

SPORT AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUTH WELLNESS

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Abstract

This article examines the motivation of youth to participate in organized sport, and conversely, also explores the reasons for youth dropping out of organized sport. Along with motivation, the article also examines the numbers and percentages of youth who attend organized sport, who had been part of but no longer continue in organized sport and who has never been in organized sport. The data were collected by an online questionnaire that was distributed to primary schools and first grade of gymnasiums.

Key words

Sport, organized sport, youth, motivation, drop-out.

1 INTRODUCTION

Today's era and its society are characterized by different features than the climate of the previous generation, mainly due to dynamic technological changes. The Internet, mobile telephones, social networks and digital tools have become an integral part of our lives and bring many benefits, but also risks. On the one hand, technology is a tool that allows us to improve communication, speed and efficiency in work, education and entertainment. But on the other hand, they can also bring dangers such as addiction, loneliness, cyber-shaming and loss of privacy. We also encounter the issue of shifts in value orientations, where nowadays in the modern age of consumer electronics, rapid technological development, good availability of all products and food at sometimes unbelievably low prices cause most people to lose the real concept of values (Sekot, 2013).

At the same time, today's society is also experiencing an increase in stress and anxiety. Many people are suffering from various psychological problems, which can be caused by, for example, work stress, financial problems, unemployment or social isolation. At the same time, however, there are also many ways to maintain physical and psychological health, for example through therapy, meditation or, most importantly, sporting activities (Blahutková and Charvát, 2003).

We speak of contemporary society as a

sedentary or consumer society, which is marked by a significant decline in physical exertion in all areas of life. This is particularly the case in many professions where most people are sedentary. There is also a decline in physical activity in the home, mainly due to the technological shift that makes all work easier, which is also true for individual forms of exercise (Sekot, 2019).

Today, there are many expert studies and reports that inform us about the risks of a lack of regular physical activity and the undesirable consequences of a sedentary lifestyle. In addition to organised fitness and recreational sports activities, regular walking in particular is considered to be the most acceptable and well-implemented way of compensating for this lifestyle and the risks arising from it. Walking is considered to be the most natural human movement (Sekot, 2008).

Today's society is also often referred to as information society. This term has become important in relation to today's technological innovations and changes in society and has become common in discussions about the challenges of the modern world and what the future will look like (Černý, 2016).

The term "information society" began to emerge in the late 20th century, when technology and the Internet began to become part of our everyday lives. Initially, the term appeared as a description of new technologies, but later it became part of the dis-

cussions about how these technologies could change society. According to Castells (1996), information society refers to a society that becomes dependent on information technology and information. In this society, most economic, political and social activities involve the production, manipulation and also distribution of information based on information technology as well as information networks (Castells, 1996).

The information society has several key characteristics. One of the most important characteristics is the increasing importance of information technology and digital media. These technologies enable fast and effective communication and make information accessible to a wider audience. Another characteristic of the information society is globalisation, which is facilitated by the development of information technology and the Internet. Another characteristic of the information society is the increasing importance of information in the economy. Information is now seen as an important raw material upon which new products and services are created (Duff, 2000).

One of the positive impacts of the information society on the overall society is the improvement of access to information and education. With the development of information technology and the internet, information has become more widely and easily accessible. People can quickly find the information they need and gain new knowledge. Another positive impact is the improvement of communication and social interaction. People can easily communicate and share information with people from all over the world, which helps to create global communities (Fuchs, 2014).

In order to define sport, it is necessary to first define what exactly is a physical activity. Physical activity is physical movement that increases energy expenditure, increases heart and respiratory rates, and generally requires energy expenditure above the level of normal rest. Physical activity has a positive impact on an individual's health, is usually of low or moderate intensity, and can include activities such as walking, cycling, swimming, running, as well as housework (Hoeger and Hoeger, 2011).

Sport is a physical activity that also naturally induces physical exertion, but it differs from physical activity mainly because there are competitive elements such as rules, results, and overall patterns of behaviour occur in an organized princip (Pink, 2008).

Sport brings many benefits to people. One benefit already mentioned is the improvement of physical fitness and health. Playing sports helps keep the body fit, increases strength and stamina, improves heart function and boosts immunity. Sport also helps to improve mental health. Playing sports releases endorphins that improve mood and reduce stress and anxiety. Playing sports regularly can also help regulate the sleep cycle and lead to better quality sleep (Tod et al., 2012).

Playing sports helps and teaches acceptance and adherence to given rules, working with other people and especially getting to know oneself. Physical activity and sport improve cognitive functions, develop coordination, operational thinking, tactical thinking and, for example, team or group thinking, which is important for mutual cooperation (Slepička, Hošek and Hátlová, 2009).

Another and very important advantage of playing sport is socialisation through sport. Socialization through sport is a process that involves individuals engaging in sporting activities to learn cooperation, communication and respect for others. Sport is an effective tool for socialization because it allows individuals to establish new friendships and create networks of social ties in today's age where communication is largely moving online (Sekot, 2003).

Organized sport is a phenomenon that plays an important role in our lives. One of the most important benefits of organized sport is the improvement of physical fitness and health. Regular sporting activity can help people reduce their risk of developing a range of health problems, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease and many others. Playing sports regularly also helps to maintain a healthy weight, strengthen muscles and reduce head stress. Another benefit of organised sport is the acquisition of new

experiences and skills. People participate in sporting activities to learn new sports, techniques and strategies, which can have a positive impact on their lives as a whole. For example, athletes learn to work together as a team, communicate, respect rules and discipline. These skills can be valuable not only in sports, but also in their professional and personal lives (Health Care, 2020).

2 OBJECTIVE

The aim of the research is to analyse the motives of sporting youth and the motives of non-sporting youth on the basis of a questionnaire survey. A sub-objective is to determine the proportion of children in schools who play sport or participate in a sporting activity in a sports organisation. We have set also 5 research questions:

- RQ1: What percentage of youth participate in organized sport?
- RQ 2: What is the most common reason for children to drop out of organized sport?
- RQ 3: What motivates children to stay in organized sport?
- RQ 4: At what age are children most likely to start organized sport?
- RQ 5: How often do children usually have training sessions if they are part of organized sport?

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research sample

The research involved 280 children aged eleven to fifteen years from primary schools

with a second level and from multi-year grammar schools. The schools involved in the research were from the Vysočina Region, the South Moravian Region and the Pilsen Region. 4 responses were not valid and were therefore excluded from the research. Thus, the research works with 276 responses in total.

The gender distribution of respondents is almost balanced, with 55% women and 45% men, respectively girls and boys.

Respondents were aged 11-15 years and always completed the questionnaire under the supervision of a teacher during class time. The average age of the respondent was 13.6 years. The median and the mode are 14 years.

110 respondents are studying the first stage of a multi-year grammar school, 166 are studying the second stage of a primary school.

The representation of respondents by region is divided into 4 units. Most respondents were from the South Moravian Region (136 respondents), followed by the Vysočina Region (83 respondents) and the Pilsen Region (56 respondents). One respondent is from the Ústí region, probably a friend of one of the respondents.

The last question, which serves to divide the respondents, focuses on active participation in organized sport. 65% of respondents regularly play sport in a club or group, while the remaining 35% of respondents do not play organized sport (figure 1).

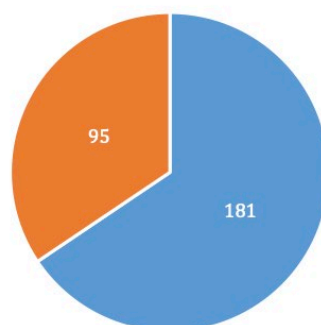


Figure 1. Participation in organised sport (own processing)

3.2 Research methods

The research was conducted in a quantitative form of a non-standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed due to the unavailability of a suitable standardized questionnaire on the same topic.

The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions, of which the first seven questions were named as background information. These were segmentation questions such as gender, age, type of school and others.

The last question in the basic information category was a question asking whether the children play sports in a club, club or club. Or whether they are part of an organized sport. After this question, the questionnaire was divided into two branches according to the answer whether they are part of an organized sport or not. An affirmative answer of attending a club or circle was followed by eighteen questions ranging from joining a club or circle, participating in competitions, tournaments, motivation and demotivation for training to continuing in the club or circle.

In the second branch of the questionnaire, when respondents answered that they were not part of organized sport, they were asked seven questions. The questions were mainly related to their relationship to sport, whether or not they do any physical or sporting activity, or what specific activities they do, whether or not they used to attend a sports club and why they do not attend anymore, and other questions about physical and sporting activities and their motivation or demotivation for sport.

In the non-standardised questionnaire there were most closed answers and some open-ended answers. Thus, this non-standardized questionnaire can be described as semi-structured.

The closed-ended questions will be evaluated using descriptive statistical analysis where the data will be interpreted to obtain relative knowledge and information. Open-ended responses will be categorised and then statistically evaluated. The majority of responses will be evaluated by percentage of responses.

Some of the questions in the questionnaire are just to better understand the important issues and to guide the respondents to these questions, some of the questions in the questionnaire are also used to activate the respondents, hence not all responses will be evaluated in detail.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will divide the results into two categories and two more sub-categories – youth who participate in organized sport and youth who do not participate in organized sport – those who did participate before and those who have never participated.

4.1 Youth participated in organized sport

Once the questionnaire was distributed to the next phase, the first question asked young athletes to participate in more than one sports club or club. 35% of respondents attend more than one sports club or club, leading to opportunities for sports versatility, prevention of one-sided sports load or burnout from the constant pressure to perform. For these respondents, we directed their other responses towards their main sport.

The next question is about the form of organised sport. Respondents are asked whether they attend a sports club (63%), an after-school club (31%) or directly at school (6%). From the results we can see that the vast majority of respondents play sports in a sports club or after-school club, while extra-curricular leisure activities within school are rare.

The respondents who play sports mainly play team sports (61%), which are especially important for younger children in terms of socialisation and integration into a team. 39% of the respondents play individual sports, according to the open-ended question, very often combat sports, which have recently become highly publicised and popular (MMA, boxing, judo, etc.), but also tennis or swimming.

34% of respondents have to commute for sport (Figure 11), which can often be one of the barriers not only for children and young

people as athletes, but also for their parents, who have to drive their children to trainings or commute with them by public transport.

Almost 50% of respondents drive their parents or grandparents to training or take turns commuting with friends' parents. Around 37% of respondents use public transport for commuting. In this question we have 36 double answers, i.e. respondents use more than one form of transport.

The next question points to a possible motivating factor, which is the frequency and frequency of training. 42% of the respondents train 3 or more times a week, which, according to the practice in the Nordic countries, is not suitable for motivating young athletes under 12 or 13 years of age and their future continuation in sport.

Almost 70% of the respondents regularly participate in competitions or matches in their main sport. 30% of the respondents do not participate in any competitions in their sport, so it can be assumed that these are the ones who train only once a week and do sport for fun.

Of those respondents who regularly participate in competitions or matches in their main sport, 58% are actively involved in 12 or more matches, so it can be estimated that they are involved in team sports and are part of a year-round competition. A further 20% or so take part in matches or competitions 6-11 times during the year. The remaining 22% of the respondents then participate in a maximum of 5 competitions or matches throughout the year (Figure 15), so it can be assumed that the pressure to perform is low, and therefore their motivation to stick with the sport longer term.

The next question is very interesting and perhaps one of the most surprising. Motivation to start organized sports is fairly evenly distributed among three basic factors, namely friends (24.5%), parents or grandparents (33.7%), but also the respondent's own initiative (33.7%). For this option, the question arises whether the respondents really came to the club or club on their own, or whether they only perceive

it as such in hindsight, even though their parents brought them there at a younger age. Only 1%, i.e. 2 respondents, mentioned school as a factor that led them to organized sport. 7% of the responses were in the "other" option, where a sibling, a summer camp, the interest of the club itself were very often mentioned as strong motivating factors, but only once was direct recruitment by a sports club.

Another important factor is the age at which organized sport starts. Of the 181 respondents, most of them started sport at the age of 7, the median age is also 7, and the arithmetic mean age of starting sport is 7.9 years.

Another question that focuses on the positive motivation for active organized sports. The majority of respondents (80%) answered that they enjoy playing sports in a club or club as such, and that friends, training and coaches are also very important factors, but unfortunately success is also one of the important parts of playing sports for children in our environment. The "other" answers then mention, for example, personal development, travelling to different places for competitions or matches, but also money, which is a really interesting observation at this age, and the question arises whether this is a prospective motivation or whether someone is really already earning money through sport at this young age.

If we reverse the question and try to find out what young sports people do not enjoy about organized sports, there is a positive majority answer that there is nothing that the respondents do not enjoy. However, this is followed by the expected answers, namely sacrificing leisure time or other activities at the expense of training and travelling to matches or competitions. Some of the respondents do not directly enjoy matches or competitions, travelling to them or to training, but also the lifestyle associated with playing sport. The "other" response then echoes the possibilities of coaches, poor teamwork, or little time for school due to the time demands of training coupled with commuting.

The next question is very positive, with the

majority of respondents expressing a positive attitude towards sport in the future. 92% of respondents plan to continue playing organised sport in the future.

The last area we focused on is the influence of idols. In recent times, in our environment, idols have had a very positive effect on young people, motivating them not only to participate in sport but also to lead a healthy lifestyle. It is more than evident that this factor is on the decline, with almost 50% of respondents having no sporting idol or role model (Figure 21). We will therefore focus on the other half who do have an idol and named it in the next follow-up open-ended response. Of the 88 idols named, only 19 are Czech, the rest are usually world-class superstars such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Kobe Bryant or Lebron James.

4.2 Youth not participated in organized sport

The basic question for respondents who are not part of organised sport was whether they participate in at least some other form of physical activity. Very positively, 86% of respondents engage in at least some form of physical activity, either with friends, family or on their own. Only 14% (13 respondents) do not participate in any form of organised sport or physical activity. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Of the 96 respondents, 87 engage in at least one form of physical activity, most often walking, exercising or working out either at home or in a fitness centre, cycling or scooting, running, going to the playground, or engaging in other activities such as inline skating, horse riding or dancing.

Again, we asked about the role of idols among the group of respondents who are not active in organized sport. We can see a big difference compared to their regularly playing sports peers, where only 30% of the respondents have a sports idol. Out of 29 answers, ten idols are mentioned by Czech athletes. For example, the hockey players Martin Nečas, Radek Koblížek or Jaromír Jágr are mentioned, but again the names of world celebrities such as Lionel Messi, Erling Haaland or Michael Jordan also appear.

A key question for the last part of the questionnaire is whether the respondents had previously attended a sports club or club. 80% (77 respondents) had previously participated in some form of organised sport.

4.2.1 Youth participated in organized sport before

The first question for those respondents who had previously participated in organised sport was, of course, the motivation to leave it. 41 answers mention that they did not enjoy organized sport, 27 respondents do other activities than sport, 19 e.g. did not have friends in the club or circle, among other answers we can find e.g. that the respondent only wanted to try sports in a team, the cancellation of the club due to the small number of members, or also the negative influence of coaches or the team.

We also see the question of how long the respondents had previously played sport as important here. 48% of respondents who had tried some form of organised sport had only lasted one or two years. This figure is quite alarming as it shows the importance of intrinsic motivation of children and young people. If a sport or physical activity does not engage them in the first weeks or months, there is a very high likelihood that they will not stick with it.

4.2.2 Youth never participated in sport

Communication with respondents who did not participate in organised sport or physical activity and had no relationship with it is also an important part of the process. Eleven of the 19 respondents do activities other than sport, and the remaining eight see barriers in terms of health, poor transport accessibility from their home, or simply never showed any interest in sport within the family.

4.3 Discussion

Youth participation in organised sport brings many benefits, such as improved physical fitness, increased self-confidence and social relationships, and the opportunity to develop sporting skills. However, recent survey results show that the number of children and young people participating in organised sport is decreasing. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to understand what

motivates young people to participate in organised sport and why many young people are leaving this environment.

One of the key factors motivating youth to participate in organized sports is a positive atmosphere and support within the club or team. If children and young people are guided by coaches and parents who are focused on developing sporting skills, while respecting individual needs and goals, they can have a positive experience of sport and a desire to continue to pursue the hobby.

Another factor motivating young people to participate in organised sport is the diversity of sports and activities on offer. If children and young people have the opportunity to try different sports and choose the one that suits them best, they may be more motivated to train regularly and improve their performance. On the other hand, the over-saturation of the environment with a variety of sports to choose from may be one of the factors that prevent young people from staying in sport for longer.

In addition to motivating participation in organised sport, it is also important to understand the factors that lead to youth dropping out of this environment. One of the most common reasons is a lack of motivation and interest in the sport or a lack of support from coaches and parents. Another factor may be unfair treatment or discrimination by teammates or coaches.

Last but not least, it is also important to understand those who have never been part of organized sport. Possible reasons may include a lack of financial resources, a lack of information about sporting opportunities and a lack of time due to other interests and responsibilities.

From these findings, it can be concluded that to ensure youth participation in organized sport, it is important to ensure a positive atmosphere, support from coaches and parents, and the diversity of sports activities offered. In addition, it is important to think about ways to reach out to those who have not yet been part of organised sport, for example through promotion and information about the opportunities available. This is

the only way to ensure that young people continue to see sport as a positive and beneficial activity and are able to develop healthy habits and a lasting love of exercise and sport.

Returning to the issue of youth motivation in sport, we can observe several trends that are often discussed in professional forums and conferences. We can identify three paths, each with its own specificities. In the North, there is a strong emphasis on all-sport development and late specialisation. There is no pressure on children to achieve and the aim is for them to enjoy sport as much as possible and to develop a positive relationship with it. Targeting one sport comes at the age of 11-12 and leads to versatility, longer-term motivation and prevention of burnout in young people. Another pathway may be southern, where there are usually several preferred sports available to young people interested in sports. In the Balkans, for example, there are usually no more than ten sports that have a large public following, including youth, and the numbers of participants in organised sports are also significantly higher than in the Czech Republic. At the same time, they also have long-standing excellent results in their preferred sports (e.g. football, basketball, handball or water polo). The third way is the liberal option - common in Central Europe - where sport is not restricted too much, there are no fixed prioritised sports and no specific strategy. Unfortunately, Central Europe, and the Czech Republic in particular, is moving in a direction where we can observe a significant decline in youth interest in sport, but also a rapid decline in the number of registered youth members in organized sport.

5 CONCLUSIONS

If we summarise all the results, we can see a reflection of the current situation in organized adult and youth sport. 65.7% of the respondents who participate in sport reflect the trend of further development in older young athletes and adults. A major motive is often the positive experience of sport, which according to the results is highly influenced by the sport environment,

coaches and the collective in the sports club. If these factors work within a positive motivation framework, respondents can also manage the negative side of playing sport, such as sacrificing leisure time and other activities. Starting with sport was at a relatively young age, most often between 7-8 years old. Non-sporting youth, on the other hand, started sport very late and thus did not develop a positive relationship with it. Leaving their comfort zone is already difficult for them and they prefer to look for other forms of leisure.

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