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Leisure Time of Seniors: The Role of Recreational Activities in Poland and France

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Abstract:

Purpose: *Leisure time activities are an important component of seniors' lifestyles and contribute to healthy and active aging. The purpose of this article is to compare the amount of leisure time available to older adults participating in Universities of the Third Age (UTA) in Poland and France, and to present key determinants influencing their selection of recreational, cultural, and digital activities.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study applies a mixed diagnostic approach based on the analysis of primary empirical data. The research was conducted using questionnaire surveys (electronic survey in France and classroom survey in Poland), supported by open interviews and direct observation. The methodological procedure involved data triangulation, critical analysis, and synthesis, enabling the identification of cross-national differences and the development of evidence-based conclusions.*
Findings: *The results show that French UTA participants report more leisure time, particularly on weekdays, and more frequently engage in cultural activities (theater, cinema), physical activities (cycling, walking), and digital practices (Internet use). Polish seniors more often choose home-based leisure dominated by television viewing. Family responsibilities, especially regular intergenerational caregiving (e.g., childcare for grandchildren), were identified as a key leisure-limiting factor in Poland, while French seniors demonstrated greater autonomy and broader social and cultural participation.*
Practical Implications: *The findings provide practical value for institutions and managers designing senior-oriented educational and community services. The results can support the development of service strategies that reduce family-related leisure barriers, increase access to diverse recreational opportunities, improve seniors' well-being, enhance social inclusion, and promote a more holistic model of active aging.*
Originality/Value: *The article contributes to a systematic understanding of seniors' leisure behaviors in a cross-cultural context. It offers theoretical insight and empirical evidence, addressing a research gap where comparative analyses of UTA participants' recreational, cultural, and digital engagement in Poland and France remain limited.*

Keywords: *Leisure time, seniors, Universities of the Third Age, recreational activity, active aging.*

JEL codes: *J14, Z32, I31, D13, L83.*
Paper Type: *Research article.*

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1. Introduction

The societies of the European Union, including Poland and France, are currently experiencing a process of rapid ageing. Due to demographic decline and increased life expectancy, the proportion of older people continues to rise: they now represent 20% of the population in Poland and 24% in France (2024 data).

In 2020, France already had more than 17 million people over the age of 60. This phenomenon, associated with longer life spans, has intensified social and political debates about ageing, the quality of life of older adults, and the control of healthcare expenditures.

From this perspective, physical and sporting activity plays a central role. It is often presented as a preferred way to "stay in shape" other than through medication (Dufraisse *et al.,* 2024, p. 9). Recreational activity, more broadly, constitutes an essential condition for health and psychosocial well-being: it fosters social connections, helps combat isolation, and improves physical and mental condition, thus contributing to optimal ageing (Wartecka-Ważyńska, 2015). Such activity is determined not only by biological factors but also by social and economic determinants, which are often decisive for access and motivation to participate.

The progressive ageing of the population therefore represents a social, economic, and cultural challenge. It requires systemic solutions that take into account the diverse difficulties encountered in old age: health problems, economic insecurity, inadequate housing, family disruptions, adaptation difficulties, dependencies, or emotional disorders (Leszczyńska-Rejchert, 2016, pp. 33-50).

Caradec (2022) also emphasizes that old age is not a homogeneous biological category but rather a social and cultural construct. The perception of what constitutes an "older person" varies according to historical and societal contexts, depending on norms, stereotypes, and institutions (such as retirement age). Thus, it is more appropriate to speak of "old ages" in the plural, as the experiences and trajectories of ageing differ according to gender, social class, economic status, health, or lifestyle.

In this context, it becomes relevant to explore cultural and societal differences in the leisure practices of older adults. Poland and France provide two contrasting yet

comparable contexts in this respect. Both countries belong to the same European cultural sphere and face similar demographic challenges, while differing in their levels of economic development, social policies, and family relations.

In France, the culture of leisure and autonomy among seniors is well established and supported by public policies that encourage cultural, associative, and educational participation. In Poland, by contrast, recreation among older people often focuses on health, family, and rehabilitation, in a context where intergenerational solidarity continues to play a central role.

The choice to compare Poland and France stems from the desire to examine two European models of ageing and social participation among older adults. Both countries are subject to similar demographic trends (ageing, longer life expectancy, feminization of old age) but follow different socio-economic and institutional trajectories.

In France, the promotion of "active ageing" is rooted in a long-standing tradition of public action focused on autonomy, prevention, and participation, supported by a strong institutional network (retirement homes, associations, universities of the third age). In Poland, the ageing process has accelerated more recently, within a post-socialist context where public policies and support infrastructures are still developing.

The aim of this comparison is twofold. On the one hand, it helps to understand how different institutional and cultural contexts influence the forms and motivations of recreational activities among older adults. On the other hand, it contributes to identifying good practices that can be transferred from one country to another, particularly regarding the promotion of well-being, social cohesion, and autonomy among older people.

Thus, the comparison between Poland and France goes beyond the simple juxtaposition of two national cases: it seeks to shed light on the social and cultural dynamics of active ageing in contemporary Europe.

Opportunities to continue professional activity within the framework of the "silver economy," the gradual improvement of older people's health, and the growing awareness of the need for physical activity are today contributing to the popularization of active forms of leisure.

Research on population ageing is expanding, aiming to find strategies that allow individuals to experience this life stage with quality. The practice and development of recreational activities represent an important factor in quality of life, as they contribute to greater well-being and, for older people, can serve as a strategy to mitigate the effects of the ageing process. Nevertheless, as some studies show, older adults often do not attribute much importance to leisure in their lives, largely due to

life histories that did not provide favorable conditions or opportunities to engage in such activities. Even among older adults who are not accustomed to dedicating free time to recreation, it is a fact that at a certain age, such activities can become a structural element of daily life (Marques and Teixeira, 2022).

Seniors now represent a specific category of tourism and leisure consumers, with increasing free time and resources (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2021). People aged 60 and over have specific needs, particularly regarding health, which can be met through physical, sporting, and recreational activities. The practice of sport is not only a means of maintaining physical condition but also a vector of social integration, self-esteem, and autonomy within the family (Laure and Falcoz, 2006).

The aim of this article is to identify the forms of leisure pursued by students of the Universities of the Third Age (UTA) in Poland and France, based on the results of empirical research. It also seeks to compare the state of recreational activities among UTA participants in the two countries and to formulate both theoretical and practical conclusions. This group of seniors, regularly engaged in educational, cultural, and recreational activities, constitutes a privileged observatory of active ageing.

Analyzing their practices allows for a better understanding of how cultural and socio-economic differences influence the choice of leisure forms. It also opens avenues for the creation of adapted leisure programs, both in places of permanent residence and in temporary stay destinations. Finally, the results obtained can help UTA students make informed choices about their participation in tourism and recreational activities, thereby contributing to their well-being and social engagement.

In addition to this introductory section, the structure of the article includes three parts: the first presents the study's methodology; the second discusses the results obtained; and the final part offers a synthesis and main conclusions.

2. Materials and Methods

In the context of the ageing European population, the initiatives undertaken and the present empirical research focus on the group of people aged over 60 in Poland and France, limited to participants of the University of the Third Age (UTA). The growing interest in this issue reflects a deep awareness of the importance of the ageing phenomenon and, consequently, of the need to address the problems and educational needs of UTA students (Cabanel and Chastenet, 2016; Perek-Białas, 2014).

The issue of recreational activities and other forms of leisure among students of the University of the Third Age in Poland and France refers, among others, to the following questions:

- How much leisure time do UTA students in Poland and France have per week?
  What forms of recreational activity do the respondents engage in on weekdays and weekends?
- What other forms of leisure do UTA students in Poland and France pursue on weekdays and weekends?
- What benefits, according to the respondents, can be derived from participating in recreational activities?

To answer the above questions, an empirical study was carried out using appropriate research methods and techniques.

The study employed the diagnostic survey method (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2001, p. 240), which involved a survey technique using a standardized electronic questionnaire (France) and a paper-based auditorium questionnaire (Poland). The questionnaire addressed to Polish seniors contained closed, open, and semi-open questions and was completed by respondents in the presence of an interviewer.

Conversely, the same questionnaire designed for French respondents was distributed electronically. The respondents were students of the University of the Third Age in Poznań, Poland, and in Nantes, France.

In total, 232 people participated in the survey (120 in Poland; 112 in France). The first part of the research was conducted between February and April 2024 in Poznań (hereinafter referred to as the Poznań group), and the second part between September and October 2024 in Nantes, France (hereinafter referred to as the French group).

In addition, the research methodology included free interviews and direct observation. A literature review was also conducted, and statistical methods were applied: Pearson's chi-square test and logistic regression modeling. A χ^2 statistic and corresponding p-values were calculated for each pair of variables, assuming a significance level of $\alpha = 0.001$. Significant relationships were interpreted as grounds for further modeling.

Among the Polish seniors surveyed, 86% were women and 14% were men. Similarly, among the French seniors, 78% were women and 22% were men (Table 1). Participants of UTAs in both countries are predominantly women, which is confirmed by other studies.

Analyzing the age structure of the Polish sample, it should be noted that the smallest group (10%) consisted of respondents aged 60-65, while the largest number of seniors (31%) were aged 66–70 and over 71. A similar situation was observed

among the French seniors surveyed, where the largest percentage (40%) was also made up of people aged 66-70 and over 71.

Both Polish and French respondents were dominated by individuals with higher education—57% among French seniors and 79% among Polish seniors.

The majority of respondents in both Poland (78%) and France (68%) declared that they lived in large cities. This can be explained by the research being conducted in Poznań and Nantes, respectively. The urban environment likely provided practical advantages, as city residents have access to institutions offering sports, leisure, and cultural opportunities.

However, 23% of Polish respondents and 32% of French seniors lived in small towns in the region and commuted to UTA meetings in Poznań and Nantes from nearby towns or villages. According to interviews, some had moved to smaller towns to build private homes but continued to travel willingly to the city for UTA classes, maintaining long-standing ties with these institutions.

A survey of the marital status of Polish seniors showed that most respondents were married (46%), followed by widowed persons (39%). Among French seniors, 59% were married and only 9% were widowed.

The study also considered the seniors' opinions on their financial situation, which is an important determinant of their participation in leisure activities, as such activities entail certain costs (Sikora and Wartecka-Ważyńska, 2017).

Among Polish seniors, 72% described their current financial situation as very good or good, 38% as average, and 1% as poor or very poor. Among French respondents, 71% declared a very good or good financial situation, followed by 29% describing it as average. None of the French seniors surveyed reported a poor or very poor material situation.

89% of Polish seniors stated that their average monthly income per family member exceeded 1,500 PLN (about €350). In contrast, 88% of French seniors indicated that their average monthly income ranged between €500 and €1,000 (2,175-4,350 PLN). In 2025, the average pension in Poland was 4,100 PLN gross per month (€956), while the minimum pension amounted to 1,879 PLN gross (€438). In France, the average pension in 2025 was €1,650 gross per month (approximately 7,177 PLN gross), and the minimum pension was about €1,240 gross per month (approximately 5,394 PLN gross) (Wersocki, 2025; Grzegrzółka, 2025).

Thus, in both countries, the seniors surveyed received incomes below the national average pension, with French respondents' incomes being closer to the minimum, while in Poland, a significant proportion declared incomes well below the national average but above the legal minimum.

Pensions in France are higher than in Poland, both nominally and when converted into PLN. However, it should be remembered that the cost of living in France is also higher, which affects the real purchasing power of pensions.

3. Results and Discussion

In both Poland and France, the number of older adults actively participating in lifelong learning - particularly at Universities of the Third Age (UTAs) - is steadily increasing. These participants not only develop their intellectual skills but also find active and satisfying ways to spend their free time. Studying leisure time and recreational activities among seniors helps to better understand their needs and the benefits of their engagement in such activities.

The aim of this research was to determine the amount of leisure time available to UTA students in Poland and France, as well as to identify the forms of leisure they engaged in during weekdays and weekends.

The study also sought to understand how participation in recreational activities affects the respondents' quality of life and the benefits—health-related, psychological, and social—that they perceive from regular participation in such activities. Understanding these aspects was crucial not only for designing educational and recreational programs for older adults but also for promoting active ageing more broadly.

The amount of leisure time among UTA students in Poland and France during the week, on weekdays and weekends, is presented in the table below (Table 1). The data presented were collected from 221 UTA students in Poland and France, who reported the number of hours of leisure per week on weekdays and weekends. The percentages shown reflect the distribution of responses according to three categories: 1–2 hours, 3–4 hours, and 5 hours or more.

Differences between the two countries and between weekdays and weekends were analyzed statistically using Pearson's Chi^2 test and the Chi^2 NW test ($p < 0.0001$), indicating that the observed differences are not due to chance.

The analysis of weekly leisure time among Polish and French UTA students revealed significant differences between the two groups, both for weekdays and weekends. On weekdays, 70.64% of Polish respondents reported having 5 or more hours of free time per day, whereas in France, this percentage reached 94.64%.

Meanwhile, a smaller proportion of Polish respondents (22.94%) reported having 3–4 hours of free time, compared with only 4.46% in France. Those with 1–2 hours of leisure time accounted for 6.42% among Polish respondents and only 0.89% among French respondents.

These results indicate that French UTA students have significantly more free time during the week than their Polish counterparts. This suggests that lifestyles and the structure of daily responsibilities may differ between the two countries.

On weekends, differences in leisure time distribution are less pronounced, though still noticeable. In both Poland (90.26%) and France (92.74%), the majority of respondents reported having 5 hours or more of free time. The proportion of people with only 1–2 hours of leisure was low in both groups (Poland 3.95%, France 4.05%).

Table 1. *Amount of Weekly Leisure Time Among Polish and French University of the Third Age Students Surveyed, on Weekdays and Weekends*

Leisure time	Poland – weekdays	France – weekdays	Poland – weekends	France – weekends	Total
			%		
1–2 hours	6.42	0.89	3.95	4.05	221
3–4 hours	22.94	4.46	14.80	15.20	8
≥5 hours	70.64	94.64	90.26	92.74	30

Note: *Pearson's Chi² = 22.39236, p = 0.00001; NW Chi² = 24.19152, p = 0.00001*
Source: *Author's own research.*

Statistical significance tests (Pearson's Chi² and Chi² NW) showed highly significant differences between the countries in weekend leisure time distribution ($p = 0.00001$). The strong significance level ($p < 0.001$) confirms that these differences are not random.

In summary, French UTA students have more leisure time than Polish students, particularly on weekdays. On weekends, the differences are smaller but remain statistically significant.

The recreational activities of Polish and French University of the Third Age (UTA) students during weekdays are presented in Table 2. Data analysis shows that Polish and French respondents differed statistically significantly in terms of how they spent their leisure time on weekdays. Among the active forms of leisure pursued during the week, both Polish and French respondents most frequently indicated cycling, swimming, gardening, and domestic activities (such as cleaning, cooking, or childcare).

Analysis of Table 2 shows that cycling was reported by 29% of Polish respondents and 48% of French respondents ($p = 0.0025$), indicating significantly higher popularity in France. In contrast, swimming was similarly popular in both groups: 30% in Poland and 29% in France ($p = 0.8747$).

Domestic activities were practiced by 74% of respondents in Poland and 89% in France, a difference that was statistically significant ($p = 0.0024$). Gardening was

reported by 48% of Poles and 55% of French respondents ($p = 0.2321$), showing no significant difference.

On weekends, recreational activity patterns were similar, but the proportion of respondents engaging in active leisure was lower in Poland than in France. Cycling was indicated by 23% of Poles and 43% of French respondents ($p = 0.0116$). Domestic activities remained higher in France (79%) than in Poland (33%), a difference highly significant statistically ($p < 0.0001$). Gardening was also significantly more frequent in France (47%) than in Poland (18%) ($p < 0.0001$).

Regarding passive forms of leisure—reading books and newspapers, listening to music, watching television, using a computer, and participating in cultural life (cinema, theatre)—significant differences were observed between the groups. On weekdays, the analysis is as follows: reading books and newspapers was almost universal in France (100% of respondents) and much less popular in Poland (82%), with a highly significant difference ($p < 0.0001$).

Use of computers and the Internet was reported by 65% of Poles and 89% of French respondents ($p < 0.0001$). Participation in cultural events (cinema, theatre) was significantly higher in France (79%) than in Poland (30%) ($p < 0.0001$). Listening to music was more popular in France (85%) than in Poland (54%) ($p = 0.0005$). In contrast, watching television was very common in Poland (97%) and slightly less so in France (81%), but the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.7377$).

On weekends, the trends remained the same, with an increase in the popularity of passive activities in France. Reading books and newspapers remained very popular in France (96%) compared to Poland (46%) ($p < 0.0001$). Participation in cultural events was much higher in France (81%) than in Poland (23%) ($p < 0.0001$).

Computer and Internet use during the weekend was reported by 81% of French respondents and only 38% of Poles ($p < 0.0001$). Listening to music was more popular in France (75%) than in Poland (32%) ($p < 0.0001$). Watching television, however, was more common in Poland (50%) than in France (22%) ($p = 0.0001$).

The study results indicate that French UTA students are significantly more likely than Polish respondents to engage in both active and passive leisure activities on weekdays and weekends. These differences are particularly evident in participation in cultural events, reading, and physical activities (cycling, gardening).

In conclusion, the analysis of leisure activities among UTA students in Poland and France revealed significant differences between the groups. French respondents were more inclined to engage in both active and passive forms of leisure, demonstrating higher physical and cultural activity. Polish respondents, on the other hand, preferred more passive ways of spending their free time, such as watching television (Roult, Carbonneau, Lefebvre, Adjizian, Belley-Ranger, Duquette, 2017, p. 1).

Table 2. *Forms of Recreational Activities on Weekdays and Weekends Among Polish and French UTA Students*

Activity	Poland - weekdays (%)	France - weekdays (%)	Poland - weekends (%)	France - weekends (%)	p-value
Cycling	29.0	48.0	23.0	43.0	0,003[a]/ 0,0116[a]
Swimming	30.0	29.0	9.80	11.0	0,8747[a]/ 0,8249[a]
Books/newspapers	82.0	100.0	46.0	96.0	<0,001[a]/ <0,001[a]
Cinema/theatre	30.0	79.0	23.0	81.0	<0,001[a]/ <0,001[a]
Listening to music	54.0	85.0	32.0	75.0	0,0005[a]/ <0,001[a]
Watching television	97.0	81.0	50.0	22.0	0,7377[a]/ 0,0001[a]
Computer (Internet)	65.0	89.0	38.0	81.0	<0,001[a]/ <0,001[a]
Cafe	34.0	23.0	22.0	22.0	0,0592[a]/ 0,8965[a]
Pub	5.0	3.0	2.00	4.00	0,3735[c]/ 0,6029[c]
Interest club (retiree circle, University of the Third Age)	79.0	78.0	22.0	25.0	0,8517[a]/ 0,6051[a]
Domestic activities (cleaning, cooking, childcare)	74.0	89.0	33.0	79.0	0,0024[a]/ <0,001[a]
Gardening	48.0	55.0	-	-	0,2321[a]/ <0,001[a]

Note: *[a] – Pearson's Chi², [b] – NW Chi², [c] – Yates' Chi².*
Source: *Author's own research.*

French respondents were almost three times more likely to go to the cinema or theatre on weekdays than Polish respondents. This suggests that French respondents engaged in cultural activities that have not only aesthetic value but also therapeutic benefits. The use of a computer or the Internet was more than 1.5 times more frequent among French respondents than among Poles. Similarly, recreational activity—cycling—was more popular among French UTA students (Table 3).

The results indicate that Polish UTA students are more likely than French students to spend their leisure time in active ways—culturally, digitally, and physically. The largest difference concerned participation in cultural events (cinema, theatre), while the smallest difference was in cycling.

Logistic regression analysis was used to identify the forms of leisure activities during weekdays that differentiate membership in the Polish or French UTA student group. The three variables analyzed—attendance at cinema/theatre, use of a computer/Internet, and cycling—were found to be significant predictive variables for belonging to the French group.

Attendance at cinema or theatre was the strongest predictive variable, increasing the odds of being a French respondent by more than 2.79 times compared to those who engaged in this activity less frequently. Use of a computer and the Internet also had a significant effect: digitally active individuals were 1.86 times more likely to be French UTA students. Cycling increased the likelihood of belonging to the French group by approximately 1.48 times compared to Polish students.

The odds ratios (OR) and confidence intervals confirm that all three variables have a statistically significant effect ($p < 0.05$) on classifying respondents by country. The model showed that French respondents were more likely than Polish respondents to attend traditional cultural events, were more digitally active, and slightly more likely to engage in physical activity (cycling).

Table 3*. Weekday Leisure Activities and Membership in Polish or French UTA Students – Logistic Regression Results*

Weekday Leisure Activity	Estimate	p-value*	Odds Ratio (OR)**	OR Lower 95% CI***	OR Upper 95%****
Cinema, theatre	1.026	0.0001	2.79	2.04	3.81
Computer, Internet	0.623	0.0020	1.86	1.25	2.78
Cycling	0.391	0.0150	1.48	1.08	2.03
Scale	1				

Note: ** Estimate – Logistic regression coefficient (logit): ** p-value – Indicates statistical significance (if < 0.05, the result is significant). *** Odds Ratio (OR) – How the odds change based on the activity. **** OR 95% CI – Confidence interval for the odds ratio (lower and upper limits).*
Source: *Own study.*

The data presented in Table 3 were collected from a sample of students enrolled in the University of the Third Age (UTA) in Poland and France. The UTA was chosen as the survey setting because it represents an active population engaged in lifelong learning, providing insight into the leisure activities of committed seniors. The sample included 232 respondents: 120 in Poland and 112 in France, selected using a diagnostic survey. In Poland, the questionnaire was administered in person (auditorium), while in France it was distributed online.

Analysis of leisure activities during weekdays and weekends indicates that French respondents were more than three times as likely to attend the cinema or theatre compared to Polish respondents. Similarly, reading books and newspapers was much more popular among French UTA students than among Polish students.

Internet use was also more common among French respondents, although the difference was less pronounced. These results, obtained through logistic regression, highlight significant differences in leisure behavior between the two groups.

French UTA participants were twice as likely as Poles to engage in gardening. The smallest difference in weekend leisure activities between Polish and French respondents was in listening to music, although the survey still showed greater interest in music in France.

French respondents were also more likely to spend weekends actively engaged in cultural activities (cinema, reading). They were more involved in physical and domestic activities (gardening, Internet use). Overall, they were more active in these leisure pursuits than Polish respondents (Table 4).

The study tested whether weekend leisure activities differed between Polish and French UTA students. All variables tested reached statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), confirming the reliability of the observed differences.

Table 4. *Ways of Spending Weekend Leisure Time – Logistic Regression Results*

Weekend Leisure Activity	Estimate	p-value	Odds Ratio (OR)	OR Lower 95% CI	OR Upper 95% CI
Cinema, theatre	1,24	0.00	3,45	2.31	5,14
Books, newspapers	1,36	0.00	3,89	2,10	7,18
Computer, Internet	0.60	0.01	1,83	1,20	2,79
Gardening	0.69	0.00	1,99	1,29	3,06
Listening to music	0.46	0.03	1,59	1,05	2,41

Source: *Own study.*

The comparative analysis revealed significant differences between the study groups. In particular, French students were statistically more likely to engage in walking as a form of physical activity than Polish students (OR ≈ 1.7; 95% CI: 1.17–2.35; $p = 0.002$). This means that French respondents were almost 1.7 times more likely to choose walking than Polish respondents.

Furthermore, French UTA students were more likely to participate in fitness activities than Polish respondents (OR ≈ 1.7; 95% CI: 1.22–2.39), although this difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.944$). In contrast, Polish UTA participants were more likely to engage in home gymnastics than French students (OR ≈ 0.7; 95% CI: 0.52–0.90), but this difference was also not statistically significant ($p = 0.855$).

Walking was the only statistically validated and more popular form of physical activity among French UTA students. Polish respondents showed a tendency (though not statistically significant) to exercise more frequently at home.

These results highlight the importance of lifestyle differences in shaping physical activity preferences among UTA participants in Poland and France (Table 5).

Table 5. *Forms of Physical Activity Practiced by Polish and French UTA Students – Logistic Regression Results*

Forms of Physical Activity	Estimate	p-value	Odds Ratio (OR)	OR Lower 95% CI	OR Upper 95% CI
Fitness classes	0,536	0,944	1,709	1,221	2,392
Walking	0,506	0,002	1,659	1,17	2,352
Gymnastics	-0,387	0,855	0,679	0,515	0,896
Scale	1				

Source: *Own study.*

Table 6 presents the opinions of Polish and French UTA students on the benefits of participating in leisure activities. The horizontal axis shows the odds ratio (OR) – values above 1 indicate that a particular benefit was more frequently reported by French respondents, while values below 1 indicate it was more frequently reported by Polish respondents.

French respondents were more than five times more likely to state that participation in leisure activities enhances their knowledge of the world compared to Polish UTA students. They were also more than twice as likely as Polish respondents to highlight the aesthetic aspects of leisure.

Polish respondents, on the other hand, were slightly more likely (0.4 times) to indicate that participation in recreational activities is beneficial for health. Overall, French respondents perceived leisure more as a form of world learning (educational aspect) and development of aesthetic sensitivity, whereas Polish UTA students were more inclined to emphasize the health benefits of leisure activities.

Table 6. *Benefits of Leisure Participation Reported by Polish and French UTA Students – Logistic Regression Results*

Effect	Estimate	p-value	Odds Ratio (OR)	OR Lower 95% CI	OR Upper 95% CI
Enhances knowledge	1,697	0,0	5,46	3,399	8,76
of the world	-0,88	0,0	0,415	0,264	0,652
Promotes human	0,782	0,0	2,187	1,442	3,316
health	1				
Shapes aesthetic values					
Scale					

Source: *Own study.*

Polish UTA respondents appear to be more practical, focusing on health and choosing activities that can be done at home. For them, leisure serves a preventive health function. French seniors, on the other hand, view free time more

holistically—as an opportunity for intellectual, aesthetic, and social development—and go out more often (Marchand, Quéniart, and Charpentier, 2010).

Leisure offerings should be adapted to the expectations of seniors depending on the country. In Poland, programs should focus on health, rehabilitation, and physical activity, while in France, educational, cultural, and aesthetic programs in outdoor settings are preferred (Table 7).

In both countries, activities that promote a holistic approach to leisure, combining health, culture, and education in the lives of older adults, should be supported. France has a long tradition of supporting a leisure culture and social life among seniors. Many governmental and local programs encourage educational, aesthetic, and social activities (Racicot-Lanoue, Goudreault, Larocque-Tourangeau, and Garon, 2018).

Poland, in contrast, has only been developing more comprehensive programs to support older adults' recreational activity for about twenty years, with a stronger emphasis on health and rehabilitation, following political transformations and increased life expectancy (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021; Ministry of Solidarity and Health, 2021; Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), 2020; Dufraisse *et al.,* 2024).

In France, healthcare and preventive measures are more developed, allowing for a focus on quality of life and personal fulfillment for older adults (OECD, 2022; Wyszkowska *et al.,* 2021).

Moreover, French seniors, including UTA students, are encouraged by family and institutions to participate in social life. Personal development and cultural engagement are considered important for "successful aging" (Petit, 2010, pp. 79-96). Polish seniors, including UTA students, have historically been accustomed to a family-centered time organization model, often viewing leisure as functional (e.g., "being healthier for the family") (Hofstede Insights; Kubiak-Szymczak, 2019). In Poland, UTAs are often associated with rehabilitation courses, health workshops, and less with cultural offerings.

In contrast, in France, the UTA in Nantes offers a richer and more attractive program to its students—it organizes lectures, art classes, theatre courses, and outdoor concerts (University of the Third Age in Warsaw, 2023; Université Permanente in Nantes, 2024/2025) (Table 7).

4. Conclusion

The study revealed significant differences in the amount of free time available to University of the Third Age (UTA) students in Poland and France. French respondents have considerably more free time during weekdays, which may be due

to differences in the structure of professional and social responsibilities between the two countries. The larger weekday leisure budget of French UTA students may also result from a more flexible work structure and the number of holidays. In Poland, by contrast, free time is more limited, especially on weekdays, due to professional and daily obligations. On weekends, these differences are smaller but still noticeable, indicating variations in daily life organization.

Table 7. *Qualitative Synthesis of the Results of a Survey Conducted Among French and Polish UTA Students on Leisure Activities*

Certain Aspects of Leisure	**Country**	
	Poland	France
Main objectives of leisure	Health, prevention, rehabilitation	Intellectual, social, and aesthetic development
Dominant location of recreational activity	At home	Outside the home (parks, cultural centers)
Preferred types of recreational activities	Home exercises, physical rehabilitation	Courses, educational and cultural activities
Leisure approach style	Practical	Holistic
Recommended leisure offerings	Health-focused, rehabilitation	Cultural-educational, aesthetic-nature
General recommendations	Support a holistic approach to leisure	Support a holistic approach to leisure

Source: *Own study.*

French UTA students were more active in both active leisure forms—such as cycling and walking—and passive forms—such as cinema, theater, and reading. Polish respondents tended to engage more in passive leisure activities, such as household chores and watching television.

Regarding technology and digital engagement, computer and internet use was much higher in France, suggesting that French respondents are more open to digital technologies. In Poland, despite growing popularity of online activities, respondents were more inclined to choose traditional leisure forms.

Participation in UTAs is an important factor in activating older adults, providing opportunities to develop intellectual skills and engage in various forms of physical and recreational activity. Participation in these activities positively impacted seniors' quality of life, particularly in terms of social and mental engagement.

Respondents in both countries highlighted that recreational activities promote human health, improving well-being, reducing stress, and maintaining mental health. French respondents particularly emphasized the benefits associated with aesthetic value formation, such as cultural and intellectual activities, which also influence their social engagement. Seniors in both countries also reported social benefits—enhancing their knowledge of the world, integration with others, making new

friends, and feeling part of a community. Participation in recreational activities, therefore, provides physical, mental, and social advantages.

The study's conclusions allowed the researchers to answer the research questions, highlighting differences between Polish and French respondents in terms of leisure time, preferred forms of physical activity, and perceived benefits of participation.

French respondents had more time for physical and cultural activities, resulting in higher activity levels compared to Polish respondents, who preferred more passive ways of spending their time. In both countries, respondents perceived significant health, mental, and social benefits associated with recreational activities.

UTA students represent a highly specific market segment from the perspective of leisure activities. The research findings encompass not only cognitive aspects but also practical implications. In this context, it is important to note that older adults' recreational activity, particularly physical activity, affects their health status within the family (Osinski, 2013, p. 11), which has social, well-being, and economic dimensions.

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