

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Leisure Patterns among
Arab Adolescents in Israel**

Sawsan Iraqi

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's

Degree in the School of Education, Bar-Ilan University

Ramat Gan, Israel

2018

Abstract

This research aims at studying the leisure patterns among Arab youth in Israel using these demographic variables: socioeconomic status and gender. The research literature views the socio-economic status, age, gender, mental state and educational level as important factors in choosing leisure activities, perhaps, limiting factors (Cohen, 2008). Therefore, this research examines some of these factors, and the extent of their influence over choosing leisure activities among Arab youth in Israel.

The rate of teenagers in the Arab population in Israel is rather high; they comprise a substantial part of its social life. According to data published by The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2007 Arab youth, aged 12-17, numbered 218,000 persons (15.3% of the entire Arab population of Israel). This higher rate and the major role in Arab society coupled with a growing generational gap, stress the importance of studying this age group (Abu Asbeh, 2010).

This research joins a small group of researches which studied leisure patterns among Arab youth in Israel, so as to acquire a better understanding of the leisure culture of Israel's Arab youth. Furthermore, this paper will look at the transformations the Arab society in Israel is experiencing as a whole, being a minority society with distinct characteristics.

Examining this issue may contribute to identifying new ways to culturally and educationally advance the Arab society in Israel, hence the practical aspect of the research. It will put leisure pattern among Arab youth and the factors underlying an individualized consumption of leisure in the spotlight, which is where its theoretical importance lies.

Arab youth' leisure culture is influenced by the modern Israeli culture as a whole, and from the Israeli youth culture in particular. Hamdan (2005) shows that the exposure of Arab teens to mass media (such as TV and the Internet) and their strong connections with the urban society led them to adopt new values, emphasizing the individual over the collective. These values are foreign to the traditional Arab society and are not accepted by it. Research literature indicate the lack of basic cultural institutions such as public libraries and school libraries, as well as a shortage in other arts and creative institutions in Arab villages and towns in Israel, and the scarcity of cultural activity

centers such as movie theaters and museums (Manna, 2000). In this context, we should add that the economic gaps between the Jewish and Arab populations in Israel, in addition to the economic distress the Arab population in Israel suffers in general, affect the leisure patterns and the participation in desired cultural activities, since consumption of various cultural products requires financial expense (Sh'hada, 2004).

We have also looked at gender differences in choosing leisure activities. Since the Arab society in Israel is characterized by a clear distinction of gender roles, this paper sought to find out whether there were gender-based differences in leisure patterns, and in which fields.

The findings by the Van Leer Institute research (Tzameret Kretchmer, Herzog, & Chazan, 2015) which examined the inequality in Arab society, present a highly concerning picture from this point of view. The results show that the Arab women in Israel are still very far from equality. These findings may reflect the Arab society's separation and detachment. The gender inequality in it is still high, which may explain the gender differences which were detected in the current research in choosing leisure patterns. These differences show that the Arab family still remains a traditional family even today.

Another finding discussed in this study correlates leisure patterns to socioeconomic status: We have found that Arab youth of a higher socioeconomic status use computers and Internet for educational and gaming purposes, more than their peers of lower socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic differences testify to the significant transformation the traditional Arab family in Israel is currently undergoing.

By and large, technological development accelerated many processes and brought various changes in different systems, which in turn, generated transformation in the traditional set of values, and directly affected the leisure culture (Adoni, 1979). These changes brought far reaching technological improvements and higher standard of living, and increased the variety and diversity of leisure and occupation options available to individuals. They also increased the amount of free time that may be devoted to these options (Goldberg, 1995; Katz, 1973; Katz et al., 2000).

Research Questions

- a) Are there any differences among Arab teenagers in Israel in the concept of leisure, based on socioeconomic status and gender?
- b) Are there different motives for leisure activities, based on socioeconomic status and gender?
- c) Are there any differences in the importance assigned to leisure activity in comparison to the time devoted to it, based on socioeconomic status and gender?
- d) Are there any differences in leisure patterns based on socioeconomic status and gender?
- e) Are there any differences in computer usage based on socioeconomic status and gender?

Research Hypotheses

- a. There will be differences between genders regarding the different leisure measures.
- b. There will be differences between different socioeconomic levels and different leisure measures.
- c. There will be correlation between gender, socioeconomic level and leisure level.

Methodology

Research Population

The population researched was comprised of 318 students, ages 12-16. The average age was 14 (0.91 standard deviation). 60% were girls and 40% were boys.

Research Tools

For this research we used several questionnaires that investigated the leisure pattern among teenagers. The questions were updated, some of them were omitted, and the remainder were translated into Arabic. The questionnaire that was presented to the teenagers included items that referred to various aspects of leisure.

The first part of the questionnaire included “background variables”: ten questions about the teenager’s hometown, age, gender, father’s occupation and education, number of siblings, number of rooms in the house, youth movement participation, whether he or she volunteers or not.

The second part of the questionnaire included the 11th question about the concept of leisure. It was aimed for the participant to define leisure, and point out what leisure meant for her or him. The question was comprised of ten items which offered leisure options such as social meetings and enjoyment.

The third part of the questionnaire was the 12th question which aimed to examine what were the motives for leisure activities among the participating teenagers. The same changes that were made in question 8 were made here. This question asks the responders to scale their motives for leisure activities, and it includes seven items which s/he is asked to scale by Lickert Scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). The items were based on the paper by Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) about young people and free time and the researchers of Scales (1991) and Pitman (1991) which refer to youth’ basic needs.

The fourth part of the questionnaire included question number 13 which was about the importance attributed to leisure, in comparison to the time devoted to it. The question was comprised of 24 items. Every item indicted a form of time spending, and the responders had to estimate the time they devoted to it. The scale of answers was 1-8 (1 = not at all; 8 = almost every day) on Lickert Scale.

The fifth part of the questionnaire was question number 14, Frequency of Leisure Pattern: Based on Sivan’s (1984) questionnaire, this question focused on frequency of leisure activities, and was comprised of 30 items. Each item represented a type of activity and the responder had to indicate the frequency s/he engaged in this activity. The Lickert Scale here was 1-8 (1= not at all; 8= almost every day).

The sixth part of the questionnaire was about using computers and the Internet and included questions 15-22. It was based on a research done by Shamla (1999). The original research included 20 questions, of which some irrelevant items were omitted.

The Research Process and Data Processing

To analyze the data we have acquired from the questionnaires, and to test our research hypotheses, we used data analysis SPSS program. In order to compare different groups we have used the appropriate statistical analyses, such as t tests, two way analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test the differences between the various measures based on gender and socioeconomic level.

Findings

This part presents the research findings following the research hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: The Differences between Leisure Measures between Girls and Boys

Measuring the effect of gender on the dependent variables, the following differences, the research shows the following differences:

- a. The research found that boys conceive leisure as an activity which is more free ($M = 3.42$) than girls ($M = 3.23$) $F(1, 292) = 5.11, p = 0.025, \text{Eta}^2 = 0.160$.
- b. The research also found that boys dedicate more time ($M = 2.73$) than girls ($M = 2.62$) to meaningful leisure activities $F(1, 292) = 5.08, p = .008, \text{Eta}^2 = 0.030$.
- c. Boys are engaged more frequently than girls in shopping as leisure activity $F(1, 292) = 9.87, p < .01, \text{Eta}^2 = .033$.
- d. The research found also that boys use the computer to study more frequently than girls ($M = 5.12$) away from school ($M = 4.86$) $F(1, 292) = 5.40, p < .05, \text{Eta}^2 = .018$.

Hypothesis 2: Differences between Socioeconomic Levels (including father's education) in Leisure Measures

When we examined the socioeconomic status on each and every dependent variable, we found the following differences:

Teenagers from higher socioeconomic background use computers for their school work more than students from lower socioeconomic background ($F(2, 292) = 4.26, p < .05, \text{Eta}^2 = .028$).

Additionally, boys from a higher socioeconomic level play the computer more than any other teenagers from lower economic level ($F(2, 292) = 3.37, p < .05, \text{Eta}^2 = .023$).

Discussion, Summary and Conclusions

After examining the differences between girls and boys in their **concept of leisure**, we have found that boys view leisure more as a free activity than girls. The research has not found that the motives for leisure concept, “personal development” and “social need” are gender-based and socioeconomic-related.

Regarding the differences in “breaking the regular routine” and “developing personal skills” motives for leisure activities, the research has not found gender-based differences, nor socioeconomic or father education-related differences.

Considering gender differences regarding the importance attributed leisure, we have found that boys gave more points to the variable “**dedicating time to meaningful activities**,” however, there were no gender-based differences in the variable “**dedicating time to social activities**”.

Examining the differences between genders in leisure patterns, we have found that boys were engaged more frequently than girls in “**shopping activities**” and “**studying activities**”. Regarding Socioeconomic status and father’s education, it was found that teens from a higher socioeconomic status are engaged more in “**studying activities**” than teens from a lower socioeconomic status. No differences in leisure patterns were found in the variable “**shopping activities**” when comparing socioeconomic levels.

Looking at **computer usage** variables, there were no gender-based differences in “**using computers for school work**” “**using computers for playing purposes**,” “**using the Internet for schoolwork**, and “**using the Internet for playing purposes**.” When we checked the variables based on socioeconomic level and father’s education, we have found that teenagers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are engaged more in gaming than their peers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the research shows that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to use computers for schoolwork more than their peers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

As it was described above, the findings of this research point out to certain differences between girls’ and boys’ **concept of leisure** as well as different patterns of leisure in responders from different socioeconomic levels. The fact that the boys engage in these activities more frequently raises one of the main questions, in light of the findings: How should the gender differences be interpreted in the context of the concept of leisure?

It is important to mention that the research has not found gender-based or socioeconomic differences in all the variables regarding the **concept of leisure, motives for leisure activities, and the importance attributed to leisure activities**. These findings correlate to the definitions of leisure that were presented in the literature review, that stated that leisure in modern society was perceived as valid and egalitarian, and of a spontaneous nature according to the individual inclinations and aspirations (Bar-Lev, 1990; Kelly, 1983; Kraus, 1971; Meyer, Brightbill, & Sessom, 1969). Therefore, we could make the assumption that there will almost be no gender-based differences in the **concept of leisure, in leisure activities and in the importance attributed to leisure**, since these are all related to the individual.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this research found that the Arab society had distinct gender-based differences in several variables in the **concept of leisure and leisure patterns**: It shows that boys tend to choose leisure activities that are ore associated with “**free activity**” more than girls; boys devote more time to “**meaningful activity**”; and boys are engaged more than girls in “**studying**” and “**shopping**”. Indeed, this situation teaches us about a significant gender gap in the concept of leisure and the preferable leisure activities. Gender-based differences in the concept of leisure were presented in the theoretical review (Cohen, 2008; Mesch, 2001; Necker, 2000). They can be related to the way leisure is perceived in almost any modern country, not necessarily in the traditional or the Arab society in Israel.

Considering gender-based differences in looking at the **importance attributed to leisure**, this research found that boys devote more time to “**meaningful activities**” than girls, however, there were no gender-based differences in the variable “**devoting time to social activities**.” There were no differences between socioeconomic levels and **father’s education levels** regarding the **importance attributed to activities in comparison to the time devoted to it**.

Looking at the time dedicated to each type of activity, the research found that most of the time was devoted mainly to social activities. **Spending time with friends** was the main activity regarding both the time devoted to it and the importance the students attributed to it.

One may assume, looking at the research's findings, that there will be a correlation between the teenagers' socioeconomic level and their level of media consumption: watching TV and video as well as playing computer games. Additionally, another correlation was found between parents' education and the rate of students who own a computer, a video set, the rate of students who read books, magazines and periodicals, and who frequent the concert hall, watch plays, movies or shows, go to youth movements and youth camps on holidays (if they exist in the Arab sector). These researches correlate with the findings of other researches (Israeli Bureaus of Statistics, 1992; Mesch, 2001; Necker, 2000).

All in all, if we compare the leisure pattern of Arab youth today to those which appear in Sarsour's 1971 research, which examined the leisure patterns of high school students of Arab students in Central Israel, we will not find any significant changes. This is a disappointing, harsh state of affairs which attests to a failure in closing the gaps in this field.

Previous studies have shown that Arab youth in Israel, particularly in the last decade, are exposed to Western contents and to modernization by way of mass media (for example, by television and Internet). This exposure led them to adopt new values, focusing on the individual, instead of the traditional values which highlight the collective. Individual values are foreign to the traditional Arab culture, and thus a conflict was created between the teenagers and their traditional parents (Hamdan, 2005).

In order to examine the influence of modernization over the concept of leisure, it was important to understand the meaning of leisure for youth. As this research shows, leisure concept marks certain modernization which occurs in the Arab society. Therefore, it is important to view the changes that were found in this research from a comprehensive point of view, as reflecting a transformation in the Arab society. According to the theoretical literature, this transformation encompasses many areas, including relative decrease of gender differences and an increase in education and exposure to Western education. It also includes certain modern values such as economic transitions and economic modernization, democratization, Jewish society influence, mass media exposure, adopting modern teaching techniques, employment and engaging in more prestigious occupations instead of agriculture, as well other changes that have

started making their way into the Arab society, especially among young people, change the way they conceive leisure (Avitzur, 1987; Elhaj, 1997). The entire Arab society in Israel is undergoing this process, however it is mostly manifest in the higher socioeconomic level.

Future research will have to study thoroughly the connection between a family's level of religiousness and its socioeconomic level, so as to find a connection between a traditional family and a lower socioeconomic level; and a similar connection between a modern family and a higher socioeconomic status.

In future research I suggest to continue to study patterns of leisure, concepts of leisure and motives for engaging in leisure activities in Arab societies more thoroughly; by choosing other populations samples in various places in Israel, various ages and a comparison between them. This is due to the fact that this current research does not represent the entire Arab population of Israel, but that of one area only. Based on this research, I suggest mapping the data, and comparing the new data to this current research, so as to have the option for different comparisons. Moreover, this way, we will be able to examine the concept of leisure directly vis-à-vis the demographic variables: socioeconomic status, gender and father's education, which were examined in this research, and to look into the amount of correlation to the modern or to the traditional concept.

This current research joins a meager number of researches studying the topic of leisure in the Arab society in Israel. Its importance lies in practical suggestions for implementation which may improve the future Arab leisure culture in Israel. There is a paradox: The Arab teens are interested in experiencing leisure time the way their Jewish peer experience it in the media. However, they encounter mental, technical and physical obstacles these experiences. Therefore, we need to find out and see what the most desired and required needs are for Arab youth, in cooperation with their parents, by performing future research. This way the leadership can decide how to divide the resources, and plan the current educational programs so they would be suitable for the future years and generations. Thus, government, various organizations and institutions should all be tasked with the mission of taking care of the Arab society, putting its need on the agenda, so as to close gaps, and find ways to let Arab youth manifest their

identity in the public realm in an appropriate and respectable mode, and hence realize a real equality.