

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS INFLUENCING LEISURE ATTITUDE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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—Abstract —

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of various socio-demographic factors on leisure attitude among undergraduate students. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 430 undergraduate students enrolled at a South African university during the first semester of 2014. Leisure attitude was measured using the Leisure Attitude Scale by Ragheb and Beard (1982). Descriptive statistics and a binary logistic regression were used to analyse the data. Results showed that factors such students' expenditure, race, mode of transport to and from campus age, and level of study have a significant influence on leisure attitude among students. There was no statistical evidence supporting the effect of place of residence during school time, gender and field of study on leisure attitude status. This study concluded that socio-demographic factors do not only influence leisure attitude but may also affect the level of participation in leisure activities.

Key Words: *Leisure attitude, socio-demographic, logistic regression, university students*

JEL Classification: D63, D80, I20, I31, J17

1. INTRODUCTION

Leisure has many definitions. Most definitions suggest that leisure is the time spent on activities free from work (non-remunerative) or other duties and the constraints of culture and one's environment (Gist & Fava, 1964; Godbey, 1985; Kaplan, 1975; Kelly, 1972). Leisure is also seen as an important component of a balanced lifestyle, which improves physical and mental health and creates opportunities for socialisation to enhance the sense of social cohesion and integration (Social Report, 2010).

Ragheb and Beard (1982) state that one's willingness to participate in leisure activities are predicated by one's attitude toward leisure. Attitude, in this sense, encompasses the knowledge, belief system, behavioural patterns and feelings that govern our interactions with the world around us (ITRISA, 2014). Measuring attitudes toward leisure is an essential component of leisure research (Teixeira & Freire, 2013). Despite this, Mannel and Kleiber (1997) indicate that very little research has been conducted with regard to leisure attitude. Freire (2006) and Freire and Fonte (2007) indicate that leisure attitudes provide an understanding of the impact that leisure activities have on life experiences. Researchers can gain an understanding of how attitudes towards leisure activities evolve, how engagement in leisure activities are predicated, and facilitates the development of interventions necessary to ensure participation. These interventions ensure enhanced wellbeing and life satisfaction (Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Stebbins, 2006; Walker, Courneya & Deng, 2006; Freire & Fonte, 2007; Social Report, 2010).

Chiu (2009) states that little research has been done with regard to the determinants of leisure time physical activity amongst university students. As leisure participation, motivation and attitude have a positive influence on quality of life (Baldwin & Tinsley, 1988; Dowall et al., 1988), the participation of university students in leisure activities is essential for enhancing mental and emotional wellbeing to assist with the stresses of higher education (Wankel & Berger, 1990). Evans et al. (2013) state that leisure should be part of all university students' daily schedule. Leisure activities can boost students' self-esteem and the sense of belonging (JCU, 2013). Those students who do not perform well in their studies have the opportunity to excel outside of academia. However, university students' leisure time is largely perceived as wasteful, with the perception that they engage in undesirable activities such as excessive drinking and, risky sexual behaviour, to name a few (Watson, 1996). Chiu (2002, 2004) and Biddle et al.

(1998) indicate that, although this behaviour does occur, many university students are aware of the benefits of physical activity and perceive the physical, mental and emotional benefits of leisure time.

Given the benefits attributed to leisure time physical activity, the purpose of this study is to identify the socio-demographic determinants of leisure attitude amongst university students. In their study of attitudinal correlates of leisure time physical activity among young Europeans, Steptoe et al. (1997) found that gender differences were prevalent with regard to frequency with males more likely to have engaged in physical activity in the previous two weeks than females. No gender or age differences were observed with regard to the association belief in the health benefits of exercise.

Brown and Roberts (2011) found that living in an urban area had a negative impact on physical activity participation. They also found that living in areas with higher income disparities has a negative impact on participation. The impact of dependents was relegated to gender with females less likely to participate if they have children under five years of age or older children. This indicates that locality and dependents have an impact on leisure participation. It was also found that education had a negative impact on leisure time physical activity. Despite the fact that those that are educated will be aware of the benefits of leisure and exercise, the opportunity cost involved with sacrificing hours of work and the remuneration received, is too high. Finally, Brown and Roberts (2011) found that the perceived lack of free time impacted on actual participation in leisure time physical activity.

Dolman and Lewis (2010), in their study of the impact of socio-economic position (SEP) on sport participation amongst South Australian youth, found that those with low SEP identified more barriers to participation than those with higher SEP. These barriers include transport availability, limited access to facilities, safety and high cost of access. This concurs with studies conducted by Humbert et al. (2006) and Hofer et al. (2001). Females, with reference to emotional support for organised sport, were more restricted than males (Dolman & Lewis, 2010). Family obligations, such as child care, were identified by Humbert et al. (2006) as limiting factors unique to lower SEPs.

It is evident that certain socio-demographic variables may have a significant effect on leisure attitude. However, such effect tends to vary with the categories of population or the location. Thus, this study assesses the effect of different socio-

demographic on leisure attitude among some of the South African undergraduate university students.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approach and Instrument

This study followed a quantitative approach with the use of a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study comprised of two sections. The first section captured demographic information of the participants. The second section comprises the Leisure Attitude Scale (LAS), developed by Ragheb and Beard (1982). This scale was used to operationalise leisure attitudes and has been adopted by other studies in the similar context (Ragheb & Tate, 1993; Siegenthaler & O'Dell, 2000; Chiu & Kayat, 2010). The Leisure attitude scale used consisted of 36 items consisting of three sub-scales of 12 items each (Ragheb & Beard, 1982). The Cognitive subscale examines aspects of attitude related to knowledge about leisure and beliefs about its value; the Affective subscale examines aspects of attitude related to liking, disliking, and other feelings about leisure activities; and the behavioural subscale examines aspects of attitude related to past, present, and intended actions with regard to leisure activities and experiences (Ragheb & Beard, 1982).

All these sub-scales are scored on a five-point Likert scale as follows: almost never true (1), seldom true (2), sometimes true (3), often true (4) and almost always true (5). For this study, the index of the overall leisure attitude was constructed with a minimum of 36 scores and maximum of 180 scores. The average score for each participant was also used to categorise participants with positive or negative leisure attitude. A participant with an average score above 2.5 was considered to have a positive attitude; while an average equal to or less than 2.5 indicated a negative attitude (Bowtell, 1993). A test for internal consistency showed that the Cronbach's alpha (0.89) of the overall leisure attitude scale was above the benchmark of 0.7 (Pallant, 2013), confirming the reliability of this scale.

2.2 Sample

Data was randomly collected from a sample of 430 undergraduate students enrolled at a South African University, during the first semester of 2014. This sampling process ensures that the information included in the sample is a true

reflection of the population (Brown et al., 2011). Of the 430 questionnaires administered, 401 (93.3% response rate) completed questionnaires had full information.

Demographic information shows that more participants (52%) were senior second and third year students; while the remaining proportion (48 %) of them were first year students. More female students (53.6%) than male students (46.4%) participated in the study. Race distribution showed that the majority (82.2%) of students were Africans. A large number (86%) of the students were doing commerce studies and 96.5 percent of them were single (never married). The majority of students (85%) solely depended on their parents to support their studies. Additionally, 39.8 percent of the students stayed at home, while the remaining 60.2 percent stayed at university residence and private accommodation during the study period. On the mode of transport to and from school campus, 76 percent of the students made use of vehicles (private or public), while 24 percent of them used other methods walking and riding to and from the university campus. The average age of students was 19.96 years (standard deviation = 2.08) and average monthly total spending for each student was R3426 per month¹. The monthly expenditure seems to be high but it is justifiable as all expenses, including rent, were captured by the questionnaire.

2.3 Data analysis

This study used descriptive statistics and logistic regressions to assess how demographic and socio-economic variables affect the overall attitude towards leisure. The estimated regression was based on the following equation:

$$LAS_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{LogEXP}_i + \beta_2 \text{AGE}_i + \beta_4 \text{GEN}_i + \beta_5 \text{RACE}_i + \beta_6 \text{FDS}_i \\ + \beta_7 \text{PR}_i + \beta_8 \text{MTS}_i + \beta_9 \text{FS}_i + \beta_{10} \text{LS}_i + u_i$$

Where: LAS is leisure attitude status (one for positive attitude and zero otherwise); LogEXP is the natural logarithm of a student's total monthly expenditure; AGE is the age a student; GEN is the gender of a student (1 for female and 0 for male); RACE is the race of a student (1 for black and 0 for otherwise); FDS represents a student's financial dependence (1 if a student is solely depending on parents/guardians and 0 otherwise); PR is the place of residence while schooling (1 if a student stays at home and 0 for the university

¹The average of R3426 was approximately \$300 during the period of data collection.

residences and private accommodation); MTS is the mode of transport to/from the university campus (1 if a student uses a private or public car, and 0 for walking or cycling); FS² is the faculty of a student (1 for commerce and 0 for humanity studies); LS is the level of study (1 if a student is first year and 0 otherwise); $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_{10}$ are the estimated coefficients; β_0 is the constant; and u_i represents the error term.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Leisure attitude status within socio-demographic variables

Table 1 presents the distribution of leisure attitude status within different socio-demographic variables. There is a difference in the leisure attitude status among senior and first year students, with senior students reporting higher positive leisure attitude (81.3%) than first year students (62%). The high value of Chi-Square (9.189) with P-values of 0.002 suggests that this difference is statically significant at the 1 percent level of significance. A comparison of leisure attitude between Humanities and Commerce students showed that the number of students who reported positive leisure attitude (78.3%) were higher in Commerce studies than Humanities studies (56%). This difference is statistically significant at the 5 percent level of significance.

With regard to gender, Table 1 shows that there appear to be no difference of the leisure attitude among male and female students (non-significant at the 5% level of significance). These findings are similar to that of Steptoe et al. (1997) who found that gender differences were not associated with the belief in the health benefits of exercise. There is a weak but significant difference of leisure attitude status among African and non-African (other races) students (at the 10% level of significance), with a larger number (83.6%) of non-African students reporting positive attitude than Africans students (76.6%). There is significant (at the 10% level of significance), difference of leisure attitude status among the students using vehicles as mode of transport to/from school and those walking or cycling to/from school. Positive attitude is higher among the students who use vehicles to travel to school. The distribution of leisure attitude status within the remaining variables (place of residence while at school, financial dependence, and the categories of monthly expenditure) is not statistically significant, even at the 10

² The selected campus had only two faculties during the period of data collection

percent level of significance. This suggests the difference in participants' distribution of leisure attitude status amongst these variables is not significant. Overall, cross tabulation showed that leisure attitude status may differ among different variables but this does not confirm whether such variables have an effect on students' leisure attitude status. Thus, a regression analysis is used to test if such an effect exists.

Table 1: Cross tabulation of Leisure attitude status and various variables

Variable	Status of Leisure Attitude			Total number	Pearson Chi-Square (P-values)
	Category	Negative Attitude	Positive Attitude		
Level of study	Senior students	39 (18.7%)	170 (81.3%)	209	9.189 (0.002)
	First year students	61 (31.8%)	131 (68.2%)	192	
Faculty	Commerce studies	89 (23.7%)	287(76.3%)	376	5.176 (0.023)
	Humanity studies	11 (44.0%)	14 (56.0%)	25	
Gender	Male	50 (26.7%)	137 (73.3%)	187	0.607 (0.436)
	Female	50 (23.4%)	164 (76.6%)	214	
Race	Non-African	12 (16.4%)	61 (83.6%)	73	3.444 (0.063)
	African	88 (26.8%)	240 (73.2%)	328	
Place of residence while at school	Not at home	71 (27.3%)	189 (72.7%)	260	2.219 (0.136)
	At home	29 (20.6%)	112 (79.4%)	141	
Financial dependency	Financial support	39 (22.5%)	134 (77.5%)	173	0.392 (0.334)
	Self-funded	61 (26.8%)	167 (73.2%)	228	
Mode of Transport to/from school	Walking/Cycling	30 (32.6%)	62 (67.4%)	92	3.753 (0.053)
	With a car	70 (22.7%)	239 (77.3%)	309	
Total Monthly Expenditure	Less 1000	11 (20.8%)	42 (20.8%)	53	4.561 (0.601)
	1000 - >2000	26 (25.7%)	75 (74.3%)	101	
	2000- >3000	12 (23.1%)	40 (76.9%)	52	
	3000- >4000	15 (28.8%)	37 (71.2%)	52	
	4000- >5000	10 (17.9%)	46 (82.1%)	56	
	5000- >6000	12 (35.3%)	22 (64.7%)	34	
	6000 & more	14 (26.4%)	39 (73.6%)	53	

3.2 Regression analysis

The results of the logistic regression on the effect of socio-demographic factors on leisure attitude status are illustrated in Table 2. The omnibus tests for coefficients

for goodness fit of the model shows that the Chi-square (109.671) is significant at the 1 percent level of significance, implying that the model passed the goodness fit test. Regression results show that factors such as expenditure (LogEXP), mode of transport to/from school (MTS), age, level of study (LS), and race have a significant effect on leisure status. These variables are positive and statistically significant at the 1 percent level of significance. LogEXP increasing the percentages of monthly expenditure increases the probability of reporting a positive attitude. The odds ratio of 1.10 implies that a 1 percent increase of in total monthly income, increases the probability of having positive leisure attitude by 10 (1.1- 1) percent. Thus, income influences leisure attitude.

Table 2: Regression results

Variables	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Odds ratios
LogEXP	.096	.015	6.247	.000	1.10
MTS	.153	.047	3.244	.001	1.17
FDS	.023	.039	.594	.553	1.02
PR	-.056	.043	-1.316	.189	0.95
AGE	.161	.007	24.591	.000	1.17
GEN	.064	.038	1.656	.099	1.07
RACE	-.126	.016	7.983	.000	0.88
LS	-.231	.043	-5.369	.000	0.79
C	1.105	.117	9.444	.000	3.02
Chi-square = 109.671 (Sig. 0.00)			Log likelihood = -216.62921		

A significant positive coefficient for the mode of transport used to the university campus (MTS) means that using a motor vehicle (public or private) to/from the university campus, compared to walking and cycling, increases the probability of reporting positive leisure attitude. The odds ratio of 1.17 indicates that students using public transport are 17 (1.17 -1) percent more likely to report positive leisure attitude than those walking and cycling to school. This is similar to the cross tabulation results and implies that the accessing a better mode of transport influences leisure attitude. These results are similar to those of Humbert et al. (2006); Hoefler et al. (2001) and Dolman and Lewis (2010), which showed that transport availability is among the key determinant of leisure attitude and leisure activity among the youth. This suggests that transport availability does not only affect participation in leisure activities but it is also among the factor influencing the leisure attitude.

The coefficient of the level of study (LS) is negative and statistically significant at the 1 percent level of significance. This implies that being a first year student, compared to being a senior (second or third year) student, decreases the probability of reporting positive leisure attitude. The odds ratio of 0.79 implies that being a first year student, compared to being a senior student, decreases the likelihood of reporting a positive leisure attitude by 21 (0.79 - 1) percent. This indicates that leisure attitude of first year and senior students differs significantly. This finding may not be surprising as these two groups of students are exposed to different academic environments which may affect how they view leisure. For example, senior students may have more leisure time because they are familiar with the campus environment and have developed strategies for managing their studies. This may not be the case for first year students who may compromise their leisure time as they try to adjust to the new university environment. These results are line with Brown and Roberts' findings (2011) that the perceived lack of free time has an impact on the perceptions and actual participation in leisure activity.

A negative and statistically significant (at the 1% level of significance) coefficient for race indicates that being African, compared to other races, decreases the probability of having positive leisure attitude. The odds ratio of 0.88 indicates that being African compared to other races decreases the likelihood of reporting positive leisure attitude by 12 (0.88 -1) percent. This emphasises that leisure is viewed differently among African students and students of other races. Brown and Roberts (2011) found that living in areas with higher income disparities has a negative impact on participation in leisure activities. This explains the findings of the current study which focused on a sample of students whose geographical areas are related to their race. African students mostly come from low income area (rural and townships), while non-African students tend to come from urban areas (Maseko, Viljoen & Muzindutsi, 2015). Thus, students' background seem to influence students' attitude towards leisure.

The coefficient for gender is positive and is not significant at the 5 percent level of significance. This implies that being a female student, compared to being a male student does not increase the probability of having positive attitude toward leisure. This is contrary to the findings from other studies (Humbert et al., 2006; Dolman & Lewis, 2010) which found gender to have a strong influence on attitude and participation in leisure activities. However, these studies used a

sample of adults with obligations, such as child care, that limit females' participation in leisure activities.

The coefficient for age is positive and statistically significant at the 1 percent level of significance; implying that an increase in age number increases the probability of having positive leisure attitude. Older students tend to view leisure attitude more positively than younger students. The plausible explanation of this finding is that older students are mostly senior students who are familiar with university environment and have time management strategies which allow them to make a free time for leisure activities. Hence, older students tend have positive attitude towards leisure.

Other variables such as field of study (FS), place of residence (PR) are not statistically significant at the 5 percent level of significance. This implies that these variables have no influence on the status of leisure satisfaction. Having a sample mostly dominated by commerce students (86%) may explain why the field of study was not significant. The results of place of residence show that there is no difference between leisure attitude of students staying at university residences or private accommodation and those who stay at home. This is in line with Chiu and Kayat (2010) who found that there was no relationship between family membership and some dimensions of leisure attitude. However, these results are contrary to the findings of a study by Dolman and Lewis (2010) which concluded that having emotional support such as home environments affect leisure attitude and participation in leisure activities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study used descriptive statistics and logistic regression to assess the effect of various socio-demographic factors on leisure attitude among undergraduate university students at a South African university. Findings revealed that a number of socio-demographic factors have a significant influence on leisure attitude. This demonstrates that leisure attitude is influenced by personal characteristics such as time management, demographic factors such as gender and race, and environmental factors such as the new university environment and transport availability. These are factors that mostly have a significant impact on actual participation in leisure activity, suggesting that socio-demographic factors do not only influence leisure attitude but may also affect the level of participation in leisure activities. Thus, strategies encouraging students to participate in leisure

activities such sport exercise should address these personal, demographic and environmental factors affecting students' attitude towards leisure.

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