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ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL EDUCATION LESSONS IN STUDENTS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

School physical education consists in interactions between teachers and students. It is important that each of those present in the classroom feel satisfied with their own results, but also with the way in which the required contents are taught. The aim of the study was to determine the attitudes of students towards physical education classes at different levels of education. The survey was conducted in September 2016 in a group of 157 students from the sixth grade of a primary school, third grade of a junior high school, and from a high school. The results of the survey were analysed separately for each level of education and each sex, and then girls and boys were compared between age groups. Schools from Bielsko-Biała which have similar conditions in terms of equipment and place of teaching classes were selected for the survey. The survey questionnaire by S. Strzyżewski and K. Górna (1989) was used in the study. The results showed that many elements of the lesson remain to discourage the student from practising. Insignificant differences were found depending on the level of education. The youngest girls and boys at every level of education like attending classes, but this tendency is not observed in the oldest girls.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, more and more attention is being paid to the holistic approach to health. It is more common than ever that people care for themselves and their families by eating healthy food and involvement in physical activity. This is because we have better access than in previous years to information promoting our health through Internet websites, television and the press. The fact that more and more fitness clubs, gyms and even specialist dietary centres are being opened represents another facilitation as they become available to everyone, not only to certain individuals. However, in addition to healthy lifestyles, the problems of diseases of affluence, such as cardiovascular diseases or obesity, are also addressed very often. Despite the popularization of health problems, physical activity as one of its determinants remains to be underestimated. Therefore, the role of physical education should be emphasized. The general objective of school physical education is to teach students how to take care of their physical fitness, both now and in the future (Bronikowski et al., 1998). The problem of

decreasing active participation of children and adolescents in physical education classes has appeared again.

The aim of the study is to examine the attitudes of students of a primary school, junior high school and comprehensive secondary school to physical education lessons and participation in them. The opinions of students about physical education were presented.

Physical education is the process of educating children and young people which prepares them to take responsibility for themselves and their health after completion of education and develops students' personality. This is in line with the views presented by the theoreticians of physical education (Strzyżewski 1989, Osiński 2011, Grabowski 1996). It is commonly known that fewer and fewer people care for their physical fitness on a regular basis. It is likely that we ignore taking care of our fitness and teaching of the young generations because we have not been adequately prepared for it. Currently, the access to various types of media that improve awareness is much simpler than it was a dozen or so years ago. Promoting a healthy and active lifestyles increases public awareness of the need for adopting more healthy attitudes. However, in the youngest children, the main source of knowledge in this field is physical education lessons (Bartoszewicz et al., 2005). It is known that the main goal which a physical education teachers wants to achieve is “ both to improve human body and psychosomatic functions of a young person and to develop the system of knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes towards physical culture that in practice will manifest in activities aimed at maintaining a high physical fitness and health” (Strzyżewski 1982, p. 50). Undoubtedly, physical education lessons perform many functions which help influence students, among which Gilewicz (1964) distinguished between stimulating, adaptive, compensatory, and corrective functions. According to Osiński (2011), physical education should also meet many other objectives, such as creative, utilitarian, teaching, fitness, aesthetic-shaping, morphophysiological, health-promoting, hygienic, cognitive, educational, social, educational, somatic, hedonistic and leisure objectives. In Osiński's concept, the separation of educational functions should be emphasized. The author clearly indicates the obligations of school education oriented toward future adult life of the students. This means education of people responsible for their health and fitness who are involved in lifelong physical activity. Physical education deserves that lessons are conducted at the highest possible level by the best

specialists from early age of human life. Specialists should not only ensure physical activity, but also improve their knowledge and achieve as many of the above mentioned objectives as possible. The more goals are achieved with younger or older pupils, the better prepared they will be to take care of themselves in the future. Grabowski (1996) argued that the functions by which we influence students can also be used by adults.

In the process of physical education, the emotional attitude of students to physical activity plays an important role. Students pay special attention to the elements of the lesson. These elements influence their attitudes to physical education and physical exercise. The attitudes towards teachers are also critical. If, for some reason, a student is not positively disposed towards the teacher, his or her attitude towards the lesson will not be positive enough for them to be willing to participate in the lesson. It is important that students' contact with physical education shapes positive emotional experiences. The better the experiences, the greater the chance for adopting active lifestyles in the future. By emphasizing positive emotions during classes, pupils can be encouraged to broaden their knowledge of the subject and to popularize physical activity.

In the light of previous research, students' attitudes to physical education are very diverse. Although the most of respondents like (or like very much) physical education lessons, the opposite situations often occur. The attitudes may concern physical education lessons as a whole and attitudes to its individual elements. The attitude towards lessons may be due to the approach in previous years to education and function of physical education. A similar pattern is observed when the students are shown different types of movements and they have the opportunity to attend interesting and professionally taught classes. The attitude to lessons may also depend on the way in which they are taught.

A survey of the attitudes of students towards physical education lessons was already conducted in 1985-1986. Students of grades 5 to 8 of primary schools, secondary schools and vocational schools were examined by Strzyżewski and Górna (1989). It was found that the attitude of young people towards classes and their elements is getting worse with age. As factors negatively influencing school sports activities, students most often mentioned regularly repeated exercise routines, poor lesson organization, having to exercise to orders,

lack of music exercises, excessive easiness or difficulty of exercises. An important factor influencing the level of interest in the lesson is elements such as introducing music during the classes, treating children as persons, independent practising of exercises. It is also worth noting that the elements indicated as those that reduce the attractiveness of classes largely depend on the teacher. It is the teacher who can adjust the difficulty of the exercises, add a musical aspect, change the exercises or interest the students in new ways of performing them.

In the master's degree by Rzepka (2014), the results of the survey showed that students want lessons to be more attractive, especially during warm-ups, they want to familiarize with new sports, and girls want more classes with music. Furthermore, it is worth paying attention to the fact that school physical education should be more oriented towards recreation and the students themselves.

The survey of general physical activity conducted in Białystok in 2013 showed that physical education is a very popular subject in the respondents from primary and junior high schools, but unfortunately, with age, the interest in classes decreases (Kulesz, 2013). A positive aspect of the results of the survey was that students practised for pleasure, whereas physical education lessons were less stressful than other subjects. Furthermore, the survey showed that the willingness to spend time actively does not change with age.

Another survey was conducted in Kraków in two high schools. Students surveyed in these secondary schools expressed the opinion that the lack of appropriate equipment and unattractive classes had a significant impact on the attractiveness of classes (Karasiński, 2015).

A survey at the national level showed that every tenth student did not participate in all physical education lessons and there were always more boys than girls present during the classes (Woynarowska et al. 2015).

The study conducted in 2016-2017 can verify whether the attitudes of young people towards physical education lessons have changed compared to the results of previous surveys.

2. Material and methods

Characterization of the study participants

The participants of the survey were 157 students, including 90 girls and 67 boys. (Tab. 1).

Table 1. The number of young people

School	Girls		Boys		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Primary school	24	26.7	19	28.4	43	27.4
Junior high school	29	32.2	29	43.2	58	36.9
Secondary school	37	41.1	19	28.4	56	35.7
Total	90	100	67	100	157	100

Research methodology

The study used selected questions from the survey questionnaire developed by D. Bask based on the S. Strzyżewski's questionnaire "Students' interest in physical education and sport". The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions. Most of them were closed-ended single-choice questions. The questions concerned: emotional attitudes to physical education lessons (1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9) and attitudes to selected elements of physical education lessons (4, 5, 10, 12). Furthermore, question 3 was an open-ended question, whereas questions 7 and 8 offered the option to justify a variant of the answer. The questions allowed the students to indicate their favourite types of lessons, write what they would like to change, and they could also present sports not included in the core curriculum which are of particular interest to them.

The consent of school head teachers for the survey was obtained. The survey was conducted during the homeroom hours, in the presence of homeroom teachers. Students were asked to carefully and independently fill in questionnaires.

Quantitative percentage calculations were used for the statistical analysis of the results.

3. Results and discussion

3 most interesting questions which best reflected the subject discussed were selected for the description.

Girls' answers to selected questions:

Emotional attitude of the girls to physical education lessons was reflected in the answers to the question "Do you like practising during physical education lessons?" (Tab. 2, Fig. 1).

Table 2. Girls' answers to the question "Do you like to practising during physical education lessons?"

Response options	Primary school		Junior high school		Secondary school	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
(a) I like it very much	15	62.5	8	27.6	8	21.6
(b) I like it	9	37.5	16	55.2	15	40.6
(c) I do not like it	-	-	5	17.2	14	37.8
Total	24	100	29	100	37	100

Primary school girls like practising during physical education classes (62%). Girls from junior high schools and secondary schools had worse attitudes towards participation in classes. 30% fewer girls in junior high school and 40% fewer girls in secondary school liked physical education lessons very much compared to primary school. At these levels of education, also a significant percentage of girls did not like the lessons - in junior high school: almost 20%; in high school: ca. 40%.

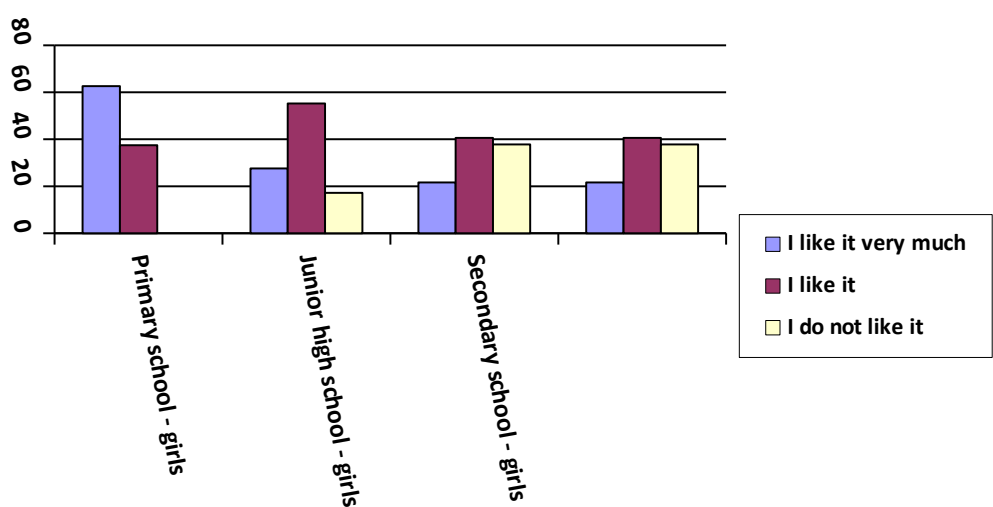


Figure 1: Girls' attitudes to PE lessons

Table 3. The most popular types of PE lessons among girls. (multiple choice)

Type of lesson	Primary school		Junior high school		Secondary school	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
(a) gymnastics	7	13.2	5	14.3	8	13.6
(b) team games	18	34.0	17	48.6	22	37.3
(c) track and field	7	13.2	2	5.7	3	5.1
(d) skating	9	17.0	3	8.7	9	15.3
(e) swimming	12	22.6	3	8.7	10	16.9
(f) other	-	-	1	2.6	2	3.4
(g) I do not like any lessons	-	-	4	11.4	5	8.4
Total	53	100	35	100	59	100

Team games are the most popular in each school. This response was indicated by more than 30% of girls from primary and secondary schools and by nearly 50% of female junior high school students. Next, students in primary school and secondary school indicated swimming and skating (23% and 17% in primary school 17% and 15% in comprehensive secondary school, respectively). At each level of education, gymnastics were given high ratings (nearly 14%).

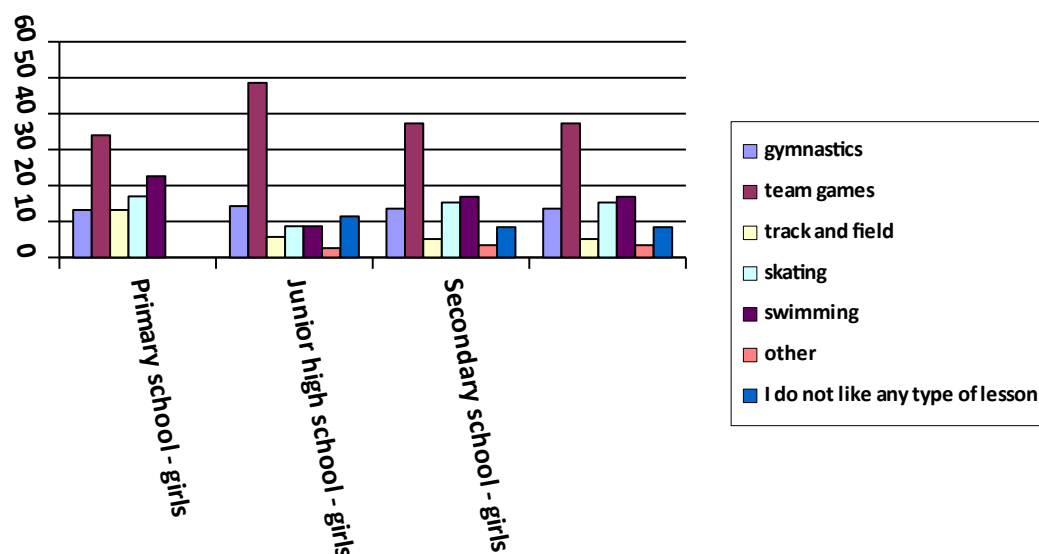


Figure 2. Types of lessons liked by school girls

Open question, with the respondents enumerating their own favourite sports (Tab. 4, Fig. 3). Each girl could give two answers.

Table 4. Sports which are or would be most enjoyable for girls.

Selected sport	Primary school		Junior high school		Secondary school	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Tennis	2	3.9	-	-	2	3.6
Inline skating	3	5.9	3	7.7	3	5.4
Volleyball	5	9.8	9	23.1	16	28.6
Swimming	12	23.5	4	10.3	4	7.1
Ice skating	7	13.7	4	10.3	5	8.9
Skiing	1	1.9	-	-	4	7.1
Snowboarding	2	3.9	2	5.1	1	1.8
Baseball	-	-	1	2.5	1	1.8
Cycling	-	-	1	2.5	3	5.4
Dancing	-	-	-	-	4	7.1
Soccer	3	5.9	4	10.3	3	5.4
Fitness classes (yoga, aerobics, zumba)	-	-	-	-	2	3.6
Handball	-	-	3	7.7	1	1.8
Badminton	-	-	-	-	2	3.6
Medicine ball throw	-	-	-	-	1	1.8
Rugby	-	-	-	-	1	1.8
Basketball	1	1.9	3	7.7	1	1.8
Table tennis	-	-	-	-	1	1.8
Gymnastics	3	5.9	2	5.1	1	1.8
Gym	-	-	1	2.5	-	-
Track and field	6	11.7	2	5.1	-	-
Horse riding	4	7.8	-	-	-	-
Martial arts	1	1.9	-	-	-	-
Games and playing	1	1.9	-	-	-	-
Total	51	100	39	100	56	100

According to the respondents from primary school, the most popular sport was swimming, followed by skating and track and field (23.5%, 13.7%, 11.7%, respectively). Girls from junior high school and secondary school took part in volleyball lessons (junior high school: 23.1%; high school: 28.6%). The second sport among junior high school students was swimming, ice skating and soccer (10.3%). High school students chose ice skating (8.9%), swimming, skiing and dancing (7.1%). Other forms of activity were indicated by few students. All girls chose in total 24 forms of activity, including the youngest - 14, junior high school girls - 13, and the oldest girls - 19.

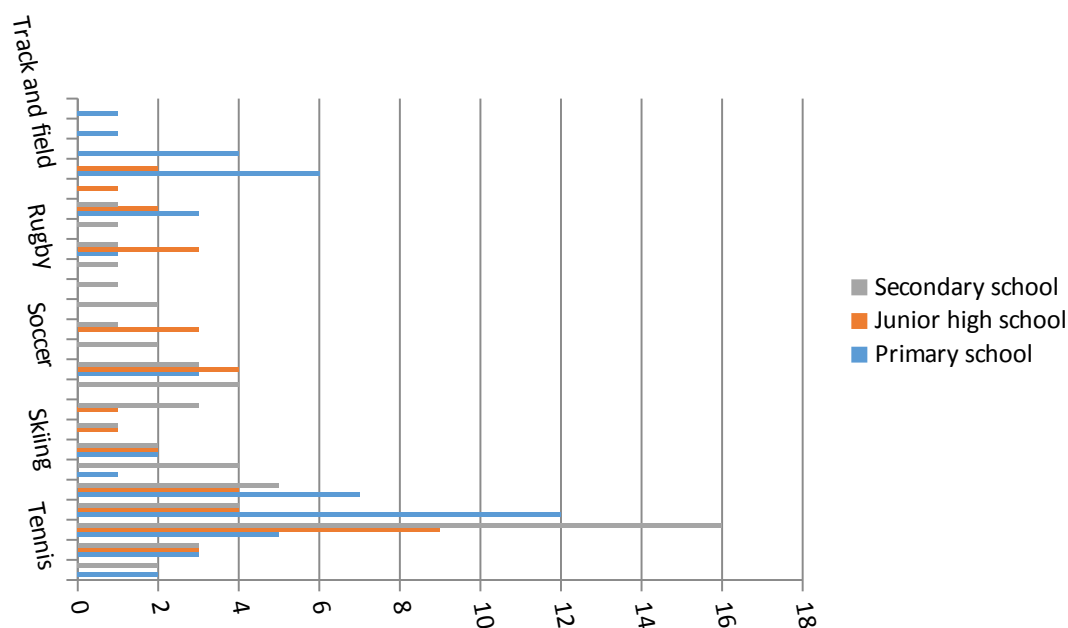


Figure 3 The sports girls like the most

Boys' answers to selected questions:

Boys' emotional attitudes to elements of the lessons reflected in the answers to the question "Do you like practising during physical education lessons?" (Tab. 5, Fig. 4).

Table 5. Boys' answers to the question "Do you like to practising during physical education lessons?"

Response options	Primary school		Junior high school		Secondary school	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
(a) I like it very much	14	73.6	14	48.3	9	47.3
(b) I like it	4	21.1	11	37.9	6	31.6
(c) I do not like it	1	5.3	4	13.8	4	21.1
Total	19	100	29	100	19	100

In each age group, the respondents of more than one age group liked practising during physical education classes. Furthermore, it can be noted that in primary school, this answer had a significant advantage over other answers (by ca. 50%). Unfortunately, with the growing age of the exercising students, more and more young people do not like practising during physical education lessons. The highest percentage of people who do not like exercising was found in secondary school (21%). A tendency can be noticed for more and more respondents who do not like and increasingly fewer of those who like practising sports.

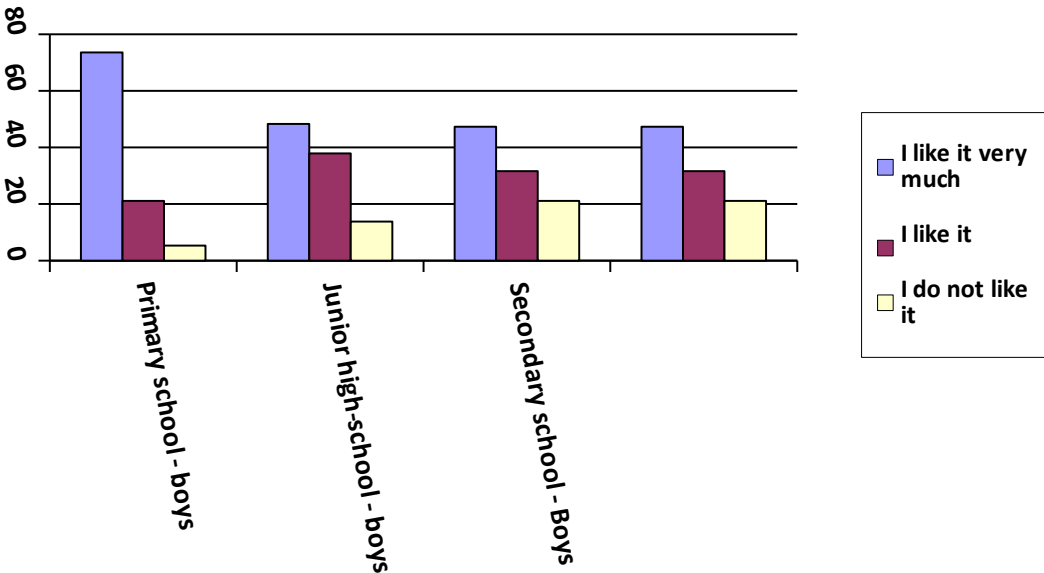


Figure 4. Boys' attitudes to PE lessonsThe most popular types of lessons chosen by boys (Tab. 6, Fig. 5).

Table 6. The most popular types of PE lessons according to boys (multiple choice).

Response options	Primary school		Junior high school		Secondary school	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
(a) gymnastics	2	9.1	3	8.6	3	10.0
(b) team games	16	72.7	20	57.2	14	46.7
(c) track and field	-	-	5	14.3	5	16.7
(d) skating	-	-	1	2.8	1	3.3
(e) swimming	3	13.6	2	5.7	4	13.3
(f) other	1	4.6	-	-	2	6.7
(g) I do not like any lessons	-	-	4	11.4	1	3.3
Total	22	100	35	100	30	100

Each age group of boys liked team games lessons the most (primary school: 73%; junior high school: 58%; secondary school: 46%). In addition, junior high school and secondary school students liked track and field very much (junior high school: 14%; high school: 17%). Secondary school students and the youngest boys also often indicated swimming lessons (about 14%).

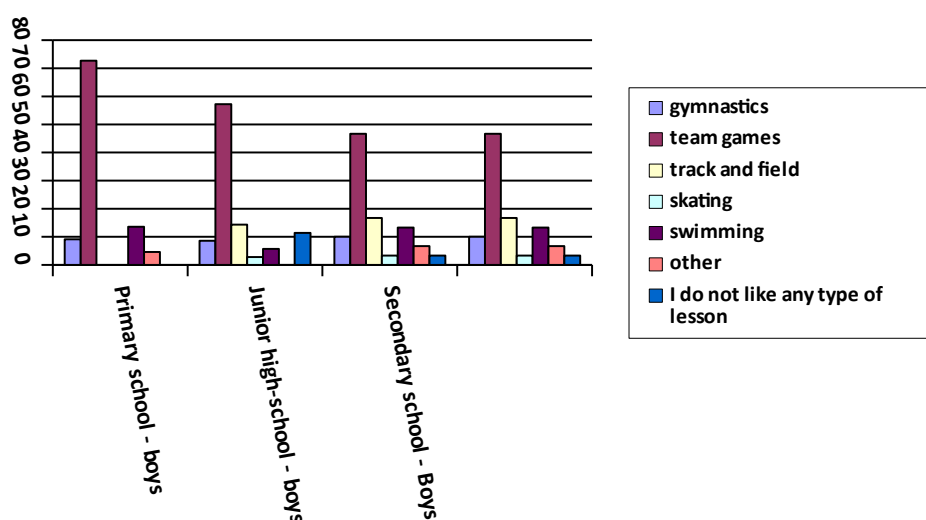


Figure 5. Types of lessons liked by school boys

This question was open and required students to enumerate their favourite (two) sports (Tab. 7, Fig. 6).

Table 7. Sports which are or would be most enjoyable for boys.

Selected sport	Primary school		Junior high school		Secondary school	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Bowling	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Volleyball	3	9.7	5	12.2	6	16.2
Fitness	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Soccer	10	32.3	9	21.9	6	16.2
Handball	1	3.2	2	4.9	2	5.4
Basketball	6	19.4	6	14.6	6	16.2
Track and field	-	-	3	7.3	2	5.4
Pool	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Sailing	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Swimming	3	9.7	2	4.9	2	5.4
Cycling	1	3.2	4	9.7	2	5.4
Cross-country skiing	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Tennis	1	3.2	2	4.9	2	5.4
Badminton	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Dancing	-	-	-	-	1	2.7
Martial arts	4	12.9	1	2.4	2	5.4
Ice skating	-	-	1	2.4	-	-
Rugby	-	-	1	2.4	-	-
Hockey	-	-	1	2.4	-	-
Table tennis	-	-	1	2.4	-	-
Gymnastics	-	-	1	2.4	-	-
Climbing	1	3.2	-	-	-	-
Mountain hiking	-	-	1	2.4	-	-
Shooting at the target	1	3.2	1	2.4	-	-
Total	31	100	41	100	37	100

According to the respondents from primary school, soccer was the most popular sport (32.3%), followed by basketball as the second most important activity (19.4%). Boys from junior high school also mentioned soccer (ca. 22%), with basketball being the second most popular sport (14.6%). Secondary school students choose soccer, basketball and volleyball as their favourite activities (16.2%). Other activities were indicated by few respondents. All boys chose in total 24 forms of activity, with the youngest choosing 10 forms and older boys - 16.

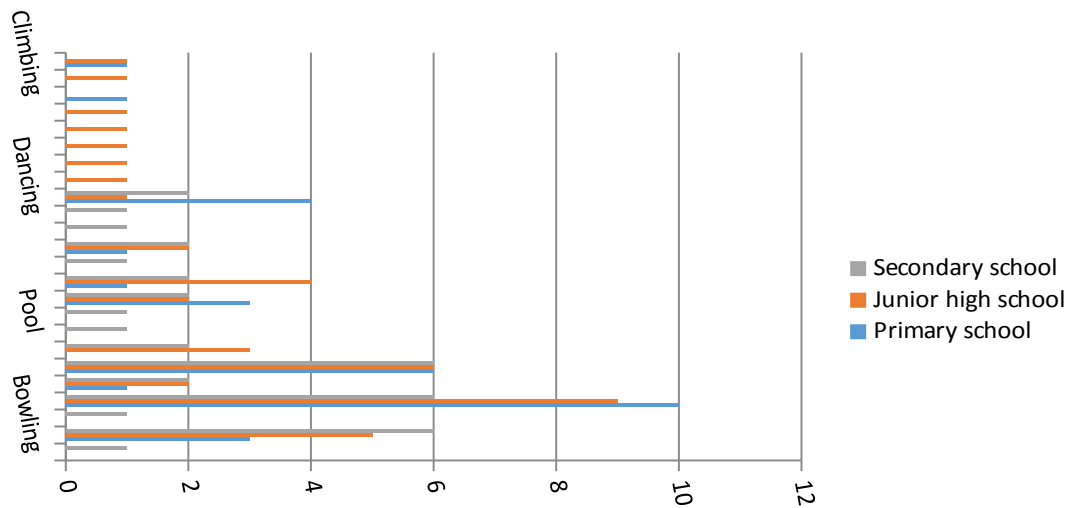


Figure 6. The sports boys like the most

3. Conclusions

The analysis of the results of the survey demonstrated insignificant differences depending on the level of education of students. However, almost all the respondents liked physical education classes or liked them very much. Furthermore, the survey showed a wide range of students' interests in forms of physical activity. The higher the level of education, the greater their diversity. Girls would be more willing to take physical education lessons in gymnastics, swimming and skating. These are sports in which they participate most willingly apart from team games. In this respect, some tendencies for differences between sexes were observed. Boys mostly pointed to team games, although track and field and swimming were also high in the rankings. The results of the research revealed that physical education lessons can be more attractive. Perhaps this would improve the level of participation of young people in classes, especially girls from higher levels of education. As far as possible, it is advisable to introduce forms of physical activity suggested by students into classes or extracurricular activities so that the students can choose what they are really interested in. The study also allowed for identification of the aspects of physical education lessons which are worth putting more emphasis on during coaching young people or during training for working teachers, so that physical education lessons meet students' expectations to a greater extent.

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