THE PREFERENCES TOWARD SPORTS OF STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This research was conducted to establish preferences toward sports of students in three Zagreb's institutions of higher education with majors in humanities and social sciences, and natural sciences and engineering. The sample of 1358 students, specifically 443 male and 915 female students, evaluated 59 sports based on the scale of behavioral aims with grades from one through five. Noticeable difference based on gender was established in preferences toward sports. Male students prefer football, table tennis and similar so-called "adrenalin" sports, while they tend to avoid so-called "feminine" sports with emphasis on an esthetic component of activity. Female students on the contrary, prefer aerobics, dance, ice-skating and roller-skating. Badminton and individual sports such as cycling and swimming is equally appealing to both female and male students. While there were no significant differences in preferences among female students from different higher education institutions, differentiation were more expressed among male students.

Key words: *preferences toward sports, students, gender difference, higher education institutions*

Introduction

The period of higher education and the beginning of the adulthood is characterized by the achievement and retainment of a certain level of development for a longer period of time. The main goal of physical education in the institutions of higher education is to preserve all of our anthropological features, prevent health problems, preserve and potentially improve health, as well as to help us acquire habits for lifelong beneficial participation in sports and recreational activities.

Initially students have various motoric skills, and motoric and functional capabilities. Their attitude towards physical activities, health, acquired habits and world in general represents a wide social spectrum.

It is established that habits acquired during childhood and adolescence influence behavior to a great extent and the quality of life in adulthood (Buckworth, 2001.; Kraut at al., 2003; Telama at al., 2005.). Also, it is of great significance to establish positive habit toward regular and lifelong physical exercise from the earliest age. Important factor for a regular physical activity lies in proper offer of different sport-recreational programs since motivation is a key factor for a long-term regular engagement to specific sport activities. Individuals who prefer sport competitions have shown an intrinsic motivation such as pleasure and challenge, in contrast to those who exercise without participating in competitions who have shown extrinsic motivation towards physical appearance, weight and stress control (Kilpatrick at al., 2005). The research on this subject so far has shown statistical differences to a great measure among genders (Dzewaltowski at al.,1997; Kilpatrick at al., 2005.), or education for different vocations (Prot at al., 2005) in preferences toward sport-recreational activities. Male students show tendency for team sports and competing generally, while female students prefer aerobic and dance.

In order to make physical education more interesting and successful, the opinions and attitudes of students are more than appreciated and it is they who can influence the introduction of all sorts of new programs such as aerobics, yoga, dances, badminton, rowing and etc.

Variety of sports and recreational activities makes possible for everyone to find adequate physical activity given their anthropological characteristics, motoric skills and motivation for participating.

Methods

Purpose of the research

The goal of this research was to determine preferences toward particular sport-recreational activities, and to determine whether there exists any statistically significant gender difference and differences among students of different institution of higher education.

An adequate offer of sports is an important factor that enables participation in physically beneficial activities. An appropriate guidance of interest towards a sport activity demonstrates that any individual can achieve personally significant results.

The sample of subjects

The research was conducted during Winter Semester 2007-08 on a sample of first year (freshmen) male and female students of three different institutions of higher education in Zagreb majoring in different areas; students from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FF) with major in humanities and social sciences, students from Faculty of Science (PMF) with major in science, and students from The Polytechnic of Zagreb (TVZ) with major in technical sciences or engineering - shown in details in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of female and male students participating in research differentiated by gender and institution of higher education

	FF	PMF	TVZ	TOTAL
	frequency	frequency	frequency	frequency
male students	220	73	150	443
female students	674	199	42	915
TOTAL	894	272	192	1358

The sample of variables

Students participated in this research on voluntary base. Data was obtained by filling out an anonymous questionnaire (Prot at al., 2001.) about preferences towards sport activities. The questioner shows preferences of students towards 59 sports through the scale of behavioral aims. Each student ranked a sport on the scale with five levels. Mark 5 represents a sport in which a student would definitely like to participate if there was a possibility. Mark 4 stands for a sport in which a student would gladly participate. Mark 3 corresponds to a sport in which a student would occasionally participate (or if circumstances were favorable). Mark 2 is a proxy for a sport in which students do not want to participate, or maybe would take part if there was nothing else available. Mark 1 indicates a sport in which a student would never and under no conditions participate.

Data processing methods

In processing of data we applied standard methods of descriptive and inferential statistics. All obtained data were processed with appropriate statistical software package (SPSS).

Results and discusions

Tables 2 through 5 show results of 10 most and least favorite sports from the viewpoint of students of three different higher education institutions. The results are ranked on the base of average mark.

Table 2. List of the first 10 sports from the viewpoint of female students

	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION - female students								
	FHSS			FS			TPZ		
	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N
1	dances	3,77	638	dances	3,86	199	badminton	3,79	42
2	badminton	3,32	651	weekend outfitting	3,71	199	aerobics	3,57	42
3	aerobics	3,32	650	badminton	3,53	199	dances	3,52	42
4	yoga	3,32	643	swimming	3,46	199	volleyball	3,48	42
5	swimming	3,23	641	aerobics	3,45	199	weekend outfitting	3,43	42
6	fitness	3,22	637	roller skating	3,42	199	figure skating	3,31	42
7	weekend outfitting	3,11	637	figure skating	3,30	199	roller skating	3,31	42
8	roller skating	2,98	634	cycling	3,28	199	fitness	3,24	42
9	cycling	2,93	641	fitness	3,21	199	swimming	3,12	42
10	volleyball	2,87	637	yoga	3,14	199	cycling	3,02	42

Table 2 shows the list of the first 10 sports from the viewpoint of female students (1 - 10) due to the value of arithmetic mean. It is noticeable that female students prefer sports that include music, rhythm and esthetic, like dances and aerobics, but sport-recreational activities such as weekend outfitting, badminton, swimming, volleyball and fitness are also ranked highly. Female students find badminton and volleyball appealing also because they are not interacting via direct physical contact with the opponent in contrast to all the other sport games that did not show up on a list of most desirable ones. Weekend outfitting, cycling and mountaineering are recreational activities they use in order to satisfy their needs for exercise in the nature on their own and with company. Generally they have shown tendency toward physical activities that can be preformed individually and do not have primarily competitive character. Aerobics, as a typical '' feminine '' activity, holds a high desirable place among all students because it enables most of them achieving personal success. Along with aerobics, yoga and badminton are sports with which many of them encounter for the first time at faculties because they were not a part of mandatory program in their education, and they are highly ranked on a list of desirable sport-recreational activities.

An adequate offer of sport contents during education surely enables participation in beneficial physical activities.

Table 3. List of the last 10 sports from the viewpoint of female students

	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION - female students								
	FHSS			FS			TPZ		
	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N
1	wrestling	1,42	640	wrestling	1,37	199	bowling	1,40	42
2	body building	1,42	634	weight lift	1,56	199	field hockey	1,50	42
3	weight lift	1,48	638	body building	1,60	199	kayaking/canoeing	1,64	42
4	field hockey	1,60	639	ice hockey	1,71	199	softball	1,64	42
5	rugby	1,62	631	sport fishing	1,76	199	wrestling	1,67	42
6	sport fishing	1,64	629	rugby	1,78	199	sport fishing	1,67	42
7	ice hockey	1,69	640	bowling	1,89	199	baseball	1,69	42
8	bowling	1,69	639	boxing	1,91	199	water-polo	1,69	42
9	triathlon	1,73	634	baseball	1,94	199	golf	1,71	42
10	water-polo	1,73	634	triathlon	1,97	199	triathlon	1,71	42

Table 3 shows the list of the least 10 sport-recreational activities from the viewpoint of female students. The direct contact in wrestling and boxing along with unesthetical component in weight lifting and body building is main reason female students refuse participating in that activities. Likewise they are not fond of typical ''male'' sports like ice hockey, field hockey, rugby and water polo.

There are no significant differences in the most and in the least desirable sport activities among female students of different higher education institution.

Table 4. List of the first 10 sports from the viewpoint of male students

	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION - male students								
	FHSS			FS			TPZ		
	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N
1	football	2,97	211	football	3,37	73	football	3,73	150
2	table tennis	2,84	208	table tennis	3,18	73	motto sport	3,49	150
3	basketball	2,77	210	cycling	3,00	73	table tennis	3,19	150
4	swimming	2,75	207	mountaineering	2,99	73	swimming	3,06	150
5	archery	2,71	210	swimming	2,96	73	rafting	3,04	150
6	shooting	2,71	209	basketball	2,85	73	snowboard	3,01	150
7	mountaineering	2,70	210	tennis	2,85	73	cycling	3,00	150
8	chess	2,68	211	parachuting	2,84	73	handball	2,97	150
9	cycling	2,65	210	badminton	2,79	73	basketball	2,93	150
10	weekend outfitting	2,63	210	chess	2,79	73	tennis	2,92	150

Table 5. List of the last 10 sports from the viewpoint of male students

	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUION - male students								
	FHSS			FS			TPZ		
	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N	SPORT	Mean	N
1	callisthenics	1,32	211	acrobatics	1,42	73	callisthenics	1,54	150
2	aerobics	1,37	211	aerobics	1,52	73	acrobatics	1,58	150
3	tuned swimming	1,43	211	sport gymnastics	1,56	73	aerobics	1,63	150
4	sport gymnastics	1,48	209	callisthenics	1,56	73	tuned swimming	1,67	150
5	acrobatics	1,49	210	tuned swimming	1,58	73	roller skating	1,89	150
6	roller skating	1,66	211	roller skating	1,84	73	yoga	1,92	150
7	figure skating	1,72	210	softball	1,88	73	sport gymnastics	1,93	150
8	wrestling	1,76	209	wrestling	1,89	73	field hockey	1,94	150
9	equestrian sport	1,78	209	yoga	1,92	73	figure skating	1,94	150
10	field hockey	1,79	210	field hockey	1,99	73	softball	1,95	150

Table 4 shows the list of the first 10 sports from the viewpoint of male students (1 - 10) due to the value of arithmetic mean. Male students of three higher education institutions mostly prefer football. Popularity of this sport, especially the media one, is obvious in the world as in Croatia, and the desire for companion is present also. Sports such as table tennis, badminton, tennis, basketball and handball are ranked very high. It is interesting that fitness is not listed among top ten desirable activities, and that so called "adrenalin" sports like moto sport, rafting, snowboarding and parachuting are listed among the top ten popular sports especially among The Polytechnic of Zagreb's students. All these sports require high psycho-physiological abilities and exhausting training, and they present danger, raise adrenalin level and offer students the ability to prove themselves and to others. Financial conditions are the key boundary for engaging in this sort of sports and they are impossible for implementing in regular physical education. Swimming is highly ranked and is of interest for students mainly because of the simplicity of movement, health aspect and individual approach. The choice of top ten sport activities differs by students of different higher education institution. FF's students are into archery and shooting meanwhile these sports are of no interest to PMF's and TVZ's students. Likewise, TVZ's students do not list chess which is interesting to both FF's and PMF's students.

Male students of three different high education institutions share the same attitude towards the choice of the least ten desirable sport activities and do not want to engage in so called '' feminine '' sports which have a strong esthetic component.

Table 5 shows list of the last ten sports from the viewpoint of male students to the value of arithmetic mean. From all shown it can be inferred that there exist statistically significant differences among preferences toward certain sport-recreational activity due to gender differences.

Conclusions

This research was conducted in order to improve physical education by introducing various sport programs that would primarily fulfill and take into consideration needs, dispositions and interests of students of different institutions of higher education. Based on detailed analysis of obtained data, the physical education can be organized in a better way on what can be achieved not only based on material prerequisites but by homogenizing groups according to their interests and commitment to a sport. With this kind of approach it is possible to appropriately plan physical education and to influence improvement of anthropological features of student population.

Considering that interests and needs of different students for physical activity differ and depend on their abilities and conditions to engage in different activities, there is a need for continuance of this research and monitoring of present condition, to plan and program future activities. The possibility of an individual choice, from variety of sport programs at different faculties, would motivate students to think of physical activity and education as their daily need and satisfaction, and not as an obligation or a burden, which presents a challenge for the students as well as for the professors.

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