Original Article

How Japanese university students spend leisure time:
Relationship between leisure time and life satisfaction

Tomomi Hanai (Faculty of Economics, Teikyo University, hanai.tomomi@main.teikyo-u.ac.jp)

Abstract

People think deeply about what they are and what their identities are through various experiences during their university days, and it is essential to feel adapted to and content with university life to make the university days meaningful. This study examines the effects of leisure time, how much time is spent on leisure, and life adaptability or satisfaction regarding university. The first purpose is to clarify how much time is spent and on what during the Golden Week, which is a Japanese term for several holidays between the end of April and early May. Second, this study examines the relationship between leisure time and life adaptability or satisfaction regarding university. The survey was conducted among 98 university students (48 male and 50 female) in mid-May of 2016. The results show that about one-third of the participants had only one or no free day during the Golden Week in 2016 and that there are no relationships between leisure activities and the number of free days. Additionally, The number of free days and leisure activities did not affect life adaptability or satisfaction, against the prediction.

Keywords

leisure time, leisure activity, life satisfaction, adaptability, university students

1. Introduction

1.1 University days and lifecycle

People think deeply about what they are and what their identities are through various experiences during their university days. These university days are included as an important stage of the lifecycle and involve preparations to go out into the world [Oikawa and Sakamoto, 2008]. It is essential to feel adapted to and content with university life to make the university days meaningful.

How have adaptability or satisfaction regarding university life been determined and assessed? Hirosawa [2007] points to two important aspects in the process of new students adapting to university life: an interpersonal aspect, like friendship and relationship with teachers, and a learning aspect. Additionally, Hirosawa [2007] suggests that the students who feel adapted in the learning aspect are more adapted with the faculty and department and have more confidence about interpersonal matters. In addition, several studies show that close friendships and familiarity with teachers contribute to an active learning approach [Yoshida and Banzai, 1984; Okubo and Aoyagi, 2003].

Several scales have been developed to assess adaptability or satisfaction regarding university life. A subjective adjustment scale for university students developed by Okubo and Aoyagi [2003] consists of four factors: a sense of comfort, feelings of being accepted and trusted, the existence of tasks and goals, and the absence of feelings of rejection. In terms of the mental health of the university students, educational stumbles, disappointment with the university, irregular lifestyle, lack of satisfaction with university life, and lack of self-confidence are extracted. Thus, disappointment with the university, educational stumbles, and irregular lifestyle cause truant tendency of the level of consciousness.

Further, adaptability or satisfaction regarding university life are focused on from the view of institutional research (IR). The Higher Education Research Institute in the University of

Table 1: Factors determining university life satisfaction by a series of JCIRP studies

Rank	JCSS2005	JCSS2007	JFS2008
1	Experiences in the university	Experiences in the university	Experiences in the university
2	Professional education	Communication with teachers	Integrated feeling among students
3	Exchanges among students	Professional education	Exchanges among students
4	Quality of lessons	Communication with friends	Communication with friends
5	Liberal arts education	Exchanges among students	Various ideas
6	Integrated feeling among students	Integrated feeling among students	Liberal arts education
7	Life-related education	Quality of lessons	Life-related education
8	IT environments	Life-related education	Quality of lessons
9	Humanity education	Liberal arts education	The number of students
10	Library	Leadership	Career-related education

California, Los Angeles, developed two representative surveys: the College Student Survey (CSS) and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey (CFS). In Japan, an IR consortium conducts a survey of student engagement, which was developed based on the Japanese CIRP (JCIRP) [Yamada et al., 2009]. The purpose of the JCIRP is to investigate possibilities to promote how to assess the educational effects of college impact on students. The JCIRP was developed as a combination of the JCIRP CSS (JCSS), the JCIRP Freshman Survey (JFS), and the JCIRP Junior CSS. Table 1 shows the factors that determine university life satisfaction as revealed by a series of JCIRP studies.

1.2 Tourism and mental health

As described previously, it is important to feel adaptability or satisfaction in the university. However, most students focus on activities and experiences in the university. It is undeniable that activities and experiences like education programs and exchanges among students in the university contribute to adaptability or satisfaction, but leisure activities and experiences outside the university also enhance adaptability or satisfaction regarding the university. Sharp et al. [2006] note that leisure activities and experiences reduce participants' stress levels. Coleman and Iso-Ahola [1993] summarize the leisure effects on softening the participants' stress levels: (1) resting, (2) diverting oneself, and (3) personal development. All three of these effects are essential to enhance quality of life. Roger and Douglas [1997] point out that people nurture social support and independent-mindedness through leisure activities and experiences. Per these findings, a productive and fulfilling leisure life might enhance mental health and quality of life.

People experience activities in a natural environment, relax mentally and physically, and connect with others in their leisure time. People fulfil their personal lives and creativity. In addition, fulfilling personal leisure time is beneficial to society. A vital society is formed and sustained through these various experiences. It might increase people's incentive to work and provide the opportunity to learn knowledge and acquire skills, and it nurtures personnel resources, which is beneficial to society, assumes a great role in geriatric healthcare, and brings meaning into one's life. One leisure activity in particular—traveling—carries these aspects. Sasaki [2000] also summarized five factors in tourists' motives: 1) to relieve many daily tensions and frustrations, 2) to do something fun, 3) to enhance a personal relationship, 4) to build a wealth of knowledge, and 5) to become more than one was before.

Mental health tourism is a current trend and challenge toward which tourism and psychology collaborate. Travel's most common purpose, as mentioned above, involves relieving frustrations that are experienced every day. Furthermore, those who proactively engage in tourism tend to be physically and mentally healthy. "Mental health tourism" focuses on mental wellness and aims to reduce participants' negative moods and increase their positive moods. When people experience a positive mood during travel, they sometimes encounter flow experiences. It is suggested that flow experiences improve attention and concentration and enhance creativity and productivity [Oguchi, 2015].

People are increasingly attentive to mental health tourism because of a variety of modern social factors: repentance for mass tourism problems, mass tourism dissatisfaction, a greater diversity of values, changes in the concept of health, and the impact of social issues. However, the studies of mental health tourism mostly target people in the working world [Hanai and Oguchi, 2016; Hanai et al., 2016]. However, tourism might also be effective for the mental health of university students.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study examines the effects of leisure time, how much time is spent on leisure, and life adaptability or satisfaction regarding university. The first purpose is to clarify how much time is spent and how during the Golden Week, which is a Japanese term for several holidays between the end of April and early May.

The Golden Week in 2016 was from April 29 to May 8. The Golden Week is one of the tourist seasons in Japan. Japan Tour-

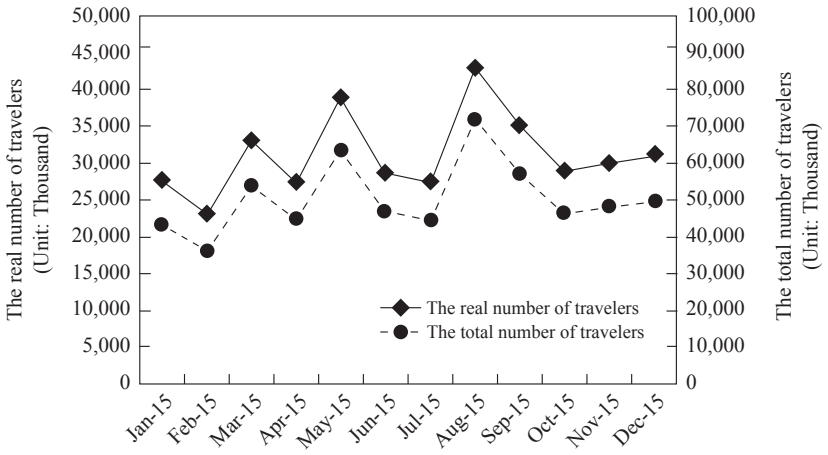

Figure 1: The number of travelers in 2015

ism Agency [2016] reported that there are two tourist seasons: May and August (Figure 1).

Second, this study examines the relationship between leisure time and life adaptability or satisfaction regarding university.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and period

The survey was conducted among 98 university students (48 male and 50 female) in mid-May of 2016. All the participants belong to the faculty of economics in the university in Tokyo, Japan.

2.2 Items

The following items were asked of the participants.

- How many days did you spend on your hobby and leisure during the Golden Week? (1: none, 2: 1 day, 3: 2-3 days, 4: 4-5 days, 5: 6-7 days, 6: more than 8 days)
- Please select all the activities and the most joyful activity from the activity list in Table 2.

Table 2: Leisure activity items

Item	What did		Most
	n	%	*n*
Sports			
Walking, jogging, and marathon	3	3.1	1
Playing sports	13	13.3	2
Watching sport games	9	9.2	7
Hobbies			
Dining out	64	65.3	10
Shopping and window shopping	64	65.3	14
Watching movies	31	31.6	7
Watching videos	31	31.6	0
Music appreciation	47	48.0	0
Playing TV games	18	18.4	1
Reading books	21	21.4	0
SNS	71	72.4	2
Social games	22	22.4	4
Going to spa facilities	11	11.2	0
Karaoke	27	27.6	5
Going to live performances or concerts	8	8.2	4
Joining events	17	17.3	3
Cooking	7	7.1	1
Traveling			
Domestic traveling	13	13.3	7
Overseas traveling	1	1.0	0
Going to cultural facilities	14	14.3	6
Going to amusement parks	5	5.1	4
Driving	20	20.4	8
Outdoor activities	10	10.2	5

To assess the subjective adaptability or satisfaction regarding university, several items of the subjective satisfaction scale for university students [Okuda et al., 2010] were extracted. The subjective satisfaction scale consists of four factors: "sense of fit," "companionship satisfaction," "study satisfaction," and "anxiety." Each of eight items was loaded highly in the first three factors, and all of the items in the fourth factor were used.

3. Results

3.1 Leisure time and activities

Figure 2 shows how many days the participants spent on leisure. Table 2 shows what activities and the most joyful activities they did during the Golden Week.

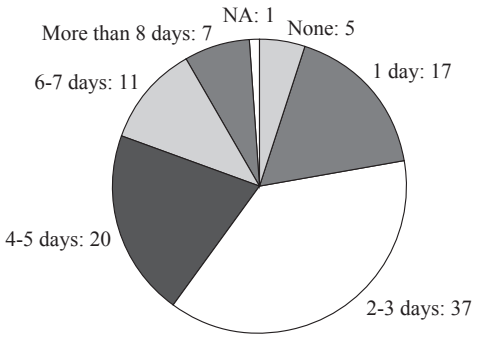

Figure 2: The number of free days in the Golden Week

3.2 Relationship between leisure activities and the number of free days

To examine the relationship between what kinds of activities (sports, hobbies, and traveling) the participants did and the number of days they spent on leisure, Chi-squared tests were conducted, and there were significant differences in the sports (χ^2 (5) = 14.71, $p < .05$; Table 3). There were no relationships in hobbies or traveling.

Table 3: Relationship between leisure activities and the number of free days

	Sports	Hobbies	Traveling
Not at all	1	4	0
1 day	0	17	9
3 days	6	36	19
4-5 days	4	20	12
6-7 days	6	11	4
More than 8 days	3	6	4

3.3 Relationship between subjective satisfaction and the number of free days

Table 4 shows the results of the simple descriptive analyt-

Table 4: Descriptive analytics and factor analysis on the subjective satisfaction scale

	M	*SD*	Sense of fit	Companionship satisfaction	Anxiety	Communality
I will find what I want here.	3.26	0.74	0.80	0.02	0.12	0.60
I will be able to do various things here.	3.57	0.82	0.76	−0.03	0.03	0.55
I have something to do actively.	3.26	0.84	0.74	−0.12	−0.20	0.64
I think I have a lot of potentialities here.	3.38	1.01	0.71	−0.11	−0.16	0.56
I learn what I am interested in.	3.38	0.87	0.70	0.15	0.15	0.54
I learn what I want to learn.	3.24	0.72	0.68	0.10	0.08	0.50
I will develop myself here.	3.43	0.76	0.62	0.03	−0.22	0.55
I am satisfied with the lesson contents.	3.23	0.77	0.61	−0.03	0.22	0.31
I have something I am enthusiastic about.	3.18	0.93	0.59	0.08	−0.12	0.46
I will think about how to live in the future here.	3.18	0.77	0.59	−0.06	−0.23	0.47
My university life is meaningful.	3.36	0.74	0.56	−0.05	−0.28	0.48
I feel isolated here.	2.61	1.03	0.32	−0.87	0.18	0.67
I do not have intimate friends here.	2.42	0.97	−0.02	−0.80	−0.01	0.65
I have met nice friends here.	3.92	0.89	0.18	0.73	0.16	0.64
I have shared joyful time with my friends here.	3.75	0.99	0.18	0.71	0.25	0.62
I get on well with others here.	3.36	0.84	0.12	0.71	0.10	0.56
I am satisfied with friendships here.	3.71	0.92	0.10	0.65	0.03	0.47
I feel lonely here.	2.50	0.98	0.18	−0.64	0.31	0.47
I am out of circles of friends.	2.53	0.89	0.08	−0.42	0.07	0.16
I sometimes think about moving to another university because I do not like here.	2.48	1.13	−0.29	−0.41	0.03	0.36
I am not sure what I should do here.	2.86	0.91	−0.12	−0.05	0.71	0.60
I am unable to forecast what I will do here.	2.90	1.01	−0.09	0.08	0.63	0.43
I worry about my career plan.	3.66	0.99	0.16	0.06	0.59	0.31
I feel I do not match with my major.	2.54	0.83	0.07	−0.35	0.53	0.42
I feel anxious because I might not be able to graduate.	2.65	1.15	−0.06	0.05	0.42	0.19
The lesson is different from what I expected.	2.49	0.88	−0.15	−0.11	0.36	0.22
Eigenvalue			7.63	3.01	1.77	
Cumulative contribution ratio			29.36	40.92	47.74	

ics and factor analysis on the subjective satisfaction scale for university students. Three factors were extracted: "sense of fit" (α = .91), "companionship satisfaction" (α = .87), and "anxiety" (α = .72). Then, to examine the relationship between subjective satisfaction and the number of the days they spent on leisure, one-way ANOVAs were conducted, but there were no differences in the three subjective satisfaction factor scores depending on the number of free days (Table 5).

Table 5: Subjective satisfaction factor scores among the number of the days

	n	Sense of fit	Companionship satisfaction	Anxiety
None	5	3.35 (0.41)	2.84 (0.43)	3.00 (0.47)
1 day	17	3.40 (0.66)	3.71 (0.60)	2.80 (0.49)
3 days	36	3.29 (0.56)	3.68 (0.68)	2.85 (0.64)
4-5 days	20	3.22 (0.64)	3.53 (0.76)	2.80 (0.68)
6-7 days	11	3.37 (0.58)	3.47 (0.77)	2.80 (0.65)
More than 8 days	7	3.30 (0.81)	3.56 (0.47)	3.12 (0.88)

3.4 Relationship between subjective satisfaction and leisure activities

To examine the relationship between subjective satisfaction and what kinds of activities (sports, hobbies, and traveling) the participants did, one-way ANOVAs were conducted, but there were no differences in the three subjective satisfaction factor scores depending on the leisure activities (Table 6).

Next, to examine the relationship between subjective satisfaction and the most joyful activity (sports, hobbies, and traveling), one-way ANOVAs were conducted. The participants whose most joyful activity is sports showed stronger "sense of fit" than those who chose traveling (F (2,87) = 2.64, $p < .10$; Table 7).

Table 6: Subjective satisfaction factor scores among the leisure activities

	n	Sense of fit	Companionship satisfaction	Anxiety
Sports				
Did	20	3.33 (0.62)	3.49 (0.55)	2.91 (0.57)
Did not	77	3.29 (0.60)	3.61 (0.72)	2.83 (0.64)
Hobbies				
Did	94	3.30 (0.61)	3.59 (0.70)	2.83 (0.63)
Did not	3	3.33 (0.05)	3.41 (0.45)	3.22 (0.19)
Traveling				
Did	48	3.26 (0.59)	3.64 (0.62)	2.90 (0.63)
Did not	49	3.35 (0.61)	3.54 (0.75)	2.80 (0.62)

Table 7: Subjective satisfaction factor scores among the most joyful activity

	n	Sense of fit	Companionship satisfaction	Anxiety
Sports	10	3.68 (0.43)	3.69 (0.55)	2.77 (0.50)
Hobbies	51	3.25 (0.61)	3.49 (0.72)	2.88 (0.60)
Traveling	29	3.19 (0.60)	3.72 (0.61)	2.85 (0.72)

4. Discussion

4.1 Free time during the Golden Week

About one-third of the participants had only one or no free day during the Golden Week in 2016. In this study, the Golden Week was defined as the 10 days from April 29 to May 8. The National Federation of University Co-operative Associations reported that 70.4 % of the university students had part-time jobs in 2015, and this is the highest value since 2008. This suggests that university students are too busy due to work to enjoy their free leisure time enough. However, there are no relationships between leisure activities and the number of free days. The university students seem to manage their short time to enjoy leisure. Additionally, this 10-day vacation is too short to engage in leisure activities requiring several days like traveling. The results might be different if this survey is conducted after the one-month summer vacation, and the relationships between leisure activities and the number of free days might be predicted.

4.2 Relationship between leisure time and life adaptability or satisfaction

The number of free days and leisure activities did not affect life adaptability or satisfaction, against the prediction. However, the participants who showed the latest sense of fit in the university reported the traveling was the most joyful activity during the Golden Week. This might seem to match the general impressions. However, Hanai and Oguchi [2016] insisted that people who felt stressed prefer traveling, especially to natural environments to reduce their stress levels. This finding is consistent with this study's result. In this study, participants were asked not only what they did but also how what they did might be more important and useful to investigate the relationship between traveling and its stress-reducing effects.

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