

ATTITUDE OF PROGYMNASIUMS STUDENTS TOWARDS HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVENESS

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the attitude of 8 form students of Šiauliai city progymnasiums towards health and physical activeness. The study was attended by 870 (out of 1088) 8 form students of Šiauliai city progymnasiums. Questionnaire survey was chosen as the main research instrument. The research was conducted employing quantitative research methodology. The respondents of the research were given out questionnaires, the data of which were systematised, analysed and presented in graphs.

Key words: health, physical activeness, pupils, adolescence, leisure

Introduction

Adolescence and childhood are of utmost importance for health development as in this period the foundations of lifestyle and behaviour are formed, later determining the person's health and life quality. However, there are quite a number of risk factors that negatively affect the adolescent's or child's health: lack of movement, harmful physical and social environment, irregular nourishment, inheritance (Strukčinskienė, Griškoniš, Raistenskiš, & Strukčinskaitė, 2012). Barzda, Bartkevičiūtė, Stukas et al. (2009), Behjat Shokrvash, Majlessi, Montazeri, Nedjat, Rahimi, Djazayeri and Shojaezadeh (2013) state that physical activeness and healthy lifestyle are particularly important components of health, which have to be formed in childhood. According to Juškelienė (2007), Zumeras and Gurskas (2012), daily physical activeness, physical activity and movement are both physiologically and psychologically important in the adolescent's life; besides, they are socially beneficial. According to Lithuania scientists' research data, namely physical activeness is a particularly important component of healthy lifestyle, affecting children's and adolescents' health, because sufficient physical activeness enables growth and formation of human body and formation of regular posture (Strukčinskienė, Kurlys, Griškoniš, & Raistenis, 2011).

When pupils' health is discussed, in all age periods lack of active physical activity is emphasised. Although children and adolescents are more active than the majority of adults, the age of technologies, their advancement and social environment determine students' physical activeness, which is not necessarily positive. Good computer literacy, knowledge of foreign languages are increasingly promoted, mental workload is being increased. There is less focus on pupils' healthy lifestyle education and promotion of physical activeness (Tamošauskas,

Régalienė & Mačys, 2003; Kardelis & Vainienė, 2008). Insufficient attention to children's physical education in the family, parents' little physical activeness and discouraging to do exercises negatively influence children's health, suppresses the need of inborn physical activeness (Narbutienė, Rutkauskaitė, & Bujanauskas, 2011). Physical activeness skills formed in childhood usually remain for the whole life. Once the child starts school, physical activeness diminishes significantly and activities distance from playing. Physical activeness is one of the most important students' leisure forms: it is a condition of good health, social and emotional wellbeing. Even short daily physical activity reduces the possibility to gain weight, improves metabolism in the organism and action of the heart (Maciulevičienė & Sadzevičienė, 2009). Based on research data, Hohensee and Nies (2012) confirmed that children who are more engaged in sitting activity; e.g., watching TV and playing visual games, have a higher body mass index and are more inclined to overweight or obesity. Juan, Bengoechea, Montes and Bush (2010) explain that young people's physical inactivity became an important problem of the society's health in the whole world. Adolescence is first of all a period during which general level of physical activeness rapidly reduces; therefore, according to Valius and Jaruševičienė (2008), the adolescent's life should be inseparable from physical activation, which is necessary for the adolescent's growth and one of the most important development conditions.

It is considered that children and adolescents should be physically active every day for one hour or more. However, according to the data of the HBSC global research, conducted in almost 40 European and North America countries, less than half of adolescents between 11 and 15 years of age are physically active. Therefore, in many countries, including Lithuania, there is a growing concern about low physical activeness of adolescents (Zaborskis & Raskilas, 2011). The mean of insufficient physical activeness in other EU countries is 60% for boys and 72,6% for girls. Although physical activeness of students aged 11, 13 and 15 is higher than the mean of other EU countries, it has not been increasing since 1994 (Skurvydas, 2008). As stated by Narbutienė et al. (2011), in order to solve the problem of physical activeness, it is necessary to know its determinants, significantly affected by both biological and social factors.

Aim of the research

To reveal attitude towards health and physical activeness of progymnasiums students

Subject of the research

Attitude of pupils of progymnasiums towards health and physical activeness.

Problem questions of the research

1. What is adolescents' subjective perception of their health and physical activeness?
2. How does it relate to spending leisure and healthy lifestyle skills?

Research methods

1. Quantitative research. For data collection questionnaire survey was used.
2. Statistical data analysis processed using SPSS 19.0 programme. The research includes calculation of percentages, Chi-square (χ^2) and Mann-Whitney non-parametric criteria, mean and standard deviation (SD), the chosen significance level $p \leq 0,05$.

Research participants

The research was attended by 870 eighth form students of Šiauliai city progymnasiums (out of 1088 pupils, which made up 80 per cent) (428 girls, 438 boys and 3 did not indicate gender). The mean age of the respondents is 13,8 years (SD = $\pm 1,2$).

Research Organisation and Methodology

The research was conducted in all progymnasiums of Šiauliai city (N = 14). To perform quantitative research the questionnaire survey method was chosen, which helped to reveal relevance of the analysed problem. Questionnaire consisted of blocks of questions about health, physical activeness and active and passive ways of spending leisure.

Research Results

The research aimed to disclose the attitude of 8 form pupils of Šiauliai city progymnasiums towards health and physical activeness. Another important issue that was addressed was what ways of spending leisure students choose because this helps to reveal the degree of physical activeness of adolescents in after-school activities and during leisure time.

Analysing research data, it was sought to find out pupils' subjective attitude towards their health. Having employed non-parametric criterion Chi-square, statistically significant data were obtained ($\chi^2=14,263$; $df=4$; $p=0,007$). 20,1 per cent of female students and 15,4 per cent of their male counterparts indicated that their health was bad or satisfactory; 79,8 per cent of female students and 84,6 per cent of their male counterparts defined it as good and very good. It is noticed that boys rate their health better than girls.

Having found out that students rated their health quite well but that one fourth of students nevertheless rated their health negatively, it was sought to find out what physical and mental difficulties could cause negative sensations for them. Having applied non-parametric Chi-square criterion, statistically significant data were obtained (Fig. 1) disclosing that almost twice as many female students, compared with male students, often complained of headaches ($\chi^2=52,037$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), dizziness ($\chi^2=48,829$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), backaches ($\chi^2=20,547$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), stomach-aches ($\chi^2=28,595$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), bellyaches ($\chi^2=52,856$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$). Male students are more inclined to complain of these aches sometimes; boys twice as much as girls never complain of these aches.

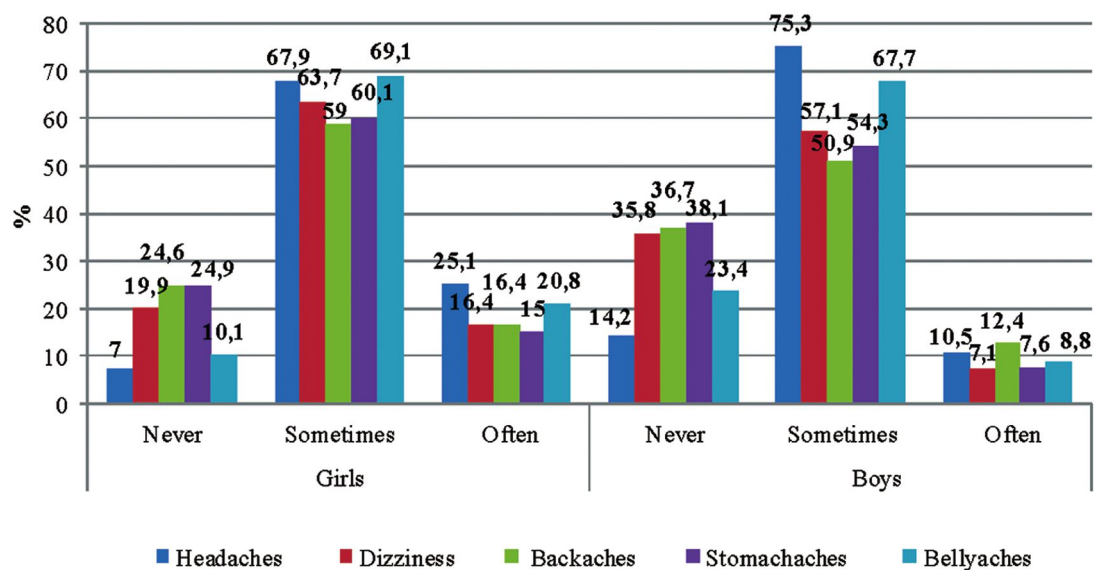


Figure 1. Physical complaints girls and boys suffer from, %

Having found out what physical difficulties pupils suffer from, it was also sought to disclose eight formers' mental complaints; therefore, they were asked to rate how often they are moody, experience tension and sleep disorders (Fig. 2). Having applied non-parametric Chi-square criterion, statistically significant data were obtained, showing that both male and female students named all psychological difficulties similarly but one and a half as many female students are often moody ($\chi^2=40,915$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), compared to their male counterparts, experience emotional tension ($\chi^2=30,008$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), sleep disorders ($\chi^2=65,488$; $df=4$; $p=0,001$), tension caused by daily activities ($\chi^2=13,830$; $df=4$; $p=0,008$); however, male students feel far more physically exhausted than their female counterparts.

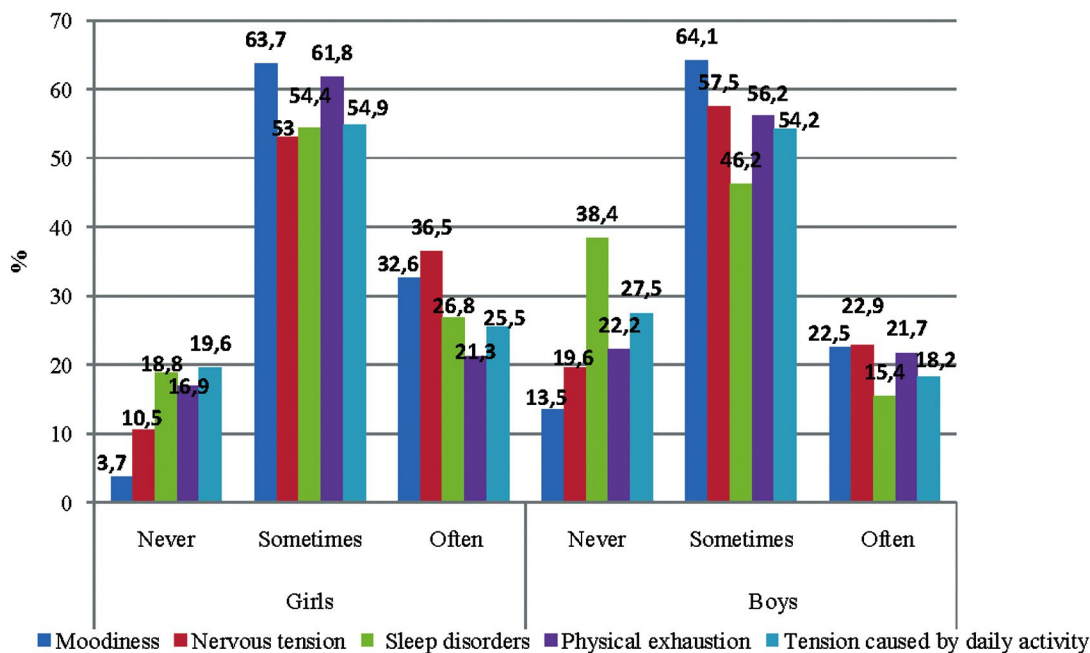


Figure 2. Psychological complaints girls and boys suffer from, %

During the research it was sought to find out whether respondents thought that physical activeness enhances health. Statistically significant differences in gender aspect were obtained ($Z=-2,761$, $p=0,017$), revealing that more male students than female students think that physical activeness enhances health. Such data were revealed by the rank mean, which among female students was 420,17 and among male students, 443,64. The finding that pupils approve that physical activeness is significant led to the question how the very adolescents rated their physical activeness and whether they were physically active. Application of non-parametric Mann-Whitney criterion revealed a statistically significant difference between these groups ($Z=-3,525$, $p=0,0001$), while the mean rank showed that male students (Mean Rank — 451,74) treated themselves as physically more active than female students (Mean Rank — 407,91). It is noticed that boys more positively rate benefit and significance of physical activeness. It was also sought to find out whether the respondents thought that physical activeness affected body weight because it is a sore problem too. Mann-Whitney non-parametric criterion revealed a statistically significant difference ($Z=-2,997$, $p=0,003$) between girls and boys. It was noticed that more female students (Mean Rank — 449,33) than male students (Mean Rank — 413,92) thought that physical activeness influenced body weight.

Having found out how respondents rate physical activeness (Fig. 3), it was sought to find out whether this rating is really reflected in choosing ways of spending leisure, which were grouped into active and passive but which were not emphasised as separate in the questionnaire survey in order to avoid influence on the student while choosing frequency of every activity. It was noticed that male students were far more often engaged in active leisure activities, such as going to the swimming pool ($\chi^2=12,882$; $df=4$; $p=0,012$), jogging ($\chi^2=26,836$; $df=4$; $p=0,0001$), going to the sports club ($\chi^2=36,442$; $df=4$; $p=0,0001$), cycling ($\chi^2=44,263$; $df=4$; $p=0,012$), going to workouts than female students. The results revealed that female students more often chose traveling with the family ($\chi^2=12,015$; $df=4$; $p=0,017$), with friends ($\chi^2=12,944$; $df=4$; $p=0,012$), more often helped in doing the chores. To sum up these results, it is noticed that anyway boys more often choose a more active way of spending their leisure than girls.

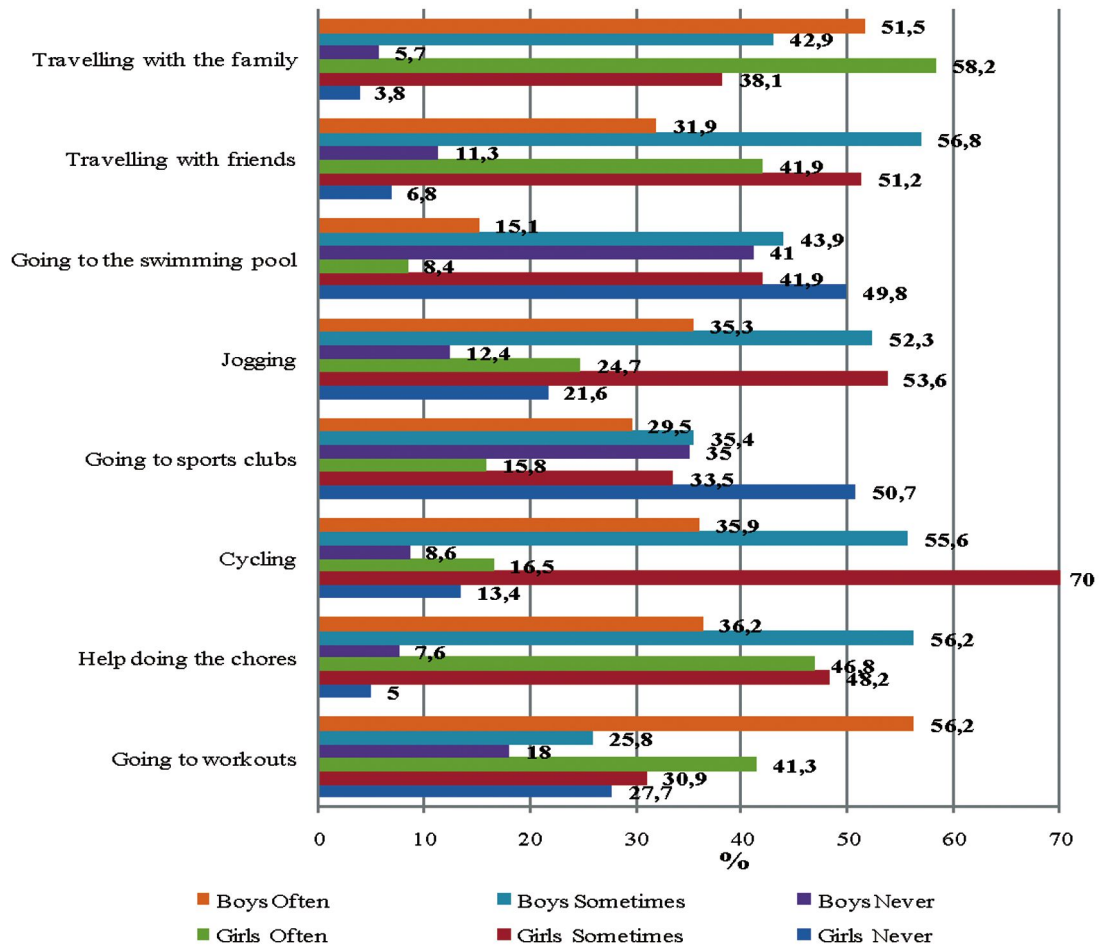


Figure 3. Girls' and boys' choice of physically active hobbies, %

Data presented in Figure 4 reveal what passive activities are chosen by 8 form students by gender. It is noticed that male students three times as much as female students play computer games. One fourth of girls and boys state that they often like to do nothing. About 40 per cent of girls and boys often spend time watching television. Male students almost three times as much as female students choose games on coin-operated gaming machines ($\chi^2=54,653$; $df=4$; $p=0,0001$). Female students more often than male students socialise with the family, surf on the Internet, spend time with friends and almost twice as much as male students read books.

The analysis of passive and active ways of spending spare time among students enables to state that girls need more social contacts with other persons because the latter spend more time with friends, family, while boys tend to spend time surfing on the Internet, swimming, engaging themselves in active activities in the sports hall, etc.

Conclusions and discussions

1. Subjective perception of health by eight formers of Šiauliai city progymnasiums revealed that the majority of adolescents rated their health as good and very good and about one fourth of students tended to rate their health as satisfactory; it is noticed that female students rated their health worse than male students. Female students also more often than their male counterparts tend to complain of various physical and mental ailments.

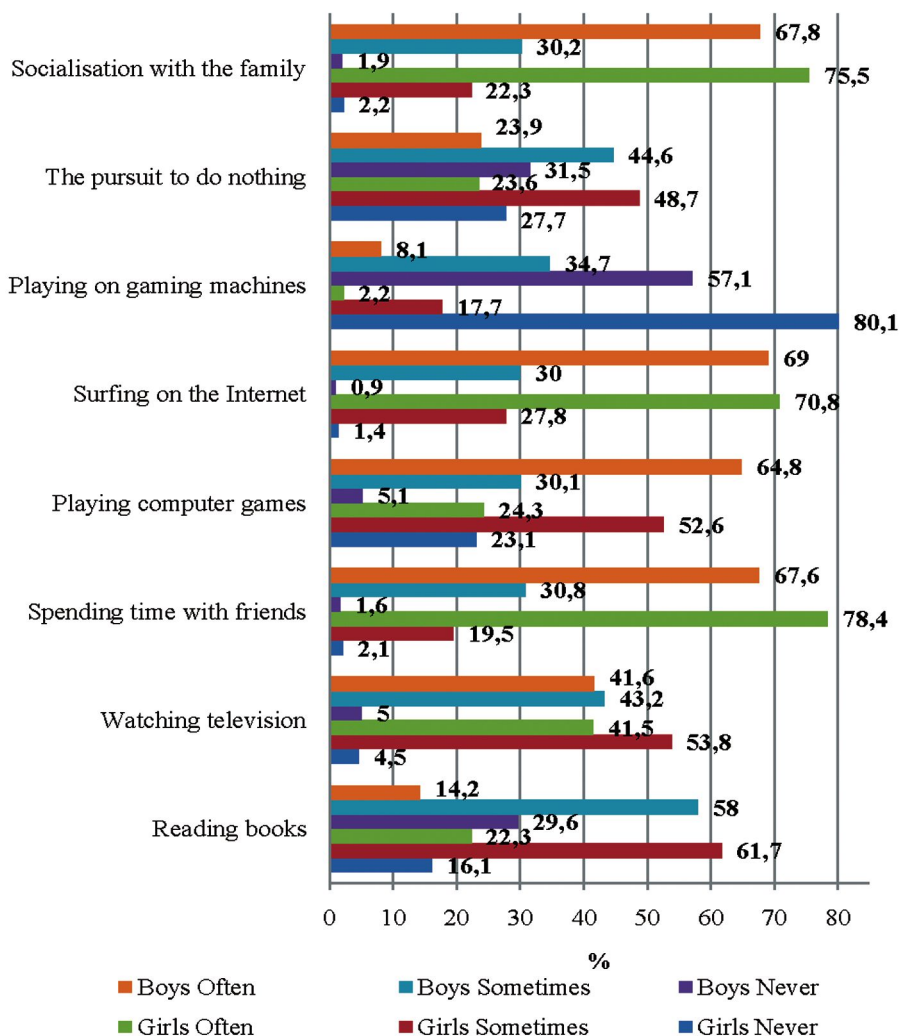


Figure 4. Girls' and boys' choice of passive activities, %

2. Evaluating students' attitude to physical activeness, it is noticed that boys treat themselves as more physically active than girls and more often approve of positive effect of physical activeness on the organism. However, girls were far more active rating the effect of physical activeness on the body weight.

3. Having analysed research data about passive and active ways of spending spare time, it was found that boys considerably more often chose active ways of spending leisure and this is in line with their own perceived positive rating of physical activeness, while girls tended to choose more passive activities.

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Attitude of Progymnasiums Students towards Health and Physical Activeness

Summary

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When pupils' health is discussed, in all age periods lack of active physical activity is emphasised. Although children and adolescents are more active than the majority of adults, the age of technologies, their advancement and social environment determine students' physical activeness, which is not necessarily positive. Good computer literacy, knowledge of foreign languages are increasingly promoted, mental workload is being increased. There is less focus on pupils' healthy lifestyle education and promotion

of physical activeness (Tamošauskas et al., 2003; Kardelis & Vainienė, 2008). Insufficient attention to children's physical education in the family, parents' little physical activeness and discouraging to do exercises negatively influence children's health, suppresses the need of inborn physical activeness (Narbutienė, Rutkauskaitė & Bujanauskas, 2011). Physical activeness skills formed in childhood usually remain for the whole life. Once the child starts school, physical activeness diminishes significantly and activities distance from playing. Physical activeness is one of the most important students' leisure forms: it is a condition of good health, social and emotional wellbeing. Even short daily physical activity reduces the possibility to gain weight, improves metabolism in the organism and action of the heart (Maciulevičienė & Sadzevičienė, 2009).

Aim of the research was to reveal attitude towards health and physical activeness of 8th form Šiauliai city progymnasiums students.

Method and Organisation of the Research. The research was conducted in all progymnasiums of Šiauliai city. To perform quantitative research the questionnaire survey was chosen which consisted of health, physical activeness, active and passive leisure questions blocks. The questionnaire was compiled by the authors. The analysis of research data was performed employing the SPSS programme. 870 eight form students of Šiauliai city progymnasiums (out of 1088 pupils, which made up 80 per cent) (428 girls, 438 boys and 3 did not indicate gender) participated in the research. The mean age of the respondents is 13,8 years ($SD=\pm 1,2$). Research reveals physical difficulties of pupils, it was also sought to disclose eight formers' mental complaints; therefore, they were asked to rate how often they are moody, experience tension and sleep disorders. Both male and female students named psychological difficulties similarly but one and a half as many female students are often moody, compared to their male counterparts, experience emotional tension, sleep disorders, tension caused by daily activities; however, male students feel far more physically exhausted than their female counterparts. Analysing research data, it was sought to find out pupils' subjective attitude towards their health: 20,1 per cent of female students and 15,4 per cent of their male counterparts indicated that their health was bad or satisfactory; 79,8 per cent of female students and 84,6 per cent of their male counterparts defined it as good and very good. It is noticed that boys rate their health better than girls.

Having found out how respondents rate physical activeness it was sought to find out whether this rating is really reflected in choosing ways of spending leisure, which were grouped into active and passive but which were not emphasised as separate in the questionnaire survey in order to avoid influence on the student while choosing frequency of every activity. So, male students were far more often engaged in active leisure activities, such as going to the swimming pool, jogging, going to the sports club, going to workouts than female students. The results revealed that female students more often chose travelling with the family, with friends, more often helped in doing the chores. To sum up these results, it is noticed that anyway boys more often choose a more active way of spending their leisure than girls. Generalizing the research such **conclusions could be carried out:** Majority of adolescents rated their health as good and very good and about one fourth of students tended to rate their health as satisfactory; it is noticed that female students rated their health worse than male students. Female students also more often than their male counterparts tend to complain of various physical and mental ailments. Evaluating students' attitude to physical activeness, it is noticed that boys treat themselves as more physically active than girls and more often approve of positive effect of physical activeness on the organism. However, girls were far more active rating the effect of physical activeness on the body weight. Having analysed research data about passive and active ways of spending spare time, it was found that boys considerably more often chose active ways of spending leisure and this is in line with their own perceived positive rating of physical activeness, while girls tended to choose more passive activities.