
The perception and constraints towards recreational activity among female students

Azlan Ahmad Kamal¹, Mohd. Syukran Abdul Khadir², Farhana Wan Yunus¹

1. University Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
2. Physical and Health Department, Sekolah Menengah Batu Unjur

Correspondence with:

Azlan Ahmad Kamal

azlanahmadkamal@yahoo.com

Faculty of Education

University Technology MARA (UiTM)

40200 Shah Alam. Selangor, MALAYSIA

International Journal of Sport Management Recreation & Tourism, Vol.6, pp.62-75, 2010

© 2010 I.J.S.Ma.R.T. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1791-874X

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/>

DOI: 10.5199/ijsmart-1791-874X-6d

The perception and constraints towards recreational activity among female students

Abstract

More often than not, male students are seen to be more active in recreation activity than female students. To investigate this matter, a study was done on the female recreational activity participation. This study investigated the perception and constraints towards recreation activity among female students in a university in Malaysia. This study used a questionnaire regarding the recreation activity to collect the findings. Sixty respondents have been selected randomly as the subject for this study. All the information that is obtained from the questionnaire has been collected and analyzed using SPSS. It was found recreation is most often perceived as 'extreme sports' by female students. Moreover, most of the female students perceived themselves as participating regularly in recreational activity. The reasons for not participating in recreational activity are of lack of time, low energy level, lack of participants, lack of facilities and money. It was also found female students prefer outdoor activities such as camping, abseiling and wall climbing. Future studies should compare the perception of male and female students' on recreational activity.

Keywords: recreational; activity; constraints; female; students

The perception and constraints towards recreational activity among female students

Introduction

Leisure and recreation activities provide healthy lifestyles to whoever participates in it. Recreation is a famous activity. Camping, mountain climbing or hiking, scuba diving, jungle tracking are some example of recreational activities that are very popular. Almost all higher institutions have their own recreation club and lots of programs have been offered for the students every year such as yearly camping program. Recreation program is not only limited to adults but also to youth. Recently there are many discussions about the recreation program. Leisure constraints which inhibit interested people from participating cover to “a range of social and psychological factors as well as ones pertaining to the logistics and structure of the services offered” (Godbey, 1989). According to Jackson and Barton (1990) there is a general agreement among researchers that there are three types of recreational activity constraints; those that are external to the individual (environmental); those which are internal (psychological, intrapersonal); and those which are rational and social (socio-psychological). Outdoor recreations have been described as beneficial and some of the benefits are useful to youth for example keeping at-risk youth off the streets and give them a safe environment to interact with their peers, and fill-up their time within which they could otherwise get into trouble. However, constraints are one of the factors that lead to the failure of some activities.

Review of Literature

Women in the past joined in several recreational programs. However, it was still not enough because the women still think they are second-rate to men's programs. It is believed that a lot of work needed to be done to improve women's participations in recreational activity. Recreation activity that focused on female students' development can offer opportunities for female students to defend against social stereotypes and promote positive gender identity development Whittington (2006). When female students participate in recreation activity, they can develop some “masculine skills” and “feminine skills” in them. Masculine skills include decision-making and leader while feminine skills include cooperation and taking care of others (Ivtzan & Conneely, 2009). In accordance to Handerson and Bialeschki (1995), in the past, sports and outdoor recreation have

been claimed by females as a symbol of authority. Thus, females joined sports and outdoor recreation to feel good about themselves. Luckily in this modern era, recreational activities have evolved and changed. Females now enjoy a wide range of sports and recreational activities (Cahn, 1994).

In universities, recreation programs are not limited to male only but also to female students. However, not many female students realize the advantages of getting involve in the recreation programs. They may prefer shopping or just sitting at home and watching the television rather than join recreational activity. This is because, getting involve in recreation program demands a lot of time and work to do. The most important thing is it will demand them to be exposed to the sun shine that will cause sun burn to their skin or sleep in the camp that will expose them to the mosquitoes. According to Li, Min, Belk. Kimura & Bahl (2008), having white or fair skin is considered a sign of beauty to the Asian culture. Due to that fact, skin lightening and skin whitening products are fast selling in the Asian markets. Malaysian females are very concern of their skin and they hate anything that can cause damage to their skin. Because of that, Malaysian females sometimes decline the offer of joining outdoor sports.

The female students' perception towards recreation is very important as this can give a lot of information about their preference of recreational activities. Many female students give a lot of excuses for not participating in recreational activities. In accordance to Korstanje (2009), people often give excuses due to personal constraints such as financial, social, psychological, physical, functional, situational and travel risks. People are also afraid of leaving their familiar surrounding (Qi, Gibson & Zhang, 2009). They prefer familiarity because they are afraid of taking risks. It was found, people's decision is also effected by their past experiences. Furthermore, Qi, Gibson & Zhang (2009) said females are more risk conscious than males. Males are more spontaneous and adventurous while the females are more careful in their actions. When people have the emotional fear of something, they also decline the offer to avoid facing their fear. Fear can also lead to anxiety (Kostanje, 2009). Anxiety is considered as an individual constraint as well. Therefore, people around them must always inform them the advantages of recreational activities. A survey research done by Markwell & Tomsen (2010) found the top reason why people join in an event is because they feel it will be fun to them. A lot of knowledge can be gained during recreational activities. Self confidence skill and social skill will also be gained when joining recreational activity. Moreover, the students will have a healthy body and mental state. This is because these

activities needed them to have good healthy body and mental to do the challenging activities. Apart from that, recreational activities teach students good time management. Hence, students should be able to divide their time properly by giving balance time between academic study as well as recreational activities.

Objectives

The purposes of this study were:

- To determine the perceptions of the female students' involvements in the recreation activities;
- To know type of recreational program that female students' like to participate;
- To determine the female students' constraints in participating recreational program.

Significance

Recreational activity has a lot of constraints. A lot of research has been done to find out the constraints people had to face during recreational activity. The results of the research may lead to help people reduce those constraints and improve their behaviors (Iso-Ahola & Mannel, 1985). Through conversations with the female students, they argued that they do not have any activity to do besides attending classes daily at the university. They usually used their free time to window shop and watch movies. These students claimed that they do not know how to use the time properly by involving themselves in recreational activity that has been organized by the university. They do not see the benefits and points of joining recreational activities. Therefore, this study is to provide the female students new insights on recreational activities. Everybody should try to join the recreational activity, so that they will know the advantages and benefits of the recreation activity to fulfill their leisure time.

Methodology

Sample

Sixty female students were selected randomly for this study. The students were from the Faculty of Education, University Technology MARA, Malaysia. Faculty of Education produces future teachers. Thus, the students selected were students who were studying to become future teachers. This is prudent, especially to females because teachers need to not just be talented and skillful in academics, but must be well balanced in physical activities or recreational programs as well. This study adopted a

survey method, which was designed to investigate the female students' perception towards recreational activity. This study focused on the female only. No male student was involved in this study.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A is the demographic data while Section B is the perception of recreational activities. In section A, the students were required to answer the question 'Do you perceived yourselves as participating in recreational activity regularly?' with 'Yes' or 'No' answer. Students who chose 'Yes' were required to answer Section C and Section D, while the students who chose 'No' had to skip section C and straight away go to Section D. This is because Section C is not relevant to the students who perceived themselves as irregular to recreational activity. Section C is only for respondents who participated regularly in recreational activity. Section D looks at the respondents' constraints towards recreational activity.

Process

The students were from the Faculty of Education, University Technology MARA, Malaysia. Each respondent was given the same set of written questionnaires and they were randomly selected. Each respondent had to answer the questionnaire at the time given. The questionnaires were distributed and collected on the same day.

Results

Section A (Respondents' Background)

Table 1 below shows the average age of the respondents. The result shows that a total of 19 respondents or 31.7% of the respondents were 20 to 22 years old while 31 respondents or 51.7% of the respondents were 23 until 25 years old. The remaining 10 respondents (16.7%) were 26 years old and above.

Table 1. Respondents' age.

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-22	19	31.7	31.7
	23-25	31	51.7	83.3
	>26	10	16.7	100.0
	Total	60	100	

Table 2 below represents the marital status of the respondents. The result indicated 8 students or 13.3% are married while the remaining 52 students or 86.7% are still single.

Table 2. Respondents' Marital Status.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	52	86.7	86.7	86.7
Married	8	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 shows that 33 respondents or 55% of the respondents live off campus while the remaining 27 respondents or 45% of the respondents live at the university's hostel.

Table 3. Respondents' Place of Residence.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Valid Off Campus	33	55.0	55.0	55.0
Hostel	27	45.0	45.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 below shows 33 respondents (55%) perceived themselves as participating in recreational activity regularly while 27 respondents (45%) said they do not participate in recreational activity regularly. Respondents who answered Yes must answer Section C of the questionnaire, while respondents who answered No has to skip Section C and go to Section D straight away.

Table 4. Do you participate in recreational activity regularly.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Valid Yes	33	55.0	55.0	55.0
No	27	45.0	45.0	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Section B (Perception of recreational activities)

Table 5 below indicates the respondents' perception towards recreational activities. The majority of the respondents (26.7%) perceived recreational activity as extreme sports. According to Anderson (2010), an extreme sport is defined as activities

that are related to an adrenaline rush that is felt by the participant. Extreme sports are often dangerous and sometimes it can result in injury or even death. Some examples of extreme sports are mountain biking, climbing, skiing and drag racing. 16.7% of the respondents answered social interaction, 15% of the respondents chose recreational activity as maintaining good health, 10% of the respondents answered hobbies and 8.3% of the respondents chose tourism and reducing stress. The remaining respondents chose recreational activity as voluntarily participation with (6.7%) while 5% of the respondents chose sensual pleasure and 3.3% of the respondents perceived recreational activity as play or amusement.

Table 5. Respondents' perceptions towards recreational activity.

Which of the following elements are included in your perceptions of recreation?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
	Percent				
Valid	Hobbies	6	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Social Interaction	10	16.7	16.7	26.7
	Play/Amusement	2	3.3	3.3	30.0
	Tourism	5	8.3	8.3	38.3
	Extreme Sports	16	26.7	26.7	65.0
	Reducing Stress	5	8.3	8.3	73.3
	Sensual Pleasure	3	5.0	5.0	78.3
	Voluntarily Participation	4	6.7	6.7	85.0
	Maintaining Good Health	9	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 below shows that 31.7% or 19 respondents perceived recreational activity as important in their lives. 28.3% or 17 respondents have answered unimportant while 23.3% or 14 respondents have chosen very important. The remaining 16.7% or 10 respondents have answered that recreational activity as very unimportant in their lives.

Table 6. The importance of recreation in the respondents' life.

How would you evaluate the importance of recreation in your life?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	
		Cumulative Percent			
Valid	Very Unimportant	10	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Unimportant	17	28.3	28.3	45.0
	Important	19	31.7	31.7	76.7
	Very Unimportant	14	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Section C (Respondents who participated regularly in recreational activity)

For this Section C, only 33 students said that they participated regularly in recreational activity. According to Table 7 below, it shows that majority of the respondents (54.5%) said they mostly participated in outdoor activity as recreation. 27.3% or 9 respondents have choose other activities. Other activity can be defined as any activity except outdoor activity, leisure activity and sports. It can be dancing, singing, playing music, watching movie and etc. 12.1% or 4 respondents said leisure activity as a part of recreation program they most participated in. The remaining 6.1% of the respondents said they mostly joined in sports programs.

Table 7. Recreational Activity Participation.

What recreational activity did you most participate in?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
		Percent			
Valid	Outdoor activity	18	54.5	54.5	54.5
	Leisure	4	12.1	12.1	66.7
	Sports	2	6.1	6.1	72.7
	Others	9	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0	

Section D (Constraints towards recreational activity)

For this Section D, only 27 students said they do not participate in recreational activity regularly. Thus, only 27 students answered this Section D. Table 8 below shows that, only 10 respondents or 37% said that they participated in recreational activities regularly, while 63% or 17 respondents said they do not participate in recreational activities voluntarily.

Table 8. Voluntary Recreational Activities.

Have you ever participated in recreational activities voluntarily?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	37.0	37.0	37.0
	No	17	63.0	63.0	100.0
Total		27	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 below shows that 22 respondents or 81.5% of the respondents have chosen 'No' to the question "Is there any recreational activity that you would like to participate in or start doing regularly?" The remaining 18.5% or 5 respondents have chosen Yes for that question. It can be said that the respondents (female students) that are not doing regular recreational activity have no interest to start doing it even on the voluntary basis.

Table 9. Choice of starting doing recreational activity.

Is there any recreational activity that you would like to participate in/start doing regularly?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Valid	Yes	5	18.5	18.5	18.5
	No	22	81.5	81.5	100.0
Total		27	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 below shows that 6 or 22.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that they do not have a will to participate in recreational activities. 37% or 10 respondents from 27 respondents have answer agreed to the statement while 40.7% or 11 respondents have chosen neutral to the statement.

Table 10. Respondents' will to participate in recreational activity.

I just don't have a will to participate					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
Valid	Strongly agree	6	22.2	22.2	22.2
	Agree	10	37.0	37.0	59.3
	Neutral	11	40.7	40.7	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Table 11 below shows that 5 or 18.5% of the respondents strongly agree that the social environment is inappropriate for them to participate in recreational activity. 1 or 3.7% of the respondents agreed while majority of the respondents (70.4%) have answered neutral. The remaining 2 or 7.4% of the respondents disagreed that inappropriate social environment become the constraint in participating recreational program.

Table 11. Inappropriate social environment.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	5	18.5	18.5	18.5
	Agree	1	3.7	3.7	22.2
	Neutral	19	70.4	70.4	92.6
	Disagree	2	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	27	100.0	100.0	

Furthermore, these respondents, who perceived themselves as doing irregular recreational activity, claimed that they have several constraints when it comes to recreational activity. One of the constraints that all of the respondents stated was having no time to join recreational activity due to other commitments. Apart from that, majority of the respondents said that they have low energy level to do recreational activity, have health problems such as asthma, fear of injury, lack of participants, facilities unavailable and lack of money to do recreational activity regularly as some activities may require expensive equipment like shoes, golf club, tennis racquet and other stuff needed. In addition, the female students of this study said that their social, religious and cultural norm restrict their participation in recreational activity. For example, the students might not join swimming because they have to wear swimming suits that make them uncomfortable especially in the presence of male students. Only 25.9% of the respondents disagreed to that statement as they do not think the social and cultural norm restrict them from joining recreational activity. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (51.8%) also claimed that some recreational activities are not appropriate for females. The remaining 48.2% of the respondents chose 'neutral' or 'no comment' to the statement. Hence, these constraints hinder them from joining and enjoying recreational activity that are available for them.

Discussion and Conclusions

Recreational activity has a lot of benefits for everyone. Female students who join recreational activities provided by the university can improve their leadership skills and improve self confidence. Moreover, they can also develop critical thinking skills, create problem solving strategies, enhance creativity, promote and experience physical and emotional health (Lamar University, 2008). Apart from that, they can interact with other students which can improve their social skills. Of course, the best benefit of all is that the students can maintain good health. The university must play a role in informing and educating the students about the advantages of joining recreational activities which will also fulfill the government's dream to see youth as healthy future leaders. Students should be educated more on physical health so that they will see the importance of recreational activity. A lot of students perceive recreation as extreme sports, social interaction, maintaining good health and as a hobby. This implies that the perceived role of recreation as a leisure activity to fulfill wasting time on weekend. Most students are interested in joining recreational activity. However there are a few constraints that hinder them from joining. Having no time for example, is a regular excuse. From the analyzed data, it was found that 100% of the respondents strongly agreed that the lack of time is the major reason why they are not participating regularly in recreational activity. To avoid this negative lifestyle of "all work and no play", the university might have to take some actions on this matter. From time to time, the university should plan some recreational activities made compulsory for the students to join. This is to ensure that the students have a healthy mind and body.

The study also found that most female students enjoy doing outdoor activities rather than join sports like netball, basketball, tennis, swimming and badminton. Outdoor activities include camping, abseiling and wall climbing. This may be because the female students find outdoor activities more interesting, challenging and fun. To make the students interested in participating regularly in recreational activity, the university should organize outdoor and sports activities for the students. By giving equal opportunities to female students to join recreational activities, it will increase the number of participation which can lead to teamwork, cooperation, social interaction and leadership skills that will benefit the students. In addition, the university should provide more facilities and equipment for the students to use at anytime. This can make the students' interest towards recreational activity increase. It can be concluded that the female students are

willing to join the recreational activities. However, some constraints are hindering them to take part in recreational activity.

In the future, researchers should use both male and female students as the subject as this will make the study become more interesting. Nowadays, we can see that male and female have a somewhat same level of abilities that can lead to interesting findings.

References

- Anderson, J. (2010). What are extreme sports? Retrieved January 8th, 2011, from <http://www.catalogs.com/info/outdoor/what-are-extreme-sports.html>
- Cahn, S.K. (1994). *Coming on strong: Gender and sexuality in twentieth century women's sport*. New York: The Free Press.
- Godbey, G. (1989). *Implications of recreation and leisure research for professionals*. In Jackson, E. L. and Burton, T. L. (eds.). *Understanding Leisure and Recreation: Mapping the Past. Charting the Future*. State College, Pennsylvania: Venture Publishing, 613-628.
- Henderson, K. A., & Bialeschki, M. D. (1995). Parks & Recreation, 30, 70 – 79. Retrieved, August 20th, 2007, from: <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Iso-Aloha, S. E., & Mannell, R. (1985). *Social and psychological constraints on leisure*. In M.G. Wade (Ed.), *Constraints on Leisure* (pp. 111-151). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Ivtzan, I. & Conneely, R. (2009). Androgyny in the Mirror of Self-Actualisation and Spiritual Health. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 2, 58-70.
- Koprstanje, M. (2009). Re-visiting risk perception theory in the context of travel. *e-Reviewer of Tourism Reserarch*, 7(4). 68-81. Retrieved January 2nd, 2011 from: <http://list.rtps.tamu.edu/ertr/>
- Lamar University. (2008). Recreational Sports. Retrieved December 30th, 2010, from: http://dept.lamar.edu/studentaffairs/recreational_sports.htm
- Li, E. P. H., Min, H. J., Belk, R. W., Kimura, J. & Bahl, S. (2008). Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Cultures. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 35, 444-449.
- Markwell, K. & Tomsen, S. (2010). Safety and Hostility at Special Events: lessons from Australia gay and lesbian festivals. *Event management*, 14, 225-238.
- Qi, C. X., Gibson, H. j. & Zhang, J. J. (2009). Perceptions of Risk and Travel Intentions: The Case of China and the Beijing Olympic Games. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*. 14(1), 43-67.

Whittington, A. (2006). The Journal of Experiential Education, 28, 205 – 222. Retrieved, August 27th, 2007, from: [http:// www.AAHPERD.com/](http://www.AAHPERD.com/)