

Scouting Activities in Maintaining the Wellbeing and the Health of High School Students

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Abstract

The article is part of a larger research, this being the starting point in order to see the efficiency of some activities that are already in development, similarly to those that we are about to suggest in a series of activities packages for free time activities for high school students, that come to meet the problems they are dealing with, but also to support the teachers who have more and more the opportunity (obligation) to make projects for extracurricular activities.

Keywords:

Leisure activities; non-formal education; scouting activities; scouts – explorers; high school students; wellbeing, health; school performance.

The case study presented analyses the level of wellbeing and health of high school students, members of the National Organisation of Romanian Scouts, Local Centre Târgu-Mureş, named within the association Explorers. We present the activities they have and we follow the dependent variables through a questionnaire.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel - Teil einer umfangreicheren Forschung -, ist ein Ausgangspunkt, um die Wirksamkeit einiger Aktivitäten festzustellen, die schon eingeführt wurden und gleichzeitig die Effizienz solcher Tätigkeiten zu prüfen, die wir in der nahen Zukunft in Form von Freizeitaktivitätspaketen für Jugendliche anbieten werden. Diese sollten sowohl die Probleme vorbeugen, mit denen sich die Jugend konfrontiert, als auch Lehrkräfte unterstützen, die immer öfter die Möglichkeit (die Pflicht) haben, außerschulische Aktivitäten zu planen und durchzuführen.

Schlüsselworte:

Freizeitaktivitäten; non-formale Bildung; Pfadfinderaktivitäten; Pfadfinder – Entdecker; Lyzealschüler; Wohlbefinden; Gesundheit; schulische Leistungen

Die dargestellte Fallstudie untersucht das Wohlbefinden- und Gesundheitsniveau von Lyzealschülern, die Mitglieder des Neumarkter Zentrums des Nationalen Pfadfinderorganisation in Rumänien sind und die innerhalb des Vereins Entdecker genannt werden. Ihre Aktivitäten werden dargestellt und durch eine Umfrage werden die abhängigen Variablen beobachtet.

1. Introduction

High school students' problems represent a delicate subject as adolescence is the age of uncertainty, of (self)discovery, of the internal struggle with contradictory feelings, identifying the ideals and the selection of role-models. It is also the age when young people need support, advice and help.

The research on the benefits of outdoor activities, but also from the urban area highlight the valuable contribution that they bring to the individual's health. We wanted to check and highlight these aspects on a local scale, following the footsteps of the high school students who are members of the National Organisation of Romanian Scouts, Local Centre Târgu-Mureş. More to the point, we made a case study in order to see if they have a high level of wellbeing and health.

2. Theoretical foundation

The contemporary high school students deal with different problems that generate into undesirable behaviour. Therefore, emotional problems can determine the consumption of cigarettes, drugs, alcohol or the appearance of depression; the antisocial behaviour can lead to isolation, long exposure to computers, tablets, smart phones; the obsession for the physical aspect can have several consequences, like: unrecommended diets, anorexia, bulimia, obesity; family crises can lead to the lack of parental affection and of self-confidence, financial problems.

If we manage to engage them into activities that offer them comfort, an environment for development and affirmation, some of these problems will be surpassed. Such a context is offered by the activities conducted in the environments of the non-formal education, either out-of-school or extracurricular,

whether conducted by organisations, foundations, associations, etc.

We consider the non-formal education as "the form of education that comprises the sum of the activities and educational influences organised outside of the school system, systematic, deliberate and meant for people of all ages, activities which respond to consonant educational finalities and are connected to each individual's or group's needs of learning, people who share common values and purposes." (Moldovan, V.O., 2017, pp. 15-16)

The Romanian Teaching system offers a more and more declared recognition of the non-formal activities and of the institutions that offer such activities. A relevant example is the fact that once the Order MECTS no. 4.292 has been published, the Programme "The different school" has been introduced. Since then, the project has been in progress, under the name "The different week", being chosen a week dedicated to extracurricular and extra schooling educational activities (www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act?ida=10408).

The purpose of these educational activities is the involvement of children, students and teachers in activities that respond to their different interests and preoccupations, to highlight their talents and capacities in different areas, not necessarily in those present in the national curriculum and to stimulate their participation to varied activities, in non-formal contexts. (www.isj-db.ro/static/files/Anexa_la_Ordin_4496_MECS.pdf).

There are numerous problems raised by the implementation of extracurricular and extra schooling activities. Some of them are related to the lack of funding, the lack of money of the disadvantaged environments' children, but also the teachers' low motivation for developing non-formal activities. So, unfortunately, not all the teachers manage to organise activities like these, even if there are times that require their organisation.

We want to offer a solution by highlighting an organisation that has non-formal activities with children and young people, organisation with which partnerships can be signed in order to achieve joint activities, not only within "The different week", but any time the context allows it.

The National Organisation „Romania's Scouts” (ONCR) is one of the non-governmental organisations acknowledged by the Ministry of Education as being a supplier of non-formal education. This organisation has a history that started more than 100 years ago, being seen, like now as a promotor of an education complementary to school. (www.scout.ro)

Scouting is education for life as, in the young man's education, it completes the family and the school and it develops the self-knowledge, supporting the necessity of finding the new, of participating, exploring, discovering, making and helping. We can say that it is fun with a purpose since by recreation and adventure; scouting reaches its objective of physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development of the youngsters. Scouting is a movement open to all, regardless of race, faith, gender, in accordance with the purpose, the principles and the method conceived by their creator, Robert Baden-Powell. (www.scout.org)

3. Research methodology

We made a case study based on a social group, more precisely on the National Organisation "Romania's Scouts"(ONCR).

The purpose of the organisation is to contribute to the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development of children and young people who are prepared to become good citizens and members of the local, national and international community.

Scouting is governed by the „Scout's Law” and by „The Promise of the scout” or „The Pledge”, the scouting attains its purpose by combining 7 elements: education through action, teamwork, the symbolic frame, the personal progress system, nature, law and the promise of the scout, the support of the adults. (www.scout.ro)

The plan of the case study consisted of shaping the details about the way of collecting the information that have been used.

First of all, we contacted the ONCR organisation – The Local Centre Târgu-Mureș, more precisely the leaders from the Explorers (14/15-18/19 years old). We presented the research we want to make and its purpose – that is to constitute a first step in a larger research that might suggest the use, by the teachers, of different packages for free time activities for high school students. We also presented the questionnaire

we prepared for the high school students within the organisation, a questionnaire made in Google Forms (Appendix).

We have established together the distribution of the questionnaire on their internal Facebook group, alongside a brief presentation of the case study and its purpose within the research participants. The explorers had one week to fill in and send the questionnaire.

The data obtained was briefly presented to the Explorers and their leaders, on their internal group, since that was their wish. They are also presented here in the chapter Results.

We are going to present **the coordinates of the research**.

The purpose of this research is to show that the regular participation to the outdoor activities, in nature or within the urban area, more precisely non-formal scouting activities, determine the wellbeing and health of high school students without this affecting the schooling performances, on the contrary, it supports and improves them.

The hypothesis of the research: High school students' participation to non-formal scouting activities contributes significantly to the maintaining of their wellbeing and health.

The independent variable represents high school students' participation to the non-formal, scouting education.

The dependent variables: the level of the wellbeing, health and high school students' performances.

The methods used are part of the scientific research methods, more precisely the case study and the enquiry based on a written questionnaire.

The sample of participants is made up of high school students enlisted within the National Organisation Romania's Scouts, Local Centre Târgu-Mureş at the Explorers age group, therefore 21 scouts with ages between 15 and 19 (Table 1.). They have a seniority as organisation members between 1 and 9 years (Table 2.), most of them being active also at the younger age groups: Cubs and Scouts.

Table 1. Age distribution

Age	Frequency
15 ys	4 Explorers
16 ys	2 Explorers
17 ys	5 Explorers
18 ys	6 Explorers
19 ys	4 Explorers

Table 2. Seniority in scouting

Seniority in scouting	Frequency
1 year	2 Explorers
2 ys	3 Explorers
3 ys	3 Explorers
4 ys	2 Explorers
6 ys	4 Explorers
7 ys	4 Explorers
9 ys	3 Explorers

The content sample represents the activities the scouts attended in the period when they were active members of the organisation.

The scouting activities are based on three principles:

- the spiritual principle – the involvement in the searching of the spiritual values, of life beyond the material world;
- the social principle – participating at the society's development by respecting the dignity of others and the integrity of the world;
- the personal principle – developing personal responsibility and stimulating the desire to express it.) (www.scout.ro)

Currently, ONCR has in progress, at a national level, through the national teams and at a local level tens of activities in various areas: forming stages, activities of developing life abilities, activities of integrating disabled young people, charity activities, ecological activities, civic education, education for the environment, vocational preparing, seminars, workshops, publications (magazines, fliers and brochures), national and international camps, youth exchange, fund raisings and many other activities.

Those from the participants' sample have been involved in numerous activities along the years,

thematic activities in the above-mentioned areas, came to life in the form of: hikes, camps, national or international gatherings (Jamboree). The percentage of high school students who attended these activities is mentioned in Table 3.

Table 3. Age distribution

Activities with scouts	The percentage that attended
Hikes	100 %
Camps	70%
National Jamboree	40%
International Jamboree	10%

In addition to these activities specific to scouting, high school students, the participants to this study, say that they also took part in other activities organised for them and by them within the local centre: rafting and climbing, riding the bicycle, relaxing in nature (hammocking, picnics, games, acoustic concerts).

4. Results

With the help of this pedagogical research, we want to highlight if the high school students' participation at non-formal scouting activities contributes significantly to the maintaining of their wellbeing and health, without these affecting the school performances, but on the contrary to support and improve them.

In order to support the results obtained we will use the information offered by the article *Benefits of Outdoor Sports for Society. A Systematic Literature Review and Reflections on Evidence* (Eigenschenk, B., 2019) where are presented a selection and an analysis of 133 studies. The authors of this study present evidence regarding the importance of physical activity, especially for the physical and mental health and that of wellbeing. They also bring evidence regarding the benefits of outdoor activities.

In order to follow the first dependent variable – high school students' wellbeing, we asked them which are the free time activities they practice and offer them a state of wellbeing both from a physical, emotional and social point of view. The most frequently mentioned activity, 38% from the respondents, was reading, followed by activities with friends (33%), sporting activities (23%) and hikes (23%). Other activities preferred by the Explorers were: watching films and series, climbing, creative activities, listening to music, teamwork, drawing and sculpture, yoga,

riding the bicycle and trips.

Most of the activities mentioned are between the most frequently organised within scouting, we can say that this organisation responds to the needs of high school students. Also, based on the studies analysed on the above-mentioned research, we can say that there is evidence of the impact that free time activities have upon the general well-being, the quality of life, happiness and satisfaction. In the same time, physical exercises in natural environments have brought a feeling of revitalising and positive commitment to the participants. Relaxing in nature shows positive effects upon the mood, the endurance, the feelings of revitalisation and a positive commitment. It is also shown that, outdoor activities have effects upon increasing self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficiency and social efficiency. (Eigenschenk, B., 2019).

We also wanted to observe how often high school students, the participants to the study, have activities in nature, either with the scouts or on their own. The answers are highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4. How often they practise outdoor activities

How often	The Explorers' percentage
2/3 times / week	15 %
1 / week.	20 %
1 / 2 week.	45 %
1 / week	10 %
1 / 2 months	5%
rarely	5%

As we can notice, most are the ones who have an activity every two weeks.

In order to follow the second dependent variable – *the health level* we asked the explorers 3 questions. The first question takes into consideration their immune system, more precisely if it is or not a strong one, asking them how many times they had a cold or a flu in the last two years.

Table 5. How often they had a cold or a flu

Frequency	The Explorers' percentage
0	20 %
1	55 %
2	15 %
3	10 %

We can notice in Table 5 that 20% of the respondents have not had a cold or a flu in the last two years, and that most of them (55%) were sick only once. So, we can say that their immune system is a strong one.

We have also asked if they have other health problems. Most of them, 61% of the Explorers, do not have other health problems, 14% of the respondents mentioned that they have different allergies, and others suffer from different affections (near-sightedness, gastritis, allergic asthma, anaemia and knee problems).

We asked the Explorers to self-evaluate their health situation on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is a bad health situation and 5 is a very good health situation. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Self-evaluated health situation

The Explorers' percentage	
1 (bad)	0%
2	0%
3	10%
4	45%
5 (very good)	45%

Analysing the data from these tables we can say that most of high school students who attend scouting activities consider they have a good and very good health. Following the results of Barbara Eigenschenk's study (2019) and her colleagues, along reducing illnesses, outdoor activities are associated with a good general subjective perception of health, which can also be noticed in the case of our research, even if they suffer from different illnesses, most of them consider they are in a good and very good health.

A third dependent variable of the research, *school performances*, was followed with the help of four questions. First of all, we wanted to find out which high schools the students, who participate at scouting activities, attend (Table 7.). We noticed that they attend the top graded high schools in the city.

Table 7. High schools where they study

The high school	Frequency
National College „Al. Papiu”	6
National College Unirea	7
Economic College	3

National Pedagogical College „Mihai Eminescu”	3
Art College	2

We asked the Explorers to tell us their final exam grade at the National Exam at the end of the 8th grade.

Table 8. The average at the National Exam at the 8th grade

The average	National Exam 8 th grade
10	5%
9,5-10	50%
9-9,5	15%
8,5-9	25%
8-8,5	5%

Taking into consideration the fact that the high schools they study at are good we expected the average to be good and indeed it was, 50% of the respondents had the average between 9,5 and 10.

We also asked the average from the high school years and we made an average on each class. (Table 9.)

Table 9. The average for each class

Grade	The Explorers' average
IX	9,33
X	9,26
XI	9,41
XII	9,48

Analysing the data from these tables we noticed that if we added the Explorers' average in each class, individually, their average is more than 9 every time.

In order to highlight the fact that the activities made in their free time do not negatively affect school performances, but on the contrary they support and improve them, we asked the Explorers to specify the School Olympics they attended and the result they obtained.

Although our case study had only 21 respondents, the number of awards is impressive: at the international level a participation, at a national level 8 participations and awards obtained, and at the county and local level, in addition to those that brought national participation, 4 participations. We enumerate the extra-schooling results obtained at a national level:

- The German National Olympics (2nd place) +

The German International Olympics

- The Biology National Olympics (Mention)
- The Geography National Olympics (2nd place)
- The Informatics National Olympics (2nd and 3rd places)
- The English National Olympics (1st place)
- The Natural Sciences National Olympics (Mention)
- The Young People Debate National Olympics (Mention)
- The „Ars Nova” National Olympics (Mention)

Other studies that followed the benefits of outdoor activities highlighted an increase of the motivation for study, a higher involvement within the lessons, a higher academic learning, better efficiency and better results. More than this, it was shown that being active in the natural environment influences not only the attitude towards learning, but it also has effects upon the cognitive aspects, such as: attention, memory and the abilities to solve problems. (Eigenschenk, B., 2019).

5. Discussions

Being a case study and not a psycho-pedagogical experiment, there can be many variables that influence our results, but the information we obtained, corroborated with the ones offered by the specialised literature strengthen our believes.

The results obtained, reported to the hypothesis confirm our expectations. It was shown that the participation to the scouting activities contributes to the maintaining of well-being and high school students' health, we also notice that their school performance is a good one.

6. Conclusions

The influence of the scouting activities upon the variables followed turned out to be a positive one. It is true that scouting helps the young people to maintain their wellbeing and health. Also, their participation to non-formal activities did not distract their attention from studying, on the contrary, we can say that it maintained their school performances, maybe even improved it.

We would like, in the near future to make a bigger research, based on a psycho-pedagogical experiment, on a higher sample of students, and the independent variable to be introduced by us, having the possibility to control it better. More to the point, the study presented in this article is a motivation for a future research in the introduction of free time packages meant for high school students, that the teachers will be able to easily use, being designed to the smallest detail.

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Authors note:

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Appendix

Questionnaire for the Explorers

1. Prenumele și numele *	Your answer
2. Vârsta *	Your answer
3. Liceul unde studiezi *	Your answer
4. Medie testare națională cls. a 8-a *	Your answer
5. Media în anii de liceu încheiați. *	Your answer
6. Ai participat la olimpiade, concursuri naționale? Dacă da, numește competiția și rezultatul obținut de tine. *	Your answer

7. Vechimea la cercetași *

Your answer

8. La ce activități cercetășești, în natură, ai participat? *

Drumeții

Campuri

Jamboree națională

Jamboree europeană

Jamboree mondială

Roverway

9. Cât de des desfășori o activitate în natură (nu neapărat cu cercetașii, ex.: alergat, mers cu bicicleta, cățărare, drumeții, etc.)? *

de mai multe ori într-o săptămână

o dată pe săptămână

o dată la două săptămâni

de 2-3 ori într-o lună

o dată pe lună

o dată la 2 luni

Other: _____

10. Ce activități îți-ar plăcea să desfășori (mai des) în natură? *

Your answer

Sănătate

Description (optional)

11. Ce tip de activități, pentru timpul liber, îți dau o stare de bine (fizic, psihic, emoțional, social, etc.)? *

Long answer text

12. De la 1 - 5, care este starea ta de sănătate? *

1 2 3 4 5

Precară ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Foarte bună

13. De câte ori ai fost răcit/gripat în ultimii doi ani? *

Short answer text

14. Ai alte probleme medicale? Dacă se poate, spune-mi care sunt acestea?

Long answer text

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