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MOTIVATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO
PRACTICE SPORT ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Motivation is the support of motor activities and the basic argument for which a person is involved in an activity and acts for it. The purpose of this study is to identify and share the opinions of the students regarding the reasons for practicing physical sport activities in the primary school cycle. The hypothesis is that, at this age, there are still enough factors able to motivate children to practice different motor activities frequently and regularly. The objective pursued is to identify the main reasons that determine children to practice sport activities. The following methods of research were used in this paper: study of documents, sociological survey, questionnaire, statistical method. The sample investigated includes the 4th grade students of "Vasile Alecsandri" Middle School in Bucharest - a group of 112 students. The results show that, at this age, there are enough factors that can determine children to often practice sport activities on a regular basis. The analysis of study results has revealed that a strong and sustainable motivation to practice physical exercises can be achieved by raising the children's awareness of their importance for a healthy lifestyle and personality development. Through this study, we showed that, to achieve a harmonious physical development in order to be able to relate with other colleagues and to reduce the time spent on the internet, students should be motivated to participate actively in the physical education lessons, to practice sport in their leisure time or performance sport for talented children.

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1. Introduction

According to Leucea Ilica (2010), practicing sport activities builds a set of mental skills like: willpower, motivation, tolerance, competitiveness, cooperation, discipline, strategic thinking, mutual respect, friendship, fulfilment, defeat and ambition to prevail (Potop, 2014, pp. 45-47). Alongside physical performance, the cognitive and affective job satisfaction comes; virility and effervescence mingle with the agility of thought, attention and concentration within a healthy mind, where order, stamina and balance are doubled by body hygiene and gesture aesthetics. The systematic practice of exercise has physical and biological effects. (Predoiu, 2016, pp. 23-26)

When growing up, the child adapts to life, society changes and numerous factors shape his/her personality. Adults and children seek their way through the labyrinth of life, forgetting how vital it is to keep their balance in life and not giving up sport. The requirements for the child should not exceed their real possibilities; they will meet the age requirements and will also take into account the near perspectives of their psychological development (Epuran et al., 2007, pp. 295-297). At an early age, cognitive activities favour an obvious intellectual development also influenced by a special plasticity of the nervous system - a functional advantage that gives the child a great receptivity, compared to adults (Dragnea et al., 2006, p. 57). Thus, students who manage to balance intellectual and physical efforts accomplish superior functional indices and increased work capacity.

2. Problem Statement

In primary school, physical education has always emphasized the children's play. The Physical Education subject aims at a progressive development of competences by capitalising on the pupils' age-specific experience and emphasizing the affective component of attitude and the action dimensions of pupils' personality (Urichianu, 2017). This is fundamental to child development and includes: education for motricity development, cognitive growth, social function development and emotional development. All of these become less relevant when the child is threatened by obesity (Kirsten & Clarkin-Philips, 2017).

The physicians' efforts will be directed to preventing the occurrence of complications by fighting obesity. Medical and therapeutic specialists argue the presence of this disease due to misunderstood aspects of civilization (Leucea Ilica, 2010, p. 61). At pre-puberty age, cognitive activities favour an obvious intellectual development influenced by a special plasticity of the nervous system - a functional advantage that gives the child a great receptivity, compared to adults. A healthy conduct is formed only on the basis of education and positive patterns of peers, according to the continuous practice of these abilities and skills (Stănică, 2011, pp. 25-27).

Relying on the data of a questionnaire completed by 112 pupils aged 9-10 from the "Vasile Alecsandri" Middle School of Bucharest, we examined their reasons and preferences regarding leisure activities, with a special emphasis on sport activities or play.

Based on feedbacks, the evidence of the effect of implementing school education programs and the parental involvement in children's leisure time, our point of view on physical activities and children's health will tackle the implications of school physical education in students' choices. We will fight for

physical education teachers in primary schools to accept reconsideration of the curriculum to help children regain their enthusiasm for practicing non-restrictive forms of movement that have a healthy effect on the body. Concerned with understanding the importance of the social sport phenomenon that is directly influenced by the physical education and sport process, we wanted to know the students' opinions about practicing permanent physical activity and their knowledge regarding the educational aspect of this formative side.

3. Research Questions

To meet this research goal, we ask the following questions:

- Does the sharing of students' opinions on constantly practising sport contribute to achieving the educational focus of the formative physical education?
- Does the identification of student motivations help boosting the age group 9-10 years to do sport activities?

Can the identification of student motivations to practice a physical activity contribute to selecting the best physical activities for their skills instead of random movement?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and share the opinions of the students regarding the reasons for practicing physical sport activities in the primary school cycle.

5. Research Methods

The sample is represented by the 4th graders of the "Vasile Alecsandri" Middle School of Bucharest, a group including 112 pupils. A total of 53 girls and 59 boys aged 9-10 years in grades 4 A, B and C were investigated. The physical education teacher explained the students the questionnaire and clarified uncertainties. The questionnaire was applied in homeroom classes, where students were asked not to write their names on the sheets and to focus and respond as honestly as possible.

The research methods used were the following:

The review of the existing literature, which allowed us to advance our research on problems related to the practice of sport activities by children aged 9-10, through documents such as textbooks, curricula, publications, communications and papers presented at scientific conferences.

Pedagogical observation, which is a systematic and continuous process that helped us discover new peculiarities of the pedagogical reality; it is absolutely indispensable to the other methods and allows a real connection of the researcher with the studied phenomenon. As part of our scientific approach, the observation method involved the presence of the researcher along with the physical education teacher in conducting some didactic activities, in our case, the physical education lessons, sports competitions and homeroom classes. The obtained data allowed us to formulate relevant conclusions on the students' motivation for participating or not participating in sport activities.

Social questionnaires, which require responses to questions about preferential relationships within a group (Gagea, 2010, pp. 374-378). In a relatively short time, we obtained information about the

students' opinions, motives, interests and options for a motor activity, so we could draw some conclusions (Urichianu Toma & Gagea, 2010, pp. 155-157). In this case, the investigation was materialized by applying a questionnaire with 7 items having between 4 and 11 variants, depending on the questions addressed to the students.

Statistical and mathematical methods of data processing and interpretation - for a precise analysis of the data obtained from the application of the questionnaire, statistical and mathematical indicators from the literature were used. The processed statistical and mathematical parameters are enlisted in tables and presented in the graphical form, an efficient method of illustrating the averages in order to highlight the dynamics of the obtained results.

6. Findings

From the centralized data presented in Table 01, we can see that the subjects offered the most varied responses.

Table 01. Results in percentages of the questionnaire responses

Questions	Responses (%)											
	a (n/%)	b (n/%)	c (n/%)	d (n/%)	e (n/%)	f (n/%)	g (n/%)	h (n/%)	i (n/%)	j (n/%)	k (n/%)	l (n/%)
1. Participation in PE classes	86	21	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	76.78	18.76	1.79	0.89	1.79							
2. Motives for non-participation in PE classes	0	14	1	2	1	0	0	2	2	2	1	87
		12.5	0.89	1.79	0.89			1.79	1.79	1.79	0.89	77.67
3. Motives for absences from PE classes	5	6	0	2	4	7	2	86				
	4.45	5.37		1.79	3.57	6.25	1.79	76.78				-
4. Motives for participation in PE classes	51	8	2	6	3	11	4	2	12	11	2	-
	45.54	7.14	1.78	5.37	2.68	9.82	3.58	1.78	10.71	9.82	1.78	
5. Leisure time preferences	39	10	31	17	9	6						
	34.82	8.93	27.68	15.18	8.03	5.36						
6. Favourite sports practiced during PE classes	31	9	11	13	14	30	4					
	27.68	8.03	9.82	11.6	12.5	26.79	3.58					-
7. How the school can enhance the practice of sport	4	12	41	22	5	26	2					
	3.57	10.71	36.62	19.64	4.46	23.22	1.78					

Note: PE – Physical education

The responses to question 1, *Participation in PE classes*, show that 86 pupils attend 76.78% of physical education classes, and 21 participate in 18.76% of classes, while the remaining 5 (4.47%) attend only half of them, or rarely/never attend them.

To question 2, *Motives for non-participation in PE classes*, 25 pupils (22.32%) invoke the consent of their parents, medical exemptions or the leaves of absence from the teacher.

To question 3, *Motives for absences from PE classes*, 26 pupils (23.32%) respond as follows: 15 say they do not have good results in sport or do not have the appropriate skills, and 11 declare that their health condition is impaired and cannot do exercise, are bored or the lesson content is unpleasant.

To question 4, *Motives for participation in PE classes*, 51 students (45.54%) believe that exercise is good for health, 12 (10.71%) show interest in sport to get high grades and 11 (9.82%) respond that practicing physical exercise helps them to better know their colleagues, to relate to them.

As regards question 5, *Leisure time preferences*, 39 pupils (34.82%) say they love to do sport, 31 (27.68%) mention the Internet, and 42 (37.5%) declare they spend their free time reading, learning etc.

To question 6, *Favourite sports practiced during PE classes*, 31 pupils (27.68%) say they like sports games, 30 (26.79%) like martial arts, and 27 (24.1%) prefer to practice gymnastics and dance. The remaining 24 students (21.42%) would prefer to practice swimming, tennis and other sports.

The responses to question 7, *How the school can enhance the practice of sport*, reveal that 41 pupils (36.62%) are willing to do more sports games during PE classes, 26 (23.22%) would organise sport activities outside the school and 22 (19.64%) would like lower requirements and less exigent rules regarding evaluation.

Figure 01 shows the dynamics of motivational factors for the practice of sport activities by primary school pupils. For this, it was calculated the percentage share of each indicator, highlighting the motivation-related factors.

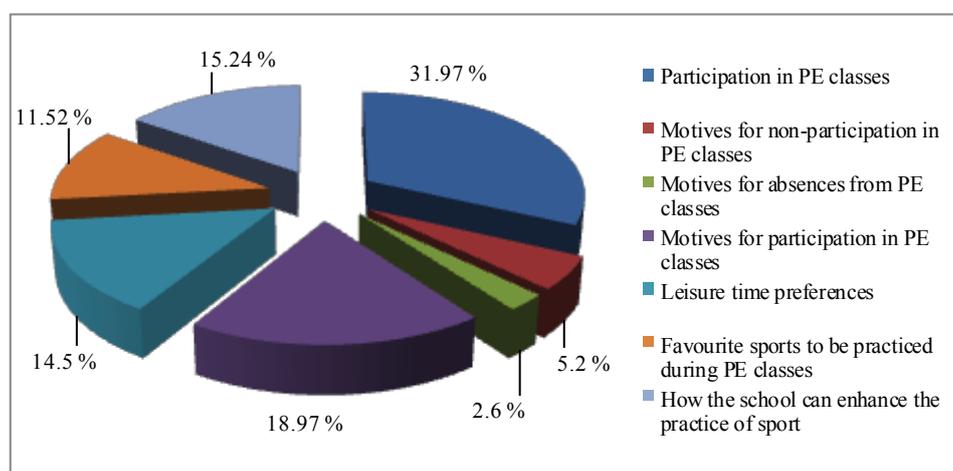


Figure 01. The weight of motivational factors for the practice of sport activities by primary school pupils

The analysis of motivational factors in the questionnaire highlights the following results for the research subjects (Table 01, Figure 01):

- Participation in PE classes: 86 students (76.78%) participate in every PE class;
- Motives for non-participation in PE classes: 25 students (22.32%) invoke the consent of their parents, medical exemptions or the leaves of absence from the teacher;

- Motives for absences from PE classes: 15 say they do not have good results in sport or do not have the appropriate skills, and 11 declare that their health condition is impaired and cannot do exercise, are bored or the lesson content is unpleasant;
- Motives for participation in PE classes: 51 students (45.54%) believe that exercise is good for health;
- Leisure time preferences: 39 pupils (34.82%) love to do sport;
- Favourite sports practiced during PE classes: 31 students (27.68%) like practicing sports games;
- How the school can enhance the practice of sport: 41 students (36.62%) are willing to do more sports games.

7. Conclusion

The assertions that have stimulated the achievement of this research at the primary education level, namely the 4th grade, as regards the students' low interest and participation in movement activities, are not confirmed, at least for the "Vasile Alecsandri" Middle School of Bucharest. The responses given by the different categories surveyed lead to several conclusions:

At the moment, there is a relatively low level of movement awareness to achieve an increase in the quality of life, and this is revealed by the responses given by most subjects. Students are much more aware of the importance of movement in their lives than adults consider. They are sufficiently motivated to do more physical activity than is currently being done in schools.

Children find alternative movement solutions that compensate for the inadequacy of the perceived physical education classes as an obvious lack.

At the institutional level, the concern with sport for all is very low, as well as the involvement of institutions or state organisations.

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