

## **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS IN LEISURE TIME OF STUDENTS FROM THE FACULTY FOR PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION AT SOFIA UNIVERSITY “ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI” – BULGARIA**

*(Preliminary communication)*

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### **Abstract**

*Physical activity and sport in leisure time of students during their studies, have a great impact in creation of students personal identity and quality of their life in the future. This is especially important for the students of Teaching faculties as future teachers and educators. The goal of this publication is to explore the place of physical activity and the attitude of the students at the Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education, part of the “St. Kliment Ohridski University”, towards physical exercising and practising sports in their free time, and based on this, to point out some underutilized opportunities for their wide implementation in everyday life. The research was realized on a sample of 166 students of all four years of study, at The Faculty for preschool and primary school education at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria. The research was conducted using specially designed closed form of questionnaire, composed of 20 questions according the research aims. Obtained results were analyzed using frequencies (f) and percentage (%). The results indicate the possible directions for the positive influence of sport and physical exercise on physical capability of students and the reasons for playing sports and preferences of choosing sports in leisure time. The role of the University to plan certain sport actions that would allow students to spend quality leisure time, taking into consideration their needs and interests that will develop their abilities.*

**Keywords:** *leisure time, physical activity, sports, students*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Trends in recent years show that exercise and sport are becoming an integral part of the culture of the Bulgarian population. Among the opportunities that sport provides, is its role within the physical and spiritual nature of a man. In the recent years there has been more pronounced decrease in physical activity of students at the expense of their mental engagement. This led to a serious imbalance between the mental and physical activity in the lives of the future graduates. Solving this problem could be achieved, on one hand, by increasing the effectiveness of the physical education and sports classes in universities, and on the other hand, by an ever increasing presence of sports in the free time of the students.

Leisure time is an integral part of human activities. It is time away from the professional, family and social obligation, time during which the individual person chooses on their own free will the forms and the content of their creative activities, rest and relaxation. In their free time each person chooses the content and the activities, which they wants to take part in and perform according to their wishes, needs and proclivities.

Young people’s life and work during their free time are especially important for their future development. The autonomy of a person’s free time of and its portioning into playing games, practising a hobby or creative activities, is a sign of specific and planned activities, which could lead to fundamental changes in their whole life. Free time, spent in a meaningful way, makes life multidimensional, rich, organised and creative. This way young people develop their individuality and get introduced on an amateur level to scientific-technological, artistic, sporting and other activities. It is important to note that free time is determined by the social standing of the young people and their life experience, their established habits and their individual needs and capabilities. How they will spend their free time, whether actively playing games, having fun, doing creative work, or passively resting, depends only on them.

All authors, exploring the physical activity of students found that it is at low level and continues downsizing. Meanwhile unanimous opinion that their

optimal physical activity is not only an important component of a healthy lifestyle, but it is an important factor for the quality of their training and realization.

The theme of leisure time and particularly the sport in the leisure time is a social phenomenon in students and it is very interesting. Many authors have explored this issue.

P. Bankov introduces alternatives to optimize the management of recreational sports, territorial management and resourcing. The author reveals the nature and specificity of sport for all, as well as the theoretical and applicable aspects of its management (Bankov (Банков), 2007).

After conducting his survey in 2010., A. Ivanov found out that there was a strongly expressed trend of a negative decrease in the level of physical activity among all students surveyed by him, as well as a markedly lower level of physical activity in comparison to students from 20 years ago. (Ivanov (Иванов), 2010).

B. Colov and D. Dasheva performed a sociological survey, the goal of which was to explore the students' attitude towards physical exercises and sport in their free time (Colov & Dasheva (Цолов & Дашева), 1998).

In their 2013. study D. Sivevska and B. Popevska present the activities performed in their free time by the students of the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University in the town of Stip, Macedonia. The results of the study showed that the 152 students who were surveyed didn't have much free time and didn't use properly the short free time they had. All this should be taken into account when planning the life and work routines of the faculty. According to the authors, specific activities, which would allow the students to use their free time in diverse ways, should be planned as early as the start of each academic year (Sivevska & Popeska (Сивевска & Попеска), 2014).

In another study by the same authors, they present the place of living and the socioeconomic status of the students as factors for the way their free time is organised. The results of this study showed that the location of the faculty building didn't have a significant influence on the way students' free time was organised, even though there were differences in the connection between the socioeconomic status of the students, especially the size of the monthly payments, and the way the students were organised in their free time (Popeska & Sivevska, 2013).

According to Sivevska & Eftimova Boshkova, in order to get the children under control and to enable the family to channel their wishes and ambitions in the proper direction, they need to be supported by their social environment, especially the school. The parents would find it very difficult to achieve positive results in this area in regards to their kids if there is a lack of free time culture (Sivevska & Eftimova Boskova, 2014).

According to Fehim Cosan, Aytakin Alpullu and Aysel Koseoglu, the students from sports coaching specialties at the Marmara Universitesi – Istanbul participate much more often in sports related activities,

compared to students from pedagogy related specialties (Cosan, Alpullu & Koseoglu, 2009).

According to Mlinarević, Miliša & Proroković only when free time becomes a space where the young people feel content and happy and recognize themselves, then we will be able to be sure that free time has performed its functions and has contributed to the development of the young person (Minarević, Milisa & Proroković, 2007).

## METHODS

The factors listed above necessitated that a wide range survey be conducted with the **goal** of researching the place of physical activity in their lives and the attitude of the students towards taking part in physical exercises and sports in their free time, and based on that to point out some underutilized opportunities for their wide implementation in everyday life.

The survey used a survey card. The survey card contains a total of 20 questions, which are about comparing the sporting activities of the surveyed persons during their primary and secondary education with their period as university students, as well as the place of physical activity in their free time, what are their reasons for practising sports and what are their preferences when choosing a sport for their free time.

**The topic** of the study is the opinions of the students at the Faculty of Preschool and Primary School Education (FPPSE), part of the Sv. Kliment Ohridski University, and, more specifically, the students from the specialties Preschool and Primary School Education (PPSE), Primary School Education and Foreign Language Teaching (PSEFLT) and Preschool Education and Foreign Language Teaching (PEFLT) about the sports and physical activities in their spare time.

**The subjects** of the study were 166 students at the FPPSE, part of the Sofia University, who were in their first, second, third or fourth year of study, distributed as follows: 50 students with a PPSE specialty, 69 students with a PSEFLT specialty and 38 69 students with a PEFLT specialty.

The study was conducted in the month of January of 2015, at the end of the winter semester of the 2014/2015 academic year. The results of the study were analysed and presented based on analysis of the frequency (f) and percentages (%). The data gathered by the survey was processed in MS Excel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the results includes all survey questions, which are in the area of the designated goal of the specific study i.e. researching the place of physical activity and the attitude of the students towards taking part in physical exercises and sports during their free time.

In reply to the question: "*What role do physical activities and sports play in your life?*" the biggest portion of the students replied that these things had a secondary role in their life and that there were other activities which were more important for them (50%). A

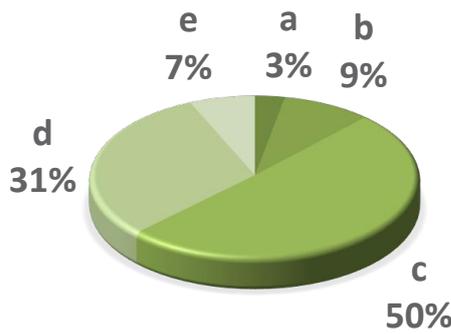


Figure 1. Question: What is your life physical activity and sport (%)

sizeable portion of them said that the physical activities and sports were very important during their period of study at the university (31%). Another portion of the students didn't place much importance on these activities (9%), a small portion couldn't imagine their day without any physical activity present, while for (3%) of them these activities had no importance whatsoever. (Figure 1).

In reply to the question: "Did you regularly practice sports in primary and secondary school and if yes, what kind?" 50.6% replied that they did, while 49.4% replied that they didn't. Out of the 35 sports listed in total, 13 students each practised basketball and athletics, 12 practised volleyball, 10 practised swimming, 9 practised dancesport, tennis, fitness and football were each practised by 7 students, 6 practised folk dancing, 5 practised aerobics, 4 - gymnastics, 3 each - ballet and karate, 2 each - badminton, judo, Latin dancing, orienteering, skiing and tae bo, 1 each - acrobatics, American football, biathlon, box, zumba, cycling, equestrianism, kickboxing, paragliding, softball, competition climbing, taekwondo, table tennis, fencing, handball and ice hockey. Out of the 166 surveyed students, 87 declared that they had practised sports regularly. One student declared that he had regularly practised 4 different sports, nine of them said that they had practised 3 sports, 18 - that they had practised 2 sports, and 59 - one sport.

Naturally the answers to the previously asked ques-

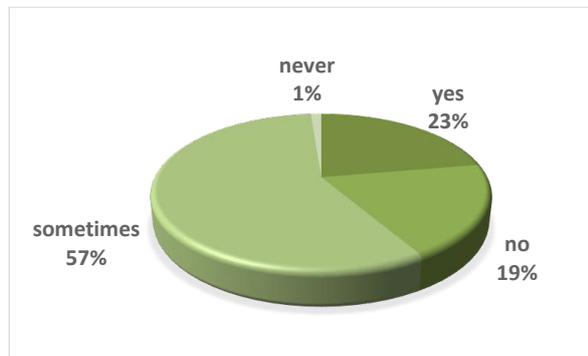


Figure 2. Active engagement with physical activity as students (%)

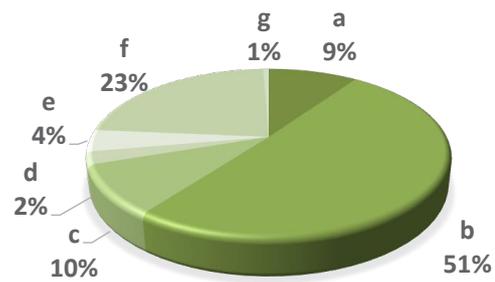


Figure 3. Reasons for sport studies (%)

tion about what sport they practised in primary and secondary school and how much, are strongly correlated to the received answers to the question: "Have you been practising any sport regularly since you became a student and if yes, which one?" 44 students out of the 166 surveyed indicated that they have. Three of them said that they had regularly practised three sports, eight of them had regularly practised 2 sports, and 33 had regularly practised one sport. Out of the 20 sports listed, 22 students said they regularly worked out in the gym, 5 students each practised regularly aerobics and athletics, 4 students regularly practised dancesport and football, 2 - callanetics and swimming, while one student each practised volleyball, judo, zumba, callanetics, folk dancing, orienteering, paragliding, pilates, skiing, snowboarding, tae bo, tennis and table tennis.

In response to the summarising question: "If you compare your sporting activities during the previous period of your life (in primary and secondary school) to your time as an university student, when did practice sports and took part in physical activities more?", we got the following responses: 17.47% replied "I practised sports more in primary school", 31.9% replied "I practised sports more in secondary school" 17.5%, replied "I practise sports more now that I am at the university" 18.7% replied "I practice sports as often now as I did before", while 15.6% replied "I didn't practice sports before and I don't do it now either".



Figure 4. Degree of satisfaction with the use of leisure (%)

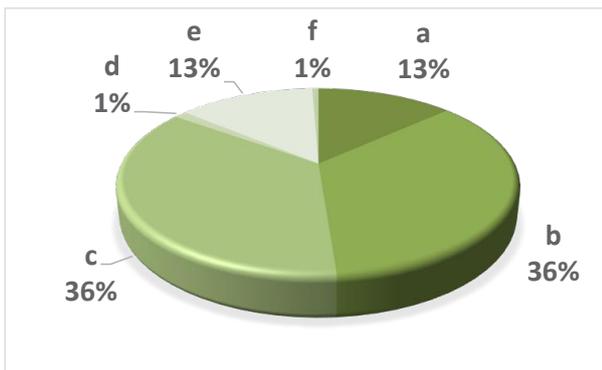


Figure 5. Use of leisure time in sports activities (%)

The goal of the following questions was to find more specific data about the way in which the students practise sports in their free time.

First of all we were interested in the amount of free time the students had daily. This question received the following answers: the biggest group of students – 36.14%, had 3-4 hours of free time per day, 34.94% had 4-5 hours of free time per day, 16.27% – 1-2 hours per day, while 12.65% had more than 5 hours of free time per day. The daily free time varied depending on which year of study the student was in, their study load at the faculty, the way they were supporting themselves financially and the place where they lived.

The views of the students in regards to the question *whether the students were aware of the content and the activities for filling the free time, offered by the university*, were divided, with 16.87% of them saying that they were aware of what the university was offering, 28.31% stating that they weren't aware, while 54.82% said that they were partly aware.

In response to the question: *“Are you regularly involved in physical activities during your free time now that you are a student at the university?”*, 23% replied “Yes”[a], 19% replied “No” [b], 57% said “Sometimes”[c] and 1% said “Never”[d], (Figure 2).

The answers to the next question are related to the previous question, which was *“How often do you take part in physical activities in a single week?”*, 23.5% said once a week, 32.5% - twice a week, 16.87% - 3 times a week, 6.63% – 4 times a week, 7.2% – 5 times a week, and 1.2% – 6 times a week. The portion of the students who didn't take part in any physical activities wasn't a small one since 12.1% of them replied “0 times”.

Apart from the general questions, we were also interested in *“Which of these listed motives is the main reason for you taking part in sporting activities?”*, 9% replied “I am a sports fan and I really like to practice sports”[a], 51% – “I practice sports to maintain my physical condition and health and to improve my willpower and character” [b], 10% said “I am confident I will feel pleasant emotions while playing sports” [c], 2% listed the opportunity to take part in organized competitions as the reason[d], 4% said “Sports is a guaranteed recreational activity for me”[e], 23% listed the desire to relax mentally as the reason[f], while 1% said “Practising sports will help my future career as a teacher”[g], (Figure 3).

Regarding *the preferences of the students when selecting sporting activities in their free time*, 59.6% prefer that they took place outside, 40.4% prefer them to be at an arena or other indoor area; 56.6% prefer to practice sports individually, while 43.6% prefer to do it in groups; 22.3% prefer their sporting activities to be in competitions, while 77.7% prefer them to be outside of competitions.

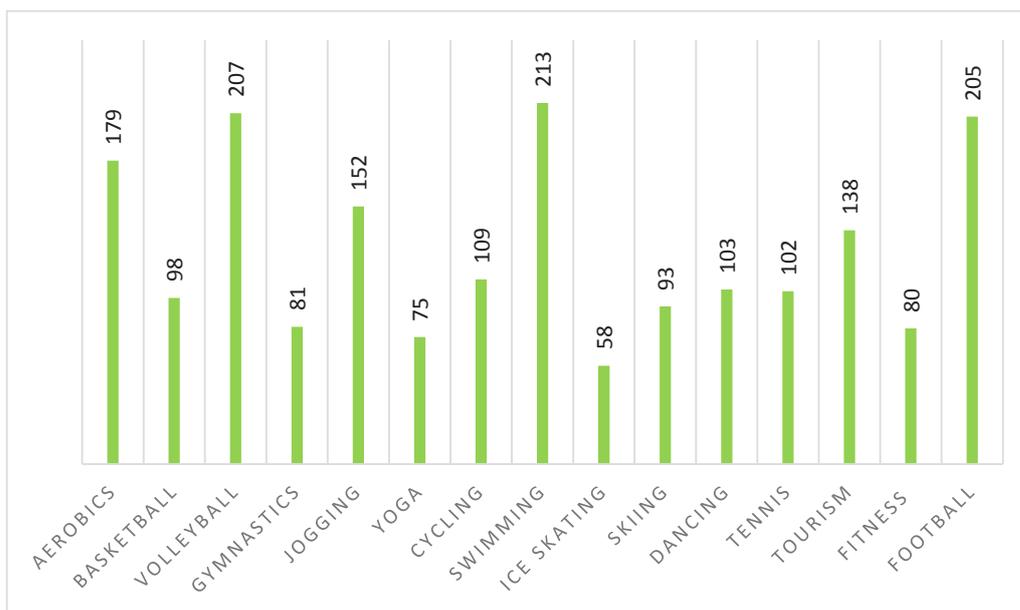


Figure 6. Most preferred sports students (scoring)

In answer to the question about *the level of satisfaction of the students regarding their use of their free time*, almost half of the surveyed students (49.4%) said that they were “mostly satisfied” by the way they used their free time, 20.48% expressed a neutral position - they said they were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, 20.48% were “quite satisfied”, 4.82% were “quite unsatisfied”, while 4.82% were “unsatisfied in general”. The number of satisfied students (49.4%) is explained by the fact free time is time, which they organise and regulate themselves, they choose the activities and the content according to their own wishes. It follows that satisfaction or lack of satisfaction is a reflection of their own organisation skills and wishes, i.e. their level of personal engagement (Figure 4).

The answer to the following question: “*Do you think that the way you use your free time will be important for your personal development or influence your character and behaviour*” are also interesting - 51.2 % said “Yes”, 7.83% said “No”, 34.94% said “Somewhat” and 6.02% said- “I am not sure”.

Out of six suggested answers of the question: “*How do you see the way you use your free time for sports or physical activities?*”, we received the following answers: 13% of the students said “it is a necessity of modern life” [a], 36% each said “it is a personal choice” [b] и “it is an investment in my health and welfare” [c], 13% said “it is a high quality way to use your free time effectively” [e] 1% each said that it is a “workout” [d] and “other content” [f], like maintaining a pretty body, etc. (Figure 5).

Regarding students’ preferences when choosing a specific sport to practice in their free time, the surveyed students chose 5 (five) most liked or disliked sports out of the ones listed and rated them from 1 to 5 in the following way: rating of 5 – “I will definitely take part if I can”, rating of 4 – „It would be a pleasure to join”, rating of 3 – “I will take part once in a while if there are suitable conditions”, rating of 2 – “I don’t want to take part or I would only take part if I have no choice”, and rating of 1 “I won’t take part under any circumstances”. The results showed that the most preferred sport was swimming - 213 points in total, then it was volleyball with 207 points, football with 205 points, aerobics with 179 points, jogging with 152 points, tourism with 138 points, etc.(Figure 6.).

## CONCLUSION

1. Young people’s leisure time has a specific structure and has a preventive role in their life. The way young people spend their free time largely determines their lifestyle. This is especially important for the future teachers, since a lot is expected of them in their teaching jobs. They should be positive examples for their students, since the practical experience shows that being a positive example is one of the most important educational methods.

2. The results of our study, which was done on 166 students from the FPPSE, show that students had little

free time per day (3-4 hours, 36.14%), and the reason for that, apart from their obligations at the faculty, may be the place where the students lived.

3. For a large portion of the students – 50% of the ones surveyed, physical activities and sports were of secondary importance, while for (3%) were of no importance. This high percentage is remarkable, since it suggests neglecting the physical activities of the person. Of course, the students’ material conditions and living environment contributed to that too.

4. It was a bit worrying that 12.1% of the surveyed students don’t participate in physical activities at all, while 23.5% do this once a week. Only 17.5% replied that as university students they practised sports more often than before. A possible reason for that may be also the necessity for social contact and communication, not sports, which is typical for the persons of this age, but, on the other hand, another possible reason for that is the insufficient quantity of quality sporting facilities offered, as well as of productive and well organised sporting content, which could fill their free time.

5. The leading motives for practising sports according to the students were: 51% said “I practice sports to maintain my physical condition and health and improve my willpower and character”, 23% listed the desire to relax mentally as the reason, 10% said “I am a sports fan and I really like to practice sports”, 4% said “Sports is a guaranteed recreational activity for me”, 2% listed the opportunity to take part in organized competitions as the reason, while 1% said “Practising sports will help my future career as a teacher”. These motives though rarely appear in their pure form. They are most often joined in individual complexes of constantly present motives and according to the relative share in the whole motivational system they form a ranked sequence and largely determined the whole motivation for practising sports. This leads to the necessity of taking into account the motives listed above, their strength, resilience, hierarchy, dynamics, the different shades of meaning and the mutual connections in the case of each student.

6. The preferences of the students when choosing sporting activities in their free time showed that 59.6% preferred that they took place outside, 40.4% preferred them to be at an arena or other indoor area. This made us reach the conclusion that the University should offer modern outdoor and indoor facilities to its students in order to allow them to practice sports regularly and to use their free time to the fullest and for positive reasons by practising sports. The lack of such facilities has also Sofia University’s biggest problem for years.

7. The most preferred sports by the students are swimming, volleyball, football, aerobics, jogging, tourism, tennis, basketball, skiing, gymnastics, fitness, yoga, etc. The University should provide free access to all its facilities following a specific schedule in order to ensure that all sports are successfully practised by the students. The management of the Sofia University should draw a strategy for building university-owned

sporting facilities and equipment in order to respond to the contemporary expectations of the students and the Sport Ministry of the Republic of Bulgaria in regards to sport.

8. The results of the study showed that the students didn't have much free time and didn't use in a positive way the little free time they had. All this should be taken into account when planning the life and work routines of the faculty and the University. It is necessary to have planned as early as the start of the academic year specific sport activities, which would allow the students to have high quality free time, taking into account their wishes and interests, through which they would develop their abilities and activities.

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