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# **TEORIA I METODYKA REKREACJI RUCHOWEJ W ŚWIELE AKTUALNYCH BADAŃ.**

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**NARCIARSTWO BIEGOWE FORMĄ ZAGOSPODAROWANIA CZASU  
WOLNEGO NA PRZYKŁADZIE OŚRODKA W JAKUSZYCACH.**

**CROSS - COUNTRY SKIING AS A FORM OF A LEISURE TIME  
MANAGEMENT ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE SPORT AND  
RECREATION CENTRE IN JAKUSZYCE.**

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## SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the reasons behind selecting cross-country skiing as a form of leisure time activity at the Sport and Recreation Centre of Cross-Country Skiing and Biathlon in Jakuszyce. The publication provides information about the level of the public interest in the cross-country skiing; This publication will present climatic conditions, variety of the landscape and other advantages of the Jakuszyce village including numerous tourist routes of varying difficulties, perfect for hiking and the cross-country skiing and also the annual event that is well-known among enthusiasts of this discipline of sport – the Piast Race.

The following paper consists of analysis of the research on the cross-country skiing conducted at the Sport and Recreation Centre in Jakuszcze. It also provides analyses of other recreational activities and motives of its making. The questionnaires were completed by women and men. The participants of this study were divided into different age groups. The first of these involved respondents under the age of 25, the second consisted of respondents aged 26-35 years, the next 36-45 years, and last included the respondents who were aged 46 years and more. The questionnaire contained questions concerning respondents' goals and the frequency of practicing the cross-country skiing and the source of information through which they learned about the possibilities of taking on this discipline.

The publication provides a summary and conclusions acknowledging the value of skiing on the health and overall well-being and also its benefits on the development of imagination and sensitivity to beauty.

## Introduction

The popularity of cross-country skiing is constantly increasing. This phenomenon is clearly favoured by an increasing need for activities in the open air and enhanced awareness of the benefits of healthy recreation. In recent years, the health benefits of recreational physical activity is better understood and appreciated, the science in this regard focuses on the value of recreation in improving the efficiency of and human health.

Health concerns have become the main reason for engaging in the recreational physical activities among adults, often following a long break, in middle age and older. Clear signs of involution and the deteriorating state of health and medical fitness are often proxies for returning to participation in active recreation. While not participating in other forms of recreation (those not

involving physical activities) does not have adverse effects on human well-being, the lack of physical workout has an impact on health. (Wolańska 1994)

Despite the overwhelming recognition of a role of physical activities in shaping the health and the comfort of living, participation in those, especially within the Polish population, is still low. The changes of values and needs, as well as a noticeable consumer lifestyle are partially responsible for a growing interest in spending holidays actively. Thus, the intensity of the consideration about the healthy lifestyle has increased as much as the fashion for a fitness, healthy looking, and well-being lifestyle. Physical activity affects all human life functions, relieves tension, affects the personality, improves the strength of will, perseverance, motivation, improves blood circulation in the brain, the processes of concentration, attention and intellectual functioning, resulting in better blood circulation in the skin, delays skin aging and delivers results in younger looking. Bones become more flexible, less prone to decalcification (also with the elderly), and more resistant to fracture. The muscles have better durability and greater strength (can work longer without fatigue, better muscles tension and figure). The blood delivers more oxygen to the tissues (the elimination of waste products is better, the lipid composition improves resulting with less of "bad" and more of "good" cholesterol, and the regulation of blood sugar levels is also greater). The heart works more economically. Blood circulation and lymph flow improves, anti-atherosclerotic lesions and the blood pressure normalises.

The vital capacity of lungs increase, respiratory muscles strengthen and the purification of bronchitis becomes more efficient. The digestive tract is also affected; better digestion, increased appetite and lack of problems with constipation are some of the benefits of the active lifestyle. Long-term, moderate exercises help to get rid of excess body fat, increase range of motion and resistance to injuries also can improve motor coordination and reflection. The active lifestyle positively influences the self-esteem, increases the level of satisfaction with our performance and makes it easier to cope with stress. (Gracz, Sankowski 2001)

Physical recreation, if treated as part of a holiday relaxation will fulfil its role by bringing pleasure which is associated with positive emotions. The physical activeness is crucial in developing a need for leisure which should be just as important as any other daily needs - sleeping, eating. Leisure is a process used to remove the changes caused by excessive a long-term effort that weakens the body's functional state. It can and should take various forms of work breaks, relaxing after work, after a stressful week or proper holiday. (Gracz, Sankowski 2001)

Skiing is one of the most common, not only in Poland, forms of recreation on weekends and holidays during the winter. The physicians and professionals promoting the healthy lifestyle emphasise the importance of physical activity throughout the year. Skiing is not just a stunt; it is also a special and wonderful form of relaxation and recreation. "The white insanity" is a fully justified notion to describe this form of leisure activities, which began to be hugely popular in the twentieth century. (Klepacki 1985) It has outstanding health values, which

consist of a variety of reasons. Climatic factors associated with the season play the essential role as they have potential to toughen the human body. Another undutiful advantage of skiing is the opportunity to practice this sport in every area of favourable climatic conditions, thus extending its influence on health in the broad context of rural and urban populations.

The form of motion used in skiing - both simpler, such as walking and running, as well as more complex, for example, runs and jumps - can be adapted to all age groups, depending on the degree of motor development and technological advancement. Skiing is one of the few sports that create ideal conditions for the hardening of the body thanks to the mountain air with variable humidity and its large, slowly increasing temperature difference between day and night. Several months of the ski season provide the opportunity to accustom the body to effects of cold, cold air and wind. Health benefits of skiing are not limited solely to the body toughening effects of the season. The beneficial effects of skiing are even more explicitly disclosed in a range of movements involved while practicing this sport. Motor development depends on environmental conditions, the stimuli acting primarily on the sensory organs, statokinetic system in the inner ear and the musculo-articular apparatus. Skiing influences motion stereotypes, which takes place with the involvement of the nervous system. At the same time, it provides a wealth of stimuli and sensations. The health impact of skiing is also revealed in the rapid regression of symptoms of fatigue and "nervous exhaustion", which often affects people living in urban areas. Regular skiing, both sport and purely recreational, leads to the strengthening of the specific muscle groups and parties, in particular the muscles of the legs, abdomen and arms.

Skiing has a range of advantages related to the impact of the landscape conditions. The possibility of skiing in any landscape is a great convenience and attraction, even for people with low mobility and reduced exercise capacity. Also, the use of skis as a means of transportation saves a lot of energy and greatly increases the speed of movement compared to walking.

Similarly to many other types of sport, skiing has exceptionally many assets - it creates opportunity for recreation in a beautiful landscape, the snow and sun. (Maniak 1999) Skiing combines certain climatic conditions and topography, as much as with the winter season and its charms. "A contact with nature associated within ski tourism deserves a particular emphasis. Residents of large urban areas are exposed to a constant state of mental tension resulting in severe fatigue. For a rest and to relax from hectic living and working conditions, the activities such as outdoor exercise free from exhaust fumes and urban areas, traveling in a group of several people, without haste and stress as it surrounded by the beautiful wintry weather are "an antidote for urban density." (Vysata 2004)

Spending time in the mountains increases well-being and prevents from many everyday stresses. Winter landscape inspire to appreciate the beauty of snow-covered slopes and valleys. Skiing is a factor of integrity, a special atmosphere leads to experience emotions that are difficult to achieve in any other conditions. Skiing has stimulating effects on the mental health, and by a direct contact with nature it develops imagination and sensitivity to beauty. Peace, quiet and

soothing sounds of the stream and wind provide relaxation and the regeneration of the nervous system. "This contact with nature brings joy and is fundamental for mental rest and relaxation in conditions favourable to health. Clean air, sunshine, the landscape covered with snow, mountain slopes or open forest clearings - are elements of the natural environment conducive to the positive effects of skiing. Stressing the advantages of a winter landscape, both in the mountains and the lowlands, the soothing and regenerating impact of snow cover on the nervous system cannot be omitted. Snow tends to absorb the sound waves, which deepens the peace and quiet of winter landscape. While writing about the skiing, it is essential to highlight its health benefits with regards to physical, functional and motor skills. Given the rapidly growing disease that affects our civilization, manifesting mainly in shortcomings in the cardiovascular system, regular exercise and physical activity appear to be the best prevention and no cure is rarely successful. (Krasicki 2001)

The main value of skiing is that it can be practised by children, and there is no age limit to this discipline. Ski lessons are held on a clean and fresh winter air. The physical activities in these conditions not only temper, but also maintain the efficiency of the body giving satisfaction and a pleasant stay. "Positive emotional experiences resulting from slipping on the snow and the satisfaction of overcoming difficulties develop mental health. Skiing satisfies the need for physical activity, presence in the natural environment, the need for social contact and the need for achievement. Skiing also affects personality characteristics such as the nature (active, self-reliance, the manifestation of initiative, perseverance, self-confidence, and self-control), temperament, intellect and physical constitution. (Krasicki 2005)

## **Materials and methods**

The aim of this publication was to ascertain the reasons behind selecting cross country skiing as a form of leisure at the Cross-Country Skiing and Biathlon Centre in Jakuszyce. The cognitive aim is to gain the knowledge about the public interest in cross-country skiing. The practical aim is to assess who is the potential participant in this form of recreation and what are the benefits of its practice. The main goal of this study was to answer the questions regarding the reasons for choosing cross-country skiing as a form of leisure time activities. The study is based on the method of diagnostic survey. The methods of observation, document analysis and interview using questionnaires were employed. The study used a passive observation to obtain information about ski resorts in Jakuszyce. Analyses of the documents were concerned with cross-country skiing, a sports and leisure centre in Jakuszyce and also general recreational activities and motives of engaging in them. The study was conducted in 2011/2012. It involved a random sample of 100 adult participants actively engaged in cross-country skiing in their spare time in the Cross-Country Skiing and Biathlon Centre "Jakuszyce" Polana Jakuszycka near Jakuszyce and Szklarska Poreba. This is the

most famous cross-country skiing resort in the Lower Silesia part of Poland. The specific microclimate is conducive to long accumulations of snow, which maintains an average 156 days a year. Thanks to the excellent climatic conditions, the thick snow layer remains till the late spring. The Jakuszycka Glade offers a variety of prepared cross-country trails and ski trips; these routes are suitable for professional and tourist use. Jakuszyce is located 6km away from Szklarska Poreba and is considered as the best place for cross country skiing in Poland. A refurbished training centre is just another chance for this reactivation of this sport in Jakuszyce. There are excellent conditions for cross country skiing for the beginners and those more advanced. For years, the resort has been hosting a well-known, among the cross-country skiing amateurs, sport event - The Piasts Race. Cross-country skiing resort "Jakuszyce" offers cross-country routes of varying difficulty from very easy to very challenging. Most routes in the Izerskie Mountains are located in the Forest District Szklarska Poreba and partially in Forestry Swieradow Zdroj. Racing loops approved by global FIS (International Ski Federation) are:

1. The Route of the European Union - 7500m (CL, F) Class D
2. Turów Route - 5005m A (CI) Class E
3. Polish Bank PKO Route - 5090m B (F) Class E
4. Marszałkowska Route - 1,000m (up to 1 .500 m) Class D

In Jakuszyce there are also about 100km of walking and hiking trails. All are shaped as clover leaves and come together at certain points, giving the possibility of combining routes or choose to adapt to your needs. The highest point on the route is 1003 m above the sea level and the lowest point on the route is 752 meters above sea level (near Harrachov). The Cross-Country Skiing Centre in Jakuszyce offers equipment rental. Jakuszyce and Szklarska Poreba also have an excellent range of accommodation and catering facilities. It is the perfect place to spend your free time while ski hiking in a beautiful environment.

## **The results**

The examined sample consisted of a relatively similar proportion of females (47%) and males (53%). Among the respondents, 75% lived in agglomerations with more than 100 thousand residents, 25% are people living in rural areas. By analysing the number of respondents in the age groups, 9% of the respondents in the range up to 25 years were university students, respondents from 26 to 35 years of age represent 14%, and the next most numerous group of 31% of respondents are aged 36 - 45 years, most parents with children. The greatest numbers of skiers were participants over 46 years of age (46%), these are mostly grandparents and old aged pensioners. Almost half of the parents and grandparents determined that they cultivate cross-country skiing with their children and grandchildren to fill the spare time. Family ski tours are held primarily by those aged 36-45 and over 46 years. It's mostly parents with children and grandparents. Respondents under the age of 25 years, in the vast majority, practise cross-country skiing with friends and colleagues. 40% of

respondents found out about the possibility of cross-country skiing in Jakuszyce from the mass media - internet and polish television. 25% of respondents were informed about this venue by friends and family. When asked about the frequency of their participation in cross-country skiing, 62% of respondents said they practiced a few times a year. For the majority of respondents (70%) cross-country skiing is a healthy way of spending free time but also a pleasure, 8% of those surveyed treated cross-country skiing as a sport competition, and 22% as fun and entertainment. The attractiveness of cross-country skiing has been studied in groups of less physically active individuals, and among persons regularly engaging in physical recreation. Interestingly, 60% of respondents reported practicing other forms of physical activity in addition to cross-country skiing. 20% of physically inactive participants found the attractiveness of cross-country skiing as very high, 54% as large and 26% as average. While, 50% of physically active respondents perceived the attractiveness of cross-country skiing as high, 46% as average and 4% rated the cross-country skiing as a little attractive compared with other forms of physical activity they undertake. For 60% of respondents a desire for active recreation and relaxation in a pleasant and healthy climate was an important factor in cross-country skiing in their spare time. There are no significant differences between men and women in the motivation to undertake this form of recreation. 95% of respondents chose the centre in Jakuszyce because of the interesting ski slopes, beautiful scenery and active leisure. Cross-country skiing is great fun for people of different ages. The main reason for choosing the centre in Jakuszyce for most respondents was a desire to spend an active holiday with family and friends, for relaxation, entertainment and health.

## **Summary and conclusions**

Cross-country skiing grows in popularity because it is a sport for everyone. Children, adolescents, adults also disabled regardless of gender, age, physical ability and skill can enjoy this activity. Cross-country skiing provides active recreation. It is a well-received and appealing discipline especially in times of the success of Justyna Kowalczyk. It is also a fantastic form of family recreation.

Everyone can practice cross-country skiing in their spare time and the Ski Arena in Jakuszyce meets all the requirements for practicing this sport in either recreation or professional form. Skiing can be successfully used as a remedy for various diseases of the nervous, circulatory, respirator systems and many other ailments. Through positive effects on the cardio-respiratory capacity the cardiac output is increased and also the upsurge in the affinity of oxygen to the blood in relation to the increase in the number of erythrocytes, thus increasing the percentage of haemoglobin. Raising the ceiling for oxygen increases exercise capacity, increases metabolism and improves the working of internal organs. Improvement of the lungs' vital capacity takes place. Particularly valuable here is to breathe clean and pollution-free air. Skiing affects the harmonious development of the musculoskeletal system, strengthening of articulating - ligament and muscle, especially the lower extremities and shoulder girdle. It

improves overall physical fitness and coordination. An important advantage of the ski areas is the possibility of the hardening of the body, and this leads to an increase in its resistance to colds and various infections. "Contact with nature and being outdoors have a positive effect on human body, and this can be achieved by winter sports." (Michalik 1997)

The educational value of cross-country skiing cannot be omitted. Exercises on skis shape accuracy and the economy of motion, endurance, inner discipline and orderliness. In addition, they are excellent in creating courage, decisiveness, and self-control which are extremely useful features of contemporary social life and work.

It is substantial to embrace the important role of skiing which because of its touristic- recreational character has gained many supporters, just like a desire to maintain a good physical condition, and thus the health and well-being. (Czarny, Czaja 2002)

Being in the fresh air while undertaking winter sports has a positive effect on the overall well-being, physical fitness and health. Therefore it is of interest to make an effort and ensure that this specific form of physical activity which is skiing is cultivated from the childhood to the old age.

Cross-country skiing has a long tradition that dates back to distant times. Centuries ago, man used skis as a primary means of communication. Following the development of advanced techniques, skiing equipment was modified and greatly improved. Currently, specialized ski equipment that allows a better implementation of the relevant technical elements is available on the market. The majority of people engaged in cross-country skiing are middle age. Over 50% of the respondents were spending time actively in the family circle, despite the relatively high costs associated with such holidays. It is notable that as many as 33% of those surveyed undertook this discipline for the first time and also that 95% respondents intended to use this activity on a regular basis. Recreational activities of cross-country routes in Jakuszyce were the most appreciated by active respondents. Infrastructure is highly valued and also active leisure in a friendly environment. The vast majority (80%) of respondents intended to practice this form of activity on the next holiday and to encourage their friends to do so. Skiing also has many health benefits as much as landscape and nature values, which can be derived by practicing this sport. Cross-country skiing has a positive effect on the human body, improves its functioning, motor coordination and enhances a silhouette.

The conclusions raise the following comments:

1. The recognition of health benefits associated with cross-country skiing cause an increase in the number of participants in this form of recreation.
2. The diversity of the ground and the cold snowy winter environment increases the attractiveness of skiing.
3. Recreational skiing is an increasingly popular physical activity among young people. It gives an opportunity to find a physical and mental release and to stay healthy and fit.



4. Skiing can be successfully used as a remedy. It is a form of exercise improving coordination, strengthening muscles and improving cardiovascular fitness, muscular and respiratory systems.
5. The movement is the most important of human needs, and cross-country skiing clearly creates the opportunity to fulfil this need in the family circle.
6. Skiing practiced in a human friendly environment shapes the character traits such as perseverance, determination, courage, self-control, and psychological resistance. The individual practicing skiing not only has to struggle with himself, but also with the weather, what is evidently a specific feature of this sport.

Skiing has very beneficial effects on health. The body, which is subjected to physical exercise in a clean, mountain air, at low temperatures gets hardened. Doctors stress that such conditions have a positive influence on the functioning of the circulatory system. Recreation in the mountains helps with relaxing and psychomotor recovery. Cross-country skiing allows developing multiple muscle groups and a correct posture and stance. It is certainly profitable to actively enjoy cross-country or classic skiing as it contributes to improving the overall health of the body. Skiing is an all year round sport, and its cultivation does not need to be closely associated with the mountains. The use of plastic lining for ski slopes ceased snow to be a precondition for cross-country skiing.

Another form of evidence to confirm the thesis that skiing can be practised throughout the year are skikes. Skikes are special skis designed to ride on grass and smooth surfaces. They are ideal for cross country skiing as a recreational activity or professional sport. Experienced skiers use those during the summer-autumn periods for the purpose of training in essential preparation for the season.

The impressive results of polish sportsmen in recent years contributed to the popularization of skiing. Successes of athletes such as Justyna Kowalczyk had a significant impact on popularizing this sport among the enthusiasts of ski runs. Great importance in promoting this discipline of sport are mass media, internet and the broadcast of live sports events like World Cup and other skiing competitions.

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