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Appendix 1: PM programme (One example from 18 possible group activities)

| Activity | The sky turns around |
|-----------------------|---|
| Goal | Practicing balance by turning around (fast and slow) |
| Performance component | Dynamic balance, body scheme, vestibular sensation, activity level |
| Equipment | Three scooter boards, small mat, parachute |
| Procedure | <p>1. Warm up activity The children try to keep their balance while sitting on a big ball. The teacher tries to disturb the child's balance by gently pushing the ball. Peers are encouraged to imitate the teacher. This activity enables the child to experience balance responses at first hand.</p> <p>2. Main Activity Two scooter boards are placed next to each other with a mat covering both the boards. One child then lies on the scooter in a prone position. A peer is asked to gently rotate the scooter boards. The teacher is available to assist if needed.</p> <p>3. Closing Activity Teacher connects three scooter boards and spreads the parachute to cover them. Children are encouraged to lie on the parachute. The teacher gently pulls the scooter board while playing calming music, giving the children the opportunity to relax and decrease their activity level.</p> |
| Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children practise dynamic balance through fast or slow movements. • Through movement the child builds body scheme and experiences vestibular sensation. • The closing activity is important for children who experience heightened activity levels during the main activity. |
| Evaluation | This activity is suitable for improving the dynamic balance of the children with severe and multiple disabilities, who do not move spontaneously. It also develops postural control in a playful manner. |

Through the lens of a peer: understanding leisure boredom and risk behaviour in adolescence

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ABSTRACT

There has been very little research investigating leisure boredom and risk behaviour among adolescents in South Africa. Using a qualitative approach, this study investigated adolescents' perceptions of leisure boredom and risk behaviour during free time. The sample of participants comprised three groups of adolescents: a community group, a school group and a group who had dropped out of school. Participants documented their free time experiences by taking photographs that were later discussed in focus groups. The findings showed that the participants were bored in their free time mainly because they had nothing to do. The low socio-economic environment where they lived contributed to occupational deprivation and imbalance in their free time, maintaining or 'trapping' the adolescents within the situation and contributing to feelings of boredom. The participants spent much of their free time 'hanging out' on street corners or in backyards, which allowed them to socialise, but inevitably led to boredom. Participants felt that boredom was part of life, although some perceived it to be 'dangerous' because it often led to risky behaviour. In conclusion, the study showed that for the participants, leisure is an occupational concern due to the occupational deprivation and imbalance occurring within their free time. Occupational therapists should consider how leisure boredom influences adolescent health, wellbeing and development, and plan interventions accordingly.

Key words: Adolescence, free time, leisure boredom, photographs, risk behaviour

Introduction

Leisure boredom is being experienced by young South Africans and can influence aspects of their lives. A previous study conducted among school-going adolescents in Cape Town (South Africa)

showed that leisure boredom was relatively higher among girls and younger adolescents¹. Another study showed that adolescents who experience higher leisure boredom were at greater risk of dropping out of school². These studies used a quantitative approach, thus



there is a need for a qualitative study to investigate adolescents' perceptions of leisure, their experiences of boredom in free time, and their views about how risk behaviour is associated with leisure and boredom³.

To address this need, a qualitative study was conducted with three groups of adolescents: a community group, a school-going group and a group who had dropped out of school. The study setting was an impoverished community in Cape Town. The adolescents took photographs depicting their free time experiences and these were later discussed in focus groups. In this article, the study is described, the findings are presented and recommendations are made.

Literature overview

Boredom is a complex phenomenon that is described as anxiety about the absence of meaning or loss of purpose in an activity or situation, accompanied by feelings of dissatisfaction, irritability, restlessness, stress, and a sense of entrapment^{4,5,6}. Leisure boredom occurs when individuals perceive their leisure experiences as not sufficient to satisfy their need for optimal arousal⁷.

Free time and leisure are related yet quite distinct concepts that are often used interchangeably. Free time occupies a broader domain than leisure, and refers to time that is free of obligatory activities. It is that time when adolescents are not engaged in school-work, homework, work or chores. Relative to working adults, adolescents have more free time available for leisure, although this may vary depending on the socio-cultural context. In a time-use study of adolescents (n=3052) in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, the percentage of daily time spent hanging out, (which was defined as "... doing nothing, hanging out at the mall or street corner, or going to bars or parties"), was 12% for Black boys, 9% for Indian boys, and 5% for White boys⁸. Adolescents who have dropped out of school have relatively more free time than their school-going counterparts. However, no previous studies in South Africa had investigated how adolescents experience their free time, and their perceptions of boredom and risk behaviour.

Leisure can be regarded as being 'nested' within the domain of free time, as leisure activities usually occur during free time. Leisure has been defined as the purposeful and intentional use of free time to engage in self-selected activities that are meaningful and intrinsically motivating to the individual in that they are enjoyable, fun, refreshing and pleasurable⁹. Leisure is an occupation that enables adolescents to experience freedom, intrinsic motivation and positive affect¹⁰. Feeling competent, playful, spontaneous and involved in leisure activities that meet one's needs contribute to a sense of satisfaction through constructive use of leisure time¹¹. A fundamental belief in occupational therapy is that engagement in meaningful, purposeful occupation and activities contributes directly to the individual's health, wellness and development, and promotes a cycle of positive performance and engagement. As occupational therapists, we may ask the question - what happens when the elements of context, occupation or activity and experience are less than optimal?

Free time and leisure can also be utilised for risky pursuits or unhealthy activities. A deficit in the experience of, or inability to engage in, meaningful occupations increases the likelihood of ill-health, dysfunction and risk behaviour. Wilcock^{12,13} defined "occupational risk factors" as "occupational deprivation" and "occupational imbalance". Occupational deprivation occurs when factors beyond people's control limit their choices of, and opportunity to engage in, occupation¹². Occupational imbalance occurs when engagement in occupation fails to meet the individual's unique physical, social and mental needs, or when there is incongruity between what one wants to do and what one has to do¹². Poverty plays a major role as an external agency or circumstance causing occupational deprivation and imbalance for many individuals and communities in South Africa¹³. However, there has been no research that has investigated how these risk factors manifest during the free time of South African adolescents, especially those living in impoverished areas.

The influence of the environment on occupational participation should not be underestimated. Law *et al.*¹⁴ proposed that

the environment be viewed as one of three core constructs – the other two being the person and the occupation – that influence occupational performance. The environment is continually shifting and changing over time and space, which requires individuals to adapt their behaviours, and thus, their occupational performances. When individuals experience the environment as containing sufficient opportunities for action (challenges) balanced by their own capacity to act (skills), the quality of the experience is usually highly positive. Csikszentmihalyi¹⁵ referred to this optimal experience as flow. Adolescents who have opportunities to experience flow through participation in leisure pursuits also experience satisfaction and well-being, which ultimately contributes to their positive health and development. Another question is - how does the environment influence adolescents' experiences during free time?

In summary, the review of literature revealed gaps in the knowledge base and a need for further research to investigate adolescents' experiences of boredom in free time, and their perceptions of leisure boredom and risk behaviour. This has relevance for occupational therapy because it deepens understanding of leisure as an important occupation, and provides insight about how leisure boredom contributes to risk factors influencing adolescent health, wellbeing and development.

Methods

Aim and objectives

Using a qualitative approach, the aim of the study was to understand adolescents' perceptions of leisure boredom and risk behaviour in free time. The objectives were to:

- ❖ Explore adolescents' experiences during their free time;
- ❖ Document the form, function and meaning of boredom in free time;
- ❖ Explore adolescents' perceptions of how boredom relates to risk behaviour; and
- ❖ Explore how the environment influences adolescents' experiences during free time.

Population and sampling

The population comprised adolescents residing in an impoverished community in Cape Town. In order to get a diverse sample of adolescents, three groups of participants were selected using convenience sampling. For the first group, adolescents who attended the local library one afternoon were invited to participate in the study. This group comprised five participants (three girls and two boys whose ages ranged from 15 to 18 years). A second group of participants was obtained by inviting learners from a Grade 8 class at a local high school to take part in the study. This group comprised ten participants (four girls and six boys whose ages ranged from 13 to 15 years). The third group comprised 17 participants (nine boys and eight girls whose ages ranged from 16 to 20 years) who had dropped out of school. A local high school provided lists of adolescents who had dropped out of school in the preceding two years, and these adolescents were contacted telephonically and invited to participate.

Data gathering

Visual imagery provides researchers with a valuable means of making sense of social phenomena, and allows participants' voices to be heard. Dialogue between researchers and participants is facilitated because of the visual nature of the medium. This becomes particularly useful when working with adolescent participants who may not yet have developed sufficient abstract thinking abilities and the vocabulary required to express themselves adequately through discussion alone, and who may perceive adult researchers to be in a position of power or authority. Thus, photographs taken by the participants formed one main data source and facilitated access by the adult researchers to the adolescents' lived experiences. During introductory sessions, pairs of participants were given disposable cameras and requested to, "Take photographs of teenagers having fun" over a period of five days including a weekend.



After the cameras were returned and the photographs developed, two focus groups were held during which the participants discussed their photos. Focus groups were used because they capitalise on the interaction within a group to gain rich experiential data about a particular topic, and group discussions provided direct evidence about similarities and differences in participants' opinions and experiences¹⁶. The researcher, a co-researcher and three under-graduate students facilitated the groups. Participants were also asked to write captions on the back of their photos describing what was happening in their photographs. This was followed by a discussion about the photographs.

Thereafter, three gender-specific focus groups were run at a school. The photographs were used to trigger discussion around boredom and risk behaviour in free time. Four large sheets of paper – each containing one of the following unfinished statements – were pasted against the wall: (1) Being bored means ... (2) Teenagers like me get bored when ... (3) Places that make teenagers like me get bored are ... (4) Being bored can be a problem for teenagers like me because Participants were invited to choose one or more photographs that were personally meaningful in that they answered the statements, and stick these onto the relevant posters. Afterwards, the researchers and the participants discussed these meanings by talking about what the photographs depicted and how they related to boredom from the participants' perspectives.

Data Analysis

Using Kanstrup's¹⁷ method of analysing photographs, the researchers first grouped similar photographs, for example, socially acceptable leisure activities such as soccer or rollerblading. Once this process was finalised, the scenes depicted by the grouped photographs were described in writing, and these constituted the categories. Where present, the participants' captions on the backs of the photographs were included in the written descriptions. From the written descriptions and the photographic evidence, the researchers looked for patterns among the categories that related in some way to the research objectives and these became themes.

The focus groups' discussions were audio-taped, and then transcribed verbatim. Bearing in mind the research objectives, inductive thematic analysis of the transcripts was conducted by identifying codes, grouping these into categories, and then forming themes by means of similarities and patterns within the data. Finally, categories and themes from both the analyses of the photographs and the focus groups were cross-referenced and merged into four main themes.

Trustworthiness

This study employed several methods to establish trustworthiness. Firstly, there was triangulation of data through the use of multiple methods of data collection. Secondly, all of the photographs were discussed with the participants during the focus groups, thus constituting a form of peer verification. Thirdly, investigator triangulation occurred through discussions with researchers, a colleague and students.

Ethics

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the respective Research Committees of the Universities of Cape Town and the Western Cape. Active consent was obtained from the parents/guardians of the participants who were under the age of 18 years.

Regarding the photographs, ethical issues were discussed with the participants such as the importance of asking permission from potential photo-subjects, and informing people that the photographs would be used for research purposes and their identities would be protected by blocking out their faces.

Findings

Four themes emerged from the analysis. *Table 1* below shows the themes, sub-themes and categories.

Table 1: Themes, sub-themes and categories

| Themes | Sub-themes | Categories |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No entry - no exit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited leisure resources Limited leisure opportunities Poverty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive leisure activities Risky, negative activities Use of free time Relationship to time Environmental influence on boredom |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too much free time, but you have time for yourself | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free time means ... Doing nothing On your own Op die hoeke (On the street corners) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental influence on leisure Boredom at school Form of boredom Form of leisure Experiences of boredom Experiences of leisure Purpose and function of boredom Purpose and function of leisure |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boredom is <i>gevaarlik</i> (dangerous) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking for fun Lack of supervision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaning of boredom Meaning of leisure Process of boredom Process of leisure Properties of boredom |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every person must get bored | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of life Doing something | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties of leisure Reasons for boredom Boredom relating to risk behaviour Dealing with boredom Playing the fool Enthusiasm about something new / different |

Theme 1: No entry – no exit

This theme contextualises the major impact that the environment had on the participants' experiences during their free time. The title for this theme comes from the participants' perceptions that there was 'no entry' into leisure facilities and 'no exit' from their situation. The photographs provided much evidence of limited leisure and recreational resources in the community. Sports fields and playing fields at schools were often used as parking lots, or were so run-down and neglected that they were unusable. Sports fields were locked and surrounded by electric or barbed wire fences mainly to prevent unwanted elements from vandalising equipment and using the area for illicit activities as indicated in the quote below. However, this also prevented adolescents from accessing and using the sports fields.

They lock it up because now gangsters wanna take over the grounds there, then we can't play on the field and stuff (Boy, 15 years).

Although there were recreation and community centres, these appeared to be under-utilised for youth recreation programmes. This is a typical scenario of similar communities and occurs for a number of reasons including a shortage of suitably skilled staff, lack of money, and because leisure and recreation do not take priority over providing resources such as soup kitchens and crèches⁴.

There were many parks and open fields that were surrounded by houses, flats and busy roads. These parks were not very appealing places as the equipment was either broken or stolen. There were numerous derelict buildings and deserted houses in the area that had been vandalised or burnt out, with broken walls and covered in graffiti. Although the participants perceived parks to be places for younger children to play in, and derelict houses as places frequented by sexual assailants and where gangs consumed drugs and alcohol, the participants spent a lot of their free time in



these places for want of better places to go. Known as *suiker huisies* (sugar houses) (see Figure 1) because they are 'sweet' places where young people were free to do whatever they wanted, the activities in these houses were often risky and anti-social. These places were considered boring as the quote below indicates:

A place like that makes teenagers bored... Its just boring man, it's not right for me... You get teenagers that would go to places like that, doing their thing, they go tik [use of methamphetamine derivative] themselves mad there or drink or smoke weed or something, but it's all bad things. (Girl, 15 years).



Figure 1: A derelict building known as a *suiker huisie* (sugar house)

For the participants living in this community, the environment (homes, schools and local community) offered very limited opportunities to utilise leisure, sport and recreational resources. They had few options for exposure to, and participation in, leisure activities. This meant that there was very little engagement in leisure activities that provided opportunities for meaningful participation and sustained involvement over time. For the participants who had dropped out of school, there were even fewer opportunities available. Therefore, the environment contributed significantly to occupational deprivation¹⁷ in that the participants were unable to participate in a range of healthy leisure activities due to environmental limitations.

The participants perceived poverty as being one of the major factors maintaining this situation as it limits choices for engagement in a wider variety of leisure pursuits. As one 18 year old boy said, "If you don't have money you can do nothing."

As a result of the environmental influence on occupational deprivation, the participants experienced high levels of boredom during their free time. The environment also offered many opportunities for risk activities like substance use, and anti-social behaviour such as vandalism. The situation was compounded by poverty and the lack of employment opportunities for participants who had dropped out of school.

Theme 2: Too much free time, but you have time for yourself

This theme offers an understanding of why the participants felt bored, and the meaning that they attributed to their boredom. The theme title quotes a 17 year-old boy participant and sums up the general perception of the participants that free time was a double-edged sword – on the one hand, they valued their free time as they could do mostly what they wanted without being constrained by chores and other work; however, this free time was often meaningless and unconstructive, leading to their experience of boredom.

The photographs depicted the type of activities that the participants engaged in during their free time. Many of these activities were positive, healthy leisure pursuits. Boys participated in numerous physical activities such as soccer, riding bicycles, cricket, rollerblading and skateboarding – nearly all of these activities took place on the streets. Only one picture showed girls doing a physical

activity – skipping, although they also enjoyed playing street netball. Other leisure activities were watching television, reading, playing pool (see Figure 2), video arcade games, dice games, sleeping, playing with pets and listening to music. Participants enjoyed spending time – generally referred to by the participants as 'hanging out' – at local shopping malls, on street corners, in game shops, at friends' houses listening to music, playing PlayStation, driving around, going to the beach, sleeping and eating.

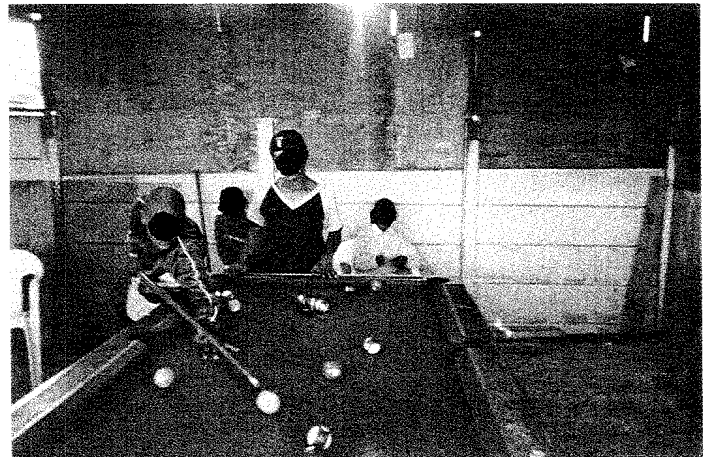


Figure 2: A game shop with pool table and video games

Many photographs showed adolescents engaging in substance abuse. For example, one photograph showed three girls standing against the wall of a *shebeen* [private houses from where alcohol and drugs are sold illegally] – one girl was smoking a cigarette, the other girls drank beer. Participants visited *shebeens* because they perceived that they could drink freely with little or no interference from adults. Another photograph showed a boy sitting on an upside-down toilet in a wooden shed next to a box of dominoes. He had a piece of paper in his hand filled with *dagga* [cannabis]. Participants said they enjoyed partying at friends' houses because they could dance, smoke, drink and use drugs. This occurred mostly when adults were not at home.

All of the boy dropouts and the majority of girl dropouts reported that they had used, or were still using drugs; *tik* was the most commonly used drug. All of these adolescents said they dropped out of school because of drug abuse. One boy described how his "free time was not lekker" [nice] because he spent most of his time planning how to make money, deal drugs, and use drugs.

Many participants (mainly boys and some girls) spent a lot of their free time at game shops. Generally, a game shop is a room at the back of a shop or house containing pool tables and video arcade games. However, the participants described how the monotony of this activity led to boredom, especially once they had mastered a particular game, as indicated in the quote below:

You go to game shops and it's gonna get monotonous like if you go there every time repeatedly and it can get monotonous, yeah the game ... nothing's gonna change, the same stuff all the time so it's gonna get boring. It's keeping the same pattern (Boy, 17 years).

Generally, the participants perceived that any element of repetition within their daily activities and time use led to boredom. One girl participant said, "Boredom is the same thing over and over...". When adolescents are not fully engaged in an activity, boredom may result due to the sense of disconnection that arises within the situation³³.

Much of the participants' free time – especially those who had dropped out of school – was spent doing nothing. There were many photographs of adolescents sitting or lying around in groups, and the phrase 'doing nothing' was frequently used to refer to time that passed without meaningful activity or any purpose. One girl described this as, "Sitting there, getting lazy, doing nothing." Watching television was an activity that many of the participants felt they did



because they had nothing else to do. Even when this activity had some purpose in that they were watching a favourite programme or were with friends, the activity was regarded as having little meaning or value. For the participants who had dropped out of school, watching television was just a way to use up time.

Situations or activities that limited interaction with peers were perceived to be boring. For the participants that had dropped out of school, being on their own was perceived as being a very boring situation. This is not surprising as these adolescents were alone for much of their time during the day, when family and friends were at work or school. The isolation of these dropouts and decreased opportunities for interaction with peers compounded their disconnection from the rest of society and lack of stimulation, thus contributing to their feelings of boredom. The fact that so many adolescents drop out of school and experience this situation was expressed by one of the boy dropouts who said, "There by us everybody leaves school. You are at home, nothing to do...".

Gathering together, or 'hanging out' on street corners was a predominant free time activity for the participants - both boys and girls (see Figure 3). Sometimes, instead of the street corners, girls preferred to gather outside their houses in their yards, which they referred to as 'sitting on doorsteps'. In response to having nothing to do and/or being alone, the purpose of hanging out (mainly on street corners) was perceived as creating opportunities for social interaction with peers, and it provided meaning by giving the participants something to do in that they could observe what was happening in the neighbourhood. Participants described how a common activity was meeting on street corners and discussing other young people or 'gossiping'. There were many photos that showed adolescents hanging out in groups on the streets or in front of houses.



Figure 3: Boys hanging out on street corner

Despite the amount of time spent hanging out on street corners, the participants felt that eventually this activity could also become boring when there was nothing to do, and often this would lead to some form of risk behaviour. As one 18 year-old boy said:

Unless you gonna have something that you gonna do, then you can be bored with your friends, that happens a lot and now you don't know what to speak about anymore, you just sit and look at each other.

Theme 3: Boredom is gevaarlik (dangerous)

The participants' perception of how boredom in free time was associated with risk behaviour is described in this theme. As indicated in the theme title that quotes a 16 year-old boy, the participants clearly perceived boredom as being 'dangerous' as it led to many forms of risk behaviours and activities. They felt this was mainly as a result of under-stimulation which arose out of having nothing to do, as this 18 year-old girl indicated:

...there was always nothing to do and then I used to go to my friend next door ... and we just tried it (dagga) out because we were bored and then it started coming a every weekend thing.

Participants perceived boredom to be associated with feelings of restlessness that caused them to look for fun in the form of risky pursuits and behaviours. This is indicated by the following quote from a 17 year-old boy dropout:

Boredom can lead to doing stupid things, it makes you steal, do drugs.

It was clear that the participants regarded boredom as a cause of risk behaviour. Risk activities were perceived to alleviate boredom. However, they acknowledged that risk behaviour resulted in other problems such as addiction to substances and dropping out of school. Although not investigated in depth, it was evident from the participants that peer pressure played a role in risk behaviour – particularly substance use (see Figure 4).

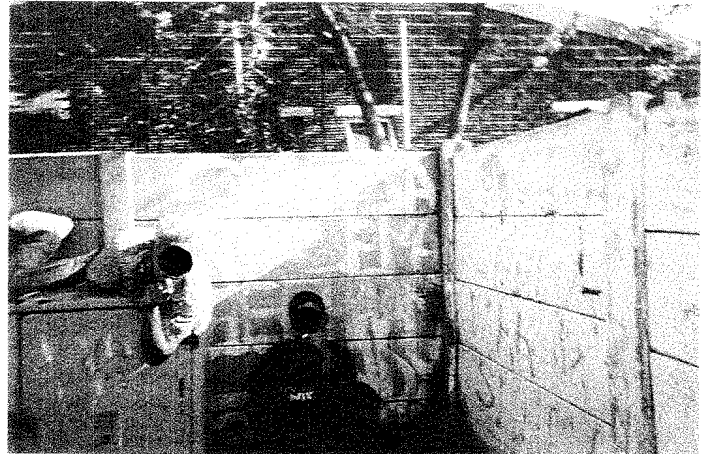


Figure 4: Boys hanging out on street smoking dagga

Theme 4: Every person must get bored

It was difficult for the participants to articulate the meaning of boredom in their free time, most likely because it was a concept that they had never previously thought about much. However, there was the realisation that boredom was a part of life, as indicated in the quote used to title this theme. The participants felt that boredom was a problem because it led to young people wasting their time and achieving nothing in life. This resulted in feelings of restlessness and irritation with the situation, as indicated by this 18 year-old girl in the quote below:

No man I'm young, I don't want to sit there when you know there is somewhere you can go!

However, some participants recognised that boredom can propel individuals towards action, as this 18 year-old boy said:

Boredom is not a good thing, but you can make something about boredom or you can do something to get boredom off your mind.

Discussion

It was evident that leisure boredom and risk behaviours were part of the participants' free time experiences. Boys had more free time available than girls, with the boy dropouts having almost the entire day free. Free time was valued because the adolescents could do as they pleased, but when there was nothing to do, much of this free time was spent hanging out on street corners. This was even more so for the participants who had dropped out of school as they felt isolated and avoided being alone. Many of the activities that the adolescents engaged in could be classified as low-yield activities¹⁸ because they are not goal-oriented, offer little outlet for creativity, require little discipline and focus, do not offer appropriate challenges, do not build skills or require much competence, and do not require persistence and commitment over time. Sporting activities such as skateboarding and street soccer demand some of these elements and could be considered high yield activities; however,



the informal nature of, and context in which these activities occur probably negate some of the benefits. Elements of monotony, repetition¹⁹, lack of meaning²⁰ and having no choice in activities were all evident in the participants' utilisation of their free time, and contributed to their experiences of boredom.

There was clear evidence of involvement in substance use, including use of cigarettes, alcohol, *dagga*, *tik*, and heroine (to a lesser extent) among all of the participants. Substance use was clearly associated with hanging out. The lack of meaning, monotony and repetitiveness of hanging out every day was interpreted as feelings of boredom. Activities such as substance use and playing the fool were ways of alleviating the boredom by having fun. Similar findings emerged from an ethnographic study conducted in Scotland that explored the meaning of substance use among adolescents who spent time hanging out on streets²¹.

The environment had a major influence on the participants' experiences of boredom in free time and there was clear evidence of occupational deprivation and imbalance¹². Occupational deprivation occurred as they were restricted by their environment from engaging in leisure activities due to factors such as the lack of resources in the community and schools, lack of money, and safety concerns. The restriction in occupational choice led to occupational imbalance as the participants spent most of their time hanging out on street corners or in backyards, thus increasing the risk of exposure to, and engagement in unhealthy or negative leisure activities. Clearly, the participants' developmental needs were not fully being met though leisure engagement in this particular environment. Furthermore, occupational imbalance occurred due to incongruity between what leisure pursuits they wanted to do in their free time, and what they were actually able to do. However, it was encouraging to note some of the participants' wishes for constructive, meaningful free time activities, supporting the notion that boredom provokes the desire to engage, and find meaning, in constructive activity^{20, 22, 23}.

Limitations

The greatest limitation of the study was the difficulty in recruiting participants who had dropped out of school. Many of these adolescents were suspicious of the researchers' motives. Others said they were not interested in taking part because they did not feel like it, which suggests a lack of motivation amongst this group. Adolescents who have dropped out of school are a marginalised group in society, and there is a need to conduct further research with them. Potential research could focus on factors such as levels of boredom and use of time.

Recommendations

Occupational therapists have a role in promoting health, wellbeing and development of adolescents, particularly those living in impoverished areas and those who have dropped out of school. Part of this role is to consider how to address the challenge of leisure boredom, thus also tackling risk behaviour such as substance use. Through facilitating leisure exploration and participation, occupational therapists can move beyond a deficit-based approach that addresses only risk or problem behaviour, to one that develops adolescent capabilities and assets. The Person Environment Occupation Model¹⁴ provides a useful framework to facilitate optimal occupational performance through interventions that target people, the environment and occupations. In partnerships with educators, learners and community organisations, occupational therapists are well-placed to develop leisure programmes in schools and communities. Occupational therapists should advocate for the creation and sustainability of leisure opportunities that are accessible, affordable, available and safe. The health promoting schools approach²⁴ provides much scope for the involvement of occupational therapists in mainstream schools, for example, in developing after-school programmes. Finally, occupational therapists, through their understanding of the link between occupation and health, should engage in further research in the field of leisure.

Conclusion

This study focuses attention on leisure boredom as a factor contributing to risk behaviour in South African adolescents. Using photographs was an effective method of enabling the adolescent participants to document their experiences of leisure boredom and risk behaviour during their free time. The participants perceived that their experiences of boredom in free time were associated with risky behaviours. The impoverished environment contributed towards this situation. This study has shown that leisure is an occupational concern among adolescents, particularly those living in impoverished areas, due to the occupational deprivation and imbalance that may occur within their free time. Occupational therapists should consider the role of leisure boredom on adolescent health, wellbeing and development, and implement strategies to address this challenge.

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Employing people with disabilities in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has developed policy and legislation to overcome barriers that people with disabilities face in the labour force, yet there remain practical issues relating to the implementation of these policies. This research aimed at identifying the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions and experiences of employers when hiring People with Disabilities (PWDs). Two organisations were selected using a purposive sampling method where interviews were conducted based on a completed questionnaire. It was found that there was a lack of knowledge about disability and although there were negative attitudes presented toward disabled people from fellow employees as well as physical barriers to their employment within the organisations, there were also clear benefits. These benefits were related to among others, the positive contribution made by the employees with a disability.

Key words: people with disabilities, attitudes towards People With Disabilities, employment of people with disabilities

Introduction

The South African constitution states that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it; we are united in our diversity”^{1,1243}. The South African White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS)² envisions “A society for all...encompassing human diversity and the development of all human potential”, encouraging people with disabilities (PWDs) to make contributions of their experience, capabilities and talents to both national and international development.

According to the national mid year population estimates of 2007, South Africa has a population of 47, 9 million³. There are no current statistics available on the number of PWDs currently in South Africa; however according to the 2001 census, approximately 5% of the population had disabilities⁴. If this statistical measure has remained constant, there are an estimated 2 395 000 PWD in South Africa. The Commission for Employment Equity indicates that 43 716 of PWD are currently in part time, temporary or permanent employment⁵. Although this is a marked improvement on the 12 049 employees employed in 2003, only 1.8% of PWD are now employed. This makes a mockery of the statements given in paragraph one.

Literature Review

It is evident that South Africa has developed policy and legislation to overcome barriers faced by the PWDs in the labour force, but the practical implementation poses a challenge. It is essential that occupational therapists who are involved in the vocational assessment and management of clients understand the knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and experiences that employers have towards hiring people with disabilities.

Literature indicates that a lack of opportunities and resources increase disability prevalence². Cultural myths and misconceptions appear to have also played a role in disability discrimination, as some African cultures view disabled children as a social and economic curse on the family and are often considered a burden. As a result many PWDs consider themselves to be without purpose.

South Africa has developed a number of policies with respect to fairness and equality of race, gender and disability in order to overcome segregation and discrimination. These include, *inter alia*, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination act⁶, the National Skills Development Strategy 2005- 2010⁷, the Employment Equity Act (EEA)⁸ and The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS)². Whilst governmental

