

Social values of sport participation and their significance for youth attitudes towards physical education and sport

Rajmund Tomik¹, Dorota Olex-Zarychta², Władysław Mynarski³

¹ Department of Tourism, The Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Poland

² Department of Theory and Methodology of Physical Education, The Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Poland

³ Department of Recreation, The Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice, Poland

ABSTRACT

Introduction. The purpose of the educational process at school is to promote a pro-fitness lifestyle, which means that after completing education school graduates should be able to engage in different forms of physical activity on a regular basis for the aim of health enhancement. Adolescents with positive attitudes to physical education are more active and tend to opt for more PE lessons at school.

Aim of Study. The aim of the present study was to determine whether School Sport Clubs (SSC) might support the efforts of the school to prepare youngsters for lifelong participation in physical activity in its socio-cultural aspects.

Material and Methods. The method of diagnostic survey was used. The study group consisted of SSC members involved in school sport for at least three years, while the control group comprised their uninvolved peers. The main research tool, i.e., diagnostic Questionnaire for Testing Youths' Attitude to Physical Education and Sport was developed by S Strzyżewski. 2,704 diagnostic questionnaires were selected for statistical analysis.

Results. In the entire group of participants three attitude parameters showed the highest values: attitude towards physical education classes and exercises, attitude towards one's own physical fitness and development, and attitude towards self-control and self-evaluation. Parameters such as "social values of physical education and sport" and "cognitive activity in physical education and sport" reflected a neutral attitude. No attitude parameters scored negatively or highly negatively. Average values of all attitude parameters obtained from SSC members were higher than those from the uninvolved peer group. Average values of all parameters were significantly higher in boys.

Conclusion. The results seem to confirm the hypothesis that School Sport Clubs members present more pro-social attitudes towards sport and physical education than their peers uninvolved in the sport process. The results strongly support the important role of extracurricular sport as reinforcement of positive effects of social and cultural education at school.

KEY WORDS

educational process, physical education, sport, attitudes assessment, children.

Introduction

One of purposes of school is to promote a pro-fitness lifestyle. This means that after completing his or her education the individual will be able to engage in different forms of physical activity on a regular basis, which would lead to his or her health enhancement. School education should concentrate on emancipating tasks because they prepare youngsters for relevant, humane and independent participation in socio-cultural life. The school has become pre-

eminently the agency for introduction of youngsters into relevant domains of culture, in order to give them opportunities to acquire the coveted socio-cultural competences. Following the external democratization of sport, i.e. the *sport for all* principle, the term "sport" is no longer reserved for competitive sport only, but it also refers to recreational sport, health sport, fun sport, etc. For that reason it is important to prepare youngsters to deal with the expectations of others and to cooperate with other people in sport activity i.e. to accept and give help and support.

In a Eurobarometer report from 2007 [1] leisure activities that are most frequently practiced by young Europeans include doing exercises (45%) and meeting friends (40%). These data show how important it is to learn to solve social-cultural problems which occur often in connection with motor activities. Movement socialization goals should therefore be emphasized in school physical education and sport as important factors influencing attitudes of young people towards physical activity and sport.

An attitude is defined as "a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" [2, p. 150]. Attitude is readiness or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation [3]. They encompass, or are closely related to one's opinions and beliefs, and are based upon his/her experience. Since attitudes are often related in some way to interaction with others, they represent an important link between cognitive and social psychology. As far as instruction is concerned, much learning involves acquiring or changing attitudes. It has been shown that attitudes have a direct effect on young people's intention to participate in physical education classes [4]. Adolescents with positive attitudes to PE are more active and tend to opt for more PE lessons at school [5].

Children's and youths' attitudes towards physical activity and sport seem to influence their future adherence rates and patterns in these areas. Studies indicate that children with a positive attitude towards physical education [6, 7, 8] or physical activity [6, 9, 10] are more likely to intend to exercise in the future. Moreover, sport involvement seems to facilitate many positive developmental experiences (e.g. related to challenge, meaningful adult and peer relationships or a sense of community), which makes sport programs play an important role in facilitating adolescents' positive emotional development [11].

Non-mandatory participation in sport (out-of-school sporting activities) seems to have an effect on compulsory physical education adherence. In some research, participation in extracurricular sport correlated with greater motivation for physical education [12], and with continuation of sports by young people with an emphasis on social relationships of sport activity in sport clubs [13]. Social agents seem to contribute to the quality of adolescents' physical activity experiences. Some studies [14] indicate that physical activity improves the quality of peer relationships. Therefore, the relationship of school sport clubs and the attitude towards other areas of physical education and sport seems to be an interesting subject for further research. The "Sport and Physical Activity" Eurobarometer analysis of adherence rates and sport activity patterns of Europeans shows that only 18% of 15- to 24-year-olds participate in sports clubs. Boys are more active in this area than girls (25% of boys, 11% of girls) [15]. From the perspective of caring for adequate movement socialization of all youngsters, school sport clubs should be treated as important movement socialization agencies for young people providing the opportunity for movement and play with others.

The dynamic development of school sport clubs in Europe calls for a summary and analysis of their educational

effects in the area of movement socialization. The main environment of School Sport Clubs (SSCs) activity is the school, which is responsible for the development of skills, knowledge and socio-cultural competences. These competences influence the future participation in physical culture.

Aim of Study

The aim of the present study was to determine whether SSCs might support the efforts of the school to prepare youngsters for lifelong participation in physical activity in socio-cultural aspects. Parameters of attitudes towards physical education and sport were compared between male and female members of SSCs and their uninvolved peer group. We hypothesized that participation in organized sport classes should positively influence the attitude towards movement culture by meaningful contribution to participants' social development.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The method of diagnostic survey was used in the study. The study group consisted of SSC members involved in a school sport system for at least three years each, while the control group comprised their uninvolved peers. Six hundred and twenty-three randomly selected school sports clubs in Poland took part in the project.

Diagnostic questionnaires were mailed to schools organizing sports in their SSCs. A detailed instruction was added of how to conduct the survey at school. Physical education teachers engaged in SSCs distributed the questionnaires among SSCs members and a group of uninvolved peers. Questionnaires were then mailed back; 2,704 diagnostic questionnaires (1,214 from boys and 1,490 from girls) from sport clubs members were selected for statistical analysis. Respondents aged 12-19 years were selected from different types of schools in Poland. All respondents gave their informed consent to participate in the survey. Participants were divided into two groups: involved and uninvolved in the school sports clubs (1,452 – 53.7% and 1,252 – 46.3%). The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice and each participant gave his/her informed consent.

Measures

The main research tool, i.e., the diagnostic questionnaire, was developed by S Strzyżewski (*Questionnaire for Testing Youths' Attitude to Physical Education and Sport*) [16]; its validity, reliability, and selectivity had been verified in various population fractions. Questionnaire reliability was $r = 0.86$ and $r = 0.88$ for boys and girls, respectively [16, 17, 18]. The 67-item questionnaire used in the study had been adapted to the Polish physical education and sports system. Participants were asked to choose from among five predefined responses: "Certainly YES", "YES", "I do not know", "NO", and "Certainly NO". Each response was assigned a point value (4, 3, 2, 1, 0, respectively).

The following parameters (P) of attitude towards physical education and sport were calculated:

- P 1. Attitude towards social values of physical education and sport (3 items).
- P 2. Attitude towards health values of physical activity (8 items).
- P 3. Attitude towards one's own physical fitness and development (6 items).
- P 4. Attitude towards free-time physical activity (7 items).
- P 5. Attitude towards self-control and self-evaluation (3 items).
- P 6. Attitude towards physical education classes and physical exercises (11 items).
- P 7. Attitude towards sport and sports events (14 items).
- P 8. Attitude towards partner and adversary in sports competition (7 items).
- P 9. Attitude towards the Olympic idea and tradition in physical education and sport (5 items).
- P 10. Attitude towards cognitive activity in physical education and sport (3 items).

Individual scores were calculated as a product of all point values attained for a particular set of items, and the number of set questions.

Attitude level was determined using K Górná's norms developed on the basis of extensive studies of adolescents. Our research employed the same methodology, and thus the same norm ranges, i.e. 0-0.49 – highly negative attitude, 0.5-1.49 – negative, 1.5-2.49 – neutral, 2.5-3.49 – positive, and 3.5-4.0 – highly positive [17].

Statistical analysis

Normal distribution in the study group as a whole, and then separately in the groups of boys and girls, was verified with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The distribution of attitude parameters (except for P 7) was different from normal. The results were statistically significant. However, the small values of skewness (-0.888-0.347) and kurtosis (-0.476-0.941) as well as the large size of the study group ($n = 2,704$) allowed the use of variance analysis [16].

The attitude towards physical education and sport may depend not only on gender but also on school sports club (SSC) membership. A statistical model was needed incorporating the effect of single parameters and their combina-

tions. Thus, a linear mixed model (ANOVA) incorporating the main effects of gender and SSC membership as well as their interactions was used. The Tukey post-hoc test was also used in a more detailed analysis of attitude level differences in participant groups. In all analyses the level of significance was set at $p = 0.05$.

Results

In the whole group of participants three attitude parameters revealed the highest values: attitude towards physical education classes and exercises (P 6 – 3.01), towards one's own physical fitness and development (P 3 – 2.99), and towards self-control and self-evaluation (P 5 – 2.90). Parameters P 1 (social values of physical education and sport) and P 10 (cognitive activity in physical education and sport) reflected a neutral attitude (2.28 and 2.26). No attitude parameters scored negatively or highly negatively.

The average values of all attitude parameters obtained from SSC members were higher than those from the uninvolved peer group. Average values of all parameters were significantly higher in boys. Only P 8, i.e. the attitude towards partner and adversary in sports competition, showed a statistically significant advantage of girls (Table I).

Generally, boys demonstrated a more positive attitude towards physical education and sport than girls ($P 2 - p < 0.001$), except for P 1 (social values of physical education and sport; statistically non-significant) and P 8 (attitude towards partner and adversary in sports competition; advantage of girls) (Table II).

Variance analysis demonstrated a significant effect of gender on the level of all attitude parameters, except for P 1, i.e. social values of physical education and sport.

SSC members (both boys and girls) demonstrated higher attitude values in all tested areas (P 1 – P 10; $p < 0.001$). The statistically significant interaction of gender and SSC membership was found in attitudes towards free-time physical activity (P 4 – $p = 0.010$), PE classes and exercises (P 6 – $p = 0.011$), and sport and sports events (P 7 – $p < 0.001$). In all parameters these interactions were stronger in girls (Tables II and III).

Table I. Mean values of parameters of attitude towards physical education and sport depending on gender and SSC membership

Parameter	Total (2,704)		Gender				SSC membership			
			Boys (n = 1,214)		Girls (n = 1,490)		SSC members (n = 1,452)		Non-SSC students (n = 1,252)	
	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s
P 1	2.28	0.63	2.29	0.67	2.27	0.61	2.32	0.63	2.22	0.64
P 2	2.78	0.45	2.84	0.46	2.74	0.43	2.84	0.44	2.71	0.45
P 3	2.99	0.52	3.04	0.52	2.95	0.51	3.07	0.48	2.91	0.54
P 4	2.68	0.55	2.75	0.54	2.63	0.56	2.80	0.52	2.55	0.57
P 5	2.90	0.65	2.95	0.65	2.85	0.65	2.98	0.63	2.80	0.66
P 6	3.01	0.59	3.10	0.54	2.93	0.61	3.15	0.51	2.84	0.63
P 7	2.50	0.50	2.57	0.5	2.44	0.49	2.71	0.42	2.26	0.47
P 8	2.66	0.54	2.57	0.57	2.73	0.51	2.73	0.54	2.58	0.53
P 9	2.48	0.63	2.58	0.64	2.40	0.62	2.61	0.60	2.32	0.64
P 10	2.26	0.84	2.43	0.85	2.11	0.81	2.41	0.80	2.08	0.85

Table II. Double classification analysis of variance – the effect of SSC membership and gender

	Parameters	F	p
Attitude towards social values of physical education and sport (P 1)	Gender	0.25	0.616
	SSC membership	14.82	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	0.14	0.713
Attitude towards health values of physical activity (P 2)	Gender	34.41	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	50.32	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	2.26	0.133
Attitude towards one's own physical fitness and development (P 3)	Gender	15.98	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	58.06	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	0.79	0.373
Attitude towards free-time physical activity (P 4)	Gender	26.5	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	128.3	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	6.7	0.010*
Attitude towards self control and self evaluation (P 5)	Gender	12.26	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	46.96	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	2.84	0.092
Attitude towards physical education classes and physical exercises (P 6)	Gender	46.7	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	182.6	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	6.5	0.011*
Attitude towards sport and sport events (P 7)	Gender	38.7	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	672.2	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	14.6	< 0.001*
Attitude towards partner and adversary in sport fight (P 8)	Gender	62.4	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	62.87	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	0.3	0.584
Attitude towards the Olympic idea and tradition in physical education and sport (P 9)	Gender	47.8	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	136	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	0.1	0.782
Attitude towards cognitive activity in physical education and sport (P 10)	Gender	87.92	< 0.001*
	SSC membership	98.72	< 0.001*
	Gender*SSC membership	0.01	0.929

* statistically significant at 0.05.

Table III. Post hoc test for mean values of parameters of attitude towards physical education and sport depending on gender and SSC membership

Parameters	Girls (n = 1,490)					Boys (n = 1,214)				
	SSC members (n = 754)		Non-SSC students (n = 736)		Difference p	SSC members (n = 698)		Non-SSC students (n = 516)		Difference p
	\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s		\bar{x}	s	\bar{x}	s	
P 1	2.31	0.61	2.22	0.60	0.046*	2.33	0.65	2.23	0.68	0.042*
P 2	2.81	0.43	2.66	0.42	< 0.001*	2.88	0.45	2.79	0.47	0.003*
P 3	3.04	0.47	2.87	0.54	< 0.001*	3.10	0.49	2.96	0.55	< 0.001*
P 4	2.77	0.52	2.48	0.55	< 0.001*	2.83	0.51	2.64	0.57	< 0.001*
P 5	2.96	0.62	2.75	0.66	< 0.001*	3.00	0.64	2.87	0.65	0.007*
P 6	3.10	0.55	2.75	0.62	< 0.001*	3.20	0.46	2.96	0.61	< 0.001*
P 7	2.69	0.41	2.18	0.42	< 0.001*	2.73	0.43	2.36	0.50	< 0.001*
P 8	2.81	0.52	2.64	0.49	< 0.001*	2.64	0.55	2.49	0.58	< 0.001*
P 9	2.54	0.59	2.25	0.61	< 0.001*	2.70	0.60	2.42	0.67	< 0.001*
P 10	2.27	0.79	1.96	0.79	< 0.001*	2.57	0.78	2.25	0.91	< 0.001*

* statistically significant at 0.05.

Discussion

In the whole sample, boys revealed more positive attitudes towards physical education and sport than girls as shown by the majority of parameters. These results may be treated as confirming previous research on the efficacy of

the physical education process in elementary schools [17, 20, 21, 22, 23]. The *Young Europeans* report [1] confirms that positive attitudes (among other factors) among boys actually lead to their greater involvement in sport as a pastime when compared to girls. In our study a comparison of different parameters of attitude towards physical education

and sport enabled to identify the area of girls' advantage, i.e., girls presented a more positive attitude towards partner and adversary in sports competition ($P = 8 - p < 0.001$). This might suggest that girls value the social aspect of participating in a sports event more than the competition result. It suggests that girls can be more involved in socio-cultural aspects of sport performance than boys. Some previous studies indicated that girls showed more favorable attitudes toward physical activities emphasizing out-of-performance goals [24, 25, 26, 27]. This might constitute a helpful hint for physical education teachers, i.e. the social value of sport, for example, the idea of fair play should be emphasized especially while working with boys who are more result-oriented than girls. Becoming the winner should not be perceived as the sole goal of sports competition. However, it should be considered that non-athletes who have a greater win orientation have lower self-esteem [28]. It may influence the social development of such individuals by neglecting peers during performance to avoid comparisons and uncomfortable social situations.

Our results indicate clearly that the membership in a school sport club is a factor influencing the level of general attitude towards physical education and sport, with SSC members' statistically significant advantage in all attitude parameters (Table III). The greatest differences among the mean values of parameters were shown in the area of sport and sports events ($P = 7, 0.46$). Górna's research [17] into secondary school students' preparation for physical education and sport demonstrated that children and adolescents perceived school sport as a physical activity and a social phenomenon rather than a competition area. Young people attending sports and recreation events organized by their own school also demonstrated higher levels of skills, knowledge, and general attitude towards physical education and sport.

Westerstahl et al. in their study [29] on secular trends in attitudes towards sports activity and physical education in a group of young Swedes (16-year-olds) showed more positive perception of sport among those who pursued sport as a pastime. Other studies showed that significant differences between groups of adolescents with positive and negative attitudes towards physically demanding activities resulted from the level of participation in sports activities. Adolescents with positive attitudes were more active in sport [30]. To promote positive attitudes towards physical activity among adolescents who are not active in sports during leisure time, it is important to introduce and offer a PE program acceptable and attractive even for those children and youth who spend most of their time on sedentary activities. Our results indicate a need to go beyond the popular victory oriented approach to sport limiting participation of less skilled children and youth. Social aspects of sports activities should be emphasized. Some of these activities could be continued throughout adulthood as a way of social contact and as a part of cultural life [29].

Our results support the hypothesis that membership in a school sports club may promote a neutral or positive attitude towards physical education and sport in its socio-cultural aspects. Previous studies indicated that integration with others, so characteristic for team work in sports train-

ing, can be an important factor influencing this relationship [5, 11]. Longitudinal studies of behavior patterns in young people demonstrated that the sooner a child began participating in physical activity and sport, the greater was the probability of continuation of active lifestyle in the future [32]. The findings of Slutzky and Simpkins [33] showed the positive association of sport participation with self-esteem in children. Children who spend more time in team sports demonstrated higher self-esteem levels than their peers. These findings seem to confirm a positive influence of sport participation on motivational outcome in adolescents and, therefore, support our results.

Although beyond empirical inquiry or proof, one can safely assume that joining a sports club promotes a positive attitude towards different aspects of physical culture including those connected with socio-cultural life. Sollerhed et al. [5] demonstrated that a sense of coherence among adolescents was another strong determinant of positive attitudes towards physical education. Participation in sport, training sessions, and competitions has a powerful effect on the development of positive relationships between team members, and between competitors and their coach. Considering previous results [34], it seems that irrespective of gender, the global attitude towards physical education and sport as well as its cognitive, affective and behavioural components will always be more favourable among SSC members. The other factor influencing youth's attitude towards physical education and sport is the teacher and PE standards/guidelines at school [23]. Participation in organized sport at school (SSCs) can affect the final evaluation of the student's physical education activity (i.e., school mark at the end of the education level) and also socio-cultural activity.

Our results also indicate a strong interaction of gender and SSC membership. Especially in girls, participation in school sport can be one of the factors which positively influence the attitudes towards free-time physical activity, physical education lesson and physical exercises, and sport and sport events. The information is valuable in the context of physical education for girls, whose reluctance and lack of motivation to engage in physical activity at school and in free time remains one of the greatest problems of contemporary physical education. Joining a school sports club can help a girl combine social and physical activities, resulting in improved fitness, which has direct and immediate effects on young people's health. The *Young Europeans* report [1] showed that one half of the respondents were not attending any sports organization (51%). Only 54% of boys and 41% of girls from EU member states were sports clubs or associations members. A Polish project aimed at setting up a network of school sports clubs (1994) seemed to address the problem. At present, the clubs operate in as many as every fourth school; however, it should be admitted that still only 9% of children and youth are involved in this process [34]. Our study was based on a single questionnaire, which constitutes one of its main limitations. The effect of SSCs on adolescents' attitudes towards physical activity could only be unambiguously confirmed by continuous monitoring of baseline attitudes and changes in their dynamics over several years of training.

Conclusions

The results of the study seem to confirm the hypothesis that members of school sports clubs display more pro-social attitude towards sport and physical education than their peers uninvolved in the sport process. They also strongly support an important role of after-school sport as reinforcement of positive effects of social and cultural education at school.

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Correspondence should be addressed to: Rajmund Tomik, Wydział Zarządzania Sportem i Turystyką, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego w Katowicach, Mikołowska 72 a, 40-065 Katowice, Tel. (32) 207 51 69, e-mail: r.tomik@awf.katowice.pl

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