

RELATIONS BETWEEN LEISURE TIME, THE FREQUENCY OF DOING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MEMBERSHIP IN SPORTS CLUBS AMONG PUPILS

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(Original scientific paper)

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to analyse the relations between the amount of leisure time and membership in sports clubs among elementary school pupils, focusing on gender differentiation. The sample included a total of 157 students (78 boys). By testing significance of differences between proportions of the students who self-reportedly have free time and are members of sports clubs ($p_1=0,64$) and the ones who self-reportedly do not have leisure time and are members of sports clubs ($p_2=0,26$), a statistically significant difference was determined ($p<0,001$). Moreover, by testing significance of differences between proportions of the female students who self-reportedly have leisure time and are members of sports clubs ($p_1=0,33$) and the ones who self-reportedly do not have free time and are members of sports clubs ($p_2=0,67$), a statistically significant difference was determined as well ($p<0,001$). The results show gender differentiation as well, where boys who have more free time are more likely to become members of sports clubs, while the situation with girls is reversed. Taking into consideration the significance of physical activity, especially during puberty, which is a critical period of habit formation, results clearly indicate that membership in sports clubs is a predictor of the development of a variety of child development areas. These results are in accordance with a series of timely and adequate actions aimed at creating and maintenance of desirable habits, and preventing the negative consequences of the lack of physical activity.

Key words: membership in sports clubs, habits, students, physical activity

Introduction

A leisure time is a social phenomenon that requires a detailed approach in all aspects of life. Thus, scientific disciplines focused on human behaviour put emphasis on it as well (Mlinarević and Gajger, 2010). According to the researches dealing with this phenomenon, it can be concluded that it is not uniquely defined. Among numerous definitions, that of Dumazedier (1962, 29), who is considered to be one of the most eminent representatives of the sociology of leisure, stands out. In his opinion, "leisure consists of a number of occupations in which the individual may indulge of his own free will – either to rest, to amuse himself, to add to his knowledge or improve his skills disinterestedly or to increase his voluntary participation in the life of the community after discharging his professional, family or social duties".

When taking into consideration the development of society, leisure activities have gone through several stages from the tribal society to modern times (Previšić, 2000, 405):

a) the domination of free time without the concept and praxis of work in the expression of primitive cultures;

b) unlimited and undefined work time and leisure time;

c) the prevail of work time over leisure time;

d) the shortening of work time and an increase in leisure time

In times when the demands of a modern human being living in consumer society are ever growing, free time is given to us as a prize, i.e. it must be bought (Polić, 2003). In this situation we ask ourselves what free time is free from and what it is free for. Commercialisation of free time has helped profitable industries, such as "the industry of entertainment", tourism and sport to develop; and in their eyes free time is primarily seen as time free of work. However, in modern times leisure time is seen as profitable also if it is spent studying of creating. This is how non- work is distinguished from wasting time. Although the difference is

sometimes elusive, there are cases in which it is deliberately blurred in order to commercialise free time and annul its revolutionary power in society. Thus, we can ask ourselves the following question: Are sports competitions a part of leisure activities (a game) or a part of work time? (Polić and Polić, 2009). Whatever the answer, leisure time with all of its contents has become a dominant part of everyday life and the quality of spending it has become the topic of researches (Badrić and Prskalo, 2011). In modern times, a large proportion of population lives in urban areas. Such situation is unfavourable from both ecological and kinesiological point of view. Leisure time is increasingly spent in sedentary behaviours which consequently lead to a variety of disorders, primarily obesity and anxiety. However, adequate kinesiology programs help reducing the consequences of the lack of physical activity (Prskalo et al., 2009). Children and teenagers have more free time in comparison with adults and the content of leisure activities significantly contributes to shaping their identity and the future quality of life. Due to their specific bio psychosocial status, they should spend their free time in an organized manner. It certainly can not be left to chance (Previšić, 1989). Jedud and Novak (2006) see it as a means of empowerment of young people and as a sphere of the realization of interests of an individual or a group, and since an individual spends his/ her free time in accordance to personal wishes and possibilities, it provides him/ her with the sensation of liberty and personal control, enabling him/ her to achieve self determination. According to Bouillet and Uzelac (2008), leisure time should represent the peak of pleasure and happiness, which makes it indispensable in modern world value system.

The role of school in creating leisure time activities for children is crucial, but unfortunately insufficiently effective since there are not enough school activities which can be done in free time. Nevertheless, regardless of numerous organizational, professional and material limitations, schools do organize some extracurricular activities, and among them, sports activities (Mlinarević i Gajger, 2010).

According to the recommendations of the World Health Organization, children and youth should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity daily. Maršić and Paradžik (2006) stated that in Croatia the number of physically inactive pupils and citizens is still large and that achieving the desirable level of physical activity in the population is definitely not an easy task.

Researching the structure of leisure time of elementary school children, Arbunić (2006) came to the conclusion that the amount of activity depends on the time of day and the age of the pupils. The amount of physical activity with respect to overall leisure time declines with age (Thompson et al., 2009; Kvesić et al., 2015), and gender differences in physical activity levels are also noticeable in favour of male students (Mota and Esculas, 2002).

Škegro, Čustonja and Milanović (2009) put emphasis on two most common types of leisure - time physical activities: membership in sports clubs, recreational associations, boy scouts and other institutions and individual physical exercise.

In the focus of Hartman's (2003) research was the participation of school children in extracurricular activities. 181 children (92 boys) were included in the study sample. The results showed that 51% of the children were physically active, out of which 83,9% were members of some sports club, and 16,1% were members of school sports club. The results stress the significance of ensuring adequate material, professional and organisational conditions in order to obtain an adequate and desirable level of physical activity of the students.

Kokko, Kannas and Villberg (2009) was research profiles of childrens and youth sports clubs in Finland in relation to health promotion in view of the policy in the clubs and the perception of the coach. The study included 27 sports clubs, 273 sports professionals and 240 coaches. The survey was conducted HPSC questionnaire which proved valid and reliable where the particles in the questionnaire related to politics in clubs, ideology, practices and environmental factors. The results showed that only a small number of clubs in making a significant impact on overall health promotion.

A significant and worryingly high number of children, both members and non-members of sports clubs, do not consider physical activity to be an appealing choice when it comes to spending leisure time (Miholić Jenko, Hraski and Juranić, 2015), which is a problem since attitudes are a significant predictor of the choice of leisure time activities. Attitudes towards P.E. and sport are a frequent subject of kinesiology researches. The reason can be attribute to the assumption of the possibility of predicting behaviour based on attitudes, i.e. the assumption regarding the cause and correlation between attitudes and behaviour. Markuš (2011) determined that researches showed correlation between attitudes and behaviour, but the extent of it is still to be determined.

Pano and Markola (2012) was research the factors what affecting on children's attitudes towards physical activity. Significant variables considered social class, gender, race, physical identity and self-perception of the body. The study included 1062 high school students aged 14-18 years from 6 different public high schools of Albania. The results indicate that the 14,21 % of respondents are concerned with physical activity and sport regularly, 39 % participate in physical activity or sport once a week, and 36 % are active rare. Motivation for activity is fun (35.87 %) and 33.08 % of them "improving their physical image ". The lack of free time (53.57 %) and lack of sports facilities (20.43 %) are the main reasons why they do not deal with physical activity and sport. There is also a lack of information on the benefits of participation in physical activity and sport for this age.

Geind , Quennerstedt and Eriksson (2013) was research the importance of sports clubs in improving on the health of young people, where sports clubs participating in the study were not professional clubs, membership in clubs was voluntarily and outside the regular school program. Programs that are implement in these clubs was in accordance with the recommendations of the WHO. In order for clubs to become a significant factor in improving health should be a comprehensive approach activities being carried out in areas with specified objectives and purposes.

In the focus of the research of Tomac, Šumanović and Rastovski (2013) was the attitude of 8th grade students toward P.E. They determined that students who are physically active express affinity toward physical education, while the affinity decreases with girls and students whose favourite subjects are Maths and foreign languages.

Žnidarec Čučković and Ohnjec (2014) also described the interests of children and youth in the context of doing physical activity and sports in order to detect their attitudes. They concluded that motion receives its own dimension separated from the context of play and entertainment. Moreover, the attitude toward different organised sports activities is fairly strict. Among other things, Prskalo (2013) finds physical activity to be an activity without an alternative.

In accordance with the abovementioned, the following aim of this research was formed: to determine the correlation between the amount of students` free time and membership in sports clubs on the sample of elementary school students (grades 5-8), with gender differentiation.

Methodology

This research was conducted in accordance with Ethical Standards for Research Involving Children. The children included in the sample are elementary school students of Split-Dalmatia County. In accordance with the aim of the research, the sample comprised 157 students (grades 5-8) – 78 boys and 79 girls. After obtaining parental consent, the research was conducted via a questionnaire designed specifically for this research. The questionnaire contained the following questions: “*Do you have enough free time?*“, “*Are you a member of a sports club?*“ (nominal scale with two categories) and “*Would you like to continue doing physical activity / sports in the future?*“ (nominal scale, three categories) The students were given 10 minutes to anonymously answer the abovementioned questions about the perceived amount of free time.

Using z-test significance of differences between observed proportions, of categories of boys who self-reportedly have/ do not have free time and are members of sports clubs were examined. The results are obtained by using the software Statistica 12.0. (StatSoft, Tulsa, OK, USA). The type I error was set at $\alpha=5\%$.

Results and Discussion

Within a table 1 and table 2, insight into frequencies of self-reported structure and amount of free time for boys and girls is given.

Table 1: Frequencies and the self-reported proportions of the amount of free time

Free time Club Membership Future life	Boys (n ₁ =78)			
	Yes (n _{1,1} =66)		No (n _{1,2} =12)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
No	0 (0%)	2 (2,56%)	0 (0%)	1 (1,28%)
Yes	40 (51,28%)	16 (20,51%)	7 (8,97%)	2 (2,56%)
Maybe	2 (2,56%)	6 (7,69%)	1 (1,28%)	1 (1,28%)

Free time (“*Do you have enough free time?*“), membership in a club – Club membership (“*Are you a member of a sports club?*“) on a nominal scale with two categories and - Future life (“*Would you like to continue doing physical activity / sports in the future?*“ on a nominal scale with three categories for male students.

Table 2: Frequencies and the self-reported proportions of the amount of free time

Free time	Girls (n ₂ =79)			
	Yes (n _{2,1} =63)		No (n _{2,2} =16)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Club membership				
Future life	No	0 (0%)	1 (1,27%)	0 (0%)
	Yes	19 (24,05%)	26 (32,91%)	3 (3,80%)
	Maybe	2 (2,53%)	15 (18,99%)	0 (0%)
				6 (7,59%)

Free time ("Do you have enough free time?"), membership in a club – Club membership ("Are you a member of a sports club?") on a nominal scale with two categories and - Future life ("Would you like to continue doing physical activity / sports in the future?" on a nominal scale with three categories for female students.

By using z-test, significance of differences between proportions of the students who self-reportedly have free time and are members of sports clubs ($p_1=0,64$) and the ones who do not have leisure time and are members of sports clubs ($p_2=0,26$), a statistically significant difference was determined ($p<0,001$). Moreover, by testing significance of differences between proportions of the female students who self-reportedly have leisure time and are members of sports clubs ($p_1=0,33$) and the ones who do not have free time and are members of sports clubs ($p_2=0,67$), a statistically significant difference was determined as well ($p<0,001$).

The results of some other researches (Beigle et al., 2006; Badrić and Prskalo, 2011) show gender differentiation as well, where boys who have more free time are more likely to become members of sports clubs, while the situation with girls is reversed.

Conclusion

Numerous researchers around the world have focused on leisure time of children and youth since the structure of leisure time is a predictor of health and optimal child development. In times of modern technology, such as computers and mobile phones, sedentary behaviour prevails given that using technology requires no or very little physical activity. According to studies, organised physical activity, among which membership in sports clubs is considered to be the best, is a desirable form of exercise due to a series of reasons, such as professional leadership and adequate material conditions. By testing significant differences between proportions of the students who self-reportedly have free time and are members of sports clubs ($p_1=0,64$) and the ones who do not have leisure time and are members of sports clubs ($p_2=0,26$), a statistically significant difference was determined ($p<0,001$). Moreover, by testing significant differences between proportions of the female students who self-reportedly have leisure time and are members of sports clubs ($p_1=0,33$) and the ones who do not have free time and are members of sports clubs ($p_2=0,67$), a statistically significant difference was determined as well ($p<0,001$). The results show gender differentiation as well, where boys who have more free time are more likely to become members of sports clubs, while the situation with girls is reversed. In times when both the number of overweight children and the number of disorders connected with insufficient physical activity have been rising due to the lack of physical activity, and the attitude of students about physical activity does not show satisfactory and desirable results, this research will help to set goals for the future actions in order to prevent negative outcomes. The significance of physical activity for children and youth, especially during adolescence, is particularly stressed through membership in sports clubs. Since the results of this research show that female students are more inactive than the male students, these results could serve as a timely appeal causing adequate actions aimed at creating and maintenance of desirable habits, and preventing the negative consequences of the lack of physical activity.

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