

Acceptance and areas of involvement of students of tourism and recreation in EKO-AGRO-FITNESS[®] programme

Authors' Contribution:

- A** Study Design
- B** Data Collection
- C** Statistical Analysis
- D** Manuscript Preparation
- E** Funds Collection

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Abstract

Background and Study Aim:

E-A-F is an educational programme which is an alternative to the process of physical education, but it also provides a content-related background for the contemporarily understood and promoted concept of recreation and health tourism. The aim of the study is to answer to the three questions: (1) are professional qualifications within the framework of E-A-F an attractive educational offer for students of tourism and recreation majors? (2) Which specializations of E-A-F leader are preferred by the respondents? (3) Do students of tourism and recreation university majors consider E-A-F as an attractive product of health education for mountain regions and other regions in Poland?

Material/Methods:

The survey included 74 students from the third year of the tourism and recreation university major (20 men and 14 women, extramural studies; 20 men and 20 women, full-time studies) of first-cycle studies in The Podhale State Vocational School of Higher Education, Nowy Targ, Poland. Average age of full-time students was 21.34 years, whereas this value for extramural students was 25.42 years. An anonymous questionnaire was used in the own survey.

Results:

Qualifications connected with E-A-F are an attractive offer for obtaining new professional competencies to 76% of the students. The most of the students (52%) declared that they will cope with the methodology of sport training, whereas 12% of them are interested in the profession of injury prevention manager. The option of specializing in the methods of health-related training was more often declared by men (53%) compared to women (26%). The most of the students responded that E-A-F programme stands the chances to be implemented, both in Tatra County (81%) and throughout the whole Poland (85%).

Conclusions:

There is empirical rationale behind the presumption that E-A-F will attract students' interest, especially as a concept of coaching leaders of health-related training and injury prevention, which opens up opportunities for getting an attractive professional profile.

Key words:

complementary health-related training • educational standards • motor safety • effort safety • injury prevention

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BACKGROUND

E-A-F is an educational programme which is an alternative to the process of physical education [1], but it also provides a content-related background for the

contemporarily understood and promoted concept of recreation and health tourism. The objective of the program is to provide the conditions for the acquisition of competencies in terms of the achievement of human motor and effort safety. Achievement of this objective

Complementary health related training – is coherent system of using such methods and means which affects body in complex way. The most valuable ones are those which stimulate all health dimensions (somatic, mental and social health), motor and strain safety, and develop wide range of motor survival competences [1].

Educational standards – set of educational rules on studies preparing for teaching profession and the professions for which the requirements for the educational process and its outcomes are defined in the regulations of the European Union (Article 1.18) [25].

Effort safety – is consciousness of the person who starts physical effort or consciousness of the subject who has the right to encourage or even enforce from this person the physical effort of a certain intensity and duration, who it is able to do so without risking life or health [1].

Motor safety – is consciousness of the person undertaking to solve a motor task or consciousness the subject who has the right to encourage and even enforce from this person that would perform the motor activity, who is able to do it without the risk of the loss of life, injuries or other adverse health effects [1].

involves promotion of reasonable diets and preference for taking up physical activity mainly in the environment of nature and caring for its quality [1].

Achievement of the specific objectives of E-A-F programme is ensured by a complementary health-related training, which is a coherent system of using those forms, methods and resources which affect the human body comprehensively, thus stimulating all the dimensions (somatic, psychical and social) of health, developing motor and effort safety and allowing for acquisition of widest possible range of motor competencies necessary to survive, with particular focus on injury prevention [1].

This approach to the goals, methods and means of implementation of the E-A-F educational programme goes beyond the conventional meaning of health-related training [2–5], particularly in terms of the achievement of such goals as encouraging motor and effort safety or acquisition of motor competencies necessary for survival. Learning how to fall or avoid collisions is frequently treated marginally in health-related training or even neglected, whereas performing some exercises significantly reduces the risk of falling or injury to the body when a person loses balance and falls on the ground or bumps into a vertical obstacle.

The implementation of the E-A-F educational programme was adopted in the Institute for Recreation and Tourism of the Podhale State Higher Vocational School in Nowy Targ.

The education at the level of vocational university courses in Poland is defined by the educational standards contained in the Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education [6]. The system of Polish education at the degree of first-cycle studies envisages, through promotion of the university majors, education of specialists in medicine and physiotherapy, thus specialists whose fundamental mission is to provide treatment and therapies rather than prevention or improving health.

Facing these conditions, it seems that, in content-related terms, education of specialists in the field of implementation of health-related training schemes, viewed comprehensively in the context of the E-A-F concept, is contained in the educational program of the university major of tourism and recreation, complementing and developing current educational standards [6].

The curriculum-related proposal for the university specialization of 'health-related training and injury prevention' within the framework of the major of tourism and recreation in Podhale State Higher Vocational School in Nowy Targ, Poland, concerns both theoretical and practical subjects, whose goal is to acquire professional

qualifications by students in order to implement the E-A-F health programme. The two basic fields emerge from the educational programme: education in terms of health-related training and injury prevention. Starting education in either of the fields allows for acquisition of the competencies of a methodology leader or a manager-leader of this new and unique specialization, included in the category of comprehensive health prevention.

Research assumptions

1. Since continuous health-related training requires regularity, whereas pregnant women and the women during maternity leave period are unable to effectively stick at their training routines, the factor of gender is an important variable in the investigations aimed at determination of attractiveness of this profession.
2. The gender factor is not that important during selection of the candidates who will be taught to become health-related training managers in the future.
3. The anonymous declarations by the students of the third year in the major of tourism and recreation contain their internal (not necessarily fully conscious) opinion about the quality of university education and the creativity of the organizations in closer and further social and economic environment.
4. If, during interpretation of the results of individual uniform groups of empirical variables, no statistical differences are observed in the relationships for either gender or the study mode, they will be treated as a single set.

Study aim

The main aim of the study is to find out about the acceptance and the area of involvement among the students of tourism and recreation in the EKO-AGRO-FITNESS® (E-A-F) programme. The specific aims include finding the answer to the three questions:

1. Do professional qualifications within the framework of E-A-F provide an attractive educational offer for the students of tourism and recreation?
2. Which specializations of the E-A-F leader are preferred by the respondents?
3. Do students of tourism and recreation view the E-A-F as an attractive health education product for the mountain region and other regions in Poland?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Diagnostic survey

A questionnaire developed by the authors was employed for the diagnostic survey. Apart from the questions concerning directly the main area of the study, the

questionnaire contains the questions of gender and study major. Six questions in this questionnaire necessitate indicating the assessment of a particular characteristic ('certainly yes', 'rather yes', 'I don't know', 'rather not', 'certainly no'). The presentation of the empirical data took also into consideration the index of percentage of the respondents who did not answer to the question. Two items in the questionnaire are multiple-choice questions (the total of the results does not necessarily have to return 100%).

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis measured the level of significance of differences of proportions between certain pairs of variables. Chi-square coefficient was employed in order to verify the convergence between the variables. The calculations were performed using the Microsoft Office Excel spread sheet.

For the purposes of graphical representation, the index of proportion of a particular tendency was expressed in real values (to the nearest 0.01%), whereas the analysis of empirical data used rounded values.

Study subjects

74 students of the third year of the university course of tourism and recreation first-cycle studies (20 males and 14 females from extramural studies, and 20 males and 20 females in full-time studies) from Podhale State Higher Vocational School in Nowy Targ, Poland, were included in the study. The study subjects were 21 to 24 years old in the full-time studies (mean: 21.34) and 20 to 45 years (mean: 25.42) in the extramural studies.

RESULTS

Attractiveness of E-A-F programme for the students of tourism and recreation

Only 7% of the respondents answered that the qualifications connected with the E-A-F programme are unattractive to them, whereas 76% of them are interested in the offer. Others (18%) did not have an opinion about it (Figure 1).

The qualifications within the E-A-F programme (in consideration of the persons who declared 'certainly yes') are more attractive to men (40%) compared to women (18%), with statistically significant difference of $p > 0.05$ (Figure 2).

Specializations preferred by the students

The most of the students (52%) declared that they would prefer the methodology of health-related training,

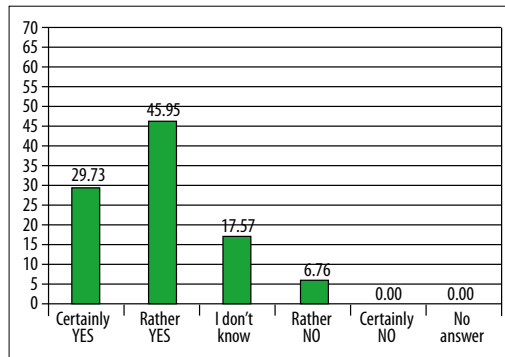


Figure 1. The structure of students' answers (n=74) to the question of: *Are these qualifications attractive to you in professional terms?* (general division).

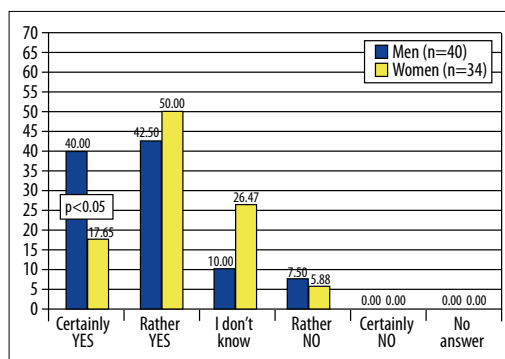


Figure 2. The structure of students' answers (n=74) to the question: *Are these qualifications attractive to you in professional terms?* (division according to gender).

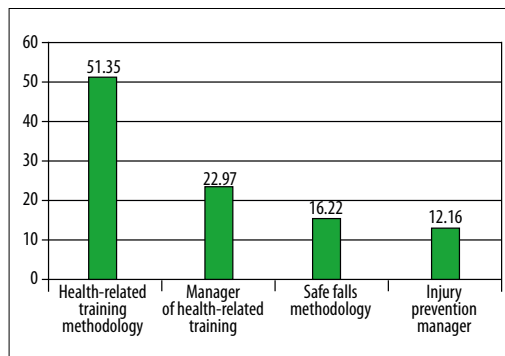


Figure 3. The structure of students' answers (n=74) to the question of: *Which specializations of the leader would you cope with?* (general division).

whereas the fewest students (12%) would cope with the specialization of the injury prevention manager (Figure 3).

Similar proportions for the declarations of the students concerning the forms of self-realization (Figure 4) were revealed. The students are similarly interested in the qualifications of the methodology leader (41%) and health-related training (36%).

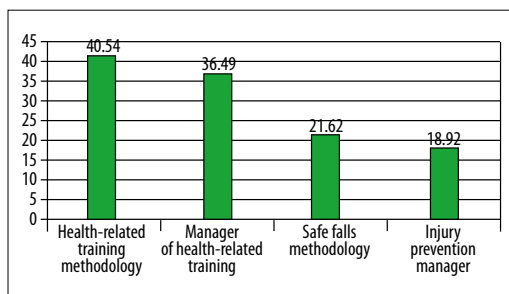


Figure 4. The structure of students' answers (n=74) to the question: *Which specializations of the leader would be a form of self-realization?* (general division).

The opportunity to specialize in health-related training methodology is significantly more preferred by men (53%) compared to women (26%). The difference between the proportions of these declarations is statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Women declared their interest in the specialization of a manager of health-related training more frequently (44%) compared to men (30%) (Figure 5).

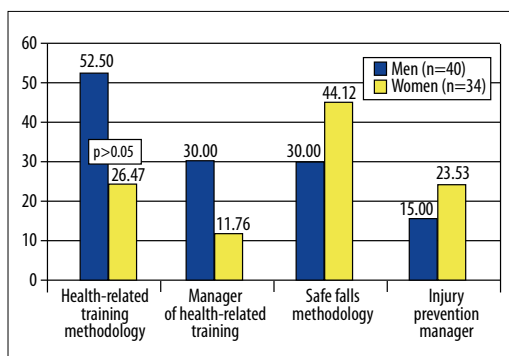


Figure 5. The structure of students' answers to the question *Which specializations of the leader would be a form of self-realization?* (division according to the gender).

Opportunity of implementation of the E-A-F programme

Since no statistically significant differences were found in the empirical data with division into gender and the type of studies, the 4 studied groups were treated as a one set. The most of the students think that the E-A-F programme has chances to be implemented, both in the Tatra County (81%) and throughout the whole country (85%) (Figures 6, 7).

Relationships between the empirical variables

No convergence was found ($\chi^2 = 0.000334$) between the declarations of the students ('certainly yes', 'rather yes') as the answers to the questions of *Can the E-A-F programme be implemented in Tatra County?* and *Can the*

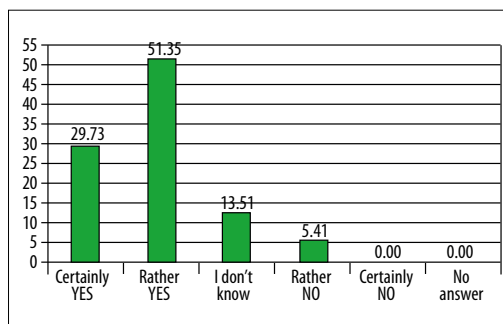


Figure 6. The structure of students' answers (n=74) to the question *Can the E-A-F programme be implemented in Tatra County?*

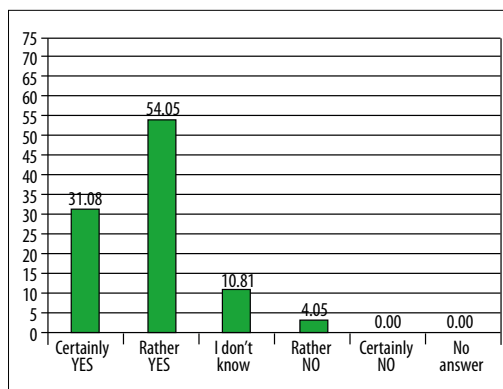


Figure 7. The structure of students' answers to the question *Can the E-A-F programme become an attractive product of health tourism in other regions of Poland?*

E-A-F programme become an attractive product of health tourism in other regions of Poland?

Accumulation of the declarations of 'certainly yes' and 'rather yes' (as a single index of acceptance) in the groups of women and men caused only an insignificant increase in the value of chi-square ($\chi^2 = 0.288$).

Similar tendency was found for the relationships in the answers of women and men to the questions of *Are these qualifications attractive to you in professional terms?* *Which qualifications of the leader would be a form of self-realization to you?* ($\chi^2 = 0.46$). Again, no convergence was found when the declarations of 'certainly yes' and 'rather yes' were totalled as a single index of acceptance and was correlated with the answer of 'rather not' to these questions ($\chi^2 = 1.025$).

DISCUSSION

The successful implementation of the E-A-F programme depends in particular on good preparation of specialists, the methodology leaders and managers for health-related training and injury prevention. Therefore, the evaluation of the interest of the students in the study

major or tourism and recreation in the specialization of 'health-related training and injury prevention' and opportunities of acquisition of professional competencies in the field of E-A-F programme are essential.

The most of the students included in the study (76%) expressed their opinion that the professional qualifications connected with the E-A-F programme are an attractive educational offer.

The respondents, who expressed their interest in the profession of a leader of methodology of health-related training and injury prevention, reflected their awareness of growing importance of health to contemporary human and opportunity of health monitoring through purposive health-related training. There is a great deal of evidence to prove the positive effect of physical activity on human health [7]. An increase in health awareness among Polish society has been reported in a number of studies [8,9], and this tendency can be also seen among young people, who are a generation of the people who, due to their age, usually do not suffer from any perceivable health problems [10,11].

It can be also expected that the students, who expressed their interest in the E-A-F, took into consideration not only the content-related scope of education, but they also attempted to assess the perspectives of the employment and confirmation of the acquired professional competencies.

A leader of health-related training and injury prevention is a new profession in the area of tourism, sport and recreational services, which bridges the gap in the Polish system of training of the staff necessary in the comprehensive physical culture. The system envisages, on the one hand, educating physiotherapists i.e. the specialists who work with the disabled people. On the other hand, education of sport instructors and coaches is being observed [12]; they are prepared for working with healthy people who show high level of fitness and they are high-class specialists, but they only focus on one form of physical activity. The contents which prepare specialists for comprehensive health-promoting programmes are not contained in the programmes for teaching students in the field of tourism and recreation [9]. Moreover, the new Ordinance by the Minister of Sport and Tourism [12] does not take into consideration the previous opportunities for being granted state professional qualifications of a physical recreation instructor [13], which attracted the greatest interest from the students of tourism and recreation.

Therefore, there is an urgent need, confirmed by the reports by other authors [9,14], for educating the

specialists in health-related training according to the assumptions of the E-A-F programme.

It is also worth emphasizing that the obtained results of the study demonstrated sexual differentiation in the interest in acquisition of qualifications within the framework of the E-A-F programme. In consideration of the persons who declared the 'certainly yes' answers, the E-A-F competencies are more attractive to men (40%) compared to women (18%): the difference is statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This state is not surprising in the context of the research assumption which assumed that the women, during the period of pregnancy and the maternity leave, cannot effectively control their health-related training.

Nevertheless, the obtained results of the study can also result from the higher self-assessment of physical fitness, which is typically found in men [15], and, consequently, from their being convinced that motor competencies necessary for the achievement of the set goals of the health-related training and injury prevention can be acquired. The observations show that the self-assessment of abilities in terms of physical fitness is often a factor which determines the decisions connected with physical fitness, with men predominantly assessing its level higher than women.

Specializations preferred by the students

The above presumptions were also confirmed with the answers to the question concerning the specializations of an E-A-F leader preferred by the respondents. Although the majority of the students (52%) thought that they would cope with the methodology of health-related training and this specialization would be satisfactory (41%), the opportunities for specialization in health-related training methodology were declared much more frequently by men (53%) than men (26). The differences in proportions of these declarations are statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Women showed their interest in the specialization of a manager of health-related training and the manager of injury prevention more frequently (44%) compared to men (30%) (24% and 15%, respectively).

The fewest respondents were interested in the specialization of a manager of injury prevention (12%) and injury methodology (16%). Analysis of the distribution of the answers to the question of qualifications which would be preferred by the respondents shows that both leader of injury methodology and a manager of injury obtained 22% and 19%, respectively. Does it confirm the lack of confidence in their own opportunities of acquisition of competencies in terms of injury

prevention or is it simply due to the lack of knowledge about these problems?

It can be expected that the low interest in the specialization in the field of injury prevention results from its innovative character. The curricula for physical education lessons do not take into consideration teaching the methods of safe falling as an effective implementation of injury prevention programmes [1]. Therefore, the participants of the conventional physical education lessons are unaware of the opportunities of learning the abilities which could prove useful in the situations of health or life risks and the qualifications necessary for coaching others in the area of these abilities.

Opportunities of implementation of the E-A-F programme assessed by the students

The most of the students view the E-A-F as an attractive product of health tourism for mountain regions and other regions of Poland and, consequently, they think that the programme has perspectives to be implemented, both in Tatra County (81%) and throughout the country (85%).

Planning of implementation of the E-A-F programme in a particular region of the country should involve both the level of health awareness and movement-related interest among the inhabitants of a particular region as well as tourist expectations who visit a particular area.

Physical activity of the inhabitants of Podhale, compared to the inhabitants in other regions of Poland, is higher, which was confirmed in the studies [16]. This state is likely to result from the traditions of physical activity (with utility/professional, cultural and recreational/tourist character) on the one hand and from growing awareness of the importance of physical activity to maintaining health and ensuring the comfort of living even in old age on the other [16].

Implementation of the E-A-F programme for tourists should, in particular, concern the regions which are attractive in terms of tourism. Tourist values, particularly those connected with nature, are a factor which improves tourist traffic in a particular region and might increase the scope of the recommended forms of physical activity, thus the attractiveness of the implementation of the E-A-F programme.

An essential characteristic of contemporary tourism is creation of an attractive, comprehensive tourism product. Tourists today are not satisfied with merely accommodation and meals in the destinations with tourist, natural and cultural values. The dynamics of development

of human needs in terms of management of leisure time during travels causes that contemporary tourists expect to be shown the methods of enjoying the attractions, which can be covered by the programs of recreation which are interesting and meet their individual needs and expectations. Since the tourists today tend to seek health values during their travels, sport and recreation activity can, and should, become a new and essential factor of the enhanced attractiveness of tourist offer [17]. The necessity of the diversification of tourist products towards a more comprehensive inclusion of sport and recreational services is increasingly often emphasized [8,14,17]. Because of its health-related values, physical activity taken in the natural environment is of particular importance [18]. The environmental and ecological elements have been increasingly important in planning sport and recreation forms, which has been demonstrated, among others, by Danish researchers [19].

Therefore, it can be presumed that the comprehensive tourist products such as the E-A-F programme should meet social expectations today. This product combines the elements of moving for pleasure and moving for health, involving selected forms of outdoor physical activity, in natural, ecologically clean conditions, thus maintaining the ecological safety [20], as well as the activities in the rooms adapted (without substantial financial expenditure) in the hotels, guest houses, holiday centres, where the combat sports and learning how to fall safely could be coached [1]. These activities, with the main objective of increasing motor safety, are a new element of a tourist product. Their implementation will allow for overcoming the stereotypes of spending free time in tourist resorts and enrichment of the most popular offer of fitness and bodybuilding exercises with the elements of combat sports and teaching the methods of safe falling. From the standpoint of effort and motor safety, the exercises of injury prevention open up much greater opportunities of individualization of the physical effort, both in terms of selection of the form and the load.

This causes that a new concept of health-oriented tourism is emerging. The literature in this field predominantly views health-oriented tourism as a conscious and voluntary trip for a particular period of time outside the place of residence in free time in order to recover through physically and psychically active relax [21]. Therefore, it is understood so comprehensively that it is able to involve almost all the forms of tourism [22]. According to M. Tabacchi, health-oriented tourism can involve any type of travels which causes that the traveller feels healthier [23].

However, the spa tourism, which is associated with travels to health resorts aimed mainly on improvement in

health status and maintaining it at a particular level by means of treatment and prevention activities is the most popular and the most frequently reported in the related literature [8]. Therefore, in this understanding, there is no space for the activities connected with taking physical activity which would be aimed at creation of a new quality in terms of human health.

It can be presumed based on the increased health awareness and current demographical tendencies in developed societies that health tourism will become a segment of tourist market, which will be developing more dynamically [24]. It is confirmed by the forecast of the European Tourism Commission, which says that the demand for the international health tourism will be increasing faster than in other types of tourism. The goals of health tourism are possible to be achieved largely due to the offer of sport and recreation services [8]. Therefore, the new approach to health tourism, based on the E-A-F concept, perfectly matches the new social tendencies observed in tourism and recreation.

CONCLUSIONS

1. There are some empirical grounds for the presumption that the E-A-F will show great interest among the students, particularly as a concept of coaching leaders of health-related training and injury prevention, thus the opportunity of obtaining the attractive professional qualifications. This justifies the expectations that

the future labour market will be reinforced with the specialists who will be able to prepare people (with particular focus on the families), in a competent and modern manner, for continuous health-related training, making them able to independently continue this training with the course of time.

2. The contents of the E-A-F programme match the curricula in the study major of tourism and recreation. However, new legal regulations concerning higher education in Poland and the conditions for acquisition of qualifications in sport, combined with the comprehensive and varied contents of the E-A-F programme open up opportunities (and, in consideration of the modern health prevention, even the necessity) of implementation of its teaching contents within the independent study major.

3. Development of a detailed didactic offer in terms of profile of education of health-related training leaders and injury prevention should take into consideration the varied interest of women and men in performing the job of a leader of methodology and a leader-manager.

4. The outcome of the E-A-F educational programme implemented within the university specialization of 'health-related training and injury prevention' will be the new and comprehensive product of health-oriented tourism, containing all the elements of the health-related training included in the E-A-F concept.

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