

Original scientific paper

DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES OF FOURTH GRADE AND SEVENTH GRADE FEMALE STUDENTS TOWARD PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES¹

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Abstract: The main aim of this research was to determine the differences in the attitudes of female students of fourth and seventh grade of elementary school toward Physical Education classes. The research has the transversal character and it was conducted at the elementary school "Oktoih" in Podgorica. The sample consisted of 50 students from the mentioned elementary school. Students were divided into two subdivisions, according to the age criteria and the grade they attended. The first sub-sample was composed of 25 female fourth grade students and the second was composed of 25 female seventh grade students. Anonymous standardized questionnaire survey, adapted to the needs of this research, was used. Questionnaire surveys were given to the girls who were explained how to fill them in. The questionnaires were observed and the received results were processed in a descriptive way and shown in a tabular way. Chi-squared test ($p < 0.05$) was used to determine statistically meaningful differences between fourth grade and seventh grade female students' answers. The results have shown the existence of statistically significant differences considering favorite places of conducting Physical Education classes and pleasure in terms of the quality of Physical Education classes.

Keywords: *teaching, Physical Education, female students, attitudes*

INTRODUCTION

Physical Education is a systematically organised and planned process of acquiring fine motor skills, knowledge and abilities, strengthening the health, and developing students' neuro-physical strengths and the abilities (Krulj et al., 2001). The basic aim of Physical Education classes in schools is that its content, using the educational process, affects the integral development of the personality of a child (Nikolić, 2019). This subject affects the development of the entire personality of the child, which is reflected in its aims, such as: boosting growth and development, acquiring specific knowledge, skills and habits, creating moral guidance and moral leadership qualities of students' personalities, acquiring and developing the awareness of the need to protect their health, the nature and the human environment (Višnjić et al., 2004).

It is known that Physical Education is considered one of the favorite school subjects, especially amongst younger grades of elementary school (Šekeljić & Stamatović, 2011; Đorđić & Tumin, 2008). Some of the reasons for that are certainly the natural urge of the child to be active, to play and to show its creativity, and this subject provides the biggest opportunities for that. However, not all students have positive attitudes towards this subject. In the teaching practice this becomes the most obvious during the period of entering adolescence, especially among girls. It is shown that the interest for attending these classes drops among a big number of the adolescent girls (Dunjić-Mandić, 2007; Arabaci, 2009). One of the reasons to avoid Physical Education classes could be the fact that the content of the subject is not adapted to the age, interests and the needs of the girls, so they start perceiving the

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subject as the "male subject" (Arabaci, 2009) and they often avoid any type of the activity connected to the subject, which carries a lot of bad consequences for their health. In order to persuade adolescents to practice physical activity and to feel its positive effects, it is necessary to develop positive attitudes towards Physical Education classes.

Adolescents' attitudes are also formed by the influence of some their internal judgements, through the effect of their environment, the groups they interact with and mostly by their peers (Stojaković, 2002). Particularly the adolescence is considered to be a period when the attitudes of the group we belong to become especially important (Koca et al., 2005). Because of it, the girls who normally have the positive attitudes towards Physical Education, show the tendency to change their attitude in order to be accepted among their peers. It's a fact that attitudes towards this subject depend on the gender and the age of students. Physical education and sports in general are traditionally considered as male areas and in the schools they were first introduced for male students and then, only in the late 19th century, for female students, too (Đorđić & Tumin, 2008). Even participation at sports events was reserved for men only, while women received their right to participate only later. Today women are competing equally, in many disciplines and in almost every sport. However, with adolescent females, the belief that sports career is related with "manhood", at least in terms of PE classes, is still present (Arabaci, 2009). Šekeljić et al. (2012) found differences in interests of boys and girls, meaning that a different concept of Physical Education is needed in terms of the curriculum. The attitude toward Physical Education, can indirectly indicate the quality of the realised curriculum and positive attitudes are possible to form through various interesting programs (Dragutinović & Mitrović, 2019).

Positive attitudes toward Physical Education would contribute to the physical activity happening more often, which would affect the balance of the physical and mental development of younger and adolescent girls. In relation to that, the subjects of this work are precisely the attitudes of the students of the fourth and the seventh grade of elementary school toward Physical Education classes. The main aim of this research is to determine the differences in the attitudes of the fourth and the seventh grade female students toward Physical Education classes and also to see if those differences depend on the age. To achieve that, we researched if the girls enjoy attending Physical Education classes, what they prefer to do at those classes, if they are satisfied with the presentation of Physical Education in their school, which games they find particularly interesting, etc.

METHOD

Study aim

The main aim of this paper is to determine the differences in the attitudes of the fourth and seventh grade female students toward this subject.

Study objectives

Objectives are concluded from the presented aim:

- Determine the attitudes of the fourth grade students towards Physical Education
- Determine the attitudes of the seventh grade students towards Physical Education

Study hypothesis

According to the given aim and objectives of the research, there are one main (Hm) and two auxiliary (H1 and H2) hypotheses:

Hm - It is presumed that the differences between the female students of the fourth and the female pupils of the seventh grade toward Physical Education exist.

H1 - It is presumed that female students of the fourth grade have positive attitudes toward Physical Education lessons.

H2 - It is presumed that female students of the seventh grade have negative attitudes toward Physical Education lessons.

Examinee sample

The sample in this research comprised 50 female respondents, students of the elementary school "Oktoih" in Podgorica. This sample was divided in two sub-samples. The first sub-sample was composed of 25 fourth grade

female students and the second sub-sample was composed of 25 seventh grade female students from the mentioned elementary school. This research has the transversal character and it was conducted in a single day at the beginning of June 2021.

Study techniques

Anonymous survey was used as the research technique. Standardised survey questionnaire (Dzibric et al., 2011; Dragutinović & Mitrović, 2019) was used as the research instrument. The research instrument was modified and adapted to this research (Survey questionnaire 1). This questionnaire involved 8 close-ended questions. Survey questionnaires with the explanation how to fill them were given to the girls.

Survey questionnaire 1

This is an anonymous survey questionnaire used for the purpose of making a scientific paper. Read it carefully, answer honestly and do not write anything that could reveal your identity.

(DO NOT WRITE your first name, last name, class number or anything similar.)

Gender M F Grade IV VII

1. Do you enjoy attending Physical Education classes?

a) Yes b) No

2. What do you prefer doing at Physical Education classes?

a) Running b) Playing games c) Exercising

3. How satisfied are you with Physical Education classes in your school?

a) Completely b) Partially c) Not at all

4. Do you think that exercise and the physical activity during PE classes have a positive effect on your health and development?

a) It contributes to my health b) It does not contribute to my health c) It is bad for my health

5. What would you prefer to have:

a) A nice and modern outfit b) A healthy and strong body

6. What is more important to you:

a) To execute PE exercises correctly b) To solve Mathematics problems correctly c) Both

7. Which games do you particularly like?

a) Classroom games b) School yard games c) Sports hall games

8. If you could change something in your PE classes, what would it be:

a) Nothing b) The conditions c) The curriculum

In the end, the survey questionnaires were reviewed. The received results were treated in a descriptive way and shown in a tabular form (in percentages). Statistically significant differences between the variables considering the age criteria were determined by the Chi-squared test with significance level $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the answers of the fourth grade female students to the questions presented in survey questionnaire. The values of the results were shown numerically and by percentage.

Table 1. *Attitudes of fourth grade female students toward Physical Education*

Questions	Answers	Number	Percentage
1. Do you enjoy attending PE classes?	a) Yes	22	88%
	b) No	3	12%
2. What is your favorite activity during PE classes?	a) Running	5	20%
	b) Playing games	13	52%
	c) Exercising	7	28%
3. How satisfied are you with Physical Education classes in your school?	a) Completely	15	60%
	b) Partially	8	32%
	c) Not at all	2	8%
4. Do you think that exercise and physical activity during PE classes have a positive effect on your health and development?	a) It does	22	88%
	b) It does not	3	12%
	c) It is harmful	0	0%
5. What would you prefer to have?	a) A nice and modern outfit	4	16%
	b) A healthy and strong body	21	84%
6. What is more important to you?	a) To execute PE exercises correctly	7	28%
	b) To solve Math problems correctly	7	28%
	c) Both	11	44%
7. Which games do you particularly like?	a) Classroom games	5	20%
	b) School yard games	8	32%
	c) Sports hall games	12	48%
8. If you could change something in your PE classes, what would it be?	a) Nothing	12	48%
	b) The conditions	5	20%
	c) The curriculum	8	32%

By looking at the Table 1, we can see that the majority of the fourth grade female students (88%) responded to the first question saying that they enjoy going to their PE class. The rest of the girls expressed a negative attitude towards PE classes (12%). Games are what they like the most about the classes - (52%) of them said that those are their favorite activities, while exercise (28%) and running (20%) are the activities that are interesting to fewer of the fourth grade girls. When it comes to enjoyment in Physical Education classes, most examinees are satisfied with organization of these classes (60%), but there are those who are partially satisfied (32%) and those who are dissatisfied with it (8%). Girls of this age are aware that physical education classes have a positive impact on their health and growth, which can be seen in the answers that they gave to the fourth and the fifth question. 88% of them understand that physical education positively affects their health, while fewer of them responded that physical education does not contribute to their health (12%) and none thought that it is bad for the health (0%). The fifth question also shows

that most girls understand the importance of healthy growth and development, so 84% of them answered that they want a healthy and strong body, while 16% of them would choose nice and modern clothes. By answering the sixth question, the fourth grade students considered solving math problems correctly and correct execution of exercises as equally important (28% each), while 44% of them answered that both are equally important. Considering the best environment for conducting PE classes, a majority of girls opted for a sports hall (48%). School yard games were chosen by 32% of them, and classroom games were chosen by 20% of the fourth grade female pupils. The overall satisfaction with PE classes was shown by the answer to the last question. Twelve girls (48%) answered that they wouldn't change anything, 8 (32%) would change the curriculum and 5 (20%) would change the conditions.

Table 2 shows the responses of the seventh grade students to the questionnaire. The values of the results were shown numerically and by percentage.

Table 2. *Attitudes of the seventh grade female students toward Physical Education*

Questions	Answers	Number	Percentage
1. Do you enjoy attending PE classes?	a) Yes	15	60%
	b) No	10	40%
2. What is your favorite activity during PE classes?	a) Running	5	20%
	b) Playing games	14	56%
	c) Exercising	6	24%
3. How satisfied are you with Physical Education classes in your school?	a) Completely	9	36%
	b) Partially	10	40%
	c) Not at all	6	24%
4. Do you think that exercise and physical activity during PE classes have a positive effect on your health and development?	a) It does	19	76%
	b) It does not	6	24%
	c) It is harmful	0	0%
5. What would you prefer to have?	a) A nice and modern outfit	9	36%
	b) A healthy and strong body	16	64%
6. What is more important to you?	a) To execute PE exercises correctly	6	24%
	b) To solve Math problems correctly	9	36%
	c) Both	10	40
7. Which games do you particularly like?	a) Classroom games	0	0%
	b) School yard games	3	12%
	c) Sports hall games	22	88%
8. If you could change something in your PE classes, what would it be?	a) Nothing	10	40%
	b) The conditions	3	12%
	c) The curriculum	12	48%

When we talk about the first question, the number and percentage of the seventh grade female students who enjoy attending Physical Education classes is significantly different from the number and percentage of the fourth grade female students. Fifteen pupils (60%) answered YES, and 10 pupils (40%) answered NO. Such a difference can be attributed precisely to the claims that support the assumption that girls' interest in PE classes weakens at the beginning of their adolescence (Arabaci, 2009; Đorđić & Tumin, 2008; Rowland, 1999). The fourth grade female students and the majority of seventh grade female pupils like playing games during these classes (56%), exercising (24%) and running a bit less (20%). Answering the third question, the seventh grade female students expressed that they are not completely satisfied (meaning that they are partially satisfied) with the organization of this class, whereas 36% are completely satisfied, and up to 24% are dissatisfied (which is about three times more than fourth

grade students). Their answers in relation to the influence of this subject on health and their growth, indicated that the seventh grade female students are also aware of the health benefits of carrying out physical activity. The fourth question was answered positively by 76% of the examinees, while the rest of them (24%) think that physical activity doesn't contribute to the health. Even with the fifth question, where they had a choice between health and fashion, they mostly answered positively about health (64%), while 36% of them gave the priority to nice and modern clothes. While answering the sixth question, the seventh grade students gave the priority to solving math problems (36%), while 24% chose correct execution of physical exercises. Nevertheless, most of them think that both are equally important (40%). When we talk about the seventh question, as much as 88% of the seventh graders answered that they prefer sports hall games, while the others (12%) preferred school yard games. This difference is expected and can be attributed to the usual practice that Physical Education classes in the higher grades of elementary schools is very rarely conducted in the school yard and almost never in the classroom, which is understandable considering how complex the teaching content of that subject is. With the eight question, as much as 48% of the respondents answered that they would change the curriculum for their PE classes, which contributes to the assumption that the content for the higher grades is not adapted for the girls.

Table 3 contains the results of the Chi-squared test for the small and independent samples, with the statistical significance of $p < 0,05$.

Table 3. *Chi-squared test results*

Variables	Sig.
1. Do you enjoy attending PE classes?	.009
2. What is your favourite activity during PE classes?	.830
3. How satisfied are you with Physical Education classes in your school?	.059
4. Do you think that exercise and physical activity during PE classes have a positive effect on your health and development?	.127
5. What would you prefer to have?	.111
6. What is more important to you?	.967
7. Which games do you particularly like?	.002
8. If you could change something in your PE classes, what would it be?	.365

Legend: Sig. – Importance of Chi-squared test difference

What we can conclude based on Table 3 is that the statistically meaningful differences between the fourth and the seventh grade female students are noticed in the answers to the first and to the seventh question. In terms of the first question, statistically significant differences are presented in favour of the fourth grade students. On the other hand, the seventh question was connected to the venue where Physical education classes take place. In case of that question, hall games are predominant with both sub-samples, namely 48% of fourth graders, and 88% of seventh grade students selected that answer.

DISCUSSION

Girls' attitude toward PE classes are changing with their age, which is proven by some other studies (Arabaci, 2009; Smoll & Shutz, 1980). Fourth grade female students mostly have got the positive attitudes toward Physical Education classes (Šekeljić & Stamatović, 2011; Šekeljić et al., 2012), which was proved by this research, too. On the other hand, students of higher grades have got negative attitudes toward this subject (Arabaci, 2009). This research also followed the trend of deterioration of positive attitudes toward Physical Education classes with increasing age – a large number of the fourth grade female students had positive attitudes toward PE classes, while the number of the seventh grade female students proved to be smaller. This could be credited to the beginning of adolescence of the seventh grade girls, insufficient adjustment of the content to their interests and needs, as well as to their desire to fit better in the group of peers. What is highly concerning is that as much as 40% of the surveyed seventh grade

students do not enjoy attending PE classes, and the neglect of this subject is reducing the quality of the education and has a negative effect on the public health and health budget in the future (Đorđić & Tumin, 2008). That can be conditioned by some of their beliefs about these classes. Woman is traditionally seen as an intuitive, compassionate and gentle creature, focused on marriage and founding a family, and it is believed that "male" sports activities could ruin her femininity (Đorđić & Tumin, 2008), so it is possible that some seventh grade students have such beliefs because of the influence of their social environment. On the other hand, the dissatisfaction of the students with PE classes may depend on the teacher, their ability and innovativeness (Martinović & Branković, 2012).

Contents that are covered by PE classes, according to the Subject Curriculum for Elementary Schools (2011) are only apparently adapted to students' age and gender, but practice shows that football is much more practiced and played than modern dances, for example. Football will highly unlikely be particularly interesting to girls, but it would be good to increase the number of classes of modern dance or something similar that might interest them. In favour of this fact, 48% of the seventh grade female students responded that they would, when given the opportunity to change something, change the curriculum.

This paper pointed to the differences in the attitudes of the fourth grade and seventh grade female students of elementary school toward Physical Education classes. The results showed that there are significant statistical differences by the favorite venue for PE classes, and in terms of the satisfaction by the quality of PE class realisation.

CONCLUSION

The significance of this research is reflected in informing teachers about the students' attitudes toward Physical Education. The received results may provide an insight to the teachers about the present state, considering the students' attitudes toward Physical Education, and thereby contribute to the improvement of the teaching-education practice.

Physical Education is a subject that may influence healthy mental and physical development of children and young people. Quality Physical Education classes, an adequate selection of teaching content and positive attitudes toward Physical Education classes form the basis for engaging in physical activity and sports, not only in childhood and adolescence, but also throughout life. The choice and the structure of Physical Education contents at elementary school age should be adapted based on the age, interests, needs and gender of a child. Because of it, it is important that teachers adapt the content and make the lesson interesting to students of both genders, so that they (and especially female pupils in higher grades) could develop positive attitudes toward PE classes and thereby understand that this subject affects not only their looks, but also their health.

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