

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDE TO THE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: AN EXPERIENCE OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract: The relevance of the subject is associated with the importance of maintaining the healthy lifestyle as one of the major life factors. The paper is aimed at studying young people's attitude to the healthy lifestyle. The research relies on using the quantitative method of analyzing results of the authors' sociological survey conducted in Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University in 2020/2021 (N = 315). The survey has found an inconsistency in the young people's consciousness: on the one hand, they understand the importance of the healthy lifestyle, while on the other – they do little to maintain it in practice. The paper is intended for specialists in physical fitness and sports.

Keywords: health, the healthy lifestyle, young people, sociological survey, sociology of health, daily life, gender.

1 Introduction

The problem of health and the healthy lifestyle (hereinafter the HL) is of unfading importance for man. At all times, this is one of the most essential subjects for people to discuss, care, and worry about. Numerous sociological studies conducted nowadays demonstrate quite clearly that as a rule, the value of health occupies leading places with representatives of various age-based, national, cultural cohorts, and religious denominations.

The lack of health has a negative impact on the quality of life, its fullness, etc. Health limitations form a special group of people who have to solve life problems, overcome life difficulties, and adapt to the reality around them in a fundamentally different way. One can say that health is one of the crucial conditions enabling one to reveal one's potential capacities, live life to the full, build, and fulfill one's life plans.

The healthy lifestyle attitude is laid down at a young age. According to the data of the World Health Organization (hereinafter the WHO), about 50-55% of a person's state of health is determined by their way of life. Results of new studies evaluate the impact of this factor even higher, raising its significance of up to 70% (Ermolaeva & Noskova, 2015).

Opting for and organizing the healthy lifestyle rely on the nature of daily life and leisure; they are closely associated with free time availability and organization opportunities. The lack of spare time, material possibilities for organizing leisure aimed at maintenance or promotion of health can bring to nothing various value-based attitudes, HL needs, and habits instilled by parents during childhood. That is why, special attention and significance is given to the study of the opportunities that young people have today and their wish to maintain the HL.

The relevance of conducting a sociological survey of young students is associated with having to find out values and value-based attitudes in relation to health and the healthy lifestyle which are already formed. The empirical analysis of young people's value-based ideas allows identifying sore spots in questions of upbringing, i.e., introducing young people to the healthy lifestyle. The necessity of maintaining the healthy lifestyle must become the basic need of the contemporary young people. It is on the current young people's state of health that the nation's future welfare depends, as it is the young who are the principal demographic, social and economic, and political resource of the society.

The obtained research results will allow adjusting the youth policy in physical education and sports significantly.

2 Literature Review

Indicators of the healthy lifestyle and models of bad habits proliferation in the society are studied by many foreign sociologists. A large theoretical and methodological contribution into the development of this scientific focus area was made by F. M. Andrews (Andrews & Inglehart, 1979), W. C. Cockerham (2005), A. R. Herzog (Herzog et al., 1982), et al.

Among Russian researchers of the Soviet period, it is M. S. Bedniy (1984) that must be noted; he considered health as mutually related and mutually conditioning unity of the social and the biological. He also gave an exhaustive characteristic of health of the population.

In recent years, questions of forming the healthy lifestyle in Russian population in general and in its younger generation in particular have gained special importance. They arise close interest in the scientific community both in terms of theory (Agheevets, 2017; Ermolaeva & Noskova, 2015; Nemova et al., 2016a; Pakina & Retivina, 2016; Modern understanding of Human Life Forces..., 2000) and in applied research (The 2015 Study of the Attitude..., 2015; Vaghin et al., 2018; Volkova, 2017; Gareeva & Konobeyskaya, 2020).

The existence of mutual relation between one's state of health and the lifestyle one maintains has been repeatedly confirmed by studies conducted by the WHO. Adherence to rules of the HL depends on numerous factors: having the relevant values and value-based attitudes, the need of performing day-to-day practical activities. So, P. O. Ermolaeva and E. P. Noskova (2015) identified four kinds of daily life practices characterized by different attitudes of the respondents to health and the HL: "creators", "doers", "destroyers", and "skeptics". The researchers came to the conclusion that it is the destroyer type that prevails among Russians; its representatives share an extremely negligent attitude to their health owing to the absence of evident health issues. It has to be emphasized, too, that men aged under 35 and young people belong exactly to this group.

The problems of interrelation of the spiritual and moral development of the society by introducing people to physical education and sports were studied by V. U. Agheevets (2017), the long-term head of P. F. Lesgaft Saint Petersburg National State University of Physical Education, Sport, and Health. Using the example of his own scientific and practical activity, the scientist proved the possibility of acting on the young people's spiritual and moral world by introducing them to physical education.

With regard to this, the requirements for training modern physical education teachers change accordingly. M. M. Kutepov and M. P. Konovalova (2019) substantiated the idea of the necessity for future physical education teachers to master further competencies. Namely, they have to develop the ability of organizing and holding competitions, performing judging in basic kinds and in an optional kind of sport.

The findings of K. V. Volkova's sociological survey (2017) are of a certain scientific interest. This survey was conducted on young students in Petrozavodsk. The said study correlates with the authors' survey in two aspects: they have similar research object and place, i.e., regional and not central location of the city where the respondents live.

A significant contribution to studying the population's attitude to the healthy lifestyle was made by sociologists of Cherepovets city (2015). The monitoring survey was conducted in 2015, taking into account social and economic, age-related, and gender particularities of the respondents. The Cherepovets researchers note that although a positive trend of a larger quantity of Russia's

citizens maintaining the HL has been observed in recent decades, young people's overall state of health causes serious concern with medical professionals.

The authors discussed the problem of young people's attitude to the value of health and analyzed sociocultural mechanisms of broadcasting the healthy lifestyle attitudes in the contemporary society in 2016 (Nemova et al., 2016b). In the course of the research, some controversies were found: on the one hand, the value of health is important both for the generation of "parents" and for that of "children", while on the other hand – both generation cohorts lead the mostly passive way of life and do little for maintaining their health. So, leisure of the "parents" generation is extremely passive more often than not; Russians of the older generation give up to 70% of their free time to watching TV, domestic chores, communicating with friends and relatives, and so on. While the survey of 2016 was aimed at studying the role of further education in socialization of Russians and the health and healthy lifestyle value problems were not immediately in question, this research of 2020/2021 deals with studying young people's attitude to the value of health and problem of the HL exclusively.

3 Research Methodological Framework

The objective of the authors' research is to study the attitude of young students to the healthy lifestyle.

Tasks of the research are:

1. to find out life conditions influencing young people's attitude to the HL;
2. to identify principal ways and practices of maintaining the HL by young people in their daily life;
3. to outline the main causes mobilizing the respondents to take care of their health;
4. to explore young people's attitude to nutrition as an important constituent of the HL;
5. to study young people's value-based ideas about physical fitness and sports;
6. to analyze gender distinctions in young people's value-based ideas about the HL.

In 2021, the authors conducted the sociological survey "The attitude of young students to the healthy lifestyle"; its objective was to find out the young people's value-based perception of health and the healthy lifestyle. The total of 315 respondents of Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University (hereinafter Minin NSPU) were surveyed. The sampling was random, with pro rata quantities of the students being trained at each faculty of the said university (intramural form of study) observed. The survey involved year 1 through year 5 students of the following faculties: the faculty of humanities; the faculty of design, fine arts, and media technologies; the faculty of natural, mathematical, and computer sciences; the faculty of pedagogy and psychology; the faculty of management, social and technical services; the faculty of physical education and sports.

The age of the respondents ranges from 18 to 25 years old; gender composition is 22,2% of young men and 77,8% of young women. The survey was conducted using the quantitative method, that is, via questionnaire survey with subsequent data analysis in the SPSS-21 software. The questionnaire form was uploaded on the Internet in the open access mode and available at the address: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScwRKXvBs3i3L9Aw58s8WqAREjUxf_oHKyMd_WL841872Q9jw/viewform?usp=sf_link; it was distributed exclusively among the students of Minin NSPU. The survey was conducted during the academic year of 2020/2021.

So, human health depends on many circumstances: genetics, way of life, living conditions, willpower, motivation, and others. One can influence genetic background or environmental conditions to a small extent only but one can well change one's way of life, diet, etc. In fact, life conditions are biographically determined circumstances. In this case, literally every aspect matters: the family's physical education

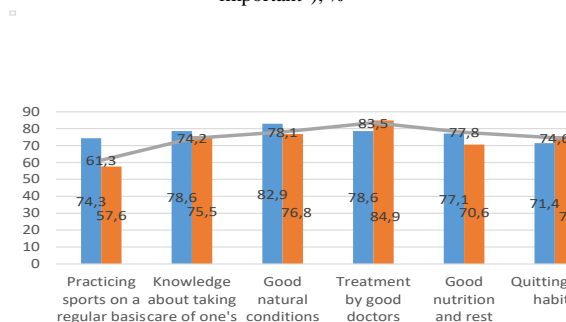
level, urban or rural residence, one's material and status position in the society. One of the first tasks of the research was to find out conditions, i.e., life circumstances affecting the young people's attitude to the HL.

4 Results and Discussion

The respondents were asked to rate the extent of favorableness of the conditions for maintaining their health according to a 5-point scale from "completely unimportant" to "very important". For this purpose, the following question was posed to the students: "What conditions for maintaining health do you consider the most important?". When answering this item, the respondents rated highest the "passive" factors, i.e., those not depending on their personal efforts: "Treatment by good doctors" (83,5) and "Good natural conditions" (78,1%). What is indicative is the young people's attitude to the necessity of organizing practicing sports on a regular basis: it has turned out to be an outsider in relation to all other options suggested (61,3%). The leading places were occupied by "Good nutrition" (77,8%), "Quitting bad habits" (74,6), and the "Knowledge about taking care of one's health correctly" (74,2%) (see Figure 1).

Gender-based analysis has shown that for the young women "Treatment by good doctors" is much more important (83,5%) than working out on a regular basis (57,6%). By contrast to the girls, the young men rated "Practicing sports on a regular basis" as an important health maintenance condition much higher (74,3% versus 57,6%, respectively); the same holds true for "Fulfilling the healthy lifestyle rules" (77,4% versus 70,6%). "Good nutrition" is also rated by the young men higher than by the young women (77,4% versus 70,6%) (see Figure 1).

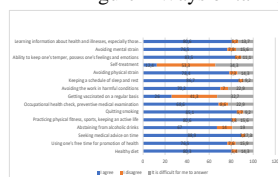
Figure 1 The most important conditions for maintaining health according to the respondents (the total of "important" and "very important"), %



Source: compiled by the authors

A "passive" attitude to maintaining one's health was manifested in the respondents' answers about possible ways of taking care of their health, too. 88,9% of the respondents believe that one must "Seek medical advice on time" if one takes care of one's health. The significance of other health care ways was distributed as follows (let them be presented in the order of the respective figures decreasing): "Keeping a schedule of sleep and rest" – 86,7%; "Quitting smoking" – 85,1%; "Keeping one's temper, possessing one's feelings and emotions" – 83,5%; "Practicing physical fitness, sports, trying to keep an active way of life" – 80,6%; "Learning information about health and illnesses, especially those I have" – 80,6%; "Healthy diet" – 80,3%; "Avoiding mental strain" – 67%, and so on. Thus, it can be seen that practicing physical fitness and sports as the main way of taking care of one's health occupies far not the leading positions. Seeking medical advice is already an extreme measure of taking care of one's health. Most frequently, people go to doctors when they really have some health problems onboard. This is how Russia's long-standing mental trait is manifested, captured in a vivid manner in the Russian popular proverb "A peasant needs thunder to cross himself and wonder" (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Ways of taking care of one's health, %



Source: compiled by the authors

The pleasure principle is one of the most important motivators of human activity, especially for the young cohort. If one gets pleasant feelings, a feeling of joy, one is more willing to perform an action.

The students were asked to answer the question "What do you need to boost your life tonus?" by selecting one of the six suggested options. Let the respondents' answers be presented (in the descending order): having a good sleep (94,6%); keeping regular hours (80,3%); continuous outdoor walks (74,9%); practicing sports (66,7%), etc. 6,3% boost their life tonus by drinking alcohol, and 2,9% of the respondents take soft drugs. The obtained data inspire certain optimism: first of all, brightening one's mood with alcohol and drugs is not especially popular; secondly, practicing sports still cause positive emotions with 2/3 of the surveyed ones, which is certainly good news.

To find out the practical constituent of life of the respondents, the question "Do you do anything from the options you have agreed with here?" was posed. "Yes, I do everything" was noted by 11,1%; "Yes, I do, but not all of them" – by 74,3%. 13,0% said "I do very little", and 1,6% – "I do nothing". By adding up the answers in the positive ("Yes, I do everything" and "Yes, I do, but not all of them"), it is obtained that 87,3% of the respondents try to take care of their health to some extent or another.

The question "How frequently do you take care of your health?" was answered by 34,3% of the young men and 26,5% of the young women as "Always"; by 55,7% of the young men and 67,3% of the young women as "From time to time"; and by 1,4% of the young men and 0,8% of the young women as "Never". Thus, the majority of the respondents try to take care of their health and adhere to the HL rules on a regular basis.

Usually, health deterioration problems concern older people but not the young. Anyway, maintenance of health and its promotion largely depends on what way of life a person keeps. At the young age (this research is no exception), young people do not think much about their state of health as they experience an excessive surplus thereof: nothing hurts, nothing worries, therefore, one can live just as one pleases.

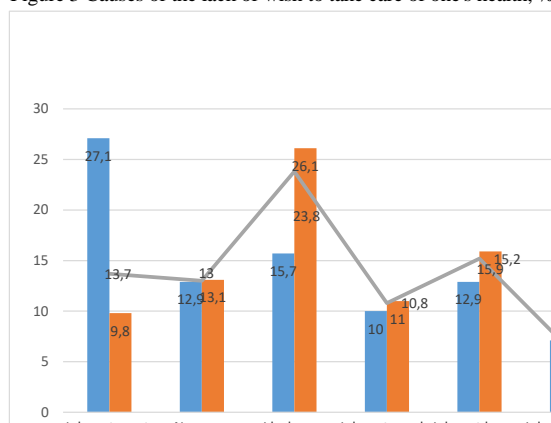
The indicators of subjective appraisal of health were obtained by asking the following question to the respondents: "How do you estimate your state of health?". 40% of the young men and 36,7% of the young women rated their state of health as a good one; 48,6% of the young men and 49,8% of the young women said it was satisfactory. 2,9% of the young men and 7,8% of the young women rated it as bad, and other respondents had difficulty answering. In general, most respondents estimate their state of health quite positively. In the data they supplied, one can sense optimism which is inherent exactly in representatives of the younger cohorts of the society.

Another important task of the research was to outlining the causes of the respondents' caring of their health. The respondents were asked to answer the question "If you take care of your health, what is it caused by?". They rated the

causes conditioning the necessity of caring of one's health as follows: by upbringing (36,8%); by deterioration of health (31,1%); by the influence and example of others (19,4%); by the effect of medical information (7%). These findings give evidence about the respondents' realizing the importance of the upbringing process in terms of introducing to the HL. What can be seen, too, is the fact that for 1/3 of the respondents, the only significant cause is abrupt health deterioration and having to seek medical advice as an extreme means for keeping and regaining one's health.

For this research, a significant task was also identification of causes preventing the respondents from taking care of their health. The students were asked to answer the question "If you do not take care of your health, why is it so?". Only one option could be selected from the list of the suggested answers. With the young women, the leading choice was the "lack of willpower" – noted by 26,1%, and with the young men it was the "lack of wish to limit themselves in any way" (27,1%), which is essentially the same. All these options are manifestation of a weak character and a penchant for hedonistic and eudemonistic attitudes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Causes of the lack of wish to take care of one's health, %



Source: compiled by the authors

Gender-based analysis of causes of the lack of wish to take care of one's health has shown that the young men tend not to limit themselves in any way more than the young women, i.e., "enjoying life to the full" (27,1% versus 9,8%). This fact confirms young men's larger predisposition to risky behavior as compared to young women. Curiously enough, the "weaker sex" justifies the name, too, by their larger (as compared to the young men) lack of willpower (23,8% versus 15,7%, respectively). The young women are more fastidious to the conditions for practicing sports. 15,2% of the young women and so few as 12,9% of the young men noted they did not have appropriate conditions for sports (see Figure 3).

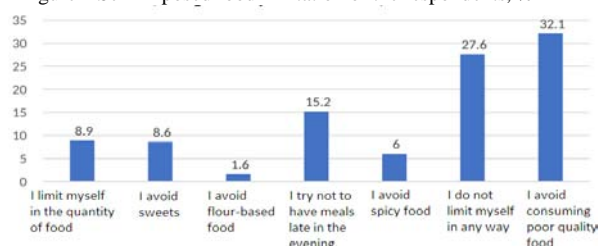
Proper nutrition is a significant part of life and largely the basis of the HL. So, the authors could not but consider this topic in their HL research, too. Regrettably, analysis of the answers has shown that having the knowledge about proper nutrition and understanding the importance of keeping a healthy diet do not prevent the young people from neglecting these aspects at all and being completely irresponsible toward their own health.

Mainly, the respondents have meals at home: 82,4% have breakfast, 47,3% have lunch, and 86,8% – supper. On the one hand, this could be indicative of caring about one's health. Home is perfect for organizing individual proper nutrition, cooking, and eating healthy food only, which is useful exactly for one's organism. However, the authors believe this rather to be the proof of a low level of life and the lack of material possibilities to eat out, i.e., to use public catering system. This assumption is confirmed by further analysis of the respondents' answers. So, the students care more about freshness of their food rather than its utility for the organism. In terms of nutrition, they target the

task of physical saturation of the organism first, and not that of proper nutrition.

The respondents were asked to answer the question "Do you impose limitations on your nutrition?" Here, they could choose one answer option from the seven available. So, the respondents' answers were distributed as follows: 32,1% avoid consuming poor quality food; 27,6% admitted frankly they did not limit themselves in any way. 15,2% of the students try not to have meals late in the evening, and 8,9% limit themselves as for the quantity of the food consumed; 8,6% avoid eating sweets, 6% – spicy food, 1,6% – flour-based food (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 Self-imposed food limitation of the respondents, %



Source: compiled by the authors

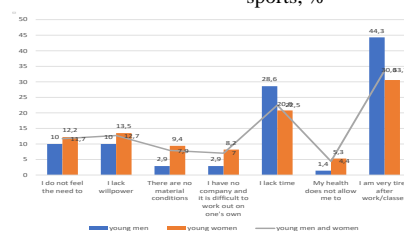
The data obtained correlate with survey results of the sociologists of Cherepovets city (2015). The Cherepovets sociologists also note that of all characteristics of the food products, the respondents pay most attention to expiry date (83%), and least – to energy value (23%). Thus, what can be seen is that the respondents worry about extreme forms of food – the extent of freshness and edibility – and they care less about quality parameters of food, i.e., its usefulness for the organism.

Realization of the importance of practicing physical fitness and sports is developed by everyone on their own; many can fail to realize it at all. The childhood is immensely important in terms of cultivating the need of physical exercises and sports (in family, school, and the system of further education). The question "Did you go in for physical fitness and sports as a child?" was answered in the positive by 77,8% of the students. Meanwhile, the quantity of ones practicing as of today (those answering the question "Do you go in for physical fitness and sports?" in the positive were taken into account) was much lower, making 54,9% of the respondents. As for working out on a regular basis, the findings have shown that there are even fewer of those actually engaged in physical fitness.

To measure the frequency of physical fitness and sport activities, the respondents were asked to answer the question "How often do you manage to practice physical fitness and sports?" 69,5% said they did not at all; 2,5% said they did several times a year; 3,5% noted they did once a month. So few as 24,4% of the students said they worked out several times a week. Based on the data obtained, it can be seen that the level of understanding the importance of physical fitness and sports for maintaining the HL is extremely low in the students of Minin NSPU. This fact makes one become concerned as this university trains future school teachers who have to show children with their own example how they must regard the HL and lead them by their own example. The survey data confirm the conclusion, too, that in their daily life, 2/3 of the students do not adhere to the HL, i.e., their actual daily life is far from their perfect ideas.

What are the causes preventing the respondents from daily practicing physical fitness and sports? The item of the questionnaire form was worded as follows: "If you do not practise physical fitness and sports, why is it so?" As the principal causes preventing them from working out, the respondents gave simple tiredness (30,6%), lack of time (20,8%), lack of willpower (13,5%) and need (12,2%) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Causes preventing from practicing physical fitness and sports, %



Source: compiled by the authors

It has to be emphasized specifically that in Nizhny Novgorod, quite a lot has been accomplished in terms of popularization of physical fitness and sports in the recent several decades and an extensive sports and recreational infrastructure has been created. It is no mere chance that so few as 9,4% of the questioned ones answered they lacked material means for organizing their sports leisure (see Figure 4). What prevents the young people from engaging in sports activities is their own idleness, lack of willpower and realization of the importance of such activities. Similar conclusions have been made by Petrozavodsk sociologists, too: "... The principal causes proceed from not the objective (state of health) but from subjective circumstances (their own idleness, etc.)" (Volkova, 2017).

5 Conclusion

The questions of young people's HL are of a considerable theoretical and practical interest for teachers of schools and further education system; due to their direct functional tasks, they are aimed at introducing young people to the HL. In its essence, the HL must become the principal need and a compulsory rule of life of a modern person.

Analysis of the empirical data has shown inconsistency of the students' ideas about the HL. On the one hand, the students understand what the HL rules are and admit their importance and significance for their life; on the other hand, they do little to implement these rules into their life. It is subjective factors (lack of time, lack of willpower, etc.) that prevent them from practicing physical fitness and sports daily. For the vast majority of the respondents, the importance of the HL is only recognized when a real threat to their life and health arises. Being important constituents of the HL, physical fitness and sports seem significant for keeping one's health to so few as 2/3 of the questioned ones. However, in their usual life, over 2/3 of the surveyed do not practice physical fitness and sports. Gender-based analysis has shown the absence of discord along gender identity lines: young men demonstrate a greater willpower, a less demanding attitude, and riskier behavior as compared to young women.

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