THE ROLE OF HOBBIES, LIKES, DISLIKES, AND PERSONAL PASSIONS IN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Hobbies, likes, dislikes, and personal passions are important elements of human life that influence individual identity, behaviour, emotional well-being, and personal development. Although they are often considered simple aspects of everyday life, personal interests have a deeper psychological, educational, and social significance. Hobbies provide opportunities for creativity, relaxation, and skill development, while likes and dislikes help individuals understand their preferences, values, and attitudes. Personal passions, in particular, can become powerful sources of motivation, encouraging people to pursue long-term goals and overcome difficulties. This article examines the relationship between personal interests and individual development, focusing on their psychological benefits, educational importance, influence on social relationships, and contribution to professional growth. It also considers relevant psychological theories and research to explain why meaningful activities are essential for a balanced and fulfilling life.

Keywords: hobbies, personal interests, likes, dislikes, passion, motivation, personality development, psychological well-being, creativity, self-development.

Human life consists of numerous activities, responsibilities, relationships, and personal experiences. People study, work, communicate, solve problems, and make decisions every day. However, life is not defined exclusively by professional responsibilities or academic achievements. Personal interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, and passions also play a significant role in shaping human identity and determining how individuals experience the world around them. These interests make people different from

one another and provide opportunities to express their personalities beyond social expectations and professional obligations.

A hobby can be described as an activity that an individual chooses to perform regularly during free time for enjoyment, relaxation, or personal satisfaction. Examples include reading books, playing musical instruments, travelling, cooking, photography, gardening, painting, playing sports, and learning foreign languages. Although these activities may appear recreational, they often contribute to the development of important personal qualities, including patience, discipline, creativity, concentration, and responsibility.

Likes and dislikes are equally important because they represent individual preferences and attitudes towards different objects, activities, situations, and experiences. Some people enjoy social communication and group activities, while others prefer independent work and quiet environments. Some individuals are interested in technology, science, and innovation, whereas others are attracted to art, literature, music, or nature. Such differences demonstrate the diversity of human personalities and highlight the importance of respecting individual preferences.

Personal passions represent a deeper level of interest. Unlike ordinary hobbies, which may change according to circumstances, passions are often connected with strong emotional involvement, personal values, and long-term ambitions. A person who is passionate about science, education, entrepreneurship, music, or sports may dedicate considerable time and effort to improving their abilities in that field.

In modern society, where individuals frequently experience academic pressure, professional competition, and technological changes, personal interests have become particularly significant. They offer opportunities to maintain emotional balance, discover new abilities, develop meaningful relationships, and establish a stronger sense of personal identity.

Hobbies are more than activities performed to fill free time. From a psychological perspective, they can provide individuals with opportunities to experience enjoyment, autonomy, achievement, and emotional satisfaction. Unlike many compulsory activities,

hobbies are generally selected voluntarily. This freedom of choice allows people to participate according to their interests, abilities, and personal goals.

One important explanation of the psychological value of hobbies can be found in the concept of flow, developed by Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Flow refers to a mental state in which a person becomes deeply involved in an activity, experiences strong concentration, and temporarily loses awareness of distractions. This experience is more likely when the difficulty of a task corresponds to the individual's level of ability.

For example, a musician practising a difficult composition, a painter creating an artwork, or a football player concentrating during a match may experience this state. During such activities, attention becomes focused, and the process itself can become highly rewarding. Flow demonstrates that personal satisfaction does not always depend on external rewards such as money, recognition, or competition.

Hobbies can also contribute to emotional well-being by providing a temporary separation from everyday responsibilities. Academic assignments, professional deadlines, financial concerns, and family obligations may create stress. Engaging in enjoyable activities can offer a healthier way to manage these pressures.

Research published by the American Psychological Association and other organisations has frequently discussed the relationship between leisure activities, stress management, and psychological well-being. However, the effects depend on the nature of the activity, the individual's circumstances, and whether participation is genuinely enjoyable rather than another source of pressure.

Another important benefit of hobbies is their contribution to self-confidence. When individuals develop a skill through consistent practice, they begin to recognise their abilities and experience a sense of achievement. Learning to play the guitar, completing a painting, running a longer distance, or successfully preparing a complicated meal can strengthen the belief that personal effort leads to improvement.

Therefore, hobbies should not be considered unproductive uses of time. They can support psychological balance, encourage positive habits, and help individuals develop a healthier relationship with themselves.

Every individual has a unique combination of likes and dislikes. These preferences influence everyday decisions, communication styles, lifestyle choices, and relationships with other people. Although preferences may sometimes appear insignificant, they are closely connected with personal identity.

Likes reflect activities, experiences, and conditions that individuals find enjoyable, interesting, or meaningful. For instance, someone may enjoy reading historical books because of an interest in the past, while another person may prefer travelling because it provides opportunities to discover different cultures. Similarly, a student may enjoy learning English because it creates opportunities for international communication and professional development.

Dislikes, on the other hand, represent activities or experiences that individuals find unpleasant, uncomfortable, or inconsistent with their preferences. A person may dislike crowded environments, excessive noise, dishonesty, or repetitive tasks. Understanding these preferences can help individuals make more appropriate decisions about their education, careers, and personal relationships.

However, likes and dislikes should not be interpreted as permanent characteristics. Human preferences can change over time because of education, personal experiences, cultural influences, and social interaction. Someone who dislikes reading during childhood may develop a strong interest in literature after discovering books that correspond to their interests. Similarly, a person who initially feels uncomfortable speaking a foreign language may gradually become confident through regular practice. This demonstrates that personal identity is not completely fixed. It develops through continuous interaction between individual characteristics and the surrounding environment. Understanding personal preferences also improves decision-making. When individuals recognise what motivates them, what makes them uncomfortable, and which activities correspond to their values, they can make more informed choices. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between

genuine preferences and temporary emotions. Avoiding every difficult activity simply because it is uncomfortable may prevent personal development.

For example, a university student may dislike public speaking because of nervousness. However, this discomfort does not necessarily mean that public speaking is unsuitable for that individual. With preparation and practice, the student may develop confidence and eventually discover an interest in communication.

Consequently, understanding likes and dislikes requires self-awareness, reflection, and a willingness to experience new situations.

Hobbies can make a valuable contribution to education because they provide opportunities to develop abilities that are not always fully addressed through traditional classroom instruction. Academic education generally focuses on structured knowledge, examinations, and specific learning objectives. Hobbies, however, allow individuals to explore subjects independently, experiment with new ideas, and learn through personal experience. Reading is one of the most beneficial intellectual hobbies. Regular reading can improve vocabulary, language comprehension, critical thinking, imagination, and general knowledge. Students who read different types of literature, including scientific publications, historical works, biographies, and fiction, are exposed to diverse perspectives and ways of thinking. Learning foreign languages is another example of an educational hobby. It develops communication skills and introduces learners to different cultures and traditions. In addition, language learning requires memory, concentration, repetition, and problem-solving. These abilities can support academic and professional development. Creative hobbies also contribute to intellectual growth. Painting, writing, music, photography, and handicrafts encourage individuals to express ideas in different ways. Such activities require observation, experimentation, and the ability to evaluate results. They can also help students become more confident in presenting original ideas.

Sports and physical activities provide educational benefits as well. Participation in football, basketball, swimming, running, or other sports can teach discipline, teamwork, leadership, and respect for rules. Team sports are particularly useful for developing communication and cooperation because participants must coordinate their actions to

achieve common objectives. An important educational concept related to hobbies is experiential learning. This approach emphasises learning through experience, reflection, and practical application. When a student builds a model, prepares a meal, creates a digital project, or participates in a sporting activity, theoretical knowledge can be connected with real-life situations.

For universities, encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities can therefore support a more comprehensive educational environment. Student clubs, debating societies, sports teams, cultural organisations, and volunteering programmes provide opportunities to develop practical abilities alongside academic knowledge. However, hobbies should complement education rather than replace it. Students need to manage their time effectively and maintain a reasonable balance between academic responsibilities and personal interests.

Personal interests influence not only individual development but also relationships between people. Shared hobbies often create opportunities for communication, cooperation, and friendship. Individuals who participate in similar activities can establish connections based on common experiences and interests.

For example, people who enjoy football may become members of the same sports club, while those interested in literature may participate in book discussions. Photography enthusiasts can exchange technical knowledge, share their work, and organise creative projects. These activities create environments in which people communicate naturally and develop a sense of belonging. Shared interests can also reduce social barriers. People from different educational, professional, and cultural backgrounds may develop friendships because they enjoy the same activities. A common interest can provide a starting point for communication even when individuals have different lifestyles or personal experiences.

Volunteering is another activity that combines personal interests with social responsibility. Individuals who care about environmental protection, education, animal welfare, or community development may participate in voluntary projects. Such activities can strengthen empathy, cooperation, and civic awareness. Nevertheless, having different interests does not necessarily create barriers between people. Healthy relationships depend

on mutual respect rather than identical preferences. Friends may enjoy different types of music, sports, films, or leisure activities while maintaining strong relationships. Respecting differences is particularly important in multicultural environments such as universities and international workplaces. Understanding that people have different preferences can improve communication and reduce unnecessary misunderstandings.

Therefore, hobbies and shared interests can strengthen social relationships, while respect for individual differences contributes to a more inclusive society.

The relationship between hobbies and well-being has attracted increasing attention from researchers in psychology, public health, and social sciences. Recent research provides evidence that participation in enjoyable activities is associated with several positive aspects of psychological and physical well-being.

One particularly significant study, published in 2023 in the journal Nature Medicine, examined the relationship between hobby engagement and mental well-being among adults aged 65 and older across 16 countries. The research included data from 93,263 participants. Its findings indicated that having a hobby was associated with fewer depressive symptoms and higher levels of self-reported health, happiness, and life satisfaction. The results were observed across different national settings, although the strength of associations varied. PubMed+1

This research is important because it demonstrates that hobbies may have benefits beyond temporary entertainment. They can contribute to meaningful daily routines, personal satisfaction, and social participation. However, the findings should be interpreted carefully: an association between hobbies and well-being does not necessarily prove that hobbies alone cause improvements in mental health. Another important theoretical contribution comes from Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan's Self-Determination Theory. Their research emphasises three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Autonomy refers to the feeling that individuals have control over their choices. Competence concerns the feeling of being capable and effective, while relatedness refers to meaningful connections with other people. According to this theory, satisfying these

needs supports intrinsic motivation, personal growth, and psychological well-being. DOI+2

Hobbies can support all three needs. People choose activities according to their preferences, develop abilities through practice, and establish relationships with others who share similar interests. These findings provide a scientific explanation for why personally meaningful activities can contribute to a balanced lifestyle. They also suggest that individuals should have opportunities to choose activities according to their own interests rather than participating only because of external expectations.

Conclusion

Hobbies, likes, dislikes, and personal passions are essential components of individual development. Although they are often associated with leisure and entertainment, their influence extends to psychological well-being, education, social relationships, creativity, and professional growth. Hobbies provide opportunities for relaxation, skill development, and personal achievement. Scientific research, including studies on psychological motivation and hobby engagement, supports the importance of personally meaningful activities in human life. Nevertheless, the benefits of hobbies depend on maintaining balance and avoiding excessive pressure or unhealthy dependence.

In contemporary society, where academic and professional responsibilities frequently dominate everyday routines, personal interests should not be considered unnecessary or unproductive. Instead, they should be recognised as valuable opportunities for self-expression, learning, and personal growth. Ultimately, a fulfilling life is not determined exclusively by professional achievements or material success. It is also shaped by the activities people enjoy, the interests they develop, the relationships they establish, and the passions that give meaning to their experiences. By understanding and cultivating their personal interests, individuals can build a more balanced lifestyle and develop a stronger sense of identity.

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