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Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska
Państwowa Szkoła Wyższa im. Papieża Jana Pawła II w Białej Podlaskiej

The Selected Aspects of the Lifestyles of the Students of Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska

Wybrane elementy stylu życia studentów Państwowej Szkoły Wyższej w Białej Podlaskiej

Summary
The study period is the time when young people shape and strengthen their habits while becoming independent. Unfortunately, numerous studies have shown that the lifestyle of students is not conducive to health. Students generally do not eat on a regular basis, do not eat breakfast and consume large amounts of fast food. Their diet is meat-dominated; they eat far too little fish, insufficient dairy products and whole grain breads. In addition, students consume large amounts of alcohol and take drugs, which is to ensure having good fun while socialising with their peers. The conducted study was designed to evaluate the lifestyle of students of the Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska in terms of nutrition, physical activity and the use of stimulants. The study involved a total of 117 third-year students of two fields of study: Public Health and Civil Engineering. These fields of study were chosen deliberately in order to compare the lifestyle of paramedic students - future health promoters, and students of an engineering field, whose courses do not include health education. The study was conducted using the diagnostic poll method and found that the respondents spend too little time doing physical activities, do not eat on a regular basis and use stimulants. However, no significant differences between the lifestyles of students of the two analysed fields were found.

Key words: lifestyle, students, nutrition, physical activity, stimulants

Streszczenie
Okres studiów to czas, kiedy młody człowiek usamodzielniając się, kształtuje i umacnia swoje nawyki. Niestety liczne badania dowodzą, że styl życia młodzieży akademickiej nie sprzyja zdrowiu. Studenci zazwyczaj nie odżywiają się regularnie, nie jedzą śniadań oraz spożywają duże ilości żywności typu fast-food. W ich diecie dominuje mięso, a zdecydowanie za mało spożywają oni ryb oraz produktów mlecznych i pełnoziarnistego pieczywa. Ponadto studenci spożywają duże ilości alkoholu, a także zażywają środki odurzające, które mają gwarantować im dobra zabawę podczas spotkań towarzyskich z rówieśnikami. Przeprowadzone badania miały na celu ocenę stylu życia studentów PSW w Białej Podlaskiej pod kątem odżywiania, aktywności fizycznej oraz stosowanych używek. W badaniu uczestniczyło łącznie 117 studentów III roku dwóch kierunków: Zdrowie Publiczne oraz Budownictwo. Celowo zostały wybrane powyższe kierunki, aby móc dokonać porównania stylu życia studentów kierunku paramedycznego-przyszłych promotorów zdrowia z kierunkiem inżynierskim, na którym nie jest prowadzona edukacja zdrowotna. Badania przeprowadzono metodą sondażu diagnostycznego. Po przeprowadzeniu badań ustalono, że respondenci zbyt mało

czasu poświęcają na aktywność fizyczną, nie odżywiają się regularnie, jak również stosują używki. Nie stwierdzono jednak istotnych różnic w stylu życia studentów obu badanych kierunków.

Słowa kluczowe: styl życia, studenci, odżywianie, aktywność fizyczna, używki

Introduction

Undoubtedly, health is the most important value in human life. It is determined by a number of interconnected factors, the most important of which is the way of life (approx. 50% of all effects). According to Andrzej Siciński, a lifestyle is the whole of everyday behaviours characteristic of an individual or a community, such a "way of being" which distinguishes between one individual or community and another (Woynarowska, 2008). Due to the fact that the lifestyle largely determines health, the following terms are often used: 'a health lifestyle', 'a healthy/unhealthy lifestyle' or 'a lifestyle conducive/hazardous to health'. Antonina Ostrowska provides two definitions of a health lifestyle. According to the first of these – a definition formulated by Cockerham – health lifestyles are "collective patterns of health-related behaviour based on choices from options available to people according to their life chances" (Ostrowska,1999). In his definition, Abel adds that apart from behavioural patterns, a health lifestyle also consist in "values and attitudes represented by people", which constitute a response to their living conditions.

Behaviours connected with health can be divided into four categories:

1. Behaviours connected with physical health: physical activity, a balanced diet, body hygiene and care for the cleanliness of the immediate environment, hardening, appropriate duration and quality of sleep;
2. Behaviours connected with psychosocial health: avoidance of and the ability to cope with stress, providing and taking advantage of social support;
3. Prophylactic behaviours: self-care, undergoing preventive health screenings, safe behaviours in everyday and sex lives;
4. Avoiding risk behaviours: limiting alcohol consumption, no smoking, no drug or other psychoactive substances use, reducing consumption of non-prescription drugs (Woynarowska, 2008).

Rational nutrition is a very important part of our lifestyle, which determines one's health. An improper number and distribution of meals throughout the day, which usually results from the lack of time and the accelerating pace of life, is a very frequent nutrition mistake. What is also important is proper composition of meals, which completely fulfils the body's energy needs and provides all nutrients necessary for optimal growth and good health maintenance. Research shows that poor nutrition may be a direct cause or a risk factor for about 30-50 diseases. The most common diseases associated with poor diet are: cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity, cancer (especially the stomach and large intestine cancer), and even osteoporosis (Ostrowska, 1999).

Physical activity is significant in prevention of many diseases. It helps to maintain a healthy weight and has a major impact on reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases, the cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis. According to the WHO, the recommended daily physical activity is a 30-minute endurance training with an intensity of 40-60% of the possible maximum.

Smoking is considered to be one of the most important risk factors for respiratory diseases, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and also has a negative effect on the fertility of both men and women. The World Health Organization has identified smoking as a leading cause of premature death. Studies show that smoking 20 cigarettes a day reduces lifespan by about five years, while smoking 40 cigarettes per day reduces it by about eight years (Ostrowska, 1999). One ought to remember that cigarette smoke harms not only smokers but also non-smokers around them. Passive smoking can equally lead to many diseases, and therefore, banning smoking in public places and specifying special spaces for that purpose was a good decision. Tobacco smoke has a particularly negative impact on children and young people, in whose case it may lead to an increased incidence of respiratory diseases. In addition, children of smokers may be characterised by decreased mental and physical development, as well as behaviour issues. Also, newborns may be exposed to the negative effects of their mothers smoking during pregnancy, which increases the risk of miscarriage or foetal death and may cause subsequent delays in physical and mental development of the child, as well as low birthweight in newborns (Zadworna-Cieślak, Ogińska-Bulik, 2011).

Similarly to smoking, excessive alcohol consumption is a major cause of premature death among both men and women. It may cause liver cirrhosis and cancer of the liver, the oesophagus, the larynx, the stomach and the oral cavity, and also increases the risk of the cardiovascular disease. Additionally, it greatly contributes to the number of deaths due to accidents, injuries and poisonings. Long-term and regular alcohol consumption can lead to an addiction. Apart from numerous and serious health problems, the negative effects of alcohol addiction involve also other problems which do not influence the addicts solely, but also their surroundings. Alcohol abuse may lead to job loss or family breakdown; therefore, it is not only a medical problem, but also an important social issue.

Material and methods

For the purposes of the research, we used our own survey questionnaire. The survey consisted of 32 questions, the first six of which are a certificate. Other questions related to student physical activity and eating habits, as well as stimulants use. The study was conducted in January 2013. The studies included third-year students of the Public Health (PH) and the Civil Engineering (CE) fields of study at the Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska. There were 66 students of the Civil Engineering field of study and 51 students of the Public Health field. The research involved a total of 117 students. The statistical chi-square test (χ^2) was used to compare the obtained results.

Results

Although students generally stated that they have enough leisure time (67% of all respondents), more than half of them do not spend it actively. Only 33.3% of the Public Health students actively spend their free time, while 66.7% prefer passive recreation. From among the students of the Civil Engineering field of study, almost half of the respondents - 48.5% - spend their time actively. The value of the $\chi 2$ statistic amounts to 2.7134, which indicates that the way students spend their spare time does not depend on the field of study (Table 1.).

Tab. 1. The manner of spending leisure time

What forms of recreation do you prefer?	In total		Public Health		Civil Engineering	
	n=117	%	n=51	%	n=66	%
active recreation	49	41.9	17	33.3	32	48.5
passive recreation	68	58.1	34	66.7	34	51.5

χ^2= 2.7134

Only 20% of the respondents engage in physical activity on a daily basis (19.6% of the PH students and 21.2% of the CE students). Only about half of the respondents dedicate more than an hour to a single exercise session (41.7% of the PH student and 61.9% of the CE students). Students most often choose to go for a walk or exercise at the gym or a health club; jogging and cycling are equally popular. Every third respondent is aware that by doing physical activity they gain health (31.3% of the PH students and 30.2% of the CE students). The respondents equally often answered that they enjoy practising sport (33.3% of the PH students and 30.2% of the CE students). The remaining students claim that they take physical exercise from force of habit, for personal satisfaction from their own fitness or to sculpt their silhouettes. The most frequently stated reason for avoiding physical exercise is laziness (43.1% of the PH students and 45.5% of the CE students), whereas health problems constitute an obstacle for merely 3% of the respondents.

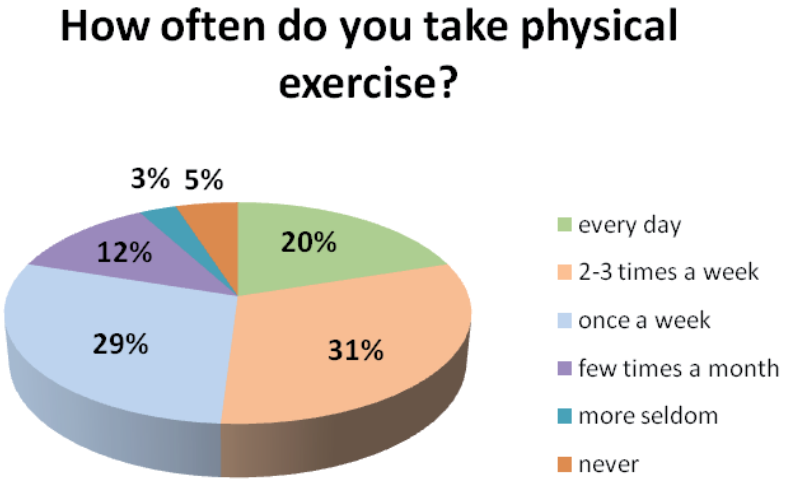


Fig. 1. The frequency of physical activity.

The vast majority of students take physical exercise at least once a week; about 20% of all the respondents (24 people) claim to be taking daily physical exercise; about 31% of the students (36 respondents) exercise twice a week; and 29% of the respondents (34 people) take physical exercise once a week. 17 people (about 15%) stated that they do sport few times a month or less, while about 5% (6 people) admit that they do not take physical exercise at all.

Students were also asked about what kind of physical activity they choose most often. They were allowed to select up to two types of physical activity that they prefer.

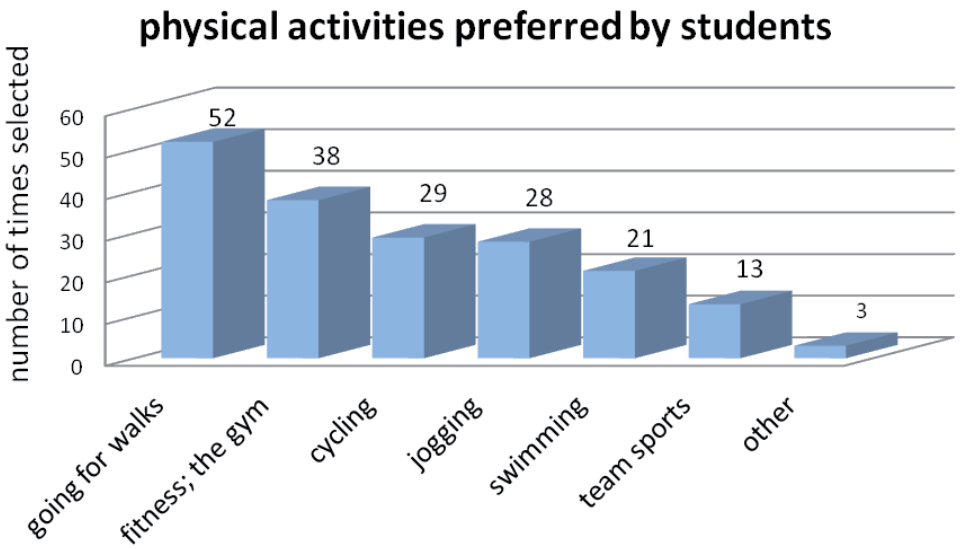


Fig. 2. Physical activities preferred by the students.

From among the listed forms of physical activity, the students most frequently choose walking (selected by 52 students) and gym exercises or fitness/aerobics classes (selected 38 times). Jogging and cycling are also quite popular (selected by 28 and 29 students). Swimming was selected by 21 respondents, while team games are the least popular among the students (selected by 13 students). They were also allowed to specify other forms of physical activity that they undertake. Three people took advantage of this possibility and added: horse riding (2 people) and martial arts (1 person).
In order to assess students' diets, questions regarding eating regular meals and having breakfast were included. The frequency of fruits and vegetables, dairy products and fish consumption was also analysed.

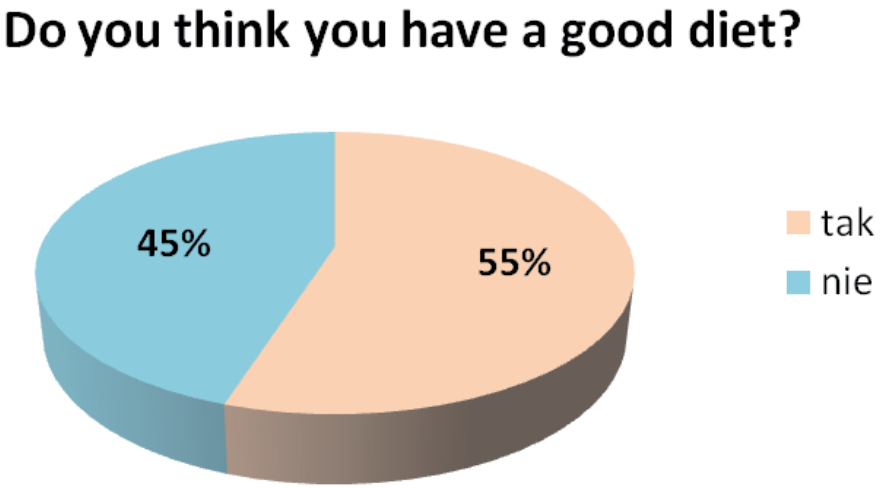


Fig. 3. Students' evaluation of their own diets

More than half of the respondents claim that they eat properly (about 55%) - 58.8% of the Public Health students and 51.5% of the Civil Engineering students. Other students admit that their nutrition models are not rational.

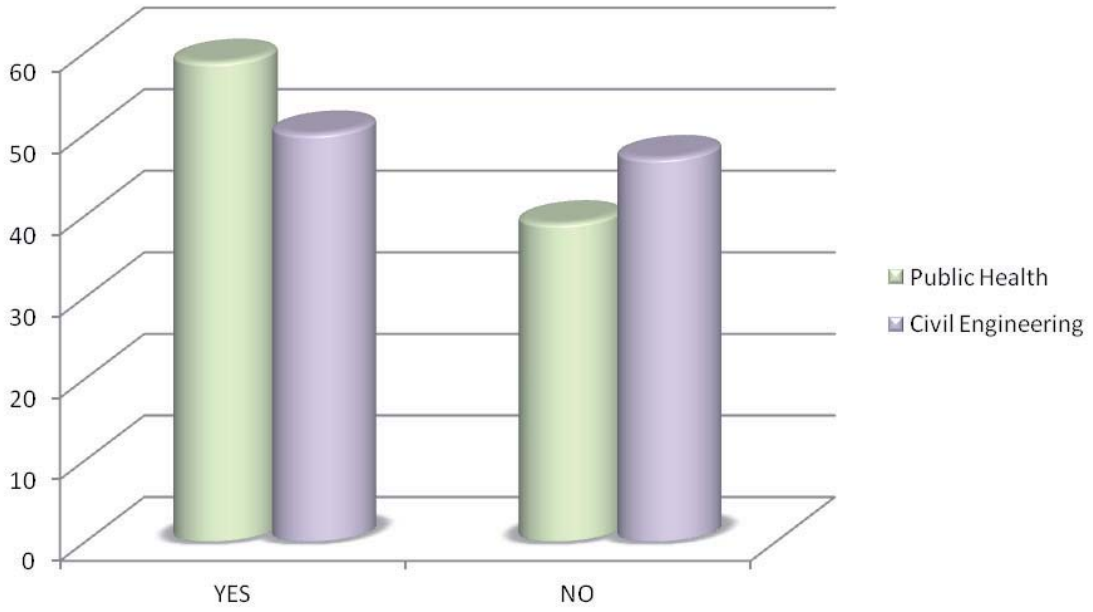


Fig. 4. Student evaluation of their own diets in regard to field of study (in %).

Most of the students consume between 3 and 5 meals a day (66.7% of the PH students and 80.3% of the CE students), but usually they are not regular. Almost half of the respondents think that it is their daily schedule that prevents them from eating regular meals; and 12.1% of the Civil Engineering students (6.8% of all respondents) believe that eating regular meals is not an essential aspect of having a healthy diet. No correlation between the regularity of meals and the field of study at a significance level of 0.05 has been found (Table 2).

Tab. 2. Do you eat meals regularly?

Do you eat meals regularly?	**In total**		**Public Health**		**Civil Engineering**	
	n=117	**%**	**n=51**	**%**	**n=66**	**%**
Yes	52	44.4	27	52.9	25	37.9
No, my daily schedule doesn't allow it	57	48.7	24	47.1	33	50.0
No, I don't think it's important	8	6.8	0	0.0	8	12.1

χ^2= 2.6434

Although slightly more than half (55%) of respondents think that they eat properly, only 47% of them eat breakfast on a daily basis, and 21% say that they do not eat breakfast because they have no appetite in the mornings. The vast majority of respondents admit snacking between meals (72.5% of the PH students and 78.8% of the CE students).

Those who admitted snacking between meals were asked to give the most frequently chosen snacks. They were asked to select up to two answers.

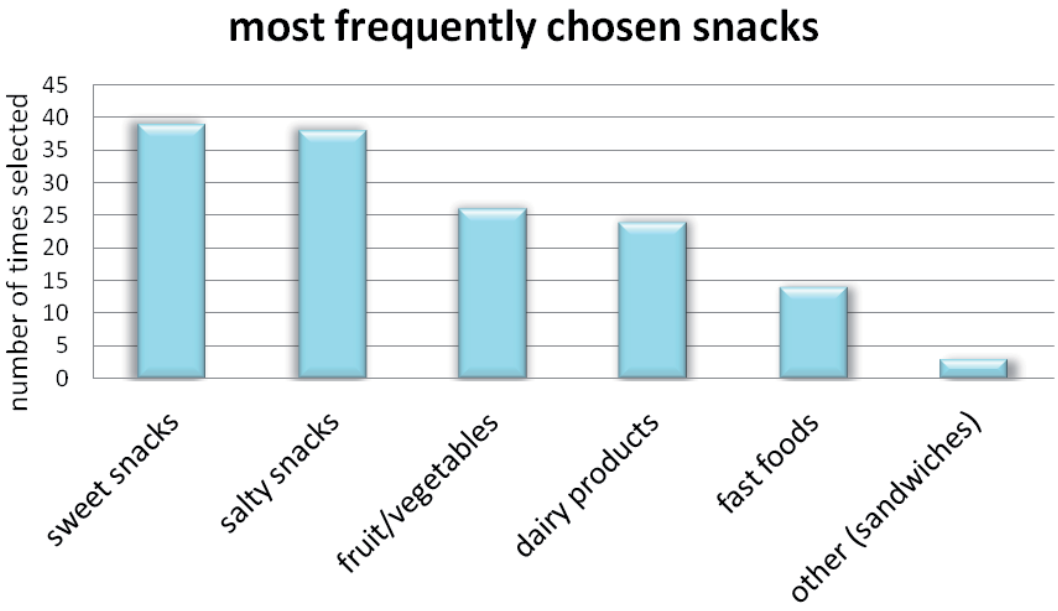


Fig. 5. The most frequently chosen snacks.

Snacks that are most frequently chosen by the students include sweet buns, candy bars and biscuits, as well as salty snacks such as crisps or salty sticks. Second most frequently chosen group of snacks are fruits, vegetables and dairy products. Only 9.7% of the students eat fast foods between meals. Respondents could also give other answers - an option chosen by only three people, who have sandwiches as snacks between meals.

Daily consumption of fruits and vegetables was declared by only 32.5% of the respondents (35.3% of the PH students and 30.3% of the CE students), while majority of the respondents eat fruits and vegetables several times a week. This is not an acceptable amount as the recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption suggest at least 700g a day. The situation concerning the consumption of milk and dairy products is very similar. They are consumed on daily basis by 31.6% of the respondent (33.3% of the PH students and 30.3% of the CE students), and by 55.6% of the respondents a few times a week. The diet of some individuals does not include dairy products at all. Low fish consumption rate is worrying - as many as 17.1% of the respondents (13.7% of the PH students and 19.7% of the CE students) do not eat fish at all, and a vast majority (61%) consume fish very rarely.

Every fourth respondent admitted to smoking cigarettes, with greater percentage of smokers among the Civil Engineering students - 27.3%, and a lower one among the Public Health students - 17.6% ($\chi^2 = 1.5016$). Students usually smoke about 20 cigarettes a day - 44.4% of the smokers, while 14.8% smoke up to 5 cigarettes a day. Most frequently the students reach for a cigarette in stressful situations (37%) and during social meetings (30%). About 26% of the respondents are habitual smokers. None of them believes that their immediate environment (friends and family) causes them to smoke cigarettes.

Almost all students (94.9%) admitted to drinking alcohol in different amounts. Only 5.1% (9.8% of the PH students, 1.5% of the CE students) are teetotallers. The fact that 16.2% of the respondents drink alcohol every day, and as many as 34.2% (35.3% of the PH students and 33.3% of the CE students) consume alcohol several times a week is disturbing. The most common occasion for students to consume alcohol are discos and meetings with friends (71.2% of the respondents in total), with 18% of the respondents drinking alcohol only on special occasions. Over 10% of the respondents admit to drinking alcohol alone, and the fact that most of them also admit to daily consumption of alcoholic beverages is worrying. Almost half of the respondents (41.3% of the PH students and 50.8% of the CE students) admit that they sometimes get drunk, while 44.1% of the respondents claim that they drink only symbolic amounts. Only few individuals stated that they often get drunk, but there were people who stated that they always drink till they drop. Beer and vodka were found to be the most popular alcohols among the student-respondents.

Drug use is quite popular among the students. As many as 33% of the students have tried drugs. 42.4% of the Civil Engineering students admitted having tried drugs; the percentage is much lower in case of the Public Health students - 21.6%. Currently, 17.6% of the Public Health students and 31.8% of the Civil Engineering students take drugs (Table 3).

Tab. 3. Drug use among students.

Do you take drugs?	**In total**		**Public Health**		**Civil Engineering**	
	n=117	%	n=51	%	n=66	%
Yes	30	25.6	9	17.6	21	31.8
No	87	74.4	42	82.4	45	68.2

χ^2= 3.03017702

As the reasons for trying drugs, the students enumerated mostly curiosity and desire to have fun, and the most popular drug among the respondents is marijuana. The fact that most of the people who tried drugs in the past are still taking them now is alarming.

Discussion

The results show an unsatisfactory picture of the students of the Pope John Paul II State School of Higher Education in Biała Podlaska. The students take physical exercise far too rarely, do not have proper eating habits, and tobacco, alcohol and drugs are surprisingly common among them.

Almost half of the students exercise less than twice a week, while the daily level of physical activity recommended by the WHO is at least a 30-minute endurance training. Reduced levels of physical activity often result from laziness and lack of time. Similar results were obtained in a research conducted by D. Piaszczyk among students of Information Technology and Tourism and Recreation of the same school (Piaszczyk, 2005) - majority of the students dedicated merely 2-3 hours a week to exercise.

Students do not eat on a regular basis, and only 47% eat breakfast every day. Students do not eat enough fruits, vegetables and dairy products. According to the dietary guidelines, these products should be included in daily diet. Only every third respondent follows these recommendations. Low fish consumption rate is also alarming. More than half of them eat fish very rarely, and 17% do not eat them at all. Similar results were obtained in a study conducted by D. Piaszczyk, according to which students consume very little dairy products and fish, and eat large quantities of meat (Piaszczyk, 2005).

Almost every fourth respondent admitted to smoking cigarettes, with more smokers among the Civil Engineering students. However, no relationship between cigarette smoking and the field of study was found. These differences may result from the fact that the Public Health field of study is dominated by female students, whereas the Civil Engineering field is male-dominated. The available literature on the subject indicates that men are more likely to engage in risky behaviours. The defined percentage of smokers was lower than that specified in previous studies - 26% of the respondents were daily smokers (Piaszczyk, 2005) - which may indicate that cigarette smoking is slowly becoming less popular. In both studies, the majority of students smoked about 20 cigarettes a day, and the most common cause of reaching for a cigarette was stress.

Almost all students (95%) drink alcohol - at different occasions and in different quantities. Beer is the most frequent of choices. The fact that some students admit to drinking alcohol every day and to drinking alone, which may quickly lead to addiction, is very disturbing. Similar results were obtained in a study conducted by D. Piaszczyk. At that time, about 91% of the respondents admitted to drinking alcohol.

The obtained research results regarding drug use were very surprising. Every third respondent admitted to having tried drugs. Although the main reason for trying drugs was curiosity, as many as 70% of the people who once reached for drugs continue taking them now.

Although the Civil Engineering students admitted to smoking cigarettes and drug use that those of Public Health, the conducted statistical analysis showed no relationship between these behaviours and the field of study. Similarly, the differences in the frequency of physical activity and dietary habits do not suggest that the Public Health students lead a healthier lifestyle. The lack of a clear correlation may indicate that health education should begin much earlier. The habits and preferences of young people starting their college education are often already developed. Changing health behaviours despite increasing health consciousness is therefore not easy to achieve.

Conclusions

Analysis of the research results leads to the following conclusions:

1. The students spend little time in physical activity, and only a small percentage of them declare their physical activity level to be in line with the WHO recommendations.
2. Although students believe that they have healthy diets, they usually do not eat regularly, do not eat breakfast, and the frequency of fish consumption is much lower than recommended.
3. Almost one in four respondents smoke cigarettes.
4. Nearly all students consume alcohol (mainly beer), and the most common occasions for drinking are meetings with friends.

5. Every third respondent admitted having tried drugs, and one in four to be still taking them.
6. There were no significant differences between the lifestyle of Public Health students and that of Civil Engineering students; although Civil Engineering students more often admitted to smoking cigarettes and taking drugs than those of Public Health.

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