ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Changes in the group's social structure in mountain tourism

Authors' Contribution:
A – Study Design
B – Data Collection
C – Statistical Analysis
D – Data Interpretation
E – Manuscript Preparation
F – Literature Search
G – Funds Collection

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Abstract

Background: *Mountain tourism implies specific aspects in contrast to other components of physical education and sport, by the vast scope and accessibility regardless of physical condition, age and skills or similarities with everyday life activities. We hypothesized that the joint activities, cooperation, interaction and direct communication with the natural and social environment will result in a better understanding of oneself and partners, placing the group structure on real bases, prompting avoidance of possible malfunctions in the subsequent group activity.*

Material/Methods: *Subjects of this sociological research were 48 first-year students, participating in "Mountain tourism and sport orientation" (26 males and 22 females), which applied a sociological survey. To achieve the research'e objectives, we used the following methods: a questionnaire, a statistical and mathematical method and a graphical method.*

Results: *In the most part, previous relationships of acceptance, empathy, trust, rejection or isolation were of the interpersonal type, motivation being that they had not previously – as a group or individually – experienced collaboration, mutual assistance, addiction group and so on. Experiences conducted in a common framework, adapted to everyday comfort, provide false opportunities for the knowledge of the self and one another. The ranking of desired partners would change significantly: the originally agreed out of "top 10" instead came to be approved by other subjects (46, 48); a symmetrical aspect applies to unwanted partners, and, in fact, produced a reversal of the scale of values. An important aspect is the knowledge and recognition targeting sociometric's leadership, sense that we can say that the initial place 1, 2, 3 have become 7, 3 and 4 and the final places 1, 2, 3 won the original positions 9, 24 and 2.*

Conclusions: *Knowing the stage achieved in the formation of the group cohesion (through calculation of the cohesion index), before an important step for the group and some period thereafter, will show the effectiveness of the actions taken. Calculation of the index at different stages will reveal in which direction the group evolves: increasing cohesion, stagnant or in decline. The two investigative tools can be a strong support for knowing the socio-emotional bases of a group which usually escapes in direct observation, and especially provides the possibility of an action, an intervention in the group that takes into account the internal organization to enhance its functioning to improve group cohesion, and the establishment of a homogeneous team (an important aspect in sport or other activities with high complexity).*

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Introduction

Beyond notions and definitions, tourism is today, by its content and role, a distinct field of activity, an essential component of economic and social life for a growing number of countries. Responsive to transformations of the contemporary world, tourism evolves integrating its dynamics in the overall development process. In turn, by the human and material potential involved and by its effects on interference areas, tourism acts as an important stimulus of general development, including the social branch [1].

In spite of occasional shocks, international tourist arrivals have shown virtually uninterrupted growth: from 25 million in 1950, to 278 million in 1980, to 435 million in 1990, to 675 million in 2000, and 1,035 million in 2012.

In 2012, travel for holidays, recreation and other types of leisure accounted for just over half of all international tourist arrivals (52% or 536 million arrivals) [2]. Obviously, this segment of tourism is an important opportunity for the economy of any country.

Mountain tourism (walking on trails/mountaineering/tracking) involves specific aspects of other components of physical education and sports, by the vast scope and accessibility regardless of physical condition [3], skills or age [4] and by similarities with actions of everyday life [5, 6]; we can capture some features:

- the role of personal initiative – manifested through actions conditioned by communication skills, organizational and leadership skills, orientation skills by reading a map, tourist boards and indicators, the signs and significance of natural phenomena and so on;
- developing complex motion qualities and skills;
- an applicative character of actions used: walking, running, climbing, crawling, carrying loads and so on;
- the need to adapt gradually to the type of effort and the complexity of the chosen trails;
- the absence of competition (no emulation);
- a possibility to use materials and technical means (e.g.: skis, bikes) without lowering effects or the character of undertaken actions.

As a result of involvement in specific upland activities, participants develop a number of skills that help to improve personal performance and awareness by group members of the obstacles that hinder teamwork and help to improve team performance, both within the exercise and "real life" [7].

In the content of the research conducted through a questionnaire, we included a series of questions of a sociometric test, aiming to highlight the characteristics of relationships within the group, changes in its cohesion and leadership in order to improve the psychosocial, relational and communication climate.

It is therefore important to delineate some of the important features of the sociometric test. It is intended to provide primary information, asking members of a group with well-defined boundaries (e.g. collective work, year of study, a sports group, etc.) to indicate colleagues/partners who they would like to join for a specific action or in a future situation, or those colleagues they accept as a real leader. It is all about putting subjects under natural conditions of choice (and not a platonic game), ensuring real motivation. A sociometric study has a threefold orientation [8]:

- detecting affinities expressed by members, and hence the relations within the group;
- the subjects' better understanding of their own positions in the group;
- improving relations and group psychosocial climate, through specific psychological actions.

Based on these facts, the premises of this research were outlined as a consequence of an objective analysis regarding the new requirements for reorganizing the internal structure of the higher education system in our field, hence the need for new planning documents for initial training (curricula and syllabus) and labor market requirements in terms of economic development in the geographical area (targeting faster employability opportunities).

Material and methods

The results presented in this paper were obtained as part of more extensive research (which was also aimed at economic, motor, management and marketing aspects) that began in 2006 and ended in 2009. Some of the partial results were presented at the International Seminar "Sport,

leisure, tourisme et développement en Europe" – Nice, France (2007) and Science Sports Council Conference in Hungary – Keszthely, Hungary (2007).

The subjects of the study were students (first year) at the Physical Education and Sports Faculty, participants in the "Mountain tourism and sport orientation" practical course held in Padis Massif in form of a tent camp.

The study involved 48 people (26 males and 22 females), aged between 18 and 24 years, who had to answer some questions (47 items) in a questionnaire before and after the activity. All subjects who did not participate throughout the whole length for various reasons (health, family problems, etc.) were excluded from research. For guiding effects to the desired targets direction (psychosocial effects, among which there is the leadership development), during "the campaign" we proposed to develop a well-defined program of activities (Table 1).

After applying the test, we coded subjects' names and surnames (Figure 1) to simplify the procedure, with each initial a number from 1 to 48. We introduced appropriate responses in comparative tables, then we interpreted the responses to items 25, 26 and 27, which cover the investigated issues.

Tab. 1. Program to influence psychosocial relations

Target	Main action	Dosing	Methodical
Developing climbing skills and techniques	Learning basic climbing techniques	8 hours, day 4	2 routes, at different degrees of difficulty
	Crossing the "Dry Valley" route	aprox.10 hours, day 7	selection of participants as proven skills
Developing leadership skills	Providing the necessary wood	daily	rotating, teams of 6 boys
	Group guidance on routes proposed by a map	daily	in mixed teams of 4
	Organizing "group's evening"	3-4 evenings	each group organizes and leads one cultural and entertainment evening
Developing accountability	"A clean route"	daily	"guards teams" ensuring greening of resting places
	Environmental cleanup action	daily	responsibilities established in each group
	Rearranging place after camp decommissioning	last day	responsibilities are established on groups for removal/packaging common use effects
Developing communication skills	Common household cooking	3 times	mixed groups, coordinated by teachers
	Sports orienteering competition	day 9	teams of 3
Improving group relations	Football and volleyball camp championships	2 days	organized and conducted by students teachers involved
Developing creativity and ability to make good decisions	Activities: "Walk on the ropes", "Spider's web", "Tiroliana"	day 5, afternoon	facilities in "Ponor glade" as a competition, in groups

BA-1, BAC-2, BAL-3, BAS-4 BAS-f-5, BRB-6, BRS-7, BS-8, CA-9, CAM-10, DMI-11, FAM-12, FC-13, FM-14, GP-15, GyV-16, HCF-17, HN-18, KA-19, KCs-20, KB-21, KG-22, KL-23, MVM-24, NM-25, OR-26, PB-27, PD-28, PE-29, PM-30, PSz-31, PTS-32, RM-33, RTI-34, RTR-35, SA-36, SB-37, SC-38, SC-f-39, SR-40, SzT-41, SN-42, TA-43, TC-44, TD-45, TR-46, TV-47, TI-48

Fig. 2. Names coding

Results

The results of preliminary investigation were processed using graphical and sociometric methods (sociogram). Analysis of responses to the proposed items shows the main characteristics of the subjects interviewed at the individual and the group level, in terms of sports history (mobility), in terms of socio-economic aspects, but also in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can stimulate or inhibit the practice of physical exercise in various forms and types of organization, as well as the trend of leadership and homogeneity of the group.

Considering that between good/bad organizer qualities and an informal (representative, accepted) leader there exists (or not) a correlation, analysis of these issues shows that:

- the ranking of "the best organizer" did not change significantly (Table 2), so we found that subject 1 has strengthened the status of the "best organizer", subjects 9, 12, 15, 4, 17 retained their places and subjects 33 and 37 remained in „top 10";
- similarly, we find that feedback about the worst organizer (Table 3) was not significantly altered, so the first two weakest organizers have just changed places, subject 37 strengthening his position of the "worst organizer" by the number of assessments "-"; a noteworthy paradox is that subject 1 is found in all 4 reviews at a place in the range of 1 to 5, being appreciated by some colleagues as the best organizer and by others as among the poorest organizers;
- on the representative leader (Table 4); paradoxically, if we analyze item 26 and the initial assessment of item 27, the opinion of many colleagues goes to subject 1. The paradox disappears if we link this assessment with options manifested in responses to item 25 and that in both situations from the initial to the final assessment this subject strengthened his status.

Tab. 2. Representation item 25 – Which fellow do you think is the best organizer?

Initial								Final							
Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+
1	10	34	1	18	0	35	0	1	14	34	1	18	0	35	0
33	6	38	1	21	0	36	0	37	7	47	1	21	0	36	0
9	4	2	0	22	0	39	0	9	4	2	0	23	0	38	0
12	3	3	0	23	0	40	0	12	3	3	0	24	0	39	0
15	3	5	0	24	0	41	0	15	3	5	0	25	0	40	0
19	3	6	0	25	0	42	0	33	3	6	0	26	0	41	0
37	3	7	0	27	0	43	0	22	2	7	0	27	0	42	0
4	2	8	0	28	0	44	0	4	1	8	0	28	0	43	0
16	1	10	0	29	0	45	0	13	1	10	0	29	0	44	0
17	1	11	0	30	0	46	0	17	1	11	0	30	0	45	0
20	1	13	0	31	0	47	0	19	1	14	0	31	0	46	0
26	1	14	0	32	0	48	0	20	1	16	0	32	0	48	0

2, 3, 23, 25, 41, 42, 46, 47 – are not expressed   3, 23, 25, 41, 46 – are not expressed

Tab. 3. Representation item 26 – Which fellow do you think is the worst organizer?

Initial								Final							
Nr.	-	Nr.	-	Nr.	-	Nr.	-	Nr.	-	Nr.	-	Nr.	-	Nr.	-
30	6	36	1	14	0	29	0	37	12	41	1	15	0	32	0
37	6	41	1	15	0	31	0	30	8	46	1	16	0	33	0
10	4	46	1	16	0	32	0	1	6	2	0	17	0	34	0
18	4	47	1	17	0	34	0	18	3	3	0	19	0	35	0
1	3	2	0	20	0	35	0	10	2	4	0	20	0	39	0
6	3	3	0	21	0	39	0	6	1	5	0	21	0	40	0
28	2	4	0	22	0	40	0	11	1	7	0	24	0	42	0
38	2	5	0	23	0	42	0	22	1	8	0	25	0	43	0
11	1	7	0	24	0	43	0	23	1	9	0	26	0	44	0
12	1	8	0	25	0	44	0	28	1	12	0	27	0	45	0
19	1	9	0	26	0	45	0	36	1	13	0	29	0	47	0
33	1	13	0	27	0	48	0	38	1	14	0	31	0	48	0

3, 13, 14, 25, 27, 28, 40, 41, 46, 48 – are not expressed   3, 12, 25, 29, 31, 41, 46, 47 – are not expressed

Tab. 4. Representation item 27 – Which fellow do you accept as an informal (representative) leader of the group?

Initial								Final							
Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+	Nr.	+
33	8	17	1	20	0	34	0	1	9	44	1	20	0	34	0
37	8	44	1	21	0	35	0	24	6	2	0	21	0	35	0
9	6	2	0	22	0	36	0	37	6	3	0	22	0	36	0
4	2	3	0	23	0	38	0	9	4	4	0	23	0	38	0
10	2	5	0	24	0	39	0	15	3	5	0	25	0	39	0
13	2	7	0	25	0	41	0	17	3	6	0	26	0	41	0
28	2	8	0	26	0	42	0	33	3	7	0	27	0	42	0
40	2	12	0	27	0	43	0	8	2	11	0	28	0	43	0
1	1	15	0	29	0	45	0	10	2	12	0	29	0	45	0
6	1	16	0	30	0	46	0	40	2	14	0	30	0	46	0
11	1	18	0	31	0	47	0	13	1	16	0	31	0	47	0
14	1	19	0	32	0	48	0	19	1	18	0	32	0	48	0

6, 14, 23 ,28, 29, 38, 41, 42, 46 – are not expressed	6, 14, 22, 23, 36 – are not expressed

Discussion

Many reported findings are examined in relation to the embodied accounts of perceptual-motor performance. Issues related to the interdisciplinary dialogue, implications for research, and applied practice are also discussed [10]. For a high level of efficiency, all exercise programs should be tailored to meet the needs and wishes of target groups [11] following such aspects as: effects on empathy, learning and performance, pro-social contexts, the effects of empathy on individuals and group physiology and pro-social behavior [10].

Social groups (and sports groups) are an unavoidable reality for an individual and for society [1]. Outside groups, a human being can exist only temporarily; the socialization process is carried out in groups and human communities. Muresan [9] proposed the following definition: "a social group is a unit consisting of a number of individuals, who are each to other in status and role relations established after a period of time and which has a set of values or rules governing mutual behavior, at least in matters concerning the whole group."

To function, a group must have a common task to produce, to achieve, to succeed [8]. Personal needs that members bring into the group require solutions, and those needs can be satisfied only by the interrelations between the group members. In this context, the conclusions that arise as a consequence of the analysis of information obtained from carrying out investigation [1] can be summarized as follows:

To make our students partners in the instructive–educational act, it is important to know intimate details of the group, how it is structured, what informal relationships are occurring in the group. From the schema of group relations we can also obtain information about isolated members, about those who fail to adapt or those who are most agreed on;

In the main part, previous acceptance relationships, empathy, trust, rejection or isolation were of an interpersonal type, because previously the subjects did not have - as a group and individually - the experience of collaboration, mutual assistance, group addiction and so on;

Acts occurring in a common and banal framework, adapted for everyday comfort, offer false opportunities for self- and mutual knowledge.

Conclusions

Knowing the level reached in the calculation of the cohesion index, the preferential status and informal leadership before an important step for the group and some period thereafter will show us the effectiveness of the actions taken. Highlighting these issues at different stages will reveal the direction in which the group evolves: the cohesion increases, is stagnant or declines. Phenomena that can produce such changes are numerous; therefore, it is not only advisable but necessary to proceed with regular sociometric test applications and thus compare results and identification of factors that caused the changes.

Psychosocial investigation may support the knowledge of socio-affective foundations of a group that usually escapes direct observation, and mostly provides the possibility of an action or

a direct intervention in the group that takes into account the internal organization in order to enhance its functioning, to improve group cohesion, and to establish homogeneous teams (particularly most important in sport or other activities with high complexity).

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