



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR OVERALL WELL-BEING

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### Abstract

*In the past years of 21-st century mounting research has shown how lifestyle changes, including exercise, stress management, and diet can prevent almost ninety percent of chronic illnesses in our society and improve the quality of life and well-being. Promoting physical activity as a well-being component in schools and universities targets the enhancement of vigour, resilience, employment and social outcomes for graduates and communities. Further, health is conditioned by our own habits and behaviour and the accumulation of positive and negative effects on health and well-being is for over the life-course. Therefore cognitive acquisition related with a healthy and active lifestyle would be a useful support for physical activity. Improved well-being in youth should contribute to reducing school and college/university dropout on short term, and strengthening personal confidence and cognitive function, improving educational efforts and enhancing employability on long term. The education level is correlated with health; educated individuals report higher sense of control which conducts to a better health. Integrating physical and health education in preventative strategies would have a real effect in reducing the occurrence of physical and mental disorders and co-morbidities associated with these later, over the life time and in reducing the burden on the healthcare system.*

**Keywords:** *Health, overweight, morbidity, active lifestyle, physical education*

**JEL classification:** *H80,I0, I1*

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### Introduction

Well-being is a topic in trend in social sciences, even the definition of this concept is not yet established and unitary. The notion of well-being is in tight relation, and some times used interchangeably, with quality of life, physical and mental health promotion, good living or happiness.

Quality of life is also the subject of academic debate in economics aiming to measure and compare changes in quality of life within and between communities, cities, regions and countries (Galloway, 2006). Over the past 40 years grow the idea that economic indicators alone could not reflect accurate the quality of life of populations. New indicators and datasets were created to capture social and environmental aspects that Gross National Product failed to incorporate. Therefore social and psychological indicators have been developed to assess various facets and dimension of subjective well-being. This included indicators measuring education achievements, health outcomes and environmental

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degradation (Conceição, Bandura, 2008). Major studies on wellbeing and quality of life are now undertaken by the most important global organizations such as UNO, the OECD or WHO.

Well-being develops individually and depends on the attitude individuals evaluate their lives. The psychological aspect of well-being has important repercussions on self esteem and self confidence and has a wide range of consequences for how a person deals with society and life. In the last 20 years, psychologists have had a constant regard of self-esteem as a significant psychological predictor for health and quality of life. An important number of studies has linked the self-esteem concept with a wide range of topics from violence and aggression (Baumeister, Smart, Boden, 1996) to life satisfaction (Zang, Leung, 2002), moderated by age, gender or ethnicity.

The aim of this study is to discuss the influence of physical exercise on health and eventually overall well-being, arguing with results from previous studies on the topic.

### 1. Physical activity

Physical activity is fundamentally important for the maintenance of life functions and it is an essential part of having a healthy lifestyle, as it has been proven to have a protective role against the development of cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, skeletal disorders and even mental illness.

Researchers and physicians, and even non-specialists in physical education and sport domain recommend regular physical exercises for their substantial and sustainable health benefits. Practical interventions and scientific studies demonstrate without any doubt the potential positive effect for exercise to improve both physical and psychological well-being. In the psychological well-being category we can frame the perceptions, opinions and feelings related with body image, health condition, self esteem, etc. most of them improvable through physical activity.

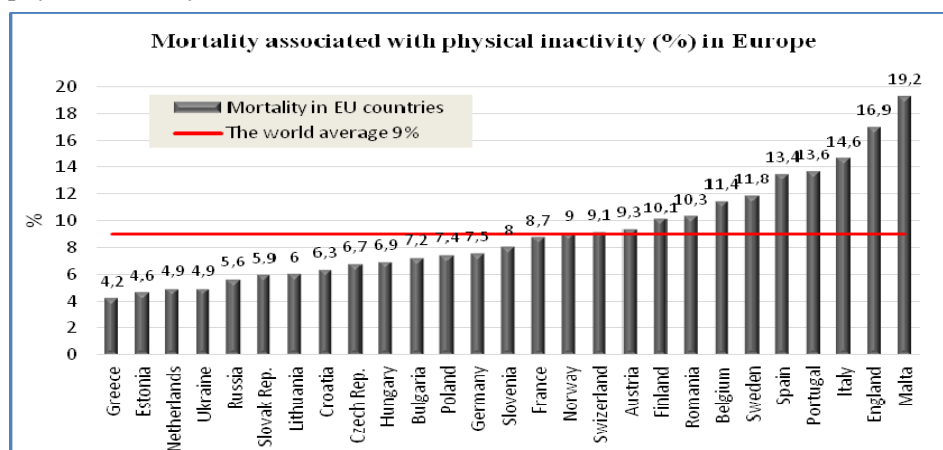


Fig. 1 Mortality associated with physical inactivity (%) in Europe



Scientific evidence suggests that exercise enjoyment is positively associated with body image change. A pleasant and supportive work climate will help people to take part enthusiastically in fitness, aerobic, dance or climbing classes. Working in a friendly group, watching other people exercising, receiving constructive feed-back and assistance could motivate people to join a physical activity (Jinga, Pop, 2007).

In contrast the physical inactivity determined by the increasing amount of time spent in sedentary activities is becoming an issue with serious consequences, being the cause of more than 5 million death/ year globally.

The role of education in preventing physical inactivity consequences among young generation is essential. The knowledge, skills and habits related with a healthy lifestyle have better results if they are taught in families and schools from the early years. The effect of family lifestyle is tracking more than one generation. Also overweight and obesity tend to run in families. There are 50% chances for a child of being overweight if one parent is overweight or obese, and if both of parents have weight problems the chances will increase to 80%. Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults and an 80% chance if a parent is overweight or obese [7]. The body weight problems of children and young people are associated with asthma, type 2 diabetes, depression, being bullied, learning difficulties, low self confidence and social reluctance; the greater the body mass index, the greater the risk to health.

Only 20% of children have exercised regularly in 2012 (OECD) and if the tendency was correctly estimated, in 2017 less European children are involved in regularly formal and informal physical activities and more have a precarious weight status. Physical activity includes all activities which involve bodily movement and are done as part of playing, working, active transportation, house chores, exercise, and recreational activities. Formal physical activities are planned, structured, repetitive, and aiming the improvement or maintenance of one or more components of physical fitness. The main point in physical education, exercise, training, leisure or utilitarian physical activities is the balance between calories intake and energy expenditure.

We found in our study conducted on a sample of high school graduated that the number of overweight and obese persons was of 9,1%. Comparing with an equivalent sample' results from 1999, when the overweight persons percentage was nearly 2,5%, it comes that the overweight and obesity risk increased 3,67 times until 2014 (Pop, Nae, 2014). If this trend has kept on in 2020 we estimate the percentage of overweight and obesity persons in the 18-20 years segment population to exceed 10,5%.

## **2. Conclusions**

Society perception shaped by media, prizes way ahead the relationship between health and beauty than the relationship between health and well being. The globalization of overweight and obesity, the acute perception of being stressed most or all the time, the sedentary life style and the co morbidities of those



behaviours might be the most common detrimental effects for the new millennium generation health.

Promoting physical activity as a well-being component in schools and universities targets the enhancement of vigour, resilience, employment and social outcomes for graduates and communities. Further, health is conditioned by our own habits and behaviour and the accumulation of positive and negative effects on health and well-being is for over the life-course. Therefore cognitive acquisition related with a healthy and active lifestyle would be a useful support for physical activity.

Improved well-being in youth should contribute to reducing school and college/university dropout on short term, strengthening personal confidence and cognitive function, improving educational efforts and enhancing employability on long term.

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