

PERSISTENCE OF PRACTICING SPORTS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE: A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION

I. E. SANDU ¹ M. DRAGOMIR ²

Abstract: *In the current context, young people face an increasingly limited availability of time to manage all the activities they propose, and this temporal restriction also influences their habits regarding physical activity and practicing sports. The benefits that physical activities have on the mental health of young people are manifested in various aspects, such as reducing stress, improving self-esteem and the quality of sleep. Considering these aspects, a research was proposed with the aim of evaluating the existence of significant differences in the ability of young people to maintain a habit of exercise, particularly dance, either in a dance class or in the comfort of their own home.*

Key words: *activities, dance, mental health, youth.*

1. Introduction

The concept of mental health has become increasingly prevalent in public discourse to describe individuals' psychological well-being, and this heightened attention has also extended to the realm of physical activities [9], [10]. Physical activities primarily contribute to maintaining a general sense of well-being in terms of self-confidence and physical appearance, which is one of the main reasons for engaging in such activities. However, their benefits do not stop there but also extend to physiological health, positively influencing aspects such as

cardiovascular function, hormonal balance, and overall health [3].

In the current context, characterized by limited time and the challenge of effectively managing free time for physical activities, another significant factor that negatively influences this issue is the presence of social media. The online environment is often inundated with images of immediate results with minimal effort, promoting ideals of the perfect body and improperly executed physical exercises. These false pressures, inconsistent with reality and often unhealthy, exert immense pressure on individuals' motivation to engage in

¹ Phd student, Doctoral School of Sport Science and Physical Education, University of Craiova, sandu.isabelaelena@gmail.com

² Doctoral School of Sport Science and Physical Education, University of Craiova.

physical activities or to give up on them prematurely. Such unrealistic expectations lead many to doubt their physical appearance or their ability to engage in a particular sports or physical activity.

Of course, the integration of technology into our daily lives has brought both benefits and challenges. While social media and the internet can contribute to the emergence of unrealistic ideals and generate pressures on individuals regarding physical appearance and sports performance, they also offer significant opportunities for improving health and overall well-being [5]. The emergence of online classes and various fitness and wellness platforms has allowed access to instruction and guidance in a variety of physical and practical activities, even from the comfort of one's own home. These resources have become particularly useful in the context of the pandemic, when travel restrictions and the closure of gyms have prompted people to seek alternatives to maintain their level of physical activity. However, it is crucial to be selective in choosing the information and resources we use to ensure that we receive proper guidance tailored to our individual needs [4].

Special attention should be paid to the credibility and qualifications of online instructors or fitness applications to ensure that we engage in physical activity safely and effectively.

2. Purpose

This article aims to provide an analysis of young people's physical activity

behaviour, taking into account both the social and spatial environment of the dance class and the convenience and accessibility of practicing dance at home via an app. This research aims to provide an in-depth and systematic analysis of young people's physical activity behaviour, taking into account both the social and spatial environment of the dance class and the convenience and accessibility of dancing at home via an application.

3. Hypothesis

Starting from the premise that the majority of young people face time constraints and are prone to sedentary behavior and obesity, this physical phenomenon is often accompanied by antisocial behaviors due to limited human interactions. These conditions can lead to a range of conditions, both emotional and cognitive, as well as physical, that are not always effectively managed or treated appropriately. According to Eurostat, in 2022, only 25% of Romanians engage in physical activity from once to three times per week, indicating a trend towards sedentary behavior and consequently towards other health conditions. Thus, we investigate the hypothesis that moderate physical activity can support overall well-being and alleviate multiple associated conditions. Considering criteria such as temporal accessibility, level of physical effort, and material availability, we have chosen dance as the focus of this investigation.

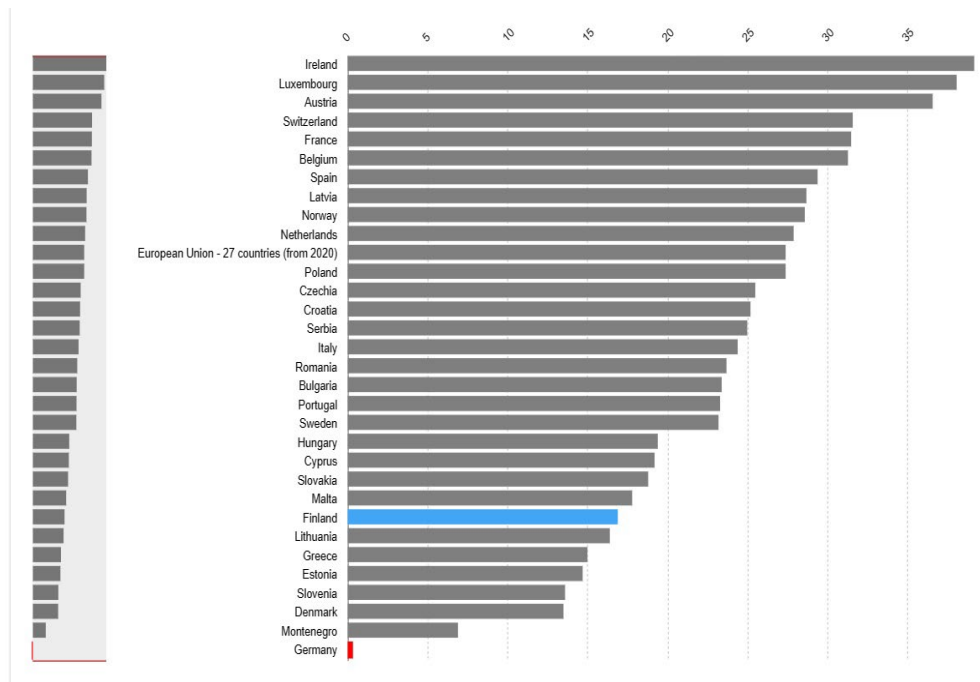


Fig.1. Persons performing physical activity outside working time by frequency in a typical week, body mass index and age in 2022

Source: Eurostat

4. Research Method

When it comes to selecting a physical activity, there is a wide range of options available, and for the relevance of this study, it has been decided to focus on dance. The reason for this choice is grounded in several factors, including the versatility of different dance styles, the possibility to practice dance without requiring a high level of physical activity, the rhythmic aspect of music, and adaptability according to age.

Factors that could positively influence the choice of dance classes should form the basis of selecting this sports activity. Therefore, we aim to investigate whether persistence in practicing dance is influenced by the environment, whether it

be online courses or physical classes, as well as the long-term regularity of participation. This investigation will provide a deeper understanding of how the environment and participation frequency influence commitment and continued engagement in this physical activity [2].

In our study, we investigated a group of young individuals from November 2023 to February 2024, who were subjected to a questionnaire regarding their participation in dance classes in the SV Oltenia area, either in physical or online format. We adopted a research model designed to identify variations and highlight behavioural patterns among participants, specifically whether they have developed a habit of practicing dance in either of the two formats and which one is preferred.

The questionnaire was distributed and completed online, with a total number of 103 participants.

To obtain the necessary data, we designed the questionnaire with relevant questions addressing aspects such as the frequency of participation in dance classes, reasons for choosing a particular format (physical or online), satisfaction level, and persistence in practicing dance in both mediums [1]. Analyzing these responses allowed us to assess the trends and preferences of participants regarding the mode of participation in dance classes and to identify factors that could influence their choices in this regard.

In light of this data, we applied appropriate statistical techniques to examine the correlations and associations between the measured variables, as well as to determine the level of internal consistency of the questionnaire used. This approach enabled us to formulate robust conclusions and provide relevant recommendations for promoting participation in dance classes in both formats, based on the individual needs and preferences of the participants.

5. The Content of the Experiment

The experiment aimed to investigate the factors influencing the persistence and preference for participating in dance classes among young individuals in the SV Oltenia area, conducted from November 2023 to February 2024. A total of 103 participants took part in the study, responding to a questionnaire distributed online.

The questionnaire comprised inquiries addressing various aspects such as the frequency of participation in dance classes, reasons for selecting either

physical or online formats, satisfaction levels, and persistence in practicing dance in both mediums. By analyzing the responses, the study sought to identify trends and preferences regarding participation modes and factors influencing these choices.

Furthermore, statistical techniques were applied to examine correlations and associations between measured variables and assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. This methodological approach facilitated the formulation of robust conclusions and the provision of relevant recommendations for promoting participation in dance classes, tailored to individual needs and preferences.

6. Results

This study investigates the preferences and motivations underlying the choice between online and physical dance classes among a young population. The study sample consists of 103 participants, who were selected to reflect diversity in age, dance experience, and level of physical activity.

Data analysis revealed that 68 of these participants, representing approximately 66% of the total, expressed a preference for online dance classes over physical ones. This significant proportion suggests a clear trend among participants towards the online environment for practicing dance. However, it is important to note that these results are susceptible to survey errors, and the margins of error could affect the accuracy of estimation to some extent.

However, it is observed that the predominant reasons why young individuals opt for participating in online dance courses are multiple and varied.

Among these, the absence of a specific time slot and the flexibility in the participation schedule are identified as significant factors. This adaptable approach provides participants with the opportunity to organize their activities according to other commitments or priorities, thus facilitating the integration of dance into their daily routine.

Moreover, the freedom of movement and the absence of constraints related to physical appearance are important aspects that encourage participation in online dance courses. By eliminating the pressure to conform to aesthetic or social standards, participants feel more comfortable to explore and express themselves freely through movement, which can contribute to a more enjoyable and confident experience in their own abilities [7]. Thus, online dance courses become a conducive environment for developing dance skills and expressing creativity in a free and unrestricted manner.

Within the subgroup of participants who opted for online courses, 39 of them, representing approximately 57%, indicated a preference for a more interactive experience and would be willing to invest time in attending physical classes to enhance the social aspect of their activity.

Regarding the persistence in practicing dance, only 43 out of the 103 participants, approximately 42%, maintained a consistent habit of participation throughout the duration of the questionnaire. This suggests that, despite the declared interest in dance courses, a significant percentage of participants face difficulties in maintaining a consistent

practice routine, either due to environmental factors, lack of motivation, or other personal constraints.

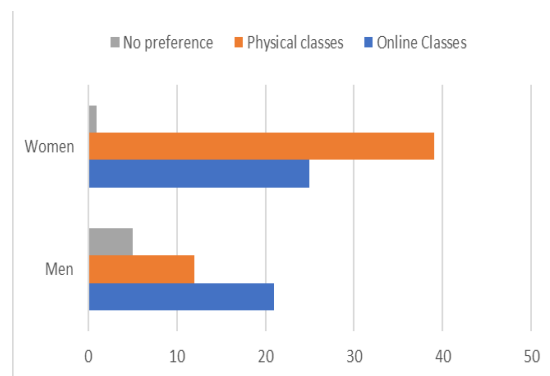


Fig. 2. *Descriptive statistics*

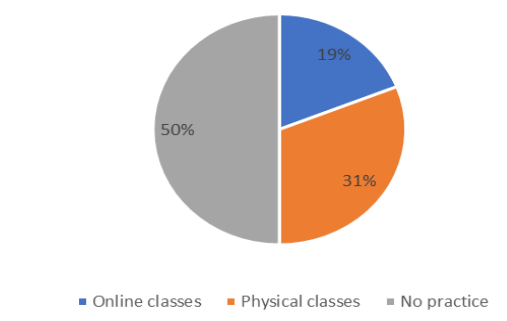


Fig. 3. *Long-term practice*

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the preferences and motivations driving young individuals' choices between online and physical dance classes. The findings underscore the growing popularity of online platforms for engaging in physical activities among young people, driven by factors such as scheduling flexibility and freedom of movement. However, it is essential to

recognize the diverse range of reasons influencing participation choices and the importance of addressing barriers to sustained engagement.

The results highlight the need for targeted interventions aimed at promoting physical activity and addressing the challenges faced by young individuals in maintaining a consistent practice routine. Strategies focused on enhancing motivation, providing social support, and creating conducive environments for practice are crucial for fostering long-term engagement in physical activities such as dance.

The findings emphasize the importance of considering individual preferences and motivations when designing interventions to promote physical activity. Tailored approaches that take into account the unique needs and preferences of young people are essential for maximizing engagement and fostering a culture of active living.

8. Proposals

The findings of this study shed light on the preferences and motivations driving young individuals' choices between online and physical dance classes [8]. The significant proportion of participants expressing a preference for online dance classes underscores the growing popularity of virtual platforms for engaging in physical activities.

One notable aspect revealed by the data is the diverse range of reasons why young people opt for online dance courses. The flexibility in scheduling and the absence of a fixed time slot emerged as prominent factors influencing participants' choices.

This flexibility allows individuals to integrate dance into their daily routines more seamlessly, accommodating other commitments and priorities. Additionally, the freedom of movement and the absence of physical appearance-related constraints contribute to the appeal of online dance classes [7], [6]. By providing a judgment-free environment, these platforms empower participants to explore and express themselves creatively, fostering a more enjoyable and confident experience.

Despite the advantages offered by online dance classes, a subset of participants expressed a preference for a more interactive experience. This preference highlights the importance of social engagement in physical activities, particularly for young individuals seeking opportunities for social interaction and connection. The willingness of these participants to invest time in attending physical classes underscores the value they place on the social aspect of dance participation.

Furthermore, the findings regarding persistence in practicing dance reveal a notable discrepancy between intention and behavior [11]. While a significant proportion of participants expressed interest in dance courses, maintaining a consistent practice routine proved challenging for many. Environmental factors, lack of motivation, and personal constraints emerged as potential barriers to sustained engagement. Addressing these barriers may require targeted interventions aimed at enhancing motivation, providing social support, and fostering a conducive environment for regular practice.

Overall, the results of this study underscore the importance of considering individual preferences and motivations when designing interventions to promote physical activity among young people. By understanding the factors influencing participation choices and persistence, policymakers, educators, and health professionals can develop tailored strategies to support and encourage engagement in physical activities such as dance, both online and in traditional settings.

References

1. Abeza, G.: *Social media and sport studies (2014–2023): A critical review*. In: *International Journal of Sport Communication*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, 2023, p. 251-261. DOI: 10.1123/ijsc.2023-0001
2. Afthinos, Y., Theodorakis, N.D., Nassis, P.: *Customers' expectations of service in Greek fitness centers: Gender, age, type of sport center, and motivation differences*. In: *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, Vol. 15, Issue 3, 2005, pp. 245-258. DOI: 10.1108/09604520510598329
3. Antonia, T.G., Pierpaolo, L.: *Research on a massive open online course (MOOC): a Rapid Evidence Assessment of online courses in physical education and sport*. In: *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, Vol. 19, 2019, p. 2328-2333. DOI:10.7752/jpes.2019.s4326
4. Franchina, V., Lo Coco, G.: *The influence of social media use on body image concerns*. In: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis & Education*, Vol. 10, Issue 1, 2018.
5. Iuliano, E., Mazzilli, M., Zambelli, S., Macaluso, F., Raviolo, P., Picerno, P.: *Satisfaction levels of sport sciences university students in online workshops for substituting practice-oriented activities during the COVID-19-Lockdown*. In: *Education Sciences*, Vol. 11, Issue 10, 2021, p. 600. DOI: 10.3390/educsci11100600
6. Jiotsa, B., Naccache, B., Duval, M., Rocher, B., Grall-Bronnec, M.: *Social media use and body image disorders: Association between frequency of comparing one's own physical appearance to that of people being followed on social media and body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness*. In: *International journal of environmental research and public health*, Vol. 18, Issue 6, 2021, p. 2880. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph18062880
7. Lupton, D.: *Digital media and body weight, shape, and size: An introduction and review*. In *Fat Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, 2017, p. 119-134. DOI: 10.1080/21604851.2016.1203386
8. Murray, R.M., Sabiston, C.M., Doré, I., Bélanger, M., O'Loughlin, J.L.: *Association between pattern of team sport participation from adolescence to young adulthood and mental health*. In: *Scandinavian journal of medicine & science in sports*, Vol. 31, Issue 7, 2021, pp. 1481-1488. DOI: 10.1111/sms.13906
9. Pascoe, M.C., Parker, A.G.: *Physical activity and exercise as a universal depression prevention in young people: A narrative review*. In: *Early intervention in psychiatry*, Vol. 13, Issue 4, 2019, p. 733-739. DOI: 10.1111/eip.12732

10. Siefken, K., Junge, A., Laemmle, L.: *How does sport affect mental health? An investigation into the relationship of leisure-time physical activity with depression and anxiety.* In: Human Movement, Vol. 20, Issue 1, 2019, p. 62-74. DOI: 10.1515/humo-2019-0007
11. Strachan, L., MacDonald, D.J., Côté, J.: *Project SCORE! Coaches' perceptions of an online tool to promote positive youth development in sport.* In International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, Vol. 11, Issue 1, 2016, pp. 108-115. DOI: 10.1177/174795412110272