



Kamila Słupska

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Activity of young people studying in their free time

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Abstract: The article concerns students' free time. It includes theoretical explanations concerning the essence and meaning of the main above-mentioned category, review of the outcomes of a research conducted on free time activities of the studying youth, and – as an illustration to these considerations – a report from a personal research. As a part of it, the respondents referred to, among others, the significance of free time in life, its functions, ways of making use of it (actual and desired ones), and factors contributing to it.

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Taking care of (free) time...

Referring to two attitudes towards time, shaped by the influence of cultural factors, attitudes towards time described by Tad James – “in time” and “through time” – a question could be posed: which one of them dominates in the current landscape? The former is characterised by the focus on the present, which makes a person fully engaged in what is happening at present (its specificity refers to the culture of the East). The latter, on the other hand, provides easy access to the past and the future, which makes it difficult to focus on what is “here and now” – this philosophy is characteristic of Western culture. Using the “time crunch” category, Philip G. Zimbardo analyses the attitude in feeling the strong pressure of time, which manifests itself, among other things, in irritation in the situation of waiting for something. “[...]although thousands of devices make our everyday lives easier, we

work longer than ever and have no time for certain activities, considered to be wasting it [...], such as meetings with friends, religious life, family ceremonies. [...] The multitude of events taking place in the environment makes us feel that our time is not our time” (Sobol-Kwapińska 2007, p. 70-71). It also has consequences for the perception (or not) of the importance of free time, i.e. the category which on the one hand seems to be something obvious that has always existed “although “as a product of modern, industrialised society, a derivative of the industrial revolution, the separation of sacred and profane [...] there is no equivalent of it in the previous political systems” (Orłowska 2007 b, p. 66), inscribed in everyday life, and on the other hand – being its element, encourages reflection and discussion, taking into account the specificity of the present reality, the pace of life, people’s expectations and duties.

Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak distinguishes three categories of definitions of free time: structural (their essence is to list the activities that are performed in free time); functional (the emphasis is on its purpose) and attributive (containing the attributes of that time, in the context of the life and activity of the individual), proposing an original definition according to which “free time is the interval of subjective life in which a person experiences intellectual, emotional and physical well-being, as a result of the possibility of independent, sovereign manifestation of activities which are voluntary and non-commercial and which are a source of satisfaction. [...] free time is the tissue of personal life, a confirmation of oneself as an individual, and at the same time it gives an opportunity to participate in the public sphere – civic, mass culture, religious, etc.” (Czerepaniak-Walczak 2007, p. 222 and 236). On the grounds of social pedagogy, a lot of attention was paid to the analysed category by Aleksander Kamiński, whose proposal, referring to the above classification, belongs to the category of structural definitions: “Free time is that part of the time budget which is not occupied by normal or additional gainful work, by systematic education, by satisfying basic physiological needs [...] or by domestic chores [...], and can be used either for recreation or for family life, social responsibilities and activities with short-term benefits.” He also proposed that this concept be filled with content, using the term “recreation,” defined as “a part of our free time, which can be freely and voluntarily used and filled with rest, play and mental work (self-education), as well as social, artistic, sporting, technical and other activities undertaken as needed for our own development.” As a supplement, he also introduced the category of “partially free time”, which he understood as “a part of the time budget allocated to activities carried out with a sense of duty to perform them or awareness of material benefits, but which we also perform with a certain degree of freedom” (Kamiński 1980, p. 352). He thus pointed to both the

quantitative (part of the general budget of time) and qualitative (filling with content) dimension of free time. These two categories are also believed to be significant and used by Anna Zawadzka, who also devotes much attention to detailing the conditions necessary for its occurrence (non-mandatory, voluntary, conscious nature) (Orłowska 2007a, p. 583-587).

Ramon Ramos Torre presents three contemporary ways of referring to time metaphorically – time as a resource; time as a specific external environment; time as a horizon of intentionality – which, as Tomasz Szlendak points out, cannot be escaped, because they are imposed by participation in social life. That is why we can observe more and more frequent entrapment of people who work today by time, for example generating free time “in spaces and areas previously considered to be inviolable ‘time of necessity’”, “scraping” free time from working time (due to new technologies) (Szlendak 2009, p. 202-205). On the other hand, according to Stanisław Zagórny, we are entering a laborious phase of mutual approximation of two orders: work and free time, which is necessary in order to provide an opportunity for the full development of social personality. There is a paradox here: working time, which is tiring by nature, is less tiring (duties are known, defined in advance) than time spent relaxing (when it is necessary to plan its schedule and put some intellectual effort into it) (Zagórny 2011, p. 226).

It is therefore important to pay attention to the leisure activities of all generations:

- Children – so that they can play, develop their interests and use their predispositions (and thus avoid the emergence of various phenomena defined by Aneta Jegier, such as the “occupied child syndrome”, where their entire time is filled with activities imposed on them by adults, which makes them only passive consumers, as well as the “child neglected due to welfare”, where they are surrounded by an abundance of toys that they do not know how to use. (Jegier 2016, p. 7-8; see also: Orłowska, Błeszyński 2016; Kostrubiec 2008; Nowak 2009; Charaśna-Blachucik 2011);
- Youth – so that they are aware of the purpose of their free time and able to make full and satisfactory use of their own free time and its potential (see for example: Seul-Michałowska 2008; Tomaszewska 2014; Zasacka 2014; Charaśna-Blachucik 2011; Graczykowska et al. 2011; Walentynowicz-Moryl 2011; Trzop, Szaban 2011; Bojanowicz 2014);
- Adults, constituting an extremely broad category, diversified in terms of their life situation, including professional life – free time of working persons, free time activity of the unemployed, structure of post-retirement time (see for example: Orłowska 2007 b; Borkowska, Mroczkowska 2012; Krzyżanowska

2012; Woszczyk 2009; Domańska 2009), resulting from successive stages (see Daniel Levinson's stages of adult life; the stages of cognitive development according to Warner Shaie, Zimbardo 2004, p. 205), so that they can balance work and free time, and the change in the dynamics of their activity did not entail the loss of the sense of social functioning.

In this article, the author focuses on the issue of free time of students as representatives of the young generation. She invokes arguments related to this subject matter, both theoretically and empirically, reviewing research analyses in a synthetic form, as well as illustrating her reflections with a communiqué from her own research.

Free time in students' lives

The authors of the *Report on the State and Diversity of Urban Culture in Poland* emphasise that, according to contemporary perception, participation in culture covers the entire period of an individual's activity. The following categories can therefore be distinguished from leisure time in its broadest sense:

- time for oneself – at the exclusive disposal of the individual, filled with various behaviours and activities, which are part of the “passivity – considerable effort” continuum; it is limited mainly by compulsory activities, financial situation and availability of cultural offer, it can be daily and occur during holiday time, it is also time for family and/or friends
- time that is unorganised and uncontrolled – in relation to the young generation it is characterised by lack of supervision of adults, it is highly valued and spent mainly among peers;
- compulsory free time – free time of the unemployed, or children and young people brought up in neglected environments, characterised by frustration, related to boredom and the occurrence of negative behaviours;
- seemingly free time – available to mothers on parental leave, retirees or pensioners, as well as some of the unemployed working in the so-called grey market, “people forced to participate in culture or imposing on themselves a healthy lifestyle regime, children and young people with so-called organised leisure (Fatyga, 2009).

According to the results of the study carried out in 2008, which took into account free time in the sense of “time for oneself”, more of its forms are realised not at home, but outside. The activities carried out outside include meetings in pubs, cafés, restaurants, weekend trips outside the city, shopping in malls, visits to the

cinema, theatre, walks, going to discos or music clubs, sports, music concerts, as well as gardening. At home, on the other hand, people watch television, read newspapers and books, use computers and surf the Internet, meet friends, create and engage in do-it-yourself activities, clean, sleep and care for their children. Youth “leave home, seek entertainment in the city and hang out with their peers. Often, their financial situation becomes an obstacle. [...] A division can be observed between hanging out in public space (with peers) and private space (with a partner). Among the dominant form, there are music clubs and meetings in pubs or cafés, followed by sports (mainly bicycle, gym, skateboard, roller skates, but also more elite urban sports, such as parkour, turbogolf, freestyle cycling)” (Fatyga, 2009). It also seems symptomatic that “[...] in the opinion of young respondents, free time spent away from home is usually filled with entertainment, while high culture (theatre, art galleries, avant-garde) is rather the subject of interest of the elite individuals, or its use results from a type of environmental pressure or snobbery. Even in large academic centres, it is difficult to find traces of student culture, which flourished in the times of the Polish People’s Republic. Student clubs are no different from other clubs, and students, who are usually engaged in gainful employment, declare that they have very little time for themselves” (Pęczak 2010, p. 106).

The results of the research conducted by Katarzyna Klimkowska on a group of 84 students (of applied linguistics, as well as culture animation and management) indicate that the most common forms of spending free time are: entertainment, socialising and using the mass media (mainly the Internet, TV and listening to music, while the level of readership turns out to be very low.) The use of cultural institutions is not popular, unlike sport, tourism or self-development. The rates of religious activity at that time are also not high. As far as preferences are concerned, respondents would like to spend their free time on having fun and entertainment, resting, as well as working on themselves. Referring to the types of participation in culture distinguished by Dzierżymir Jankowski, the author concludes that the participating students represent mainly the third type – intensive, sometimes quite versatile, but only perceptive activity. It cannot be said, however, that they suffer from “cultural anaemia,” because they meet their aesthetic needs and interact with the world of art through new technologies (Klimkowska 2008, p. 234-235), which undoubtedly enable and facilitate the performance of the role of both viewer and creator (Słupska, 2015.)

On the other hand, empirical analyses conducted by Małgorzata Przybysz-Zarembe, who conducted research among 260 students of five faculties – pedagogy, philology, Polish studies, economics and computer science – show that 81% of them spend their free time actively, on participating in social gatherings (59.2%),

walking (53.8%), shopping (37.3%), going to dance clubs (35.7%), going to the cinema (33%), practising sports (26.5%), going to the theatre or participating in concerts (20%). On the other hand, the most frequently mentioned passive forms, indicated by 19% of the respondents in total, are: listening to music, using a computer, watching television and sleeping (Przybysz-Zaremba 2008, p. 103-105).

Another study of the culture of free time of academic youth (humanities and economics) in a medium-sized city, carried out in two stages (in 2007 and 2012) by Karolina A. Zaniewska showed that students prefer to spend their free time in the company of their friends, using the Internet and watching television. Compared to the first stage, listening to music has lost some of its popularity. What differentiates the preferences of students of humanities and economics was reading books – in the case of the former – higher in the ranking (stage I: 33%, stage II: 27%), in the case of the latter – lower in the ranking (stage I: 16%, stage II: 17%) – and practising sport (reverse trend; students of economics, stage I: 17%, stage II: 30%, students of humanities, stage I: 13%, stage II: 19%). Other free time activities include going to dance clubs, meetings in student clubs and walks. On the other hand, what makes respondents similar is that they do not often mention such forms of spending free time as sleeping, playing computer games, thinking, going to the cinema and theatre, shopping, as well as artistic activities. Travel has not been popular either, nor has self-improvement or volunteering. Lack of free time was declared by almost equal group of students in the first and second stages of research (stage I: 3% among students of humanities and 2% among students of technical faculties; stage II: 4% and 3% respectively) (Zaniewska 2012, p. 132-141).

Empirical research on free time activities of students (N=133) of psychology at the Catholic University of Lublin and tourism at the University of Rzeszów (which constituted a part of a larger project), conducted by Agata Błachnio and Aneta Przepiórka, also showed that the focus in this area is placed on social contact, followed by reading and sports, with taking up work and volunteering being the least popular. Using the cluster analysis method, two groups were also distinguished: active (N=77, high scores for all activities) and passive (N=56, low scores or zero scores) (Błachnio, Przepiórka 2008, p. 275-281).

Students of pedagogy, participating in the research conducted by Lidia Marek (the cohort consisted of 344 people), formulating their own definitions of free time, stressed mainly freedom (from learning, from work; from orders and prohibitions), privacy (free time as personal time) and pleasure, as well as the functions of rest/leisure, ludic, creative, developmental and integration. The most popular idea for free time implemented by the respondents is the use of mass media (radio, television, Internet – first of all; books, press – apparent lower interest), meetings

with other people are also popular, including ludic activities (games reducing emotional tension, for example meetings with dancing during private parties, in the clubs or in dance clubs,) outdoors relaxation (although sports do not place high in the ranking), shopping and visits at shopping malls, tourism, understood as trips away from home, undertaken for recreation purposes and lasting at least two days, developing interests and hobbies, followed by sleep and passive relaxation, as well as: volunteering, participation in various types of organisations and cultural events (35.5% each), which turns out not to be very attractive in comparison with other forms of spending free time. The place where most participants come into contact with culture is the Internet, which gives them an opportunity to participate in cultural events, as well as to partake in creative endeavours (Marek, 2012), which has already been mentioned above.

According to the study carried out in 2007 by Patrycja Hanyga-Janczak among a group of 734 students of two universities: Jan Kochanowski University (majoring in pedagogy) and Kielce University of Technology (majoring in construction), the most popular forms of spending free time include watching television, using a computer, meeting friends and reading (books and magazines); however, these activities are not always compatible with the interests of the respondents, of whom only half expressed their satisfaction with taking advantage of their free time. The most frequently indicated obstacles standing in the way of the realisation of their dreams connected with the choice of a form of spending free time, where students from both groups opted for travels, courses and social meetings; differences in choice occurred in the case of practising sport (selected more often by students of the University of Technology) and participation in cultural events (selected more often by students of the University) are lack of funds, insufficient time and lack of information about the events taking place (Hanyga-Janczak, 2011, p. 65).

The results of the survey completed by 23 students of the first year of English Studies (aged 20–22 years), where five main spheres of human existence – physical, mental, sociological, cultural and spiritual – were identified, and the forms of free time activities chosen by young people during the summer holidays were listed within them, show that mental and social activities were selected to be the most attractive (primarily: leisure and making up for the sleep deficit, visiting friends, developing thinking, the top ten also included: activities related to the needs of association and communication with friendly people, as well as activities related to the development of memory and reading books; only one item was related to physical exercise – going to the gym). Among the least popular forms are spiritual and physical activities. The respondents were also able to indicate any number of days (having 30 days at their disposal) for each activity. It turned out that they were able

to spend most of their time on activities related to mental activity of recreational and cognitive nature (9 days on average), then – on meeting social needs (6 days on average), cultural and physical activity (4 days on each) and only about half a day on the spiritual sphere. Respondents also stressed the attractiveness of particular forms by allocating specific amounts of money to them (having a monthly budget of PLN 3,000 at their disposal). It turned out that they would most willingly spend this sum on physical, as well as cultural and social activities (shopping, pubs, concerts, combat sports, relaxation, followed by meeting new acquaintances, gyms, mountain tourism, sailing and swimming). Jacek Z. Górnikiewicz summed up the analyses by pointing out that similar surveys, which would cover a larger number of people from socially diverse groups and be more representative of them, could be a source of inspiration for entities involved in the organisation of free time (at the local, regional and national level), as well as turn out to be inspiring for representatives of the media promoting various forms of free time activities and for the participants themselves as future parents (Górnikiewicz 2014, p. 138-151).

This conclusion may constitute a universal justification for the need to undertake continuous empirical explorations, the effects of which have not only a diagnostic and cognitive dimension, but also serve practical purposes, both in the current and prospective perspective.

I rest, have fun, develop interests... (research communiqué)

The considerations presented above can be illustrated with the results of research carried out in the academic year 2015-2016 among pedagogy students at the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The research methodology employed was diagnostic survey, using the questionnaire technique. The research group comprised 52 persons aged 20–24 (including: 20 years – 15.38%, 21 years – 44.23%, 22 years – 28.85%, 23 years – 5.77%, 24 years – 3.85%, no answer – 1.92%), mainly women (94.23%, men – 5.77%).

Respondents were asked to assess the importance of free time in the life of a young person. Most of them expressed the opinion that it is very important (73.08%), giving their own justifications, which, in order to organise the empirical material, were classified into the following categories:

- opportunity to rest and regenerate – 44.23%;
- opportunity to develop passions and interests – 40.38%;
- opportunity to maintain relations with others/meet with family and friends – 13.46%;

- opportunity to reflect on oneself – 3.85%,
- opportunity to realise plans and dreams – 3.85%,
- opportunity to do something useful – 1.92%;
- opportunity to devote time to what you like – 1.92%,
- opportunity to see the world – 1.92%,
- opportunity to gain life experience – 1.92%,
- learning opportunities – 1.92%,
- others – 5.77% (“this is a time that we can plan only for ourselves”; “we can happily enjoy life”; “there is very little of it and young people want to do so much”; “this is a time when young people can still ‘go wild’ in their lives, take advantage of this time before they reach adulthood”).

On the other hand, 26.92% of the respondents stated that it is important, indicating mainly rest and recuperation – 21.15% (additionally: contact with relatives – 3.85%, developing passions and interests – 1.92%).

The students were also asked to estimate the amount of free time they had (Table 1). They have more free time at their disposal during the weekend (61.63% have 5 hours or more), 25% of them have about 3–4 hours, and 3 people stressed that they do not have any free time at all (at the same time 2 of them declared that they have about 2 hours during the week, while 2 more respondents declared having less than 2 hours).

Table 1.

Amount of free time	during a week (%)	on weekend (%)
5 hours or more	36.54	61.53
approx. 3-4 hours	38.46	25.00
approx. 2 hours	19.23	3.85
less than 2 hours	5.77	3.85
none	0	5.77

Source: own research and calculations.

Referring to the amount of free time they had, respondents indicated mainly two answers: 20 people said they did not have enough of it, while 19 people thought they had enough of it. It is worth noting that almost 20% (10 respondents) noticed a problem with the proper use of their free time, and only 1 person indicated that they had too much free time (earlier they declared that they had 5 hours or more at their disposal both during the week and on weekends). (Table 2).

Table 2.

I believe that:	%
Generally speaking, I do not have any free time.	3.85
I do not have enough free time.	38.46
I have enough free time	36.54
I have enough free time, but I also have a problem with planning it properly.	19.23
I have too much free time	1.92

Source: own research and calculations.

Forms of spending free time constitute a certain order, “the combination of elements of time and its organisation.” They have a variety of functions (such as leisure, entertainment, self-fulfilment), define specific activities (for example “recreational events, holidays, team games and individual activities”), overlap [...] and complement each other in the overall impact on a person’s personality.” However, each of them “has a different meaning, especially in the context of the requirements of modern civilisation and educational tasks” (Truszkowska-Wojtkowiak 2012, p. 116). The behaviours in free time can vary greatly. Kazimierz Migdał classifies them into the following categories (often complementary):

- Activities with an emphasis on recreation (passive leisure, active leisure, social contacts);
- Religious practices.
- Creative activities, learning, helping others.
- Tourism in various forms.
- Asocial, antisocial and pathological behaviours.
- Additional gainful employment (in this case free time loses its original character) (Migdał 2011, p. 36-37).

On the other hand, Krzysztof Przeclawski, divides the behaviours of young people in their free time into ways of spending this time (individual and in groups) and behavioural patterns related to it and defines the following categories of group patterns:

- intellectual (e.g. clubs);
- artistic (e.g. amateur theatres);
- social (e.g. helping others);
- technical;
- sports;
- tourism;
- cultural;

- ludic-social;
- pathological (source: Przeclawski 1978, after: Walczak 1994, p. 14-15).

In response to the question about the real and desired forms of free time activities, respondents were asked to indicate no more than four types of activities from a list consisting of 14 proposals, the last of which was open (Fig. 1). Meetings with friends are by far the most popular (selected 46 times – 88.46%), followed by using computer and the Internet (31 times – 59.62%) and meetings with family (22 times – 42.31%), reading books, watching TV, listening to music, doing nothing, walks, sports, pursuing interests and going to dance clubs/events (equal number of picks), cinema/theatre/concerts. None of the respondents uses the offer of the community centre, which indicates that it is not perceived as an institution which guarantees interesting ways of spending their free time, which may be the result of the lack of knowledge of the offer and stereotypical perception of its activities, while it (often!) plays an important role in the activation of young people (cf. Słupska 2016), including older ones. Four respondents selected “other” and specified that they participate in brass band rehearsals (2 of them), study (1 respondent) and relax (1 respondent).

When asked what they would like to do in their free time, choosing from the same categories, the students responded that they would prefer to spend their free time with friends/family, which is in line with the high rate of their choices in terms of current leisure activities (the balance also applies to reading books – where these indicators are certainly not satisfactory, going to parties/events and walking). On the other hand, the dreams and aspirations of many respondents include: going to the cinema, theatre or participating in concerts – 44.23% to 9.62% – (due to the fact that participation in culture, as a form of spending free time, is conditioned by the occurrence of specific needs in this area – higher-order needs, or so-called secondary needs – according to the classification proposed by A. Maslow) (Szafranska, Napierała 2007, p. 117) – the students express such needs), sports (53.85% to 19.23%), pursuing interests (48.08% to 15.38%). Responses in the “other” category included two answers pursuing interests with loved ones and sleeping (1 person did not specify).

The issue of persons/factors influencing the ways of spending free time by the respondents also seems to be interesting (Table 3). The vast majority (82.69%) emphasises the fact of independent choice. At the same time, the financial situation, emphasised by half of the respondents, turns out to be a significant factor; followed by the opinion/attitude of peers (44.23%); the impact of the family (34.62%), as well as coincidence (32.69%) Among those who indicated the financial aspect, 52.17% would like to use the offer of cinema/theatre in their free time or to

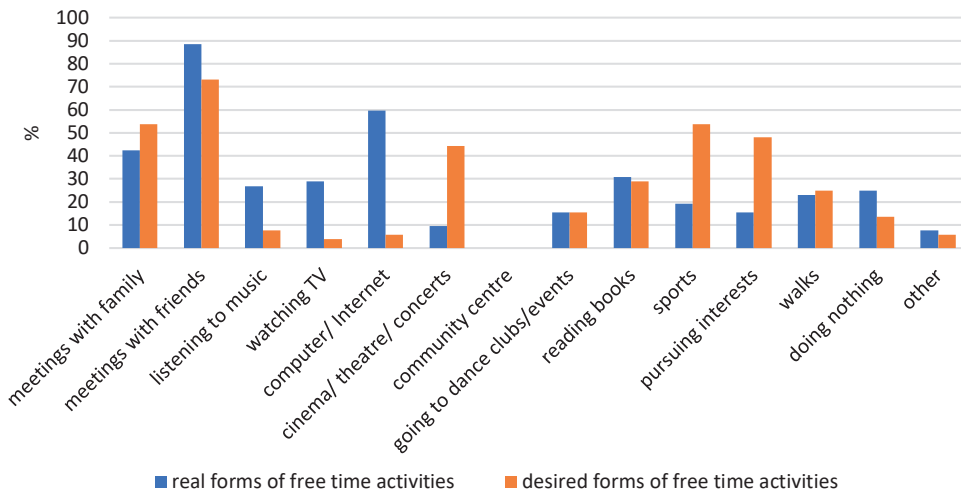


Fig. 1.

Source: own research and calculations.

participate in a concert, while 47.83% would like to pursue their own passions. It can therefore be concluded that the barrier of insufficient financial resources hinders the realisation of the objectives, in the context of participation in paid events and possibly the pursuit of a hobby involving the necessity of making certain investments (which would need to be confirmed by further in-depth study). Students surveyed by Jolanta Urbanek, who conducted her research in order to determine the level of participation in culture, indicated that the lack of financial resources and lack of free time were the main obstacles hindering their participation. It is worth mentioning, when assessing their contacts with institutions of high culture (theatre, philharmonic, art exhibitions, museums, opera houses, operettas), that they are definitely insufficient (only 3.6% of the studied population can be classified as regular audiences) (Urbanek 2002). At the same time, as Ewa Krawczak emphasises, “modifications of free time activities and mediatization of leisure patterns result also from a change in attitudes towards culture and lack of specific habits” (Krawczak 2009, p. 71). The “other” category was picked by five respondents, who complemented it with the following answers: “my mood on a given day, for example whether I am happy, sad, etc.”; “employer”; “university, work (work to be done for the next day)”; “scheduling”; “limited time.”

Table 3.

What/who mainly determines how you spend your free time?	%
I do, myself	82.69
Peers/friends	44.23
Family	34.62
Coincidence	32.69
Health	15.38
Financial situation	50.00
Current fashion	0
Other	9.62

Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Source: own research and calculations.

When asked about the care, interest and attention paid to free time and appropriate forms of using it in the family home, half of the respondents (51.92%) answered that it depends (sometimes yes, sometimes no). Almost 20% felt that it was either difficult to say or that no attention had been paid to these issues. Only 15 respondents confirmed that their parents cared very much about it (Table 4).

Table 4.

Has any importance been attached to creative/valuable free time activities in your family home?	%
Yes, parents have taken great care of this	28.84
No, parents did not pay attention to this	9.62
Sometimes yes, sometimes no	51.92
It is difficult to say	9.62

Source: own research and calculations.

Respondents were also asked what they considered to be the functions of free time. The question was open-ended. The possibility of providing any answer resulted in a variety of forms. Some of the respondents listed their functions, simply naming them without characterising their essence, others formulated general opinions about their free time and their free time activities, indirectly indicating issues of interest from the analysed standpoint. In order to organise the empirical material, the following function classification was made on the basis of the answers obtained:

- Recuperation (rest, relaxation) – 68.63%
- Self-realisation (self-understanding, development of interests, broadening knowledge) – 56.86%
- Recreation (fun) – 17,65%
- Integration (meetings with family and friends) – 13.73%
- Reflection – 5.88%

Among the functions mentioned by students, there were also: cultural, “nutritious”, activating and socialising. Each of them has been indicated once, appearing among others in the above qualification. For them to be included, the respondents would need to clarify their meaning. In order to illustrate the answers of the respondents, it is worth citing some of them:

“Free time gives us the opportunity to get to know ourselves better, it is the time when we can rest and do what we like, do what gives us satisfaction, pleasure” (F, 21 years old);

“Free time is the time taking a break from everyday chores. Rest and recuperation. It’s a time when people can do what they want” (F, 22 years old);

“It allows you to distance yourself from problems, rest, unload, calm down, regain strength” (M, 21 years old);

“In my opinion, free time serves the purpose of allowing you to regain your strength, for example, for the next day, week [...]” (F, 23 years old);

“[...] a moment for yourself to contemplate various things” (F, 21 years old);

“This is a time when we can focus only on ourselves and our needs” (F, 21 years old);

“Enables [...] to change the mood” (F, 22 years old);

“Free time serves a function of relaxation and “stopping”, when we have a lot of things on our mind” (F, 21 years old);

“[...] time for reflection” (F, 21 years old);

“During this time I can do whatever I want. I don’t have to rush anywhere and I have time only for myself” (F, 20 years old).

Referring to – as Małgorzata Orłowska puts it – timeless typology developed by Aleksander Kamiński, who pointed out: rest (recuperation from fatigue, which is conducive to regeneration of the body), fun (entertainment, expression, counteracting boredom) and self-development (development and participation in so-

cial life) (Orłowska, Błeszyński 2016, p. 34-36), it can be said that the students participating in the survey paid attention to each of these aspects, although they emphasised them in different ways, mentioning some of them while not emphasising the others (for example activities for the benefit of others within the framework of self-development). At this point, it is worth referring to the terms collected and analysed by Maria Truszkowska-Wojtkowiak, which are the answers to the question "What is free time for you?" answered by a group of 36 working female students. The most common and typical terms are: pleasure (20%); relaxation (20%); time for myself (17%); clearing backlog (11%); short holiday to do something else (8%); family time (5%); sense of freedom (2.5%); hobbies (2.5%); dreams (2.5%); laziness (2.5%); others (8%). As the author herself emphasises: "In the vast majority of responses, the dominating approach to free time is that it is a state of mind and spirit, as well as simple relaxation and pleasure" (Truszkowska-Wojtkowiak 2012, p. 267), which is also reflected in the responses to the question about its functions mentioned above.

Free time in students' lives – important, indifferent, or maybe completely meaningless? To sum up, young people are certainly aware of its importance, but they also recognise that activities that they undertake are not always corresponding to their real needs or preferences. This, in turn, proves that the discussed issues are still part of the area of pedagogical research, as important and current topics, and that they are a challenge for theoreticians and practitioners involved in the analysis and organisation of human development environments.

Conclusions

"Having free time combined with the impossibility of fulfilling it in an attractive way or lack of formed habits in this aspect leads to boredom, frustration, multiplies discouragement and promotes escapism into the world of apparent values" (Denek 2006, p. 129-130). We should agree with the commonly held view that its deficiency has a negative impact on human health, personal achievements, self-esteem and attitudes towards others and everything around us. Rationally organised free time activities is of great importance for the development of the personality of a person and the society in which they live (Denek 2006, p. 135). Fragmentation of free time, its commercialisation and instrumentalisation (cf: Mroczkowska 2014), mediatization on the "phenomenon of free e-time" (used through the Internet – "exercising freedom to" or "free time from contact with the Internet"; Czerepaniak-Walczak 2007, p. 226),

resulting from and manifesting contemporary phenomena related to its post-modern vision (cf. Mokras-Grabowska 2015) make it an important, interesting and cognitively unsatisfactory issue, requiring both theoretical analyses and empirical exploration.

Studying youth who enter adulthood, full of challenges and forcing commitment (in the context of the activities carried out) should balance the various forms of everyday activity, so as not to forget about themselves, their passions and the moment of taking a break from everyday duties, which will allow them to distance themselves from the problems, worries or existential attempts that are so necessary, yet still exploiting. Referring to the research results indicated in the article, it can be stated that the images of students' free time activities contain many similarities in the context of actual and preferred activities/behaviours, in the context of functions as well as associations connected with this category. Appreciating its importance is encouraging; however, it must be translated into action in practice. Remembering the sphere which is "a particularly good source of inspiration" (Szafrańiec 2011, p. 224) – about free time, the (real) care for its proper development is an important element, influencing the quality of life, and therefore one can state with full conviction that free time is important time.

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