

## Studying the Relationship Between Leisure Time Activities and Depression in Nursing Students

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This study aimed to determine the relationship between leisure time activities and depression among nursing students in Islamic Azad University, Lahijan Branch. The kind of study is descriptive-correlative. Data collection tool in this study is questionnaire. Questionnaires include demographic inventory, Beck's Depression Inventory and free time questionnaire. The population included in this study are nursing students of Islamic Azad University, Lahijan branch who 300 samples were selected by simple random sampling method. The results showed that 54.7% of samples had no activity in leisure time and 45.3% of samples had leisure time activities. 38 percent of students had mild depression, 17.3 percent suffered from moderate depression and 3.4% had severe depression and 41.3% of them had no depression, i.e. how they pass their leisure time and depression had no significant statistical relationship with each other. Also, it was found that there is a significant relationship between passing leisure time and depression only with place of living variable  $p < 0/05$ . Due to the sensitivity of students and young people to choose the type of spending leisure and reducing subsequent problems, serious and pre-programmed planning should be done by the management of relevant officials.

**Keywords:** leisure time, depression, relationship, student.

One of the areas that represent everyday life and show strength and resistance in human lives is the area of leisure time<sup>1</sup>. In fact, leisure activities are entertainments and tasks that are done with interest and is outside workplace and education and involves activities that the young people are doing with their choice to enjoy and is not done with forcible activities or to get rating or credit status<sup>2</sup>. Today, recreation and leisure are effective means to develop mental, physical, moral and social faculties and a factor to prevent social

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deviation. Leisure time is a normal human right and should be considered as a basic necessity for him. Therefore, planning for leisure provides their relaxation and mental health and their personality will be grown and flourished<sup>3</sup>. Intended use of the leisure time will eliminate the stress of life<sup>4</sup> and can improve mental, psychological, physical, cognitive, social and the individual performance<sup>3</sup>. Studies show that 80 percent of young people, including university students, high school students and others do not enjoy public recreation programs. This figure, when placed alongside the study, shows that 71 percent of young people, as they confess, spend their leisure time in idleness, which shows the magnitude of the disaster. The students

are taking advantage of these programs so little that in most research, these programs are not placed in the rankings of these peoples' interests<sup>5</sup>. In a research that Eslami et.al has done to examine depression and its relationship with how to pass leisure time among 238 medical students. The results showed that the subjects are clearly experiencing poor leisure time so that 52.2% of men and 65.2% of women had no specific leisure time and those who had leisure time are mostly involved in relaxation. The results also showed that creative activities such as cooking, chess, painting, poetry and playing music had the most impacts in medical students' depression<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, as stated, engaging in desired working and recreation is effective in balance and body and soul health<sup>6</sup>. Since recreational experiences have positive and direct impact on mental health<sup>2</sup> and prevents from many mental health such as depression. Depression is the most common mental health problems which is reportedly prevalent among students as much as 10-64%. It is one of the most common causes of disabilities resulted from diseases. Depression is a disorder that is specified with reduced energy and interest, feelings of guilty, difficulty in focusing, anorexia and thoughts of death and suicide<sup>7</sup>. It is associated with reduced social, cognitive and physical function and high morbidity and mortality and its outcome is reduced independence and personal and familial suffering. Research done by Arredondo and his colleagues suggest that the leisure activities can cause serious effects in depression and physical health problems in adults<sup>8</sup>. In another study that examined the relationship between how to spend leisure time (having physical leisure time activity and lack of physical activity in leisure time) and depression among elderly people. The results among the 2727 persons over 65 years showed that the prevalence of 20.6% of depression among the samples. The study showed that physical activity during leisure time is associated with lower levels of symptoms of depression and if the intensity of these activities is high, it seems that depressive symptoms is reduced<sup>4</sup>.

The results of studies conducted by Sieverdes and colleagues also showed that there is a significant inverse association between leisure activities and depression<sup>9</sup>. So how to spend leisure time represents peoples' lifestyle and evidences

of their health and disease or family problems<sup>10</sup>. It is also very effective on the marital status, mental health, educational and professional progress, especially young people who have significant contribution among students. And attention to this important issue, especially for medical students who have more stress due to the nature of their job seems necessary. One of the most critical periods in one's lives is the young age that students are part of the society's adolescents. Therefore, student time can be the best opportunity to use leisure programs which are determined by the university and obtain the vitality and freshness necessary to continue future activities<sup>3</sup>. The result of organizing leisure time is creating a circle of human communication, the elimination of grief and indifference to life. By encouraging the active involvement of people, daily life of people will take a new concept and compels people to move and hope, to enhance the taste level and through which new ideas, new habits and ways of life that cares more active social and cultural life of the common man will be formed<sup>11</sup>. Thus, attendance at pre-determined leisure programs that is done usually based on interest and choice can be led to functions such as enhancing the cognitive development of people towards themselves and environment, different experiences, broad cultural and social understanding and one's position in this range, achieving clear vision of the capabilities and talents<sup>12</sup>. In the present study, leisure time is raised in the area of youths, because nearly two million young people are students. And these students will become managers, nurses, teachers, etc. not too distant future and it is natural that leisure time activities of this segment become increased importance sensitivity toward other people<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, doing activities during leisure time have extensive communication with physical problems and mental disorders such as depression. Active engagement in leisure time will contribute to reducing physical problems such as high blood pressure, psychological problems such as depression associated with these conditions<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, use of leisure time as well as doing physical activity during this period is an effective strategy for the prevention or treatment of depression or similar disorders among individual people. A glimpse of the results of the research show that young people, especially students, who

should pass their best and most enjoyable life periods to do suitable affairs for their growth and flourishing spend the worst way or even in idleness will cause many underlying physical, mental, family problems and instead of taking burden from the society, they will impose an enormous cost to society<sup>6</sup>.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This type of study is cross-correlation that has been conducted among nursing students and 300 ones were selected through simple random sampling. Data gathered in this study included a demographic questionnaire with the variables of age, sex, marital status, father's occupation, mother's occupation, education level of parents and place of residence. Beck Depression Inventory to investigate depression and leisure activity inventory. The main form Beck's inventory is composed of 21 questions. It is more focused on cognitive content of depression. Beck Depression Inventory includes 21 questions with 4 answer which option 1 has 0 score, option 2 1 score, option 3, two scores and option 4 has three scores. The lowest rate of depression of subjects is 0 and its highest amount is 63 and these people are accordingly divided into two depressed and non-depressed groups and depressed groups are divided into three weak, mild and severe depression groups. According to Beck scoring criteria, scores 0-9 are considered without depression and score 10 and higher than it are considered depressed group. Score 10-19 are mild depression, 20-29 are moderate depression and above 30 are severe depression. Beck test at the time of its construction has been repeatedly going under psychometric assessment. Efforts have been made to explain the internal consistency of the test showed internal consistency coefficient 0.86. The reliability coefficient of the scale is also 0.86. Leisure time inventory that has 17 questions assess the type of student activities including sports, cultural, educational, religious and community activities and in addition to the type of activity, motivation and satisfaction of the activities on five options as very high, high, medium, low and very low satisfaction. Computer software SPSS, version 16 for data analysis and descriptive and analytical statistics methods were also used. To describe the data,

descriptive statistics were used and to assess the relationship between variables, Chi-square and Fischer inferential statistics were used.

## Findings

In this study, 300 nursing students were tested which among them, the highest percent (82.7) was in the age range of 18-22 years and the lowest percentage (3) is in the age range of 28-32 years, 89% were female and 11% were male, 84.7% were single, 15% married and 0.3% were widowed. The highest percentage of fathers' job was free (41.3%) and the lowest percentage (6%) was employed, the mothers' job was highly housewives (64%), 20% employed, 10.3% free and the others were working in other jobs. The highest percentage of fathers' education was 41.3% and mothers' education was 39.3% that has been jointly diploma. Also, the lowest percentage of parent's education was 8.7% and 7% as illiterate and upper-diploma, respectively. 78.3% of samples were living with their families and 21.7% were living without their families. (Table 1) shows that 54.7% of samples had no activity during their leisure time and 45.3% stated that they have leisure time and among recreational activities, they are more engaged in sports activities such as swimming, volleyball and basketball (Table 2). The highest percentage of samples i.e. 65.3 had no special incentive to do activates. But then the highest motivation was in sports, religious activities as well as participating in associations and communities related to interests and cultural activities of learning and the lowest percentage was motivation in sport activities of learning, religious-cultural activities and gaining prestige in the activities related to participating in associations, communities and entertainments (Table 3). Also, the highest percentage of samples mentioned that they have no satisfaction of doing activities and the lowest percentage of samples had very low satisfaction in sports and religious activities and also stated that their satisfaction in cultural activities and participating in associations and communities are low. The results showed that although 41.3% of nursing students were not depressed, 58.7% of students were suffering from depression of which, 38% had mild depression, 17.3% had depression in an medium level and 3.4% has severe depression (Table 4). In addition, no significant relationship was found between passing leisure time and depression (Table 5). Also, there

was no significant relationship between leisure time and depression with demographic variables: age, sex, marital status, education and father and mother's education. But Fischer's test showed that there statistically a significant difference between leisure time and depression with demographic and place of living variables ( $P < 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

As noted, the results showed that 54.7% of samples do not perform any activity in their leisure time and 45.3% have noted that they have leisure activities and the majority had no special motivation to do the activities. It also noted that

the highest percentage of samples had no satisfaction of their activities. The results are consistent with the results of the research done by Eslami and colleagues. The result of their research among 238 medical students aiming to investigate depression among medical students and its relationship with how to pass leisure time showed that the students have evidently poor leisure. 52.2% of men and 65.2% of women have no leisure activities<sup>2</sup>. However, the results of research done by Ebrahimi et.al in 2011 showed that the average active leisure time of the samples was more than the average non-active leisure<sup>14</sup>. In another study, the results showed that the most important way of passing leisure time is watching TV and reading books<sup>15</sup>. While the results of this study showed that major activities of students in leisure time was doing sports.

In this study, it was found that although 41.3% of medical students had no depression, 58.7% of students were suffering from depression. The results of the study done by Abedini and colleagues who examined the prevalence of depression among medical and nursing students showed that the prevalence of depression among nursing students was 60% and among medical students was 49.5%. In fact, 40% among nursing students without depression, 43.2% of depression in a very mild and boundary level, 6.2% depression in an average level and 10.6% had severe depression<sup>7</sup>. In this study, no significant relationship was found between n leisure activities and depression. In fact, as Fischer Test in this research did not show a statistical relationship between leisure time and depression, the study done by Eslami et.al who investigated the amount of depression and its relationship with passing leisure time could not find a significant relationship between depression and leisure time and the result of their research is consistent with the results of this study<sup>2</sup>. But the results of this study in Taiwan is notable. The study examined the association between leisure time activities (physical activity and lack of physical activity in leisure time) and depression among elderly people. The results showed that depressed people have low levels of activities in their leisure time. In fact, the existence of physical activity in leisure time is associated with low level of depressive symptoms and depression is reduced with increasing the intensity

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the research samples

Demographic characteristics		Number	Percentage
Age (year)	22-18	248	Jul-82
	27-23	43	14-Mar
	32-28	9	3
Gender	Female	267	89
	Male	33	11
Marital status	Single	254	Jul-84
	Married	45	15
	Widow	1	Mar-00
Father's job	Worker	18	6
	Staff	119	Jul-39
	Free job	124	Mar-41
	Other	39	13
Mother's job	Housewife	192	64
	staff	60	20
	Free job	31	10-Mar
	Other	17	5-Jul
Father's Education	Illiterate	26	8-Jul
	Non-degree	67	22-Mar
	Diploma	124	Mar-41
		37	12-Mar
	Upper-diploma MA and upper	46	15-Mar
Mother's Education	Illiterate	31	10-Mar
	Non-degree	104	Jul-34
	Diploma	118	Mar-39
		21	7
Place of living	Upper-diploma MA and upper	26	8-Jul
	With family	235	Mar-78
	Without family	65	21-Jul

of activities<sup>4</sup>. The results obtained by Sieverdes and colleagues also showed that there is an inverse relationship between leisure activities and depression and the more the level of these activities, the less the amount of depression<sup>9</sup>. The results showed that there is no significant relationship between demographic variables of age,

sex, marital status, father's education and mother's education. However, a statistically significant relationship was found between leisure time and depression with demographic variables of place of residence ( $P < 0.05$ ). This means that students who lived with their family choose activities in leisure time and the amount of depression is reduced among them.

**Table 2.** Relative and absolute frequency distribution of research samples in terms of the kind of leisure activity

Type of activity	Items	Number	Percentage	
Sport	Without activity	175	Mar-58	
	With activity	Swimming	11	3-Jul
		Volleyball	28	9-Mar
		Basketball	9	3
		Handball	9	3
		Body building	20	6-Jul
		Other	48	16
Cultural	Without activity	196	Mar-65	
	With activity	Music	20	6-Jul
		Language	40	13-Mar
		Theatre	9	3
		Computer	15	5
		Other	20	6-Jul
		Religious	Without activity	204
With activity	Quran interpretation		15	5
	Regulations		9	3
	Nahj Albalaghe interpretation		9	3
	Other		63	21
Participate in forums and organizations	Without activity	211	Mar-70	
	With activity	Scientific-Cultural Community	21	7
		Islamic Association	2	Jul-00
		Mobilization	51	17
		Political formations	1	Mar-00
		Other	14	4-Jul

**Table 3.** Distribution of absolute and relative frequency of research variables in terms of the motivation to do activities

Motivation to do activities	Sports		Cultural		Religious		Participating in associations and communities	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Without motivation	151	3/50	180	60	188	7/62	196	3/65
Learning	10	3/3	56	7/18	31	3/10	19	3/6
Gaining prestige	20	7/6	7	3/2	8	7/2	17	7/5
entertainment	41	7/13	10	3/3	12	4	12	4
Interest	52	3/17	37	3/12	42	14	33	11
Other	26	7/8	10	4/3	19	3/6	23	7/7

**Table 4.** Distribution of absolute and relative frequency of research variables in terms of depression

Depression	Number	Percentage
Without depression	124	3/41
With depression (mild)	114	38
With depression (average)	52	3/17
With depression (severe)	10	4/3
Total	300	100

Ebrahimi et.al in their study investigated leisure time and the social factors affecting it and showed that there is statistically significant relationship between four variables of age, education level of samples and parents' education level<sup>14</sup>. However, no significant correlation was found between age variables and parents' education with leisure time. In another study conducted among people over 18 years in Damavand city, only two variables of gender and marital status is related to ways to pass leisure

**Table 5.** Distribution of absolute and relative frequency of research variables in terms of passing leisure time and depression

Leisure activities Depression	Without activity Number percentage		With activity Number percentage		Total Number percentage	
Without depression	65	7/21	58	3/19	123	41
Mild depression	66	22	49	4/16	115	4/38
Moderate depression	28	4/9	24	8	52	4/17
severe Depression	5	6/1	5	6/1	10	2/3
Total	164	7/54	136	3/45	300	100
F=0/682	df=3		P>0/05			

time and no relationship was found between other variables and leisure time<sup>13</sup>. Another study results showed that the decrease in leisure activities will enhance the risk of depression and there is relationship between marital status and physical activities of leisure time and depression among women<sup>15</sup>. One of the important goals that is intended in this research is to use the results achieved from in different functional areas through which improve the quality of healthcare and help to enhance them. The results showed that the majority of research areas are deprived of leisure and also a high percentage of these research units have kinds of depression. Since this study was conducted among nursery students who are required to work in risky and sensitive environments, hospitals and health care systems. Hence, the results of this study can be used in the identification, prevention and timely treatment of problems such as depression, which is now considered as one of the important challenges in mental health and is considered one of the problems in society today. Attention to this issue that

students are faced with threatening factors for mental health, and since it was found in this study that many women have no recreational activity. Proving appropriate conditions to do constructive and suitable activities in leisure time can have many benefits for the person and family. The interesting point in this context is how to pass leisure time and making an appropriate planning for it does not happen by itself, but requires management, planning, organizing and using timely and appropriate place that can reduce stress and daily pressures, increasing endurance problems, improve family relationships, career achievement and ultimately improve the mental and physical functions. All these requires planning by authorities and managers to provide leisure time for the youths as best as possible and reduce the percentage of disorders such as depression.

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