

Considerations Regarding the Parents' opinions About the Physical Education Lesson in the Secondary Schools of Reșița

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ABSTRACT. Parents' attitudes towards physical education lessons can have a significant impact on children and their participation in physical education lessons. If parents show disinterest or have a negative attitude towards the lesson and the physical education teacher, children may receive a signal that this activity is not important, causing them to be reluctant to engage in physical education lessons, to avoid these activities, to engage in sedentary activities, which can contribute to increasing the risk of obesity and other conditions. The purpose of our research is to find out the opinions of the parents of secondary school students regarding the lesson of physical education and sports. We used the questionnaire-based survey method and the graphic method. Questionnaires were applied to the parents of students from educational institutions in the municipality of Reșița. The answers showed that parents are aware of the importance of physical education and sports classes alongside other school subjects, sports making children happier, more motivated in terms of choosing a sport to practice in their free time.

Keywords: *physical education, sport, lesson, attitude, motivation.*

INTRODUCTION

Social contemporary phenomenon, with its roots in the Ancient Greece, sport represents a source of well-being and social connections, an educational and self-improvement instrument, the physical activity having multiple benefits on the human body, regardless of age.

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If we talk about children, it must be said that parents are responsible for their formation, because they are their life models (Raudsepp, 2006) on all levels. Parents have a significant influence concerning the physical activity of their children (Hein, 2015), they are considered important responsible people for its promotion (Erkelenz et al., 2014) and for the behaviour which aims the physical activity of their children (Jago et al., 2009; Kettner et al., 2012). The research indicates the fact that parents who were physically active in the past and who are still active have assessed more the importance of physical activity than the inactive parents and these assessments did not take into account the parents' education or their studies Cercet (Hein, 2015).

Besides this, the physical education teachers have a significant influence in promoting the physical activities by physical education lessons done according to the present curricular documents in force. By their roles: didactic, motivational, assessment, cognitive diagnosis, regulator of social relations in the classroom as a group and the role of partner in the affective interaction (Jeremić et al., 2018), the physical education teacher also contributes to the qualitative involvement of students in the physical education classes (Cox & Williams, 2008).

The subject *Physical education and sport* is stipulated in the education curriculum with a budget of two hours per week, during every school year in the Romanian secondary school education. Generally, the physical education lessons in Romania follow similar principles and objectives to the educational systems from other countries. These include the development of motor skills, promoting an active and healthy lifestyle, learning and application of specific rules and techniques specific for sports and the promotion of cooperation and team spirit (Almond et al., 2019), by warm up and stretching exercises, athletics, gymnastics, ball games, individual and team sports, dancing or other recreative activities. The curriculum of physical education can vary according to the country and education level. Sometimes, there is special attention given to certain sports or activities and sometimes they follow the promotion of a large range of physical activities (Hardman & Marshall, 2017).

The structure and content of the lessons can vary according to the education level, school program and the preferences of the physical education teachers (McKenzie & Kahan, 2017). In the education system, the physical education plays an important role in the students' physical, mental and social development being considered an important part of the school program and it is a compulsory subject in most of the countries (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2015). The purposes of physical education in the educational system are manifold. Among them we can count the development of the motor skills and aptitudes, the improvement of the general physical condition, the promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle, as well as the development of the cognitive, emotional and social capacities (World Health

Organization, 2018), the development of some physical capacities, of physical aptitudes and motor skills by physical and sport activities (Standage et al., 2012). The physical education class offers the students the opportunity to be engaged in varied physical activities by means of which the students learn to work in a team, to develop the communication skills and to improve the self-esteem (McKenzie & Kahan, 2017).

The physical education plays an important part in the human development and is beneficial for the physical and mental health, for a better social, emotional, spiritual and academic life. With physical activity, children can improve their physical capacity, body posture and eventually they can increase their self-esteem. If they are helped, the students can develop good habits from an early age. Running, jogging, weight training, food and sleep are only a few skills that can help them in the future (Pop, 2021).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Procedure

This research used a descriptive, cross-sectional and observational design. Having in view the achievement of this research objectives, we have used quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative data facilitated the explanations which were stated based on the initial quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As quantitative methods we have used the inquiry based questionnaire, in order to find the parents' perception of the secondary school students in Reșița, and the graphical method in order to represent the answers received. In order to find the answers to the research question: „What is the parents' perception of the students in the secondary school referring to the physical education and sport lesson?” we have done, on the Google forms platform, a questionnaire with eight questions. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents' consent to have their answers processed is stated, mentioning that the research is anonymous, all the information are confidential and the communication of the results obtained is done by statistical processing and examples which do not allow the identification of the people whom we solicited the information from. The questionnaire was built around three themes: a. the importance of the physical education discipline in relation to other subjects in the curriculum (one item: "The importance of PE in relation to other subjects"); b. the importance of the physical education discipline in terms of physical, mental health and academic activity (three items: "The importance of PE for

physical health", "The importance of PE for mental health", "The importance of PE for improving academic performance"); c. the role of the teacher in adapting the contents of the physical education lesson, diversifying activities, student safety and in terms of positive personal example (four items: "The importance of adapting content in the PE lesson", "The importance of diversity of activities in the PE lesson", "The importance of the positive example of the PE teacher", "The importance of student safety in the PE lesson").

Subjects/Participants

The participants in this questionnaire were parents of the students in the secondary school from 10 education institutions in Reșița (three colleges, two high-schools and five secondary schools), which schools more than 2000 students in the 89 classes in the secondary school cycle. We sent to them a questionnaire with eight items, created with the help of the Likert scale with five answer options (1 – very unimportant, 5 – very important). The inquiry was achieved during the period April-May 2023.

Contacting parents was carried out with the support of physical education teachers from the mentioned schools and the homeroom teachers of the students in the middle school cycle, who distributed the link on the class group (created for efficient communication between school and family), after we obtained, in advance, the verbal agreement of the management of the educational institution in order to distribute the link with this questionnaire.

Table 1. The participants incidence

No. crt.	Educational unit	No. total classes	No. total students
1.	"Traian Lalescu" National College Reșița	11	271
2.	"Diaconovici-Tietz" National College Reșița	11	194
3.	"Mircea Eliade" National College Reșița	12	247
4.	"Sabin Păuța" Art High School Reșița	7	151
5.	Baptist Theological High School Reșița	4	78
6.	Gymnasium School No. 2	8	198
7.	"Mihai Peia" Gymnasium School Reșița	6	121
8.	Gymnasium School No. 7	11	306
9.	Gymnasium School No. 8	9	218
10.	Gymnasium School No. 9	10	242
TOTAL		89	2026

RESULTS

412 filled in questionnaires were handed in, which constitutes a representative sample for the town of Reşiţa.

Table 2. The number of responses to the questionnaire questions

Themes	Item Appreciation	Very unimportant	Little important	To some extent	Important	Very important
1. The importance of PE in relation to other subjects	The importance of PE in relation to other subjects	2	21	100	203	86
			5 %	24.2 %	49.2 %	20.8 %
2. The importance of PE for physical and mental health, for improving academic performance	The importance of PE for physical health	0	2	53	217	140
				12.8 %	52.6 %	33.9
	The importance of PE for mental health	8	16	39	272	77
		0.2 %	3.8 %	9.4 %	66 %	18.6 %
	The importance of PE for improving academic performance	8	21	84	213	86
		0.2 %	5 %	20.3 %	51.7 %	20.8 %
3. The role of the PE teacher	The importance of adapting content in the PE lesson	7	13	33	198	161
		1.6 %	3.1 %	8 %	48 %	39 %
	The importance of diversity of activities in the PE lesson	0	47	129	217	19
			11.4 %	31.3 %	52.6 %	4.6 %
	The importance of the positive example of the PE teacher	0	7	18	179	208
			1.6 %	4.3 %	43.4 %	50.4 %
	The importance of student safety in the PE lesson	0	0	26	218	168
				6.3 %	52.9 %	40.7 %

The answers show that the parents are aware of the importance of the physical education lesson achieved in schools and they have expectations connected to the aspects they were questioned about by means of the questionnaire.

Thus, over 69% of the respondent parents agree that the subject physical education is a very important one for the students, not being with anything less than all the subjects contained in the school curriculum.

The answers show that parents are aware of the importance of the physical education lesson held in school and have expectations regarding the

aspects that were brought to their attention through the questions of the administered questionnaire. Thus, over 70% of the parent respondents believe that the physical education (PE) subject is extremely important for students, being in no way inferior to other subjects included in the curriculum. At the same time, 87% of the parents consider that the physical education lesson is important and very important for the physical health of children, 85% of the respondents consider it important for the mental, social and emotional health of children, the other percentages representing responses from parents convinced that only to a certain extent can one speak of such importance of the physical education lesson.

Parents overwhelmingly agree, 72.5%, that physical education is of great importance for improving students' academic performance, while 20% believe that this is true to some extent. However, they are interested in the diversity of activities during physical education lessons, with 57% considering it important and very important for students. The positive examples of the physical education teachers are appreciated as being important and very important by 94% of the parents. Over 90% of parent respondents highlighted the importance of the safety of their children and students in general during physical education lessons.

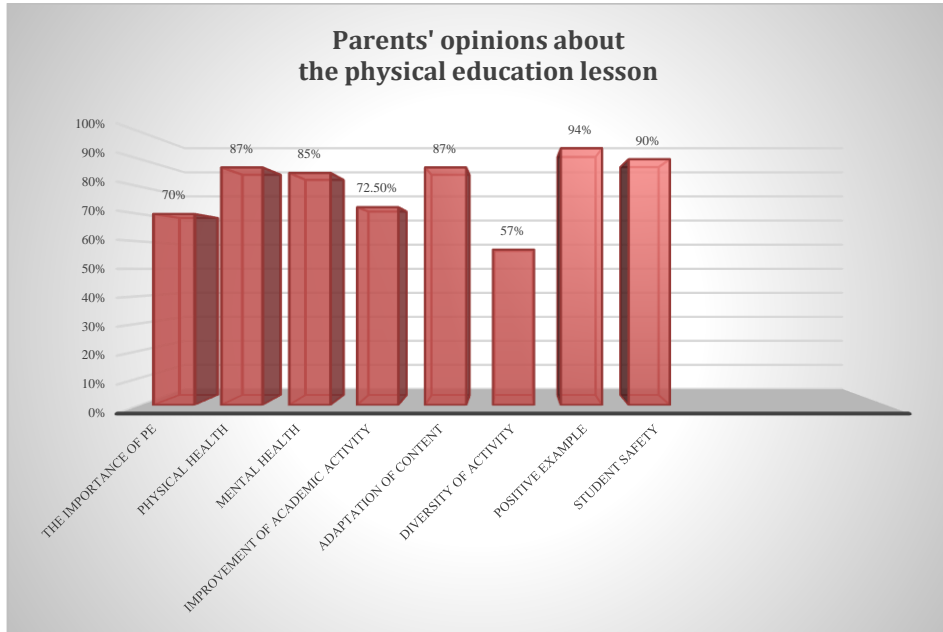


Fig. 1. Parents' opinions about the physical education lesson

DISCUSSIONS

It is a reality that today's children are both physically inactive (Venetsanou et al., 2020; Voukia et al., 2018), and heavily exposed to screens (Sigmundová et al., 2018). Sedentary behavior caused by watching television, using computers/smartphones and video games (Ussher et al., 2007) is associated with various negative health consequences (Prentice-Dunn & Prentice-Dunn, 2012). Therefore, schools have the mission to ensure sufficient physical literacy (Castelli et al., 2014) and to help students maintain their health-related physical fitness. In this sense, there are parents in whose eyes schoolwork only targets a few subjects, which justify a stronger educational influence (Chambon, 1990). In a 2010 study by Candolfi, most (58%) of the parent respondents ranked physical education in sixth and seventh place out of nine subjects (mother tongue, mathematics, two foreign languages, music, visual arts, history and computer science). However, the role of physical education compared to other subjects in the curriculum should not be minimized. Even if parents of middle school students theoretically agree with this, and the respondents participating in our study demonstrate that they support this statement, there are parents who agree with giving up physical education classes in favor of other subjects considered basic, as demonstrated by the results of other studies (Earley & Fleet, 2021; Stevens et al., 2008; Coe et al., 2006). As for us, we support increasing the number of hours allocated to this subject precisely in order to build a healthy generation from all points of view. This is especially true in the Hungarian education system, for example, where physical education classes are mandatory for all students, both in primary and secondary school, five days a week (World Health Organization, 2021). At the same time, in France, the "30 minutes of daily physical activity" program was launched in September 2022 in the 36,250 primary schools in the country, the French government being aware that daily physical activity contributes to well-being and health, fundamental conditions for learning well. This program is complementary to the three hours of physical education and sports, a mandatory subject. Included in the national sports-health strategy, this measure reaffirms the role of the school in promoting health through physical activity (MENESR, 2024). 94% of teachers in France believe that the 30 minutes of daily physical activity improve the well-being of students.

From a physical point of view, physical education lessons contribute to improving physical fitness, developing muscles, coordination and combating sedentary lifestyle (Nelson & Gordon-Larsen, 2006), which is a form of maladaptive behavior. It generates cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases, which account for 74% of global deaths (World Health Organization, 2022). Also, within physical education lessons, students receive or should receive information about the importance of a balanced diet, about

body hygiene and the benefits of regular physical activities, for the development of healthy habits in the long term. In the European Union, various programs have been implemented to promote a healthier lifestyle from an early age: active breaks in playgrounds equipped with sports equipment and infrastructure; active breaks during lessons to break up prolonged sitting hours and after-school physical activities to engage children in sports and programs to encourage students to walk or cycle or use other forms of active transport instead of relying on motorised vehicles (World Health Organization. Copenhagen, 2021).

On the other hand, by physical exercises, the students' mental activity is stimulated and the mental fatigue is removed: by engaging the physiological functions which are connected to movement, then, the mental functions are indirectly improved (Higashiura et al., 2006), cognition and academic performance (Donnelly et al., 2016). The specialists agree that the interventions of physical activity for children should optimize the physical aptitude, to promote behaviours connected to health which should compensate obesity and facilitate the mental development (Tomprowski et al., 2011). It would be equally desirable, that during the physical education lessons the psycho-emotional stress should be diminished, that the state of mind should be improved and the self-esteem could be increased. Numerous studies have presented the connections between the physical activity and the general well-being (Ströhle, 2009). The emotional well-being is promoted in schools (Appleton & Hammond-Rowley, 2000; Bywater & Sharples, 2021), the physical exercises having positive effects in this direction.

There are proofs of the positive correlations between different measures of psycho-motor performance, cognitive abilities and academic performances (Planinsec & Pisot, 2006). Researchers (Stevens et al., 2008; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008) have proved that the improved cognitive performance is connected to physical activity, among the most important activities with small children, they mention free play and guided play or physical education. That is why, they consider that the physical activity could be stored with more hours, taking time from other subjects, without any risk regarding the students' academic results. Likewise, adding time to the "academic" subjects or "curricular" and the reduction of the allotted time for the subject physical education do not improve the results in these subjects, but it could be harmful for the health. In the same train of ideas, the connection with school and school satisfaction are factors which contribute to the reduction of school abandon (Libbey, 2004). The present orientations regarding physical activity for children and adolescents recommend generally at least 60 minutes of daily moderate to intense physical activities, all the more so as 81% of the adolescents (aged between 11 and 17) are physically inactive (Guthold et al., 2019).

The activities diversity in the physical education lesson helps the students to be more involved, to discover what activities they like more, contributing to the development of physical and psychic skills, values, among which friendship, self-control, helping others, fairness and responsibility (Temel & Mamak, 2023; Bessa et al., 2021), an important role also having the positive feedback from the teacher. If the experience is not positive and successful, the students can become unmotivated, with a passive and reproductive behaviours, without being able to make decisions or to solve problems.

The strategies used by the teacher during the physical education classes are of a real importance. The studies achieved on this subject have revealed the importance of the didactic activity adaptation to the level and possibilities of each student. Van Munster et al. (2019) treat the differentiated teaching by three main approaches: (a) normalised instruction – traditional curriculum without differences in the program; (b) differentiated instruction – adapted elements specifically for each disabled student; and (c) universally projected instruction, based on the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and accessibility for all students. This is the reason why, we should mention the efficiency of the preparation methodology introduction for the future teachers of physical education and sport with activities aiming inclusive education (Demchenko et al., 2021).

The students' safety during the physical education classes, the avoidance of injuries represents a very important aspect that the physical education teachers have in mind. These are responsible for the good functioning of sport installations and equipment in the gym rooms, the running tracks etc. The teacher is obliged to check the safety of each element of the equipment each time when this is used during classes. We should constantly insist on the basic safety rules during every class, in order to make the students conscious about their observance during the whole learning process. (Capel, 2002). Experts consider that the number of accidents during the physical education lesson is increasing in the last years (Fitzgerald & Deutsch, 2016), among the most common dangers during the physical education classes being: broken arms, legs, luxation, contusions, tendonitis, muscle ruptures and muscle strains and scars. Unfortunately, despite the concept of olympism, sport is often a carrier of unjustified violence and even extremely severe aggression. Thus, researchers plead that through sport the interpersonal aggressiveness should be reduced by competent use of specific methods and means for largely understood sport activity (Klimczak et al., 2014), resilience and assertiveness representing important psychological variables in preventing injuries (Patenteu et al., 2024). However, the existence of rules and becoming aware of their existence does not represent though, a guarantee in what concerns the students' safety (Podstawski et al., 2015).

An increased attention should be awarded to the professional responsibility in physical education, to the attitude that the physical education teachers

manifest towards the lesson itself. Their behaviour and the way in which they interact with the students can positively or negatively influence the children's perception of physical education. They have the potential to offer multiple desirable educational and health results, on condition that the profession of physical education should not be only a profession but manifesting responsibility in applying the most efficient didactic strategies and in their involvement in a continuous professional improvement (Armour, 2009).

The teachers should be greatly aware of their potential as models to be followed and the obligation to offer the students development feedback (Keay, 2005), empathic behaviours in their interaction with heterogeneous groups of students (Schnitzius et al., 2021, Chia et al., 2022). We should keep in mind the positive influence of the teacher on the students' performance (Hattie, 2009), this being a typical measure of the teachers' efficiency (Kim et al., 2019). The results of the studies indicated that the students involved in the lessons of physical education taught by active teachers rather than in those taught by less active teachers (Cheung, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

As the aim of education is the formation of a complete and harmonious personality, this can't be developed by a single form of education but it supposes a tight connection of physical education with other forms of education, such as intellectual, moral, aesthetic and social education (Rodić, 2014).

This research proposed to find out the parents' perception of the secondary school students regarding the lesson of physical education and sport. The answers to the questions in the given questionnaire have highlighted the fact that the parents are aware of the role played by physical education in the improvement of the students' health and well-being. They have high and very high expectations concerning the students' physical, emotional, mental, academic and social health in the wake of their participation in the physical education lesson. The parents want the physical education teacher to be a model for their children, to adapt the lesson contents to the typology of the students' personality, to be creative. For an increased quality of the physical education classes the children's motivation is necessary, as well as the use of a diversity of didactic strategies.

The future research could investigate to what extent the parents' expectations of the physical education lesson are supported by their personal example of being involved in physical activities or they represent only a desideratum for their children's well-being. The previous studies have highlighted the importance of the personal example given by parents in the students' motivation to do physical activities (Guzauskas & Sukys, 2021).

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