



**Toward the pathway of sports school
students: Health awareness and dropout
as the index of academic and non-academic
achievement**

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Proposal Information

Several factors can stand in the background of the dropout of the student from an educational institution namely learning difficulties; social problems; or the lack of motivation, direction, or support. School dropout cannot be predicted by only one factor as the determinants are in connection during the progress (Fenyves et al., 2017). For the investigation of the various factors, the Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model (1979) can provide a basis. The model distinguishes the onto-system (the individual and its genetic, physical and psychological characteristics), the micro-system (family, nursery, school, healthcare services, etc.), the meso-system (close and distant components such as the collaboration of the institutes and organizations), the exo-system (the broader material, cultural or political environment, and community), and the macro-system (local, regional, national, governmental, and social decision-making practices; Morin, Terrade, & Preauc, 2012). The low educational level does not only have serious consequences for the pupils concerned but also has a negative impact on the educational system at the level of the budget and on the social level (an aging society needs everyone on the board;

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[Merce, Anda, Petroman, & Ciolac, 2015](#)). This is an important question in the sports school system as well as the phenomenon namely changing sports club, moving and thus changing educational institution can be more frequent among (elite) athletes; however, this topic has not been investigated yet.

Another significant question is the connection between dropout and health behavior and health awareness. Previous studies have already confirmed that health-damaging behavior correlates with worse academic achievement and a higher dropout rate. The positive relationship between school absenteeism and early school leaving can already be regarded as evidence. Smoking increases the chance of early school leaving ([Cox, Zhang, Johnson, & Bender, 2007](#); [Ferguson, Horwood, & Beautrais, 2003](#)), and the same can be said regarding substance use, since the chances of dropping out are almost one and a half times (i.e., 1.37 times) bigger among those who are daily consumers of illegal drugs and it is even higher if it started before the age of 14 years ([Legleye et al., 2009](#)). The results of the previous investigations measuring the relationship between alcohol consumption and school dropout are ambivalent. Among regular consumers, academic achievement (grade point average) is lower ([Balsa, Giuliano, & French, 2011](#)) and the rate of dropout is higher ([Wichstorm, 1998](#)). Controversially, according to Legleye et al. (2009), the experience of drunkenness did not correlate with academic achievement. Our previous research conducted among sports school students revealed that academic achievement also showed a negative connection with risky behavior and a positive connection with health behavior (Health-Behaviour of Students Learning in Sports Schools and Traditional Schools 2017 project [Sportiskolák és Hagymányos Köznevelési Intézmények Tanulóinak Egészségmagatartása 2017 kutatás]; [Kovacs, 2018](#)). Students who dropped out are more likely to have mental health problems, for example, depression, aggression, self-evaluation, etc. ([Chatterji & DeSimone, 2005](#); [Liem, Lustig, & Dillon, 2010](#); [Roebuck, French, & Dennis, 2004](#)). In this study, we measured the dropout intentions, dropout rates, and health awareness of students learning in sport schools and in non-sport schools; furthermore, the connection between dropout intention and health awareness was investigated as well on the basis of focus group conversations.

Methods

In our research, the students of four sports schools (secondary educational institutions with a special program for developing sports and academic career with A-level exam at the end; one in Budapest and three in the country) and four non-sports schools (one in Budapest and three in the country) were examined through focus group discussions. In each institution, 10th grade students were interviewed about their academic and non-academic achievement (health behavior) and their dropout intentions ($N = 80$). According to the focus group discussions, the participants talked about their attitudes toward their educational institution, the atmosphere of the school, their future plans, as well as their academic and non-academic achievements. The conversations were based on

the following key issues: "What specialization do you learn?" "What do you think of this class?" "What are your plans for the future?" "Have you thought about studying in another institution? If so, why?" "Did you change school during secondary education? If so, why?" "To what extent would you change school on a 10-point scale?" "What are the factors due to that you would leave the institution?" "How health conscious are you on a 10-point scale?" "What do you think about smoking?" "What do you think about drinking?" "What do you think about drugs?" "What do you think about anxiety? How anxious do you feel on a 10-point scale?" "What do you think, how important is coping in life? How can you cope with the obstacles and problems on a 10-point scale?"

The aim of the research was to compare students of sports schools and non-sports schools with regard to the dropouts, the intentions of dropout, and health awareness. Our further aim was to examine the relationship between health awareness and the intention to drop out. During our research, the following questions were formulated:

1. The intension of dropout and the proportion of dropout are higher among students learning in sports schools.
2. The level of health awareness is higher among students learning in sports schools.
3. The higher level of health awareness correlates with the lower level of dropout.

The data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows, version 22 (IBM, New York, USA). Due to the distribution of the data (Kolmogorov–Smirnov probe, $p < .001$), Mann–Whitney probe was used for the between-group comparisons, Spearman' rank correlation method was used to measure the strength of the relationship between the variables, and χ^2 test was applied for the measurement of differences in the distributions.

Conclusions

According to our results, the intention of dropout and the real proportion of dropout are higher in sports schools. In the sports schools, dropout intentions were based on changing sports club (34.8%), dormitory problems (30.5%), academic difficulties (13%), relocation (8.7%), school climate (8.7%), and the risk of low academic achievement (4.3%). In non-sports schools, dropout intentions were based on academic failures (50%), academic difficulties (30%), and school climate (20%). Among sports school students, the factors causing dropout were related to changing sports club (33.4%), dormitory (22.2%), learning difficulties (22.2%), relocation (11.1%), and school climate (11.1%), whereas among non-sports school students, dropout was caused by relocation (60%), learning difficulties (20%), and school climate (20%). It was also claimed that sports school students have a higher level of health awareness. Based on the results of the

Mann–Whitney *U* test, there are significant differences in the attitudes and perceptions of alcohol consumption, health awareness, anxiety, and coping. Simultaneously, subjective health consciousness and attitudes related to smoking and illegal substance also show tendentious differences. Thus, sport school students can be described with better anxiety and coping parameters, primarily due to the regular physical activity itself. Finally, with regard to the relationship between the intention of dropout and health awareness, it can be stated that subjective health awareness and coping have a moderate positive relationship, whereas anxiety has a moderate negative relationship with the dropout intention of the students. The results highlight the importance of issue, so the institutional choice of sports school students will also allow us to examine the issue of interoperability between sports school institutions. Through this, the pathway of the dual sports and academic career in the primary and secondary educational systems could be measured.

Keywords: dropout, health behavior, sports school system

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