

Night Sport in the Mirror of Child Welfare – The Presentation of Midnight Table Tennis Championships as a Potential Means of Prevention, and the Examination of Its Efficiency

Abstract of PhD Thesis

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Introduction

It has never been an easy task to bind the energies of the young having no idea what to do with their free time. Probably there hasn't been such a period in history where society or the given age could offer unambiguous possibilities acceptable and useful for everybody to solve this problem from which it derives that seeking solutions was rather bound to the given age.

In Hungary among free time activities sports clubs were the most significant, to put it more punctually sports activities taking place at the sports associations where personal challenges were greatly highlighted on as well. You didn't have to be an athlete to get into a club where then you could do sports regularly in a safe environment as a member of a team.

Since the effect of a contemporary group is decisive it is important that sports as valuable free time activity, which gives the individual real recreation ensuring relaxation appear among the programs aiming at spending free time. For not spending free time in the right way will sooner or later result in boredom. And the bored young will soon find those types of relaxing methods which later cause addiction from which health disorders, financial and social losses derive firstly for themselves and secondly for the persons living around them. That is why the preventive aspect of doing sports has a great significance. The healthy attitude to sports and doing sports by children and young adults will greatly contribute to the successful integration to a certain community, e.g. school, later on to workplace. The fact that the participation of the person is counted on in a sports group may greatly improve self-esteem. In the course of a team work the young have the opportunity to get to know their own abilities and capabilities as a result of which they can judge their possibilities more punctually as a result of which they will relate to themselves more healthily and more acceptingly.

It is the root cause of a number of crimes that the young especially the teenagers don't know what to do with themselves, they don't know how to spend their free time valuably, to bear the negative self-image formed of themselves deriving from the characteristics of their age, and to "overwrite" them without any help. Doing sports has a great significance from the aspect of the mental hygiene of the young. Taking part in team sports teaches following rules indispensable for cooperation while in the case of individual sports it teaches the responsibility of making decisions (I. Kiss, 1999). Many are dealing - even if only marginally - with the positive effects of doing sports and that of the adequate physical activity but the number of such surveys is few which analyse the affect of sports on the development of personality and on the facilitation of social processes.

Those surveys and analyses are missing which examine the elimination of the negative effects in the lives of children, teenagers and young adults especially with the help of sports and through sporting. That is why I consider important to deal with the topic to take advantage of and utilize the multisided possibilities given by sporting in a wider scope and to use sports as one of the important and significant means of prevention and socialization.

My research firstly aims at using sports as a prevention possibility for child protection examining the relationship between the family model and the learning of solving conflicts, the causes of deviant behaviour, and the negative effects of wrong socialization processes – and contemporary groups - in childhood affecting the individual.

Hypotheses

H₁: On the basis of the original objectives of program MÉSE I suppose that the children of parents having lower education take part in the program in a greater proportion.

H₂: On the basis of the original objectives of program MÉSE I suppose that the children of parents in worse financial situation take part in the night-time table-tennis in a greater proportion.

H₃: I suppose that the parents of the young taking part in program MÉSE have a positive attitude to sports, they did sports earlier.

H₄: Taking the original – American – population of program MÉSE as a basis I suppose that the young going to the club don't like to go to school.

H₅: I suppose that the night-time table-tennis club is mainly attractive due to the friends attending the club.

H₆: I suppose that the longer the young person is attending the night-time table-tennis club the more he/she will accept adjusting him/herself to the rules of the club.

H₇: I suppose that the longer the young person is attending the night-time table-tennis club the more his/her self-image has changed for the positive.

H₈: I suppose that the conflict solving ability of the young attending the club and their relation to aggression have positively changed to the affect of attending the club. I suppose that the young attending the club for a longer time are less aggressive.

Method

I chose the anonym questionnaire method for surveying the young participating in program MÉSE, for the application of sports as a prevention possibility in child protection though which the elimination of the negative effect of the contemporary group and the positive development of personality. I carried out the survey using a questionnaire comprising of two parts, and I had them fill in a personality test and a value scale.

Sample

The young taking part in the night-time table-tennis program of the Moonshine Hungarian Midnight Sports Championship Association were at my help in the research. The website of MÉSE containing the clubs taking part in the night-time table-tennis program and the contact of the organizers gave me the starting point for choosing the sample.

Data collection

For the survey of the child protection aspects of the night-time sports I analyzed the questionnaires filled in by the young taking participating in the Night-Time Table-Tennis Program organized within the frames of the Hungarian Midnight Sports Championship Association. This was the location where sports utilized as a possible preventive means was examined, more exactly how the juvenile and the young can be kept out of committing crimes through sports activities, kept off spending their free time worthlessly and what is needed to make the effect of the contemporary group positive, how a young person could be persuaded to chose sports instead of the seemingly “cool”, illegal troubles.

Surveying the family background of the young taking part in the table-tennis program as well as the formal education of the parents, dwelling circumstances, financial situation, the attitude of the parents towards sports of those taking part in the survey, and the formal education of the given young person were focused on in this topic. When evaluating the results I surveyed the prioritisation of the free time activities of the given person, the motivation for and the frequency of attending the club, and the self-evaluation and scale of values of the participants. I touched upon the relationship between aggression and problem solving possibilities of the participants and the connection between winning and the question of the game.

Results

Boys and girls taking part in the night-time table-tennis program constitute the sample so the results will refer to them. If we look at the proportion of the boys and girls in the sample related to different age groups it can be stated that boys are overrepresented in the older and girls in the younger age group. While boys of 18 or older come to two-thirds of all the boys (30.3%) more than tenth of the girls (12.8%) belong to this age group. Boys of 13 or younger come to 8 percent of all the boys while girls of the same age make up 18 percent of all the girls.

Looking at the priority of the favourite ways of spending free time, playing football ranks high up in the first place (52.6%), this is followed by computer (46.7%), then partying (with friends) (40.8%), while reading (21.7%), going to the movies and to the theatre (19.7%) and making excursions (21.7%) with subscales, respectively. It is important to mention that besides these 37.3% of the responding persons indicated “other” favourite activities, usually sports (bicycle riding, jogging, kayak, canoe, horseback riding, etc.) which however were practiced by only one single person. An exception to this, important from the point of view of my survey, is table-tennis, which was chosen as a favourite activity by 7 percent of the persons giving answer. More than half of the parents of the responding young (mothers 54.9%, fathers 50.9%) had at least secondary education, but one-quarter had higher education as well (mothers 25.2%, fathers 25.4%). Almost three-quarters of the family of the responding young (74.8%) had a car. Nine children out of ten (86%) goes on vacation, more than half (52.3%) in Hungary one-quarter (27.3%) abroad, 18 percent both in Hungary and abroad as well.

When analyzing the data of the survey sheet it was apparent that answer possibilities referring to security were all given a value around 80 percent, which means that four out of five marked these. 89 percent of the young attending the clubs are aware that there are rules in the night-time table-tennis. For example it is prohibited to stay in the club drunk and under the influence of drugs, they cannot swear and smoke, they have to keep the rules of competition and they have to take care of the assets of the club. The young attending the club have quite good self-esteem. Based on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (-15 – 0 – +15) four-fifths of the young responding (78.8%) had positive values. No significant difference could be seen when the sexes were compared.

Discussion

I carried out a survey on the young taking part in the program of the Hungarian Midnight Sports Championship Association using the questionnaire method. I examined the parental background, the school education of the parents, their financial situation, their attitude to sports and I surveyed the relationship of the participants to school.

By the analysis of the results it can be said that night-time table-tennis in Hungary as opposed to the intentions of the American founder and the Hungarian nationaliser does not primarily serve the crime prevention of the young coming from families of the braking-off, endangered classes but the time spending and entertainment of the children of the middle class parents. Both parents have workplaces at nearly two-thirds of the young and only less than ten percent stated that neither of his/her parents had a job. More than half of the young responding stated that their parents always had jobs, but more than one-third said that one of their parents was unemployed for a longer period of time. More than half of the parents of the young have secondary school education and a quarter of them have higher education. In total the young responding do not come from the poorer, financially disadvantaged classes but rather they come to the clubs as the children of the middle class having a more stable background.

The survey reveals that more than one-third of the parents are still doing sports and four-fifths used to do sports. Regarding the question on attending school more than two-thirds of the young answered that they liked to go to school. The proportion of the boys who said they didn't like to go to school is a bit more than one-third. In the survey I was curious what motivates the participating young to attend and how often they go to the clubs, how they relate to the rules of the clubs and what free time alternatives they have. I was interested in their opinion on aggression and fighting as a problem solving possibility, if they had friends, and how they lives, they relation to aggression and to the rules of the club have changed since they attend the club.

In the knowledge of the results we can say that surprisingly the young participate in the night-time table-tennis program for the atmosphere of the club and for the feeling of safety experienced there. They also consider attention, being respected and warm food important. If we look at it divided by the sexes, the atmosphere in the club is more attractive for boys while girls like the club also for the sporting possibility. It's highly probable that the boys (could) do sports somewhere else as well, for which reason this possibility is less important for them but at the same time the whole atmosphere of the club is sympathetic for them. Most of them regularly go to the events of MÉSE for years. More than two-thirds of them attend the club

weekly and less than a quarter of them at least twice a month. To the question where you would be if you were not playing table-tennis at the club half of the young responding said “somewhere else with friends” just like they answered “at home” as an alternative free time activity. As a consequence of the activity of the club the participating young found friends in the course of the program, they became cleverer, they could make contact more easily and they also learnt to be happy for the success of others. According to them they have many friends: three-quarters of them indicated 10 or more friends. (It must also be stated that some non-negligible part of the young responding probably didn't think about this question thoroughly because one-quarter indicated more than 50 friends.) Regarding the free time activities of the participating young it can be said that more than half of the young responding chose football in the first place which was followed by computer and partying with friends, respectively. Less than a quarter of them indicated any other free time activity and table-tennis was preferred by less than one-tenth of them. What could be said of the conflict solving methods of the young attending the club is that nearly one-third of the responding thinks that problems can really be solved by beating. The ones attending the club occasionally or rarely think that problems can be solved by fighting, while only one-third of the ones attending monthly or more often agree with this opinion. The majority, three-quarters of the participants do not consider fighting a solution because they see that it has no sense and that aggression will bring about new aggression. Despite this according to their own statement a quarter of them usually engages in a fight. Out of the responding ones 4 persons gave different answers all together as compared to that of a year before.

In the course of the survey I was interested in what self-image the participating young have and which values they consider important in the value scale made up of eighteen elements. What aims in life they consider important and what aims less important in the sequence made up by them. The young filling in the questionnaire ranked peace, family security, happiness and true friendship – in this sequence. They put the feeling of successful realizations, national security, prettiness, salvation and authority to the last places in the value scale. When judging characteristics they put honesty, braveness and trustfulness to the first three places while intellectuality, open-mindedness and ambitiousness were listed in the last three places. Considering the relationship between attending the club and self-esteem the results show that the general self-esteem index of the young attending the club for a couple of months is the double of those attending the club for at least six months or for longer.

Conclusion

In the knowledge of the results of the survey we can say that from the point of child protection we obtained new and useful information through the survey made on the family background of the young living in the night and choosing the night-time table-tennis instead of hanging about without any aims, on the effect the club has on them, and on themselves and their scale of values. Emotional insecurity appearing in consequence of the loosening of the traditional family pattern, the formation of the roles within the family, the change of the situation of the child within the family do not spare children either. The lack of the proper family pattern, the injuries obtained along socialization processes have significant effect on their later lives, rule following, self-esteem, making the formation of healthy social relationships difficult.

The most important conclusion of the present survey is that today in Hungary night-time table-tennis as opposed to the intentions of the American founder and the Hungarian nationaliser does not primarily serve the crime prevention of the young coming from braking - off families, endangered classes but the time spending and entertainment of the children of the middle class parents. The clubs are mainly visited by the school-age children of qualified parents the majority of who – according to them – could be staying at home during the time of the program.

In the survey I obtained surprising results on the motivation of the young attending the club. From the survey it is obvious that the majority of the young participating in the night-time table-tennis program live in quite good financial situation. So the question arises why in this case do these kids spend their free time left from the night at such a place the financial level of which is far poorer compared to those places where they could get due to their good financial situation. From the answers it is quite obvious that a good word, attention, a human voice, food, being accepted in a community, the satisfaction of basic social needs at a safe place and in a safe way overwrite the power of money, the “cold” richness of the atmosphere at home and the impersonal wellbeing. The young try to make up for the lack of acceptance necessary for healthy self-esteem usually out of their homes, firstly by the help of the methods of solutions offered by the contemporary group. The young living with the possibilities offered by MÉSE are less likely to hang around with groups looking for trouble since at the club they get all what the ones hanging out in the streets don't. Besides all the above it has irreplaceable socializational possibilities due to its community creating activity.

Although at night the clubs are visited by such young people who are in different situation as that of the intentions of the founder this program is still needed in the future. The young who is not cared for at home will not definitely become a hooligan but he has a great chance to be lost. But those who have/will have the opportunity to join the night-time table-tennis program could make up for the deficiencies at home in a great deal. I believe that the night-time table-tennis is such a suppletory entertainment possibility, which needs to be preserved, supported and its values should be passed on. To all these it is indispensable that the association makes itself known at every possible event so that who knew and forgot about it will remember again and those who have not met with it earlier would be offered a new possibility for a healthy, crimeless free time activity aiming at sports focusing on the contemporary group.

Publications

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