

Pole Kids as A Means of Physical Development for Primary School Age Children

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Summary. The article provides a theoretical analysis of contemporary approaches to updating the physical education system for primary school children in the context of declining levels of physical activity, physical inactivity, and increasing academic and information overload. It substantiates the relevance of introducing innovative forms of physical activity that meet the age, psychological, and sociocultural needs of children aged 6–10 and contribute to the formation of a positive attitude toward physical culture and a healthy lifestyle. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of *pole kids* as a pole sport specially adapted for children, combining elements of choreography, gymnastics, and acrobatics on a pole. The historical background of pole sports, the stages of its institutionalization, and its current state of development in Ukraine and internationally are highlighted. The purpose of the article is to provide a theoretical justification for the use of floor games as a means of physical development for primary school children. The physiological and psycho-emotional characteristics of primary school children, which determine the feasibility and specificity of using *pole kids* in the physical education system, are analyzed. The methodological principles of organizing *pole kids* classes, their structural components, the specifics of physical load dosage, safety requirements, and injury prevention are revealed. The content of technical training, the permissible arsenal of static and dynamic elements on the pole, as well as the role of choreographic and acrobatic training in the formation of motor culture and performing skills of children are characterized. The article also focuses on the psychological and pedagogical aspects of *pole kids* classes, in particular the formation of motivation for systematic classes, the maintenance of positive self-esteem, emotional comfort, and interaction with parents. The peculiarities of competitive activities for primary school children, regulated requirements for stage appearance, and ethical norms for participation in competitions are considered. It is concluded that *pole kids* is safe, and pedagogically appropriate means of physical development for primary school children, which contributes to the comprehensive development of physical qualities, the formation of correct posture, the development of coordination of movements, artistry, and sustained motivation to engage in physical culture.

Keywords: pole kids; physical development; primary school children; physical education; pole sports; physical activity.

I. Statement of the problem and its connection with important scientific or practical tasks.

Modern social and educational conditions cause negative trends in the physical health of primary school children. A decrease in daily physical activity, the predominance of static forms of educational activity, and an increase in the amount of time spent using electronic devices lead to a decrease in physical fitness, weakening of the muscular system, and an increase in the number of musculoskeletal disorders [10, p. 20]. Traditional forms of

physical education do not always provide the desired motivational effect and do not fully meet the interests of modern children.

In this regard, it is important to find innovative, attractive, and at the same time safe means of physical development that can diversify motor activity and increase children's interest in physical education [2, p. 190]. *Pole kids*, as a form of pole dance adapted for children, combines elements of gymnastics, acrobatics, and choreography, which provides a comprehensive impact on the child's body. Research into the possibilities of applying this discipline is of great practical importance for improving the physical education system, expanding the range of extracurricular physical education and health activities, and forming a positive attitude among children towards a healthy lifestyle [3, p. 78].

II. Analysis of recent studies and publications.

Issues related to the physical development and health promotion of school-age children are widely covered in the works of domestic and foreign scientists. In particular, Rymar O.V. (2023), Leonenko A.V., Krasilov A.D. (2017), Mandiuk A. (2023) studied the influence of various forms of physical activity on the physical fitness, posture, and psycho-emotional state of primary school children.

The scientific works of Sosina V.Yu. (2021), Todorova V.G. (2018), Saldana C.G.O, Gavira J.F., Oliver A.J.S. (2017) prove the effectiveness of gymnastics, choreography, and acrobatics as means of developing flexibility, coordination, strength, and endurance. Some studies are devoted to pole dance as a new type of sporting activity, its structure, competition rules, and physiological effects on the body (Sobko I.M., Velieva A.R., Sobko Y.O., Slastina O.O., 2022; Kartali I., 2018, Oleynik G., 2017). At the same time, most scientific publications are focused on adult athletes or students. The issue of using *pole kids* in working with primary school children remains underdeveloped and requires systematic scientific analysis.

III. Unresolved parts of the general problem.

Despite the growing popularity of *pole kids* in extracurricular education, there is a lack of comprehensive research in scientific and methodological literature on its impact on the physical development of primary school children. Issues such as lesson planning methods, optimal exercise intensity, age restrictions for performing certain elements, as well as psychological and pedagogical aspects of lessons and overcoming social stereotypes associated with this field remain insufficiently studied.

IV. Purpose, objectives, and research methods.

The purpose of this article is to provide a theoretical justification for the use of *pole kids* as a means of physical development for primary school children. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set: to characterize the age-related features of the physical and psycho-emotional development of children aged 6–10; to analyze the specifics of *pole kids* and the features of its adaptation for children; to determine the structure and content of *pole kids* classes; to substantiate the impact of classes on the development of basic physical qualities; to outline the requirements for safety and competitive activities for primary school children. The study used theoretical methods: analysis and generalization of scientific and methodological sources, comparative analysis, and systematization of the data obtained.

V. Presentation of the main research material.

Current trends in education and society necessitate systematic updates to the content and forms of physical education for children. Current conditions, characterized by a decrease in the level of natural physical activity, hypodynamia, and an increase in information overload, highlight the need to introduce innovative types of physical activity that can meet the age, psychological, and sociocultural needs of the younger generation. This problem is particularly important when working with children of primary school age (6–10 years), who are in a difficult period of transition from preschool childhood to a new stage of personal and social development.

This age period is characterized by intensive physical, psycho-emotional, and social development, active formation of self-esteem, motivation, cognitive interests, and ways of self-expression. It is at this time that the foundations of a child's attitude to their own body, physical activity, and healthy lifestyle are laid, which

determines the special responsibility of the physical education system for the choice of adequate means and methods of influence [2, p. 190].

In the context of searching for new, attractive, and pedagogically appropriate forms of physical activity, *pole kids*—a form of pole dance specially adapted for children—is becoming increasingly popular among children and teenagers. It combines elements of choreography, gymnastics, and acrobatics on a pole, which has a multifaceted effect on the physical and psycho-emotional state of the child. Given the growing interest in non-traditional types of physical activity, it is important to scientifically understand the potential of *pole kids* as an effective means of physical development for primary school children [20].

The physical development of children aged 6–10 has a number of characteristic features, including a relative slowdown in growth rates with a simultaneous increase in body weight, changes in body proportions, high joint mobility, and significant elasticity of the ligamentous apparatus. This period is sensitive for the development of coordination skills, speed of motor reactions, and overall endurance. At the same time, the organization of the educational process in general secondary education institutions often leads to a reduction in physical activity, which requires additional involvement of children in physical education and health activities outside of school hours [2, p. 191].

Younger school-age children are largely dependent on the emotional support of their parents and teachers, which necessitates taking into account not only physiological but also psychological characteristics when organizing classes. It is important to foster positive motivation for classes, support adequate self-esteem, create an emotionally comfortable environment, and establish constructive interaction with parents.

Pole dance, as a synthesis of dance and gymnastics, began to actively develop in Ukraine in the early 2000s. At the initial stage, this direction was mainly positioned as a fitness activity aimed at an adult audience, mostly women. The opening of the first specialized studios in large cities of Ukraine around 2010 contributed to its further popularization and gradual entry into the professional sports level.

An important milestone in the institutionalization of pole sports was the creation of the International Pole Sports Federation (IPSF) in 2009, which ensured the formation of uniform rules, classification requirements, and a competition system. Over time, pole dance has gained the status of an independent sport, which is divided into athletic (strength) and artistic disciplines. At the present stage, Ukrainian athletes are demonstrating high results on the international arena, and pole sports are actively developing among adults, children, and adolescents [18].

Pole kids is a specially adapted form of pole dancing for children, which takes into account the age, physiological, and psychological characteristics of the child's body. Classes are characterized by moderate loads, the use of technically accessible and safe elements, as well as a combination of pole technique with choreography and general acrobatic training.

Despite certain social stereotypes and prejudices on the part of some parents and teachers, associated with false associations of pole dance with striptease, practice shows that *pole kids* is gradually being recognized as an effective means of physical education. Regular classes promote the development of strength, flexibility, endurance, coordination, as well as the formation of dance skills, artistry, and self-confidence.

Pole kids classes for primary school children have a clearly structured methodological framework and usually consist of a preparatory part, which includes warm-ups and games to prepare the musculoskeletal system and prevent injuries; a main part aimed at mastering elements and connections on the pole; and a final part, that ensures the gradual restoration of the body's functional state after exercise [17, p. 42].

In preparation for competitive activities, it is advisable to include additional classes in choreography and acrobatics. Children of primary school age are capable of working with figurative and narrative performances, conveying the emotional state and character of the composition in accordance with their age-related abilities [8, p. 33].

Within the limits of the permitted program, children can master both static and dynamic elements on the pole, perform combinations of one or more movements. The basic technical arsenal includes climbs, hangs, splits on the pole, stands, flips, and elements near the pole. At the same time, there is a list of elements that are prohibited or restricted for performance, especially at the initial stage of training, given their high complexity and potential for injury [19].

Given that the musculoskeletal system is still actively developing at this age, it is extremely important to strictly adhere to safety techniques, use safety mats, and monitor the symmetry of exercises on both sides of the body. This approach contributes to the formation of correct posture and the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders, in particular scoliosis.

Primary school children participate in competitions according to specific age and qualification categories (debut, beginners, amateurs, semi-professionals, etc.). An important component of competitive activity is compliance with regulated requirements for stage appearance, in particular costumes, hairstyles, and the use of accessories [20].

Participants under the age of 16 are strictly prohibited from wearing costumes of a sexual nature. Only stage images that correspond to the age characteristics of children, have an educational focus, and do not contradict ethical norms are allowed. The regulations also clearly define the degree of coverage of the costume and prohibit the use of any means that may improve grip on the pole or create a risk of injury [18].

Choreographic training is an important component of *pole kids* classes. At this age, children are able to perform basic classical exercises on the pole, as well as master elements of modern dance styles, including modern, contemporary, jazz-funk, folk-modern, demi-classic, etc. The use of choreography increases the artistic value of competitive performances, contributes to the development of performance skills, and has a positive effect on the final results of performances [9, p. 252].

VI. Conclusions.

Thus, according to the analysis of literary sources, *pole kids* is a modern and pedagogically appropriate means of physical development of primary school children. Classes in this type of physical activity have a comprehensive effect on the child's body, contribute to the development of basic physical qualities, the formation of correct posture, and increased motivation to engage in physical culture. Prospects for further research are related to the experimental study of the impact of *pole kids* classes on children's physical fitness indicators, the development of educational and methodological programs, and the study of the psychological and pedagogical aspects of this direction.

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