

STUDY ON THE SOCIOLOGICAL AND MOTIVATIONAL PROFILE OF FITNESS CENTER USERS IN RESITA MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT. *Introduction:* The insufficient level of physical activity among the population is a public health problem worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, over 27% of adults and approximately 80% of adolescents do not reach the minimum recommended levels of physical activity to maintain health. Technological development influences contemporary lifestyles, favoring inactivity. Regular physical activity is a viable alternative for maintaining optimal health, as well as for improving the quality of life. Group physical exercises are one of the more effective options for reducing stress and increasing the quality of life, compared to individual training. Fitness is an effective form of movement, helping us to be in shape both physically and mentally. *Objective:* To create a sociological and motivational profile of users of fitness centers in Reșița, Romania - demographic data, motivations, training preferences and social participation. *Materials and methods:* A 30-item cross-sectional questionnaire was administered to 87 clients of fitness centers (October 2024 - June 2025). Descriptive statistics and qualitative analyses were applied. *Results:* Respondents were mostly urban (90%) and male (68%), aged between 14 and 60 years and older (mostly 25-35 years). Over half had university degrees and full-time jobs. Most trained 3-5 times/week (71%) for 1-2 hours/session; For 71%, the gym was the only place where they practiced physical activity. Traditional resistance training (powerlifting/hypertrophy) predominated, with fewer choosing functional training or CrossFit. The main motivation was health and well-being (~30%), followed by relaxation (22%); 9% of respondents cited medical reasons.

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Discussion: Users are young - middle-aged, educated and health-oriented - consistent with the known benefits of exercise (e.g., reducing anxiety, improving self-esteem), but with gaps in diet adherence (~30%) and in proactively seeking professional guidance, despite high informational interest (78%). Personality preferences may influence choices regarding fitness modalities. *Conclusions:* Fitness centers in Reșița attract a socially active and health-conscious clientele; Expanding instructor-led education and inclusive offerings (e.g., beginner support, group activity formats) could broaden participation and maximize health impact, strengthening the evidence that physical exercise combined with social activities improves outcomes.

Keywords: physical activity; fitness centers; training, motivation, physical exercises, social implications

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that physical activity is universally acknowledged to be an important part of healthy functioning and well-being, the full scope of its value is rarely appreciated (Bailey et al., 2013)

The insufficient level of physical activity among the population is a public health problem worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (www.who.int), over 27% of adults and approximately 80% of adolescents do not reach the minimum recommended levels of physical activity to maintain health. Technological development influences contemporary lifestyles, favoring inactivity, which, in turn, affects both labor productivity and the well-being of the population (American Institute of Stress, 2023). Regular physical activity is a viable alternative for maintaining optimal health, as well as for improving the quality of life. Group physical exercises are one of the more effective options for reducing stress and increasing the quality of life, compared to individual training. Fitness is an effective form of movement, helping us to be in shape both physically and mentally.

Physical activity carried out in fitness centers is one of the ways people can choose to spend their free time in the most useful and enjoyable way, being able to choose between powerlifting workouts, aerobic gymnastics classes, Zumba dance, cycling, yoga, pilates and many others.

The interests of each person are characterized by their closeness to certain activities; they can be identified based on qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Qualitative indicators refer to the attention focused on the activity. When we engage in an activity we enjoy, we have greater concentration during the activity compared to an activity we are obliged to do. Another qualitative indicator we can identify is the positive affectivity that accompanies the activity and the maintenance of a tendency to approach or return to the undertaken activity (Michalos, 2023)

Quantitative indicators include the increased frequency of specific activities, engaging in the activities during free time, showing preference for at least 6 months accompanied by a manifestation of intensity. Besides these factors, persistence in the activity is also needed, without which we cannot achieve anything.

In order to correctly identify a person's interests, both qualitative and quantitative factors are important. This way, we can identify interests that have been sufficiently explored as well as those that have not been, for various reasons known only to the individual. Activities intended to identify children's areas of interest should allow them to explore their own interests without taking into account constraints or prejudices.

Discovering interests can also be done in the form of a questionnaire; currently, the best-known one is based on Holland's theory. He considers that people show different interests in working with people or objects and have preferences for working with ideas or facts. The six types of interests identified are: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, entrepreneurial, and conventional interests.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research conducted by Yorks et al. (2017) has shown that individuals who train in groups reduce their stress levels by 26 percent while simultaneously improving their quality of life. The same study demonstrated that individuals who choose to train individually exert more effort without experiencing significant changes in stress levels and only limited improvement in quality of life. "The common benefits of coming together with friends or colleagues and doing something challenging while encouraging each other pay much greater dividends than exercising alone" (Yorks et al., 2017). Dr. Yorks, together with other researchers from the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, recruited 69 medical students, a group known to have very high stress levels alongside low quality of life.

The greatest change occurred among participants who chose to engage in group activities for at least 30 minutes once a week. They selected functional

training, a type of workout that involves multiple exercises performed in a circuit format. By the end of the study, significant improvements were recorded: "Mentally, there was an improvement of 12.6 percent, psychologically 24.8 percent, and emotionally 26 percent; at the same time, stress was reduced by 26.2 percent" (Yorks et al., 2017). Individuals who preferred to engage in activities alone or with a maximum of two partners, regardless of whether they chose running or weight training, did not experience major changes, despite the fact that they spent twice as much time training. The changes that occurred were in terms of mindset regarding quality of life, which improved by 11 percent. "The medical school understood that their programs are demanding and stressful. Having this data regarding the positive aspects of group fitness, the school should consider offering new opportunities related to group fitness" (Yorks et al., 2017).

The effectiveness of physical exercise varies depending on the personality of the individual. A study conducted on more than 800 workers from different countries showed that people with a more extroverted nature have a higher tendency to engage in physical exercise in gyms. Employees who prefer objective logic are also more likely to adopt a strict exercise plan than those who consider feelings and values to be more important. People with more creative thinking, especially those who prefer to work with new ideas, are much better suited for outdoor activities such as cycling or running compared to a structured indoor program.

Moyle and Hackston (2018), stated at the annual conference of the British Psychological Society that they are passionate about investigating how organizations can help their employees develop through exercises. They found that linking an individual's personality with a certain type of exercise can increase both the effectiveness and the enjoyment with which the person performs that activity.

The most important aspect of this presentation is that there is no single type of physical activity that is suitable for everyone.

Discovering interests can also be done in the form of a questionnaire; currently, the most well-known one is based on Holland's theory. He believes that people display different interests in working with people or objects and preferences for working with ideas or facts. The six types of interests encountered are: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional interests (Holland, 1997).

To better identify the needs of the participants, to streamline the activity, as well as to find solutions to increase the number of people engaging in physical activities, we resorted to the sociological survey.

Participants

This research project followed ethical principles, and all interviewees were afforded the right to anonymity and confidentiality. Although the actual age and occupation of the participants are provided throughout the research report, each participant is assigned a pseudonym so that their responses cannot be linked to anyone's personal data other than the researcher.

The subjects selected for this research are residents of the city of Reșița of different ages and varying financial situations. All 87 individuals who participated in this study are beneficiaries of maintenance centers in the city of Reșița who have been engaging in physical activity for a longer or shorter period of time.

Procedure

The research was conducted in the city of Reșița at all maintenance centers present in this city. For a smoother process. We personally visited all the halls to distribute the questionnaires in electronic format or via QR code. In most gyms, I relied on the support of the instructors present to distribute these questionnaires because they are closer to the individuals to whom I applied the questionnaire. Besides the trainers, I also tried to involve the people who had already completed this questionnaire to distribute it further to friends or acquaintances who I know engage in physical activities in the fitness centers of the city of Reșița. The period of implementation was from February 2025, to September 2025, thus allowing me to include in my research both individuals who engage in physical activities for a short period of time and those who attend these fitness centers regularly and for a long time.

Materials

A questionnaire with 30 items was administered, to gather more information regarding the beneficiaries of the care centers in the city of Reșița. The aim of these questions was to find out the opinions of the people who attend the care centers in the city of Reșița.

Data analysis

From the perspective of people who engage in physical activities in the gym, 78 of the participants have an urban residence and only 9 a rural one. 59 of the participants were male, the remaining 28 being female. The age groups found in these care centers are quite diverse, with individuals ranging in age from 14 to over 35 years old. In terms of height, we observed a variation

between 151 cm and 194 cm. The weight corresponding to this height ranges between 46 and 122 kg. From the perspective of completed studies, we observe that the majority of people have university degrees.

From a social perspective, the majority of individuals who completed this questionnaire belong to the category of employees, managing to find a balance between their workplace and the physical activities they engage in. In the halls, people from all social classes were encountered. Most people who attend fitness gyms are from the public sector. For most subjects, going to the gym constitutes the only form of physical exercise in their entire routine. In terms of training frequency, we encounter practitioners ranging from one training session per week to situations where they practice daily. The most common workouts are powerlifting and hypertrophy, being the two classic types of training found in all gyms. Cross-fit and functional training workouts are also present. Of all the people who engage in physical activities at the fitness centers in the city of Reșița, some do so to maintain physical and mental health, others for relaxation, and some for medical purposes.

Most people prefer to work out with a friend who can motivate and help them during the training. Most people prefer workouts with music in the gym. In terms of the time of day when people prefer to engage in physical activity, most prefer to work out in the evening or afternoon. Most people who engage in activities at maintenance centers in the city of Reșița perceive a relaxing atmosphere in the room. Many people in the room consider the presence of an instructor/coach/teacher useful to supervise, guide, or assist them if needed. Among all the people who engage in physical activities, a good portion have had the opportunity to talk with a qualified person about their needs or concerns regarding gym activities.

RESULTS

From the perspective of individuals who engage in physical activities at the gym, 90% have an urban residence and only 10% a rural one. Due to their place of residence, there is less development in this direction among those with a rural residence, while those with an urban residence are more inclined to additional physical activities (figure 1).

A larger proportion of people who engage in this type of activity are male, 68%, with females participating at a rate of 32%, indicating that men are more active in this branch of physical exercises (figure 2).

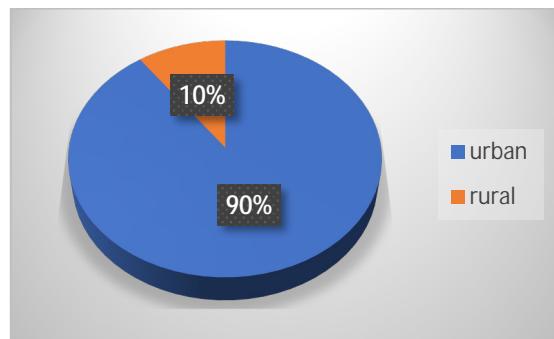


Fig. 1. People's background

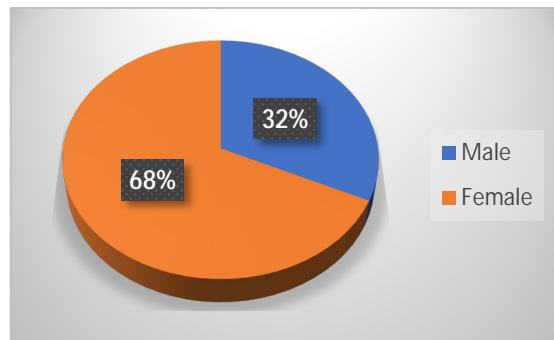


Fig. 2. Sex of the participants

The age groups encountered in these care centers are quite diverse; we can find people aged between 14 and over 35 years, with the majority, 30%, being aged between 25 and 35 years (figure 3).

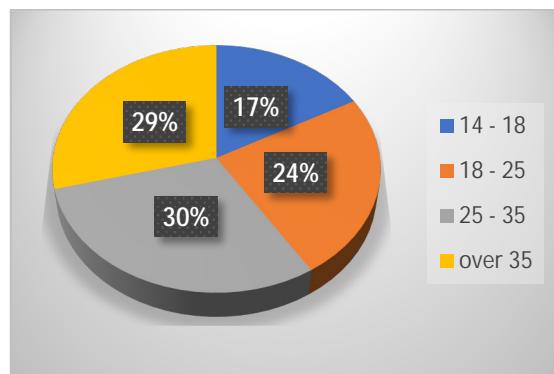


Fig. 3. Age groups

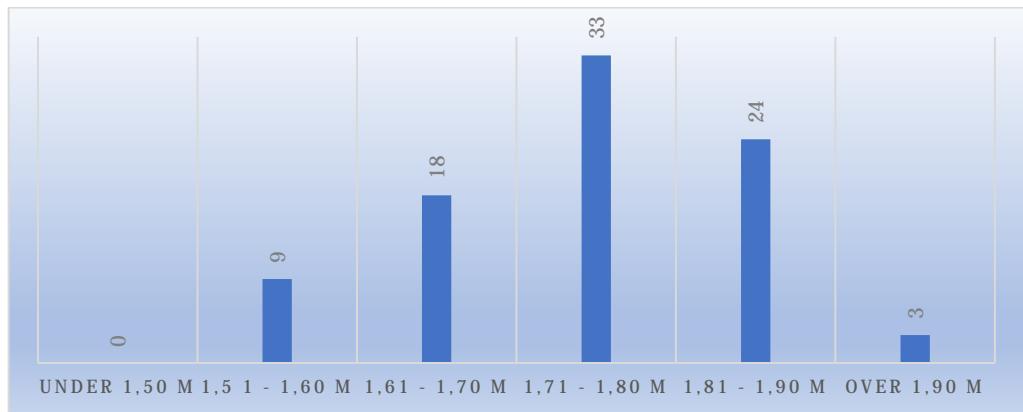


Fig. 4. Height of the participants

In terms of height, we note that 60 people have a height of over 1.71 m, while only 27 out of all subjects have a maximum height of 1.70 m. These data also relate to the total number of male subjects who are most often taller (figure 4).

The weight reported for this height is 15 people over 91 kg, 22 with a weight between 81 and 90 kg, 18 between 71 and 80 kg, and 32 with a weight under 70 kg. An approximately proportional relationship between the participants' weight and height was observed (figure 5).

From the perspective of completed education, we observe that most people are university graduates, specifically 47 out of a total of 87 participants. As shown in this graph, more than 50% are individuals with higher education who understand the importance of physical activity (figure 6).

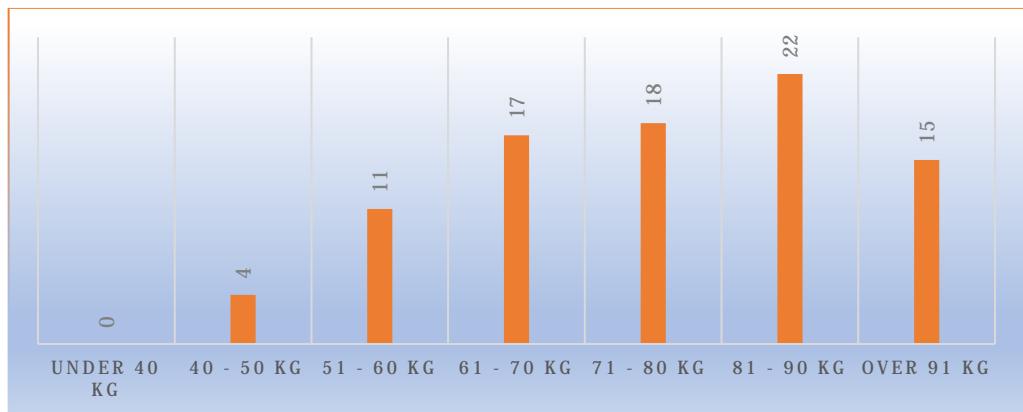


Fig. 5. Weight of the participants

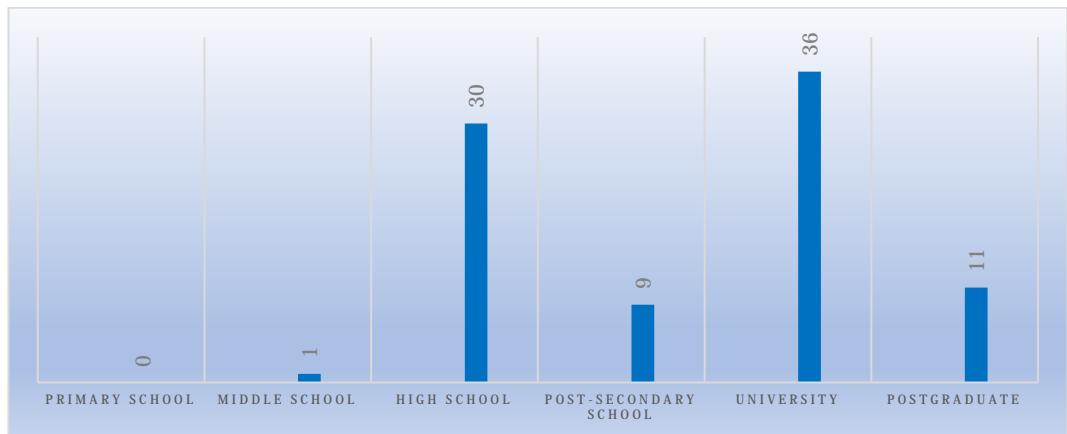


Fig. 6. Completed studies

From a social perspective, most people who completed this questionnaire belong to the category of employees, managing to find a balance between their workplace and the physical activities they practice. The people with the least time for physical activities are those in the student-employee category, which is why only 4 people fall into this category (figure 7).

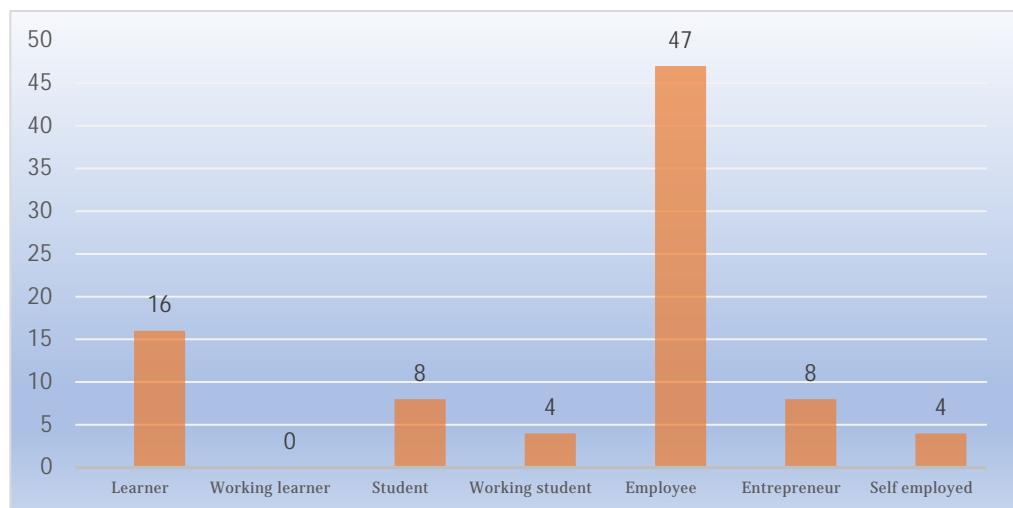


Fig. 7. Social status

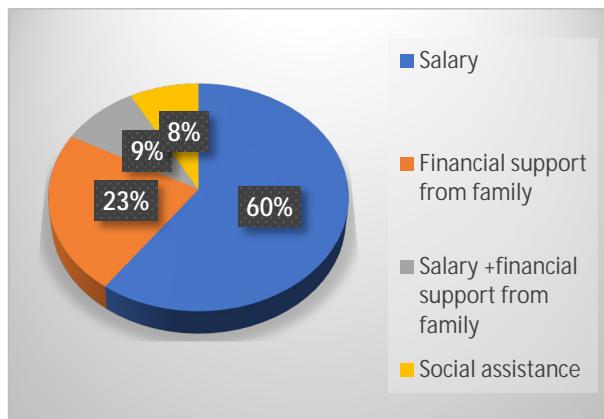


Fig. 8. Main source of income

60% of all individuals who completed this questionnaire have salary as their main source of income, 32% receive financial support from their family, most of them being pupils or students (figure 8).

As shown in this chart, the gym attracts people from all social classes. However, the largest share is represented by individuals with an income of over 5000 lei, specifically 24%. The smallest share is represented by individuals with an income of up to 3000 lei, as exercising in a gym is probably not a priority when it comes to monthly expenses (figure 9).

Although most gym subscribers do not receive any reimbursement for these memberships, 28% of all respondents to this survey enjoy a reimbursement between 100 and 300 lei, 1% receive a reimbursement between 300 and 500 lei, and 2% receive an amount greater than 500 lei (figure 10).

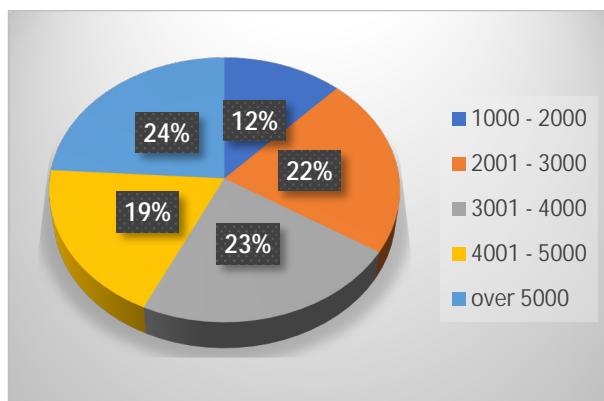


Fig. 9. Average monthly income

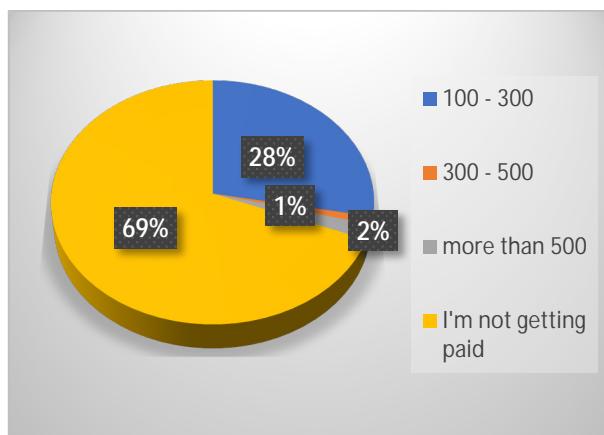


Fig. 10. Reimbursement of subscriptions for gym beneficiaries

In terms of training frequency, the majority of beneficiaries, 71% of them, have a weekly frequency ranging between 3 and 5 workouts. 20% of them are still beginners or do not have enough time and train 1 to 3 times per week, and only 9% train daily (figure 11).

The most common workouts are power-lifting and hypertrophy, being the two classic types of training found in all gyms. Cross-fit and functional training are preferred by only 8 beneficiaries, most often those who do not have much time for training or are athletes who need mobility and speed in movements, not just appearance (figure 12).

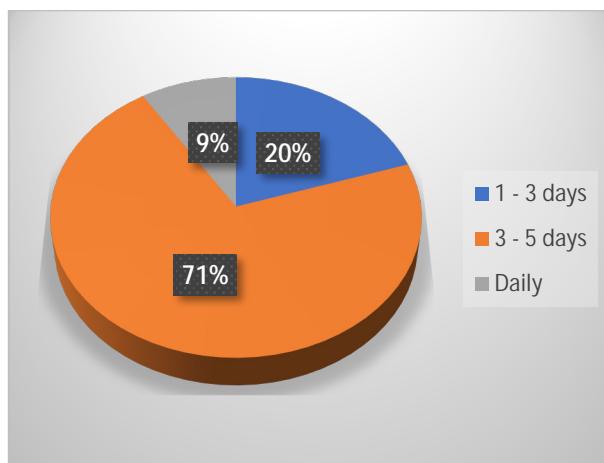


Fig. 11. Training frequency

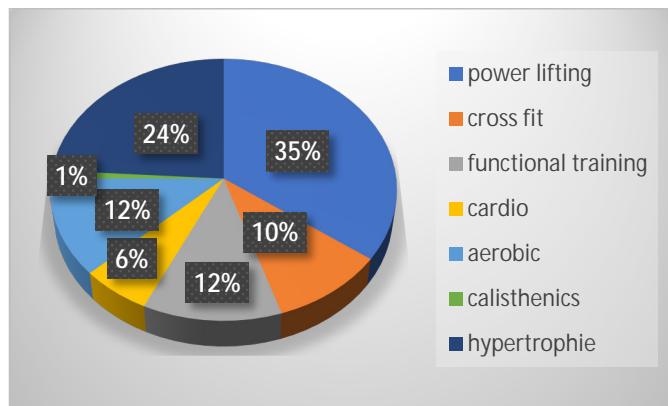


Fig. 12. Preferred type of training

Of all the people who engage in physical activities at fitness centers in the city of Reșița, almost a third of them do it to maintain their physical and mental health, 22% do it for relaxation, and only 9% for medical purposes. Many people with ailments are not aware of the importance of physical activities regardless of the problem (figure 13).

In terms of training intensity, 42% of all subjects rate their training as moderate intensity, which leads to a longer duration of effort; 29% train at high intensity, 11% at very high intensity, which results in a shorter duration of effort due to fatigue, 14% in low intensity and 4% of the total have low intensity (fig. 14.).

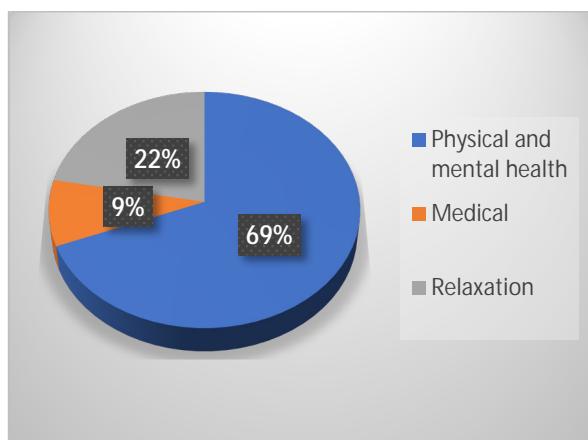


Fig. 13. Purpose of the training

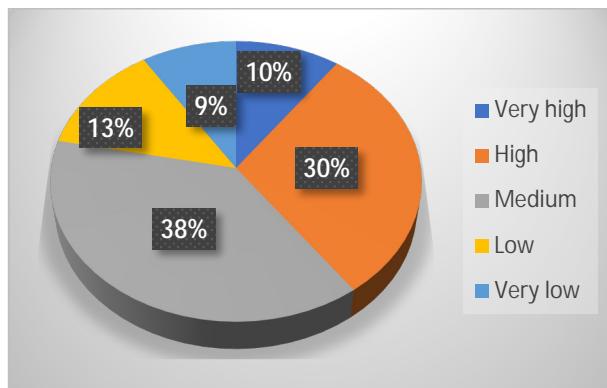


Fig. 14. Intensity of the training

In terms of the time of day when people prefer to engage in physical activity, most prefer evening or afternoon workouts, 76%, while 21% train either in the morning before going to work or in shifts due to a work schedule that does not allow a fixed gym routine; only a few of them prefer lunchtime workouts (figure 15).

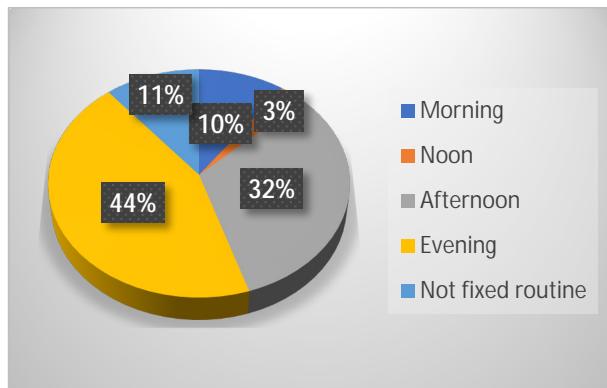


Fig. 15. Times of day when subjects engage in physical activity

DISCUSSION

The fact that people who engage in physical activities at the gym come mostly from urban areas, with only a small proportion from rural areas, may be caused, in addition to the lower development in this regard among those living in rural areas, by economic constraints, inadequate access to facilities, as well

as cultural barriers that disproportionately affect low-income populations, as demonstrated in the study by Dives (2024).

As shown by the analysis of the results, 56.3% of people who engage in indoor physical activities are individuals with higher education, being more likely to have sedentary jobs. For this reason, they better understand the need and usefulness of practicing physical exercises outside of working hours, because people also turn to physical exercise as a way to boost self-esteem. Research shows that performing 10 sessions of aerobic exercise will increase self-esteem in sedentary subjects (Bowman et al., 2014). Body image is generally understood as a mental image of the body as it appears to others. In consumer culture, it is often assumed that people are concerned with their body image because social status and acceptability depend on a person's appearance. This view is based on popular physiognomic assumptions that the body, especially the face, reflects the self (Featherstone, 2010).

When we talk about training preferences, the most common forms of performing exercises in the gym are with a friend, which implies that a person will always need to be part of a community, regardless of its size. Being an activity carried out with a partner, the risk of injuries is significantly reduced because there is always someone nearby who can help if needed. The way exercises are performed is often modeled after what is seen in others at the gym, and most of the time it is not done correctly, or the principles of the action are not fully understood. Gerson, Cryder and Milkman (2022) have shown that those who go to the gym in tandem go 35% more often than those who do it individually.

Most practitioners allocate between 90 and 120 minutes to engaging in physical activities during a training session and they prefer to practice in the afternoon. Most of them engage in moderate-intensity activities. Janssen and LeBlanc (2010), claim that aerobic - based activities had the greatest health benefit, other than for bone health, in which case high-impact weight bearing activities were required.

Many people practice physical activities for their physical and mental health. Preferences regarding the types of physical activities practiced are quite limited compared to the multitude of available options. Strong evidence demonstrates that moderate-to-vigorous physical activity has a transient benefit for cognition, including attention, memory, intelligence, processing speed, and executive control during the recovery period following a bout of exercise. The findings indicate that the effects are larger in preadolescent children and older adults relative to other periods of the lifespan (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

Fitness centers in Reșița attract a socially active and health-conscious clientele; Expanding instructor-led education and inclusive offerings (e.g., beginner support, group activity formats) could broaden participation and maximize health impact, strengthening the evidence that physical exercise combined with social activities improves outcomes.

The results show an encouraging interest in practicing physical activities, despite the low involvement of employers in providing bonuses that would include, among other things, reimbursement for a gym membership.

Most practitioners allocate enough weekly sessions, as well as the time required for a session so that their individual objectives can be achieved.

Many people inform themselves solely using social media sources, without verifying what they later put into practice, which is not always beneficial or realistic.

Most practitioners are individuals with higher education, who have minimal knowledge regarding the ways of practicing physical activities, focusing on their beneficial effects, as well as the possibility of allocating a portion of their own income to such activities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1, author 2, and author 3 contributed to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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