

## ARE THERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEXES IN THEIR INTEREST FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION?

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(Original scientific paper)

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### Abstract

*In this article interest for sport and physical education of children and adolescents was observed. The review of thirty relevant researches from all over the world analyzes the attitudes, interests, motives and barriers of persons of both sexes for their physical education affinities. The results indicate that interests, strength and direction of motivation for physical education and sport vary depending on age and sex, which has negative influence on forming of lasting habits for physical education. The differences in interests and attitude between sexes were determined, which indicates the need for differently designed curricula in primary and secondary schools.*

**Key words:** physical education, sport, attitudes, sex, interests, motives

### INTRODUCTION

Interest, strength and direction of motivation for physical education vary a lot. Physical education is a favorite subject to some students, while to the others it represents the main cause of stress and motive for truancy (Biddle, 2001; Dragic, 2005). The researches indicate that during physical education lessons children have negative experiences, the feeling of incompetence or boredom (Vilhjansson & Thorlindson, 1998). Salis and Hovel (Salis & Hovell, 1990) thinks that are numerous factors which can be dominant for different groups in different life stages to show different attitudes and interest for physical activities. Because of that Breta and associates (Bret et al, 2002) think that their identification is very important in order to understand what motivates them to be physically active. According to the same authors (Brett et al, 2002) inclination to physical activity depends on many factors, for example, value attitudes, social climate, structural and cultural barriers. The influence can be strengthened by the influence of media; it can be connected to ethnic and cultural values and in connection with examples (Bruce and Sonders, 2005). Inclination to physical activity also can depend on supply of equipment and buildings, teacher's knowledge as well as previous engagement in school and recre-

ative teams (Hill & Cleven, 2005). One of the reasons for non interest for physical education can be in the contents which do not correspond to the interests of youth and which are not compatible with modern social and cultural trends (Hardman, 2007, 2008).

### Why do people during growing up lose interest in physical education?

Age can be significant factor in choosing activity and its intensity. Very interesting fact was determined in many researches that affinity for physical education and sport declines as students are getting old. For example, the research of Sekeljic and Sturze – Milic (2010) and Sekeljic and Stamatovic (2011) indicate that female and male students show great interest in physical education lessons and for most of them it is their most favourite subject.

According to the researches of Radosavljevic and Visnjic (2004) on the sample of 500 boys and girls in fifth and sixth grade by the use of Mercer's inventory it was determined that the values of researched attitudes towards physical education were higher than average, that they are positive and that they are closer to upper limit value.

The results of the research Matic and Bokan (1990) on the sample of 1301 students of both

sexes aged 13 to 17 indicate that interest for physical education is widely spread, and that it is more dominant for younger school age.

In research Radosavljevic et al (2010), the sample was 783 students from which 417 students were from seventh and eighth grade of primary school and 366 students from first and third grade of secondary school. For the evaluation of the level of physical activity the questionnaire of physical activity for adolescents was applied (PAQ-A). The results of the analysis of variance show that there are differences on the level of physical activity between the students in primary schools and secondary schools in favour of the primary school students. The existence of sex differences on the level of physical activity was also determined in both age groups in favour of the male adolescents.

Trost, et al, (2002) determined sharp decline of moderate to very intensive activity from childhood to puberty both for girls and boys, and Pate, et al (2007) on the basis of his data indicate further gradual decline of intensive physical activity for girls from eighth to twelfth grade. Other studies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; Van Wersch et al, 1992) determine that in the adolescence the interest for sport rapidly declines participation in sport teams or sport clubs. In this period the percentage of students declines for 50% who actively participate in physical education lessons, and there are more and more those who evade physical education lessons (Ntoumanis, et al, 2004; Brooks & Magnusson, 2006). According to the research Jorgic and Veselinovic (2008) in Nis, 40% of high school students are always or sometimes absent from physical education lessons.

With years people change interest for certain activities. According to the research (CDC, 2003; Dovey, et al, 1998; Kimm, et al, 2002; U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, 1996) the interest for basketball, football, running, cycling declines and it is more common for girls than for boys.

### **Competence as a factor for inclination for physical activity**

The level of motor abilities significantly influences the participation in activities. More skillful students readily take part in activities and spend more time practicing (Raudsepp & Pall, 2006), because they think they will experience the sense of success. On the contrary, less skillful students

evade activities because they expect failure and the sense of shame (Fairclough, 2003; Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004). The difference in motor abilities is one of the reasons of rare participation of boys and girls in sport activities. The research Maihan et al, (2006) shows that boys have a special influence on physical activities of girls. They can motivate them to be physically active, but at the same time they represent one of the barriers which is formed due to intolerance and inability of boys to accept them equally in games. Because of the fact that girls usually do not know the rules of the games and because they have weaker sport technical education, boys verbally discourage girls, they are sarcastic and they tease them, which influences girls' self respect and they evade these situations.

### **Different perceptions of sport and physical education between sexes**

Different positions and experiences of boys and girls about physical education contribute to the existence of different interests, attitudes and motives in relation to physical education (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001, Visnjic et al (2010). The differences in perception go so far that Smeal, et al (1994) in his feminist attitude towards modern sport and physical education think that it is only one of the socially acceptable ways to promote aggression, and a good opportunity for the domination of men. In this way girls are discriminated and they lack the opportunity to accept positive values of sport and physical education.

In the research which was realized in our country by Visnjic and Radosavljevic (2004), and Visnjic et al (2010), the assumption were determined that the fifth grade male students are more interested in sports than fifth grade female students and that sex is an important predictor of the level of motivation for the engagement in physical education lessons. The research of Krsmanovic (1996) was realized on the sample of eighth grade primary school students and it showed that students differently assess physical education lessons, depending on the sex. Half of the girls think that actual week number of lessons is enough, and less than 20% of boys share their opinion. Significant differences exist in evaluating of interest and access of certain education contents, personal preferences to certain contents and so on. In the work of Djordjic and Tubic (2008) it was stated that girls are not homog-

enous group as it looks like and that they are not all passive and without interest for physical education. For girls who take part in organized sport there is a higher level of interest for sport, higher level of motor competence and more self assurance in comparison to girls who do not take part in sports.

The fact that there is significant difference between boys and girls in the field of perception of physical education and sport was confirmed in the work of Hill and Cleven (Hill & Cleven, 2005) according to which most secondary school boys (61%) think that physical education is their favourite subject, while only 39% of girls think the same. At the same time, 42% of girls do not have any attitude about physical education, which according to the author indicates that actual educational programmes do not involve enough activities which girls prefer.

With the intention to promote healthy lifestyle of students, Ministry of Scotland started action within which Forsythe et al, (2009) came to the data that male students incline more to physical activities while female students evade physical activities, forget equipment and more often request from their teacher not to be loaded with any physical activities. Other researches (National Centre for Health Statistics, 2001) determine the fact that this is usual for secondary school students and later, because of which during this critical developing period physical education is not promoted adequately (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999; Rowland, 1999).

### **Do boys and girls have the same interests considering physical education?**

According to the research Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (1997) different interests for physical education of girls and boys come from different attitudes, perceptions, motives, barriers. For example, boys prefer to compete; they are attracted to more intensive exercise, activities in which strength dominates, they prefer cycling and traditional sports, while girls primarily see their physical engagement with the purpose of lessening body weight (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999; Garcia et al, 1995), they prefer non competitive, associate and individual sport activities (Bradley, et al, 2000), they are more focused on friendship and activities in nature (Greenwood and Stillwell, 2001). Godin &

Shepherd (1986) determined that girls are less convinced that physical activity helps in health keeping, but they are convinced that exercising will help them to look better, they do not think it is funny and they are bored with physical activity. Female adolescents do not take part so willingly in high risk sports as boys, they are more interested for those activities like aerobics, volleyball and modern dance. They do not like team sports, swimming and gymnastics which can be connected with their looks or lack of competence (Kovar, et al, 2001). Boys are more interested for sports like football, basketball, athletics, tennis, skating, weight training, street hockey or grass hockey. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; Hill & Cleven, 2005), while small number wants to take part in dancing because they think that these activities are feminized (Greenwood and Stillwell, 2001).

The research of Hill and Cleven (Hill & Cleven, 2005) shows that there is different interest between sexes for different activities. From 33 possible activities boys are most interested for football (73%), basketball (70,1%), bowling (62%), table tennis (54%), swimming (52%), grass hockey (51%) and fencing (50%), while most girls would rather choose swimming (68%), skating (68%), volleyball (66%), bowling (64%), basketball (64%), gymnastics (61%), football (60%), yoga (56%), softball (54%) and canoeing (52%). During secondary school there is significant decline of interest for some activities. Boys lose interest for archery, fencing, swimming, walking, canoeing, skating and water polo. Girls lose interest for gymnastics and softball, but they gain interest for football. At the same time there is a growing interest for elementary game pig-in-the-middle, skiing and snowboarding, skateboarding, different dancing forms, extreme sports like bungee jumping, parachuting, elementary games, alpinism, cycling paintball, box, fishing, hunting, rugby, riding and other.

### **Sociological and cultural motives and barriers as a factor of designation for physical activities**

The effects of physical education depend on students' motivation. The researches Maihan et al (2006), Culp (1998), McGuireet et al (2002), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1996) indicate some reasons why girls are less physically active. These are their duties about homework,

lack of interest, shyness. On the other hand they are more interested in TV programme, going to shopping, talking to family members and like. One of the barriers is protective relationship of parents who are afraid of a daughter's accidents during exercising or they think that some sports are more appropriate to men. Common reasons are lack of money for membership, transport, friends' reactions, and sometimes avoiding of physical activities connected with different ways of bad behavior in these places. Most female adolescents (85%) think that family is the most influential factor in their decisions to be physically active. Very important initial factor is older brothers, verbal motivation, active participation and parents' support.

## CONCLUSION

The choice of programme contents and their structure by its depth and content are one of the crucial problems of education which must be based on scientific thinking and in accordance with modern social, pedagogical, cultural and sociological demands. Theory and practice of physical education in the last few decades indicate that there is a

need for students to actively participate in determining of programme contents (Zdanski, 1984; Matic and Bokan, 1990; Greenwood & Stillwell, 2001; McKenzie, et al. 2004; Pate, et al 2007), because education programmes are most important in relation of student to physical education (Luka & Sinclair, 1991). These ideas are not new because they have their roots in Piaget who thinks that education contents should create children's interest so that they could be active during studying. They are actual in pedocentric pedagogy in the studies of Rouse and Djuj, and in humanistic theory of Maslov and Rogers based on self actualization and the need for lessons which students will consciously and freely choose and study the contents according to their interests. Our idea to contribute to the studies of attitudes of female and male students to the physical education and programme contents is not small. By the research of students' preferences it is possible to develop plan and programme which fulfills in the best way their needs, and which are in relation to didactic demands.

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## ДАЛИ ПОСТОЈАТ РАЗЛИКИ ПОМЕЃУ ПОЛОВИТЕ ВО ОДНОС НА ИНТЕРЕСИТЕ ЗА СПОРТ И ФИЗИЧКО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ?

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(Оригинален научен труд)

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### Апстракт

Во овој прегледен труд се разгледани интересите за спорт и физичко образование кај децата и адолесцентите. Со преглед на триесет релевантни испитувања од целиот свет се анализирани ставовите, интересите, мотивацијата и бариерите од двајта пола од сите возрасти за нивниот афинитет и ориентација кон физичката активност. Резултатите од испитувањето укажуваат на тоа дека интересот, силата и насоката на мотивацијата за физичко образование и спорт се разликуваат во голема мера во зависност од возраст и пол, што неизбежно влијаат на формирање на трајни навики за физички активност. Имаше разлики во интересите и ставовите меѓу половите, што укажува на потребата за поинаку дизајнирана програма во основните и средните училишта.

**Клучни зборови:** физичко образование, спорт, ставови, пол, интереси, мотиви.

