

## ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

# The Effects of Sports-Recreational Activities on the Inclusion of Young Montenegrins in Society

Bojan Masanovic<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>University of Montenegro, Faculty for Sport and Physical Education, Niksic, Montenegro**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to determine whether there are differences in the level of social inclusion between respondents who are not at all engaged in sports activities and respondents who engage in sports and recreational activities once or twice a week. The sample included 60 subjects divided into two subsamples, 35 respondents who are not at all involved in sports activities and 25 respondents who practice sports and recreational activities once or twice a week. For research purposes, respondents voluntarily applied to the standardized Social Inclusion Scale questionnaire. To determine the significance of differences in the degree of social involvement between groups, was used t-test at the level of significance of  $p < 0.05$ . It was concluded, based on these results, that between pairs of individual entities, a significant difference exists only in the fourteenth question (I have friends I see or talk to every week). There is no statistically significant difference for the other 17 pairs in the system of comparable parameters.

**Key words:** *Social Inclusion, Sports Activity, Social Inclusion Scale*

**Introduction**

To have the possibility and capacity for full and productive participation in economic, social and cultural life, as well as to enjoy the standard of living, that is, the welfare that is considered normal in a developed community, is to be socially involved (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). In contrast, social exclusion is a shortened term for what can happen when community members suffer from a combination of related problems such as unemployment, incompetence, low income, inadequate living conditions, poor health conditions, high crime rates and deteriorated relationships in the family (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001).

Davidson, Stayner, Nickou, Styron, and Chinman (2001) have established three dimensions of social inclusion that are related to friendship, the feeling of personal value and optimism, which leads us to the conclusion that a person can not be considered socially involved unless he is not capable to realize friendship experiences at a certain degree, to perform useful and meaningful activities in society and to hope for an even better future. However, about 11% of the adult population can be considered

socially excluded (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman, 2007), which can be a huge problem for the entire community. If such a significant part of the society is separated from the part of the population that normally lives and contributes to the community, the whole society will be harmed. Therefore, society increasingly applies interventions of any kind aimed at increasing social inclusion. The inclusion of as many people as possible in any form of activity and co-operation is shown to be a key in the recovery from mental problems, the reduction of poor mental health and the increase in mental strength (Wilson & Seckter, 2015).

Social inclusion, understood as a multi-dimensional concept, includes physical, psychological, social and professional aspects (Le Boutillier & Croucher, 2010). So, if physical activity, as we know, positively influences all these dimensions, and if we certainly know from previous research that it can positively influence mental health, and also help to recover both mentally and physically (Biddle & Asare, 2011; Mašanović, Popovic, Bjelica, Vukotic, Zoric, 2018, Masanovic, Popovic, Vukotic, 2019; Popovic, Bjelica, Masanovic, & Gardasevic, 2019), then we must use it.

The aim of this research was to determine whether there are differences in the level of social inclusion between respondents who are not at all engaged in sports activities and respondents who engage in sports and recreational activities once or twice a week.

## Methods

This study covered 60 respondents aged between 18 and 26, divided into two subsamples. The first subsample consists of 35 respondents who are not at all engaged in sports activities, while the other subsample consists of 25 respondents who engage in sports and recreational activities once or twice a week. The criterion for participating in the experiment was that the subjects were older than 18 years and that they had no health problems.

A research technique determining the level of social inclusion was a survey in which a standard questionnaire called Social Inclusion Scale was used, consisting of 18 questions divided into 3 chapters, or the scale which has three subscales that measure social isolation, social relations and social acceptance (Wilson & Secker, 2015). The scale consists of statements in which respondents choose one of the options on the Likert's scale (1: "Not at all", 2: "Not particularly", 3: "Yes a little" and 4: "Yes definitely") that best describes their relationship with other people in the past month.

Filling out the questionnaire lasted an average of 10 minutes, and respondents volunteered to participate in the research. Prior to the interview, all respondents were asked to sign an agreement confirming that they were willing to take part in it. It should be noted that the survey was anonymous and that all

responses were strictly confidential. In spite of that, the respondents were able to revoke their participation in the survey at any time to which none of them decided.

Empirical data were analyzed through a statistical package for social sciences SPSS 20.0 (Chicago, IL, USA). The descriptive statistics were expressed as a means and standard deviation for each variable. To determine the significance of differences in the degree of social involvement between groups, a t-test for small independent samples was used. The significance was set at an alpha level of 0.05.

## Results

This section presents the results of central tendency and dispersion parameters, as well as the results of t-test for independent samples, classified into tables.

Looking at the average values of the results obtained with the Social Inclusion Scale (Table 1), on average, we see positive answers in 15 out of a total of 18 questions when it comes to a group of respondents who are not at all engaged in sports activities. In the group of respondents who deal with sports-recreational activities once or twice a week, the situation is very similar, and on average, we see positive answers in 16 of the total of 18 questions. Also, we can notice that a group of respondents who are not at all engaged in sports activities have on average more positive answers to 10 of the total of 18 questions. A group of respondents who deal with sports-recreational activities once or twice a week responded positively to 8 questions from a total of 18 on average.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistical parameters for assessing the degree of social inclusion of both groups of respondents (inactive and active)

Subscale	Question	Inactive Mean±SD	Active Mean±SD
Isolation	I have felt terribly alone and isolated	1.63±.81	1.68±.80
	I have felt accepted by my friends	3.63±.55	3.48±.71
	I have been out socially with friends	3.51±.57	3.48±.65
	I have felt I am playing a useful part in society*	2.86±.88	2.92±.81
	I have friends I see or talk to every week*	3.43±.66	3.52±.82
Relations	I have felt I am playing a useful part in society*	3.11±.80	3.16±.85
	I have felt what I do is valued by others	3.26±.78	3.16±.80
	I have been to new places	2.97±.82	3.16±.85
	I have learnt something about other cultures	2.91±.82	3.04±.89
	I have been involved in a group not just for my university studies	2.63±1.00	2.44±1.08
	I have done some cultural activity	2.11±.93	2.2±1.00
	I have felt some people look down on me because of how I am	1.69±.96	2.04±.98
I have felt unsafe to walk alone in my neighbourhood in daylight	1.57±1.01	1.52±.82	
Acceptance	I have friends I see or talk to every week*	3.66±.54	3.24±.83
	I have felt accepted by my neighbours	3.60±.65	3.44±.71
	I have felt accepted by my family	3.69±.63	3.56±.77
	I have felt clear about my rights	3.34±.77	3.32±.69
	I have felt free to express my beliefs	3.29±.79	3.28±.79

Note: Mean – Arithmetic mean; SD – Standard deviation; \* – Items in more than one subscale

Based on the results shown in Table 2, it can be clearly seen that between the pairs of individual entities, a significant difference exists only in the fourteenth question (I have friends I see or talk to every week). For all other couples in the system of comparable parameters there is no

significant difference, i.e. in the other 17 questions, there is no significant difference between respondents who are not at all engaged in sports activities and respondents who engage in sports and recreational activities once or twice a week.

**Table 2.** Differences in the degree of social inclusion between inactive and active respondents

Subscale	Questions	Activity	Mean	SD	F	Sig	
Isolation	I have felt terribly alone and isolated	Inactive	1.63	.808	-.244	.808	
		Active	1.68	.802			
	I have felt accepted by my friends	Inactive	3.63	.547	.913	.365	
		Active	3.48	.714			
	I have been out socially with friends	Inactive	3.51	.658	.199	.843	
		Active	3.48	.653			
	I have felt I am playing a useful part in society*	Inactive	2.86	.879	-.282	.779	
		Active	2.92	.812			
	I have friends I see or talk to every week*	Inactive	3.43	.655	-.479	.634	
		Active	3.52	.823			
	Relations	I have felt I am playing a useful part in society*	Inactive	3.11	.796	-.213	.832
			Active	3.16	.850		
I have felt what I do is valued by others		Inactive	3.26	.780	.471	.640	
		Active	3.16	.800			
I have been to new places		Inactive	2.97	.822	-.864	.391	
		Active	3.16	.850			
I have learnt something about other cultures		Inactive	2.91	.818	-.566	.573	
		Active	3.04	.889			
I have been involved in a group not just for my university studies		Inactive	2.63	1.003	.695	.490	
		Active	2.44	1.083			
I have done some cultural activity		Inactive	2.11	.932	-.341	.735	
		Active	2.20	1.000			
I have felt some people look down on me because of how I am		Inactive	1.69	.963	-1.396	.168	
		Active	2.04	.978			
I have felt unsafe to walk alone in my neighbourhood in daylight		Inactive	1.57	1.008	.210	.835	
		Active	1.52	.823			
Acceptance		I have friends I see or talk to every week*	Inactive	3.66	.539	2.359	.022
			Active	3.24	.831		
	I have felt accepted by my neighbours	Inactive	3.60	.651	.903	.370	
		Active	3.44	.712			
	I have felt accepted by my family	Inactive	3.69	.631	.695	.490	
		Active	3.56	.768			
	I have felt clear about my rights	Inactive	3.34	.765	.119	.906	
		Active	3.32	.690			
	I have felt free to express my beliefs	Inactive	3.29	.789	.028	.978	
		Active	3.28	.792			

Note: Mean – Arithmetic mean; SD – Standard deviation; F – value of Levene's test of equality of variances; Sig - significance of two-tailed testing of arithmetic mean difference; \* - Items in more than one subscale

## Discussion

The results of this study show that physical activity is not in a positive correlation with the degree of social inclusion of young Montenegrins, which is in contrast to the majority of previous studies that clearly indicate that there is a positive impact of activities such as sports and recreation on social inclusion (Bailey, 2005; Skinner, Zakus, & Cowell, 2008; Kelly, 2011; Bjelica, Popovic, Masanovic, & Gardasevic, 2019). Nevertheless, the mentioned studies do not provide accurate data on the statistical significance of the sport's impact, which in a way suggests that we must accept their results with a dose of reserve. However, in literatures we can find the opposite results, which are somewhat in correlation with the results of this study. In other words, we can find research that negates the statistically significant influence of sports on the social inclusion

of young people, and nevertheless do not deny that some aspects of social inclusion are more positive after participating in organized sports and recreational activities (Masanovic, 2019). The inconsistencies we encounter in all previous studies lead us to conclude that this area needs to be further examined. In the end, it is interesting to mention the third group of research that indicates that any organized activity that influences the suppression of loneliness positively affects the social inclusion of the individual (Perkins, 2010), regardless of whether it is sport or any other social engagement. Most of the experts in the field of Sport Sciences will give priority to the sport, as its advantage is that besides raising social inclusion, the participants also get a positive impact on the health and quality of life, which would again mean that they solved two problems with one move (personal communication, S Popovic).

It is important to admit some of the limitations of this research. In the first place, the sample of respondents is not large enough to generalize the conclusion, so the next study should be conducted on a larger sample of respondents. The next fact is that the extent of an active group's exercise may not be sufficient to make any difference, so the next study should examine a population that daily practiced sports and recreational activities. Finally, when it comes to young people, the chance that they are socially excluded is much lower than when it comes to older people, because the feature of this age is optimism and a desire for progress and proving, and their daily schedule is filled with different activities (education, job and career, family creation and conditions for existence) that suppress the sense of social exclusion. A person who is active has lower opportunities to think about some negative aspects of life and, can not be socially excluded because, an individual can not be considered socially excluded if he does not feel socially excluded (Onken, Craig, Ridgway, Ralph, & Cook, 2007; Pinfold, 2000). This approach could certainly contribute to the quality of the results obtained, and in this way would enable more representative data on the basis of which it would gain an accurate insight into the social inclusion of young people, but would not reduce the contribution of this preliminary study.

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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