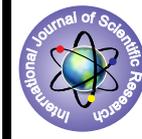


Leisure and Its Impact on Well Being in School Children



Medical Science

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Introduction

"All work and no play make jack a dull boy" old saying poses importance to leisure among children.

Leisure is defined as a "non-obligatory activity that is intrinsically motivated and engaged in during discretionary time, that is, time not committed to obligatory occupations such as work, self-care, or sleep" (Parham & Fazio, 1997).

Leisure activities should be novel and should provide arousing experience. Recent studies indicated a growing interest in identifying specific types of leisure activities that contribute to well-being. The basic characteristics of leisure are relaxation, enjoyment, freedom of choice, intrinsic motivation, commitment, control and challenge. Engagement in leisure can promote physical and psychological wellbeing for persons of all ages (Susan Knox, 1998). Raphael (1996) stated that a lack of satisfying leisure activities may be associated with behavior problems such as delinquency. Some common leisure activities in school children were reading, television watching, use of computers, spectator activities, arts and crafts, game and physical activities and some other hobbies as per their interest. Childhood leisure facilitates competence in adulthood (Barnett, 1990). In adulthood, leisure provides a source of satisfaction and allows for respite from work (Vandenberg & Kielhofner, 1982). Thus leisure has a major impact throughout one's life.

Types of Leisure

Leisure can be divided in to Active and passive. Active leisure involves exertion of physical and mental energy (e.g. physical activity) while passive does not exert any significant physical or mental energy (e.g. watching television).

Impact of Passive Leisure on Well-being

Passive leisure activities such as watching television, playing video games etc. leads to negative impacts like social isolation, sense of boredom and reduced physical activity. So it is not only necessary to include interested leisure activities but it's also more important to consider and encourage an active leisure activities. In a study done by Koch et al., 2003, Overweight/obesity is associated with a poorer body gross motor development and endurance performance. An active lifestyle is positively correlated with a better gross motor development in first-grade children. Therefore, to prevent the negative consequences of physical inactivity and overweight/obesity early intervention to support exercise and movement is recommended. This exercise can be done through interesting leisure activities like active sports and games.

Importance of Active Leisure

In a study by Mark D. Holder, the relation between leisure and well-being, including happiness and self-concept was examined in school children of 8-12 years of age Active leisure (e.g. physical activity) was positively correlated with well-being. Passive

leisure (e.g. television and video games) was negatively correlated with well-being. Aspects of active leisure (e.g. the importance of sport to the child and how sports made the child feel) as judged by both parents and children accounted for unique variance in children's wellbeing.

Obstacles for Participation in Leisure

Leisure in school children is influenced by time availability, freedom of stress, lack of available resources or materials, due to over load of student ratio, provision of novelty and opportunities to make choices etc. self-consciousness, too much challenge, limited choices and excessive competition are inhibitory to leisure interest and their participation. Rahim and Sakhyyah (2004) investigated the relationship between leisure constraint and students' participation in recreational sport activities in selected fully residential schools in Johor, India. Results revealed that an increase in the intensity of constraint experienced would likely be followed by a decrease in students' participation and concluded that leisure constraint and students' participation were interconnected.

Implications

"A suitable balance among individuals' daily activities, self-maintenance, work, leisure time activities, rest and sleep is important for remaining in good mental health" (Adolph Meyer, 1922). Activity configuration of a typical day of a student includes a balance among 8 hours of work/ school tasks, 8 hours of sleep and 8 hours of leisure or play. Equal important must be given to all 3 sorts of activities in order to maintain a balanced life. In most of the residential school, activity configuration is broken as more importance is given to academics and least bothered about leisure and play tasks.

It is important to identify interested leisure tasks in residential school children through Interest or Leisure check list. Thus facilitating active, automatic participation and to encourage active leisure activities in residential school children which has a positive effect on physical and mental wellbeing, enhances student's participation and contributes to academic achievement. Hence it is essential to promote active leisure in residential schools.

Conclusion

"Empty mind is Devils Workshop" according to an old saying, lack of leisure and inappropriate time use may lead to certain issues such as drug abuse, addicted habits, psychosocial problems which may influence their physical and mental well-being and thereby affecting academic achievements. School systems can encourage group games, sports, arts and crafts, and aerobics or can be a free play which develops unity and social integration among students. Active leisure also stimulates physical and cognitive process which in turn leads to good physical and mental wellbeing. It can also enhance self-esteem and confidence thereby the child can achieve a sense of self satisfaction.

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