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## INTRINSIC VERSUS EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION FOR LEISURE TIME SPORTS ACTIVITIES AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

*Aim.* The aim of this article is to investigate how physical education plays a significant role in sport performance of students and performance athletes. Physical education plays an important role in the preparation of students and athletes and in helping them to develop and improve their physical abilities, such as strength, agility, speed and endurance. These capacities are essential for sports performance, regardless of the sport practiced. Through physical education, athletes also learn about techniques and tactics specific to their sport, improving their skills and creating opportunities to excel in competitions.

*Keywords:* physical education, competition, questionnaire, athletes, motivation.

### Introduction

Recent studies have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic had a strong impact on reducing the frequency of leisure time sport and exercise (LTSE) (Jaskulska et al., 2022)

The results of these studies suggested that the impact was stronger in the case of female participants in comparison with male participants, and in the case of older people compared with younger people (Mutz & Reiners, 2021).

### Objectives

The present study aimed to explore the current attendance level of leisure time sport activities compared with the attendance level of sport activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and before the pandemic. In addition, in case of a change, the aim was to explore for which category of adults the change was more important);

Another objective of the study, equally important, was to identify the complex motivation factors for leisure sport activities (intrinsic or extrinsic) in a sample of participants who participated in LTSE activities as fitness exercises.

### Research questions

1. What is the current attendance level for fitness exercises in the current period in comparison with the previous pandemic period?
2. For which gender was the change in the attendance level of fitness exercises more important?
3. Which type of motivation is stronger for adults practicing fitness exercises, intrinsic motivation (enjoyment and/or competence) or extrinsic (appearance, social and/or health)?
- 4.

### Methods

- The instrument used in the survey was the Motivation for Physical Activity Measure (M-PAM) (Ryan et al., 1997), which included the following sections: Enjoyment (7 items); Appearance (6 items); Social (5 items); Fitness/Health (5 items); Competence (7 items), followed by a section that tested the changes in the habits of physical training (3 questions), and finally a socio-demographic section;
- The first five sections (focused on motivation factors) presented a series of assumptions followed by Likert scales (from 1-total disagree to 5-totally agree);
- The data were collected via an online survey in Google Forms (25.02-5.03.2023) while the sample was a sample of availability;
- 91 valid responses were collected (from which 27 men and 64 women).

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**Results: sociodemographics (i) (age, education, employment and relationship status)**

**What age range do you fall into?**

92 responses

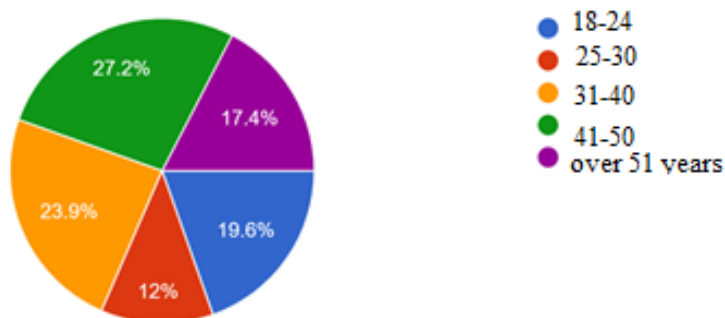


Figure 1. Age range

**What is the last level of education completed?**

92 responses

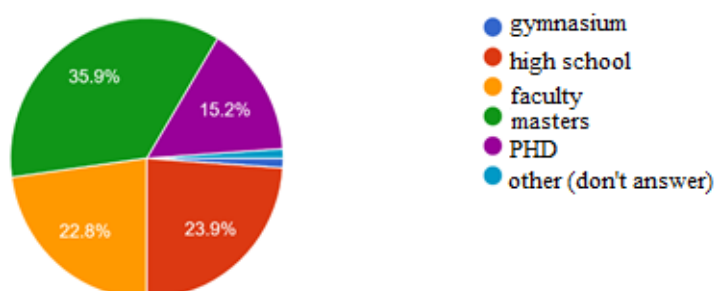


Figure 2. Completed education level

**What is the working regime?**

92 responses

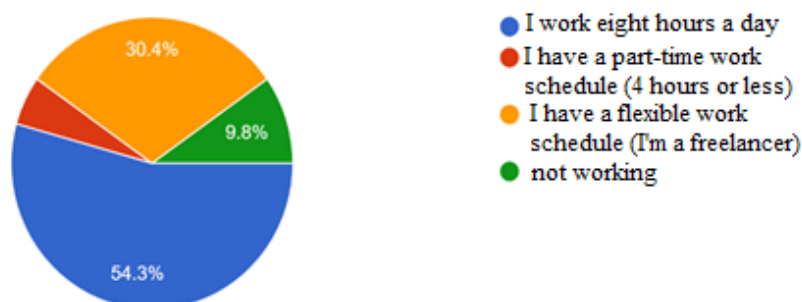


Figure 3. Work regime

### What is your relationship status?

92 responses

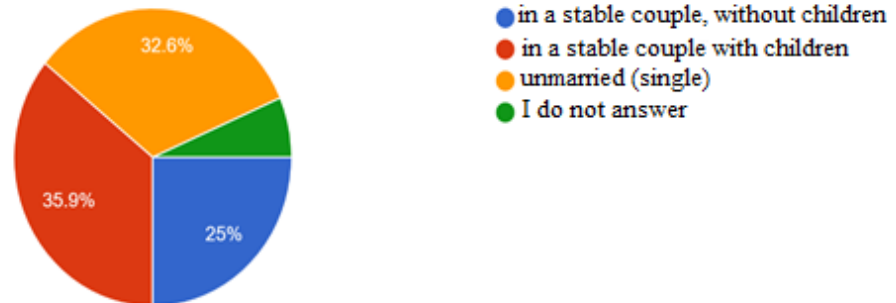


Figure 4. Relational status

### Results: access to infrastructure (residence and distance to the fitness room)

#### Where you live?

92 responses

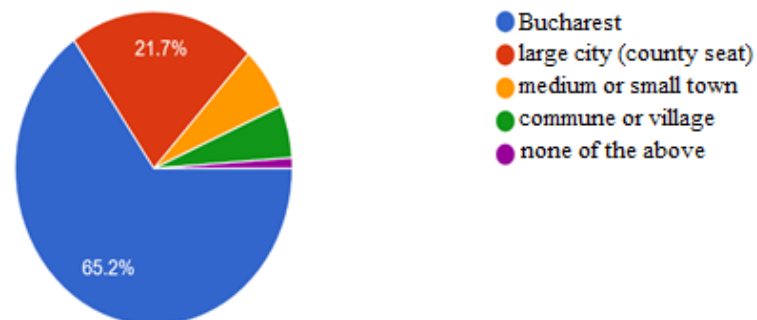


Figure 5. Where you live

More than half of the respondents live in Bucharest, while the other 20% live in a big city.

### How far is the nearest gym from your current home?

91 responses

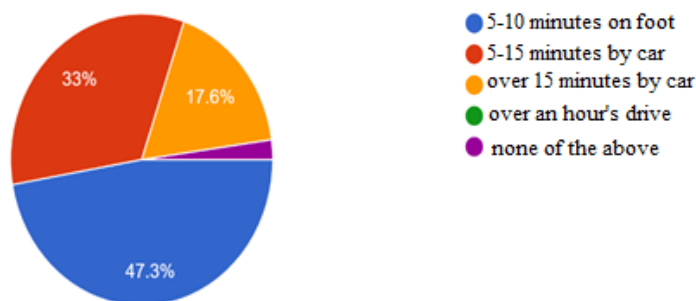


Figure 6. Distance from the fitness room to the current home

For almost half of the respondents, the fitness room is within walking distance;  
 For one-third of respondents, the fitness room is at minutes of driving

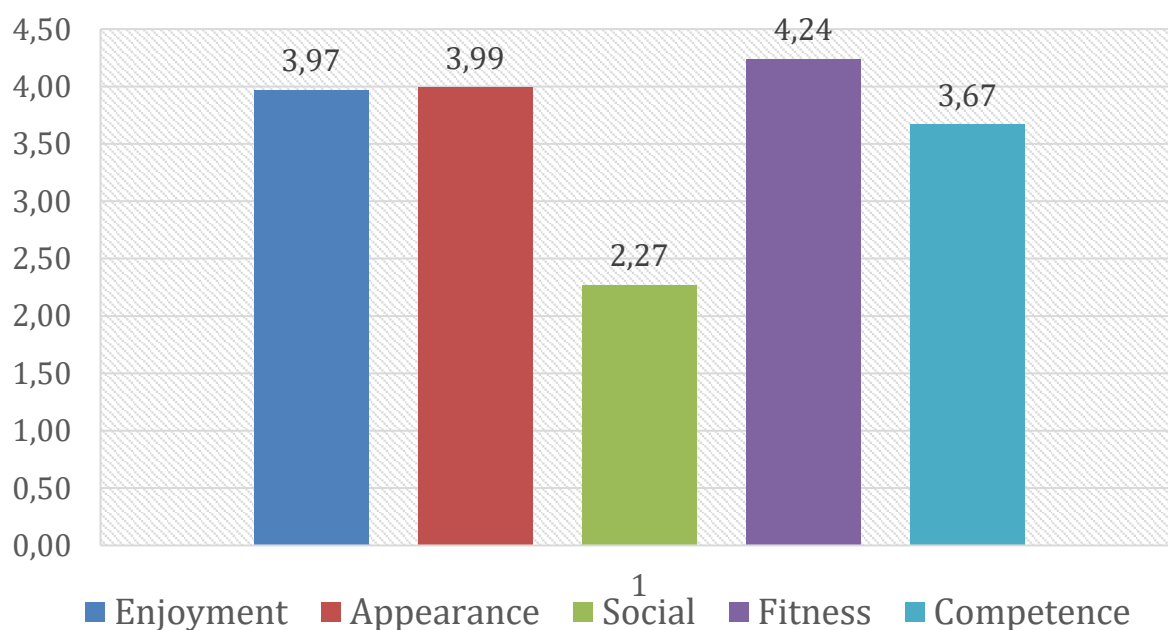


Figure 7. Comparison of the categories of motivation factors

The social factors of motivation are weak in comparison with other categories.  
 Health/fitness factors present the highest level of intensity.

At the same time, the level of extrinsic factors (appearance, social and health) indicates that motivation is mainly extrinsic.

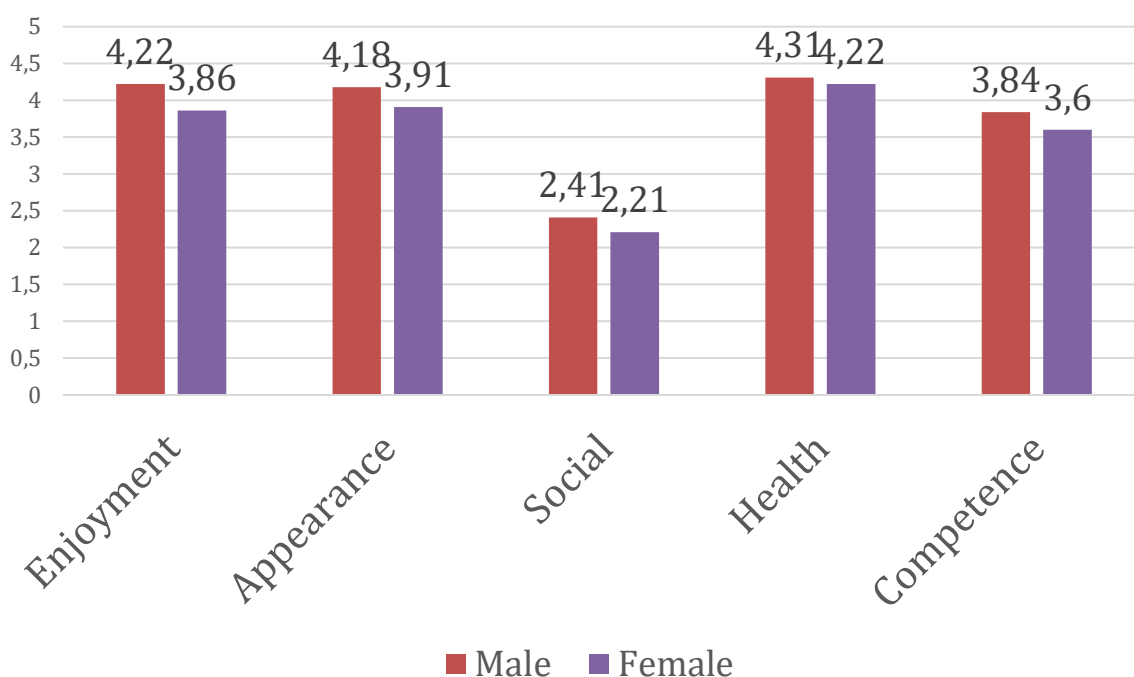


Figure 8. Motivation factors (gender)

Men present higher levels of motivation in all five categories compared with women. The difference is higher in the first two categories: enjoyment (intrinsic) and appearance (extrinsic).

#### Attendance to fitness exercises

How often do you exercise at the gym these days?

92 responses

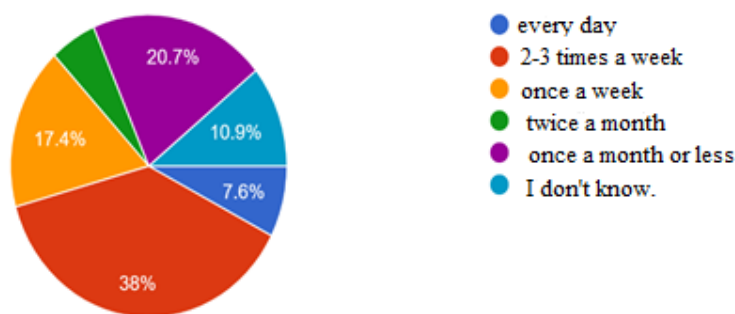


Figure 9. Exercises at the fitness room

Attendance is balanced, 38% of respondents attending the fitness room 2-3 times/week, 7.6% every day, and 17.4% one time in a week.

Men present a better attendance compared with women: 18 out of 27 men in the sample attended the fitness room every day or 2-3 times in a week, while in the sample of women, only 23 out of 67 (less than a half) were in this situation.

#### Improvement in attendance compared with previous periods

Compared to the situation during the pandemic, the number and frequency of my workouts at the gym have improved.

92 responses

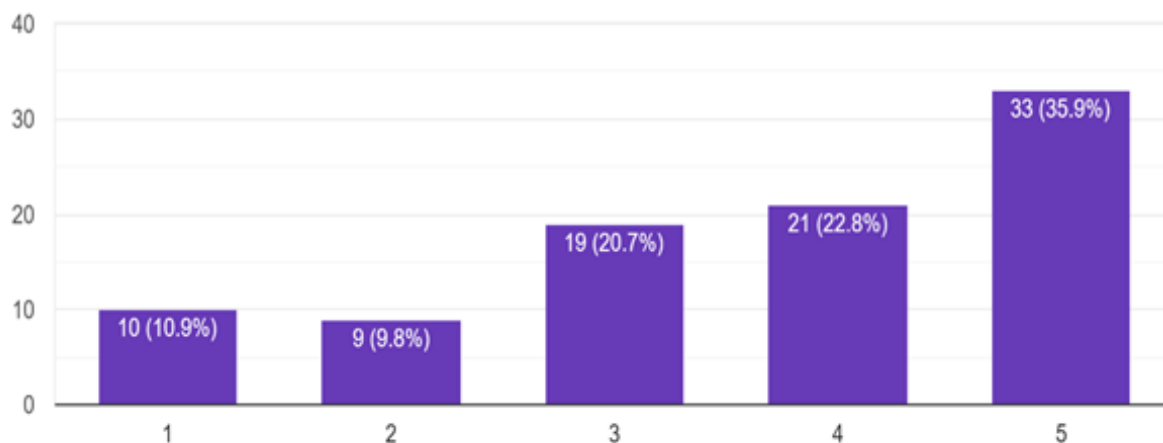


Figure 10. Situation during the pandemic

Respondents share the belief that their training in the fitness room improved in comparison with the pandemic situation (more than a half of respondents agree or totally agree with this idea).

Compared to pre-pandemic, the number and frequency of my gym workouts have improved.

92 responses

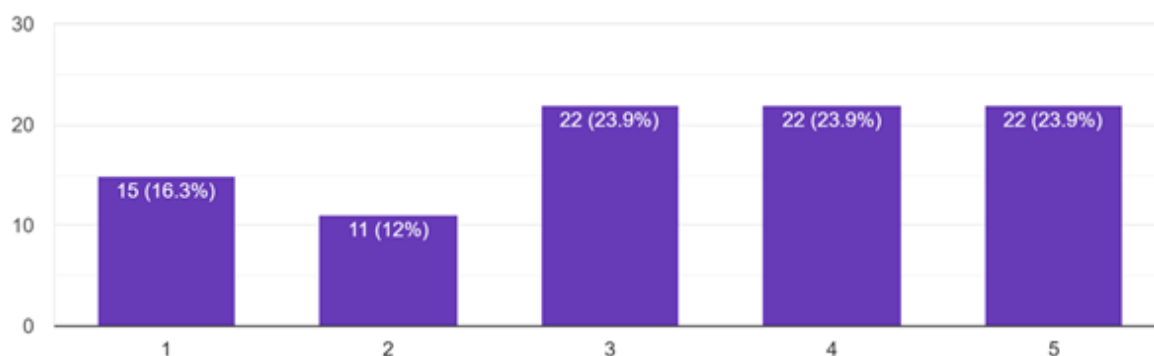


Figure 11. Situation before the pandemic

When compared to the situation before the pandemic, the perceived improvement was not as high as in the previous case, but almost half of the respondents (48%) still believed that their attendance improved.

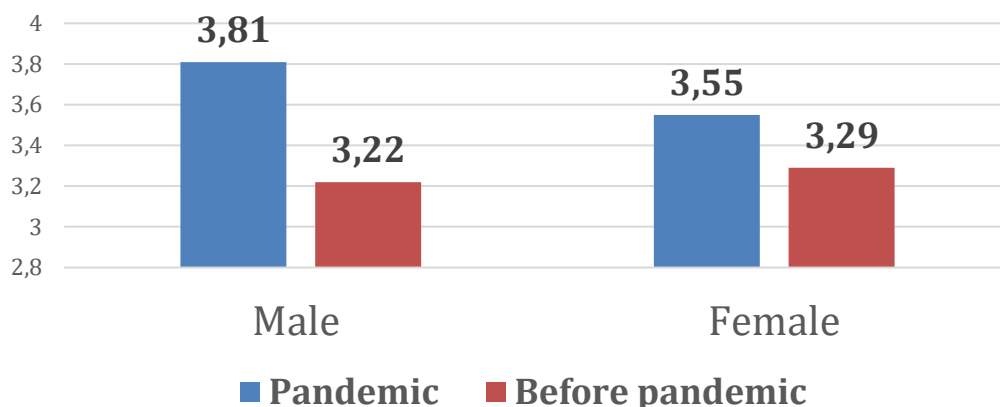


Figure 12. Improvement in attendance compared with previous periods according to gender

- The perceived improvement in attendance compared with the pandemic period is stronger in the case of men;
- The perceived improvement in attendance compared with the period before the pandemic was almost equal for men and women;
- Interpretation of the results;
- RQ1: the respondents perceived an improvement in their attendance in the fitness room compared with the previous pandemic period and a smaller improvement compared with the period before pandemic;
- RQ2: according to gender, men reported a higher level of improvement in attendance than women; also, men presented a higher level of attendance and a higher level of motivation to all the five categories;
- RQ3: the social motivation factors were the weakest in the complex of five categories of motivation factors (enjoyment, appearance, social, health and competence); however, extrinsic motivation seems to be stronger than the intrinsic motivation.

#### Limitations of the research

- The size of the sample was limited to 91 people and to a collection of data according to the availability;
- Although the sample was balanced in many respects (age, education, employment, relationship status), it was not balanced in two aspects: residence (Bucharest and big cities) and gender (women double than men). Therefore, the study should be expanded to a larger sample and more balanced;
- The online survey presents disadvantages, such as the lack of answers and explanations to respondents in case they do not understand the items.

#### Conclusions

- This period presents an improvement in physical activity and higher motivation of adults of all ages in all categories of motivation factors;
- Extrinsic motivation was more intense than intrinsic motivation, but this finding should be confirmed in future research; However, the social perception of sport and physical activity should be improved to encourage engagement in these activities among a larger sample of adults;
- In addition, the infrastructure and accessibility of sport halls should be improved to attract more adults into practicing sport or other forms of physical training.

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