



THE STUDENTS' INTEREST IN INTRODUCING PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES AT FACULTIES

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Abstract

Introduction. In the period from 1963 to 1998 regular PE classes were organized for all first year students at the universities in Serbia. At the University of Belgrade, non-swimmers attended compulsory swimming lesson, while the swimmers were given a choice of other activities such as skating, exercises accompanied with music, sports games, etc. The compulsory part of the course implied the weeks of preparation for cross country race and its realization and all students participated in it. We wanted to examine whether the students' would be interested in attending PE classes as an optional course.

Methods. A survey method was applied, i.e., we made the transversal cross section of the students' attitudes and interests. Basic research technique was the survey carried out by the means of a standardized *cloze-type questionnaire*. The research was performed in May and November 2010, on the sample of 2160 students from Belgrade, plus 300 students from Novi Sad and 300 students from Niš. The average students' age in this study was 21.5.

Results. Belgrade university students were mostly interested in swimming (51.33%), then in basketball (48.00%), mountaineering (40.00%), fitness (36.33%), volleyball (36%), etc. The students at the University of Novi Sad showed interest in almost the same sports and recreational activities. These students showed the greatest interest in swimming (44.21%), followed by volleyball (33.84%), basketball (27.04%), fitness (19.72%) etc. The students at the University of Niš also displayed the greatest interest in swimming (36.30%). About 42.5% of the respondents exercise at least once a week. It can be noticed that the frequency of doing physical exercises decreases with age. Over 56% of students exercise at least once a week, whereas this percentage reduces to 40% among the employed and among the retired it reduces to about 32%. On the basis of the obtained data it may be stated that a great number of students do not meet the minimum criterion of the weekly exercise frequency which should be at least three times a week.

Conclusion. On the basis of the data obtained from the survey carried out on the sample of students at the universities of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš, we can conclude that the students at all three universities are largely interested in having organized regular PE classes at their universities. The survey confirmed that there is a variety of interests in particular sport-recreational activities among the students at different universities.

Key words: Physical Education, Recreation, Students' Interest in Physical Education.

Introduction

Starting a faculty represents a significant change in lifestyle and qualitative organization of the way of studying. Attending faculty lectures does not have such a level of obligation as during high school, there is no homework which has to be done every day and there is no constant pressure due to knowledge testing. Those young people who come to a different place to study are seemingly free, without constant parental care and they feel that they are the masters of their free time and life organization. Adolescents who still have no stable working habits and search for their own identity gladly get involved in experimenting in the domain of social behavior and searching for self-assurance. For the greatest number of students studying at faculty means examining problems and searching for the secrets of the profession which is their vocation. They find practical lessons, seminar papers, public discussions and debates as a valuable source of necessary knowledge.

From 1963 to 1998 lessons of physical

education were regularly organized for all first year students at the universities in Serbia. Swimming was compulsory at the University of Belgrade and swimmers were given the option to choose among other activities such as ice-skating, exercising with music, sports games and others. The compulsory part of the programme included cross-country races which took several weeks to prepare. Our aim was to examine students' interest in organizing the lessons of physical education as an optional subject.

The research was done in May and November 2010 on the sample which included 2160 students from Belgrade and Serbia + 300 students from Novi Sad + 300 students from Niš.

According to the data obtained by conducting the survey on the students of all three universities, it can be concluded that a great number of them are interested in organizing regular lessons of physical education at their faculties. The students belonging to the University of Novi Sad showed the greatest interest in those lessons (48.33%). The students belonging to the University of Belgrade

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showed somewhat lower interest (47.13%), while the interest of the students belonging to the University of Niš was the lowest (41.00%). About 1/3 of the students belonging to all three universities would introduce the lessons of physical education partially (Beograd 30.79%; Novi Sad 33.67%; Niš 38.67%), while about 1/5 of the students do not agree with this. The obtained results are in accordance with the results of other researchers. In the research done by Širić, Blažević and Vladović (2009), 53.1% of the respondents said that the lessons of physical education at their faculties should be compulsory since they felt that students are not involved in doing physical exercises enough. The researchers claim that possible reasons for insufficient exercising possibly lie in the financial situation, the fact that the students are not informed enough about the types of sports and recreational activities, too many obligations they have at their faculties, or simply their indifference to exercising. It is interesting that the part of the students who at least sometimes do physical or recreational activities want to have some kind of organized programme, probably due to the fact that space and sports equipment are ensured that way.

Methods

A survey method was applied, i.e., we made the transversal cross section of the students' attitudes and interests. Basic research technique was the survey carried out by the means of a standardized *cloze-type questionnaire*. The research was

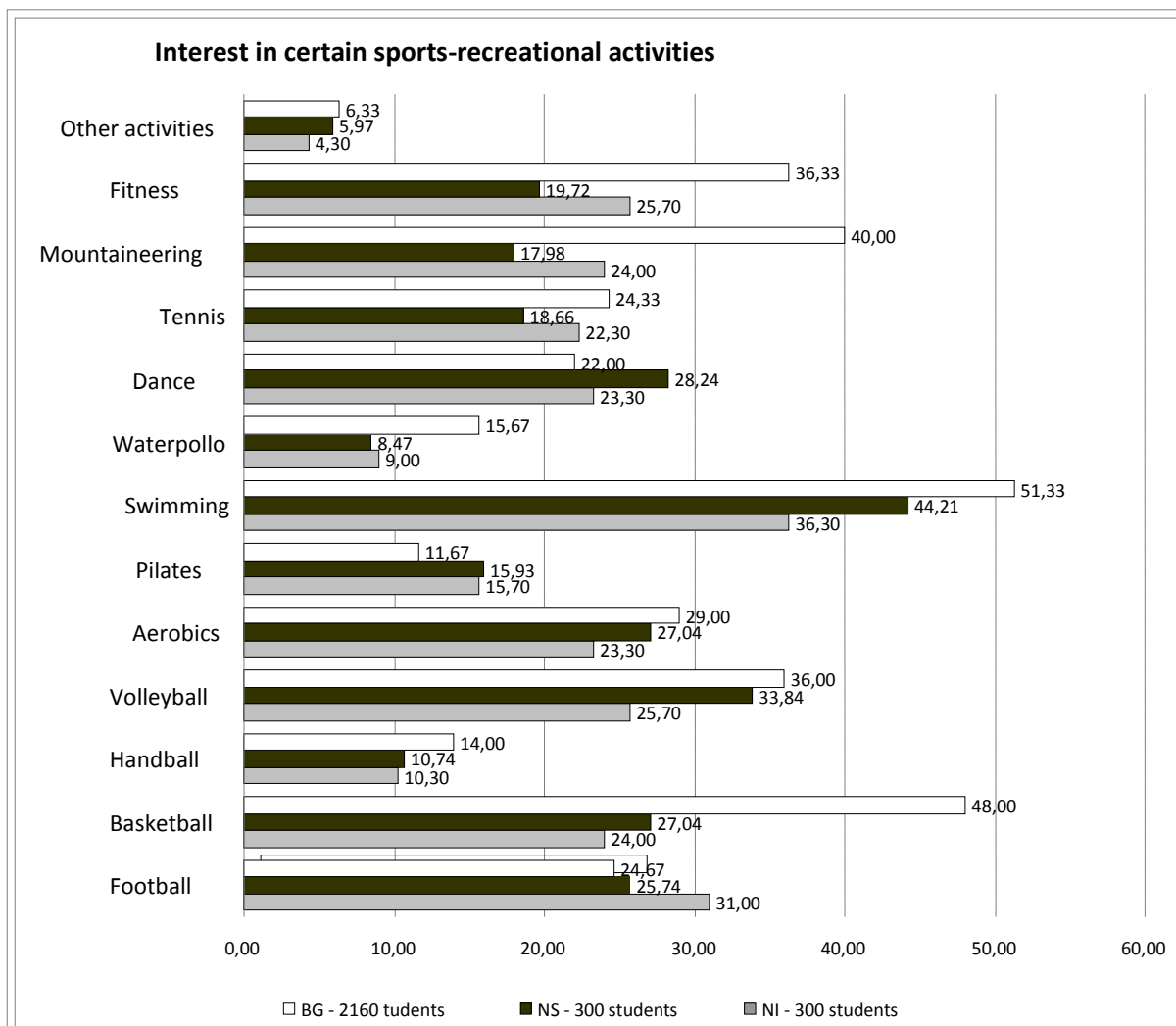
performed in May and November 2010, on the sample of 2160 students from Belgrade, plus 300 students from Novi Sad and 300 students from Niš. The average students' age in this study was 21.5.

Results

Table 1. Interest in different sports activities

The survey confirmed that there is a difference between the degrees of interests showed for certain sports-recreational activities among the students from different universities. The students belonging to the University of Belgrade are most interested in swimming (51.33%), followed by basketball (48%), mountaineering (40.00%), fitness (36.33%), volleyball (36%) etc. Students from the University of Novi Sad showed almost the same interests: swimming (42.21%), volleyball (33.84%), basketball (27.04%), fitness (19.72%) etc. The greatest interest in swimming was also showed by the students from the University of Niš (36.30%). Taking other sports-recreational activities into account, they are mostly interested in football (31%) and fitness (25.70%), followed by other sports. Students from the University of Belgrade showed the slightest interest for Pilates (11.67%), while water-pollo is the least interesting for the students belonging to the universities of Novi Sad and Niš (8.47% and 9.00%, respectively).

The activities which students most often



chosed in other research are: aerobics (6.03%), exercises with free weights (5.02%), running (3.26%), dancing structures (2.26%), cycling (1.75%) and Pilates (1.75%) (S. Ćurković, I. Bagarić, O. I. Straža and Š. Šuker, 2009).

The results obtained this way most probably are the consequence of current financial-technical and spatial conditions under which the choice of sports-recreational activities is made.

According to the results obtained by conducting survey on the students from all three universities, it can be concluded that the students belonging to all of the above mentioned universities want to have organized and compulsory sports activities. Possible reasons for this lie in the fact that students first of all want to improve their health and physical appearance (V. Širić, S.I. Blažević and Z. Vladović, 2009).

Table 2. The level of interest in introducing compulsory physical education at faculties

The greatest interest in compulsory physical education was showed by the students of the University of Niš (45%), but the results showed that the students from other two universities are also interested in implementation of the lessons of

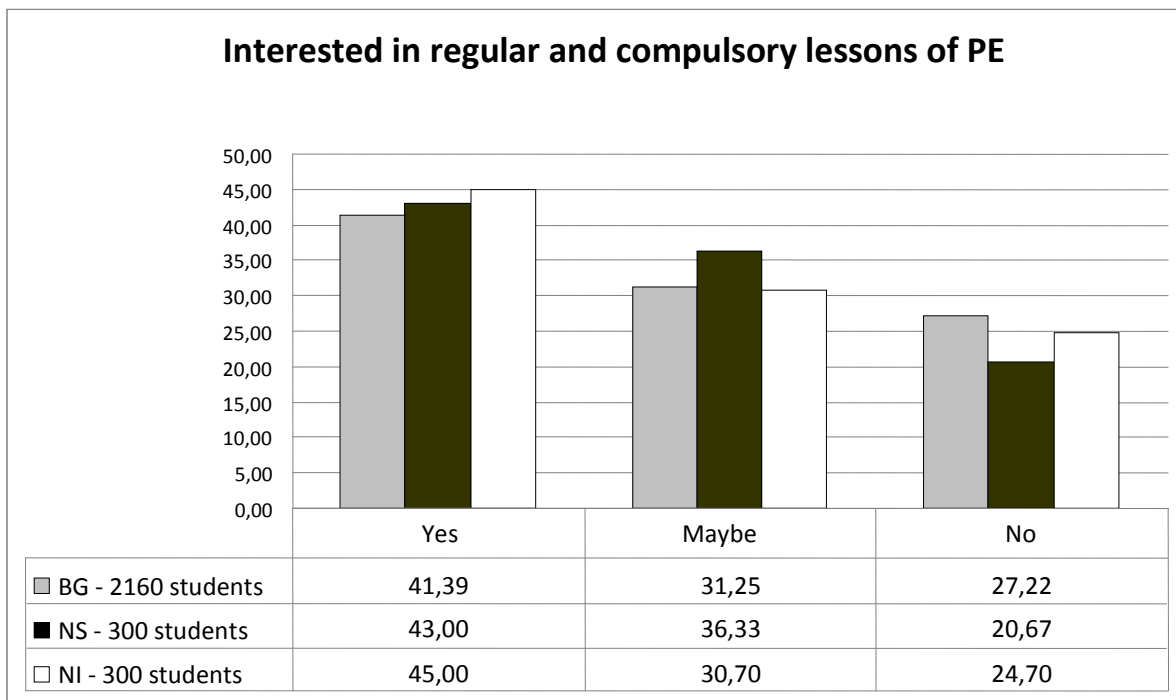
physical education in the curricula at their faculties (41.339% students from Belgrade and 43.00% students from Novi Sad). 1/3 of the examined students from all three universities partially agree that physical education should be implemented as compulsory, which is shown in the table 2.

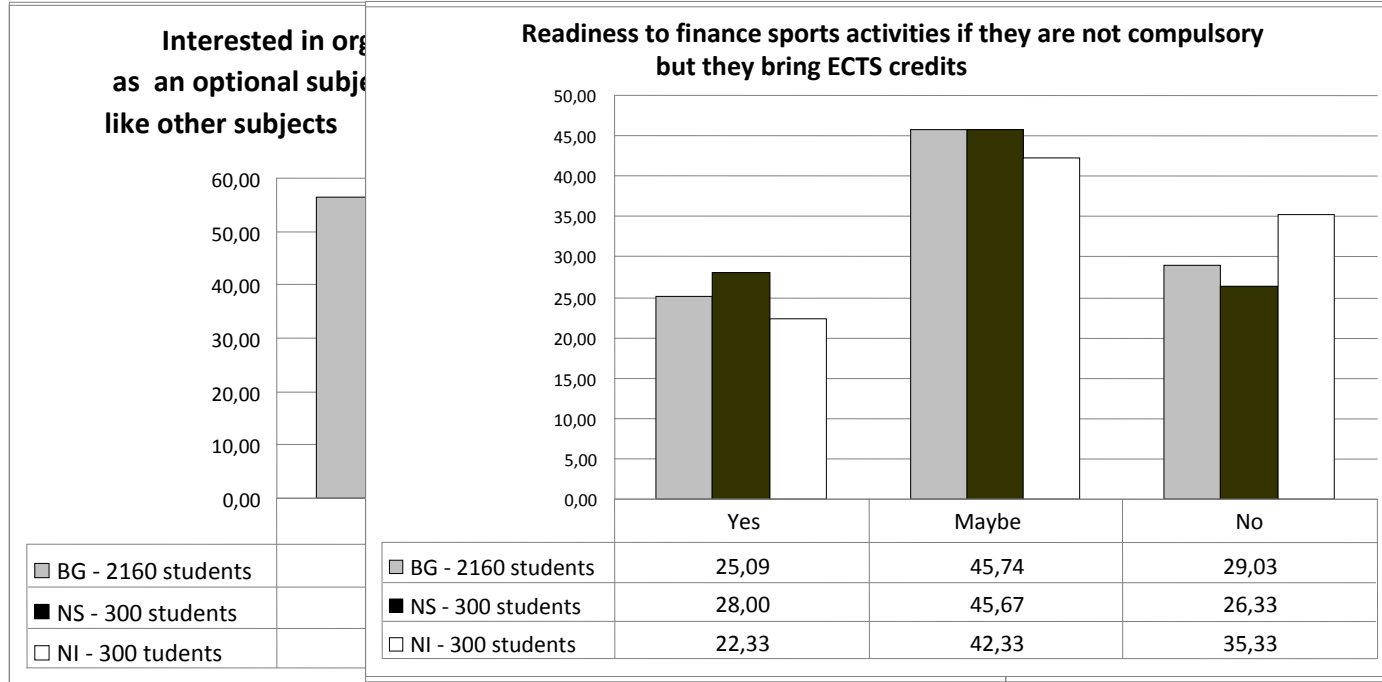
Table 3. Sports activities as an optional subject

In the research done by V. Širić, S.I. Blažević and Z. Vladović (2009) similar results were obtained. The authors state that 53.1% of the examined students claim that the lessons of physical education should be introduced as compulsory at faculties.

The data obtained by conducting a survey showed that almost half of the respondents from all three universities think that it is necessary to organize sports activities as an optional subject which would bring them certain ECTS credits.

The students from the universities of Belgrade and Novi Sad showed the greatest interest in the implementation of physical education as an optional subject (56.44% and 56.00%), while the students from the University of Niš showed somewhat smaller interest (47.67%).





Similar data, but in somewhat lower values were also obtained for the students who partially agree that it is necessary to organize sports activities at faculties as an optional subject. The greatest number of these students come from the University of Niš (31.00%), while the percentage of the students from other two universities is somewhat lower (Belgrade 26.16% and Novi Sad 28%). However, there is a certain number of students who do not support the implementation of sports activities at faculties as an optional subject. The greatest lack of support is showed by the students from the University of Niš (21.33%), followed by the students of the University of Belgrade (17.27%) and Novi Sad (16%).

Table 4. Readiness to finance sports activities if they are not compulsory.

According to the results obtained by conducting the survey on the students from the universities of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš it can be concluded that the greatest number of the students from all three universities are partially ready to finance sports activities if they are not compulsory, but they bring certain ECTS credits. Almost half of the respondents said that they might finance such participation in sports activities. Similar attitude was expressed by the students of the universities in Novi Sad and Belgrade (45.67% and 45.74%, respectively), while the students from the University of Niš showed somewhat different opinion (42.33%). The fact that almost 1/3 of the respondents are not ready to partially finance sports activities unless they are compulsory should be observed with concern. The greatest percentage of the students who share this opinion come from the University of Niš (35.33%); a little bit fewer students come from the University of Belgrade (29.03%), while the smallest number of them come from the University of Novi Sad (26.33%).

In other studies (A. Daskapan, E. Handan, T. Eker & L. Eker, 2006) it was established what prevents students from doing physical exercises. The results of the survey showed that the most frequent

objective obstacles students encounter are the lack of time due to their obligations at faculties, the fact that parents pay more attention to their academic success than physical exercises and the lack of time due to their family and social obligations. The most frequent inner obstacles are the lack of energy and their incapability to do exercises.

The average age of the students who took part in this project was 21.5 years.

Students' free time on average is 4.1 hour. The obtained results are in accordance with the results from the earlier research. Buntić (2006) made an estimation of students' physical activities in the structure of free time, with the purpose of finding out how much free time they spend on sports activities, which sports activities they prefer and whether that choice of spending free time and the faculties they attend affect the perception of their subjective shape and health. The results of the survey indicated significant differences between male and female population. Female students had worse results since they spend most of their free time studying and have no habit of doing physical activities.

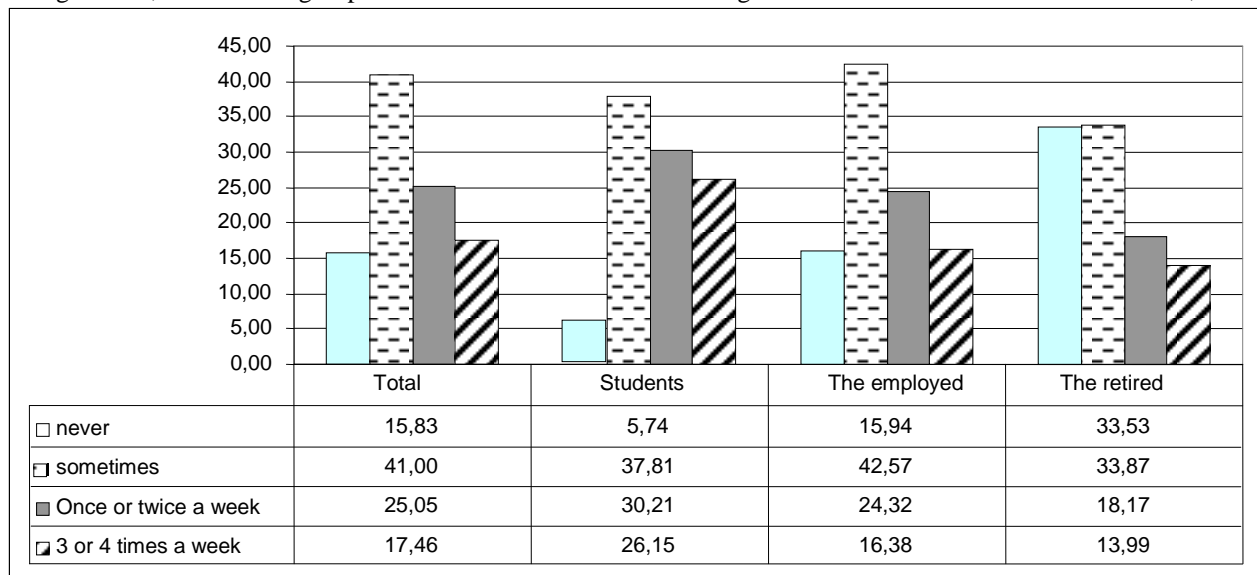
About 42.5% of the respondents do some kind of physical exercises at least once a week (table 9). It can also be noticed that the frequency of doing physical exercises decreases with the age. Over 56% of students do physical exercises at least once a week, while this percentage decreases to 40% for the employed, and for the pensioners it is about 32%. We repeat that the World Health Organization prescribes doing exercises at least three times a week, and our sample contained far less students who behave in accordance with that recommendation. In the first place we must mention the students who exercise 3-4 times a week (a little bit over one quarter of them), while in the case of the employed and retired the percentage decreases to 16 and 14, respectively. We believe that the results obtained in our research reflect the general state in the population of Serbia. The results once again indicate an unsatisfactory, we could say even very serious, situation, as well as the necessity to take serious measures directed at

increasing the number of people who exercise covering all age groups.

The data from the survey show that the greatest number of students occasionally do sports-recreational activities (37.81%), or once or twice a week (30.21%), which is insufficient for staying healthy and in good shape. Only about ¼ of the respondents do exercises regularly (26.15%), while there are also those who never take part in any physical activities (5.74%).

Other researchers obtained similar results. Buntić (2002) claims that the frequency of doing exercises 2-3 times a week was notified in 59.83% in the case of male students, while the percentage is higher for female students (63.47%) who have done some kind of physical activity once a week in the past six months to one year. A. Daskapan, E. Handan, T. Eker & L. Eker (2006) did research which showed that out of 303 respondents (222 female students and 81 male students) there were 174 female and 36 male students who were physically inactive. The research done by other authors also indicate a rising physical inactivity in the population of students (A. Vuillemin et al., 2005., M. Fogelholm et al., 2006). Stojanović, Višnjić and Mitrović (2008) established that there is a greater inactivity of female students (66.90%) than male (36.32%).

Table 5. Recreational and sports activities students do during a week, divided into groups



In the research done by Širić, Blažević and Vladović (2009), which included the population of students, 53.1% of the respondents claimed that physical education should be introduced as a compulsory subject at faculties.

Insufficient physical activity represents a risk factor responsible for a series of health problems: obesity, cardiovascular diseases and cancers, while significant positive effects on health and life quality and length in general can be achieved by participating

in any physical activity lasting 30 minutes a day, at least three times a week (ACSM, 2005). The effects of an activity realized in such a way depend on the scope and intensity of the activity, the increase in the scope of the activity brings the increase of positive effects. According to the obtained data it can be concluded that a large number of students do not meet a minimum criterion of the frequency of doing physical exercises during one week, which should be at least three times (ACSM, 1998; P.O. Astrand, 1999; S.N. Blair, M.J. LaMonte & M.Z. Nichaman, 2004, R. Pate, M. Pratt, S.N. Blair, W.H. Haskell, C.A. Macera & C. Bouchard, 1995)

Discussion and conclusion

According to the data obtained by conducting a survey on the students belonging to the universities of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš, it can be concluded that the students belonging to all three universities are largely interested in introducing regular lessons of physical education at their faculties again.

The average age of the students in this research was 21.5, the employed 37.2 and the retired 66.3.

On average, our examinees have three hours of free time a day, which is in accordance with all global statistics which state that the amount of free time should be between 2 and 4 hours (table 4). It is completely expected that retired people have the largest amount of free time on their hands, but 3-4

hours of free time that students and employed people have proves the fact that most citizens have enough time for exercising, which should occupy one hour at least three times a week.

About 42.5% of the examinees do physical exercises at least once a week. It can be noticed that the frequency of doing this type of exercises decreases with the age. Over 56% of students exercise at least once a week, while this percentage decreases for the employed to 40, and for the retired to 32. We repeat the fact that the World Health



Organization recommends doing physical exercises at least three times a week, while the number of examinees who respect that is far smaller in our sample. Of course, students come first in this area since a little bit over ¼ of them exercise 3-4 times a week, while for the employed and retired this percentage decreases to 16 and 14, respectively. We believe that the results obtained this way reflect the state in general in the population of Serbia. The results once again indicate an unsatisfactory, we could say even very serious, situation, as well as the necessity to take serious measures aimed at increasing the number of people who do exercises in all age groups.

According to the obtained results it can be concluded that a large number of students do not meet the minimum criterion of the frequency of doing exercises, which should be 3 and more times a week.

Comparing the results obtained in the last ten years, we can see that these numbers have had pretty stable values in different years. The differences which still occur are unfortunately negative. Not taking into account the results obtained in Vojvodina this year, but on a relatively small sample (in comparison to other subsamples), it can be concluded that, unfortunately, the number of people who never do exercises rises, simultaneously followed by the fall in the number of those who exercise most regularly (3-4 times a week).

These data once again clearly indicate that there is a necessity to take an extensive action of promoting beneficial effects of doing physical exercises regularly, as well as permanently motivate people to exercise and create conditions necessary for doing physical exercises for all categories of citizens. All relevant factors must be included in this action, first of all the Government through its competent ministries, scientific and professional institutions, sports federations, media, etc.

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