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Leisure Activities Among Emirati Youth

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Abstract

This study explores the average leisure time and leisure activities among Emirati youth based on a survey conducted by the UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority in 2017. The study focuses on three issues and their implications: 1) the average amount of time Emirati youth dedicate to leisure activities, 2) the types of leisure time activities Emirati youth prefer and 3) interest in club participation among Emirati youth. The main findings of this study revealed that volunteering is the least important leisure activity to Emirati youth; the majority of Emirati youth are not members of any clubs; Emirati youth do not invest much time in reading and practicing sports; Emirati youth spend considerable time in passive leisure activities and internet and social media take up the majority of their time. The study recommends that the government plays a role in the following: spreading awareness about the importance of active leisure activities among youth (e.g. sports and volunteering activities) raising awareness about the importance of volunteering among the youth and encouraging more participation in clubs by promoting existing clubs, increasing the number of clubs based on the youths' interest and ensuring the availability of clubs to all emirates.

Introduction

During recent years, youth empowerment studies and initiatives have increased around the world. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), explains the reason for the rise in popularity: "At 1.8 billion, there are now more adolescents and young people (aged 10-24) than at any other time in history. While the number of young people was 721 million in 1950, by 2050 it is set to reach 2 billion" (UNDP, 2016, p.6). Therefore, empowering and equipping the youth have become increasingly essential components to improving human, political, economic and sustainable development throughout the world.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), one of the countries in the region that invests the most in its young citizens, categorizes youth as anyone between the ages of 15 – 30. The country's investment was made patent in 2016 when the UAE appointed a 22 year old Minister of State for Youth. Now, many entities in the UAE have youth councils to enable young people to voice their opinion and concerns on social and economic issues that affect them. The youth councils conduct youth circles within different government entities and public spaces, in which one topic is chosen and selected individuals from the youth discuss the dilemma; the purpose of these councils is to come up with solutions for specific issues.

This study is about how Emirati youth spend their leisure time. Stebbins and Elkington (2014, p. 188) provide a comprehensive definition of leisure as: "un-coerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, using their abilities and resources, actually do in either a satisfying or fulfilling way (or both)". Therefore, the emphasis in this definition and this study is on leisure as a voluntary activity that people undertake to feel a sense of enjoyment.

Understanding how Emirati youth spend their leisure time is important because leisure time activities, as demonstrated in various studies in the field of leisure studies, contribute to human wellbeing which is a basic prerequisite for enhanced job performance and stress recovery and is therefore essential for social

and economic development to take place (Brajša-Zganec, Merkas and Sverko, 2011; Roberts, 2011; de Bloom, Rantanen, Tement and Kinnunen, 2017). According to Roberts (2016, p.5), “with the exception of watching television, every leisure activity that has been studied, in every socio-demographic group, has been found to enhance wellbeing”. This highlights the effects of active leisure time activities as opposed to passive ones, like watching TV.

Other reasons as to the importance of studying leisure time activities among the youth are the following: first, some studies show that there is a correlation between leisure time and labor efficiency. For instance, a longitudinal study found that as leisure time has been increasing in the US and Japan since 1980, labor efficiency was also on the increase (Wei, Qu and Ma, 2015). This is not the case in China where the increase in leisure time did not lead to an increase in labor efficiency (Wei, Qu and Ma, 2015). The authors (2015) attribute this to the absence of active leisure time activities, like physical activity and community involvement, compared to the US and Japan, and the dominance of passive leisure activities like watching television and surfing the internet. According to Wei, Qu and Ma (2015, p.112)

“Passive leisure participation would lead to individual’s low energy level and low productivity. For example, watching TV watching is considered as a typical type of passive leisure participation because people who watched a lot of TV experienced lower leisure satisfaction, less happiness and lower work satisfaction more often”.

This highlights the importance of ensuring that UAE population, particularly the youth, is aware of the importance of active leisure activities and have easy access to them. Second, the hobbies or the activities that some people may practice during their leisure time may allow them to make careers out of them, wherein they could end up being professionals in a certain sport, music, or other activities (Roberts, 2011). Again, this reiterates the importance of ensuring that Emirati youth have access to diverse leisure activities. Third, evidence from the US suggests that devoting leisure time in associations or clubs bolster community ties, which leads to “better health, less crime and higher attainments in education” (Roberts, 2011, p.16). This underscores the importance of encouraging Emirati youth to be more engaged in clubs and associations during their leisure time.

Consequently, this study focuses on three issues and their implications: 1) the average amount of time Emirati youth dedicate to leisure activities, 2) the types of leisure activities Emirati youth prefer and 3) interest in club participation among Emirati youth. It concludes with recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted to better understand leisure and the patterns of leisure time use around the world. This section briefly reviews some of the literature on leisure with the purpose of placing this study into context, in terms of understanding how leisure is conceptualized in the literature, as well as identifying leisure time use among the youth in different countries to be able to compare it with the UAE.

Historically, leisure time has been associated with wealthy people, wherein wealth allowed a person to engage in various leisure activities. However, in contemporary society, people from a variety of socioeconomic classes are able to enjoy leisure time. Roberts (2016) provides a historical background of the creation of leisure activities, which can be traced back to the west as a byproduct of industrialization. The new industrial life, which improved the standard of living, provided people with more time and money. At this point, public authorities started creating opportunities for leisure activities such as building parks, museums and art galleries in order to avoid the increase in crime rates and social breakdown that is a repercussion of increased free time (Roberts, 2016). However, recently, leisure time has been perceived by scholars in a more positive light, believing it can contribute to wellbeing and happiness of individuals (Roberts, 2016). This perception is reflected in the fact that leisure has been rendered as a basic human right by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948).

The nature of leisure time activities has continued to transform since the latter half of 20th century until today, reflecting constantly changing technology. A study conducted by López-Sintas, Rojas de Francisco and Garcia-Alvarez (2017), explores the impact that the advent of digital technologies, namely the internet, has had on home-based leisure activities in Barcelona, Spain. The main findings of the study include the following: first, participants prefer digital-based leisure activities to other more traditional leisure activities that include going out for a walk or meeting friends because digital leisure activities, like the internet, are easier to access and have become nowadays cheaper compared to when they were first introduced (López-Sintas, Rojas de Francisco & Garcia-Alvarez, 2017); second, digital-based activities lead to members of the same household having different experiences or, in other words, “living together separately”. Instead of members of households engaging in shared leisure activities, like watching TV, each member is engaged in a different activity. Third, digital-based leisure activities, in many cases, connect separated family members or friends. The study indicates, thus, that leisure time activities in Barcelona have been largely shaped by digital technology; in addition, more people are choosing to spend their leisure time at home because of convenience.

The nature of leisure time activities is being shaped not only by technology, but also by cultural globalization. By examining the concept of leisure in Middle Eastern countries, namely in Egypt, Turkey, and Iran, Mason and Martin (2003) find that the activities mostly revolve around religion and the culture of these countries; for example, much time is spent with family and praying. However, western influence on leisure is also evident; watching television and using the internet are both popular leisure activities in Middle Eastern countries (Mason and Martin, 2003).

Most statistics available on leisure time and leisure time activities are for developed countries. The UK's Office for National Statistics (2017) conducted a survey in 2015 to investigate leisure time and it drew the following conclusions: first, the average British male youth (16-34) has more leisure time per day (5.8 hours), than the average female youth (5 hours). Second, the main leisure activity in the UK is the

consumption of mass media, (e.g. watching TV, reading, or listening to music) which occupies 41% of the average British citizen's leisure time. Finally, the two other prominent leisure activities in the UK are categorized under: 1) socializing and 2) hobbies, computing¹ and games, each consisting of 10% of their leisure time per day, with females spending more time socializing and males spending more time engaging with other hobbies. The activities that occupy the least amount of time are sports (5%), with males spending more time playing sports, and cultural activities (2%)² (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

Comparatively, American youth (ages 15-34), spend an average of 4.5 hours of leisure time per day, with the main leisure activities being watching TV (44%), and socializing and communicating (17%). Two of the least popular leisure activities are reading (3%) and sports (9%). As in Britain, American males have more leisure time (5.5 hours) than American females (4.8 hours)³ (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

A study conducted on the average amount of leisure time spent in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) member states and India, South Africa, and China illustrates that in every country, except Japan, males have more leisure time than females (OECD, 2016). This tendency mirrors the breakdown of leisure time spent by female and male youth in Britain and the United States.

There have been very few studies conducted on the topic of leisure time among UAE youth. There is, however, one study that has addressed leisure time among GCC youth. A study conducted in 2010, titled "Youth in GCC Countries: Meeting the Challenge", looks at the GCC youths' employment statuses, education and leisure time among other factors (AlMunajjed and Sabbagh, 2010). The study found that GCC youth spend their leisure time as follows: 88% of the youth surf the internet, 78% watch TV, 65% spend time with family and 13% engage in community service. The study indicates that "a significant number of leisure activities take place at home" and provides recommendations on how governments and other non-state actors should capitalize on the leisure time of youth (AlMunajjed and Sabbagh, 2010, p.52).

To sum up, the main findings thus addressed in literature on the topic are as follows: 1) the increase in the standard of living in the world has resulted in more leisure time globally, 2) leisure time, today, is perceived as an essential right to everyone, 3) leisure time has recently become shaped by technological advancements and 4) even though leisure time use is different in every country, there still seems to be common trends in the world, which could be attributed to globalization.

¹ Computing refers to surfing the internet, playing computer games, communicating over the internet or programming.

² The numbers on how much each leisure activity occupies an individual's leisure time apply to the whole UK population (aged 8 and above), not only the youth.

³ This is the total of leisure time average per day by sex of the American population aged 15 and above, not only the youth.

Survey

This study was conducted between April and May of 2017 and is based on a questionnaire constructed and conducted by UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority with the support of the Emirates Foundation. The purpose of this survey is to investigate youth welfare and development among UAE nationals. The sample was selected from the seven emirates, based on the number of Emirati families in each emirate. A total of 6,600 households were randomly identified to take part in the survey amounting to a total of 51,174 individual. As shown in Figure 1, more than 30% of the households are from Abu Dhabi because it has the largest national population in the UAE. Other emirates have a smaller national population; therefore, the participants from each emirate represent between 10-15% of the total number of participants.

Since the purpose of the study was to understand the leisure time of youth, only members of households who were between the ages of 15-30 – 6518 participants – filled out the youth part of the questionnaire. As mentioned earlier, because Abu Dhabi has the largest national population in the UAE, around 30% of survey participants are from Abu Dhabi (Figure 2).

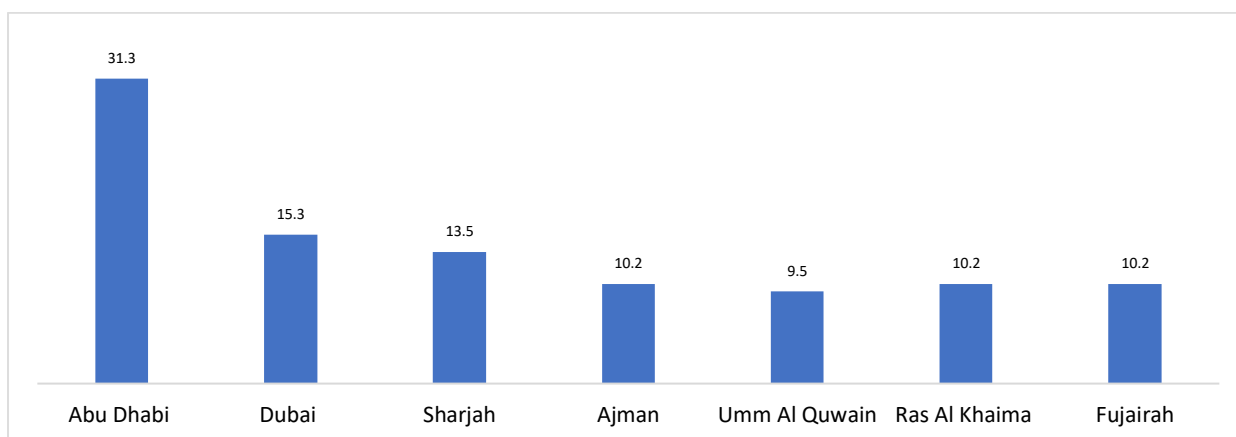


Figure 1: Selected households per emirate (%)

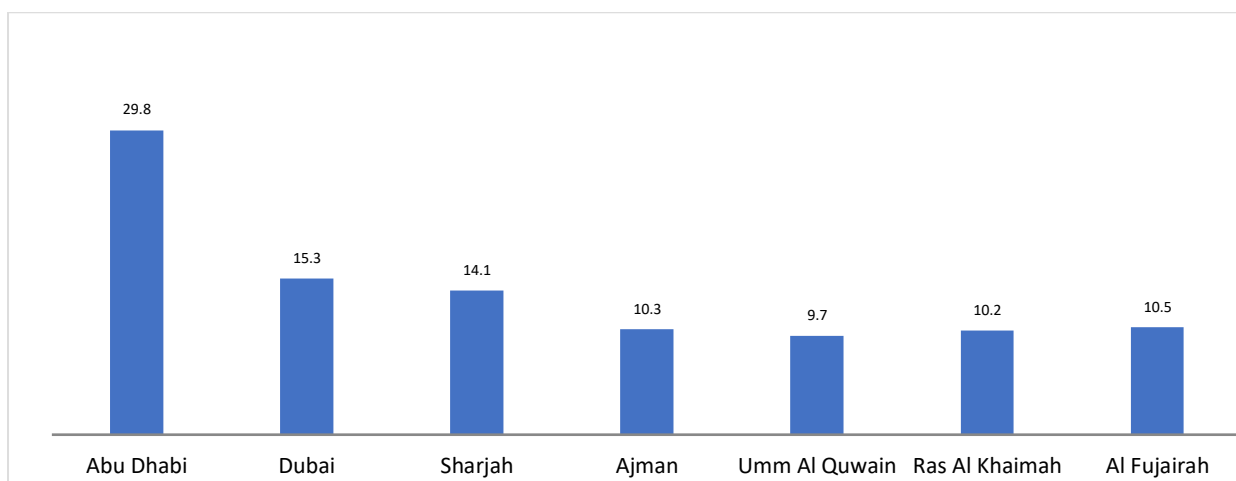


Figure 2: Youth participants per emirate (%)

The survey categorizes youth into the following age groups: 15-19, 20-24 and 25-30. Figure 3 illustrates that there is a significantly higher number of participants in the age groups 15-19 and 25-30 than those in the 20-24 age group. The percentages of participants in the age groups of 15-19, 20-24 and 25-30 are 36.1%, 27.2% and 36.7, respectively.

The percentage of female participants (52.6%) is slightly, but not significantly, higher than male participants (47.4%) (Figure 4).

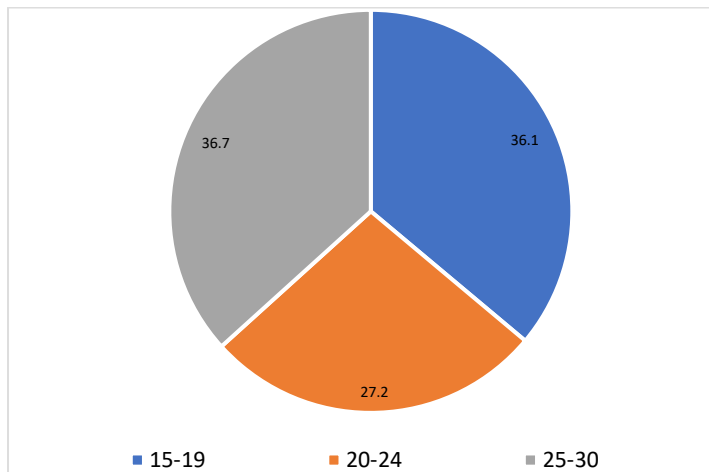


Figure 3: Participants per age group (%)

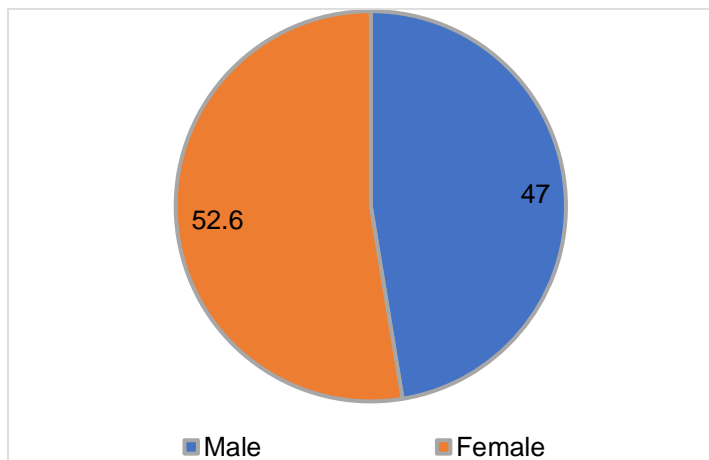


Figure 4: Participants per gender (%)

Findings and Discussion

The youth survey is divided into fourteen sections that examine diverse issues such as education, labor, health, social relations and security among other topics. This study focuses on only one of the sections of the questionnaire, which is leisure time activities among the youth. Specifically, this study looks at three areas in the respective section: average hours of leisure among Emirati youth, activities practiced during this time and the average time spent in each activity and club.

Leisure or free time, as per the survey's designers, is defined as the time one spends when not working, studying, sleeping, or eating. The survey assumes non-leisure activities take up a minimum of 12 hours of

the participants' day, if not more, so, by default, the maximum number of leisure hours is assumed to be 12 hours per day. Therefore, when allocating the time spent on each activity, the total number of hours for all activities will not exceed 12 hours for each participant.

As to the question of club participation, participants were asked to choose the clubs that they enjoy participating in. They had the opportunity to choose more than one. Some of the listed clubs include science, chess, math and computer clubs.

This is an exploratory study attempting to investigate how Emirati youth spend their leisure time. This study uses weights to adjust some of the differences in sample representations in terms of distribution by emirate and gender.

Leisure hours per day

More than half of participants (54%) stated that they spend 3 to 5 hours per day engaging in leisure-time activities (Figure 5). This amount of leisure time is comparable to that of youth in the UK and the US (Office for National Statistics, 2017; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). 21% of Emirati youth said they spent an average of 4 hours of leisure-time per day. Because the survey design allowed for a maximum of 12 hours for leisure time and a minimum of 12 hours for sleeping, eating, working and studying, and assuming that participants sleep for 7-8 hours, work/study for 7-8 hours and spend 3-4 hours preparing for work/school, commuting to and from work/school and eating, the results seem to be reasonable. Therefore, the average number of leisure time hours among youth is 4.36 hours. According to the study, male youth tend to have slightly, but not significantly, more leisure time (4.43 hours) than female youth (4.3 hours), as shown in Figure 6, mirroring findings from studies on other countries that males have more leisure time than females.

Leisure time varies slightly across the three age groups: 15-19, 20-24, and 25-30. The amount of time spent partaking in leisure activities is estimated at around 4.31, 4.67 and 4.12, respectively (Figure 7). The second age group (20-24) has the highest average leisure time. A possible explanation for this is that youth at this age have recently graduated from university and are searching for employment, so they are not working nor studying, resulting in more leisure time. The first age group (15-19) most likely consists of students which could explain why they have less leisure time than the second age group. People in the third age group (25-30 years old), have the least amount of leisure time, likely because a large percentage of them are employed (Figure 8).

Leisure time among youth varies among different Emirates as well. Emirati youth from Sharjah have the least amount of leisure time (4.04 hours) compared to Ras Al Khaimah, for instance (4.63). The reason for this discrepancy could potentially be explained by the number of Sharjah residents who commute daily to Dubai for work in traffic jams, which results in the reduction of leisure time.

Finally, the participants' status in the labor force also plays a role in the amount of leisure time she/he has. Figure 9 segregates leisure time hours based on the participant's employment status. The average amount of leisure time for students (4.2), employees (4.3) and housewives (4.6) is close to the total average of leisure time hours (4.36). The rest of the population has more leisure time hours per day; this segment of the population consists of the "retired"⁴ and the "unable to work". However, the participants of the last two categories comprise only a small percentage of participants compared to students, employed, and unemployed.

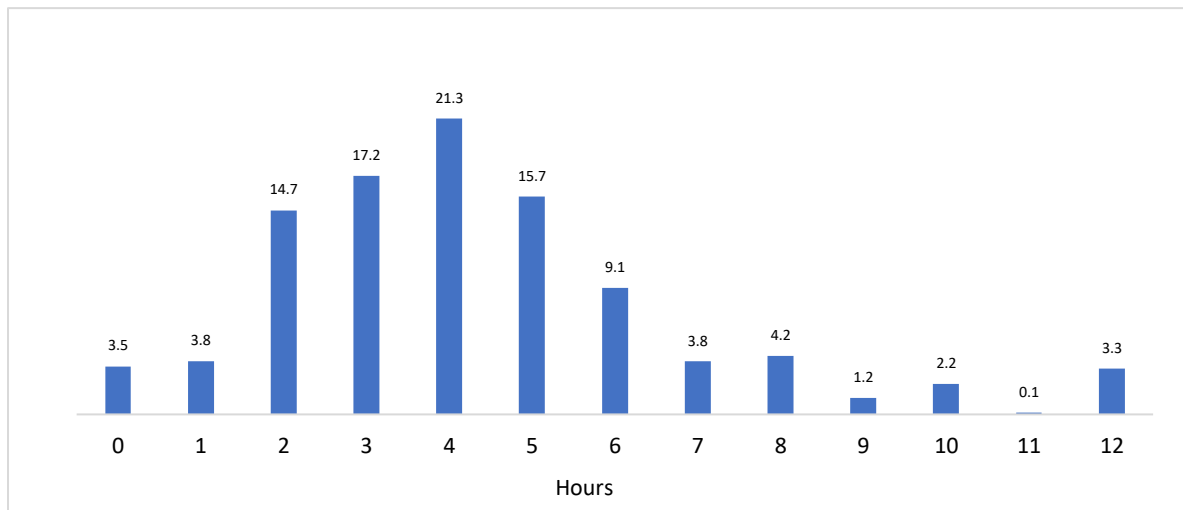


Figure 5: Leisure-time hours per day of Emirati youth (%)

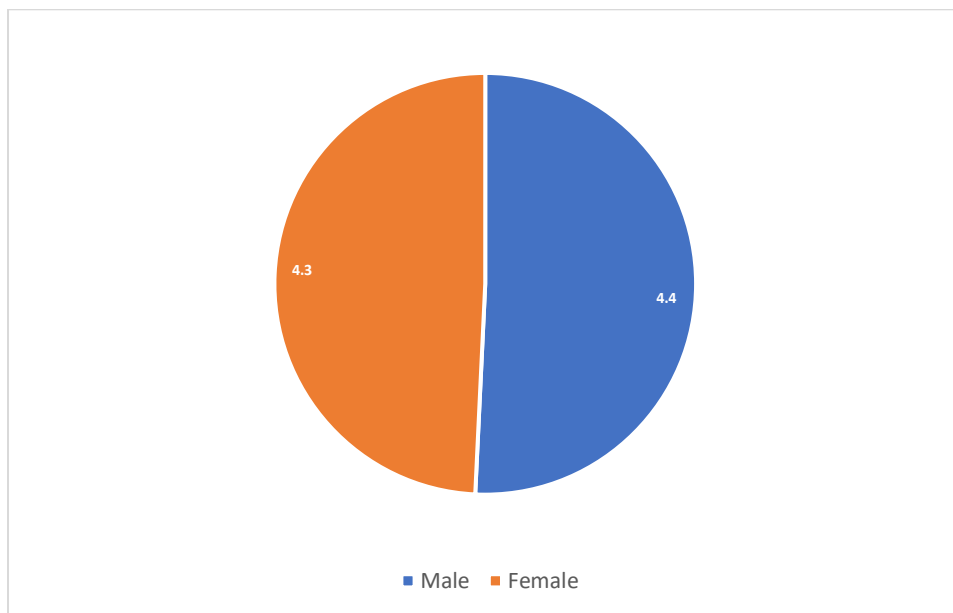


Figure 6: Average leisure time hours for Emirati males and females (%)

⁴ This refers to rare cases of early retirement due to health or other reasons

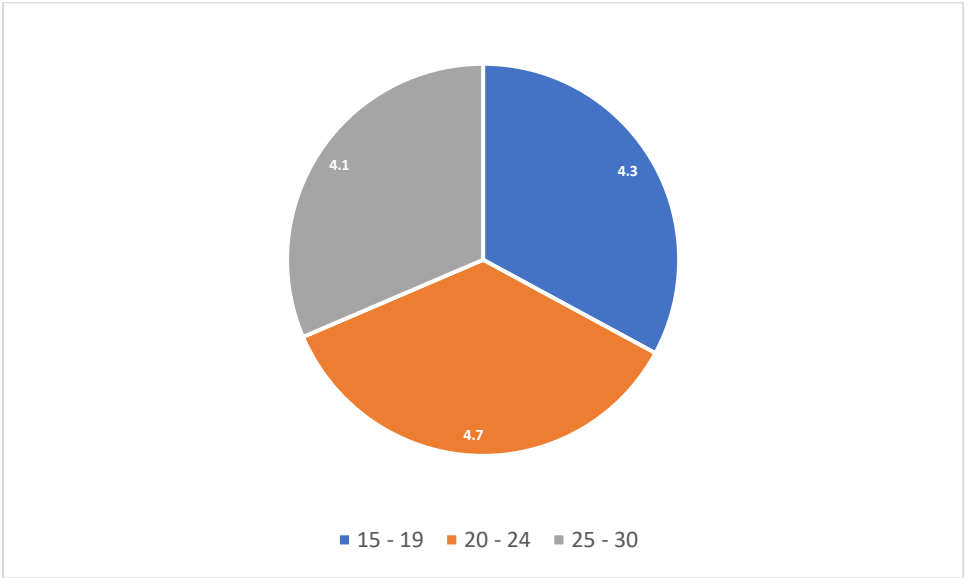


Figure 7: Average leisure time hours per age group (%)

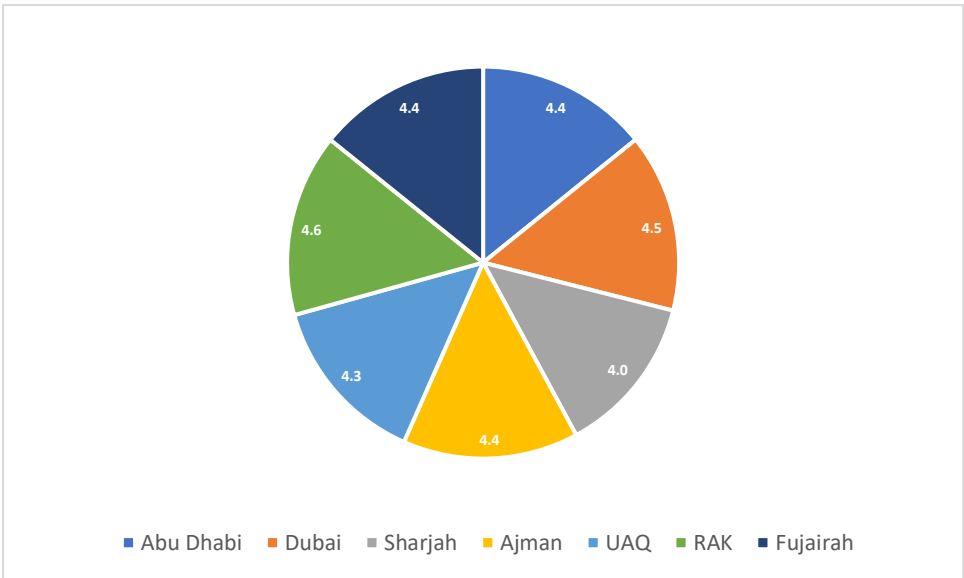


Figure 8: Average leisure time hours per Emirate (%)

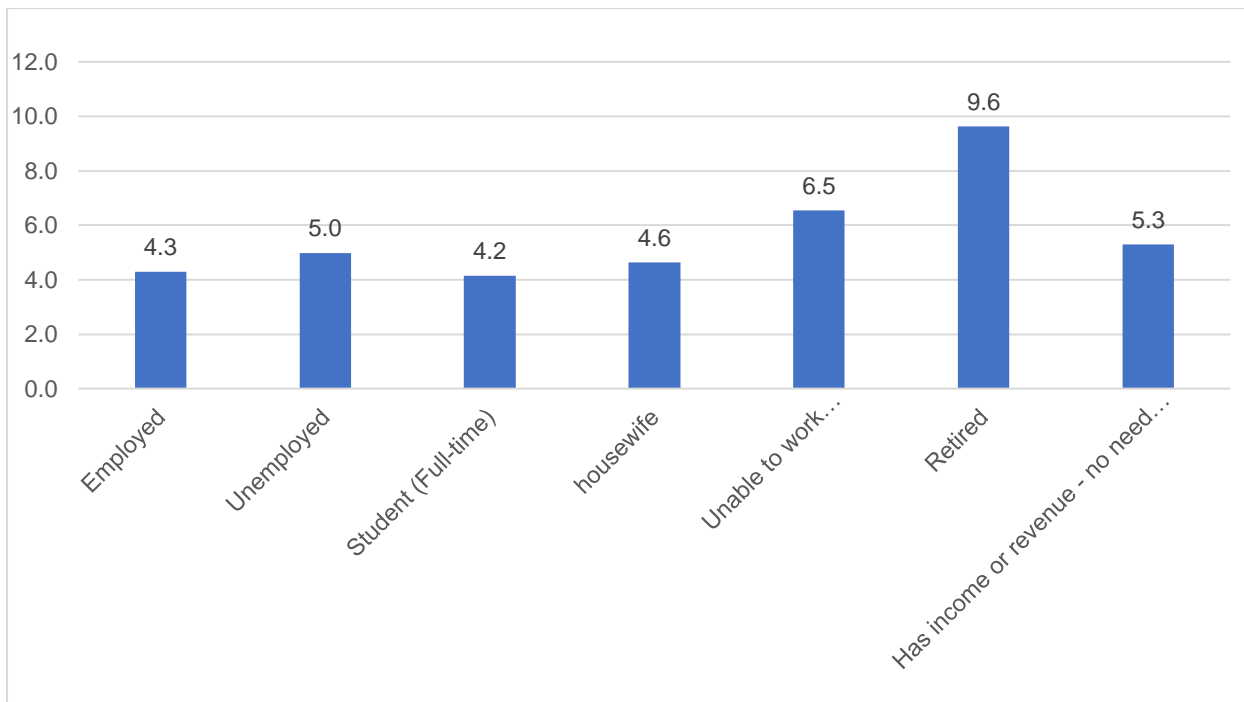


Figure 9: Average leisure time hours per day by status of participants (%)

Leisure time activities

There are various activities that comprise the leisure time of Emirati youth. The top three activities are: using the internet (34%), relaxing (10.9%) and spending time with family (15.8%) (Figure 10). On the other hand, the activities that the average Emirati youth spend the least time doing are volunteering (0.7%), participating in hobbies (2.9%) and playing electronic games (4.1%). However, some discrepancies must be highlighted. For instance, we are aware of the fact that some of the listed activities – reading, electronic games and sports – could be considered as “hobbies”. Additionally, participants who spend a lot of time on internet gaming, which is similar to the concept of “electronic games”, might have included this as their “internet” time. Also, since it has become very common for people to watch films or other TV shows on the internet, there is a possibility that the average time allocated for the internet includes watching films and TV shows, as well as playing games.

Emirati youth population spend more than one third (34%) of their free time on the internet (this includes social media usage). Details on the sort of activities that participants engage in on the internet are, unfortunately, unavailable. This information would have allowed us to determine whether the time spent on the internet is active or passive. A person using the internet to read an article, for instance, might be perceived as engaging in an active leisure activity compared to a person using the internet to watch TV shows. The amount of time Emirati youth spend on the internet proves to be similar to the results of the study conducted in Spain that found that digital technology shapes leisure time activities, especially if we add to this the time spent on electronic games, wherein we can state that the average Emirati youth spends 38% of his/her leisure time using digital activities. It also illustrates that this tendency has carried over during the past few years; the GCC youth study conducted in 2010 also found that the majority of Emirati

youth spent their leisure time surfing the internet. However, it is also interesting to note that this is not the case in the US and the UK, where the main leisure activities are watching TV in the US and the consumption of mass media, in the UK. The only parallel in all these countries is the fact that the main leisure activity is usually a home-based activity.

Relaxing is another activity that, evidently, takes a considerable portion (10.9%) of the participants' leisure time. Western countries, like the US and UK, spend less time relaxing (4.7% and 4.5% respectively). Unfortunately, the survey does not provide a clear definition as to what relaxing entails. However, relaxing, as well as watching TV and listening to music are passive leisure activities and together seem to occupy a substantial amount of Emirati youths' leisure time.

Participants also spend a significant amount of time with family (15.8%) and friends (9.2%) and socializing in general (24%). The amount of time Emirati youth spend time with family reflects the collectivist nature of Emirati society in which most individuals are obligated or expected to spend time with their nuclear family members, attend weekly functions with friends and extended family members, and attend relatives' and friends' occasions – weddings, engagements, funerals...etc. The 2010 GCC youth study also found that spending time with family was one of the main leisure activities. This is not the case in western nations like the UK and the US where socializing consists of only 10% and 17% of their leisure time, respectively. However, what “family time” consists of must be investigated in future research. Family time could be a time when families sit together and converse or engage in different activities. It could also be a time when families sit together, but are simultaneously engaged with their smart devices, a phenomenon that has become recently common. This is evident in the above-mentioned study that finds that digital-based leisure activities have also played a role in shaping family time. The same could also be applied to socializing with friends, wherein socializing might entail friends being together in the same place while engaging in different activities.

Even though volunteering is listed as a leisure activity in this survey, this is not the case in the UK and the US where volunteering is categorized as “unpaid work” or a “civic activity”. Emirati youth spend very little time (0.7%) volunteering, which could be attributed to the lack of volunteering opportunities or to the lack of awareness of the importance of volunteering. The limited amount of youth engagement in volunteering activities was also evident in the 2010 GCC study, where only 13% of the participants were involved in community service. Interestingly, 2017 was, as announced by the UAE government, the Year of Giving. In June. (after the survey was conducted) the UAE launched “UAE volunteers” as a platform for anyone interested in volunteering in the UAE. According to the UAE government:

“Volunteering enhances social solidarity and cohesion, positively affects individuals, families and the community, and is a reflection of progressive and civilised societies. It develops citizens' sense of social responsibility, and helps individuals unleash their talents by participating in positive activities that have an everlasting positive impact on society” (The Year of Giving, 2017).

It would be important to conduct a similar survey within the next few years to see if this platform has influenced Emirati youth to select volunteering activities during their leisure time. The “UAE Volunteers” website claims that, so far, around 300,000 people volunteered through this platform. Those volunteers include Emiratis and expats residing in the UAE, so it would also be compelling to segregate expats from the national volunteers.

Emirati youth population also spend very little time on sports and physical activities (5%). Similarly, youth in the UK and the US report spending only 5% and 9% (respectively) of their leisure time participating in sports and physical activity. The lack of physical activity has potential adverse effects on the general wellbeing (physical and mental) of Emirati youth, thereby affecting their productivity and leading to undesirable implications for the economy. This is also a cause for concern because of the prevalence of obesity and diabetes in the UAE (Gulf News, 2017; Bell, 2016). The UAE government, especially the Dubai government, has launched various innovative initiatives to encourage the youth and the whole UAE population to become more physically active. Among the efforts was the November 2017 Dubai Fitness Challenge during which participants would exercise for 30 minutes a day for 30 days and log their activities in the challenge’s smart application. The participants who had exercised the most were then rewarded. Another initiative is the Gov Games in which “teams of Government workers [are] pitted against each other in a bid to be Gov Games champions” (Malek, 2018). The winning team was awarded a prize of AED 1 million. Since both initiatives took place after the survey was conducted, it is important that another survey be conducted in a few years to assess these initiatives and whether they have made a difference in the amount of time Emirati Youth spend engaging in physical activity.

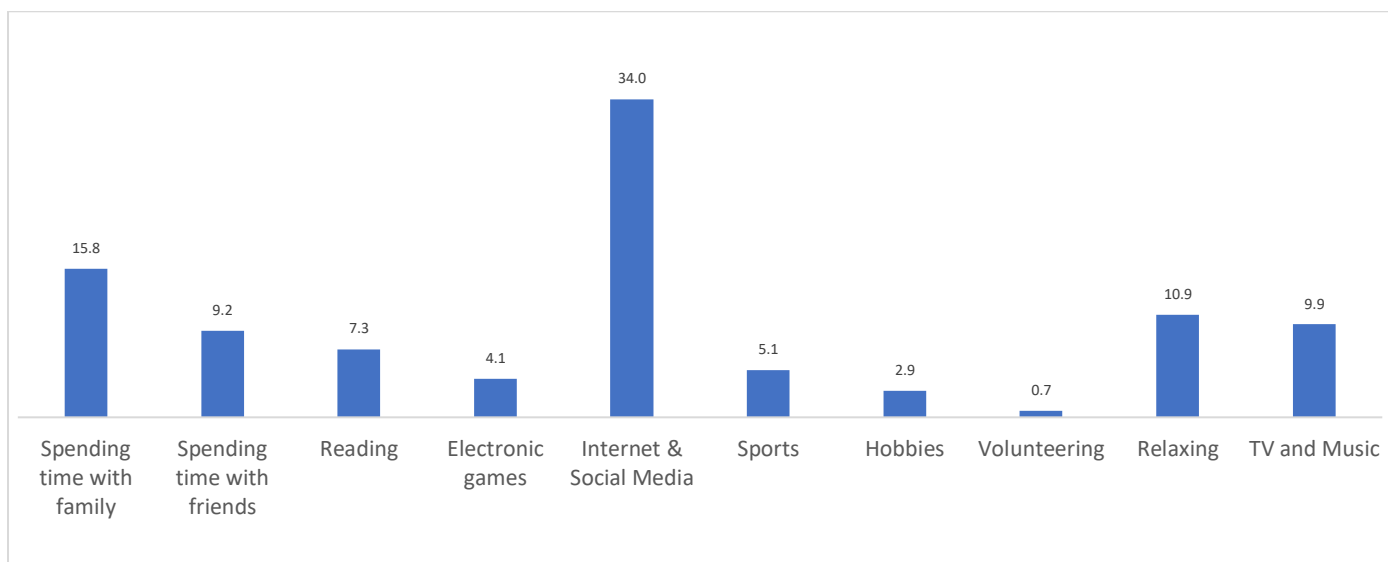


Figure 10: Distribution of leisure time activities among Emirati youth (%)

When classifying the participants based on gender, it appears that there is a slight, insignificant, difference between how much time males and females spend on each activity. The average Emirati female youth, for instance, spends slightly more time (17.1%) with family as opposed to the average Emirati male youth (14.6%) (Figure 11). This difference could be due to the social perception that raising and spending time

with children is the mother’s obligation, whereas the father’s main role is the provision of financial support. Emirati males, however, spend more time (10.9%) with friends than Emirati females (7.5%). This difference is probably due to the fact that Emirati males have more social freedom than Emirati females.

Male Emirati youth dedicate more time (6.4%) to sports than female Emirati youth (3.8%). One potential reason for this is that many Emirati women are expected to dress modestly in public, therefore it becomes socially unacceptable for them to exercise in public, unless it is all-female gyms, which are limited in number.

Female Emirati youth spend more time than male youth on the internet, reading, and relaxing. This tendency, in addition to an increased amount of time spent with family and on sports, indicates that Emirati women spend more time at home compared to Emirati men. The trend is illustrated by Figure 10 and reflects traditional gender roles in Emirati society.

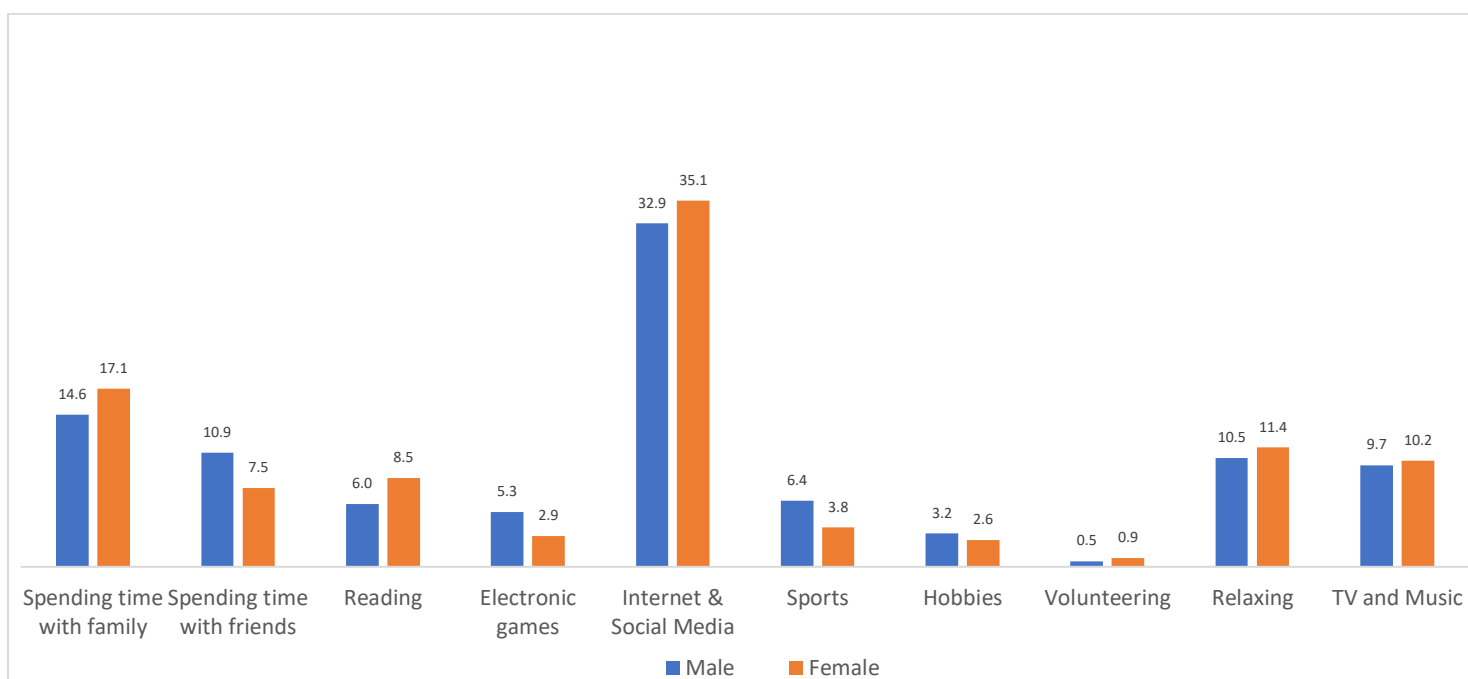


Figure 11: Gender-based distribution of leisure time activities among Emirati youth (%)

In regards to the distribution of leisure time activities among the three age groups, Figure 12 shows that participants in the 25-30 age group spend more time (18.7%) with family compared to the 15-19 (14.6%) and 20-24 (14.8%) age groups. The 20-24 age group spends more time (36.3%) on the internet compared to the 15-19 (32.1%) and 25-30 (34%) age groups. In general, it seems that as Emiratis become older, they allocate less time to reading, electronic games, hobbies and friends. In contrast, they start allocating more time to relaxing, sports and, most importantly, family.

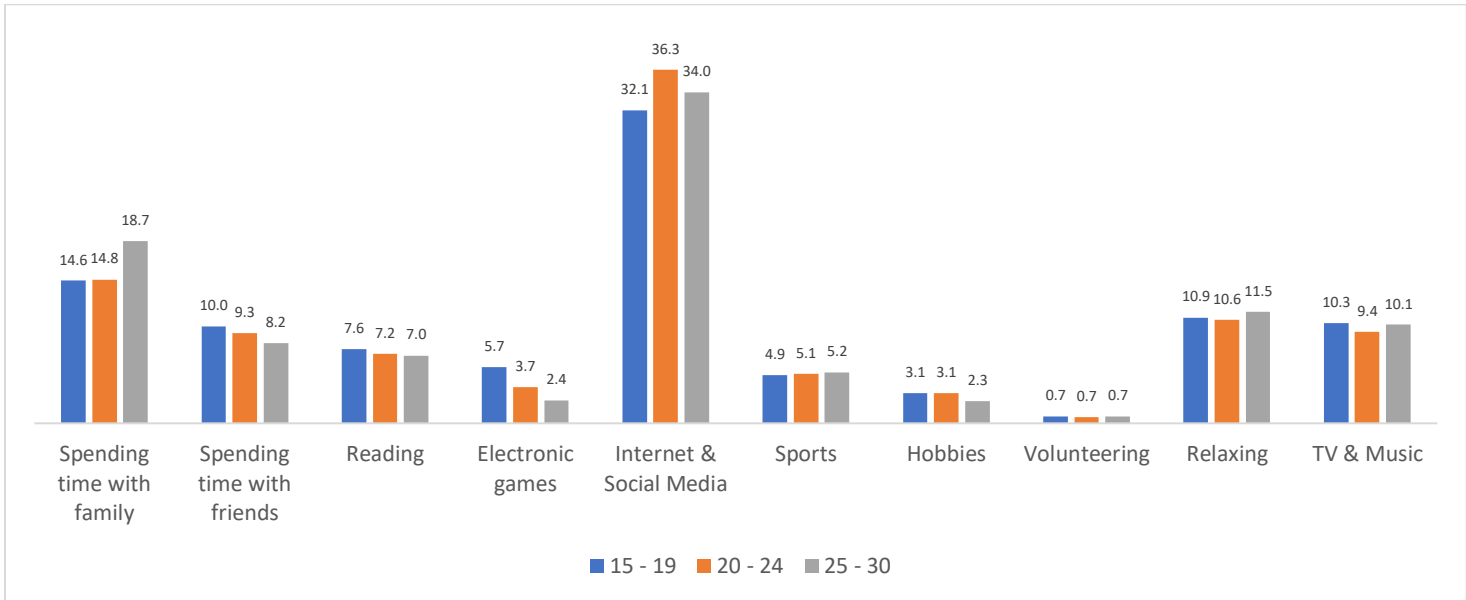


Figure 12: Age-based distribution of leisure time activities among Emirati youth (%)

Club Participation among Emirati youth

Figure 13 illustrates the percentage of Emirati youth interested in club participation. It is important to emphasize that this chart only looks at whether Emirati youth have interest in club participation, not whether they are members of these clubs. More than half of the participants (55.2%) expressed no interest in clubs. Therefore, we could infer that the majority of the participants are not club members. A potential explanation for this observation could be that clubs are not often promoted to the average Emirati youth, and there are not many clubs within the UAE. All clubs in the UAE must be regulated by the government, so even if the interest arises, it is challenging for a group of people to establish a club because of the bureaucratic process. An alternative explanation could be that a “club culture” is not prominent in Emirati society and the concept is still rather new. Finally, as already indicated, Emirati youth tend to choose home-based leisure activities because they are easier to access. However, clubs that have the highest percentage of interest are computer (15.1%), reading (9.1%) and math (8.8%) clubs, while clubs that have the least percentage of interest are the robotics (4.2%) and chess (3.8%) club

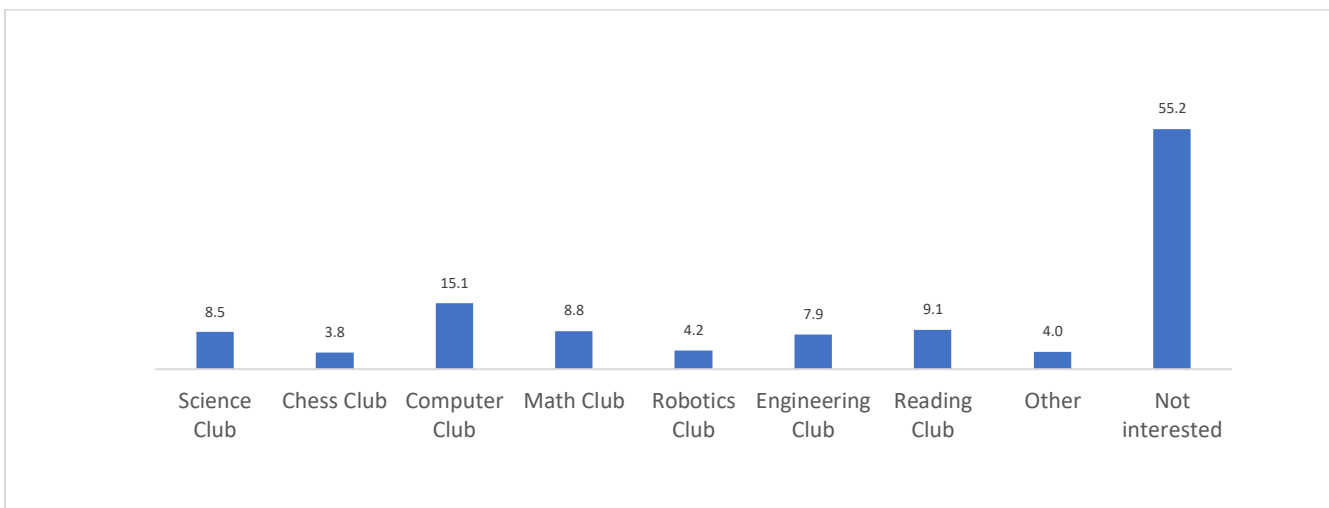


Figure 13: Emirati youth interested in club participation (%)

When comparing interest in club participation between Emirati males and females, it is clear that more males (45.4%) have expressed interest in club participation than females (44.2%); however, the difference is fairly insignificant. More males are interested in participating in computer (16.2%), chess (6%) and math (10.5%) clubs as opposed to females – 14.2%, 1.9% and 7.3% respectively. More females, on the other hand, are interested in participating in reading (12.4%), science (9.5%) and engineering (8.6%) clubs as opposed to males – 5.3%, 7.4% and 7.1% respectively. There is a slight difference between the percentage of males interested in reading clubs as opposed to females. This difference corresponds with the above-mentioned finding indicating that females dedicate more time to reading than males (Figure 14).

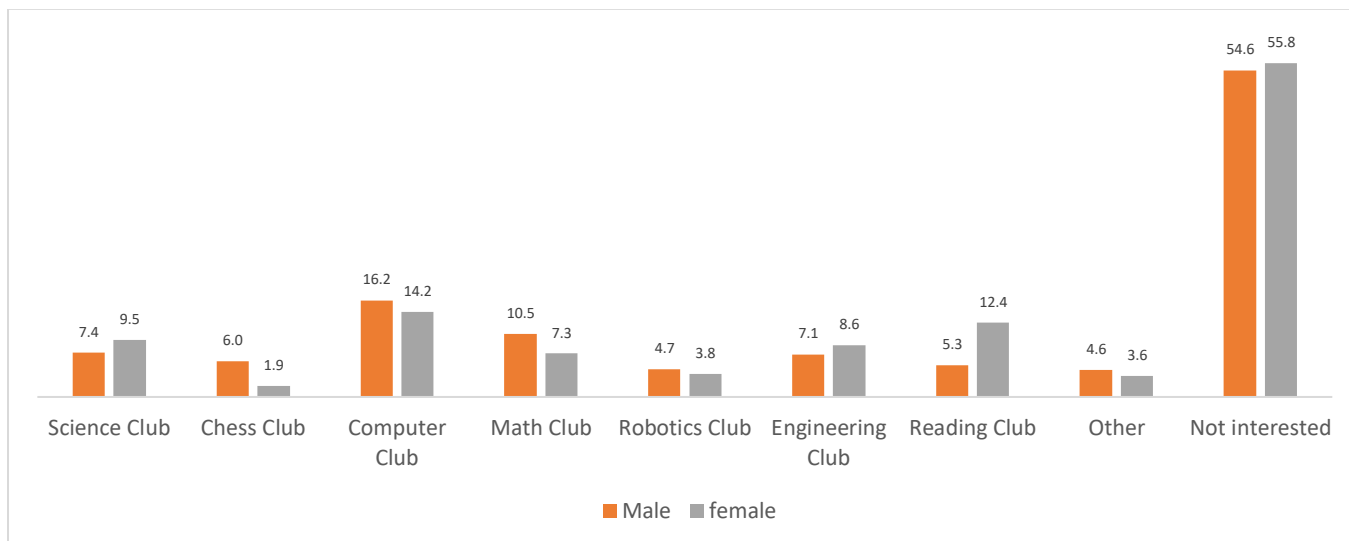


Figure 14: Emirati youth interested in club participation based on gender (%)

Interest in club participation declines as Emiratis grow older. Figure 15 shows that 46.2% of Emirati youth from the 15-19 age group, 57.7% from the 20-24 age group and 62.3% from 25-30 are not interested in club participation. A possible explanation is that youth between the ages of 15-24 are usually either university or school students and are more exposed to clubs in their educational institutions. Conversely, youth between the ages of 25-30 are most likely in the labor force, working, or looking for jobs; thus, they might be less exposed to clubs.

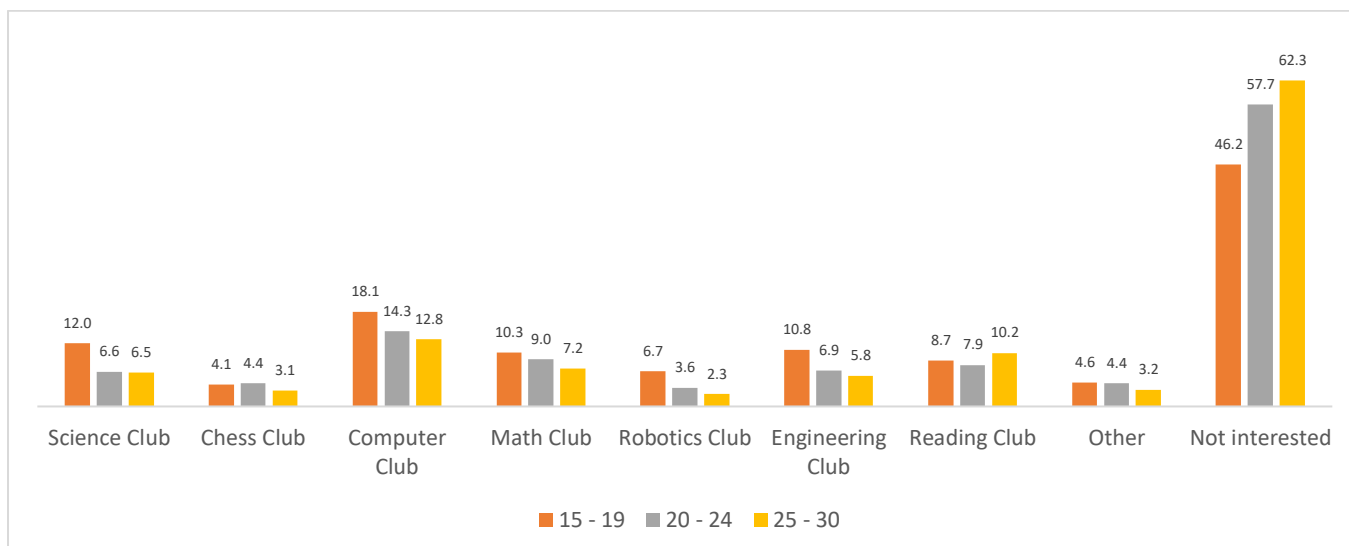


Figure 15: Emirati youth interested in club participation based on age group (%)

Conclusion

This study examined leisure time among Emirati youth by focusing on the average amount of leisure time they spend, types of leisure time activities, and interest in club participation of Emirati youth. The most important findings of this study are: volunteering is the least important leisure activity to Emirati youth; the majority of Emirati youth are not members of any clubs; Emirati youth do not invest much time in reading and sports; Emirati youth spend considerable time in passive leisure activities and internet and social media take up the majority of Emirati youth's time.

An essential component of investing in youth is investing in their wellbeing and this is where leisure time and leisure time activities come into the picture, as leisure time activities play a crucial role in contributing to human wellbeing. Therefore, in countries, like the UAE, where youth development is one of its main agendas, it is vital for governments to ensure that youth have access to various leisure activities, especially active leisure activities. The government should play a role in the following: spreading awareness about the importance of active leisure activities among youth (sports, volunteering, hobbies...etc); investing more in raising awareness about the importance of volunteering among the youth; and encouraging more participation in clubs by promoting existing clubs, establishing more clubs and ensuring clubs are available to all emirates. The government could also establish additional clubs based on youths' interests. This study also provides a deeper understanding of Emirati youths' interests, which could benefit the government, as well as other stakeholders, when forming any youth-related policy.

Finally, further investigation into this topic is necessary, especially in the following areas: 1) the effects of the "UAE volunteers" initiative, which was launched after this survey was conducted; 2) the effects of various sports initiatives introduced by the government on youths' physical activity; and 3) exploration into the kind of activities that youth engage in on the internet

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