

### Effects of sport in resocialization of minors

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*Article by early stage researcher*

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## **EFFECTS OF SPORT IN RESOCIALIZATION OF MINORS**

**Abstract:** The author of the article presents the influence of physical activities on socially maladjusted youth, on the basis of desk research analysis, as well as using personal observations conducted during serving as a probation officer for a period of two years. The observations were conducted on a group of 11 male and female minors advised physical activities, as one of the means of influence in the process of resocialization. The article focuses on two social environments, where the resocialization process may take place – the open environment and the institutional environment.

The author presents the process of resocialization, its goals, methods used in it, and the reasons why this process is so significant.

The aim of the article is to show the changes occurring in the behaviour of young and socially maladjusted people as a result of participating in sports activities. The author's final conclusions indicate the positive effects of physical activity as a means of influence.

**Keywords:** sports, physical activity, resocialization, minors, data analysis, observation.

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## Introduction

Sports are currently not only a form of physical activity and measure of interactions used in schools, youth clubs, kindergartens, and day-care centers. Sport is more and more often used in the process of resocialization.

Resocialization according to Kalinowski (2008) is "... a variety of the education process that turns an individual who is ill-adapted to the requirements of social life into a re-socialized individual, i.e. socialized, independent and creative." (P.235)

On the other hand, a pedagogue Lesław Pytka (2008), perceives resocialization as a process taking place on many levels and proposes the following take on the process:

- resocialization as modification of behaviors
- resocialization as change of social affiliation
- resocialization perceived as an emotional change
- resocialization as growth in culture
- resocialization as a process of shaping correct social attitudes
- resocialization as a process of adapting to life situations
- resocialization as a return to higher values
- resocialization perceived as reintegration of a person
- resocialization as a process of self-education.

Resocialization is a process undergone by socially ill-adapted people who remain in various types of corrective institutions or people who are only starting to lean towards the path of social maladjustment. This process aims to introduce changes in social relations and cognitive structures that guide people in their lives (Konopczyński 2015). The process of resocialization can cover both minors and adults, however, the author wishes to focus in this article on the use and effect of sports on resocialization of the first of these groups. People undergoing resocialization are usually socially dysfunctional and demonstrate behavior inconsistent with the generally prevailing social principles and norms.

According to O. Lipkowski (1971), we refer to a person as a socially maladjusted in the context of a person who, due to their characterological disturbances caused by unfavourable external or internal development conditions, is expressing increased and long-term difficulties in adjusting to normal social conditions and carrying out life tasks. (P. 36)

In the case of minors, social dysfunction is most often a sign of rebellion or inability to cope with the reality, however, it is a situation in which resocialization has the largest probability of success, especially if this process is conducted in an interesting and accessible form, for example sports, rather than orders, prohibitions or in the form of penalties, with which resocialization is often associated.

The explanation of the author's above conclusions can be found in Richard Jessor's *Problem Behavior Theory*. In his theory, Jessor defines problem behaviours as behaviours inconsistent with generally accepted attitudes and social

norms, which in consequence, may trigger a desire for social control in the form of punishments, reprimands, rejection and even deprivation of liberty.

This theory draws attention to the importance of problem behaviours in the case of behaviour of children and adolescents and attempts to achieve the goals and needs that are important to them, and their fulfilment or implementation in a socially acceptable way and in accordance with generally accepted norms seems impossible. The author of the theory refers to the fact that risky behaviours may be a reaction to frustration, incompetence and inability to deal with something, and at the same time an attempt to integrate with peers who face similar problems.

Sport is “an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment.” (Definition sport [-]). Various sports are discussed as a physical activity, the effect of which is by many specialists considered to be much more effective than pharmacology – both in terms of the body and the mind.

Studies concerning the effectiveness of physical activity as a substitute of medication have been carried out by various researchers, including American psychologist James Blumenthal, PhD, and his team at Duke University in North Carolina. The researchers conducted a series of studies comparing the effectiveness of aerobic exercise with medication based on sertraline, one of the most common SSRIs. The research subjects were 156 patients with signs and symptoms of depression. Depending on the group, patients were treated with either sertraline-based medication, group exercise three times a week, or a combination of both forms of therapy. After four months, it was found that the patients exhibited no significant differences in results of therapy. This indicates that physical activity is as efficient as antidepressant medication (Depresja: leki czy ćwiczenia fizyczne? [-]).

Similarly, according to Polish dietitian and psychologist Paulina Owsieńska (2016), “(...) among people who exercise regularly, those who suffer from depression or anxiety disorders constitute a far smaller group than among people who do not exercise at all.”

Research concerning the effectiveness of sport as a replacement of pharmacological treatment has also been conducted at the London School of Economics, Harvard Medical School, and Stanford University School of Medicine, where scientists compared the results of both types of treatment in conditions such as heart failure and diabetes, as well as regeneration of the brain after a stroke. The results encompassed 305 studies carried out on 339,274 people. The studies showed that medication and physical activity produce similar results in patients with diabetes and mild heart disease. The effectivity of exercise was the highest in patients recovering from a stroke. Medication proved more effective in patients suffering from heart failure. (Karpińska 2013)

Sports practiced responsibly and reasonably yield incredible benefits to people at every age – from kindergarten children, whom sports allow

to expend their energy, to elderly people who can do more calm sports to remain fully agile until late old age.

According to J. Kupczyk (1976), sports activities significantly shape personality traits: order exercises help to develop the habit of discipline, group exercises and classes give the opportunity to develop collective skills, and difficult exercises, for example on specially designed machines, strengthen the sense of courage and determination.

Jerzy Pośpiech (2003) recalls the positive goals of participation in sports activities and their impact on life, which, apart from striving for winning, wanting to break records, becoming better and better, also shape the character as well as civic and moral development and all this is a consequence of physical activities.

In turn, Żukowska (2002) presents sport as a “carrier” of autotelic values that can give a chance for self-fulfilment, especially in social communication, and can become a permanent element of a healthy lifestyle or a source of life’s joy.

## Method

The author of the text would like to focus on the advantages of sports, especially within the behaviour, since those are the benefits that are the most valuable and desirable in the resocialization process.

In connection with the above research, i.e. “all that contributes to social reality” are the changes that sports activities trigger in a person, with particular attention to the youth. (Dudkiewicz 1996).

The author’s considerations are based on detailed review of specialist literature and information published by institutions undertaking rehabilitative activities. In connection with the above, for the needs of the article, the author used desk research, with the support of non-structured observations of the author conducted during the two-year probation officer’s service, modeled on Odrowaz-Coates (2015 2016) auto-ethnographic research paradigm.

The aim of the desk research analysis is to get acquainted with and present the effects of practising various types of sports activities on human behaviour. However, thanks to personal observation, the author wants to examine what changes have taken place in an 11-member youth group that was advised sports activities as part of resocialization process.

Desk research is a method based on using already existing information, messages or research – in the case of the article: official documents, namely registers, actuarial data, mass media, or documents of a particular institution. (Emerling [-]) The article also uses results of research conducted by sociologists, psychologists and educators, concerning the impact of sports.

Moreover the method of observation is also used. The method of observation “is a way of collecting data through observing. Observation data collection method is classified as a participatory study because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are, while taking notes and/or recording.” (Research-methods, qualitative-research, observation, [-])

The author uses qualitative research. According to Teresa Bauman (1995), this kind of research is used, when:

- we want to look closely at practices in their context, when we want to get to know them as they are rather than ascertain whether they are consistent with our opinion about them - the examined phenomenon is “sensitive”, concerns problems recognized by the surveyed as intimate, private (...),
- the examined people are either - individuals with high degree of self-awareness with highly-developed ability to articulate the examined problems, or - when they are unable to express their views on the topic that is the point of interest for the researcher. (P.57)

The author of the text decided to use qualitative research to get a chance for an in-depth examination of the phenomenon in its true form, without personal prejudices or previous hypotheses.

The author, during her service as a probation officer - from March 2016 to March 2018, observed changes occurring in the case of 11 juveniles thanks to sports activities.

## **Main argument**

Based on author's personal experience, obtained whilst working with young offenders and with children at risk, an argument can be formed that sport plays an important part in the process of socialization and re-socialization (social rehabilitation). Social awkwardness among children and teenagers in the present times is a growing social problem that leads to an increased need for preventive actions or, even worse, rehabilitative actions.

It should be noted that resocialization is currently not a penal system, but a number of educational, pedagogical and often psychological activities.

The process of resocialization may take place in the open environment as well as in an appropriate institution the minor is currently staying at. Institutions where the resocialization process is conducted in the open environment include Voluntary Labor Corps, probation officer's supervision, attendance centers, streetworkers, namely the so-called street educators, or various types of therapeutic facilities. These are institutions tasked with carrying out the resocialization process without depriving the minor of the possibility to spend time in his natural environment. This type of activities are carried out by the Powiślańska Foundation located in Warsaw. Its actions are based on helping young people in many aspects of life - starting from doing homework, feeding, to organising sports activities for its pupils – eg kayaking or football. Thanks to the activities carried out by the foundation, children and young people who are at risk of social maladjustment have the opportunity to obtain



the necessary support of qualified specialists, use organised forms of activities including sports, develop their interests and skills and spend free time in a constructive way.

If the minor is unwilling to cooperate in the open environment or if his deprivation and dysfunction are so destructive and dangerous for both him and for the society, he is usually admitted to locked-down rehabilitation centers, where the resocialization process is also carried out, albeit in a different manner. In this case, resocialization takes place in the institutional environment, where example may be set by a rehabilitation facility, a juvenile shelter, or various types of therapeutic centers. (Śliwa 2013) As an example of a closed centre, one can mention the Youth Educational Centre in Kalety, which in its educational activities, is strongly oriented towards sport. The pupils of the centre have the opportunity to play football, volleyball or try sailing. The centre organises various types of sports tournaments, competitions and Sports Days for its pupils

Resocialization through sports is more and more often the form of work with socially dysfunctional minors. Since the positive impact of sports on the body and mind of a human being has been confirmed, more and more both open and locked-down rehabilitation centers decide to invest in such a form of work with minors. Clubs, centers and facilities more and more often establish improvised gyms, sports fields and gymnasiums. Sports clubs are created, and tournaments, camps, and sports summer camps are organized.

A common reason for minors acting out and, as a consequence, for their need to undergo the resocialization process is the excess of free time. Spending time in inappropriate, unproductive ways entices the youth to engage in serious rowdy behaviors, guided by irresponsible ideas, often non-conforming to the generally accepted social norms. In institutions, minors are taught alternative ways to spend their time, ways to develop their skills and passions, as well as to expend negative emotions through sports. It is significant that the youth in both open and locked-down rehabilitation centers is not left alone, and sports activities are conducted under the watchful eye of educators, so that they would carry as much positive aspects as possible and, at the same time, be fully safe and educational.

When exploring information and reports made available by various kinds of facilities and relying on professional knowledge, the author noticed that team sports are activities most often used in resocialization.

It is not difficult to conclude that it is not a coincidence, but the specific intention aimed at achieving significant goals in the resocialization process.

The author, using her observations during the two-year service as a probation officer, had the opportunity to observe the changes occurring in clients directed to sports activities. All clients were encouraged to participate in sports activities in open centres and foundations. Changes in their behaviour were observable after about two months of participation in the classes. All clients attended mixed group classes - volleyball, swimming, water sports, such as canoes, sailing, football – at least once a week.

The author, observing the behaviour of clients during her visits and when interviewing all the pupils, noticed positive changes their behaviour, even for clients who were initially negative about the idea of participating in classes. Clients have become more composed, open-minded, joyful and chatty, eagerly talked about classes, new acquaintances and achieved results. The author also observed that by allowing to practice certain sport, the probation officer gives the opportunity to achieve success, increase self-confidence and one's abilities, which in turn, has a positive effect on the juvenile's attitude to the officer as the person whose real task is to help.

Juveniles motivated by the positive impact of sport and the physical progress they achieved were more open to other remarks and changes that the probation officer sees as appropriate in the resocialization process. It also shows the positive impact of sports activities on interpersonal relations. During the observation, it was noticeable that sport was a factor causing the well-being of a socially rehabilitated person. (Baranowski 2017)

## Overview of previous studies

In this literary review one will find an overview of research studies dedicated to socialization and re-socialization through sport to enrich the argument and embed it in appropriate literature. One of the most important goals of the resocialization process is socialization, namely re-adaptation of the charge to living in the society and observing the generally accepted roles and norms.

The impact of sports on both the abovementioned processes has been the subject of research of many scientists, sociologists and psychologists for many years. The first studies on the effect of sports on the process of socialization were undertaken as early as the 1950s, but this kind of research consisted of non-theoretical correlation-based analyses presenting comparative statistics of people who practice sports and those who do not practice sports. (Sports and socialization [-])

A breakthrough in the research on socialization through sports was introduced by McCormack and Chalip in 1988 in the article, where they demonstrated errors in the past studies on sports in socialization and presented important, albeit previously omitted conclusions of their studies – sports are a social structure, the impact of sports on the person depends on the social and cultural context, implications of sports are integrated with other events in a man's life and, consequently, the results may have different effects, and practicing sports is not only the process socialization itself but everything that comprises it, such as making choices and decisions. (Sports and socialization [-])

The revolution introduced by McCormack and Chalip resulted in the initiation of new research on the role of sports in socialization, the results of which were as follows:

- sports offer to its participants both positive and negative social experiences,



- the meaning people ascribe to sports depends on the situational context, on race, gender, ethnic origin, is associated with age, social status, and skills or lack thereof – it should also be remembered that all the above factors change in the course of a human's life, depending on changes taking place in his life,

- socialization takes place through interactions, which are an element of sports and any social activity,

- socialization through sports is strongly related to the matters of identity of a given person. (Sports and socialization [-])

Both older and more current research often proved that sports are a tool that plays an important role in the socialization process, but may have different effects, depending on factors related to different aspects of human life and environmental aspects.

However, research shows that sports definitely prompt the discovery of one's identity and help establish interpersonal interactions. A confirmation of the above conclusion was presented in Wheelock/Boston Youth Sports Initiative 2010, where it was ascertained “that quality sport programs can help to develop and maintain healthy relationships amongst youth.” (What is the role of sports in socialization 2017).

Sports are also a tool that enables finding “(...) a way to break gender stereotypes, enhancing their sense of possibility”, as stated by Rosewater. In the opinion of Rosewater, sports may also not have an entirely positive impact on minors, as it causes formation of alternative social groups, where socially undesirable behaviors also have a chance to form, such as alcohol consumption. However, she emphasizes that “some studies also show that teens participating in sports report lower use of alcohol than those who are not involved in sports activities”, which is definitely a favorable and desired phenomenon in the resocialization process, for which alcohol consumption by minors is a frequent reason. (What is the role of sports in socialization 2017)

Sociologists Evagelia Boli, Dragan Popovic and Jasna Popovic, in their book *Influence of Sports on Resocialization of Juvenile Delinquents* (2017), examine the impact of sports on juvenile and underage criminals. The purpose of the study was to define the personality of a given person, the impact of cognitive, both normal and pathological, factors as well as the degree of involvement of a given minor in sports and his attitude towards sports. They assume that the attitude of a young person is his potential activity, which enables selection of the most adequate type of sport for the particular person and thus allows for making the resocialization process conducted towards him more effective. (Boli, Popovic, Popovic 2017)

In their research, they demonstrate that sports can be a desired tool in the resocialization process. However, they emphasize that, as every process in human life, resocialization through sports should also be considered individually and separately for each minor, so that it would have the greatest possibility of success and effectiveness.

Studies on the impact of sports on the process of resocialization and rehabilitation were undertaken by Vesna Šendula-Jengiđ, Tihana Dominić, Jelena Hodak,

Gordan Bošković, Dijana Beg, in their book *Ethics and Sports in Rehabilitation and Resocialization of Persons with Mental Illness* (2011), where they focused on the impact of sports on resocialization of people with mental problems, struggling with aggression, depression and symptoms of various anxieties.

The research was conducted twice – before introduction of physical activity into the lives of the examined people and after 6 weeks of practicing sports. The research proved a significant and positive impact of sports on changes in the functioning of the examined people, which contributes to improving the mood, the attitude towards reality, minimizes features of depression, reduces aggression, and improves both the process of mental rehabilitation and resocialization.

Sona Srobarova (2013) undertook research in the area of social work, emergency intervention and resocialization, where one of the elements of work is the impact of sports, more precisely team games, including group playtime and dance, on the abovementioned processes. In her research, Srobarova presents a significant relationship between physical activity of the charge and observation of mobility processes of the individual. In her opinion, this allows both the researcher and the examined person himself to learn his needs and emotional status, which, in turn, improves and steers the process of therapy and resocialization. The author of the research also indicates the significant aspect of dance as a sports activity which enables dealing with internal conflict, aggression, mental pain, stress, pressure, and most importantly - allows for doing it in a safe and socially acceptable way and, at the same time, controlling impulsive behaviors. (Srobarova 2013)

Anung Priambodo, Farida Nurhayati and Jurusan Pendidikan Olahraga, in their publication entitled *The Effect of Baseball Sports Towards the Social Behaviors of Neglected Children and Street Children in Vio Baseball Club Surabaya* (2017), examined the impact of sports, more precisely baseball, on neglected youth and the so-called “street children” in Vio Baseball Club Surabaya.

The research was conducted for the period of 3 months – from September until November of 2016, and covered 30 people, including neglected children and boys from grades 5-7 from Vio Baseball Club Surabaya.

The results of research conducted by Priambodo, Nurhayati and Pendidikan (2017) indicate a substantial impact of sports on social behaviors, especially among neglected and socially dysfunctional children and teenagers, and present sports – in this case baseball – as an alternative model of resocialization of unwanted and socially unacceptable behaviors.

Studies on the impact of sports on the process of socialization and resocialization in the institutional environment were undertaken by Robert Poklek, Ph.D. (2012), who rather than focusing on the impact of sports on resocialization itself, focuses on specific forms of social activity and its effect of people staying in closed rehabilitation facilities, since it is unquestionable that physical activity is a necessary means for achieving a resocialization effect. (Sidor 2001) The research of Poklek (2012) covered 939 prisoners from 20 institutions.

Conclusions resulting from the research indicate that not every sport prac-

ticed in the institutional environment has a positive effect on inmates. The researcher included in sports that increase aggression and cause hazards, hindering the resocialization process, any type of weight training that does not shape social skills but rather increase strength, and it was noticed that they are often also the reason for increased aggression. On the other hand, desired sports presented by the author include any type of team sports and selectively chosen individual sports, such as badminton, tennis, athletics, and gymnastics. (Poklek 2012) One of the significant conclusions of the research conducted by Poklek is that a negative result of weight training was definitely less visible when inmates practicing weight trainings also took part in team sports. This indicates a possibility of eliminating the negative effects of weight training through team sports, among others by reducing aggression and negative feelings. What is important, as emphasized by Poklek, is that the degree of isolation of the examined people is of no greater importance for the study of dependencies, since the examined people came both from locked-down and semi-open rehabilitation centers.

The impact of sports on socialization and social skills is the subject of research undertaken by Sopa Ioan-Sabin (2014) and Pomohaci Marcel (2014). The results of the conducted research were presented in the publication *Socialization Through Sports, Effects of Team Sports on Students at Primary Level*.

Sabin and Pomohaci attempted to examine the impact of team sports on the process of socialization of primary school students. The results of the conducted research demonstrate an important role of team sports in the process of socialization of an individual. Team sports provide more opportunities for development, both physical and social. Through social interaction during team games, the individual has the opportunity to confront his own psychosocial attitudes with motivations, opinions, patterns, attitudes, beliefs, moods, and feelings of other participants of the game. As a result, the game participants can set goals of the group together, correlate with each other and learn from each other.

Group activity and sports competition give an opportunity to gain self-confidence, learn new forms of relations and cooperation, ways to express one's potential, feelings and emotions in a manner acceptable by the rest of the society.

Results of the research of Sabin and Pomohaci (2014) demonstrate an important role of sports, especially team sports, in social integration and adoption of values, norms and roles prevailing in a given society.

## Conclusions

The article presents changes regarding falling in love of a socially maladjusted person as a result of practising physical activities. Using the method of desk research and observations conducted during the two-year probation officer's service, the author presents the results of research enquiry into this issue. The research works, on which the author's deliberations are based, cover both studies from the 1950s and the 1980s, as well as more current analysis made in the 21st century. The article presents the positive impact of sport on various areas of human life, with particular emphasis on changes in the area of behaviour, which change in the process of social resocialization is extremely important.

The results of the research form a clear conclusion that Sport is a remedy, when used in the rehabilitation process, often yields positive and highly desired effects.

Sports not only improve the body but also have a positive effect on the mind. The quoted research demonstrates that sport is an activity that allows for development of personal attitudes, motivations and beliefs, at the same time teaching cooperation with others. Thanks to sports, young people gain self-confidence, improve their potential, learn to express their feelings, desires and emotions in a generally acceptable manner and with respect for the social principles, which is important in the resocialization process.

All the above aspects significantly and positively affect on human behavior, which is important in the resocialization process.

Sport offers alternative and useful ways of spending free time, shape character, teach how to pursue the set goals, while at the same time maintaining healthy competition. Participation in sports, especially during group activities, makes the minor realize the dependence of an individual upon the rest of the group, teaches cooperation, respect for individualism and the opinion of others, and, at the same time, teaches how to fulfill their own motivations in a manner that does not collide with the goals of the rest of the group.

The principles prevailing during sports activities can be transposed by the young person onto social coexistence, so that he could live according to his own values and morals, whilst at the same time respecting the roles and norms generally adopted by the society.

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