

# **A consideration of Leisure Time Spent by Students at Islamic Azad Universities Nationwide-Iran**

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## **Abstract**

The present paper considered the leisure time spent by students at all Islamic Azad Universities in Iran with a focus on physical activities. The statistical population comprised all university undergraduate students in 14 districts in the 2010-11 academic years. The sample was 3,500 people selected through multi-stage cluster sampling. The measurement instruments was a questionnaire conducted by Tondnevis (1996) with the Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. We applied Friedman ANOVA and t-independent groups for statistical analysis. Results showed the average leisure time of students was 2.7 hours, but there was no significant difference between boys and girls. Average leisure time of students during the summer of was 6 to 12 hours and the average for women was significantly more than men.

## **Keywords:**

Leisure time, university, sports, Iran

## **Introduction**

Collegiate recreational sports stem from what is known as the British sports clubs. Students used to establish clubs at campuses and financially contribute to their development. Collegiate competitions (such as freshmen with seniors) were successful methods to attract students to participate in the sporting activities. Between 1875 and early 1900, the competition was often

intercollegiate limited to track and field. In 1904, Cornell University offered a system that allowed the students to be proficient in specific sports. This was the first interdepartmental system stressing on collegiate recreation and what is known today as the physical education course. Between 1904 and 1912, the activities under the control of students increased to the extent that organizations attempt to manage their activities under a central authority. In 1913, Ohio State and Michigan Universities established the University athletics office. Many famous sports programs within the universities gradually increased the need for facilities for various sports and therefore the first specialized building was built at the University of Michigan in 1982. In the early 1920s, athletic conferences were held and in 1950, William Vanern founded National Association of Recreation at the Willard University in New Orleans. Today, underlying associations are active in the United States, Canada and England and, hence, university sports movement is growing.

Crenshaw and Phillip (2007) evaluated the encouraging interventions to change the habit of physical activity in leisure time among the students at University of Mississippi. The role of various factors such as race, sex, age and financial condition indicated that race has no influence in this regard. But other independent variables were effective.

Olubor.RO and Osunde (2007) conducted an analysis of leisure time among students in Nigeria. The survey showed that colleges having the greatest time of study didn't necessarily have less physical activity. The results showed that managers and university authorities should have sporting facilities within dorms and teach social life skills to help students manage their leisure time.

Makinen and et al (2008) considered 25-year socio - economic pattern among Finnish staff. This study was conducted between 1978 to 2002. The study population were 25 513 women and 25 302 men. Social variables including education, occupation, and income showed that low-income induced less physical activity in leisure time.

Schlag R (2009) conducted a study on 98 students at Birmingham Yang University the results showed that recreational activities did not impact students in their academic level. Men were also more willing to do activities such as basketball, hiking, rock climbing, water skiing, surfing, tennis, cycling, volleyball, hockey and bodybuilding ,whereas women chose golf, swimming, ice skating and acrobats showing different preferences of men and women as far as leisure time was concerned. Based on the previous research, the present study considered the leisure time spent by students at all Islamic Azad Universities in Iran with a focus on physical activities trying to answer the following questions: How much leisure time is spent by genders?. Where do the students spend their leisure time? .What leisure activities are the students involved at?. What

makes students to exercise in their leisure time? And why some students prefer not to do any leisure time activity?

### **Methodology**

This study was descriptive and survey with an emphasis on sport. The statistical population consisted of all university undergraduates nationwide (932 045 people) in the academic year of 2010-11. We selected 3,500 people through multistage cluster sampling so that three units were selected randomly from each region encompassing a total of 42 units. Among the selected units, we chose the students studying general physical education courses (1) and (2) were selected in the first semester in 2010-11. Measurement tool was a questionnaire conducted by Tondnevis (1996) for a research project about how students at public universities across country spent their leisure time with the Cronbach's alpha of 0.85

### **Results**

**(Table 1)Leisure time spent by male and female students in the academic year and during summer**

Gender	Men			Women		
variable	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Leisure time during the semester	848	3.77	2.539	1135	3.91	2.33
Summer leisure time	1124	6.84	5.01	1223	11.76	8.97

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of daily time (in minute) spent by men and women in various places**

Variables	Women		Men		Test		
	M	SD	M	SD	t	DF	Sig
Home or dorm	500.40	345.42	417.18	262.43	5.96	2303	5.96
University Sport facilities	202.31	164.40	144.72	111.24	6.16	1065	0.001
University non-sport recreational facilities	133.98	102.25	117.87	86.67	2.45	926	0.014
Street	133.74	118.71	107.56	76.11	4.58	1538	0.001
Parks	84.560	83.13	69.810	57.01	2.81	893	0.005
Cultural and art centers	80.70	80.75	94.75	67.92	-1.73	369	0.085
Outside of the University Sports facilities	137.39	126.68	137.25	84.92	0.02	826	0.985
Internet cafes	62.38	57.49	49.63	28.31	2.62	401	0.009
Coffee shop and restaurant	68.00	31.88	66.57	30.34	0.61	798	0.542

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of various leisure activities for men and women students in a day (in minute)**

Indicators	Women	Men	t	DF	Sig
	M ± SD	M ± SD			
Reading	30.19 ± 18.31	29.14 ± 19.23	5.96	2303	0.96
TV watching	74.05 ± 41.32	68.11 ± 39.24	6.16	1065	0.001 *
Watching satellite	65 ± 21	60 ± 28	1.45	926	0.06
Watching favorite programs via DVD and VCD	77.73 ± 45.26	69.71 ± 45.36	2.58	1538	0.03 *
Listening to the radio	20.69 ± 11.17	28 ± 18.81	-2.81	839	0.005 *
Research work	15.69 ± 9.17	10.91 ± 13	1.73	396	0.08
Using computers for fun (Internet, chat, etc.)	60 ± 15.10	68 ± 30.02	2.02	826	0.04 *
Mobile working for fun (SMS, Bluetooth, ...)	28.56 ± 17.64	35.25 ± 27.67	1.62	401	0.07
Arts (calligraphy, painting, etc.)	20 ± 14.20	15 ± 9.87	2.61	798	0.04 *
Going to park	18.56 ± 12.64	15.25 ± 11.67	3.72	826	0.02 *
Recreational walking in the street	23.54 ± 11.40	42.94 ± 25.65	-7.62	401	0.009 *
Going to shopping malls for fun	60.20 ± 38	45 ± 28.09	3.61	798	0.02 *
Being with friends and relatives	15.10 ± 12.40	27.06 ± 19.66	-6.02	826	0.01 *

(Party going)					
Going to the sports facilities	40 ± 20.47	58.29 ± 37.85	1.62	401	0.07
Going to the cinema and theater	18 ± 8.7	22 ± 8.9	2.61	798	0.04 *
Playing Musical instruments and singing	30 ± 25.04	50 ± 27.80	-9.02	826	0.005 *
Going to training classes (language, computer, etc.)	42.07 ± 14.75	35.08 ± 15.81	2.62	401	0.02 *
Addressing religious activities such as reciting the Quran and ...	13 ± 8.60	7.50 ± 4.89	2.61	798	0.04 *
Doing the crosswords	30 ± 25.04	25 ± 21.70	3.02	826	0.04 *
Playing Computer games	22.27 ± 15.58	28.08 ± 19.0	-4.42	401	0.03 *

\* P <0.05

**Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of students' motivation to exercise**

Variables	Women		Men		Test	
	M	SD	M	SD	t	Sig
Physical health	1.46	0.67	1.36	0.59	3.37	0.001
Mental relaxation	1.64	1.25	1.60	0.81	0.78	0.44
Being with friends	2.60	1.30	2.14	1.08	7.3	0.001
Fun and leisure time	2.47	1.25	2.44	1.11	0.49	0.62
Medical advice	3.41	1.37	3.23	1.35	2.5	0.012
Feelings of pleasure and euphoria	1.67	0.88	1.74	0.82	-1.55	0.122
Weight control and fitness	1.79	1.11	1.85	1.13	-1.10	0.27
Maintaining physical strength	1.87	0.95	1.66	0.83	4.5	0.001
Getting accustomed to exercise	2.84	1.29	2.49	1.29	5.2	0.001

**Table 5:ANOVA Friedman test: Distribution of reasons for not exercising**

Variables	Women	Men
Lethargy and laziness	36.0%	52.8%
Not accustomed to exercise	45.6%	52.6%
Lack of interest	12.3%	12.4%
Lack of time	51.0%	68.4%
Lack of facilities	42.4%	21.7%
Physical discomfort	26.2%	29.2%
Medical advice	13.8%	14.8%
Social constraints	28.0%	20.9%
Financial problems	18.3%	39.3%

### **Conclusion**

Results showed the average leisure time of students was 2.7 hours, but there was no significant difference between boys and girls. Average leisure time of students during the summer of was 6 to 12 hours and the average for women was significantly more than men. Data obtained from this study are consistent with previous research results. Findings from the research indicated that students had a day of recreation and leisure time especially on or summer holidays and also it varies between 5-3 hours per day and an average student had about 8 hours of leisure time on holidays.

With respect to existing facilities, student's priorities regarding leisure time activities included parties going, watching their favorite program on DVD and VCD, working with computer and going to shopping centers. The study result is different from the results obtained with other studies concluding that most students spend their spare time activities in sports, film and video watching and computer work, so it seems to be necessary for providing sufficient facilities.

The conspicuous point in investigating students' motivation to exercise was that medical advice was the most important priority for both genders and this can emphasize on the special place doctors and their advice has proved invaluable among students.



Lack of exercise among students was due to lack of time, lack of habit, lack of facilities and installations, laziness, financial problems and social limitations. The research findings are consistent with those of Arzu Daskaoan et al (2006) in which the barriers were busy tutoring, academic success priority over exercise cited by the parents and the lack of time due to family responsibilities and social environment.

The research findings show that with proper and correct planning and providing an annual calendar of activities, facilities and installations, professional planners, providing features like an adequate budget, manpower, equipment and construction of sports facilities, and removing the social barriers, authorities can take steps to fill the leisure time among people resulting in a healthy, vibrant and joyful developed society.

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