

Kayak Sport Club Olsztyn as a Place to Develop Physical Fitness, Passion and Interests in Children and Teenagers

Kayak Sport Club Olsztyn jako miejsce rozwijania sprawności fizycznej, pasji i zainteresowań u dzieci i młodzieży

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to showcase canoeing as one of the forms of spending free time by children and youth, allowing them to develop their interests, passions, and physical fitness. Research on the role played by the KSC Olsztyn Sports Club in shaping the passions of children and youth was carried out by opting for the case study method and the semi-directed interview technique, focused on both the problem and observation.

The research on the issues raised indicated that canoeing is a sport that is an excellent form of socialization for young people. Furthermore, educational values connected with the said type of sport are invaluable. It is a discipline that increases the physical fitness of young people, shapes their character, and has a positive impact on their psyche. Canoeing-oriented training is also an opportunity to establish valuable interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: canoeing, passion, fitness, sport, development

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie kajakarstwa jako jednej z form spędzania czasu wolnego przez dzieci i młodzież, rozwijającej zainteresowania, pasje oraz sprawność fizyczną. Badania dotyczące roli Klubu Sportowego KSC Olsztyn w kształtowaniu pasji i dzieci, i młodzieży zrealizowano z wykorzystaniem metody studium przypadku oraz techniki wywiadu częściowo kierowanego, skoncentrowanego na problemie i obserwacji. Refleksja nad podjętą problematyką wskazuje, że kajakarstwo to sport, który jest doskonałą formą socjalizacji młodych ludzi, a niesione przez ten rodzaj sportu wartości wychowawcze są nieocenione. Jest to sport, który zwiększa sprawność fizyczną młodzieży, kształtuje charakter, uczy odpowiedzialności i pozytywnie oddziałuje na psychikę. Treningi kajakarstwa są także okazją do budowania wartościowych relacji interpersonalnych.

Słowa kluczowe: kajakarstwo, pasja, sprawność fizyczna, sport, rozwój



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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

It has to be stated that the modern youth can be described as a notably varied group of people. Such individuals differ from one another not only with regard to age or gender, but also – when it comes to their fields of interests, values followed, as well as forms of spending their free time. A remarkable percentage of teenagers is engaged in various activities pertaining to their interests after finishing their school day. One has to note that a significant amount of free time is spent by modern youth on watching TV, listening to their favorite music, playing games on consoles or PCs, as well as on meeting with their peers. Nowadays, young people have less opportunities to truly engage in various forms of physical activeness, which is paramount when it comes to ensuring the satisfactory condition of their bodies. Anna Maszorek-Szymala (2021, 15) points out that physical activeness is one of the most efficient ways of preventing civilization-specific illnesses. During the course of childhood and adolescence, the aforementioned activeness should be the source of positive emotions and of experiencing true pleasure. It is also considered to be an excellent way of spending one's free time with either peers or with family members. Teens and children are characterized by their willingness to be dynamic to the greatest extent possible, which can be seen in spontaneous willingness to take part in various physical activities and in factual interest in their varying forms. Children tend to be physically active voluntarily and express enthusiasm. What is more, they quickly learn new motoric abilities (Raczek 2017, 13). The predominant goal of this article is to elaborate on research results pertaining to the role played by the KSC Olsztyn Sports Club with regard to encouraging children's and teenager's passions, as well as to the impact of physical activeness on the quality of overall functioning of modern young individuals. Nowadays, teenagers seek new areas of activeness that would provide them with the so-desired adrenaline rush. It may be that engaging in various sports-related activities supervised by qualified professionals can be perceived as an optimal answer to the needs of young people. This article focuses on the matter of canoeing being a passion that may help the contemporary youth to develop.

The issue of sports-related activeness has been touched upon many a time in the case of education-related examinations. What is more, pedagogues tend to perceive sports as a factor that may to a remarkable extent impact the development of a particular person. Both this article and pieces of research presented therein can be treated as a kind of novelty. It is caused by the fact that it is rather problematic to find examinations pertaining to the impact of canoeing as a sports discipline on one's personal development.

“Canoeing is a wonderful pastime. Thanks to it, we can experience nature up close, we can succumb to it, or become one with it. While canoeing, one may opt for both physical strength and the power of one's mind. While limiting oneself to strength only, there will be constant difficulties connected to canoe wobbling and to trying to pass certain obstacles. However, when one learns how to properly “understand the water”, decode currents, and find out how the canoe reacts to water, canoeing-specific

trips may become much longer, more satisfying, and easier. What is more, overcoming obstacles faced will then become a pure pleasure” (Jeleń et al. 2011).

1. PASSION AND ITS DEFINITIONS

Passion is considered as an important part of one’s identity that additionally defines him or her to a remarkable extent. A person who has a passion is unlikely to say: “I am passionate about sports”, but rather: “I am a sportsman” (Litawa 2021, 16). Passion can be defined as “a strong focus on a personally meaningful and valued activeness which is adored and justifies itself by the very fact of its existence” (Curran et al. 2015, 631). It brings with it the willingness to achieve certain goals. “Passion is the basic prerequisite to achieve a higher level in realized tasks, including professional ones” (Melosik 2018, 11). “Some people have passions that are unlikely to manifest themselves outside the sphere of their own experiences. Such individuals derive a notable pleasure and joy from their activities. It may be stated, however that their passion is limited to ensuring pleasure to themselves. Nevertheless, there are people who want to change the world while making their dreams come true” (Bołtowicz and Jankowska 2019, 97). Joanna Frask (2021, 9) points out that one of the most efficient resources of a person, allowing him or her to develop in a harmonious manner, is the presence of a specific passion. Such passion makes an individual more prone to cogitation (Kopaczyńska 2019, 191). “Pursuing a given passion is the manner of experiencing the world, oneself, one’s capabilities, and is a specific form of reflection-based learning” (ibidem).

For most people, passion is the source of a myriad of positive experiences. Individuals tend to engage in actions being closely related to their passions voluntary, with a notable engagement, and with the sense of validity of their actions.

2. ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVENESS IN THE LIFE OF A PERSON

One of key elements of a healthy lifestyle is physical activeness, the importance of which in the life of a modern person has been recognized in the context of exacerbating health problems connected with the lack or insufficient mobility (Maszorek-Szymala 2010). Physical activeness is one of key factors responsible for proper physical and mental development of both children and adolescents. What is more, when it comes to mature individuals, it improves health condition and the overall quality of life (Chabros et al. 2008). It is rather terrifying that physical activeness as seen through the prism of Polish society is very low, especially among young people. It is frequently replaced with activities that are connected with remaining immobile for long periods of time: watching TV or playing games on consoles or PCs (Chorzewski 1997). Regular physical activity is one of the most important components of a healthy lifestyle. It serves an important role when it comes to improving and maintaining a desirable level of physical fitness. Fitness achieved during one’s school years is rather difficult to maintain throughout life.

The need of teenagers to be active seems to be self-explanatory, especially in the context of their biological and health-related needs. High mobility is the key to the existence and the proper development of the body (Byzdra et al. 2013).

Low physical activeness level of both children and teenagers, as well as the prevalence of sedentary lifestyle are behind the increased frequency of various health-related problems in the said age groups. It is worth pointing out the obesity epidemic, type 2 diabetes being diagnosed in increasingly younger individuals, as well as other problems that may translate directly into proneness to cardiovascular system diseases (Zawadzka et al. 2015). Therefore, the need to popularize various types of sports among young people is becoming increasingly important.

3. CANOEING

Canoeing classes allow teenagers to experience a myriad of positive emotions. Canoeing is a sport that grants excitement. It is connected with risk, as well as it requires physical fitness and good orientation (Maćkowski and Bodnar 2018, 19). It is also a discipline that shapes one's character. "Taking care of the available equipment develops responsibility, accuracy, and trustworthiness. A small canoe perfectly shows how important it is to keep all the things in order and how crucial it is to be equipped with a proper clothing or life-jacket" (Maćkowski and Bodnar 2018, 20). Cooperation among canoeing aficionados participating in various clubs and being at varying ages grants the possibility of establishing valuable interpersonal relations. The said sports discipline requires creative and innovative methods of solving unusual problems, which makes it possible for minors to work on developing their identity (Konopczyński 2006, 157). The necessity to cooperate with the team, to respect the experience of the coach, and appreciate the beauty of the nature surrounding the trip participants are key advantages of the discussed form of psychical activity. Young people spending their free time in canoeing clubs actively participate in various kinds of exercises and trials throughout the year, regardless of weather conditions. Both children and teenagers take part in water-based exercises, they swim, hike in the mountains, as well as exercise in the gym. It all allows them to show and shape both their ambition and perseverance.

When it comes to canoeing, a coach is one of key figures, as his or her task is to take advantage of the willingness of young people to participate in physical activeness and to use their remarkable energy reserves, as well as to cultivate in them the passion they feel towards this particular sport. The coach should be a respected figure, but also – a person providing support in critical situations, allowing participants to come to terms with and to adapt to new tasks. Young people starting their adventure with kayaking often have certain problems with keeping balance while inside a canoe. What is more, they do not want to traverse deep waters, being afraid of falling into it and getting wet. In the discussed scenario, the coach should give the beginners some time to observe their older friends, to learn new skills, as well as should motivate them to take up new challenges. Spontaneity and natural approach are among the most desired

traits in canoeing coaches. In order to become a proficient canoeist, one has to be strong, determined to achieve certain goals, and motivated. One of training elements, especially when it comes to young canoeists, are strength-based sports, which give them the opportunity to get rid of physical tension and improve their self-control mechanisms. Canoeing is a type of sport that allows for performing versatile, yet very efficient movements. Exercises that are closely related to this discipline develop physical fitness and improve such personality traits as: perseverance, determination, composure, and courage (Cholewa and Szepelawy 2005). "Canoeing classes take part in highly specific and remarkably dangerous conditions. That is why, they have to be preceded with the explanation of safety rules and ways of behaviour while swimming. Such principles also have to be followed without exceptions" (Cholewa and Szepelawy 2005, 28). Therefore, a notable responsibility for the health and safety of participants lies within the coach. His or her role is to plan spots where classes can take place, predict possible weather conditions, as well as to check the equipment and clothing of the participants. The coach must also equip children or teenagers with basic knowledge pertaining to safety rules (Bigiel 2005, 25). Boys and girls deciding to try their luck with canoeing should predominantly be able to swim very well, be able to get into and get out of their canoes, be capable of reaching the shore in any conditions, and always remember to wear their life-jackets before entering canoes (Dedo 2003, 93-94).

Conducting canoeing classes for children and teenagers requires both organizational and practical skills. The coach must be familiar with all methodological issues related to conducting such type of classes and ensure the safety of the entire group. It may be that such requirements make this type of sports activities rather rare.

4. METHODOLOGY OF OWN RESEARCH

Research on the role of the KSC Olsztyn Sports Club in shaping children's and teenager's passions, as well as on the impact of physical activeness on the quality of overall functioning of modern youth was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023. Kayak Sport Club Olsztyn is a public benefit organization that organizes general classes for children aged 8-12. The club, under its current name, has been functioning since 2001. It was established in 1954. Therefore, it can be stated that it is a sports-based organization that has a remarkable history. The club is one of 81 units of such kind in Poland that has been maintaining and managing its own canoeing section. The aspect that makes the KSC Olsztyn stand out among other organizations is the openness to young people, willingness to organize classes for children from various societal backgrounds, excellent cooperation with the socio-economic environment, and praiseworthy achievements of the members of the club in question.

A case study method was used to gather key empirical material (Stake 2009, 623), within the scope of which an analysis of the importance of physical activeness of children and teenagers taking part in sessions organized by Kayak Sport Club in Olsztyn was conducted. The research issues had the form of the following questions:

What is the role of canoeing in the life of a young person? How does sporting activity affect the mental and physical health of young people? Is canoeing becoming a passion of young people. If so – in what way? The research was conducted by means of opting for a semi-directed, problem-focused interview (Rubacha 2016), as well as observing children and teenagers during their trainings. Interviews were conducted in training rooms, predominantly with children and teenagers aged 10-16, but also – with their coaches. Instructions were prepared for the interviews, which reflected the research problems. When it comes to the observation-oriented phase, it was based on observing and analyzing children, teenagers, and the coach during training sessions. The examination was embedded in the concept of symbolic interactionism in the interpretative paradigm.

Within the scope of the research, a purposeful and formalized sample was taken advantage of, as said sample included children, teenagers, and coaches being members of a specific sports-oriented organization, namely – Kayak Sport Club Olsztyn. Statements of the examined individuals were combined with codes, which were specific for individual people and used during the analysis of the empirical material. Notes were also taken during the observation phase. This paper is interpretative in character and it is connected with the fact that during the analysis, basing on interactionism, the interpretation of the reality of the respondents was reproduced on the basis of their statements, using the descriptive method of text interpretation. The results obtained in the course of the analysis are presented in the article in a selective manner. They constitute a compact narrative, combined with fragments of the respondents' statements.

5. SPECIFICITY OF THE SAMPLE

Individuals who took part in the examination were children and teenagers aged 10-15, regularly taking part in training sessions organized by the Kayak Sport Club Olsztyn, being a sports-oriented organization. The participation in the examination was voluntary. Interviews/talks were conducted only with children and teenagers who had agreed to take part in the research process. Five boys and a coach took part in the interviews. During the examination of the research material, the statements of the examined individuals were coded. Individual participants were assigned codes specifying their gender (CH – a boy) and age (for example: CH – 12). The coach was assigned a separate code (T). Outcomes of examinations discussed in this article are presented in a selective manner.

6. ROLE OF CANOEING IN THE LIFE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

When it comes to KSC in Olsztyn, both boys and girls aged 8-12 can take part in organized sessions, because – as stated by the coaches – it is the best developmental period when it comes to both learning and improving skills connected with canoeing. There are also older individuals, who started their sports-oriented

adventure in the aforementioned period in life. During training sessions, young people learn technical basics, so especially – how to enter a canoe, as well as how to move forwards and backwards. Each training session starts with a greeting (both children and teenagers learn proper, elegant behavioral patterns during trainings). Afterwards, there is a 20-minute warm-up session that frequently has the form of running or jogging. If the weather allows, the participants use canoes to swim, otherwise, they exercise in the gym. The thing that distinguishes the discussed sports club from the competing ones is the fact that children and teenagers take part in the sessions when they want to. What is more, during trainings, they are not forced to do anything. Training sessions are organized daily, from Monday to Sunday. There are members who train every single day, as well as those who attend classes twice or three times a week. Some members are children and teenagers, for whom participation in trainings is not enough, but they also want the possibility of meeting with peers and the coach. A coach often becomes an authority figure for young people and a person who has an impact on their lives. In addition to sports activities, he or she tries to instill most important values and principles that are worth following in life in children and teenagers.

A coach must become an authority figure for the youth, in order to be able to not only help them develop their passion for sports, but also – to teach them basic values, principles, and behavioral patterns. (T)

Under the supervision of the coaches of KSC Olsztyn, young people predominantly learn punctuality.

We leave, for example, at 4:30 P.M. and if someone is even five minutes late, such a person cannot participate in the training. I am responsible for my group. No underage person can swim on his or her own without the supervision of an adult. (T)

Participation in training sessions makes it possible to improve discipline, as the group has to follow certain rules set out by the coach. Nevertheless, the youth can also work on their self-reliance. Children and teenagers take part in competitions and summer or winter sports camps many times during a given year. There, they learn how to function in a group of peers. They can also become remarkably more independent and self-reliant by preparing meals, adjusting their clothes to weather conditions, and taking care of their hygiene. During such trips and camps, young people also have the opportunity of exploring various interesting places in Poland, at the same time broadening their horizons.

Canoeing coaches are typically canoeists with remarkable experience who can share their knowledge with others. Professional support, as well as a notable knowledge pertaining to the particular field are not only educational in character, but also allow to create a coach-sportsman bond that is based on honesty and trust. The said bond is the basis for working with teenagers. When they respect and trust the coach, they can come to him or her with their problems, as well as thank him or her for his or her work or engagement.

The modern youth is very varying as a group. There are numerous open teens, but there are also some introverted ones. However, it happens to me quite often that some of them come to me to talk, share their problems with me, or simply exchange opinions, which shows that they trust me, but I also think that they simply like me. They sometimes give me some drawings or their other creations, which is very nice of them. (T)

KSC Olsztyn has been cooperating with the Municipal Addiction Prevention and Therapy Team for many years. Training sessions are one of elements of the preventive program, the aim of which is to limit the probability of occurrence of hazardous behavioral patterns among children and teenagers, which currently are mainly connected with spending too much time using various technological devices or taking advantage of the Internet in an improper manner.

I have been working with teenagers for many years and I have been observing various societal situations. As of currently, I do not meet teenagers overusing alcohol, drugs, or other substances of such kind. The most troublesome issue of the current generation is the excessive or improper use of the Internet. I frequently come across situations, in which two people sitting next to each other do not talk in real life, but rather communicate by means of an online application. (T)

Time spent in the club is, for the members, the time devoted to improving their physical activeness, working on their canoeing-specific techniques, and meeting with peers. During the training sessions organized, there is no possibility of using phones, which aims at showing young people other, more attractive forms of spending their free time.

7. IMPACT OF SPORTS-RELATED ACTIVENESS ON BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENAGERS

Canoeing is a discipline that is worth recommending, as swimming with the use of paddles requires remarkable motor skills – both fitness and coordination-based (Rynkiewicz and Rynkiewicz 2009, 5). Canoeing is often considered a sport for life, positively affecting human functioning. During training, the physical development of young people is ensured, as they train to maintain a proper body posture, strengthen muscles, and work on the precision of their movements, coordination of their body, as well as maintaining balance while in their canoe. The development of technology comes hand in hand with the overall worsening of motor abilities of young people. Participation in any form of sports-based activity is paramount and indispensable part of their development. The participants of the sessions organized by KSC in Olsztyn clearly stated that they were happy to be able to train there and expressed their willingness to take part in organized undertakings.

I like coming to training sessions, mainly because I like to be on the move and to exercise. What is more, canoeing is a sport that has some appeal to it. Once you start training, it is hard to stop. I have been training for 5 years and I really like it. (Ch – 14).

Canoeing is a sport that grants both children and teenagers numerous positive emotions, excitement, and adrenaline rush, but it also shapes their willpower and positively affects their mental resilience. Young people learn how to overcome their weaknesses and how to deal with difficult – or sometimes even extreme – situations. Experiences obtained during training sessions help them improve their durability and physical strength but boost their mental well-being as well.

The quicker the children start canoeing, the more likely they are to achieve remarkable successes in the future.

We strongly encourage children aged 8-9 to start training in the club, because this is the best development period when it comes to improving their motor skills and starting to learn canoeing. Sometimes young people aged 13-14 come to us and want to join the club. This is a period when they have to put much more work and effort to learn basic skills related to technical aspects of canoeing (T).

An early start of a sports-based training is important due to the existence of periods that are characterized by increased susceptibility to training-specific stimuli. The earlier the training starts, the longer the possibility of shaping the body and mental attitude of a sportsman-to-be. Canoeing can positively impact mental health of both children and teenagers. Training requires a lot for work and sessions frequently take place in unfavorable weather conditions, such as rainfall, extreme cold, or strong wind. All of those improve strong will and build resilience to stressful situations. Swimming in a single-spot canoe teaches a person taking responsibility for his or her actions. Training sessions and competitions in two-spot canoes help to work on cooperation-related skills and taking responsibility for actions of both individuals involved.

8. CANOEING – A TYPE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OR THE PASSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE?

Passion is defined as a great love for something (Szymczak 1998) and is related to intellectual involvement, often carried out regardless of “cold, hunger” or other discomforts, with certain hopes and the sense of great fulfillment (Łysakowska-Wencel and Wencel 1998). Robert. J. Vallerand (2012, 3) defines passion as an activity that a given person likes to be involved in and that grants him or her personal satisfaction. It is considered to be an important activity a person devotes his or her time and energy to.

I have been training for 5 years and I am a canoeist. I take part in competitions and often win some medals. This sport is my passion, so I devote all my free time to training. (Ch – 14).

While observing canoeing trainings the members of the club participated in, one could easily say that sports was their true passion. They trained with a remarkable engagement and willingness, regardless of weather conditions. Despite numerous school-related responsibilities, additional tasks, exams, and

other duties, they participated in training sessions every single day. It shows how important regular trainings, meeting with other sportsmen, and people sharing the same passion are for young people.

I participate in training sessions every day because I like spending time at the club. I like exercising and swimming. It gives me great pleasure. I have been training for about two years and I cannot imagine spending my free time any other way now. (Ch - 13).

Canoeing is a sport that has a remarkable impact on both the life and development of young people. It is one of the most demanding and difficult sports disciplines, as a canoeist has to frequently overcome the limits of his or her physical and mental capabilities. He or she has to overcome his or her weaknesses that may also be accompanied by problematic external conditions.

CLOSING REMARKS

Physical activeness ensures a person at any stage of life optimal health condition. Regular exercising is important when it comes to preventing illnesses, improving fitness, as well as boosting well-being as a result of increasing of the amount of endorphins in the blood. Therefore, it can be stated that it improves stress and exhaustion resistance and may prevent societal issues from emerging. Physical activeness allows to relieve emotional tension in a natural way, whereas the desire to achieve sports-specific success motivates a person to change socially undesirable behavioral patterns (Zimna-Walendzik and Szatko 2012, 68). Engaging in sports and performing physical activities daily becomes a must. PE classes, as well as trainings organized after school are great methods of ensuring both children and teenagers the required amount of physical activeness.

Canoeing is a sport that offers numerous advantages: emotional and cognitive ones, health-related and educational ones, as well as the ones connected with the possibility of acquiring new skills. Thanks to canoeing, the youth can explore new places, learn to respect cultural achievements, and gain new abilities. Canoeing teaches young people how to behave in difficult and stressful situations, how to cooperate in a group, and how to develop physically. The provided results of interviews conducted among young people participating in canoeing training sessions and coaches indicate that canoeing is considered a sport worth further popularization, mainly due to its educational values and the fact that it grants the opportunity of spending one's time with peers in a pleasant yet developing way. There is the need to popularize not only canoeing, but also other types of sport among children and teenagers. Nowadays, they spend an excessive amount of time in front of the screens of various devices and have limited opportunities for physical development, which may negatively impact their physical fitness.

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