

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Leisure Activities amongst
Religious Girls**

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Abstract

Leisure, and its relationship to identity, has been a topic of investigation in recent years, with leisure examined both for amount and quality. According to researchers of national-religious society who have addressed the affinity between leisure and religion, leisure in this society has been extricated from the realm of Halakhic authority into “allowance – the realm of option” (Bar-Lev, 1981). According to Bar-Lev (1981), “a new type of a religious person” is “gradually forming.” According to Sheleg (2000), the innovation is that – in a tangible and prominent manner – religious people see no contradiction between patterns of behavior that are clearly considered “secular” and their self-awareness as being religious and observant. Schechter (2000), too, addressed this phenomenon, when he found that young national-religious young people’s encounter with modern, Western, and secular reality is not one of a person seeing secularism, nor one encountering a reality that is external to them. For these young people, modern perceptions are part of their makeup, alongside traditional perceptions that are internalized as identities.

On a theoretical level, the research aim was to examine the hypothesis that differences in levels of religious identity – both in matters of faith and behavior – have an effect on leisure activities and patterns of adolescent girls in the national-religious sector. In this study we sought to examine this implication regarding the leisure goals that the adolescents set for themselves and their actual leisure activities. The leisure goals were examined through focusing on the goals that the girls present for themselves versus those they consider important.

The study population was derived from four all-girls schools (*ulpenot*) in central Israel. The 209 participants belong to the national-religious sector and study in sectorial institutions. Of these, 38% described themselves as very religious, 56% as religious, and 6% as traditional. Participants' average age was 14.76 ($SD = 0.51$).

Nine questionnaires comprised the research tool: (1) Religious beliefs questionnaire (Fisherman, 1998); (2) Religious behavior questionnaire (Fisherman, 1998); (3) Favorite leisure activities questionnaire (Layosh, 1999); (4) Importance of leisure activities questionnaire (based on Sivan, 1984); (5) Goals of leisure activities questionnaire (based on Sivan, 1984); (6) Halakhic legitimacy for leisure activities questionnaire (Layosh, 1999); Leisure activities questionnaire (Cohen, 2008); (8) Computer-use questionnaire; and (9) Background data questionnaire.

In this study we found differences in leisure activities according to religious definition and behavior. We also found that leisure patterns were what associated religious identity variables – directly or through a mediating effect – to leisure activities. Following are the research findings, listed by research hypothesis.

The first research hypothesis was partially confirmed. The hypothesis was that girls with a strong religious identity will be more engaged in social activities, as well as creative and enrichment activities, and will engage in fewer activities involving media and pastime than girls with a weak religious identity. In accordance with the hypothesis, a relationship was found between the religious identity variables (religious definition and religious behavior) and the frequency of engaging in the various leisure activities. At the same time, and not in keeping with the hypothesis, no relationship was found between the religious identity variable religious beliefs and the frequency of engaging in various leisure activities.

The pattern of our findings reveals that the second research hypothesis, regarding volunteerism was partially confirmed. The hypothesis was that girls with a strong religious identity would volunteer more and would have a more positive attitude toward volunteering than would girls with a weak religious identity. Religious identity variables (religious definition and religious behavior) revealed differences in volunteering in the community, with girls with a strong religious identity volunteering more than those with a weak religious identity. In addition, girls with a strong religious identity should have a more positive attitude toward the value of contributing to society. In other words, they prefer such activities, they view contributing to society as an important goal which also guides them more in choosing their leisure activity than it guides girls with a weak religious identity.

At the same time, no relationship was found between the religious identity variable religious beliefs and volunteering for the community.

The third research hypothesis was partially confirmed. The hypothesis was that girls with a strong religious identity would tend to consult a rabbinical authority about various leisure activities more than would girls with a weak religious identity. In accordance with the hypothesis, girls with a strong religious identity (regarding religious definition and religious behavior) tend to consult halakhic authorities regarding leisure activities in general, as well as recreational and media-related activities, than do girls with a weak religious identity. However, not in keeping with the hypothesis, no differences were found in consulting a halakhic authority regarding leisure activities which, according to all measures of religious identity, are neutral.

The fourth and fifth research hypotheses were partially confirmed. These hypotheses stated that weak connections will be found between the leisure goals the girls had set for themselves and the importance they attribute to these goals, and their actual leisure

activities. In accordance with the hypotheses, the leisure-goals measures “personal development” are directly associated with the various leisure activities (in a negative or positive way). The goals measure leisure-time out was barely found to be related to the various leisure activities, a finding that is not in line with the hypothesis.

The six research question was not confirmed. This question aimed at examining whether the leisure activities of girls with a strong religious identity are dictated by the leisure goals they set for themselves more than such activities are dictated among girls with a weak religious identity. No overall statement can be made that the leisure activities of girls with a strong religious identity are dictated by their leisure goals to a greater degree than among girls with weak religious identity.

The findings were discussed in relation to the research literature, and pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research were presented. The importance of this study is in its ability to demonstrate that the level of religious identity is related to the nature of leisure activities and to leisure patterns, thus emphasizing the importance of addressing the religious identity variables in studies of leisure and education for leisure.

Intensifying one’s identity in general, and specifically one’s religious identity, must be conducted alongside the development of curricula for leisure, of the type being developed in the last decade. These subjects are important for the creation of an active society, whose members develop their talents and skills, and use their free time in an active way.