

# THE IMPACT OF THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE ON MIDDLE SCHOOL PUPILS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PHYSICAL CULTURE

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** Differences and inequalities connected with the place where a person lives are a subject of interest to social sciences, sociology in particular. Empirical findings indicate that residents of urban and rural areas differ significantly in terms of such variables as physical development, health condition, life expectancy, affluence, education level, access to power, cultural capital and so on. It is interesting to check whether the above regularity also applies to young people's attitudes towards physical culture. The aim of this study was to examine attitudes which middle school pupils (ages between 13 and 16) in Poland's urban and rural areas held to physical culture. **Material and methods.** The study involved a survey conducted between 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012 on a purposive sample of 336 children. They were pupils aged 13-16 in two middle schools in Świętokrzyskie province: the Jan Karski no. 4 Middle School in the city of Kielce and the John Paul II Middle School in the village of Masłów, Kielce county. The diagnostic poll method was used in the study and an original, categorised poll was the research tool. The surveying technique was an auditorium questionnaire. **Results.** After analysis, empirical data obtained from the survey shows that the place of residence causes slight differences in middle school pupils' attitudes towards physical culture. The data allows for the conclusion that pupils from urban areas possess a little better knowledge of physical culture than their peers from rural areas. Pupils from villages have, in turn, a slightly more positive emotional approach to physical culture than pupils in cities. Urban middle school pupils manifest more positive behaviours within physical culture than rural pupils. The place of residence does not cause such striking differences in attitudes to physical culture as it does in other social and cultural variables, such as affluence, education level, access to power, health condition, fitness, participation in culture and so on.

**Key words:** attitudes, physical culture, place of residence, middle school pupils

## Introduction

Studies of sociological literature indicate that the place of residence to a large extent determines the social standing of individuals, along with their preferences and behaviours concerning different areas of life. What is more, and that might seem strange, the place of residence also has a major impact on biological features such as height, body weight, health, fitness and so on. Still, the place where people live has the most powerful impact on their leisure time activities, lifestyles, participation in culture and the quality of the consumption of culture [1, 2, 3, 4].

The findings of empirical research confirm that people who live in rural areas have a shorter life span than city dwellers, have poorer health and are less fit, they are also less educated and less affluent, they have less access to power, the jobs they have give them lower social standing and they also have lower prestige. Numerous researchers have come to the conclusion that the countryside as such works to the disadvantage of its residents [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11].

Seeing how the social variable that is the place of residence causes differences between communities in terms of many features, the authors of this study decided to check whether this variable also made young people differ from one another in their attitudes towards physical culture. To examine the problem, an empirical study was undertaken with the goal to establish

what correlation there was between the place of residence of school children and the children's attitudes towards physical culture. The study concerned children attending middle schools, a three-year education level which in Poland follows the six-grade primary school. The objective was to verify the prevalent theory in sociology that asserts that a rural background has a disadvantageous effect on fundamental social and demographic features. In other words, the authors of this paper sought to find out whether such dependencies also applied to middle school pupils' attitudes to physical culture.

Once the objective was formulated as above, the study employed the theory of attitude structure that dominates in sociology and psychology. According to this theory, an attitude contains cognitive, emotional and behavioural components [12, 13, 14, 15]. The abstract notions were subsequently conceptualised and defined in a way to enable a quantified measurement of the individual components. The cognitive component of an attitude is defined herein as consisting of knowledge, beliefs, suppositions and doubts about the object of the attitude. The emotional component consists of feelings and emotions about the object of the attitude. Finally, the behavioural component consists of behaviours with respect to the object of the attitude.

The study adopted a behavioural view of physical culture proposed by Krawczyk, according to who "physical culture is a relatively integrated and fixed system of behaviours with respect to fostering physical development, fitness, health, beauty,

bodily perfection and human expression, all conforming with models accepted in a given community; physical culture also comprises the results of such behaviours" [16].

### Material and methods

A survey for the study was conducted between 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012 among pupils of two middle schools. One was in the city of Kielce (Jan Karski no. 4 Middle School) and the other in the village of Masłów (John Paul II Middle School), Świętokrzyskie province. The survey was conducted on a purposive sample of 336 pupils aged 13-16, including 176 pupils in the city (hereinafter referred to as "urban (middle school) pupils") and 160 pupils in the village (hereinafter referred to as "rural (middle school) pupils"). Girls and boys accounted for 50% of the sample each. At the Jan Karski no. 4 Middle School in Kielce, the survey was conducted on 96 girls and 80 boys and at the John Paul II Middle School in Masłów on 72 girls and 88 boys.

As far as the school in Kielce is concerned, 48% of fathers of pupils had higher education, 26% had secondary education and 26% vocational and lower levels of education. Only 5% of fathers of pupils attending the rural middle school had higher education, whereas 45% had secondary education and 50% had vocational and lower levels of education. A majority of the urban pupils came from an educated background (70%) with a much lower percentage of pupils coming from a working class background (22%) and a farming background (8%). In contrast, a mere 21% of pupils in the Masłów school came from an educated background, while 54% came from a working class background and 35% from a farming background.

The survey mainly involved the diagnostic poll method, while the research tool was an original questionnaire consisting of 16 categorised questions, including 11 close-ended questions and 5 semi-open-ended questions. The survey technique was an auditorium questionnaire. Additionally, the survey made use of the idiographic and nomothetic methods to describe the studied problem and identify certain regularities [17, 18]. The analysis of the collected empirical (numeric) data employed frequency distribution and the data has been presented as percentage.

### Results

In this paper, the findings of the research are presented in an order which conforms with a view of attitude structure adopted by many psychologists and sociologists. They identify three kinds of an attitude's components: cognitive, emotional and behavioural. The components were conceptualised for this paper and concern, respectively, the knowledge of, the emotional attitude towards and the behaviour with respect to physical culture.

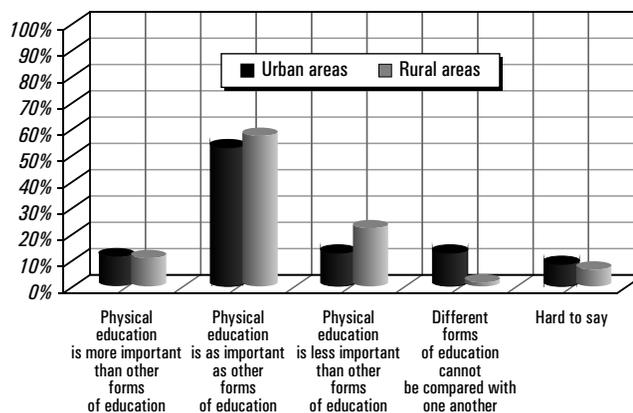
#### *The knowledge middle school pupils have of physical culture*

Twice as many rural middle school pupils (44%) than urban middle school pupils (22%) agree with the statement that it is possible to stay healthy without pursuing any form of physical activity. The number of urban pupils who disagree with the statement is almost four times the number of rural pupils. At the same time, 8% of respondents from the urban school and 10% rural pupils are undecided whether it is possible to be healthy and not be physically active.

A higher percentage of urban pupils (28%) than rural pupils (16%) believe that a health condition depends on systematic participation in physical and sporting activity. Urban pupils were three times (16%) more likely than rural pupils (5%)

to agree with the statement that genes were what determined health condition. Only 7% of urban pupils and 3% of rural pupils said that human health was determined by appropriate medical care.

A higher percentage of urban pupils (58%) than rural pupils (46%) regard physical exercises, sports, recreational activities and tourism as the best form of looking after one's physical shape. Twenty-six percent of both urban and rural pupils attribute this role to regular sleeping hours. No urban pupil considers systematic beauty treatments as the best way to stay in good shape and only 5% rural pupils agree with this statement. Only 4% of urban pupils and 7% of rural pupils consider inoculations to be the most important form of looking after one's physical shape.



**Figure 1.** Respondents by agreement with statements about the relation between physical education and other forms of education (intellectual, moral, technical, etc.)

Data collected in the survey shows that compared to the number of urban pupils (10%), almost twice as many rural pupils (20%) consider physical education to be less important than other forms of education. A higher percentage of urban pupils (10%) than rural pupils (8%) believe that physical education is more important than other forms of education. To most urban and rural pupils (53% and 58%, respectively), physical education is as important as other forms of education. According to 13% of urban middle school pupils and just 2% of rural pupils, different forms of education cannot be compared with one another.

#### *Middle school pupils' emotional approach to physical culture*

After analysis, the empirical data collected in the survey indicates that rural middle school pupils are more appreciative of the role of sports and play (43% and 39%, respectively) in their lives than urban pupils (24% and 24%). A higher percentage of urban pupils than rural pupils attribute a high value to studying (28% vs. 13%), art (13% vs. 2%) and architecture (3% vs. 1%).

A slightly higher percentage of rural pupils (19%) than urban pupils (16%) chose the characteristics "fit, athletic" as the ones they identified with the most. An identical number (6%) of pupils in both groups opted for "brave, courageous". "Pretty, handsome" were traits picked by 11% of urban pupils and 6% of rural pupils. Traits such as "cheerful, funny", "good, honest" and "clever, well-educated" are more appreciated by urban pupils, who chose them in 39%, 29% and 17% of responses, respectively, whereas rural pupils picked these characteristics in 25%, 25% and 1% of cases, respectively.

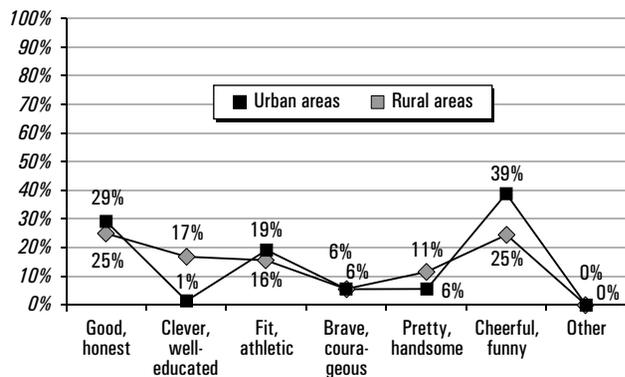


Figure 2. Respondents by personality traits they identify with the most

More rural middle school pupils (80%) than urban pupils (63%) believe that television stations air just the right amount of sports programmes. The number of urban pupils who think there is too much sport on television is twice the number of rural pupils at 8% and 4%, respectively. Urban pupils are three times more likely than rural pupils to say there are not enough sport programmes at 9% and 3% of responses, respectively. The response “too much, probably” was given by 7% of urban pupils and 3% of rural pupils, whereas 14% of urban pupils and 11% of rural pupils responded “not enough, probably”.

When provided with the right conditions to pursue physical games and other forms of physical activity, a low, but similar percentage of urban (5%) and rural (4%) pupils would choose to spend their free time in such a way. Only 6% of urban pupils and 2% rural pupils picked the response “other”, citing horse riding, working out at a gym, tennis, boxing, playing the guitar, swimming and extreme cycling as examples. Leisure time activities which the pupils in the survey liked best were video games and web surfing on the one hand and socialising with friends on the other. These activities are desired by more rural pupils (51% and 25%) than urban pupils (31% and 21%). In their spare time, urban pupils are keener to listen to music (20%) and read books (11%) than their peers in rural areas (7% and 4%, respectively).

**Middle school pupils' behaviours with respect to physical culture**

After analysis, the empirical data collected in the survey indicates that a higher percentage of rural pupils (64%) than urban pupils (51%) take part in physical activities in their free time at least 3 times a week. The findings show that a small group of respondents among both rural pupils (5%) and urban pupils (7%) fails to do any kind of physical activity whatsoever. Over a quarter of urban pupils and almost every fifth rural pupil takes part in physical activities twice a week. Fifteen percent of urban pupils and 14% of rural pupils do so once a week.

After analysis, the empirical data shows that the highest percentage of rural pupils are involved in physical activities organised by peer groups (45%), followed by activities organised by sports clubs (18%), extra-curricular activities organised by the school (10%) and activities organised by their families (6%). The highest percentage of urban pupils take part in activities organised by a sports club (34%), followed by those organised by their families (19%) and peer groups (17%) and extra-curricular activities organised by the school (14%) and other institutions (9%). A much higher number of rural pupils (22%) than urban pupils (7%) does not take part in any physical activities at all.

Judging by the empirical data, the most popular physical leisure activities among rural pupils are football (38%) along

with cycling, roller-skating and skateboarding taken together (28%). Most urban pupils choose to play basketball in their spare time (16%). Volleyball is the favourite physical leisure activity for twice as many rural pupils (18%) as urban pupils (10%). Not a single rural pupil named basketball in the survey. The number of rural pupils who like to play football is three times the number of urban pupils. Similarly, 9% of urban pupils like to swim in their spare time, which is three times more than rural pupils (3%). Cycling, roller skating and skateboarding were picked by 28% of rural pupils, which is two times more than urban pupils (13%). Walks are the favourite physical leisure activity for 9% of urban middle school pupils and 6% of rural pupils. Dancing is the favourite activity for only 1% of rural pupils, as compared to 10% of urban pupils.

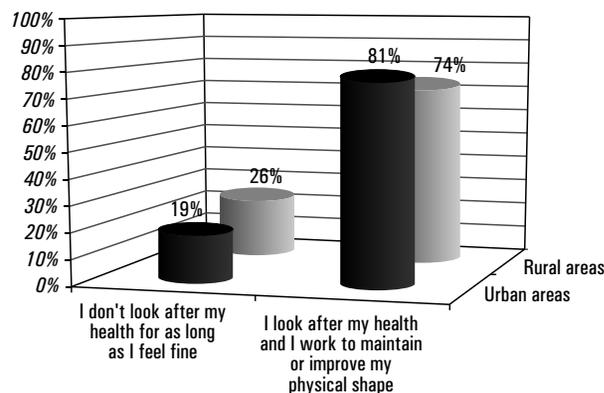


Figure 3. Respondents by their attitude to health

More urban middle school pupils (81%) than rural middle school pupils (74%) said they looked after their health and worked to maintain or improve their physical shape. At the same time, over a quarter (26%) of rural pupils and almost every fifth urban pupil (19%) declared they did not do anything about their health for as long as they felt fine.

**Discussion**

After the empirical data from the survey has been analysed, it is possible to carry out one of the final research procedures and confront the findings of the empirical research with those obtained by other researchers who have investigated this area, and with academic theories which pertain to the question asked earlier in this paper, namely, what the correlation is between the place of residence of middle school pupils and their attitudes towards physical culture.

Collected and analysed, the empirical data allows for the conclusion that middle school pupils from urban areas possess better knowledge of physical culture than their peers in rural areas, which matches the findings of earlier research and theories derived from it. In the light of such theories, rural population, including children and adolescents, possesses smaller knowledge, both general and detailed knowledge. Consequently, as a variable, knowledge of physical culture is a factor that diversifies the surveyed communities [2, 8, 10].

Judging by the analysed empirical data, rural pupils have a more positive emotional approach than urban pupils. This distribution of survey responses indicates that as far as physical culture is concerned, the surveyed communities display tendencies that diverge from differences that normally exist between urban and rural populations [6, 7, 11].

The data also allows for the conclusion that urban pupils' attitudes towards physical culture are more positive than those of rural pupils and are also qualitatively different. This trend conforms with more general theoretical findings regarding ways in which people in cities and villages, including children and adolescents, participate in culture as such [2, 6, 11].

Looking at empirical data pertaining to the three aforementioned variables – components of an attitude – we can say that the place of residence does not diversify the attitudes middle school pupils hold to physical culture in the same way as could be suggested by more general theoretical findings, in the light of which such diversification is significant [2, 6, 7, 8, 10].

### Conclusions

After the empirical data from the survey has been analysed, the final research procedure can be carried out to answer the question asked earlier in this paper, namely, what the correlation is between the place of residence (urban vs. rural areas) and attitudes which middle school pupils hold to physical culture.

One of the conclusions from the analysis is that middle school pupils in urban areas possess better knowledge of physical culture than those in rural areas. Rural pupils have a more positive emotional approach to physical culture than urban pupils, while urban pupils' behaviours with respect to physical culture are more positive than those of rural pupils. The behaviours also differ qualitatively. The other conclusion is that urban pupils manifest slightly more positive attitudes towards physical culture than rural pupils. In other words, the place of residence (urban vs. rural areas) causes only small differences in attitudes toward physical culture.

The above conclusions indicate that differences which the place of residence creates in attitudes towards physical culture are not as striking as in the case of other social and cultural variables, such as affluence, access to power, education level, health, fitness, participation in culture and so on.

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