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### Original article

## A STUDY REGARDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SPORTS GAMES AND PEAK EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS

LUPU ELENA<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

**Aim.** Through the present research, we aim to bring to the fore a problem regarding a less studied aspect, namely the so-called peak experiences and their connection with sports games.

**Methods.** For our research we involved students from the Petroleum-Gas University, Ploiești. We have to mention that Physical Education is a compulsory subject for students being in the first and second years of study, and it is enclosed in the university curriculum. The present research has been undertaken on a group of 93 randomly chosen students (capable for physical effort) and who, at least theoretically, have the same level of education. From the 93 students, in the second part of the lesson – 70 subjects systematically practice a chosen sports game and the other 23 subjects prefer the alternative of jogging for a physical exercise.

The bibliographic study method; The observation method; The enquiry method (conversation, a questionnaire entitled “The Scale of Peak Experiences”, etc.); The statistical-mathematical method; The graphical method.

**Results.** For the research, we started from the hypothesis according to which in the top of the pyramid we have the updating of the self, in order to have the so-called peak experiences, which are generally accompanied by happiness or intense joy, which may be experienced intensely especially where sports games with goals scoring are practiced, meaning with the finalization which triggers those intense feelings of satisfaction, hence peak experiences, as in its absence we do not have the triggering effect for peak experiences.

**Conclusions:** Peak experiences may occur especially where the sports game retains the supremacy and upgrades the self, in order to have the so-called peak experiences.

**Key words:** peak experiences, students, sports games, self-upgrading individuals

### Introduction

Today, the way of looking to physical education in developed countries is having a healthy society with the good harmony of education. Constantly changing and developing events and technology have begun to have an impact on individuals., (Gevat, Larion, Sabău, Nciulescu, 2012, p.331 ).

The present research brings to the fore an issue regarding a less studied aspect, namely the so-called *peak experiences* and their connection with sports games. In order to explain what *peak experiences* represent, taking into account studies undertaken by specialists, we defined them as being “... dimensions of own mental processes, unknown until then” (Internet. (2010) [www.femeiadesucces.ro/blog/cum-sa-ai-cat-mai-multe-experiente-de-varf](http://www.femeiadesucces.ro/blog/cum-sa-ai-cat-mai-multe-experiente-de-varf), p.1-2). According to Maslow (Internet – 2010) peak experiences are “Feelings of unlimited opening horizons, ... the feeling of being simultaneously stronger and more helpless than you have ever been, the feeling of ..., wonder and adoration, the feeling of loss in time and space with the conviction that in

the end something valuable and important has happened, because the subject was, more or less, transformed and strengthened in daily life by such an experience.” (Internet. (2010) [www.femeiadesucces.ro/blog/cum-sa-ai-cat-mai-multe-experiente-de-varf](http://www.femeiadesucces.ro/blog/cum-sa-ai-cat-mai-multe-experiente-de-varf), p 1-2).

Everywhere and simultaneously, inseparable peak experiences can be lived especially where sports game holds supremacy and through the reflections it possessed upgrades the self by executing probably of the harmony between the physical-mental-spirit. The individual feels liberated from social constraints, when he/she wears sports equipment and not a specific outfit for a certain activity (school uniforms, street outfit, business clothes, etc.) and does not have frustrations due to the manner in which he/she looks, whether fat or thin, tall or short.

When he/she obtains the satisfaction of intense joy such as after a goal is scored in a match, where the individual is being watched from the sidelines by other people (colleagues, friends, a loved one, lover,

<sup>1</sup>Physical Education and Sport Department, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, ROMANIA  
E-mail address: [lupu\\_ln@yahoo.com](mailto:lupu_ln@yahoo.com)  
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etc.) this aspect probably being the trigger for the self upgrade, fulfilling a curve which makes the leap to another state (trans-consciousness and conscience?!) making it easier to achieve feeling of being simultaneously stronger with the conviction that in the end something valuable and important has happened" (Internet. (2010) [www.femeiadesucces.ro/blog/cum-sa-ai-cat-mai-multe-experiente-de-varf](http://www.femeiadesucces.ro/blog/cum-sa-ai-cat-mai-multe-experiente-de-varf), p 1).

We feel obliged to offer a supplementary explanation regarding the issue approached and to emphasize that the intense feeling of fulfillment named peak experience may be obtained in different manners, occasions, situations, but we refer strictly to one segment, possibly appearing limited, but the situations created within a sports game of the competition type determines intense experiences, visible with the naked eye only if you observe the face and the gestures of the player, reason for which we dare to state that outside the sports game these experiences would not even exist.

In simple activities of running, jogging, which we consider recreational activities and for physical maintenance, these triggering effects for peak experiences do not appear, due to the lack of competition. In sports games though, which have as a first weapon the playful activity, the competitive spirit, and all is enforced by various moments, dynamic, tensioned by the contact with the opponent, peak experiences instantly interfere, being probably sustained by obtaining respect and acknowledging a first or central place in the hierarchy of the group.

#### Research purpose

The purpose of this research was to observe the individuals' capacity of prioritising their needs according to their desire, and to the manner in which satisfying certain desires shall trigger higher needs, due to the fact that on top of the pyramid stands the self upgrade for having the so-called peak experiences, which are regularly accompanied by joy or intense happiness, possible for being experienced intensely especially where sports games are practiced.

#### Research objectives

We had the following objectives at the basis of our research:

- Choosing the group to be researched;

- Conceiving and implementing an observation protocol, organised under the form of an enquiry (conversation), etc.;

- Selecting and implementing a questionnaire composed of 70 items focused on peak experiences, entitled "Live extatic moments";

- Identifying possible differences occurred as a consequence of living peak experiences for the two researched groups;

- Interpreting reasons for which possible differences occur in the perception of peak experiences for the two researched groups;

Research hypothesis. For the present research, we started from the hypothesis according to which peak experiences may be lived in many situations if they have a triggering mechanism, though in our case we believe that it emphasizes during sports games, because it is certain that emotion may be found where sports game holds the supremacy and upgrades one's self through positive emotions, transforming this emotion to the intense feeling of joy, with the reach of a triggering peak of the so-called peak experiences, experiences which appear to miss or which are suppressed outside the sports game.

Operational approach and subjects involved. For our research we involved students from the Petroleum-Gas University, Ploiești. We have to mention that Physical Education is a compulsory subject for students being in the first and second years of study, and it is enclosed in the university curriculum.

The present research has been undertaken on a group of 93 randomly chosen student (capable for physical effort) and who, at least theoretically, have the same level of education.

#### Methods

**Methods which laid at the basis of our research:**

- The bibliographic study method (it was studied both in the local and foreign literature);

- The observation method, the enquiry method, with a questionnaire entitled "The Scale of Peak Experiences", etc.);

- The statistical-mathematical method;

- The graphical method.



## Results

**Table no. 1** Registered statistical indicators - representative for the peak experiences after applying the questionnaire

The items of the questionnaire organized into focused sequences including questions for the two groups of students.	Statistical registered indicators - percentile scoring and rules after applying the questionnaire							
	Students who chose for each lesson (in the second part) sports game				Students who chose for each lesson (in the second part) jogging			
<b>Information contained in the questionnaire:</b> - The questionnaire consists of 70 items = - 2 parts: - Part I; - Part II Total = 93 students / 100%	70 students = 75.26% 5 girls = 5.37 % 65 boys = 69.89 %				23 students = 24.74% of total 3 boys = 3.23 % 20 girls = 21.51 %			
	Answers % Boys (B.)	Per cen tiles	Answers % Girls (G.)	Per cen tiles	Answers % Boys (B.)	Per cen tile	Answers % Girls (G.)	Per cen tiles
<b>Part I</b> - Questions that begin with "I had an experience..." This includes questions number: 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 36, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 52, 55, 58, 59, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70. <b>Part I</b> - Questions that begin with: "I have never had an experience ..." This includes questions number: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, 26, 30, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 62, 66. (For details see the questionnaire by Louis Janda (2012) from p.206-212. We mention that we did not elaborate and we will not elaborate the questionnaire, we present only the registered statistical indicators upon research, because the drafting space does not permit detailing. For more information contact the author by the e-mail you will find in the article)	30 students 32.25% They obtained a score of <b>56 points</b>	70	1 girl student 1.07 % Obtained a score of <b>63 points</b>	85	3 students 3.22% They obtained a score of <b>39 points</b>	15	2 girl students 21.51% They obtained a score of <b>46 points</b>	30
	20 students 21.51% Obtained a score of <b>50 points</b>		1 girl student 1.07 % Obtained a score of <b>58 points</b>	70	-	-	17 girl students 18.27% Obtained a score of <b>52 points</b>	50
	15 students 16.12% Obtained a score of <b>44 points</b>		3 girl students 3.23% Obtained a score of <b>52 points</b>	50	-	-	1 girl student 1.07% Obtained a score of <b>41 points</b>	15
<b>Caption</b> score - minimum - maximum score: * Boys (B.) = 39 points minimum / 15 percentiles – 61 maximum points / 85 percentiles * Girls (F.) = 41 points minimum / 15 percentiles- 63 maximum points / 85 percentiles ≠ recorded score difference	65 students- 69.89 %	≠ 40	5 girl students 5.37 % ≠ 10- 30 percentiles	≠ 35	3 students- 3.23 %	≠ 0	20 girl-students 21.51 %	≠ 35

Through the recording of data in tables, we may observe that we have two groups:

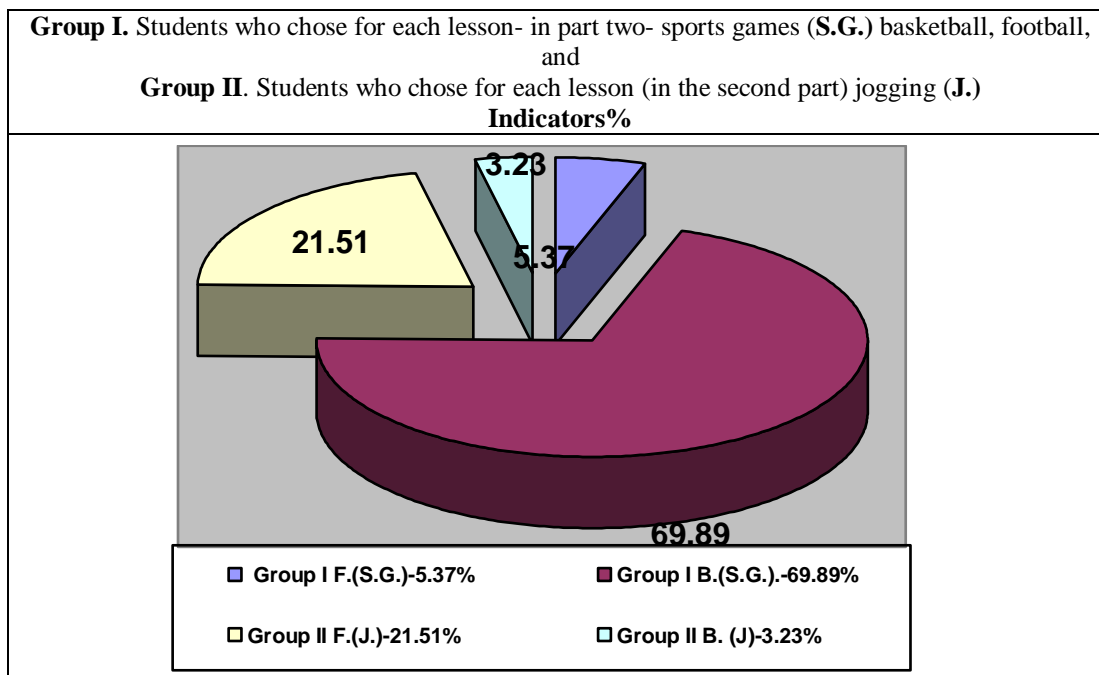
**Group I.** Students who chose for each lesson, in its second part, sports games (basketball, football), in a number of 70 students, meaning a percentage of 75.26% from the total, as following:

- 5 girls = 5.37 %, who obtained a score between **52 points – corresponding to 50 percentiles and 63 points - corresponding to 85 percentiles;**
- 65 boys = 69.89 % who obtained a score between **44 points – corresponding to 30**

**percentiles and 56 points - corresponding to 70 percentiles.**

**Group II.** Students who chose for each lesson, in its second part, jogging, in a number of 23 students, meaning a percentage of 24.74% from the total, as following:

- 3 boys= 3.23 % who obtained a score of **39 points – corresponding to 15 percentiles**
- 20 girls= 21.51 % who obtained a score between **41 points – corresponding to 15 percentiles and 52 points – corresponding to 50 percentiles.**



**Graph No.1. Representative chart for presenting by comparison the two groups of students**  
**Group I.** Students who chose for each lesson- in part two- sports games (S.G.) basketball, football, and  
**Group II.** Students who chose for each lesson (in the second part) jogging (J.)

### Discussions

For the research, we started from the hypothesis according to which in the top of the pyramid we have the updating of the self, in order to have the so-called peak experiences, which are generally accompanied by happiness or intense joy, that may be experienced intensely especially where sports games with goals scoring are practiced, meaning with the finalization and obtaining immediate satisfaction, phenomenon which triggers those intense feelings named peak experiences. In their absence we do not have the triggering effect for peak experiences and the self upgrade. The present research has been undertaken on a group of 93 students (68 Boys-73.11%; 25 Girls-26.89%), randomly chosen (capable for physical effort) and who, at least theoretically, have the same level of education. From the 93 students, in the second part of the lesson – 70 subjects systematically practice a chosen sports game and the other 23 subjects prefer the alternative of jogging for a physical exercise.

We mention that the university module has 90 minutes and two parts. The first part of the lesson is common and contains elements from the field of walking and running exercises, and is assisted by a

professor, and in the second part of the lesson, students have the right to choose the type of physical activity they want to practice, therefore, from the total of 93 students involved in our research – 70 subjects, a percentage of 75.27%, systematically practiced a sports game chosen during each module, while the rest of 23 subjects, a percentage of 24.73%, preferred to jog as a physical activity, these data being recorded after the implementation of the questionnaire. Important! – The research undertaken for the “Study regarding the connection between sports games and peak experiences for students” described is a research which aims, in the present moment, to be an observation study, this being the reason why the number of subjects is not very large, and the objectives are not very many, due to the fact that it represents a first step for a larger study in the future. “Maslow presupposed that, after satisfying certain basic needs, people would search to satisfy higher needs.” (Janda, 2012, p.214). These higher needs which lead to peak experiences may be satisfied, we believe, in a constructive / creative manner, through activities that induce pleasure-satisfaction, immediate, profound and to upgrade their self, which at this age is very important. For the



so-called peak experiences, which are regularly accompanied by happiness/joy, we believe that can be lived with intensity, where sports games are practiced and the phenomenon "I stand out, I am somebody!" is present, as well as the action of scoring a goal. Outside the sports game a similar experience is not possible, because the triggering phenomenon of "I stand out, I am somebody!" is not present, therefore the upgrade of the self is not triggered as well, in order to have the so-called peak experiences, which are regularly accompanied by happiness or joy. Before implementing the questionnaire, students were told that it is confidential, that they do not have to write their names on the paper and that it is not an IQ test. Then, they learned that the questionnaire is entitled "Live extatic moments!", and that it contains 70 items at which subjects have to answer with true or false, at their choice. They were not given a limited working time. Also, they were explained that it is a valid and verified questionnaire and that it pertains to Janda Louis, from the book "Twenty four Personality tests" (2012 p. 206-212). Scoring, norming and the score granted for the chosen answers was made in the following manner: in the book of Janda (2012, p.,213-214) there is a chart for scoring answers, which students used in order to discover the points obtained after the completion of the questionnaire. Together with the professor, they completed on the paper as following: the professor with a scoring paper in his hand asked the students to calculate their score, adding a point for questions where they answered identically with the professor, and identically with the answer from the scoring chart (p. 213)

Example: For question no. 1. "I have never had an experience that made me extremely happy and that, at least for the moment, to discard a big part of the perplexity and confusion." For this question the subject answers with true or false. If he/she answered with false, according to the scoring chart, then he/she receives a point for the first point, and if the answer is true, then the score is 0, because it differs from the scoring chart, and so on until question number 70. At the end, point are added, taking into consideration each individual score, and percentiles shall be calculated, after indications given in the book of Janda L., 2012, p. 214). from the total of 93 students involved in our research – 70 subjects, a percentage of 75.27%, systematically practiced a sports game chosen during each module, while the rest of 23 subjects, a percentage of 24.73%, preferred to jog as a physical activity, these data being recorded in Table no. 1

It would be important to emphasize, before making the analysis and data interpretation that in the field literature, as we mentioned above, all the attention has been focused on the following factors: the need of self upgrading "... because a man has to be what he wants to be..." and peak experiences, which, according to Maslow, are "Feelings of unlimited opening horizons, ... the feeling of being simultaneously stronger and more helpless than you have ever been, the feeling of ..., wonder and adoration, the feeling of loss in time and space with the conviction that in the end something valuable and important has happened, because the subject was, more or less, transformed and strengthened in daily life by such an experience..., because self-upgrading is, also, characterized as having peak experiences." ([www.e-psiho.ro/tag/experiente-de-varf](http://www.e-psiho.ro/tag/experiente-de-varf), Posted by Psiholog Psihot... at 23 September, 2012 - 12:19, p.1) taking into consideration that all these statements and data recorded in Table and Graph no.1, we performed an analysis of the results obtained in our research, according to which the two categories of students (Group I and Group II; B.) present both similarities and differences, namely:

- Students of Group I are students who chose for each lesson, in its second part, sports games (basketball, football), these having high scores, according to the "Scoring and norming scale", and according to the interpretation, as following: 65 boys, meaning a percentage of 69.89 % who obtained a score between 44 points – corresponding to 30 percentiles and 56 points - corresponding to 70 percentiles. Only 30 students, 32.25%, obtained a score of 56 points, presupposing that these are in the peak of the hierarchy for the self-upgrading, and are part of the same category of people who need personal development, as they shall never suffer from anxiety "...thus allowing them to be exceptional in their judgement... and they can use their extremely high level of psychological functioning to succeed in almost every domain" (according to Janda L., 2012, p. 215), aspect which confirms the hypothesis according to which peak experiences may be lived in many situations if they have a triggering mechanism and are emphasized during sports games, due to the fact that the emotion can be found where sports game produces a favorable environment for self-upgrading, through positive emotions able to transform up to an intense experience.

- Students from Group II. Students who chose for each lesson, in its second part, jogging, in a number of 23 students, meaning a percentage of 24.74% from the total, who obtained a score of 39 points –





corresponding to 15 percentiles and 52 points – corresponding to 50 percentiles. Only 17 girls, 18.27 % obtained a score of 52 points and 50 percentiles, thus confirming, according to Janda L. (2012), that these people are solitary, more docile, slightly self-sufficient, but open to experiences and with great chances of living peak moments, under the condition that these bring a plus in everyday life, probably modifying their lifestyle. In our research, the maximum score on the scale was 61 points for boys

### Conclusions

➤ Everywhere and simultaneously, inseparable peak experiences can be lived especially where sports game holds supremacy and through the reflections it possessed upgrades the self by executing probably of the harmony between the physical-mental-spirit.

➤ In simple activities of running, jogging, which we consider recreational activities and for physical maintenance, these triggering effects for peak experiences do not appear, due to the lack of competition.

➤ For the research, we started from the hypothesis according to which in the top of the pyramid we have the updating of the self, in order to have the so-called peak experiences, which are generally accompanied by happiness or intense joy, which may be experienced intensely especially where sports games with goals scoring are practiced, meaning with the finalization which triggers those intense feelings of satisfaction, hence peak experiences.

➤ Taking into consideration that the activity performed by students is specific to the Physical Education lesson, we consider that only perseverance and the stability that one gains when playing team sports games leads at a certain moment to self-

and 63 points for girls, for this score 85 percentiles are correspondent, but the above mentioned score was not met by any of the category of the studied subjects, reason for which we believe that this score would be closer for subjects who did or are doing performance sports, but were not present in our researched group. We do not have a confirmation for our statement, therefore this subject is to be further researched in the future, in another study, thus remaining an open matter for field specialists.

upgrading, which is characterized as a frequent trigger of peak experiences (according to the results from Table and Graph no. 1).

➤ According to the answers given at the questionnaire and to the recorded data, we may state that peak experiences may be lived in many situations if they have a triggering mechanism, though in our case we believe that it emphasizes during sports games, because it is certain that emotion may be found where sports game holds the supremacy and upgrades one's self through positive emotions, transforming this emotion to the intense feeling of joy, with the reach of a triggering peak of the so-called peak experiences, experiences which appear to miss or which are surpassed in cyclic sports games.

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