

# CORRELATIONS OF SPORT LEVELS AND POPULARITY OF SPORT PROGRAMMES AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS



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## INTRODUCTION

For decades experts have been using only negative attributes to describe the health condition of the Hungarian population (Gál, 2008). Unhealthy way of life can be related to – among others - inappropriate physical activity (twice a week/25 minutes). Hungarians are generally said to do little sport (60% of the population have never done sports!) (Földesiné, 2008). On an international level this picture is very unpleasant for our country, since statistics are giving an account of an increasing tendency of doing physical activity in the old countries having democratic traditions of the European Union (Perényi, 2011). We need to do something to increase the frequency of exercise. We agree with Bognár et al. that it is the elementary school where we have to make children love sport because school physical education has a crucial impact on the quality of physical activity later in adulthood. At the same time, at this age more and more ways of spending free time are available that represent better alternatives to sport, for example the media (Bószé, 2007) which seriously affects the individual's opinions, values, attitudes towards health and illness (Kósa, 2006). For instance, according to Nielsen Közönségmérés the 8-14-year-old children watch television on average for 202 minutes. As we can see, the researches have discovered such a high rate of television viewing that it would be difficult to make children 'give watching television up'; therefore the hypothesis may be right that television takes young people away from exercise. Thus, we suppose that with the proper programme structure television can do a lot for the sake of physical education. Advantages must be taken of it.

The theoretical basis of our study concerned with levels of physical activities/sports is provided by a 2007 study from Neulinger who established the correlations between different sport categories. Taking part in competitions may range from doing sports as a free-time activity to international levels of challenge, from amateur level to professional. Competitive sport and leisure sport represent different values although both have special importance regarding the valuable spending of free time for a young pupil. The research of Dennis Denninger (2012) was our basis when defining the theoretical framework of sport programmes. According to the researcher media has a definite determining role as early as in childhood, which means that the choices of pupils are influenced by the programmes they watch on TV. Those who regularly do any kinds of sports may become watchers and fans of sport programmes on television (Perényi, 2010). We consider it extremely important to seek out connections and relations among gender, grades, the frequency of doing sports, the importance of school physical education (P.E. lessons) and sport activities appearing on the internet; hereby our aim is to create a comprehensive picture



**Abstract:** The aim of our study is to examine correlations between the level of involvement in sport activities and the preference of watching sports. Our other question concerns the possible effects of the attitudes of the elementary school pupils regarding sports upon levels of competition. The questionnaire was completed (N=568) in five schools of the North-eastern Region of Hungary among pupils between the age of 10 – 14. We completed the survey between February and March 2013. According to our results, the level of involvement in competitions is determining concerning the attitudes towards sport programmes. The more active somebody is in professional ("pro") sports the more he/she likes sport programmes on television. (Pearson Chi-Square = 0.000). This has also proven that 87% of the students who enter international or national sport competitions do sport activities at least three times a week. 55% of those students who love to watch sport and other related programmes on TV are involved in sport activities at least three times a week. Proportionality can be observed between popularity of sport programmes on TV and sport events followed on the internet because 74% of those who search for those kinds of information and contents on the internet prefer such TV programmes.

**Key words:** sport, level of involvement in sport, sport programmes, electronic media, elementary school

through searching for answers to questions arising out of interrelations of sport-related activity and the affinity towards watching sport programmes of the surveyed sample.

### PLACES OF SPORT

In our empirical research those who answered our survey meant regular physical activity by talking about sports, active exercises and sport-related activities outside of the framework of school lessons. Taking part in these may be defined by the active involvement of the human body in physical activities; as opposed to the consuming of sports which is a passive form of pastime. In connection with the latter, we are speaking of direct consuming of sports – that is, watching sports – and indirect consuming of sports; this latter means following different sport programmes via the press or the internet (Wann et al., 2001). Neulinger (2007) distinguishes between different sport categories within sport itself (Figure 1) which provides the theoretical framework for our research.

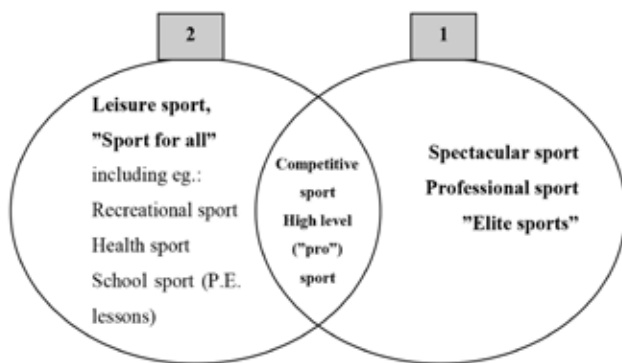


Figure 1. Relationship of the different sport categories

Source: Neulinger 2007

The aim of the competitive sports is reaching better and better personal achievements and the surpassing thereof, besides, the readiness to exceed achievements of others. We consider all physical activities done regularly in a certified form, concentrating on competitions to be competitive sports (Csorba, 2007). As opposed to this, in the case of leisure sports (mass sport activity, sport for all) the aim of those taking part is to improve their health, achieve refreshment, reviving, and active spending of free time. School physical education lessons appear as a distinctive element of leisure sports.

According to the research of Bognár et al. (2005), school P.E. lessons have a defining effect on the quality of physical activity later in the adult life of the pupils. Those who had experiences of any kinds of sports in their childhood are more inclined to lead an active and healthy life when reaching adulthood. The age group of teenagers is considered to be the age when love and commitment towards sports has to (and shall) be formed, because then those adults are going to willingly spend money, time and energy to do physical activity/sport and thus improve their own health.

Considering all the above, the research of Oláh and Makszin (2005) is of essential importance; the researchers

studied the relationship of Hungarian pupils towards school P.E. lessons. They have pointed out that 94% of the pupils thought P.E. lessons were important. In a study examining the sport activities outside school and the frequency thereof, Tari-Keresztes (2009) found that 41.5% of the pupils in primary schools attend training sessions three-four times a week. Most of them do sports as a free-time activity, and are members of different clubs and organizations. Trazskoma-Bicsérdy et al. in their study (2006) concerned with elementary school pupils (N=1604) state that 58.2% do sports on a regular basis outside school, but only for approximately half of them is this activity competitive.

### SOME OF THE INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN SPORT AND THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Sport has a slowly but constantly decreasing importance in the life of younger generations, pointing out the fact that more and more ways of spending free time are available that represent better alternatives to sport (Bicsérdy, 2002). In a study of Ács-Borsos-Rétsági (2011) one can read that communities and social media that surround youth in their adolescent years play an essential role in establishing and fortifying the dimensions of one's personality. These communities may include the family, the school, the sport club, and also the media because these can affect the later behaviour of the adolescents towards their own health and sport life.

Even in their early lives, the children are influenced regarding their choices of sports by the athletes and sport programmes that they see on television. It is interesting to follow the entry data into any sport clubs following any summer Olympic Games. If one was involved in doing any kinds of sports while still in childhood, it could serve as the fundamental factor of fan loyalty in one's adulthood (Deninger, 2012). Those who do sports are more likely to visit sport events as fans and follow the sport programmes via the electronic media (Di Maggio, 1987). Many choose the sport broadcastings and our studies also show that those who do sports will watch sport-related programmes daily on TV or at least twice a week (Fintor-Szabó, 2012).

### EMPIRICAL STUDY

The aim of our research is to determine what correlations can be discovered between levels of involvement in sport and the affinity to watch sport-related events in the case of elementary school pupils. In order to achieve this, we examined the relationship between sporting levels and the preferences towards sport programmes according to the same variables (gender, grade, frequency of doing sports, importance of P.E. lessons, internet usage habits).

The sample consisted of 588 pupils and 568 of them provided valid answers. Our sample came from grades 4, 5, 6, 7 in the schools of Debrecen, Nyíregyháza, Nyírtelek, Tiszavasvári, Újfehértó; the pupils were between 10-14 years of age. There were 321 boys (54.6%) and 267 girls (45.4%). When planning the sample our aim was to get information from two major and two minor towns and from a small settlement. The completion of the questionnaire took place in February-March 2013 in the above mentioned places.

The completion of the questionnaires was anonymous, and we took the questionnaires personally to all of the schools; the completion guide helped the work of the pupils and teachers alike.

The questionnaire consisted of closed-type of questions, and the Linkert-type of scale was also used. The self-made questionnaire contained 23 questions built around seven question-groups including personal information, family background, socio-economic variables, sporting habits and their affecting factors, health-conscious behaviour and in connection with it, the television and internet (electronic media) usage habits.

Because the data are spread across different nominal, ordinal and in some of the cases, hierarchical scale, we rather used frequency analysis to analyse the answers. This was followed by non-parametric discordance analysis. The frequency meters showed the quantity indicators of the answers and provided opportunity also to highlight certain data. On the basis of the non-parametric specifications the characteristics of the variables were analysed and compared with the others, using Chi2. We established the significance level at random 5% ( $p < 0.005$ ).

### Hypotheses

1. We assumed the following statements to be true in connection with involvement in sports:

- significant distinctions are going to be seen regarding age and grade,
- frequency of doing sports is going to be proportional to the level of sport,
- who is involved in sports at higher levels, is going to assume P.E. lessons to be more important,
- significant differences are going to be observed regarding habits of using the internet.

2. During the analysis of popularity of sport programmes we presumed that

- we are going to receive higher results in popularity among boys and higher grades,
- frequency of doing sports is going to be significant with attitude results,
- those who watch more sport programmes on TV is going to think of school P.E. lessons to be much more important than the students who watch less of these programmes,
- their habits of using the internet are going to be different.

3. We supposed that the level of doing sports and the popularity of sport programmes show significant correlation. Also, level of sport has important effect on the popularity of sport programmes.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

At first, we studied the correlations between gender and grades regarding level of doing sports (H1a) and popularity of sport programmes (H2a). It can be stated that significant differences ( $p = 0.000$ ) were observed only in one case, in the correlation of popularity of sport and gender. 51% of the boys indicated the highest attitude value to the popularity of sport programmes, while in the case of girls this is only 21%. 60% of those pupils who stated they don't like watching sports are girls. There are no significant differences in the correlation between boys and girls regarding levels of doing

sports. There are no specific differences among grades.

As a result of active sport life one can see the connection between frequency of doing sports and level of competition (H1b). Those pupils who do sports at least three times or more outside the framework of school, enter into significantly higher level competitions, that is, their level of doing sports is affirmably higher (Figure 2.).

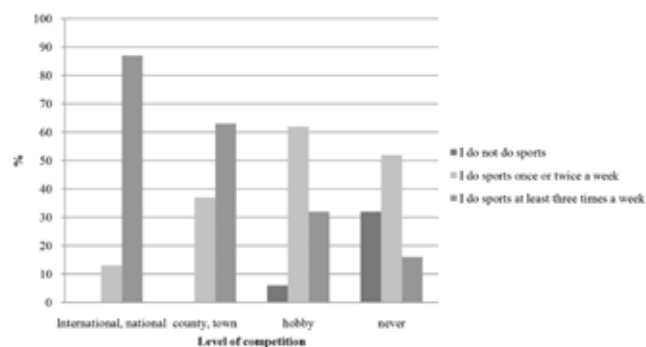


Figure 2. Proportion between level of competition and frequency of doing sports (%)

Source: own figure

87% of the pupils entering into international or national competitions do sport at least three times a week. 32% of those pupils who never wanted to enter into any competitions never do any sports at all, and 52% of them practice physical activities only once or twice a week. The significant difference ( $p = 0.000$ ) can also be observed regarding correlations (H2b) between frequency of sports and popularity of sport. 55% of the pupils who like watching sport-related programmes on TV do sports at least three times a week. 51% of those who do not practice any kind of physical activities do not like watching sport programmes either; that means, who regularly does sports likes sport programmes better than those who does sports only once or twice a week.

The next point of our research was to examine the importance of physical education (P.E.) lessons in the case of sport levels (H1c) and the popularity of sport (H2c).

The importance of P.E. lessons  The popularity of P.E. lessons		The importance of P.E. lessons			
		more important	the same	less important	not comparable
1		17,1%	15,4%	28,2%	27,4%
2		8,6%	9,6%	15,3%	8,4%
3		18,6%	18,0%	2,0%	17,9%
4		10,0%	18,6%	5,9%	12,6%
5		45,7%	38,3%	30,6%	33,7%

Table 1. Proportion of the correlations between popularity of sports and the importance of P.E. lessons

Source: own figure

When examining the importance of P.E. lessons and the popularity of television programmes, there was no significant difference, that is, in the case of each level of preference we could understand that there is no difference between P.E. lessons and other lessons for children in any previously set level of popularity; the children (in high proportions) deem all of them to be important. This result seems to be positive. Those who do not like P.E. lessons so much indicated a lower rate of affinity to watch sport-related programmes. Significant difference ( $p=0.021$ ) appears though between those who do not like sport programmes and those who like them; that is, those who like these kinds of programmes (45.7%) better deem the P.E. lessons to be more important than any other lessons. 30.6% of those who are less interested in P.E. lessons love sport programmes and only a bit fewer people (28.2%) do not like them at all.

When researching pupils' habits of internet usage, we were interested in the question if participants watch sport programmes or any contents related to sport, via Youtube. 69% of the children do not watch these kinds of programmes and events on Youtube. Of these children, 15% never wanted to do competitive sports, and the rate of those doing leisure sports is 58% (Figure 3). Differences show a significant value ( $p=0.000$ ). We can say that children watch sport programmes on the internet according to their different levels of involvement in sports. The higher level a pupil is involved in sports the more certain it is that he/she is going to watch sport or sport-related programmes on Youtube (H1d).

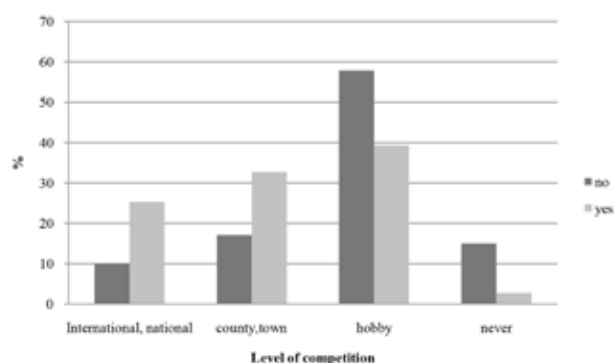


Figure 3. Correlations between watching sport-related programmes on Youtube and the level of involvement in sports.

Source: own figure

The presumed proportionality of the correlations between popularity of sports and sport programmes followed on the internet has also been proven (H2d). 74% of those who watch these kinds of contents on Youtube love sport programmes on TV too. The more one loves watching TV sport programmes, the more time one spends on Youtube watching these programmes (Figure 4).

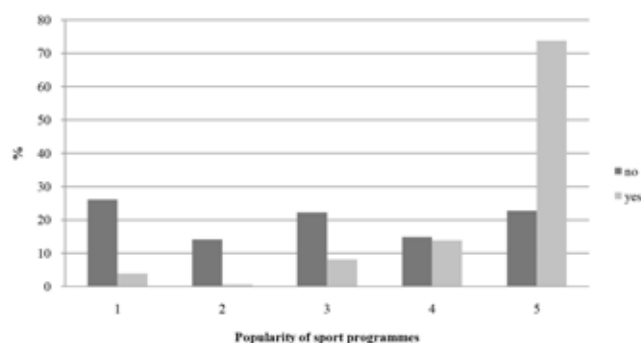


Figure 4. Correlations between popularity of sport and watching sport-related programmes on Youtube

Source: own figure

After completing the above mentioned researches, we wanted to see if level of involvement in competitions influence popularity of sport programmes (Figure 5) through which the effects of electronic media can appear (H3).

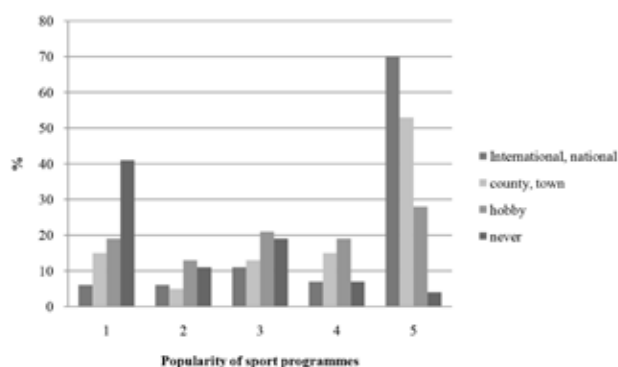


Figure 5. Correlations of popularity of sport programmes and levels of involvement in these programmes

Source: own figure

It can clearly be seen from the results that level of competition is decisive regarding the examination of attitudes towards sport programmes. The higher level of involvement in sports one has, the better he/she likes sport-related programmes. 70% of the students entering into international or national competitions like watching sport programmes very much, while 41% of those students who never wanted to enter into any competitions do not like them at all. This way, the influence of the level of involvement in sports on the popularity of sports may be deemed as positive.

## SUMMARY

After having thoroughly examined professional literature we stated where do levels of involvement in sports appear within sports categories among pupils in upper grades. The primary place for physical education and sports is school itself. Correlations between different involvement types show that those who do sports regularly may become watchers and fans of sport programmes on television;



this way, the increased rate of involvement may create or shape a general attitude towards sports, and it may become a tool for improving the consumer market segment of entertainment.

While examining our hypotheses we found that in the case of the pupils being part of our samples the boys' outstanding attitude results are unquestionable regarding popularity of sport programmes; they like these significantly more than girls. There is no such difference regarding different grades. Significant correlations may be observed, though, during the analysis of frequency of doing sports and levels of competition. The more active somebody is in sports, the higher is the level he/she is involved in that particular sport. This correlation may serve as a motivational factor for children regarding frequency of doing sports. This variable also showed significant correlation with popularity of sports, that is, the more sport one does, the more one likes sport programmes on TV. We received answers from pupils for our question about importance of P.E. lessons that pupils who deem these lessons more important than other ones like sport programmes more than those who do not deem the P.E. lessons to be particularly important. The percentage of sport programmes watched on Youtube shows significant correlations in the case of both variables. Those who do sports on higher levels watch more programmes on the internet related to sports, and this value is proportional to the popularity of sport programmes too.

As part of the main question of our research – that is, television (electronic media), the influencing power of which is unquestionable, is the main competitive counterpart against active sport – also shows correlations with the competition levels of the pupils. Regarding this variable significant differences arise when it comes to the question of popularity of sport programmes. A higher percentage of children who enter into higher (professional, "pro") level competitions like these kinds of programmes on TV.

Thus, the important message of our research is that the popularization of health preserving campaigns/sport should not be emphasized primarily on sport channels since there we cannot reach those who move little, but rather through such services which are accessible for everyone (eg. public service television). This would be extremely important in the case of young children in the life of whom media became the primary socializing milieu, and its role of providing patterns for life is unquestionable; thus we should take advantage of it, because the formation of the right self-image may be fostered with the emphasis of the importance of doing sports and it might make active exercise the natural part of young children's everyday life.

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