

## Abstract

**Title:** The benefits of outdoor course for social relationships development in school classes

**Objective:** The aim of the thesis was to examine how the outdoor course focused on teambuilding and social relationships development influences the structure and quality of social relationships in adolescent school classes.

**Methods:** The research sample was created by 211 13 years old secondary school students (128 girls; 83 boys; average age  $13.3 \pm SD$  years) who participated on a 6-days outdoor course. The course was designed using the principles of dramaturgy to meet its objectives – let the students get to know each other and their teachers better, induce positive social relationships, a cooperative atmosphere, a sense of trust and safety in the class. The students filled in the questionnaire before the course, straight after the course and 3 months after finishing the course. It was a combination of preferential record, sociometric questions (choosing classmates for a birthday party and deserted island), B3 test and two open-ended questions mapping the preference of programme resources. The results were first analysed for each class to see what happened in each group and then all classes were summarized. Primary data were analysed by non-parametric Friedman's test, statistical significance between the measurements was assessed by non-parametric Wilcoxon's test and Cohen *d*. Open-ended responses were categorized, coded and quantified by frequency

**Results:** The quality of social relationships set by the median sum in the preferential record has increased in all classes after the course. The mean of the median sum of all classes shows an increasing trend in all measurements - from 197 points before the course it increased to 200.5 points after the course and 202.5 points three months after the course, the difference between pre and post measurement is statistically significant ( $Z = 2.78$ ) at the level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , the difference between the second and third measurement is not statistically significant ( $Z = 0.25$ ). The effect size in the preferential record assessed by Cohen *d* is  $d = 1.11$  after the course. The average number of choices in birthday party question increased from 9.7 before the course to 11.2 after the course (statistically

insignificant,  $Z = 1.95$  at the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ ), after three months it decreased to 9.1 (this decline is statistically significant at the level of  $Z = 2.3$  at the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). In the island question, the statistical significance of changes is vice versa. The average number of choices after the course increased from 7 to 9.1 (statistically significant,  $Z = 2.37$  at the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ ), it decreased to 8.6 three months after the course (statistically insignificant decrease,  $Z = 0,34$ ). Sense of safety, friendship, trust, atmosphere of cooperation and tolerance increased in B3 test after the course. After three month these items decreased again under their original value except for the sense of relationships. Most often, students appreciated leisure time with classmates (48 responses), theatre (39) and class belonging (31). They see the greatest benefits in getting to know each other (104 responses), in improving social relations (72) and developing cooperation (18).

**Conclusion:** The study results show that the course leads to getting to know each other in the class better, inducing positive social relationships. After the course, there is an increase in sympathies and popularity among students, a thicker network of social relationships, a better sense of safety, trust, atmosphere of cooperation and tolerance. However, this change is not stable over time. Three months after the course, the level of sympathies in the preferential record, the number of choices in the island question kept increasing, but in other items the values decreased. It is obvious that in order to maintain a positive atmosphere in the class it is necessary to work with the class further, to develop the positive relationships, to participate in other similar activities.

**Keywords:** outdoor education, outdoor courses, adolescents, small group, dramaturgy, sociometry