinations when it comes to spending their free time. They view their free time as a quality time in hand which can be used to make the most out of it. Positive and productive leisure time activities are linked with positive personal, academic and health outcomes.

5. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the limitations of current study is that the sample has been taken from some specific geographical locations of India and future research could be carried out with more representative sample covering more geographical locations and institutes of India. Further, the future studies could focus on examining the impact of more variables on Academic Achievement. Also, this study only focused on checking the gender differences with respect to LTA and more research is needed with examination of differences in terms of stream of study and the type of institute.

6. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results and discussions, the following points implicit some important educational decisions related to the topic:

Most research undertaken in the area of passive and active leisure and their outcomes have shown negative impact of indulgence in passive leisure. But in the present research the scenario is quite different. Students performing relaxing and passive activities tend to score better academically. Passive leisure time turns out to be the time when students close their minds and involve in activities requiring minimum mental and physical stimulation. The undergraduates' passive leisure time is the time to recharge their self. This is how they refresh their overall mood and gain energy. Activities such as watching TV, talking on the phone, visiting malls, using social media, chatting with friends or playing video games are preferred in order to relax. Indian parents put undue pressure on children firstly to score higher grades in school and secondly to involve in only academic or productive activities in their free time. However, performing only academic activities in free time do not result in positive academic outcomes. Free time is the time to enhance creative capabilities. Students should be given freedom to use their free time as they like and gives them opportunity to enhance physical, mental and creative powers.

On an average, most undergraduates spend 6 to 8 hours per week on different leisure time activities. This indicates that they mostly indulge in unstructured leisure time activities which have an inverse relation with their academic achievement. Structured leisure time activities are not common among Indian teenagers. Structured leisure is involvement in serious and consciously taken up activities such as: joining badminton club, cricket club, joining educational societies and the like. This takes time and dedication and consistent efforts. International literature provides evidence about positive relationship between structure leisure time activities and academic achievement. Such forms of leisure time activities are both mentally and physically stimulating. They are considered productive with positive future outcomes. Indian teenagers should be encouraged to involve in structured leisure time activities. It can also be the case where students opt for career options in their respective types of leisure activities.

It has been observed from this study that the perception of leisure time in Indian students differs from how it is perceived in other countries. Leisure time is not given much importance in India and it is confined to a certain types of activities. It is not considered as an opportunity to create something novel for oneself but it is considered as a time to pass without putting in much effort. More useful and beneficial ways of spending free time can be

introduced to enhance both mental and physical capabilities. This can be achieved by linking In-school and after school home activities of students.

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