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The level of overall physical fitness on the basic training in the Police Training Centre in Legionowo in 2009

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Key words: physical fitness, tests, the police, training of police officers

Abstract:
Aim: To evaluate the effect of the basic training in the Police Training Centre in Legionowo on physical fitness of police officers. A question was raised whether the policemen improved their results in statistically significant way in all four trials.
Material and methods: The study was conducted with the participation of 653 students (501 men and 152 women) - basic training's attendees in the Police Training Centre in Legionowo in 2009. Two tests of physical fitness were conducted at the beginning of the training and three weeks before the end of a six-month training. During 124 days the police carried out a training program including 132 hours of tactics and intervention techniques. Evaluation of performance was made using four trials: sit-ups in 30 seconds, medicine ball throw from behind the head (2 kg for women and 3 kg for men), run with change of direction (the envelope), 800 m run (1000 m run.) In the statistical analysis of empirical data the arithmetic average and standard deviation were used.
Results: After completing a six-month basic training the police officers participating in the training improved their results in all four trials in a significant way.
Conclusions: During the basic training program physical fitness can be significantly improved. Implementation of such a goal is possible only by highly qualified staff. With a limited number of hours for training it seems to be more appropriate to provide police officers with skills of combat and intervention techniques.

Introduction

In Poland the police have been established as a uniformed and armed body serving the public, designed to protect people's safety and to maintain public order and security [Act on Police]. In order to carry out statutory duties of Police, it is necessary to prepare professional officers. Applicants for admission to the Police service must undergo a selection process for the service. The recruitment process consists of nine stages, including the evaluation of candidate's fitness for duty, a psychological test determining the intellectual and personal predispositions of the candidate, as well as physical and mental capabilities towards the service to be determined by the medical committee, reporting to the Minister of Internal Affairs [Ministry of Interior Regulation of 30 August 2007].

After successful recruitment those people are directed to basic training, implemented under the program approved by the Chief of Police. Basic vocational training program, implemented in the training unit of the Police, prepares a police officer in a comprehensive manner (theoretically and practically) to perform official duties at a basic level, as a policeman in the prevention service, in patrol and emergency units and prevention units. The training program was developed in accordance with the methodology of so-called "Modules of professional skills." 132 hours were devoted to implementation of the "Tactics and techniques of intervention" module, including the development of physical fitness in 16 hours (including 4 hours of physical fitness tests), which represents 1.65% of the total number of hours of training [Decision of KGP (National Police Headquarters) No. 9 dated 11.01.2010]. A review of works on the physical fitness of police officers and the impact of ongoing training on the level of physical fitness of police officers was made. The study mostly relates to the physical fitness of police officers already in service and the recruitment of candidates for the force. It also deals with the relation of a comprehensive physical fitness with the level of psychomotor competence in intervention activities of police officers [Bukowiecka 2006].

The authors attempted to create methods to assess preparations for intervention activities of soldiers and policemen [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki, Klimczak 2005]. Morpho-functional characteristic was also made of the policemen recruited to prevention service [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2004]. The level of comprehensive physical fitness was measured, with diversification towards specialization and gender [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2002]. In addition, a comparison with results of conscripted soldiers was made [Tomczak 2010].

The analysis results show that the vocational training helps to improve physical fitness. In addition, it was noticed that some policemen who have passed the physical fitness test for the candidates do not pass the physical fitness test at the beginning of basic vocational training [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2004; Kuczma, Jakubowski 2005; Ratajczak, Sochacki 2009]. Results were compared with the level of physical fitness tests of the police garrison in Wrocław, where it was noticed that the content of training program does not affect the improvement of their motor skills. The level of motor performance of the police officers in comparison with Polish youth is average [Gwardyński 2000].

The aim of this work is to determine police officers' fitness level and the impact of 6-month basic training on physical fitness of police officers.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in a group of 653 students (501 men and 152 women) – participants in basic vocational training in the Police Training Center in Legionowo in 2009. There have been two measurements of fitness, at the beginning of the training (physical diagnosis), and three weeks before the end of sixth months of training. During the training police officers carried out a program of 132 hours of intervention tactics and techniques that were implemented by the instructors of tactics and techniques of intervention, who were at the same time graduates of the Academy of Physical Education. Evaluation of performance was made using four tests: sit-ups in 30 seconds, medicine ball throw from behind the head, run with the change of direction (the envelope), 800 m run (1000 m run). Tests were conducted in accordance with the instructions contained in the training program [Decision of KGP (National Police Headquarters) No. 9 dated 11.01.2010]. The study took place during the training day at different times of year. Immediately before the tests there was an approximately 10-minute long individual warm-up. Participants in the tests were informed about the criteria of evaluation; the correct way of performing each exercise was demonstrated to them before each trial. In the period between research police officers participated in the garrison training the Police Training Centre. Training period was 124 training days long – 968 school hours total. The training program was divided into 10 modular units. Modular Unit No. 10 called 'Tactics and techniques of intervention' consists of 5 school units and contains 132 school hours: 'Building the physical fitness' – 16 hours; 'Using physical force as means of direct coercion '(the use of strikes and kicks, bringing to the ground techniques, levers, strangling, defense techniques against various types of attacks) – 48 hrs.; 'Technical skills for the implementation of police intervention (using grips and levers, overpowering and handcuffing techniques, using technical means of direct coercion) – 0 hours.; 'Baton as means of direct coercion' (the use of baton in the techniques of intervention and self-defense) ¬ 20 hours; 'Tactics of intervention'– 28 hours [Decision of KGP (National Police Headquarters) No. 9 dated 11.01.2010]. In addition, students have had the opportunity to use sports facilities of PTC in their free time : a treadmill, an obstacle course, team games hall, a room with a mat, gym.

The analysis omitted data of students who for various reasons did not complete the training (health reasons, personal, *et al.*), or those who joined during the training (e.g. people who for medical reasons were exempt from the previous edition of the training). Training took place in the same conditions as the previous trainings of students.

In order to verify the distribution with the parameters of the normal distribution in the following trials: sit-ups in 30 seconds, medicine ball throw from behind the head, 800 meters run (1000 m run) the Kołomogorow-Smirnov test was carried out, where a discrepancy was found between the parameters of the analyzed distribution and normal distribution. This means that to verify the hypothesis a nonparametric test was used in dependent trials (Wilcoxon rank test). In an attempt to "run with the change of direction (the envelope)" the convergence of the analyzed distributions and the parameters of normal distribution was observed. This means that to verify the hypothesis test T (dependent trials) was applied.

Results

During the training the participants significantly improved results in all four trials.

For the medicine ball throw a comparative analysis of both men and women has been made. The first step of the analysis was statistical description of distribution of the results obtained in I and II measurements. Table no. 1 contains statistics for both measurements according to the gender of the respondents.

Table 1. The descriptive statistics in an attempt to throw a medicine ball

Statistics	Women		Men	
	study 1	study 2	study 1	study 2
N	152	152	501	501
Average	6,97	7,65	9,13	9,75
Standard deviation	0,90	0,88	1,30	1,30
Minimum	5,00	6,00	6,00	7,00
Maximum	9,50	10,00	14,00	15,00

[source: own research]

Preliminary analysis of the findings in Table 1 shows higher results in the second test than in the first and also increased maximum values achieved in both groups. The comparison in the group of women showed a significant increase from projected ball during the second test: $Z = -8.49$, $P < 0.001$. A similar result was obtained in the male group: $Z = -12.60$, $P < 0.001$. Analysis of the results indicates that both women and men showed a significant increase in ball throw distances between the first and second measurement.

For the "sit-ups in 30 seconds" in the first stage of the analysis a statistical description of distributions of the results obtained in I and II measurements has been made. Table No. 2 shows the statistics for both measurements according to the gender of the respondents.

Table 2. The descriptive statistics in the sample: sit-ups

Statistics	Women		Men	
	study 1	study 2	study 1	study 2
N	152	152	501	501
Average	22,9671	27,1053	25,4770	29,5309
Standard deviation	4,85883	2,98153	5,26706	3,06293
Minimum	2,00	20,00	2,00	20,00
Maximum	30,00	35,00	40,00	41,00

[source: own research]

Preliminary analysis of the findings in Table 2 shows higher results in the second test than in the first as well as an increased maximum values achieved in both groups. The comparison in the group of women showed significant increase as a result of sit-ups in 30 seconds during the second test: $Z = -9.61$, $P < 0.001$. A similar result was obtained in the male group: $Z = -17.25$, $P < 0.001$. Analysis of the results indicates that both women and men showed a significant increase in the number of sit-ups done between the first and second measurement.

For the "run with the change of direction (the envelope)" in the first stage of the analysis a statistical description of distribution of the results obtained in I and II measurements was made. Table 3 contains statistics for both measurements according to the gender of the respondents.

Table 3. The descriptive statistics in the sample: a run with change of direction (the envelope)

Statistics	Women		Men	
	study 1	study 2	study 1	study 2
N	152	152	501	501
Average	28,398	26,3228	26,7145	24,8742
Standard deviation	1,71679	1,27708	1,65113	1,08657
Minimum	23,88	23,30	23,13	21,78
Maximum	33,50	29,64	33,00	29,50

[source: own research]

Preliminary analysis of the findings in Table 3 shows higher results in the second test than in the first as well as an increased maximum values achieved in both groups. The comparison showed a significant increase in women's results in sit-ups in 30 seconds during the second test ($t = 15.71$, $p < 0.001$). A similar result was obtained in the male group: $t = 27.04$, $p < 0.001$. Analysis of the results indicates that both women and men reported significant reduction in run-time between first and second measurement.

For the 1,000 m run (men) and 800m (women) in the first stage of the analysis statistical description of distributions of the results obtained in I and II measurements. In Table 4 contains statistics for both measurements according to the gender of the respondents.

Table 4. The descriptive statistics in the run trial

Statistics	Women distance of 800m		Men Distance 1000m	
	study 1	study 2	study 1	study 2
N	152	152	501	501
Average	3,6759	3,2278	4,0311	3,6006
Standard deviation	,54454	,33847	,63960	,34480
Minimum	3,01	2,45	3,06	2,50
Maximum	6,44	4,29	7,19	4,44

[source: own research]

Preliminary analysis of the findings in Table 4 shows higher results in the second test than in the first and increased maximum values achieved in both groups. The comparison showed a significant increase in women result in sit-ups in 30 seconds during the second test ($Z = -9.14$, $p < 0.001$). A similar result was obtained in males: $Z = -15.95$, $p < 0.001$. Analysis of the results indicates that both women and men reported significant reduction in running time between the first and second measurement.

The assessment of the level of overall physical fitness in the test basic police training course are the results of tests to determine the level of selected features. Comparing all the attempts during the first and second test, there was significant improvement of results in each case.

Discussion

After passing all stages of the selection process for the service, including passing the physical fitness test for applicants at the beginning of the training and three weeks before the end of basic training in the Police Training Centre, the policemen were tested on physical fitness [Decision of KGP (National Police Headquarters) No. 9 dated. 11.01.2010]. Physical fitness is determined by physical factors such as innate abilities, health, training and physical condition of the body (height, weight, proportions, body build) [Pilicz 1997].

In the literature related to the subject matter some work on the physical fitness of police basic training was found, in which different tests were used as research tools. The tests have undergone modifications over the years. Because of the nature of the problem related to the basic training among the Polish policemen, the analysis focused mainly on research by Polish authors. Valuable, given the analysis subject matter, are the results of American researchers that demonstrate the importance that a high level of physical fitness of police officers has on efficient performance in the service. These studies have shown that the probability to experience the risk of injury or ill health in interventions ranges from 46% to 79% of cases. It is highly likely that a properly prepared in terms of agility and mentality policeman will be able to demonstrate basic skills during the operation [Hoffman, Collingwood 1995].

In 1997-1998, a research was conducted, which was aimed at determining the current level of physical fitness of police officers and selecting one method of measurement, which would provide accurate and reliable assessment of physical fitness in this professional group. Analysis of the collected research material allowed the conclusion that existing tests of physical fitness were not adapted to the needs of the Police. The trials and assessment scale were not suitable [Klimczak, Nowacka 2001].

While examining the level of physical fitness in the police garrison in Wroclaw [Gwardyński 2000] it was found that for a period of three years there has been no statistically significant improvement in endurance and agility of the officers. The conclusion was that the Police do not constitute a specially selected group of people whose fitness level distinguishes them from the population. Content of training program doesn't improve their physical fitness. The level of fitness of police officers compared to the Polish youth is average. Thus, it is difficult to predict the good performance during official duties, especially in situations when it is necessary for the policeman to exercise their physical fitness skills (especially for young offenders, often resorting to physical violence) [Gwardyński 2000].

The same tests applied Ratajczak and Sochacki, examining a group of 181 students in Police School in Piła. During the first test 55 students received a negative rating, which means that 30.38% of students did not pass the test. The rest of the group (126 people) received the arithmetic average of the test at grade "3" (average) [Ratajczak, Sochacki 2009]. However, Kuchma and Jakubowski have studied the basic police training and some specialized training carried out at the Police School in Slupsk [Kuchma, Jakubowski 2005]. In this case the basic training lasted 10 months, and the following tests were used for men: pull-ups, medicine ball throw (3 kg), sit-ups, 1000 m run. For women the following tests were used: push-ups within 30 seconds, ball throw (2 kg), sit-ups, 600 m run. The study included 104 officers on specialized courses and 667 basic police training participants. The results below the minimum of the physical fitness test during the entrance examination organized at the Police School in Slupsk for various types of specialist trainings, received 54 police officers, representing 52% of the total number of candidates. The first test of physical fitness on the basic training was failed by 249 police officers, which represents 37% of students. These were the same officers who have successfully passed the earlier physical agility test for the candidates in their home units [Kuchma, Jakubowski 2005].

In 2000-2002, the Police School in Slupsk studied the physical fitness of 116 police officers from specialized courses: constables, patrol-intervention managers and on duty. The study allowed to draw the conclusion that the vast majority of students presents at most low or average level of physical fitness. Poor physical fitness significantly affects the level of personal safety of officers: directly by the inapplicability of the effective intervention techniques and tactics, indirectly, increasing the risk of injury, both in the training environment and the intervention [Jakubowski, Wojcik 2004].

In 2002 the study on the level of physical fitness of police officers was published. The study focused on 910 persons including 775 men and 135 women selected from the students at Police Academy in Szczytno. The analysis of results revealed that police officers with different specialties, as separate

groups (sets), did not differ significantly among themselves in terms of overall consideration of the comprehensive level of physical fitness and motor abilities of the individual. A low level of physical fitness was found in about 32% of policewomen and 26% of policemen, which raised concerns about the accuracy of the recruitment and training system of police officers [Kalina *at al.* 2002].

Bukowiecka and Bukowiecki conducted a study among police officers during further training at the Police Academy in Szczytno in 2008 (180 students, including 41 women and 139 men). At the beginning of the training, nearly 50% of women and over 42% of men received very low and low ratings of physical fitness as measured by the so-called diagnostic test. This may indicate a lack of self-improvement in this area. The comparison of results for each sample point performances shows that the lowest-marked test was the medicine ball throw. This may be due either to low levels of motor skills (strength) among the surveyed officers or faulty grading system. It was recognized that the implementation of the training program for graduates in the Police Academy has a positive effect on physical fitness of policemen and policewomen [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2002].

The results obtained during the tests drew the authors to the conclusion that the current physical fitness diagnostic system for the Police only partially provides a good selection of officers to serve in the force, since there are many police officers whose fitness level is very low, and yet – to fully cope with complex tasks – a policeman, in addition to a wide general knowledge and expertise, must be of appropriate psychophysical health [Bukowiecka 2005].

In order to improve the state of affairs the authors proposed a physical fitness test, which have been scientifically verified in terms of diagnostic accuracy, is standardized and widely used. However, this proposal has not been implemented in practice. For candidates to serve in the Police a synthetic test in the form of an obstacle course was developed, while for police officers an analytical test in four trials was introduced [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki, Klimczak 2005].

In 2003, the Police Academy in Szczytno research included 168 persons (142 men and 26 women) undergoing basic training. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the somatic development and level of physical fitness of police officers admitted to the service specializing in prevention. At the same time a comparison of the level of physical fitness of officers admitted to the prevention service was made with the following three groups: 1) the officers serving more than one year in the service of prevention, 2) a population of 19-year-old Polish youth, 3) juvenile offenders, placed in reformatories. The study used the International Physical Fitness Test. After analyzing the results it was observed, inter alia, that the level of a comprehensive physical fitness among the policewomen is higher than among the policemen. The level of physical fitness, both comprehensive and in specific motor abilities is higher among the policemen and policewomen admitted to preventive force than among officers with more seniority, which proves that the efficiency of skills upgrading training is very low. The police admitted to the prevention service are fitter than an average 19-year-old, but slightly inferior in this respect to juvenile offenders, which is an indication that the Police are not a specially selected group of people whose motor skills are above average [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2004].

Similar conclusions were formulated after a comprehensive assessment of the level of physical fitness of criminal and prevention officers. As well as in earlier studies the International Physical Fitness Test was applied. The study involved the policemen seeking to improve their professional qualifications in the Police Academy on higher professional studies, specializing in criminal investigation and prevention and post-graduate professional studies, specializing in criminal investigation and prevention. The study group consisted of 421 persons including 365 men and 56 women. The results showed that among the police officers improving their qualifications prevails the average level of physical fitness, which proves that policemen are not a specially selected group of people whose motor skills are above average [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2002].

The relationship of a comprehensive physical fitness with the level of psychomotor competence in the intervention police activities was also studied. The research data obtained was sufficient to confirm the thesis of a statistically significant correlation between the level of so-called comprehensive physical fitness and the effectiveness of fighting in direct confrontation. The results did not provide the basis for concluding that a comprehensive physical fitness determines the effectiveness of shooting after a short, intense physical effort (there was no correlation of the results of shooting with the results of any motor tests used to assess the comprehensive physical fitness) [Bukowiecka 2006]. Attempts have been made to assess police officers' preparation to intervene in extreme situations. To assess the special physical fitness the defense biathlon was used. The results obtained indicated that the level of preparedness of the Police to act in extreme situations, regardless of the type of service classes is not high [Bukowiecka, Bukowiecki 2002].

The most emphatic conclusions in the absence of a correlation between physical fitness test for the candidates to the test used during basic training and during the service formulated Jaroslaw Klimczak [2006]. The comparison of physical fitness test results in the Police department with Polish soldiers of compulsory military service in mechanized units shows that the soldiers during the nine-month services do not increase their physical fitness significantly. One of the main reasons for this may be the qualifications of the coach for the course. This is shown in the research results of Polish authors, in which the level of physical fitness has been improved to the highest degree by a group of soldiers in air units, with whom classes were held by qualified physical education specialist [Tomczak 2010].

The analysis of the foreign literature showed that, as in Poland, there is a variety of physical fitness tests for police officers. Suminski from the Roseville Police Department at the Eastern Michigan University has studied the importance of physical fitness in law enforcement - in particular, how it affects the efficiency of performance of police officers. An analysis of the various tests of physical fitness of individual U.S. states in the various departments (police, FBI) was made [Suminski 2005]. For 30 years Collingwood, Hoffman, Smith have been actively involved in developing programs in the field of physical education and the establishment of standards for municipal, state and federal law enforcement agencies. They saw a lot of problems in terms of development of physical fitness tests in the context of the basic tasks of law enforcement [Collingwood, Hoffman, Smith, 2004].

A review of literature and the results of the study support the thesis that the Polish Police are not a specially selected social group whose motor skills are above average. Our results, and most of the cited results indicate that the training of police in schools has improved the results of physical fitness tests. The exception are the results obtained by Gwardyński during testing of police officers from the garrison of Lower Silesia, where there was no statistically significant improvement in the results of physical fitness tests. Observations made by Tomczak after studying of soldiers in the Polish army confirmed the validity of the solution adapted by the Police Training Centre concerning employment of specialists in physical education. Despite having far too few hours of physical fitness training, police officers improved their results in statistically significant way. However, taking into account the tasks for policemen in service, and having the limited number of training hours, it seems more appropriate to equip the police officers with skills in combat and intervention techniques.

Conclusions

To summarise, the results of the present study reveal that during the police training the participants significantly improved their results in all four trials. A situation such as this can be determined by: the low level of physical fitness among trained police officers, activities carried out on tactics and techniques of intervention and high qualifications of teaching staff (graduates of the Academy of Physical Education). Studies of other authors confirm the fact of low physical fitness of people directed to basic training. Properly implemented classes by qualified, accessible sports facilities and properly instructed and motivated students during training can significantly improve their comprehensive physical fitness. Time devoted to building general physical fitness is not enough (16 hours). This does not allow to build physical fitness in the optimal form and to develop habits of active recreation and self-improvement in the area of physical fitness. The lack of such habits is confirmed by the analysis of results of the policemen at specialist courses. It has been discovered that a large percentage of officers at the beginning of training had low results of physical fitness tests. After transforming the results into grades it appeared that more than 56.6% of men and 12.2% of women received the failing grade during so-called diagnosis stage.

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Poziom ogólnej sprawności fizycznej słuchaczy szkolenia zawodowego podstawowego w Centrum Szkolenia Policji w Legionowie w 2009 roku

Słowa kluczowe: sprawność fizyczna, testy, policja, trening policjantów

Streszczenie

Wstęp

Po przyjęciu do służby policjanci są kierowani na szkolenie zawodowe podstawowe, przygotowujące do wykonywania zadań służbowych na poziomie podstawowym w służbie prewencyjnej w komórkach organizacyjnych patrolowo-interwencyjnych i oddziałów prewencji Policji. Na realizację modułu „Taktyka i techniki interwencji" przeznaczono 132 godziny, w tym na kształtowanie sprawności fizycznej przewidziano 16 godzin (w tym 4 godziny na testy sprawności fizycznej), co stanowi 1,65 % ogólnej liczby godzin na szkoleniu. Celem tej pracy jest określenie poziomu sprawności fizycznej policjantów oraz wpływu zrealizowanego podczas 6-cio miesięcznego szkolenia zawodowego podstawowego na sprawność fizyczną policjantów.

Materiał i metody

Badania przeprowadzono z udziałem 653 słuchaczy (501 mężczyzn oraz 152 kobiety) - uczestników szkoleń zawodowych podstawowych w Centrum Szkolenia Policji w Legionowie w 2009 roku. Przeprowadzono dwa testy sprawności fizycznej, na początku oraz trzy tygodnie przed zakończeniem sześciomiesięcznego szkolenia. Oceny sprawności dokonano za pomocą czterech prób: siady z leżenia tyłem w ciągu 30 sekund, rzut piłką lekarską w przód zza głowy (2 kg kobiety i 3 kg mężczyźni), bieg ze zmianą kierunku (po kopercie), bieg na 800 m (1000 m). W analizie statystycznej danych empirycznych posłużono się średnią arytmetyczną oraz odchyleniem standardowym.

Wyniki

Po odbyciu sześciomiesięcznego szkolenia zawodowego podstawowego badani policjanci w sposób istotny poprawili wyniki we wszystkich czterech próbach.

Wnioski

Podczas realizowania programu szkolenia zawodowego podstawowego można w istotnym stopniu wpłynąć na poprawę sprawności fizycznej. Realizacja takiego celu jest możliwa przez kadrę posiadającą wysokie kwalifikacje. Dysponując ograniczoną liczną godzin w trakcie szkolenia, wydaje się być bardziej właściwym wyposażenie policjantów w umiejętności z zakresu walki wręcz i technik interwencji.