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Physical activity among physiotherapy students





**Why is physical activity
important?**



01

Heart and circulatory health

Regular activity improves the circulatory system, reduces the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.

02

Improved mental well-being

Exercise promotes the release of endorphins, helping to improve mood, reduce stress, and enhance sleep quality

03

Strengthening muscles and bones

Physical activity improves muscle strength, supports bone health, and helps maintain mobility even in older age



**How active do you think
physiotherapy students
are compared to their
peers and compared to
pre-university years?**



Research suggests a **decline in PA**
levels among students
compared to pre-university years
and are at risk of **reduced**
physical activity due to academic
demands and lifestyle changes

(Haase et al., 2004, Wusu & Okuneye, 2022)

What factors influence PA?



- Academic workload (Saadan et al. 2015)
- Lack of time (Ferreira Silva et al. 2022)
- Academic stress (Goméz-Lopéz et al. 2010)
- Lack of motivation (Ferreira Silva et al. 2022)
- Lack of space (Ferreira Silva et al. 2022)

Our study - my PhD

- Study overview: Analysis of PA levels in physiotherapy students across multiple universities in Europe
- Sample: 1075 students from 8 European countries and 22 universities
- Methodology: Data was collected via IPAQ and additional strength/meditation-related activity measures



Findings

More than 150min = 78,9%

More than 300min = 51%

Average: 1891 METs min/week
(median 1520)

67% engaged in strength training
 ≥ 2 x/week

meditation/relaxation – 21 min/week

WHO recommendations

- At least **150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity** aerobic activity
- OR
- At least **75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity** aerobic activity per week
- 600-1200 METs min/week but better **1200-3000 METs min/ week** for PA health benefits
- Strength-training exercises ≥ 2 **times per week**

Findings #2

30.5% met HEPA criteria, 16.1% were inactive

Men were significantly more active than women ($p < 0.0001$)



The **highest** number of **inactive** students was in Portugal (44; 39%), while the **lowest** was in the Czech Republic (16; 8%).

The **highest** percentage of students in the **HEPA** category was in Finland (41%; 39), while the **lowest** was in Portugal (23%).



**96.7% (1039) of students believe
that physical activity affects
their mental health**

Higher MET-min/week significantly
improves perceived quality of life and
mental health ($p=0.0009$, $p=0.0003$,
 $cor=-0.1$)



CONCLUSION





even that 97,6% believed that PA affects their mental health

only 30,5% scored in HEPA

78.9% engaged in more than 150min of moderate PA, 51% more than 300min

67% engaged in strength training

even that our students met the criteria 1200–3000 METs–min/week

there are significant differences among countries



**Thank you for
listening!**

WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour, 2020

Ferreira Silva RM, Mendonça CR, Azevedo VD, Raoof Memon A, Noll PRES, Noll M. Barriers to high school and university students' physical activity: A systematic review. PLoS One. 2022 Apr 4;17(4):e0265913. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0265913. PMID: 35377905; PMCID: PMC8979430.

Saadon, R., Jano, Z., Sidek, S., & Bokhari, M. (2015). PERCEIVED BARRIERS IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. Journal of Human Capital Development (JHCD), 8(1), 39–46. Retrieved from <https://jhcd.utem.edu.my/jhcd/article/view/2074>

Gómez-López, Manuel, Antonio Granero Gallegos, and Antonio Baena Extremuera. "Perceived barriers by university students in the practice of physical activities." Journal of sports science & medicine 9.3 (2010): 374.