Leisure as Catalyst: Associations Between Leisure Time Engagement and Sleep Quality, Cognitive Flexibility, and Emotional Regulation Among Professionals

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Leisure engagement is increasingly recognized as an important resource for psychological recovery in the context of demanding occupational environments. It facilitates psychological detachment from work and supports processes of restoration that contribute to overall well-being. The present study examined the association between time spent in leisure activities and key indicators of psychological functioning, including sleep quality, cognitive flexibility, and emotional regulation among working professionals. A total of 88 participants from medical, educational, and corporate sectors completed standardized self-report measures, including the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, Cognitive Flexibility Inventory, and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index. Leisure engagement was assessed using a structured checklist of activities along with reported weekly duration of participation. The findings indicated that greater weekly leisure duration was associated with better subjective and overall sleep quality, higher cognitive reappraisal, and higher scores on the Control dimension of cognitive flexibility. Participants also reported engagement across multiple categories of leisure activities, reflecting the multidimensional nature of leisure in everyday life. Overall, the results suggest that leisure functions as a meaningful context for psychological restoration, contributing to improved cognitive, emotional, and sleep-related outcomes. Participants also reported engagement across multiple categories of leisure activities, reflecting the multidimensional nature of leisure in everyday life. These findings indicate that leisure duration is associated with selected sleep, cognitive flexibility, and emotion-regulation outcomes. However, the associations were not consistent across all outcomes. Given the cross-sectional design, the findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

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