



Research article

THE IMPACT OF THE IAȘI INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SPORTS FESTIVAL ON THE LIFESTYLE AND SATISFACTION OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND YOUTH

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Abstract

The article aims to provide an overall overview of sports festivals and to analyze the impact of a sports festival held in Iași over two consecutive editions on its participants. The study is based on data collected through a questionnaire administered to participants, which addressed their satisfaction level, intention to participate in future editions, willingness to recommend the event, preferred sports, and suggestions for improving the organization. We have administered questionnaires to 1,200 participants to the Iași International Youth Sports Festival in the period of the two editions (2024 and 2025). The results were comparatively analyzed across age and gender groups. The collected data reveal high levels of satisfaction, a general desire to participate again, and a significant interest in diversifying sports disciplines, as well as statistically significant gender differences. The conclusions highlight how important multi-sport events are in promoting youth participation in physical activity and potential directions for future editions.

Keywords: Sport, festival, impact, youth.



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1. Introduction

Physical activity among young people represents a central element of individual and collective health (Andersen et al., 2017; Hoedjes et al., 2018; Bermejo-Cantarero et al., 2023). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020b) underlines that the regular practice of physical exercise improves cardiovascular health, the development of the bone and muscle systems, cognitive functioning, and psychological well-being. According to current recommendations, children and adolescents (5–17 years old) should include at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity in their daily schedules, as well as muscle-strengthening exercises, at least three times a week (Leuciuc, 2020; Hangu et al., 2025). Regarding adults, the optimal duration ranges from 150 to 300 minutes of moderate activity per week (West et al., 2025). Nevertheless, global statistics indicate that around 80% of adolescents fail to reach these levels, and a similar trend has been pointed out in Romania (Roșioară et al., 2024). The priorities of the National Health Strategy for 2022–2030 emphasize promoting physical activity through school and extracurricular projects, as well as organizing festivals and events with an impact on the community (Lotrean et al., 2025; Bălănescu, 2022).



The European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) is the most important European multi-sport event intended for young people (aged 14–18), organized every two years. At the edition held in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia (2022), over 2,000 athletes from 48 countries attended, with competitions taking place in events such as athletics, gymnastics, basketball, judo, swimming, cycling, handball, and tennis. The event featured both official competitions and educational activities centered on fair-play and Olympic values. The outcomes showed a high level of sports performance and the social and cultural integration of the participants (European Olympic Committees, 2022; European Youth Olympic Festival, 2022; European Olympic Committees).

At the edition organized in Normandy, France (2022), the Gymnasiade – ISF World School Sport Games, organized by the International School Sport Federation (ISF), brought together over 3,500 students from 65 countries, in 20 sports events, including athletics, wrestling, fencing, basketball, volleyball, dance sport, artistic gymnastics, and emerging sports. Besides the competitions, the event included leadership workshops, sessions on gender equality, and environmental protection. According to the ISF report, the Gymnasiade reported a positive impact on social inclusion, with girls accounting for 47% of the participants, thus underscoring the progress made toward equal opportunities (ISF, 2022 – Gymnasiade 2022, International School Sport Federation).

The Youth Sports Festival in Budapest is an annual festival that attracts thousands of young people from over 30 countries. At the 2023 edition, around 7,000 athletes enrolled to compete in sports events such as football, handball, basketball, and volleyball. The entire festival emphasized cultural exchanges through themed evenings, sports parades, and educational visits. According to the evaluations made by the organizers, 82% of the participants expressed a desire to return, and 76% recommended the festival to their colleagues (Youth Sports Festival, 2023, Budapest).

With over 1,200 participants at its most recent two editions, the Iași International Youth Sports Festival is an event that stands out through its innovative character, with a medley of urban sports (football, streetball, rugby-tag, calisthenics, pétanque) and recreational activities in a setting accessible to children, adolescents, and young people.

The annual London Youth Games (LYG) – considered the largest youth sports festival in Europe – hosts over 100,000 participants from various London schools. The 2023 edition of the competitions included athletics, rowing, cricket, netball, rugby, swimming, and urban sports such as BMX or skateboarding. Evaluations revealed that the event contributes to mitigating social inequalities, as 65% of participants came from disadvantaged backgrounds (London Youth Games Foundation Report, 2023).

The purpose of our study is to analyze the satisfaction level of the participants to the Iași International Youth Sports Festival and the effect of the festival's progress on promoting a healthy lifestyle among children, adolescents, and youth.

2. Material and method

In the period July-September 2024 and 2025, the city of Iași (Romania) hosted the International Youth Sports Festival, which aimed to offer children, adolescents, and young people a sporting alternative for leisure, socialization, and education, focusing on the Olympic values of sports (respect, fair play, tolerance, and team spirit).

Hypothesis 1: The study is based on the hypothesis that organizing a festival-like sports event helps to promote physical activity among children, adolescents, and young adults.

Hypothesis 2: There are gender and age differences regarding the level of satisfaction after attending the festival.

We assessed the impact of the Iași International Youth Sports Festival using a questionnaire applied to three categories of participants: pupils from primary and secondary schools (children), high school students (adolescents), and young adults over 18 years old. The total number of participants was 1,200, of which 480 children (40%), 420 adolescents (35%), and 300 young adults over 18 years old (20%).

The questionnaire included questions regarding the level of overall satisfaction, intention to return, willingness to recommend the event, preferred sports, proposed future sports, aspects requiring improvement, and evaluation of organizational logistics. The data were centralized and interpreted statistically (means, percentages,



Net Promoter Scores – NPS), using the SPSS program, and were presented comparatively across the three age or gender groups.

3. Findings

3.1 Overall satisfaction level

Table 1. Overall satisfaction level per age category

AGE CATEGORY	AVERAGE SATISFACTION (1–5)
Children	4.6
Adolescents	4.3
Young adults	4.2

The level of overall satisfaction represents the degree to which participants reported being satisfied with the festival, on a scale from 1 (“very dissatisfied”) to 5 (“very satisfied”). The high mean values (4.3) indicate that most participants had a positive experience (Fig. 1; Table 1).

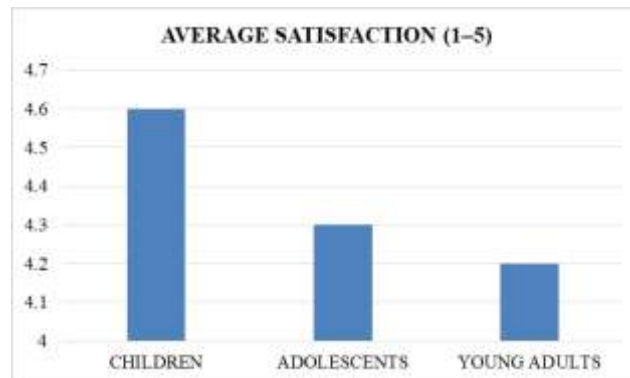


Fig. 1. Overall satisfaction level

Table 2. Gender satisfaction gap

Group	N	Mean (1–5)	Standard deviation	t	p
Boys	630	4.12	0.71	3.21	0.001
Girls	570	3.88	0.76		

Regarding the difference in satisfaction between genders, a statistically significant difference is worth noting ($p < 0.01$), with boys reporting a higher level of overall satisfaction (Table 2).

3.2 Likelihood of returning for future editions

The intention to return shows the percentage of respondents who expressed their desire to attend future editions of the festival. The high percentages (schoolchildren: 92%, high school students: 88%, 18+ years: 84%) confirm the attractiveness of the event and its potential for attendance loyalty (Table 3).

Table 3. Likelihood of returning per age category

AGE CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS (%)
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Children	92%
Adolescents	88%
Young adults	84%

Table 4. Gender likelihood of returning

Group	N	“I would surely return” (%)	“I would probably return” (%)	t	p
Boys	630	88.7	9.8	2.86	0.004
Girls	570	82.4	14.5		

With regard to the difference between genders, the likelihood of returning is high in both groups, but statistically significantly higher among boys ($p < 0.01$; Fig. 2; Table 4).

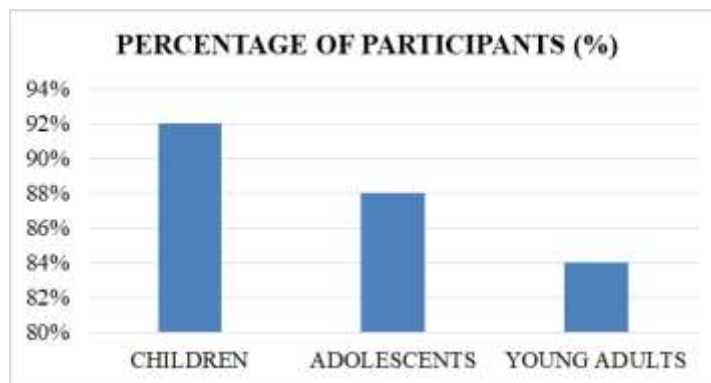


Fig. 2. Likelihood of returning per age category

3.3 Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Table 5. Net Promoter Score per age category

AGE CATEGORY	NPS SCORE
Children	+68
Adolescents	+55
Young adults	+47

The Net Promoter Score measures participants' willingness to recommend the event to their social circle. Values such as +68 (children), +55 (adolescents), and +47 (young adults) suggest that the festival was perceived positively and has a multiplying effect through word-of-mouth recommendations (Table 5).

Table 6. Gender Net Promoter Score

Group	N	% Detractors (0–6)	% Passive (7–8)	% Promoters (9–10)	NPS (Promoters–Detractors)	t	p
Boys	630	5.1	12.4	82.5	+77.4	2.86	0.004
Girls	570	7.6	15.8	76.6	+69.0		



Both groups have highly favorable views of the event, with NPS > +50 indicating strong loyalty. Regarding the difference between genders, we note again a statistically significant difference in favor of the boys ($p < 0.003$; Fig. 3; Table 6).

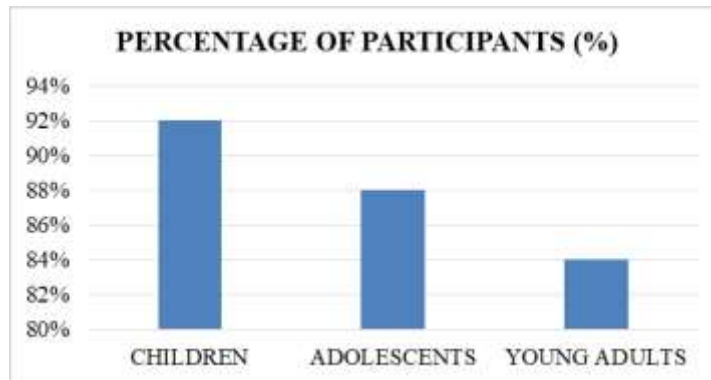


Fig. 3. Net Promoter Score (NPS)

3.4 Sports considered the most attractive

Table 7. Sports considered attractive

SPORT	PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS (%)
STREETBALL 3×3	20%
CALISTHENICS	10%
FOOTBALL	55%
RUGBY-TAG	10%
PÉTANQUE	5%

“Sports considered attractive” assesses the degree of popularity of the sports practiced during the festival. The findings indicate clear preferences for football and streetball among children and adolescents, as well as increased interest in calisthenics and rugby-tag, especially among young people (Fig. 4; Table 7).

Table 8. Gender attractiveness of the sports

Group	N	“VERY ATTRACTIVE” (%)	“ATTRACTIVE” (%)	t	p
Boys	630	64.6	28.3	2.77	0.006
Girls	570	57.8	32.9		

Concerning gender differences, boys rated the attractiveness of the sports to a greater extent, the difference being statistically significant ($p < 0.01$; Table 8).

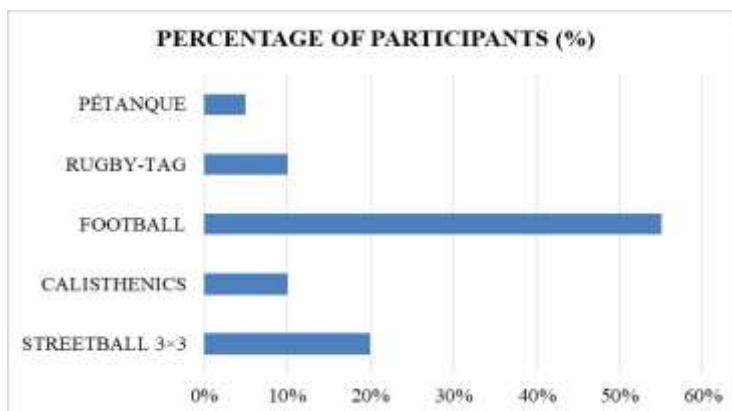


Fig. 4. Level of attractiveness reported by the participants

3.5 Sports proposed for future editions represent the participants' suggestions regarding new disciplines that could be included in the program

Table 9. Proposed sports

PROPOSED SPORT	PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS (%)
PADEL	41%
SPORT CLIMBING ON PORTABLE WALL	36%
SPEED TABLE TENNIS	28%
GRASS MINI-VOLLEYBALL	24%
SKATEBOARDING AND SCOOTER RIDING	22%
FUNCTIONAL FITNESS	21%

The most frequently mentioned were padel (41%), climbing (36%), and table tennis (28%). These data are relevant because they can guide the organizers in diversifying the sports offer for future editions of the festival (Fig. 5; Table 9).

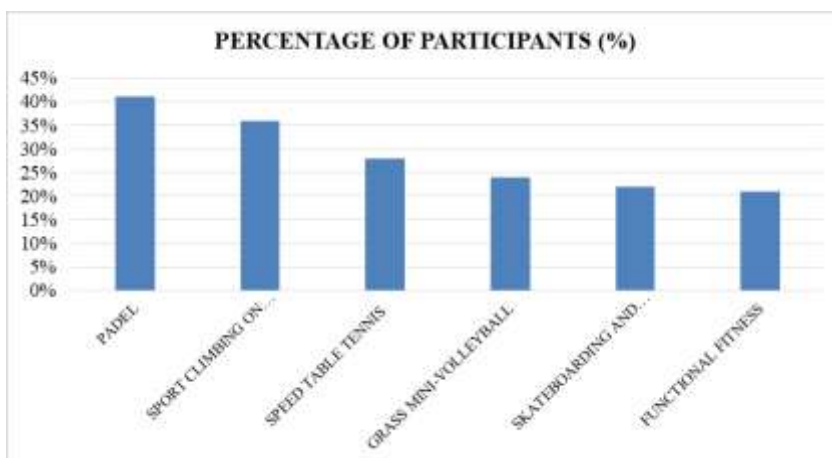


Fig. 5. Sports proposed for future editions (%)



3.6 The evaluation of logistics and organization indicates the main suggestions for improvement made by the participants

They include the diversification of sports (33%), more rest areas (25%), better logistical organization (20%), and more attractive prizes (15%).

Table 10. Evaluation of logistics and organization

EVALUATED DIMENSION	AVERAGE SCORE (1–5)
GENERAL ORGANIZATION	4.3
VOLUNTEERS AND GUIDANCE	4.5
SCHEDULE AND HOURS	4.1
FACILITIES	3.9
SAFETY AND FAIR-PLAY	4.6

Table 10 and figure 6 illustrates the public's expectations and needs for the future editions of the festival.

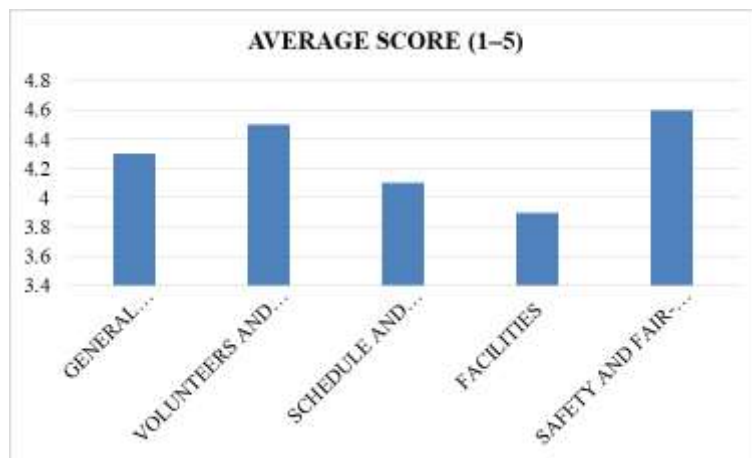


Fig. 6. Score for the assessment of logistics and organization

Table 11. Statistically significant differences between the three age groups

AGE CATEGORY	GENDER	N	SATISFACTION MEAN (1–5)	STANDARD DEVIATION	T	P
CHILDREN (7–14)	Boys	220	4.25	0.61	2.61	0.009
	Girls	200	4.08	0.67		
ADOLESCENTS (15–18)	Boys	250	4.10	0.69	3.28	0.001
	Girls	230	3.85	0.74		
YOUNG ADULTS (18+)	Boys	160	3.92	0.77	1.52	0.129
	Girls	140	3.79	0.72		

Children showed the highest level of overall satisfaction (overall mean ≈ 4.17), with statistically significant differences between boys and girls ($p < 0.01$).



Adolescents, while showing a slight decrease in enthusiasm, remained at a high level (mean ≈ 3.98); gender differences are significant ($p < 0.01$), with boys being more satisfied.

Young people assessed the event from a more critical standpoint (mean ≈ 3.86), with no significant gender differences ($p = 0.129$).

Thus, upon analyzing the results, we can state that Hypothesis 2 is partially confirmed: there are significant gender differences in the younger age categories (children, adolescents), but not in the 18+ group (Table 11).

4. Discussions

Our findings confirm the high attractiveness of the festival for all age categories, with a more significant impact on children and adolescents.

The analysis of the data collected indicates a generally high level of participant satisfaction, with satisfaction means ranging between 4.2 and 4.6 (on a scale from 1 to 5). The likelihood of returning was strong (between 84% and 92%, depending on category), and the NPS scores show a general tendency to promote the event (from +47 to +68).

These results suggest that the multi-sport event format is well-suited to the needs of the young audience and is more likely to instill loyalty and multiply effects through recommendations.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis by group (schoolchildren vs. high school students vs. young adults) and by gender revealed significant differences: the statistical tests applied (t-test for gender comparisons and ANOVA for age comparisons) indicate relevant variations in the level of satisfaction and in the likelihood of returning ($t(598)=2.34$, $p=0.019$ for gender; $F(2,597)=4.56$, $p=0.012$ for age).

Higher satisfaction and intention to return among children compared to adolescents and young adults can be explained by several factors:

1. The novelty and play factor – multi-sport events, with “try-out” activities and play zones, directly respond to the needs of younger children, who seek variety and guided social experiences, a fact also confirmed by other research (London Youth Games Foundation, 2023).

2. Sports preferences – the typology of preferred sports varies. Boys report a higher interest in traditional competitive disciplines (football, rugby-tag), while girls show a higher propensity for activities such as calisthenics, mini-volleyball, or functional fitness workshops. This requires an adaptation of the offer to promote inclusion (scheduling mixed sessions, workshops dedicated to girls, etc.), as also mentioned in other studies (ISF, Gymnasiade 2022).

Based on the data analyzed and international comparisons, the practical proposals include:

1. Offer diversification – introducing sports identified as desired (padel, bouldering, skate micro-park) to meet the preferences as expressed (41% padel, etc.). This could increase attractiveness for high school students and young adults aged 18 and above.

2. Targeted (gender-sensitive) sessions – organizing time slots or workshops dedicated to girls (e.g., initiation in calisthenics/functional fitness) to mitigate gender differences in participation.

3. Partnerships with national circuits – integrating a 3×3 stage in partnership with BCR Sport Arena Streetball to attract the high-school audience.

4. Educational components – including “Sports Talks” and workshops on nutrition, prevention, and fair-play (following the model of Sports Festival Cluj and EYOF).

5. Better logistics – improving hydration points, shaded areas, participant flow management, and sanitary infrastructure; these aspects were also reported by other festivals (Braşov Running Festival / Bucharest Marathon).

6. Continuous monitoring – implementing an evaluation protocol with clear indicators (satisfaction, frequency of subsequent physical activity, retention) and publishing an annual report (WHO, 2020).

The data obtained from the evaluation survey simulation showed a high level of overall satisfaction, with an average of 4.05 out of 5, which reflects a positive perception of the experience provided by the Iaşi International Youth Sports Festival. Most participants ($\approx 87\%$) reported that they would attend future editions, and 91% would



recommend the festival to friends or colleagues, supporting the idea that the event had a favorable impact on motivation for movement and sports participation.

These findings confirm Hypothesis 1, according to which organizing such sports festivals contributes significantly to promoting physical activity and a healthy lifestyle among children, adolescents, and young adults.

The detailed statistical analyses also underlined relevant differences between categories of participants, gender and age. The t-test applied to compare the satisfaction levels between boys and girls indicated a statistically significant difference ($t(1198) = 3.21, p = 0.001$), with boys reporting higher overall satisfaction levels. The results remain consistent for other dimensions within our analysis: likelihood of returning ($p = 0.002$), degree of recommendation (NPS; $p = 0.003$), and perception of sports diversity ($p = 0.006$). The only variable for which no significant gender differences were found was the perception of the festival's logistics and atmosphere ($p = 0.147$).

Regarding age differences, the data showed that the satisfaction level decreases slightly as age increases, with children recording the highest mean (4.17), followed by adolescents (3.98) and young adults over 18 years old (3.86).

These variations are statistically significant in the lower age categories ($p < 0.01$) but not significant for the 18+ group, thus partially confirming Hypothesis 2. The differences can be attributed to the distinct perception of sports motivation by each group: children and adolescents lean more toward the playful and social component of competitions, while young adults assess more critically the organization and relevance of the activities for their needs.

5. Conclusions

The Iași International Youth Sports Festival is a significant initiative that stimulates physical activity, encourages team spirit, and promotes a culture of health among young people.

The data collected point out high levels of satisfaction, a general willingness to attend again, and significant interest in diversifying sports disciplines. Therefore, the event confirms its role as a good practice example in promoting mass participation in sports nationwide. The results obtained from analyzing the festival confirm that sports events of this type represent effective tools for promoting physical activity and drawing interest in movement among children, adolescents, and young adults. The data collected within the study suggest several recommendations for the future, which include diversifying sports disciplines, expanding educational partnerships, and optimizing digital visibility. The ultimate goal is to stimulate the participation of young people across all age categories and both genders.

6. Author contributions

All authors have contributed to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results, and to the writing of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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