

# Outdoor activities and their impact on the lifestyle of adolescents

Stanislava Straňavská, Karol Görner

Faculty of Arts, Department of Physical Education and Sport, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica

## ABSTRACT

Outdoor activities are an ideal and attractive combination of physical activity and exercise in a natural environment. They include sport and physical activities performed outside that are not age-restricted (for children, adults and the elderly), with hiking being one of the most common outdoor activities. Physical activities are related to the quality of life, lifestyle and the state of health in specific ways. Grahn and Stigsdotter (2003) claim, that outdoor activities can improve health regardless of the age and sex of the participants and that they also provide prevention from stress-related diseases. The term "lifestyle" is nowadays used with many different attributes such as healthy lifestyle, active lifestyle or consumer lifestyle. These types of lifestyles are directly related to the behaviour of individuals in both their personal and working life. This paper is focused on the way in which outdoor activities can influence, or rather alter the lifestyle of adolescents. Here, schools play an important role. They offer space for the realization of outdoor activities, which can have positive impact on the human body. Authors such as Bendíková (2012), Oborný & Kotyra (2008), Görner & Kompán (2008), Michal (2010), Straňavská (2015) agree with this hypothesis.

The results of our research show differences in participation in free-time outdoor activities in relation to gender, where we have found that boys rate the quality of their lifestyle higher than girls. Some relationships between the lifestyle quality of students and specific variables (gender, place of residence and rate of participation in outdoor activities) are consequently observed. Participation in outdoor activities significantly influences the self-evaluation process of lifestyle quality and there is also a connection between participation in outdoor activities and the location of students, where we have found statistically significant differences at the level of significance  $p < .05$ . We consider these findings to be of great importance.

## KEY WORDS

Outdoor activities, lifestyle, adolescents, physical and sport activity.

## SOUHRN

Věnování se pravidelné pohybové aktivitě označujeme za nejdůležitější při utváření zdravého životního stylu. Autoři se v příspěvku zabývají vlivem outdoorových aktivit na životní styl dospívajících a prezentují možnosti využití volného času adolescentů, čímž zdůrazňuje význam sportovních aktivit nabízených školou, kterou žáci navštěvují. Nejdůležitější roli v tomto případě hrají školy, které nabízejí svým žákům mimo vyučovacího procesu zapojit se do outdoorových aktivit. S pojmem outdoorové aktivity je úzce spjat pojem pobytová aktivita, což se ukazuje jako velmi pozitivně ovlivňující možnost k tomu, aby žáci věnovali svůj volný čas aktivnímu pohybu v přírodě, který má pozitivní účinek na jejich organismus.

Ve výsledcích poukazujeme na rozdíly při provádění outdoorových aktivit ve volném čase v závislosti na pohlaví a následně uvádíme souvislosti mezi úrovní životního stylu žáků a proměnnými (pohlavím, bydlištěm a prováděním outdoorové aktivity). Za významné považujeme zjištění, že provádění outdoorové aktivity má značný vliv při vlastním posouzení aktuálního životního stylu a také, že existuje souvislost mezi prováděním outdoorové aktivity a bydlištěm žáka, kde se nám prokázali statisticky významné rozdíly na hladině významnosti  $p < 0,05$ .

## KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Outdoorové aktivity, životní styl, adolescenti, pohybová a sportovní aktivita

## INTRODUCTION

This of course trans The most important factor influencing our possibilities to lead an active life is the general state of our health – shaped by every single step of our everyday life. Nowadays, there are many factors that have a negative impact on our mental and physical health and that is why we have to find a way of coping with them (Rošková & Hudák, 2015). The term “healthy lifestyle” is more and more widely used and such a way of life is influenced by a great number of factors not just by the environment in which we live, but also by eating habits, cultural background, social background and last but not the least – by physical activity, which is one of the most important factors and part and parcel of our lifestyle that hugely influence both mental and physical health as well as the self-evaluation process of our quality of life (Liba & Uherová, 2003).

In our hurried times people tend to neglect physical activities affecting their general state of health. Several pieces of research concerning physical activities – in appropriate eating habits, water intake and drug addictions in all age groups – highlight that the current status is hugely unsatisfying (Adamčák & Nemeč, 2011; Görner, 2014; Chovanová, 2005; Pávková et al. 2008). Students sit and play videogames, spend time with mobile phones and smartphones and physical or sporting activities are becoming a marginal phenomenon. Modern conveniences – such as the internet – mean that students do not have to visit libraries or other educational institutions as they can find almost all information online. Our contemporary sedentary lifestyle and in appropriate eating habits are the cause of various metabolic disorders in young people. As a result, more and more young people have obesity-related health issues and suffer from various diseases. Therefore, we have to try to demonstrate the negative outcome of such types of lifestyle by the means of various public information campaigns and last but not the least by the use of social networks. People living in the countryside tend to be much more physically active in their free-time when compared to those living in urban environment (Humpel et al 2002; Killingsworth, 2003; Owen et al., 2004, Sallis et al 2000).

Within the campaign for the healthy lifestyle of young people, physical activities performed in the free-time of elementary and high school students should be emphasized. Such physical activities should be performed outside of school hours – it has to be stressed, this is not within PE classes. In this way, the performance of students is not eva-

luated, which could result in the increased interests of students in such activities. Outside of PE classes, many physical activities could be undertaken. Such activities need to be popular among students – e.g. hiking, inline skating, cycling, pétanque, Nordic walking, etc. – and also would prove beneficial for their physical condition and state of health as all similar activities have a positive impact on the human organism. Free-time physical activities are suitable for everyone regardless of their age and skills. Outdoor physical activities especially significantly improve our physical and mental conditions. Attractive and well-organized outdoor activities could improve the perspective of young people in regard to physical activities and they can also improve their creativity.

## AIM

The aim of this research, conducted within the KEGA project No. 021UMB-4/2015, was to identify the outdoor activities in which adolescents participated most and to define the potential impacts on their lifestyle.

## METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted in the academic year 2015/2016. The research group consisted of second-year, third-year and fourth-year high school students studying at schools in the town of Humenné. High schools were chosen by stratified random sampling. The total number of respondents involved in our research was 630 – 354 girls and 276 boys. Questionnaires were used as the main method for the data collection. Questionnaires were given to respondents either personally or with the aid of their teachers; all teachers were acquainted with the research and all the questions were fully explained to them. All questionnaires were filled-out and returned. Acquired results were processed and assessed by qualitative research methods.  $\chi^2$  test – nonparametric test was used to assess the independence between quantitative variables. The  $\chi^2$  test of independence was applied when testing dependence between the groups of two variables – current lifestyle and gender, place of residence, education of parents and participation in outdoor activities. We determined the statistical significance on the level of significance  $p < 0,05$ .

Description of statistical significance:

- statistical significance on the level of significance  $p < 0,05$
- si – statistically insignificant difference.

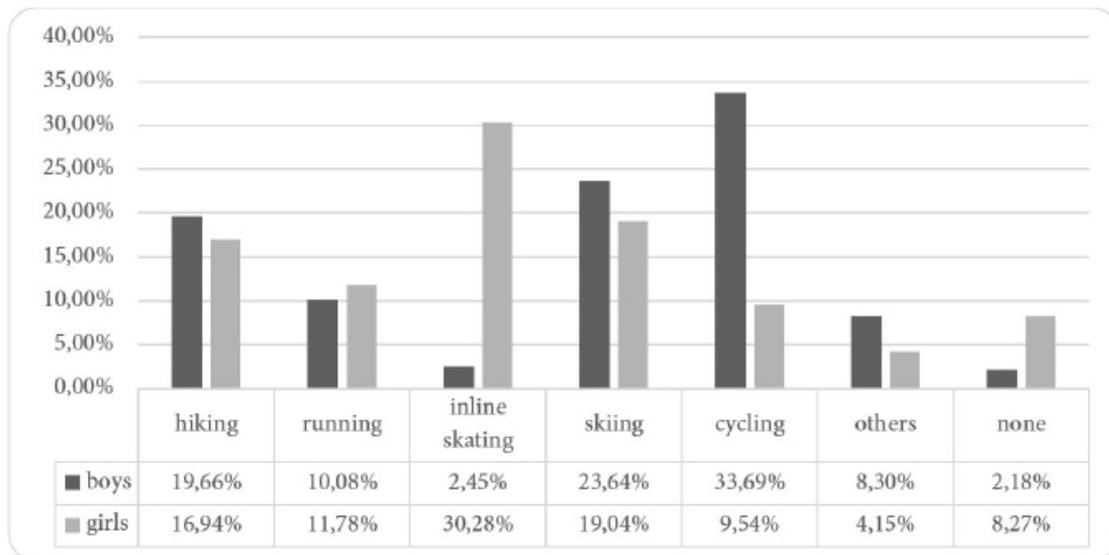
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Any type of free-time physical activity has a positive impact on the human body and on the general state of an individual's health. Similar outcomes were stated in the researches of Jedlička (2009) and Straňavská & Görner (2015), who claim that

outdoor activities are an ideal way to spend one's free-time.

In the aforementioned questionnaire we wanted to assess whether the students participated in outdoor activities in their free-time and which outdoor activities were the most common.

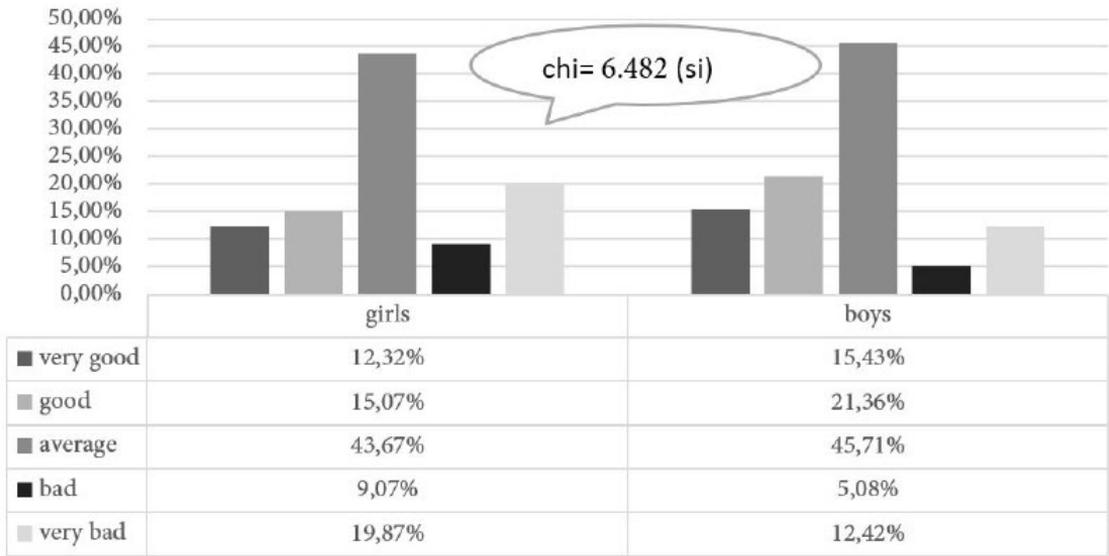
Figure 1. Free-time outdoor activities



In the course of this analysis we discovered that boys prefer cycling and girls inline skating in their free-time (fig No. 1). After a more detailed analysis we came to the conclusion that the second most common and popular outdoor activity both among boys and girls is skiing. Category "others" were stated by 8.30% of boys – the most represented activities being geocaching, pétanque and baseball. 4.15% of girls stated in category "other" activities such as geocaching – similar to boys – followed by Nordic walking. As many as 8.27% of girls stated that they do not participate in any sort of outdoor activity which is a negative phenomenon. Similar results – boys expressing greater interest in free-time outdoor activities – were also stated by Bartík (2009), Michal (2010), Šimonek et al. (2010) and

others. In their studies, Nielsen and Hansen (2007) came to the conclusion that almost 95% of population living in America do not participate in any free-time outdoor activity, or rather spend their free-time indoors mainly by watching television. Several researches – concerning the issues of lifestyle in relation to outdoor activities – came to the conclusion that boys live healthier lives than girls (Broďáni & Kamas, 2011; Michal & Nevolná, 2012 and others). As we can see in the fig No. 2, even in our research there are specific differences in the lifestyle quality between boys and girls, but the results of  $\chi^2$  test of independence shows us that between boys and girls there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance  $p < .05$ .

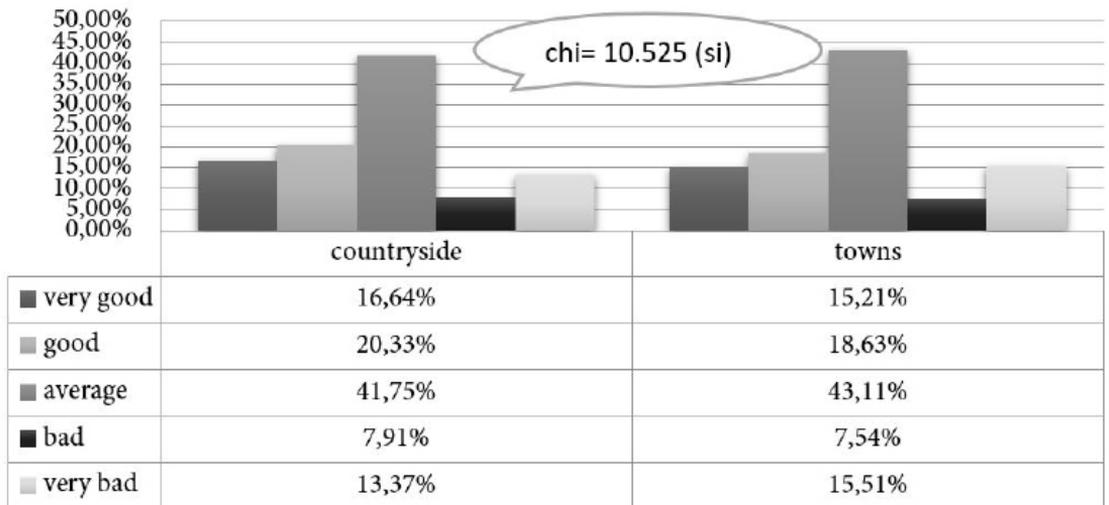
Figure 2. Dependence between lifestyle and gender of students



The research also focuses on the determination of differences in lifestyle quality in relation to the place of residence of students. As we can see in figure No. 2, there are specific differences between students living in the countryside and in the towns,

but the results of  $\chi^2$  test of independence are not statistically significant at the level of significance  $p < .05$  and therefore it can be concluded, that there is no significant dependence between lifestyle and the place of residence.

Figure 3. Interrelations between lifestyle and place of residence of students



Dependence between current lifestyle and outdoor activities is shown in figure No. 4. In the figure we can see differences in the lifestyle of students engaging and not engaging in any outdoor activity. The Chi-Quadrat-Test shows us statistically significant differences at the level of significance  $p < .05$  between the lifestyle of students participating in an

outdoor activity and lifestyle of students who do not participate in any outdoor activity. In the figure we can see that students participating in an outdoor activity rate their lifestyle quality mainly on the scale *average* – *very good*, whereas students who do not participate in any outdoor activity rate their lifestyle quality on the scale from *average* down to *very bad*.

Figure 4. Dependence between lifestyle and participation in outdoor activity

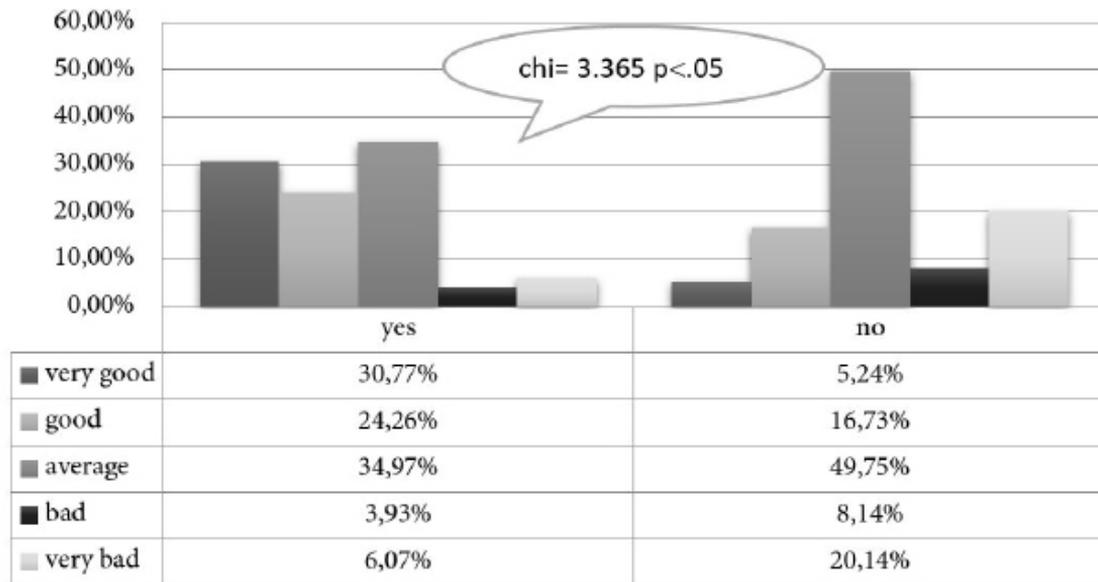


Chart legend: x-axis: participating in and not participating in an outdoor activity, y-axis: lifestyle category expressed in %

In figure No. 5 it is evident, that there is a difference in participation in outdoor activities between students living in towns and students living in the countryside, while the p-value of Chi-Quadrat-Test of independence ( $p = .0279$ ) shows us a statistically significant difference at the level of significance  $p < .05$ . Students living in the countryside tend to participate in outdoor activities more often – one possible reason being their stronger connection to

nature than students living in towns. From the aforementioned it can be seen that students living in the countryside tend to spend their free-time more actively than students living in towns. The dominant result – no participation in any outdoor activity by 57.63% of students living in the countryside and 64.39% of students living in towns – is another negative phenomenon.

Figure 5. Dependence between participation in outdoor activity and place of residence of adolescents

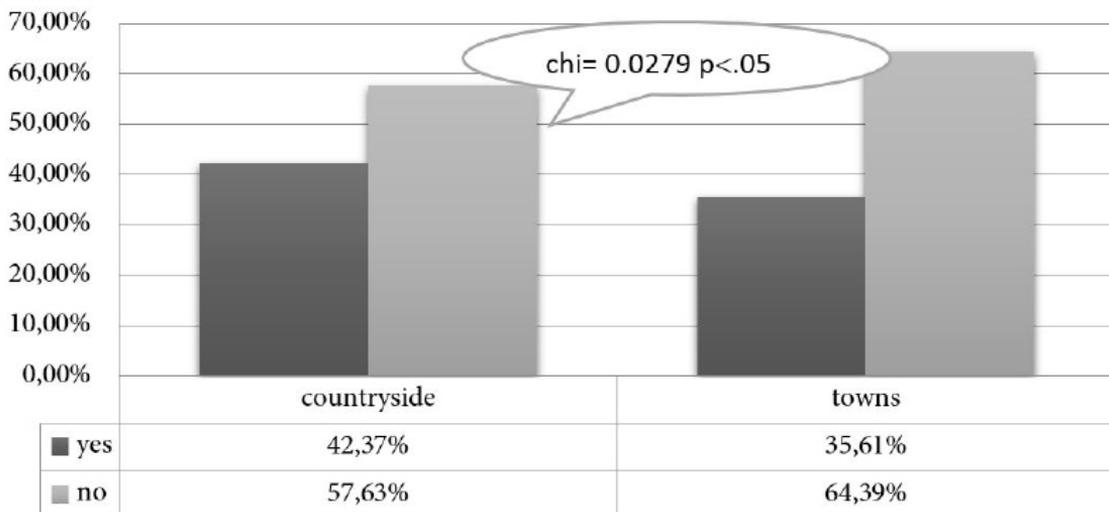


Chart legend: x-axis: place of residence, y-axis: participating in, or indeed not participating in an outdoor activity

## CONCLUSION

The paper researches participation in free-time outdoor activities and studies how outdoor activities influence the lifestyle quality of adolescents. General conclusions can be drawn –every physical activity has a positive impact on one's lifestyle. We agree with the findings of Dobrý (2006), who stated, that there is a dependence between participation in physical activities and the health state of individuals. In our research we came to the conclusion, that students participating in outdoor activities tend to rate their lifestyle quality higher than students who do not participate in any significant amount of

outdoor activity. Participation in outdoor activities significantly influences the self-evaluation process of lifestyle quality and there is also a dependence between participation in outdoor activity and the place of residence of students, in which we have found statistically significant differences at the level of significance  $p < 0.05$ . Schools have a considerable impact on the process of formation of positive habits in regard to physical activities and therefore they should offer wider possibilities for spending free-time in the form of a range of physical activities.

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Author: PaedDr. Stanislava Straňavská  
E-mail: stanislava.stranavska@umb.sk