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**Original
research paper**

Paper received: Nov 2 2021
Paper accepted: Apr 5 2022
Article Published: Oct 25 2022

Swimming in Physical Education of Children

Extended summary

The introduction of swimming as a mandatory program, both in physical education classes and education in general, will be the subject of the research and analysis presented in this paper. The aim of the paper is to examine the attitudes towards introducing swimming in teaching physical education to children. The basic theoretical guidelines were set and the reasons why the introduction of swimming lessons would represent a qualitative step forward in the teaching of physical and health education were analyzed.

Based on the theoretical analysis, the Attitude Questionnaire on swimming in physical education was made. It contains 17 statements which are answered using five-point Likert-type assessment scales. It was operationalized through five research tasks: To examine the respondents' attitudes towards the needs that children meet through swimming practice; To examine the attitudes of the respondents towards the swimming coach; To examine the attitude of the respondents regarding the influence of swimming on children's development; To examine respondents' opinion regarding the effects of swimming on different age-groups; To examine whether there are statistically significant differences in respondents' attitudes in relation to socio-demographic characteristics, swimming and sports habits of children and parents. The research was carried out on a convenient sample of 104 respondents. All respondents filled out the survey anonymously and the survey consisted of two parts. The first part contained questions related to the socio-demographic status of the respondents and their children, as well as swimming and sports habits. The second part of the survey was the Attitude Questionnaire about swimming in physical education.

The obtained results suggest that parents clearly perceive numerous needs that children meet through swimming lessons. This, on the one hand, testifies to the positive impact of swimming as a

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physical activity, but also to the positive attitude and emotions that children derive from swimming lessons. These needs refer to healthy development, socialization, as well as play and entertainment.

The results of the research also speak of the important role of swimming coaches as the agents of parents and children's positive attitude. Regardless of the attractiveness and positive effects of swimming, without proper planning and realization of lessons (practice) we can hardly expect the development of a positive attitude. Of course, this is not solely related to swimming, but also to any sort of activity in which children engage. In this sense, the responsibility of coaches and physical education teachers is great.

Swimming is specific for its combination of positive emotions, fun, and development. The effects of swimming range from physical and psychological, to the effects it has on the socialization and development of healthy habits and a positive value system.

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis speak of an extremely positive attitude when it comes to swimming in physical education ($M=4.52$, $SD=0.29$). Descriptive statistical analysis proves that health and recreational goals of swimming ($M=4.81$) are significantly ahead of sports and competition goals ($M=2.33$). When it comes to evaluating emotions related to swimming, it can also be concluded that recreation ($M=4.85$) and fun ($M=4.66$) are more important than competition ($M=3.72$), namely, they cause more positive emotions in children.

In the end, the obtained results unanimously testify to the intensity of the respondents' positive attitude towards swimming lessons. By providing support for the introduction of swimming lessons as an extracurricular as well as curricular activity, both for primary school age and for younger ones, parents demonstrate a distinctly positive attitude.

The results of the analysis of variance show that there are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' attitude towards swimming in physical education in subsamples formed according to socio-demographic variables.

There are also many problems regarding the implementation of the idea regarding the introduction of swimming in regular classes. First of all, there are few schools that have a swimming pool, and even if they do, there are material and technical problems in maintaining and implementing swimming training programs. In the absence of school pools, the local government would have to engage in the organization of swimming training courses (basic and advanced swimming school courses) at its public pool or at a sports center pool on its territory. The organization and cooperation of the school, the sports center and the local community are the most important for this kind of action. The observed positive attitude of the respondents speaks in favor of their willingness to engage and help in the implementation of such programs.

Keywords: physical education, sport, swimming, regular classes, extracurricular activities

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