

First- versus last-year university students' physical education motivations

UDC 159.9.07



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Abstract

Objective of the study was to survey and analyze physical education motivations of the first- versus last-year university students not majoring in sports.

Methods and structure of the study. Belgorod State National Research University's Psychology Department students ($n=98$) were sampled for the survey run in 2021. They were subject to My Attitude to Physical Education questionnaire survey by Y.N. Gut, S.A. Korneeva; Sports Motivations test by A.V. Shabolta; and the Personality Success Motivations and Failure Avoidance tests by T. Ehlers. The survey data were processed by the standard statistical toolkit with the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test for unrelated samples using the SPSS 25 software.

Results and conclusion. The study was designed to survey and analyze physical education motivations of the first-versus last-year university students. We found the first-year students more physically active, although the seniors were tested trained on a more regular and determined basis knowing the benefits of physical education for health, mood and wellbeing. The younger group was tested focused on the socializing, peer communication, friends-making, public approval and recognition aspects. As for the GTO Complex test motivations, the seniors are reportedly more focused on success. The survey data and analysis found the genuine physical education motivations being volatile and underdeveloped in the younger group majoring not majoring in sports.

Keywords: *physical education motivation, university physical education classes, sports-unrelated first- and last-year students.*

Background. Modern health research community generally agrees that low physical progress motivations and underdeveloped health agendas are the key reasons for the university students' physical inactivity [1-4]. Surveys of the student physical education motivations make it possible to rate the actual interests, physical education agendas, values and priorities. Having analyzed the students' interests and motivations, one may forecast whether or not they will keep committed for the physical education / sports later on or their physical education needs and ambitions will rapidly fade with time in the academic period.

Knowing the basic physical education motivations, we can select and apply the most efficient corrective tools in the academic physical education service to help them make a transition from volatile opportunistic motivations centered on an immediate results

(socializing purposes, friends-making and pleasing, fashions, self-assertion needs, etc.) to more stable and healthy physical education motivations; and develop their ability to prudently manage their own motivational contexts so as to grow good determination for physical education, healthy lifestyle and physical progress as such.

Objective of the study was to survey and analyze physical education motivations of the first- versus last-year university students.

Methods and structure of the study. We sampled for the survey (run in 2021) the Belgorod State National Research University's Psychology Dept students ($n=98$). The sample was subject to My Attitude To Physical Education questionnaire survey by Y.N. Gut, S.A. Korneeva; Sports Motivations Probe by A.V. Shabolta; and the Personality Success Motivations



and Failure Avoidance tests by T. Ehlers. The survey data were processed by the standard statistical toolkit with the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test for unrelated samples using the SPSS 25 software.

Results and discussion. As provided by the questionnaire survey data, 85% and 78% in the first- and last-year groups (respectively) are reportedly physically active; and 15% and 22% inactive ($U=772$; $p \leq 0.05$). Only 8.8% and 24.2% reported habitual physical education for they “feel energized and happy” in trainings; versus 41.8% and 40% trained on a “periodic” basis; plus 48.4% and 35.2% on a “rather irregular” basis ($U=765$; $p \leq 0.05$).

The first-year group reported the following preferred physical education / sports: volleyball (17.6%), jogging (13.2%), body building (11.2%), swimming (11.2%), and vague “different sports” (8.8%). The senior group ranked the favorite sports as follows: fitness (19.8%), jogging (19.8%), stretching (8.8%); gym trainings (8.8%), etc. The physical education / sporting motivations were ranked as follows: 8.8% and 11% in the first- and last-year groups (respectively) reported no motivations whatsoever; 26.6% and 4.4% motivated by fashion and sporting image; and 30% and 37% motivated by the individual health agendas.

However, most in the first- and last-year groups (55% and 50.5%, respectively) were found indifferent to the daily active breaks and activation workouts in the classes; whilst the rest were virtually equally split into supporters (22% and 19.8%) and critics (22% and 28.6%) of the above physical activity initiatives, with an insignificant intergroup difference. Furthermore, only 39.6% and 27.4% of the above (respectively) reported joining the university physical education / sports events and movements on a habitual or periodic basis - versus 52.8% and 52.8% in the both groups reluctant to join the GTO Complex trainings and tests; and 30.8% and 37.4% plus 15.4% and 8.8% reporting “periodic” and “habitual” participation in the events, trainings and tests, respectively.

The above reluctance is mostly explained by disinterest (39.6% in every group); whilst. 30.8% and 8.8% in the first- and last-year groups (respectively) mentioned compulsion/ strong pressure from outside among their physical education motivations. Furthermore, 28.6% and 11% in the groups reported motivated by the GTO badges; and 13.2% and 8.8% said they just followed suit of their acquaintances and friends in the physical education activities.

On the whole, the first- and last-year groups reported mostly motivated for the GTO Complex trainings and tests by the socializing and success agendas, respectively; apparently due to the younger group being more driven by emotional aspects of the physical education classes than the senior peers. It should be mentioned in this context that the first-year group was tested higher on the physical-education-related emotionality scale (8.3 versus 6.0 points, respectively; $U=671$; $p \leq 0.05$). This means that the emotional informal communication and socializing aspects of the physical education classes are higher appreciated by the younger group.

Note that the senior group was tested higher on the sports success motivation scale than the first-year one (7.7 versus 4.5 points, respectively, $U=570$; $p \leq 0.01$). This finding partially explains why the seniors are generally more systemic in the physical education / sporting behaviors being more motivated by their own physical progress goals than the still unstable first-year group.

This finding agrees with the questionnaire survey data. The seniors are reportedly more aware of the shortage of physical activity in their lifestyles and tend to go in for sports to “have a break in mental work” and “energize”. We would mention in this context, that the civil-patriotic motivations were tested significantly higher in the senior group as well ($U=425$; $p \leq 0.01$). It may be concluded, therefore, that students tend to develop more prudent, healthy and balanced attitudes to the academic physical education / sports with time, with their personality progress, friends-making and success motivations being complemented by the team spirit/ pride, patriotism and healthy lifestyle related ones. On the whole, however, the first-year group was tested notably more ambitious and higher on the physical education success motivation scale than the seniors – 17.4 versus 15.1 points on average, respectively ($U=585$; $p \leq 0.01$).

Conclusion. The survey found the first-year group physical education / sports practices more frequent and active than in the senior group, although the latter were tested more determined and regular in the trainings due to their better-shaped health/ mood/ well-being agendas. The younger group reported more sensitive to the physical-education-related fashion, social image, socializing/ communication/ friends-making opportunities – i.e. being driven by their self-assertion, social approval and recognition needs. They also rank higher the “aesthetic pleasure” and more sensitive to the com-



munal opinions. These group motivations, however, are rather volatile as they tend to fade with the growing disinterest form surrounding, time pressures etc.; and it is not unusual that the younger group is rapidly discouraged or disinterested in the academic PW/ sports with time. Generally, the survey data and analysis found the genuine physical education motivations being volatile and underdeveloped in the younger students majoring in sports-unrelated specialties.

We recommend the academic physical education / sports curricula being complemented by the psychological comfort building elements; competitive/ team sport practices and active games; difficulty-stepping emotional workouts till sub-maximums; sports-exploration, socializing, morality and team spirit centered elements; physical self-assertion and health prioritizing drivers; competitive progress goal setting initiatives; and good teamwork and trainer-trainee communication encouragement methods. Such methods and tools will help develop healthy physical education / sporting agendas in the university students to facilitate their personality and physical progress for success in professional career.

The study was qualified as a bid for the "Intramural Grant Line No. 826-OD of the Belgorod State National

Research University to support the social and humanitarian research initiatives" of 14.08 2020

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