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# The Importance of Group Sports Activities in Adult Lifelong Education and in Improving the Quality of Life

Tudor Iulian-Doru<sup>a\*</sup>, Grigore Vasilica<sup>b</sup>, Tudor Maria<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>“Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacology, B-dul Eroilor Sanitari nr. 8, CP 050474, Bucharest, România

<sup>b</sup>National University of Physical Education and Sports, Str. Constantin Noica, Nr. 140, C.P. 060057, București, România

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## Abstract

In the context of contemporary society, the concept of lifelong education is acquiring a growing importance, being involved in many aspects of social and professional life, from retraining to personal development and quality of life. From the perspective of the quality of life, permanent adult education must address the issues of leisure sports activities, particularly those carried out in groups. These types of physical activities, in addition to the physiological, somatic and motor benefits, have strong educational valences related to the psychological and social domains. In the present study we tried to find out the way in which psychosocial effects of recreational group sports activities are reflected in the adults' consciousness. We also tried to capture the differences that arise regarding the matters referred to above between group sports activities with a competitive component (such as sports games) and those without a competitive component (group fitness programs). We undertook a questionnaire-based investigation, the subjects being required to assess the importance of recreational sports activities on meeting some needs related to the multilateral development of the personality and the improvement of social skills that affect quality of life. Responses were single, closed, subjects scoring the degree of validity of each statement on a Likert rating scale from 1 to 5 (1 = no impact, 2 = minimal impact, 3 = medium impact, 4 = high impact, 5 = maximum impact).

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## 1. Introduction

The dynamics of modern society requires special skills from individuals, both psychological (ability to adapt to constant changes, high stress resistance, etc.) and biological (functional and motor potential). In that context, lifelong education becomes imperative.

Thus, the idea of continuing education, having first appeared in France in the '60s, receives an increasingly higher value, physical education being an important part of this process. The objectives pursued by self-education

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\* Corresponding author Tel.: +4-072-265-6185; fax: +4-021-318-0862/int. 270.

E-mail address: [tuddoru@yahoo.com](mailto:tuddoru@yahoo.com)

aim at the acquisition of information, knowledge, skills that will serve the subject to better fit the rigors of socio-professional life. Lifelong learning naturally includes the adults' leisure activities. Free time is an issue for society and the individual alike, being a component of the standard of living and therefore of the quality of life. From this perspective, the motor activities undertaken by adults in their free time, the so-called leisure sports activities, prove to be of utmost importance. In Romania, a recent study coordinated by Marginean and Precupetu (2010) shows the growing importance of leisure sports in people's free time options (15% in 1993, 26 % in 2010), although sedentary tendencies still prevail (95% watching TV).

Speaking of motor activities "as a stimulant of the body and as an antidote and a means for purging the harmful influences of a civilization characterized by inactivity and overstress" Epuran (1999), apud Bota (2006), highlights the benefits of physical exercise on the human body.

Dumazedier (1988) talks about the value of leisure as "social time affected to the self, the self as a priority." Sports, participation in family, cultural and artistic activities, social contacts with friends are seen as having a positive effect on personality development through the accumulation of human, as well as social and cultural capital, with effect on increasing the quality of life.

In developed societies the concept of quality of life was analyzed based on the idea that material abundance and economic progress are not enough for people to be satisfied with their way of life. This requires a wider evaluation of people's global life problems. Currently, research on the quality of life brings together specialists in the field of social sciences, medical science, sports science, etc. Hence quality of life is a synthetic concept, the mirror that reflects the whole social system.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Purpose*

We sought to highlight the way in which psychosocial effects of recreational group sports activities are reflected in adult consciousness. We also tried to capture the differences that arise in connection with the matters referred to above between sports activities with a competitive component (such as sports games) and those without a competitive component (group fitness programs).

### *2.2. Premises*

Education for physical activities has become today one of the issues that concern state policies and strategies. In economically developed countries, concern for improving quality of life has grown dramatically, and our country has also set as an objective the improvement of the quality of life through physical education and sport.

### *2.3. Hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1 - Leisure sport activities have multiple benefits towards meeting some needs related to the multilateral development of the personality and to improving relational skills, with an effect on enhancing the quality of life.

Hypothesis 2 - There are differences in the hierarchy of importance given to these needs, depending on the type of leisure physical activity practiced (sports games or group fitness activities).

### *2.4. Subjects and Procedure*

The study was conducted on a sample of 62 subjects, adult practitioners of leisure physical activities in the gym of the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest. Of the 62 subjects, 22 had

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