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Lifestyle of Primary School Pupils

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LIFESTYLE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

(Monograph)

Jiří MICHAL

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ABSTRACT

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Monograph presents the results of research aimed at analysing any change in attitudes of primary school pupils towards physical education and sport after an intervention project. The first part describes the theoretical background necessary for the identification of the problem. The empirical part contains the author's research in which 1253 respondents from three districts of Banská Bystrica region were asked to fill in a questionnaire to provide empirical data. A pedagogical experiment was subsequently conducted on an experimental group.

The experimental part of the research was a project tailored for the experimental group that lasted for 15 weeks. Results from the experimental project confirmed the positive influence of a carefully planned intervention project on the pupils' attitudes towards physical education and sport with a level of significance at 1% ($p < 0.01$). The influence of the intervention project on the pupils' lifestyle proved to be statistically significant in certain aspects of their lifestyle. Author expects that this work will become an impulse for creating other health projects aimed at positively influencing pupils' attitudes and knowledge of health, sport and lifestyle.

Keywords: health, lifestyle, attitudes, primary school

FOREWORD

Health is considered to be an important individual value, directly determined by self-preservation. Many people underestimate its importance due to lack of information or indolence and only start to appreciate it once they become ill.

Interpersonal relationships are deteriorating and life is becoming oriented towards gathering new products, success, money and power. As a result, exercise is disappearing and overeating is becoming more common. New problems are appearing on a large scale, namely the diseases of affluence (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, obesity and diabetes). Negative changes are often irreversible, which means the health question is closely linked to the lifestyle of society. Improving the health of the population should be a central concern for the state, government, insurance companies and professional healthcare organizations. It is essential to exclude or even remove harmful influences like advertisements for junk food, cigarettes, alcohol and energy drinks. It is important to promote physical education and regular physical activity.

Those teachers who are aware of this connection try to create the best possible environment including the possibility for children's activities and health education. One of the appropriate components for achieving these goals is a health project within the framework of discontinued projects such as Schools supporting health. The absence of nationwide projects aimed at health and physical activities presents a problem as well as a challenge. For this reason, our work monitors how a health project influences pupils' attitudes towards physical education and sport as well as their lifestyle. We collected relevant information about changes in the outlook of pupils' attitudes from questionnaires.

Physical activity and sport is a social phenomenon and a part of the strategic goals of the European Union. It helps to create values important for the personal and social development of citizens, contributes to solidarity, prosperity, tolerance and active citizenship. The constant improvement of living standards brings more opportunities and ways to spend free time. A sufficient amount of physical activity should be present too. Creating enough opportunities for positive free time activities, not only for children and youth but also for adults, means supporting the right attitudes and opinions towards free time and ensures that it is perceived as an important individual and social value and also as a necessary precondition for the functioning of society.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of modern technologies of automatisisation and robotisation brought attention to lifestyle. This rapid development has a positive influence, mostly on human well-being. It leads to a simplifying and modernisation of our lifestyle, improving the quality of technologies, new discoveries in treatment of diseases and more time for research and study. On the other side of the coin, technological progress has its negative side too. The lifestyle of today's youth is taking its toll. Our health is often in danger, be it in the length, way or quality of life. The onset and development of metabolic dysfunction diseases like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer are the most frequently visible.

In our monograph we are focusing on the lifestyle of children aged 10-15 and on the ways in which they spend their free time. We were interested in their eating habits and the subsequent consequences for health. Children who answered our questionnaire are attending primary schools. It is a sensitive stage of development, formative for their way of life, professional future and consequently also health.

Humans are lazy in nature and a sedentary lifestyle is becoming prevalent. We are trying to make our lives more comfortable. We abandoned climbing the stairs for taking lifts and escalators, walking for driving cars and using public transportation. Even the most basic movement at home has been reduced to a minimum thanks to conveniences such as remote controls and mobile phones.

There is less and less movement in every aspect of life, outdoor walks are no longer popular and sport's appeal is decreasing. Young people spend most of their free time in front of the TV, playing video games or on the internet. Practically, we have unrestricted access to food today which combined with a high energy intake and low output leads to the accumulation of energy reserves in the body. Health problems are the tax we are paying for a lack of active exercise, excessive calorie intake, a sedentary lifestyle and spending our free time physically passive.

Health is affected by our lifestyle from the day we are born. It is essential to exclude, or even remove harmful influences like advertisements for junk food, cigarettes, alcohol and energy drinks. It is important to promote physical education and regular physical activity.

It is essential now for those who should educate, motivate, and most importantly, teach others to be aware of current trends and to create an environment that would appeal to the young generation. Several authors who were interested in attitudes towards physical education and sport in Slovak school system proved that it is possible to influence attitudes (Görner – Starší, 2001; Michal, 2006; Bartík, 2009). Modern lifestyle often lacks the beneficial

effects of physical activity, instead we are relying on various pharmaceutical supplements, energy boosters or calming remedies. They might bring the expected result but, in the end, their secondary effects are harmful for human health. The situation calls for a change in the current lifestyle of children, youth and adults. A new approach should include physical activity because this, together with physical work and spending free time in an active way (sports and hiking), constitutes one of the pillars of a healthy lifestyle. These are basic life attributes and contribute significantly to both good health and physical fitness.

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