



Disponible en ligne sur

ScienceDirect
www.sciencedirect.com

Elsevier Masson France

EM|consulte
www.em-consulte.com/en



Original article

Perceived functions of playfulness in adults: Does it mobilize you at work, rest, and when being with others?



Les fonctions perçues de la tendance à être joueur chez les adultes : les mobilise-t-on au travail, au repos, ou en société?

R.T. Proyer

Department of Psychology, University of Zurich, Binzmühlestrasse 14/7, 8050 Zurich, Switzerland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 June 2013

Received in revised form 8 May 2014

Accepted 7 June 2014

Keywords:

Adult playfulness

Coping

Leisure

Play

Well-being

ABSTRACT

Introduction. – Little is known about what adults perceive as core functions of playfulness in their daily life.

Objective. – To compile a list of perceived functions of playfulness from nominations of laypeople and to test the association of the productions with individual levels of playfulness as a personality trait.

Method. – Three hundred and twenty-four adults aged 18 to 62 ($M = 31.6$, $SD = 11.5$) listed perceived functions of playfulness in five areas (leisure and work and when being with work colleagues, friends, and their partner) and completed a questionnaire for playfulness.

Results. – The entries were grouped into seven broader categories; namely, (1) well-being; (2) humor and laughter; (3) mastery orientation; (4) creativity; (5) relationships; (6) coping strategies; and (7) coping with situations. Women noted more functions than men ($t(297) = 2.99$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.35$) but there were no gender differences in the playfulness scale. Individual levels of playfulness correlated only for men with a greater number of functions, while it was uncorrelated in the sample of women.

Conclusion. – People see a broad range of functions for playfulness in their daily lives. This warrants further investigation on potential benefits of adult playfulness.

© 2014 Elsevier Masson SAS. All rights reserved.

R É S U M É

Introduction. – Il existe peu de connaissances concernant ce que l'adulte perçoit comme relevant des fonctions centrales de la tendance à être joueur dans la vie quotidienne.

Objectif. – Faire la liste des fonctions perçues de la tendance à être joueur, basée sur les propositions de personnes issues de la population générale et tester l'association entre ces propositions et les niveaux individuels de la tendance à être joueur, conceptualisée comme un trait de personnalité.

Méthodologie. – Trois cent vingt-quatre adultes, âgés entre 18 et 62 ans ($M = 31,6$, $SD = 11,5$), ont fait la liste de ce qu'ils percevaient comme étant des fonctions de la tendance à être joueur dans cinq domaines (loisirs et travail, en étant avec les collègues de travail, les amis et le/la partenaire) et ont complété un questionnaire mesurant la tendance à être joueur.

Résultats. – Les propositions des participants ont été regroupées en sept catégories plus larges, à savoir : (1) le bien-être ; (2) l'humour et le rire ; (3) l'orientation vers la maîtrise ; (4) la créativité ; (5) les relations interpersonnelles ; (6) les stratégies de coping ; et (7) la gestion des situations stressantes. Les femmes ont rapporté plus de fonctions que les hommes ($t(297) = 2,99$, $p < .01$, $d = 0,35$). Cependant, aucune différence entre les femmes et les hommes n'a été observée sur l'échelle mesurant la tendance à être joueur. Les niveaux individuels de tendance à être joueur corrôlaient avec un plus grand nombre de fonctions chez les hommes, alors que ces niveaux ne corrôlaient pas avec les fonctions chez les femmes.

Mots clés :

Bien-être

Coping

Jeu

Loisirs

Tendance à être joueur chez l'adulte

E-mail address: r.proyer@psychologie.uzh.ch

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.erap.2014.06.001>

1162-9088/© 2014 Elsevier Masson SAS. All rights reserved.

Conclusion. – Les individus perçoivent une large gamme de fonctions liées à la tendance à être joueur dans leur vie quotidienne. Ainsi, ces résultats justifient la poursuite des études portant sur les bénéfices potentiels de cette tendance chez la personne adulte.

© 2014 Elsevier Masson SAS. Tous droits réservés.

The main purpose of this study is to examine what functions adults attribute to playfulness in their everyday experiences. While there seems to be an agreement in the literature that playing and being playful serves important functions in infancy and younger ages, the personality characteristic is less frequently studied in adults. Hence, comparatively little is known about its perception among adults. Barnett (2007) defines playfulness as “[. . .] the predisposition to frame (or reframe) a situation in such a way as to provide oneself (and possibly others) with amusement, humor, and/or entertainment” (p.955). This study is aimed at contributing to a broader understanding of what functions of playfulness adults perceive in different areas of their daily life.

It was expected that laypeople perceive functions of playfulness in a broad variety of contexts and settings (at leisure, work, when being with work colleagues, in the partnership, and when being with friends) since earlier work suggests that playfulness has an effect in different areas of life. For example, adult playfulness is associated with academic success (Proyer, 2011), innovative behavior at work and work satisfaction (Glynn & Webster, 1992; Yu, Wu, Chen, & Lin, 2007), stress coping (Barnett, 2012; Magnuson & Barnett, 2013; Qian & Yarnal, 2011), or life satisfaction and quality of life (Proyer, 2012c, 2013; Proyer, Ruch, & Müller, 2010) – to name but a few. At this point, it needs to be stated that there is a difference between the “function” of playfulness and the “perceived function” of playfulness. In the framework of this study (referring to Burghardt, 2005), the function describes the adaptive value of playfulness (e.g., for enhancing fitness at some level; e.g., individual or group). On the other side, the *perceived* function describes laypersons’ implicit beliefs about functions of playfulness. This article focuses on uncovering these beliefs and their structure. The *perceived* functions are everyday observations that are associated with playfulness; i.e., the way laypeople think that playfulness contributes to their lives. Of course, these two meanings of *function* are not equivalent and this study was not aimed at making references to the adaptive value or function of playfulness in general, but more so on what people experience with respect to playfulness in their daily lives.

While not directly addressing playfulness as a personality trait, but rather the actual behavior (*play*), there is a broad range of studies on potential functions. One of the most frequently mentioned functions is its role in the development of skills; e.g., in the cognitive, physical, or social field (see e.g., Bekoff & Byers, 1998; Bernstein, 1982; Fagen, 1981; Smith, 1982). Robust effects have been reported for the cognitive-linguistic and affective social-domain (Fisher, 1992; see also Lillard et al., 2013; Pellegrini, 2009; Smith, 2010). Burghardt (2005) lists, amongst others, these proposed benefits of play: motor and physiological development, perceptual-motor coordination, social roles and social-communicative skills, cognitive abilities, or creativity and notes that they are controversially discussed in the literature. Baxter (1992) suggested that in intimate partnerships play can be seen as an indicator of intimacy, as a mean for reducing conflict and tension, as a “safe” communication strategy (sharing emotional attachment), as a “creative outlet for individual expression [. . .] to celebrate their individual qualities while simultaneously embedded in an interdependent relationship” (p.337), enhancing communication for finding joint meaning, and for promoting intimacy (see also Raskin, 1985); emotion regulation in general has also been frequently listed as one function of specific types of play (e.g.,

Fein, 1981). Bowman (1987) argues that playing can be a coping strategy employed against boredom (see also Barnett, 2011). Other authors highlight the role of play in work (e.g., Dandridge, 1986), as a facilitator of innovative behavior (e.g., Pellegrini, Dupuis, & Smith, 2007; Smith, 1982), organizational creativity (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; West et al., 2013) and psychological safety in groups (West et al., 2013), learning (McGhee, 1979; Smith, 2004), or problem solving (Bruner, 1972) – to name but a few (see also e.g., Burghardt, 1982, 2005; Ghiselin, 1974; Mannell, 1984; Sutton-Smith, 1997).

Other scholars investigated playfulness more directly. For example, Chick, Yarnal, and Purrington (2012) found that playfulness is a highly desired personality characteristic with respect to mating preferences. The authors argue that playfulness signals non-aggressiveness in men and fecundity in women. Other researchers have pointed out that playfulness is associated with the ability to entertain oneself (Barnett, 2007, 2012; Mannell, 1984) and has an impact on leisure activities, which prevent boredom from occurring (Barnett, 2011). Fredrickson (2001) suggests that playing and being playful elicit positive emotions, which can contribute positively to the well-being of a person. Yu et al. (2007) see the function of playfulness at the workplace as a mean for socializing among the work colleagues, for tension release, but also as a mean for stimulating creativity. Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe (2003) relate playfulness to higher levels of cognitive functioning in the aging process.

In a more direct test Guitard, Ferland, and Dutil (2005) used semi-structured interviews with 15 adults, who were prescreened and “appeared to have marked or weak playfulness” (p.13) and identified the following functions: *Expression* (e.g., of creativity, sense of humor, or spontaneity), *problem solving*, *exploration*, *individuality*, inspiration for *creativity* and facilitator of *creativity*, *personal growth*, *pleasure* and facilitator of *pleasure*, *coping* with situations, *communication*, (*mental*) *health*, sensation of *happiness* and *well-being*, *burnout-prevention*, and *mechanism against deception*. These elements identified by Guitard et al. reflect a broad variety of topics and functions. However, they have not yet been replicated and also the question arises whether these functions have the same relevance in different areas of life; e.g., in leisure time, at work, or when being with ones partner.

Apart from the identification of perceived functions of adult playfulness, the study also aims at testing whether they differ depending on the context. Therefore, participants in this study will be asked to write down perceived functions in the areas of *leisure time*, at *work*, in interaction with ones *colleagues at work*, when being with ones *partner*, and when being with ones *friends*. These areas encompass a broad range of everyday experiences. This also allows testing whether the productions differ for these areas or whether the perceived functions are homogeneous across the areas; e.g., enable joy and well-being only in one specific area, but facilitate humor and laughter in all of the areas.

Participants will be asked to write down as many functions of playfulness as they can think of in the five areas described earlier. Analyses on the perceived functions will be based on:

- the *frequency* of productions (i.e., how many perceived functions were written down);
- the *number of unique productions* (i.e., how many non-redundant perceived functions were listed);

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/895450>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/895450>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)