

Social representations of health among students-athletes and students not involved in sports

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Abstract

Objective of the study is the content and structure of social ideas about health among students who have linked their future with professional sports, and among students who do not go in for sports.

Methods and structure of the study. The research methodology was based on the main provisions of French social psychology on the phenomenon of social representations and their functions in the life of people and society (S. Moskovisi), as well as provisions on the structure of social representations (J.K. Abrik). The research methods were the SF-36 Health Status Survey Questionnaire and the methodology for studying the structure and content of social representations by P. Vergès. The study involved 56 students aged 20 to 24 years, of which 29 people are professionally involved in sports and 27 people are not involved in sports.

Results and conclusions. The results of the survey showed that student-athletes have complete, evidence-based and systemic knowledge about health, about the requirements of health-saving conditions and the principles of a healthy lifestyle. However, the study of the prototype analysis data showed that for athletes, health is considered as a condition for the success of sports activities, providing a high level of physical capabilities. Such an "instrumental" approach leads to the fact that professional athletes consider health not as the most important value, but as a basic condition for sports achievements and career success. Students, participants of the study who are not involved in professional sports, have poorly structured knowledge about the essence of a healthy lifestyle, tend to give stereotypical answers. However, their social representations consider health as a necessary condition for a happy life, associated with activity and general well-being.

Keywords: social representations, health, athletes, sports, activity, healthy lifestyle, association.

Introduction. Professional sport, designed to create a social model of health, unfortunately, in recent years has shown a complete disregard for the issues of maintaining the health of professional athletes. Athletes are aimed at achieving high sports results and do not always pay attention to actions that can potentially cause irreparable harm to their health. Between the content of ideas about health and professional sports, the semantic distance is expanding, the image of sports ceases to fulfill its social function.

Social representations reflect the context in which the information mass is constructed, reflecting what is considered as common sense, acting as certain regulators of human behavior, as well as the functioning of society as a whole [2]. The theoretical basis of this

study was: a meaningful definition of the phenomenon of social representations in people's lives by S. Moskovisi [6]; the factors necessary for the construction of social representations, identified in the studies of T.P. Emelyanova [3]; the structure of social representations highlighted by Zh.K. Abrik [5]; characteristics of the study of social ideas about health I.B. Bovina [1].

Objective of the study was to identify the social representations of athletes and people who do not go in for sports about health; revealing the structure, content and qualitative characteristics of the ideas about the health of these groups of respondents.

Methods and structure of the study. 56 people, male students, took part in the scientific experiment. 29 people are professionally involved in sports (cyclic



and acyclic), they study at faculties that train specialists in the field of physical culture and sports and plan their professional career in sports. The students of the second group (27 people) do not go in for professional sports, they plan their professional career in different areas far from sports. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 24 years.

The study used the Questionnaire SF-36 Health Status Survey) [8], adapted at the Institute of Clinical and Pharmacological Research in St. Petersburg [4], and the method of studying the structure and content of social representations by P. Verg s [7].

Results of the study and their discussion. The results of the SF-36 Health Status Survey were processed using the method of variation statistics, which allows you to fully calculate the necessary parameters to determine the significant significance of the study results. In each of the groups for all signs were calculated: arithmetic mean (M); average error of the arithmetic mean (m); significant difference confidence factor (t); error probability (p).

The results of the SF-36-S test allow us to talk about a significant difference between the perception of sports, assessment of their own health and quality of life among athletes and students who are not involved in sports.

Statistical analysis performed using the Mann-Whitney U-test (at $p = 0.05$) showed:

- athletes at the level of a significant statistical difference demonstrate systematic, evidence-based knowledge about health, evaluate the positive impact of playing sports not only on the physical, but also on the emotional state; athletes, more than people who do not play sports, tend to believe that playing sports forms a stable positive assessment of their own capabilities;
- students who do not go in for sports showed a statistically lower level of knowledge about health and a healthy lifestyle;

- athletes believe that sport makes them more resistant to physical and psycho-emotional stress.

All study participants believe that sports have a positive effect on quality of life indicators, there is no significant statistical difference.

A method of studying the structure and content of social representations of P. Verg s was carried out. An analysis of the data of a prototypical analysis of associations given by student-athletes to the word "health" showed that the core elements of the idea of health included the following associations: "happiness" (23; 4.5), "achievement" (23; 2.3), "body" (20; 2.87), "goal" (16; 2.69), "immunity" (10; 3.06), "life" (22; 2.80), "youth" (16; 2.57).

Actually, the peripheral system of ideas about health is formed by such concepts as "well-being" (12; 4.67), "rehabilitation" (8; 4.75), "doctors" (13; 3.92). The potential zone of changes included "training" (17; 2.29), "aspiration" (8; 3.25), "medal" (16; 3.19), "sports" (15; 3.07), "strong" (9; 3.56).

Table 1 presents the associations that form the core and periphery of student-athletes' ideas about health, indicating their average rank and frequency of occurrence.

An analysis of the data of a prototypical analysis of associations given by students who are not involved in professional sports to the word "health" showed that the following associations were included in the core elements of the idea of health: "beauty" (20; 3.07), "training" (5; 2.47), "diet" (2; 2.59), "organism" (12; 1.93), "well-being" (9; 3.61), "treatment" (21; 2.17), "aspiration" (3; 3.64), "discipline" (6; 2.98). Actually, the peripheral system of social ideas about health in people who do not go in for professional sports is represented by such concepts as "activity" (24; 4.08), "rest" (19; 4.16), "nature" (26; 3.85), "fitness" (21; 3.90). The potential zone of changes included the words: "movement" (24; 3.63), "food" (20; 3.09).

Table 1. Structural status of the elements of student-athletes' social representation of health

Association frequency	Average rank of the association	
	Less than 3.65	Greater than or equal to 3.65
Greater than or equal to 18	«happiness» (23; 4.5) «achievement» (23; 2.3) «body» (20; 2.87) «goal» (16; 2.69) «immunity» (10; 3.06) «life» (22; 2.80) «youth» (16; 2.57) «training» (17; 2.29) «aspiration» (8; 3.25) «medal» (16; 3.19) «sporty» (15; 3.07) «strong» (9; 3.56)	«activity» (3; 3.67) «organism» (8; 3.88) «competition» (12; 4.67) «people» (13; 3.92)
Less than 18		«well-being» (12; 4.67) «rehabilitation» (8; 4.75) «doctors» (13; 3.92)

**Table 2.** Structural status of the elements of the social idea of health among students who do not go in for sports

Association frequency	Average rank of the association	
	Less than 3.66	Greater than or equal to 3,66
Greater than or equal to 27	«beauty» (20; 3.07) «training» (5; 2.47) «diet» (2; 2.59) «organism» (12; 1.93) «well-being» (9; 3.61) «treatment» (21; 2.17) «aspiration» (3; 3.64) «discipline» (6; 2.98) «movement» (24; 3.63) «food» (20; 3.09)	«active» (23; 3.78) «purposeful» (27; 3.96) «man» (29; 3.97) «image» (12; 4.03) «organism» (68; 3.99) «immunity» (30; 3.87) «body» (10; 3.74)
Less than 27		«activity» (24; 4.08) «rest» (19; 4.16) «nature» (26; 3.85) «fitness» (21; 3.90)

Table 2 presents the associations that form the core and periphery of the ideas about health among students who are not involved in professional sports, indicating their average rank and frequency of occurrence.

For athletes, health is closely related to sports activities, is associated with a high level of physical capabilities, with achievements. Social ideas about the health of people who do not go in for sports are associated with activity and a healthy lifestyle.

Conclusions. The conducted research suggests that student-athletes are well aware of the positive impact of sports on the quality of life, highly appreciate the role of health in their own lives. However, at the semantic level, athletes treat health as a means to achieve their life goals. Such an “instrumental” approach significantly reduces the value content of the concept of “health”, which can lead to situational, potentially erroneous forms of behavior.

Students who are not involved in professional sports consider health as an independent value, a necessary attribute of a happy and fulfilling life.

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