

PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS FROM PEDAGOGICAL SPECIALTIES ABOUT THE ESSENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Abstract

Physical activity is a key factor for human health and physical well-being, as well as an important element in the education of young people. It is crucial that students who are being trained as future educators understand the essence and significance of physical activity not only in the context of physical education, but also as a component of personal and societal prosperity. For this reason, the awareness of the role that physical activity plays in personality development is essential for future pedagogical professionals.

The aim of this article is to examine the knowledge of students in pedagogical specialties at Trakia University regarding the nature and importance of physical activity, and to propose ways to increase their awareness of this important social phenomenon.

The research method used is a pedagogical survey, the results of which indicate good levels of awareness, primarily acquired through the Internet and university education.

The results of the study show that students in pedagogical programs possess fundamental knowledge about the nature and importance of physical activity, but there are areas where further education and increased awareness are necessary. While most participants assess their level of knowledge as satisfactory, some are not fully familiar with the recommended levels of physical activity or with the age-specific characteristics of children – factors that are critically important for effective pedagogical practice.

Keywords: physical activity, student teachers, knowledge

Introduction

Physical activity is an indispensable factor in the "struggle to preserve the genetic fund of humanity" [5, pp. 13], and a fundamental means for prevention, recreation, and recovery of physical and mental capacities. The conditions under which physical exercises and various types of motor-sport activities are practiced serve as a safeguard for strengthening the body and counteracting the growing trend of hypodynamia. Their corrective functions are applied in the fight against spinal deformities and flat feet, as well as in the development of proper static posture and body alignment.

The human need for physical activity is substantial, and its appropriate amount is determined by the age-specific characteristics of ontogenesis. In modern educational settings, and particularly in the context of distance learning, a concerning trend has emerged – a significant reduction in physical movement among children and adolescents [4, pp. 220]. Adolescents do not engage in sports activities frequently enough during the week, which poses a serious risk of overweight and, consequently, health-related complications for the body [2, pp. 135].

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases, improves cognitive functions, and has a positive effect on mental health [3, pp. 1]. This implies that it serves as a tool for shaping moral values, discipline, and social skills. Scientific literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of physical activity in the educational process and the role of educators in promoting it. The researcher R. Bailey [1, pp. 399] emphasize the need for students in pedagogical

programs to be not only theoretically prepared but also practically motivated to integrate physical activity into their future professional work. The professional training of students should focus on developing their skills to plan and conduct appropriate motor activities. Within this context, the present study examines the knowledge and attitudes of students regarding the essence and significance of physical activity. Through the analysis of their responses, the aim is to outline opportunities for improving university-level training and for shaping a positive professional orientation toward motor culture as a fundamental component of the modern teacher's educational mission.

The impact of physical activity on the human body is multifaceted and can be examined in several key dimensions:

- physical health – for prevention, and for optimizing the functional capacities and physiological processes of the body;
- mental balance – for reducing levels of stress and anxiety, and for improving mood;
- social and emotional well-being – for developing communication skills, leadership abilities, and teamwork capabilities;
- cognitive development – research shows that physical activity enhances cognitive functions such as perception, memory, and thinking, as well as attention span as a capacity of mental development [6, pp. 132].

The educational context of the study should not be underestimated: for students preparing to become future educators, it is essential to possess both theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of the role of

physical activity. It is a professional calling for pedagogical specialists to integrate physical activity as an important component of daily educational practice.

The presented findings clearly demonstrate that active physical activity is of great importance for the comprehensive development of adolescents' personalities. Physical activity plays a crucial role in physical health, psychological well-being, social adaptation, and emotional development. Educators bear the responsibility of shaping the habits and attitudes of future generations. Students enrolled in pedagogical programs must possess in-depth knowledge of the essence and significance of physical activity in order to effectively integrate it into their future professional practice. In doing so, they will contribute to the development of a healthy and successful generation. This, in turn, will

enable them to be more effective in their work, motivating young people to actively participate in sports and motor activities.

Research Procedure

The study was conducted through an anonymous survey among students training to become educators. A pre-designed questionnaire included six closed-ended questions. The survey was carried out in the form of an online questionnaire in January 2025 among 118 students, enrolled in the following academic programs: "Preschool Pedagogy", "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy", "Primary School Pedagogy with a Foreign Language" and "Pedagogy of Physical Education".

Analysis of Results

The results presented in Fig. 1 show the data obtained from the question aimed at assessing the respondents' self-evaluation of their level of knowledge regarding the nature of physical activity.

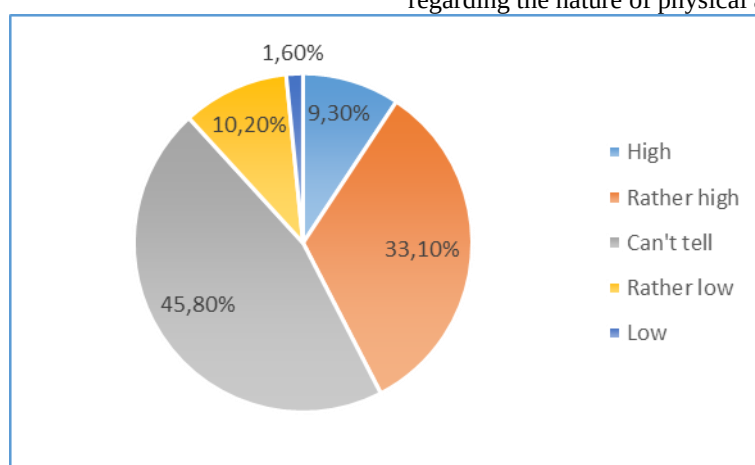


Figure 1. Share of responses to the question "In your opinion, what is the level of knowledge you possess about the nature of motor activity?"

The results visualize a prevailing uncertainty: the largest share of respondents experience difficulty in self-assessing their level of knowledge on the examined indicator. This may be due to a lack of objective criteria by which students can evaluate public awareness or to insufficient personal familiarity with the topic. A moderate degree of optimism is observed: the combined share of positive responses ("high" and "rather high") amounts to 42,4%, indicating that nearly half of the surveyed individuals consider their awareness to be at a

good level. Critically low self-assessment is rare: only 1,6% of all respondents rated their knowledge as "low" and 10,2% as "rather low". This suggests that a severe lack of awareness is not perceived as a widespread issue among the participants.

Fig. 2 presents the distribution of responses to the question investigating the level of knowledge regarding the importance of physical activity.

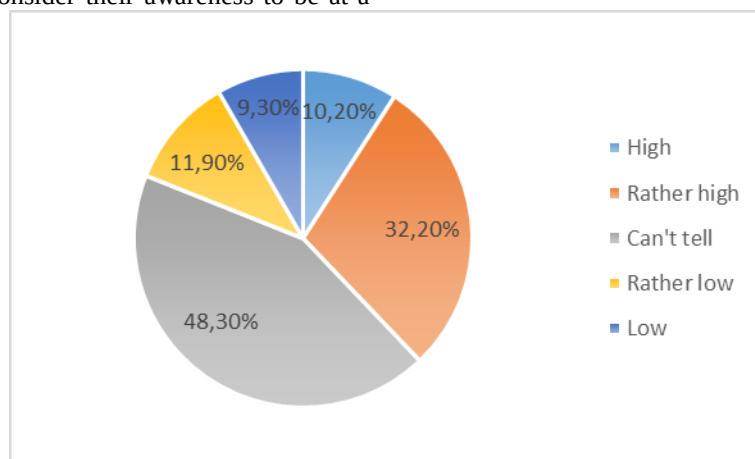


Figure 2. Share of responses to the question "In your opinion, what is the level of knowledge you possess about the importance of physical activity for society?"

The summarized findings once again indicate that nearly half of the students (48,3%) are unable to self-assess, 42,4% report positive levels of awareness, while one-fifth of the participants exhibit low levels.

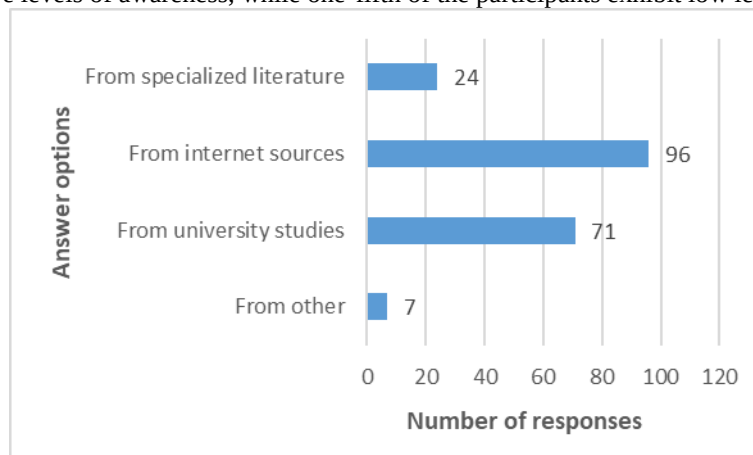


Figure 3.

Results of responses to the question "Where do you get the information you need in the field of motor activity?"

The results for the next question, presented in Fig. 3, reflect the preferred sources of information on physical activity among the surveyed students. The questionnaire allowed for multiple responses, with each participant permitted to select more than one source. The option "from the internet" was chosen by 96 students, indicating a high level of trust in online resources. The digital environment – including websites, blogs, video platforms, and social media – has established itself as a primary source of information for the younger generation. The second most selected source, "from university

education", was noted by 71 students, suggesting that formal education is perceived as a significant source of authoritative and structured information. This highlights the need to promote information literacy and skills for working with specialized sources in order to enhance the quality of knowledge related to physical activity.

The aim of the fourth question is to assess the level of knowledge regarding the recommended levels of physical activity necessary for maintaining good health. The results are presented in Fig. 4.

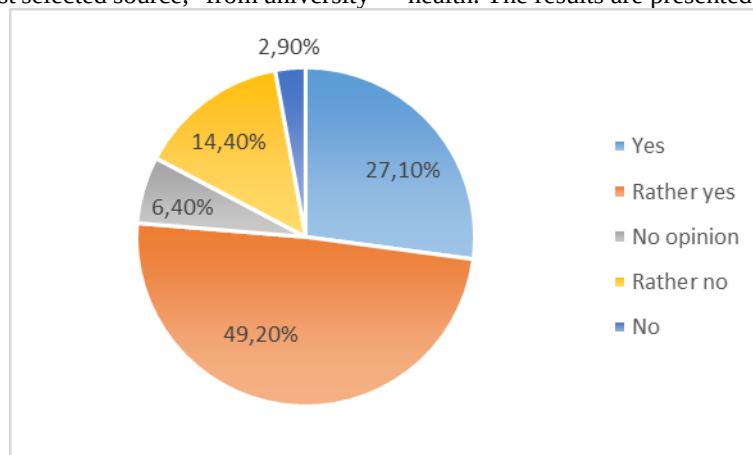


Figure 4. Share of responses to the question "Are you familiar with the recommended levels of minimum physical activity necessary to maintain good health?"

Nearly half of the respondents (49,2%) indicated that they are somewhat familiar with the recommended levels, while more than one-quarter assessed their knowledge as very high. This is an encouraging indicator of students' awareness.

The results regarding students' self-assessment of the existing opportunities to increase children's and pupils' physical activity within the educational system are nearly identical (see Fig. 5).

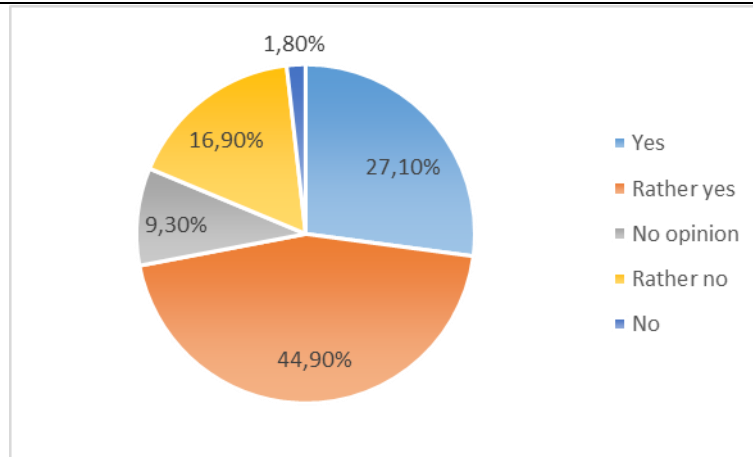


Figure 5. Share of responses to the question "Are you familiar with the opportunities for increasing children's physical activity in the educational system?"

The results obtained from the responses to the final question in the survey are particularly encouraging (see Fig. 6).

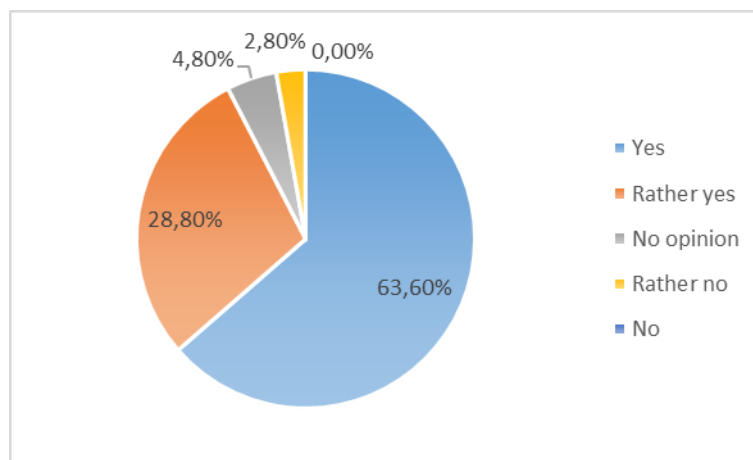


Figure 6. Share of responses to the question "Are you willing to conduct active activities to increase children's motor activity in your future pedagogical work?"

A vast majority of the respondents (over 92%) firmly expressed their readiness to plan, organize, and conduct active sports events aimed at increasing the motor activity of children and adolescents in their future work as educators

Discussion

The results indicate that students require a greater volume and more detailed information regarding the multifaceted nature and beneficial impact of physical activity. The findings also underscore the need for diverse programs and practical initiatives related to physical and motor activities, as well as regular campaigns aimed at raising awareness among future educators about the essence and importance of physical activity – both for children and youth in particular, and for society as a whole.

A clearly expressed positive attitude is observed toward the benefits of physical activity and the professional commitment to applying active forms of motor engagement in pedagogical practice. This reflects a high level of intrinsic motivation and awareness regarding the role of physical activity in the educational process.

The study highlights the necessity for targeted instruction on this topic within university curricula, along

with broader utilization of accessible sources of information. Encouragingly, a significant proportion of the students express both willingness and readiness to implement active approaches for enhancing the physical activity of children in their future professional roles. This provides a solid foundation for the development of initiatives aimed at fostering healthy habits among children and students from an early age.

Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn are as follows:

- Among students preparing for the teaching profession, there is a high level of awareness regarding the importance and role of physical activity for human health and well-being. A portion of the participants demonstrate a strong understanding of the significance and nature of physical activity in relation to health and quality of life.

- The knowledge acquired by students concerning the minimum recommended levels of physical activity for maintaining good health, as well as the potential of the educational system to enhance physical activity among younger generations, is clearly expressed.

- Information sources – The main channels through which students obtain information on the essence and benefits of physical activity are the Internet and social media, followed by the university learning

environment. There is a need for a wider variety of specialized literature to further strengthen student awareness and build confidence in their knowledge.

- Positive attitude toward physical culture – The study reveals that students perceive physical activity not only as a health-related and social necessity but also as a phenomenon that contributes to the development of numerous personal qualities and skills, thereby supporting the holistic formation of the individual.

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