

# **As parents see physical education (PE) from a representative survey's point of view**

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These days, sport - as a leisure activity - is rather neglected in the life of children (Keresztes, Pluhár & Pikó, 2003). Schools play the most significant part in educating children in this field (Goleman, 1997). Since introducing every day PE lessons in September 2012 in an uplining system (grades 1, 5, 9) sport in schools once again earned a prominent role, however in choosing a sport parents have the greatest influence on children (Tari-Keresztes, 2009). As for the students, beyond getting committed towards the chosen sport, the loving-kindness of their PE teacher is also very determining (Mikulán, 2013). According to the badinage method (Howes, 2000) relationship with significant adults (teachers) creates a higher level of motivation towards school-work in the children. In terms of sport habits of the children, the physical activity and the opinion of their parents about sports, greatly influences them (Stucky-Ropp & DiLorenzo, 1993).

In our research, we have made a survey amongst the adult population (by filling in a questionnaire), within a research (Omnibusz) of the TÁRKI Social-research Association ZRT. The split of their address is as follows: 18% live in a county-shire city, 34% of them in cities, 30% in a civil parish and 18% of them in Budapest. (55% women, 45% men)

The aim of our research was to get an answer from the parents to find out if a positive opinion about sports (and the introduction of every day PE lessons) appears as a predetermination. We wished to know how important parents consider the love of their children towards PE and in what extend they see a role of their PE teacher in the prevalence of their sport activities.

70% of the parents proved right the need of introducing every day PE lessons and also considered important the role of PE teachers in the prevalence of their children's sport activities. They also found it important (73.5%) that their children should like PE as a subject. Significant differences are shown in the split of addresses (smaller

places with tighter attitude) and in the prevalence of sport activity in the childhood.

By these results it can be confirmed that the positive attitude of parents in every day PE does have a positive, predetermining influence on the increase of children's physical activity.

## *Introduction*

Sport as a free time activity does not have a significant role in the lives of the students. Many researches approach the question how it would be possible to improve the sport activities of the children, to increase the occasions of sport activities out with PE lessons, as many researches prove how dangerous physical inactivity can be. It is well known that doing sport activities have a positive effect both on physical and mental state of the children. Aszmann's research (2003) proves that we do not live a healthy life, although everyone considers it as the most important value in our lives. The health state of the Hungarian young adults is much worse than those young people living elsewhere in Europe (Huszár & Bogár, 2006).

The first fields, where this knowledge can be provided are the educating facilities /schools/ which is already proved in Goleman's research (1997) which says, teaching healthy lifestyle based on family education, must be established in schools. Since September 2012, there is a chance of practicing this within the every-day PE lessons. Through this, school sports once again have gained a rather important role as a subject, by which help the task of teaching a healthy lifestyle in the school is also higher prioritised. The role of a teacher has also been overthought as the expectations towards them have significantly increased (both from parents and head-teachers).

The role of parents at this age is still unquestionable, although according to Piaget (1993) children by this time are led by „double ethic”. The adults respect and accept the norms showed by the children, on the other hand, children of the same age have their own constructed rules, where friends give their reference frames. The effects of parents are still very important, as they influence them in the regularity as well as choosing sports and sport activities; furthermore they have a positive influence on their physical activity behaviour (Tari-Keresztes, 2009; Baker et al., 2000; Humpel et al., 2002).

In our examination we would like to find out how parents feel about the necessity of every-day PE lessons from 2012, the importance of liking the subject and whether they consider the role of the teachers in terms of the regularity of their children's sport activities.

## *Theoretical background*

### *Sport habits of the youngsters*

Two third of the children do not do any sports. 50% of those who are not active sportsmen do nothing or only have 1-2 hours of physical activity a week (Keresztes, Pluhár & Pikó, 2003). The necessity of living a healthy lifestyle does not appear as an expectation in the forming of youngsters' approach. Sport habits are according to the norms and value system of the society (Cashmore, 1990), whereas there are major differences within the society itself (Chinn et al., 1999). The inequality in the society also determines the willing of doing sport activities (Donnelly, 1996), which continuously reduces by teenage, and the same can be observed from gender's point of view in the case of girls (Trost et al., 2002).

Beside schools, many other facts appear to have an influence on sport habits. *Herpainé Lakó and Olvasztóné Balogh* (2007) have examined the importance of grandparents taking part in involving children in sport activities, and the results showed that supportive grandparents do make a difference in the terms of regularity. In the research of *Fintor* (2013) healthy lifestyle and media (more precisely watching television) appears. *Ács, Borsos and Rétsági* (2011) have made a transverse sectional examination in three different life-stages, regarding the attitude of physical activities which have an influence on the quality of life. The consequences of the research show that the biggest influence on teenagers' health-behaviour comes from the socialising medium and communities (such as school, family, sport clubs, media, friends). It also highlights that parents appear in the field of motivation either way: both if the children do not do any sport activities, but also as an encouraging power. Another word, their influence is unquestionable. Families, kinder-gardens, schools are all fields where we must find the personality constituents, by which we can expect an influence visible in our lifestyles and changed activities (Meleg, 2002). To have an active and healthy life in adult age, there is a need for great experience of doing sport activities in childhood (Bognár, Tóth & Baumgartner, 2003). 55% of Hungarians believe that an appropriate PE education has a great influence on the possibility of having a healthy and active adult life (Huszár & Bogár, 2006). *Bognár, Tóth, Baumgartner and Salvára* (2005) have also observed that the PE in schools have a significant influence on the quality of physical activity in adulthood. Aims are also defined by the programme of nation-health: The role of the educating institutes is, e.g.: „giving a behaviour model, creating an

*adequate physical condition as well as equality to enter a healthy life."*

### *The subject of PE*

Many have proved the importance of the subject PE, its influence on daily physical activities (Morgan et al., 2007), its short term influences on health, for example being overweight (Drake et al., 2012), on mental health (Mather et al., 2002) and on fitness (Carrel et al., 2005). The positive influence of sports on school performance has also been examined and proved right by *Rasberry and his colleagues, 2011, Carlson and his colleagues, 2008. Gergely (2002)* summarizes the results of examining the state of school PE and youngster's sport clubs<sup>1</sup>. He considers the challenges of the subject to be a challenge of the society, as creating conditions to enjoy sport activities is rather the possibility of the society than the subject's.

The role and importance of PE is rather at the bottom of the list of subjects. Even though everyone knows and appreciates all sorts of positive influences (rehabilitational and personality forming) of it. It can also be seen in the research of *Gombocz (1999)* that Hungarian families do not perform well in terms of physical educating and schools as possible partners are not taking an appropriate part in it. In his research he analyses the changes that increasing PE lessons made as well as the opinions of those involved in it, with the prestige-case and the content of education. He observed that there is a very little understanding within the teachers towards healthy life and the values of body-culture (physical activities). As a result of this, the popularity of the subject also reduces within the students, which can already be observed at primary school-age.

It is known from the research of *Neulinger (2007)* that 60% of those who took part in the survey liked PE, whereas 22% of them had negative experiences of it. 66% of them liked their PE teacher, while 13% didn't. It proves a great linking point between sport activity habits and school PE. However, it also shows that the influence can only be observed when children are effected by it, which seems to fade away in the coming years. Another word, if a primary school student likes PE, he/she will do more physical activities in their school years, but it has no effect on sport activity habits in the years after. *Elbert (2010)* had also examined the appreciation of the subject within the students, colleagues, parents, teachers and institute leaders. Its summing-up is sort of medium – however everyone

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<sup>1</sup> Research made by the National Education Institution and Curriculum improving Center in 1999.

respects the importance of it. Results were best within school leaders, whereas teachers seem to appreciate it least.

### *Everyday PE lessons*

Everyday PE lessons are an important part of the procedure of creating a health-remaining behaviour of the children. Many researches show the importance of school sports and introducing everyday PE. Educational institutes are the most important fields beside families, which can contribute towards improving health, because the complex (compulsory) health-defending programmes are for the sake of the above mentioned (Frantz & Chandeu, 2011). Influencing the student's health-remaining behaviour can only be achieved by the close relationship of PE teachers and health advisors. PE has to contribute greatly towards the regular physical activity (Bognár et al., 2005). Regarding everyday PE F. Mérey (2007) has put forward a very critical opinion, in which he expresses that sport has a very little influence on health-remaining and the students' physical education is not conscious. Therefore he makes a suggestion for modernising the subject, in which besides reaching a health remaining – improving influence he is also aiming for the higher appreciation of teachers. Elbert (2010) suggests a way of teaching PE by offering positive experiences for the students, but at the same time considering the importance of achievements.

A future orientated PE has to be introduced already in the starting stage of the primary school for the improvement of every physical and theoretical actions are in relation until the end of pre-school age (Vass & Kun, 2010).

The necessity of changing the curriculum is not only determined by social-political and other facts, but also based on the experiences of school-efficiency researches<sup>2</sup>. The National Basic-curriculum was introduced in the school term of 1989/1990. The 41st article of the law has specified the obligatorial measuring of the students' physical state, with which 45% of the teachers agrees, whereas 47% only partly agrees. The 52nd article (9) of the law specifies the necessary conditions for the students and the institutions to introduce everyday PE. In the results of the research it appears that PE teachers (91%) agree on the necessity of everyday PE lessons. Despite of this, one third of them stated that it is not possible to implement it with the actual given infrastructural conditions.

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<sup>2</sup>In this research more facts were examined, which are considered to have an influence on achievements. Most important facts: Institutional infrastructure, school leading, rating of teachers, difference in students' synthesis.

*Földes* (2001) talked to different leaders of such institutions, in the frame of a round-table conversation, where everyday sport activities showed far beyond the border of their schools. All those taking part in the interview agreed that there is such an approach behind everyday PE, which determines and greatly influences the mental improvements of children and has an effect on the school itself. The parents of the students also considered it important that sport has a significant role. The modification of the law in 2006 gives a highlighted role to both technical<sup>3</sup> and not technical systemed teaching in grade 5 and 6, furthermore the everyday PE lessons. 77% of PE teachers do not agree with the fact that teachers with a primary school teacher degree (not specialised in PE) should be allowed to teach PE in the grade of 6. At the same time, PE teachers had been obliged to take part in further training in order to be able to teach PE in grade 1-4. Two third of the teachers rejects this decision. „*This decision has greatly contributed towards the low appreciation of PE!*” (Elbert, 2010:62).

The National Basic-curriculum accepted in 2012 treats the PE as part of health-improvement and specifies the introduction of everyday PE lessons from the school term 2012/13 in grades 1., 5., 9., which needs to be implemented in the frame of 5 PE lessons a week (NAT, 2012).

The introduction of everyday PE lessons is a significant turning point in PE, of which introduction is greatly down to the professional preparation of the past decades and the results of researches. In terms of students' dedication towards sports, beside the regular physical activities, the love of PE teachers also have a great influence on them, which similarly influences the school performance of the students in a positive way (Mikulán, 2013).

It is known from the telephone-research<sup>4</sup> made in March 2014 on International Youth day, that 2/3 of the parents have already realised the positive effect of everyday PE. According to their opinion the behaviour and general feeling of their children is influenced in a positive way by everyday PE lessons.

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<sup>3</sup>Education is not special-systemed if subjects or most of the subjects are taught by a teacher with primary school degree only (for lower grades 1-4) (Modification of national education law of 121.§ (34. in 2006).

<sup>4</sup> From the survey of Kutatópont (Searching-point) a department of Nézőpont (Point of view) Institute dealing with researches.

## *Examinations of effect, linking theories*

In the above written we have introduced how everyday PE and school sport activities play an important role in the student's life in forming their health improving behaviour. In this chapter I would like to highlight that the role of parents in forming their children's behaviour norms at pre- and primary school age is unquestionable, therefore their opinions and approaches may well be significant in terms of forming their sport habits.

*Brady and Flor* (1997) have examined and proved that parents do influence the forming of their children's social behaviour norms, as their deeds appear for them as a model role to be followed.

*Zsolnai* (2013) have also examined the social behaviour of those in pre-school and teen-age as well as the factors influencing their behaviour. Amongst the inter-personal factors, the most significant factors seem to be those influences coming from culture, family, school and of those with the same age group.

*Jámbori* (2003) have introduced in his study that in reaching personal goals, the relation with reference-people are very significant, as the relationship with them helps to keep mental health. Such relation can be formed between parents-children and children-school environment as well. School environment is one of the most important social backgrounds behind the school. The teacher-student relationship in the environment greatly influences the achievement motivation.

According to the linking theory (Howes, 2000) relationships with significant adults (such as teachers and PE teachers) creates a higher motivation and dedication in students towards school work.

In terms of sport habits, the physical activity of parents is rather important, which has an influence on their children when forming their own idea about sports (Stucky-Ropp & DiLorenzo, 1993).

## *Empirical examination*

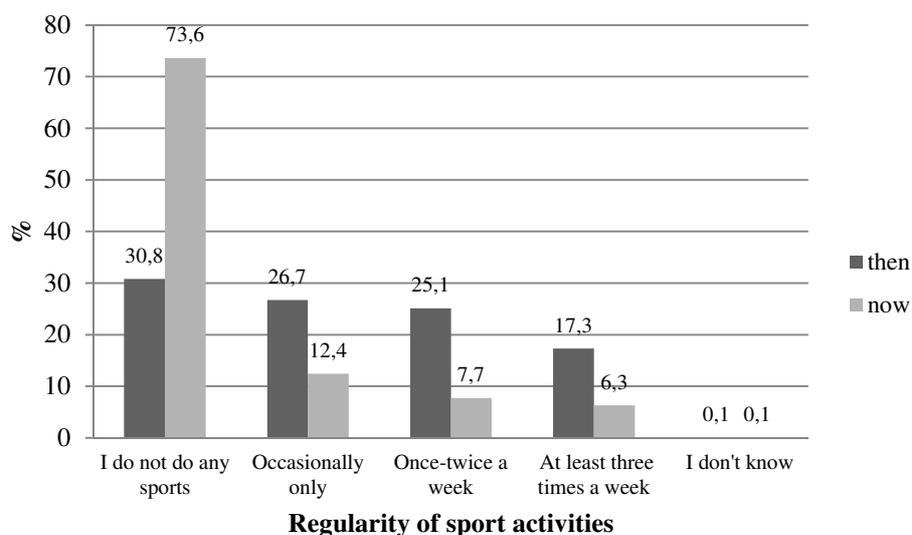
The aim of our examination was to find out in the adult population, how important they consider introducing everyday PE lessons, how much they agree with the fact that PE teachers have an influence on forming their physical activity's regularity, and how important they think it is that children like PE lessons.

## *Typifying the sample*

The search (filling in an own survey) was held within the national Omnibusz Research of TÁRKI Social Analysing Institute ZRT in 2014. The way of involving people in the survey was conjectural, by which every Hungarian adult had the same chance of being involved in it.

The information taken from these surveys by this method – within the statistic border of possibly mistakes – may well be universalised for the whole population. We have used a more staged, scaling conjectural sample taking procedure. Following the determination of the number of people to be questioned, we have chosen the „accidental walking method” to create the full sample. In the houses, chosen by the above explained way, the examining people have chosen the interview person by the Leslie Kish key. In order to have a good balance between the adult Hungarian population and those groups involved in the survey (gender, education, address, etc) the sample has been weighted, therefore the result is according to the adult population groups. For testing statistically the comparison a standardised residual value has been used. In the survey, beyond the social background-changes we have asked people regarding every PE attitudes (Likert-scale). For evaluating the data, we have used SPSS 18 programme. Altogether 1007 people have been involved (55% female, 45% male). As for their residence: 18% of them live in a big city, 34% of them in a town, while 18% in Budapest. From graphic 1 it can be seen that in terms of education, more females have „Level A” than male. As for the regularity of sport habits, it can be observed that whereas the percent-age of those not doing any sport activities in their childhood is 30,8%, but it increased to 73,6% by getting more advanced in age. Twice as many adults do not do any sports, compared to those active in the childhood. The number of those doing a sport activities at least 3 times in their childhood (17,3%) a week are down by third (6,3%).

Graphic 1. *Repartition of regularity of sport activities (%) N=1007*



Source: TÁRKI's own redaction

### *Research questions, hypotheses*

We are searching answers to find out whether different circumstances (gender, type of address, education, active sports in childhood) have an influence on considering the importance of everyday PE lessons. We assume that the opinion of parents regarding the importance of introducing everyday PE lessons will be positive, whereas there will be a difference in results depending on where people live and whether they are active in sports. The following question examines the role of a PE teacher in terms of influencing the children's regularity in sport activities. We were examining what parents think about, whether a PE teacher has an influence on how much their children do sports. Since regarding the regularity of sport activities parents' influence is unquestionable (Ács, Borsos & Rétsági, 2011), therefore we are now interested in parents opinion to find out what they think about the possible influence of a PE teacher. We were assuming that children's regularity in sports and the parents sport habits will influence the answer to this question.

Beside these we also examined how important parents considered that their children love PE as a subject, because sport habits do have an influence on school performance (Mikulán, 2013), and the preference of the subject also have an effect on achievements.

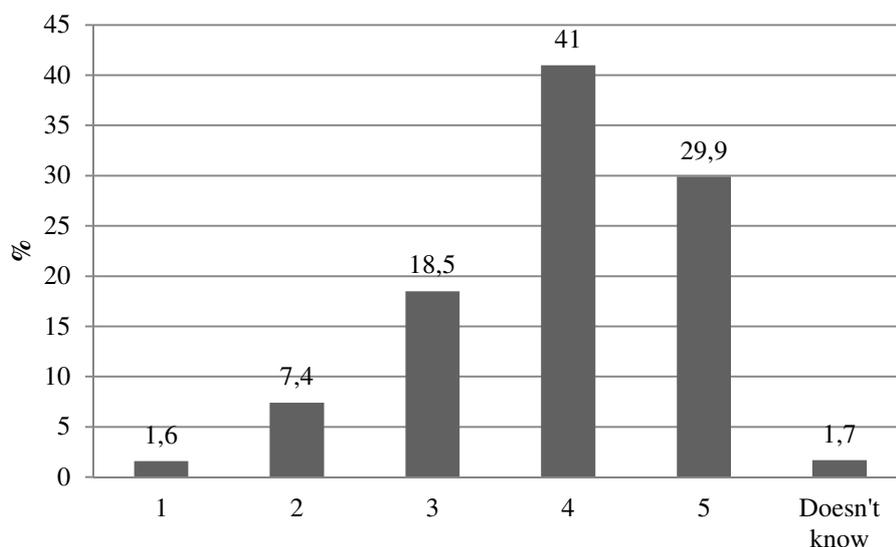
## Hypothesises

1. Parents think it is necessary to introduce everyday PE lessons.
2. According to parents' opinion, PE teachers do not influence the regularity of their children's sport activity.
3. Parents agree that it is important that their children love PE as a subject.

## Results

In the first hypothesis parents had to indicate on a scale from 1-5 (where 1 means they do not agree at all and 5 means they totally agree) how important they think introducing everyday PE lessons is. (Graphic 2.) Results showed that 70% of the population totally agrees or just agrees, which is a very high rate and is only a little lower than the result showed at the research made on the International Youth Day (75%). The 9% of result where people did not feel it was necessary to introduce everyday PE lessons shows that beside the teachers the adult population (potentially parents) also felt it was important and useful to introduce everyday PE lessons.

Graphic 2. *Necessity of introducing everyday PE lessons, based on parents' opinion (%) N=1007*



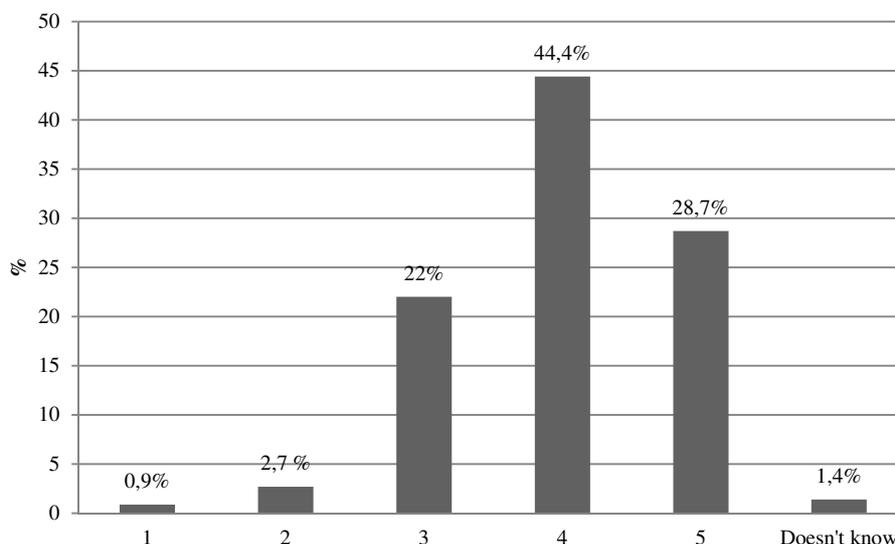
Source: TÁRKI's own redaction

We have made further analysis by cross-table to observe whether different circumstances (gender, address, education, sport habits now and then) make a difference in terms of the result.

It can be observed that significant differences are found in results in terms of address (Pearson Chi-Square= 31,552,  $p=0,007$ ) and in regularity of sport activities (Pearson Chi-Square= 65,746,  $P=0,000$ ). There is a higher level of agreeing where people live in a bigger city, which is probably due to better infrastructural circumstances. As far as regularity of sport activity is concerned, it is obvious that where people were more active in sports in their childhood, they have a higher agreeing. This strengthens the results of *Bognár, Tóth and Baumgartner in 2003*. Differences in gender and education show no difference between those asked.

In the second hypothesis those taking part in the survey had to give an answer to (once again on a scale 1-5, where 1 means they do not agree at all and 5 means they totally agree) whether they think a PE teacher has an influence on regularity of sport activity of the children. Another word, do PE teachers influence the physical activity of the children. (Graphic 3.) The average result of the answers (3,93) shows that a very high number of parents agree that PE teachers do have an influence on their children's regular sport activity. The result of 73% agreeing is a very high rating indeed, since the results at Neulinger (2007) were 66%.

Graphic 3. *Influence on a PE teacher on the regularity of children's sport activity based on parents' opinion (%) N=1007*



Source: TÁRKI's own redaction

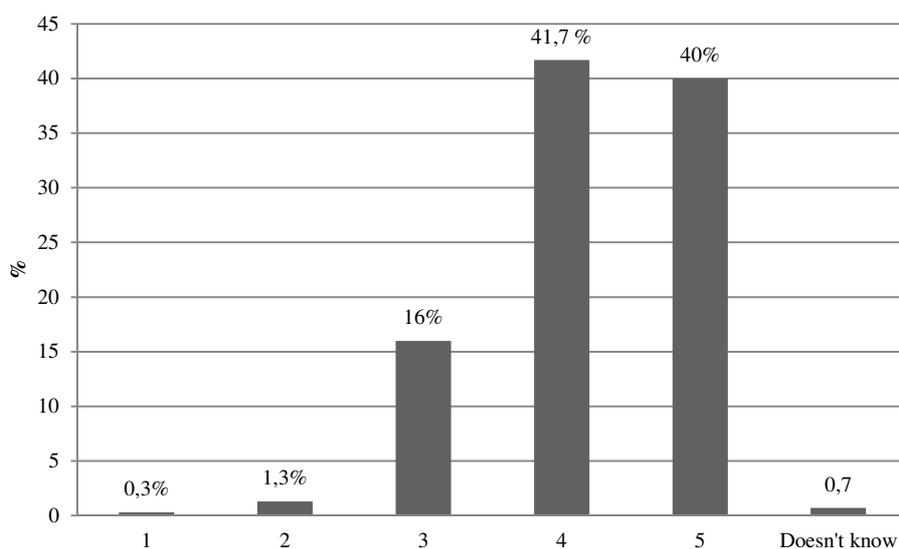
These results have also been examined as above mentioned in a cross-table, taking into consideration the possible differences in circumstances. Once again, gender and education showed no difference in the results, whereas address (Pearson Chi-Square= 36,600,  $p=0,001$ ) and the regular sport activity of parents when they were children (Pearson Chi-Square= 64,675,  $P=0,000$ ) shows a

significant difference. Those living in smaller places and doing regular sport activities in their childhood show a higher agreeing in the influence of a PE teacher when forming the sport activity habits of children.

In the third hypothesis we asked people about the importance of preferring PE lessons (on a 1-5 scale, where 1 means they do not agree at all and 5 means they totally agree). Parents think (by a 4,17 rate) that it is important that their children like PE as a subject (Graphic 4.) 81,7% of them agrees and considers the positive attitude towards the subject important. This is a higher result than in Neulinger's (2007) research (60%).

The result of 0,3% of those not agreeing at all is very low indeed, which can be encouraging for PE teachers.

Graphic 4. *The importance of children's love and preference towards the subject of PE, based on the opinion of parents (%) N=1007*



*Source: TÁRKI's own redaction*

Regarding the attitudes towards the subject of PE, results showed no difference in terms of gender and education of those questioned, however the address (Pearson Chi-Square= 42,987,  $p=0.000$ ) and the regularity of sport activities in childhood (Pearson Chi-Square= 63,390,  $P=0.000$ ) showed again a significant difference. Those living in smaller places and having a more active physical life in their childhood consider more important the preference of PE subject.

## Summary

In our study we have examined the opinions of parents regarding the everyday PE lessons introduced in September 2012, within a representative national research. In the study we highlighted the importance of sport, the sport habits of students, which are greatly and mainly influenced by grandparents (Herpainé Lakó & Olvasztóné Balogh, 2007) the media (Fintor, 2013) and parents (Ács, Borsos & Rétsági, 2011). PE as a subject doesn't just influence the physical activity (Morgan et al., 2007) but also the school performance (Rasberry et al., 2011). Therefore introducing everyday PE lessons seemed to be necessary. We have observed by the linking theory and efficiency-examinations that the predicting role of parents at primary school age is unquestionable despite of all the other social influences. At the same time, PE teachers remained as significant adults in the life of the students, with whom a close relationship may create a higher dedication towards school performance (Howes, 2000).

We have completed our research within the adult population in the frame of the Omnibusz research of TÁRKI in January 2014, where we asked the adult population about their attitudes towards everyday PE and PE teachers. 70% of the parents agree with introducing everyday PE lessons and by the cross-table – significant differences in the answer can only be found according to addresses (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 31,552$ ,  $P=0.007$ ) and the regularity of sport activity in the asked people's childhood (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 65,746$ ,  $P=0.000$ )

73.5% of parents also agree with the fact that PE teachers do have a role in forming the sport habits of the children, and 81,7% considers it important that their children have a positive attitude towards PE. Once again, significant differences were only found where asked people lived in different places and had a difference in their sport activities at their childhood. All these prove that sport habits of young age determines the approach towards sports in adulthood, which show a direct influence on children's sport habit – in this case on everyday PE lessons in terms of approaching PE teachers and PE as a subject.

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