

The Effects of Active Social Leisure Activities on Communicative Skills and their Role on Mental Health of the Employees of Education Organization of Hamedan

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Abstract

Introduction and objective

It is obvious that leisure time has very important role in mental and physical improvement of the members of society; thus, the aim of the present study is to analyze the effect of active social leisure activities on communicative skills and its role on mental health of employees.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive correlative. The statistical population includes 400 employees of education organization of Hamedan city. According to Cohen formula (2000), the sample size includes 196 members who were selected through stratified random sampling from the statistical population. For data collection, active social leisure activities, communicative skills and mental health of employees with reliability of 0.71, 0.90 and 0.92 were used. Moreover, the face and content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by the experts. The statistical analyses have been done through statistical software packages of social sciences, version 19 and Lizrel (version 8.54) in descriptive and referential levels ($p \leq 0.05$).

Findings

Findings have shown that the active social leisure activities directly influence communicative skills and mental health.

Conclusion

It seems necessary to pay enough attention to physical, mental and social health of individuals. Thus, having active social leisure time is recommended as an effective factor in increased efficacy and sufficiency of individuals and social and working transactions as leisure strategy.

Keywords: mental health, active leisure activities, social activities, employees, communicative skills

Introduction

Due to increased advances of technology, economic growth and changes of social system, the modern communities have found complex forms (1). One of the important issues that have greatly covered the individuals' life is leisure time. Although the labor and especially industrial works has turned to the most important element of individuals' life in post-industrial revolution in Europe and plays determining role; however, through the facilities that emerged due to leisure time, the role of labor has been replaced by leisure time (2). Undoubtedly, leisure time has quantitatively proceeds labor and has qualitatively became more important than labor. However, it should not be forgotten that these two have close relation with each other (3). Leisure time is not the waste time without any responsibility in the individuals' life, on contrary, at this time; more is expected of the individual to have sense of responsibility. Even when the individual is left by himself, the decision making is by him and he can freely act, the responsibility toward himself, other individuals and society becomes more important (4). Thus, to enrich it, it is necessary to remove the barriers that prevent the achievement of these objectives. Spending leisure time has currently become diversified due to development in cultural, social and economic areas. According to his inclines and taste, everyone tries to spend his leisure time to the best way that fulfills his needs in this regard (5). The entertaining sports are the most appropriate and even necessary for spending leisure time in the current time (6).

Spending leisure time through healthy entertainments especially sport has positive events on the individual and society such that it leads to release from pressure and stress, physical health, mental health, skill growth, creativity and learning concerning personal interests. In terms of social interests, it leads to strengthening of family, development of friendly relations, increased public utilization, improved public health and developed social spirit. Indeed, sport facilitates the learning of main human values (7). Thus, the individual who feels healthier and fresher will be mentally strengthened and feel as becoming stronger in terms of self-esteem and self-belief. The researchers of sport medical sciences have recently proposed that sport trainings might stabilize or modify mental pressures. The other group of researchers considers the beneficial effect of sport activities on reduction of stress associated with decreased electrical activities of muscles and increased

feeling of well-being in individual. In general, all these factors lead to increased feeling of self-esteem, decreased anxiety, stress avoidance and better mental performance (8). In so far as one of the axes for evaluation of the health of organizations is public health of human resources of that organization, undoubtedly, this evaluation axis plays significant role in guaranteeing the dynamism and efficiency of organization and it is required to have come consideration for evaluation and its improvement in organizations which is more important in some organizations including education. Since according to Kaplan, public health includes continuous compatibility with varying conditions and attempt for fulfillment of balance between inner demands and obligations of changing environment. Thus, the employees who can become compatible with their environment will be normal in terms of general health. Moreover, employees with high mental balance resist against the unavoidable failures of work environment and create a happy environment for themselves, their colleagues and even clients. In addition, one of the main features of public health is social interest and inclines toward cooperation and constructive and positive social relation with others (9). Communicative skills are those skills through which the individuals could be involved in interpersonal interactions and communication process; i.e. the process whereby the individuals share their information, thoughts and feelings through verbal and nonverbal interactions (10). These skills are so important that their insufficiency is along with feeling of loneliness, social anxiety and depression (11). Thus, the human being as a social being requires communication and interaction with others to eliminate the individual and social needs and achieve organizational objectives. In this regard, sport increases the influence on others through education and improvement of communicative skills in personal, interpersonal and cumulative levels (12). Since the Education Organization is one of the main and effective organizations in society and its functions affect all social, cultural, health and family dimensions of individuals and since the most important resource of any organization is human resources, it seems necessary to pay enough attention to happiness, mental and physical health of the employees of that organization.

Concerning the studies, Besler (2003) studied the role of sport and leisure in Austrian people, the results of this study showed that sport is at least important for 50% of individuals and is one of the activities related to leisure time. 75% to 80% of Austrian people are engaged in sport sometimes; however, 20% of the Austrian people regularly do sport such that it positively affects their health (7). Vos wendal et al (2004) realized that increased physical activity in leisure time significantly affects the efficacy of relative health quality (13). This is while Sanee et al (2004) perceived that increased physical fitness leads to decreased burnout; however, there is no meaningful relation between physical fitness and mental health (14). Moreover, Khorjhai, Sadeqi and Dejahang (2011) compared the mental health of male athletes and non-athlete students and perceived that the mental health and its subscales are better in male athlete students compared to non-athletes. Furthermore, training and physical activity can leads to increased mental health and its dimensions and on the other hand, decreased negative dimensions of mental health such as depression, anxiety and stress (15). Moreover, Irandost (2011) tested mental health between athlete and non-athlete teachers of physical education and specified that there is difference between athlete and non-athlete teachers in terms of mental health and the athlete teachers have higher mental health than non-athlete teachers (16).

Molina-Garcia and et al (2011) studied the role of physical activity in leisure time on the mental health of students of Spain universities and concluded that the more is the leisure time, the more will be happiness and health (17). However, Sorori (2011) studied this issue from other aspect and tested the effect of general physical education on the mental health of female students. Moreover, it was observed that one session of physical activity in week not only has no significant effect on mental health but also it has no effect on other components and in a general conclusion, he claims that the effectiveness of sport on mental health requires performing physical activity at least 7 times in a week. In the present study, concerning the low number of the training sessions, no positive and significant effect was observed on mental health of students (18). In another study, Jorge Mot and et al (2011) concluded that girls pay much attention to artistic and personal duties and activities during their leisure time, this is while boys were more engaged in sport, computer and watching TV (19). Shamisa (2013) realized that there is some relation between leisure and its subscales and between mental health and its subscales in the athletes of dangerous and high risk sport fields (20).

Meanwhile, other studies have been carried out individually concerning the variables of this study. For example, Gask and et al (2004) concluded that teaching communicative skills to general physicians is effective in assessment of management of depression and promotion of their general health (21). Moreover, Mustafa Nejad and Dortaj (2011), in another study entitled, "the efficacy of communicative skills on mental health of the junior students of rehabilitation sciences of Kerman University" and concluded that teaching communicative skills has not had meaningful effect on sleep disorder, anxiety and depression of students. However, general, the results of statistical analysis indicate that mental health of individuals has increased following their communicative skill (22). Mortazavi et al (2011) studied the relation between individual and personality characteristics and communicative skills of the experts of physical education of Khuzestan Education Organization and perceived that there is positive meaningful relation between personality features and communicative skills. On the other hand, the results of Spearman correlation showed that from individual

characteristics, only age and marital status of experts have meaningful relation with their communicative skills; this is while, no meaningful relation was observed between gender, educational level, field of study, work experience, sport experience and management experience (23). Doremami (2012) also concluded that there is no meaningful relation between communicative skills and mental health of employees (24). However, Amini, Noori and Samavati (2013) claimed the opposite of this in their study. According to their study, teaching communicative skills increases general health up to 73% and decreases depression, anxiety, disorder in social and physical functions up to 75, 72, 72 and 34% (25).

Generally, discussion and study about leisure time is a scientific field of study that can just be perceived through regular and comprehensive study. Thus, some of the scholars express their regret on that leisure is just considered from training, educational and sociological aspects and believe that there is some gap concerning fundamental, moral and believe discussions about leisure. The gap in the studies concerning the relation between the mentioned variables is that most mentioned studies have investigated the mutual relation between active leisure activity and mental health together and communicative skills and rarely any study has dealt with the investigation of the effect of all mentioned variables on each other and on mental health within a model with through a comprehensive approach. This trend cannot help achieving a comprehensive and general approach toward mental health of the employees of Education Organization and effective factors on it and the relation between the mentioned variables and mental health. Thus, the main research question is that how is the effect of active social leisure activities and communicative skills on mental health of employees of Education Organization of Hamedan city? What is the relation between direct and indirect relations between mentioned variables and mental health? What is the effect of each variable on mental health?

Methodology

The present study is descriptive correlative that has been done as field study. The statistical population of the study includes all employees of Education of Hamedan city who were 400 members out of which 196 subjects were randomly selected as research sample according to Jersi and Morgan table. Thus, to increase the generalizability of the results, 270 individuals were tested in the study. For data collection concerning theoretical background and literature review, library resources, papers, books and internet were used. Moreover, for data collection for the purpose of analysis, researcher made questionnaire of active social leisure activities, communicative skills scale of Barton E. J. (2001) and General Health scale of Geldberg (1998) were used. The logical validity of research instruments and their reliability were studied by the experts in this field through filling questionnaire by 30 samples of research and calculation of Cronbach Alpha. The total reliability of questionnaires has been presented in table1.

Table1. Reliability coefficient of research instrument

Variable	Active social leisure activities	Communicative skills	Mental health
Cronbach Alpha	0.92	0.71	0.90

Moreover, for analysis of data, descriptive and referential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and tables) was used for describing the demographic characteristics of research samples and referential statistics (structural equations model) was used for investigation of the effect of variables and the model test of the study. The analyses in this section have been done by SPSS and Lizrel software.

Research findings

Table2. The demographic features of research samples

Variable statistics		Frequency	Percentage	Variable statistics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	214	79.3	Working experience	Below 10 yrs	79	29.3
	Female	56	20.7		11-20 yrs	66	24.4
Education	Diploma and below	20	7.4		21-30 yrs	125	46.3
	AA	40	14.8	Marital status	Single	31	11.5
	BA	150	55.6		Married	239	88.5
	MA	59	21.9	Occupation	Full time	213	78.9
	PhD	1	0.4		Contractual	57	21.1

The results of table 2 indicate that from 270 subjects, 79.3% are male and 20.7% are female. 55.6% have bachelor degree and only 0.4% of subjects have PhD. Moreover, 46.3% have working experience of 21 to 30 years, 88.5% are married and 78.9% are full-time workers.

Research model

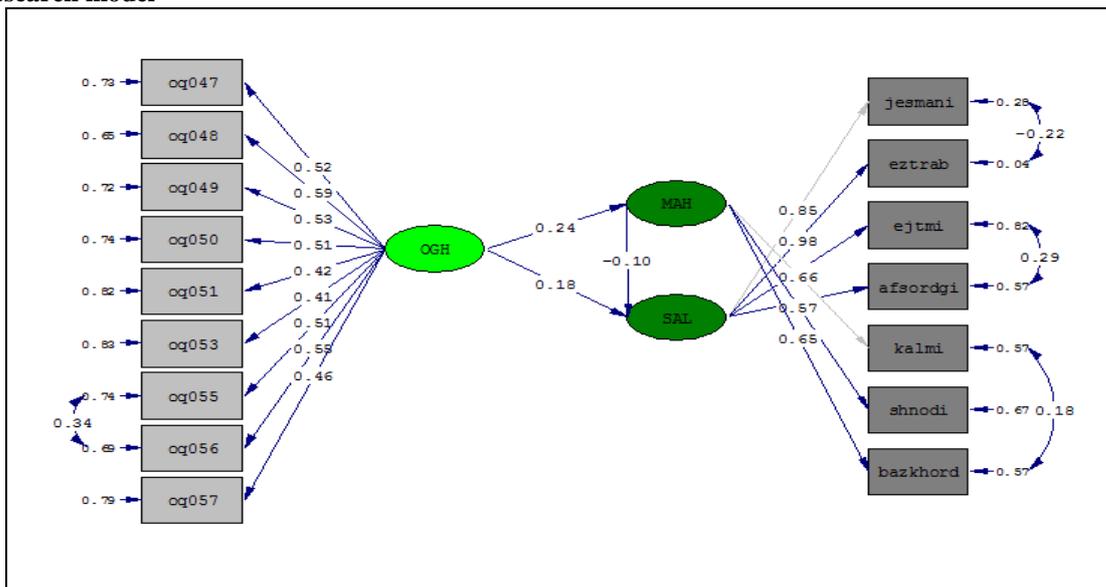


Figure1. The final output of Lizrel software in standard state of the causal relation between variables

Table3. The fitness indices of the model

Index	Variable	Value	Desired value	Status
1	χ^2	1.76	1-3	Acceptable
2	GFI	0.93	>0.90	Acceptable
3	AGFI	0.90	>0.90	Acceptable
4	NNFI	0.94	>0.90	Acceptable
5	CFI	0.95	>0.90	Acceptable
6	RMSEA	0.053	<0.08	Acceptable

Generally, statistical indices of fitness in the studied model in Lizrel are acceptable and it is possible to consider the good of fitness acceptable for the mentioned model (table3). In fact, X^2/df ratio is less than 2 whose acceptable range is 1-2 and in some sources, it is 1-3. In addition, good of fitness, revised good of fitness, NNFI and comparative fitness index (CFI) have acceptable values. Finally, RMSEA has acceptable value, and all are indicative of desirable fitness of model.

Table4. The path coefficients of the model and significance levels

Model	Path coefficient	T-value
Active social leisure activities..... communicative skills	0.24	2.54
Active social leisure activities..... mental health	0.18	2.49
Communicative skills..... mental health	-0.10	-1.13

As table 4 shows, the coefficient related to active social leisure activities to communicative skills and active social leisure activities to mental health is above 1.96 that shows the significance of these paths. This is while; path coefficient is not meaningful between communicative skills and mental health.

Variable	Effects		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
Active social leisure activity	0.24	-0.1*0.24	0.24
Communicative skills	0.18	-	0.18

The results of table 5 show that active social leisure activities directly affect mental health; however, this effect is not meaningful indirectly through mediating role of communicative skills on mental health. Moreover, the communicative skills directly affect the mental health of employees.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of active social leisure activities on communicative skills and its role on mental health of employees of Education Organization of Hamedan city. The research model has this priority over previous studies that has compared the relation between two variables of active social leisure

activities and communicative skills with mental health of employees that helps better understanding of the effect of these variables on mental health of the employees of Education system. Based on this, the results of the study showed that active social leisure activity directly influences the communicative skill. The sport activities provide this possibility to make relation between various peoples of the society. Especially group sports provide the possibility of real contact with others and help him to be accepted by others. Sport situations make the individuals' value increase among his peers and add to his popularity. On the other hand, within the framework of sport activity, social coordination will be created and positive balance will be hold between different generations of the society. It is such that one can claim that in no other place such as sport environments, it is almost impossible to communicate with others and find new friends. This trend leads to increased use of communicative skills by the employees. However, in addition to leisure activity, there are other factors that play some role in relation with communicative activities. The personality and individual traits are two factors among these that explain the communicative skills individually. In proving this claim, it is possible to refer to the result of Mortazavi et al study (2011).

Moreover, the results of the study showed that active social leisure activities directly influence the mental health of individuals. In addition to positive effects on physical abilities, sport leads to increased feeling of trust and mental health. It is such that if human being is physically healthy and happy and has good feeling of himself, he will be mentally healthier. In fact, without healthy and strong body, the mental and personality growth of individual is not possible and mental health of the individual would be endangered. Performing regular sport exercises keeps the individual healthy and also strengthens his mental health; otherwise, just after a short time, frustration would happen. Thus, Bensler (2003) refers to this point than only 20% of Austrian people perform sport exercises effectively and Sarvari (2011) claimed that the effectiveness of sport on mental health requires performing physical activity 7 times or more during the week. The result of this study, i.e. the effect of active social leisure activity on mental health is consistent with the results of Vos Wendel et al (2004), Khorjehan et al (2011), Irandost (2011), Molinagarcia et al (2011) and Shamsa (2013); however, it contradicts with the result of Saneet et al (2005) studies.

Moreover, the results showed that communicative skills don't directly influence mental health. One of the traumatic factors in organizations is lack of required communicative skills in confrontation with life problems. Most individuals lack essential communicative skills in working environment and life and this makes them vulnerable. Problems such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, timidity, wrath and confliction in interpersonal relations are the problems that most individuals are engaged in and these problems are considered somehow as the root of many social damages (9). Although most individuals communicate in personal issues and as a member of organization, they communicate well with others; however, they are not able to realize what communicative skills they should use. Thus, the researcher believes that there is the possibility that the above result is influenced by these factors. This conclusion that the communicative skills have no effect on mental health of employees is consistent with the results of Gask et al (2004), Amini et al (2013) studies; however, it contradicts with the results of Mustafanejad and Dortaj (2011) and Deramani (2012) studies.

Moreover, the results showed that active social leisure activities of employees have the highest effect on their mental health. In other words, the more active social leisure activities increases, their mental health also increase. However, the results showed that the indirect effect of active social leisure activities on their mental health through mediating variable of communicative skills is not meaningful.

In overall, concerning the results of the study, it can be said that the most important resources of each organization is human resources. Thus, it is required to pay enough attention to happiness, mental and physical health. In this way, spending leisure time with happy and fun activities prevent the emergence of problems and increases the efficiency of individuals. Moreover, sport policies related to leisure time in a country cannot be considered without consideration of other social condition and as a policy apart from culture, environment, labor market and educational status of that community. These policies should be regularly reconsidered and their weaknesses and strengths should be realized by precise and scientific studies.

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