

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF OLDER STUDENTS DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a study of the physical activity of older students (15 to 18 years old) during the lockdown period. It analyses whether students' physical activity changed during the lockdown period after the introduction of certain restrictions in a survey of 150 respondents at the General Education and Vocational Training Centre. Summarising the results of the survey, it can be stated that one third (30%) of the respondents spent three to four hours a week with friends and family during the lockdown. The respondents also actively participated in volunteering: as many as 30% devoted some time to this activity. It also turned out that a third of respondents (30%) spent between three and four hours at a computer. The study found that physical activity did not decrease during lockdown, only the nature of activities and the physical activity changed. It should be noted that those students who were active in sports prior to the announcement of the lockdown restrictions remained physically active.

KEY WORDS: *physical activity, older students, lockdown period.*

JEL CODES: I10, I12, I20.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15181/rfds.v37i2.2436>

Introduction

In scientific literature (Carlson *et al.*, 2015), physical activity (PA) is defined as: 1) movement caused by skeletal muscles, during which energy consumption is higher than at rest; 2) any expression of movement of the human body that causes higher metabolism: exercise, preparation for competitions, participation in competitions, household chores, leisure activities that require physical effort. So we can say that physical activity is any movement of the body that significantly increases energy expenditure. Physical activity is divided into employment and leisure activity. Physical activity means daily activities (such as walking, hard work at home or in the garden), or leisure activities (such as swimming, dancing, cycling, various exercises in sports centres).

Meanwhile, the term physical exercise describes planned and defined activities that consist of repetitive body movements designed to improve or maintain the body's capacity (e.g. strength training) (Warburton, 2015). This broad definition covers all forms of physical activity: leisure-time physical activity (including most sports and dancing), physical activity at work or at home, and physical activity for transport purposes (EU Physical Activity Guidelines, 2008). Physical fitness is the ability of a person to perform certain physical work as efficiently as possible. Physical fitness is a prerequisite for improving health and physical fitness. It depends on the environment, lifestyle (diet, physical activity, motivation), and innate characteristics. It is characterised by the power of the circulatory and respiratory systems, the peculiarities of the metabolism and the nervous system, motor skills, muscle strength and endurance, and body composition (Stonkus, 2002; Jankauskienė, 2008). Although physical performance is more the result of physical activity, it is also affected by adequate sleep duration.

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Many studies (Carlson *et al.*, 2012; Stathokostas, 2012; Cutt *et al.*, 2017; Bijnen *et al.*, 2018; Stathokostas *et al.*, 2012; Adaškevičienė, 2004) show that regular physical activity contributes to mental and physical health and social well-being. The physical activity of young people is the foundation for further human health. S. Stankus (2008) states that people who live a physically active life are less likely to experience emotional and psychological problems and are happier. Physical activity requires good health and good conditions, so it is interesting to see how the physical activity of older students (15 to 18 years old) changed during the lockdown period. The scientific problem detailed in the problematic question is: how did the nature, extent and frequency of physical activity of older students change during the Covid-19 lockdown?

Tasks:

- To theoretically examine the assumptions, changes and health effects of physical activity in older students.
- To determine the nature, extent and frequency of physical activity of older students during lockdown.

Work methods: review of scientific literature; quantitative research, questionnaire survey.

1. Theoretical substantiation of the research

There are at least five key dimensions (quantities) of physical activity that are specifically inversely related to specific diseases and are characterised by certain physiological parameters: energy consumption during movement related to the body's energy balance; aerobic capacity to the health and condition of the heart.

Physical fitness is the ability of a person to perform certain physical tasks as efficiently as possible. Physical fitness is a prerequisite for improving health and physical fitness. It depends on the environment, lifestyle (diet, physical activity, motivation), and innate characteristics. It is characterised by the power of the circulatory and respiratory systems, the peculiarities of the metabolism and the nervous system, motor skills, muscle strength and endurance, and body composition (Stonkus, 2002). Although physical performance is the result of physical activity, it is also affected by adequate sleep duration.

The following health-related characteristics of physical fitness are distinguished:

- aerobic capacity;
- flexibility;
- muscle endurance;
- muscle strength;
- coordination skills;
- composition of body mass (Peterson, 2017).

In a scientific context, it is stated (Abbott, 2016) that active physical activity reduces the risk of developing chronic diseases, and helps to overcome stress and depression. Physical activity and exercise are especially important when doing mental work, or when a lot of time is spent sitting. According to Hardman (2011), physical education, sport and physical activity are important, irreplaceable phenomena for the physical, cognitive, functional, sensorimotor and psychosocial development of people of all ages, especially in childhood and adolescence. The European Parliament's resolution on the role of sport in education (2007) emphasises that the knowledge, skills and understanding developed in school prepare people for life.

As we can see, physical activity is one of the many factors that have a positive impact on health. Scientific literature (Araki *et al.*, 2009; Beekman *et al.*, 2009) states that total physical activity (PA) in older people includes leisure PA (walking, playing games, dancing, gardening, swimming, skiing, etc), transport or mobility PA (such as walking or cycling), professional PA if the person is still working, housekeeping PA (washing, cooking, window cleaning, vacuuming, etc).

It is argued that there is plenty of scientific evidence on the impact of appropriate teaching in the physical education process, gaining a knowledge of the world and of oneself, understanding the rules of a game, the ability to respect others, cooperating and competing, understanding the differences between success and

failure, and morality and ethics and unfair treatment. The Strategy for the Promotion of Physical Activity of the Lithuanian Population for 2008–2020 envisages the popularisation and promotion of physical activity in various sections of the population, systematically raising public awareness, promoting the perception that physical activity and sportiness are a precondition for and a part of culture (Davi, 2011).

Summarising the scientific literature (Peterson, 2017; Davi, 2011), it can be stated that there is plenty of evidence that physical activity has a positive effect (in terms of prevention and treatment) on depression, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and other mental and behavioural diseases, it has a significant positive effect on anxiety and nervous tension and the emotions, improves the mood and perception of personal well-being, improves the subjective assessment of health, strengthens personal self-esteem, improves the self-image and the external image, improves sleep quality, etc. Thus, physical activity can be offered as a positive, promising and long-term means of addressing the mental health problems of older people: 1) as a means of treating individual mental and behavioural disorders; 2) as a means of preventing individual mental and behavioral disorders; 3) as a means of improving the mental and physical condition of patients with mental and behavioural illnesses; and 4) as a means to greater social and psychological well-being.

The following factors affect students' physical activity:

Psychological factors

Research on physical activity motivation directly links the motivation of adults and the elderly to a person's level of physical activity (Biddle *et al.*, 2018; Kaplan, 2016). One of the most significant factors limiting physical activity in the elderly is lack of motivation (i.e. low motivation), or a complete lack of motivation (Clark *et al.*, 2011). Other equally important factors in this group that have a very significant influence on the choice of a particular physical activity and its practical application are self-confidence, personal self-esteem, and the perception of the effectiveness of one's activity (or self-efficacy) (Barnett *et al.*, 2012; Larson, 2016). The term 'self-efficacy' (a brief explanation is given below), frequently used in scientific literature, was introduced by Barry (2018) in his personality socio-cognitive learning theory. It is the ability to perceive one's own abilities, to behave appropriately in certain specific situations, and the extent to which one feels able to perform specific tasks in one's own situation, overcoming various difficulties in life. Thus, people who value their effectiveness, choose more complex, more difficult and riskier goals, but also make more effort to achieve them, which only increases their chances of success and raises their self-esteem (Dadelienė, 2006).

Social factors

In general, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds are at a significantly higher risk of being affected by a variety of psychosocial variables that have a direct impact on morbidity and mortality in these groups (Kaplan *et al.*, 2016; Andrews, 2011). This is linked to the global social redistribution of power and resources and social exclusion in society. These psychosocial variables include:

- lack of social relations and social support;
- long-term negative effects on a person's character: lack of optimism, self-esteem, self-confidence, a poorer appreciation of the meaning of personal life, anger and hostility towards the surroundings;
- long-term (permanent) and short-term psychological stress in life and work.

Research confirms that various social factors significantly affect a person's physical activity throughout life (especially in old age), regardless of their living environment (Brown, 2015; Marengoni *et al.*, 2008; Zuożienė, 2010). In the scientific literature (Walsh, 2011; Lohman *et al.*, 2009), social, demographic and economic factors are often grouped together.

Environmental factors

Personal security and the adaptation of the physical environment are two important complementary factors that significantly affect the participation of the elderly in physical activity. For example, footpaths, cycle paths and roads, their condition and quality, the distance from heavy traffic, the abundance of parks and recreational areas, patrolling police officers, and the presence of toilets, washrooms, kiosks, benches and adequate lighting, are all important environmental factors that support and promote physical activity in the elderly (Peterson, 2017; Muliarčikas *et al.*, 2007). The environment is a barrier to active leisure for the elderly who live in a cramped, urbanised and unsuitable urban environment, sometimes not only without a well-equipped park or playground, but even sidewalks in poor condition, or living in a village with no infrastructure at all.

The benefits of promoting a healthy lifestyle and physical activity should be seen as having a direct positive impact on people's overall well-being and health. The promotion of long-term healthy lifestyles and the development of social well-being should involve all stakeholders: 1) personal and public health institutions; 2) professionals in the field of sport and health; 3) as many athletes as possible. Promoting physical activity at the community level should include the widest possible range of efforts to change young people's attitudes and gradually adapt to the physical environment in which they spend most of their lives. It is also possible to change an established physically passive lifestyle in a targeted way. To this end, the widest possible range of information (impact) measures should be used to reach as many people as possible who are not members of various non-governmental (public) organisations or informal social groups: leaflets, lectures, advertisements, posters, campaigns, parties, radio and television programmes, various holidays and free events and activities, etc.

2. Results of the investigation of physical activity of older students during lockdown

Empirical research methodology. The study was conducted in 2020 and 2021 at Kretinga General Education School and Klaipėda Vocational Centre. A questionnaire survey was conducted remotely (during the lockdown period for Covid-19). The study involved 150 students (15 to 18 years). In the course of the empirical research, the data collection method was chosen: a questionnaire survey. The research questionnaire was prepared after conducting a review of scientific literature, analysing previous research, and based on theoretical conclusions.

Analysis of empirical research results. Analysing the answers of the respondents to the survey conducted during the lockdown period, the answers to the question 'How many hours per week did you go jogging?' were as follows: most (47%) said they ran for less than an hour, 13% of respondents spent from one to three hours running, 9% went running five to six hours a week, and 22% did not answer the question. As we can see from the results of the survey, none of the respondents ran for more than seven to nine hours during the week. The respondents were also asked 'How many total hours per week did you spend with friends and family (excluding those you live with)?' A total of 31% spent one to two hours with friends and family, 23% spent less than one hour.

The respondents were also asked how many times a week they engaged in their favourite activities. Given that the survey was conducted under lockdown conditions, this type of activity was also restricted. This is reflected clearly in the answers: 39% did not answer the question, 40% responded one hour, 15% responded two hours. Volunteering is a much more pressing issue in lockdown conditions. So respondents were asked how many hours a week they volunteered in total. The answers can be seen in Fig. 36. It should be noted that most respondents (30%) devoted some time to this activity, up to three or four hours, 30% of respondents allocated one or two hours, 19% of respondents allocated three or four hours, and 9% of respondents to the study said they spent more than nine hours per week volunteering.

When asked how much time respondents spent at a computer, the answers are as follows: analysing the data, we notice that the majority of respondents (30%) spent between three and four hours per week at a computer, 20% of respondents spent one to two hours, 19% spent nine and more hours, and 10% of respondents spent seven to eight hours. Respondents who spent nine hours or more at the computer were also found to

have chosen the following answers in other responses: walking slowly, never climbing mountains, playing tennis, changing physical health during lockdown, and so on. For the total number of hours per week spent on woodworking, handicrafts, drawing or other arts and crafts, the answers were as follows: 34% of respondents state that they engaged in woodworking, handicrafts, drawing or other arts and crafts from one to two hours per week, 19% of respondents allocated from three to four hours per week to these activities. A large part (24%) of the respondents did not answer this question).

Table 1 gives the statistical characteristics of the answers to the questions reflecting the activities of the respondents. The table contains questions that cover a variety of sporting activities, as well as sporting activities that may have been restricted during lockdown. During the survey, we were particularly interested in how much time respondents spent actively playing sports (swimming, running, cycling, etc). Analysing the survey data, it was found that 34% of respondents took an easy workout during the week for one or two hours, and 21% spent three or four hours playing sport.

Table 1. Statistical characteristics of the questions reflecting the activities of respondents

| Question | Stand. deviation | Coefficient asymmetry | Excess coefficient | Range | St.n./diap., perc. |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|
| How many hours a week did you do slow running? | ,500 | -0.10 | -2.00 | 1 | 50.0 |
| How many hours a week did you play basketball or football? | ,489 | 0.44 | -1.81 | 1 | 48.9 |
| How many hours a week in total did you work hard at home? | ,448 | 1.00 | -1.00 | 1 | 44.8 |
| How many hours per week did you do physical work? | ,367 | 1.86 | 1.46 | 1 | 36.7 |
| How many hours a week did you walk fast? | ,359 | 1.95 | 1.79 | 1 | 35.9 |
| How many hours a week did you walk? | ,850 | -0.27 | -0.49 | 3 | 28.3 |
| How many hours a week did you sprint for fun? | ,281 | 2.96 | 6.79 | 1 | 28.1 |
| How many hours per week did you ride a bicycle? | ,822 | 0.48 | -0.19 | 3 | 27.4 |
| How many hours per week did you do other activities, such as rowing or walking? | 1.156 | 0.73 | -0.04 | 5 | 23.1 |
| How many hours per week did you swim? | ,500 | -0.10 | -2.00 | 1 | 50.0 |
| How many hours a week did you do stretching or flexibility exercises? | ,473 | 0.70 | -1.52 | 2 | 47.3 |
| How many hours a week did you do yoga or gymnastic exercises? | ,448 | 1.00 | -1.00 | 1 | 44.8 |
| How many hours a week did you do aerobics or aerobic dancing? | ,421 | 1.29 | -0.33 | 1 | 42.1 |
| How many hours a week did you do a moderate or intense workout? | ,397 | 1.54 | 0.37 | 3 | 39.7 |
| How many total hours a week did you do a light workout? | ,388 | 1.64 | 0.68 | 1 | 38.8 |
| How many total hours a week did you do general exercises such as rhythmic gymnastics? | ,367 | 1.86 | 1.46 | 1 | 36.7 |
| Were you otherwise physically active? | ,850 | -0.27 | -0.49 | 3 | 28.3 |

The survey also found that respondents liked water sports, so 25% of respondents did water exercises during the week for the same amount of time. It was also found that respondents were actively involved in other sports: 34% of respondents spent one or two hours a week cycling, 28% did other aerobic activities, and 46% spent one or two hours a week doing stretching or flexibility exercises.

The survey of respondents showed that their physical activity decreased during lockdown: it was found that physical activity decreased by 31.3%. One third of respondents experienced a 10% reduction in physical

activity; for half of respondents, physical activity decreased by 19%; and physical activity more than halved for 2% of respondents to the study.

Respondents also mentioned the reasons for the decrease in physical activity:

- Have to comply with lockdown bans on attending organised gatherings (45%).
- I can't force myself to exercise at home because of a lack of company (24%).
- I can't exercise at home because I'm lazy (12 %).
- I do not have the conditions (space) to be physically active at home (8%).
- I do not exercise, I do not know how to exercise (4%).
- Deteriorating physical health (2%).
- I do not have the strength to exercise (2%).

Table 2. Physical activity during the lockdown period

| Activities | Per cent | Weekly activities (hours) |
|---|----------|---------------------------|
| How many hours per week did you do physical work? | 46.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you walk fast? | 46.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you walk? | 40.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you sprint for fun? | 38.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours per week did you cycle? | 38.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours per week did you do other aerobic activities, such as rowing or walking? | 38.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours per week did you swim? | 38.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you do stretching or flexibility exercises? | 34.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you do yoga or gymnastics exercises? | 34.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you do aerobics or aerobic dancing? | 34.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours a week did you do a moderate or intense workout? | 34.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours per week did you do a light workout? | 34.0 | 1–2 |
| How many hours per week do general exercises such as rhythmic gymnastics? | 32.0 | 1–2 |
| Were you otherwise physically active? | 30.0 | 3–4 |

The study found that due to lockdown restrictions respondents had to give up: communicating with family and friends (78%), travel (52%), sport (41%), walks (23%), sport in a gym (15%), activities in a hall of active activities (8%), taking the shuttle bus to the garden (5%), swimming in a swimming pool (3%). When respondents were asked what new physical activities they had taken up during lockdown, the answers were as follows: none (57%), sport online (29%), outdoor or outdoor exercise equipment (27%), sport at home (13%), walking (7%). Table 2 presents data (percentages, hours) on physical activity during the lockdown period.

The benefits of promoting a healthy lifestyle and physical activity should be seen as having a direct positive impact on the overall well-being and health of students. The activities analysed during the research are directly related to students' sports and physical activities, and contribute to their physical and psychological maturity.

Conclusion

Physical activity includes: 1) leisure-time physical activity: walking a dog, mushrooming, playing games, dancing, swimming, etc, in rare cases sports; 2) physical activity in transport or mobility: walking or cycling, etc; 3) professional (workplace) physical activity, if the person is retired; 4) physical activity in the household or farm: washing, cooking, floor washing, window cleaning, mowing grass, watering, weeding, digging, dusting, digging snow, etc. Young people who live an active life are less likely to have emotional and psychological problems and are happier because their physical health is significantly better compared

to those who are not physically active. The decrease in physical activity is determined by: physiological, psychological, social and environmental factors. Thus, physical activity promotes balance and coordination, improves general well-being and physiological functions, and avoids undesirable health disorders, such as being overweight, diabetes, osteoporosis, some forms of cancer, and so on.

The study has shown that older students (15 to 18 years) spent one to two hours a week doing physical activity during lockdown. Of the 21 physical activities mentioned in the questionnaire, the respondents noted 19 to which they devoted one or two hours a week. The bans that came into force during the lockdown restricted sports activities in sports clubs, swimming pools and group activities, so other physical activities and their frequency became more common: working at home, flexibility and stretching exercises, gardening, individual training, walks, etc. Summarising the results of the survey, it can be stated that one third (30%) of the respondents spent three to four hours a week with friends and family during the lockdown. The respondents also participated in volunteering, as many of the respondents devoted some time to this activity. It also turned out that a third of the respondents spent between three and four hours per week at a computer. It was also found that respondents were involved in other activities, as many respondents stated that they exercised. Almost half the respondents noted that they spent one or two hours working hard at home, and some of the respondents took an easy workout during the week for one or two hours, and 21% spent three or four hours playing sport. It should be noted that the people who participated in the survey also engaged in other sports, 34% of respondents spent one or two hours cycling during the week, 28% did other aerobic activities during the week, and 46% did one or two hours of stretching or flexibility exercises during the week.

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VYRESNIO AMŽIAUS MOKINIŲ FIZINIS AKTYVUMAS KARANTINO LAIKOTARPIU

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje keliamas probleminis klausimas, kaip pakito vyresnių moksleivių fizinio aktyvumo pobūdis, mastai ir dažnis COVID-19 karantino laikotarpiu? Išskelti šie uždaviniai: teoriškai išnagrinėti vyresnio amžiaus mokinių fizinio aktyvumo prielaidas, pokyčius ir poveikį sveikatai; nustatyti jų fizinio aktyvumo pobūdį, mastą ir dažnumą karantino laikotarpiu. Straipsnyje pristatomas atliktas vyresnio amžiaus mokinių (15–18 metų) fizinio aktyvumo tyrimas karantino laikotarpiu. Analizuojama, ar pakito jų fizinis aktyvumas karantino laikotarpiu įvedus tam tikrus ribojimus. Apklausta 150 respondentų (bendrojo ugdymo ir profesinio rengimo centre). Apibendrinant atlikto tyrimo rezultatus galima teigti, kad trečdalis (30 proc.) respondentų karantino laikotarpiu 3–4 val. per savaitę praleido su draugais ir šeima. Be to, respondentai aktyviai užsiėmė savanoryste, net 30 proc. šiai veiklai skyrė nemažai laiko. Išryškėjo, kad trečdalis respondentų (30 proc.) prie kompiuterio praleido nuo 3 iki 4 val. per savaitę. Nustatyta, kad respondentai aktyviai užsiėmė ir kitomis veiklomis, net 34 proc. teigė aktyviai sportavę. Beveik pusė jų (46 proc.) pažymėjo, kad dirbo fizinį darbą namuose nuo 1 iki 2 valandų; 34 proc. respondentų 1–2 valandas per savaitę treniravosi; 21 proc. – sportuodami praleido 3–4 val. Pažymėtina, kad apklausoje dalyvavę asmenys užsiėmė ir kitu sportu: 34 proc. apklaustųjų teigė 1–2 val. per savaitę važinėję dviračiu, 28 proc. – atlikę kitas aerobines veiklas, 46 proc. – 1–2 val. per savaitę darę tempimo ar lankstumo pratimus. Nustatyta, kad fizinis aktyvumas karantino laikotarpiu nesumažėjo, pakito tik veiklos ir fizinio aktyvumo pobūdis. Pažymėtina, kad aktyviai iki karantino ribojimų paskelbimo sportavę mokiniai ir toliau išliko fiziškai aktyvūs.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *fizinis aktyvumas, vyresni mokiniai, karantino laikotarpis.*

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: I10, I12, I20.

Received: 2022-04-10

Revised: 2022-05-09

Accepted: 2022-05-20