

## THE IMPACT OF AN AMATEUR SWIMMING COMPETITION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MASS SPORT AND ON THE PERFORMANCE EVOLUTION OF THE SWIMMING CHILDREN

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**ABSTRACT.** The first swimming competitions for children who practice swimming as a leisure sport organized at the "Universitas" Swimming Complex were held from 2013, these being only demonstrative for parents, as an open lesson at the end of each calendar year. Starting with 2017 these competitions were organized and monitored more closely not only as a demonstration lesson but as a sports competition for amateurs, the rules being adapted according to the F.I.N.A. This article will show graphically and statistically a substantial increase of participants in this type of activity, which is due mostly to emotions and feelings both before and after the competition. Feelings of joy, sadness, emotions experienced during the contest lead to an intrinsic motivation, which causes the child to come with pleasure to the training and to prepare more intensely for the next contest. The monitoring of the subjects started from the year 2017 by attending the swimming courses and it was proved that after each organized swimming contest the number of participants in the training courses increased and at the same time the results obtained were improved.

**Keywords:** *swimming, children, competition, mass sport, performance evolution*

**REZUMAT.** *Impactul unei competiții de înot pentru amatori asupra dezvoltării sportului de masă și asupra evoluției performanței copiilor practicanți de înot.* Înotul este o activitate care aduce o multitudine de beneficii, de la cele fizice până la cele mentale și sociale. Înotul oferă un excelent antrenament cardiovascular, are un rol important în tonifierea musculaturii și creșterea capacității pulmonare. Un sport recomandat tuturor categoriilor de vârstă, în special copiilor și persoanelor cu deficient de postură. Este o opțiune excelentă pentru a face mișcare în orice perioadă a anului, dar este o activitate mai populară mai ales pe timpul verii, când se poate practica în bazine descoperite sau chiar la mare. Pentru copii, înotul poate fi considerat un sport

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placitor, și de aceea se încearcă diferite metode pentru a atrage copiii să practice acest sport. Ideea concursului a fost creată pentru a atrage mai mulți copii care să practice înotul ca activitate de recreere. Un concurs de înot pentru amatori oferă copiilor satisfacții care stimulează practicarea sportului în mod cât mai frecvent. Aceste satisfacții constau în premiile oferite de organizatori, sentimentele obținute în timpul concursului, sentimentul de reușită, bucuria părinților etc. Toate aceste aspecte îi ajută pe copii să îndrăgească înotul și să practice în mod constant această activitate sportivă. După organizarea primului concurs cu caracter mai oficial, numărul participanților la cursurile de înot a crescut semnificativ în cadrul Complexului de natație Universitas. Aici a început monitorizarea mai atentă a acestui eveniment. Timp de doi ani au fost monitorizate în permanență următoarele aspecte: numărul copiilor participanți la cursurile de înot, frecvența de participare săptămânală, numărul copiilor care participă la concursurile organizate și timpii obținuți de aceștia la concurs, la proba de 50 m liber. Pentru a avea date relevante, la calcularea timpilor au fost luați în considerare doar copii cu vârste cuprinse între șapte și nouă ani, la fiecare concurs.

***Cuvinte cheie:** înot, copii, competiție, sportul de masă, evoluția performanței*

## **Introduction**

Learning how to swim contributes to children's development in many ways. Swimming benefits for children include mental and physical development (Vorob'eva, 2019).

Any activity in the pool has very low impact on their bodies, and the added resistance also means they use more energy than they would out of the water. It really gives the whole body a workout without any strain being put on your child's joints (Kaur, 2019).

Swimming keeps children's heart and lungs healthy due to the stimulation of cardiovascular activity, improves strength and flexibility, increases stamina. Moreover, it improves the balance of the body and posture. Due to exercise during swimming, children develop their mind-body connection, and due to the increase of endorphins in the brain, swimming help children to effectively relieve their stress (Bass, 2015).

Swimming benefits also include life-saving skills that every child should learn (Vorob'eva, 2019).

Swimming provides challenges, rewards and accomplishments, which helps children to become self-confident and believe in their abilities. They also

can have plenty of opportunities to make friends and grow in confidence (Day & Roberts, 2019).

Swimming can teach competitive values to children, mostly if they take part in swimming competitions, even if they are amateurs (William, 2009). Determination is another important trait swimming teaches (Porcar, 2012).

Competitive swimming for kids has many benefits, ones that will have a positive effect on the children's health throughout their lives (Kang, 2017). Here are the main benefits to competitive swimming for kids:

- Develop proper stroke techniques and become a stronger swimmer
- Exciting way to make friends and have fun
- Learn the importance of hard work
- Learn positive sportsmanship skills
- Learn the value of a healthy lifestyle
- A lifetime sport they can practice into their adult years
- Keeping track of the pace clock to determine speed is a great workout for the brain

## **Objectives**

The aim of this research paper is the monitoring of the development of amateur swimming as a mass sport, after some competitions for amateur children and the impact of these on the children's obtained performance. We had followed four important factors. One of them is the number of participants at the competitions, the second factor is the time which was obtained by each child at 50 m freestyle. The third factor that we followed was the frequency of participations of the children at courses, and the most important factor, the number of children who practice amateur swimming weekly.

## **Materials and methods**

The observed children practice amateur swimming at the "Universitas" swimming complex. They are members of the following sports clubs: Active Swim, Ego, ForXcape and Ebihalak.

Within this research four main factors were followed and measured. The first measurement in the research is the time obtained after the completion of 50 m freestyle swimming. For a valid result we used only the time obtained by the fastest 50 children aged between 7 to 9 years. The second mensuration

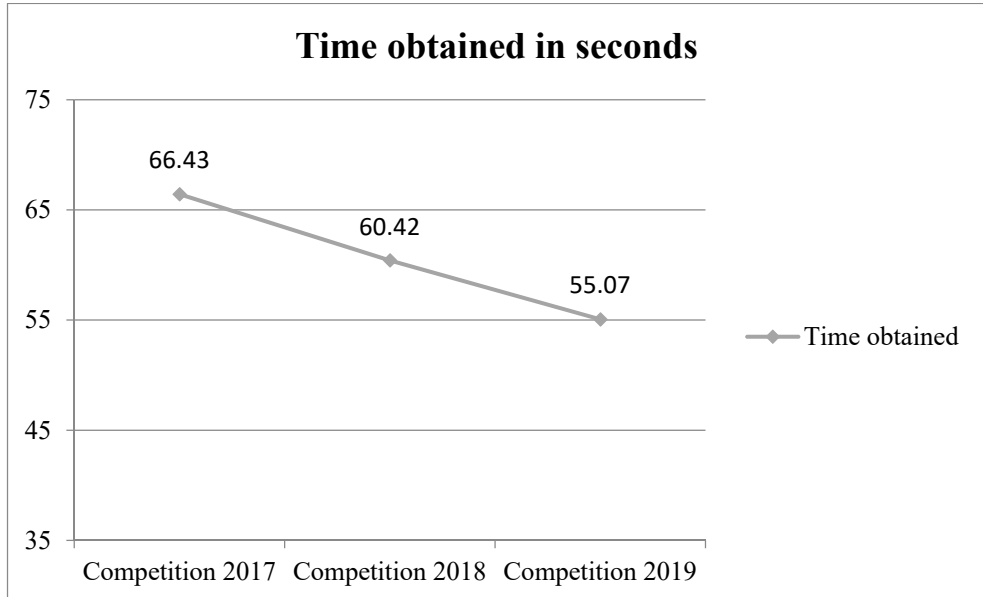
is the total number of participating children at our competitions. The third observed factor is the total number of children who attend the courses organized at “Universitas” swimming complex. Here we count the beginner adult classes too. This is the most important factor for our research. The fourth and the last mensuration is the frequency of participation at the courses.

The main method in our case is the observation method. We followed every group for two years, to get proper results.

The measurements were carried out between March 2017 and December 2019, at “Universitas” swimming pool, from Cluj-Napoca, during controlled training activities, and during the competitions organized at the same place.

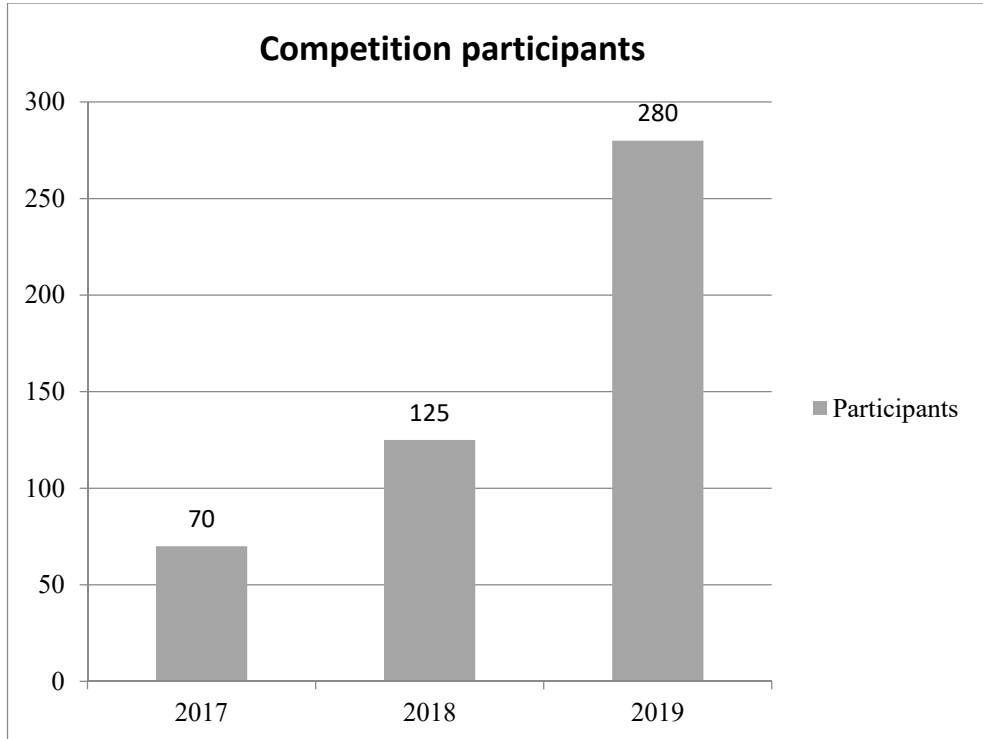
## Results

The times obtained by the children in the contest decreased significantly from the 2017 contest to the 2019 contest. For valid results, the best 50 times from each contest were considered. The times were obtained after completing 50 m freestyle swimming.



**Fig. 1.** Time obtained in seconds

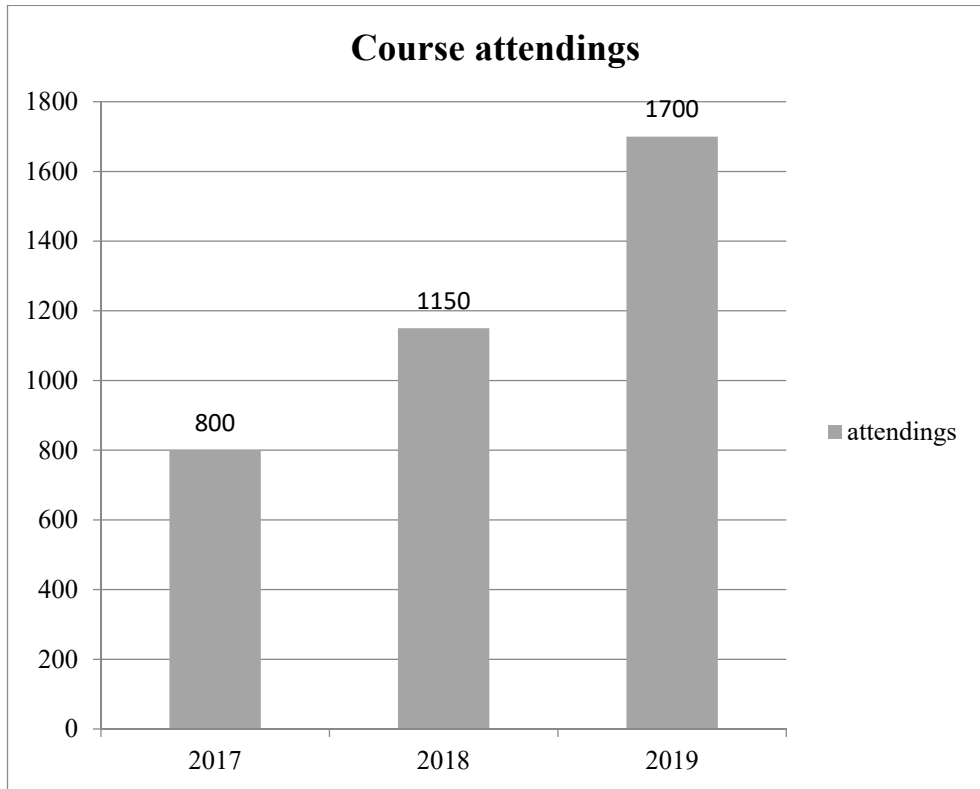
The average time in the 2017 competition was 66.43 sec and in 2019 it decreased to 55.07 sec. We can say that it is a very good improvement.



**Fig. 2.** Number of participants at the competition

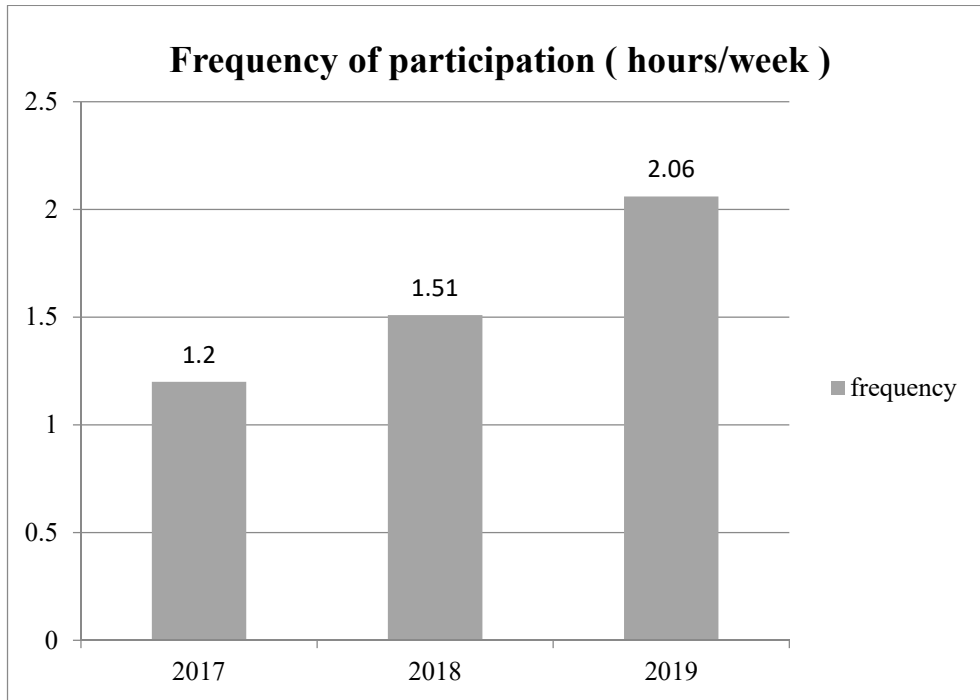
The number of participants in 2017 was 70, in 2018 125 children participated and in 2019 the number increased significantly to 280 competitors. The increase of number of participants is very significant for each age group, but especially for children aged between seven and nine years.

From the first competition organized until the competition in 2019, the number of children who practice swimming has doubled. In 2017, the "Universitas" Swimming Complex had 800 children enrolled in swimming lessons, and in 2019 the number increased to 1700 children who practice swimming weekly. It is a significant increase.



**Fig. 3.** Number of children who attend the courses at “Universitas” swimming pool

In 2017 children frequented swimming lessons one hour per week, in 2018 the frequency increased to 1.5 hours per week, and in 2019 to 2.06 hours per week. In the pre-contest periods this number is usually even higher (2.88 hours / week) which indicates that these events have an important role in promoting mass sports. The pre-competition period was set to 5 weeks.



**Fig. 4.** The frequency of participation of courses

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, we can say that after analyzing the data obtained in the 2 years of observation, each indicator shows a significant increase. These amateur competitions have become increasingly popular. Along with the increase in the number of competitors, both the number of swimming practitioners and the frequency of weekly practice of this sport have increased. These competitions bring a benefit to mass sports by attracting children to practice swimming as a leisure activity.

By practicing more frequently, children also get much better times at the completion of a length of pool. This aspect can also be beneficial for swimming as a performance sport, because it motivates children to work harder and get better results.

### **Conflict of interest**

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