
SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES, THEIR ROLE AND IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BASED ON EXAMPLES SELECTED IN RZESZÓW AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Jarosław HERBERT^{ABCD}, Beata A. PRUKOP^{AEF}

Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow

Keywords:

- physical activity
- recreation and leisure
- health
- SPA and wellness

Abstract:

Introduction: Sports and recreation facilities are becoming more important in the development of physical activity. This study follows a line of research on the sustainable development of physical activity in dense urban environments. **Study Objective:** This study discusses the role of sports and recreation facilities and how they promote healthy lifestyle, impact the physical activity of the modern community, namely the residents of Rzeszów, the capital of Podkarpackie province in Poland, and in the nearby towns surrounding it. **Sources and Methodology:** In addition to analysing the available literature in the field, research was carried out based on an original questionnaire in selected sports and recreation facilities. **Results:** The survey demonstrated that, among other results, both younger and older generations are increasingly aware of the benefits of the physical activity, because it makes them feel healthier, relaxed and stronger when facing everyday challenges. **Conclusions:** Numerous sports and recreation facilities have become destinations not only for business people and managers but just about anybody looking to improve one's fitness and health, including students, elderly and the unemployed.

INTRODUCTION

Doing sports and regular exercises of any type is the perfect way to spend one's free time actively, although certainly not the only option. Physical movement improves health and fitness, but not only: it has positive influence on one's mood, as well. Unfortunately, regardless of such intangible benefits people tend to choose more passive solutions in their lifestyle. However, a physical activity programme can be customised so that everyone can perform exercises without excessive effort while still benefiting from the effect of relaxation and other advantages, both in health and in one's emotional life.

Physical activity is among the crucial factors that stimulate a more harmonious and comprehensive development of a young body.

According to J. Gracz and T. Sankowski [2007: 363], "in the times of such intensive development of technical knowledge, more often than not faced with reduced physical effort because of the transformed nature of the work and ways of movement in the environment, there is an urgent need to supplement the shortage of the physical movement by introducing various types of physical activity in one's free time. There should be no doubts that the physical activity not only stimulates the morphic and functional development of the human body, but also has great impact on the balancing of internal systems as well as the overall wellness and the feeling of satisfaction."

The key period when healthy behaviours can set is the period of childhood and adolescence. It is likewise important to ensure promotion of the appropriate behaviours

among people able to influence attitudes and behaviours of children and teenagers. Such health promotion and education during the childhood and the adolescence should bring strong support for the process of shaping healthy behaviours, and strongly counteract risky behaviours throughout the entire human life.

In 1980s, sports and recreation facilities were introduced in reputable hotels. The primary features of the facilities included a small indoor swimming-pool, a sauna, a sunbed, a weight-lifting room and a SPA/wellness club. Today, the facilities have turned into stand-alone venues that can be quite popular in the community [Błądek 2001: 23].

Such facilities provide a range of public services in the field of physical culture to provide opportunities for physical and mental development, improvement of one's talents and skills, as well as reconditioning and bringing people back to health.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study was aimed at identifying opinions among the surveyed respondents about whether or not they recommend using the services of sports and recreation facilities and whether or not participation in courses available at such facilities bring any advantage to one's health.

The surveyed question was: Do sports and recreation facilities impact the overall health and its promotion among the community?

The survey was administered in March – April 2016. The pool of respondents was derived from people who were actually available in such facilities when surveyors visited them, insofar as they volunteered to provide answers to the survey questions.

The pool included 240 people. In each of the six facilities, there were 40 people asked to participate in the survey.

The study covered six facilities across the municipality of Rzeszów, each offering a range of courses intended to help in healthy lifestyle and wellness.

The study method has therefore been a survey-based study.

In the survey, there were mostly closed-end questions with ready options prepared by the author.

The survey consisted of 11 questions. The study instrument used to gather materials has therefore been an original survey developed by the author of the study.

Results were presented as charts and additional descriptions that covered the highest and the lowest values in the responses.

STUDY RESULTS

The study covered 240 people. The respondents were assigned to six age groups. The biggest age group (46.6%) was respondents aged 25–35 (112 people). The second biggest age group (40%) was aged 18–24 (96 people). The smaller age groups were people up to 18 years of age (4), 36–45 years of age (20), 46–55 years of age (6) and over 55 years of age (2). Among the 240 respondents, 37% (90) were men and 63% (150) were women. The biggest count of people was represented by 76 students (31.6%). An equal number was obtained in the case of white-collar employees. The lower counts included pupils of elementary, secondary and similar schools (4), freelancers (12), unemployed (16) and blue-collar workers (20). A significant result (42) was obtained with respect to the "other profession" option (17.5%).

When asked about the place of residence, a majority of the respondents (54%, 130) indicated other towns than Rzeszów as their permanent domicile. 30% (80) chose Rzeszów and 13% (30) other places beyond Podkarpackie province.

The question about sports implying health was answered affirmatively by as many as 220 people (91.6%). Only a minor rate of the respondents (8.4%, 20) answered negatively.

The the next question describes how the respondents answered about the impact of sports on one's fitness and health. A great majority (95%, 228) answered affirmatively to the above question. Contrary opinions were expressed by 12 people, equivalent to 5% of the respondents.

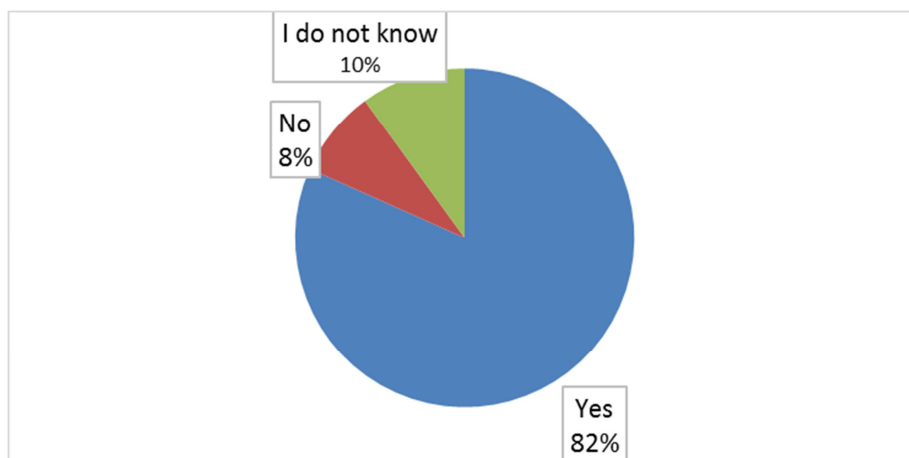


Chart 1. "Is recreational activity and active leisure good for overall reconditioning and relaxation?"
Source: own study.

Chart 1 shows how the recreational activity and leisure influences one's reconditioning and relaxation. 81.7% of the respondents (196) answered affirmatively. Negative answers included 20 people (8.3%). The rest (10%, 24) had no opinion on this subject.

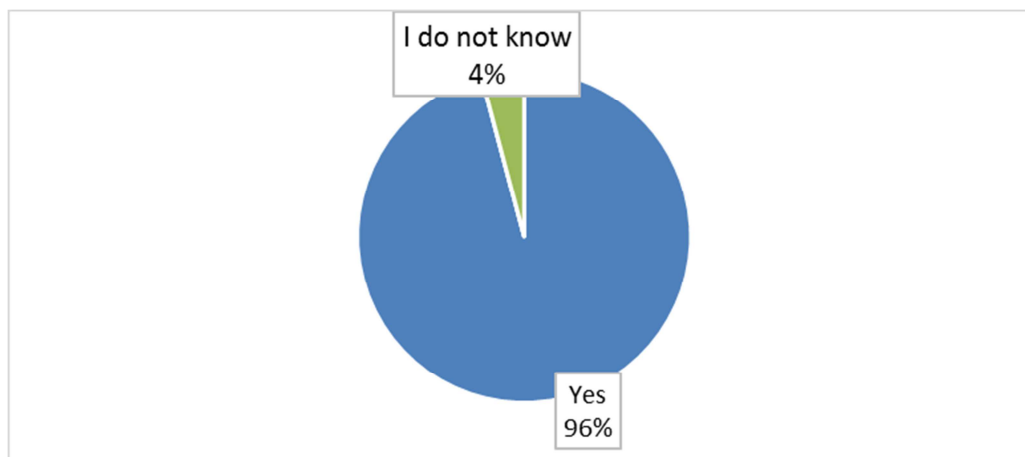


Chart 2. "Can the sports and recreation facilities existing in Rzeszów and surroundings help promote the healthy lifestyle?"
Source: own study.

The respondents answered almost unequivocally to this question as illustrated on Chart 2. For 230 people (96%) the existing sports and recreation facilities in Rzeszów and surrounding can help in promoting the healthy lifestyle.

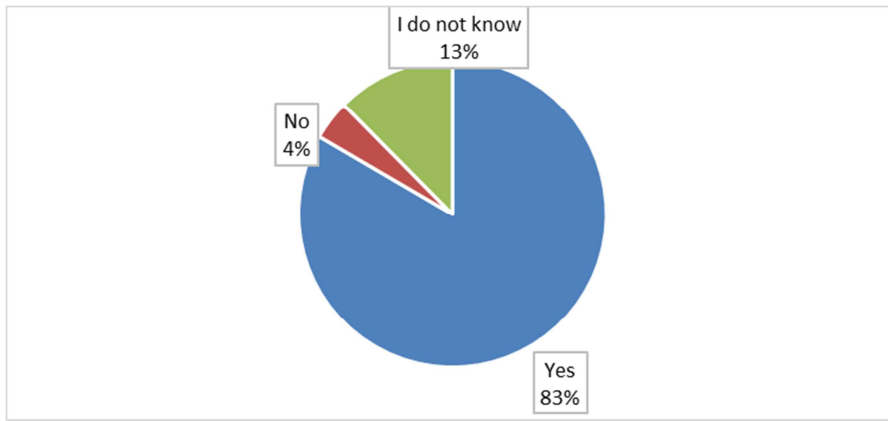


Chart 3. "Are the sports and recreation facilities a part of the lifestyle in Poland?"

Source: own study.

According to the respondents (Chart 3), the sports and recreation facilities are integral to the lifestyle in Poland. Such answer was provided by 83% of the respondents (200). Contrary opinion was shared by 10 people (4%) and no opinion was the selected option by 30 respondents (13%).

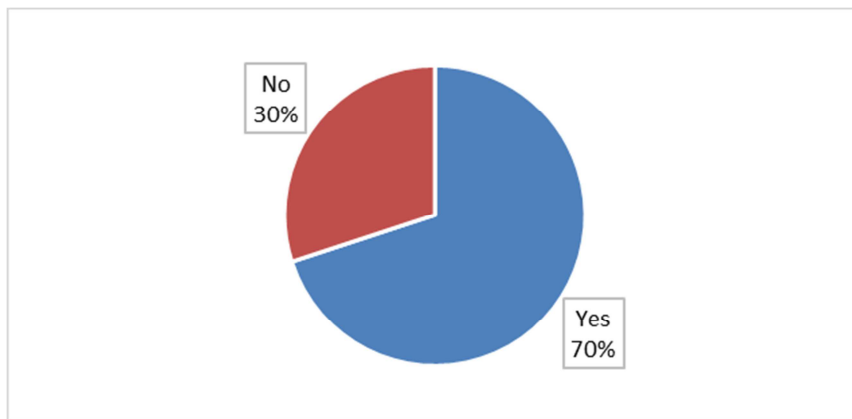


Chart 4. "Is there enough recreational facilities in Rzeszów and its surroundings?"

Source: own study.

The results shown in Chart 4 demonstrate that 168 respondents (70%) think that there is a sufficient number of the recreational facilities in Rzeszów and around. Their number is insufficient for a part of the respondents (30%, 72).

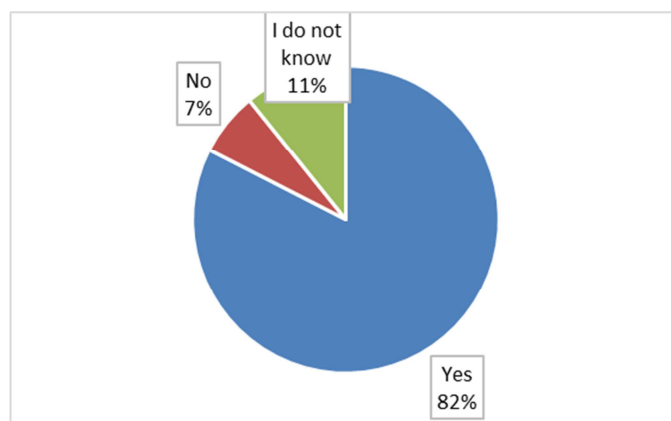


Chart 5. "Are the sports and recreation, SPA and wellness facilities becoming more popular?"

Source: own study.

According to 82% of the respondents (198), a noticeable increase can be observed in the popularity of the sports and recreation facilities. Contrary opinion was expressed by 16 people (7%) and 26 respondents had no opinion at all (11%).

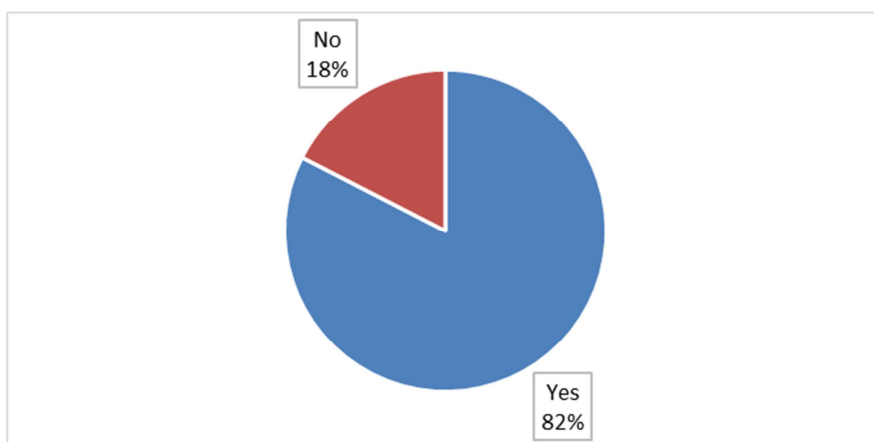


Chart 6. "Do you use services of the sports and recreational, SPA and wellness facilities?"

Source: own study.

This question (Chart 6) was responded affirmatively by 198 respondents (82%). Only 42 people (18%) did not confirm using such services.

The respondents who admitted to use the sports and recreation facilities were also asked "how often". Most of them (24.25%, 48) uses such services several times a week. An almost equal number of the respondents (21.2%, 42) indicated regular attendance in the sports and recreation, SPA and wellness facilities, because they hold subscription cards that are frequently offered by such facilities. The answers were *once a week* – 36 people (18.1%), and *depending on available time and will* – 38 people (19.1%). The lowest number of respondents selected *once a month* – 10 people and *several times a month* – 24 people.

The next questions concerned the role of the sports and recreation facilities. For 90 respondents (37.5%), the sports and recreation, SPA and wellness facilities allow reconditioning of one's physical and mental wellness. 80 people (33.3%) noticed that the facilities feature specialists helping their members to improve body shape and fitness. For 50 people (20.8%), the sports and recreation facilities are a good place for relaxation, and 16 people (6.6%) think services of sports and recreation, SPA and wellness facilities are overrated. Two respondents said that such venues allow people to interact socially.

The last question asked was "how do you prefer spending your free time on weekends and holidays?" 64 responses (26.6%) includes sports: swimming, football, basketball, and 58 (24.1%) riding a bike during summer and skiing during winter. During leisure, an equal number of the respondents (13%, 32) said they meet friends and go to foreign trips (13%, 32). Among the respondents 30 spend their free time enjoying sofa and watching TV, listening to radio or surfing the Internet. The lowest result was going to the movies (12), gardening (8) and nordic walking (4).

DISCUSSION

The surveyed question was: Do sports and recreation facilities impact the overall health and its promotion among the community?

In the recent decade, over ten professional facilities originated in Rzeszów alone. These are privately-owned venues mostly. They enjoy long-term members in the range of tens to hundreds. Some of them are chain brands that could be spotted elsewhere in Poland and even abroad. The facilities are scattered across entire Rzeszów. In terms of prices, the level of

affordability addresses almost all income groups (this study shows that the biggest user group is students – 31.7%).

Notably, a 24/7 facility has been opened recently. The facilities tend to offer various types of activities, including Body Ball, Cross Cage, Power Pilates, Zumba, Pump, Cycling, etc., led by professional coaches. In addition, an increasing number of such venues could be spotted also in smaller towns around Rzeszów, further proving the rise of the physical activity among the local community.

On the other hand, according to the respondents there is still not enough facilities in Rzeszów (30%).

According to CBOS research from 2013, one in every three Poles declared that the amount of free time at hand has been reducing in the past 5 years. At the same time, one in every four respondents said the contrary. Professionals appear to have the least spare time. Compared to other Europeans, Poles have been spending less time on hobbies and more for social gatherings [<http://www.poradnikzdrowie.pl>].

In the second half of 2015, the Polish Main Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny) published detailed results of *Tourism and leisure in households, 2014*. The most frequent answers were listening to radio, music, watching films at home, watching TV, web surfing (21%), sun tanning, resting (13%). Certain forms of physical activity could be identified in the results of this research. The most popular choices included hiking in mountains, forests, strolls, bicycle rides (almost 12%) [<http://www.sportnaukowo.pl>].

The above data is hardly optimistic, however this study shows that the situation is not all that bad, and in fact is rather inspiring. More and more people tend to be aware that sports, physical movement, recreational activity and services of sports and recreation facilities are the only way to keep one's fitness, mental wellness and active (healthy) lifestyle.

Healthy way of living is crucial for the human body, because it provides benefits to our health and, last but not least, better mood. The healthy lifestyle is primarily about exercising, intensive physical movement and care for the overall body shape. Healthy lifestyle also includes food [<http://www.plastmed.pl>].

Even sports and recreation facilities that are equipped on outstanding level are not utilised up to their purpose. This is an effect of, among other things, social and psychological factors (passive leisure at home, watching TV, surfing the Internet), personal habits, the trend of visiting shopping malls in the free time, fastfood, poor offering in venues (sports only).

The respondents are aware that such facilities are good for reconditioning one's physical and mental abilities and improving the body shape and fitness (82%).

Health is not something given for granted throughout the entire life that we and external factors cannot change. Rather one needs to improve and shape one's health. In other words, a healthy lifestyle leads to better health.

The respondents know perfectly that physical activity is good for overall reconditioning and relaxation. In addition, the facilities that the respondents attend help them in keeping the healthy lifestyle (over 90%).

Promotion of the healthy lifestyle is linked directly to health education. According to M. Demel [1968: 45] "health education is an integral element of shaping one's personality. It is about creating fitness, skills directly or indirectly related to self-defence, improvement of health, shaping attitudes and motivation to keep hygiene, effective care, prevention and treatment of diseases, stimulation of positive attitude to issues related to health by regular improvement of one's knowledge about the body, its development and all principles of the public health."

An important factor that has been stimulating the development and promotion of the healthy lifestyle is the civilisation diseases of the respiratory system, cancers, mental disorders, increasing number of accidents resulting primarily from risks inherent to the

modern lifestyle and the today's environment. Treatment medicine is not able to prevent and fix everything. This has led people to look into the pro-health activities of people and the community that promote the healthy lifestyle, i.e. a relaxed life with a matched degree of physical movement, no recreational stimulants, no medicines, in a healthy and unpolluted natural environment [Zalewska-Meller 2001: 26].

The health-related education and promotion play a major role in propagation and implementation of the healthy lifestyle that can ensure longer life, safer, more relaxed, full of satisfaction derived from practical countering of health issues and their proper prevention [Campbell 1995: 23].

The regular use of services provided by sports and recreation facilities should be noted here, as well. Approximately 50% of the respondents indicated to have been using the facilities on regular basis.

SUMMARY

The analysis of the available publications and the survey results of 240 respondents demonstrated that the active lifestyle with a significant portion of sports and recreational activities can protect against stress, depression and, last but not least, numerous diseases. Not even the best medicine can replace physical movement and activity that makes the human body relaxed.

Numerous sports and recreation facilities have become destinations not only for business people and managers but just about anybody looking to improve one's fitness and health. The choice of exercises, body treatments as well as opportunities for leisure and relaxation is wide and everybody is able to find their match. Furthermore, prices for the services are not elevated and virtually anyone can afford to spend one's free time to relax there.

Without a doubt, the healthy lifestyle has been gaining followers, especially among the younger age groups that noticed how physical movement and relaxation brings benefits to health while being quite enjoyable.

More people tend to recognise how much time is lost in passive and sitting ways of living. This is why any physical activity is beneficial (or even miraculous) for the human body.

Other conclusions and recommendations implied by this study and the author's afterthoughts:

1. the healthy lifestyle and the significance of physical movement for the human life need to be promoted more widely;
2. programmes should be implemented in schools to encourage younger generations to do sports and spend time actively;
3. the activity of sports and recreation facilities need to be popularised and their role noticed;
4. even more sports and recreation events for entire families are recommended;
5. it would be good for the mass media to show examples of people whose sporty lifestyle could be influential for others.

All in all, the residents of Rzeszów and its surrounding towns are aware how precious the health is and know that active free time, various body treatments and use of sports and recreation facilities can help them counteract many obstacles while retaining mental and physical health.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Błądek Z. 2001, *Hotele*, wyd. Albus, Poznań.
2. Campbell B., 1995, *Ekologia człowieka*, wyd. PWN, Warszawa.

3. Demel M., 1968, *O wychowaniu zdrowotnym*, wyd. PZWS, Warszawa.
4. Gracz J., Sankowski T., 2007, *Psychologia aktywności sportowej*, AWF w Poznaniu, Poznań.
5. http://www.plastmed.pl/zdrowy_styl_zycia.html (dostęp 23.03.2016 r.).
6. <http://www.poradnikzdrowia.pl> (dostęp 23.03.2016 r.).
7. <http://www.sportnaukowo.pl> (dostęp 23.03.2016 r.).
8. Tombak M., 1999, *Jak żyć długo i zdrowo*, wyd. Galaktyka, Łódź.
9. Zalewska-Meller A., 2001, *Edukacja zdrowotna – nowa jakość w życiu człowieka*, wyd. „Edukacja” nr 4/2001