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## **Teachers' characteristics as factors of the school sport quality in the Republic of Serbia**

### **Extended summary**

School sports appear as a factor that connects physical education on the one hand and the sports system on the other. That is why the way they are organized is extremely important. The condition and development of school sports primarily depends on understanding the importance of physical activity (Bailey, 2006, Biddle et al., 2004), and then on the characteristics of organization in education and sports. Linking physical education and the elements of the sports system is a specific challenge, given the different goals in terms of organizing a physical activity (Andrews, 1999, Randjelovic and Savic, 2016).

The priority of the school sports development strategy in Serbia is to increase the number of sport and recreational activities in schools in order to increase total physical activity for the proper growth and development of physical abilities and mental capacities of pupils (School Sports Development Strategy, 2015).

However, although all of the above is a necessary precondition for school sports to exist in general, a physical education teacher still stands at its epicenter (Milošević & Čolović, 2019).

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Regardless of the evident importance of physical education and school sports, the least attention in the professional and scientific literature is paid to those who lead and carry out this process. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the impact of teacher characteristics on the quality of school sports in the Republic of Serbia on the one hand, but also the importance and satisfaction of teachers with various organizational and management tools as instruments of motivation and their connection with the quality of teachers' work in school sports.

The research was conducted on a sample of 127 physical education teachers employed in 91 primary and 34 secondary schools at the territory of the Republic of Serbia with an average age of  $40.5 \pm 8.7$  years, with average working experience as a physical education teacher of  $11.4 \pm 8.8$  years. For the needs of the research a questionnaire was constructed, from which the variables of the socio-demographic and work status of teachers were singled out, then the variables of the school sports quality in Serbia and the variables assessing satisfaction with certain aspects as instruments of motivation for quality work and commitment in school sports. To test the defined hypotheses, the procedures of nonparametric descriptive (frequency and cumulative frequencies of quality variables), correlation (Spearman rho coefficient between individual factors and cumulative motivation factor on the one hand, and quality variables on the other hand) and comparative procedures (Man-Witney test for the assessment of the gender and school level differences, as well as the Kruskal Wallis test to assess differences among different age and work experience categories).

In approximately 80% of the cases, the participation of pupils does not exceed the percentage of 25%, while the most common cases of teacher participation are 25% or 100%, according to the principle of "all or none". On average, the teacher organizes pupils to participate in  $6.8 \pm 2.9$  sports competitions, among which futsal, volleyball, table tennis, basketball and track and field are most often represented. The correlation analysis showed that there are statistically weak and moderate, but significant positive correlations between the teachers' motivation, their age and experience with the participation of pupils and teachers in competitions. The results of the Man-Witney test for differences in teacher and pupil participation in competitions showed no effect either for teacher gender ( $p = 0.126-0.869$ ) or on the school level in which the teacher works ( $p = 0.215-0.916$ ). On the other hand, the results of Kruskal Wallis indicated the existence of differences between different age categories when it comes to teacher participation, i.e. between different levels of experience measured by years of work in physical education classes when it comes to both teacher and pupil participation. The described situation in school sports is better than expected. The organization of work and the instruments used to increase the motivation of teachers in schools are an important reason for the unexpectedly high level of quality of school sports in Serbia. The observed positive trends provide a basis for optimism on this issue. If their continuation and empowerment is to extend to the future, strengthening the motivation for work through the organizational procedures described in this paper is a realistic and desirable possibility. However, the described state of school sports is far from the desirable and necessary quality if anyone wants at least partial fulfillment of the social mission that it has. The connection between the quality of school sports and the experience of teachers raises doubts about the continuation of the observed positive trends. If the organization of the school system continues to be based on the enthusiasm of teachers, along with

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the continuation of reduction of trust in it, it is unlikely that the system will succeed in functioning well. Even if the trust and autonomy of teachers is restored, the big question is whether in changed social circumstances intrinsic motivation can be sufficient factor of quality work of an individual and the functioning of the system as a whole.

**Keywords:** physical education, school sports, teacher, motivation, quality.

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