

Young readers and family life satisfaction Jóvenes lectores y satisfacción con la vida familiar

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Abstract

The objective of the present study was to examine satisfaction with the quality of personal and family life perceived in young¹ people who read as a cultural leisure activity. An ad hoc questionnaire was administered to a sample of 1085 Riojan students, aged between 15 and 19. Descriptive and inferential analyses were carried out. Reading ranks third among the preferred cultural practices of young people from La Rioja, with girls being the most readers. In addition, students who perceive having a poorer quality of family and personal life are the ones who read the most. Therefore, a prospective analysis is suggested to analyse whether reading could be a refuge from everyday problems, as well as a provider of solutions for them. Finally, family-shared cultural leisure is not a common practice in this group, which leads to proposal statement for reflection and action that would promote this habit, given that previous studies have reported its many personal and family functioning benefits.

Resumen

El objetivo del presente estudio fue examinar la satisfacción con la calidad de vida personal y familiar que perciben los jóvenes que practican lectura como actividad de ocio cultural. Se aplicó un cuestionario elaborado *ad hoc* a una muestra de 1085 riojanos, de entre 15 y 19 años. Se llevaron a cabo análisis descriptivos e inferenciales. La lectura ocupa el tercer lugar entre las prácticas culturales preferentes de los jóvenes riojanos, siendo las chicas más lectoras. Asimismo, los estudiantes que perciben tener menor calidad de vida familiar y personal son los mayores consumidores de lectura, por lo que se sugiere como prospectiva analizar si la lectura podría constituirse en refugio ante los problemas cotidianos, así como en proveedora de soluciones para los mismos. Por último, el ocio cultural compartido en familia no es una práctica habitual en este colectivo, lo que lleva al planteamiento de propuestas para la reflexión y la acción que favorezcan este hábito, dado que estudios previos han constatado sus numerosas bondades, tanto para el ámbito personal como para el funcionamiento familiar

The text presented herein is linked to the research "From educational times to social times: Daily family life in the construction of youth physical-sports leisure" (EDU2012-39080-C07-05) [years 2012-2015], and is the basis of the current research "Leisure and well-being on an intergenerational note: From daily family life to social innovation in the grandparent-grandchildren networks" (EDU2017-85642-R) [years 2017-2020], both co-financed under the National R&D&I Plan with two grants from the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

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Introduction

The changes that have taken place in the information and communication society have forced a re-signification of leisure, which is now seen as a human right that provides freely chosen experiences, which promote self-realisation and improve our quality of life (Cuenca, 2009). Leisure experiences contribute to activate our body and mind, to improve our mood and subjective well-being, to develop our ability to communicate, to enhance self-confidence, to smoothly adapt ourselves to the environment, as well as to enhance a feeling of self-worth (Cuenca, 2014).

Leisure is crystallised in different manifestations or activities that may be of a physical, social, intellectual, spiritual or artistic nature (World Leisure and Recreation Association, 1993; Cuenca & Goytia, 2012); the same person may carry out practices that correspond to one or more of these dimensions, depending on personal preferences, skills and resources available in their habitat (Vera-Toscano, Serrano-del-Rosal & Ateca-Amestoy, 2004).

Leisure's cultural sphere integrates elements of an intellectual, social, spiritual and artistic nature, since its experience is linked to taking part in activities with an implicit cultural component, such as music, drama, literature, crafts, painting or folklore, which foster personal growth, have a reflective tone and are directly related to learning (Cuenca, 2000, 2014; Valdemoros-San-Emeterio et al., 2015). For this reason, every cultural experience of leisure requires the individual's participation (Csikszentmihalyi, 2001), as he must activate his creativity and enjoy it in a reflective way, not forgetting that leisure's cultural dimension is constantly evolving and being rebuilt as a consequence of socio-cultural evolution (López-Sintas, García-Álvarez & Pérez-Rubiales, 2015; Codina-Mata & Munné-Matamala, 1996).

Subjective well-being is understood as the perception of a state of homeostasis, surrounded by an affective halo, as a consequence of a complex process of evaluation of life through experiences that forge leanings, preferences and objectives that seek to satisfy needs for our personal growth (Arita-Watanabe, 2005). All the foregoing explains why it is a powerful predictor of health (Moreta-Herrera et al., 2018).

Satisfaction with life is one of the key indicators of subjective well-being. It has been used for evaluation thereof and is linked to the individual's perception of his current state, being contextualised in the examination of his cognitions and feelings about his way of life (Anguas, 2000; Arita-Watanabe, 2005; Dávila-de-León & Díaz-Morales, 2005; Diener et al., 1999; Fergusson et al., 2015; Perugache et al., 2016; Ramírez-Pérez & Lee-Maturana, 2012). Perceived vital well-being is directly related to the value placed on specific areas (Perugache et al., 2016) such as the family, which what this work mainly focuses on.

Satisfaction with family life is an assessment based on positive and negative experiences within the family, which can only be understood as exclusive to each member (Luengo-Rodríguez & Román-Sánchez, 2006). Such satisfaction values different domains related to family life, such as the relationships between family members, the activities that parents carry out to help their children grow and develop, aspects related to health and physical and emotional security, or the resources available to the family to cover the needs of its members, *inter alia* (Poston et al., 2003).

Previous research confirms that young people identify the practice of cultural leisure activities as a subjective indicator of human development, since they perceive these experiences help them grow as people, mainly in psychological, emotional, cognitive and creative aspects (Sanz-Arazuri et al., 2019). Therefore, social policies

should facilitate cultural leisure opportunities favouring the consolidation of creative, artistic and intellectual habits in citizens at large and in young people more specifically.

Reading is one of the activities of cultural leisure that can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. This work focuses on the perspective linked to leisure, that is to say, to non-compulsory reading, the one that delights and enlightens us, the one that is instituted in an art and a right that is projected in the “leisure with dignity” hungered for (Racionero, 1983), “valuable leisure” (Cuenca, 2014) and “valuable aesthetic leisure” (Amigo-Fernández de Arroyabe, 2014), as it is based on a freely chosen first-person experience, which allows one to recreate oneself in the complex human nature and, therefore, to cultivate oneself both materially and spiritually. Reading is thus a key part of lifelong learning and the building of active citizenship (Caride, Caballo & Gradaïlle, 2018).

Ordine (2017) also links reading the classics to the art of living, as it grants precious time, relieving stress and the obsession with efficiency and performance (Marramao, 2008); reading is “an act of dignity” (Basanta, 2017, p.97) that makes us more competent and critical, as it makes it possible to understand different types of texts and to select the sheer amount information around us daily under different forms (Cerrillo-Torremocha, 2005). It is therefore impossible to conceive of an educational society without reading (Yubero-Jiménez, 2009).

Reading is a voluntary personal choice that does not depend on available free time; acquiring reading skills implies interacting with texts and, consequently, asking questions, deliberating following one’s own criteria, reflecting on oneself, empathising with the emotions and problems of the characters, which, in short, increases the ability to explain reality (Elche, Sánchez-García & Yubero, 2019).

People who feel the pleasure of reading also enjoy more varied and valuable leisure time, and appreciate their free time more positively, which establishes a link to the need for a shared effort to develop love of reading, working so that the act of reading evolves into conversation, exchange, as well as personal and collective growth (Caride et al., 2018).

At present, there is no consensus as to the place of reading as a cultural leisure activity for young people, since studies have shown reading is a preferential activity in their leisure time (Ballesteros-Guerra et al., 2009; López-Ruiz, 2011; Ministry of Culture of Spain, 2011, 2015; Moreno-Minguez, 2012) as well as research that suggests the opposite, that is, that reading is less practiced by young people in recent years (Berntsson & Ringsberg, 2014; Caballo-Villar, Caride-Gómez, Gradaïlle-Pernas, 2012; Gil-Flores, 2011; Giménez-Chorner, 2014; Muñoz-Rodríguez & Olmos-Migueláñez, 2010).

Despite these discrepancies, the pedagogical value of reading and its literacy power from an equalising, inclusive and integrating paradigm is clear, and, therefore, its contribution to people’s quality of life, demonstrated by the following benefits derived from its practice

- It promotes intellectual development and enrichment (Díaz-Martín, 2009; Gil-Flores, 2011), linguistic enhancement (Biemiller & Boote, 2006) and understanding (Piasta, Justice, McGinty, Kaderavek, 2012).
- It improves academic performance and school grades (Cromley, 2009) by increasing receptive and expressive vocabulary, reading comprehension and language (Conlon et al., 2006; Zucker et al., 2013).
- It stimulates neurological, psychological, affective and social progress and fosters life skills and critical thinking, which in turn promotes education in values and appreciation of cultural heritage (Álvarez-Álvarez & García-Eguren, 2013; Duque-Aristizábal et al.,

2013; Cerrillo-Torremocha, Yubero-Jiménez & Larrañaga-Rubio, 2004; Presentado et al., 2014).

In short, reading contributes to all-round personal development (Yubero-Jiménez & Larrañaga-Rubio, 2010) and has to be seen as a key indicator of human development, as stated by the United Nations Development Programme (2018).

Whilst in the past there was a need to implement social policies making cultural leisure opportunities viable, in general, nowadays emphasis must be placed on the urgency of recognising reading and writing policies as a key part of the quality of life of citizens, due to their potential for inclusion, social cohesion and citizen participation (Martín-Barbero & Lluçh, 2011).

Given that reading is never alien to our everyday life (Caride et al., 2018), the influence of the family environment must be taken into account, since it has been found that adult reading models, the educational level of parents or reading within the family have a positive influence on the formation of the reading habit (Clark y Hawkins, 2010; Mata-Anaya, 2011).

More specifically, it is essential for young people to see their families enjoy reading, to talk about it, to share opinions and to learn about their cultural heritage (Álvarez-Álvarez & García-Eguren, 2013), as it contributes to the development of a positive attitude towards reading, to the formation of the reading habit and, as a consequence, to intellectual enrichment and linguistic development (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Díaz-Martín, 2009; Gil-Flores, 2011; Goikoetxea-Iraola & Martínez-Pereña, 2015; Piasta et al, 2012). In short, reading at home implies sharing spaces, building thoughts, and increasing learning and educational motivations together (Soler-Gallart, 2003; Valls, Soler

& Flecha, 2008). These issues will undoubtedly have an impact on the creation of an atmosphere conducive to well-being and coexistence within the family.

The assumption of this research is that young readers, increase their level of subjective well-being as they benefit from the advantages of this cultural leisure activity.

The aim of this study is to analyse the satisfaction with the quality of family life perceived by young people who read as a cultural leisure activity. This research will make it possible to identify the keys that inspire the development of new inclusive social policies, which are sensitive to the power of reading for the optimum functioning of the family.

Method

Participants

This is a qualitative, *ex post facto* study. The sample was configured through a simple random selection from the population of high school students in La Rioja and applying proportional allocations according to geographical location, school type (public/private), gender and year. The size (a sampling error of ± 3 sigmas and a 99% confidence level was set) amounted to a total of 1085 high school students in La Rioja. The minimum age recorded among the participants was 15 and the maximum age was 19. In terms of gender, there is a balance, 51.52% were boys and 48.48% girls. The latter sample units were selected following a stratified probability procedure by clusters. On the one hand, it took the geographical location and type of the educational centre into account and, on the other hand, it took the high schools and the class groups into account. Sixteen centres were randomly selected from different locations in La Rioja, and the number of students (male and female) to be surveyed in each centre was set

proportionally. Upon application and validation of the instrument, the expected proportion in each of the strata was obtained, so there was no experimental mortality; the expected size thus corresponded to the actual size.

Instrument

Two instruments were used for this study.

On the one hand, a comprehensive and complex *ad-hoc* questionnaire was developed to collect data for a coordinated national survey of which this work was part of. The questionnaire was made up of 44 items grouped into 8 thematic areas, which collect information on student characteristics, school life, free time, health and quality of life, future studies and labour market, entrepreneurship and family functioning.

It was validated through a pilot test in which 248 students from 8 Autonomous Communities participated, as well as through the opinion of experts with the participation of 14 researchers from seven Spanish universities.

The variables based on which this questionnaire has collected relevant information for this study are the following:

- Importance of cultural leisure activities: variable that aims at identifying whether these activities occupy a preferential place in young people's leisure.
- Type of cultural leisure activity: variable that aims at checking what type of cultural activities are preferred by young people, classified into seven themes:
 - Listening to music.
 - Watching films in the cinema or at home.
 - Reading books they like.
 - Going to the theatre.
 - Going to museums, art galleries or exhibitions.
 - Going to concerts or festivals.
 - Participating in some artistic, musical or literary activity.

- Reading's ranking vis-à-vis other cultural leisure activities preferred by young people.
- Type of cultural leisure activity within the family: variable that aims at checking what type of cultural activities are shared by young people within their families. The categories coincide with those of the *type of cultural leisure activity* variable.
- Reading's ranking vis-à-vis the other cultural leisure activities shared by young people within their families.
- Gender: a dichotomous variable that identifies whether the respondent is male or female.

On the other hand, the satisfaction with family life scale (SWFL) of Diener et al. (1985), validated by Luna-Bernal and Laca-Arocena (2014) was used in high school students. It consists of 5 statements in which the participant must state whether he agrees or disagrees by means of a 5-point Likert scale:

- My family life is ideal most times.
- The conditions of my family life are excellent.
- I am satisfied with my family life.
- So far I have achieved the important things I want in my family life.
- If I could decide about my family life, I would not change anything.

The internal consistency of the scale was confirmed with the sample of this study obtaining a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.84, which guarantees the instrument's validity.

Procedure

In order to ensure proportionality, the instrument was applied to all students set in each of the class groups of the 16 randomly selected schools distributed throughout the geographical areas of La Rioja.

A formal letter was sent to the Director-General of Education in La Rioja, to the headmasters of the schools, as well as to the parents

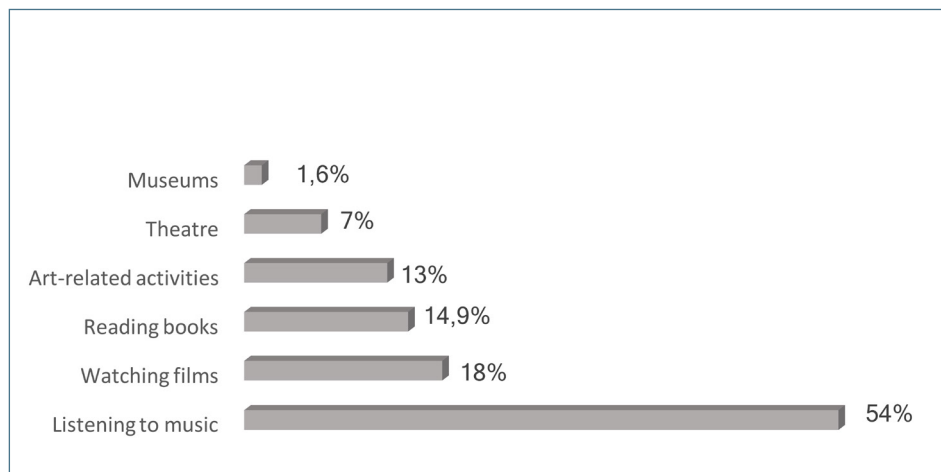


Figure 1. Cultural activities most practised by young people in La Rioja.

of the students, informing them of the study and requesting their voluntary participation in it.

The questionnaire was administered during two months by two properly trained researchers, who went to the schools in person, thus achieving its correct application. A total of 30 minutes was spent on completing the instrument with each group of students selected.

Anonymity was guaranteed by not requesting any identifying information, respect and confidentiality, according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki (General Assembly of the World Medical Association, 2013), which sets the ethical principles for research on human subjects. The entire process was also carried out in accordance with the provisions of Spanish Organic Act 15/1999, of 13th December, on personal data protection.

Data analysis

Firstly, a descriptive analysis of the data was carried out, using the frequency statistic, in order to find out the proportion of students in La Rioja who place reading among their preferred cultural leisure practices, how many of them read with their families and the degree of satisfaction with their family life. Secondly, through

the comparison of means, using the Student t-test for independent samples, we found out if the degree of satisfaction with family life is a variable linked to reading leisure. Previously, Levené's test was studied to determine whether equal variances could be assumed. The significance level used in all statistical analyses was $p < 0.05$.

Results

42.7% of secondary school students in La Rioja specify at least one cultural activity among their three leisure priorities, ranking third place vis-à-vis general leisure practice (18.8%), behind physical (30.3%) and festive (27.7%) leisure.

In terms of the type of cultural activities preferred by young people in La Rioja, reading ranks third; listening to music ranks first (54%), followed by watching films (18%), reading books (14.9%), carrying out art-related activities (13%), going to the theatre (7%) and visiting museums (1.6%) (Figure 1).

Only 21.4% of young people in La Rioja engage in cultural leisure activities with their families, reading ranking fifth (0.6%), along with art-related (0.6%), behind watching films (10.2%), listening to music (7.1%), going to the theatre,

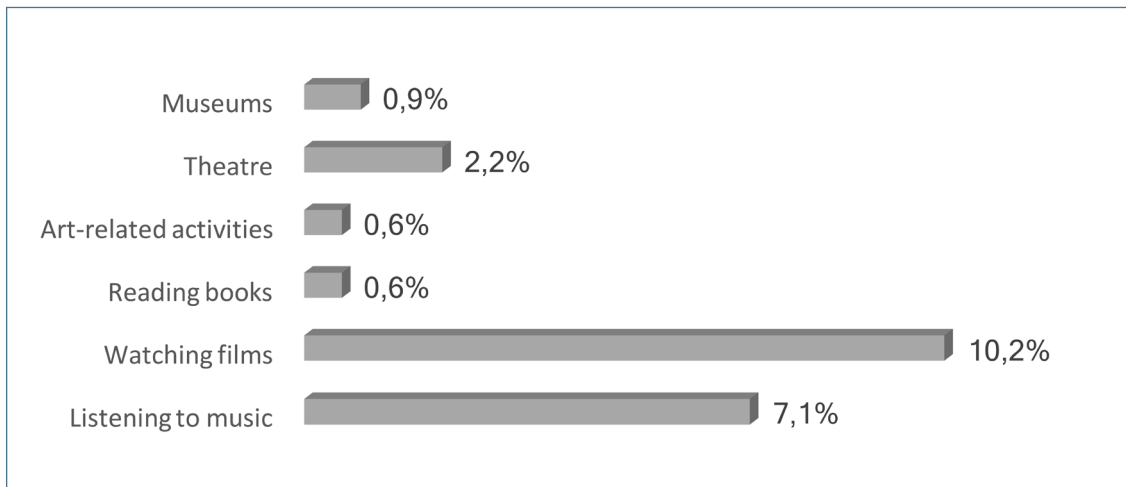


Figure 2. Cultural activities most practised young people in La Rioja within their families.

concerts or shows (2.2%) and going to museums (0.9%) (figure 2).

On the other hand, the data show that students in La Rioja are quite satisfied with their family life ($\bar{x} = 4.11 \pm 1.83$), believe that their conditions are quite excellent ($\bar{x} = 3.78 \pm 1.31$) and they usually agree that they achieve the important things they want in that context ($\bar{x} = 3.70 \pm 1.03$) that their family life is ideal most of the time ($\bar{x} = 3.63 \pm 0.98$). Finally, they state they

would not change anything in their family live ($\bar{x} = 3.48 \pm 1.23$) (figure 3)

In relation to the link between reading as a leisure activity and the satisfaction of young people with their family life, Levene's test allows us to assume the equality of variances both in terms of satisfaction with it ($p = 0.329$), and in considering the conditions are excellent ($p = 0.211$), that they achieve the important things they want ($p = 0.121$), that it is ideal most of the

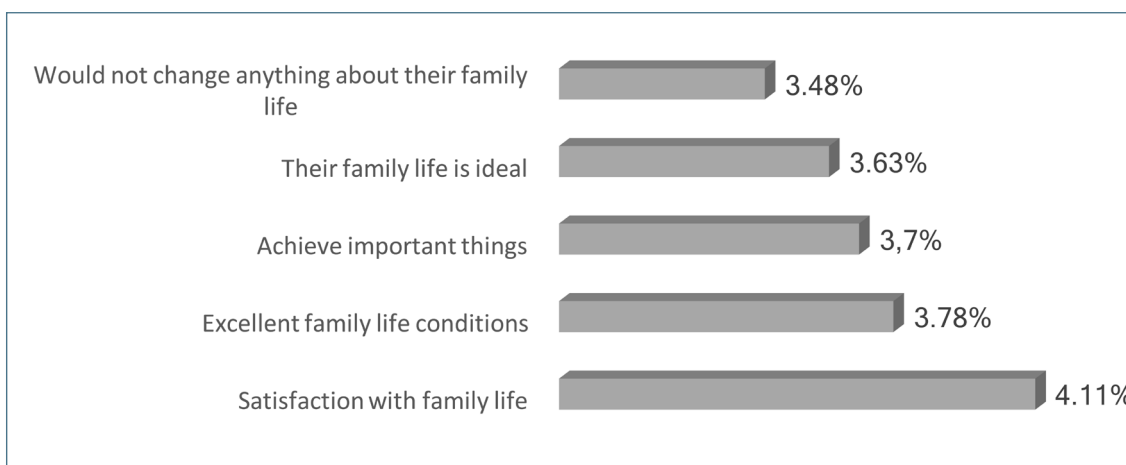


Figure 3. Average assessments of the degree of agreement and disagreement of young people in La Rioja on the scale of satisfaction with family life.

Table 1

Student T-test summary for independent samples: Satisfaction with family life vis-à-vis being a reader or non-reader in leisure time

| Family life satisfaction scale | Levene test for equality of variances | | T-test test for equality of means | | | | – X ± ds |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|------|-------|-----------|--|
| | F | p ¹ | T | gl | p | Cohen's d | |
| Satisfaction with family life | .952 | .329 | -1.774 | 1082 | .076 | .057 | Reader= 3.875 ± 1.176 Non-reader= 4.154 ± 1.927 |
| Excellent family life conditions | 1.564 | .211 | -2.179 | 1082 | .030* | .510 | Reader= 3.580 ± 1.067 Non-reader= 3.823 ± 1.346 |
| Consecución de las cosas importantes que desean en su vida familiar | 1.044 | .121 | -2.409 | 1081 | .016* | .204 | Reader= 3.521 ± 1.183 Non-reader= 3.733 ± 998 |
| Achieve important things | 1.230 | .079 | -2.741 | 1082 | .006* | .244 | Reader= 3.438 ± 1.119 Non-reader= 3,667 ± 953 |
| Would not change anything about their family life | 1.423 | .233 | -.777 | 1081 | .437 | .049 | Reader= 3.413 ± 1.288 Non-reader= 3.495 ± 1.221 |

¹Levene Test: p>0.05 in all cases, equality of variances is then assumed.

Source: Prepared by the authors

time ($p = 0.079$), and that they would not change anything in their family life ($p = 0.233$). After assuming the equality of variances, the bilateral significance shows that there are no significant differences in the degree of satisfaction between reading and non-reading students in this context ($\bar{X}_{\text{reading}} = 3.87 \pm 1.17$ VS $\bar{X}_{\text{non-reading}} = 4.15 \pm 1.92$; $p = 0.076$) or in their desire to change aspects of their family life ($\bar{X}_{\text{reading}} = 3.41 \pm 1.28$ VS $\bar{X}_{\text{non-reading}} = 3.49 \pm 1.22$; $p = 0.437$). However, significant differences are found with regard to excellent conditions ($\bar{X}_{\text{reading}} = 3.58 \pm 1.06$ VS $\bar{X}_{\text{non-reading}} = 3.82 \pm 1.34$; $p = 0.030$), that it is ideal most of the time ($\bar{X}_{\text{reading}} = 3.43 \pm 1.11$ VS $\bar{X}_{\text{non-reading}} = 3,66 \pm 0.95$; $p = 0.006$) and that they achieve the important things they want in this aspect of their life ($\bar{X}_{\text{reading}} = 3.52 \pm 1.18$ VS $\bar{X}_{\text{non-reading}} = 3.73 \pm 0.99$; $p = 0.016$) (table 1).

Discussion / Conclusions

Cultural activities are the second most important leisure activities for high school students, after those related to physical activity, which have been the first to be highlighted by our target group.

With regard to their favourite cultural activities, this study shows that reading ranks third, behind listening to music and watching films.

In line with other research (Fraguela-Vale, Pose-Porto & Varela-Garrote, 2016; Muñoz & Olmos, 2010; Pérez-Parejo et al. 2018; Sharp, Coatsworth, Darling, Cumsille & Ranieri, 2007), it is found that girls read more than boys.

When analysing whether reading is linked to the valuation of their family life by young people, it is surprising that those who read more are those who least consider their family life to be ideal, those who least perceive excellent conditions within their families and those who believe that they have not achieved what they want with their family life. This leads us to believe that there are important shortcomings in the different domains that the scientific literature establishes as satisfactory (Poston et al., 2003). This issue conflicts with our initial assumption, which foresaw that young readers, by benefiting from the advantages of reading, would increase their subjective well-being and, consequently,

their satisfaction with life, in their family sphere too.

From these findings, a question arises that should be worked on in future research: Could it be explained that some young people could make up for this reality by reading? Interesting contributions (Hernández-Pérez & Rabadán-Rubio, 2014; Zorroza, 2007) assert that reading is a facilitator to elude the real universe, because of its capacity to travel to other desirable worlds recreated before us and to achieve a certain emotional well-being. Recent studies (Arias-Vivanco, 2018) even explain that motivation for reading is an excellent tool to escape from reality or to face it with the best resources, since what is achieved by reading books is to live a diversity of lives and, consequently, to broaden one's own, providing solutions to problems that seemed not to have it actually (Alonso-Blázquez, 2005).

Can reading be both a haven from problems and a provider of solutions to them? Future work should analyse the link between these two variables by trying to establish whether there is a causal relationship between them.

However, it should be stressed that both readers and non-readers agree in considering not to change anything in their family life and show the same level of satisfaction with it.

Finally, this research shows that cultural leisure time shared with the family is not a common practice among young people, as less than 33% of high school students share some cultural activity, reading with their families accounting for an insignificant proportion.

Although previous studies underline the positive willingness that young people have towards sharing part of their leisure time with their families (Castillo-Viera, Jiménez Fuentes-Guerra & Sáenz-López Buñuel, 2009), their behaviour is not in line with the previous attitude, which could be due to the vital moment examined, characterised by a need for autonomy and independence that may sometimes result in

natural distancing and disconnection from the family (Bell & Bell, 2009); Martínez-González, Inglés-Saura, Piqueras-Rodríguez & Ramos-Linares, 2010; Paradis, Giaconia, Reinherz, Beardslee, Ward & Fitzmaurice, 2011) which leads to less time spent in this area and more time spent with friends (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008; De Goede, Branje & Meeus, 2009; Li, Zou, Liu & Zhou, 2014).

Despite this fact, we would like to highlight the small proportion of young people who, according to other authors (Soler-Gallart, 2003; Valls, Soler & Flecha, 2008), will be able to enjoy greater satisfaction with their family life because they experience an activity that helps them grow and develop, and that contributes to the shared construction of intergenerational thoughts and to the increase in motivation for learning. In turn, it could optimise the relationships originated within the family, aspects that are linked to important domains for the assessment of family satisfaction (Poston et al., 2003).

One of the limitations highlighted in this research is the lack of scientific literature that specifically links the variables analysed in this study. It should also be noted that this paper identifies a link between reading and satisfaction with family life among the young people examined, but does not go so far as to determine whether this link is causal or its meaning. Future studies should therefore focus their efforts on resolving this issue, as it would provide important keys for future reflection and action.

As a prospective of this work, we also suggest to conduct further research on subjective well-being and psychological well-being as variables very closely linked to the vital well-being perceived by young people, including that concerning the family sphere, raising questions on the way experiences linked to obtaining well-being are constructed, based on reading's place in young people's leisure, seen as a key reference of life (Cardona-Rodríguez, Osorio-Tamayo & Moreno-Carmona, 2014).

Finally, this paper provides some guidelines for reflection and action aimed at promoting reading, in general, and this shared leisure practice, in particular, based on some of the conclusions of Gil-Flores (2009), Presentado et al. (2014), Sáenz-de-Jubera-Ocón and Valdemoros-San-Emeterio (2018) and Vals et al.:

- Analysing whether digital reading in all its versions (tourism, news, literature, tutorials, etc.) could be a facilitating factor for family reading.
- Encouraging the opening of school and municipal libraries to the entire educational community, providing parents with access to their library collections.
- Promoting parents' participation in activities to encourage reading that originate from educational and social institutions, facilitating spaces for shared reading and subsequent debate, encouraging dialogical reading as a tool that encourages this practice among family members both at home and in these entities.
- Making the family aware of the essential value of reading and implementing -from cultural policies- actions generating favourable attitudes towards reading within the family, providing suggestive materials in the multiple supports provided by the twenty-first century society.

Notes

1. Throughout the document, an attempt will be made to use inclusive language, although "under Law 3/2007 of 22 March, for the effective equality of women and men, any reference to positions, persons or groups included in this document in masculine, are to be understood as including both women and men".

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