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Study regarding the motivation for practicing sports activities at students from University “Lucian Blaga” Sibiu

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Abstract. Sports activities are more and more popular among young generation being practiced for a lot of reasons starting from maintaining health level, socialization and communication, building friendships, spending free time, relaxation, self-improvement and even for getting good grades. Our study focused on analysing students’ motivation for practicing sports activities, what determines them to attend to sports lessons or to practice them in free time. The research sample was formed from 300 students from different faculties from the University “Lucian Blaga” Sibiu from first and second university year, that practice sports activities as an optional discipline in their academic curricula.

The research methods used in our investigation were the study of the bibliographic references, the experiment method and the questionnaire for discovering students’ motivation and preferences.

The results of our investigation showed that the main reasons that students practice sports activities are: at male students are more likely to play ball games for keeping health levels, improving self-image and develop their muscle system compared with female students that are more likely to practice swimming, running or cycling for combating obesity, develop their social lifestyle, making friendships and build strong relationship with their colleagues.

1. Introduction

It is essential to know the main motivations involved in physical activity and sport practice and the adherence to a particular sporting profile [1] [2]. In this basis, Keegan et al. [3] established that motivation is an indispensable factor for sports practice that depends on individual aspects such as beliefs, cognitions and values. Besides this, social influences, family support, sporting habits of the immediate environment and cooperative and competitive interactions with peers can act as enhancers or distracters of physical activity and sport practice [3] [4].

One of the main motivations for sport, analyzed and discovered by specialists, is to create a healthy lifestyle through practicing physical exercises. According to experts, a healthy lifestyle is an active process that takes place during ontogenesis especially during maturity, the genetic inheritance being important and environment norms and values in which individuals live [5].

Bearing in mind that through sports a child develops communicational skills and improves interaction with other people, becomes better prepared to undertake responsibility and obligations,

develops working habits, the sense of fair play and sportsmanship, learns about organizational skills and learns how to accept both victory and defeat, forms personal responsibility for taking risks and achieves many other useful purposes, it is needless to discuss the importance of doing sports and choosing a sports discipline that would suit the child best [6]. In addition, sport practicing has a positive influence on the dexterity of the non-dominant member, all the more so as the training is conducted in this respect and, on the other hand, whether the sport involves the use of both members equally [7].

The study of the problem of motivation involves making reference to intensive and selective aspects of behaviour. The former concerns the strength, volume and duration of the commitment to sport, which allows us to establish quantitative differences between individual motivations; the latter aspect refers to the goals, needs, desires and aspirations of those that practice sport [8]. The development of contemporary society generates unprecedented quantitative and qualitative growth in all areas, including that of sports performance [9].

There is a concern to promote physical activity and to develop habits of sport practice in the population, as it is known that regular physical exercise, if not excessive, results in physical and mental benefits [10].

Sicilia et al. [11] highlight that physical activity and sport practice is associated with intrinsic and more self-determined motivation when physical activity is done by enjoyment and hedonism. In contrast, socialization, health improvement, to achieve attractiveness or desire of competition are extrinsic motivations and less self-determined reasons for doing physical activity and sport practice [12] [13].

Moreno-Collados and Cruz-Bermudez [14] affirm that it is necessary to continue studying the motivational aspects of a specific population to promote sport participation, in order to associate the promotion with motives that lead to regular practice. Another variable that should be considered in these programs is exercise dependence, since Allegre et al. [15] concluded that after studying the prevalence and intensity of this variable, exercise dependence should be a behavior to take into account for the promotion of sport participation.

From the standpoint of a more operational and integrative model, [16] defines motivation as a psychological variable that moves the individual to the realization, guidance, maintenance and / or abandon of physical and sporting activities, and is usually determined by cognitive association that is the subject of different situations (if it is positive, greater motivation, whether it is negative, lower motivation if it is neutral, will depend on the cognitive structure that performs the influence of environment and convictions) as a function of a number of factors (individual, social, environmental and cultural). Specialists also found a growing interest of youth for sports activities, and also presented the consequences of lack of physical activity with negative effects on human life (obesity, excess in body mass index, deformation of the spine, heart problems etc.) also practicing sports activities can improve socialization, communication and friendships [17].

Recent researches have focused on the motivations and factors that configure a healthy lifestyle doing physical activity and sport practice [18]. Castro-Sánchez et al. [19] discuss the importance of knowing the reasons which exert most influence on physical activity in adolescent, since it is a vital stage for shaping healthy habits into adulthood. In the same line, Marcos, Orquín, Beland, & Moreno-Murcia [20] studied self-motivation in elderly people who do physical activity and sport practice. These authors establish that enjoyment, social practice and improvement of quality of life are the main reason for doing physical activity. Finally, Zurita et al. [21] highlight the importance of turning physical exercise programs towards a more self-determined motivation in order to promote physical activity and sport practice and reduce abandonment in older adults.

2. Aim of the research

Our research started from the assumption that students practice sports activities motivated by some reasons so our aim of the experiment was to discover what motivates students to participate in physical education classes or at sports activities both in their free time and at mandatory university physical education courses.

3. Methods of the research

3.1. The place and period of the research

Our investigation took place in the university school year 2017-2018 at the University “Lucian Blaga” from Sibiu at the optional Physical Education classes, with students from other profile faculties then sport like: the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Journalism, the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Economics.

3.2. Sample of the research

The research sample was formed by 370 students from the five faculties of our university mentioned above, and they were asked to answer to the motivational questionnaire regarding their desire to practice sports activities.

Regarding the structure of our sample we can see that 183 students, representing 49% from the total amount of students, were females, and 187 students, representing 51% from the total of 370 students, were male respondents. As the representation of students regarding their appurtenance to faculties we can see that: 83 students, representing 22% from the total, were students from the Faculty of Engineering; 70 students, representing 19% from the total, were students from the Faculty of Law; 78 students, representing 21% from the total, were students from the Faculty of Journalism; 65 students, representing 18% from the total, were students from the Faculty of Science and 74 students, representing 20% from the total, were students from the Faculty of Economics.

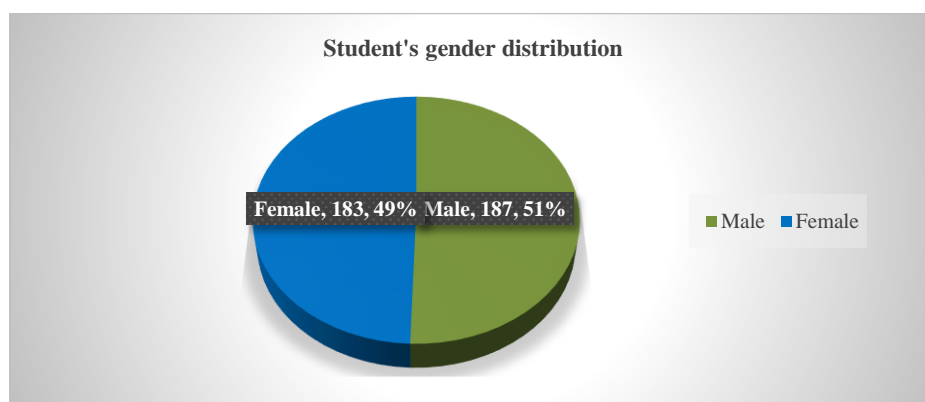


Figure 1: Student's gender distribution

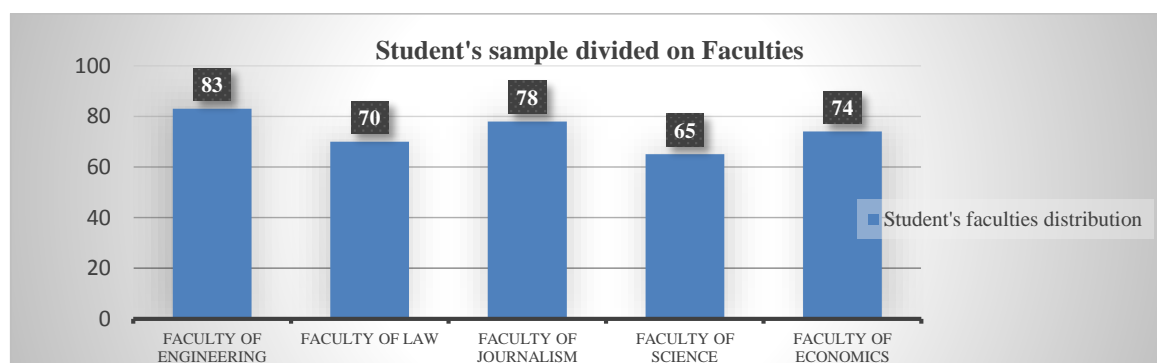


Figure 2: Student's sample divided on Faculties

4. Methods of research

The methods of research used in our investigation was the study of the specific literature, observation method and the main method of research was the questionnaire of motivational factors for practicing sports activities. For the research questionnaire of motivational factors we used the following references Dragnea et al. [22], Cârstea, G. [23] and Ionescu, C. [24]. The questionnaire for students had 8 items that followed our research theme and had as aim to discover the motivational factors that determine students to practice sports activities. The questionnaire was built on a five scale fixed answer giving the opportunity of choosing the level of accordance with the affirmations or to choose between variants of answers.

5. Results of the research

The first step in our investigation was to administrate a set of questions and to discover the opinions of students regarding their motivational factors for practicing sports activities.

Item 1. The frequency of sports practice of students from our research sample:

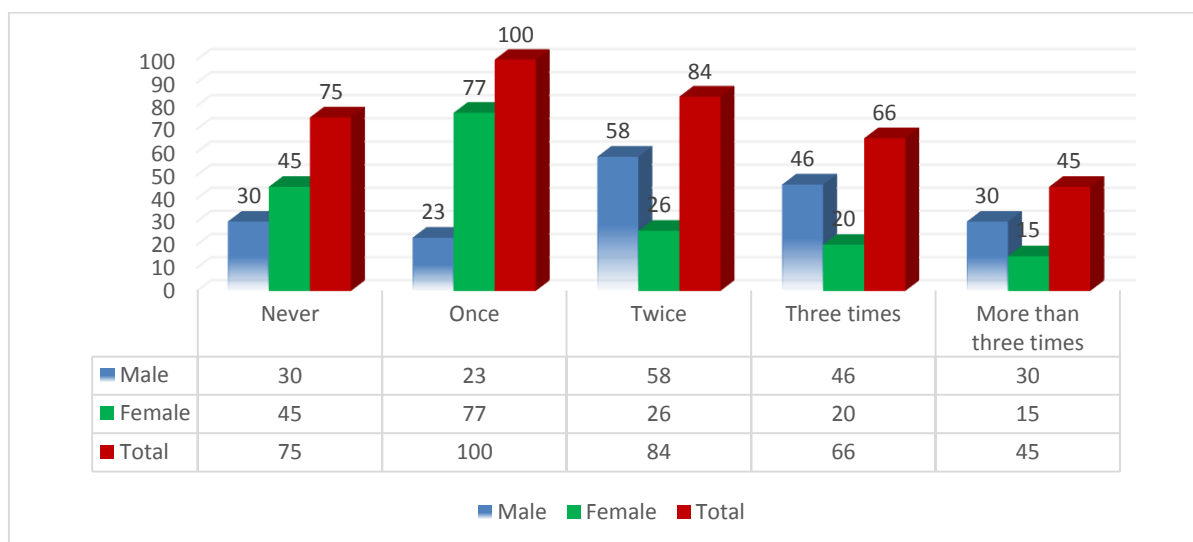


Figure 3: The frequency of sports practice by our sample of students

At the first item regarding the frequency of sports practice as we can see in Figure 3 represented with blue colour the male students, with green the female students and with red the total amount of students that practice once, twice, three times, more than three times or never sports activities. We introduced this item so we can analyse how many times do our students practice sports activities and observe which of the male or female students practice for more times this kind of activities.

Item 2. The specificity of the sports practice by the students from our research sample

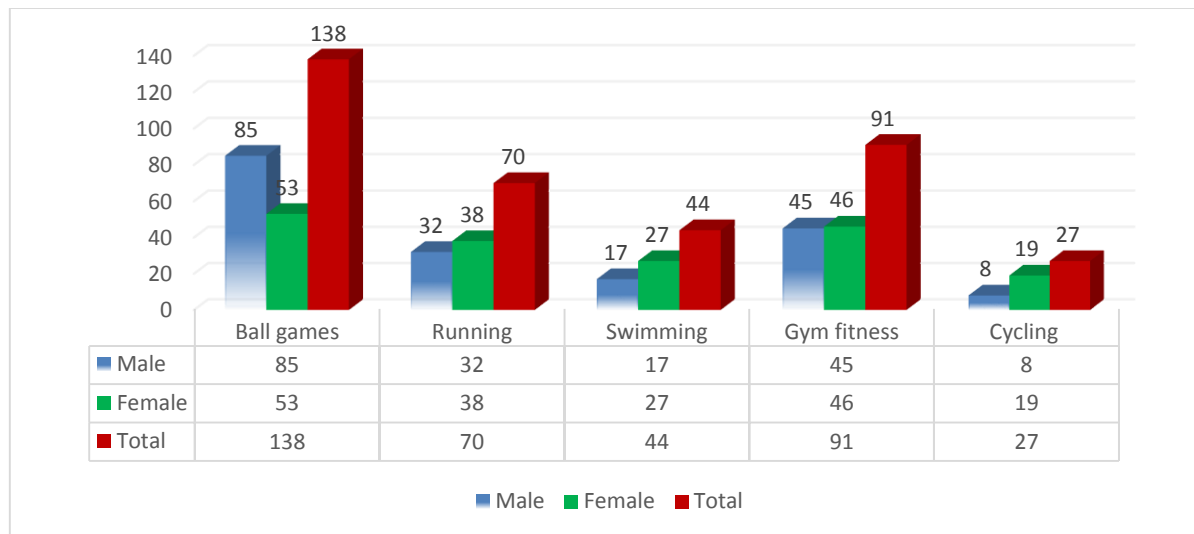


Figure 4: Sports specificity practice by our students' sample

At the second item we wanted to analyse which kind of sports activities do our students practice or like so we ask them to choose between ball games, running, swimming, gym fitness and cycling. The results can be seen in Figure 4. With the blue colour we can see the male respondents, with green the female respondents and with the red colour the total amount of students that choose that specific category.

Item 3. How important are sports activities in maintaining the health

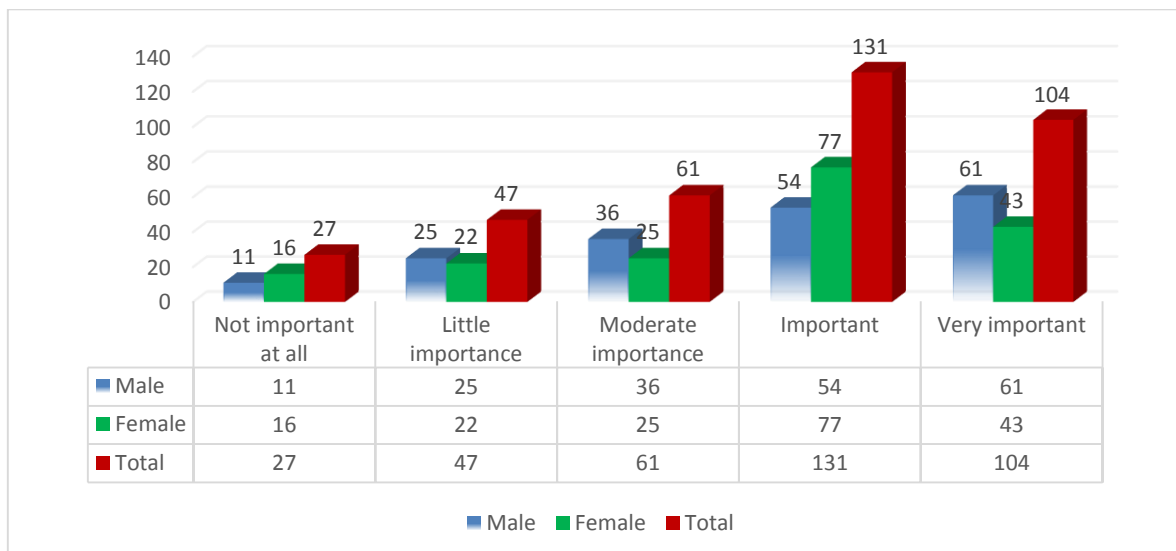


Figure 5: The importance of sports activities in maintaining health parameters for our student sample

Regarding the 3rd item which analyse the importance that our students give to sports activities in maintaining health levels we can see in Figure 5 that we introduced a five level scale with answers like not important at all, little importance, moderate importance, important and very important. We had three categories: male answers with blue colour, female answers with green and the total amount of students for each scale level with red colour.

Item 4. The motivational health factors for sports practice

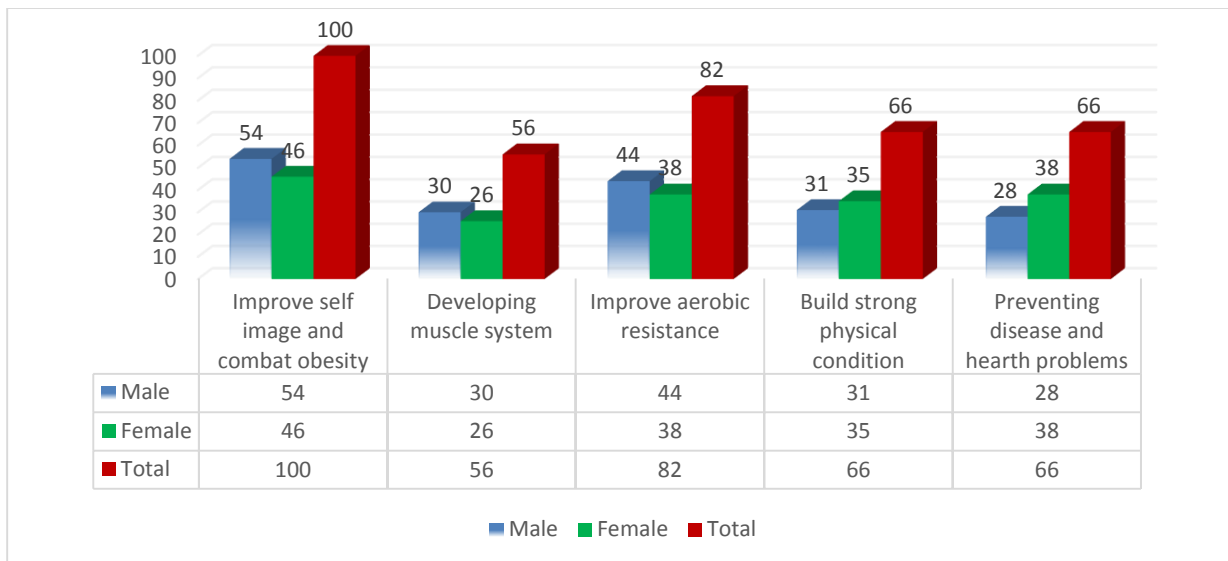


Figure 6: The motivational health factors for sports practice

In the Figure 6 we can observe the answers at the item 4 regarding the motivation of students to practice sport for health reasons. We establish five main health motivation factors: improve self-image and combat obesity, developing muscle system, improve aerobic resistance, build strong physical condition and preventing disease and health problems. As in the case of the previous items we had the answers of male respondents with blue, the answers of females with green and the total amount of answers with red colour.

Item 5. How important are sports activities in social lifestyle

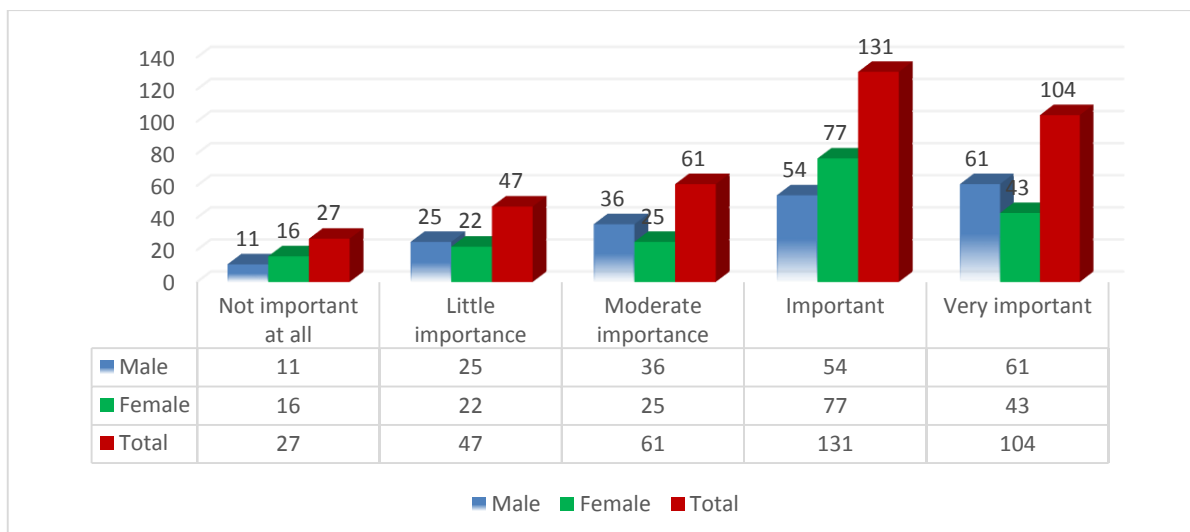


Figure 7: The importance of sports activities in social lifestyle

As for the item 5 we can observe in Figure 7. that we choose to ask the students how important are sports activities for their social lifestyle, so we choose a five level answer scale with the following possible answers: not important at all, little importance, moderate importance, important and very important.

Item 6. The motivational social factors influenced by sports activities

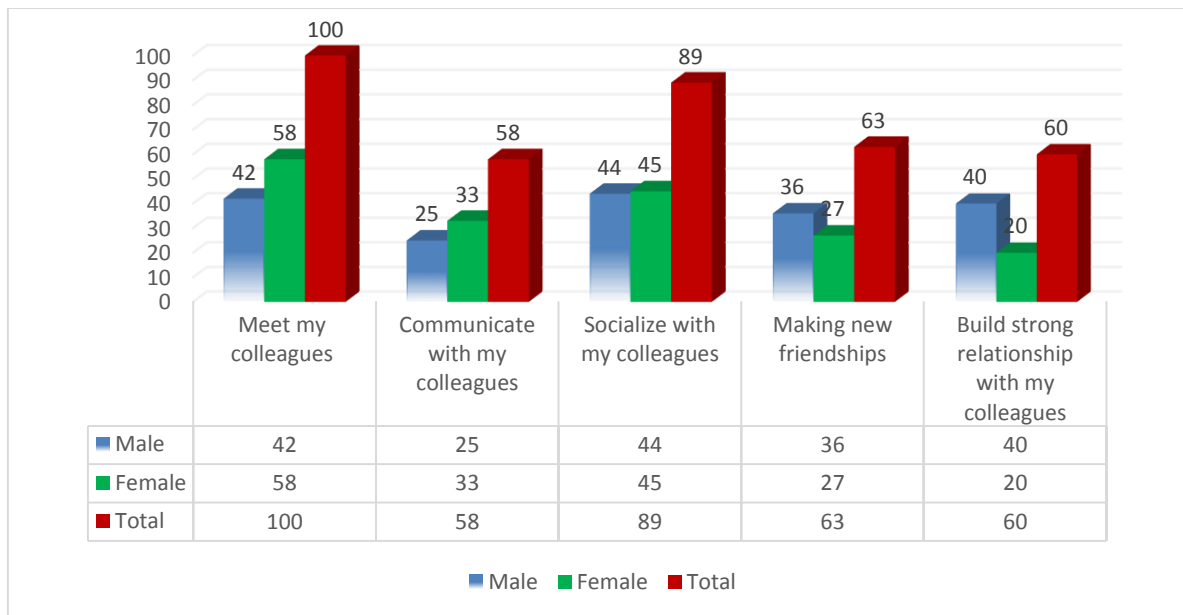


Figure 8: The motivational social factors for sports practice

Regarding the 6th item we choose to ask the students their motivational factors for practicing sports activities regarding the social lifestyle and give them the following variants for answer: meet my colleagues, communicate with my colleagues, socialize with my colleagues, making new friendships and build strong relationship with my colleagues.

Item 7. The motivational factors regarding physical and psychological relaxation influenced by sports activities

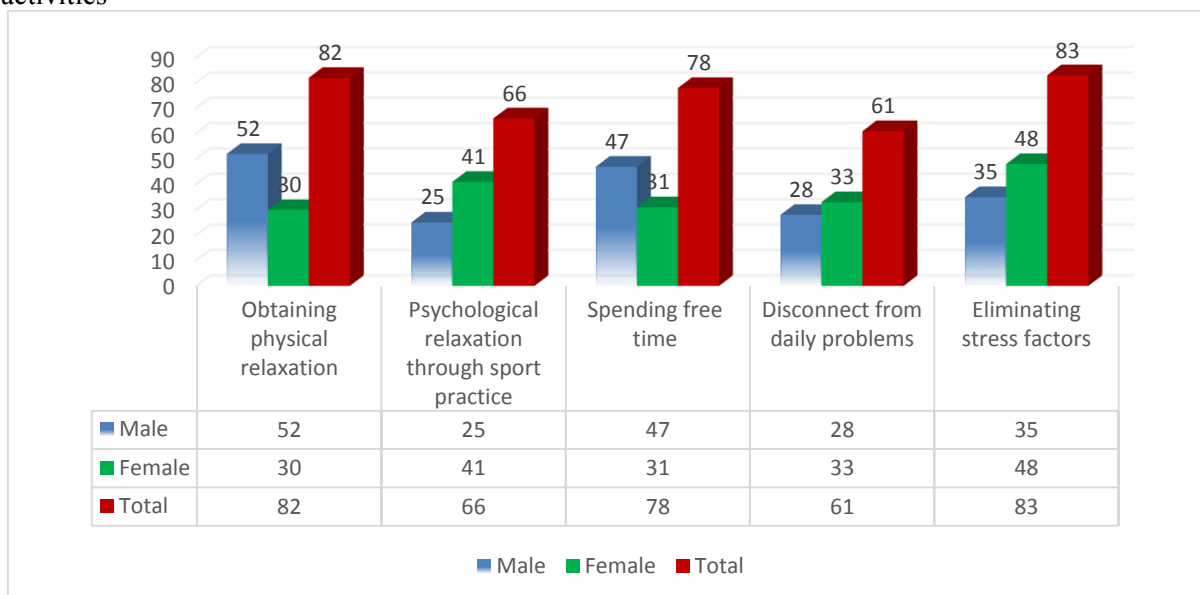


Figure 9: The motivational factors regarding physical and psychological relaxation influenced by sports activities

At the 7th item we asked the students to choose between motivational factors regarding the physical and psychological relaxation influenced by sports activities. The variants of answer were: obtaining physical relaxation, psychological relaxation through sport practice, spending free time, disconnect from daily problems and eliminating stress factors.

Item 8. The moral motivational factors promoted by sports activities

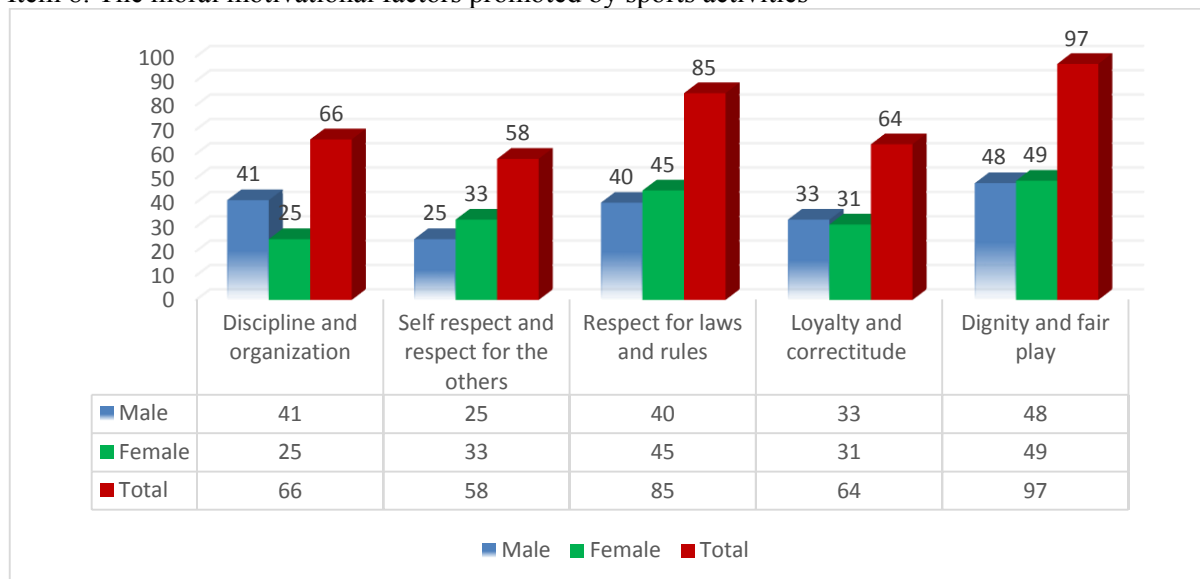


Figure 10: The moral motivational factors promoted by sports activities

Regarding the 8th item we wished to discover the moral motivational factors that students think sports activities promote and give them five variants: discipline and organization, self-respect and respect for the others, respect for laws and rules, loyalty and correctitude and dignity and fair-play.

6. Discussions

The questionnaire that we proposed aimed to discover the factors that motivates the students from the University “Lucian Blaga” Sibiu to practice sports activities. Among motivational factors we proposed were the following: health factors, social factors, moral factors, physical and psychological and relaxation factors.

Regarding the first item, that refer to the frequency of sports practice by students in a week from our research sample, we found out that 75 students from the research sample, representing 20% from the total amount of students, never practice sports activities; 100 students, representing 27% from the total, practice once a week physical activities; 84 students, representing 23% from the total amount of students, practice twice a week sports activities; 66 students, representing 18% from the total, practice three times a week physical activities and 45 students, representing 12% from the total, practice more than three times a week motor activities. As to gender differences we can see that the frequency of sport practice is more pronounced for male gender compared with females.

At the second item of our questionnaire we looked for the specificity of sports practiced by the students from our research sample, so we asked them to tell us what category of sports they practice, so we had the following results: 138 students, representing 37% from the total, practice ball games; 70 students, representing 19% from the total amount of students, like to practice running; 44 students, representing 12% from the total, like to swim; 91 students, representing 25% from the total, goes to the gym and fitness and 27 students, representing 7% from the total, likes to do cycle sports. Regarding gender preferences we can see that male students are more likely to practice ball games and gym fitness compared with females that likes to practice swimming, running or cycling.

At the 3rd item regarding the importance of sports activities in maintaining health level, our students from the research sample answered: 27 students, representing 7% from the total, considered not important at all; 47 students, representing 13% from the total amount of students, give little importance to sport activities in maintaining health; 61 students, representing 17% from the total, give moderate importance; 131 students, representing 35% from the total number of students, consider sports activities important in relation to health and 104 students, representing 28% from the total number of students, consider sports very important in keeping the level of body health. Regarding gender differences we can affirm that male respondents are more aware about the importance of sports activities on keeping the health levels.

In the case of the 4th item regarding the motivational health factors for sports practice the students answered: 100 students, representing 27% from the total amount of students, considered that sports activities can improve self-image and combat obesity; 56 students, representing 15% from the total, affirm that sports activities develop muscle system; 82 students, representing 22% from the total, think that sports activities can improve aerobic resistance; 66 students, representing 18% from the total amount of students, consider that through the practice of sports activities we can build a strong physical condition and the same amount of students 66, representing 18% from the total, consider that sports can prevent disease and hearth problems. Regarding gender differences we can affirm by analysing the students' responses that male gender consider sports activities for improving self-image and combat obesity, developing muscle system and improve the aerobic resistance; compared with female gender which consider more important the process of building strong conditioning and preventing disease and hearth problems.

Regarding the 5th item of our questionnaire we wanted to know how important sport activities are in social lifestyle, the students answered: 27 students, representing 7% from the total amount of students, consider not important at all sports activities in social lifestyle; 47 students, representing 13% from the total, give little importance to sports activities as contributors to the social lifestyle; 61 students, representing 16% from the total amount of students, give moderate contribution of sports activities in building social lifestyle; 131 students, representing 35% from the total, consider sports activities as an important factor in social lifestyle; 104 students, representing 28% from the total, consider sports activities as a very important factor in building a well-developed lifestyle. Comparing genders of our research samples, we can see a difference, females give more importance to sports activities in building a strong social lifestyle compared with males.

At the 6th item regarding the motivational factors that are influenced by the sports activities we found the following results: 100 students, representing 27% from the total, practice sports activities for meeting their colleagues; 58 students, representing 16% from the total amount of students, consider that through sports activities they can communicate with their colleagues; 89 students, representing 24% from the total, appreciate that through sports activities they can socialize with their colleagues; 63 students, representing 17% from the total, consider that through sports activities can make new friendships; 60 students, representing 16% from the total, affirm that through sports activities they can build strong relationships with their colleagues. Regarding gender differences we can affirm by analysing the graphics that female students prefer sports activities for meeting colleagues and communicate with them, compared with male students that prefer sports activities for making friendships and build strong relationships with their colleagues.

At the item 7 regarding motivational factors for physical and psychological relaxation through sports activities, students answered as follows: 82 students, representing 22% from the total consider that they obtain physical relaxation through sports activities; 66 students, representing 18% from the total, affirm that thorough sports activities they obtain psychological relaxation; 78 students, representing 21% from the total, consider that sports activities are a good way to spend their free time; 61 students, representing 16% from the total amount of students, consider that through sports activities they disconnect from daily problems; 83 students, representing 22% from the total amount of students, consider that through sports activities they eliminate stress factors. As for the gender differences we can affirm that male respondents practice sports activities for obtaining physical relaxation and spending

free time compared with female students that practice sports activities for psychological relaxation, disconnect from daily problems and eliminating stress factors.

Regarding the 8th item of our questionnaire we ask the students to answer what moral factors motivate them to practice sports activities, the responses were as follows: 66 students, representing 18% from the total amount of students, practice sports activities because they promote discipline and organization; 58 students, representing 16% from the total, consider that sports activities promote self-respect and respect for the others; 85 students, representing 23% from the total, consider sports activities as promoters of respecting the laws and rules; 64 students, representing 17% from the total, think that sports activities promote loyalty and correctitude; 97 students, representing 26% from the total, consider that sports activities build aspects like dignity and fair play. Regarding gender differences we can say that we can observe that male respondents consider more important the moral values of discipline and organization compared with females that consider self-respect, respect for the others and for the laws as more important.

7. Conclusion

Physical activity and sport practice, which are done in an individual way or with friends, were the most common modes of practice, using mainly private facilities and public places. Justifying these results, Eime et al. [25] determined that interpersonal aspects constitute a decisive factor for doing physical activity. The reason is that the influence exerted by friends and family is related to extrinsic motivations such as support, praise, monitoring or direct involvement [26]. Also, time has validated the positive effects of physical activity and sport on self-concept, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, pressure and stress, self-confidence, energy, mood, efficiency and wellbeing. Sport and physical activity has contributed to the socialization of men especially young people [27].

The conclusions of our investigation has given us the opportunity to find out the students motivation for practicing sports activities from different point of views like social interaction, moral values, health related factors, communication and socialization. Conclusion of the research show that students are aware of sports benefits and give big importance regarding sports practice.

Regarding gender differences we can affirm that first of all the frequency of sport practice is more pronounced for male gender compared with females and that male students are more likely to practice ball games and gym fitness compared with females that like to practice swimming, running or cycling. Also we found that male respondents are more aware about the importance of sports activities on keeping the health levels and consider sports activities for improving self-image and combat obesity, developing muscle system and improve the aerobic resistance; compared with female gender which consider more important the process of building strong conditioning and preventing disease and hearth problems. Other visible differences between genders: females give more importance to sports activities in building a strong social lifestyle compared with males; female students prefer sports activities for meeting colleagues and communicate with them, compared with male students that prefer sports activities for making friendships and build strong relationships with their colleagues. Male respondents practice sports activities for obtaining physical relaxation and spending free time compared with female students that practice sports activities for psychological relaxation, disconnect from daily problems and eliminating stress factors and also females consider self-respect, respect for the others and for the laws as more important.

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