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5 **Investigating the role of physical education in physical activity promotion: an Italian**  
6 **multicenter study**

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1 **INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PHYSICAL**  
2 **ACTIVITY PROMOTION: AN ITALIAN MULTICENTER STUDY**

3 **Running head:** Physical Education in Physical Activity Promotion

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1 **Abstract**

2 Background. Physical education (PE) can be considered an instrument for active lifestyle  
3 promotion, and PE teachers can motivate youths to continue their studies in the field of  
4 Movement Sciences (MS).

5 Methods. To evaluate the role of PE in higher secondary school in promoting physical activity  
6 (PA) and MS career, previous PE experiences and current PA practice were investigated in a  
7 sample of Italian freshmen enrolled in different university degree courses.

8 Results. A total of 7,033 questionnaires were completed by students from 14 universities  
9 (41.3% **males**, mean age  $20\pm 2.76$ ). Recreation seems to be the principal aim (42.2%) pursued  
10 during PE lessons, which are based mainly on practical activities (51.7%). 67.2% of  
11 respondents were satisfied with the PE received during higher secondary school and 51.6%  
12 participated in extra-curricular PA. Current practice of PA was reported by 58.1% of the  
13 sample. Extracurricular activities were associated with choice of MS curricula (OR 2.15,  
14 IC95% 1.85-2.50) and with current practice of PA (OR 1.68, IC95% 1.51-1.87). Geographical  
15 differences concerning lessons organization and satisfaction were registered ( $P<.01$ ).

16 Conclusions. To enhance its role in health promotion, PE teaching should be improved by  
17 increasing the time allocated to PE and by strengthening the provision of school-based extra-  
18 curricular PA.

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1 **Introduction**

2 **There is significant evidence that numerous physical and mental health benefits are**  
3 **associated with physical activity (PA) and exercise. Many studies have documented that**  
4 **PA improves health status, playing a preventive role in cardiovascular diseases, cancer,**  
5 **diabetes and other chronic conditions.<sup>1-5</sup> In a large review, PA has been found to**  
6 **decrease the incidence of type 2 diabetes of 6%, the risk of colon cancer and breast**  
7 **cancer of 30-40% and 20-30%, respectively, contributing to reduce the relative risk of**  
8 **death from any cause by about 20-35%.<sup>1</sup>**

9 Although it has been widely demonstrated that PA can have many protective effects, only few  
10 people **are aware of this and meet the guidelines** that recommend the daily movement  
11 pattern of moderate to vigorous activity to benefit health.<sup>6-10</sup>

12 Children and adolescents, in particular, frequently do not meet the recommended amount of  
13 60 minutes of PA every day,<sup>11-13</sup> and PA levels decrease from youth to adulthood.<sup>14,15</sup> Data  
14 reported by the World Health Organization's cross-national survey on Health Behaviour in  
15 School-aged children (HBSC) show that in Italy the percentage of youths aged 11-15 years  
16 who meet these recommendations ranges from 6.9 to 8.2%.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the experience of  
17 PA is frequently confined to participation in a few training sessions of sport, which is not  
18 enough to ensure the daily requirement of PA.<sup>17,18</sup>

19 The health benefits of regular PA during adolescence are well known and include a better  
20 cardiovascular health and musculoskeletal fitness. PA can also facilitate weight control,  
21 prevent or treat symptoms of depression and anxiety, and reduce the likelihood of developing  
22 risk factors for chronic disease in adulthood.<sup>19</sup> Several studies suggest that physically active  
23 adolescents often become active adults.<sup>20,21</sup>

24 Schools are widely recognized as important institutions for the promotion of PA and fitness in  
25 children and adolescents.<sup>22</sup> By providing students with skills to engage in PA and contributing

1 to their weekly PA levels, physical education (PE) can play an important role in active  
2 lifestyle promotion, as well as providing **an instrument to improve motor skills and school**  
3 **performances.**<sup>14,23-27</sup> Furthermore, PE is the only venue where the least active children can  
4 experience PA at higher intensities.<sup>28</sup> It has been shown that positive PE experiences are  
5 associated with higher levels of leisure-time PA in young adolescents.<sup>29,30</sup> **In 2012, Sallis et**  
6 **al. coined the term “HOPE – Health Optimizing Physical Education” to highlight the**  
7 **role of PE in reaching public health goals. In this perspective, the school represents the**  
8 **most cost-effective public health resource to fight inactivity and the PE teacher has the**  
9 **opportunity to provide and promote PA.**<sup>19</sup> Moreover, due to their unique position,  
10 **physical educators can represent good or bad examples of healthy lifestyles for the**  
11 **students and also a role model to choose studies in Movement Sciences (MS) for their**  
12 **future career path.**<sup>31</sup>

13 Although PE is included in the formalized school curriculum worldwide, time and resources  
14 allocated to this teaching are frequently inadequate to promote PA in school-age and  
15 lifelong.<sup>32,33</sup> Where interventions aimed to enhance the role of PE were carried out, benefits  
16 for both students and community were registered.<sup>34,35</sup> Many of these interventions were also  
17 carried out in Italy, above all **in primary schools where the figure of PE teacher is lacking**  
18 **and the need for an external support in PE is higher.**<sup>36,37</sup> **In fact, in Italian primary**  
19 **schools, children aged 6-11 years participate in 1 or 2 hours of curricular PE lessons per**  
20 **week, supported by generalist teachers, while in secondary schools, students (11-19**  
21 **years) participate in two hours of compulsory PE per week with teachers who have a**  
22 **specific curriculum and training in PE.**<sup>38</sup> In addition, national and local sport institutions  
23 and associations promote many school-based initiatives of extracurricular PA, in order to  
24 introduce different sports and increase the participation in organized sport outside the school.

1 However, little is known about the features of PE teaching and its efficacy in promoting **an**  
2 **active lifestyle** in our country.

3 In order to characterize PE teaching in Italy and to investigate its role in promoting PA and an  
4 MS career, the Working Group “Movement Sciences for Health” of the Italian Society of  
5 Hygiene launched a survey among university students aimed to investigate their previous PE  
6 experiences in higher secondary school and their motivations and satisfaction in PE  
7 participation. A pilot study was previously carried out involving freshmen in the city of  
8 Naples.<sup>39</sup> The present paper reports the results of the multicenter study aimed to extend the PE  
9 evaluation to the whole national area and to highlight possible geographical differences.

10 The aim is to draft a picture of the current organization of PE in the Italian higher secondary  
11 schools and to point out the weaknesses and strengths of PE, as resulting from the **beliefs** of  
12 the students, in order to evaluate whether PE in the Italian school system represents an  
13 instrument to enhance active lifestyles or whether substantial changes need to be addressed.  
14 Furthermore the study aims to analyze PE as a motivational factor for choosing MS curricula  
15 at university level.

16

## 17 **Methods**

### 18 *Participants*

19 A convenience sample of 7,087 freshmen was recruited from different degree courses of 14  
20 universities distributed on the whole Italian territory (Figure 1). Students were selected on the  
21 basis of accessibility and proximity with Working Group researchers.

22

### 23 *Questionnaire*

24 An anonymous, self-administered questionnaire was used. Questions included demographic  
25 data and information about the current degree course and the secondary school attended

1 before university enrollment. In order to ensure an accurate recollection of participants'  
2 experience, only information about PE undertaken in the last two years of secondary school  
3 was collected. This information regarded the type and the main contents of PE lessons, the  
4 personal participation in extracurricular PA offered by schools, and the availability of gyms  
5 and equipment. **For the purposes of this study, the term “recreational activity” indicates**  
6 **any type of non-structured PA performed without the guidance of a teacher or a coach,**  
7 **and “sport activity” indicates structured and supervised PA. Beliefs** about PE teaching  
8 and personal PE experience were also asked, regarding the aim and the importance attributed  
9 to PE and the satisfaction perceived. **Furthermore, the current practice of PA was**  
10 **investigated: type of PA, average minutes and number of sessions per week.** On the basis  
11 of WHO recommendations, a student was defined active if he/she reported at least 150 min of  
12 moderate PA or 75 min of vigorous PA per week.<sup>9</sup> **Beliefs** about the influence of PE on the  
13 current practice of PA were also investigated.

14

#### 15 *Data collection procedure*

16 The questionnaire was previously tested during the pilot study.<sup>39</sup> In the present study, it was  
17 administered during the first semester of the 2013-2014 academic year. At the moment of  
18 administration, a researcher explained the purpose of the study and emphasized the anonymity  
19 of the responses. Since the questionnaire was anonymous and self-completed, ethical approval  
20 was not required. Only the permission of the degree course director was obtained.

21

#### 22 *Data analysis procedures*

23 A descriptive analysis was carried out to show the main features of the whole sample.  
24 Furthermore, data related to the PE personal experiences of the students and their **beliefs**  
25 about PE were also described and differences among groups coming from North, Center and



1 South regions of Italy were analyzed; comparisons were performed using the chi-square test  
2 with  $P < .05$  as significance level.

3 In order to verify if some variables related to the PE received in the secondary school  
4 influenced the choice of university course and current PA practice, a multivariate logistic  
5 regression analysis was performed. The outcome variables were as follows:

- 6 - Choice of education area (Outcome 1): a binary variable was built by attributing the  
7 value 1 if the students belonged to MS degree courses, and the value 0 otherwise;
- 8 - PA practice at the time of the investigation (Outcome 2): a binary variable with the  
9 value 1 if the answer was “yes” and 0 otherwise.

10 All the outcomes were investigated separately using all the explanatory variables regarding  
11 PE experience (type of lessons, availability of gym/equipment, participation in extracurricular  
12 activities). The explanatory variables were selected by backwards selection using a limit value  
13 of  $P < .05$  as significance level. Odds Ratios (ORs) and 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of  
14 differences between groups were considered. ORs were weighted for gender and age.

15 All the statistical analyses were performed with the SPSS software version 21.0 for Windows.

16

## 17 **Results**

18 A total of 7,033 (99.2% response rate) questionnaires were completed by freshmen of 14  
19 universities. **Table 1** describes the distribution of some individual variables of the sample.  
20 Participants (41.3% males) reported a median age of 19 **years** (mean value  $20 \pm 2.76$  **years**)  
21 and came from five education areas. Almost half of the sample was enrolled in Universities  
22 from Northern regions of Italy (49.4%) and came from public secondary schools (94.8%),  
23 mainly from a lyceum (75.6%).

24 **Table 2** summarizes the information regarding the organization of PE received at school.  
25 Answers are stratified by geographical area (North, Center, South) and p-values achieved by

1 comparing the sub-groups are reported. Overall, in the opinion of the students, the principal  
2 aim pursued during PE lessons was mainly recreation and, to a lesser extent, introduction to  
3 sports, but the students from central regions reported the achievement of psycho-physical  
4 wellbeing as the second main aim ( $P < .01$ ). More than half of the sample reported practical  
5 activities only during PE lessons and another high percentage of respondents (>40%) declared  
6 both practical and theoretical lessons, with a similar pattern across the whole Italian territory.  
7 However, a higher proportion of students who did not report any type of lessons was  
8 registered in Southern regions compared to the others ( $P < .01$ ). Volleyball is the most  
9 frequent activity practised during lessons, both in the whole sample and in the three  
10 subgroups, while differences were registered in the distribution of other sports ( $P < .01$ ).  
11 Similarly, theoretical lessons regarded mainly anatomy in all the geographical areas, while  
12 other items were differently distributed ( $P < .01$ ). About 90% of respondents reported the  
13 presence of a gym in the school, with no differences among the three areas ( $P = .087$ ).  
14 Instead, while equipment was also present in the majority of schools, it appeared to be less  
15 frequently available in Southern than in Central and Northern regions ( $P < .01$ ). More than  
16 half of the students declared their participation in PA proposed in extra-school time, with no  
17 geographical differences ( $P = .074$ ) (**Table 2**).

18 Approximately 60% of the sample reported current practice of PA, independently of the place  
19 of origin ( $P = .201$ ) (**Table 3**). However, in Central and Southern Italy, higher percentages of  
20 students reported practising sport at agonistic level, compared with Northern areas ( $P < .01$ )  
21 and this is reflected by the number of hours per week of PA ( $P < .01$ ). Regarding their  
22 **beliefs**, more than half of the sample reported no or a modest influence of PE on their current  
23 personal PA practice, with some differences among areas ( $P < .01$ ) (**Table 3**). However, the  
24 majority of the sample considered PE learning highly/moderately important, especially in

1 Southern regions ( $P < .01$ ). More than two thirds of respondents were satisfied with the PE  
2 received, mainly in Northern regions ( $P < .01$ ).

3 The multivariate regression models built to study the role of high school PE on the subsequent  
4 choice of education area and on the participation in PA, showed that, excluding gender, only  
5 extracurricular activities performed during the attendance of the secondary school were  
6 associated with the choice of MS curricula at university level (OR 2.15, IC95% 1.85-2.50)  
7 and with the current practice of PA (OR 1.68, IC95% 1.51-1.87) (**Table 4**). The models were  
8 fitted on 6,425 and on 6,355 complete observations, respectively.

9

## 10 **Discussion**

11 The present study was carried out to draft a picture of PE teaching in the Italian higher  
12 secondary school, as resulting from the **beliefs** of the students. **A first aim was to highlight**  
13 **possible geographical differences in equipment availability, teaching conditions and**  
14 **students' perceptions. Furthermore, the role of PE in determining the choice of future**  
15 **university studies and PA practice was evaluated.**

16 **The very high response rate of the survey (99.2%) was probably favored by the active**  
17 **participation of the investigators, constantly present in the classroom during the**  
18 **questionnaire administration in order to explain the aims of the study.**

19 The picture of PE that emerges from the study shows some differences within the country. **In**  
20 **general, PE lessons are seen as a moment of recreation in all the geographical areas,**  
21 **with percentages higher in the Center and South in comparison with the North. This can**  
22 **not be considered a negative aspect, but represents a limitation of PE teaching which**  
23 **should also provide information regarding the benefits of PA and the knowledge useful**  
24 **to introduce students to sports and PA outside the school context. In many cases**  
25 **teachers leave students free to undertake non structured physical activities during PE**

1 **hours, without the recommended integration between theory and practice, thus failing**  
2 **in part to fulfil their important role as motivators of young people to the practice of**  
3 **PA.**<sup>22</sup> Students from Southern areas declared higher levels of missing PE lessons, in  
4 accordance with a lower availability of equipment; this is probably related to the lower  
5 satisfaction declared. Nevertheless, this group considers PE highly important, also in  
6 addressing the choice to practise PA outside the school context.

7 The greater part of the respondents are currently engaged in PA, although the percentage of  
8 active students (58.1%) is not consistent with the data provided by the Italian Institute of  
9 Statistics in the investigation carried out in 2014 ([www.istat.it/it/archivio/128694](http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/128694)), which is  
10 around 74% for persons aged 18-24 years. However, in our sample, females, who always  
11 show lower levels of PA compared to their male counterparts, are more represented and, in  
12 addition, only students enrolled at University are included. Interestingly, although the  
13 declared PA participation is about the same in the different areas of the country, the practice  
14 of agonistic activities is significantly higher in the Center and South than in the Northern  
15 areas. This could be related to the higher number of students from Movement Sciences  
16 courses belonging to the Center and Southern subgroups (data not shown), who could be more  
17 inclined to practise agonistic PA.

18 Modalities of PE teaching in the higher secondary school partly affect the behaviors and  
19 choices of students; in fact the extracurricular activities offered by schools proved to be  
20 related to the choice of University course and to the current practice of PA. This result is in  
21 line with what was previously observed in the pilot study and highlights the role of school  
22 setting in movement promotion.<sup>39</sup> On the contrary, the role played by the curricular PE  
23 teaching does not seem as important, since it was not associated either with the choice of  
24 degree course or with the current participation in PA. **In accordance with Sanchez Oliva et**  
25 **al. and Meng et al., PE teaching could be an important tool to promote PA in young**

1 **people in relation to the type of the learning environment created by PE teachers, who**  
2 **should favor the motivational processes to determine enjoyment and interest in PA, and**  
3 **stimulate students to increase autonomy, competence and, consequently, satisfaction in**  
4 **PE.**<sup>40,41</sup>

5 The results of this study therefore point to the need to enhance PE teaching in the Italian  
6 school. This enhancement should be obtained through an increase of the time allocated to PE  
7 lessons and through their assignment to well-trained teachers, while extracurricular PA  
8 programs should be maintained and enhanced as a useful tool for PA promotion. Sallis et al.  
9 highlight that the quality of school PE can be improved through policies, teacher training, use  
10 of activities-focused “enhanced” curricula, and small class sizes.<sup>19</sup> **Hills et al. recognize the**  
11 **physical educators as key drivers of physical behavior change of youth, through an**  
12 **interactive teaching style, involving students, families and school staff.**<sup>22</sup> At the same  
13 time, our findings show that links with sport societies, sport promotion associations and  
14 institutions represents a good strategy and should be strengthened in order to promote sport  
15 participation in students and to increase their weekly PA levels. The high participation in  
16 school PA, including team and individual sports, academic clubs, and PE, is associated with  
17 adulthood PA.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, scientific evidences show a positive association between  
18 academic performance and PA, with a positive influence on concentration, memory and  
19 classroom behavior.<sup>43</sup>

20 All these aspects have been considered in the recent Government Decree of the Italian  
21 Ministry of Education ([www.labuonascuola.gov.it/](http://www.labuonascuola.gov.it/)) which resulted from a public consultation  
22 about the Italian school system. As regards PE teaching, this document foresees the  
23 introduction of the PE teacher with specific curriculum even in primary schools as a health  
24 policy, in order to increase social inclusion and promote the healthy and balanced growth of  
25 children and teens.<sup>44</sup> It is, in fact, well established that the expertise of PE staffing is

1 positively associated with better school PE and PA practices, including those outside the  
2 school.<sup>45</sup> The document has been recently approved by the Italian Parliament and it is hoped  
3 that its application will improve PE teaching in Italian schools.

#### 4 *Limitations of the study*

5 This investigation involved only university students, and degree courses were chosen not  
6 randomly, but on the basis of availability in the Universities participating in the study.  
7 Moreover, we did not consider the social and economic conditions of the students. Finally, a  
8 part of the freshmen included in the North and Center subgroups may come from Southern  
9 regions, which is a common occurrence in Italy, and females were more represented.  
10 However, the large size of the sample may have reduced the effects of confounding and bias.

11

#### 12 **Conclusions**

13 The study analyzed PE teaching in the higher secondary school and its possible influence on  
14 lifestyles and study choice in young adults. It was carried out on a wide sample recruited on  
15 the whole Italian territory and geographical differences were examined.

16 Our findings showed that PE is still not always considered and endorsed as an instrument for  
17 health promotion by students and, apparently, also by teachers. In addition, the lack of time  
18 and resources contribute to weaken its role, especially in the Southern area of the country.

19 In anticipation of the desired forthcoming innovations in the Italian school, extra-curricular  
20 school-based PA activities, by extending the time and effects of PE, seem to be a useful way  
21 to address youths toward active habits and professions.

22

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<b>VARIABLES</b>		<b>N (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	2896 (41.3)
	Female	4117 (58.7)
<b>Mean age (range)</b>		20 (17-25)
<b>Geographical area</b>	North	3476 (49.4)
	Center	1153 (16.4)
	South	2404 (34.2)
<b>Education area</b>	Movement Sciences	1227 (17.4)
	Economics	581 (8.2)
	Sciences	2470 (35.1)
	Medicine	1414 (20.1)
	Liberal arts	1341 (19.0)
<b>Higher secondary school type</b>	Public	6632 (94.8)
	Private	362 (5.2)
<b>Higher secondary school qualification</b>	Lyceum	5297 (75.6)
	Technical school	1363 (19.5)
	Professional school	272 (3.9)
	Other	72 (1.0)

**Table 1.** Descriptive analysis of the freshmen sample.

VARIABLES	NORTH	CENTER	SOUTH	$\chi^2$	TOTAL
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	(P)	
<b>PE aim</b>	Recreation	1,094 (34.8)	463 (46.7)	1,084 (51.3)	2,641 (42.2)
	Sport introduction	838 (26.7)	198 (20.0)	401 (19.0)	1,437 (23)
	Wellbeing	497 (15.8)	280 (28.2)	403 (19.1)	1,180 (19)
	Acquisition of knowledge	496 (15.8)	32 (3.2)	96 (4.5)	< .01* 624 (10.0)
	Physical aspect improvement	142 (4.5)	13 (1.3)	77 (3.6)	232 (3.7)
	Other	73 (2.3)	6 (0.6)	53 (2.5)	132 (2.1)
	Practical lessons	1,792 (52.4)	573 (50.4)	1,210 (51.1)	3,575 (51.7)
<b>PE teaching</b>	Theoretical lessons	17 (0.5)	7 (0.6)	34 (1.4)	< .01* 58 (0.8)
	Practical/Theoretical	1,517 (44.4)	509 (44.8)	956 (40.4)	2,977 (43)
	None	94 (2.7)	48 (4.2)	169 (7.1)	311 (4.5)
<b>Activities</b>	Volleyball	639 (30.0)	338 (48.8)	768 (50.0)	1,745 (40.1)
	Football	495 (23.3)	33 (4.8)	113 (7.4)	641 (14.7)
	Basket	308 (14.5)	90 (13)	217 (14.1)	615 (14.1)
	Gymnastics	176 (8.3)	142 (20.4)	269 (17.5)	< .01* 587 (13.5)
	Athletics	173 (8.1)	81 (11.7)	87 (5.7)	341 (7.8)
	Fitness	206 (9.7)	4 (0.6)	22 (1.4)	232 (5.3)
	Other	131 (6.1)	5 (0.7)	59 (3.8)	195 (4.5)
<b>Theoretical lessons</b>	Anatomy	778 (31.3)	241 (40.2)	538 (40.6)	1557 (35.3)
	PE/sport history	573 (23.0)	109 (18.2)	103 (7.8)	< .01* 944 (21.4)
	Nutrition	416 (16.7)	117 (19.5)	245 (18.5)	778 (17.6)

Physical Education role in Physical Activity Promotion

	Technical issues	377 (15.2)	40 (6.7)	262 (19.7)		595 (13.5)
	Physiology	342 (13.8)	92 (15.4)	178 (13.4)		537 (12.2)
<b>Presence of a gym</b>	No	323 (9.4)	116 (10.2)	278 (11.7)	.087	717 (10.3)
	Yes	3,113 (90.6)	1,027 (89.8)	2,097 (88.3)		6,237 (89.7)
<b>Equipment availability</b>	No	128 (4.0)	100 (9.4)	388 (17.8)	< .01*	616 (9.6)
	Yes	3,033 (96.0)	958 (90.6)	1,794 (82.2)		5,785 (90.4)
<b>Participation</b>						
<b>in extra-curricular activities</b>	No	1,716 (49.8)	536 (46.5)	1,126 (47.4)	.074	3,378 (48.4)
	Yes	1,732 (50.2)	616 (53.5)	1,251 (52.6)		3,599 (51.6)

**Table 2.** Information about personal PE experience of freshmen in higher secondary school.  $\chi^2$  test was used to compare subgroups from the three areas.

**PE**= Physical Education; \* = p value less than significance level assumed.

VARIABLES		NORTH	CENTER	SOUTH	$\chi^2$	TOTAL
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	(P)	
<b>Current PA</b>	No	1,479 (42.8)	449 (38.8)	1,002 (42.2)	.201	2,930 (41.9)
	Yes	1,978 (57.2)	709 (61.2)	1,372 (57.8)		4,059 (58.1)
	Agonistic level	984 (50.0)	418 (59.5)	929 (67.7)	< .01*	2,331 (57.6)
	Recreational level	986 (50.0)	284 (40.5)	443 (32.3)		1,713 (42.4)
	< 3 day/week	802 (40.4)	201 (28.7)	335 (24.4)	< .01*	1,338 (33.0)
	$\geq$ 3 days/week	1,184 (59.6)	499 (71.3)	1,036 (75.6)		2,719 (67.0)
<b>PE motivated current PA level</b>	Highly	197 (9.0)	73 (9.6)	251 (15.5)	< .01*	521 (11.4)
	Moderately	524 (24.1)	202 (26.6)	475 (29.3)		1,201 (26.4)
	Modestly	765 (35.1)	257 (33.8)	463 (28.6)		1,485 (32.6)
	No	692 (31.8)	228 (30.0)	430 (26.6)		1,350 (29.6)
<b>Importance attributed to PE</b>	High	663 (19.2)	231 (20.2)	722 (30.2)	< .01*	1,616 (23.2)
	Moderate	1,224 (35.6)	395 (34.5)	830 (34.8)		2,449 (35.1)
	Low	1,172 (34)	395 (34.5)	639 (26.8)		2,206 (31.6)
	None	387 (11.2)	123 (10.8)	195 (8.2)		705 (10.1)
<b>Satisfaction with PE learning</b>	No	930 (27.2)	405 (35.7)	933 (39.7)	< .01*	2,268 (32.8)
	Yes	2,492 (72.8)	731 (64.3)	1,415 (60.3)		4,638 (67.2)

**Table 3.** Current PA practice and beliefs about personal PE experience of freshmen in higher secondary school.

$\chi^2$  test was used to compare subgroups from the three areas.

**PE**= Physical Education; **PA** = Physical Activity; \* = p value less than significance level assumed.

		Dependent variables	
Independent variables		Outcome 1 OR (IC95%)	Outcome 2 OR (IC95%)
Gender	Female	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
	Male	.29 (.25 –.34)	.45 (.41 –.51)
Geographical area	North		
	Center	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
	South		
Higher secondary school qualification	Other		
	Lyceum	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
	Technical school		
	Professional school		
PE teaching	None		
	Practical lessons		<i>n.s.</i>
	Theoretical lessons	<i>n.s.</i>	
	Both		
Presence of a gym	No	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
	Yes		
Equipment availability	No	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
	Yes		
Practice of extracurricular activities	No	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>
	Yes	2.15 (1.85 – 2.50)	1.68 (1.51 – 1.87)



**Table 4.** Results of the logistic regression analysis. **Outcome 1:** Choice of education area; **Outcome 2:** PA/sport practice.



**Figure 1.** Locations of the universities participating in the study.