



New Challenges, Reality, Perspective of Personal Trainers on Fitness in the Era of Covid-19

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“New Challenges, Reality, Perspective of Personal Trainers on Fitness in the Era of Covid-19”

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Abstract

Sport is, without a doubt, an inherent part of our culture and social life. Changes in social reality connected with the emergence of Covid-19 and resulting introduction of particular actions aimed at prevention of spreading the danger, have not bypassed the world of sport or, widely understood, fitness culture. Colossal changes, which stopped everything for a moment, have ensued. The effect of those changes was suspension of operation of fitness facilities involved in fitness culture, including fitness clubs or gyms. The fitness world, the community of creators as well as consumers of fitness culture, collided with a new reality and new challenges. The loss of workplaces, e.g. for trainers, and the lack of spaces to be physically active have influenced immensely how sport activities look like for the subjects actively taking care of their health, physical condition, their bodies and appearance. What is Polish fitness world currently struggling with? How personal trainers are faring in the era of Covid-19? How does the collaboration of personal trainers and their clients look like? How does the fitness community find themselves in the new “coronavirus”, pandemic reality? What strategies were adopted by the personal trainers to survive and be able to function actively in their professions? I will try to answer these specific questions in this article, based on my own research, which had an exploratory character and was aimed at recognizing the experiences of personal trainers as the main representatives of the new reality connected to the emergence of Covid-19. The research was conducted through interviews with 10 personal trainers. As a result of the qualitative data analysis, six main areas emerged, such as reactions for the introduction of changes; reflections on life; new possibilities; places/spaces for work and meetings; interpersonal relationships and reflections on the future. The fitness culture during the Covid-19 pandemic has undergone a significant transformation. The obtained data indicate a critical, rather negative attitude to the introduced restrictions and their consequences for the widely understood fitness, physical activity and sports sectors. I hope that this small fragment of the reality related to participation in the fitness culture and the struggles of people in the pandemic era, which I mentioned in my



article, will be a contribution to further research and will encourage reflection on the fitness culture, social and socialization values of sport and our future.

Keywords:- Covid - 19, coronavirus, sport, Culture, fitness, physical activity, personal trainer, training, fitness clubs, gyms.

Introduction

One of the most recognizable signs of our times is ubiquitous and pervasive change. Impermanence and uncertainty are inscribed in the times, in which it came for us to live. We are witnesses to incessant changes encompassing with their range all aspects of social life. This evolution and continuous metamorphoses are connected with globalization processes and the advent of times described as post modernity or liquid modernity. We live in the world full of change, uncertainty, evanescence, risk and fear. „The world I call 'liquid' because, like all liquids, it cannot stand still and keep its shape for long. Everything or almost everything in this world of ours keeps changing: fashions we follow and the objects of our attention (constantly shifting attention, today drawn away from things and events that attracted it yesterday, and to be drawn away tomorrow from things and events that excite us today), things we dream of and things we fear, things we desire and things we loathe, reasons to be hopeful and reasons to be apprehensive. And the conditions around us, conditions in which we make our living and try to plan our future, in which we connect to some people and disconnect (or are disconnected) from others, keep changing as well. Opportunities for more happiness and threats of misery flow or float by, come and go and change places, and more often than not they do all that too swiftly and nimbly to allow us to do something sensible and effective to direct or redirect them, keep them on course or forestall them. To cut a long story short: this world, our liquid modern world, keeps surprising us (...)” (Bauman, 2011, p.1).

The dynamics of ongoing changes (metamorphoses) in social reality means lack of ready and limited possibilities of scenarios for one's own life. It determines the necessity and need to “adjust to new requirements”¹ (Leszniewski, 2007, p.1), being flexible (Beck, 2004; Giddens, 2001, 2010; Bauman, 2011) and “experiencing yourself in freedom and taking responsibility for your own life” (Berger, 1995, p.167), leading to the fact that “ability of a human being to move effectively in the world requires constant learning of new skills and a reflective approach to their life and the choices made” (Leszniewski, 2007, p.1).

Perfect depiction of aforementioned words about liquid reality and incessant need to reinterpret and self-create one's own life and designing new ways of acting in the face of surprising changes in the social reality is the current Covid-19 pandemic. This extraordinary time of the pandemic unquestionably influenced immensely our functioning in our well-known ordinary lives and completely revolutionized every area of social life. One of the sectors which were hurt the most is sport, space for physical activity and the fitness world, the areas which are at the centre of my deliberations.

Sport was an inseparable part of our culture and a real phenomenon since the dawn of times. As a part of our reality it accompanied individuals in different forms throughout their whole lives, carrying with it socializing and universal values, as Blajet (2012, p. 89) mentions “it is (sport) not only the model reflection of social life but also autonomous being, in different ways anticipating social trends”.



Therefore, as you can surmise or base on your own experiences as an observer and a first-hand witness being in the centre of currently crystallizing changes in social reality connected with the emergence of Covid-19, you can see that the ongoing changes and resulting from them commonly introduced particular actions aimed at prevention of spreading the danger, have not bypassed widely understood physical culture with all of its derivatives. Colossal metamorphosis, which stopped everything, has ensued. The effect of those changes was suspension of operation of fitness facilities involved in fitness culture, including fitness clubs or gyms and reduction and shrinking of possibilities to engage in activities within active participation of fitness culture. There are numerous effects of these activities. In this article I will focus on the fitness culture, created along processes of emerging modernity, and then liquid modernity (post modernity). Simultaneously, with the changes ongoing in social reality, as the presence of consumptionism, instant culture, visual culture, free time culture, society of risk and ubiquitous individualism and incessant reflections of one's life, chasing the new, the unknown, the pleasure, the self-improvement, reinterpreting your own identity and relationships with others, there was a new space created, known as fitness culture. Concurrently, the narration which noticed possibilities of creating and anchoring these currents in the body has emerged.

What is fitness, what is fitness culture? Fitness may thus be understood as a cultural field, a set of relatively structured positions within which individuals and institutions, producers, and consumers struggle over the status and definitions of fitness and fit bodies. These struggles occur through the mobilization of particular forms of resources or stakes, some specific to the field – such as physique and sport science expertise – and some generic to consumer societies and services economies – such as impression management and the cultivation of status. The development of the contemporary commercial fitness field has involved the institutionalization of specific social settings (particularly, the health club), a variety of media forms targeting both the consumer (such as exercise manuals and magazines) and the producer (occupational texts and manuals), a cadre of professional producers (such as personal trainers and aerobics instructors), and a range of field-specific goods to signal participation” (Smith Maguire, 2008, p. 21). Fitness culture is a socio-cultural phenomenon centered around physical activity, health, body, and appearance - to create your own identity, take responsibility for your fate, control your life and try to feel safe, where “Fitness gyms are at the core of a much broader fitness culture” (Sassatelli, 2010, p. 11) and people (especially trainers, instructors) become both: creators and consumers of this culture (Sassatelli, 2010; Maguire, 2008). The society of creators, as well as the fitness consumers, collided with new reality and new challenges. The loss of workplaces, eg. of personal trainers and the lack of spaces to do physical activities have immensely influenced how sport activities look like currently for the subjects actively taking care of their health, physical condition, their bodies and appearance.

Material & Methods

The researchers had an exploratory character aimed at learning about the experiences and the way of interpreting daily life and work reality in which personal trainers work and live with particular regard to their role in physical culture from the perspective of changes prevailing and resulting from the pandemic, especially with the regard to limitations resulting from the governmental regulations and their effects on limiting physical activity. The research



for fitness culture will affect our society. “The gym, however, offered far more than a utilitarian function of building muscle. It provided a sense of escape and therapeutic, ritualistic and remedial qualities. The familiarity of routine itself provided security and structure in response to the chaos of the outside world” (Brighton, Wellard, Clark 2020, p. 3). Familiar space, familiar people, controlling the body, expert knowledge are just examples that can be used to take control over your own life and increase your sense of security. This is one of the reasons why the fitness culture, fitness club, gyms and personal trainers are vital elements in our lives, which I tried to present in my article. Even Plato emphasized the importance of regular practice and the significant impact of physical activity on the quality of life, which is articulated in this sentence “Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it” (Kumar, 2017, p.1).

Conclusion

Fitness Culture in the era of Covid-19 refers to the new reality and new problems connected with physical activity. Personal trainers as subjects in my studies emphasize the need to adapt to changes and look for new opportunities, but at the same time, they look with some fear in the future. I hope that this small fragment of research of fitness culture will have an influence on the perception of the fitness culture, fitness clubs, trainers and people belonging to this community as activities not only aimed at appearance and body, and will show the more important side of practicing physical activity focused on health understood holistically (both physical, mental and social health). The changes mentioned by the surveyed trainers show them as entities aware of their role in society. They notice the changes taking place and try to follow the course of time and adapt to the current conditions. More importantly, I hope that readers will start to see, for example, opportunities to fill the gaps related to inappropriate physical education, insufficient sports socialization, global health problems connected with obesity and sedentary lifestyle in personal trainers and fitness clubs and the entire fitness culture. This research is only a small fragment, a section of changes happening in the fitness culture due to the Covid-19 pandemic, though it can be a basis for further research.

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Role of Sports in Higher Education, Issues and Challenges



Government of Karnataka
Department of Collegiate Education

GOVERNMENT FIRST GRADE COLLEGE

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Research, Development And Knowledge Management In Higher Education

Role of Sports in Higher Education, Issues and Challenges

Shree K. Kaleemulla*

ABSTRACT

The goal of the paper is to explore the role and functions of sports in higher education. The significance of the problem subject to analysis stems from the fact that, as far as primary and secondary level of education are concerned, the functions of sport and physical education as well as their social role are well-defined, but no such definition has yet been offered as regards tertiary education. The function of sport to facilitate social integration and communication and to promote health and recreation are intrinsic to the process of physical education and sports in college and at university. The research is applied Critical review of specialized theoretical literature concerning the problem and Content analysis

Keywords: sports, specific role of sports, educational process, physical exercises.

INTRODUCTION:

The role of physical education and sports in colleges is to aid the educational process as a whole by enhancing students' physical and mental efficiency and capacity for work, thus preparing them for their future professional careers. Physical education and sports stimulate the best qualities of the student. The efficiency of the educational process in colleges and universities is closely related with students' energy and health condition. The educational process in colleges or universities is conducted within a specific timeframe determined by the curriculum. Physical education and sports have a combined effect on the organism of those who practice it. In the process of primary education, for example, this effect is manifested in the variety of functions that physical activities realize. Educational functions, Health preventive and therapeutic functions, Functional development, Communicative functions, Ethic and aesthetic appreciation functions, Recreation and entertainment functions etc. One of the goals of physical education and sports in higher schools is to relieve psychological tension and maintain the high level of students' working capacity so as to facilitate their adequate participation in the educational process and establish an environment conducive to mastering professional competencies.

On this basis it is reasonable to analyze the functions of sports and their significance to sports education in higher schools. The working definition of the functions of sport the present study adopts is its intrinsic characteristics and their objective effect upon the individual and upon interpersonal relations, which meet and develop specific demands of both the society and the human personality. The functions of sports can be divided in two groups: specific ones (characterizing sports as a phenomenon) and general ones. The former incorporates competitiveness and model emulation as well as heuristic discovery and achievement (cognitive) functions. The latter includes the functions that have social and communal significance. These are the learning and educative function, the developmental function, the recreation and health function, the vicarious emotion function, the social integration function, the communicative function, and the economic function.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To know the activities that meet the needs of a variety of student interests and abilities.
- ❖ To study the relationships between athletic teams and student bodies, faculties, administrators and the community.
- ❖ To promote the value of sports activities in the educational process.
- ❖ To encourage professional development for coaches through school district events/activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research has applied critical review of specialized theoretical literature concerning the problem and content analysis. Scientific research on the issues demonstrates that the proper physical development, the amelioration of physical fitness and health, the efficiency of locomotive habits and skill mastered during sports education depend on the locomotive activity of students. It represents a holistic complex, which, for the purposes of analysis, can be contingently divided in two spheres: obligatory scheduled activities and free time activities. The latter are usually intended to meet the immediate material and spiritual needs of the personality.

Communicative role of sports

The humanization of society at the current stage of human development turns sport into a mediator in international relations, mutual understanding, and cultural collaboration between nations. For a long time sport has played a significant role in international communication. Today the International Olympic Committee incorporates 205 national Olympic committees.

Cultural Norms in Sports

As a sociocultural phenomenon - sport is characterized by specific norms and content. The cultural standards in sports are seen as a holistic complex, incorporating four spheres of norms. These spheres are not isolated from each other. Rather, they are intrinsically connected and form a system that regulates and manages the behavior of an athlete. In this way it ascribes cultural content to his/her actions.

Economic role of sports

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Sustainable Development And Knowledge Management In Higher Education

Sport has been acquiring an increasing economic significance, which is manifested in the financial means being invested in the development of sports and their beneficial effect upon the health of the population, their capacity for work and the prolonged life expectancy. The development of sport, the sophisticated sports facilities and the professional preparation of athletes facilitate the practice of sports at an early age and in adolescence, sports for general purposes, and competitive sports. The role of sport in this respect is invaluable.

CONCLUSION

The social integration function of sport, the communicative function, and the health and recreation function are intrinsic to the process of physical education and sport in colleges and at universities. The principle of fair play unites human morality with the norms established in sport, while the norms emergent as a result of behavioral patterns are humane and they do not counteract against the concept of victory in competition.



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