



A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE MOTIVATION OF FEMALE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THRACE TO PARTICIPATE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivation of female students to actively participate in Physical Education and Sports classes after the Covid-19 pandemic and to compare it with that before it. A questionnaire survey was applied as an express method to assess the motivation of female students to participate in sports. Various aspects of their interests and desires for sports and exercise were investigated. It was found that after the pandemic fewer percentage of female students wanted to exercise, isolation, and online learning have affected the priorities and desire for leisure time activities like computer, television, and staying at home, lack of theoretical knowledge of female students of all the benefits of exercise and sports. After the pandemic, there is a decrease in the desire to actively participate in classes. After the pandemic of Covid-19, there is a large decrease in the percentage of female students involved in sports.

Keywords: pandemic, Covid-19, interests, survey

INTRODUCTION

The daily life of students is increasingly tense and intense. Their academic workload is constantly increasing. The daily life of the students takes place in a monotonous posture, with insufficient physical activity. This, in turn, leads to immobilization, emotional and nervous-mental tension, chronic fatigue, stress conditions, a decrease in the level of physical fitness, and an increase in the risk of various diseases (1).

Sports activities appear as an alternative to these harmful phenomena. They stimulate mental performance, labor activity, and metabolic processes in the body and are a factor in strengthening health and increasing the resistance to diseases of students (2).

For the effective implementation of the learning process in "Physical Education and Sport" is

necessary mental readiness associated with a pre-formed attitude to the upcoming activity in the class and a properly developed attitude to the role and importance of sport (3).

On 13 March 2020, Members of the Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of the introduction of a state of emergency in Bulgaria due to the growing threat of the global coronavirus pandemic COVID-19. Initially, it lasts for 1 month - from 13 March to 13 April, and then it is extended until 13 May 2020. (4) This state is extended several more times until mid-2022.

According to P. Angelova, the greatest significance for the deterioration of health according to students is immobility, lack of sports facilities and physical activity, and lack of health culture (5).

Increasingly significant in the dynamics of our time is the environmentally friendly lifestyle, including especially the way of nutrition (selection of products, regime) and physical

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activity. In the current pandemic situation, it becomes even more relevant (4).

The aim of the present study was to find out the motivation of female students for active participation in Physical Education and Sports classes after the Covid-19 pandemic and to compare it with that before it. To realize the aim we set the following tasks:

1. To develop a questionnaire.
2. To conduct a survey.
3. Process and analyze the survey data.

Methods:

1. Questionnaire survey
2. Mathematical methods

The survey was conducted during the winter semester of the academic year 2020/2023. The contingent of the study were 120 students (women) with an average age of 20,07 years from the Faculty

of Agriculture, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Economics at the University of Thrace, Sofia. The participants were 120 students from the University of Stara Zagora. The survey was anonymous. The questionnaire contained 17 questions and 4 subquestions.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The same survey was conducted with female students of Thrace University before the pandemic in 2017. We compare the responses of female students before and after the pandemic from Covid - 19.

On the question - "Do you like the discipline of Physical Education and Sports?", 91.58% of the female students gave a positive response in 2017. In 2022, the "Yes" responses dropped to 85.25%. Negative responses in 2017 were 8.42% and in 2022 they increased to 14.85%. The results are presented graphically in **Figure 1**.

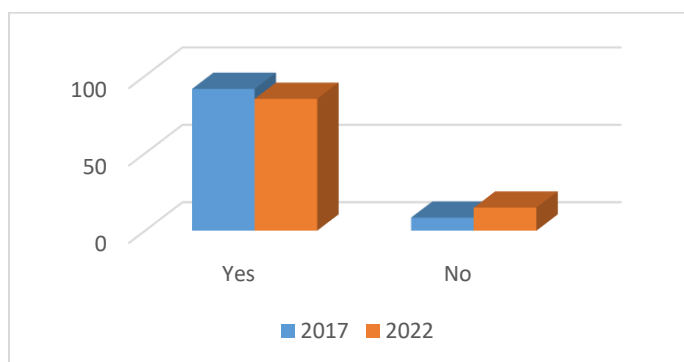


Figure 1. Response to the question "Do you like the discipline of Physical Education and Sport?"

On the question - "How do you rate the Physical Education and Sports classes?" in 2017, 58.91% found Physical Education and Sports classes interesting, 29.21% found them monotonous, and 9.41% found them boring. In 2022, the percentage of students who found the classes interesting dropped more than 10% to 45.12%, monotonous increased to 33.48%, and boring doubled to 18.62%.

Less than half of the students found the curriculum of "physical education and sports" interesting, but judging from the responses of a fairly large proportion, 52.10% of the respondents, found the classes monotonous and boring. Therefore, consideration could be given to diversifying the curriculum and including more varied and non-standard sports and modes of exercise. The results are presented graphically in **Figure 2**.

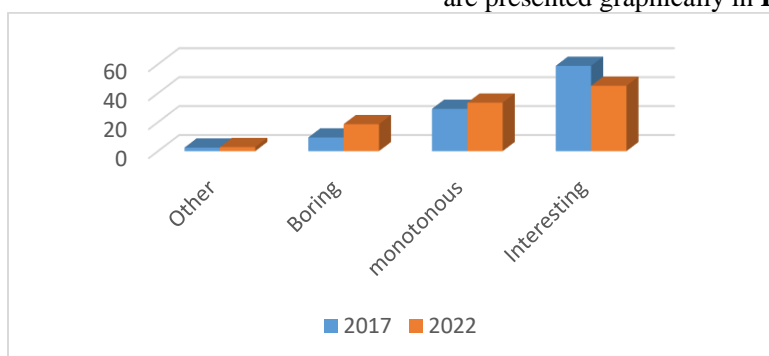


Figure 2. Response to the question "How do you evaluate the Physical Education and Sport classes?"

To the question - "In your opinion, is the number of hours of Physical Education and Sport at the University sufficient?", 83.66% responded in 2017 that the hours of Physical Education and Sport are sufficient for them, and in 2022 the

percentage is 91.23%. In 2017, 9.90% of female students' hours are not enough and in 2022 they are 5.65%, while 6.44% in 2017 and 3.12% in 2022 cannot judge. The results are presented graphically in **Figure 3**.

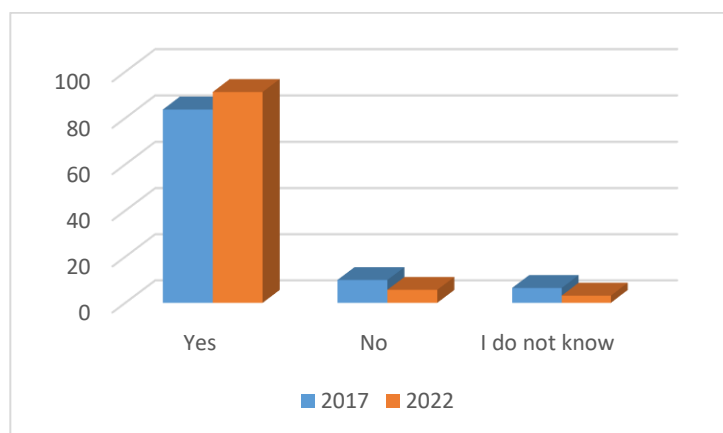


Figure 3. Response to the question "In your opinion, is the number of physical education and sports classes at the University sufficient?"

To the question - "Do you actively participate in Physical Education and Sports classes?" - 90.10% of female students actively participate in classes in 2017, while in 2022 this percentage has dropped to 65.87%. Female students who do not actively participate in PE and Sport classes are 9.90% in 2017 and 34.13% in 2022. As can be

seen, the percentage of female students who actively participate in the classes has decreased, and those who do not actively participate have given as the reason that they are not interested, do not want to exert themselves and that they do not see the point in this subject. The results are presented graphically in **Figure 4**.

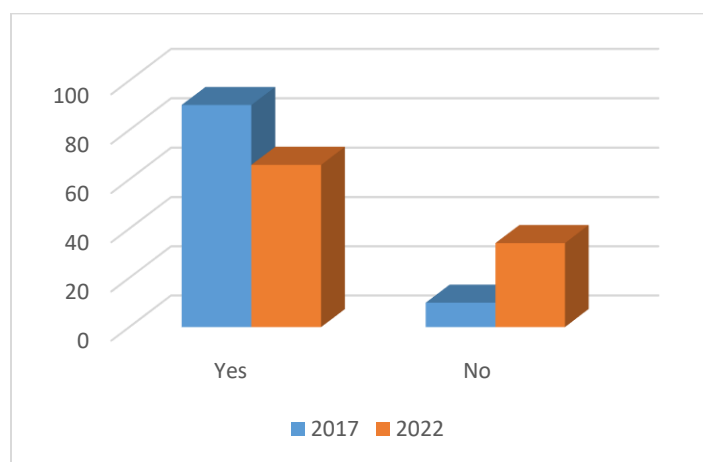


Figure 4. Response to the question "Do you actively participate in Physical Education and Sport classes?"

To the question - "Is your workload sufficient in Physical Education and Sports classes?", 84.16% of female students' workload is sufficient in 2017 and 88.37% in 2022, while 15.84% of female students' workload is not sufficient in 2017 and 11.63% in 2022. The fact that 88.37% of female

students are sufficiently loaded in PE and sports classes gives us information that the intensity and density of classes is very good and the load is sufficient. The results are presented graphically in **Figure 5**.

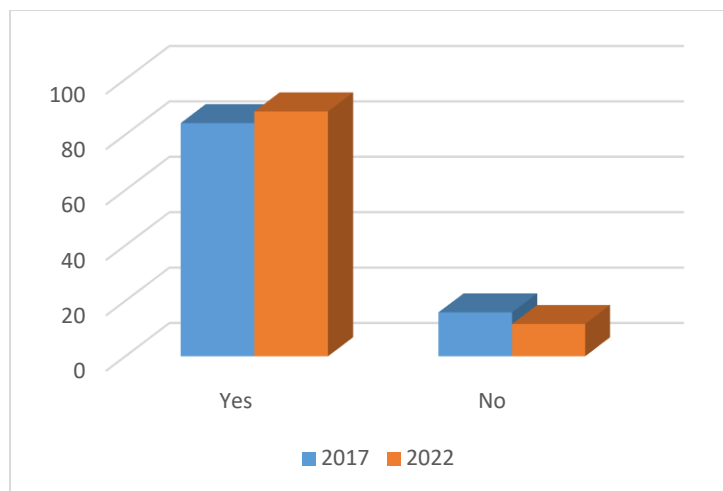


Figure 5. Response to the question "Do you find the workload in Physical Education and Sports classes sufficient?"

To the question - "Will the knowledge and skills gained in Physical Education and Sports classes be useful for your future work in the field of study?" the answers of female students in 2017 and 2022 are almost the same. More than 60% of female students are not aware of the usefulness of the skills and habits learned and acquired in PE and Sports classes for their future profession.

To the question - "In your opinion, what is the impact of Physical Education and Sports classes?", the data shows that female students (5.45% in 2017) do not know that through physical education they can develop qualities, skills, and habits, form behavioral responses that determine the success in their future professional activity. In 2022, the percentage of female students who are of this opinion is 12.43%. As can be seen, the relative proportion of female students who are unaware and do not know the benefits of physical exercise in classes has increased. According to the majority of female students, physical education is for improving physical fitness, physique, and improving health.

To the question - "Suppose you have more free time. How would you use it?" -28.22% (2017) and 9.36% (2022) would use their free time to go to the cinema, theatre or opera, 42.08% (2017) and 25.36% (2022) would study and read more books, 45.54% (2017) and 18.69% (2022) would do more sports, 41.58% (2017) and 15.25% (2022) would do more hiking, 7.92% (2017) and

36, 75% (2022) will spend more time on the computer, 7.92% (2017) and 15.36% (2022) will watch more TV, 37.13% (2017) and 46.87% (2022) will rest more, 13.86% (2017) and 15.07% (2022) will go to restaurants, 0.50% (2017) and 1.23% (2022) gave other answers (work and extra income). The percentages are more than 100 because female students gave more than one answer. As we can see from the responses in 2022 there is a large increase in the percentages of activities such as watching TV, playing games on the computer, and relaxing at home. There is a large decrease in the percentages of hiking, playing sports, reading books, and going to cultural events. The decrease in leisure time sports activities is particularly large - almost three times. In 2017, female students prioritized them in the following way - 36.44% put studying and reading books first, 23.40% will spend on the computer, 15.35% put playing sports first, 7.88% will watch TV, 5.43% will rest more, 4.40% will go to the cinema, theater or opera, 3.48% will go hiking, 3.12% will go to restaurants, 0.50% will work more. In 2022, female students prioritized activities in the following way - 38.36% will spend on the computer, 15.75% will watch TV, 12.88% will rest more, 11.42% have put playing sports first, 8.27% have put studying and reading books first, 5.36% will go to restaurants, 5.21% will go to the cinema, theater or opera, 2.45% will engage in tourism, 0.30% will work more. The results are presented graphically in **Figures 6 and 7.**

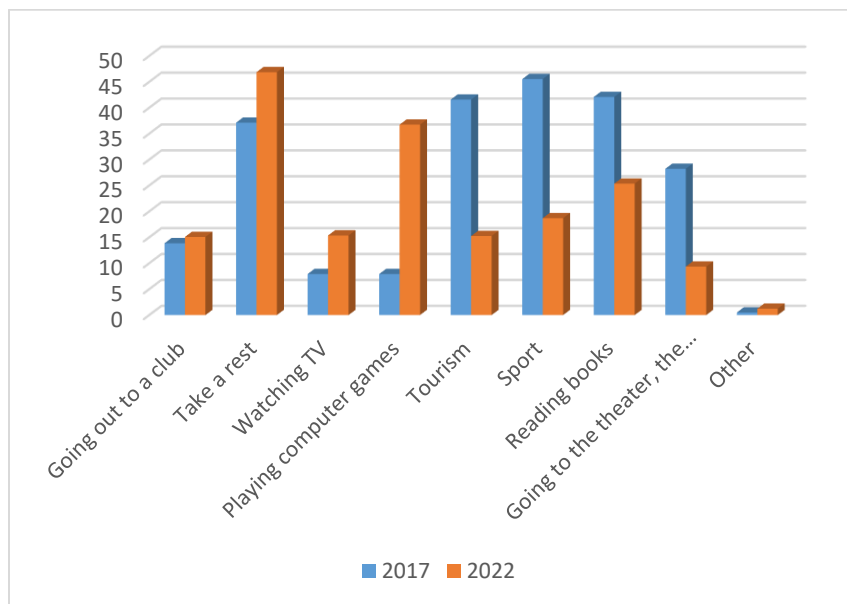


Figure 6. Answer to the question "Suppose you have more free time. How would you use it?"

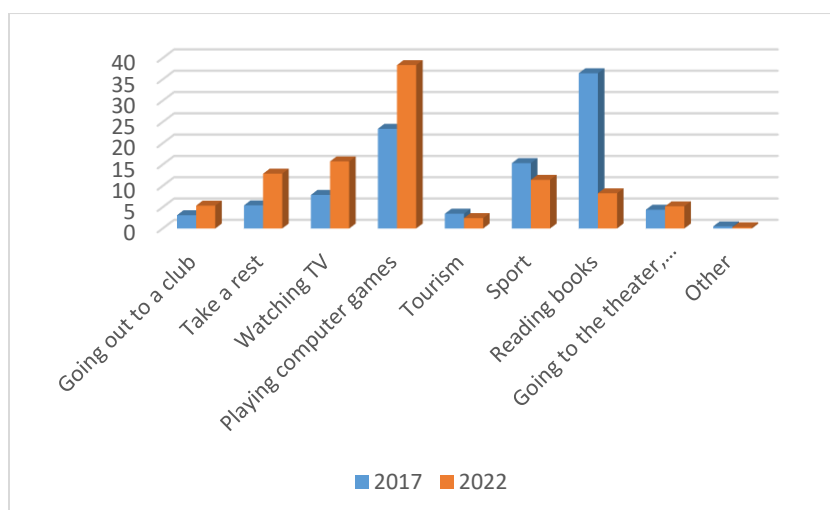


Figure 7. Response to the question "Rank the activities you do in your free time."

To the question - "If there were free elective classes in Physical Education and Sports would you take them?" in 2017 55.45% of female students would take free elective classes. They would be willing to put in the extra effort. 44.55% would not attend such classes. According to these female students, weekly physical exertion is enough for them or they do not want to do sports. In 2022, the female students who would attend such classes are The results are presented graphically in **Figure 8**.

To the question - "What would you like to see changed or covered in PE and sports classes to increase your interest?" both before and after the

pandemic, the majority of students felt that no change in classes was needed and of the recommendations, the following were the most prevalent - improving facilities, playing more sports and including other sports in PE classes.

On the question - "Have you been involved in sports?" - in 2017, 61.88% of female students surveyed were involved in sports before they started their studies at Trakia University, while 38.12% of them did not play sports. The female students who played sports were mostly involved in fitness, horse riding, and basketball. The other sports they practiced were gymnastics, volleyball, martial arts, dancing, etc.

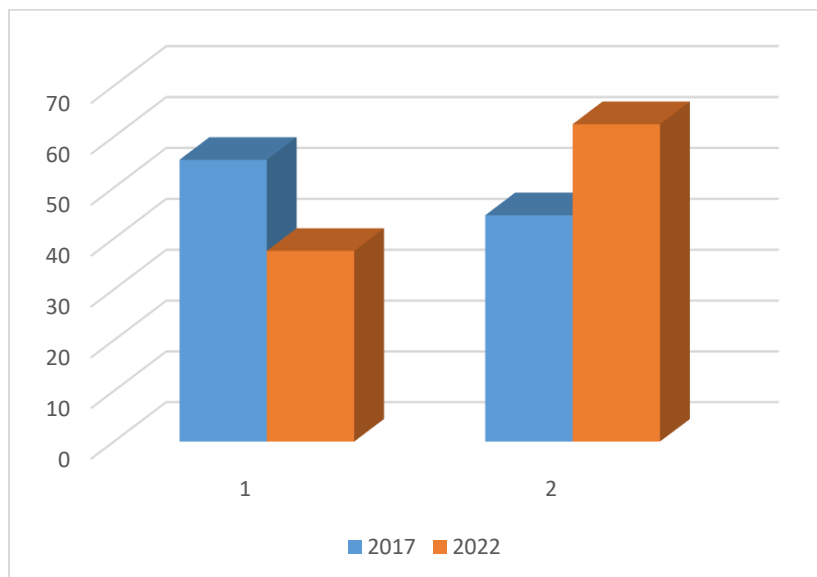


Figure 8. Response to the question "If there were free elective classes in PE and sport would you take them?"

After their admission to Trakia University, the percentage of female students who played sports dropped to 19.31%, and the percentage of female students who did not play sports increased to 80.69%. The sporty female students are mostly engaged in fitness and less in other sports. They practice their chosen sport up to three times a week (75%) and more than three times a week 25% of female students. In 2022, of female students who were involved in sports before starting their studies at Trakia University 54.36% and 45.64 did not play sports. Currently, the percentage of female students who play sports is only 12.48% and the percentage of those who do

not play sports is 87.52%. Female students practice their chosen sport up to three times a semester 78% and more than three times a week 22%. From these comparisons, it can be seen that the number of female students who play sports has decreased more than three times. This fact is quite disturbing because due to the heavy workload in the study process, female students are unable or unwilling to engage in sports activities, which to a large extent would provide them with a very good active rest, recovery of spent mental and emotional strength, etc. The results are presented graphically in **Figures 9, 10 and 11.**

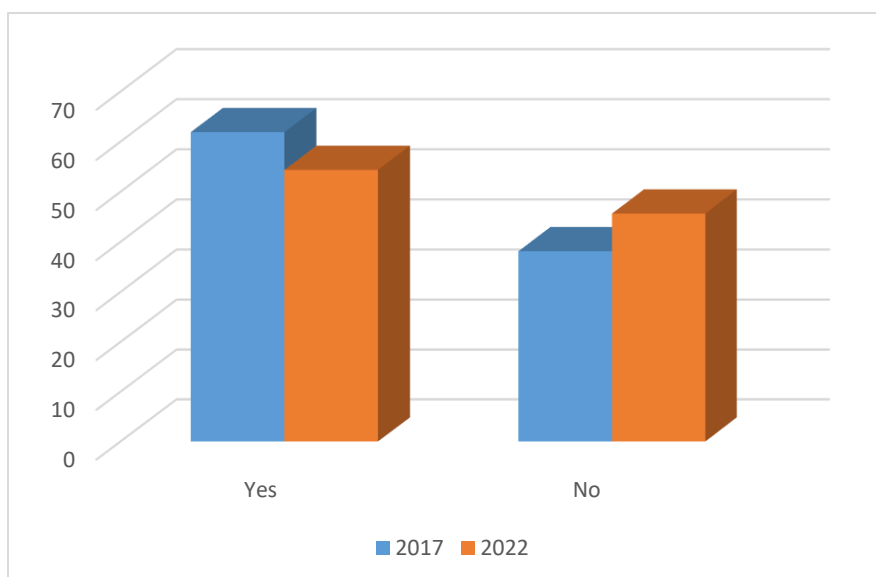


Figure 9. Response to the question "Have you ever played sport?"

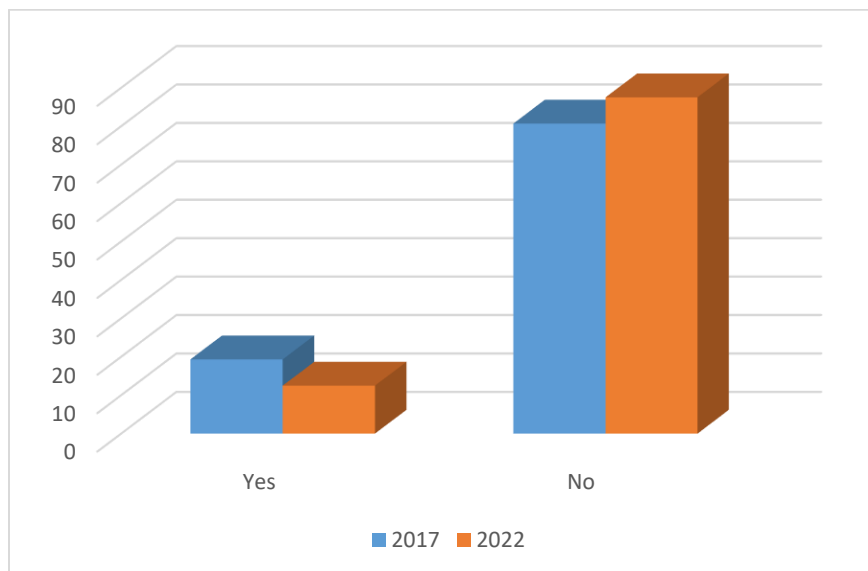


Figure 10. Response to the question "Do you currently play sport?"

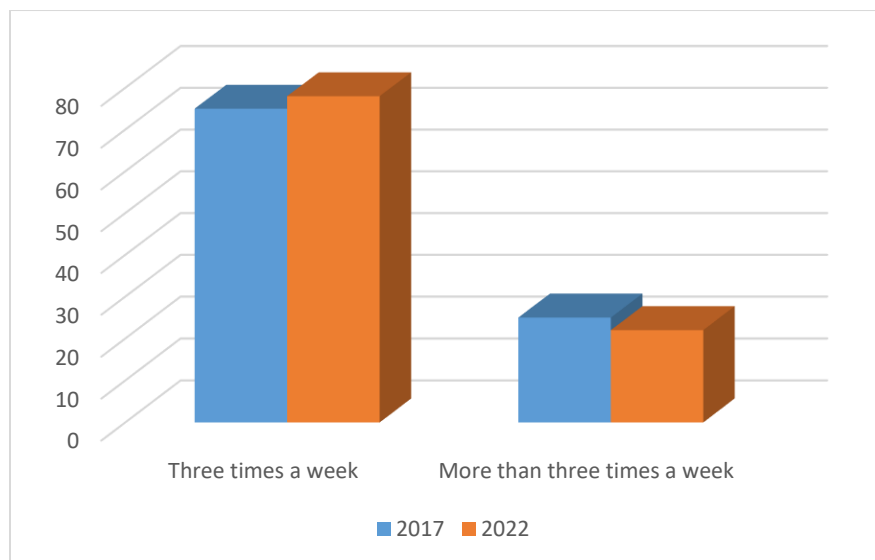


Figure 11. Response to the question "How often do you play sports?"

To the question - "Does improving your appearance motivate you to do sports?" the answers of female students in 2017 and 2022 were almost identical. A large proportion of female students are motivated by their appearance, while for a small proportion, appearance is not a priority. The large number of positive answers given gives us reason to assume that some prejudices about appearance and public opinion are in place for a large proportion of those wishing to play sport.

To the question - "How would you maintain your figure?" - female students in 2017 answered that 23.27% would maintain their figure by dieting, 19.80% of female students would use strength training, and 48.51% would use cardio training to maintain their figure, 8.42% indicated other options. In 2022, female students who will use diets to maintain their figure 32.15%, strength training will be used by 14.36%, cardio training 47.69%, and other methods by 5.8%. The results are presented graphically in **Figure 12**.

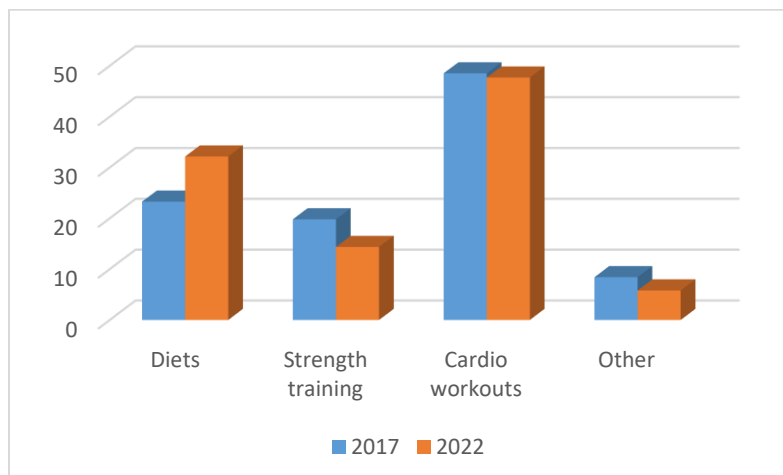


Figure 12. Response to the question "How would you maintain your figure?"

CONCLUSION

1. The results of the questionnaire indicate that after the pandemic, a smaller percentage of students wanted to exercise.
2. Isolation and online learning have affected priorities and desire for leisure activities - computer, television, and staying at home.
3. Students lack theoretical knowledge of all the benefits of exercise and sport.
4. After the pandemic there was a decline in the desire to actively participate in classes.
5. After the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a large decrease in the percentage of female students participating in sports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve and upgrade the facilities of the university.
2. Create conditions for the inclusion of all female students in additional sports activities.
3. Motivating female students to actively participate in classes by including sports activities of interest to them.

4. Giving theoretical knowledge about the use, effect, and benefits of practicing physical exercise and sports.
5. Acquiring knowledge and skills of female students to practice sports independently.

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