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Original article

AN ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' INTEREST IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SPORTS, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ZYLFI SHEHU¹, SHPËTIM MADANI², ORSOLA GJERGJI¹

Abstract

Aim. Physical activity has numerous beneficial physiological effects, most evident on the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems, and considerable benefits for metabolic, endocrine, and immune functions. Stamina and endurance, as advantages of exercising, decrease within 2-3 weeks if physical activity is significantly reduced, whereas the results disappear within 2 to 6 months if physical activity is not resumed. Physical activity is essential to normal skeleton development during childhood and adolescence, as well as preservation of maximum bone density in adults/the young. Physical activity seems to alleviate the symptoms of depression, anxiety and improve the mood. Regular physical activity, especially engagement in sport activities, can reduce the risk of developing depression, as well as lower the risk of colon cancer throughout life.

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the results obtained from high school male and female students in Tirana, regarding their functional development, interest in physical activity, favorite foreign languages, and sport in general. By referring to the results and analysis of this study, high school students, as well as teachers will know where to focus in the future, with a view to having a clearer idea about selecting the objectives that can be achieved more easily. Undoubtedly, it will be valuable to design modern policies and programs, in order to enhance the quality of physical education and its importance to today's youth.

Methods. This study is a survey of Tirana public high school male and female students regarding the subject of physical activity at school, sport activities and interest in foreign languages. The results were processed in Excel and reflected in tables and graphs. The study involved 213 males and 207 females in the city of Tirana; the respondents' age varies from 15 to 19 years old.

Results. Students like team sports more; males prefer football, while females like basketball and volleyball better. Concerning their interest in foreign language acquisition, English ranks first, namely chosen by 38.57% of females and 16.90% of males. The second most preferred language is German, with 15.73% of females versus 16.43% of males. The least preferred languages are Spanish, Portuguese, etc.

Conclusions. In terms of family income, only 39.62% of male respondents think they have the financial means to pursue extracurricular sports activities versus 60.38% of them who find this impossible. While 47.03% of females think that the financial support from family has a great impact, 52.97% of them are of the opinion that family income does not affect their non-engagement in extracurricular activities.

Keywords: Female and male, foreign languages, sports, physical education, high school students.

Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to highlight the results obtained from high school male and female students in Tirana, regarding their functional development, interest in physical activity (LaPorte, Montoye & Caspersen, 1985; Caspersen, 1989), favorite foreign languages, and sport in general. By referring to the results and analysis of this study, high school students, as well as teachers will know where to focus in the future, with a view to having a clearer idea about selecting the objectives that can be achieved more easily. The primary goal is to promote the health of young people through a better infrastructure, financial support, and improved school curricula, as well as setting the right objectives and choosing the physical activities, sports, and foreign languages that students like most (Nishio, Scrimgeour, Kumar, Nishio, H. & Nishio, 2019). Undoubtedly, all the answers will be important for designing modern policies and programs, in order to enhance the quality of physical education and foreign language acquisition, considering the importance they have amongst today's youth.

Methods

This study is based on a random selection of three high schools in Tirana. The respondents are public high school students aged 15-19, (Montoye & Taylor, 1984); LaPorte, Montoye, Caspersen, 1985; Caspersen, 1989). The questionnaire was conducted during March - April 2025.

¹ Department of Physical Education and Sports, Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Sports, University of Qiriazi, Tirana, Albania; Corresponding author: kampion_absolut@yahoo.com;

² Foreign Language Center, Academy of Armed Forces, Tirana, Albania.

Age calculation was performed by taking April 1, 2025 as given date. All the results obtained from the respondents were processed in excel and reflected in various tables and graphs.

The study comprised students of:

- Grade 10 - 80 males and 62 females.
- Grade 11 - 78 males and 87 females.
- Grade 12 - 55 males and 58 females.

Results

Table 1. The age of female and male subjects

TIRANA	Subjects	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	AVERAGE AGE
		AGE	AGE	
Tirana city schools	Males	15 years and	18 years and	17 years and 2
	213	8 months	6 months	months
	Females	15 years and	18 years and	17 years and 1
	207	7 months	5 months	months
<i>Total</i>	<i>420</i>			

Table no.1 shows the number of male and female participants. The minimum age of males is 15.8 years old, and that of females is 15.7 years old. The maximum age of males is 18.6 years old, and that of females is 18.5 years old. The average age of males is 17.2 years old, and that of females is 17.1 years old.

Table 2. Results of the questionnaire for males in the city of Tirana.

Variables	Males						Average	
	Grade10		Grade 11		Grade 12			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Do you like the subject of physical education?	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
	80.00	20.00	76.92	23.08	74.55	25.45	77.16	22.84
Do you think that you took enough physical education classes in junior high school?	53.75	46.25	51.28	48.72	74.55	25.45	59.86	40.14
Do you think that 2 physical education classes a week is enough?	38.75	61.25	34.62	65.38	56.36	43.64	43.24	56.76
Do you think that the 12th grade should have physical education as a school subject?	83.75	16.25	76.92	23.08	87.27	12.73	82.65	17.35
Has the subject of physical education affected your physical condition?	87.5	12.5	88.46	11.54	92.73	7.27	89.56	10.44
Do you feel better when you have physical education at school?	88.75	11.25	91.03	8.97	90.91	9.09	90.23	9.77
Should physical education classes be reduced from 3 to 1?	86.25	13.75	78.21	21.79	85.45	14.55	83.30	16.70
Do you think that the subject of physical education should be removed from the curriculum?	6.25	93.75	5.13	94.87	16.36	83.64	9.25	90.75
Do you think that physical education classes should be increased to 4 per week?	85.00	15.00	91.03	8.97	61.82	38.18	79.28	20.72
Do you think that the number of physical education classes you had in junior high school affected your performance?	63.75	36.25	69.23	30.77	89.09	10.91	74.02	25.98
Do you think that if you had taken more physical education classes in junior high school, you would have a higher performance today?	72.5	27.5	75.64	24.36	85.44	14.55	77.86	22.14
Do you think that the subject of physical education also affects malestal health?	63.75	36.25	82.05	17.95	74.55	25.45	73.45	26.55

Do you think that the sports infrastructure in your school needs to be improved?	87.5	12.5	91.03	8.97	83.64	16.36	87.39	12.61
Do you lack the didactic tools to have physical education class?	91.25	8.75	83.33	16.67	72.73	27.27	82.44	17.56
Are you engaged in extracurricular sports activities?	16.25	83.75	17.95	82.05	27.27	72.73	20.49	79.51
Do you have the financial means to attend extracurricular sports activities?	30.00	70.00	37.18	62.82	47.27	52.73	38.15	61.85
Does your family's financial income affect your participation in a sport?	55.00	45.00	67.95	32.05	58.18	41.82	60.38	39.62

Table no.2 presents the data of the questionnaire for the male respondents', where 22.84% of them do not like the subject of physical education versus 77.16% who do. They think that when they were in in junior high-school they should have taken more physical education classes, whereas 53.75% of 10th graders and 51.28% of 11th graders were against increasing the number of classes in junior high school. On the other hand, 25.45% of 12th graders are of the opinion that they should have had more than two physical education classes per week, even when they were junior high school students.

Table 3. Results of the questionnaire for females in the city of Tirana.

Variables	Females						Average	
	Grade10		Grade11		Grade12			
	%		%		%		%	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do you like the subject of physical education?	82.26	17.74	83.91	16.09	86.21	13.79	84.13	15.87
Do you think you had enough physical education classes in junior high school?	67.74	32.26	74.71	25.29	74.14	25.86	72.20	27.80
Do you think 2 physical education classes a week is enough?	75.81	24.19	78.16	21.84	81.03	18.97	78.33	21.67
Do you think the 12th grade should have physical education as a school subject?	64.52	35.48	57.47	42.53	81.03	18.97	67.67	32.33
Has the subject of physical education affected your physical condition?	80.65	19.35	68.97	31.03	82.76	17.24	77.46	22.54
Do you feel better when you have the subject of physical education?	90.32	9.68	90.80	9.20	91.38	8.62	90.83	9.17
Should physical education classes be reduced from 3 to 1?	74.19	25.81	75.86	24.14	79.31	20.69	76.45	23.55
Do you think the subject of physical education should be removed from the curriculum?	6.45	93.55	5.75	94.25	18.97	81.03	10.39	89.61
Do you think that physical education classes should be increased to 4 per week?	96.77	3.23	82.76	17.24	62.07	37.93	80.53	19.47
Do you think the number of physical education classes in junior high school affected your performance?	75.81	24.19	68.97	31.03	62.07	37.93	68.95	31.05
Do you think that if you had taken more physical education classes in junior high school, you would have a higher performance today?	83.87	16.13	58.62	41.38	72.41	27.59	71.63	28.37

Do you think that the subject of physical education also affects malestal health?	87.10	12.90	64.37	35.63	75.86	24.14	75.78	24.22
Do you think that the sports infrastructure in your school needs to be improved?	75.81	24.19	87.36	12.64	84.48	15.52	82.55	17.45
Do you lack the didactic tools to have physical education class?	90.32	9.68	88.51	11.49	74.14	25.86	84.32	15.68
Are you engaged in extracurricular sports activities?	8.06	91.94	12.64	87.36	15.52	84.48	12.07	87.93
Do you have the financial means to attend extracurricular sports activities?	25.81	74.19	11.49	88.51	24.14	75.86	20.48	79.52
Does your family's financial income affect your participation in a sport?	20.97	79.03	63.22	36.78	56.90	43.10	47.03	52.97

Table no. 3 shows the data of the questionnaire conducted with female respondents where, 84.13% of them preferred the subject of physical education to other subjects, whereas 5.87% were against it. In the second variable, 72.20% of high school students said that if they had taken more physical education classes a week during junior high school, their performance and physical fitness would be at higher levels.

Table 4. Students' interest in foreign languages and sport activities.

No.	Sports	Males	Females
		213 Subjects	207 Subjects
1.	Football	41.78 %	3.05%
2.	English	16.90 %	38.57 %
3.	Basketball/Volleyball	14.55 %	27.41 %
4.	German	16.43 %	15.73 %
5.	Combat sports	1.88 %	3.05 %
6.	French	0.94 %	3.05 %
7.	Athletics/Gymnastics	1.88 %	2.03 %
8.	Italian	0.94 %	1.02 %
9.	Other sports/fitness	2.35 %	2.54 %
10.	Other languages	2.35 %	3.55 %
Total		100 %	100 %

Table no. 4 reflects the interest of male and female high school students in sports and recreational activities, as well as foreign languages in the city of Tirana.

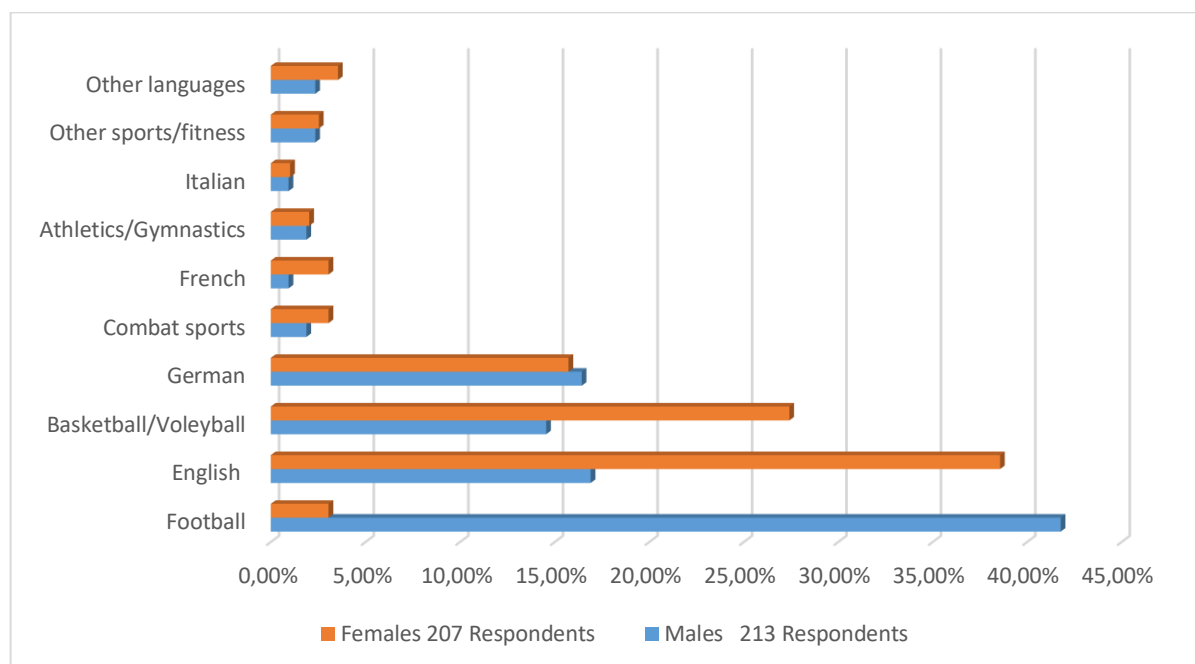


Figure 1. Students' interest foreign languages and sports activities.

Discussions

This study comprised 213 males and 207 females from high schools in the city of Tirana. Two classes of physical education per week have a minimal impact on students. In all developed western countries, the subject of physical education is included in the school curriculum for all study cycles and for all age groups, the number of classes ranging from 2 to 5 a week (Graham, Macfadyen, & Richards, 2012). 61.25% of 10th graders and 65.38% of 11th graders think that 2 classes a week is not enough and should be increased, while 56.36% of 12th graders think that physical education classes should not be increased. Regarding the increase in the number of classes, 79.28% of males agree.

In terms of sport infrastructure, there is a high percentage of respondents that seek its improvement. 87.39% of them think that there is a lack of sports infrastructure, while 12.61% of them also think that the didactic tools are sufficient to have physical education classes, versus 87.39% who believe there is a drastic shortage of didactic tools. Amongst males, 20.49% of them are engaged in extracurricular sport activities, whereas 79.51% are not. This is probably related to financial constraints. These sport facilities have rendered participation easier and increased the number of young people that engage in sport teams, recreational activities, and the like. More and more young people are inclined to participate in sports nowadays (Zylfi, Perparim, Alpin & Daniel, 2014). In terms of family income, 38.15% of the respondents think they have the financial means to pursue extracurricular sport activities.

As students believe that they did minimal physical activity during junior high school, they stated that two classes a week were insufficient; respectively, 78.33% of females think that the number of physical education classes for the 9-year school system should be increased, whereas only 21.67% of said that 2 classes of physical activity a week is enough. As for the question whether the 12th grade should have physical education as a subject, 35.48% of the 10th graders and 42.53% of the 11th graders think that when they promote to 12st grade there should be no subject of physical education.

Physical education is already known to have positive effects, in terms of physical health (Quennerstedt, 2019), but 22.54% of female high school students think differently. Whereas, as to the question if they feel better when they have the subject of physical education, 90.83% of them state that they do. Amongst females, a high percentage of 23.55% of them requests that the subject of physical education be reduced from 3 classes to 1 class per week, and 10.39% of them want the subject of physical education to be removed from the pre-university education curriculum versus 89.61% who desire the opposite. 80.53% of females would like an increase of physical education classes from 2 to 4 a week.

Physical education also improves mental health (Cocca et. al., 2020). When asked about this, 75.78% of females agree with such a thing, whereas 24.22% of them think that it has no impact on mental health. Regarding sports infrastructure, 82.55% said that it should be improved, and 84.32% of them are of the opinion that didactic tools are lacking. On the other hand, financial support from parents plays an important role, in order for students to engage in sports and recreational activities during and outside of school hours. In this regard, only 20.48% of them can afford that and 79.52% do not have the financial means. Concerning the impact of family financial income on engagement in extracurricular activities, 47.03% of females think that the financial support from family has a great effect, while 52.97% are of the opinion that family income does not prevent them from engaging in extracurricular activities.

As shown from the questionnaire data on financial means and family support for their children's engagement in extracurricular sport activities, a large number and percentage of respondents cannot be financially supported by their parents. This is also related to the high unemployment rate that prevails in Tirana, with a small percentage of families receiving support from relatives abroad, while most families depend on pensions, and state benefit (Murseli, 2021).

In the schools where the subjects study, there is no serious commitment on the part of teachers and coaches to create and organize extracurricular sport teams for some (individual) sports. If this were to happen, it would certainly reduce financial costs, save time, and have a positive influence on massification and increase in the number of young people who want to be active in sport activities.

Tirana high school students like football as a sport at 41.78%, a generally significant percentage. This is probably due to the fact that football has already become a very popular sport and is watched by all ages (Williams, Pope, & Cleland, 2023; Camiré & Trundel, 2013), the media have also played a really positive role by enhancing their interest in both watching and participating in this sport discipline. As regards preference for English language, out of 213 male respondents questioned, 16.90% of them state that they would wish to attend English language courses if they could afford them. There is also a high percentage of those who like volleyball and basketball, but that lags far behind compared to football and English. 14.55% of males like volleyball and basketball, while athletics, gymnastics, and team sports constitute a very small percentage, just as is the case with other sports and other languages. In terms of German language, 16.43% of males like to learn it. This is also related to the desire of young people to study and work in Germany where many of their peers are leaving for a better life.

It is clear that as for fitness in the gym, there is a slight increase in the percentage of those who seek to improve it, compared to other sports. The respondents probably do not have the right information about the advantages and disadvantages of exercising in a gym, as opposed to participating in sports or outdoor activities. Going to the gym is a rising trend amongst the youth. The young people may be lacking in the necessary information about sports, the connection between sports and fitness, as well as positive and negative effects of each engagement. This remains to be discussed and studied in future studies, as there is still no such study. Currently, there is no national sport institution that offers counseling and guidance for young people to choose a sport (Kristiansen & Houlihan, 2017). So far, the physical education teacher, the school at pre-university level, has tried to perform this task in the best manner possible. While in all public and private universities, where these young people will be part of in the future, the subject of physical education has been removed from the curricula; however, the impact of this decision remains to be discussed in future studies.

Out of 207 female students surveyed, 3.05% of them like football. So, if they had the opportunity they would engage in the sport of football. Sometime after 2005, there occurred the formation of first females' football teams for all age groups in our country, as well as organization of activities nationally and internationally, with the participation of females in this sport increasing significantly (Petty & Pope, 2019).

The English language is preferred by 38.57 of females as opposed to 16.90% of males. This is due to the fact that it has already become a highly sought-after language for young males and females, which is also related to the widespread inclination to learn foreign languages considering the importance they have in urban areas (Getie, 2020).

Basketball and volleyball turn out to be the sports most popular with females, compared to males who rate football as first. 27.41% of females like basketball and volleyball. Regarding the selection of athletics and gymnastics, there is a decrease in the number of females by 2.03% (Miguel-Ortega, Calleja-González, & Mielgo-Ayuso, 2023) and males by 1.88%.

Italian language has been spoken in our country since before the 90s, although this language has had a good progression in the population due to learning it through television channels (including only western Albania); it is also a language which is mastered by young people, but the Italian language has been chosen by the smallest number of respondents, namely by 1.02% of females and 0.94% of males. Young people are more oriented towards English and German, which are in highest demand on the Albanian market, also due to foreign companies seeking qualified staff that speaks these languages. Coastal and mountain tourism is a good employment opportunity where English (Nishio, Scrimgeour, Kumar, Nishio, H. & Nishio, 2019) and other foreign languages are required. Another factor concerns university studies in other countries where foreign language mastery is needed.

There is almost the same number of males and females in terms of choosing fitness. Also, with males the most popular sport is football, while the least popular are athletics and gymnastics. Females and males generally tend to engage in team sports. (Individual) martial arts are not very popular, but in general individual sports are less popular. There are no such studies in Albania regarding the question why young people do not choose martial arts and individual sports and why there is a very small participation compared to football, volleyball and basketball.

English continues to be the most preferred and after it is German which has increased the interest of young people due to projects of the German embassy for all those young people who wish to attend German universities at a low cost or as scholarship students, or go to Germany for employment purposes. The French language is also part of projects and scholarships for young people who want to study in France and there is a growing interest among them. Also, the Italian language does not lag behind in this regard.

Conclusions

The subject of physical education is liked by almost all high school male and female students. Most of the respondents are of the opinion that the number of physical education classes in junior high school should be increased to 4 classes per week. Currently, the number of classes is insufficient for both males and females.

Students like team sports more; males prefer football, while females like basketball and volleyball better. Male and female respondents are of the opinion that the subject of physical education affects the development of mental health. Individual sports are least liked by males and females, which varies from 1.88% - 3.05%. Most of the respondents that participated in the study stated that financial constraints are the main obstacle for their participation in extracurricular sport activities. Students also emphasized that there is a lack of sport infrastructure and didactic tools for organizing large physical education classes.

The percentage of active male and female students in extracurricular sports activities is very low. English is the most preferred language by young people, with females liking it to the extent of 38.57% while males 16.90%. The second most preferred language is German, with 15.73% of females versus 16.43% of males. The least preferred languages are Spanish, Portuguese, etc.

However, we can't take these definitions separately because in sport there's a body mind connection. In sports the communication tool is the movement, but it should be under the mind's control. Foreign language is necessary to teach sport because sport nowadays is becoming more globally. So, the combination of choosing both sport and language is a good choice.

Political commitment is needed to support physical activities at school. At national level, the public should be made aware of the importance of physical activity and foreign language acquisition. Policies should be implemented effectively, so as to increase the importance of foreign languages, physical education, and physical activity in school curricular.

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