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SPORTS AS LEISURE DURING THE PANDEMIC PERIOD: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

Relevance and novelty. During the last year, physical culture/health/sport mass spectacles have revived in Lithuania. The success of the region and the city in the field of physical education and sports is mainly determined by the persistent efforts of the community, which has increased since the restoration of Lithuania's independence. The year 2020 was extremely difficult for education, as well as for other areas of public life. Education and its environment have been strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It disrupted the usually gradual change in education and caused the need to urgently look for solutions on how to organize training, but also led to a breakthrough in the application of innovations, opened up new opportunities, actualized the ones under consideration and raised new questions when considering the future of physical education / health / sports education (Lithuania. Education in the country and regions, 2021). *Scientific problem:* How has the epidemic situation of COVID-19 and its management measures (aimed at protecting the person physically, but threatening the sustainability and well-being of his/her social connections) affected physical culture/health/sport? *Subject:* physical culture / health / sports during the pandemic. *The goal is* to reveal the physical culture/health/sports situation during the COVID-19 pandemic in a practical and theoretical aspect. *Tasks:* 1. Discuss the theoretical aspect of the pandemic as a phenomenon; 2. To define the sustainability of physical culture/health/sport through innovation. *Methods:* review and analysis of scientific literature. Literature review is a theoretical research method. Its essence, according to Daubarienė (2018) (cited Žukauskienė and Erentaitė, 2011), is that the author, by reading, analyzing, comparing, evaluating previous literature in a certain field, evaluates the current situation, solving a certain problem. This section provides context to the study and demonstrates the importance of the study. The purpose of the literature analysis is to methodologically base the investigative analytical part.

Keywords: leisure, sport, pandemic, change, sustainability, governance.

The theoretical aspect of the pandemic as a phenomenon

The recent pandemic that has plagued the world is one of the greatest challenges of all time in the world of sports. The emergence of the coronavirus (Covid-19) severely restricted the activities of all sports organizations, and in some cases even completely limited them. Although the field of sports is already one of the most sensitive areas, strongly dependent on other areas as well, such as the economic situation, the political situation, people's interest, etc., in this case, the pandemic is a new, unprecedented challenge to the world of sports. Every company, sports club, or even sportsmen's association had to find its own solutions and be able to discover or create certain innovations, new solutions, thanks to which it could continue to operate, find a way to survive, and in certain cases of success – and improve its existing

positions, and possibly take solid steps in building strong foundations for the successful future of your society or organization.

There is little doubt that we are living in unprecedented times and that much of society's daily life has been changed by the first global pandemic since the Spanish flu (1918–1920). In the world, not only illnesses but also deaths are counted in millions. Life has come to a standstill in many places, with people only expected to leave their homes for “limited reasons” such as getting basic food, exercising once a day (Grix, Brannagan, Grimes & Neville, 2021).

This pandemic was also a challenge for science, innovation, and business. Every crisis is an opportunity in disguise (Ciotti et al. 2020; Mulcahey et al. 2021). Perhaps the best example of all this is the first vaccine developed by Moderna, the American biotech company was able to develop the vaccine and start human trials within 42 days of identifying the infection. States began to use technology, to create mobile apps that made it possible to determine a person's location, to inform about possible contacts, or in certain countries to monitor that people follow the rules of self-isolation. Of course, these developments in portable and smartphone

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applications are also clearly creating new privacy concerns (Brem, Viardot & Nylund, 2021).

All this changed the world irreversibly, for some those changes were painful and difficult, while some were able to take advantage of the new opportunities and improve their existing positions.

People imprisoned in their apartments and houses were forced to adopt new behaviors (Adam, Alarifi, 2021). This is noted in all articles, such innovations as distance learning, remote exams, remote work using (MS Teams, Zoom, Skype and other apps) have appeared. All the lessons learned from this pandemic, and the new skills learned, are likely to remain after the pandemic, and the world is likely to be irreversibly changed in these places. According to N. Donthu & A. Gustafsson (2020) it is also important to note that the principles (such as openness and global trade) on which society is based have lifted many countries around the world out of poverty and created well-developed economies.

Public health specialists point out that good emotional health is also influenced by physical activity, but research has shown that at least 60 min. on average, only every tenth pupil of Vilnius played sports. It is good that in Vilnius from 6.6 to 10.4 percent the number of students actively spending their free time has increased. Unfortunately, this indicator is quite low. Various data show that the population of the European Union is becoming more and more passive, and Lithuania is no exception. According to the data of the World Health Organization, about 80 percent of children and adolescents do not achieve the recommended physical activity (information from the Vilnius public health office, 2022).

In summary, it can be said that, just like in other areas of life, the pandemic had an impact on the organization of physical education/health/sports activities, events decreased, activities appeared as alternatives, and new solution options emerged when dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the course of the pandemic, sports service employees acquired new competencies, mastered technologies, improved cooperation and focus, and started providing new and innovative leisure organization services. However, the pandemic has not ended and the challenges remain, as the disease is not going anywhere, there is a “burnout” of employees, the deterioration of the public’s mental health and the increasing need for funds. The theoretical aspect of the pandemic as a phenomenon is intended to create and substantiate solid theoretical and practical

foundations for modern innovations in the physical education and sports sector and to test practical mechanisms for the implementation of systematic innovative physical education and sports projects.

Sustainability of physical culture/health/sport through innovation

The benefits of sports. There are many articles and studies about the benefits of sports for psychology, health, and emotional state, and this is indisputable. The importance of sports and wellness is strongly emphasized and is successfully pursued through the writing of various projects and research. Lithuanian municipalities presented various innovative physical education and sports projects that increase children’s motivation for physical education and sports activities. The goal is for young people to play sports, be physically active, improve physical fitness and improve health indicators.

Sports is becoming a large industry that affects other sectors of the economy (Ratten, 2019). Most innovations in sports technology aim to increase the value of a product, service or process. watching and participating in sports offers one of the most powerful cultural forces many people need to survive the difficult times of pandemic-induced lockdowns and limited social interaction (Grix et al., 2021).

Development of 5G Internet. During the pandemic, the rapid emergence and development of the new generation of Internet – 5G – has just begun. With the vast majority of the world moving home, communication, leisure, sports and other entertainment to television or computer screens, it was perhaps an ideal opportunity for the development of 5G. Hu Dujuan (2021) also notes this in his article – 5G will change the experience of watching sports at home. 5G will give sports a digital upgrade and a variety of new skills (Dujuan, 2021). 5G will improve the quality of mobile TV and video, increase the range of content available to the audience of mobile devices. All this will raise to a new level of quality both the broadcasts themselves and all other digitization tools that are used in sports, competitions, events and elsewhere. A very telling fact is that 5G has already been tested at the Tokyo Olympic Games. In summary, it can be said that in Lithuania there has already been considerable progress with the quality of the Internet, so such a big change is not felt, but in other countries that change is many times more significant.

Innovations in sports. Most of the technology existed before the outbreak of COVID-19. However, their utility and application has been greatly

accelerated by this pandemic. Technologies such as cashless payments, because of the ubiquitous risk of infection, the use of cash is risky because the coronavirus can spread through banknotes. This has sometimes increased contactless payments and is noted by A. Brem, E. Viardot & P. A. Nylund (2021). In the analyzed works of researchers, other similar technologies, such as the emergence of digital ticket devices, digitized organization of sports matches, etc., have been observed. popularization The use of physical tickets has decreased significantly.

During the pandemic, sports competitions were often held without spectators and this prompted leagues and federations to look for new solutions to maintain revenue and viewership. J. Grix et al. (2021) notices that viewers of TV shows and sports broadcasts are decorated with the paraphernalia and clothing of their favorite clubs. The players are broadcasted recordings of joy and sorrow. The voices of fans and supporters heard on the soundtrack, which becomes an effect of general (collective anticipation) joy or disapproval. This is how there were attempts to “sit cardboard” spectators in arenas, to play recordings of chants, or to fill the resulting void in other ways.

Most innovations in sports are also related to digital technologies. Broadcasting of live sports events on the Internet has allowed more people to watch and participate in events, even though they were not familiar with sports before. Sports clubs have started broadcasting live training sessions to people at home on online platforms such as (Youtube or Facebook).

V. Ratten (2019) observes that often larger sports organizations are successful in business because they have the financial resources to experiment with new forms of knowledge transfer, but smaller sports organizations or start-up companies can react to crisis situations and develop new technologies faster. Most of the innovations were introduced in major sports: football, basketball, etc. For example, during the pandemic, basketball in America discovered “bubbles”, during which teams closed themselves in a social bubble to avoid contact with potentially sick persons and continue to play sports and compete, while broadcasting them to the audience.

E-sports. For years now, E-sports has been making its way to being recognized as a sport. Forced confinement at home during the pandemic has led to a boom in online gaming. According to the Candy Crush community, the most active months are the last quarter. Table 1 presents the 2019–2020 income:

Table 1

Candy Crush Revenue

Year	Revenue (USD)
2019	1117 millions
2020	1190 millions

Source: Curry, 2022

Compared to 2019 and 2020 income increased from 1117 million up to 1190 million this means almost 10 percent. increase (Curry, 2022). A. Brem, E. Viardot & P. A. Nylund (2021) argue that it is probably only a matter of time before the International Olympic Committee or the International Football Federation will have to bow to pressure to agree to some form of e-Olympics or e-World Cup. Since even events like the Olympics have been postponed due to the pandemic, an official eSports competition run by the IOC and/or FIFA, or eOlympics might be welcome, and would be an alternative for both governing bodies and viewing audiences, and would be a lesson for the future if when such events have to be postponed again.

Discursive aspects that improve the sustainability of physical culture/health/sport through innovation can be implemented in accordance with the following provisions:

1. Systemic innovation, which means interrelated local innovative projects with synergistic multilateral effects and multiple long-term benefits. Innovative projects would consist of the following initiatives: clusters of physical education and sports services created through public-private partnership; optional formats of physical education and sports and health services for local communities; children and youth sports quality management projects; integration of general and advanced physical education and sports systems; communication marketing technologies in the physical education and sports sector, etc.

2. An interagency collaborative network that would involve effective collaboration between various relevant agencies in the development and implementation of test standards, test policies and practices in local education systems, businesses, physical education and sports service organizations (both municipal and private), industry operators, non-governmental organizations, sports federations, the VES sector and health system management agencies, etc.

3. Integrating the sports infrastructure of each property, which can be interpreted as a sports infrastructure clustering policy, to effectively focus and manage local sports facilities with carefully

planned school physical education lessons, out-of-class training, health improvement practices in age groups, better accessibility and affordability of local sports centers etc.

4. The complex promotion project of media organizations, considered as an inseparable part of communication marketing of the physical culture and sports sector of the municipality, applying the most effective marketing communication models and tools – mainly carried out on a non-commercial basis. because company partners receive indirect benefits from advertising campaigns. Social networks such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. play a special role in the set of tools for promoting physical education and sports. In addition, local physical education and sports services are advertised with various audio-visual tools, posters, advertising campaigns and event marketing mechanisms; video screens throughout the city center and shopping centers. The campaign to promote physical culture and sports is supported by progress analyses, surveys, tests, press clips, Yandex headlines, promotions sponsored by partners, joint events and many other mechanisms.

Conclusions.

1. Research data showed that when learning only remotely, students' learning motivation weakens, the feeling of social isolation increases, and due to a lot of time spent on computers, students' physical health deteriorates (Jusienė, 2020). It is especially difficult for distance learning for children in pre-school and primary education programs. Therefore, contact direct communication between students and teachers must remain in future education. However, the pandemic is encouraging a shift to a blended education model that consistently combines face-to-face and distance learning.

2. Researchers, developers of educational platforms, information technology specialists should improve various tools that help teachers create and store educational materials (for example, platforms for creating interactive slides, large document containers, etc.), expand banks of digital educational resources and tools, create technologies and programs improving the quality of remote communication and well-being of learners due to lack of contact and social isolation.

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СПОРТ ЯК ДОЗВІЛЛЯ У ПЕРІОД ПАНДЕМІЇ: ТЕОРІЯ ТА ПРАКТИКА

Анотація

Актуальність і новизна. За останній рік у Литві відродилися фізкультурно-оздоровчі та спортивні масові заходи. Успіхи області та міста у сфері фізичного виховання та спорту визначаються головним чином наполегливими зусиллями громади, яка зросла після відновлення незалежності Литви. 2020 рік був надзвичайно складним для освіти, як і для інших сфер суспільного життя. Освіта та її середовище сильно постраждали від пандемії COVID-19. Це порушило зазвичай поступові зміни в освіті та викликало необхідність терміново шукати рішення щодо організації навчання, але також призвело до прориву в застосуванні інновацій, відкрило нові можливості, актуалізувало ті, що розглядалися, і поставило нові питання, коли розглядаючи майбутнє фізичного виховання / здоров'я / спортивної освіти (Литва. Освіта в країні та регіонах, 2021). Наукова проблема: як епідемічна ситуація з COVID-19 та заходи з її контролю (спрямовані на фізичний захист людини, але загрожують стійкості та благополуччю її соціальних зв'язків) вплинули на фізичну культуру/здоров'я/спорт? Тема: фізична культура / здоров'я / спорт в умовах пандемії. Мета – розкрити фізкультурно-оздоровчу/спортивну ситуацію під час пандемії COVID-19 у практичному та теоретичному аспекті. Завдання: 1. Обговорити теоретичний аспект пандемії як явища; 2. Визначити сталість фізичної культури/здоров'я/спорту через інновації. Методи: огляд та аналіз наукової літератури. Огляд літератури є теоретичним методом дослідження. Його суть, за Даубарієне (2018) (цит. За Žukauskienė and Erentaitė, 2011), полягає в тому, що автор, читаючи, аналізуючи, порівнюючи, оцінюючи попередню літературу в певній галузі, оцінює поточну ситуацію, вирішуючи певну проблему. Цей розділ надає контекст дослідження та демонструє важливість дослідження. Метою аналізу літератури є методологічне обґрунтування дослідно-аналітичної частини.

Ключові слова: дозвілля, спорт, пандемія, зміни, стійкість, управління.

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