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Enhancing Health Through the Bodystyling Method – An Opinion of Female Residents of Leuven in Belgium

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to present and promote pro-health benefits offered by the Bodystyling method, highlighting opinions of female residents of Leuven in Belgium. In order to characterise the method of Bodystyling, the following research methods were used: document analysis, analysis of material from web pages concerning the subject matter, interviews, and observation. The authorial survey questionnaire was carried out in November of 2015 among a group of female residents in Leuven, Belgium. The majority of the group constituted women aged 20-30 years who were university graduates, performing sedentary work with salary of 2000-4000 EUR, married and with children. The main reasons for undertaking the Bodystyling exercises were: health improvement and weight reduction. The majority of women observed a positive influence of the Bodystyling exercises on physical and mental dimension of their health. The offer of Bodystyling is an interesting one for the purpose of prophylaxis, and as a support, in treatment of the diseases of civilization.

Keywords: health, physical activity, nutrition, Bodystyling, civilization diseases

1. Introduction

The contemporary society is vulnerable to various civilization diseases, described as common health problems of mass range, which stem from and spread as a result of development of modern technology, industry, and urbanization. Diseases

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of the 21st century are responsible for deterioration of quality of life, and are the cause of about 80% of all death cases [Bąk-Romaniszyn 2013: 5]. In accordance with health promotion assumptions, condition of a contemporary man depends mainly on individual health behaviour [Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion 1987: 382-384; Taylor 1995: 33-37]. Properly dosed physical activity is one of the most effective methods of preventing early incapacity caused by civilization diseases. Physical activity is considered to be the key element of healthy lifestyle, potentially integrating its other elements [Aaranio et al. 2002: 360-364; Sokołowski et al. 2012: 37-43]. This particularly refers to modification of eating habits. Scientists highlight influence of a poor quality diet on improper body composition. Lack of physical activity results in increased level of fat component, which in turn increases risk of disease [Jakcic & Otto 2005: 226S-229S; Sun et al. 2003: 331-40; Wadden, Butryn & Wilson 2007: 2226-2238]. On the other hand, maintaining proper body weight contributes to decrease of risk of diseases. Death rate is also higher among overweight people than slim ones [Wadden, Butryn & Wilson 2007: 2226-22388-9; Tao et al. 2006: 101-107]. Changes which pose new challenges and open new opportunities forced human beings to live fast, and necessitate constant adaptation to new conditions. This results in improper diet and lack of time for physical activity. Research on pro-health behaviours show that the cognitive component significantly exceeds the behavioural one [Nowak et al. 2009: 165-169].

Health is a dynamic process. A contemporary human being may enhance his/her health potential using various offers which use innovative programmes and modern technologies. The aim of this paper is to present and promote an offer of the Bodystyling, particularly stressing the opinion of female residents of Leuven in Belgium, who often participate in those programmes. The women were asked about specifics concerning the following issues: what is their opinion about the Bodystyling method? How often do they participate in such programmes, and which do they choose? Does the Bodystyling method, in their opinion, influence their health potential?

2. Material and method

In order to characterize the Bodystyling method the following research techniques were used: document analysis, analysis of material from the web pages concerning the subject matter, interview, and observation. Opinions of female residents of Leuven about the Bodystyling were gathered with use of a diagnostic survey carried out in November 2015. The research tool was authorial survey questionnaire. Selection of research sample was intentional. In consultation with

the Bodystyling staff in Leuven the women received questionnaires to fill in before and after activities. Ninety two women took part in the survey. Their social and environmental characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Social and environmental and features of the answerers

	Variables	%
Age	20-30 y.o.	46
	31- 50 y.o.	45
	51-70 y.o.	9
Education	University	56
	Secondary education	16
	Vocational	28
Kind of work	Sedentary	51
	Standing	13
	Movement	28
	Other	5
	I do not work	3
Earnings	Over 4000 €	6
	2000-4000 €	52
	1400-2000 €	34
	Below 1400 €	5
	I do not work	3
Marital status	Married, with children	38
	Married, without children	23
	Single	33
	Widow	6

Source: own research.

As Table 1 shows, among the answerers dominated women of 20-30 years old (46%), graduates of a university (56%), performing sedentary work (51%), earning between €2000 and €4000 (52%), married, having children (38%).

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of the Bodystyling

The Bodystyling is a method of taking after health which combines healthy nutrition and exercises shaping body in a Thermo+ cabin. The Bodystyling centres are placed mainly in the northern and northwestern part of Belgium, in provinces such as Antwerp (Borem, Heist-op-den-berg, Kapellen, Mechelen, Mol, Schilde, Turnhout, Westerlo), West Flanders (Oostkamp), Limburg (Beringen, Bilzen, Bocholt, Genk, Hasselt, Lommel, Maasmechelen), Liège (Liège), East Flanders

(Aalst).¹ A person who enters the Bodystyling facility undergoes a preliminary examination, including amongst others, analysis of body composition and detailed measurement of body parts. Exercises are prepared individually for every person. Exercises are performed in a heated Thermo+ cabin, under the trainer's supervision, who observes progress and prepares potential changes in the programme of exercises (Picture 1).



Picture 1. Exercises in a Thermo+ cabin

Source: the author's archive.

The rules for exercising in Thermo+ cabin, heated to 37°C, are that exercises should be performed accurately. It is the so-called, thermo-physical method, which takes into consideration general principles of sports medicine, physiotherapy and nutrition.² Heat which is produced by the cabin stimulates circulation, so that no muscle pain is felt, and loss of weight is accelerated. Exercises in the cabin are performed in lying position, which releases back and joints from additional load, thanks to which effective work on body is achieved.³ Exercising in the cabin is good for people with back- and neck aches, or rheumatism, because they allow for painless strengthening of muscles. Positive results of exercising in Thermo+ cabin are: faster burning of fat tissue (the effect of a 30 minute-exercise in the cabin equals to one hour of exercises outside of it), improvement of metabolism and

¹ www.bodystyling.be/onze-vestigingen/ [access: 7.12.2015].

² www.powerfit.nl/nl/index.php?page=tfm [access: 8.12.2015]

³ www.veroligne.be/tfm.php [access: 8.12.2015]

circulation, positive influence on high blood pressure, fatigue, stress, headaches and sleep disorders, alleviating rheumatic problems and joint aches, strengthening and building muscles, cellulite reduction, lack of pain after training.⁴ After the exercises, a so-called ozone bath follows (Picture 2).

Picture 2. Ozone cabin

Source: the author's archive.



This intensive treatment allows for quicker regeneration of skin cells. Ozone treatment works favourably on the body, and is particularly recommended for such ailments as: acne, allergies, mycosis, cold sore, overweight, cellulite, excess of water, fatigue, sinusitis, rheumatic diseases of muscles and joints, severe and chronic intestine infections, stress, migraine, attention deficit, depression.

In the Bodystyling method it is essential to observe a nutritionist's recommendations, so that long-lasting effects are achieved. The main goal of the Bodystyling specialists is to help their customers develop healthy eating habits. Consultations and recipes serve this purpose. The Bodystyling experts prepared seven programmes, depending on health needs:

- **Pnatal programme** – a programme prepared in co-operation with gynaecologists, for pregnant women or those who plan to get pregnant. Particular attention is paid to strengthening abdomen and pelvis muscles, and preparing for natural childbirth;⁵

- **BMI programme** – a programme for overweight people. Specialists determine fitness and health potential of a customer, and arrange frequency and intensity of trainings. It is assumed that 50% loss of excessive weight may be achieved through exercises, while further 50% is a balanced diet. An ozone cabin plays

⁴ www.powerfit.nl/nl/index.php?page=tfm [access: 8.12.2015].

⁵ www.bodystyling.be/programmas/pnatal/ [access: 9.12.2015].

a significant role in this programme. After the exercises a 15-minute relaxation in the cabin is recommended, which helps the skin to adapt consistently to a slimmer figure;⁶

– **HeltiPro programme** – combined with the BMI programme, was created for overweight women. It is designed to burn calories significantly already in the first sessions, which is important for exercising women and gives them motivation to lose weight and maintain final weight. The diet eliminates carbohydrates, and focuses on high quality food decreasing appetite.⁷ Also in this programme the ozone cabin plays an essential role, preventing excess of skin, reducing stretch marks and cellulite;

– **Spot programme** – a programme which works on selected groups of muscles (hips, abdomen, arms, buttocks, thighs, legs). The diet in this programme focuses on providing large amounts of proteins, and avoiding fat. In addition, the Bodystyling specialists prepared the BodyPro treatment, which involves use of low frequency ultrasounds on selected body parts. It does not require medical intervention and is utterly painless;

– **Meno programme** – a programme prepared for women in menopause period. Well-suited diet and exercises reduce symptoms of menopause. The programme focuses on basic exercises oriented towards muscle building, and strengthening the body. The programme does not require a low-calorie diet. Using the ozone cabin is recommended, because skin of 50-year olds is less elastic. Ozone helps to toughen it and prevents appearance of wrinkles;⁸

– **Health programme** – a programme for people suffering from fatigue. It is designed to focus of mental condition, satisfaction from exercises, not on loss of weight. A dietician helps in selecting suitable nutrients. Use of the ozone cabin is recommended as ozone makes one feel energised;

– **Med + programme** – is designed for those, who suffer from various ailments hindering everyday functioning: back- and neck aches, arthritis, diabetes, MS. In such cases medics often recommend exercises in order to ease symptoms of disease. A trainer first considers all limitations of a participant, and then assigns suitable exercises. Thermo+ cabin helps to relax muscle tone, and high temperature softens pain during exercises. All exercises are performed in lying position, which allows to distribute load on the whole body evenly. While preparing a diet, a nutritionist should take into consideration: age, weight and degree of ailment.

⁶ www.bodystyling.be/programmas/bmi/ [access: 9.12.2015].

⁷ www.bodystyling.be/programmas/bmi/ [access: 9.12.2015].

⁸ www.bodystyling.be/programmas/meno/ [access: 9.12.2015].

3.2. Analysis of experience of women participating in the Bodystyling programmes

The first question referred to source of information about the Bodystyling method (Fig. 1).

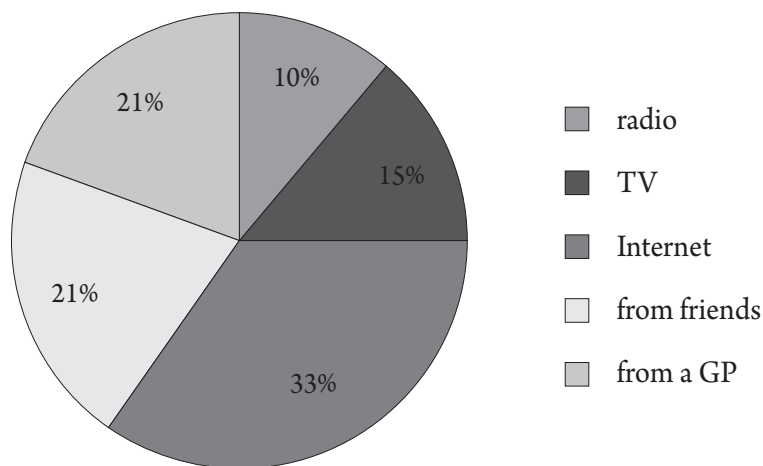


Figure 1. Source of information about the Bodystyling method

Source: own research.

The data received show 33% of the women found the information about the method on the Internet. Second group constitute 21% of the answerers who heard about it from their friends, while 21% received this information from their GP.

Furthermore, the women answered how long they participate in the Bodystyling programmes (Fig. 2).

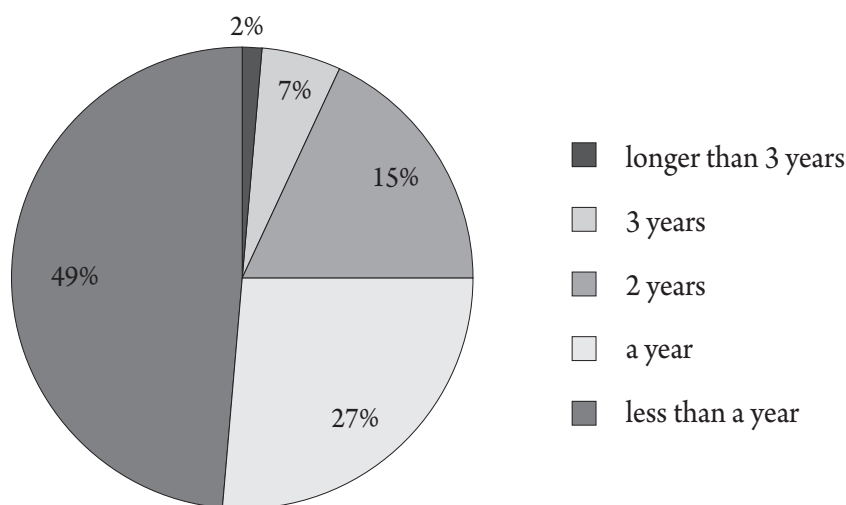


Figure 2. Participation in the Bodystyling programmes

Source: own research.

The most numerous (49%) was the group participating in it for less than a year. The least numerous – those who were using it for longer than three years.

It was interesting to learn about the motives in deciding on the Bodystyling offer (Fig. 3).

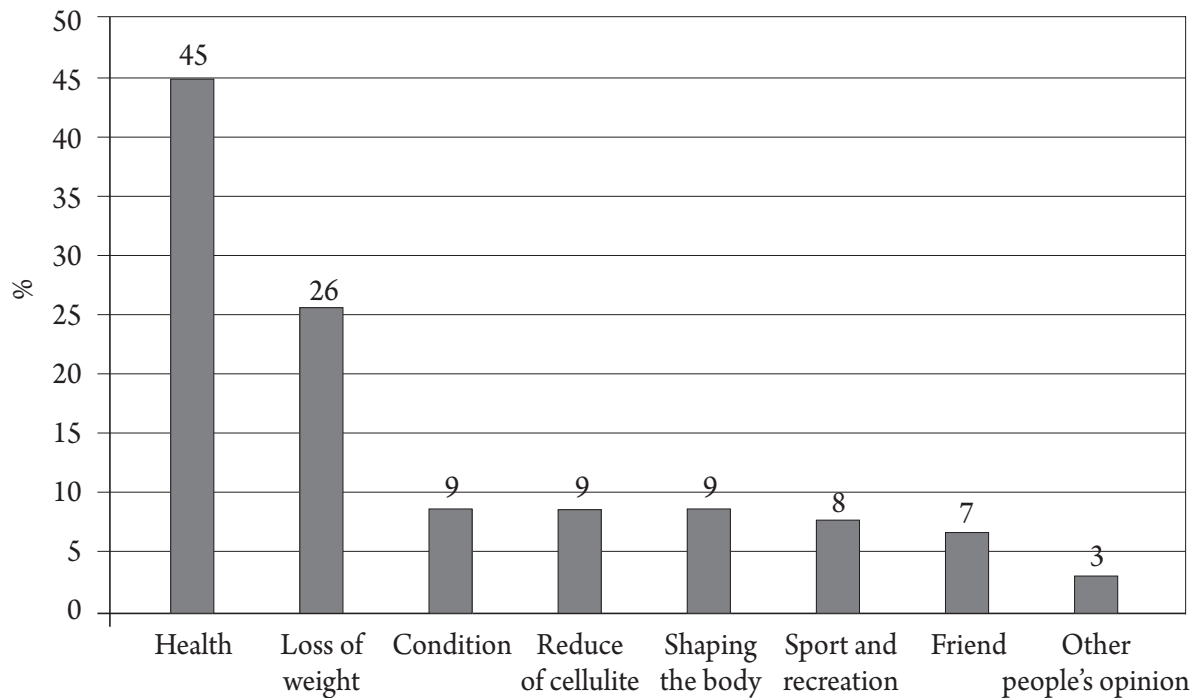


Figure 3. Reasons for participation in the Bodystyling programme

Source: own research.

The majority of the women visited the Bodystyling facilities motivated by their health. The second large group constituted those who wanted to lose weight. Others pointed to: improving condition, reduction of cellulite, shaping the body, sport and relaxation. Those who decided to take part in the Bodystyling programmes at friend's prompting or because of other people's opinion were in minority.

Another question was about the selected programme of exercises (Fig. 4).

The main group (30%) were women who chose the BMI programme. Participants of the Meno programme constituted 13%, while Med+ programme – 12%. The least numerous was the group participating in the Pnatal programme – 2%.

The answerers were also asked how much time in a week they spend on the Bodystyling exercises (Fig. 5).

Almost half of them responded: 3-4 hours. Another 28% of women spend 5-6 hours exercising, while 26% – 1-2 hours. None of them spends more than 6 hours on the Bodystyling programme.

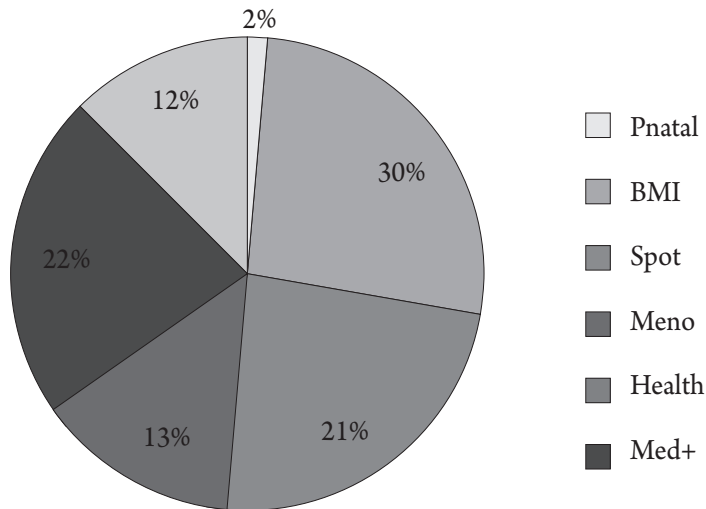


Figure 4. Selected programme

Source: own research.

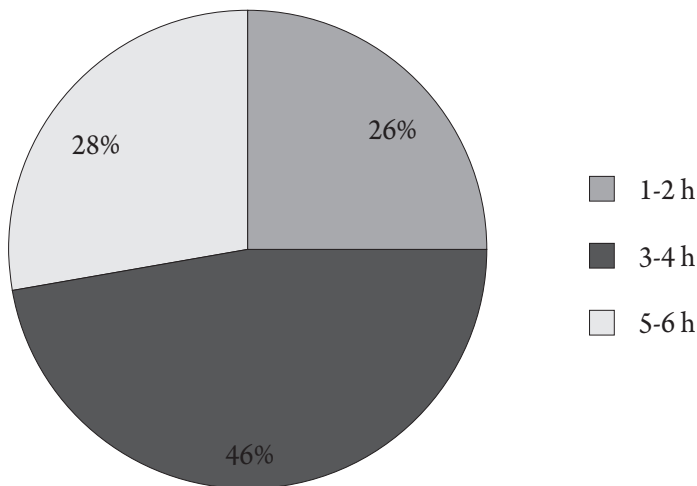


Figure 5. Time devoted to the Bodystyling exercises

Source: own research.

Another question concerned modification of nutrition. The majority of women (58%) participating in the Bodystyling programmes have a diet prepared by specialists.

In the questionnaire there was also a question regarding evaluation of trainers' professionalism (Fig. 6).

Half of the group evaluated it as "very good," while 47% – as "good." Asked if there was anything they would alter, all of them responded that they would not change anything.

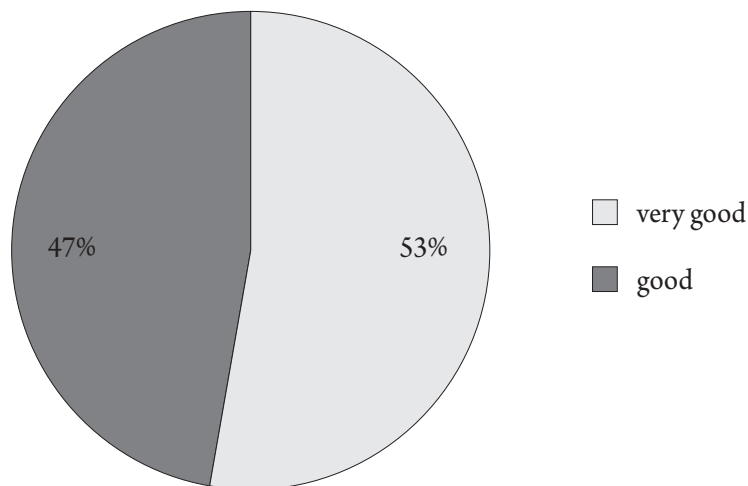


Figure 6. Evaluation of trainers' professionalism

Source: own research.

Another question referred to effects of performed exercises. As many as 99% noticed effects of the Bodystyling training. The most numerous (45%) was the group of women who perceived the effects after one month, while further 37% – after two months.

The women were also asked if the Bodystyling training influenced their health and wellness (Fig. 7).

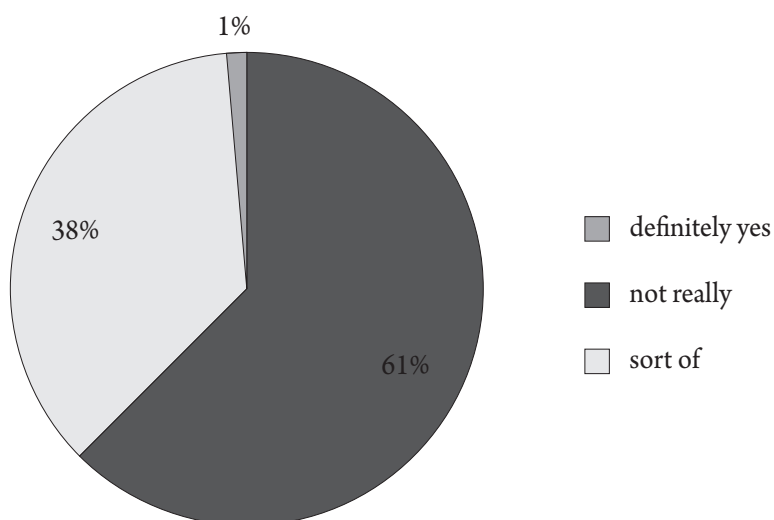


Figure 7. Influence of the Bodystyling exercises on health/wellness improvement

Source: author's own research.

The majority (61%) answered "definitely yes." Asked what effects they noticed, some of them mentioned more than one (Fig. 8).

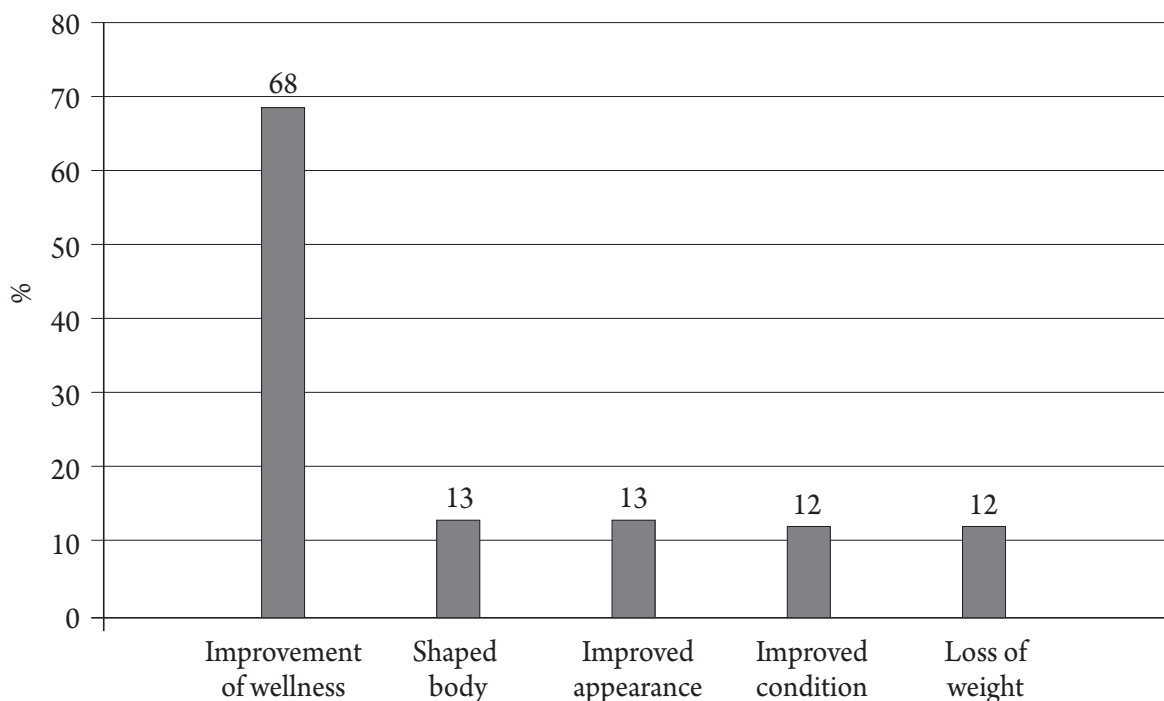


Figure 8. Effects of the Bodystyling exercises

Source: own research.

The most common answer referred to improvement of wellness and health. Others pointed to shaped body, improvement of appearance and condition, as well as loss of weight.

4. Discussion

Physical activity is one of more important factors influencing health, wellness and quality of life of a contemporary human being. It is a crucial element of healthy lifestyle [Aarano et al. 2002: 360-364]. People exercising regularly are less prone to civilization diseases. Whereas for patients who already struggle with symptoms of those diseases physical activity is an excellent therapy enhancing effects of treatment. Research results prove that physical activity plays an essential role in reducing weight, and counteracts negative effects of excessive fat tissue [Bensimhon, Kraus & Donahue 2006: 598-603; Lee & Skerrett 2001: 459-71; Wessel et al. 2004: 1179-1187]. Excess of fat tissue is an originator of various diseases. Obesity increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes, or some tumours. Special Eurobarometer Research has shown that the number of people (in Europe) who never exercise or engage in sport increased by 3%

within the previous five years. A similar increase has been registered in Poland. Approximately 35% of Polish people do not willingly engage in daily physical activities, e.g. bike riding, gardening, dancing etc. which is greater than the EU-average of 30% inactive [Special Eurobarometer Research 2014].⁹ Low level of physical activity and bad eating habits of Polish people were also highlighted in the National Health Programme, pointing to main causes of diseases and deaths in our society [Narodowy Program Zdrowia na lata 2016-2020].¹⁰

Therefore, it is essential to promote various modern forms of physical activity. The aim of this paper was to present the comprehensive Bodystyling offer in which physical activity is combined with pro-health modifications of eating habits. The research shows that the most numerous group were women having sedentary work, which is connected with health problems resulting from such body position and lack of movement. Main reasons for participating in the Bodystyling programmes was health improvement and loss of weight. The data gathered in the questionnaire demonstrate that the answerers consider the Bodystyling method to be very efficient, 99% of them noticed effects of training and would recommend it to their friends. The majority declares that, regardless of programme selected, the exercises positively influenced their wellness.

5. Conclusions

The offer of the Bodystyling is an interesting one for the purpose of prophylaxis and as a support in treatment of civilisation diseases. The Bodystyling method may become an interesting complement to recreation opportunities offered in Poland. It may also encourage to increase physical activity and modify eating habits.

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Wzmacnianie zdrowia poprzez bodystyling w opinii mieszkanek Leuven w Belgii

Streszczenie. Celem niniejszej pracy jest przedstawienie i popularyzacja prozdrowotnej oferty bodystyling, z uwzględnieniem opinii mieszkanek Leuven w Belgii. W pracy wykorzystano następujące techniki badawcze: analiza dokumentów, analiza materiałów z tematycznych stron internetowych, wywiad oraz obserwacja uczestnicząca. Badania sondażowe z zastosowaniem au-

torskiego kwestionariusza ankiety przeprowadzono w listopadzie 2015 r. w grupie mieszkanek Leuven w Belgii. Wśród respondentek przeważały kobiety w wieku 20-30 lat, z wykształceniem wyższym, wykonujące pracę siedzącą, zarabiające między 2000 a 4000 euro, będące mężatkami posiadającymi dzieci. Głównymi motywami podjęcia ćwiczeń bodystyling przez respondentki jest poprawa zdrowia oraz redukcja masy ciała. Zdecydowana większość badanych kobiet zauważyła pozytywny wpływ bodystyling na fizyczny i psychiczny wymiar zdrowia. Oferta obiektów bodystyling jest ciekawą propozycją mającą na celu profilaktykę i wspomaganie leczenia chorób cywilizacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: zdrowie, aktywność fizyczna, żywienie, bodystyling, choroby cywilizacyjne