


SELF-PERCEPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE RESIDENTS IN BRAZIL ABOUT THEIR LEISURE ACTIVITIES¹

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ABSTRACT: Leisure activities generate pleasure and well-being. This study aimed to identify leisure activity preferences in young people and the possible influences of age and gender. This is an exploratory, cross-sectional, qualitative-quantitative study with 50 young people aged between 14 and 23. The young people undertook a leisure activity and answered questions about the activity. They were interested in the activity (98%), in a good mood (98%), excited (96%) and having fun (96%). The activities chosen were artistic (48%), sporting (32%), musical (12%) and on screens (8%). There was no association between age group and choice of activity. Girls chose artistic activities more often (58%) and boys chose sporting activities (47.6%), with no association between gender and activities.

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AUTOPERCEPÇÃO DE JOVENS RESIDENTES NO BRASIL SOBRE SUAS ATIVIDADES DE LAZER

RESUMO: Atividades de lazer geram prazer e bem-estar. Este estudo objetivou identificar preferências de atividades de lazer em jovens e as possíveis influências da idade e gênero. Pesquisa exploratória, transversal, quali-quantitativa, com 50 jovens, entre 14 e 23 anos. Os jovens realizaram uma atividade de lazer e responderam questões sobre a atividade realizada. Demonstraram-se interessados na atividade (98%), de bom humor (98%), animados (96%) e se divertindo (96%). As atividades escolhidas foram artísticas (48%), esportivas (32%), musicais (12%) e em telas (8%). Não houve associação entre faixa etária e escolha da atividade. As meninas escolheram com maior frequência (58%) as artísticas, e os meninos as esportivas (47,6%), sem associação entre sexo e atividades.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Autopercepção. Jovens. Atividades de lazer.

Introduction

Leisure refers to the performance of some activity, in a given period of time, which is freely chosen by the individual and is not linked to professional, family and social obligations (Almeida, 2021), referring to actions, chosen spontaneously by the individual, to be carried out in their free time (Silva and Ferraz, 2017), whose reward is the personal and collective satisfaction caused by the situation or moment (Marcellino, 1996), generating pleasure and well-being (Queiroz and Souza, 2009).

Studies on leisure in Brazil have permeated various areas of knowledge, with increasing expansion into the fields of health and education (Queiroz e Souza, 2009). Research has focused on issues related to the use of free time (as opposed to obligatory activities), public and private spaces dedicated to playful expression, and social practices that involve cultural and pleasure interests based on each individual's reality and the environmental factors in which they are embedded (Campos *et al.*, 2021).

Leisure is characterized as a possibility for personal fulfillment, as it depends on the individual's own choices and interests, leading to a happier life. However, it is not always seen as something important in people's lives and is a topic that is rarely

discussed and valued (Martinelli, 2011). Although leisure is responsible for feelings of pleasure and well-being, it still occupies a short space in the routine of most people, often being limited only to weekends (Queiroz and Souza, 2009; Gomes, 2014).

Studies indicate that involvement in leisure activities is associated with higher scores on quality of life, subjective well-being, and life satisfaction (Lima and Morais, 2018). In this way, leisure plays an important role in promoting well-being and, therefore, contributes as a protective factor for mental health, by reducing stress, promoting a sense of satisfaction, quality of life, self-determination and social support, especially when it involves interaction with other people (Pondé and Caroso, 2003).

Young people construct their own norms, cultural expressions, and ways of being, mainly during their free time and participation in leisure activities (Campos et al., 2021), in the pursuit of pleasurable and joyful moments that positively result in the integral development of each individual (Silva and Ferraz, 2017). In general, they invest a lot of time in leisure activities (Formiga; Ayroza and Dias, 2005), which are influenced by extrinsic factors (sociocultural context, socioeconomic conditions) and by intrinsic factors (values, motivation, disposition and individual perception) (Pondé and Caroso, 2003).

Given the increasingly frequent and rapid social changes in people's daily lives in Brazil, the following research questions arise: What leisure activities do young people living in Brazil engage in on a daily basis? Do age and gender influence these choices?

Purpose

To identify the leisure activity preferences of young people living in the five regions of Brazil and to verify possible influences of age and gender on these choices.

Method

This is an exploratory, cross-sectional, non-experimental, qualitative-quantitative study that followed all ethical criteria for research with human subjects (approved by the Research Ethics Committee, opinion no. 5.332.357). The research began in October 2022 and lasted until March 2023.

Participants

This is a non-probabilistic convenience sample. Participants were recruited through social media outreach and subsequently through the "snowball" technique (Vinuto, 2014) in which acquaintances and young people referred other participants, and so on, until the entire sample was reached. Fifty young people of both sexes, aged between 14 and 23 years, with typical development, residing in the five regions of Brazil (Southeast, South, North, Northeast and Midwest), participated.

Instruments

Mini Mental State Examination – MMSE (Folstein et al., 1975)

This instrument was used only as an exclusion criterion if the person presented cognitive impairment. It is one of the most widely used tests worldwide to assess cognitive function and screen for dementia. Regarding the test score, below 18

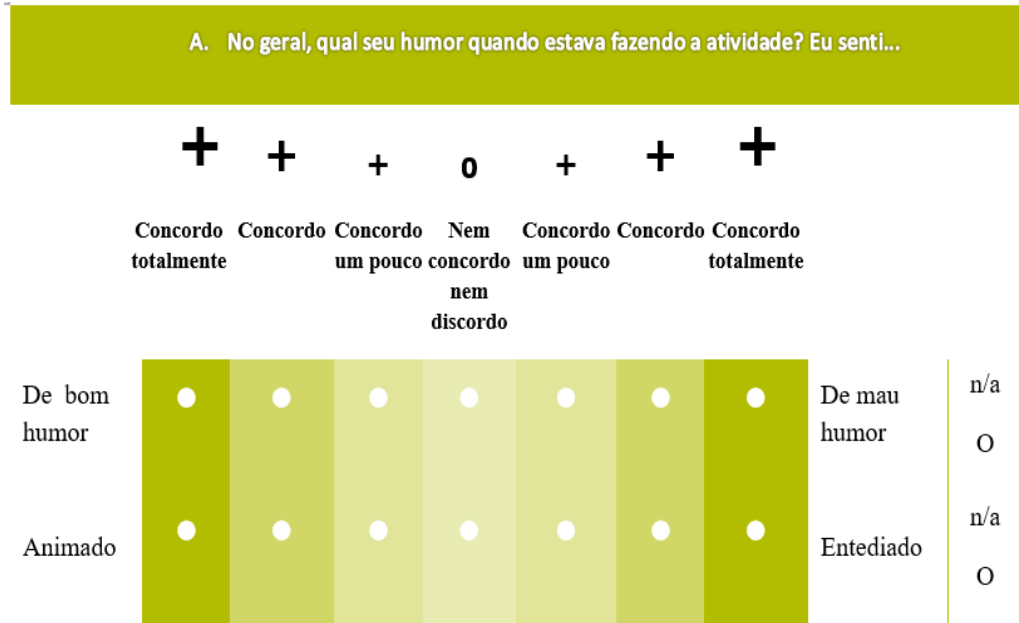
corresponds to low and medium education levels, and 26 to high education levels (Bertolucci et al., 1994).

The MMSE was applied to the young people in the study in order to ensure the absence of cognitive deficits so that they could understand and correctly complete the SEAS-Br questions. All participants presented scores within the expected range, taking into account their level of education.

Self-Reported Experiences of Activity Environments (SEAS-BR)

It is a self-report measure by young people about their experiences in recreational or leisure activities (King *et al.*, 2013). The SEAS consists of 22 items, and each item can be rated on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from: strongly agree to strongly disagree). In this research, the version adapted transculturally for Brazil was used (Peruzzo, 2021). Below is an example of a question frequently asked in the instrument.

Figure 1: Example of an item from the aforementioned instrument.



Source: King *et al.* (2013). Self-reported Experiences of Activity Settings. Licensed by Holland Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Adapted transculturally by Peruzzo (2021).

Data Collection Procedures

Participants were informed about the research stages and, after understanding and consenting to participate in the research, they were asked to sign the Informed Consent Form (ICF) for young people over 18 years of age, and for young people under the age of 18, they were asked to sign the Informed Assent Form (IAS), as well as the signature of their guardians on the ICF. Only after these procedures were completed did data collection begin.

The first step consisted of administering the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) (Brucki *et al.*, 2003) remotely in order to assess cognitive abilities and minimum comprehension for responding to the Self-Reported Activity Settings (SEAS) instrument. After the results of the MMSE were confirmed, with scores above 29 to verify the absence of intellectual disability (Brucki *et al.*, 2003), information was

provided regarding the procedures to be followed, and the link to the instrument was sent to the young people via Google Forms.

Young people needed to choose a leisure activity of their interest, perform it for a minimum of 15 minutes, and then fill out the questionnaire via Google Forms.

After completing the leisure activity, the young people, upon starting to fill out the Google Forms, provided information about their personal data, the activity performed, whether it was formal or informal, the location where the activity took place, whether they had partners in carrying out the activity, and then about the SEAS-Br questions related to the young person's self-perception of the activity performed.

It is important to highlight that the original instrument, developed in Canada, was designed for in-person application. However, the researcher contacted the authors of the original instrument to explore the possibility of adapting the research to a remote format, in order to compare its applicability in both modalities. The response was positive, and this study will only present the results obtained in the remote version, as it is part of a larger study.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were initially tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet to allow for frequency and percentage analyses. All leisure activities undertaken by the participants were subsequently analyzed and categorized independently by three researchers.

An association analysis was performed between sex and age groups using the Chi-square test (Normando; Tjäderhane and Quintão, 2010), where the data tabulated in the Excel spreadsheet were run in SPSS 21.

Results

Characterization of the Young People in the Sample

The sample consisted of 50 young people between 14 and 23 years of age, of whom 27 (54%) were over 18 years old, the majority being female (29 - 58%). The fact that the data collection was carried out remotely allowed the participation of young people from all 5 regions of Brazil, although with a higher frequency from those from the Southeast region (48%), followed by the North region (20%), Northeast (12%), Midwest (12%), and South (8%).

Characterization of the Types of Leisure Activities Engaged in by Young People

The leisure activities undertaken were freely chosen by the young people. The majority (72%) chose an activity considered to be very to extremely familiar, and they also performed it in an environment/location (66%) that was also very to extremely familiar.

The vast majority of participants stated that they were interested in carrying out the activity (98%) and that during the activity they felt in a good mood (98%), excited (96%) and having fun (96%). The activities were classified by the researchers into 4 categories, whose definitions are below:

I – Screen-based activities: refers to activities involving electronic devices and multicolored screens, such as computers, video games, television, tablets, and cell phones, items used for playing, learning, and communicating (Paiva and Costa, 2015; Queiroz; Ruas and Santana, 2021).

II – Musical activities: refers to sound activities available through different media (TV, radio, etc.) and through different situations of social interaction, enabling the integral development of the individual (Tomiazzi; Faria and Gitahy, 2013).

III – Artistic, cultural and other entertainment activities (including tours): refers to activities involving musical performances, theater, dance, visual arts, performance art, storytelling, among others (Silva, 2015).

VI – Sports or physical activities: refers to activities that involve physical conditioning, flexibility, endurance, weight loss, muscle strength, among other factors important for development. In this field, we can mention activities such as: walking, running, cycling, playing, climbing stairs, dancing, walking pets, practicing sports, martial arts, gymnastics, yoga, judo, capoeira, circus arts, among others (Gonçalves; Martins and Mello, 2021; Brazil, 2021).

Characterization Regarding the Types of Leisure Activities Performed by the 50 Young Participants in the Survey (100%)

Table 1: Frequency of leisure activities undertaken by young participants in each leisure category.

CATEGORIES	Leisure activities performed	Quantity / Frequency
I - Activities on screens/virtual environments	Watch a movie Watch an episode of anime Watch TV series Game on the computer	4 (8%)
II – Musical activities	Corner Playing the guitar Playing at Mass Music lesson Composition Guitar lesson	6 (12%)
III – Artistic, cultural and other entertainment activities (including tours)	Going out with friends (2) Reading (3) Beach for All Project Walking with the dog Evening walk Painting Card game (2) Stand up Music show (2) Lunch at a friend's house	24 (48%)

	Shopping Tour Horseback riding with friends Going to the beach Flying a kite Trip to the beach Visit to the museum Carnival parade Club swimming pool	
VI – Sports and physical conditioning activities	Gym workout Cycling Dancing Skateboarding Play basketball Swim Play volleyball Play football Run Beach race Jiu jitsu class Bodybuilding Jazz class Roller skating Beach tennis Football training	16 (32%)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In the overall sample, as shown in Table 1 above, the majority of activities chosen were artistic, cultural and other entertainment activities (48%), followed by sports activities (32%), musical activities (12%) and screen/virtual activities (8%). There was no association between age group and activity choices, with very similar results between the groups and a chi-square analysis showing a $p = .982$.

Regarding gender, a difference was observed in the frequency of choice of leisure activities, with girls more frequently choosing artistic and cultural activities and other entertainment (including tours) (62.06%), and less frequently choosing sports activities (17.24%), screens/virtual activities (10.34%) and musical activities (10.34%). Boys more frequently opted for sports and fitness activities (47.6%), followed by artistic and cultural activities and other entertainment (including tours) (33.33%), musicals (14.28%), and, to a lesser extent, screen/virtual activities (4.76%). Despite

these differences, there was no association between sex and activity choices, as the analysis using the Chi-square test showed a $p = .171$.

Regarding the young people's partners in carrying out the activity, it was found that most carried out the activity with friends (36%), followed by others (26%), alone (20%) and with relatives (18%). When analyzing the responses from other participants, these corresponded to people who frequent a specific space, such as a club or gym, including students and teachers/instructors. Thus, the majority of young people chose activities to be carried out with partners or in groups (78%), as can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Activities performed individually vs. in groups/partners

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES	GROUP/PARTNER ACTIVITIES
Reading (3), Gym, Walking, Cycling, Painting, Playing basketball, Running, Computer game	Going to the movies, Singing, Church fair, Beach for everyone project, Card game (2), Show (3), Skateboarding, Lunch at a friend's house, Shopping, Walk, Football game, Horse riding, Beach run, Carnival street party, Socializing with college friends, Playing guitar, Watch series (2), Music lesson, Swimming, Volleyball championship, Composition, Guitar lesson, Volleyball in the pool, Jiu-jitsu class, Gym, Jazz class, Beach tennis, Soccer training, Walking with my dog, Dancing, Playing at Mass, Going to the beach (2), Flying a kite, Museum, Rollerblading

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 1, presented earlier, it was possible to see that there are activities that were carried out both individually and in groups or with partners, such as weight training (gym), playing basketball, and walking, mentioned by different participants. Of those young people who participated in leisure activities with partners or in groups, 92.3% stated that they had a good relationship with them; 94.9% felt a sense of belonging to the group; 92.3% felt valued/respected by their partners or group members; 84.6% felt supported and encouraged by their peers; and 87.2% had good conversations with the people.

When engaging in leisure activities, 74% stated that they shared something special, and 64% affirmed that this activity enabled growth or change.

Regarding the time of day the activities were carried out, most took place in the afternoon (40%), followed by the evening (38%) and the morning (22%).

Most young people chose to engage in activities categorized as informal (82%), such as tours, watching series or movies, walking, reading, among others, and formal activities (18%) were activities involving classes – music, singing, jazz, beach tennis, soccer training and championships.

The results of this study have important implications for the planning and promotion of leisure activities for young people, considering their interests, preferences, and sociocultural contexts. Since leisure activities encourage socialization, it is essential that they are planned taking gender differences into account and prioritizing accessible cultural and sporting options, as well as flexible schedules. This is justified by the fact that engaging in enjoyable activities brings significant emotional and psychological benefits. The data obtained can support public policies aimed at youth, reinforcing the need for investments in accessible and diverse leisure spaces. Especially when considering the regional distribution of the sample, which included all regions of Brazil, these findings can guide the creation of cultural, sports, and community centers, ensuring that they meet local demands and promote greater equity in access to leisure.

Discussion

Each individual assigns particular meanings to their lifestyle, and their choices impact others around them and the environment, consequently influencing their mental,

physical, social, emotional, and spiritual capacity, and thus influencing their time, energy, money, and material possessions (Westhorp, 2003).

According to the results, the most frequent leisure activities correspond to the category of artistic, cultural and other entertainment, followed by the category of sports activities.

Artistic and cultural activities in the daily lives of adolescents are of great importance, as they are developed in spaces that represent a place of belonging, care, participation, cultural expression, and the recovery of citizenship (Souza, 2022). These activities provide benefits in all areas of development, whether in the motor, affective, social and cognitive aspects, as well as in the ability to correlate skills and competencies (Silva, 2015).

The preference for sports and physical fitness activities shows results that suggest an active lifestyle among the adolescents in the study. Furthermore, the higher frequency of physical activity among males corroborates the study by Moura et al. (2018) on adherence to physical activity and leisure in adolescents, in which males showed greater interest in Physical Education classes, as well as being the group that practices more sports activities outside the school environment. The study also shows that 63.1% of participating teenagers practice some sport or physical exercise after school hours. In the study by Marcino *et al.* (2022) Leisure activities were frequently mentioned by the young people in the study, accounting for 49.6%, with physical activities or sports (78.5%) cited, such as martial arts, gym workouts, walking, soccer, volleyball, gymnastics, and cycling. It is of utmost importance to promote health initiatives that encourage leisure activities among adolescents, such as physical activity, considering it as a protective factor for mental health, contributing to quality of life and

well-being. The study reflects on the need for public policies beyond the area of health, such as sports and leisure, that enable access, motivation, and encouragement for this population (Marcino et al., 2022).

Although choice patterns are moving towards a process of equality, differences are still observed between young men and young women in the sample studied, which, according to Oliveira and Rosa (2019), occurs mainly due to prejudice and family education. The literature cites, for example, the predominance of girls in activities inside the home, worrying about the safety of going out alone and helping with household chores (Oliveira and Rosa, 2019; Pfeifer; Martins and Santos, 2010). However, it should be noted that much may have changed by the present day (2023).

Although the results for screen-based activities were low in this study, corresponding to 12% in the overall sample, studies such as Oliveira et al. (2023), Queiroz; Ruas and Santana (2021) and Barreto et al. (2023) criticize the harmful effects of excessive screen time on children and adolescents, due to its impact on cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. Thus, studies highlight the importance of conscious and monitored use by adults, so that technologies and their constant evolution become tools and not obstacles to human development.

Analyzing Brazilian studies on youth leisure activities, it was possible to identify a preference for more sedentary activities such as watching series, movies, TV programs and being on cell phones (Matias et al., 2012; Acácio et al., 2021). Several researchers are addressing how the excessive use of technology affects young people socially, emotionally, and cognitively (Silva and Ferraz, 2017). Thus, the importance of balance in choosing leisure activities is highlighted, also considering other important

activities such as sports, physical exercise, music, reading, dancing, among others(Matias et al., 2012).

The study by Mielke et al. (2015) analyzed regional differences and factors associated with leisure-time physical activity among adults participating in the 2013 National Health Survey, with a sample of approximately 63,000 adults aged 18 or older. The objective was to verify the prevalence of adults active during leisure time in different regions of Brazil and the factors associated with this practice. The results showed that the prevalence of adults active during leisure time ranged from 21.9% in the South to 24.4% in the Midwest. Men were 1.48 times more active than women (95% CI 1.40 – 1.57), with the North region showing the greatest difference between the sexes. The practice of physical activity during leisure time also varied according to age group: adults aged 75 or older were 67% less active than those between 18 and 24 years old, with this difference being even more pronounced in the North region. Regarding education level, individuals with higher levels of education engaged in physical activity more frequently than those with lower levels of education, although the smallest difference between the groups was observed in the Northeast region. These results suggest that, despite small regional variations, there are significant differences in leisure-time physical activity when factors such as sex, age, and education level are analyzed. This reinforces the need for specific strategies to promote physical activity in different regions of Brazil.

Studies reinforce the importance of leisure as a source of pleasure, well-being, and fun, and how much it provides meaningful social interactions. For young people, what mattered most was with whom they shared their leisure time, valuing the importance of being among friends, family, and partners (Oliveira e Rosa, 2019; Ribeiro

et al., 2019; Peixoto e Knuth, 2019). These data corroborate the findings of this study, in which the vast majority of young people mentioned having carried out the activities with partners or in groups.

A balanced lifestyle considers the interrelationship between health and well-being and is based on choosing activities that are meaningful, important, and valuable to the individual (Westhorp, 2003).

In this sense, the actions chosen by young people have repercussions not only in their lives, but also in their surroundings (families, groups, and society in general), making it possible to achieve a balance that promotes health (Westhorp, 2003).

Furthermore, considering the remote data collection, it was possible to find positive results in the study in question, capturing a range of leisure activities carried out by young people.

The study by Antunes et al. (2023) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of remote data collection. Among the advantages, the following stand out: elimination of travel, reduced costs, greater geographical reach, and ease of scheduling interviews. Disadvantages include problems with internet connectivity, unequal access to technology, lack of human contact, and difficulty in assessing the interviewee's ethics. The study indicates that, despite these limitations, technology-mediated interviews have become an increasingly common alternative to traditional interviews, requiring proper planning according to the research objectives.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the leisure activity preferences of young people living in the five regions of Brazil and to verify the possible influences of

age and gender on these choices. Based on the analyses conducted in this study, it was possible to observe a greater predominance of artistic, cultural, and other entertainment activities, followed by sports, music, and screen/virtual activities; however, when comparing genders, there was a difference, as boys tend to be more active than girls, more assiduously seeking out sports, while girls prefer more passive activities, such as cultural activities.

Leisure activities contribute to quality of life and well-being, proving effective and necessary in the daily lives of young people, especially as a factor in mental health. The young people in the study reported feeling excited and interested, while also experiencing feelings of challenge, self-awareness, choice, interaction, belonging, and learning new skills. Furthermore, it was observed that a large proportion of young people chose activities that involved being with friends or other people, data that indicates the importance of these experiences in their daily lives.

The study has limitations regarding the sample size, thus highlighting the importance of a larger sample in different regions of Brazil, deepening the demographic data (age range, gender, race, ethnicity) and also analyzing other variables such as socioeconomic status, education level, family structure and configuration.

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