

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND LEISURE TIME AMONG 13-15-YEAR-OLD TEENAGERS LIVING IN BIAŁA PODLASKA

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**Annotation.** The aim of the research was to get information about physical activity and forms of spending leisure time by teenagers between 13 and 15 years old, who live in Biała Podlaska. The research included 229 pupils from three Grammar Schools (115 girls and 114 boys). The range of respondents' age is from 13 to 15 years old. The research tool was anonymous questionnaire consisting of questions concerning healthy lifestyle, physical activity and forms of spending leisure time. In total, the questionnaire consisted of 17 both open and close questions. On the basis of the questionnaire, it was proved that pupils' knowledge on physical education and health is low (37-47% of correct answers). Young people more and more often choose passive forms of activity. Boys much more often take up active forms of exercise than girls. Teenagers devote most time to physical activity, the development of interests and taking care of one's own appearance.

**Key words:** physical activity, health, knowledge, schoolchildren.

## Introduction

Physical activity is perceived as one of the most important elements of healthy lifestyle which determines appropriate development of children's and teenagers' organism with regard to physical, mental and social aspects (Drabik 1995; Woynarowska 1998; Żukowska 2000). Children encouraged to practice sports from early age have a tendency to be physically active in later ages and adulthood what has a strong influence on health condition (Drabik 1997; Woynarowska 2003). According to Drabik (1995) there are three factors, which have a strong influence on whether people take up various activities or not, such as: knowledge about activities and their influence on people's health and body, demographic factors and fashion. Unfortunately, the research shows that children more and more often choose passive forms of spending leisure time what has a detrimental influence on their health (Riddoch 1998; Sybilski and coauthors 2007; Rąglewska 2009). Family environment, school and mass media have, unquestionably, a huge influence on the increase in the level of physical activity among children in their leisure time (Demuth 2004). Cooperation between them is the key to achieve the best results.

**In connection with it, the aim of the research was to evaluate physical activity and recognize forms of spending leisure time chosen by teenagers aged between 13 – 15 years old who live in Biała Podlaska.**

Having specified major aim of the research, the following aspects need to be resolved:

1. What is the level of teenagers' knowledge about health and physical education?
2. What forms of spending leisure time are preferred by teenagers?
3. What role does physical activity play in everyday life of Grammar school goers?

## Materials and methods

The research included 229 pupils from three Grammar Schools (Forms IA-III A) among whom there were 115 girls and 114 boys. The range of respondents' age varied from 13 to 15 years old.

The major research method involves diagnostic poll along with a questionnaire as a research tool. In the research a modified version of Żukowska's questionnaire entitled "I – my health - sport is used (Academy of Physical Education, Warsaw). The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part concerns the lifestyle and spending leisure time (seven questions). The second part concerns healthy eating and hygienic/ healthy lifestyle (six questions) and the third part of the questionnaire concerns the need and the importance of physical activity (four questions). In total, the questionnaire consists of 17 both open and close questions.

The vast majority of respondents (40%) are children who come from families in which parents graduated from the university (fig. 1).

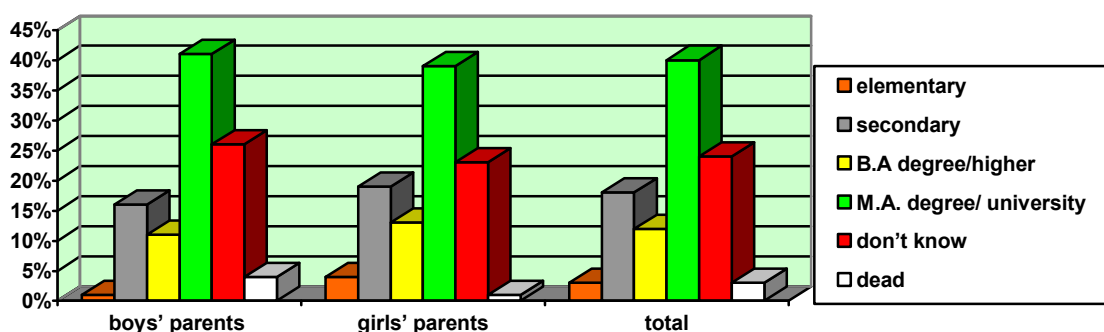


Fig. 1. Education of respondents' parents, n=229

## Results

On the basis of the carried out research it has been stated that the level of respondents' knowledge on the elementary elements of physical activity and health is low (fig. 2). The correct definition of health was given by 37,55% of respondents, 39,30% of respondents appropriately defined recreation, whereas 47,16% of respondents correctly defined sport. More than a half of respondents did not answer or gave incorrect answer to previously mentioned terms. The high level of correct answers concerning the issue of healthy eating (75,55%) and healthy lifestyle (85,15%) was observed in the research.

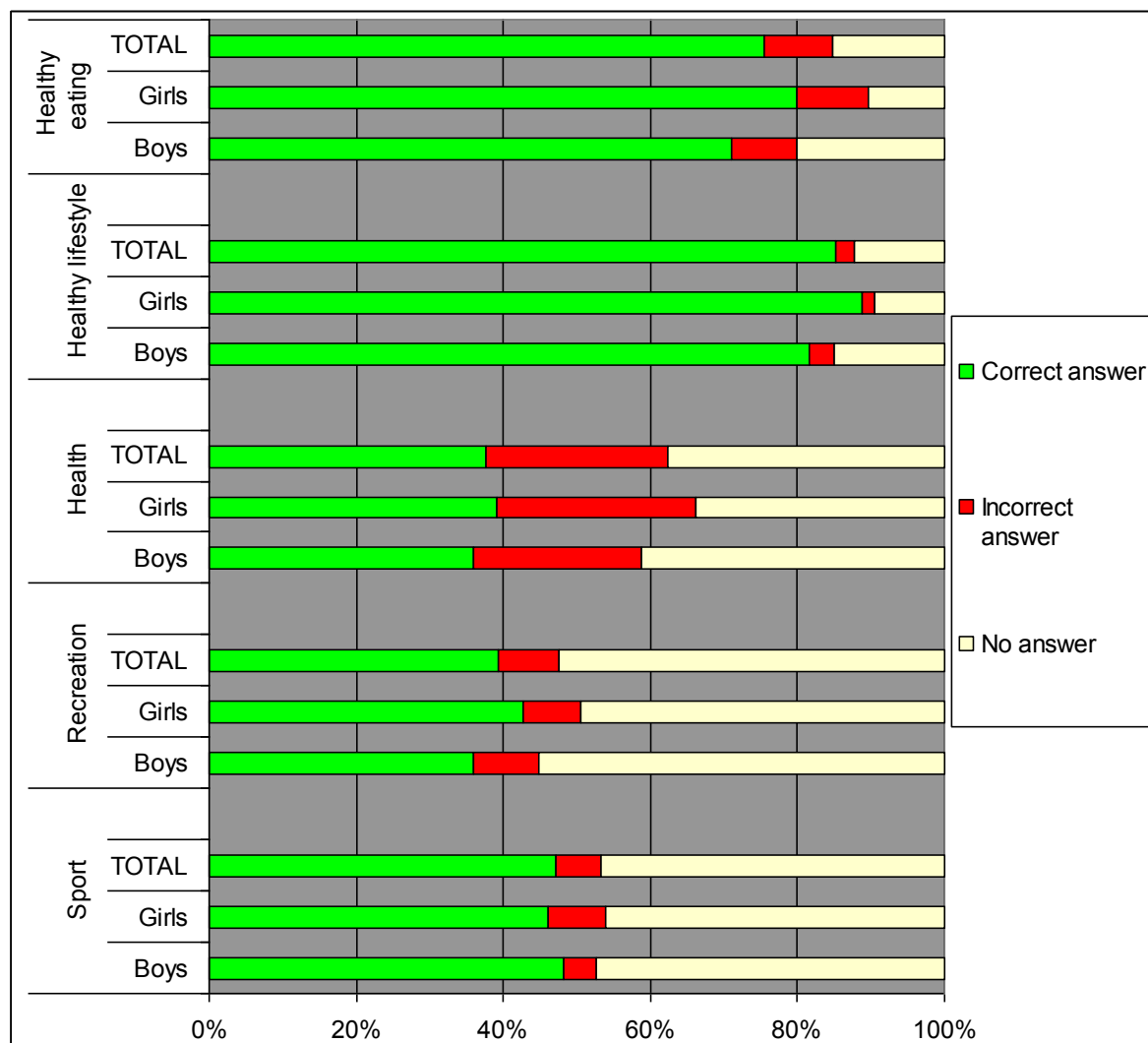


Fig. 2. The level of respondents' knowledge on physical education (n=229)

Only 12,33% of respondents evaluated one's lifestyle as healthy (fig. 3). The vast majority of respondents' answers occurred in the range of – rather healthy (39,21%) and rather unhealthy (29,96%). According to the conducted survey, it can be concluded that a small number of gymnasial youth smokes cigarettes (5,67%). The respondents claim that they smoke five cigarettes a day on average.

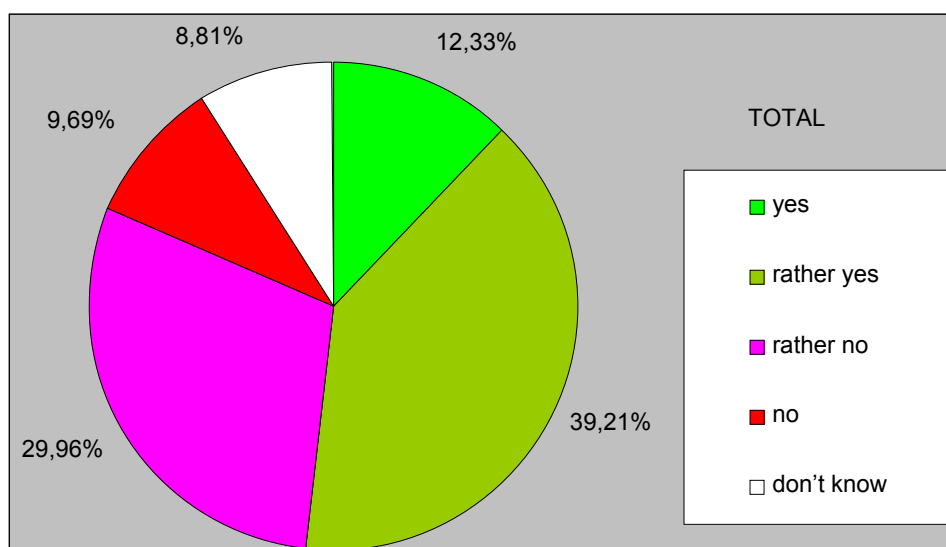


Fig. 3. Own evaluation of lifestyle in term of health by girls and boys (n=229)

The survey outcome shows that 38% of respondents spend their leisure time in an active way, whereas 59% of respondents spend their leisure time in a passive way (table 1). It happens more often that boys, rather than girls, prefer spending leisure time in an active way.

Table 1. Form of spending free time (n=229)

| Respondents | active forms | Passive forms | no answer |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| Boys        | 21%          | 25%           | 3%        |
| Girls       | 17%          | 33%           |           |
| Total       | 38%          | 59%           | 3%        |

In case of having the possibility to make own independent decision in terms of how to spend leisure time, 41% of respondents would choose active forms (table 2). It would result in increasing the level of active by 3%, however, passive ways of spending free time would decrease by 11% in favour of option "no answer"

Table 2. Forms of spending leisure time chosen on my own (n=229)

| Respondents | active forms | Passive forms | no answer |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|
| Boys        | 23%          | 23%           | 5%        |
| Girls       | 19%          | 25%           | 6%        |
| Total       | 41%          | 48%           | 11%       |

The carried out survey shows that lack of time (30,55%) and the feeling of tiredness (21,64%) are the most common reasons which prevent people from spending leisure time in a favourable way – table 3.

Table. 3 The most common reasons preventing people from spending leisure time in a favourable way (n=229)

| Reasons                                 | Boys* | Girls* | Total* |
|---|-------|--------|--------|
| - lack of time                          | 27,65 | 33,22  | 30,55  |
| - poor health condition                 | 3,03  | 3,50   | 3,27   |
| - lack of financial means               | 8,33  | 5,24   | 6,73   |
| - lack of determination and consistency | 3,41  | 7,69   | 5,64   |
| - lack of interests                     | 1,89  | 3,50   | 2,73   |
| - the feeling of tiredness              | 19,70 | 23,43  | 21,64  |
| - lack of appropriate conditions        | 8,71  | 6,29   | 7,45   |
| - lack of family and friends acceptance | 5,30  | 2,80   | 4,00   |

|                                      |       |      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|
| - I haven't got any problems with it | 16,67 | 6,64 | 11,45 |
| - other (what?).....                 | 5,30  | 7,69 | 6,55  |

\*data shown in per cent

The results, describing time which the respondents spend doing specific activities during the day in everyday life, are shown in table 4.

*Table 4. The amount of time devoted to specific activities performed in the week day (n=229)*

|     | Specification                   | Boys* | Girls* | Total*      |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------|--------|-------------|
| 1.  | Learning or working             | 3,25  | 3,79   | 3,52        |
| 2.  | Everyday household chores       | 3,33  | 3,42   | 3,38        |
| 3.  | Meeting friends                 | 3,68  | 3,49   | 3,59        |
| 4.  | Going for a walk                | 2,82  | 3,31   | 3,07        |
| 5.  | Going to the theatre or cinema  | 2,64  | 2,91   | <b>2,78</b> |
| 6.  | Physical activity               | 3,96  | 3,5    | <b>3,72</b> |
| 7.  | Taking care of one's appearance | 3,78  | 3,97   | <b>3,88</b> |
| 8.  | Watching television             | 3,58  | 3,45   | 3,52        |
| 9.  | Reading newspapers              | 2,73  | 2,96   | <b>2,84</b> |
| 10. | Reading books                   | 2,8   | 3,41   | 3,1         |
| 11. | Working In the garden           | 2,3   | 1,91   | <b>2,1</b>  |
| 12. | Developing own interests        | 4,17  | 3,96   | <b>4,06</b> |
| 13. | Religious practices             | 2,88  | 2,93   | <b>2,9</b>  |
| 14. | City breaks                     | 3,38  | 3,43   | <b>3,4</b>  |

\* average estimation

The results of the survey prove that gymnasial youth devote most of the time to developing their own interests (4,06), taking care of their own appearance (3,88) and physical activity (3,72).

Taking up sport as a form of spending leisure time is mostly chosen by boys (72%) and respondents sometimes chose more than one sport discipline (table 5). Among boys, most popular are team sports (58,89%) such as football or basketball. In the next position boys pointed out martial art (15,56%) being followed by swimming and tennis (5,56% each). Taking into consideration girls' preferences, it was volleyball and basketball which were predominant. The second position among girls takes swimming (19,23%) and athletics (19,23%).

*Table. 5. Sport disciplines taken up by the respondents (n=229)*

| Specification       | Boys* | Girls* | Total* |
|---------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| team sports         | 58,89 | 26,92  | 43,53  |
| martial art         | 15,56 | 0,00   | 8,24   |
| swimming            | 5,56  | 19,23  | 11,76  |
| athletics           | 2,22  | 19,23  | 10,00  |
| dancing             | 3,33  | 11,54  | 8,24   |
| tennis (lawn/table) | 5,56  | 6,41   | 5,88   |
| other**             | 8,89  | 16,67  | 12,35  |

\* data shown in per cent

\*\* skiing, skateboarding, tricking, cycling, gymnastics, roller-skating, horse riding, fitness club

The respondents also defined the role sport plays in their life. Among the most common aspects of practising different types of sport are: desire to be better (12,35%), way to be healthy (11,95%), meeting people (11,16%), attractive shape of the body (8,67%) and overcoming own weaknesses (7,57%).

## Discussion

Leisure time is the time which belongs only to a young person. He can devote this time to performing various activities such as: resting, interests, entertainment or socializing. However, the major condition must be fulfilled, namely completing all the tasks and duties connected with everyday life (going to school, doing the homework, helping in the household chores). Unfortunately, this time is more often spent in a detrimental for our organism way. That is why, issues connected with leisure time and forms of spending it were, and still are so important (Kijo 2001; Zawadzka 2001; Cyganiuk and coauthors 2001; Świdorska-Kopacz and coauthors 2008).

According to Mędrala-Kuder research (2007) leisure time is spent in an active way by half of the respondents, whereas in the surveys conducted by Otręba i Waleczka (2011) only by 42% of respondents. In the hereby research, the author proved that only 38% of gymnasial youth spend their leisure time in an active way. Even if they could decide on their own which activities to choose, the result would increase by only 3%. Among most common passive forms of spending leisure time chosen by boys is watching television and using a computer. Half of male respondents are ready to spend 4 hours a week or even more watching television (Świdarska-Kopacz 2008). In case of female respondents the range of passive forms of sending leisure time is much wider. Women enumerate such passive activities as: reading books, listening to music, going for a walk, as well as watching television or using a computer (Mędrala-Kuder 2007; Raglewska and coauthors 2009; Otręba, Waleczek 2011; Świdarska-Kopacz and coauthors 2008).

The authors in their surveys prove unanimously that these are boys who are more interested in practising sports in the age between 13-15 years old. Such tendency is observed not only in Poland but also in 22 other countries (Cabak, Woynarowska 2004). It was noticed, both in own research and other authors surveys that physical activity decreases with age among girls and boys of the same age (Świdarska-Kopacz and coauthors 2008; Szczęchowicz-Kasza 2007; Cabak, Woynarowska 2004).

The most popular among boys are team sports, especially football and cycling (Mędrala-Kuder 2007, Stolaś 2009). When it comes to girls, if they decide to take up some sports, they choose cycling or going for a walk. However, some other surveys show that girls are also keen on practising winter sports as well as roller skating or team sports in the summer.

The results of the conducted research correspond with survey carried out by aforementioned authors. Boys most eagerly chose team sports (football, basketball, martial art). However girls were more interested in volleyball, swimming and athletics (especially running).

Scientist attended to find the answers to such crucial research issues as why teenagers take up physical exercise and what is the reason for such a low participation in these activities.

There are to reasons why teenagers take up physical exercise – health reason and hedonistic reason. The first reason includes teenagers' desire to take care of their physical fitness, body shape and, of course, health. The second reason includes the desire to have fun and relax which can be combined with meeting friends and socialising (Adamin 2006).

The answer to the second question can be found in the works of Medrala- Kuder (2007) and Ręglewska and coauthors (2009). According to these two researchers lack of time and lack of willingness to take up sport is the common factor for such a low activity. Other reasons found in the literature of the subject are following: lack of interests or lack of access to sports facilities. In the author's of this article research the major cause of not being physically active is the same as in other surveys carried out. Additional answers which appeared was lack of determination and lack of place where teenagers could perform physical exercises.

### Conclusions

1. General level of respondents' knowledge on physical education and health must be defined as low (37 – 47% of correct answers). Definitely higher level of respondents' knowledge was observed within healthy lifestyle (75-85% of correct answers).
2. Gimnasial youth most often choose a passive way of spending leisure time regardless of the fact if the choice is made by them or by their parents. Boys more often choose active forms of spending leisure time comparing to the girls.
3. Physical activity, the development of interests as well as taking care of one's appearance belong to the group of three activities which take most time for gymnasial youth during the day.

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**Cite this article as:** Grad Rafał. Physical activity and leisure time among 13-15-year-old teenagers living in Biała Podlaska. *Physical Education of Students*, 2013, vol.2, pp. 74-79. doi:10.6084/m9.figshare.156385

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Received: 04.02.2013

Published: 03.04.2013