

# Professional competences of personal trainers

## 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:

The concept of professional competences is defined in many ways. In the area of physical activity (as a sphere of practice and sports science as research exploration), this concept is understood in two ways, both as a range of rights to perform certain roles, certified by a document authorizing to deal with a given specialty, and as a range of specific knowledge, skills and attitudes, thanks to which the individual effectively achieves the assumed goals with the help of educational interactions. The aim of this study is the knowledge about professional competences of people conducting personal training.

### Material and Methods:

The study was conducted on 62 person who have been personal trainer for at least 3 years. Specially designed interview questionnaire "Professional competences of trainers in selected sports and physical recreation disciplines" was used to examine professional competences.

### Results:

In the opinion of the vast majority of respondents, the most useful universal features in the work of a personal trainer turned out to be the ability to create an appropriate atmosphere in class, communication skills and kindness towards other people. All respondents agreed that 9 detailed variables were equally important. In addition, it was observed that almost of the respondents declare motor predispositions (motor skills), including motor coordination and a high level of other motor features as components of vocational preparation, as significant skills.

### Conclusions:

A general tendency was that being a personal trainer is not limited only to the subject of fitness or strength classes, but to deepening your knowledge also in other thematic areas, including medical knowledge. The respondents also declared that they lead a healthy lifestyle manifested, among others, by in active spending of free time in the air, eating specially composed and regularly consumed meals and taking advantage of selected forms of biological regeneration.

### Key words:

motor skill • personality • research exploration • sport science • universal features

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**Personality** – according to trait theories human personality consists of various traits, which account for an individual's relatively coherent behaviour.

**Competences** – these are all work-related personality traits, knowledge, skills, experience and values on which a person relies to do the job well.

**Physical activity** – *noun* exercise and general movement that a person carries out as part of their day [32].

**Motor skills** – *plural noun* the ability of a person to make movements to achieve a goal, with stages including processing the information in the brain, transmitting neural signals and coordinating the relevant muscles to achieve the desired effect [32].

**Research exploration** – work undertaken by a researcher or team of researchers to advance scientific knowledge, to establish new scientific theses, theses, axioms, generalizations and definitions.

**Sport science** – a field of knowledge that concerns various aspects of human lifestyle, including physical activity, physical fitness, health, etc.

**Universal features** – these are the features that, in the case of a personal trainer, refer to his competences, knowledge and skills in conducting health training with clients under his care.

**The Delphi method (Delphi technique)** – a method of group decision-making and forecasting that involves successively collating the judgments of experts [33].

**EFPA** – “extreme form of physical activity are extreme sports, often classified according to the environment in which they are performed (water, land, air), extreme form of physical recreation as well as gainful activity or voluntary service, and all varieties of physical activity that meet at least one classification criterion of the feature associated either with extreme risk of injury or death, or extreme body burden with high level of effort, or extreme coordination difficulty” [11, p. 19]

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, in almost all highly developed countries, we can even speak of an epidemic of “movement laziness”. On the one hand, it is the result of the benefits brought by civilization and the related lifestyle changes, and on the other hand, the lack of knowledge about the importance of physical effort for human health [1, 2]. In addition, the COVID-9 pandemic has significantly limited physical activity in any form, from recreational to elite sports, and therefore the role of a professional personal trainer (PT) is increasing [3].

Almost from the very beginning of the profession of a physical recreation instructor, and later a PT, there has been a debate about his professional competences. The professional image of a PT consists of many elements. They relate to his skills, knowledge and attitudes towards himself and the participants, among other things. The concept of professional competences is defined in many ways [4, 5]. In the area of sport sciences, this concept is understood in two ways, both as a range of rights to perform certain roles, certified by a document authorizing to deal with a given specialty, and as a range of specific knowledge, skills and attitudes, thanks to which the future PT can effectively achieve its basic [6, 7].

From a contemporary specialist in PT, one should expect knowledge from the border of many areas and the ability to implement various forms of physical activity (not necessarily equated with sport). The profession of a PT is more and more perceived not only because of its attractiveness but also because of its social utility. The difficult period of the COVID Sars-2 pandemic unexpectedly verifies this usefulness in a special way [8, 9].

The aim of this study is the knowledge about professional competences of people conducting personal training.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted on a group of 62 person who have been PT for at least 3 years. As a method, a specially designed interview questionnaire “Professional competences of trainers in selected sports and physical recreation disciplines” was used to examine professional competences. The Delphi method (competent

judges) was used in the construction of the tool. Five experts, the competent judges found 6 universal features to be sufficient, the questions were scattered.

Among the competence criteria, 4 categories of identification of the studied phenomenon were intersubjectively assumed. Neither was given more importance than the others. The ordinal variable of the presented categories is a greater number of detailed empirical variables describing these categories: **perception of specific features** (pedagogical talent / the ability to transfer knowledge, full availability, aesthetics – external appearance, complete knowledge in the field of supplementation and dietetics, duty, self-confidence moral attitude, full professional specialization [promotion system – continuous education], inquisitiveness, innovation (constant keeping up with the news about training and the human body), managerial skills, moral attitude, preparation for cooperation with specialists of various sciences and practical areas, permanent amendment of specialist knowledge, personality, specialist psychological preparation, the ability to use modern control and measurement equipment and computers (access to them) 13 – **with equal variables in alphabetical order**); **acceptance of the forms of institutional education** (conferences and specialist training participation in the observation of activities in the country and abroad conferences and specialist training internships and classes under the guidance of experienced trainers and specialists, methodical conferences, problematic courses, participation in methodological demonstrations and demonstration trainings, promotional courses, postgraduate studies: biological regeneration, dietetics, etc., undertaking and supplementing studies at the Academy of Physical Education in the fields of physical education and sport (coaching – according to the alphabet); **acceptance of the forms of individual education** (7 participation in organizational activities in the field of sport for all, collecting a personal library, getting acquainted with publications and bulletins of sports associations, learning a foreign language and using foreign-language specialist literature, preparing and conducting demonstration classes, regular use of professional literature and journals – textbook and script publications, audiovisual materials (cassettes, films, slides and searching for and applying training innovations); **perception of the meaning of universal features** (6 high level of

physical fitness, talent and the resource of pedagogical skills, organizing skills, teaching skills of a given discipline, modern specialist knowledge and high level of general knowledge).

The same criterion is used in the presentation of the results in the “results section”.

## RESULTS

The respondents agreed (among the detailed variables) that they are the most important universal features of TP. Whereas 62% of them considered that physical fitness is not the most important (Figure 1).

Among the specific features, only two (full availability 98% and pedagogical talent 97% are not recognized by the respondents as significant, the remaining identification variables are recognized by everyone (Figure 2).

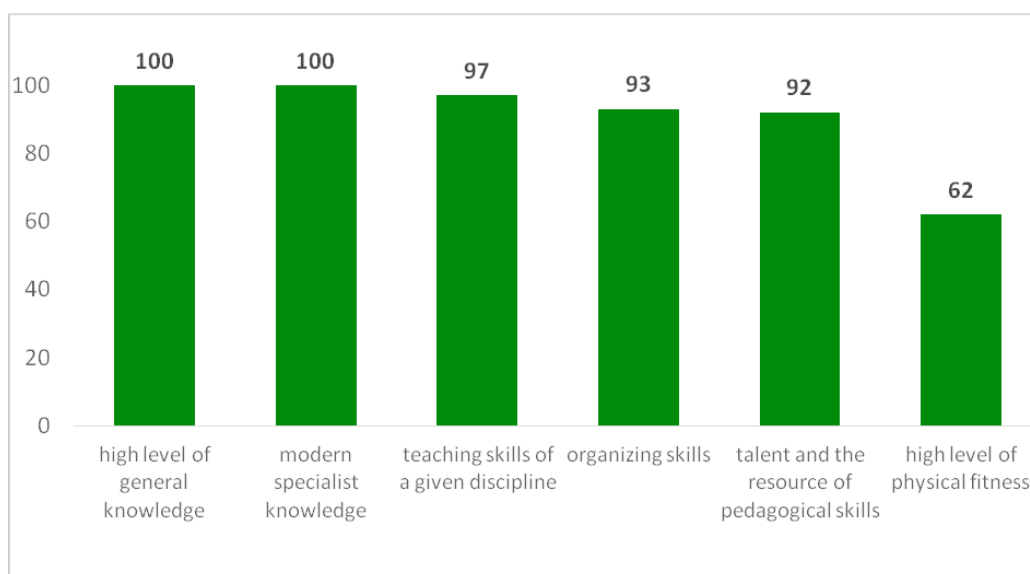
All respondents agreed that 9 detailed variables were equally important (conferences and specialist training, internships and classes under the guidance of experienced trainers and specialists, methodical conferences, participation in methodological demonstrations and demonstration trainings, participation in the observation of sports competitions – activities in the country and abroad – sport, undertaking

and supplementing studies at the Academy of Physical Education in the fields of physical education and sport/coaching, postgraduate studies: biological regeneration, dietetics, etc., problematic courses and promotional courses). Among 7 detailed empirical variables identifying the importance of individual TP education forms, acceptance is 86% only in the case of “participation in organizational activities in the field of sport for all”. The respondents agree that the other forms are important (Figure 3).

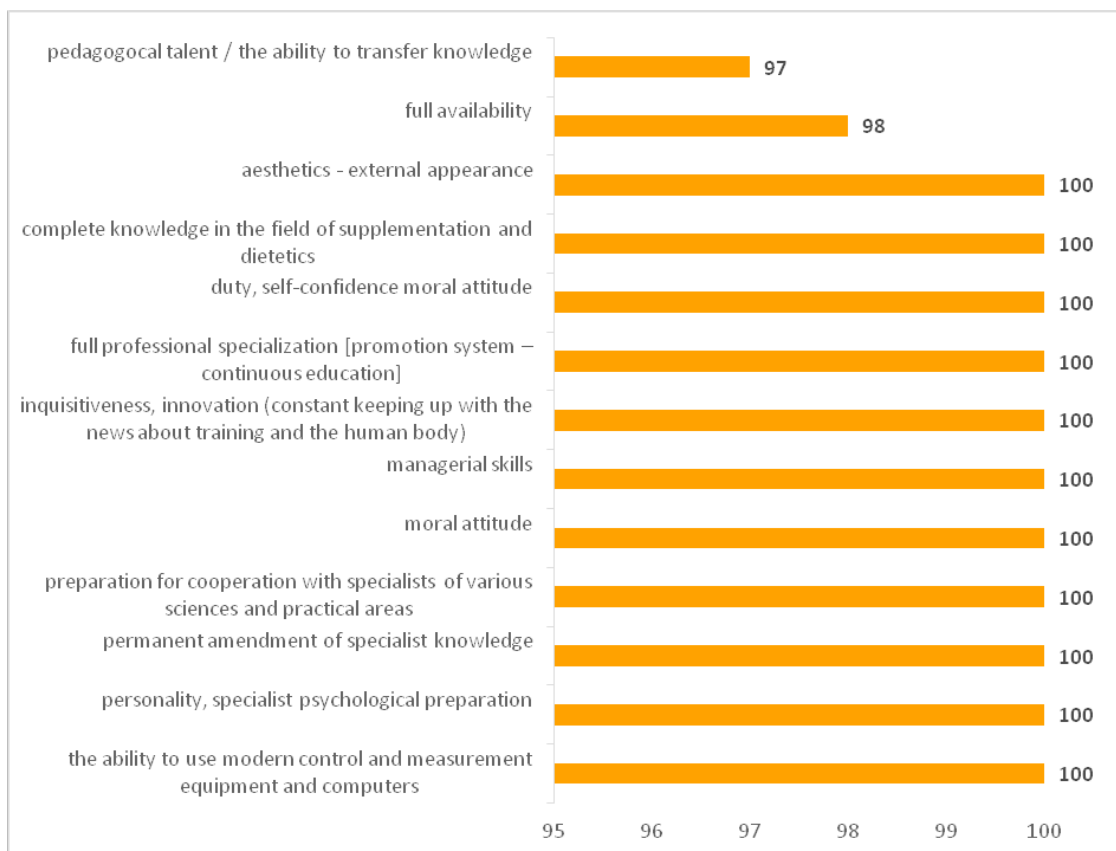
## DISCUSSION

Out of 35 detailed variables identifying the perceptions of PT’s professional competences, full agreement as to the importance (necessity) concerns 28. Thus, 80% of the identified detailed variables can be considered as absolutely identifying elements of the vocational qualifications of this profession. In a global society threatened by a pandemic, the role of PT will become more and more important. A significant result is that basically only 62% recognize physical fitness as one of the universal features of PT. Logical reasoning should be attributed to 38% because various extreme forms of physical activity – EFPA [10, 11] – are becoming more and more popular. This does not mean that RT should professionally demonstrate the ski jumping using the “V” technique.

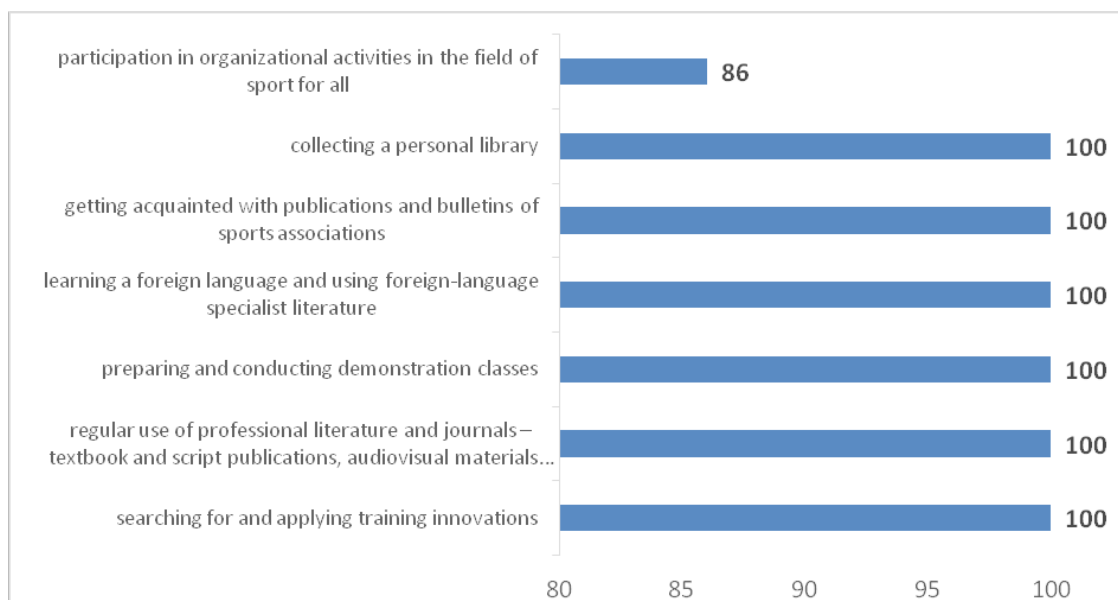
**Praxiology** – science about good work. *A Treatise on Good Work*, a fundamental lecture of praxiology by T. Kotarbinski (the first edition in 1955) has been translated into majority of the so-called congress languages (English, German, Russian) and as well: Czech, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian.



**Figure 1.** The pattern of the ideal personal trainers – universal features.



**Figure 2.** Professionalization of sport for all also means the identification of specific, desirable characteristics of the personal trainers working at this level of organization.



**Figure 3.** Individual forms of improving the professional qualifications of personal trainers.

There are many similar examples. Thus, the most important finding of these studies is the empirical evidence that professional PTs appreciate the need to intellectualize their own professional development.

Therefore, the organizers of full-time and course education of future specialists should be expected to innovate in this area. One of the most important criteria of professional education at the higher level (and not only of sports coaches) is the need to prepare a bachelor or master thesis promotional work on issues specific to future professional qualifications [12]. This problem, among others, is an important element in overcoming various barriers that delay the implementation of innovative concepts of continuous psychophysical activity, strengthening all dimensions of health and survival. An example of such neglect is stagnation (and even lowering the psychophysical professional competences of Polish policeman [13] and Polish military pilot [14].

From the praxeological point of view, the process of personal training in the full sense of the word can only be talked about when the chain of actions taken is organized. This, *inter alia*, problem is an important element in overcoming various barriers that delay the implementation

of innovative concepts of continuous psychophysical activity, strengthening all dimensions of health and survival [10, 15-19].

One of the very important criteria of TP's professional competences is the ability to combine various disciplines of knowledge and practical experience [20-25]. It is not only about the knowledge of stimulating somatic (biological) human development, but also about combining this knowledge with optimal influence on the mental sphere and social interactions [26-31].

## CONCLUSIONS

Research shows that being a personal trainer is not limited only to the subject of fitness or strength classes, but to deepening your knowledge also in other thematic areas, including medical knowledge. The respondents also declared that they lead a healthy lifestyle manifested, among others, by in active spending of free time in the air, eating specially composed and regularly consumed meals and taking advantage of selected forms of biological regeneration. The results of investigations showed, that almost all elements of the professional competences of the personal coach, as well as the forms of increasing professional qualifications, were declared by the respondents.

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