STUDY ON PRACTICING PHYSICAL EXERCISES ORGANIZED AT SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Physical inactivity is a major public health concern, not just in western countries, but also in emergent ones. Vulnerable sectors associated with the lowest levels of leisure time activity include those with low levels of education and income. There are limited theory-based qualitative studies exploring participation in physical activity and sport. As any effective health promotion necessitates an understanding of target populations, we adopt an integrative research approach, to obtain more relations between variables and detailed information. First, we present the study focused on sport integration in lifestyle, the relation between the quality of life and physical exercises, and between objective and subjective well-being and sport practice. The subject of sport and physical exercise in determining individual and social well-being is extremely up-to-date, especially for Romanian society that faces various problems, the responsibility for these being seen as both individual and structural, i.e. economic-political and social-cultural.

KEYWORDS: *qualitative studies, physical inactivity, public health, sport integration, well-being.*

J.E.L CLASIFICATION: Z20, Z28, Z29

1. INTRODUCTION

The research, a quantitative one, takes place in six secondary schools and six high schools in Cluj county, intending to find what the youth's opinions are toward practicing physical exercises, the benefits and difficulties among them. We selected two types of populations, with equal representation: the category who practice different kinds of sports, and one who does not practice sport, except during the formal physical education classes. The total population is 277 young students (below 19 years old). The structure of population is presented in the figure below:

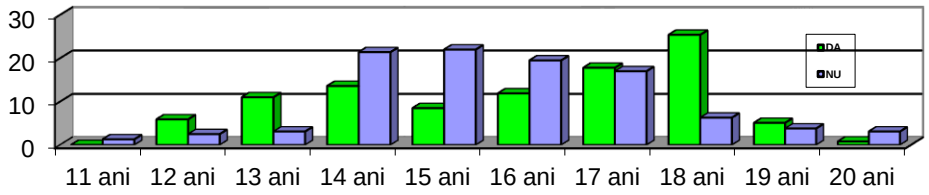

Fig. 1. Distribution by age and type of physical exercises practiced (organized / only during class)

Research stages	**Survey among students** ***Opinions regarding the practicing of organized physical exercises***
Strategy **Theory**	Deductive Theory of needs hierarchy (Maslow), theory of self-efficiency and theory of motivation (motivational climate); theory of relation with physical activity (PAR);
Method	Survey based on a standardized questionnaire
Sample	277 valid (283 questioned) Theoretical representativity on students, Cluj county, differentiation according to profile and residence environment
Area **Period**	Cluj county: schools and high schools (urban-rural, sport profile- other profiles) March- April 2023
Estimated results	Attitude and behaviour picture regarding the relation to physical activity and motivational climate, according to various socio-demographic categories.

It also interested us whether there are, and if yes, what are the differences among students residing in the urban environment (Cluj-Napoca) and the rural one (the communes of Gilău, Apahida, Florești, and the villages of Căianu, Moci and Palatca). We have to mention that there is a category of students (especially high schoolers) who, though they attend schools in the city of Cluj-Napoca, their residence is in the rural area. As these subjects are not too many in the sample total of 12 people, they were not analyzed separately. The same differences were observed according to the educational level of the parents.

Data analysis and interpretation also pursues the existence of a positive correlation between the practing of sports and the teenager's family and their option to practice a sport regularly. Further on, we are also interested in the existence of a relation between the profession/and education of parents and the option for certain sports (football, volleyball, handball, swimming-

the most frequent sports) – (the social and family climate), (Dragnea, A., Teodorescu-Mate, S., 2002).

The high shools and secondary schools where the questionnaire was applied are:

- In the city of Cluj-Napoca: N. Bălcescu Theoretical High school, G. Coșbuc Theoretical High school, E. Racoviță Theoretical High school, The High school of Computer Science, E. Nicolau Technological High school, Clujana Professional Group, Ion Creangă Secondary School, Grigorescu Secondary and High school (two high schools with secondary school cycles).
- In the rural area, in Cluj county: Gilău Theoretical High school, Apahida Theoretical High school, Florești Theoretical High school, Moci Secondary School, Palatca Secondary School (two high schools with secondary school cycles).

Out of the 300 projected questionnaires, 282 were actually applied (due to various reasons, the students hardly filled them in or not at all, returning or keeping the form, and out of those collected, 5 were partially mistakenly filled in, and were cancelled. Finally, 277 questionnaires were validated. The data obtained were analyzed and statistically processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Epuran, Marolicaru (2002).

The general structure of population in the *inital sample* is synthetized below:

Table 1. The Structure of the Student Sample (expressed in absolute figures)

Residence area	**Rural**			**Urban**			**Total**
Age category	Highschool	Secondary school	Total	Highschool	Secondary school	Total	
Physical education	55 › 23 M › 32 F	45 › 15 M › 30 F	100 › 38 M › 62 F	48 › 30 M › 18 F	22 › 4 M › 18 F	70 › 34 M › 36 F	***170*** › 72 M › 98 F
Sport	28 › 16 M	11 › 7 M	39 › 23 M	46 › 36 M	27 › 20 M	73 › 56 M	***112*** › 79 M

	› 12 F	› 4 F	› 16 F	› 10 F	› 7 F	› 17 F	› 33 F
Total	83	56	**139**	94	49	**143**	**282**

Table 2. Distribution of students according to age and regular practice of a sport

Age	Regularly practices some sport at present					
	Yes		No		Total	
	People	%	People	%	People	%
11 years old	—	—	2	1,3	2	0,7
12 years old	7	5,9	4	2,5	11	4,0
13 years old	13	11,0	5	3,1	18	6,5
14 years old	16	13,6	34	21,4	50	18,1
15 years old	10	8,5	35	22,0	45	16,2
16 years old	14	11,9	31	19,5	45	16,2
17 years old	21	17,8	27	17,0	48	17,3
18 years old	30	25,4	10	6,3	40	14,4
19 years old	6	5,1	6	3,8	12	4,3
20 years old	1	0,8	5	3,1	6	2,2
Total	**118**	**100%**	**159**	**100%**	**277**	**100%**
Average age	15,95		15,63		15,77	
Standard deviation	2,10		1,80		1,93	

Materiality threshold	p=0,173

Table 3. Distribution of students according to gender and regular sport practice

Student gender	Regularly practices some sport at present					
	Yes		No		Total	
	People	%	People	%	People	%
Male	82	69,5	66	41,5	148	53,4
Female	36	30,5	93	58,5	129	46,6
Total	**118**	**100%**	**159**	**100%**	**277**	**100%**
Materiality threshold	p=0,000004					

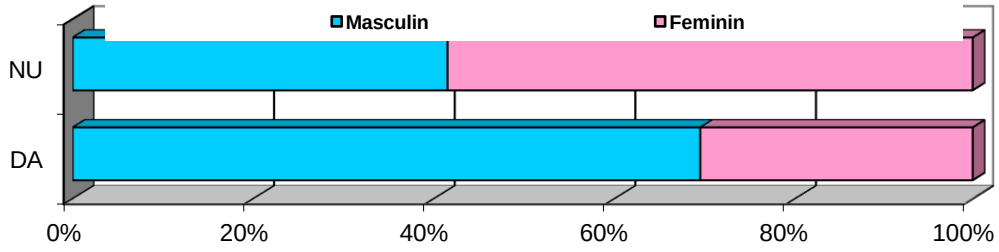

Figura 2 . Distribution of students according to gender and regular practice of a sport

Table 4. Distribution of students according to residence and regular practice of a sport

Student's present residence	Regularly practices a sport at present					
	Yes		No		Total	
	People	%	People	%	People	%
In urban area	80	67,8	64	40,3	144	52,0
In rural area	38	32,2	95	59,7	133	48,0
Total	**118**	**100%**	**159**	**100%**	**277**	**100%**

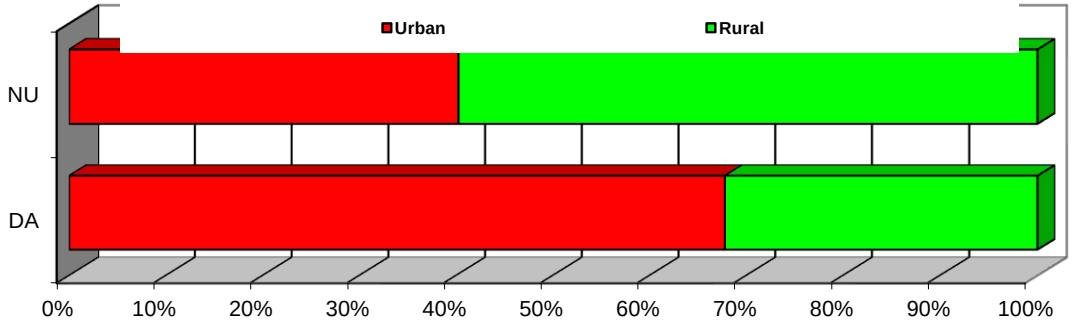

Figure 3 . Distribution of students according to residence and regular practice of a sport

In the questionnaire, we focused on differences between various socio-demographic variables such as age, residence, educational level and income of parents, sport tradition in family (parents, brothers), type of school (secondary school- high school, sport-oriented or not). Our general goal was to obtain a picture of these opinions related to sport effects on health and on the development of social relations skills by sport practice, at this age segment (Alfermann, D. Stoll, O. 2000).

The questionnaire (with open and closed questions) is focused on lifestyle issues in relation with physical activity: quality of life, enjoyment, relaxation, social-economic background of individuals, family and friendship context (social network), future plans in lifestyle changes, as determinants of physical activity relationship. Psychological theories facilitating conceptualization of the adoption and maintenance of physical activity include the theory of self-efficacy, the theory of motivation, and the theory of rational choice. Among other variables, research has focused on the motivational influences of lifestyle that includes sports on a regular basis (Andersen,2001).

2.THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Results and discussions The **f**indings of both researches revealed greater degrees of contentment within the individual, and with the local social and physical environment, indicating a higher likelihood of being physically active (Chelcea, S. ,2004/2007).

The research results suggested that the motivational tendencies among the young subjects are concentrated around several factors relating to residents' competence and confidence in physical activity. Positive factors included mental wellbeing, mood regulation and increased energy levels. Negative factors included social and familial backgrounds, a perceived lack of ability on the part of not regularly active subjects and more generally, feelings of intimidation/lack of interests associated with gyms or exercise classes. Concerns about body weight and attire were dominant among girls, whilst boys were conscious of competitive atmospheres. Positive and negative factors were obvious where physical activity was incorporated into daily schedules, but similarly induced feelings of guilt or compulsion. Encouraging features of social interaction and involvement included enjoyment, group based activity, social interaction, family and friend support. De-motivating aspects included pressure to perform and clique environments (Collins, C., 2006).

Most individuals noted a lack of local possibilities to practice regular sports and a lack of information pertaining to activities, whilst a minority felt that there was sufficient information if sought. The results on this issue are shown in Figure 2:

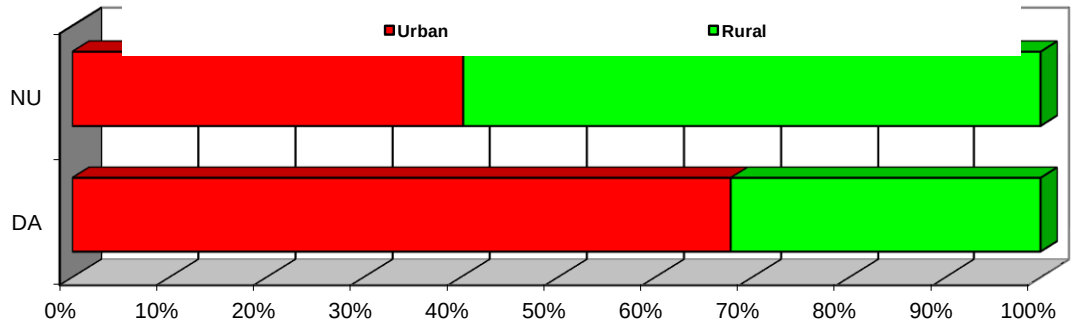

Fig.5 Distribution by residence and sport practice on regular basis

These opinions were related to the general view that there are insufficient facilities, and the contrasting minority view that activities are organised, but are not accessed by the population. Playing football or doing aerobics at home was the activity of choice for most young people who live in rural areas, which may reflect a lack of facilities for other forms of physical activity, and may also be influenced by the minimal competency required (Grosu, E.F., 2008).

Positive findings relating to the young' competence and confidence are consistent with documented health/physiological and psychological benefits of physical activity on health and quality of life. Their opinions may also reflect public confusion about health messages regarding levels of activity needed to maintain health, a lack of family and social environment education

oriented to sport. In addition, they may reflect societal standards placing emphasis on outer appearance, dictating a fit body as the ideal. Rather than comply with unattainable social expectations for physical activity performance, people may choose to abstain. For example, a 'performance' climate is one where class participants are compared, anxiety is felt about making mistakes, and praise is given for superior performance.

Such a climate may be exacerbated between peers from 'close knit' localities such as the study groups. Indeed the young viewed cliques as unconstructive since they increased feelings of intimidation or lack of interest. Present day consumer culture, which fosters unrealistic standards for physical appearance, may also be influential again here.

Motivation to comply with perceived expectations of others is defined as a subjective norm within the theory of planned behaviour. This model is a useful predictor of physical activity. In the current study, the subjective norm appeared to influence subjects' ability to engage in activity which may relate to the cohesive nature of the sportive groups (Iluţ, P., 2009).

Although literature reports smaller effect sizes between subjective norms and intentions than for other constructs, subjective norms may be more influential in peer-groups with low migration (like in rural areas). The possible influence of subjective norms on physical activity engagement in such groups is worth further investigation (Iluţ, P., Tîrhaş, C., 2010, p.145-160).

Enjoyment was an important motivating aspect of physical activity which is supported by literature. Another motivator was social support and models. Residents indicated that this can be obtained from significant others. Friendship and family support has been shown to influence physical activity. Indeed physical activity counselling support has proved effective. Having supportive others to talk to, ask questions or receive honest feedback is critical to initiating and maintaining behaviour change, especially at a young age. In this study, lack of support meant that the young felt less in control of their ability to do regular activity (Marcu, V., 2010).

One related issue here is the low level of family income, and linked to it, the interpretation with rational choice theory. Families who are under resourced do not have the same opportunities for leisure and other 'risk' factors as those with higher levels of resources. The situation of education (usually strongly related to incomes in the student's families) is described in the figure 3.

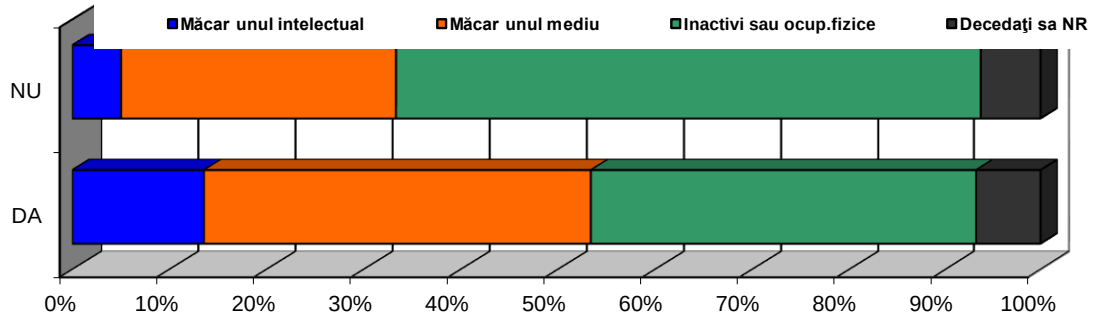

Fig. 6. Distribution by parents occupation and sport practice on regular basis

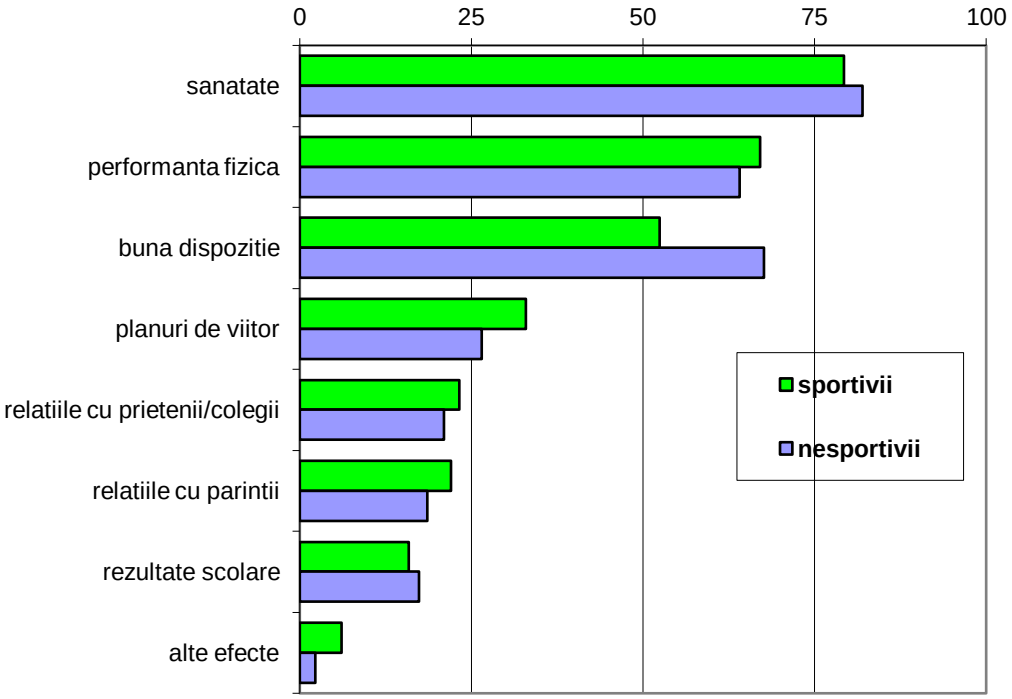

Fig. 7. „Sportive" and „unsportive" students: sports practicing effects - *in the first place have positive effects on:*

There is an urgency to address physical inactivity within socially excluded young people. Integration of physical activity with daily life is a public health goal incorporating the need for personal discipline. At the same time, the group 'motivational climates' may influence physical activity (Walace, C., Abbot, P., 2007, p.109-123).

3. CONCLUSIONS

As general design, we have pursued to identify, according to socio-demographic variables, what the students' relationship with physical activity is, along three levels of analysis: **the objective, socio-familial, and motivational climate.**

a) Generally, the eight categories of subjects (sport practitioners in an organized manner-non-practitioners; secondary school pupils-high school pupils; from rural environment-from urban environment; girls-boys) positively appreciate sport effects on health and quality of human relations. From the total of the 277 pupils sample, 42% declare registration in an extracurricular sport institution.

b) In relation to the objectives proposed, the result is that there is a positive correlation between the practicing of sports in the teenager's family and their option for regularly practicing sports at their turn.

c) High school student athletes (from both residential environments) in a 42% proportion, consider that a sport choice is not influenced, they make the decision themselves.

d) We have to mention the reduced frequency of the sport teacher's influence, which is mostly mentioned (8%) in the urban environment, in the secondary school, then in (6%) in high school, also in the urban environment.

e) Regarding perseverance in practicing sports in the athlete students category, we observe that within all student categories (high school-secondary school), over 90% do not intend to give up the sport they practice.

f) Students who mostly practice physical exercises during classes in school, in a proportion of 55%, declare that they practice various outdoor sports, with friends or individually. Among physical activities practiced in their spare time, the most frequently mention: football, running, biking, aerobics, dancing, volleyball, and swimming.

The three dimensions of the climate (objective, socio-familial, and motivational) related to physical education and sports that we have pursued, clearly configure themselves in the research results, being obvious especially for students in the rural environment, where the options of giving up sports or not practicing them are more numerous in relation with the student population of the urban environment in the sample. The widest differences occur in the relationship between the sport value and behaviour-oriented family environment and the practicing of sports by children. The interpretations that best covered the results obtained were the theory of motivation and the theory of costs-benefits.

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