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# Time Use. Economic, Social and Health Care Aspects of Greek and European Citizens

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## Abstract

The present paper explores the significant role of the creative time use and its' consequences as far as it concerns the economic, social and health care aspects in Greece and in European Union. The appropriate time use has been mentioned from the ancient years, but a more completely approach has been reported after the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In Greece the first "Time Use Survey" (TUS) took place by Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) between 2013-2014, but unfortunately ELSTAT is not expected to conduct a new one. The research question is that a no productive time use can lead to economic, social and health care negative effects in Greece and in European countries. The innovation of the paper lies in the fact that the specific scientific area (especially in Greece) has been investigated poorly.

The methodology of this study uses secondary data from Eurostat, Hellenic Statistical Authority and the historical approach of similar literature review.

The paper is structured in four parts. The first part refers to the methodology, the literature review and the limitations of the article (the effects of time use cannot be correlated totally). The second presents the theoretical approaches of the leisure time (origins and significance) from ancient years till today. The third evaluates data not only from Greece but also from European Union as regards economic, social and health care aspects such as time use, overweight, mental illness, limited social relationship, work accidents, years of healthy life and food habits. The last refers to the conclusions.

The investigation results (especially for Greece) show that the problem is the unproductive time use. The increasing period of studies, the mental illness, the personal opinion of people for themselves and their health condition (GALI index such the myopic glasses and overweight), the overtime work and passive activities, such as watching TV and surfing the internet contribute negatively to creative time.

**KEYWORDS:** Leisure, Free, Time, Spent, Creative, Household, Sleep, TV, Travel, Sports, Pet, Internet, Greece, European, Citizens.

## Introduction



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that the specific scientific area (especially in Greece) has been investigated poorly.

The limitations of the article is that the effects of time use cannot be identified clearly. The statistical data are quite poor (for example factors which affect health), so a correlation between time use and its consequence may not be so strong. The literature review cannot be confirmed totally.

### **Methodology**

The specific article uses both secondary data and historical approach. It evaluates information from Eurostat, Hellenic Statistical Authority and it presents the similar literature review with a critical view (Phillips & Pugh, 1995).

### **Literature review**

In this section will be mentioned the relevant literature review with a critical approach (Collis, 2003), giving at the same time the reasons that are reported from this paper.

The book of Diamandopoulos (2004) "Pedagogical of leisure time" presents in the first section a partial similar approach to this paper as far as it concerns Greece. In the first part he refers the diachronic development of the free time and afterwards he connects this development with the social institutions, tourism, sports, television, painting and illustrated book. The second part of the book is devoted to the empirical approach of student's leisure time for the last 4 classes of the primary school (6 years total) from 10 schools of Crete (a region of Greece), but with small sample, as emphasized by the author.

Regarding the sociological aspect, the historical development and generally the origin of leisure time some important information could be drawn from the following literature.

The book "Sociology of leisure time" of Koronaïou (1996) gives a very good insight for the sociological theories of leisure time, for the importance of game as a cultural phenomenon and its definition as an activity.

Furthermore, a very good view about the theoretical models of leisure time could be exported from the book of Georgoula (2010) "The society of leisure time". The book presents not only classical, but also modern thoughts of leisure time. Furthermore, it presents the attitude of the Greek state.

The book "Leisure time" of Konstantopoulou (2010) introduces initially the most important sociological theories and then analyzes the game as an expression of culture. As main elements of leisure time the book mentions the video games, sports and contemporary visual representation (theater, cinema, television series and reality shows) with a little reference to statistics.

Toti's book (Loupis & Pentelikos, trans., 1985) describe from social aspect the creation of leisure time, the right to laziness, and also give several definitions for the game, sports, hobbies and small freedoms correlated with social class (caste).

The book of Harris "Leisure time" (Laliotis, trans., 2011) consider education as a pleasurable activity of leisure time, but because of institutional, bureaucratic organization (aiming at professional rehabilitation) and the continuous evaluation finally is perceived as a job. Moreover, the book describes as accepted from a social majority some "illegal" by the state activities, such as dangerous substances, hunting with dogs and violent sports. Furthermore, it analyzes pornography as an activity of free time, which begins to be accepted. Finally, the book presents the phenomenon Disney synonymous to commercialization. The cultural capital is converted to profits, because of the exploitation of history and culture creating consumerism.

Regarding childhood (the way it is described into the reading/school books), game and society the present study analyzes the following two literatures.

Erikson in his book "Childhood and Society" (Koutroumpaki, trans., 1990) refers the game, the work, the spiritual development and the treatment (regarding children psychology). He associates the relief of the adult's intensity through discussion with the relief offered to the children through the game. He also emphasizes the need of children to find their personality in the environment they live and compares the reaction of modern and primitive cultures in children's behavior.

Makrynioti in her book "Childhood in reading books 1834-1919" provides a description about the historical development of childhood, compulsory schooling and the main features of the Greek educational system. Moreover she mentions the way friendship and game were presented at the school books of previous decades.

The psychosocial development of children is drawn from the following four writings.

Wenar & Kerig in the "Evolutionary psychopathology" (Markoulis & Georgakis, trans., 2000) among the models of childhood psychopathology mention the "systemic family model", which considers the whole family as a united dynamic group and affects the development of children. Furthermore, they mention the "approaching models" as concerning the way interfere, prevent and treat children with problematic behaviors. They also point out the importance of the game (dolls, sand, animals, clay and paint) in this treatment process.

Cole & Cole in Volume I "The development of children. The Beginning of Life, Pregnancy, Child-birth, and Infancy" (Solman, Papaligoura & Vourrias, trans., 2002) mention, among other things, the most favorable conditions for infant development and consequences in the following years. In addition to the appropriate response of the mother and the effects of the segregation from parents, the book emphasizes the importance of adequate stimuli (books, toys) and mother's time with the infant-child.

In Volume II "The development of children. Cognitive and Psychosocial Development in Early and Middle Childhood" (Solman & Babblek, trans., 2002) they explain the importance of "fantasy game", such as the pretense or suspicion of various social roles among a group of children. They also mention the role of television in shaping child behavior, the proper family control in use of television, and the importance of nurseries, schools and peers.

Herberth in his book "Psychological Problems of childhood" (Paraskevopoulos, trans., 1997) describes the importance of early childhood experiences and the child-mother's relationship. Furthermore, he tries to define the "problematic" child, to describe the problems of excessive inhibition and the ways to enhance a child's mental health (teacher, peers).

As far as it concerns: a) preventing and treating possible problems which may appear at children, b) the levels of reading comprehension in order to facilitate reading and c) the recreational ways of using (illustrated book, painting, sports) leisure time, some important information could be drawn from the following writings.

Rubin's book "Healing Children through Art" (Skarvelis & Anagnostopoulou, trans., 1997), emphasizes the great importance of creative development as well as the conditions for its existence, such as the giving children colors, clay, miniatures, theatrical costumes and equipment (cassettes and microphones). Moreover, she presents ways of creative use of time for children with disabilities, as well as activities that will help the whole family.

Kitsaras (1993) in his book "The Illustrated Book at Infancy and at Early Childhood" describes the psychological and pedagogical significance of the illustrated book and its reduced interest in relation to the other options (television, video games) nowadays. He mentions the comparative advantages, the content and attitudes of the child (after 7 years who is looking for more text) towards illustrated books.

Information on additional recreational activities for young people aged 15-19 is included at Myr-izaki's study "Leisure time of young people" (1997). For example it presents statistical data for recreational and sports activities, such as exits in pastry shops, cafes, dance centers, live music, taverns and bars.

Elias & Dunning's "Sports and leisure time in the evolution of culture" (Kyprianos, Chirdakis, Karkaroukas & Katsiambouras, trans., 1998) refer the leisure time as reassuring work such as going to the theater, sports activities, social dances, concerts and sports.

Finally, a spherical view for the activities of children 11-13 years is presented by Koronaïou's research (1992) "Young and Mass Media", which presents some statistical data for spending time going to the theater, reading books, illustrated, sports and women's magazines, going to the cinema, listening radio, watching television and the exploring life of Hollywood stars.

The specific part presents the theoretical approaches of the leisure times from ancient times till today. It mentions the origins and the significance of creative time for the spiritual and physical development.

The first references for the meaning of leisure time lies on the Greek antiquity. Greek philosophers such as Ippodamos, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and Isocrates mentioned the important role of the spiritual improvement. A man of that time, free from the productive obligations due to the slaves, ought to dedicate its time in the searching of knowledge and its spiritual improvement.

In the Roman Empire, leisure time did not mean only exemption from work and searching of knowledge, but also time for social recognition through the enjoyable consumption of luxury goods. Moreover, leisure time included activities such as swimming, running, wrestling, horse riding, hunting, fishing, ball and board games. Some of the most important references after the European Renaissance for the concept of leisure time are presented below.

Marx argued that society should facilitate the free development of the individual and that the consumption of goods acts as a multiplier of human subjugation to production, due to the fact that the goods which produced are consumed by themselves (Georgoulas, 2010).

Lafargue spoke eloquently about the right to laziness and the beneficial effect of a part-time daily work on humans (Georgoulas, 2010).

Durkheim reported that sports and entertainment were developed to offer personal balance and relief (Georgoulas, 2010).

Weber presented the spontaneous happiness and the leisure time as a sin for industrial capitalism, and also as a tool of power and manipulation in order for a person to preserve a dominant position in society (Georgoulas, 2010).

A first comprehensive approach was made by Veblen in 1899 in his work "Theory of Leisure Class", where the social classes were divided in two parts. In the "middle class" and in the class in which human "are working to live".

Those who occupy with fishing, hunting, sports, clergy and general works that were not productive belong in the first class, while those who work in manual or domestic work without any social prestige rank in the second (Konstantopoulou, 2010).

Huizinga (1938) in his work "Homo Ludens" refers the meaning of play as a volunteer activity, which takes place at specific local and time limits, with binding rules and aiming at the pleasure. It also describes the free time as a free choice of activities with equality and individual completeness (Koronaïou, 1996).

Next approach was made by Riesman in 1950 in his work "The Lonely Crowd", in which three

## Theoretical approach – Origins and significance of leisure time

social types are distinguished according to the time period. In the Middle Ages the pre-capitalist Europe, the Indians, the Arabs and the Chinese are characterized by strong family ties that leave no room for unique personalities.

During the Renaissance, the accumulation of capital and the population movement created internal rules that kept the balance between individual and society. Finally, the industrial and bureaucratic era (early 20th century), with the increase of productivity and the development of services, allows the mass media and mass media culture to infiltrate the personal and social life (Konstantopoulou, 2010).

Friedman in his work "Employment Discrimination" (1964) argues that work in modern times can not satisfy the individual, since there is an intensive rhythm, subordination to productive activity and division of activities. Under these conditions man feels fatigue and nervousness. Therefore, the existence of a compensatory factor, of free time, is necessary. He separates the activities to passive and energetic, but only energetic activities are able to offer satisfaction and fullness (Koronaïou, 1996).

The first complete recognition of the term leisure time, as a separate subject of the sociology, was mentioned in 1962 by Dumazedier's work "Towards a Society of Leisure". He describes all the activities that lead at rest, recreation and creative occupation after fulfilling his professional, family and social obligations (Koronaïou, 1996).

Baudrillard has made an important criticism of leisure time in 1970 in his work "The Consumer Society", where he considers that leisure time is a huge energy waste in consumer products, mass media and sexuality that will gradually lead to the society's destruction (Konstantopoulou, 2010).

Rojek in 1985 in his book "Capitalism and Leisure Theory" criticizes Dumazedier's views, presented the limitations of choices during free time, especially for women due to male-dominated society (Georgoulas, 2010).

Sue in 1994 in his work "Temps et ordre social" argues that every era emerges a dominant social time and presents leisure time in modern societies as the time that has been freed from work, which rises as well as unemployment increases. As a consequence the social value of working time is reduced (Koronaïou, 1996).

Lalivè d'Épinay in his work "Temp libre: culture de mass et culture de class aujourd'hui" (1983) argues that the increasing consumer demands result in the waste of energy and commodities, due to the increasing leisure time of modern times. Until the early 20th century, there was a trend for work and saving, while the last decades prevails the perception of consumerism and individualism. Satisfaction from work occurs only in the upper social strata and decreases in the folk, where in every opportunity they leave the work activity (Koronaïou, 1996).

Pronovost in his work "Leisure and Society" (1993) argues that leisure time is available from modern societies in order to analyze important phenomena such as social values, intergenerational cultural relations, working relationships, family dynamics and the role media communication. For this reason, the working population expresses dissatisfaction as regards overworking (Koronaïou, 1996).

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## Data from Greece and European Union

This part evaluates data not only from Greece but also from European Union as regards economic, social and health care aspects such as time use, overweight, mental illness, limited social relationship, work accidents, years of healthy life and food habits.

Factors which affect health in Greece (ELSTAT, 2016) are food, smoking, sports and social support from other people affect health. More specifically for people 15 years old and above:

- \_ 47,6% of men and 31,7% of women are overweight
- \_ 28,7% of the total work in jobs which do not require any physical effort and 51,2% with small physical effort
- \_ only 9,0% of the total uses bicycle for getting to office
- \_ 82,7% of the total of overweight people does not exercise for pleasure
- \_ only 55,0% of the total eats daily fruits
- \_ 44,0% of the total eats daily only 1 portion, quantity which fit in 1 hand, such as 1 apple, 1 orange, 3 apricots etc
- \_ 27,3% of the total smokes everyday
- \_ 55,1% of the total has only 1 or 2 people to turn for close social support and help

It is evident that in Greece a significant amount of people (above 15 years old) are overweight, with no physical effort in their job, moderate nutrition, smoking and limited friendships or close social contacts.

Moreover, factors (in Greece) which affect health (Health care research: Year 2014, ELSTAT, 2016) could be also mentioned the overweight, long term (over 6 months) disease and mental illness. More specifically for people 15 years old and above:

- \_ 49,7% of the total states a long term (over 6 months) disease
- \_ 8,6% of the total mentions mental illness
- \_ 49,9% of the total has hospitalized for 1-3 days and 35,4% between 3-10 days
- \_ 8,0% visits physiotherapist
- \_ 47,4% of the total consumes medicines, herds and vitamins with written doctor's recipe
- \_ 27,5% of the total (24,6% for 2009) consumes medicines (64,9% of them), herds and vitamins without written doctor's recipe
- \_ the increase between the years 2009 and 2014 for the consumption of medicines herds and vitamins without written doctor's recipe was 11,8%
- \_ 4,4% of the total states asthma, 4,2% heart attack or brain damage, 20,9% high blood pressure, 9,2% diabetes, 15,4% cholesterol and depression
- \_ 29,7% of the total (23,8% for 2009) argues the reduction of usual activities for the majority of people, due to self-consider illness, index GALI (Global Activity Limitation Indicator)

As regards the quality of life (Table 1) the "life expectancy" and the "years of healthy life" for people after 65 years old both in Greece and in European Union (28) figures are:

- \_ in 2005 the life expectancy and the years of healthy life for women was 20,0 and 10,3 years respectively and 20,2 and 8,9 for EU (28)
- \_ in 2013 the data were 21,6 and 6,8 for Greece and 21,3 and 8,6 for EU (28)
- \_ in 2005 the life expectancy and the years of healthy life for men was 17,1 and 9,7 years respectively and 16,7 and 8,5 for EU (28)
- \_ in 2013 the data were 18,7 and 8,0 for Greece and 17,9 and 8,5 for EU (28)

As regards the working situation it is estimated that in Greece for the year 2012-2013 and for people 15 years old and above of the total people who work or had worked in the past (Special research on accidents and health problems associated with work, ELSTAT, 2014):

- \_ 59,3% reports health problems about bones, joints (connection between bones) and muscle
- \_ 13,0% states cardiological or artery system problems
- \_ 6,8% reports depression, stress and anxiety

The use of time for Greece and other 15 European country members is stated at Table 2. The investment of time is almost the same through the total countries.

**Table 1**

Life expectancy –  
Years of healthy  
life (after 65  
years old)

|                                 | Women |      | Men  |      |
|---------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
|                                 | 2005  | 2013 | 2005 | 2013 |
| Life expectancy - Greece        | 20,0  | 21,6 | 17,1 | 18,7 |
| Years of healthy life - Greece  | 10,3  | 6,8  | 9,7  | 8,0  |
| Life expectancy - EU (28)       | 20,2  | 21,3 | 16,7 | 17,9 |
| Years of healthy life - EU (28) | 8,9   | 8,6  | 8,5  | 8,5  |

Source: Life expectancy 2013 (ELSTAT, 2016).

**Table 2**

Time Use between  
ages 20-74  
for each main  
activity in Europe  
(hours:minute)

| Main Activity        | Belgium | Bulgaria | France | Germany | Estonia | UK     | Spain  | Italy  | Latvia | Lithuanian | Norway | Poland | Slovakia | Sweden | Finland | Greece |
|----------------------|---------|----------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|---------|--------|
| Personal care        | 10:58   | 11:45    | 11:49  | 10:49   | 10:33   | 10:33  | 11:08  | 11:14  | 10:49  | 10:55      | 10:16  | 10:54  | 10:31    | 10:25  | 10:31   | 11:34  |
| Employment           | 2:29    | 3:01     | 3:01   | 2:41    | 3:42    | 3:16   | 3:13   | 3:02   | 4:11   | 4:05       | 3:21   | 3:06   | 3:17     | 3:32   | 3:09    | 02:34  |
| Study                | 0:14    | 0:05     | 0:15   | 0:13    | 0:07    | 0:09   | 0:19   | 0:12   | 0:10   | 0:10       | 0:14   | 0:14   | 0:17     | 0:17   | 0:15    | 0:13   |
| Household            | 3:20    | 3:53     | 3:31   | 3:20    | 3:50    | 3:18   | 3:17   | 3:30   | 2:58   | 3:25       | 3:04   | 3:36   | 3:49     | 3:06   | 3:08    | 3:01   |
| Free time            | 5:31    | 4:15     | 4:24   | 5:28    | 4:38    | 5:08   | 4:51   | 4:35   | 4:25   | 4:13       | 5:46   | 4:55   | 4:59     | 5:07   | 5:36    | 4:54   |
| Mass media           | 1:26    | 0:59     | 0:58   | 1:23    | 1:07    | 1:27   | 1:10   | 1:24   | 1:24   | 1:09       | 1:16   | 1:10   | 1:06     | 1:26   | 1:09    | 1:02   |
| Unspecified time use | 0:01    | 0:02     | 0:02   | 0:05    | 0:04    | 0:09   | 0:02   | 0:03   | 0:02   | 0:03       | 0:03   | 0:05   | 0:02     | 0:06   | 0:12    | 0:03   |
| Sample size          | 10.676  | 11.506   | 12.913 | 22.597  | 8.899   | 14.810 | 37.512 | 38.149 | 5.786  | 7.418      | 5.458  | 35.212 | 10.186   | 7.612  | 8.253   | 7.137  |

Source: ELSTAT.

From Table 3 it is evident that the estimated years of studies between 2008-2012 are increased in Greece, so there is less leisure time for young people. Despite the better qualifications the figure of unemployment is increased dramatically, due to the economic crisis (Table 4).

From Table 5 it is obvious that the total State Budget for Health Care is decreased significantly, confirming the fact of the economic crisis of the country.

|         | 2008 | 2012 |
|---------|------|------|
| EU (28) | 17,3 | 17,6 |
| Greece  | 17,3 | 18,3 |

Source: Eurostat 2008-2012

|   | 2008 | 2013 |
|---|------|------|
| % | 7,9  | 27,5 |

Source: ELSTAT 2015

|                              | 2009     | 2013     |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Total amount (millions euro) | 23.176.9 | 15.776.5 |

Source: ELSTAT 2015.

**Table 3**

Estimated time (years) of studies (2008-2012)

**Table 4**

Unemployment in Greece (2008-2013)

**Table 5**

Total State Budget for Health Care in Greece (2009-2013)

It seems that leisure time in Greek and Roman civilization was more important compared to nowadays, at least for noblemen of the ancient years. A wealthy person of the ancient years seeks for spiritual improvement, for social recognition and for creative activities such as horse riding, hunting and fishing. Nowadays people in Greece:

- \_ do not exercise for pleasure
- \_ reduce usual activities due to self-consider illness (GALI index)
- \_ have bad food habits, smoke every day and consume medicines without doctors' recipe
- \_ state depression, mental illness and loneliness with low social support
- \_ are overweight and have less years of healthy life after 65 years old
- \_ increase the years of studies while the unemployment is increasing exponential and
- \_ the budget for Health Care is reduced due to the economic crisis of the country

The research question that a no productive time use can lead to economic, social and health care negative effects in Greece and in European Union seems to be a fact. A no productive time use could lead to economic, social and health care negative effects both for people and governments. The literature review, the similar studies, the origins of leisure time, the statistical data and the critical approach of the paper lead to a sense that the hypothesis of the study could be verified. A more detailed investigation with questionnaire could reduce the limitations of the present paper as it may confirm the literature review, but even Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) is not expected to conduct such an extended survey.

Governments and local authorities should offer free creative activities for a big age range (such as physical exercising, painting, craft projects, dancing and spectacles), psychological support both for elderly and depressed persons and seminars for the importance of creative time use and healthy food.

## Conclusions

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