

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION ON PHYSICAL HEALTH AND ITS CONNECTION WITH PRACTICING LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Georgian BĂDICU *

University Transilvania of Braşov, România
Tel 0769219271, e-mail: badicu_georgian@yahoo.com

Lorand BALINT

University Transilvania of Braşov, România

Abstract: Physical activities have positive effects on health, on the development of the individual and of society. Doing leisure sports is a specific way of spending your free time (loisir).

In our time's way of thinking, the sports activities performed during spare time acquire two fundamental aspects: practical use and the fight against fatigue and people's unquestionable pleasure to exercise and to move freely.

Efficiently using physical exercise must be wholed with willingly spending time outdoors by practicing leisure activities, practicing games, sports and tourism, as well as more special activities like fishing, hunting and cyclotourism.

The overall population must be more motivated and more responsible when it comes to maintaining and improving health, because practicing physical activities sistematically and continuously, lead the participants to a better well being.

Key words: physical health, sports activites, leisure sports, physical activities

INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND

A good health status is an essential element of human well being (Alber and Kohler, 2004, p.34), representing a value by itself.

Health is a fundamental resource for individuals, communities and societies in a bigger picture.

For the individual, to enjoy a good health status is of a primal importance. At the same time, a generally good level of the population's health is indispensable to economic growth and society development.

OMS defines health as not just a simple absence of disease and infirmness, but as an overall "good": physical, mental and social.

At an individual level, health represents an important component of human capital, allowing people to perform activities, to fulfill their goals, to have a complete life and to be active members of society (Marginean et all, 2002, p.56). At a social level, a high health status is a key element of every country's human capital, contributing at its competitivity towards other countries (Alber and Kohler, 2004, p.35).

Maintaining an optimal health condition of the body is a quite delicate issue nowadays, that should create awareness and make every society responsible, in order to cope with every-day demands. Through the level effort, man is diminishing or increasing his physio-mobile capacity.

PHYSICAL HEALTH – CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS

Physical health refers to the organism condition and its responses to injuries and disease. In order to maintain a good physical condition and health it is important to have a behaviour that gives a physical well being. For instance, avoiding smoking, alcohol as well as a moderate diet are just a few habits that insure a good physical health.

A good physical condition requires one's better attention at the messages sent through the body's senses transmitting what is needed - more rest or different types of food, and to respond to these messages in a proper and coherent way. The fundamental abilities of self-caring can help people solve their small health issues. However, it is equally important to be responsible when it comes to having regular checks and approaching medical institutions whenever one develops serious conditions.

¹ Bădicu Georgian

Leisure sport activities, physical activities in general, have positive effects on the physical effects on the individual and community. This truth is already very well known and accepted unanimously.

The benefits of physical activities on public health have been examined and recognized by many international organizations, such as *The International Health Organization*, *The International Sports Medicine Federation*, *The European Council*. Systematic physical activity can maintain and improve the structure of other tissues and organs, to improve bodily functions and to counter damage that tend to appear due to inactivity and aging.

This is the reason for which, in developed countries, the term of „fitness” (health condition) and the term „health” are very similar and interchangeable.

Also, it is thought that emotions have an important part in human life, influencing physical health. Doctors frequently see the links between the body and the mind. Leisure sports enables a good individual's health, giving him a sense of responsibility and living.

One's health condition can be maintained or improved through practicing physical exercises, in many different forms: sport, hiking, cycling etc. Sports and leisure activities improve health and bring at the same time, social and educational benefits. (Badicu G, Balint L, p.98).

Adequate physical exercises, balanced effort and rest, maintaining a normal weight and intelligent choice of food, avoiding food abuses during holidays and events, help us also in maintaining our body's health.

Sport and physical education must not disappear from the activities of every citizen category, including from elderly people, exercising bringing good to our health condition, to physical health and it improves the quality of life (Popescu R., Preoteasa A.M., 2008, p.221).

THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES/LEISURE SPORTS

Sports physical activities are beneficial for one's health, psychological and social status. From physical health's point of view, these benefits are:

- The individual will look and feel better.
- The heart and lungs function more efficiently in supplying the body with oxygen and thus, fatigue does not present itself easily.
- The muscles become stronger and contract more efficiently.
- Through increasing muscle tone, one's posture improves.
- Water deposits are "burnt" rapidly and because of this, movement is easier and faster.
- Bones become stronger. The extra stress to which they are presented, increase the functions of bone cells (Esterson P., Finke R., 1994, p.14).

MOTIVATION FOR PRACTICING LEISURE SPORTS

People's actions and behaviour are determined by certain motives. Motives are psychological structures that start, actively sustain and direct from within, an action or behaviour, acting like a trigger (Epuran M., 1990, p.45).

Man never acts led by just one motive, but under the influence of a motivational structure. All the motives that trigger one individual's actions or behaviour, represent his motivation as well.

Motivation is the active factor involved in a person's decision to engage and make an effort in a activity ((Rose Marie Gallagher, 2000, p.48).

Epuran (2011, p.55) states precisely that the better motivated a person is, the harder the person will work and the success rate increases.

One's motivation in his participation, as a general theme that refers to the factors that influence the reasons behind one's involvement in sports activities, has become a favourite study theme for psychologists and intellectuals, especially starting with the 80's. The importance of the subject is related to the fact that the participation patterns and the quality of the physical activities performed during childhood, have profound effects on adult's choices relative to participation and overall active lifestyle (Rose Marie Gallagher, 2000, p.47).

A review of the studies with reference to the motivation in the participation to sports activities, emphasizes the sentiment of pleasure, and the joy of movement, as a factor that is extremely often encountered in the motivation of one's participation in fun sports activities.

An individual's relationship with the environment determine needs that sometimes require a great deal of effort in order to be satisfied. Thus, the psychological and social motivations form a very complicated labyrinth. Human actions are usually plurimotivated, as man aims at satisfying and succeeding most of the times, a broad range of needs. Together with need comes the impulse and then lust – awareness of need. The intention marks the passage from motives to purposes – the mental transformation and their outcome.

The needs that practicing physical activities satisfy are not fundamentally different from the other human motivations. Motivating the young in systematically performing physical activities is a principle of all physical activities methodology, regardless of their type: formal (academic), informal (extra-curricular, complementary, targetless), professional or just leisure (loisir).

The end objectives of physical education, at any level, consist in getting a strong, continuous motivation, that last a lifetime, for practicing physical activities. This can be accomplished by convincing the young of the importance of these activities for a healthy lifestyle, for the development of one's personality to a personal and social means.

It is desirable for the young to know the importance of practicing lifelong physical activities, to be dexterous and thus to be able to take on as many forms of body expression. If they are well informed, capable and eager for sport, they will always appreciate an active lifestyle, they will enjoy a fully healthy life, not only as young but as adults as well.

To invest, with reference to society, in activities aiming at promoting a healthy lifestyle, means emphasizing the most precious capital – the human capital. The expenses are far smaller in comparison with the ones diverted to the curative medicine, that requires medical offices, hospitals, medicine, medical equipment etc.

A serious effort is required in order to identify the reasons people practice leisure sports activities. Specialists need to know what people like and what they dislike about the activity that they conduct. The reasons behind people working out, organized or independent, do not stay the same over the years. And so, the motivational strategies must be modified as well. Knowing the reasons is not enough. These need to be accompanied by efforts in structuring the preparation and in offering multiple opportunities to the participants.

THE DANGER AND COSTS THAT PHYSICAL INACTIVITY GENERATES

Today it is already known that the lack of physical activity represents a danger for the individual. For example, *The International Health Organization* estimates that yearly, physical inactivity represents the cause behind 1.9 million premature deaths at a global level and that, 600 000 of these (less than 1 third), happen in the European region, meaning in the 53 countries on this continent.

As we all know, physical inactivity doesn't just affect the individuals, but the entire social group they belong to, and the effects of this physical inactivity on public health is transformed in huge costs.

An Eurobarometer of a high importance is the one made by the European Commission through the TNS Opinion & Social health network in the 28 member states, between the 23rd of November and 2nd of December 2009, bring to attention high levels of inactivity in the E.U, in regards to the practice of physical activities [14].

According to the results from the last Eurobarometer poll regarding sport and physical activity, 59% of the citizens of the European Union never practice sport or rarely undergo sports activities, meanwhile 41% practice sport at least once a week.

Northern Europe is more physically active than Southern or Eastern Europe, 70% of the respondents in Sweden having declared that they practice sport or physical activities at least once a week, placing themselves ahead of Denmark (68%) and Finland (66%), being followed by Holland (58%) and Luxembourg (54%).

At the other end, we have Bulgaria, where 78% of the population never practice sport or physical activities, followed by Malta (75%), Portugal (64%), Romania (60%) and Italy (60%).

Discussing based on these facts, Androulla Vassiliou, the European commissioner responsible with sport declared: "The Eurobarometer results confirm the necessity of taking new measures to encourage a bigger number of persons to practice sports and physical activities as a part of their way of

life. This fact is of a crucial importance not just from the health perspective, wellbeing and people integration, but because the significant economic costs that result from the lack of physical activities as well".

The poll shows that, especially local authorities can do more to encourage citizens to be active from a physical point of view. Although 74% of the respondents feel that local sports clubs and other suppliers offer enough opportunities for people to practice sport, 39% feel that the local authorities are not doing enough in this regard.

[http://ec.europa.eu/romania/news/24032014_eurobarometrul_privind_sportul_scoate_in_evidenta_niveluri_ridicate_de_inactivitate_ro.htm].

Also, a last eurobarometer looking at the percentage of the population in regards to practicing sport / leisure sports activities, is the one made in 2013, presented in figure 1 and table 1. [15].

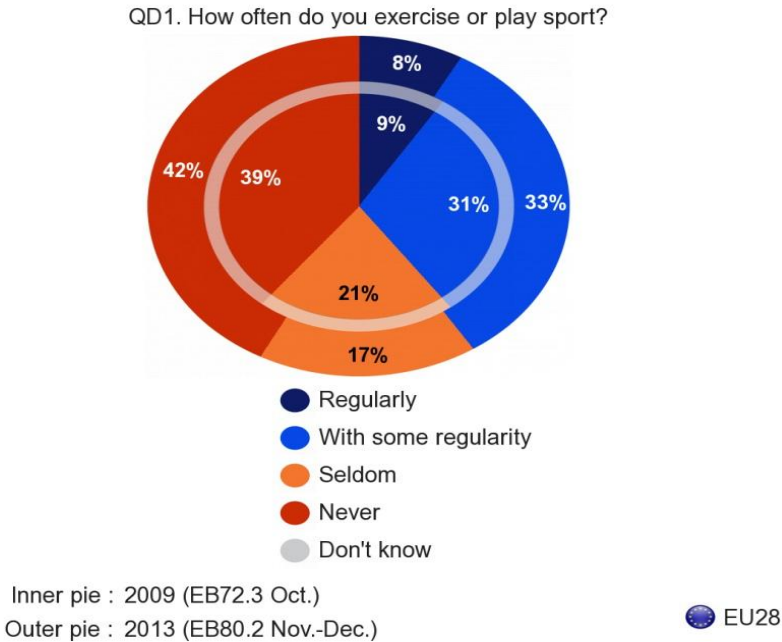


Figure 1. Percentual declared value of the U.E. population regarding practicing sport/ leisure sports activites
(Source: http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/eurobarometru-60-romani-nu-fac-niciodata-sport-1_533068b40d133766a830b537/index.html)

Table 1. The countries and percentual declared value of the U.E. population regarding practicing sport/ leisure sports activites (Data source: 12.09.2014, ibidem)

QD1 How often do you exercise or play sport?

	Regularly		With some regularity		Seldom		Never		Don't know	
	EB80.2 Nov. - Dec. 2013	Diff. 2013-2009	EB80.2 Nov. - Dec. 2013	Diff. 2013-2009	EB80.2 Nov. - Dec. 2013	Diff. 2013-2009	EB80.2 Nov. - Dec. 2013	Diff. 2013-2009	EB80.2 Nov. - Dec. 2013	Diff. 2013-2009
EU28	8%	-1	33%	+2	17%	-4	42%	+3	0%	=
HU	15%	+10	23%	+5	18%	-6	44%	-9	0%	=
EL	7%	+4	24%	+9	10%	-5	59%	-8	0%	=
ES	15%	+3	31%	+4	10%	-9	44%	+2	0%	=
NL	8%	+3	50%	-1	13%	-3	29%	+1	0%	=
SI	15%	+2	36%	-3	27%	+1	22%	=	0%	=
LT	15%	+1	22%	=	17%	-3	46%	+2	0%	=
SK	6%	+1	28%	+3	25%	-10	41%	+6	0%	=
CZ	5%	=	31%	+8	29%	-6	35%	-2	0%	=
EE	7%	=	32%	+5	24%	-1	36%	-5	1%	+1
IT	3%	=	27%	+1	10%	-6	60%	+5	0%	=
LU	12%	=	42%	+3	17%	=	29%	-3	0%	=
AT	5%	=	40%	+7	28%	-5	27%	-2	0%	=
BG	2%	-1	9%	-1	9%	-19	78%	+20	2%	+1
DK	14%	-1	54%	+5	18%	=	14%	-4	0%	=
PL	5%	-1	23%	+4	18%	-6	52%	+3	2%	=
PT	8%	-1	20%	-4	8%	-3	64%	+9	0%	-1
DE	7%	-2	41%	+1	23%	+3	29%	-2	0%	=
LV	6%	-2	25%	+6	30%	+1	39%	-5	0%	=
RO	6%	-2	15%	+2	18%	-10	60%	+11	1%	-1
FI	13%	-4	53%	-2	19%	-2	15%	+8	0%	=
UK	10%	-4	36%	+4	19%	-3	35%	+3	0%	=
FR	8%	-5	35%	=	15%	-3	42%	+8	0%	=
CY	11%	-5	25%	=	10%	-3	54%	+8	0%	=
BE	10%	-6	37%	+3	22%	=	31%	+3	0%	=
IE	16%	-7	36%	+1	14%	-1	34%	+8	0%	-1
SE	15%	-7	55%	+5	21%	-1	9%	+3	0%	=
MT	5%	-12	14%	-17	6%	-8	75%	+37	0%	=
HR	9%	*	26%	*	36%	*	29%	*	0%	*

From this table we can understand the following: 60% of romanians never practice sport, closing to the european average of 59%, and 6% regularly work out.

The most active U.E. citizens are in Sweden, where 70% of them undergo physical activities at least once a week, according to The Eurobarometer poll made in 2013.

When it comes to overall results regarding sport and physical activity, 59% of the U.E. citizens never or rarely perform sports activities, meanwhile 41% work out at least once a week.

Statistics show that Northern Europe is a lot more physically active that the Southern and Eastern part. Thus, Sweden is slightly ahead of Denmark (68%) and Finland (66%), which are followed by Holland (58%) and Luxembourg(54%).

At the other end of the standings is Bulgaria, where 78% of the population never practice sport or physical activities, followed by Malta (75%), Portugal (64%), Romania (60%) and Italy (60%) (ibidem 2013).

The poll shows that, especially the local authorities from our country could do more to encourage citizens to be more active physically. Although 74% of the respondents feel that local sports clubs and other suppliers offer sufficient opportunities for physical activities, 39% feel that local authorities do are not doing enough in this respect.

The biggest danger that physical inactivity exposes us is, as it is often said, heart sickness. It's because of this reason, the specialists and nation leaders are more and more interested in knowing the latest data regarding the incident rate and the effects of cardiovascular diseases.

In this matter, in 2005, on St.Valentine's, European Heart Network (EHN), together with the British Heart Foundation have made public the new edition of << the statistics of cardiovascular diseases in Europe>> as follows:

- Cardiovascular diseases cause 49% of all deaths in Europe and 42% in U.E.
- They represent the main cause of mortality in women, in all of Europe, and in men in all Europe with the exception of France and San Marino.

- Almost 1/3 of the “lost years” (not lived) because of early deaths are due to cardiovascular diseases.
- The mortality through cardiovascular diseases and their occurrence show a decrease in the Northern, Southern, and Western European countries, when in Central-Eastern European countries it is shown either a slow decrease or an increase.
- It is estimated that cardiovascular diseases, at a entire U.E. economy level, generate costs of approximately 169 Billion/year.

The same source, still in relation with physical inactivity, states that over 48 million adults in Europe, taken as a whole and cca 23 million adults from the U.E. states, have diabetes , and its prevalence is increasing.

In Brasov county, the sports activities are very scarce , and the citizen’s quality of life is modest. There is a insignificant number of sports actions aimed at leisure, organized by local authorities, the department of youth and sport, different private sports associations, non-profit organizations etc., however, for this city , the reality does not present high values in regards to the arrangement and the practicing of leisure sport, because, the priority lays with performance sport.

From the investigations that we conducted in 2013, from adult persons that practice sport, we can say that they are performing their sports activities in different areas of Brasov City, like: Tampa Alley, where the majority jog, walk or practice different sports games ; in the city parks where multifunctional equipment destined to enhance strenght, that are being used by many categories of people (Tractorul Park, Central Park, Racadau Park, Noua Park etc.).

Also, many of them practice diverse sports, go hiking in: Sapte Scari Canyon, Drumul Vechi to Poiana Mica, Pietrele lui Solomon, Bonloc etc., and some of them participate in different sports activities arranged by sport associations or non-profit organizations like: semi-marathons, marathons, mountain cross, cross etc.

The results of this investigation have shown that the number of liesure activities done and organized in Brasov city, in 2013, is very low (8) and the number of participants was 11056, reported to the number of adult persons (157608). The low participation numbers and low implication of the participants in leisure sports activities show a percentage of 2%, which yet again confirms that, when it comes to sports movement, we are situated very low in comparison with the U.E. average.

ROMANIAN AND BRAȘOV POLICIES IN REGARDS TO PRACTICING LEISURE SPORTS

In Romania, a very important role in regards to practicing general sport, is held by *The Sport for All Federation* which, unfortunately, because of many perturbing factors and more, is not organizing a lot of activities that are necessary for a good quality of life to develop.

By saying this, we care to mention that there have been multiple strategies and programs created in Romania, buy these proved to be non-viable. Thus, contracts of MTS/ANS like: *Sportul pentru Toți – România Mileniului III- Un alt mod de viață*, *Subprogramul Acțiuni sportiv-recreative*; *Subprogramul Etni Sport*; *Subprogramul Rural Sport*; *Subprogramul Pronatura*; *Subprogramul Old Sport*; *Subprogramul Promovarea Activă a Sănătății* etc. were proven to be inneficient and their impact, given by the number of those interested in engaging in different movement activities was insignificant [<http://sportulpentrutoti.ro/>].

At a Brasov City level, there are no policies directed to leisure sports, even more, local authorities have their attention on performance sport (professional). The majority of funding are implemented in the sports project named “*Programul Promovarea sportului de performanță*” for *Finanțarea din fonduri nerambursabile a cluburilor sportive din Municipiul Brașov*” criteria, according to the activity report of the mayor if City of Brasov in 2013 [<http://www.brasovcity.ro/>].

CONCLUSIONS

Health and movement are two fundamental notions of life, linked close, their domain and activity area being “man”, in the bio-psycho-social meaning.

Nowadays perception pushes the term Optimal health, which implies the vitality and the joy of life, representing more that the absence of disease. Sports movement can be considered as the daily

physical activity, as well as an “addition” to health, if it’s well understood, coordinated, with rules, performed rationally (Dumitru Gh., 1997, p. 3).

The influence sports and physical health have on man and society is complex, especially due to the effects that they produce on maintaining health, forming and developing one’s personality.

The systematic, correct and conscious practice of physical exercises, especially in the spare time, organized or independent, creates the premises of the development for sports culture, fact that will determine the foundation of a competitive society within the European Union, aligned to its standard.

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