

# Types of physical activity and motivation to practice physically activity for primary school and the role of parents in forming the healthy behavior

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## **Abstract**

*According to prof. dr. Barbara Woynarowska MD (2010) physical activity is a physical load (work of the skeletal muscles accompanying with many functional changes in the body, effort, energy expenditure), of a person in everyday life, study, work, play, structured exercise programs. Physical activity is essential to human at every age group and every stage of life. Human's health is shaped in all phases and stages of his life. Importance of movement, changes and evolves with age of a man, but always remains one of the main factors determining the health. Physical activity is an important determinant of physical fitness and as such can have strong influence on motor fitness (Iwona Kielbasiewicz – Drozdowska, 2001).*

**Keywords:** *motivation, parents, behaviors*

## **Physical activity-definitions, types, functions,**

Exercise, sports, dance, entertainment, and other forms of movement are treated as sub- category of physical activity. All types of move (from the smallest to the most complex activities) belongs to term „physical activity”. These could be activities such as swimming or fitness exercises but also activities of daily living, such as cleaning the house, walking or professional activity. Physical activity is the most important (after eating healthy food) determinant of health. One of the main educational objectives set by parents and teachers is to develop pro-healthy attitudes in children, associated with the daily practice of

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physical activity. Movement not only allows proper development in the physical, motor or intellectual sphere, but also supports the establishment and maintenance of social contact and psychological benefits such as better coping with depressive mood (Woynarowska, 2010).

Physical activity has the following functions:

- stimulates and supports the development of children
  - prevents disorders of development and health
  - facilitates adaptation to changes in physical and social environment
  - compensates excessive immobility associated with learning at school, work
  - treats the various disorders such as diabetes, obesity, disorders of the musculoskeletal system
- (Woynarowska, 2010).

### **Physical activity and health in children and adolescents**

For long time it has been known that physical activity has a positive effect on health (Chief Medical Officer Annual Report, 2002). Development of physical activity increases physical fitness and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and diseases of the musculoskeletal system (Erriksen, 2001; Gutin et al., 2007; Rexrode et al., 1998,). Physical activity is also an important factor responsible for the health of young people (Blaes et al., 2011). Physically active lifestyle during childhood and adolescence may reduce the risk of health problems in adulthood (Telama et al., 1997). In childhood and adolescence occur unusual physiological and psychological changes. This is the reason why these stages of life are very important.

Many studies have shown that obesity, cardio-vascular diseases, hypertension, and low physical activity is associated with low physical fitness in children (Ruiz et al., 2006; Dencker et al., 2006; Ortega et al., 2007; Brunet, Chaput & Tremblay, 2007; Buicheit et al. 2007, Thomas, Baker & Davies, 2003; Katzmarzyk et al., 2001, Ruiz et al., 2003). Therefore, the promotion of physical activity among children and youth should play a very important role.

In order to improve the cardiovascular system and the strengthening and development of muscles and bones as well as to positive stimulation of biomarkers such as health and energy metabolism and cardiovascular work, for children and youth aged 5 to 17 years, the World Health Organization recommends: AT LEAST 60 MINUTES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INCLUDING BOTH THE EFFORT MODERATE OR HIGHER INTENSITY OF EFFORT. For children and youth physical activity involves both fun, games, leisure, sports and physical education or planned exercise, in the family, school or social activities.

### **Physical activity and cognitive functions**

It is well recognized that physical activity is associated with the maintenance of cognitive function

in older adults (Kramer et al. 2006) and offers some protection against Alzheimer's disease (Rovio et al. 2005). A positive association between physical activity and cognitive health is also suspected in adolescent and young adults, but is not as well documented in this age group. Physical activity can have good influence on the cognitive functions of children. It's possible to increase physical education and/or other types of school physical activity without risk of decreasing school progress, and it may help to reduce disruptive behaviour. Furthermore, an increased participation to physical activity can also increase the level of physical fitness in adolescents. Physical activity has positive influences on concentration, memory and classroom behaviour of pupils. During adolescence intense physical exercises (30 min) improves cognitive flexibility, memory, and operating the ability to maintain attention on the task (Kubesch i in. 2009)

### **The role of parents in shaping health behaviors**

The family has a big impact on development and modeling healthy or unhealthy behaviors in children (Korenbrodt, Moss, 2000). According to Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura people learn different behaviors by watching others. In his studies about learning he demonstrated how kids learn by watching adults. Results of research conducted by Whitaker et al. (1997) showed that there is a greater probability that children whose mothers are in good or excellent health will also have good health themselves. Another study finds that children whose parents have some health problems or unhealthy behaviors will have in the future similar health problems (Foshee and Bauman, 1992).

These studies can lead to conclusion that probably if parents are physically active and participate in sport, their children will also learn to do the same. It is important that parents introduce children to exercise early so it becomes a routine part of their lives. Exercises will be easier if they include fun. In primary school age the benefits of physical activity include improved fitness and posture, improved concentration, memory and better sleep (Rowland 1990).

### **Methodology**

#### **Purpose of the research and research questions**

The aim of the study was to answer the following questions:

Is there a relationship between encouragement for participate in sport and physical activity in the research sample of primary children?

What kind of physical activity practice school-age children?

Why do they practice physical activity?

#### **Description of respondents**

The study sample consisted of 36 children (13 girls, 19 boys) from primary school, age from 9 to 12 years. Younger school age (from 6 to 12 years) is characterized by a continued high willingness to move, the need

to "events and activities" and the high spontaneous physical activity. This is called golden age of motor, which gradually appears desirability and economics of movement, control of the body. Child easily and quickly learn basic motor skills (such as basketball, swimming, cycling, skiing, skating etc.), and derives joy from achievements and athletic competitions.

### **Research Methods**

For the purpose of the study was used a self- made questionnaire consisting of 12 questions on physical activity, the motives of participate in physical activity and the role of parents in shaping and promoting physically active lifestyles, for example: How many times a week do you(except Physical Education lessons) practice physical activity?

What kind of sport / physical activity do you play?

Did your parents encourage you to engage in physical activity/ sport?

How much time usually do you spend for TV or computer?

### **Results**

In the study sample there was strong correlation between physical activity in children and encouragement from parents to practice physical activity or play sport ( $\rho=0.504$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). Correlations between physical activity in children and practicing the sport by family members also were on high level ( $\rho=0.458$ ,  $p=0.008$ ).

More than 50% of children have Physical Education classes 3 or more times in a week (see Diagram 1). About 80% of respondents practice physical activity outside school two or more times in a week (see Diagram 2). Mainly additional training takes 45 minutes or two hours (see Diagram 3). In research sample the most famous kind of physical activity is football (78% of children) (see Diagram 4). More than 80% pupils are physically active because they like it (see Diagram 5). Taking about illness in children we can say that in 6% of respondents suffer from asthma and 3% from adhd. Other children proclaim that they are healthy and don't have any serious or chronic illness (see Diagram 6).

More than 50% of parents in research sample encourage their children to participate in sport or physical activity. Generally they also practice physical activity by themselves (see Diagram 7 and 8). About 50% of children spent 45 minutes or more for making homework or playing computer/wating TV (see Diagram 9 and 10).

Diagram 1. How many times in a week do you have Physical Education classes?

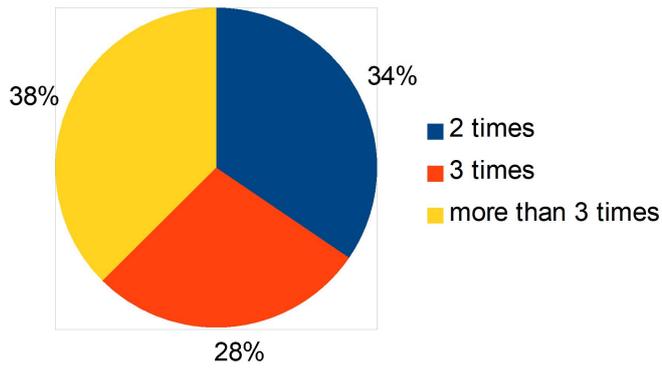


Diagram 2. How many times in a week do you practice physical activity (excluding PE classes)?

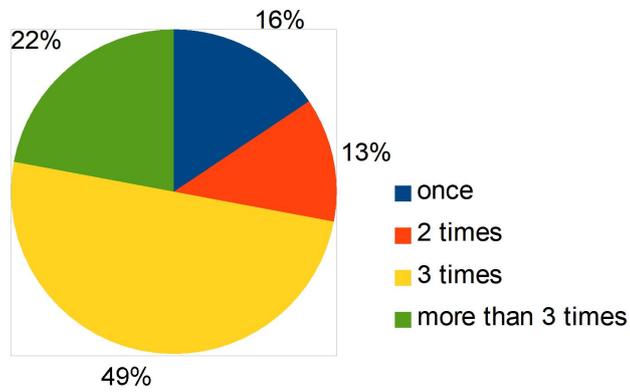


Diagram 3. How long does it take additional training/exercise outside school?

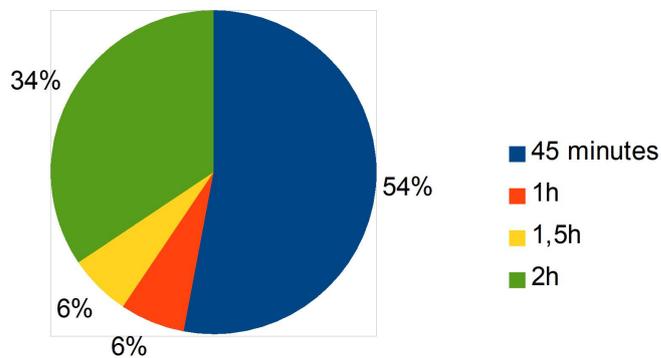


Diagram 4. What kind of physical activity do you practice?

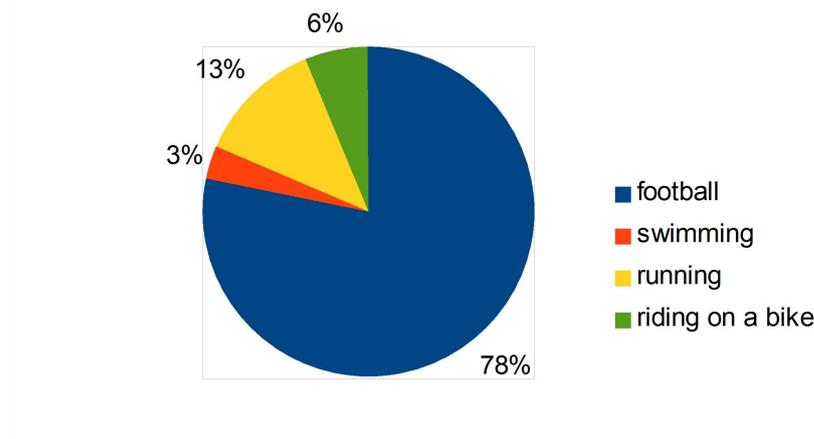


Diagram 5. Why do you practice physical activity or sport?

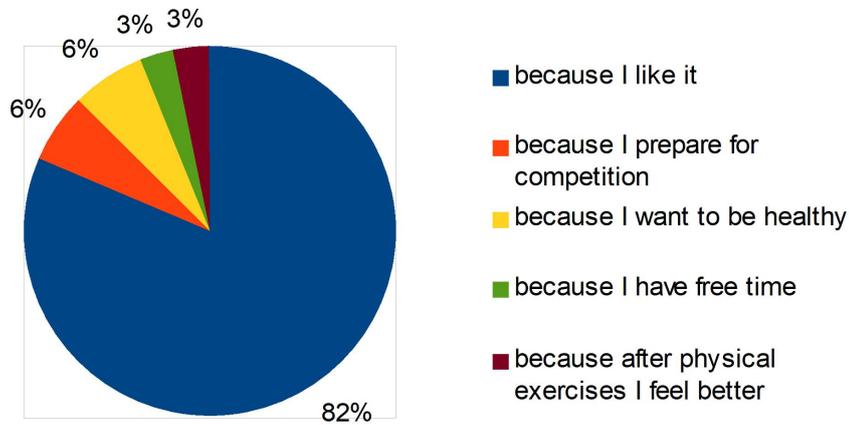


Diagram 6. Do you suffer from any serious disease?

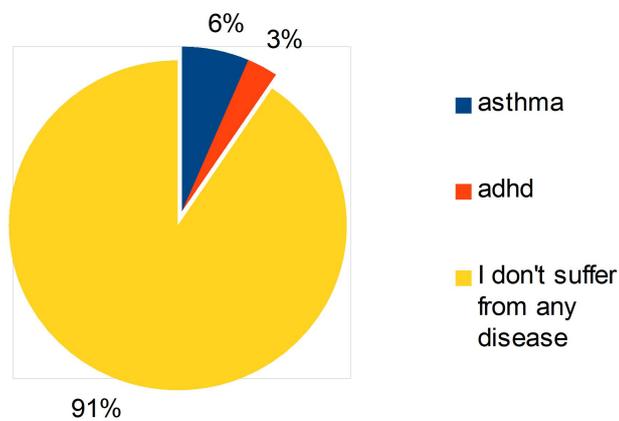


Diagram 7. Did your parents encourage you to participate in physical activity?

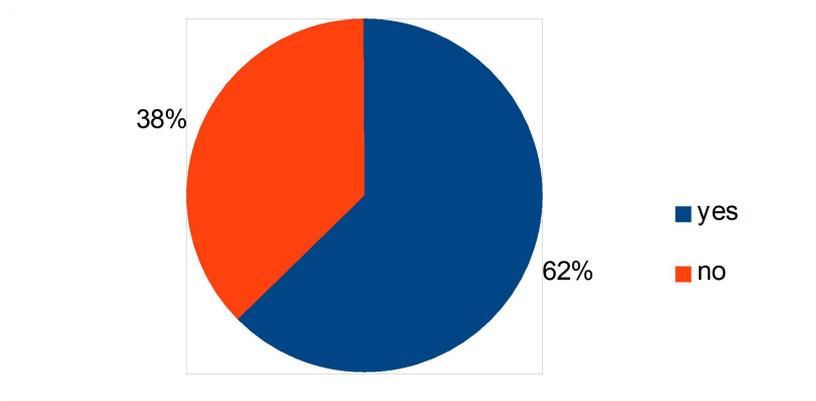


Diagram 8. Does anyone from your family practice sport?

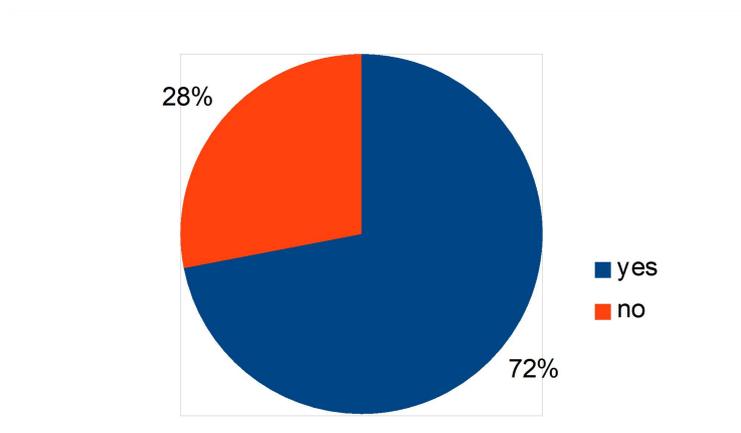


Diagram 9. How much time do you spend for homework?

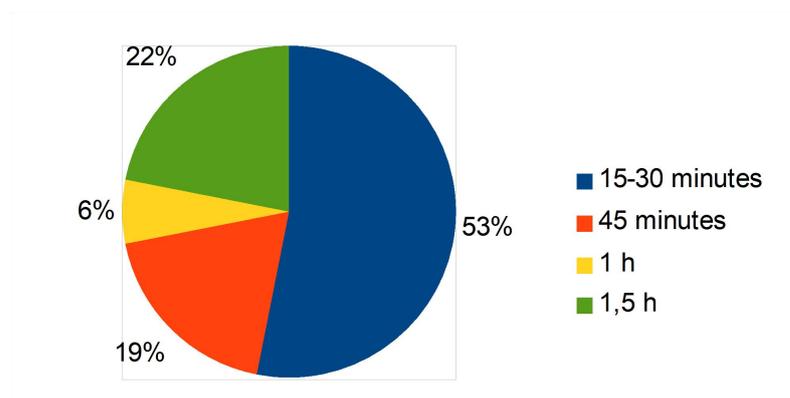
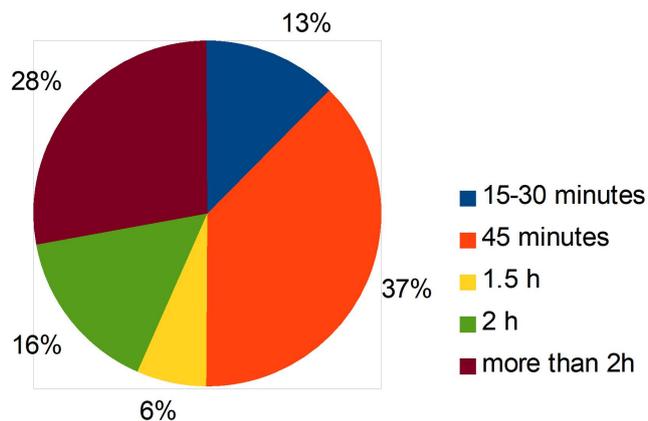


Diagram 10. How much time do you spend on computer?



### Discussion of results

The results show that over 70% of the children from research sample are participate physical activity three or more times in a week except Physical Education classes. The most famous kind of physical activity in children group was football (both in boys and girls group). The main motivation why children practice physical activity and sport was because they like it (no difference between gender).

Significant role seem to play parents and their attitude regarding physical activity. In the research sample, most of the parents encourage children to be physically active in their free time and also take part in some kind of physical activity or sport. Average (including Physical Education classes) children spend about 35 minutes a day for activities connected with sport. However, these results are still not satisfactory. The results of the study also suggest that children spend more time on homework and playing on the computer or watching TV than on physical activity (about 1.5 hours per day).

### Conclusion- how to motivate children to participate in physical activity

In all developed countries, including Poland there is hypoactivity which means too low level of physical activity in relation to the needs of children and youth (in Poland, especially in the youngest children age groups). It is important that parents organise actively leisure time for their children and engaging them to practice physical activity or play sport in a specific time and place, preferably every day or every week. It can also be a good time to build relationships with parents and siblings and other families and children who practice sport. Parents can also encourage their children to play sport in sports clubs connected with their interests, where in the colleagues group will learn new motor, social and emotional skills.

There is no doubt that the best encouragement to engage in physical activity is an example of parents and joy that makes the practice of sport. Physical activity in a family also enables to change daily routine, not to mention also a positive impact of movement on the health.

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