

# DEVELOPING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE OF STUDENTS THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF SPORT ACTIVITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*Sports activities and disease prevention is a nowadays worldwide discussed problem, many specialists embraced the idea that physical activities can develop and maintain the health of human body. Our study was focused on finding the habits of a group of students from the University “Lucian Blaga” from Sibiu regarding physical activities, types of sports activities practiced in leisure time, student’s concept about the values and importance of practicing sports activities and so on.*

*The main method of research was the lifestyle health questionnaire through which we investigated some aspects regarding sports activities influence on the level of health. We choose a sample of 300 students from all three years of study from different faculties from our university.*

*The results of our investigation showed that students are aware of the positive influence of sports activities on human body.*

**KEYWORDS:** healthy lifestyle, sports activities, benefits of sport practice

## 1. Introduction

Health is a state of physical, mental and emotional well-being felt by persons of any age in their personal and social life. According to Neacșu, *“the right to health, just as the right to good education, is one of the fundamental rights of any human being”* (Neacșu, 2010).

Promotion of healthy lifestyles has been gaining popularity as a tool for developing public health. Studies indicated that healthy lifestyles enhance lifelong health, increase quality of life, and decrease morbidity and mortality (Ebem, 2007).

Lifestyle choices and individuals’ behaviors have the potential to influence

health and improve the quality of life (Lyons & Langille, 2000). During the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents establish patterns of behavior and make lifestyle choices that affect both their current and future health (Nader et al., 2008; Telama, 2009).

Active and health-enhancing leisure time by outdoor physical activities can significantly increase the benefits of physical activities and facilitate adoption of a healthy lifestyle in children and adolescents, and can also be combined with the school environment (Fromel, 2017).

Specialists consider that health is not strictly a medical issue, but also a

bio-psycho-social state. In brief, we can state that human health is a combination of several factors: biological, psychological and social (Zlate, 2010).

Sport and leisure roles contribute to health and to quality of life. Therefore, understanding the underlying experiences of the commitment to these roles continues to gain in importance (Shipway & Holloway, 2010).

The development of contemporary society generates unprecedented quantitative and qualitative growth in all areas, including that of sports performance (Szabo, 2015).

The interest in preventing youth problems and promoting healthy youth development led to the implementation of strength-based approaches, which aimed to be empowering and effective in diverse contexts (Benson et al., 2006).

Lifestyle is an essential factor in a person's health status, obviously along with biological factors and the environment. The World Health Organization defines the concept of "health" as follows: health is "*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*" (Rășcanu, 2010).

Lack of physical activities has led to the continuous increase of the percentage of the children who are overweighted (Canning et al., 2004; Elgar et al., 2005).

Health promoting lifestyles include activities that are focused on improving the level of well-being. The focus of these activities is on the development of positive potential for physical, social, mental, intellectual or spiritual health (Ebem, 2007). Specialists also found a growing interest of youth for sports activities, and also presented the consequences of lack of physical activity with negative effects on human life (obesity, excess in body mass index, deformation of the spine, heart problems etc.) also practicing sports activities can improve socialization, communication and friendships (Sopa et al., 2016).

From this perspective, physical activity is a component of an active life, an "*important ingredient of lifestyle, which involves doing some sort of exercise according to one's own options, a few times a week; this exercise should be enjoyable, should consume energy and produce satisfaction*" (Grigore, 2007).

Physical activity is a component of an active life, an "*important ingredient of lifestyle, which involves doing some sort of exercise according to one's own options, a few times a week; this exercise should be enjoyable, should consume energy and produce satisfaction*" (Grigore, 2007). In addition, sport practicing has a positive influence on the dexterity of the non-dominant member, all the more so as the training is conducted in this respect and, on the other hand, whether the sport involves the use of both members equally (Baitel & Pătru, 2018).

Unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are major contributors to overweight and obesity, which are among the leading risk factors for many non-communicable diseases (Kelishadi et al., 2008).

There is also evidence that regular physical education may reduce or prevent from mild or moderate depression (Yildirim, 2010).

A "healthy lifestyle" is an important component of the more general notion of "health" which includes several elements: avoiding any kind of abuse (alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy diets etc.), a systematic practice of physical activity either in an organized form or individually, as a leisure time activity with a recreational purpose, observing basic nutrition rules etc. A healthy lifestyle is always associated to good health, to an active life (Macovei, 2013).

## 2. Aim of the Research

The aim of our research was to identify the lifestyle habits of students from "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu, and how sports activities influence their health and

motor development. We also wanted to observe the concern with health improvement or maintenance, if students have a regular practice of physical exercises habit, if they are conscious of the long-term benefits that sports activities have on their health and body development, and also if they have a basic knowledge of hygiene rules, nutrition benefits and overcoming the obesity threats.

### 3. Methods of the Research

#### 3.1. The Place of the Research

Our research took place in the university school year 2017-2018 at the “Lucian Blaga” University from Sibiu with students from four faculties: economy faculty, law faculty, engineering faculty and science faculty.

#### 3.2. Sample of the Research

At the experiment attended 300 students from the four faculties mentioned above, and answered to the lifestyle habit questionnaire. Approximately 178 from the total number of those questioned, representing 59 % from the total number of students, were female, and 122 students, representing 41 % from the total, were male. Regarding faculty members that participated in our experiment the structure of the sample was: 75 students from the economy faculty represented 25 % from the total number of subjects, 57 students from law faculty that represented 19 %, 69 students from the engineering faculty representing 23 % from the total number of subjects, 99 students from the science faculty representing 33 % from the total sample.

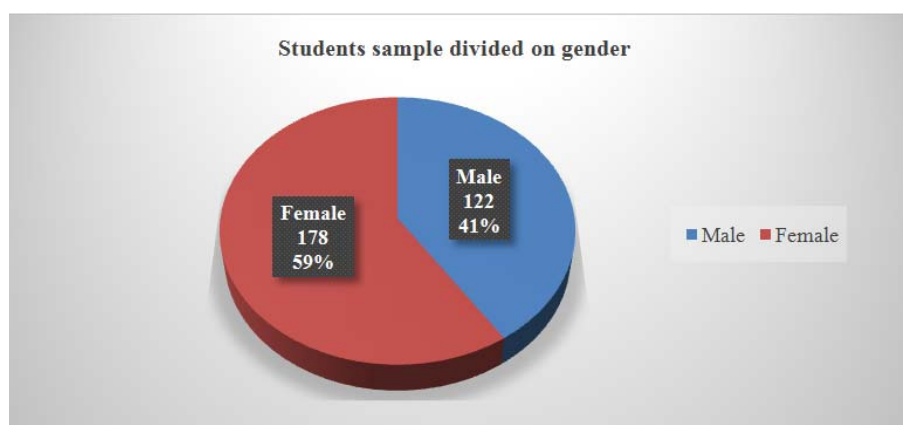


Figure no. 1: Students sample divided on gender

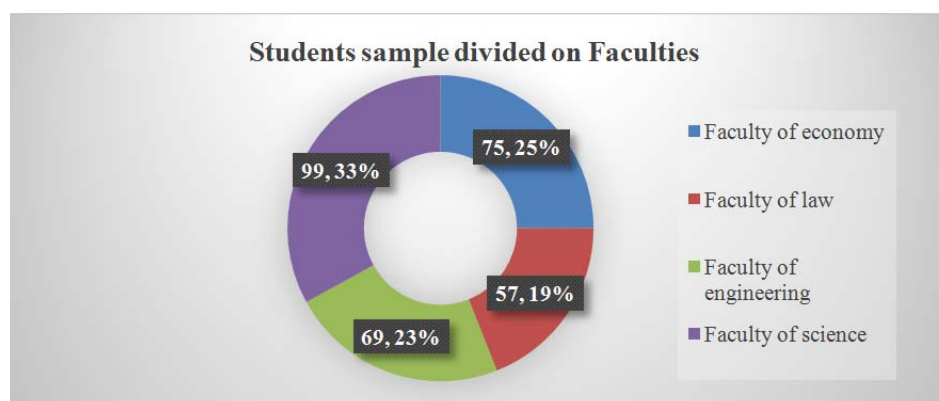


Figure no. 2: Students sample divided on Faculties

### 3.3. Methods of Research

The method of the research used in our experiment was the questionnaire of lifestyle habits with five levels of answer on Likert scale. For the questionnaire of opinions we used the following references Dragnea, A. (2006), Cârstea, G. (2000) and Ionescu, C. (2012).

We used the following types of scales in building the questionnaire: nominal scale – used for the quantitative variables, interval scale – used for measuring the level of knowledge and attitudes regarding the items of the questionnaire, and Likert scale with five levels (5 – in very big accordance with the affirmation, 4 – in big accordance with the affirmation, 3 – in relative accordance or in equal measure with the affirmation, 2 – in little accordance with the affirmation, 1 – in very little accordance with the affirmation).

The questionnaire for students had 10 items that followed our research theme and had as aim to discover the lifestyle habits of students regarding sport practice.

Because the questionnaire wasn't a standard test we applied a pre-test on a 40 persons to determine the validity of our research method. After gathering the responses from our pre-test sample to see if the intern consistency of our questionnaire is valid we used the Alfa Cronbach coefficient with the help of the SPSS statistic program. The coefficient for a valid consistency questionnaire is between 0.70-1 points, value that indicates the fidelity of the questionnaires.

The results of the questionnaire analyse and the value of Alfa Cronbach coefficient was 0.879, so we can conclude that our questionnaire fidelity parameters are adequate.

### 3.4. Results of the Research

The first step in our investigation was to administrate a set of questions and to discover the opinions of students regarding the effects of sports activities on their body and mind.

Item 1. Does sports activities help in improving or maintaining health parameters?

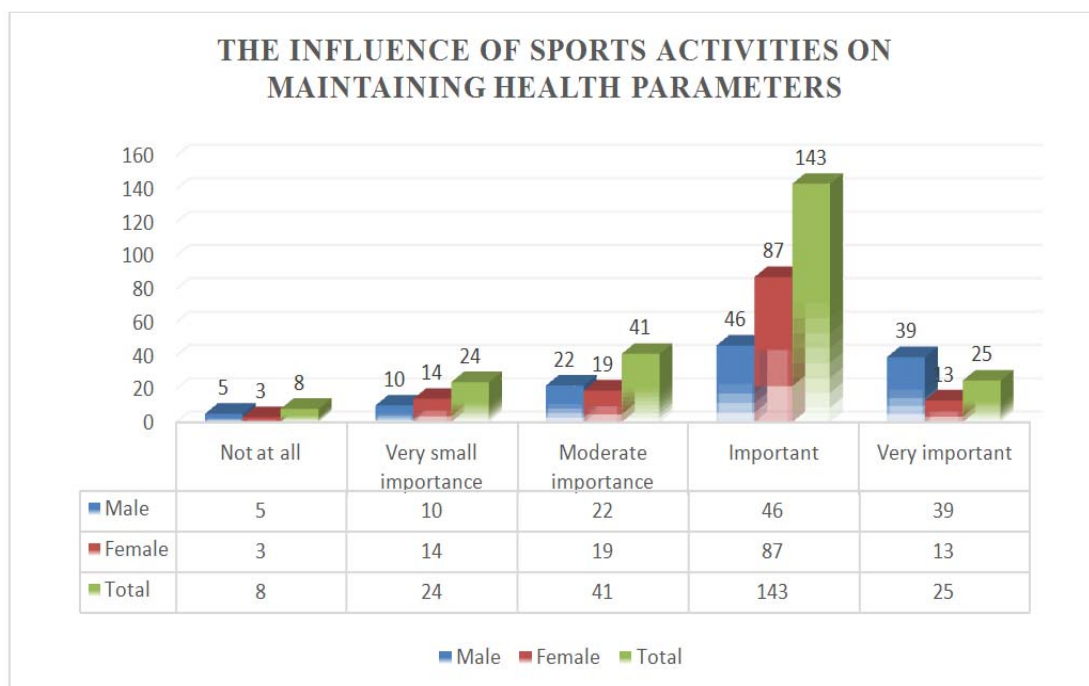


Figure no. 3: The influence of sports activities on maintaining health parameters

Item 2. Are sports activities important in developing communication, socialization and making friendships?

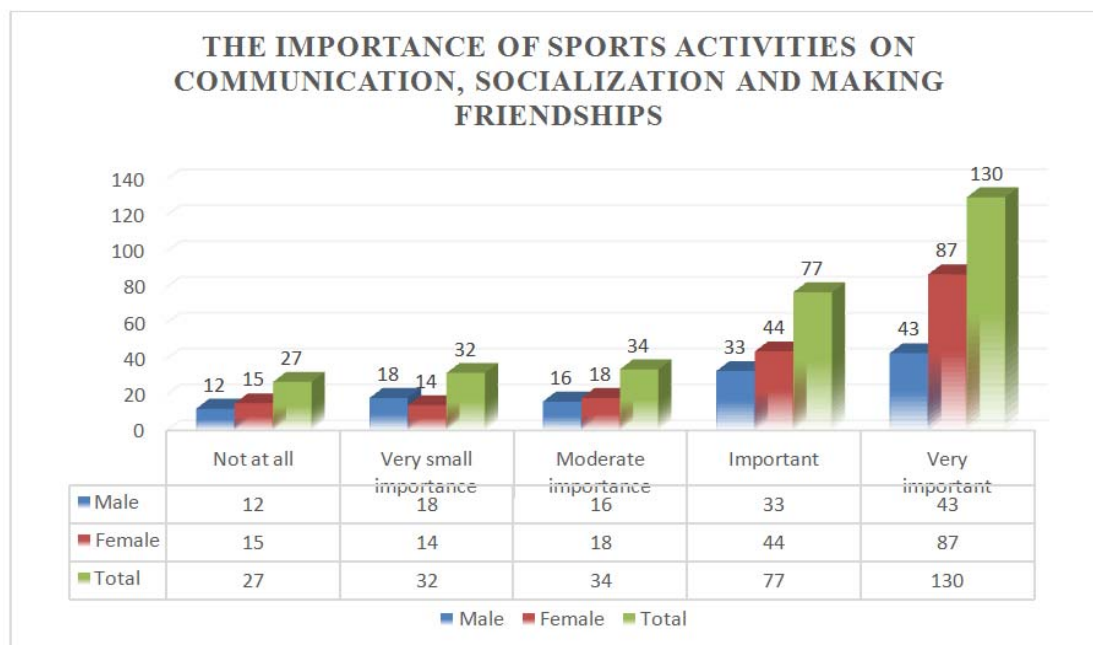


Figure no. 4: The importance of sports activities on communication, socialization and making friendships

Item 3. Does sports activities promote moral values such as self-respect, respect for the others, respect for laws and rules, loyalty, correctitude, dignity and discipline?

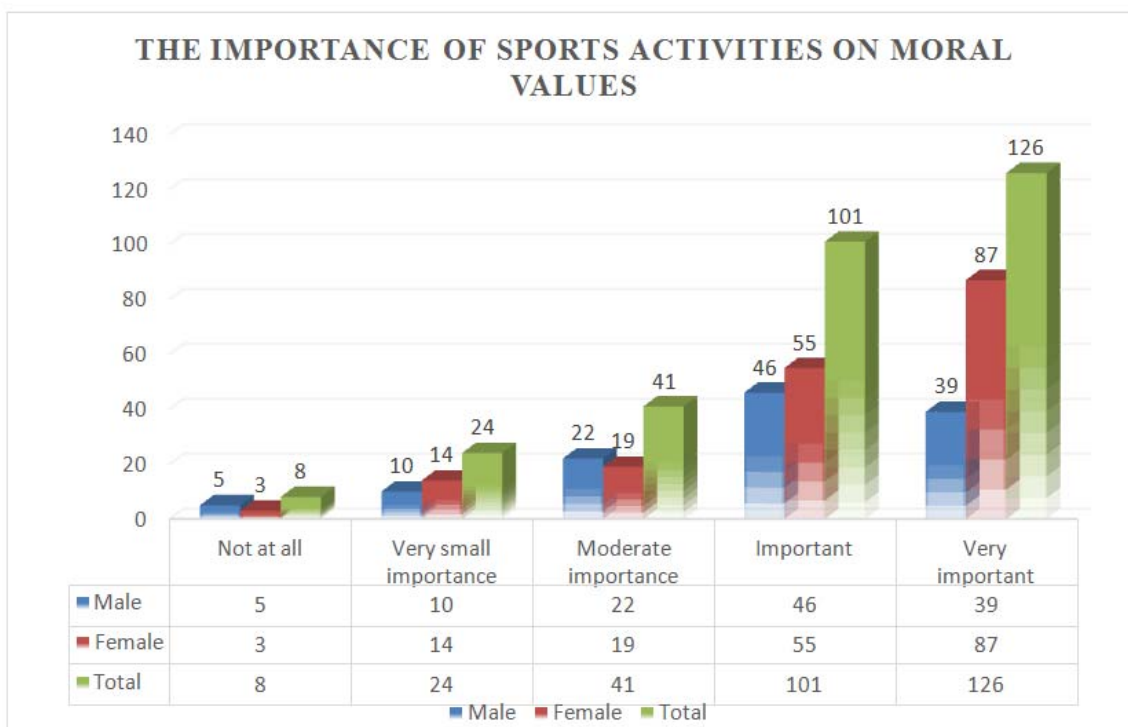


Figure no. 5: The importance of sports activities on moral values

Item 4. Has sports activities real impact on social values as communication capacity, socialization, respect for the others, respect for the social rules, raised capacity for collaboration, respect for the colleagues activity?

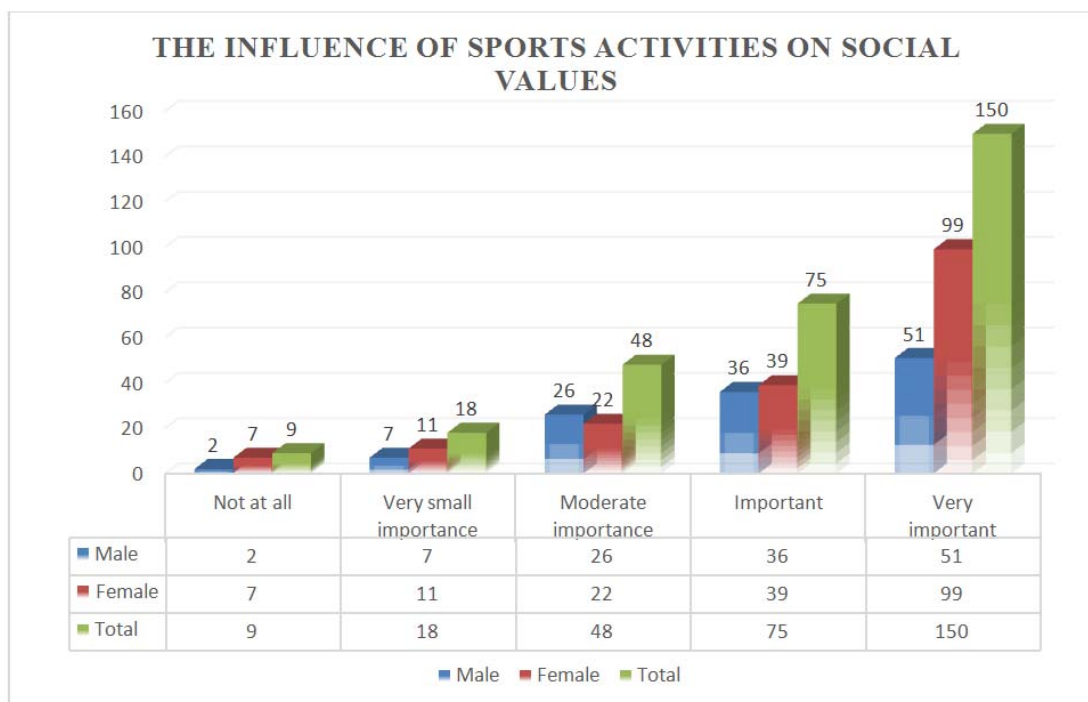


Figure no. 6: The influence of sports activities on social values

Item 5. Do sports activities improve motivation level?

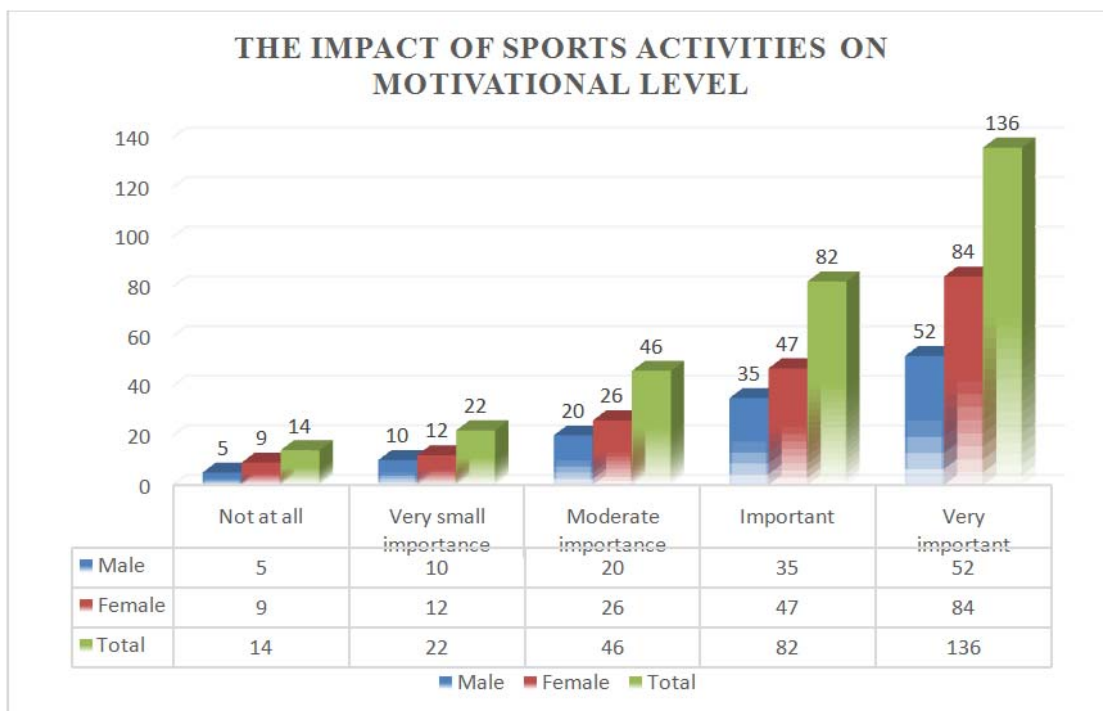


Figure no. 7: The impact of sports activities on motivational level

Item 6. Sports activities improve the need for constant practice of sport, the desire for self-improvement and the need for knowing your physical limits.

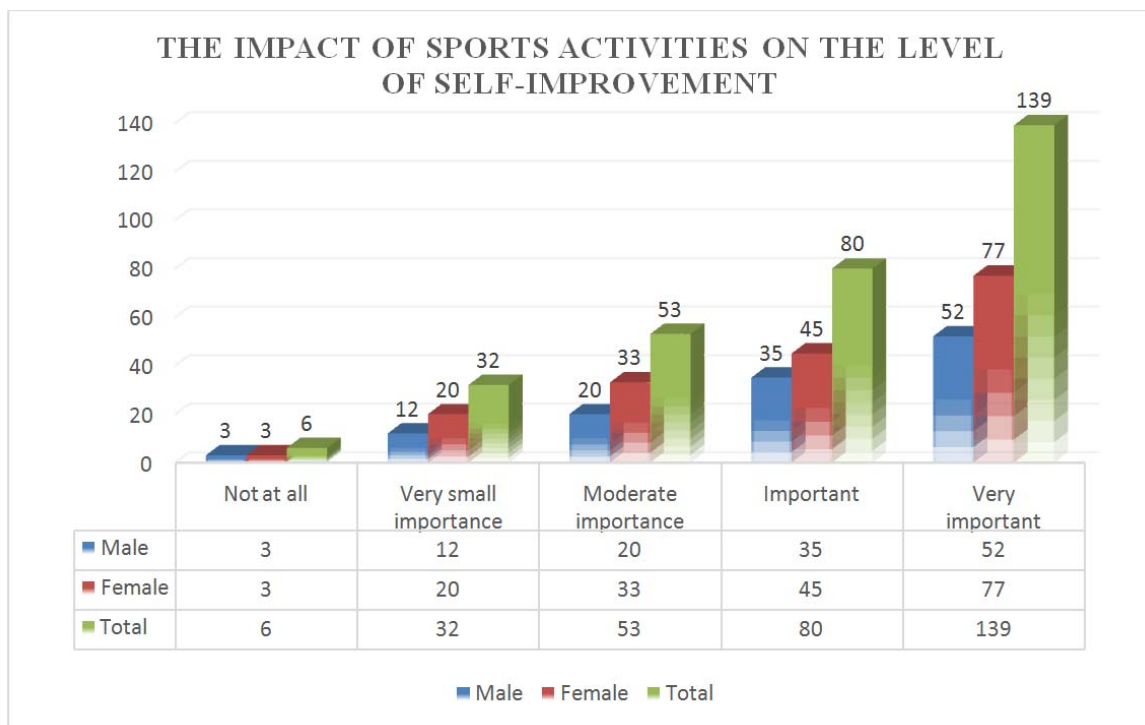


Figure no. 8: The impact of sports activities on the level of self-improvement

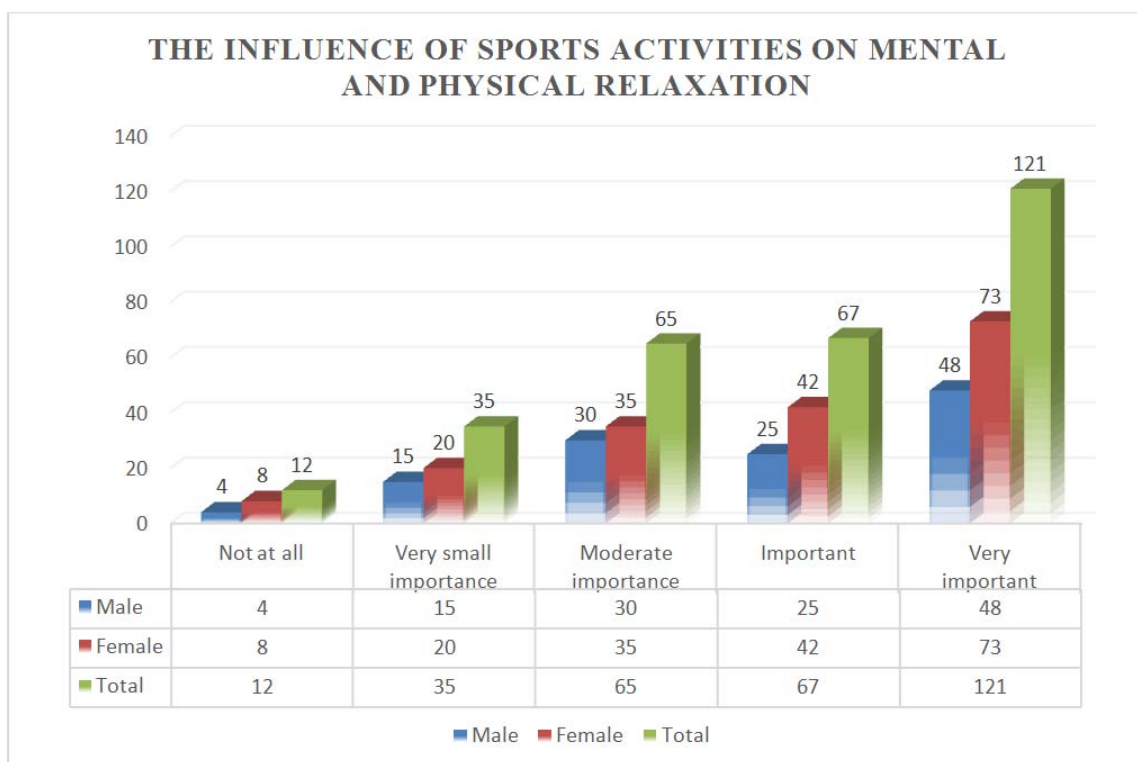


Figure no. 9: The influence of sports activities on mental and physical relaxation

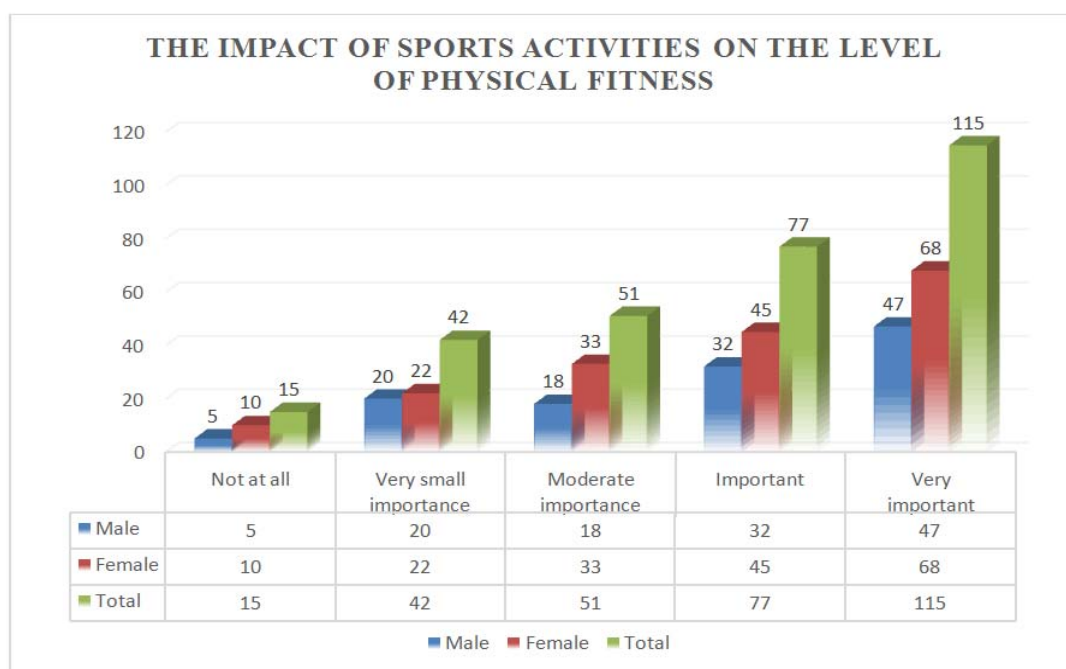


Figure no. 10: The impact of sports activities on the level of physical fitness

#### 4. Discussions

Our questionnaire aimed to identify the lifestyle habits of students from “Lucian Blaga” University Sibiu, and how sports activities influence their health and motor development. So after we questioned the students sample we could outline the following:

At the first item regarding the influence of sports activities in improving or maintaining health parameters, the sample of students answered as follows: 8 students, representing 2.66 % from the total, answered not at all showing that they don't think that sports activities can improve or maintain health parameters; 24 students, representing 8% from the total, answered with very small importance given to sports activities in health keeping; 41 students, representing 13.66 % from the total, give moderate importance for sports activities in maintaining health, 143 students, representing 47.66 % from the total, think that sports activities represent a way for maintaining health; and 25 students, representing 8.33 % from the

total, consider very important the sports activities in maintaining health.

Regarding the second item of the questionnaire that outlined sports activities as an important factor in developing communication, socialization and making friendships the students answered as follows: 27 students, representing 9 %, didn't consider at all sports as an important factor in making friendships and developing communication and socialization; 32 students, representing 10.66 % from the total, affirmed that sports activities has very small importance in developing socialization skills; 34 students, representing 11.33 % from the total, considered as moderate importance of sports activities in the development of socialization and communication; 77 students, representing 25.66 % from the total, appreciate that sports activities are important in developing new friendships and socialization skills and 130 students, representing 43.33 % from the total, considered that sports contribution to the development of new friendships, communication and socialization is very important.



At the item importance of sports activities on moral values the students answered as follows: 8 students, representing 2.66 %, considered sports activities not important at all for developing and promoting moral values; 24 students, representing 8 % from the total, thought that sports activities have a very small importance on moral values; 41 students, representing 13.67 % from the total, give moderate importance to sports activities in building strong relationships; 101 students, representing 33.66 % from the total, consider sports activities as an important factor in improving socialization and building new friendships; 126 students, representing 42 % from the total amount of students, consider sports as a very important activity in building friendships and improving communication and socialization.

As we can see at item influence of sports activities on social values the results were: 9 students, representing 3 % from the total, consider sport activities not important at all in promoting social values; 18 students, representing 6% from the total, affirm that sports activities have very small importance; 48 students, representing 16 % from the total, appreciate that sports activities have a moderate importance on building social values for their practitioners; 75 students, representing 25 % from the total, consider sports activities important in developing social values; 150 students, representing 50 % from the total amount of students questioned, consider sports activities very important in developing social values.

At the item regarding sports activities and their involvement in improving the motivational level students answered as follows: 14 students, representing 4.66 % from the total, consider that sports activities are not important at all for improving motivational level; 22 students, representing 7.33 % from the total, thought that sports activities have a small importance on the motivational level; 46 students, representing

15.33 % from the total, give moderate importance of sports activities in improving the motivational level; 82 students, representing 27.33 % from the total, consider important the sports activities in rising the motivational level and 136 students, representing 45.33 % from the total, consider sports activities as an very important factor in developing the motivational level.

Regarding the item sports activities improve the need for constant practice of sport, the desire for self-improvement and the need for knowing your physical limits the students answered as follows: 6 students, representing 2 % from the total, consider not important at all sports activities for self-improvement; 32 students, representing 10.66 % from the total, thought that sports activities have a small importance on the desire for self-improvement and the need for knowing physical limits; 53 students, representing 17.66 % from the total, give moderate importance to sports activities in self-improvement and braking physical limits; 80 students, representing 26.66 % from the total, consider sport activities as important in the process of self-improving and 139 students, representing 46.33 % from the total, consider sport activities very important in self-improvement and the need for knowing the physical limits.

Regarding the item influence of sports activities on mental and physical relaxation the students answered as follows: 12 students, representing 4 % from the total, answer that sports activities are not important at all in the process of mental and physical relaxation; 35 students, representing 11.66 % from the total, consider that sports activities very small importance for mental and physical relaxation; 65 students, representing 21.66 % from the total, give moderate importance to sports activities for mental and physical relaxation; 67 students, representing 22.33 % from the total,

consider sports activities as important for mental and physical relaxation; 121 students, representing 40.33 % from the total, thought that sports activities have a very important role in physical and mental relaxation.

At the last item regarding the impact of sports activities on the level of physical fitness, the students answered as follows: 15 students, representing 5 % from the total, answered that sports activities are not important at all in keeping the physical fitness; 42 students, representing 14 % from the total, consider that sports activities have little impact on the level of physical fitness; 51 students, representing 17 % from the total, consider that sports activities have a moderate impact on physical fitness; 77 students, representing 25.66 % from the total, thought that sports activities are important in building up a good physical fitness and 115 students, representing 38.33 % from the total, consider that sports activities are very important in developing the level of physical fitness.

### 5. Conclusions

Our study focused on discovering the basic habits of students from our university regarding sports activity and students perception about the effects of sports activity on health and other social and moral values.

From the research results we can conclude that the majority of our students know the benefits of practicing sports activities and appreciate their effects.

Besides of the main motive for practice sports activities that was analysed in many other research – the benefit of maintain health, we discovered that also socialization and communication and making new friendship is what they are looking for. Also sports activities in students' opinion have an important role in building strong motivation, mental and physical relaxation.

Also other studies analysed sports effects from a psychological perspective, physically active individuals report higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety, which also have both been associated with improved academic achievement (Flook et al., 2005).

One of the main motivations for sport, analyzed and discovered by specialists, is to create a healthy lifestyle through practicing physical exercises. According to experts, a healthy lifestyle is an active process that takes place during ontogenesis especially during maturity, the genetic inheritance being important and environment norms and values in which individuals live (Sopa et al. 2016).

Another study indicated that taking time away from traditional educational pursuits during the school day to spend an hour devoted to physical activity will not adversely influence performance of traditional educational skills (Carlson et al., 2008). Another study concluded that students who participate in physical activity programs in school are less likely to experience the adverse health complications resulting from degenerative diseases (Rennie et al., 2005). Many of the previous researches have already outlined the positive relationship between academic success and physical activity in the literature (e.g. Tomporowski et al., 2008; Chomitz et al., 2009; Tagoe and Dake, 2011; Turkmen, 2013).

In order to promote a healthier lifestyle for children, several attempts have been made, and many studies argued that education plays a vital role (James et al., 2004; Reynolds et al., 2000; Pate et al., 2005).

Taras (2005) also demonstrated that students who are physically active demonstrate greater attention during class than sedentary students.

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