

ANALYSIS OF MASARYK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' INTEREST IN SPORTS COURSES IN MANDATORY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The aim of our research was to analyze the interest of students of Masaryk University (MU) in sports courses in mandatory physical education. The partial goals was satisfaction with the offer of subjects and the obligation to attend physical education within university studies. The University Sport Center (USC) of the Faculty of Sports Studies provides mandatory physical education at MU. Students are required to have two credits in physical education (PE) within their bachelor's degree and long master's degree. They can choose both a semester lesson or in a form of block lessons that take place on Friday or weekend, as well as multi-day summer or winter training courses.

Methods: We created a survey for our research. The subject of the questions was to find out if the students were familiar with the offer of USC-organized sports courses and, if not, what is the cause of this ignorance or nescience. We also looked at their preferences for sports courses, what activities they would prefer on the course. We were also interested in student satisfaction with the offer of PE courses and with the obligation to attend these courses. The results were processed by descriptive statistics and data analysis.

Results: A total of 1608 students from all MU faculties answered our survey. The survey was conducted in the spring semester of 2019 in semester teaching, both in mandatory and in paid form. We found that 67% of students do not know the offer of summer and winter training courses. The biggest problem why they don't know the offer is the lack of interest in these activities. Among the activities that are interesting for them and would like to run them on summer courses are water sports, especially river rides, hiking, sightseeing, mountain hikes, cycling and rock climbing activities. Furthermore, we found that 95% of students are satisfied with the offer of PE courses. 91% of students see positively the obligation to attend PE at universities, 44% of them would like PE for 3 semesters or more.

Conclusion: Physical activity plays an important role in student life. For a young person who wants to be a university educated expert, movement, health, and vitality have an irreplaceable function. From the results of our investigation we can conclude that students are aware of the influence of active sports in their lives, agree with the organization of PE within their university studies and want to actively participate in physical education. Exceptions are sports courses, which they are not interested in, or have no idea that they exist. Based on the results, we will look for ways to promote both summer and winter courses, so that students can be informed about the offer (cooperation with MU faculties and rectorate) and then we will find ways to make the courses more attractive for students.

Keywords: Sports courses; mandatory physical education; students

Introduction

Regular physical activity brings many physical and social benefits and plays an extraordinary role in the prevention of various diseases. The International Charter for PE and Sport (UNESCO, 1978) declares the right of all people to have access to PE, sport and physical activity (PA), and this right must be guaranteed. It is necessary for the development of one's own physical potential, the development of physical literacy. It indicates the level of education in this area and is not a type of movement, but the quality of movement skills and abilities and includes attitudes to movement (Vašíčková, 2016).

Conversely, a sedentary lifestyle is closely linked to health pathologies and can thus trigger health problems both in childhood and adolescence (Roberts, 1991) and especially among university students (Irwin, 2007). At universities, students are faced with the problem of managing the transition to a different way of learning as quickly as possible, which results in a different way of life. Moreover, about 60% of them are temporary residents. Studying at university is the time when a young person completes the most important stage of his education, finds his lifestyle and completes his development (Valjent, 2010).

Some research confirms that the transition to college education is increasing the neglect of a healthy lifestyle and reducing physical movement (Bray & Born, 2004). This is due to changes in the life of a university student he needs to cope with – a family and school-regulated lifestyle, an increased number of study hours, increased stress due to pressure from study, and increased responsibility. However, scientific research into the health habits of college students has found low levels of physical activity and poor eating habits (Waldron & Dieser, 2010). The organizations and sports opportunities that universities offer to their students have a decisive influence on the quality of life of university students and should be adapted to their needs, both in terms of the features of the programs offered and their availability. These factors have been shown to support and enhance sport and physical practice (Reed & Phillips, 2005). It turns out that in this age group, physical literacy is more easily developed by offering a wide range of PA in order to take into account and use the potential and interest of all (Vašíčková, 2016). Our other researches show that if a student is satisfied with the offer of sports in his / her curriculum, he / she has a positive attitude towards compulsory physical education at university and to sports in general, so his / her quality of life is positively influenced (Svobodová, 2009).

In the Czech Republic, we can currently observe a decline in regular physical activity during adolescence (Frömel et al., 2007) and the period of study at the university can play an important role in shaping opinions and attitudes towards physical activities and sports. For a brief comparison of the system and content of teaching physical education and sports at universities in the Czech Republic, we selected our three largest universities - Charles University in Prague, UP Olomouc and MU Brno. Charles University in Prague - the faculties of this university approach PE teaching individually and differently. Students of some faculties are obliged to obtain a credit from physical education (from 4 credits to 1), at some faculties they must pass swimming tests, at least one training course or input examination. Overview of the organization of PE faculties is on the website (<https://cuni.cz/UK>). UP Olomouc offers its students the teaching of physical education and sports only as optional programs, the organization is provided by the Academic sport centre (<https://ascup.upol.cz/>).

Masaryk University (MU), as one of the universities, has a PE obligation in 2 semesters. The University Sports Centre (USC) of the Faculty of Sports Studies provides compulsory physical education at MU. Students are required to take two credits in physical education as part of their bachelor's and long master's studies. They can choose both semester teaching and a form of block teaching taking place on Friday or at the weekend, they also have a choice of multi-day summer or winter training courses. Currently, USC offers 80 compulsory courses and 75 paid PE courses. Unfortunately, the interest of students in winter and summer training courses is very low at the moment, and we decided to find out why this is the case. For comparison, in 2008, 24 summer training courses were announced, of which 19 courses were held, 636 students participated. In 2018, 5 summer training courses were announced, of which only 1 course was held and 27 students participated.

The aim of our research was to analyse the interest of students of MU in sports courses in mandatory physical education. The partial goals was satisfaction with the offer of subjects and the obligation to attend physical education within university studies.

Methods

The basis of the research was the created survey on sports courses and mandatory PE offers from the USC at MU. When creating the survey, we used the already published survey, which examined the physical activity of students at MU in 2005 and 2014 (Svobodová, 2009). For our needs, we have added questions related to teaching at USC, especially summer and winter training courses. The survey contains 12 questions, both closed and open. It concerns the basic data characterizing the monitored set of respondents, gender, age, faculty, we also distinguished students attending compulsory and paid PE. We created a survey based on the study of literature and adjusted it for the needs of research. The survey contains questions to find out the basic data characterizing the sample of respondents, gender, age, faculty, we also distinguished students attending mandatory and paid PE. The aim of the questions was to find out whether the students know the offer of sports courses organized by USC and if not, what are the causes of this ignorance or lack of information. We also tried to find out their preferences for sports courses, what activities they would prefer at the course. We were also interested in the satisfaction of students with the offer of PE subjects and the obligation to attend PE. And last but not least, whether they do sports in their free time and how often.

A total of 1608 students from all MU faculties answered our survey. The survey took place in the spring semester 2019 in semester teaching, both in compulsory and in paid form. The average age of respondents was 21 years. We distributed the surveys in paper form, mostly on compulsory PE in cooperation with the USC team of lecturers. All students were informed about the anonymity of the answers and about the possibility of not participating in the survey. All completed surveys are now stored in the principal investigator's office.

We evaluated the surveys with descriptive statistics.

Basic characteristics of the file:

Table 1 *Gender of participants*

	N	%
Men	559	35%
Women	1049	65%
Total	1608	100%

Representation of Particular Faculty

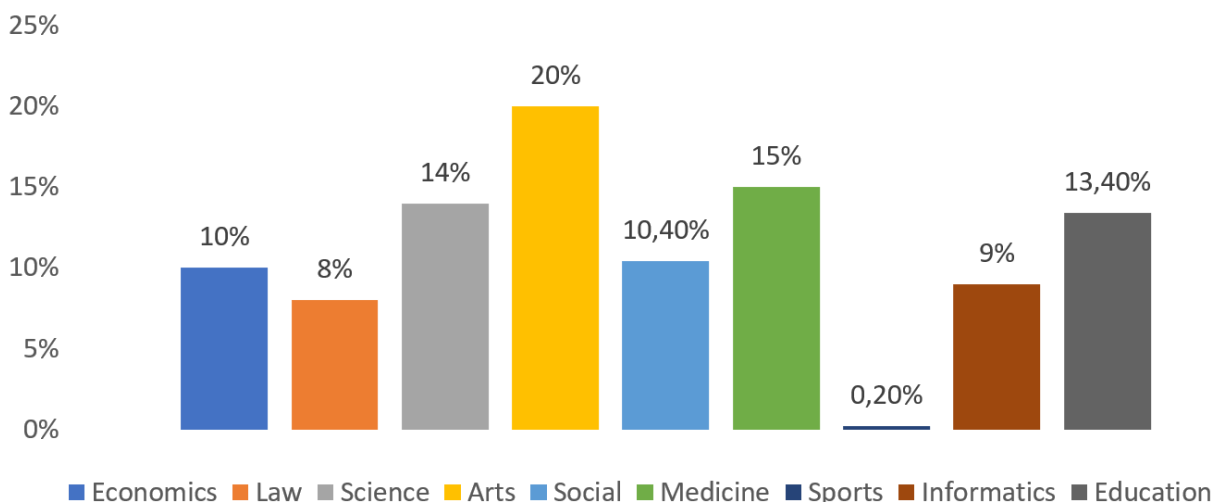


Figure 1 Representation of individual faculties of MU

Figure 1 shows the representation of individual faculties. Least students are from the Faculty of Sports Studies (FSpS) because USC offers teaching to all faculties except FSpS. They can only choose from payed PE. Other faculties are represented equally, only the Faculty of Arts has the largest representation. Students can register PE during the first 6 semesters of study, so the layout is random.

Table 2 Participation in the form of Physical Education

	N	%
Mandatory PE	1511	94%
Paid PE	97	6%
Total	1608	100%

Table 2 shows the stratification of students in mandatory and pay PE. 94% of the addressed students attend compulsory PE, which was the aim of the survey. We distributed the surveys in paper form mostly in compulsory PE for internal teachers. Paid courses were less chosen because they are intended for students who already have mandatory PE or cannot enroll in it (FSpS students).

Results

For us, the most important question we were dealing with was the knowledge of the courses, whether students know the offer of winter and summer training courses. Unfortunately, it was assumed that two thirds (67%) of the addressed students did not know the offer of courses.

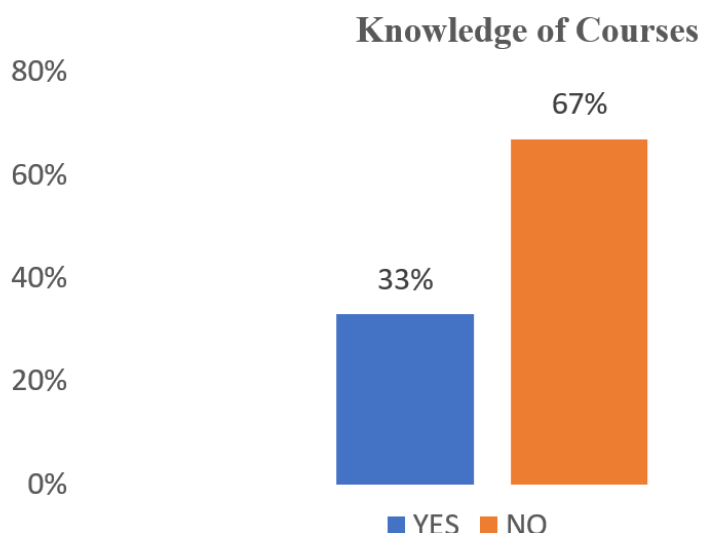


Figure 2 Courses

Part of the question was, if they know the offer, whether it suits them and if not, why they do not know the offer. Those who knew the offer usually answered that the offer suits them. There was a small percentage of those who wrote that the offer is satisfactory, but they prefer to choose semester lessons or that the dates of the courses do not suit them. Winter courses take place during the winter exam period and summer courses mostly in July or August.

Among the biggest problems why students do not know the offer is the lack of interest in these activities (40%), then that they have not heard about the offer, they do not know that the courses exist (16%), another addressed problem was time consumption of the course or lack of time (5%). In a low percentage, students reported that there is little information, no one told them, they prefer to ride alone, have other interests, or chooses semester teaching.

Another question we asked the students was the length of the courses. According to the answers, winter courses should last on average 7 days and summer courses on average 8 days.

Table 3 Course selection factors

Selection factors		Followed categories		Percentage relative frequency relative to the number of respondents
		Absolute frequency	Percentage share	
1.	Price	976	22%	61%
2.	Course length	589	13%	37%
3.	Interesting place	698	16%	43%
4.	Sport activities	1187	26,5%	74%
5.	Social gathering event	361	8%	22%
6.	Learning new skills	393	9%	24%
7.	Other	29	0,5%	2%
8.	Not interested in courses	220	5%	14%
Total		4453	100%	277%

We were interested in what is the determining factor in the choice of courses. The following table 3 shows the responses. Students had a choice of 8 options, one of which was negative (lack of interest in the courses). They could choose more options.

The decisive factor for students in the choice of courses is sports activity (26,5%) in second place is then with (22%) the price and the next is an interesting place (16%). 0,5% of students stated a different reason, which was usually the date when the course was held. Only 5% of students reported lack of interest in the courses, which is in conflict with the answer to the question about the course knowledge and the reason why they do not know it.

Among the activities that are interesting for them and would like to attend them on summer courses are water sports, especially river rafting, hiking, cycling and rock climbing activities.

A supplementary question in the survey was whether students were satisfied with the offer of courses offered by USC in both mandatory and pay PE. From Table 4 we can see that 95% of respondents are satisfied with the offer, only 5% are not. Students had the opportunity to write under the question about what subject they would welcome. The answers were very diverse and some of them were inspiring for us.

Table 4 Satisfaction with the offer of courses at USC

	N	%
YES	1519	95%
NO	89	5%
Total	1608	100%

We chose the last question in the survey on the basis of previous research conducted at our department in 2005 and 2014. We asked students about the number of semesters of mandatory PE if they wanted this obligation at all and to what extent. Survey in paid subjects were chosen less because they are intended for students who have already completed the compulsory PE or cannot enroll in it (FSpS students, only 0.20%).

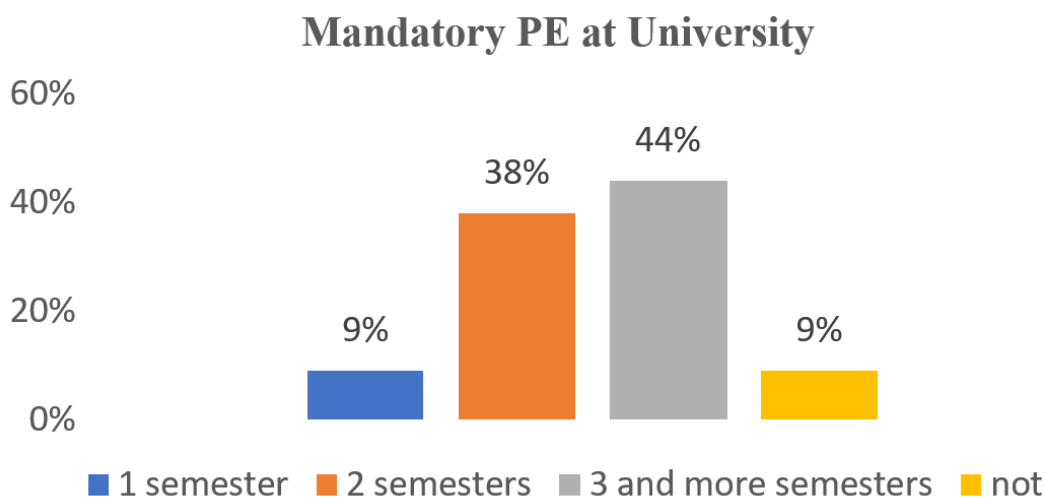


Figure 3 Mandatory PE at University

Figure 3 shows us students' interest in mandatory PE – 44% of students would like 3 or more semesters of mandatory PE, which is a very positive answer for us, 9% would abolish the obligation of PE in universities.

Discussion

The last important part of the survey was finding out whether the students agree or disagree with the mandatory PE at MU. We asked this question again like in 2005 and 2014 (Střeščíková & Svobodová, 2019). From the results that we compared in Table 5, we can see that the positive attitude of students towards mandatory physical education at MU is stable. Compared to previous researches, this year the number of students who agree to mandatory PE in two semesters has increased, and over the last 14 years the percentage of those who disagree with it has declined.

Table 5 Comparison of interest in mandatory PE at MU

	2005	2014	2019
1 semester	40(4%)	53 (4,3%)	142(9%)
2 semesters	245(23%)	393(31,6%)	605 (38%)
3 or more semesters	557(53%)	698(56,1%)	708 (44%)
Disagree	204(20%)	100 (8,0%)	152 (9%)
Total	1046 (100%)	1244 (100%)	1608 (100%)

58% of students of the 2nd of the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University, 30% of the 3rd of the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University showed interest in compulsory PE, but to a greater extent - 60% think that the teaching of physical education should be compulsory. The results from the Faculty of Medicine of Charles University show that those who do not agree with TV are 10%, which corresponds to the findings of students at MU (Gajdošík, Baláž, 2012).

Conclusion

The aim of our contribution was to find out if students know the offer of winter and summer training courses and whether they are interested in them.

From the results we found out that 67% of students do not know about the offer of courses and the main reason is their lack of interest, as well as poor awareness. The answer to the question, what would be the decisive factor for them to go to the course is sports activity, price and interesting place. The reason why our offer is underutilized is due to a term that is unsuitable for them. So we will try to focus on the selection of activities they are interested in, make the offer more attractive and improve promotion, whether in the form of flyers, social networks, etc..

In terms of satisfaction with the offer of courses, most students are satisfied and able to choose from a wide range of courses. Currently USC offers 87 mandatory courses and 63 paid PE courses.

Students agree with the organization of PE within their university studies and want to actively participate in physical education. The proportion of those who disagree with mandatory physical education decreased by 11% between 2005 and 2019. Exceptions are sports courses, which they are not interested in, or have no idea that they exist. Based on the results, we will look for ways to promote both summer and winter courses, so that students can be informed about the offer (cooperation with MU faculties and rectorate) and then we will find ways to make the courses more attractive for students.

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