The effect of canceling homework on academic performance and free time.

Ukasha Balabi 11A

Nazarbayev Intellectual School

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**Introduction**

"The goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge but to create the possibilities for a child to invent and discover, to create a man who is capable of doing new things."

**© Jean Piaget**

Recently I have noticed that my classmates and most of the students at my school who are studying with the education system are very tired and do not have enough time for self-development. So I wanted to know what the reasons are, and how to reduce it. That is, students receive a strong load that affects their moral and emotional state, which leads to a decrease in their productivity in the lessons.

In almost all countries, students are given homework at schools, which in turn takes a long time to complete. Although the student could spend his valuable time on diversified and sustainable development. Such a constant load worsens the condition as a whole, the student works continuously for the sake of mark "excellent", which as a result makes it is tired and depressed. Students have so many loads that a stereotype has already appeared that many students hate school and study. This stereotype forms a false concept as a school and all that is connected with it is evil.

As for the students of Kazakhstan, the ideas in my project can make their life easier, which will allow self-develop in other aspects of life. That is, if there is free time, the student will be able to get achievements in creativity, sports, and social life. For me, a heavy load of lessons and homework takes up a large amount of time and energy that I could spend on the diverse development of a person, such as sports or art. I think that applies to most students. It means I want to develop basketball skills and learn how to draw beautifully but don’t have enough time.

Since I am a student, I am biased in this situation, because as a student I try to make my school life easier. As soon as finish conducting the experiment, I will suggest our school administration to study the results of my research and suggest implementing it at our school. I will tell them about benefits and how the project can improve the productivity of students in their studies. In this way I want to make a contribution to our student life.

From my vantage point of view, it seems that the system of education does not allow students to spend their free time in the way they want.

**Aims**

It was chosen this particular problem, since most students at school repeatedly encounter it. Moreover, it is necessary to make significant changes to the education system, in other words, to contribute to the future intellectual potential of the country.

This research project will answer these questions:

* Will abolishing homework effect self-development? (self-development in areas such as sports, creativity, hobby)
* Will abolishing homework effect on academic performance?
* What kind of consequences may occur if homework is abolished?
* What will the students actually do if homework is abolished?

It is assumed that as a result, the students will be divided into two parts. The first and most part are those students who will really fill their free time with useful activities, and the rest will do useless activities and just waste time. As soon as finish conducting the experiment, it will be suggested our school administration to study the results of my research and suggest implementing it at our school. It will be telling them about benefits and how the project can improve the versatility of students in their studies. In this way it will make a contribution to our student life.

**Context**

In the 21st century, intellectual labour has become more appreciated than physical labour accordingly, education is a priority among young people. However, the issues of strengthening the emotional state of schoolchildren have long been of concern to scientists. The main reason for the development of neuropsychiatric disorders is the difficult living conditions of students, such as overwork, excessive and surplus information, and disinterest in learning or in the subject. Therefore, it became necessary to pay serious attention to the problem of student overload at school.

Many schools have such an education system that provides redundant information and teaches subjects that senior students may not need at all in his future profession, so students may feel overwhelmed by excess information. Such systems do not provide a choice of subjects at will, as in some schools in the United States. After all, not every senior student needs deep knowledge: physics, chemistry and biology to get a job such as a lawyer, director, actor, artist, singer, and composer.

No less important factor that affects the workload of students is homework. In almost all countries, students are given homework at schools, which in turn takes a long time to complete. Although the student could spend his valuable time on diversified and sustainable development. Such a constant load worsens the condition as a whole, senior student works continuously for the sake of mark "excellent", which as a result makes him or her tired and depressed. Senior students have so many loads that a stereotype has already appeared that many students hate school and study. This stereotype forms a false concept as a school and all that is connected with it is evil. The health status of modern students can get a negative effect manifested in the form of an increase in the number of diseases, emotional disorders, and physical fatigue. As noted by Arshinskaya, E. L., who is author of bulletin of Tomsk State Pedagogical University, during the time of schooling, the level of health of schoolchildren is reduced by 4-5 times, no more than 2-4% finish school almost healthy. Emotional and physical spending on learning is increasing. It is worth noting that the increase in health deviations of adolescents largely depends on the volume and intensity of study (Arshinskaya, E. L. (2014). The impact of the training load on the emotional state of students. Bulletin of Tomsk State Pedagogical University, (5 (146)), 58-64.).

As it was written in report of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, setting homework, claiming all the free time of the child in the afternoon, teachers need to clearly determine what goals the homework fulfills and what its role is in getting the student out of school. Another factor that affects the application of homework is the lack of the formation of experience of choice during school life. The choice is always connected with the student’s own activity, with the organization of independent activity. “The main problem is that neither choice nor independence is supported by our school culture” (Education and society: Is Russia ready to invest in its future? Report of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation (2007) // Education Issues. 2007. No. 4, pp. 5–103).

In Organization of homework for students, homework was defined as work “outside the group environment and without direct guidance from the teacher.” The main purpose of homework was the development of observation, examination and research skills, the organization of students' home life, inculcation of interest in the book, preparation for group work, consolidation of classwork (Organization of homework for students of 7 years old. Tsutranpros methodical letter [Text]. - M.: Transpechat NKPS, 1927. - 13 pp. (Center, exercise on education on transport)). Following studies conducted in Russia by Uskova Irina Vladimirovna, who is author of Yaroslavl Pedagogical Bulletin, on the question of the volume of homework expressed the opinion: “A lot of time is spent on homework assignments - sometimes up to 5 hours a day "," a busy day, there is no time for a good rest. "Parents of students ask to" reduce or cancel homework for the weekend. "However, some parents note that homework is necessary to repeat everything, to penetrate, feel the material presented in the classroom, prepare for exams (Uskova Irina Vladimirovna (2017). Development of didactic ideas about the homework of schoolchildren. Yaroslavl Pedagogical Bulletin, (3), 71-76).

But student experiences don’t always match these results. On our own Student Life in America survey, over 50% of students reported feeling stressed, 25% reported that homework was their biggest source of stress, and on average teens are spending one-third of their study time feeling stressed, anxious, or stuck (https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/homework-wars).

As noted by R.C. Lohmann, who is a professional counselor and international author of numerous books, School can cause a lot of stress, which can lead to other serious problems, like sleep deprivation. According to the National Sleep Foundation, teens need between eight and 10 hours of sleep each night, but only 15 percent are even getting close to that amount. During the school week, most teens only get about six hours of zzz’s a night, and some of that sleep deficit may be attributed to homework (https://health.usnews.com/wellness/for-parents/articles/2018-03-20/how-much-homework-is-too-much-for-our-teens).

**Methods**

It is intended to do a **survey** in order to be aware of the students’ attitude to homework, the time spent on it, as well as their desire for self-development. Research question is “will abolishing homework effect self-development (self-development in areas such as sports, creativity, hobby)”. The survey results will help to find out how much time students spend on homework, if they have enough time for self-development, and which of these two aspects prevail in their school life. The choice fell on the students of this school, it will be conducted a survey among 100 students, because it is enough for providing objective data. Also as they are given a greater academic load, in comparison with other schools. That is, reducing the load can lead to versatile self-development, as well as stress during the day to decrease. That’s why work efficiency might improve during the lesson. In this method there will be a quantitative type of results. That is, I find out how many students do not have time to engage in self-development due to complete homework. In this method there will be a quantitative type of results. That is, it will be find out how many students do not have time to engage in self-development due to complete homework.

It is planned to **interview** three parents and three teachers in this project to find out their opinion about the problem and their position. Research question is “what kind of consequences may occur if homework is abolished?”. Through an interview, it will be find out what they think about the abolition of homework and what consequences may occur. Another important aspect will be to ask whether student need the abolition of the home task. The interview will be taken from the three parent and one psychologist. Thus, it is available to get opinions on the possible outcomes of this implementation, looking at it from a different angle. The students themselves can only think about the positive, that is, only self-develop, but the opinion of the parents and the psychologist can be negative, that is, the students will probably spend time in vain. The results of this method will be qualitative, because it will be find out their personal opinion on this issue. The interview will supplement the picture of the student’s state and position through the opinion of their environment (parent, psychologist). However, this will only be an opinion, since there are no facts or statistics. This means that interviewees may not fully know students` current situation. For this will be carried out focus discussion group to find out what actually do students in free time.

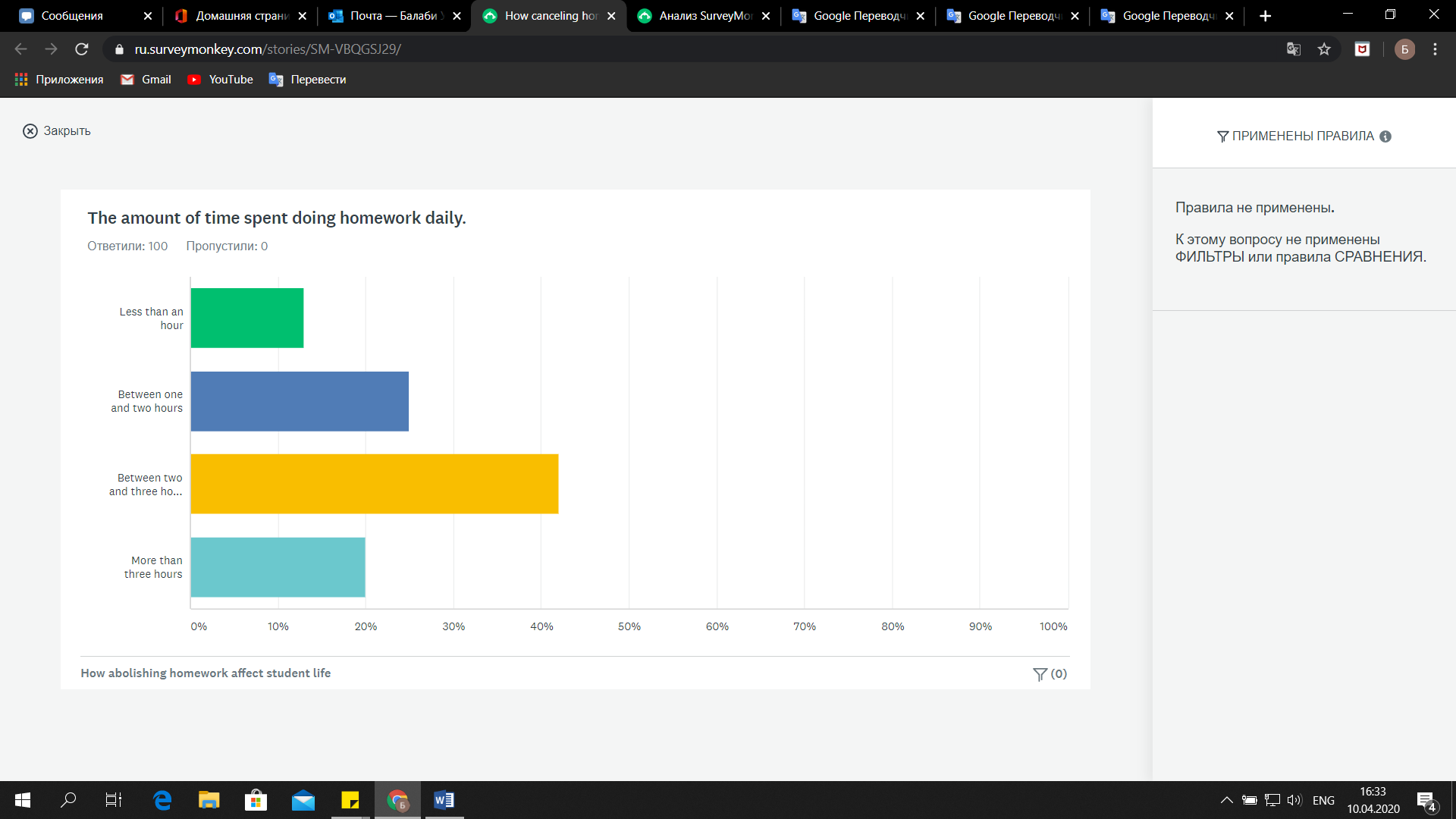
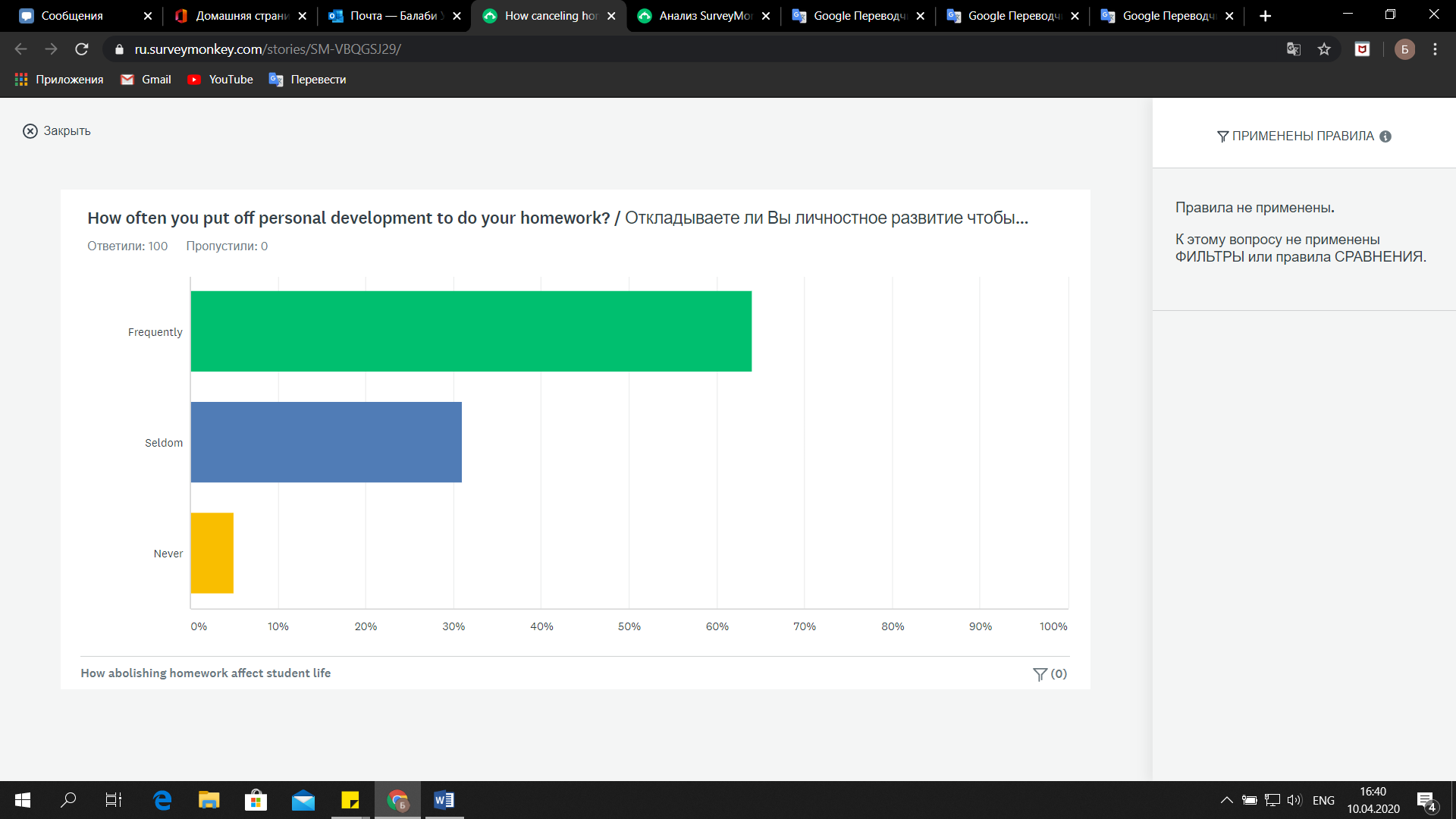
The **focus discussion group** method will be used to find out what students will do in their free time. Research question is “what will the students actually do if homework is abolished”. This method will involve 6 students of different classes. To get a big picture of a possible situation. The results will be positive, because it is important to find out what the children will be doing. According to this method, studies will be not enough confirmed, because at the beginning of the discussion it will be said that everything is carried out anonymously, it is necessary to be sincerely honest. However, students may lie better to seem better. because of which the answers may not be reliable. And to find out whether children spend productive time, a survey will be conducted.

**Results**

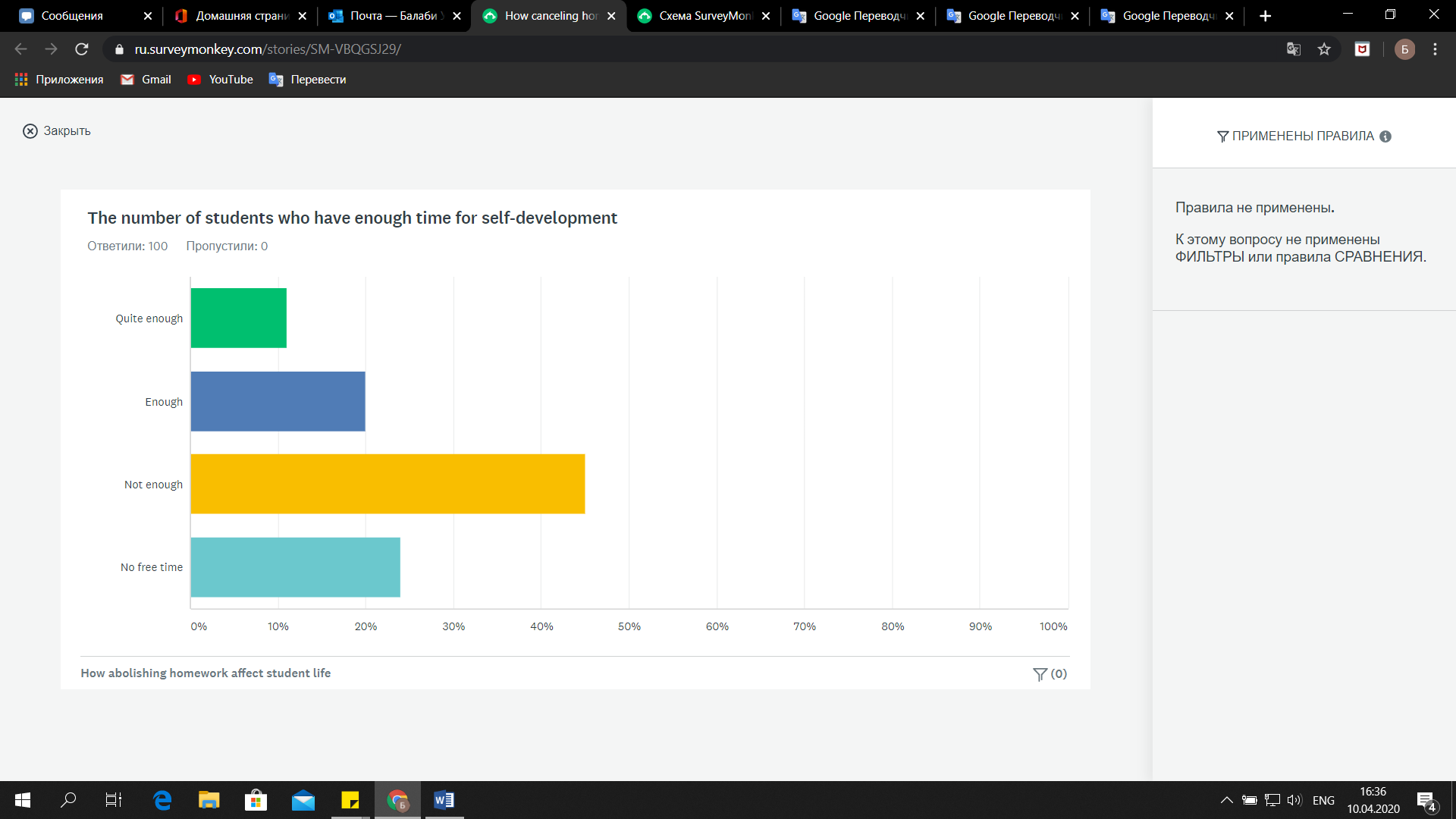
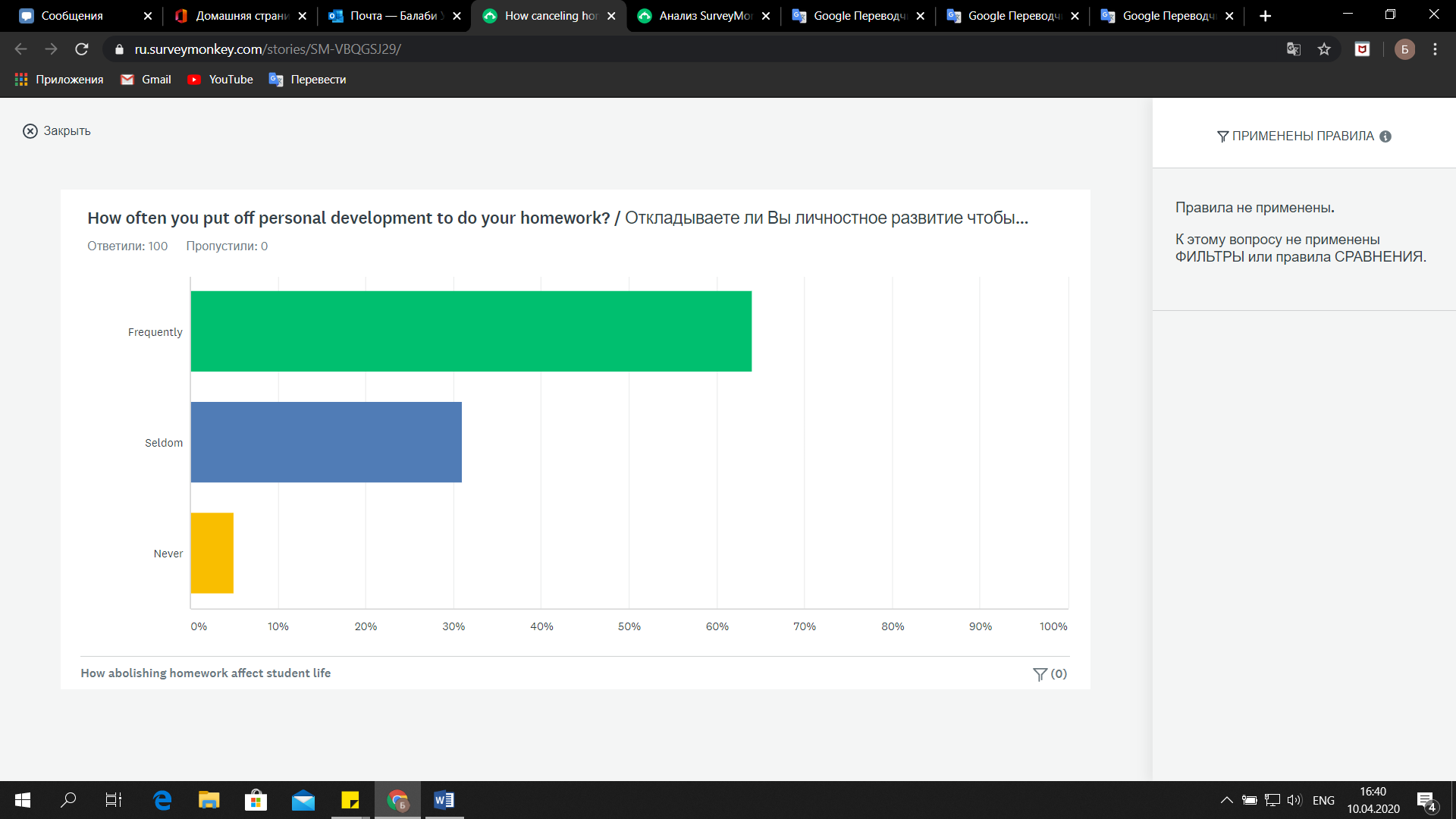
The survey was conducted among 100 students of Nazarbayev Intellectual school of Oskemen; the interviews were taken from the 3 parents and 3 teachers; the focus group discussion with students of NIS.

There are some key points from the survey, interviews and the discussion:

1. According to the results of the survey, 64% of students frequently put off self-development in order to complete homework, which in turn takes on average more than 2 hours to complete (image 1 and 2). Additionally, all participants of the interview believe that students doing homework are sometimes overloaded. So, in this case, there is correlation between what the students answered in survey and what the interviewee (parents and teachers) think. In other words, the majority of educational process participants who took part in the research (students, parents and teachers) concluded that the students of NIS get tired during all-day devoting themselves to study.

(Image 1) The amount of time spent doing homework daily.(Image 2) Frequency of putting off self-development for homework.

1. Corresponding to the results of the survey, about 70% of students do not have enough time for self-devolepment (image 3), also 64% of students frequently put off self-development in order to complete homework (image 4). Furthermore, 2 out of 3 parents were against homework. The first respondent said that the child is busy with homework till late at night. Additionally he/she thinks that homework makes a child tired and this affects the student's performance negatively. The second respondent says that children should rest at home. Everything related to study should be done at school. As an argument, they said the fact that the student goes swimming additionally, but the coach does not set homework for the student to learn. There is also a correlation between what the students treated in survey and what the interviewee (parents) thinks. The correlation is that students do not have enough time for self-development, because they do their homework instead, which ultimately leads to fatigue and exhaustion.

(Image 3) The number of students who have enough time for self-development. (Image 4) Frequency of putting off self-development for homework.

1. According to the answers of the survey, junior students are not overloaded with homework and have enough free time, but the majority of senior students (who participated in survey) spend a lot of time to complete all homework. Based on discussion with students it is proved, that students of high school sometimes are overloaded. In accordance with results of discussion, the most of senior students do not have enough freetime for self-development, and believe that it is better when homework is canceled. This may lead to appereance of free time. However, since all teachers interviewed often notice that the students are really overworked due to homework and look exhausted, especially students of high school. But despite this, teachers argue that homework is needed to reinforce the theme. One of the teaches replied that if homework is cancelled, students will be relaxed, and their academic performance may deteriorate. In addition, the curator, who also participated in the interview, said that the children are indeed overloaded. But at the same time curator says that student needs to complete the homework in a timely manner, adhering to time management, then there will be no problem. Moreover, all three pedagogues concluded that homework is needed, but the amount of homework needs to be significantly reduced. So, in this case, there is no correlation between students and teachers.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Problems “due to” completing homework | Do you always keep up completing your homework on time? | | Have you ever been overloaded “because of” completing homework? | | Will reduction of homework amount make your daily routine easier? | | |
| Junior students | Senior students | Junior students | Senior students | Junior students | Senior students | |
| Yes | 87% | 17% | 0% | 68% | 100% | | 100% |
| no | 13% | 83% | 100% | 32% | 0% | | 0% |

1. Relying on the discussion, students want their homework to be clear in goals, so as not to waste extra energy and time on assignments. In other words, homework should be short and preparing student to summative assessment (usually homework has a lot of tasks which are related only to topic, the number of tasks should be reduced). Furthermore, all three pedagogues argue that homework is needed, but the amount of homework needs to be significantly reduced. There is correlation between what students wanted and teachers argued. That is to say that decreasing amount of homework will solve the issue of overload of students and lack of time for self-development.

Firstly, students actually spend a lot of time doing homework (between 2-3 hours on average), but maybe it’s not the quantity but the discipline of the student. It means students can complete all homework on time if they are focused on it. Perhaps, if a student learns to manage time properly, then he will be able to keep up with everything. Secondly, the abolition of homework will negatively affect academic performance. Thirdly, it is not a fact that the student will use all free time productively.

It was unexpected that about half of the students (45%) do not have enough time for self-development and the fact that 24% of the students do not have free time at all. Additionally, it is surprising that in most cases adults are against the abolition of homework, knowing that the student is overloaded because of too much homework. Also junior students want to reduce the amount of homework if they have enough time and are not overloaded. this is because children want to relax and have more fun after a day at school. It is obvious that if there is a choice between rest and work, children will choose rest.

**Conclusion**

The aim of research project was reached and project done in order to identify how the potential reduction of homework affects academic performance and free time. So, the information obtained from the methodology helps to draw the following conclusions:

1. Will abolishing homework effect self-development?

As noted by R.S. Lohmann, in America, more than 35% of students reported feeling stressed and doing homework was their main source of stress. The same students do not have time for hobby and develop themselves in other areas like sports and creativity. Additionally, referring to the answers of the students in the survey, it can be concluded that students do not have enough time for self-development, because doing homework takes a lot of time. In addition, there are often cases when the student postpones self-development in order to finish homework. This means homework not only takes a lot of time from the student, but also causes stress for some. It is believed that without homework the child will increase interest in learning, there will be time for a hobby and self-development, and the level of stress and fatigue will decrease. Therefore, students might have more time to develop diversely.

2. What kind of consequences may occur if homework is abolished?

The Following studies from Yaroslavl Pedagogical Bulletin, conducted in Russia by Uskova Irina on the question of the volume of homework expressed the opinion: “A lot of time is spent on homework assignments – sometimes up to 5 hours a day ", "a busy day, there is no time for a good rest". Parents of students ask to "reduce or cancel homework for the weekend". However, some parents note that homework is necessary to revise and understand the material, and prepare for exams. Approximately the same results can be seen in the interview with parents and teachers. In most cases, adults are against the abolition of homework, even if a student is loaded because of it. Additionally, referring to the answers of the students (in the survey), 3/4 of the students do not have enough time for their interests (playing sports, dancing, and hobbies). Correlating these results, it can be concluded that it is necessary to reduce the amount of homework. In other words, when reducing the number of tasks, correspondingly less time will be spent on them. Respectively appear the amount of time for other useful activities like self-development. Moreover, the level of academic performance will remain constant.

3. What will the students actually do if homework is abolished?

Since 50% of students will spend their free time in vain according to the survey. it is undeniable that academic performance worsens. Based on focus discussion group's results, students acknowledge that they will only review material before SAU or SAT, and the rest of the time will be spent on their interests. Without revision of the material, it is expected that the level of knowledge drop. Only responsible and independent students who understand the importance of revising material will independently review the notes.

Initially, it is believed that the bulk of students would be involved in self-development, when homework is cancelled. However, in the survey, only half of the students answered that they would be engaged in self-development in their free time. Such results were unexpected. In addition, potential reduction of homework more affects academic performance and free time of senior students. Because junior students are not overloaded due to completing homework, while the majority of senior students is overloaded. Such a survey result is most unanticipating. It was believed that the abolition of homework will make life easier for all students equally. The results of the survey are reliable, because it can be generalised to whole school population as included the representatives of all grades. Therefore, hypothesis is proved and it does correspond to reality.

**Evaluation**

Even though all the research aims were achieved, it does not feel strongly confident about conclusion due to several reasons:

1. Part of the people who were interviewed as the experts were not true experts, because they do not have wide enough knowledge about potential reduction of homework effects on academic performance and free time thus, they did not give real educated opinions on that issue. For example, the parents with whom the conversation was held do not fully know what their children are doing. A student can spend a lot of time doing homework because he is distracted by phone, video games, TV shows, or movies. Because of such obstacles, the student cannot concentrate on homework. Therefore, parents may not suspect why some children do their homework until night. To avoid such situations, it was necessary to determine who the expert is – “to modify the sample” and increase the number of respondents.
2. The survey sample group is partially inappropriate. For more detailed and accurate results, it was necessary to conduct separate surveys for junior and senior classes. After all, it is obvious that high school students have more workloads than junior classes. To avoid such situations, it is necessary to conduct a survey separately for junior and senior classes. This would help to determine how overloaded the junior and senior classes are more accurately, as well as whether all NIS students need potential reduction of homework.
3. When concluding, the fact that the student can easily be distracted by phone, video game or social networks during completing homework was ignored. Throughout the project, it was believed that the set amount of homework was a lot, because of this, students spend a lot of time on completion. However, the reason for such a relatively long time to complete homework is not only the number of tasks, but also the discipline of the student himself. Next time interview of focus discussion group, it should be born in mind that the questions should include all the aspects about effect on completing homework.

Although there were some weaknesses mentioned above, the following strengths have to be evaluated:

1. Some of the survey answers and the experts` answers were correlated between each other. For example, the students replied that they devote a lot of time to doing homework, teachers and parents of the students agreed with this opinion as well. After all, such a lifestyle does not leave time for self-development.
2. The research methodology design helped well to conclude, especially the survey and the interviews. Their answers have been analyzed and the major part of the conclusion section is based on that.

**Further Research**

To improve existing work, it is needed to first change one research method: focus group discussion. To obtain more accurate information and make the project more reliable, one could conduct a social experiment or observation. For instance, students can lie during the discussion by saying that all their free time will be devoted to self-development. Such actions adversely affect the reliability of the results. To prevent this, a covert non-participant observation should be performed. This method makes it possible to find out what students do in their free time. Thus, the output will be more reliable.

During the survey method, an unexpected result arose that only half of the students were ready to devote their free time to useful activities. The hypothesis stated that the main part of students would be interested in self-development, but it turned out that only half. Such unexpected results prompted a new research idea. The reason for the low interest of students to do self development at free time could be investigated. It used to be that everyone would be engaged in self-development, since this is a vital necessity. But it was found out that other people perceive it differently and each has their own attitude to self-development. Therefore, the abolition of homework will not lead to the fact that all students will be engaged in self-development, moreover, this will destructively affect the performance of students. A secondary study stated that students were overloaded with homework, which made them feel tired. However, if the homework is not canceled, but significantly reduced, in school students will have extra time which can be filled out in self-development.

**Bibliography**

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**Appendices**

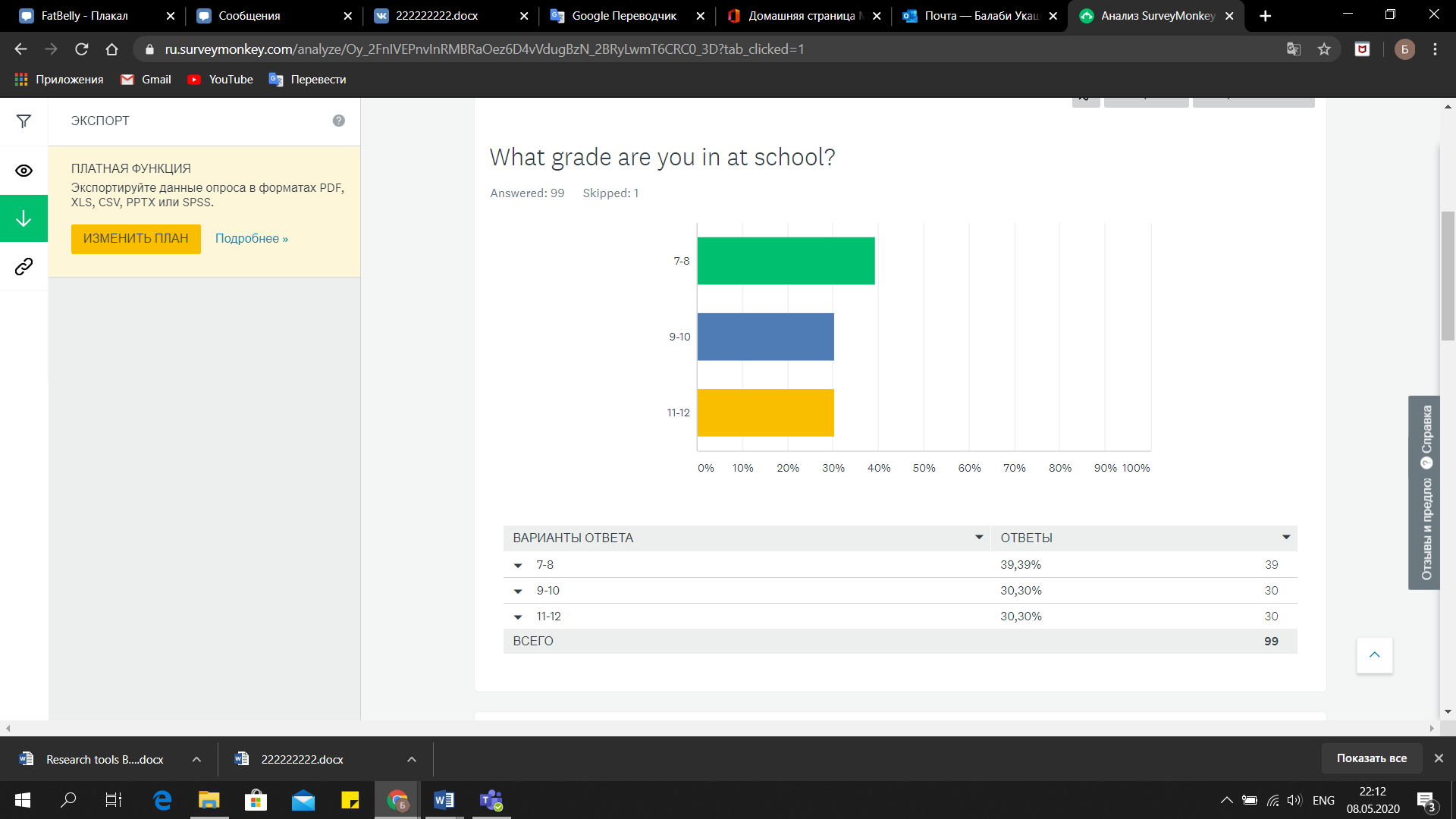
Appendix 1

Survey

**Questions:**

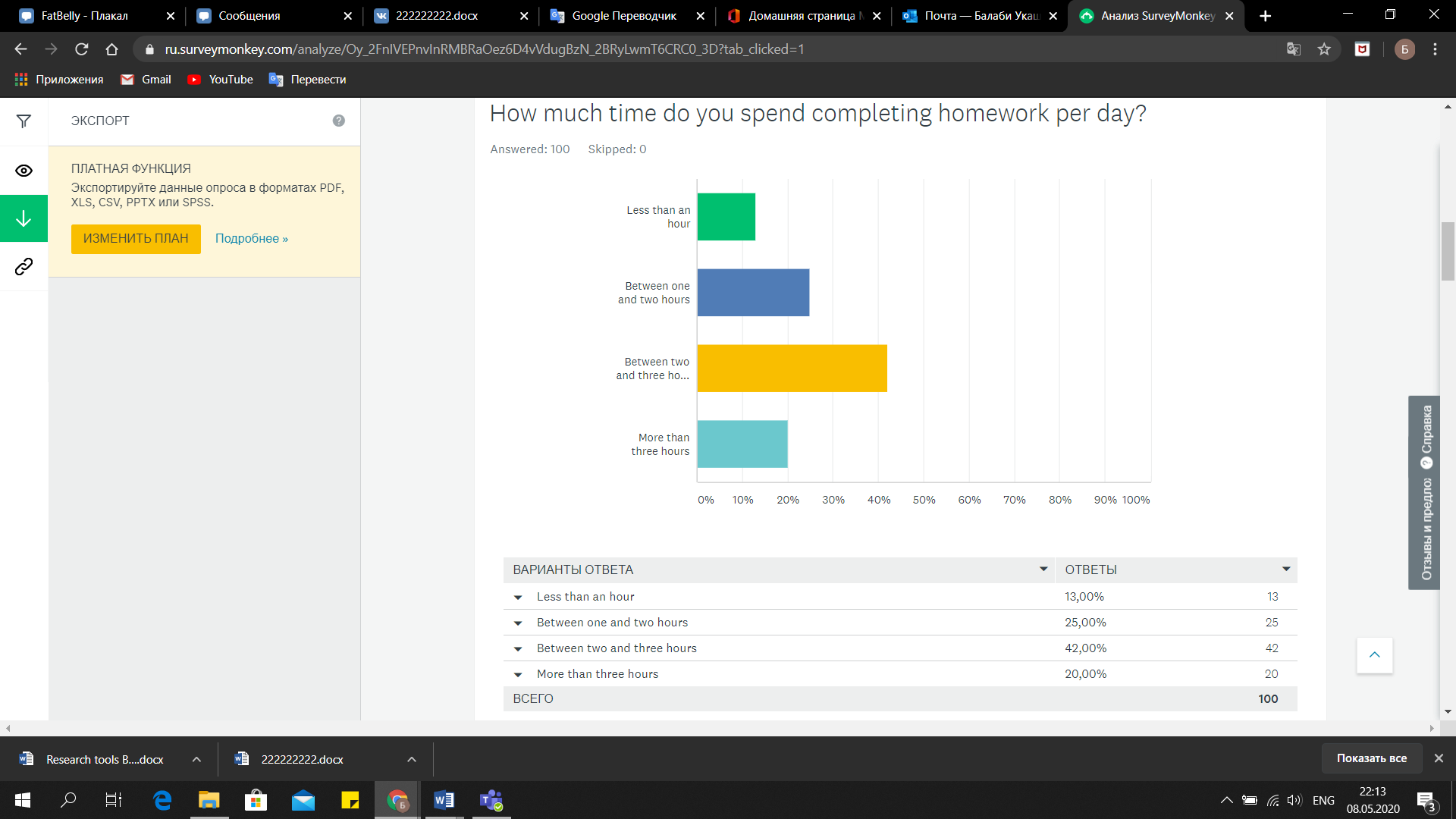
1. **What grade are you in at school?**

* 7-8
* 9-10
* 11-12



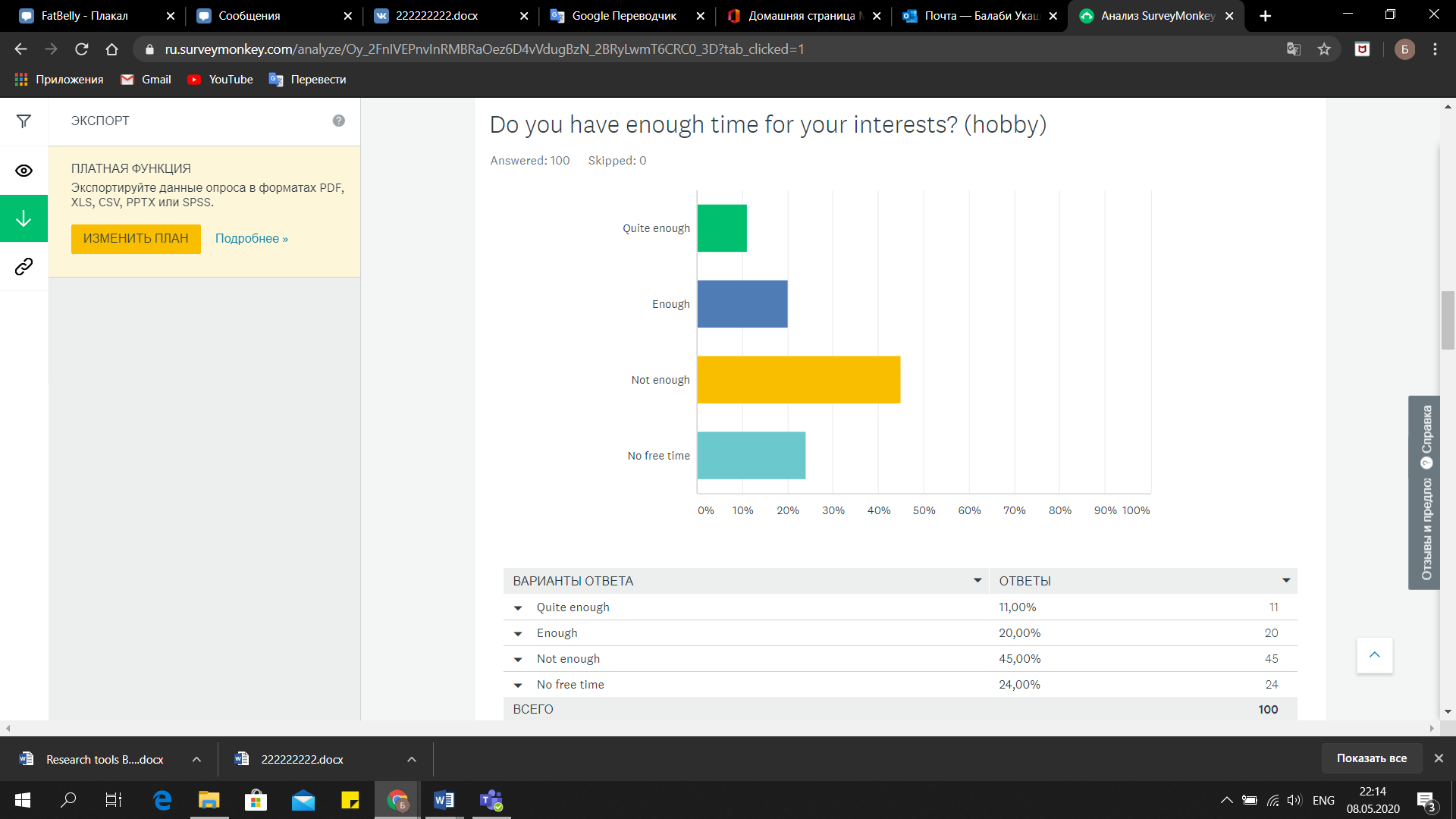
1. **How much time do you spend completing homework per day?**

* Less than one hour
* Between one and two hours
* Between two and three hours
* More than three hours



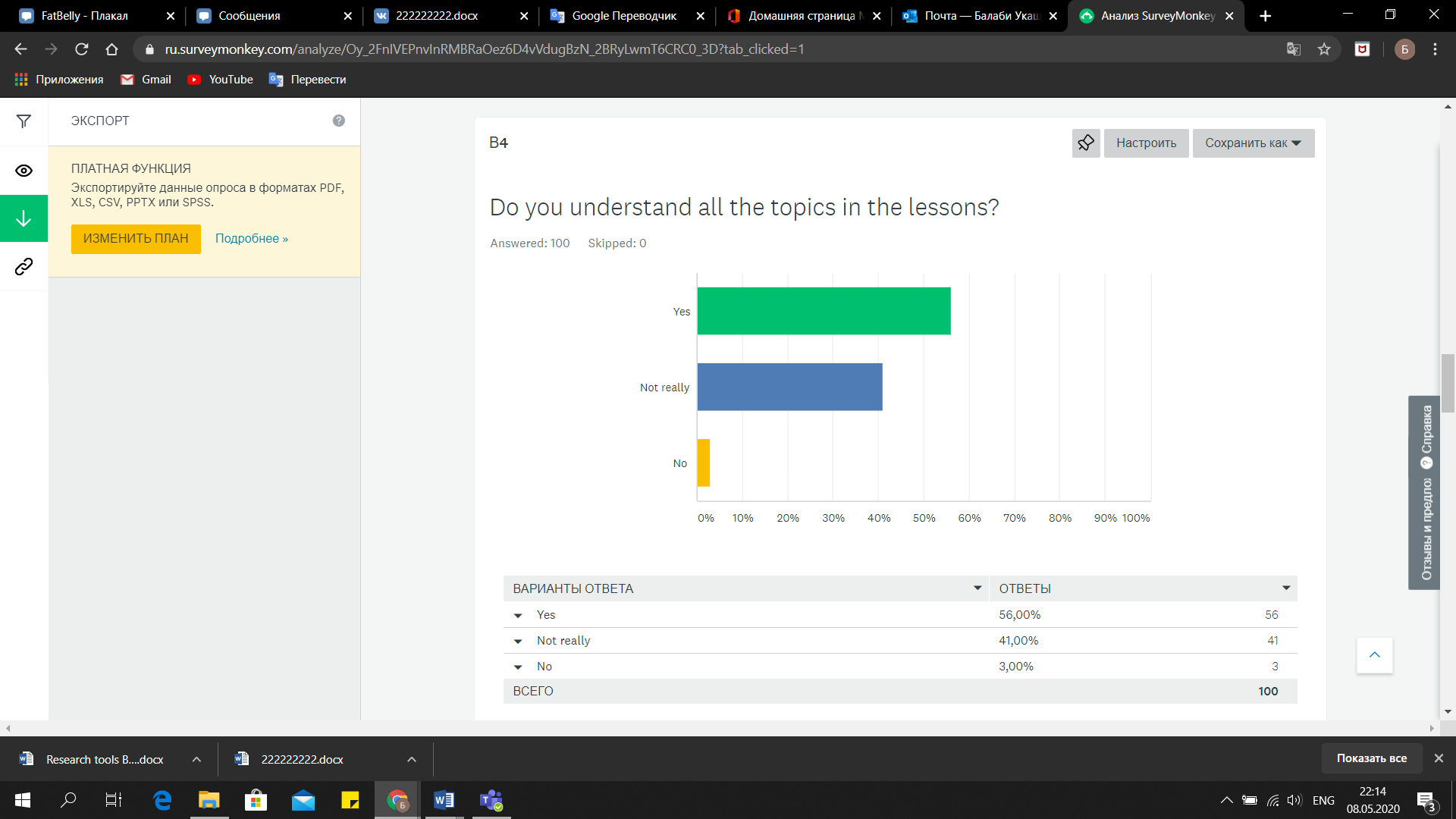
1. **Do you have enough time for your interests? (hobby)**

* Quite enough
* Enough
* Not enough
* No free time



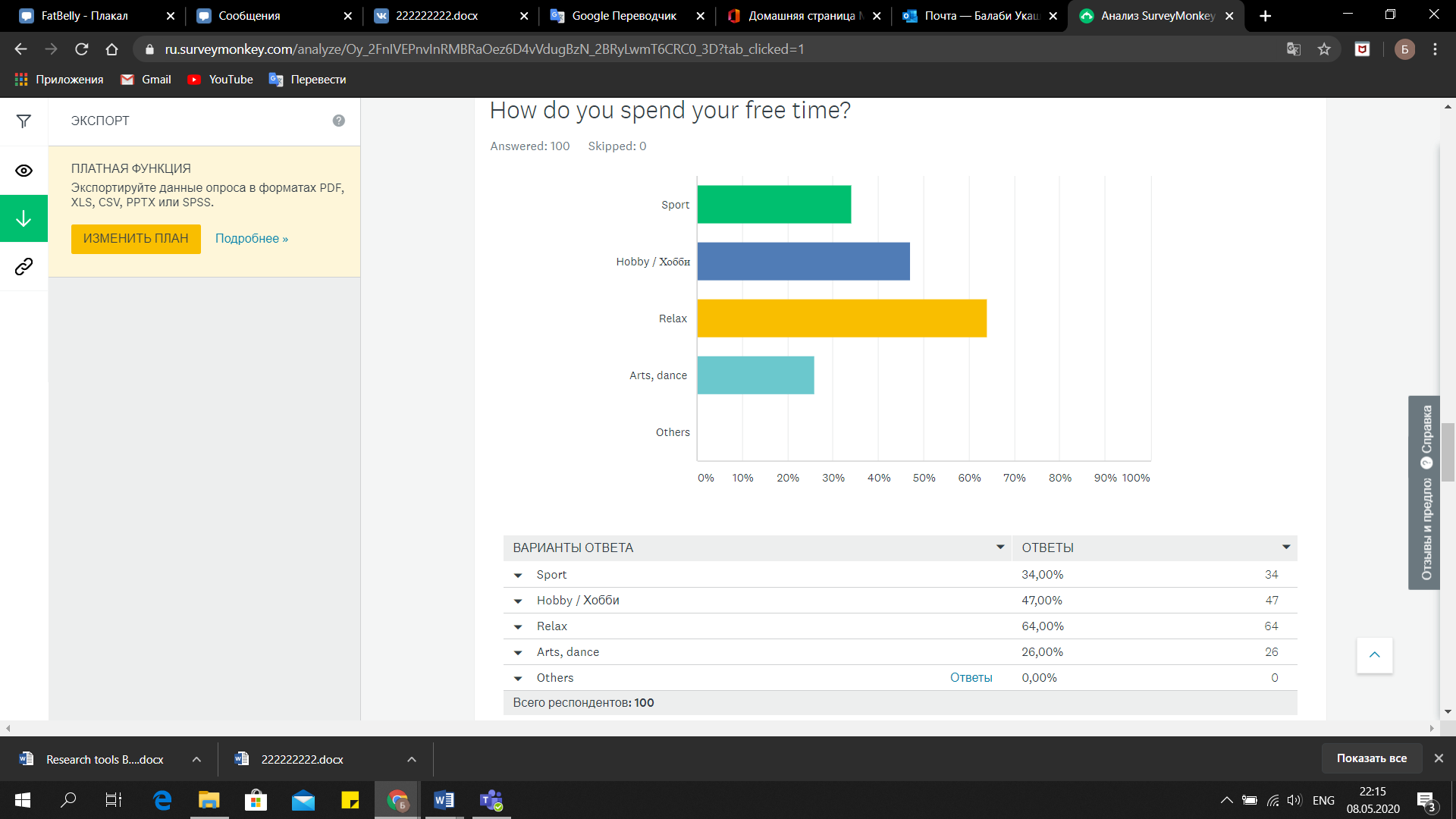
1. **Do you understand all the topics in the lesson?**

* Yes
* Not really
* No



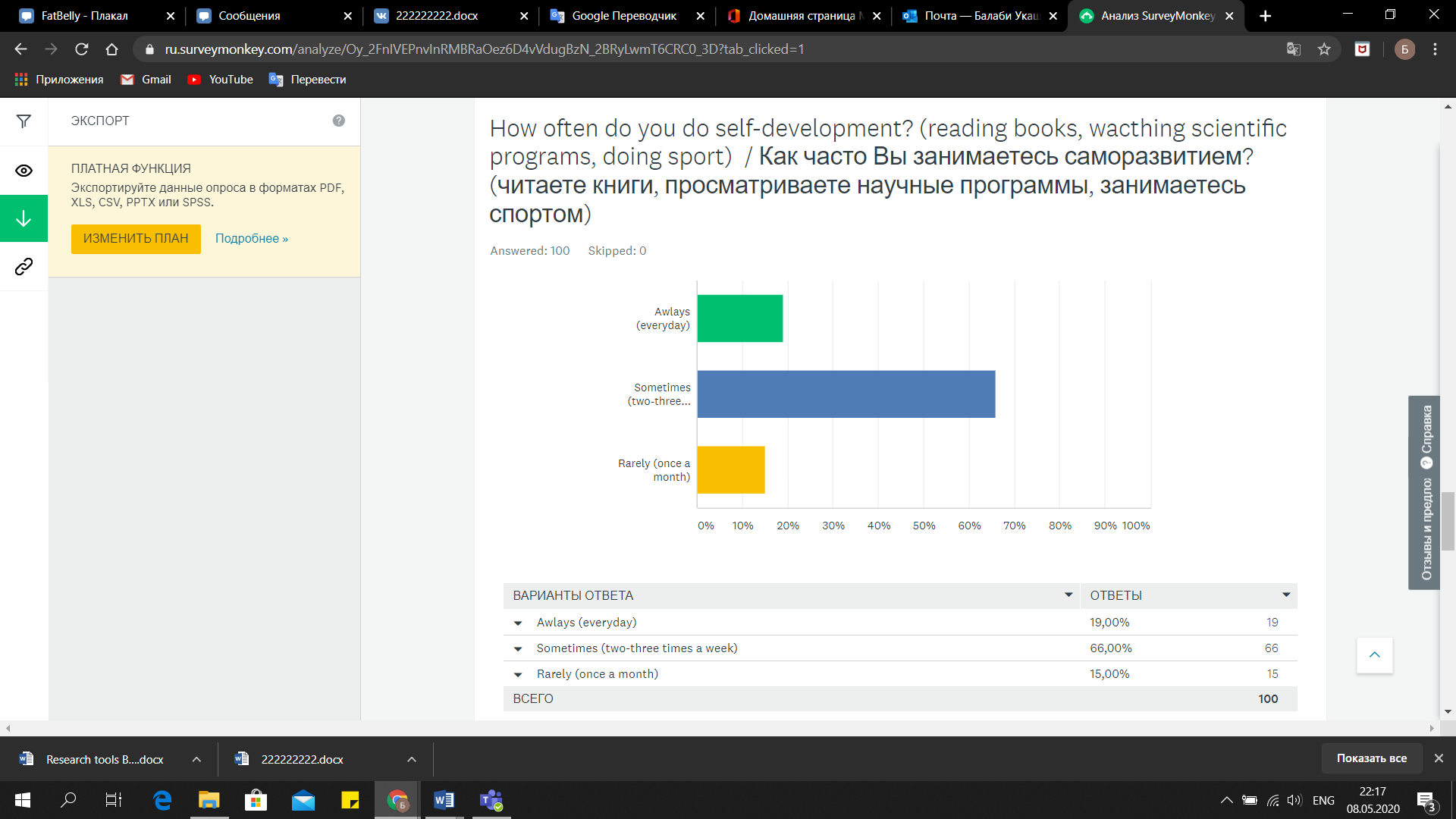
1. **How do you spend your free time?**

* Sport
* Hobby
* Relax (doing nothing in particular)
* Arts, dance
* Others: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_



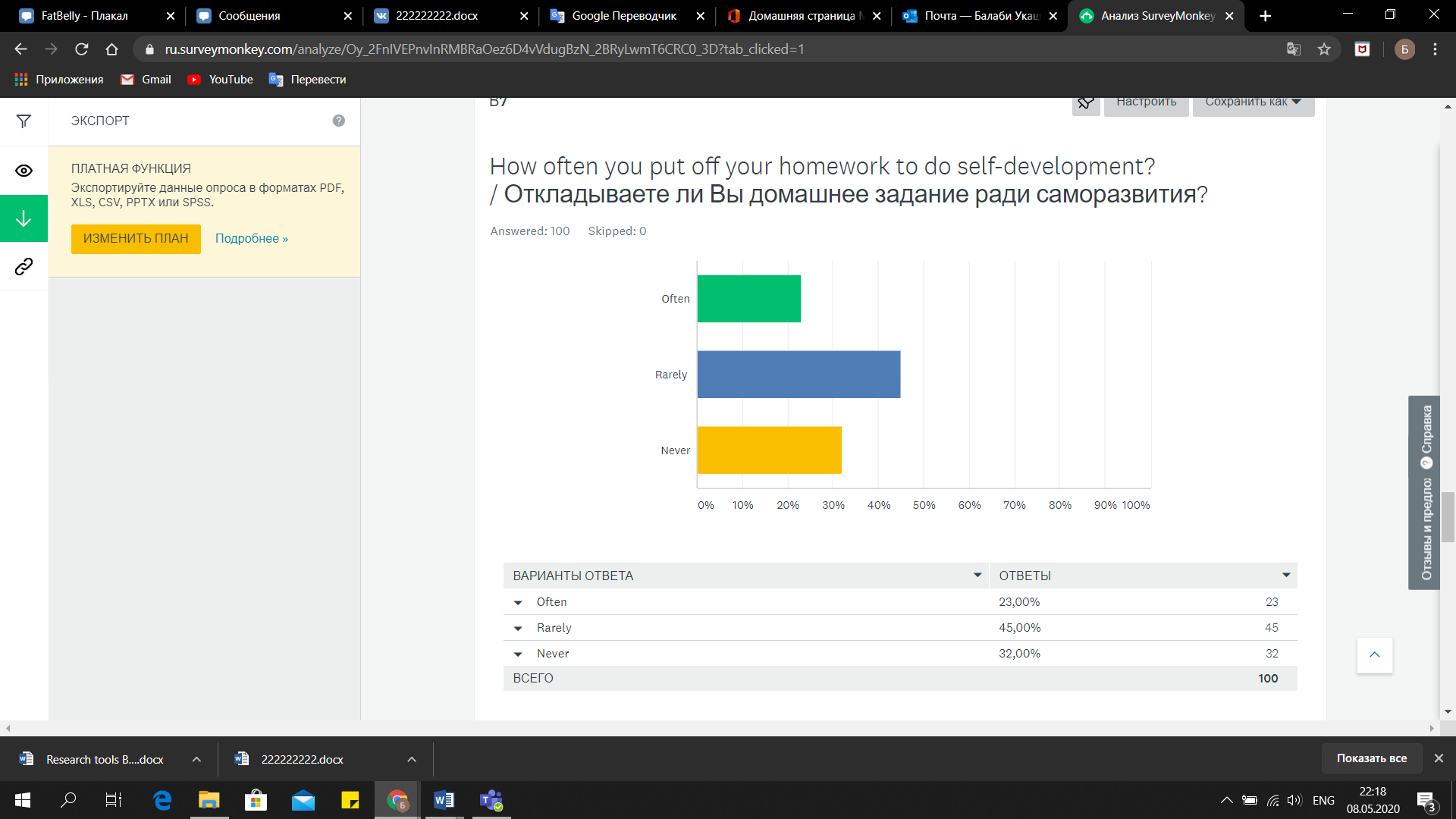
1. **How often do you do self-development?** (reading books, watching scientific programs, doing sport and others)

* Always (everyday)
* Sometimes (2-3 times a week)
* Rarely (once a month)



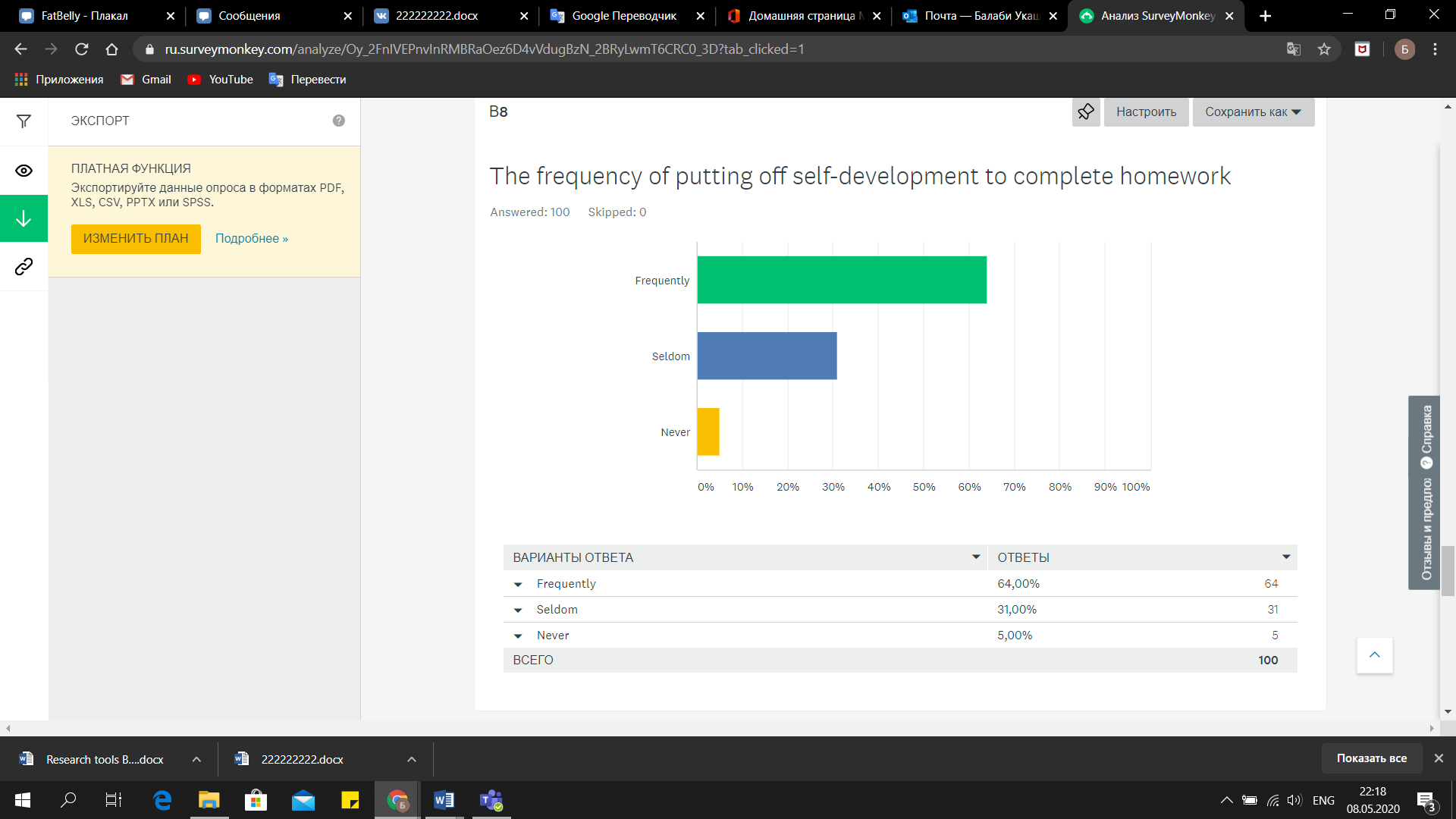
1. **How often you put off your homework to do self-development?**

* Often
* Rarely
* Never



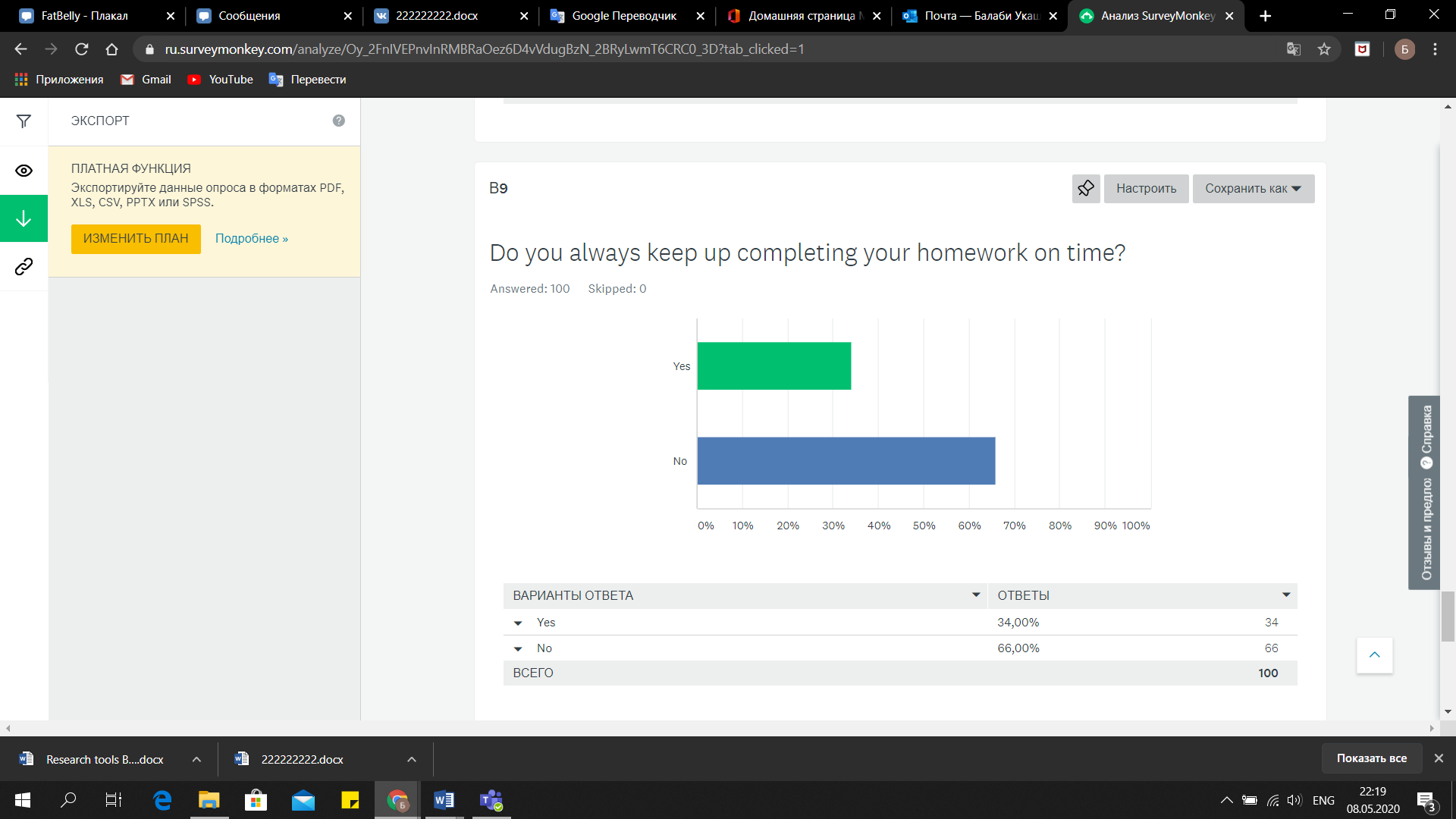
1. **How often you put off your self-development to do your homework?**

* Frequently
* Seldom
* Never



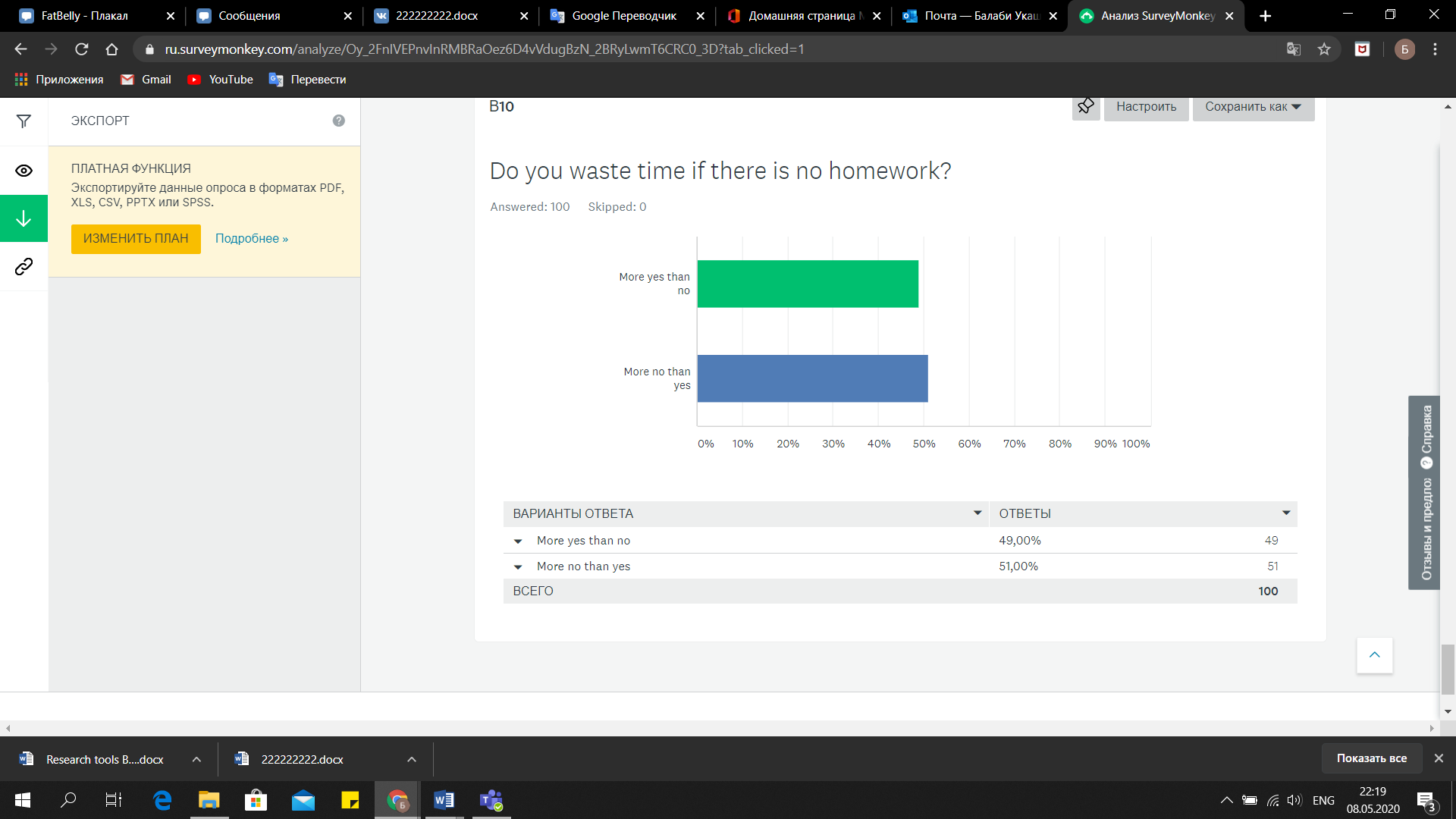
1. **Do you always keep up completing homework on time?**

* Yes
* No



1. **Do you waste time if there is no homework?**

* More yes than no
* More no than yes



Appendix 2

Interview

Structured interview questions:

1. How much are students of NIS overloaded with homework?
2. Do you think students of NIS of Ust-Kamenogorsk do they get the load from the school day?
3. What consequences may arise if the homework is canceled?

Appendix 3

Focus discussion group

Questions:

1. Do you feel overloaded with homework?
2. Do you complete all the tasks?
3. Do you have time for self-development?
4. What consequences may arise if the homework is canceled? Why?