

# The Importance of Participation of Young Athletes in Youth Sports Competitions in the City of Zadar

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**Abstract:-** In modern society, there is an increasing need to organize and fill the free time of children and young people. Observing and comparing the previous research on the free time of children and young people, it is evident that physical activity determined through sports is insufficiently practiced in the free time of children and young people. Youth sports games in the City of Zadar and Zadar County have been organized and held for many years, so they have proven to be promoters of a healthy lifestyle for children and youth. For the purposes of research and examination of respondents' satisfaction with the role and status of youth sports games in the City of Zadar and Zadar County, a survey method was used, where the sample consists of 467 participants in youth sports games, aged 12 to 18 for 2019 from the City Zadar and Zadar County. The aim of the research was to determine the degree of significance of youth sports competitions for participants and to directly determine the degree of socialization of that population caused by participation in competitions. According to the results of the research, it was determined that youth sports competitions are important for the participants, whose socialization in society has improved in accordance with the mentioned activity.

**Keywords:-** youth sports games, youth, athletes, socialization, e-technologies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Youth Sports Games today represent the most massive sports event in Croatia, and provide children and young people opportunity to participate in sports competitions. The competitions are free for all participants and are held from January to September during the calendar year in the domicile environment of the participants. Sports competitions are held in the following sports: athletics, chess, dodgeball, table tennis, beach volleyball, tennis, handball, volleyball, basketball, futsal. In sports games as previously stated participants aged 7-18 participate in sports games, where over 1.700.000 participants have performed in the past 23 years. In addition to promoting sports, healthy lifestyles, socialization and inclusion in society, through additional programs (educational corners) that are held during the competition, the importance of a sustainable lifestyle in society is affected. In 2019, they organized sports competitions in more than „220 cities and towns in the region and gathered 202,000 participants“ (Sim, 2019). The driving energy and strength of the Games is represented by its participants, primary and secondary school students from

all over the region, who felt through the Games system what sports, socializing and entertainment are. The main goal of youth sports games is to include as many children and youth of primary and secondary school age as possible, in order to spend extra free time as well as possible, regardless of the fact that they may not be successful in a sport or do not train in a sports club. Through the above, they want to be given the opportunity to participate in organized sports competitions and other activities and enable socializing with their peers from all over the country through participation in sports competitions, educational and entertainment activities that intertwine with competitions, which will affirm primary and secondary school students in a positive and creative sense (Božinović, Nedović, Erceg, 2012). During a number of years in the City of Zadar and Zadar County, a continuous increase in the number of participants is visible, from 833 participants from year 2005 and in year 2018 where 3749 participants participated, which clearly shows the importance and interest for children and youth. Although they are essentially amateur competitions, with their long-term work the organization of the Games competitions and all accompanying events is carried out on a professional level, and as such successfully promotes sports, physical activity and social inclusion of participants.

## II. LEISURE AND SPORTS GAMES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In modern society, there is an increasing need to organize and fill the free time of children and young people. The free time of young people today is a rather disorganized area over which the state itself has insufficient influence. Although today the term "*free time*" is explained in studies, textbooks, encyclopedias and monographs, the inconsistency and opposition of experts in defining this term is incomprehensible. The reason for the difficulties that arise in the unique definition of the term, are certainly different starting points in the analysis, experts of different profiles (Vukić, 2012). Organized care for the free time of young people remains at the individual level, at the level of non-governmental organizations and still rare activities of local and regional self-government bodies with the aim of well-organized free time with appropriate content. It is in this area that the Youth Sports Games found an opportunity to act, and presented programs and content that are interesting to children and youth. Youth Sports Games is a non-profit organization and as such participates in social life through its employees, ambassadors and partners. Thus, today, through their 23 years of existence, they contribute to the improvement of the quality of leisure time of children and young people, as well as to the overall quality

of life, that is, the orientation towards a healthy lifestyle. Through their vision, the Youth Sports Games want to become the world's leading sports event for children and youth with the goal of a leading position of awareness of the sustainable development of our society. The mission of the games consists of the promotion of tolerance, friendship, solidarity, fair play, and education on all aspects of sustainable development of life. The competition organization system is based on 3 phases: qualifying competitions / city finals, national finals and international finals. The Games are organized under the sponsorship of the International Olympic Committee and the World Football Federation and the honorary patronage of the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia, the President of the Croatian Parliament and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia. At the international level, the games are supported by respected names from sports, political and economic life (eg Sir Dave Richards, Jose Mourinho, etc.)

### III. YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPORTS

Observing and comparing the previous research on the free time of children and young people, it is evident that physical activity determined through sports is insufficiently practiced in the free time of children and young people. Young people in the modern age choose activities that do not require any physical effort, they spend time caused by the latest digital technologies using a range of passive content. The use and systematic use of these contents primarily impairs the health of young people and their inclusion in society at large (Badrić, Prskalo, 2010). Modern knowledge confirms that systematic, science-based exercise can significantly affect not only the regulation of morphological, motor and functional characteristics, but also cognitive functions and conative dimensions responsible for behavioral modalities and effective socialization of children and youth to variable standards of social expectations. Research shows a negative trend of increasing obesity from an early age and an insufficient degree of socialization, due to lack of physical activity (Wang et al., 2002; Chinn et al., 2001; Ogden et al., 2002; Krebs et al., 2003). In studies across Europe, for example in the United Kingdom where a two-year study (Hayes, 2002) was conducted on a sample of children aged 11 to 15 with a view to better understanding the lifestyle of young people and their perspective, primary leisure activities watching television, listening to music, writing homework, representation of computer work, presence on social networks, etc. A study in Denmark (Mehlbye and Jensen, 2003) conducted on a population of children showed that one of the main leisure activities is playing sports, and as such Denmark is a positive exception. Further research conducted by Velde et al. In 2007 conducted a survey in „nine European countries, on a sample of 12,538 children aged 11 years”, and investigated time spent watching TV, spending time in front of a computer and physical activity, where the results of the research established a devastating picture in relation to physical activity and sports (Badrić, Prskalo, 2011).

Given that the concept of sport itself is not unambiguous and that there is no single exclusive definition, experts in the field of sociology generally agree that we need to ask what activities are and why they are defined as sport in a particular society. According to one, „sport is an institutionalized competitive activity because it is based on standardized, predetermined rules, and involves intense physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills in which participation is motivated by a combination of personal satisfaction and external rewards” (Coakley, 2007). This definition raises a number of issues, such as the issue of competence for the characteristics of sport (Sports Act). For example, kinesiologists, for example, do not have to agree with the above definition, but since the subject of the paper is the above definition as such. As a social institution, sport does not have to differ significantly from the society in which it lives, but it can and does significantly influence the creation of identity and lifestyle from any other segment of mass culture, aimed at young people and children.

#### ➤ *Youth Sports Games in the City of Zadar and Zadar County*

Youth sports games in the City of Zadar and Zadar County have been organized and held for many years, so that the City of Zadar, the Sports Association of the City of Zadar and Zadar County have proven to be promoters of a healthy lifestyle for children and youth. In addition to sports activities in 10 sports, children and youth participated in various educational activities, such as a recycling corner, the selection of the best athlete games, and educational activities in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the National Road Safety Program and etc. In addition to the above sports activities, it is also worth mentioning the activities related to the Coca Cola Cup and the Joy Tour, where representatives from the City of Zadar and Zadar County achieved notable sports results. It is especially important to note that during the activities, children from most "rural" places in Zadar County participated in the games.

### IV. GOALS

The aim of this paper is to determine the degree of significance of youth sports competitions for participants and to directly determine the degree of socialization of this population caused by participation in competitions. In accordance with the set goal, the hypothesis was set that the competitions of youth sports games are important for the participants, and that their socialization in society is improved in accordance with engaging in this activity.

### V. METHODS

For the purpose of examining the respondents' satisfaction with the role and status of youth sports games in the City of Zadar and Zadar County, a survey method was used and a survey questionnaire was created. The survey questionnaire consisted of 14 questions, divided into general and research units. The survey is a quantitative form of research through which different attitudes and

opinions (satisfaction) of respondents were collected, and possible potential changes for improving the status of youth sports games were identified.

## VI. SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS DURING THE TEST

The sample of respondents consists of 467 participants in youth sports games, aged 12 to 18 for 2019 from the area of the City of Zadar and Zadar County. Respondents actively participated in the implementation of the aforementioned sports, divided into competitions according to the appropriate age categories, and represent a sample that is representative of this area. Of the total number of respondents, 316 are boys, 124 are girls, 21 are team leaders, and 6 are judges at competitions. The paper analyzes the results of the questionnaire, which includes respondents who completed the questionnaire before the competition, in an adequate space. The survey questionnaire was initially tested and conducted on 8 respondents who applied for the competition, and then all other participants in the survey approached its completion. The survey questionnaire consists, as previously stated, of 14 questions grouped into two parts, a general and a research unit. The first part of the survey questionnaire refers to the general data of the respondents, and in the

second part there are questions that aim to answer the set hypothesis in the paper. After the implementation of the survey method, the completed survey questionnaires in printed form were entered into the LimeSurvey program and exported to the specialized statistical program for data processing SPSS for further processing.

## VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the survey, the analysis of the answers received by the respondents was performed. Questions related to the quality of sports competitions in the City of Zadar and Zadar County, it was found that there is further room for improvement, given that the example of the question (Table 1), 23% (107) said they were not satisfied or dissatisfied games, while 9% (42) stated that they were partially dissatisfied, 6% (28) stated that they were completely dissatisfied, and 38% (177) stated that they were partially dissatisfied and yet 24% (112) of the respondents stated that they were in completely satisfied. Other questions from the above group of questions most often crystallized the answer that respondents want to hold competitions on surfaces of appropriate quality (for example, play football on artificial grass) on all playgrounds throughout the county.

Completely dissatisfied	Partly dissatisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Partly satisfied	Completely satisfied
6%	9%	23%	38%	24%

Table 1:- Results of the question - How satisfied are you with the quality of the youth sports competition in the City of Zadar and Zadar County?

Then, on the group of questions related to the number of youth sports competitions (Table 2), the answer of 65% of respondents that they were satisfied with the number of competitions was clearly crystallized, and 22% of respondents stated that they were neither satisfied nor satisfied, and 13% respondents stated that they were not satisfied with the number of competitions held in the City of Zadar and Zadar County.

No	Neither yes or no	Yes
13,00%	22,00%	65,00%

Table 2:- Results of the question - Are you satisfied with the number of competitions in youth sports games in the City of Zadar and Zadar County?

With the question "Why do you participate in youth sports competitions in the City of Zadar and Zadar County?" (table 3.), respondents stated answers that were quite scattered, with 39% (respondents stated socializing, while 27% of respondents stated sports scores), 18% of respondents state the answer "just like that" which can be understood as a revolt of respondents that is in line with their age, 8% of respondents state going to Split and the award-sports equipment states 8% of respondents.

Just so	For awards - sports equipment	For the sake of a sports result	Going to the finals in Split	For socializing
18%	8%	27%	8%	39%

Table 3:- Results of the question - Why do you participate in youth sports competitions in the City of Zadar and Zadar County?

When asked about the impact of participation in youth sports games on the status of participants in their society-team, the following answers were expressed in percentages, 65% (303 respondents) that participation affects, 23% (107) respondents said no or no, while 12% (56) of respondents stated no. From the above, it is evident that in this micro-social group, participation in sports games clearly affects the status of the individual in that group.

No	Neither yes or no	Yes
12,00%	23%	65%

Table 4:- Results of the question - Does participation in youth sports games affect your status in the team-society?

The question "*Does the possibility of e-registration affect your participation in competitions?*" ?, crystallized answers, the answer that 327 respondents (70%) clearly stated that it affects, 25% (116) respondents are undecided, and only 5% (23) respondents stated the answer no. These answers are expected given that the respondents are members of the so-called information generations and use digital technologies in everyday life.

No	Neither yes or no	Yes
5%	25 %	70%

Table 5:- Results of the question - Does the possibility of e-application affect your participation in competitions?

The response of the respondents from the survey questionnaire stemmed from the desire, and motivation of the respondents, who actively participate in competitions, and some of them for several years, to improve their answers to competitions in the City of Zadar and Zadar County. Based on the conducted research and the results of the questionnaire filled out by the respondents, some other topics that need to be addressed in the future were opened, such as the possibility of participation of additional categories in competitions, introduction of some new sports, possibility of both sexes in teams, etc.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Youth Sports Games represent the event as the most massive amateur sports event in the Republic of Croatia, and in the City of Zadar and Zadar County. The results of the research clearly indicate that there is a significant degree of importance of youth sports competitions for participants, which is confirmed both by the number of participants and the status that sports competitions have among young people and children. Participants defined that participation in games is important to them, not only participation but also achieving a sports result. The results of the research also indicated that the participation of participants in the games, both at the local and state level, improved socialization, the inclusion of participants in the social population. In addition to the above, the participants are satisfied with the quality of the organization of the competition and point out the possibility of playing certain sports on sports fields of better quality. The above indicates the need and importance of investing society and the local environment in sports facilities and infrastructure, which will improve the quality of life of its citizens, with the prospect of changing this to the satisfaction of society as a whole.

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