PUPILS´ ATTITUDE TO SWIMMING AND ITS RELEVANCE TO PARTICIPATION IN BASIC SWIMMING COURSES IN SELECTED REGIONS

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Abstract

The author of the article deals with the issue of pupils' relation to swimming as well as their participation in swimming courses at elementary schools. The evaluation of the results of our research showed that pupils of country elementary schools of both regions showed higher percentage representation of positive attitude towards swimming. We also want to point out that in the selected elementary schools there is no statistically significant relation between the attitude towards swimming and taking part in swimming courses. In the conclusion we present suggestions for improving the relationship towards swimming and aquatic environment.

Key words: swimming, swimming training, elementary school pupils, pupils' attitude to swimming

1 Introduction

Swimming is a specific art. It is not only a designation for a kind of sports but also a description of a technique of movement which should save people from drowning. It is also a way of receiving the tightest contact with water and its changeability. As all kinds of sports swimming has undergone a long way of transformation. Its realization, application, and usage by society are a reflection of the human society development. In the past swimming represented one of the basic human skill which helped people to survive. According to [1] swimming is nowadays understood as a physical activity, a motor skill gained by learning to solve a particular task in water environment. However, the society and its demands on sportsmen regard swimming as a motor performance itself, which does not express the complexity of this physical activity. The real value of swimming results from the fact that swimming is a suitable motor activity which can be realized at any age not only by healthy individuals but also by people with physical impairment or a physical disability. Swimming is an activity which without doubt belongs to the healthiest and most frequent sports done by active swimmers as well as other active sportsmen who use swimming as a part of their regular training programme, i.e. as an additional sport. Swimming is also used a lot as a post-traumatic rehabilitation as well as a treatment for physical or mental disorders. In the far past swimming was a basic skill to help a man to survive. Nowadays it is an inseparable part of physical culture and as one of the most frequent sports helps in completion and improvement of many people's lifestyles.

2 Issue

Although at first sight it may seem that knowing to swim is natural and simple (almost all animals can swim) it is not easy to teach a child to swim and it should not be a trauma for the child. Based on the general knowledge that the younger the person the less afraid of water and less ability to judge a possible risk and danger, it is logical that the sooner the child gets acquainted with water and learns to swim the easier and more pleasant for the parents. Training and improving swimming at pre-school children and pupils involve not only achieving swimming skills but also activity, creativity, socializing and most of all emotionality which is nowadays valued and praised the most. According to [2], knowing to swim and have a pleasant feeling in water is a very desirable experience for a child and a young person. First experience with water comes with parents´ care and education. Parents are the most important actors who

can substantially influence a child's attitude to water environment either positively or negatively [3]. Creation an attitude to water environment and swimming is one of the tasks of the educational process via planning and realization of the basic and advanced swimming courses (BSC, ASC). [4], states that teaching swimming should take place mainly at elementary schools. There are many ways how to encourage children's positive attitude to water and to involve swimming in their free time. For example regular organization of swimming courses, modernization of swimming teaching methods by using different aids, by human approach to pupils, and professional skills of the swimming instructor. Very important is also the increase of hours for basic and advanced swimming courses. According to [5], the organization and realization of teaching basic swimming at elementary and secondary schools is at present times insufficient.

3 Aim, tasks and hypotheses

The aim of this work is to find out the attitude of pupils from selected schools to swimming and their participation in swimming training organized by schools. The research included also finding the relevance of the attitude towards swimming to the participation in basic swimming courses.

Following tasks emerge from the above mentioned aims:

- to find out the level of participation in BSC at selected elementary schools,
- to find out pupils´ attitude to swimming at selected elementary schools,
- based on the results to find the relevance of the attitude towards swimming to the participation in BSC,
- based on the results to suggest possibilities for creating the relationship towards swimming and for motivating pupils for BSC.

We suppose that:

H 1: the prevalence of positive attitude towards swimming in pupils of country elementary schools is much higher than in pupils of city elementary schools,

H 2: there is relevance between the selected schools pupils' attitude towards swimming and participation in basic swimming courses at elementary schools.

4 Test group and methodology

The monitored group (n=156) consisted of pupils of selected elementary schools in Považská Bystrica and Piešťany. Two city elementary schools and two country elementary schools from each region were involved in the research. 76 pupils from the region of Považská Bystrica and 80 pupils from the region of Piešťany participated in the research (table 1).

Table 1 *Pupils participation in the research*

Elementary school	**n**	**boys**		**girls**	
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**
3. ZŠ (city) PB	39	19	48,72	20	51,28
Domaniža (country) PB	37	16	43,24	21	56,76
Total for PB	**76**	**35**	**46,05**	**41**	**53,94**
4. ZŠ (city) PN	46	21	45,65	25	54,35
Moravany/country PN	34	12	35,29	22	64,71
Total for PN	**80**	**33**	**41,25**	**47**	**58,75**
Total PB+PN	**156**	**68**	**43,58**	**88**	**56,42**

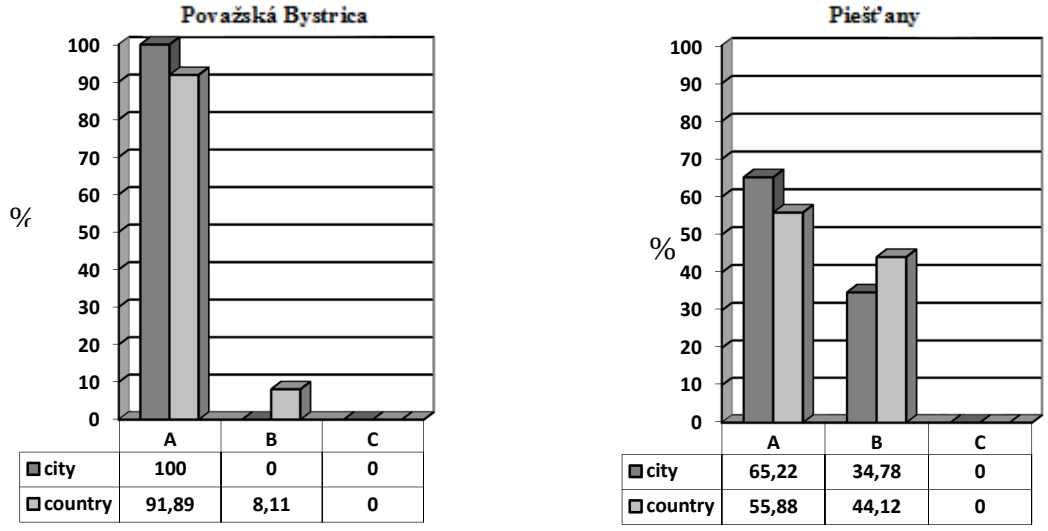
We used the method of a questionnaire to gain the data. Mainly closed questions with a possibility of choice of answers were used. The results are presented in graphs in the results part. For the evaluation of the results MS Excel was used. To find out whether there is a significantly important dependence between variables (relationship to swimming and participation in BSC) a chi-square test of independence was used with the 5% alpha level of significance. The entry data were occurrences of measured data in tested variables. In graphical outcomes we present tables with percentage of each variable, column graph and a p-value of correspondent $\chi 2$ test of independence. From the logical methods we used the method of analysis, synthesis, inductive, and deductive processes.

All elementary schools involved in the research realize basic swimming courses in the frame of their curricula. The courses are supervised by professionally trained swimming instructors.

5 Results and discussion

One of the main presuppositions for participation in BSC at elementary schools is pupils´ interest and their positive attitude to swimming. By the means of a questionnaire we were exploring pupils´ opinions and relation to swimming in selected regions. The results are presented after a thorough analysis in the graphs in combination with descriptive statistics for the comparison of cities and country and of the two regions: Považská Bystrica (PB) and Piešťany (PN).

First items in the questionnaire were oriented to the participation in BSC. The results were very satisfactory mainly in the region PB/city where 100% (39) took part in BSC and PB/country where 91.89% (34) pupils took part in BSC (figure 1a). In the region PN/city 65.22% (30) pupils claimed to have attended BSC organized by school and 34.78% (16) pupils did not participate in BSC in the city of Piešťany. The situation in the country was worse. 55.88% (19) pupils attended BSC and 44.12% (15) pupils did not attend BSC organized by school (figure 1b).



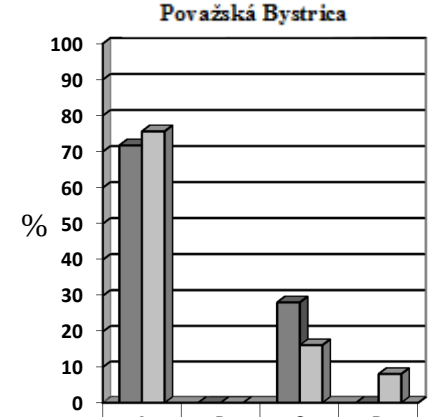
Legend: A – yes, B – no, C - I do not know

Fig. 1a, b *Participation in BSC*

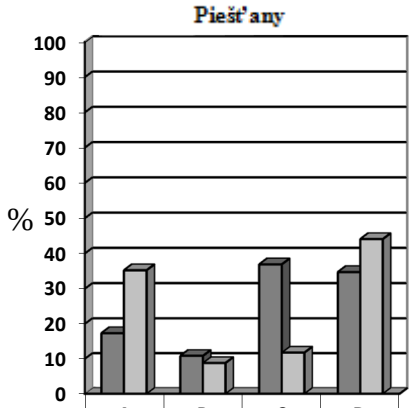
Based on the results we can state that the situation concerning attendance in BSC in the region PB is excellent, which reflects the quality and success of the institution which for a long time organizes all kinds of swimming courses including courses for adults. Apart from a kind and very human approach to children, which is an essential part of any instructor, there are very good facilities for realizing swimming courses. In the region PN the situation is quite different. At present the swimming pool is closed due to the reconstruction so there are not suitable

facilities for realizing swimming courses. Different pools of spa houses are being used which do not fulfil required criteria in general in spite of the fact that in the city of Piešťany there are hotel pools where safe realization of swimming courses is possible.

Next item of the questionnaire focused on the feelings and emotions of pupils regarding BSC. We were interested in knowing whether the subjects liked BSC. In the region PB 71.79% (28) pupils like the courses. This option was selected by 75.68% (28) pupils in the region PB/country, which again confirms the good quality and professional approach (figure 2a). In the region of PN there were some negative emotions connected with the participation in BSC organized by the school. According to figure 2b 10.87% (5) pupils from the region PN/city and 8.82% (3) pupils from PN/country do not like the course. Positive emotions from BSC organized by elementary schools were reported by 17.39% (8) pupils from the region PN/city and 35.29% (12) pupils from PN/country. The research showed that pupils from country of both regions report more positive emotions from swimming courses which may result from the lack of opportunities for swimming in a pool as opposed to city children. We also found out that pupils in the region PB have more positive feelings from BSC organized by the school than pupils in the region PN.



	A	B	C	D
city	71,79	0	28,21	0
country	75,68	0	16,22	8,11



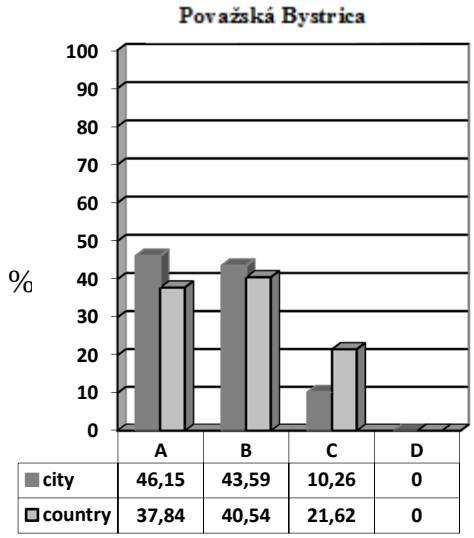
	A	B	C	D
city	17,39	10,87	36,96	34,78
country	35,29	8,82	11,79	44,12

Legend: A – I like, B – I do not like, C - Depends on situation, D - I do not know

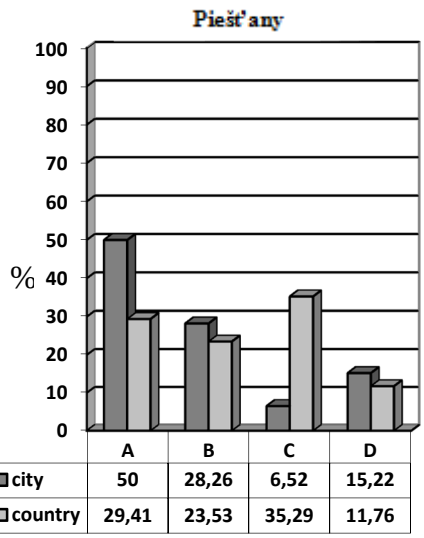
Fig. 2a, b *Pupils attitude towards swimming courses*

We tried to find out why pupils wanted to attend the swimming course. We were interested in their motives. In the region PB/city 46.15% (18) pupils and in PB/country 37.84% (14) pupils want to attend the course to avoid classes at school. In order to swim and play in water 43.59% (17) PB/city and 40.54% (15) PB/country pupils want to attend the course. 10.26% (4) pupils in PB/city and 21.62% (8) pupils in PB/country selected the option that they want to learn to swim (figure 3a).

In the region PN/country 35.29% (12) pupils marked the option that they want to go to the course in order to learn to swim. It is a paradox that in PN/city the same option was marked by only 6.25% (3) pupils. Surprisingly in the PN region there are some pupils who do not want to attend the swimming course. This option was chosen in PN/city by 15.22% (7) pupils and in PN/country by 11.76% (4) pupils. Quite disappointing is that 50% of pupils from PN/city want to attend the course to avoid classes at school (figure 3b). Based on the results of the survey we can claim that at city schools in both regions the basic motivation for attending the swimming course is to avoid classes at school. Country school pupils look forward to playing in water and learning how to swim.



	A	B	C	D
city	46,15	43,59	10,26	0
country	37,84	40,54	21,62	0

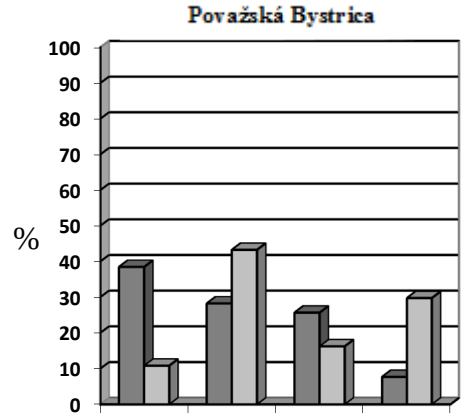


	A	B	C	D
city	50	28,26	6,52	15,22
country	29,41	23,53	35,29	11,76

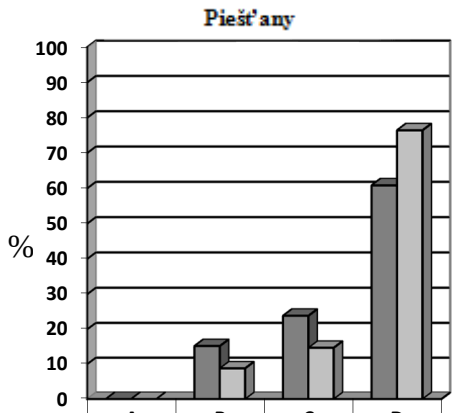
Legend: A – we will not go to school, B – I will have a swim and play in water, C – I will learn to swim, D – I do not want to go to a course

Fig. 3a, b *Reasons for participation in swimming courses*

Swimming is a motor activity which has a beneficial effect on a human body. Apart from improving physical fitness and motor performance in general, regular swimming tightens musculature, builds body, vitalizes heart and blood circulation, and eliminates stress. For this reason we included in the questionnaire a question about the frequency of going to a swimming pool. In figure 4a it is evident that 29.73% (11) pupils from country and 7.69% (3) pupils from city in the region of PB do not go to a swimming pool at all. 10.81% (4) pupils from country and 38.46% (15) pupils from city of the PB region go to a swimming pool regularly.



	A	B	C	D
city	38,46	28,21	25,64	7,69
country	10,81	43,24	16,22	29,73



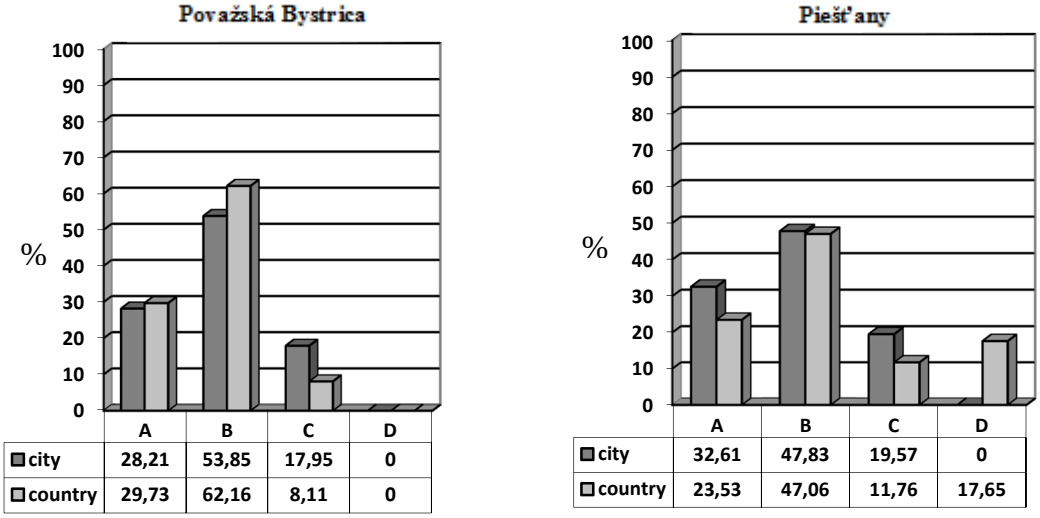
	A	B	C	D
city	0	15,22	23,91	60,87
country	0	8,82	14,71	76,47

Legend: A – regularly, B – sometimes C - rarely, D – never.

Fig. 4a, b *Frequency of visiting swimming pool*

As for going to a swimming pool the situation in the PN region is worse than in PB. In PN region 76.47% (26) pupils from country do not go to a swimming pool at all and from city it is 60.87% (28) pupils. None of the pupils from PN designated the option of regular going to a swimming pool (figure 4b).

There are many different motor activities in water environment. We were curious which activities pupils prefer in swimming pools. This part of the research should differentiate pupils who enjoy swimming per se from those who prefer playing in water which is understandingly a typical and favourite activity for youngsters bearing in mind the fact that playing has an important role in swimming training and is an essential part of the learning process. In the region PB/city 53.85% (21) pupils prefer playing in swimming pools. The result of 28.21% of pupils in PB/city who claim that their favourite activity in a pool is swimming is very consolatory.



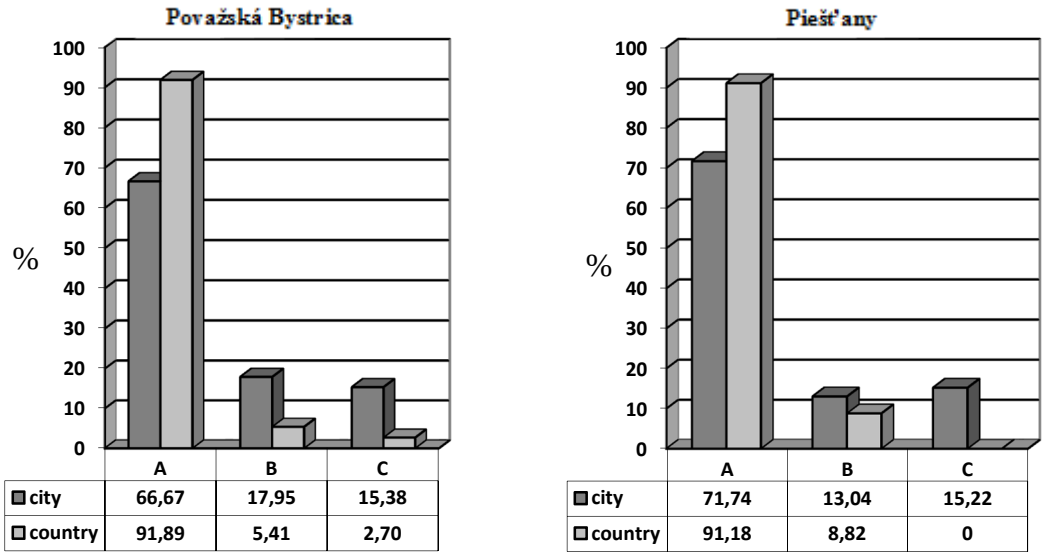
Legend: A – swimming, B – playing, C - diving, D - I do not know

Fig. 5a, b *Favourite activities in a swimming pool*

As many as 11 pupils from city school in PB preferred swimming to playing and diving, which we perceive as their positive attitude to swimming per se. Nevertheless we do not contradict the fact that pupils who prefer playing in water and diving do not have a positive attitude to swimming. In the region PB/country 29.73% (11) pupils stated that they prefer swimming and 62.16 (23) pupils stated they prefer playing in water (figure 5a). The research showed that in the region PN/city the greatest percentage of pupils prefer playing (47.83%, 22 pupils) and 32.61% (15) pupils prefer swimming. In the country of PN we found out that 23.53% (8) pupils prefer swimming and 47.06% (16) pupils prefer playing (figure 5b). The research confirms that swimming pools are used by pupils not only for having fun and playing in water but also for swimming per se.

Next we were interested in knowing what attitude the pupils have towards swimming in general. Creating an attitude towards swimming is affected by many different factors. One of the most important factors in creating an attitude to water environment is conscious support and awareness of importance of swimming from the part of parents, as a matter of fact their personal guidance followed by nice and friendly approach from instructors of BSC realized by elementary schools. So says the theory. In real life we can see quite often that incorrect and blunt approach of instructors discourages pupils and such experience results in a negative attitude towards water environment and swimming. In the region PB/city 66.67% (26) pupils have a positive attitude to swimming and in PB/country it is 91.89% (34) pupils. However, there were some pupils with a negative attitude to swimming. This was in PB/city 17.95% (7) pupils and 5.41% (1) pupils from country (figure 6a). In the PN region we found out that 71.74% (33) pupils from city have a positive attitude to swimming and as many as 91.18% (31) pupils from country. Six pupils from PN/city have a negative attitude to swimming (13.04%) and 8.82% (3) pupils from PN/country marked the option of a negative attitude to swimming too (figure 6b).

The results of this part of the research are quite satisfactory since the majority of the subjects claimed to have a positive attitude to water environment and swimming.

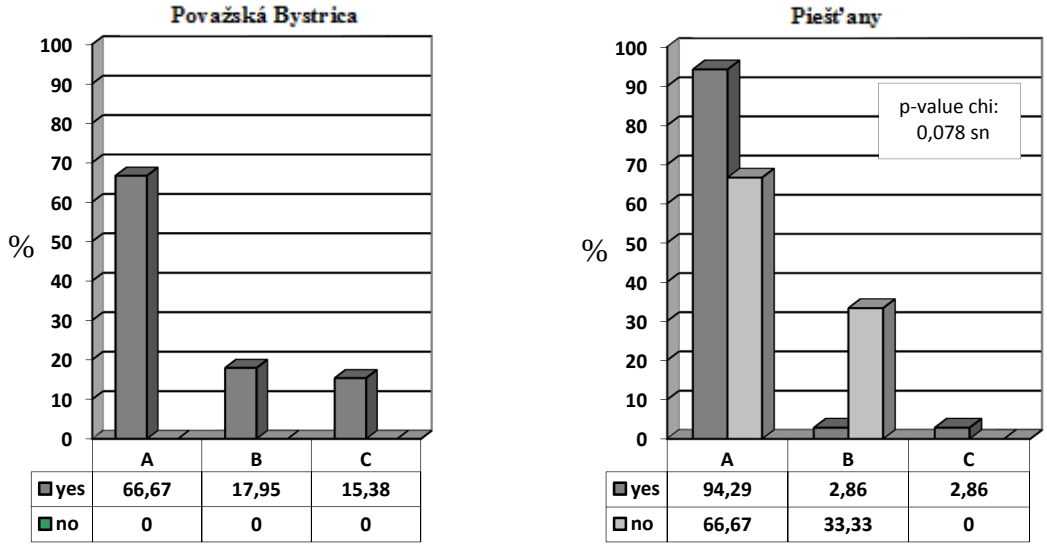


Legend: A – positive, B – negative, C - none

Fig. 6a, b *Pupils´ attitude to swimming*

Based on the results of the research we claim that in both regions more pupils from country express a positive attitude to swimming than pupils from city. This confirms **H1.**

In the questionnaire we made it possible for pupils to express their relation to swimming as well as their participation in BSC. We wanted to see if there exists any relevant dependence (relation) between two variables: the attitude to swimming and the participation in swimming courses. The variable "attitude to swimming" has three levels: positive, negative, and none.



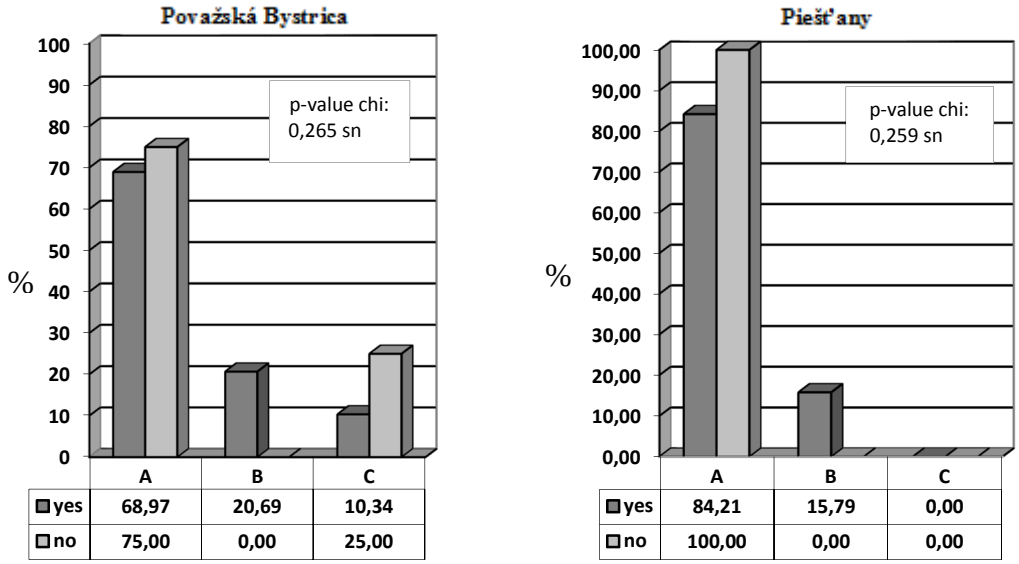
Legend: A – positive, B – negative, C – none

Fig. 7a, b *Dependence of attitude towards swimming on participation in BSC in PB*

In the region PB/city it is not possible to compute the statistically significant dependence between the attitude to swimming and participation in BSC because the occurrence in the

category of pupils who did not take part in any BSC is zero (figure 7a). We used the Chi-square test of independence to calculate the p value, the lowest level of dependency. The calculated p value is 0.078 is a high level thus we cannot reject the zero hypothesis that there is no significant dependence between the two variables (attitude to swimming and participation in BSC) at the alpha level 5%. In the region PB/country we did not find a statistically significant dependence between variables the attitude to swimming and participation in BSC.

In the region PN /city the calculated p value is 0.265 and in PN/country p = 0.259, which are very high values. Thus the zero hypothesis H_0 (the two variables are independent) cannot be rejected (figure 8a, b). We confirm that there is not a significant dependence between the attitude to swimming and participation in swimming courses at elementary school pupils in PN.



Legend: A – positive, B – negative, C – none

Fig. 8a, b *Dependence between attitude towards swimming and participation in BSC in PN*

Based on the analysis of the results of the research we confirm that there is no statistically significant dependence between the attitude to swimming and participation in BSC at elementary school pupils in the regions of PB and PN. The **H 2** was thus not confirmed. We suppose that the findings in the regions of PB and PN are influenced mainly by the fact that pupils do not build their relation to swimming (either positive or negative) based solely on the swimming courses. Their attitude to water and swimming is formed and developed by a person who teaches a pupil to swim and later by pupil's interest in swimming, by teaching pupils about positive effects of swimming, and by implementing swimming into the physical activities of pupils. We hereby state that the attitude towards swimming is not relevant to the participation in BSC. The attitude towards swimming is not the only factor influencing participation in BSC.

6 Conclusion

In our survey we deal with the issue of pupils´ attitudes to swimming and swimming courses at selected elementary schools. By evaluating the results of the research we found out that the participation in BSC in PB region is excellent (over 90% for both city and country), in the region of PN the participation in BSC is weaker (over 55.88%) in comparison with the PB region. The analysis of the results shows that country pupils from both regions demonstrated higher percentage representation in positive attitude to swimming (91.54%) as opposed to pupils from city schools (69.41%). The reasons for such results can be most probably found in the fact that the city of Piešťany does not have suitable swimming facilities for realization of

swimming courses. Suitable conditions for realization of swimming courses are one of the basic factors for creating an attitude to swimming and water environment [6]. The reasons why pupils develop a negative attitude to swimming are diverse. [5, 7] state mainly the following reasons: unpleasant experience with water in the past, fear from water, forcing pupils in swimming courses to such water activities which are unpleasant for them, and insufficient encouragement from parents [4]. Claims that a professional approach of the swimming instructor in swimming courses helps pupils to gradually get acquainted with water environment and to feel in water comfortably.

The aim of swimming courses is not performance swimming but making use of the positive influence of swimming on healthy psychological and physical development of youngsters. Apart from other benefits regular swimming hardens the body thus increasing its resistance against different diseases, positively affects motor apparatus, increases overall fitness, and improves breathing [8]. For these particular reasons it is important to motivate pupils for developing a positive attitude to swimming and water environment. Based on our findings we give the following recommendations for developing a positive attitude to swimming and water.

- human approach relative and correspondent to a pupil's age in order to improve pupils motivation and interest in swimming,
- to motivate pupils by implementing games, plays, and competitions in BSC,
- to increase pupils´ interest in BSC to involve different swimming aids and leave some space for pupils to play with them,
- the training should be performed only by a professional swimming instructor who does his job with responsibility and has a positive attitude to children,
- elementary school teacher who accompanies pupils in BSC is not just a passive observer of swimming training but by his active approach (praising children for good performances in water, encouraging pupils to swim, monitoring an instructor's work) helps to develop a positive attitude to swimming,
- to organize annually basic swimming courses supervised by professionally trained swimming instructors.

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