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# What motives induce to choose Physical Education as an optative subject at Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade?


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## ABSTRACT

Gómez-Mármol, A. (2014). What motives induce to choose Physical Education as an optative subject at Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade?. *J. Hum. Sport Exerc.*, 9(1), pp.103-110. Many Physical Education characteristics make it the axis of numerous researches, nevertheless, nowadays the information about what induces Post-Compulsory 1st grade students to the will of receiving Physical Education during their next grade is reduced. This research has designed an ad hoc questionnaire to gather this information through a 6 motives proposal; furthermore, it has also been analysed should this choice is conditioned by sociodemographic variables like sex, academic level and the level of physical activity practised assessed with Test Corto Krece Plus questionnaire. In order to that, 76 students of two public High Schools completed these two questionnaires in their respective educational centres. The attached results show that the two main marked motives are the leaning towards sports and Physical Education fun. Sex, as well as academic level and the level of physical activity practised are factors that significantly influence the motives that base this choice. **Key words:** PHYSICAL EDUCATION CHOICE, SCHOLAR PHYSICAL EDUCATION, PHYSICAL EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT, PHYSICAL EDUCATION OPINION

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## INTRODUCTION

Physical activities practices during Physical Education lessons are able to contribute positively to pro-social attitudes development (Espada, 2011; Jiménez-Martín & Durán, 2005). In fact, several authors (Danish et al., 2005; Gould & Carson, 2008; Newton et al., 2007) remark that Physical Education lessons are specially appropriate to foster personal and social skills in students because they have to make an effort to reach a goal, cooperate among their fellow students or solving game conflicts (Pascual et al., 2011). Nevertheless, this process depends on the orientation the teacher provides to its activities (Giménez, 2005); consequently, it is required a teacher who is convinced of the educative possibilities of Physical Education, engaged with the education in values of his students and motivated to show this two aspects on his lesson planning (Beaudoin, 2012; Gómez-Mármol & Valero, 2013).

There are numerous researches about how the implementation of specifics teaching methodologies oriented to improve coexistence in Physical Education lessons have lead to an improvement of participant students behaviour (Cecchini et al., 2003; Gutiérrez & Vivó, 2005; Holt et al., 2011; Pardo, 2008; Tessier et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, physical activity practiced during Physical Education lessons is, more often every day, the only physical activity practiced by an increasing collective (Mollá, 2007), mainly made up by secondary education students (Cano et al., 2011; Riddoch et al., 2007; Trost et al., 2002). It is an important young group whose levels of practice are reduced to two one-hour sessions; a duration and frequency such small that are unable to provide health benefits (Roman et al., 2008).

Facing this problem, Physical Education action must be oriented to the promotion of out-of-school physical activity through the joy practice development. In this way, nowadays there are scientific evidences that link higher enjoyment and engagement in Physical Education lessons with higher level of out-of-school physical activity practice (Gómez-Mármol & De la Cruz, 2013; Gutiérrez et al., 2007; Moreno & Hellín, 2007). It is important to clarify that from this work it is defended that this should not be understood in terms of that Physical Education goals are exclusively have fun but provide a global physical culture that lets understand the importance of practicing physical activity and that awaken its interest.

This subject is compulsory during the whole Primary Education (from 6 to 12 years old) and Secondary Education (from 12 to 16 years old), but during Post-Compulsory Secondary Education (from 16 to 18 years old) is compulsory only during the first grade. Then, at 2nd grade of Post-Compulsory Secondary Education, Physical Education is received by those students who have chosen it as an optative subject. Research field has principally focused on gathering students' opinion about Physical Education (Blández, 2001; Cockburn, 2000), its importance (Moreno & Hellín, 2007) or its intensity (Hernández-Álvarez et al., 2010).

Thus, what motivates students to voluntarily want to receive Physical Education still remains unknown. Therefore, this research aims to determine why Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade students choose Physical Education among their optative subjects and should the level of physical activity practiced, as well as several sociodemographic variables (sex, age and academic level) have influence on this decision.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### *Participants*

The sample was made up by 76 teenagers (40 boys and 36 girls, of which 12 were repeating students) whose ages vary from 17 to 19 years old ( $17,63 \pm 0,67$ ) who were enrolled at Physical Education at Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade of two High School located in Murcia. The sample access was made by convenience.

### *Measures*

In order to assess the level of physical activity practiced, Krece Plus Test were administrated (Roman et al., 2006). This test is made up by two items with a Likert answer format from 0 to 5 according to the daily hours dedicated to watch television and computer games and according to the weekly hours dedicated to out-of-school physical activities. Depending on the answer, this test groups participant lifestyles in bad, normal or good for their health (Edo et al., 2010).

In order to know the motives that lead students Physical Education choice a brief designed ad hoc questionnaire was used. It has an introductory sentence (Evaluate how each of these answer options have influenced your choosing decision of Physical Education at Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade from 1 (nothing at all) to 10 (whole) and 6 answer options, namely:

- 1.- Because it is one of the easiest optative subjects
- 2.- Because I do want to study Sport Science Degree
- 3.- Because I love sports
- 4.- Because its lessons are much funnier than the rest lessons
- 5.- Because it helps me to be fit
- 6.- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Furthermore, sociodemographic variables of gender, age and academic level (being or not a repeating student) were also considered.

### *Procedures*

Questionnaires administration was done by the main researcher in the High Schools, with directors' acceptance and teachers' cooperation whose lessons were interrupted for 5 to 10 minutes approximately. The answer anonymity was remarked; there was not any question or problem to fill out the questionnaires.

### *Data analysis*

The gathered information was analysed with SPSS 19.0 for Windows. Normality test were done (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and  $\chi^2$ ) getting non-parametric distributions in all cases; therefore, variables' crossing was done by Spearman's ranks, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests.

## RESULTS

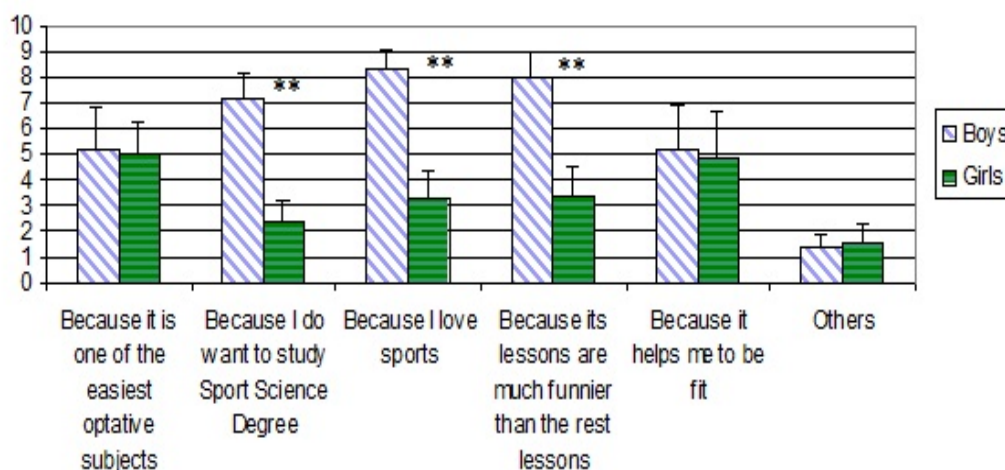
Table 1 gathers a first broader study of causes that lead the whole sample to the choice of Physical Education during Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade:

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics about motives of choice for the whole sample

Motives	Values	
	Mean	Standard Desviation
Because it is one of the easiest optative subjects	5.11	2.94
Because I do want to study Sport Science Degree	4.88	3.04
Because I love sports	5.92	3.13
Because its lessons are much funnier than the rest lessons	5.79	2.98
Because it helps me to be fit	4.97	3.63
Others	1.42	0.82

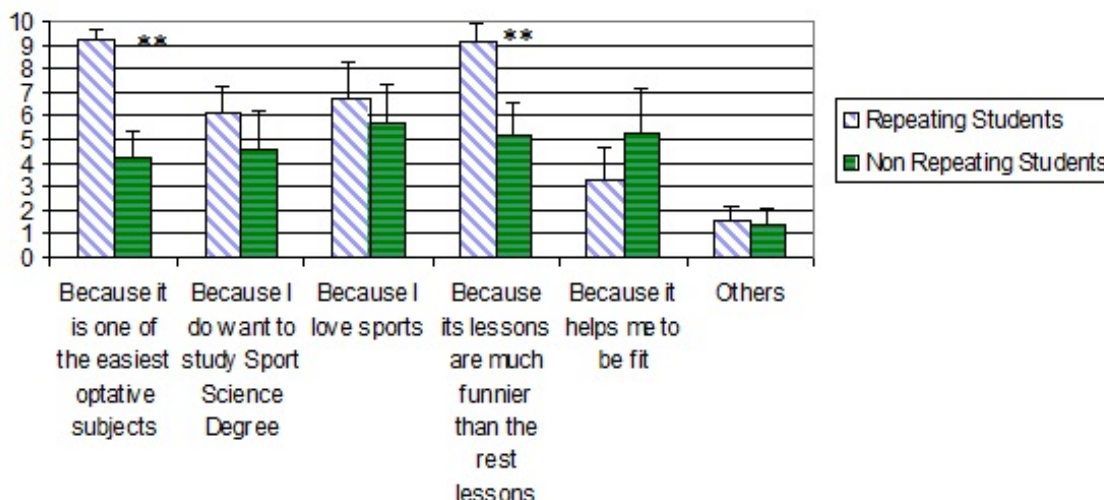
It is shown that the main motives of the whole sample for justifying their Physical Education choice are the leaning towards sports and its fun. Contrarily, “Others” category, that contains motives that could be qualified as “Social Relationships”, has been very fairly determinant for this choice.

On the other side, figure 1 analyses the found differences should this analysis is done according to sex variable.

**Figure 1.** Motives of choice in function of sex (\*\*  $p < 0.001$ )

It can be observed how boys are more convinced than girls of their choice due to their higher values in all categories, except at “Others” category where differences in favour of girls are very small. Nevertheless, these boys’ higher values are statistically significant only for the cases of willing to study Sport Science Degree (203 % higher), leaning towards sport (153 % higher) and Physical Education fun (140 % higher).

Regarding the academic level, figure 2 shows that the differences between those participants who have repeated any grade and those who have not, are not as bigger as in the analysis in function of sex.

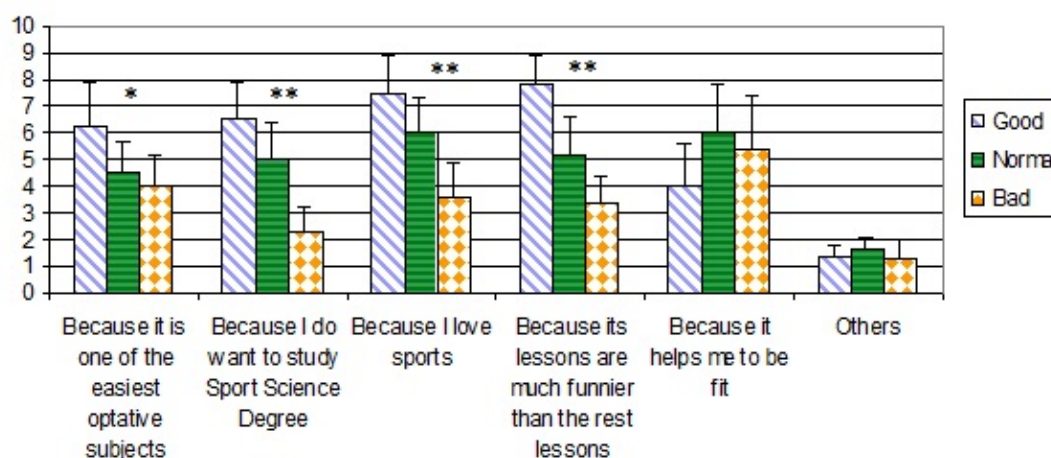


**Figure 2.** Motives of choice in function of academic level (\*\* $p < 0.001$ )

In this case, Physical Education easiness and fun with respect the rest of subjects are the principal motives that lead repeating students to the will of receiving this subject; being statistically significant these differences (127 % and 77 % respectively higher with respect non repeating students). On the other site, the main causes claimed by non-repeating students are their leaning towards sports, Physical Education contribution to be fit and its fun.

The analysis regarding the age, despite of being done with different tests, offers the same relations that the analysis regarding academic level, in such a way that elder participants (they usually are repeating students) trend to mark higher values in two categories: a) Because it is one of the easiest optative subjects ( $p = 0.003$ ;  $r = 0.335$ ) and b) Because its lessons are much funnier than the rest lessons ( $p < 0.001$ ;  $r = 0.431$ ).

Finally, in order to assess the physical activity practised level influence on motives of choice Physical Education at Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade, figure 3 is presented:



**Figure 3.** Motives of choice in function of physical activity practised level (\* $p < 0.05$  - \*\* $p < 0.001$ )

It can be observed that a higher level of physical activity practised supposes a higher leaning towards Physical Education choice because its easiness and fun as well as the will of study Science Sport Degree and the love to sports. The relationship between the physical activity level and Physical Education contribution to be fit is not clear ( $p = 0.207$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The study of those factors that condition Physical Education choice as an optative subject is a topic that has been insufficiently dealt by researchers. In this sense, this work provides a proposal of a pioneer questionnaire to gather information at this respect. This big innovation complicates the results' discussion with others' studies, nevertheless, that leaning towards sports and fun during its lessons are the most marked motives for the choice of Physical Education agree with the results attached by Gómez-Mármol & De la Cruz (2013) who affirmed that those individuals with a better opinion about Physical Education were also more engaged in physical activities practise and Physical Education lessons development.

Regarding the sex, significant differences have been found (with higher values for men in every cases) in three categories: the will of studying Sport Science Degree, the leaning towards sports and Physical Education fun. Firstly, differences according to the will of starting new sports-linked studies agree with Serra & Soler's (2012) results confirming the higher presence of men (approximately 80 %) enrolled in Sport Science Degree. Secondly, ratifying Gil et al., (2012) and Abril et al., (2012) studies, the orientation that characterizes the most practises of physical activities (often eminently competitive) is much less interesting for women developing a lower leaning toward sports. And, thirdly, that higher fun in Physical Education enjoyed by men has also been confirmed by Pedrero (2007).

On the other side, being or not a repeating student is a frequently non-controlled variable; however, this study has highlighted its importance. Repeating students tend to choose Physical Education based on its easiness to be passed and its fun whereas the main motive for non-repeating students is the leaning towards sports.

Finally, the level of physical activity practised is also a factor that conditions the motives that lead to the will of receiving Physical Education. Participants with a healthier lifestyle choose Physical Education because they think it is easier than other subjects (it can be coherent should we attend to procedural contents) and funnier, according to Gómez-Mármol & De la Cruz (2013) who related a higher out-of-school physical activity practise with a higher competence self-concept that, at the same time, is positively associated with the physical activity joy and the will of starting sports-linked studies.

## CONCLUSIONS

Physical Education is a topic that has been studied by numerous researches that, principally, analyse its importance in educational system, its relationship with out-of-school physical activity, its fun and intensity or its contribution to image and health self-concept. Nevertheless, most of the aspects that motives the students to choose Physical Education as a subject for Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade still remains unknown.

In order to cover this lack of knowledge, this research has administrated two questionnaires to 76 teenagers who were enrolled in Post-Compulsory Secondary Education 2nd grade and chose Physical Education as an optative subject. Broadly, the main marked motives are leaning towards sports and its

lessons' fun. Furthermore, differences regarding to sex, academic level and the level of physical activity practised have also been found.

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