

WHY DO STUDENTS NOT ATTEND LESSONS WITH SPECIAL REMARK TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION LESSONS ABSENCES

Dženana Imamović-Turković, Hana Hadžibulić-Nurković, Faris Rašidagić, Nermin Nurković

Scientific Review Article

ABSTRACT Students' absences in high school have become everyday issue. Even though regular attendance on lessons is main duty and responsibility of each student, class teachers and students face high number of absences each year, especially non-excused ones. Experiences from school practice show us that this problem is not easily solved due to great number of factors contributing these absences. The number of factors and reasons of students' absences has inspired us to realize this research but also the possibility to look at this problem from several different perspectives, including the pupils. In accordance with the above mentioned facts, aim of this research is to determine the most frequent reasons why students don't attend Physical Education lessons. Given data has been collected by the sample of previously done research and method used was the „target “analysis. After the research is has been confirmed that at least three factors significantly influence the number of absences: Family Related Factors, Student Related Factors and School Related Factors. By improving social conditions in family surroundings, developing student's self-consciousness and improving working conditions in schools, the number of absences could be decreased. It is recommended that similar research should be done in primary schools also even though the number of absences is smaller there. We hope this research could help solve the issue bothering the entire School System in BiH.

Key Words: Absences, Student, School, Physical Education Lessons

INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism, or in other words, students missing from the lessons, is inevitable and very common thing in our schools. It affects entire range of other negative consequences for both students and overall Educational System.

There is no teacher's or class teacher's meeting where the question of absence is not being discussed with the aim to find a way to objectively consider student's reasons, causes and consequences of them being absent from lessons (Bezinović, 2000). Whether this is excused or unexcused, there have to be means to decrease frequent absences. However, there are pedagogical measures written in the School Statute. School Statute is the main document where student's duties and obligations are stated. So, each student is obliged to attend lessons regularly and in case of not being able to come, he/she has to excuse their absence accordingly and on time. Each absence that does not satisfy given criteria, is considered as unexcused and is punished by stated pedagogical measures:

- Unexcused Absences 6 to 10 school hours, student gets Class Teacher's Warning;
- Unexcused Absences 11 to 14 school hours, student gets Discipline Warning;
- Unexcused Absences 15 to 20 school hours, Student gets Expulsion Warning;
- Unexcused Absences with 21 and more school hours, Student is removed from regular lessons

However, disciplinary measures are not always successful and do not influence the number of absences. When it comes to values promoted by Physical Education lessons where the main goal is to improve health and optimal development of

characteristics, abilities and motoric knowledge with great number of values amongst which are:

- Biological values by balancing specific organs and organism and balancing organism and environment
- Health values can be seen in possible and necessary influence of physical exercise not only to keep and improve health but also to develop all of its components.
- Economic values are seen in the possibility to influence human abilities which directly contributes to achieving better career results
- Culture values are enabling students to follow and undertake measures to develop and improve their characteristics, abilities, knowledge and achievements. Culture gives chances to acquire theoretical knowledge about nature factors (sun, air, water), keeping the nature clean, usage of everyday physical exercise.
- Pedagogical values of Physical Education can be seen in possible and necessary influence of Physical Education to develop various characteristic such as moral ones and social side of one's character.

Naturally, Physical Education Teacher's role has the appropriate influence to the abovementioned things. Based on available literature (Neichsteter, 1997; Findak, 1999) it can be concluded that teachers should behave naturally, be helpful, kind, available to students, support team work and success, believe in student's success, hold positive energy. One of the ways to successfully maintain teaching process is mutual cooperation between lesson subjects that is, teacher and student which means both subjects should listen to counterpart's suggestions (Rašidagić, Manić, Mahmutović, 2016). Shulman's Research done in 1987 claims that

teacher's academic knowledge mustn't be questioned in any form and should include at least: lesson knowledge, general knowledge about strategies and lesson planning, knowledge to teach specific themes, student knowledge, pedagogical values knowledge. In certain segments, teacher has an educational role which means such teacher respects oneself and others, is functional and disciplined to complete all duties, has reasonable requirements, has good communication with students, clear with firm attitude. School Absentism is one of the biggest problem schools are facing nowadays. Problem is seen on a global level, in almost all countries of the world. Yahaya (2010) states that absences are one of the ten biggest problems in American School System which was one of the reasons to do this research. After determined reasons for absences, this research shall offer possible measures to prevent them.

SUMMARY OF PRESENT FACTS

Theoretical basis of this research are previous researches themed "Student Absences from Physical Education Lessons". Besides available literature and research information, internet explorers such as Scribd and Google Scholar were also used. 123 similar or same researches were identified at first, but further considerations excluded more than half of them since their content and results were not appropriate (most of them were incomplete or inadequate for this research). When it comes to work methodology, they were analyzed by publication dates: from oldest to most recent ones). Tolić (1980) in his research about high school students' absences from Physical Education Lessons proves there is no difference between boys' and girls' number of absences.

Stevenson & Baker (1987) as well as Shaw and co. (1996) claim that better relation between the school and parents positively influence to decrease the number of absences.

Sallis & McKenzie (1991) have done a research to determine what would make students not leave Physical Education Lessons. The results showed that "realizing the benefits of lessons" is one of the important reasons that would keep the students in school. Speaking in that context, students should be thought that role of modern Physical Education lessons is gradual preparation to start healthy and active way of life.

Chris (1991) claims that teachers with their interaction and return information can contribute to stronger motivation of students and make them want better results and be more engaged in the lessons, also confirmed by Koka and Hein (2003).

Number of absences is increased in higher grades of high school is confirmed by Nazor (1993) with the aim to get better marks which is the most important goal when it comes to most of parents and students. Such results were confirmed by other authors such as Marušić (2009).

Rayan, Corville-Smith, Addams, Delicandro (1998) claim in their research there are three main groups

of factors that influence absences: Factors related to Students' Characteristics, Family Related Factors and School Related Factors. Each of them could be separately analyzed. For example, factors related to students' characteristics show that these influence absences: gender, type of personality and success in school. Also, it is stated that research results regarding gender are inconsistent so authors could not find statistically significant differences between boys and girls. In the same research, there are connections between absences and self-knowledge, self-respect, anxiety and neuroticism.

Smyt (1999) has also done research about gender influencing absences and got the results within high school students where boys make more absences than girls.

Author Sabljčić (2000) realized in her research, significant negative connection between average grades at the end of school year and total number of unexcused absences. One can state that students with higher marks (more successful students) have less absences. Author Bilić (2001) has determined that male and female students do not differ when it comes to number of excused and unexcused absences.

Bilmler's Research in 2001, tried to determine whether there is a connection between family relations and absences from school. Results have shown that students coming from families with unresolved internal issues, have more absences than those coming from coherent families. Same results were stated by Livazović (2011).

The most frequent variables related to family and connected to student's school success are family income, parents' occupation, number of children in family, parents' education.

One of the authors who analyzed influence of spatial working conditions (Jensen, 2003), specifically sports hall to number of absences, has determined that can cause "passive participation in lessons" which means students are present on the lesson but don't have complete equipment and suggested that appointed institutions should be involved in solving this problem.

Rečić (2003) and Mlinarević (2006) have proven connection of socio-economic status of family and school success. Results determined statistically significant relation of the two segments since children from wealthy families have more responsibilities in life and work organization outside of school.

Many authors in different periods when they did their research (Ujević, 2004) connect the age of student. It is stated that (Croatian and foreign authors have similar results) absences problems are increased with grade and age.

Type of high school is also significant for absences issue, state Bilankov and Hitrec (2004). Researchers conclude that Gymnasium students have less absences than students going to technical schools.

- Reasons were stated as follows:
- -50.5% of students – there is no particular reason to be absent;

- 68.6% of students - feeling too much pressure because of lesson plans;
- 54.9 % of students – bad interpretation, bad lesson planning, bored during the lesson.

Also, great number of students make absences to express negative attitude towards school, lessons and studying. Exhaustion, monotony that are results of non-interactive lessons, demotivated teacher, unconditioned working spaces for Physical Education just increase number of absences.

Noack (2004) determined that parents' educational level could influence their children not to be absent from lessons (cognitive competence, assuring better possibilities for education, discussing personal opinions about the importance of education).

When it comes to partial or full leave of absence from Physical Education lessons, Kosinac and Banović (2005) have determined there is no statistically significant difference of taking leave of absence between genders. However, Gontarev and Kalac (2017) claim that male students statistically make more absences from Physical Education lessons than girls. 42,3% of girls are absent from these lessons because they don't realize its importance. It is also stated that absences are encouraged by poor organization of the lesson.

According to author Zrilić (2007), absences from lessons have become a pattern when it comes to student behavior. At the same time, those absences are defined and interpreted as possible risk factors for more serious behavior problems. Researches have shown that both boys and girls are absent from lessons but boys are more prone to have unexcused absences.

Type of school is also a factor in absences during school year, claims Zrilić (2007). There is a statistically significant difference between excused and unexcused absences according to the abovementioned, that is, type of school students go to.

Author Zrilić in 2008 determined in one of her researches that students who are more absent from lessons are more keen to use unhealthy substances. Livazović and Ručević (2012) in their research make a connection between overall absenteeism and poor (sufficient and insufficient) school success.

Topoljak (2012) also deals with the question on which level students are absent from Physical Education lessons. Problem is specifically analyzed by examining how much excuses doctors give to students. Out of 261 researched students, 90% of boys and girls were not in any way excused from doing exercises on the lesson. Out of 10% of students who were „excused“, 2% of boys were temporarily excused and 6% of girls likewise. 2% of students had permanent excuse. From the presented data it can be seen that girls dominate in mentioned categories temporarily as well as permanently.

Skrbo (2014) in his Master Thesis explains that primary school female students have more absences than boys. Taking into account gender and level of education there is no significant difference when it

comes to partial or full excuses from PE lessons. The research was done in the area of Canton Sarajevo (BiH).

ANALYSIS OF GIVEN DATA AND DISCUSSION

Looking for the answers to a question: „What are the most frequent reasons why students don't attend lessons with special remark on PE lessons“, completed research on this subject was examined. One of the disturbing factors was the fact there is a small number of such researches done in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The other part of relevant research with adequate data was found in the area of Croatia and final third part of this research consists of data collected from European areas.

First thing to be noticed no matter of the area was inconsistency of results in existing researches. Same factors that impact student absences were determined but often in different mutual relations, sometimes with and sometimes without statistically significant differences. One can also state that, regardless of time period when the research was done, there is no evident change or different data collection that influence student absences. The results confirm that problem of school absences should be treated as complex matter to be dealt with in interdisciplinary way. To be more concrete, things that cause more absences even though different, could be gathered through same research to be more effective in finding a way to solve them.

Teacher/professor could be one of significant reasons to increase absences. One can conclude that students make more absences on lessons where teacher behaves in autocratic way compared to teachers who have more democratic way of teaching. Difference between autocratic and democratic way of teaching: teachers sometimes use command or autocratic lesson methods and can make students feel tired, be monotonous since they can start feeling they don't have enough freedom to express themselves.

Also, students claim they want to be more motivated to work and be more attracted to lessons by using different content during lesson process. Students believe that bad lesson planning can stimulate them to be absent from certain lessons. This can start a question of full democratic way of teaching since command styles hardly have bad organization of lessons (bad time planning, material and technical conditions, human resources). If the students are not able to see benefits of the lesson and importance to study for future life challenges, they will be absent from lessons. Given variable can be surpassed by explaining the influence of certain PE activities to health and organism or explain simple appliance of knowledge to students. School that students attend is also one of the factors that increases absences from PE lessons. Researches have shown that poor material conditions in school, lack of tools and devices as well as their malfunctioning can cause demotivation and lack of interest to be present at PE lessons.

Good or poor state of sports hall influences greater number of absences or causes „passive participation on lessons “. Second cause of absences which can be connected to school conditions is too much students in one class, that is, the size of sports hall not being sufficient. When there are too many students from different classes using the same hall, number of absences increases. One part of the responsibility is to be found in students.

Gender of students, according to some researches, is one of the reasons of increased absences. However, continuity of such results does not exist given the fact that sometimes there is no statistically significant difference by which one could say that male students are more absent than female students. Besides gender, increased absence is influenced by achievements in school. Children who have low achievements, that is, have lower average of marks at the end of school year (sufficient or insufficient) are absent more often from the lessons. Characteristic that should be defined more clearly is also age of the students. Students of older age categories are more absent than the younger ones. Nevertheless, there is no clear statistical evidence of when exactly are boys more absent than the girls. In certain cases, when medical facilities give written excuses for students' absences, there is greater number of lessons missed. These lessons are part of passive motoric presence at PE lessons. Family surrounding from which the student comes also influences absences. The most frequent variables related to family and absences as well as student's achievements are: family income, parents' profession, number of children in the family and parents' education. Higher socio-economic status of the family influences less absences from school. Parents with high level of education and „attractive professions “are a positive influence to kids and if there are less children in the family, parents can spend more time with them and effects of family care can be seen through less absences. If number of absences is to be decreased, and all of the abovementioned factors removed, it is necessary to directly or indirectly participate in educational process to minimize students' absences. After analysis of given data in research papers with this subject, conclusions about PE lessons absences were made.

CONCLUSION

Results of the study which examined reasons for absences show there should be further analysis on this matter. Therefore, after having analyzed gathered data, one can say that students make absences because of the teachers and rigid styles of teaching during the lesson process. Further on, students are absent because of poor material and technical conditions in schools. Part of the reasons is the student him/herself, their growth, development and level of maturity. In the end, it can be concluded that family factors where students with more significant parent support have less absences from school. By analyzing these basic

reasons, it seems there is possibility for things to get better and decrease number of absences. Teachers should try and change their teaching methods, make sports more appealing and attractive to students. Also, they should try to interest students to healthy lifestyle with more clear examples of PE lessons importance. School absenteeism should be prevented by solving the problem of material and technical conditions in schools and engage wider social community. When it comes to student's reasons for being absent, the problem should be seen from wider perspective and focus on personal characteristics of students. Socio-economic state of one family cannot be solved but this research has concluded that parents must be educated about ways and time spent with their own children which can serve positively to decrease absences from school, whether excused or unexcused.

REFERENCES

1. Bezinović, P. (2000), "Me and My School".
2. Bilankov, M., Hitrec, S. (2004.), Absences of High School Students. Zgreb: HPKZ, Napredak, Vol. 142(1) pg. 62-67.
3. Bilić, V. (2001). Causes, Consequences and Surpassing Failures at School. Zagreb: Croatian Pedagogical Summit.
4. Bimler, D. (2001.), School Trauma and Trancy Motivation Sorted out with Multidimensional Scaling. Journal of Adolescent Research, Vol. 16(1), 75- 102.
5. Chris, K. (1991.). Essential Teaching Skills. Oxford: Blackwell.
6. Findak, V. (1999.). Methodology of Physical and Health Culture. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
7. Gontarev, S and Kalac, R (2017). Absence of Students in Physical and Health Education Classes. Research in Physical Education, Sport & Health, Vol. 6 Issue 2, p21-26. 6p.
8. Jensen, E. (2003). Super Lessons. Zagreb: Educa.
9. Koka, A. & Hein, V. (2003). Perceptions of Teacher's Feedback and Learning Environment as Predictors of Intrinsic Motivation in Physical Education. Psychology of Sport and Exercise 4, 333-346.
10. Kosinac, Z. and Banović, I. (2005). Analysis of Following High School Students' Absences from Physical Education Lessons in Split. no. 14(2/.)
11. Livazović, G. (2011). Connection between the Media and Adolescent Behavior. Vol. 20 no. 1, pg. 122.

12. Livazović, G. and Ručević, S. (2012) Externalizing Behaviors and Eating Disorder Risk Factors in Adolescents, *Social Explorations: Social Issues Magazine*, Vol 21 No 3 (117).
13. Marušić, M (2009). Student's Absences from School. *School Magazine for Pedagogical Theory*, vol 58, no 3,
14. Mlinarević, V. (2006.), *Free Time as Predictor in Students' Behavior*. Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb.
15. Najšteter, Đ. (1997) *Kineziological Didactics*. University Press, Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports.
16. Nazor (1993) Absences from Lessons – Comparison of Students', Parents' and Teachers' Responses, *School News*, vol. 39 (1-2), pg. 29-34.
17. Noack, P. (2004). The Family Context of Preadolescents Orientations Toward Education: Effects of Maternal Orientations and Behavior. *Journal of Educational Psychology*.
18. Rašidagić, F., Manić, G., Mahmutović, I. (2016) *Methodology of Physical Education Lessons*, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo.
19. Rayan B. A., Corvile- Smit, J., Adams, G. R., Delicandro, T. (1998). Distinguishing Absentee Students from Regular Attenders: The Combined Influence of Personal, Family and School Factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.
20. Rečić, M. (2003.). *Family and Success of Students at School*. Đakovo: Tempo
21. Sabljčić, E. (2000.) *Research on School Absences Based on Gender, Grade, Success at School and Level of Stress at School*. Final Paper. Zagreb: Psychology Department, Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb.
22. Sallis, J.F., & McKenzie, T.L. (1991). Physical Education's Role in Public Health. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 62, 124-137.
23. Shaw, M. S., Caldwell, L. L. & Kleiber, A. D. (1996.), *Boredom, Stress and Social Control in the Daily Activities of Adolescents*. *Journal of Leisure Research*, no. 4 (274- 292).
24. Shulman, L. S. (1987.). *Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform*. Harvard Educational Review.
25. Smyth, E. (1999.). *Pupil Performance, Absenteeism and School Drop-out: A Multidimensional Analysis*. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*.
26. Stevenson, D. L., Baker, D. P. (1987.). *The Family- School Relation and the Child's School Performance*. *Child Development*.
27. Škrbo, N., (2014.) *Reasons for Absences of Students from Physical Education Lessons in Primary Schools*. Master Thesis. Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, Sarajevo.
28. Tolić, S. (1980.), *Students' Absences from Lessons in High School*. Split: *School News*, no. 1(5-25).
29. Topoljak, A. (2012.) *Reasons for Giving Excuses to not Participate in PE Lessons in High Schools*, Zenica. *Source Science Article*, Mostar
30. Ujević, A. (2004.), *Causes and Consequences of Intentional Skipping the Lessons*. Split: *School News*, Vol. 142(1), pg. 62-67.
31. Zrilić, S. (2007). *Analysis of School Absences based on Parents' Marital Status*. *Magistra Iadertina*. Vol. 2 no. 2, pg. 31-42.
32. Zrilić, S. (2008). *Some Potentially Relevant Sociodemographic Variables of School Absences*. *Educational Science*. Vol. 9 no. 2 (14), pg. 41-65.
33. Zrilić, S. (2011). *Connection between Escaping the Lessons and Minor Delinquency*. *Magistra Iadertina*. Vol. 6 br. 1, str. 71-81.
34. Yahaya, A., Ramli, J. and co. (2010). *The Effects of Various Modes of Absenteeism Problem in School on the Academic Performance of Students in Secondary Schools*. *European Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol. 12 no. 4, pg. 624-639.

AUTHOR(S) INFORMATION

Dženana Imamović-Turković
PhD, Assistant Professore
mail: imamovicdzenana@gmail.com

Hana Hadžibulić-Nurković
Associate professor
e-mail: 1512hana@mail.com

Faris Rašidagić
Associate professor
e-mail: faris.rasidagic@gmail.com

Nermin Nurković
Full professor
e-mail: n.nurkovic@gmail.com