

The perception of sport among the Junior volleyball players of Belgrade, pilot project

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INTRODUCTION

Why do the young participate in sport? What is the perception of sport among sportsmen and sportswomen? Different organizations consider and use sport as a tool to achieve a deeply heterogeneous gamma of goals: some consider the competition very important, others consider the health benefits, some place more emphasis on the aggregative value of the sport and others are attracted by the economic market. We live in a complex society and the sport can surely be considered as complex social phenomenon.

The European Union and the United Nations recognize the sport as tool of development in several official publications: the active role of sport is acknowledged in several domains like health (both public and individual), education (formal and non-formal), social inclusion, advocacy, partnership building, sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, active citizenship and social cohesion (European Commission, 2007; United Nations, 2003 – 2005 - website ; UNICEF, 2004 - website; UNDP, website; Sport and Development, website). Moreover the United Nations mention also sport among the tools to achieve the Millennium Developing Goals (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport and Development, 2003; International Conference for Sport and Development, 2003; 2nd Magglingen Conference 2005).

The whole former Yugoslavia, including Serbia, has recently been a theatre of inter-ethnic conflicts: those conflicts left a deep mark in the society, in the cities, in people's lives and memories. It is doubtless that in this context sport can assume different values and can support other ongoing policies in various frameworks like socialization, integration, active citizenship, healthy lifestyle and children's rights to play. In addition, sport also represents for many people, an instrument of social escalation, an improvement of their life quality, a way to escape poverty. Unfortunately in Serbia (and unfortunately not only in Serbia) sport can sometimes show its negative face: the violence, the discrimination, the shadow of nationalism. The youth Serbian athletes are the target group of the analysis: the youth always represent the future, especially in the developing countries that have recently been a theatre of inter-ethnics conflicts.

A previous research on Italian pupils (Biancalana, 2004) shows that the youngsters consider the sport important because it's healthy activity. Almost every pupil knows at least one football and one cyclist, the main part of pupils knows at least one swimmer and one basketball player. The basic rules of football, basket and volleyball are well known by the pupils.

At European level, recent statistics shows that the 22% of youngsters are member of associations: among these, the 49% are part of sport associations (European Commission, 2009). Among the European Union citizens, 40% say to play sport at least once a week. Interesting the relation between education and sport: the people with higher level of education are most likely involved in sport, both as athletes and volunteers. In fact, a significant proportion of Europeans - 7% - declare to volunteer and to help local sports projects. Men are most involved in sport than women: this evidence is evident in all age groups, but it is stronger in the 15-24 age group (Eurobarometer , 2010).

According to European citizens' opinion, "To improve health" is the main reason to be engaged in sport. "To improve fitness", "to relax" and "to have fun" are relevant as well. One respondent every four mention also "to improve physical performance", "to improve physical appearance", "to control weight" and "to be with friends". Among the youngsters, the most frequent answer is "to have fun", followed by "to improve health" and "to improve fitness" "To improve physical performance" and "and "to be with friends" result to appeal more youngsters

respondents than other age groups. Men are more motivated by fun, competition and company of friends. To control weight, to improve health and the physical appearance are most likely mentioned by women (Eurobarometer, 2010).

1. RESEARCH HYPOTESIS

The goal of this research is to understand if sport can be a tool of development: one useful to promote education, socialization, healthy-lifestyle, active citizenship or if it is just a competitive phenomenon. All the volleyball players, Junior category, of Belgrade filled the form.

2. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The research is based on quantitative methods. The forms is composed by five batteries of items related to game, regular season, training, “champion” and the value of sport. The form measures six concepts of sport: competition, education, fun, health, socialization and participation. The respondents can choose three items for each battery: the first choice gets ten points, the second five, the third one. As consequence, each concept and each items can be measured by a mark: from zero (not important at all) to ten (very important). The final part of the form is related to sport idols: each respondents could mention three sport idols, independently of sport, age, nationality, gender. The scheme of the form is available in the attachments.

The six concepts.

- Competition takes into consideration the result, the score, the ranking.
- Education is focused on three main elements: to learn how to practice a sport, improving skills, technique and acquiring new knowledge; the physical education; non-formal education.
- Fun means leisure dimension: to play, to have fun, to enjoy friends.
- Health measures how important are physical exercise, wellness of body and healthy lifestyle.
- Socialization is related to the aggregative dimension of sport: to make new friends, to share experience and feelings, to increase social skills, to improve social life.
- Participation in sport is a form of active citizenship: sport can surely be considered a tool to make athletes better citizens. Through the respect of the rules, the referee, the competitors, the losers and the winners the athletes develop civic skills.

The universe of respondents is composed by the volleyball players Junior category from Belgrade, season 2008/09: this category includes players under17 at the beginning of the championship. All the club with postal code between 11000 and 11100 – so the metropolitan area of Belgrade, included Zemun – were contacted to arrange a meeting with Junior team. 18 teams, 13 females and 5 males, were contacted: 189 athletes filled the form, 139 females, 50 males. According to these criteria, the results of the analysis can be extended to all the Junior volleyball players from Belgrade, because all the players filled the form. Statistics have been elaborated through SPSS, using frequency methods.

The results are presented in four paragraphs. The first part shows the relevance of each concept, the second part includes the perception of game, regular season, training, “champion” and value of sport. The third part shows what are the most important items for each concepts. The last part is related to sport idols. All the paragraphs includes elaboration at global level, then by gender.

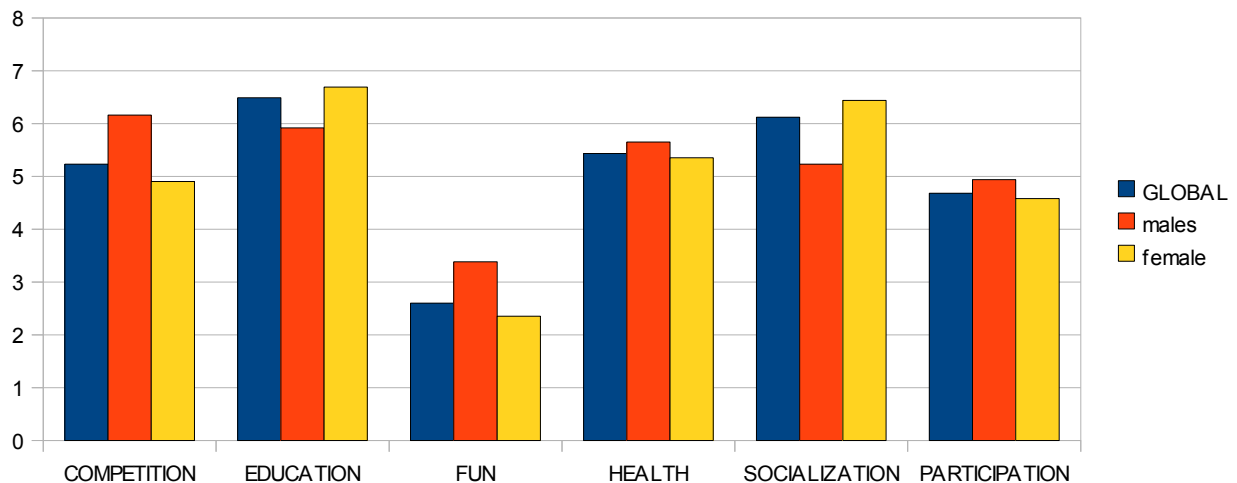
3. RESULTS

3.1 The concepts, overview

TABLE 1 - CONCEPTS, OVERVIEW

	<i>GLOBAL(M+-DS)</i>	<i>MALES(M+-DS)</i>	<i>FEMALES(M+-DS)</i>
<i>EDUCATION</i>	6,49 +- 2,17	5,92 +- 2,12	6,69 +- 2,16
<i>SOCIALIZATION</i>	6,12 +- 2,23	5,23 +- 2,45	6,44 +- 2,06
<i>HEALTH</i>	5,43 +- 2,49	5,65 +- 2,53	5,35 +- 2,47
<i>COMPETITION</i>	5,23 +- 2,49	6,16 +- 2,60	4,90 +- 2,37
<i>PARTICIPATION</i>	4,68 +- 2,29	4,94 +- 2,50	4,56 +- 2,07
<i>FUN</i>	2,60 +- 2,10	3,36 +- 2,36	2,35 +- 1,20

GRAPHIC 1



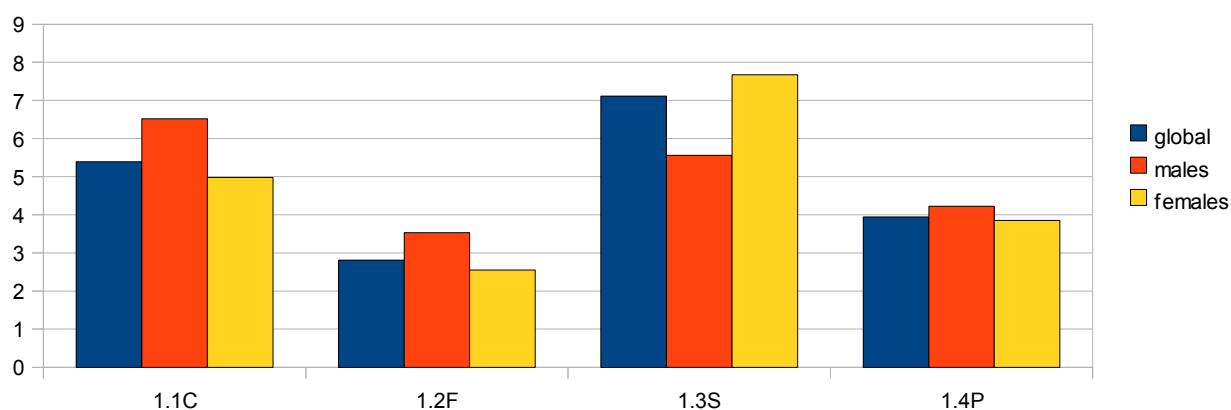
The Serbian volleyball players Junior category from Belgrade consider sport as tool of education and socialization. Health, competition and participation are also important. Fun dimension is relatively important. Competition and the fun are factors more interesting for males respondents. Socialization and education are elements more important for the females respondents. Health and participation seems to get the same level of consideration by the whole group.

3.2 Batteries

TABLE 2 – GAME

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)
<i>During the game, how important is:</i>			
1.1C To win	5,39 +- 3,06	6,52 +- 3,19	4,98 +- 3,41
1.2F To have fun	2,81 +- 2,53	3,53 +- 3,22	2,55 +- 2,33
1.3S To play well for the team	7,11 +- 3,47	5,56 +- 3,47	7,67 +- 3,31
1.4P To respect rules, referees and competitors	3,94 +- 3,26	4,22 +- 3,37	3,85 +- 3,24

GRAPHIC2
GAME

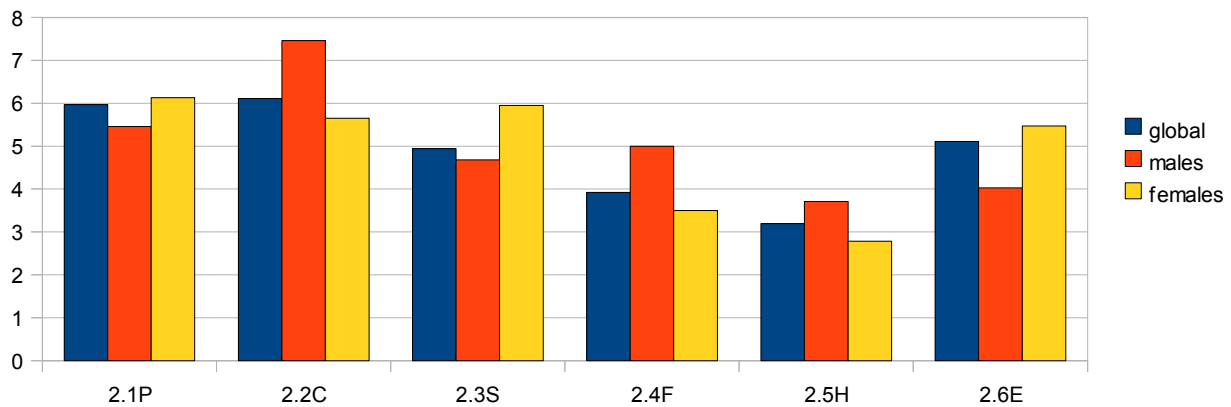


The Serbian Junior volleyball players from Belgrade consider “to play well for the team” as the most important issue during the game. However the first battery shows a difference between genders group: males consider more important the positive final score, females conversely consider more important to play well for the team. This difference is coherent with the previous paragraph: the male athletes pay greater attention to competition, the female athletes conversely pay greater attention to socialization.

TABLE 3 – REGULAR SEASON

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)
<i>Thinking at the regular season, how important is:</i>			
2.1P To participate to the championship	5,97 +- 3,50	5,46 +- 3,50	6,13 +- 3,50
2.2C To get a good positioning in the final ranking	6,11 +- 3,70	7,46 +- 3,48	5,65 +- 3,68
2.3S To be part of a group (team, club...)	4,94 +- 3,62	4,68 +- 3,5	5,05 +- 3,69
2.4F To enjoy, to have good time	3,92 +- 3,21	5,00 +- 4,24	3,50 +- 2,69
2.5H To do physical activity on regular basis, to be active	3,19 +- 2,64	3,71 +- 2,69	2,78 +- 2,04
2.6E To improve your skills	5,11 +- 3,87	4,03 +- 3,31	5,47 +- 3,98

GRAPHIC3
REGULAR SEASON



The respondents consider a good position in the final ranking as the most important goal to achieve during the regular season. “To participate to the championship” is the second most selected item: it results to appeal more females respondents. Females respondents consider important also to be part of a group and the skills improvement. Males contrariwise consider quite important the leisure.

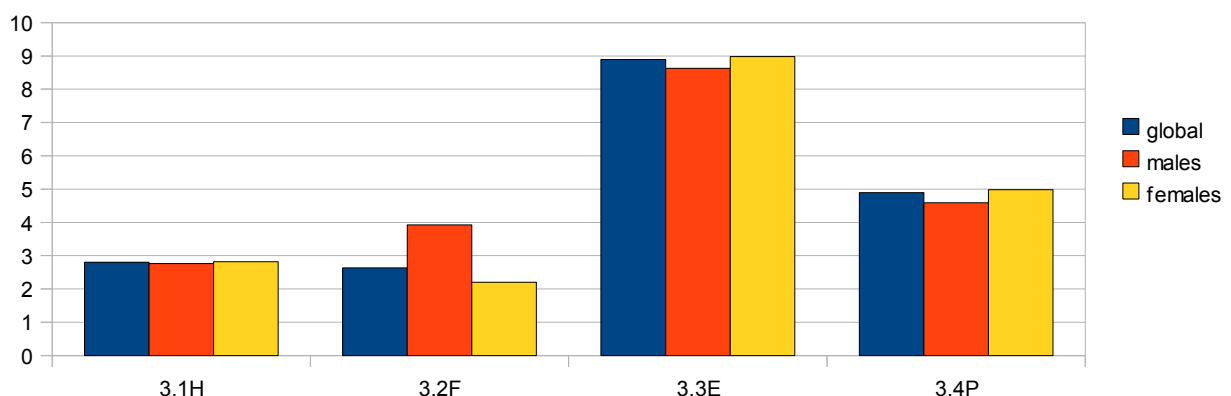
TABLE 4 – TRAINING

GLOBAL(M+-DS) MALES(M+-DS) FEMALES(M+-DS)

During the training, how important is:

3.1H	To do physical activity	2,80 +- 2,91	6,52 +- 3,19	4,98 +- 3,41
3.2F	To enjoy, to have good time	2,63 +- 2,63	3,93 +- 3,23	2,20 +- 2,68
3.3E	To improve your skills	8,89 +- 2,43	8,63 +- 2,71	8,98 +- 2,33
3.4P	To communicate with the coach and with the group	4,89 +- 2,44	4,59 +- 2,79	4,98 +- 2,32

GRAPHIC4
TRAINING



The Serbian Junior volleyball players from Belgrade consider the training as educational moment: to improve the technique is the most selected item. During the training, it's also

important to improve the communication with group and coach. According to the males' opinion, leisure is lightly more relevant than physical activity. The females think the opposite.

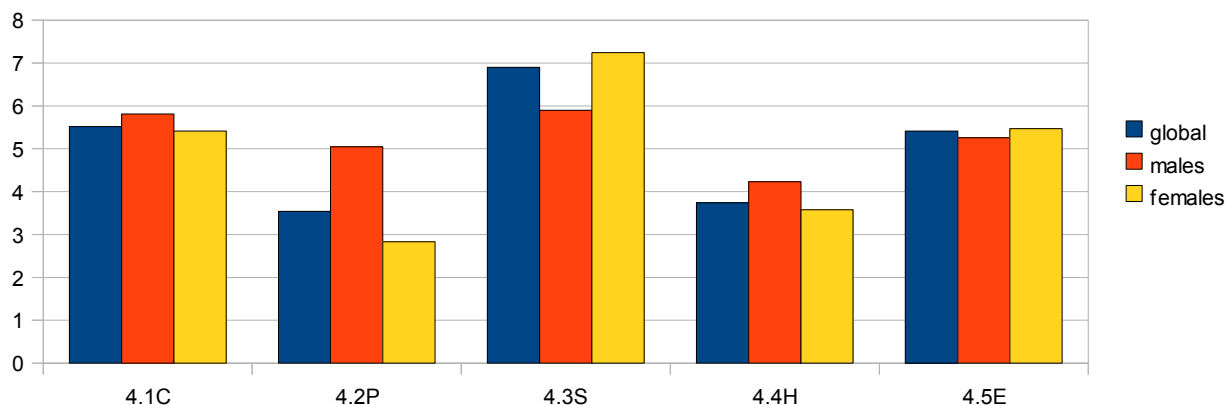
TABLE 5 – CHAMPION

GLOBAL(M+-DS) MALES(M+-DS) FEMALES(M+-DS)

Thinking at the “champion”. How important is for a champion:

4.1C	To win a lot of competitions / games	5,52 +- 3,46	5,81 +- 3,64	5,47 +- 3,66
4.2P	To respect rules, referees and competitors	3,54 +- 3,13	5,05 +- 3,24	2,83 +- 2,83
4.3S	To play well for the team, to help team-mates	6,90 +- 3,60	5,90 +- 3,82	7,24 +- 3,48
4.4H	To train and to have good physical	3,74 +- 3,08	4,23 +- 3,13	3,58 +- 3,07
4.5E	To be technically the best	5,41 +- 3,77	5,26 +- 4,07	5,47 +- 3,66

**GRAPHIC5
CHAMPION**



“To play well for the team and to help the team-mates” is the most important quality of a “champion”: technical skills and honours are important too. Males consider fair play and physical performance more important than females.

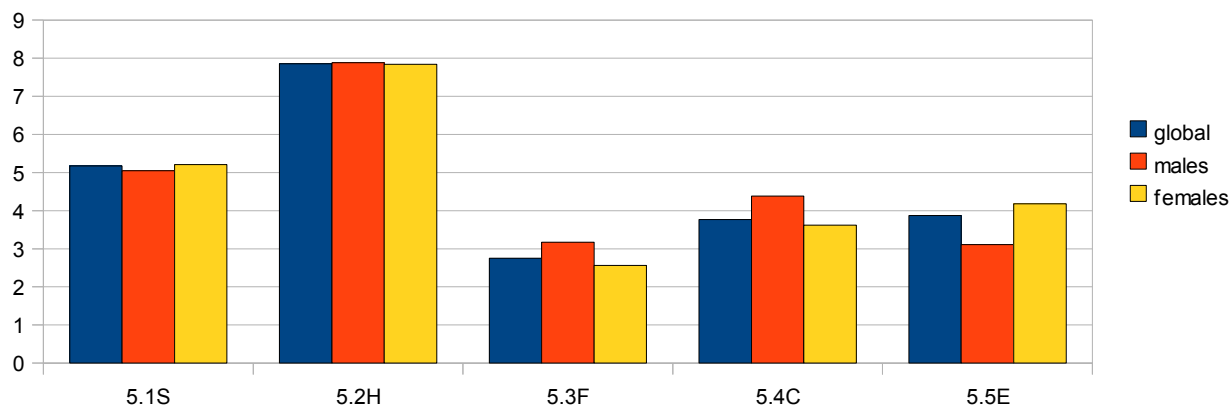
TABLE 6 –VALUE OF SPORT

GLOBAL(M+-DS) MALES(M+-DS) FEMALES(M+-DS)

Think at one of your friends who don't practice any sport. You would suggest to sport:

5.1S	To get new friends	5,17 +- 3,34	5,05 +- 2,83	5,21 +- 3,37
5.2H	To have healthy lifestyle	7,85 +- 3,12	7,88 +- 2,92	7,84 +- 3,21
5.3F	To have fun	2,75 +- 2,54	3,17 +- 2,99	2,56 +- 2,30
5.4C	To have success on the field	3,77 +- 3,50	4,38 +- 4,15	3,62 +- 2,28
5.5E	To learn how to practice a sport	3,87 +- 3,28	3,11 +- 3,08	4,18 +- 3,32

GRAPHIC6
VALUE OF SPORT



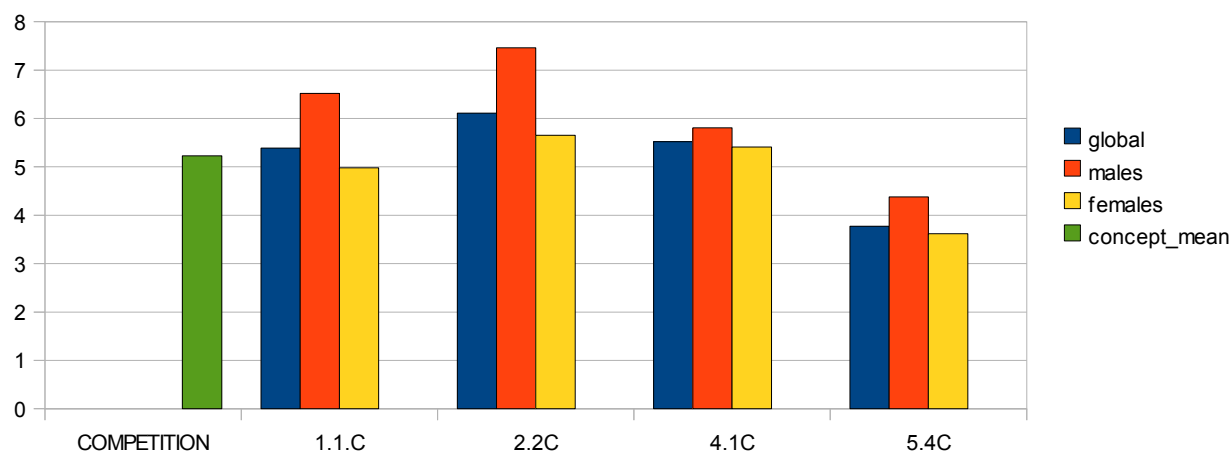
Serbian Junior volleyball players from Belgrade would suggest to practice sport “to have a healthy lifestyle”. This opinion is really polarized: health is the most relevant benefits of sport. Sport is also a tool to get new friends, to improve the social life: also this opinion is really polarized. Males respondents are more interested in having success on the field and having fun. Females highlight more education, giving less-importance to the leisure dimension.

3.3 Concept at magnificent lent

TABLE 7 – COMPETITION

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)	
CONCEPT_MEAN		5,23	6,16	4,90
1.1C To win the game	5,39 +- 3,06	6,52 +- 3,19	4,98 +- 3,41	
2.2C To get a good positioning in the final ranking	6,11 +- 3,70	7,46 +- 3,48	5,65 +- 3,68	
4.1C The champion wins a lot of competitions / games	5,52 +- 3,46	5,81 +- 3,64	5,47 +- 3,66	
5.4C Why to do sport? To have success on the field	3,77 +- 3,50	4,38 +- 4,15	3,62 +- 2,28	

GRAPHIC7
COMPETITION

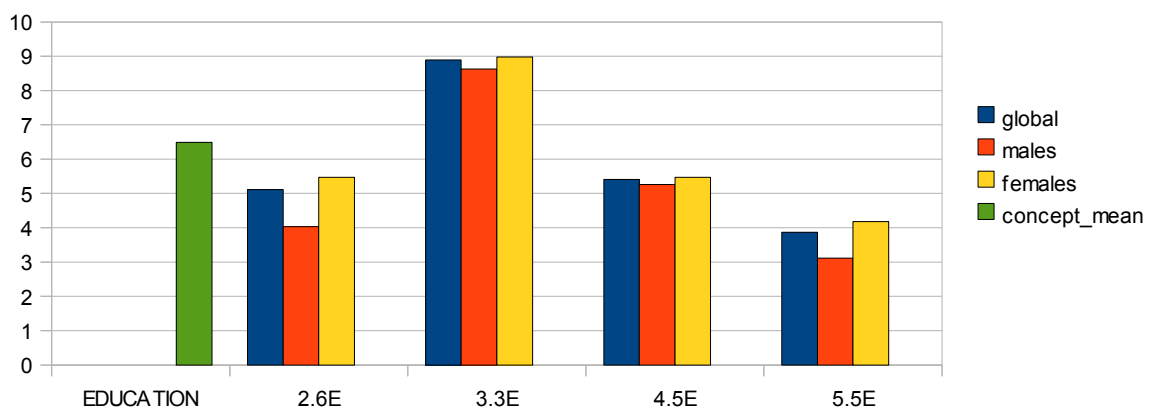


Competition is more important for males than for females. The score of the game and the position in the final ranking are the most important elements of competition. For the females, the firsts three items (the position in the final ranking, the honours of the champion and the score of the game) have similar importance. Men would suggest more likely to start to do sport to enjoy competitions than women.

TABLE 8 – EDUCATION

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)	
CONCEPT_MEAN		6,49	5,92	6,69
2.6E To improve your skills along the regular season	5,11 +- 3,87	4,03 +- 3,31	5,47 +- 3,98	
3.3E To improve your skills during training	8,89 +- 2,43	8,63 +- 2,71	8,98 +- 2,33	
4.5E The champion is technically the best	5,41 +- 3,77	5,26 +- 4,07	5,47 +- 3,66	
5.5E Why to do sport? To learn how to practice a sport	3,87 +- 3,28	3,11 +- 3,08	4,18 +- 3,32	

**GRAPHIC8
EDUCATION**



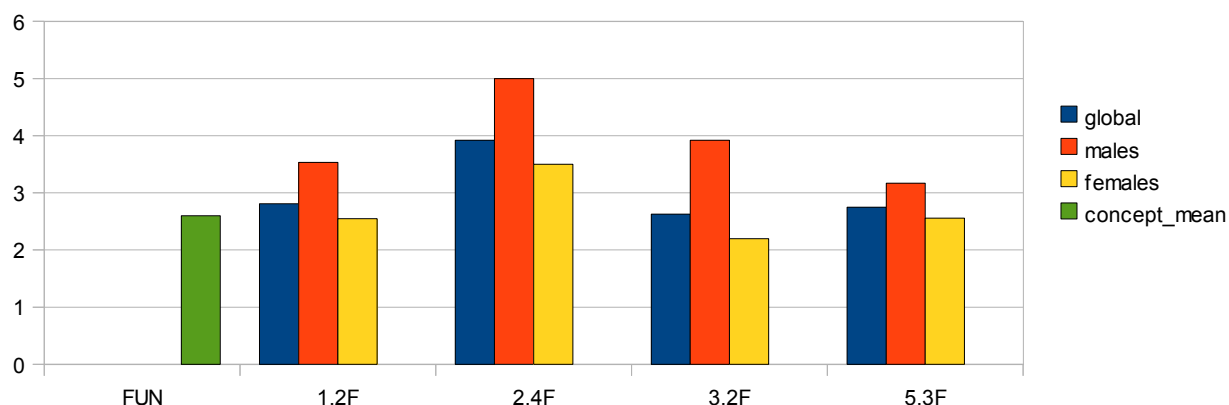
Education is very important for the whole group, with small differences between the genders. The training is the peak of education for both gender groups.

TABLE 9 – FUN

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)	
CONCEPT_MEAN		2,60	3,38	2,35
1.2F To have fun during games	2,81 +- 2,53	3,53 +- 3,22	2,55 +- 2,33	
2.4F To enjoy, to have good time along regular season	3,92 +- 3,21	5,00 +- 4,24	3,50 +- 2,69	
3.2F To have good time during training	2,63 +- 2,63	3,93 +- 3,23	2,20 +- 2,68	
5.3F Why to do sport? To have fun	2,75 +- 2,54	3,17 +- 2,99	2,56 +- 2,30	

GRAPHIC9

FUN



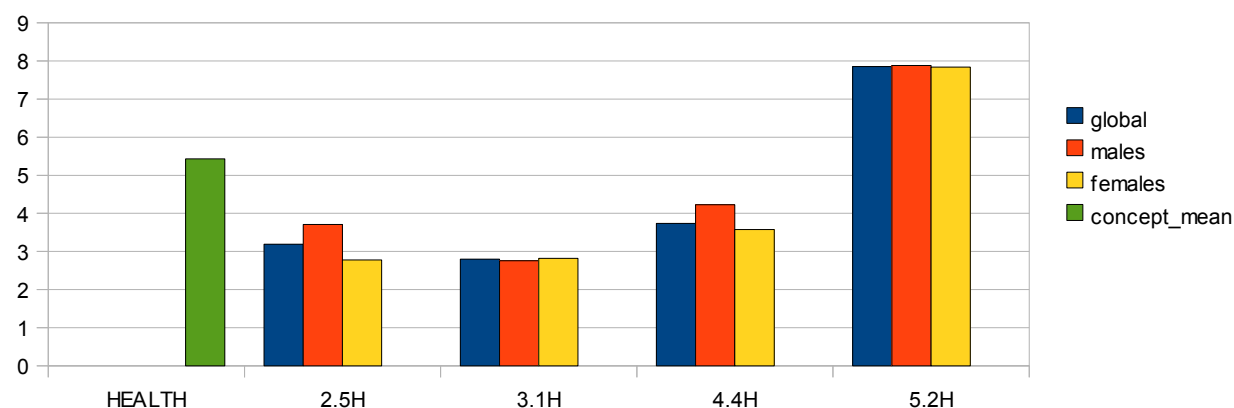
Fun is the less considered dimension by the respondents. The higher mean of the concept is related to the leisure during the regular season. Males consider more important the fun than the female respondents, the difference is relevant in all the items of the battery.

TABLE 10 – HEALTH

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)
CONCEPT_MEAN	5,43	5,65	5,35
2.5H To do physical activity on regular basis, to be active along season	3,19 +- 2,64	3,71 +- 2,69	2,78 +- 2,04
3.1H To do physical activity during training	2,80 +- 2,91	6,52 +- 3,19	4,98 +- 3,41
4.4H The champion has good physical	3,74 +- 3,08	4,23 +- 3,13	3,58 +- 3,07
5.2H Why to do sport? To have healthy lifestyle	7,85 +- 3,12	7,88 +- 2,92	7,84 +- 3,21

GRAPHIC10

HEALTH

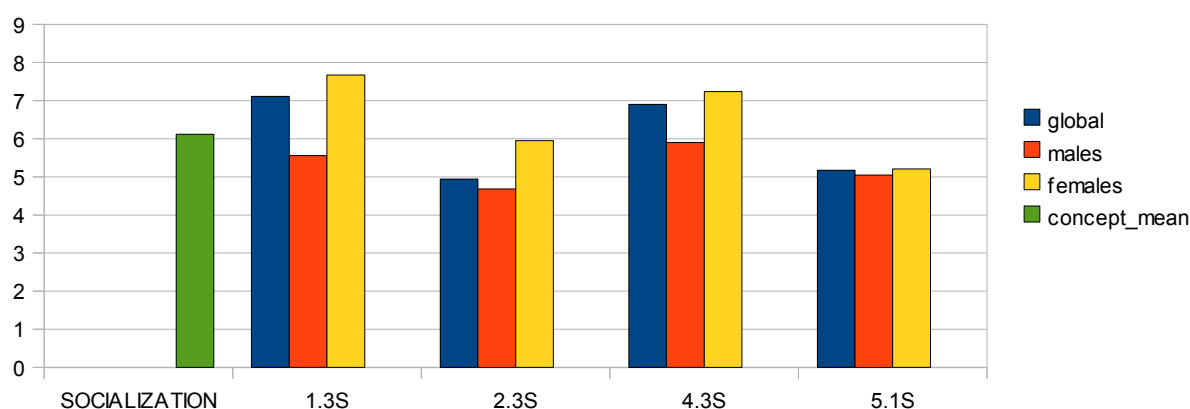


Health is universally recognized as the main benefits of sport activity, with very few differences according to the gender.

TABLE 11 – SOCIALIZATION

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)
CONCEPT_MEAN	6,12	5,23	6,44
1.3S To play well for the team during game	7,11 +- 3,47	5,56 +- 3,47	7,67 +- 3,31
2.3S To be part of a group along season	4,94 +- 3,62	4,68 +- 3,5	5,05 +- 3,69
4.3S The champion plays for the team, helping team-mates	6,90 +- 3,60	5,90 +- 3,82	7,24 +- 3,48
5.1S Why to do sport? To get new friends	5,17 +- 3,34	5,05 +- 2,83	5,21 +- 3,37

**GRAPHIC11
SOCIALIZATION**

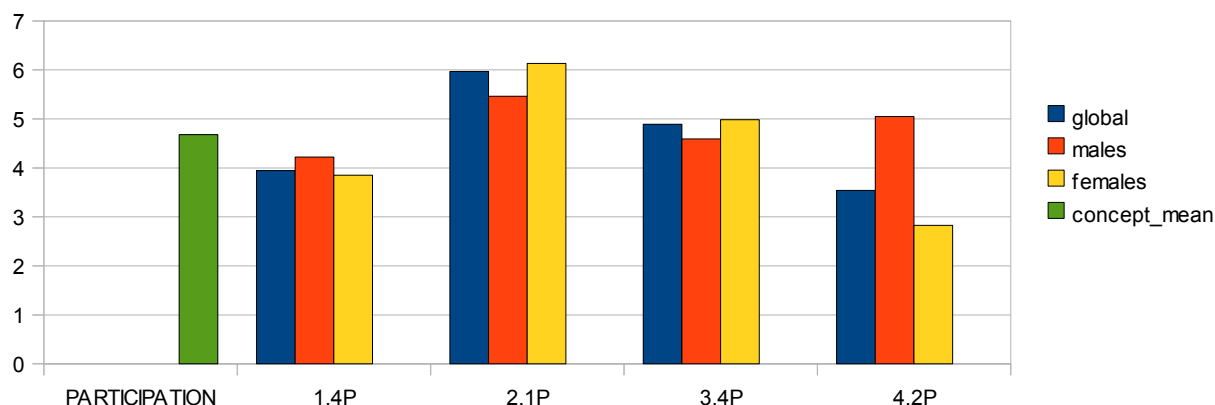


Socialization is important, especially considering only the females respondents: to play well for the team during the game is the peak of this concept. Moreover it's the most important quality of a “champion”. The main difference between genders is related to the game: boys consider more important to win, girls to play well for the team.

TABLE 12 – PARTICIPATION

	GLOBAL(M+-DS)	MALES(M+-DS)	FEMALES(M+-DS)
CONCEPT_MEAN	4,68	4,94	4,58
1.4P To respect rules, referees and competitors during the game	3,94 +- 3,26	4,22 +- 3,37	3,85 +- 3,24
2.1P To participate to the championship	5,97 +- 3,50	5,46 +- 3,50	6,13 +- 3,50
3.4P To communicate with the coach and with the group during training	4,89 +- 2,44	4,59 +- 2,79	4,98 +- 2,32
4.2P The champion respects rules, referees and competitors	3,54 +- 3,13	5,05 +- 3,24	2,83 +- 2,83

GRAPHIC12
PARTICIPATION



The relevance of participation is independent from the gender of the players: to participate in the championship is considered as the main example of social participation. Training is considered as moment to improve communication with coach and with the team-mates. The fair-play champion is appreciated more by the male respondents.

3.4 Idols

ATHLETS - TOP 20

1. Ivan Miljkovic (14,81%) 2. Novak Djokovic (6,88%) 3. Nikola Grbic (6,35%) 4. Milorad Cavic (4,69%) 5. Ivana Djerisilo (4,06%) 6. Grbic Vanja (3,53%) 7. Anja Spasojevic (3,35%) 8. Ana Ivanovic (2,82%) 9. Maja Ognjenovic (2,47%) 10. Roger Federer (2,29%) 11. Vesna Citakovic – Nemanja Vidic (2,12%) 12. Jelena Jankovic – Andrija Geric (1,94%) 13. Rafael Nadal (1,76%) 14. Jovana Brakocevic (1,59%) 15. Giba (1,41%) 16. Goran Vujevic – Jelena Nikolic – Cristiano Ronaldo (1,23%) 17. Other (101 names: 27,16%) 18. non-valid (5,11%).

SPORTS – TOP 5

1. (52,38%) 2. (tennis 17,81%) 3. football (10,76%) 4. basket (5,29%) 5. swimming (4,94%) 5. athletics (1,06%) 6. Others (8 sports: 2,67%) 7. non-valid (5,11%).

GENDER

1. Males (71,73%) 2. Females (23,23%) 3. non-valid (5,14%).

As predictable, the main part of the idols are Serbs - among the “top 20” only 4 are not Serbs - and volleyball players. Tennis confirms to be emergent sport phenomenon in Serbia: the good performance of the contemporary Serbian athletes and the consequent media's attention seems to play an active role.

The respondents are quite interested in football (almost 11%), relatively interested in basketball (only 5% of the idols and no representative on the “top 20”) and not so interested in waterpolo and handball (both less than 1%). The relatively negative results – especially in basketball - in the last years and the lack of strong and popular leaders (like Divac in the past or Cavic in

swimming) probably have some influence (the success of the tennis represent the other face of the same medal).

The big majority of idols are males, conversely the big majority of the respondents are female. The female respondents mention most likely males idols. In this perspective is a bit surprising the relatively good performances of very popular female sport idols like Ana Ivanovic and Jelena Jankovic (only eighth and twelfth positions). The respondents are teen-ager: maybe the “physical attraction” of the males sport heroes can play an active role (Milorad Cavic is fourth, the swimming is fifth) in the answers.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although we live in a complex and globalized society and in spite of the fact that sport includes several problematic aspects, the results of the analysis show a good awareness of the social value of sport among Junior volleyball players from Belgrade. The good performance of concepts like education, socialization and health clearly show this evidence. The universe of the respondents is composed by young athletes from Belgrade, the Capital of Serbia: the whole former Yugoslavia has recently been theatre of inter-ethnics conflicts. The good predisposition of the respondents for education and socialization seem to be encouraging in order to use the sport as tool of social inclusion and intercultural dialogue in the Balkan region. The good performance of health as main benefits of sport is encouraging also in the perspective to spread the sport activity in the society. The decision makers and the policy makers should consider this element in their daily job and in planning of future actions, especially at grass-root level and in youth field, according to the age of the respondents.

5. SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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More detailed statistical analysis are available upon request.