

# Physical culture with a pandemic in the background (subjective feelings)

## Kultura fizyczna z pandemią w tle (odczucia subiektywne)

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### Abstract

When a threat to a person's health and life has arisen, all forces are focused on ensuring their health security. Other areas of human activity were reduced or suspended. This also applies to behaviors related to participation in a physical culture which, although it belongs to the field of medical and health sciences, cannot fulfill its offer. It is questionable whether it is rightly assigned to this group.

**Keywords:** physical culture, pandemic

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### Introduction

During the outbreak of COVID-19, writing about the beneficial effects regular exercising has on the body, the stimulating function of physical education or the phenomenon of sport competition carries great risks. An author who contemplates to initiate such a discussion would undoubtedly be considered disconnected from reality and unable to properly assess widely recognized priorities. Currently, all efforts are directed at beating the pandemic, with all others put aside.

It is, therefore, worth to take a look at what happens to physical culture during our fight against the threat to human life and health.

### Physical culture during the quarantine

Concerns about human safety saw the introduction of restrictions eliminating the day-to-day acts of improving one's health and recreation promoted by the theory and practice of the physical activity, which propose many forms and encouraging solutions. Experts believe that reducing outdoor activity, especially when it involves contact with others, is currently one of the ways of avoiding infection. For this reason, sport and recreation have been banned, since they are one of the sources by which the disease is spreading. There are examples of people ignoring sanitary guidelines that result in the rise of the number of cases of the virus getting out of control.

Sport arenas have gone silent, many games have been suspended and undecided, scheduled events have been postponed and physical education encourages exercising at home. The environment regenerates while waves of tourists are gone; ski resorts calculate their losses and sport facilities are closed. Visits

to countries of touristic appeal/attractive tourist destinations are no more. Even physical therapy is not fully realized. The world is waiting, uncertain as to how the struggle between medicine and this insidious and vicious virus is going to pan out.

We need to look into a popular view that the physical activity of the modern person is an inherent part of their lifestyle, as one of the conditions of physical, mental and social health. In this difficult situation the criteria of physical culture that speak of an active attitude and the appropriate actions taken towards the body and their consequences, fail. The pro-somatic stance is suspended as there exists no way to realize it. Only its cognitive component attains new knowledge, stating that in a situation of threat to health or life the technology of physical exercise is a record of an individual. Even the definition provided by a Polish philosopher and ethicist, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, which states that physical culture means the *mind taking care of the body* gains another dimension since its only concern is that of health. When presented with a threat, none of the ornamental values are realized, simply because it cannot be done. The present situation leads to the conclusion that one obvious condition ought to be included in the definition of physical culture, namely that it has value only when life goes on uninterrupted and remains threat-free.

In Poland, physical culture as a branch of science belongs to medical, and health sciences. At present, due to this relation, it is possible it could be given a role to fulfill. However, like any other aspect of life, physical culture undergoes mandatory quarantine. Its parental field has no use for it, additionally imposing on it some strict limitations. This poses a fundamental question: do physical culture studies truly deserve to be assigned to this group?

### What we can learn from Abraham Maslow?

An attempt to answer the aforementioned question will be an analysis of the structure of human needs. A. Maslow aptly described human needs, assigning them to a pyramidal system. According to his theory, at the basis of the pyramid lie the physiological needs, e.g. satisfying hunger and thirst, while on a higher level there is human safety, which envelopes our health. An ill person generally does not have any other needs than the physiological and caring ones. The higher levels in hierarchy of needs (belongingness, respect, recognition, self-esteem, etc.) do not matter in that case, because there is no possibility of meeting them. The sport, touristic and recreational behaviours which interest us the most are located on top of the pyramid, as they concern self-actualisation. They appear only when the needs of the lower tiers are satisfied.

The circumstances that arose due to the pandemic reduced human needs to the two lowest tiers of the pyramid. The world devoted itself to ensuring human safety and health, with no other priorities. That is why physical culture must hibernate until proper means to awake it become available.

### Reflections

The people in power from liberal democracies are likely to review and change the internal policies of their respective countries, with their citizens' safety and protection in mind. They are going to create new sets of rules regarding how the internal structures of the state are to function during emergencies, as well as re-evaluate the existing security protocols. Totalitarian countries will probably abuse the circumstances to reinforce

their own power, putting fear among their weapons of choice. Thus, it can be said that the events of the last few months will transform numerous views on societies' lives and, perhaps, a brand-new hierarchy of universal human values will emerge.

It may take many years for this horrific event to fade away and become just a part of history, possibly not even as important as, for example the Fall of the Roman Empire, The Black Death, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki or the Collapse of Communism. It will become yet another episode of human history, remembered as unexpected and surprising, having claimed a number of lives before an antidote was produced. Future will most likely create different types of threats because that is a part of life.

What is physical culture going to be like after the pandemic? It seems like it will be slightly different. Probably humbler about having such a high goal and a firm status, at first. As a value in itself, it will eventually return to an active life, possibly without any additional duties regarding the challenges of today's world. The immediate future is unlikely to make it as special as it used to be, e.g. during the first few years after the war, when *citius, altius, fortius* awoke the youth to be extraordinarily lively and have the passion to create. Those who gain some personal benefits from physical culture, for example professional athletes, owners of fitness-related businesses as well as the huge group of people who use it as a way of achieving self-fulfilment, will come back to it with much happiness. Maybe children and teens will kick a ball outside again. In time, after a momentary joy, everything will become normal once more. Perhaps human will be reassured that the old Roman phrase: *panem et circenses* indeed in the correct order. *Bread* (safety) comes first, then *circuses*, meaning an offer of physical culture.

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### Streszczenie

Od kiedy pojawiło się zagrożenie zdrowia i życia człowieka, wszystkie siły koncentrują się na zapewnieniu społeczeństwu bezpieczeństwa zdrowotnego. Inne obszary ludzkiej działalności zostały ograniczone lub zawieszono. Dotyczy to także zachowań związanych z uczestnictwem w kulturze fizycznej, która pomimo, że przynależy do dziedziny nauk medycznych i o zdrowiu, nie może realizować swojej oferty. Jest zastanawiające, czy słusznie przypisano ją do tego grona.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kultura fizyczna, pandemia

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