

SIGNIFICANCE AND ROLE OF ATHLETES IN ETHICAL EDUCATION OF YOUTH

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SUMMARY

One cannot write about the relationship of young people and current sports stars in modern society without having previously studied the processes of mediation and globalisation of sport, and the transformation of traditional social values. The goal of the science and practice engaged in sports and education of young people is a constant quest for preserving universal ethical values and reconciling them with the modern-day social processes. This paper will present the result of a survey conducted with adolescents in five different Serbian cities in order to find the answer to the question if sportspersons were their favourite television role-models. According to the results of our survey, 45% of adolescents do not have a favourite TV personality and do not know for sure who that could be. Novak Đoković, who would be the choice of adults for a role model of the young, with 63.2% according to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, scored 3.81% in our survey with adolescents who would chose Novak Đoković as their favourite TV personality. The necessity of raising media literacy of young people with the aim of clear identification of sports role models who are going to improve their quality of life still remains an open issue for further research on this course.

Key words: sports stars, public figures, youth, morals, education

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sport has been and will be an unrivalled area when it comes to the importance for the growth and development of young people, which offers them a healthy pastime, improving abilities, competitive spirit, proper body development and a host of other benefits. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the biggest sports stars are gladly accepted as desirable role models by young people. However, the question arises: "Do athletes really have a special responsibility to remain idols, especially for children who consider them heroes or are athletes normal people with special skills who have the same legal and moral responsibility as everyone else."¹ The question arises why having a talent such as a sports skill would carry with it an additional moral obligation to be a role model to others. Morality as a form of social consciousness, a system of customs, habits and norms should apply equally to all members of society. Central values of morality such as good, correct and fair should be equally binding according to the historical period in which they were established. In order to understand the further course of research, it is necessary to define the term of a 'star'. "Gemson (1994) and his colleagues argued with that the phenomenon of the star is unique to the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, which arose due to the expansion of the media."² In addition to tying the concept of a star for a certain time period, it was necessary to redefine the notion of fame, which for centuries had been associated with something which had been a result of merit, such as famous writers, painters, scientists, but could not have been related to a famous criminal or a reality show participant. The media and their public figures cannot be viewed separately from the present day of social dynamics, culture and communication, but are a constituent factor of modern society.³

In the present day of the information society, where the transmission of information is possible almost simultaneously, through Twitter, Instagram, TV transmission and other forms of modern communication, the number of famous, exemplary, and celebrity people becomes an endless series. Too much choice reduces the choice at the same time. The results of the research⁴ on who the television role models of young people in Serbia are show that the largest number of adolescents reply that they do not have role models among public figures. On the other hand, the largest number of adults in the MOS (Ministry of Youth and

¹ Robert Simon, Fair Play, Sports Ethics (Belgrade: Official Gazette, 2004), 276.

² David Giles, Psychology of Media (Belgrade: Clio, 2010), 124.

³ Dieter Bake, Media Pedagogy (Belgrade: Center for Media and Communications, 2013)

⁴ Ivana Markov Čikić, The Role and Importance of Television Programs in the Education of Children and Young People, Doctoral dissertation, University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, 2015.

Sports of Serbia)⁵ survey cited a range of athletes as desirable role models for young people. This was the expected result given the fact that sport occupies a significant place in our society and that its proper understanding does not require any special training such as evaluating excellence in the fields of physics, medicine or the arts. In its very nature, sport is an area accessible to all; young people strive to emulate the top athletes who profit from this imitation. This causal relationship binds athletes to moral behaviour for their fans but also for "the internal morality of a sport where commitment, interest in excellence and fair play are central."⁶ What complicates the aforementioned causal link today and leads to a deviation of a simple and healthy identification of young people with unmatched sports role models is the fact that moral values are increasingly at risk of social aspiration to follow modern civilizational trends, which are created with the aim of offering the most suitable living conditions in the modern world. Hard work, many years of coaching in sports, gaining fame and a position of a role model through results, success and fair play are compromised by the possibility of achieving "glory" with one click, by posting one video clip on the Youtube channel. Therefore, a new challenge has been set in education as a process of sensorimotor, intellectual and emotional but no less significant moral and spiritual traits of young people.

2. METHOD

Role models of young people and favourite public figures were set as the subject of the research in order to determine the direction of development of their moralities, life preferences and ultimate goals in life.

The proposed hypothesis has been that young people in the modern world of media and new technologies are strongly influenced by public figures.

The scientific approach in this research is based on the operational, i.e. applied research, so that it used the method of theoretical analysis, descriptive method and comparative analysis. The theoretical analysis was used to analyse different understandings of the studied phenomena as well as the circumstances of the occurrence of these differences. The theoretical analysis method laid the theoretical foundations of this research and shed a light on the research problem,

⁵ Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia, (2016) Research on the Position and Needs of Youth in the Republic of Serbia, Ninamedia.

<http://www.mos.gov.rs/public/ck/uploads/files/Research%20position%20i%20purchase%20young%20terren%20december%202016%20correction.pdf> (Downloaded: 24/02/2018)

⁶ Robert Simon, Fer - Play, The Ethics of Sport (Belgrade: Official Gazette, 2004), 279

thus enabling the assignment and research hypothesis to be established. In doing so, the following aspects were analysed: previous research, scientific papers, professional articles, studies and textbooks directly related to the research problem. This method was also relied on in the phase of interpretation of the research results and in comparing the results obtained with the results of the previous research. The descriptive method of use was through a survey process and it was used to capture the views and opinions of children and young people.

The research was conducted on a sample of 870 seventh and eighth grade primary school students as well as third and fourth grade secondary school students in Novi Sad, Vršac, Zrenjanin, Kikinda and Pančevo. The instrument used was a questionnaire specifically designed for the research purposes. An open-ended question was asked about the favourite adolescent television personality and it read: Who is your favourite public figure? The SPSS package was used for statistical data processing.

3. RESULTS

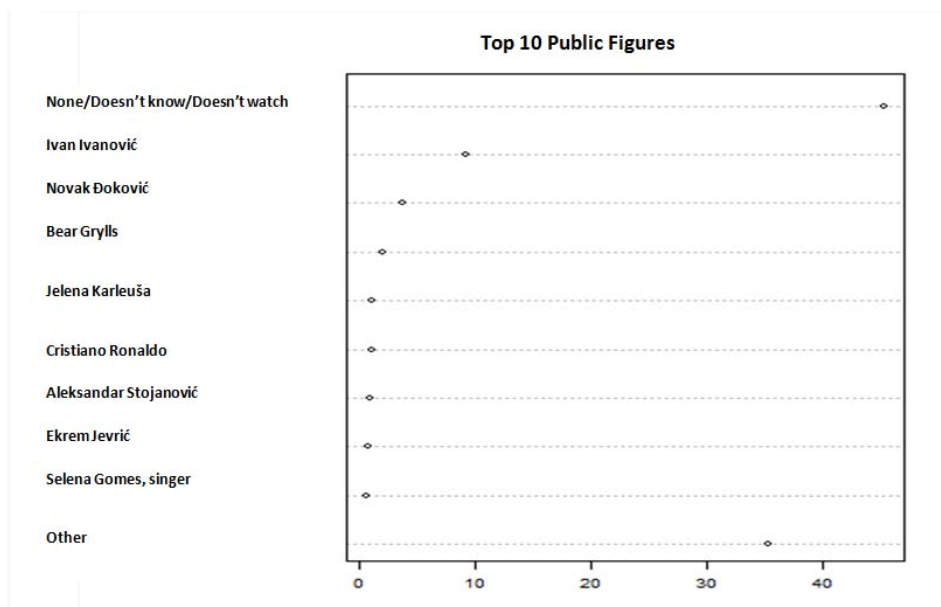
As the media fills their media pages every day with various publications and bombastic headlines such as: "Youth models in Serbia: Đoković, Šešilj, Karleuša" on the B92 website, or "Why today's youth models are Novak Đoković, Nikola Tesla, Aleksandar Vučić, Steve Jobs, Zoran Đinđić, Jelena Karleuša, Ceca Ražnatović and Vladimir Putin" on the Blic website, our research conducted five years ago shows the absence of role models in nearly one thousand adolescents. What is consistent with the latest research into sample testing is the plethora of different samples and the absence of criteria for selecting a sample and equating the term of the sample with the term of fame or glory for anything, not some criterion of excellence, skill, success and morality.

Characteristic for our research, which can be clearly seen from chart number one, is that the highest percentage of respondents answered that they did not have a favourite personality on television - as many as 45.21%, while the largest percentage of those who voted chose Ivan Ivanović - 9.23%. The most noticeable is the dissipation in the students' answers to this question, namely the fact that hundreds of favourite TV personalities scored below 0.69%. Studying the findings of the Sydney⁷ survey that there is an impact of reality TV on the consumption process of teenagers that is related to consumption, that there is an impact of

⁷ Ridhwanul Haq, Role of Reality TV as Consumer Socialisation Agent of Teenagers in Developing Country, Doctoral Dissertation, College of Business, University of Western Sydney <http://researchdirect.uws.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:8970>, (Retrieved: 28/03/2019)

reality TV on the attitudes and values of teenagers who are related to consumption but that they do not have certain television idols and that there is, too, a discrepancy in the answers, a kind of superficiality and a smallness in the preferences might have suggested that this would be the characteristic of the results of this research as well. Therefore, when asked about favourite TV personalities, adolescents give hundreds of different answers, with the highest percentage of those answering: "I don't have one or I don't know" - 45.21%. The highest percentage of adolescents chose Ivan Ivanović for their favourite TV personality, yet this was only 9.23%, followed by Novak Đoković with 3.81%, Bear Grylls 2.08%, Jelena Karleuša 1.04%, Cristiano Ronaldo 1.04% , Aca Stojanović 1.04%, Ekrem Jevrić 0.92% and Selena Gomez 0.69%. The other answers are even smaller and it is difficult to identify any universal idols or TV models of young people today.

1. Chart: Top 10 Adolescent Public Figures



Such disorientation is in line with the results of the 2014 survey of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia, on the position and needs of young people in Serbia at the age of 15-30, which shows that unemployment and poor economic situation are the biggest problems that young people, in their own opinion, are confronted with followed by corruption and crime. On the one hand, television presents a social reality that is currently very discouraging for young people. On the other hand, broadcasters, both national and foreign, are creators of the programme and

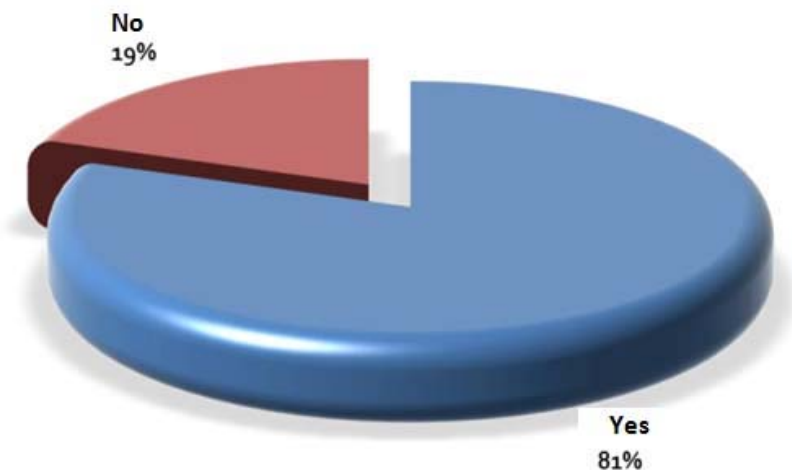
exert a strong influence on the formation of public opinion. Young people are currently bombarded with an array of information, TV personalities and TV information, which in their adolescent years of growing up in Serbia results in 45% of them not having a favourite TV personality or not knowing exactly who it could be, according to the survey conducted in the five cities in Vojvodina.

4. DISCUSSION

While the previous research which directly examines adolescents, shows the absence of any role models in their lives, the latest survey dealing with this topic, conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia, presents a completely different opinion of adults and parents. Over 4/5 of the respondents believe that athletes are role models for young people. (Chart 2)

2. Chart: What do adults think, are athletes role models for young people?

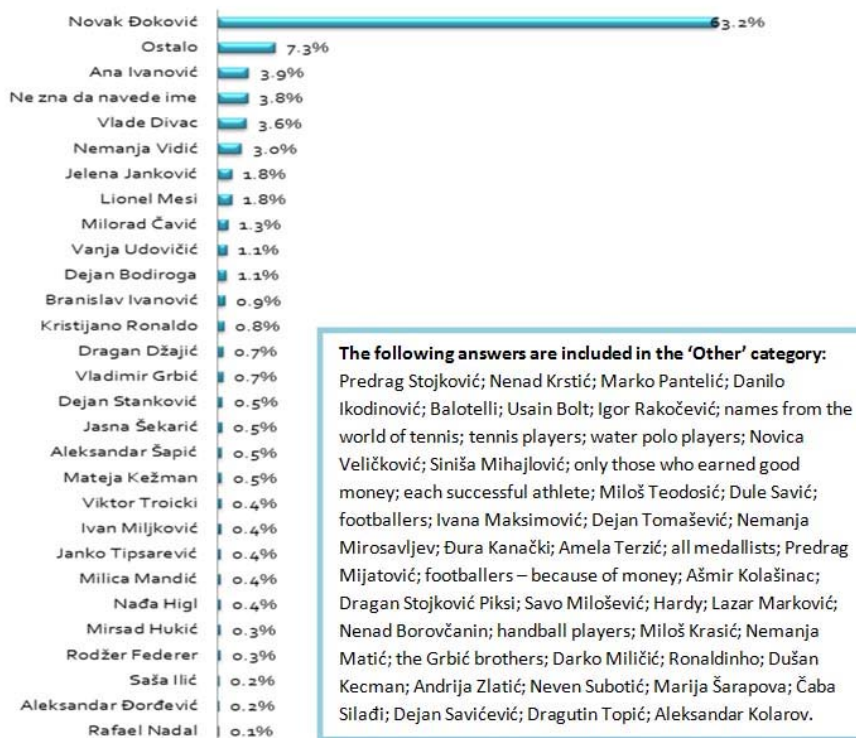
Are athletes role models for young people?



Such perceptions exist to a greater extent with urban residents than with residents in rural environments. There is also a certain regional disproportion in the respondents' answers to this question - respondents from the Šumadija region and western Serbia consider athletes to be role models in a much smaller

percentage than those in the other regions in Serbia (64.4% in Šumadija and western Serbia compared to over 85% in other regions). When talking about the specific name of the athlete who should be a role model, the absolute leader in the eyes of this corps is Novak Đoković (63.2% of respondents; no other athlete is perceived as such with more than 3.9% of respondents) (Graph 3). (MOS, 2014) We can conclude that parents would like athletes to be role models for young people, which would mean: exercising regularly, not consuming alcohol and drugs, having a proper sleep rhythm and a balanced diet and behaving in accordance with the “ontological notions of the sporting spirit” : they are ethical, strive for extraordinary achievements, have a solid character, have a good education, enjoy joy and fun, are dedicated, follow the rules, respect themselves and others, are brave, solidary, devoted to their team and community.

3. Chart. Who do adults think are athletes role models for young people?



One could expect that in the country of successful athletes, winners of medals at the European and World Championships, the Olympics, it would be implicit that

role models are successful athletes, in moral value, and especially in the habit of practising sports activities on a regular basis. However, a 2016 survey by the Ministry of Youth and Sports reveals that among those who participate in sports activities with the aim of improving their health, one third are young people, mostly men, the youngest age category, as well as residents of the Province of Vojvodina. According to 73% of participants, young people in Serbia do not exercise enough. Most respondents (44%) spend less than 30 minutes on a weekly basis in sports activities. Men are more active, then those under the age of 20, residents of urban settlements, while the lowest level of physical activity is noticeable in the region of Eastern and Southern Serbia. Results like this make one think what exactly it means to have role models in sport in today's globalised world of mass communication? The existence of role models in sport has diverged from the ancient ideals of sport, *paideia* and *kalokagathos*, where it is nourished equally: spirit and body and strength and beauty and spirituality. Following sports models on TV channels and the Internet today threatens to jeopardise the real time in a young person's life for dealing with his/her own body and health, both mental and physical.

What needs to be emphasised today in the modern world of communication, where access to information has never been easier and almost impossible to ignore, is the fact that it is difficult to make the right choice or selection of information, even if such information concerns positive role models such as our successful athletes. "As a fan of a sports club, I can love a certain product because my favourite star took a picture with it, but it does not prove that the product he/she held in his/her hands is the best and most valuable product. There are much more important and significant matters that, like "snacks" or watches, are completely unnoticed advertised by our favourite stars, and we adopt them."⁸ These more important and more significant matters are precisely the main topics of this paper – the issues of life and moral values which can only be accepted because of the public figure who promotes them, in this case is a sports star. Of course, it does not have to be bad for someone to find a successful person who will be their role model and inspiration in life as a proof that great success in life is possible, especially if role models are tennis, football, or basketball players... real role models! Successful athletes very often have the strength and intellect to deliver a speech that is for young people a much more influential "preaching" than what either parents or the official school are capable of doing. Unfortunately, there are situations when our sports idol does not have as brilliant a lifestyle and

⁸ Tehran Halilovic, Electronic Magazine for Religious Culture, Source, 7, ISSN 2335-089X <https://vdocuments.mx/number-7-martapril-2016-issn-2335-089x-online-obmane-i-poraza-zato-svak.html> (Retrieved: 02/04/2019) pp. 6-7.

value system which could match his/her throwing of the ball into the basket. So the message for young people would be that there are certain boundaries in the pursuit of public figures. What these limits are could be defined as the adoption of information from the media about our role models that will positively affect the quality of our lives. "We need to find a boundary that distinguishes between idols and role models, because celebrity tracking is positive and useful as long as that person does not become our idol."⁹ Therefore, the message for young people in today's world of modern information technology can be very confusing – to follow and at the same time not to follow their role models, to follow what is positive and to recognise and shun what is negative. There is no need to blindly follow consumer choices of sports models who smile in commercials for chocolate, cream, sachet soups, expensive cars... yet, their success, their sacrifice and their life-long dedication to one specific professional goal should be respected. The pursuit of success and its achievement is certainly for respect, but one must not forget the way, that is, the path to achieving such a goal, which must by no means be Machiavellian and utilitarian without choosing the means to achieve it, but on the contrary – it must be a path full of respect, support and all other ontological postulations of "fair play."

5. CONCLUSION

The researches conducted on young people in Serbia in order to determine who their moral role models among public figures, especially athletes were, bring to a conclusion that this issue must be viewed in the context of the development of other trends in society such as the rise of information technology, the explosion of media and Internet content, strong marketing pressure of multinational companies on public figures as promoters, and indirectly pushing young people towards a consumerist mentality and everything that the new age bears that has largely perturbed the old traditional ethical values. The way of communication has changed and the aforementioned globalisation of the media market requires from internet users to use English and adapt their own communication apparatus to an environment where a significant part of everyday communication takes place, namely the Internet.¹⁰ The unambiguous rule of the media culture, especially of its segment which is backed by computer technology and Internet communication

⁹ Tehran Halilovic, Electronic Magazine for Religious Culture, Source, 7, ISSN 2335-089X <https://vdocuments.mx/number-7-martapril-2016-issn-2335-089x-online-obmane-i-poraza-zato-svak.html> (Retrieved: 02/04/2019) p. 8.

¹⁰ Stanko Crnobrnja, *Esthetics of Television and New Media* (Belgrade: Clio, 2010)

potentials create the foundation on which new approaches to theoretical and empirical research of the world is articulated.¹¹

According to the results of our research, for this score of new and traditional values one cannot only blame the media, public figures or different role models, because 45% of adolescents do not have a favourite TV personality and do not know exactly who it would be. According to the Ministry of Youth and Sports survey, with 63.2%, Novak Đoković, who would be the adult choice for the role model of youth, recorded 3.81% of adolescents who chose Novak Đoković as their favourite TV personality. Of course, it should be noted that our study involved a slightly younger sample and a narrower area of Serbia than the MOS survey, which took a broader age span of young people and a wider geographical area; however supporting of our conclusion that there is a strong absence of role models or fragmentation, i.e. a multitude of role models among young people, are the data from the MOS survey itself which indicate that 73% of young people think that they do not exercise enough. Therefore, one of the first benefits should be the basic form of learning by imitation, that is, 63.2% of adults consider Novak Đoković a role model, and 73% of young people in Serbia believe that they do not exercise enough.

Doing sports is just one of the segments of a healthy and quality life that certainly does not have to be an indicator of other moral values of young people. It would be easier if sport, as it used to be in ancient Greece, equated to the concept of paideia, which united the beautiful and the good, the spirit and the body, and the athletes were the ideal citizens of politics and impeccable role models of young people. Today, we have a completely different situation where the field of sport itself struggles with a number of ethical issues, starting with bioethics that addresses the problems of doping, bribery, corruption, medical ethical principles and beyond, in numerous disciplines of humanities where many other topics are developed in the area of social conditionality of sport, roles of supporters, audience, their expected behaviour, building a national identity, emergence of racism and gender inequality, and a whole new set of topics. The multitude of media, the plethora of information, multitude of public figures, abundance of ethical issues in sports have certainly led to this kind of research resulting in many different responses. Where it leads when it comes to building a lifestyle and adopting a youth value system is difficult to answer, but that does not mean that we should abandon directing young people towards positive role models,

¹¹ Danica Radovanovic, Impact of Internet Community on Social Communication Processes in Networked Environment, PhD Thesis, University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences, 2015

successful athletes and great sports stars, but to educate them in the media to make a selection of information that they receive regarding their role models, to recognise and adopt only what is good in their role models and what will be good for the quality of their own lives.

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ЗНАЧЕНИЕ И РОЛЬ СПОРТСМЕНОВ В ЭТИЧЕСКОМ ОБРАЗОВАНИИ МОЛОДЕЖИ

АННОТАЦИЯ

Писать об отношениях молодежи и современных видах спорта в современном обществе не представляется возможным, не изучив предварительно процессы посредничества и глобализации спорта, и трансформации традиционных ценностей общества. Одной из задач науки и практики спортивной подготовке и образовании молодежи представляет собой постоянные поиски путей сохранения универсальных этических ценностей и их адаптации к процессам современного общества. В статье представлены результаты анкетирования подростков пяти различных сербских городов в целях нахождения ответа на вопрос, являются ли спортсмены, которых они видят по телевидению, для них примерами для подражания. По результатам опроса у 45% подростков нет таких фаворитов и они даже не уверены, какие спортсмены могли бы быть таковыми. По результатам исследования Министерства Молодежи и Спорта Новак Докович (Novak Đoković) выбран подростками (3.2%) в качестве примера для подражания. Необходимо повысить медиа-грамотность молодых людей в целях выявления фаворитов среди спортсменов, которые помогут молодежи улучшить качество жизни. Данная задача представляет интерес для дальнейшего исследования.

Ключевые слова: звезды спорта, публичные личности, нравственность, образование

ЗНАЧАЈ И УЛОГА СПОРТИСТА У ЕТИЧКОМ ОБРАЗОВАЊУ МЛАДИХ

САЖЕТАК

О односу младих и актуелних спортских звезда у савременом друштву данашњице не може се писати без претходног изучавања процеса медијације, глобализације спорта и трансформације традиционалних друштвених вредности. Циљ науке и праксе који се баве спортом и образовањем и васпитањем младих јесте у сталном трагању како очувати универзалне етичке вредности и помирити их са савременим друштвеним процесима. У раду ће бити приказан резултат истраживања на адолесцентима у пет различитих градова Србије који ће дати одговор да ли су спортисти њихови

омиљени телевизијски узори? Према резултатима нашег истраживања 45% адолесцената нема омиљену ТВ личност и не зна тачно која би то била. Новак Ђоковић који би био избор одраслих за узор младих, према истраживању МОС-а, са 63,2 %; у нашем истраживању бележи 3,81 % адолесцената који су се определили за Новака Ђоковића као омиљену ТВ личност. Неопходност медијског описмењавања младих у циљу јасног препознавања спортских узора који ће утицати на подизање квалитета њихових живота остало је отворено за даља истраживања у том правцу.

Кључне речи: спортске звезде, јавне личности, млади, морал, образовање

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