

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE AREA OF HERZEGOVINA-NERETVA CANTON

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## Abstract

The aim of this research was to determine the physical activity of primary school students in the area of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. The research was conducted on a sample of N=2589 elementary school students from I to IX grades. The obtained data show that out of the total number of respondents, there are more students who do not play sports (54.4%) than students who play sports (45.6%). Only among fourth grade there are more students who play sports (57.8%) than students who don't play sports (42.2%). In all other classes, there are more students who don't play sports.

**Keywords:** physical activity, primary school, students, sports

## INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, man sought and found his survival, safety, health and peace in movement - physical work. At that time, physical work was the basic factor of human development. Insufficient movement of children and young people negatively affects the anthropological system and health in general. Numerous studies indicate that physical activity is one of the main means in the fight for a healthy and quality life. It is important to instill healthy habits in children from a young age, which includes limiting the time spent at the computer, which is one of the most common causes of hypokinesia - reduced physical activity, insufficient activity for normal functioning and human health. Physical inactivity is also known as a sedentary lifestyle. It refers to the behavior of a person who is relatively inactive and whose lifestyle is characterized by sitting at home and at work, and a lack of physical activity. In developed countries, sedentary behavior is primarily a consequence of the technological development of society and changes in habits and behavior. The average adolescent in developed countries spends more than 5 hours a day sitting in front of a TV or computer screen, and the number of students who walk to school has decreased by 50% compared to the 1980s (Ostojić, 2017). For human health and well-being, in addition to a healthy diet and quality rest, regular physical activity is also necessary. However, despite the growing knowledge about the importance and necessity of physical activity,

nowhere seems to be a greater gap between what we know and what we do than when it comes to this way of behaving. This is clearly seen in our population, which seems to be physically inactive in all segments of life — at school and at work or during free time. We spend too much time in front of the screen comfortably reclining in an armchair and watching others play tennis or basketball, we go everywhere by car, and the bicycle collects dust in the basement - we haven't played sports or recreation for years. (Ostojić, 2017). In the accelerated pace of modern life, especially in the city, there is more and more free time, but it is used less and less for personal needs (Andrijašević, 2000). Neglecting the need for exercise can lead to disruption of overall development (Prskalo, 2005). Everyone needs physical activity throughout their life — children more than adults, but retirees and pregnant women, as well as all other population groups, should be physically active regularly if they want to preserve and improve their health. The aim of this research was to investigate how many primary school students are involved in sports in the area of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. The respondents were primary school students of grades I-IX. A total of 2589 respondents participated.

## METHODS

The purpose of this research was to determine how many primary school students from I to IX grades play

sports, and how many do not, in the area of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton.

**Participants**

The research was conducted on a sample of N=2589, elementary school students from I to IX grades, from the area of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. The number of first grade students is N=275, II grade N=249, III grade N=237, IV grade N=256, V=231, VI grade N=341, VII grade N=316, VIII grade N=329, IX class N=355.

**Variables**

The results of the research were obtained on the basis of an anonymous survey filled out by the students. In the survey, students answered the question "Do you play sports?" - YES/NO".

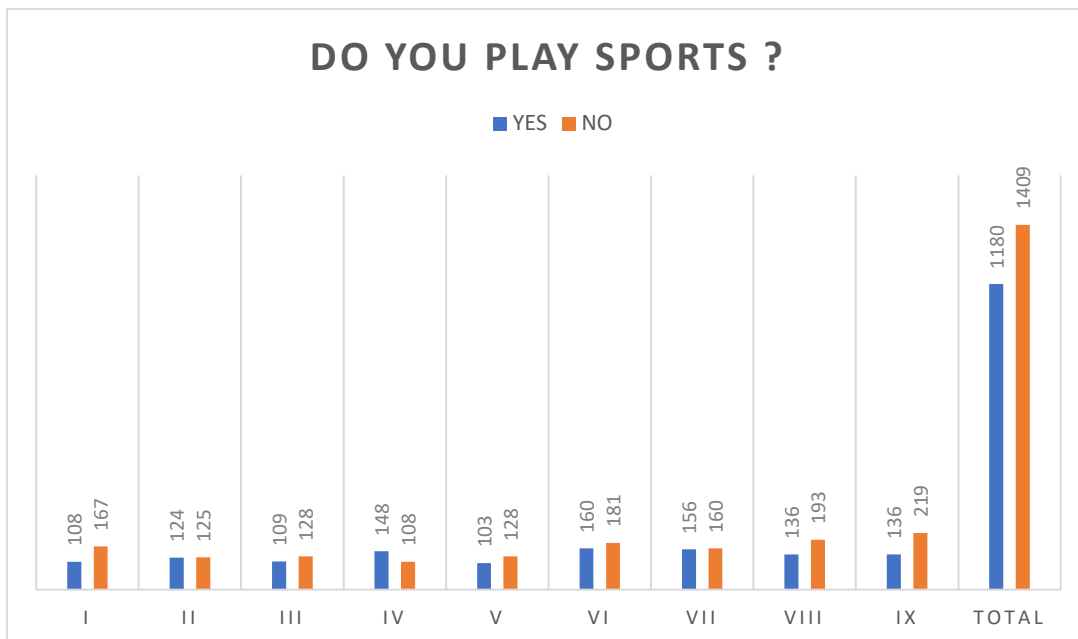
**Statistical analysis**

The data were entered into MS Office Excel, where statistical data processing was performed. After the statistical processing of the data, a graphical representation of the data was made.

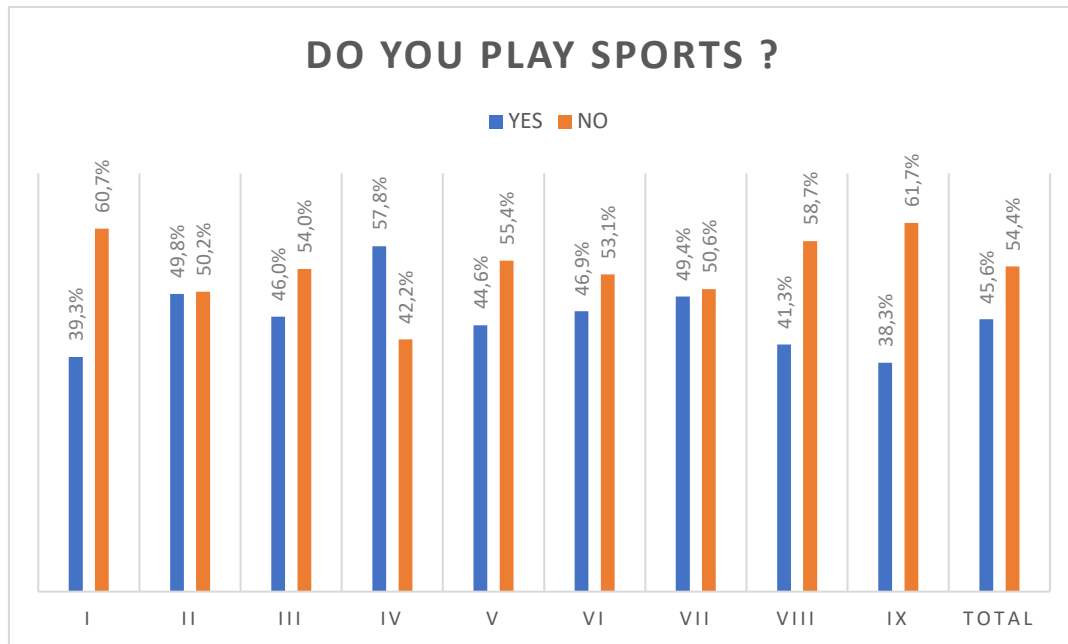
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Looking at graph 1. and graph 2. we can see that out of a total of 275 first grade students, 108 of them play sports (39.3%), while 167 students don't play sports (60.7%). Out of 249 second grade students, 124 play sports (49.8%), while 125 students don't play sports (50.2%). Out of 237 third grade students, 109 students play sports (46%), while 128 students don't play sports (54%). Out of 256 fourth grade students, 148 students play sports (57.8%), while 108 students don't play sports (42.2%). Out of 231 students in the fifth grade, 103 are involved in sports (44.6%), while 128 students are not involved in sports (55.4%). Out of 341 sixth grade students, 160 students play sports (46.9%), while 181 students don't play sports (53.1%). Out of 316 students of grade VII, 156 of them play sports (49.4%), while 160 students don't play sports (50.6%). Out of 329 students of grade VIII, 136 students play sports (41.3%), while 193 students don't play sports (58.7%). Out of 355 students of the 9th grade, 136 students play sports (38.3%), while 219 students don't play sports (61.7%). In conclusion, out of 2589 elementary school students in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, 1180 students play sports (45.6%), while 1409 students don't play sports (54.4%).

Graph 1. – Do you play sports ? YES/NO



Graph 2. Do you play sports ? YES/NO (%)



In research conducted at the level of the City of Mostar, (Šuta, 2021), ninth-grade elementary school students are the most active, while third-grade high school students are the least active when it comes to physical activity. In terms of engaging in organized physical activity, it was found that fifth-grade elementary school students expressed the greatest interest in engaging in organized physical activity, while on the other hand, the least active were third-grade high school students. In the study of the physical activity of students in the 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school, it was determined that as many as 90% of students are engaged in physical activities (Slivka, 2019). According to data from the report (Inchley, 2016), „Health Behavior in School-aged Children in the countries of the European Union“, the prevalence of insufficiently physically active adolescents ranges from 82 to 95% for girls, and from 72 to 89% for boys. According to the data obtained in the research (Floričić, 2021), it can be determined that fewer and fewer students engage in physical activity in their free time, but the majority of students in lower grades still practice physical activity in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health

Organization. With increasing age, the minutes in which students are physically active decrease due to various obligations. Research conducted on 115 elementary school children in Belgrade showed that boys and girls spend as much as 4 hours a day in sedentary activities, significantly more than recommended by leading institutions dealing with children's health (Ostojić, S.M., 2017).

## CONCLUSION

A large number of respondents of primary school students declared that they do not play sports, 54.4% of them. It's worrying fact and alarm for all of participants who can promote sports; sports clubs and organisations, schools, parents. Minimum recommendations for older children and youth require a higher level of physical activity compared to adults. During the day, children and young people aged 6 to 17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to high-intensity physical activity every day (Ostojić, 2017). Children and adolescents should avoid extended

periods of inactivity, i.e. resting for more than 2 hours a day, most often related to computer use, playing games, watching television (Ostojić, 2017). Parents also play an important role in participation by supporting them or children looking up to them. In addition to parents and family, the school is also important because it should provide the largest part for the development of physical activity, including informing students and encouraging physical activity. There are rare human activities that can simultaneously influence such a large number of human characteristics as is possible with expertly designed kinesiology activities. If we accept the obvious fact that the need for movement is a basic biotic need and that the child willingly and fully

surrenders to spontaneous play or some other form of physical activity, the conclusion is that from the point of view of "useful" use of free time, kinesiological activity is without an alternative (Prskalo, 2007). General recommendations for all ages refer to reducing the total time spent in sedentary activities and avoiding long periods of inactivity. Children under the age of 6 should limit sitting in front of a screen for entertainment (eg TV, computer, games) to a maximum of 1 hour per day, while such activities are not recommended for very small children (under the age of 2). Children and young people under the age of 18 should limit sitting in front of a screen for entertainment to no more than 2 hours a day (Ostojić, 2017).

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