





Mini-Review/Systematic Review

Proposals and effects of training using small-sided games for young soccer players: a narrative review

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Abstract - Aim: This review article aimed to search for studies that used SSG as an intervention in order to verify the effects of physical and tactical performance in young soccer players and to make a critical analysis in the literature of how small games are proposed, how they are controlled and how they affect the performance of soccer players in the short and medium term. **Methods:** In this narrative review, we searched four databases (PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and SPORTDiscus), in total, 242 studies were found. In the end, only eight studies were used in this review. **Results:** Four studies were comparisons between SSG and traditional methods; one study compared different types of SSG; one study compared the intensity of small-sided games with official games and another two made comparisons of physical performance between different categories. All the studies had as a central point to make comparisons in relation to the physical performance and none of them, longitudinally, evaluated the tactical performance using the SSG as an intervention. **Conclusions:** The use of SSG, mainly in 3×3 (dimensions between 20×25 m and 27×36 m) and 4×4 (30×35 m to 30×40 m) between 3 and 5 sessions per week for at least one month, seems to have beneficial effects concerning physical performance for young athletes. It was verified the scarcity of studies that approach the tactical performance with the use of SSG, in addition, some studies were unclear about the frequency of SSG types during the intervention time.

Keywords: small-sided games, external load, training methodology, athlete development.

Introduction

Soccer is a sport with intermittent characteristics, in which actions are performed with movements of low to high-intensity displacements with demands that require power, strength, jumps (or a combination of these movements) and are dependent on energy stores from the paths alactic and lactic anaerobic^{1,2}. As these efforts are short-lived and happen repeatedly, aerobic metabolism is predominant during the game. Therefore, aerobic conditioning has a major contribution to competitive performance, allowing players to perform high-intensity efforts repeatedly^{2,3}.

The importance of planning training sessions that are more representative of the game is increasingly evident, ensuring a co-adaptation of the tactical, technical, and physical components^{3,4}. The Small-sided Games (SSG) have been widely used in training for soccer and are characterized by using reduced spaces and fewer players compared to the formal game. In the literature, Conditioned

Games (CG), is a term used when the rules and structure of these small-sided games are changed to, in addition to modifying the constraints of the task, help in tactical learning and enhance interpersonal interactions with teammates and opponents⁴. SSG is of significant importance for the development of young soccer players, as they provide a game environment favourable to the spontaneous emergence of game behaviours, capable of stimulating all the player's skills⁵. Another advantage of SSG is that they can be adapted for players of different performance levels and in different learning processes. In addition, due to its characteristic of stimulating creativity by being in smaller spaces, in SSG the young athlete will be able to increase the level of tactical skills,⁵⁻⁸ the ability to make decisions during the game, and the effectiveness in the solution of problems⁹.

Studies have already investigated the effects of training in different types of SSG (in different formats and with manipulation of rules) on high performance in the

functional capacity of young athletes, showing no significant differences compared to traditional non-specific endurance training¹⁰⁻¹². Physiological differences in different SSG formats show that smaller games (2×2 and 3×3) are more intense and more conducive to the development of anaerobic endurance, and larger games for aerobic development¹³⁻¹⁷. As they maintain the contextual characteristics of the soccer game, SSG has been recommended for the development of the biomotor skills of soccer players, proving to be effective means of conditioning training compared to more traditional training models^{18,19-20} such as high and low-intensity runs or other analytical methods that do not contain the ball. In this context, however, these studies did not take into account the tactical-technical performance of athletes in the game, even more so in a modality that is characterized by its complex and systemic aspect²¹.

Research involving reduced game training programs, with longitudinal training plans, to assess tactical performance gain is still scarce. Souza et al.²², evaluating an under-14 category after 20 training sessions, found positive differences in actions related to the tactical principle of “defensive unit”, in total tactical actions and the Tactical Performance index. The training sessions were based on Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) in which small games were supposedly used as a methodological strategy.

In the literature, there are five systematic reviews related to SSG that investigated their application in the context of sports training aimed at physical/physiological and tactical parameters in the last 11 years²³⁻²⁷. Hill-Hass et al.²³ emphasized physiological parameters; Bujalance-Moreno, Latorre-Román, and García-Pinillos²⁴ studied the acute demands of cross-sectional studies and the chronic demands of longitudinal studies; Sarmiento et al.²⁵ focused on physical, physiological, technical and tactical demands in different categories from under-11 to under-19 and adults; Clemente et al.²⁶ addressed several sports that used SSG as an intervention, and Clemente and Sarmiento²⁷ analyzed studies that used SSG in soccer combined with running-based methods as an intervention. Of these five reviews, it is worth highlighting two of them involving longitudinal studies.

In the systematic review by Bujalance-Moreno, Latorre-Román, and García-Pinillos²⁴, nine longitudinal studies were found involving small games, and of these, five investigated young athletes, and all involved physical and physiological aspects. Clemente et al.²⁶ selected studies that investigated young athletes from different modalities as a sample, including soccer, and the effects of SSG on technical execution and tactical behavior. In these two reviews, no studies evaluating tactical behavior after an SSG intervention were found in the databases (PubMed, Scopus, SPORTDiscus, and Web of Science).

Training programs using SSG are still scarce in the literature and there is little information about the content of daily activities of the sessions during the period in which these programs take place. When evaluating the effects of a training program, the methodology used by the coach influences the adaptations generated in the performance of the players and the team. Given this scenario, we aim to 1) Verify the proposals and effects of training programs using SSG for young soccer athletes in relation to physical and tactical performance and their post-intervention effects; 2) Identify and describe whether there are training content control sessions, in addition to the intervention, during the study intervention period.

Methods

Search strategy

In this narrative review, we searched four databases (PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and SPORTDiscus) on December 2, 2021, using the following keywords and Boolean indicators: (Soccer OR football) AND (Young OR “young players” OR “teenagers players”) AND (“small-sided games” OR “small-sided games”) AND (“functional performance” OR “tactical performance” OR tactical OR “tactical behavior” OR “functional fitness” OR “physical fitness ” OR PHV - Peak Height Velocity OR maturation OR “physiological responses” OR “physiological adaptations”) AND (longitudinal OR “repeated measures”). All data were saved as a CSV file and transported to Microsoft Excel software.

Eligibility criteria

The screening was performed using inclusion and exclusion eligibility criteria. Inclusion criteria were articles published in the last 11 years (Jan/2011 to Dec/2021), articles published in English, Spanish or Portuguese, and that they had investigated small-sided games in soccer. Exclusion criteria were duplicate articles, reviews, abstracts not found, books, congress abstracts, articles that did not deal with small games, and, articles that investigated another modality that was not soccer.

In total, 242 studies were found (Figure 1), nine in SportDiscus, 11 in Web of Science, 15 in Pubmed, and 207 in Scopus. After the first screening, 29 duplicate articles were excluded and, according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, another 149 studies were excluded, totalling 178. Of these, the following eligibility criteria were used: a sample of young people between nine and 20 years old who they trained periodically; longitudinal studies with intervention in SSG for at least four weeks; resulted in levels of physical performance and/or tactical performance using validated tactical behaviour analysis instruments. In the end, only eight studies were used in this review.

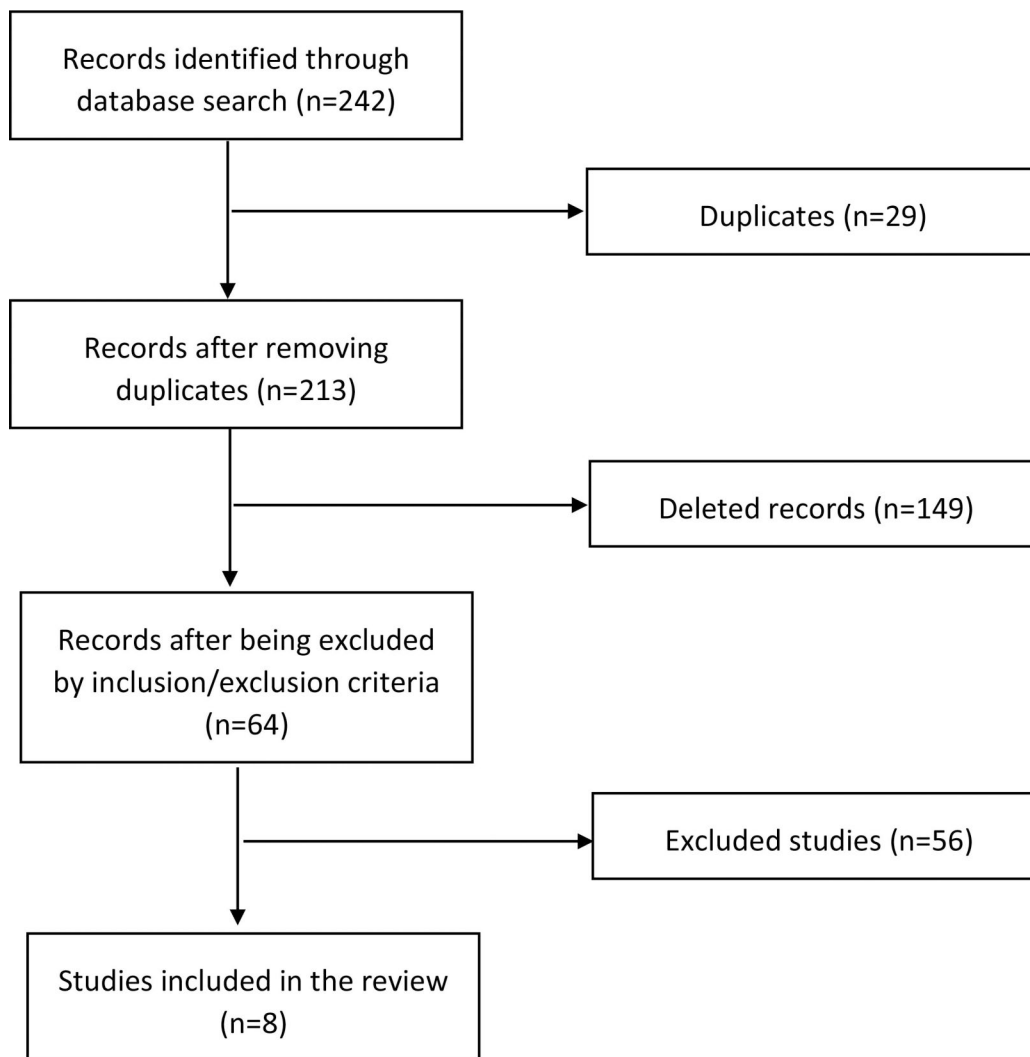


Figure 1 - Flowchart of the selection process of articles (n = 8) included in this narrative review.

Results

Of the eight studies resulting from this search, the researchers identified four different types of proposals. Four articles are comparisons between SSG and traditional methods^{11,28-30}. Praça, Custódio, and Greco³¹ compared different types of SSG, Asci³² compared the intensity of small games with official games, and Best et al.³³ and Coutinho et al.³⁴ made comparisons between different categories. The main point of most studies was to make comparisons in relation to physical performance and, in only one study, by Coutinho et al.³⁴, used the analysis of technical and creative performance as a variable, using the LongoMatch software and the positional behaviour with the Global Positioning System (GPS) SPI-PRO. None of these longitudinal studies have evaluated tactical performance in young soccer athletes using SSG as an intervention. [Table 1](#) summarizes the studies that will be discussed below.

Discussion

Intervention proposals through SSG and its post-intervention effects

Four studies compared the effects of SSG with traditional running methods. Charalampos et al.¹¹ examined the effectiveness of two training programs for aerobic conditioning. One group did only traditional running training in which the athletes had to be in a zone of 70 to 90% of HRmax. The other group performed combined running training with SSG. After five weeks of intervention, both groups showed improvements and no significant differences in maximal oxygen consumption between them. In this study, it was not reported what kind of game format was used or the time.

In the study by Faude et al.²⁸, the players were divided into a HIIT group (High-Intensity Interval Training) and an SSG group (3×3 and 4×4) in four weeks in the first

Table 1 - Characteristics of studies that used small games to assess physical and/or tactical performance in young athletes.

Studies	Sample	Age	Number of players and pitch area	Rules	Volume/density	Physical/physiological performance	Tactical performance /tactical instrument	Number of sessions for the week	Total duration (weeks)
Charalampos P., Zisis P., Asterios P., Nikolaos M. (2013)	18	16.3±0.8	Control group - running 70 to 90% HRmax / Combined running + SSG group (type and size not included)	Not listed	Not listed	Aerobic endurance/VO ₂ max.	There is not	3 to 4	5
Best R., Simon P., Niess A., Striegel H. (2013)	38	U16 -15 ±0.5 U17 - 16.2±0.4 U19 - 17.3 ±0.6	There were 5 × 2 games; 7 × 3; 6 × 6 and 8 × 8 with goalkeeper. Size and frequency are not included.	5 × 2 and 7 × 3 - 1 touch surrounding players; 6 × 6 and 8 × 8 - 2 to 3 touches on the ball.	20 min - no break description	Aerobic endurance /blood lactate	There is not	Not listed	5
Faude O., Steffen A., Kellmann M., Meyer T. (2014)	19	16.5±0.8	HIIT: 2 × 12 to 15; 15 s running with 10 min rest between sets. SSG: 3 × 3 - 35 × 25 m 4 × 4 - 40 × 30 m with goalkeeper. Crossover.	Not listed	4 × 4 min - 4' recovery	Speed, agility, strength, anaerobic threshold / CK, and urea concentrations.	There is not	4 to 5	4
Praça G.M., De Cus-tódio I.J.O., Greco P.J. (2015)	18	16.4±0.7	3 × 3 4 × 3 (superiority to attack) 3 × 3 + 2 supporting players outside the pitch area. All 36 × 27 m.	With goalkeeper, with offside. In the 3 × 3 + 2, the two athletes positioned around the field could only make 2 consecutive touches during ball possession.	2 × 4 min + 4' rec.	Distance covered, distances in intensity intervals, and the acceleration profile (GPS 15 Hz).	There is not	3	4 (1 week of familiarization)
Asçi, A. (2016)	22	17.4±0.9	3 × 3 - 25 × 20 m 4 × 4 - 35 × 30 m 5 × 5 - 45 × 30 m 7 × 7 - 55 × 40 m 9 × 9 - 70 × 40 m 11 × 11 - 105 × 65 m	With goalkeeper; no offside.	3 × 3 - 6 × 2 min 4 × 4 - 4 × 3 min 5 × 5 - 3 × 4 min 7 × 7 - 2 × 6 min 9 × 9 - 2 × 8 min There is no time interval between sets. 11 × 11 - 1 × 90 min	% HRmax and blood lactate.	There is not	1	6
Coutinho D., Santos S., Gonçalves B., Travassos B., Wong D.P., Schöllhorn W., Sampaio J. (2018)	30	U15C - 13.9 ±0.5 U15E - 14.2±0.8 U17C - 16.1 ±0.7 U17E - 15.8±0.5	SSG with additional differential learning, without standardized frequency description, types, and formats.	Not listed	15 min - no break description	Strength, speed, and agility.	LongoMatch to assess technical and creative performance. SPI-PRO to assess tactical positioning	2	10
Runacres A., Maackintosh K.A., McNarry M.A. (2019)	37	HIIT (SSG) - 14.3±3.1 CIET- 13.1	Not listed	Not listed	Not listed	Somatic maturation; aerobic endurance; anaerobic capacity;	There is not	Not listed	12

(continued)

Table 1 - continued

Studies	Sample	Age	Number of players and pitch area	Rules	Volume/density	Physical/physiological performance	Tactical performance /tactical instrument	Number of sessions for the week	Total duration (weeks)
Karahan, M. (2020)	22	15.3±3	SBT (skills) × 3 × 3 - 20 × 25 m	Not listed	4 × 6 min + 2' rec.	Speed; agility; force; anaerobic potency; VO ₂ max.	There is not	4	8

Legend: SBT, skill-based training; HIIT, High-Intensity Interval Training; CK, Creatine Kinase; CON, control; CIET, long-distance runners; SSG, Small Sided Games; GPS, Global Positioning System; HRMax, Heart Rate max.

half of the season, and, after the holidays, the programs have been changed. The following variables were analyzed: creatine kinase and urea concentrations, vertical jump height (countermovement jump, drop jump), direct sprint, agility, and field test to determine the individual anaerobic threshold (IAT). The results showed that players with low baseline resistance levels had moderate rates of improvement in physical abilities in both methods and that, to reach the same threshold, HIIT would need 63% of the total time of the SSG. Runacres, Mackintosh, and McNarry²⁹ in 12 weeks divided 37 boys into three groups: HIIT (small-sided games in soccer); CON (control), and CIET (long-distance runners). The peak \dot{V}^{2} of the HIIT group was significantly higher than that of the CON group pre-and post-training. Because it is anaerobic performance in the 30 m sprint test, the CON group was significantly higher than the HIIT group, however, all groups showed a similar magnitude of change in aerobic and anaerobic capacity after the training period. In the study by Karahan³⁰, the effectiveness of skill-based training (SBT) at maximum intensity was compared with the SSG 3×3 (20 × 25 m), in the characteristics of physical performance during the pre-season period for eight weeks. The SBT group had three seasons focused on the technical part involving kicking and heading with sprints. Each station lasted 10 min. The SBT and SSG interventions induced a significant improvement in anaerobic power, power, VO₂max, and vertical jump, however, the SBT group obtained a greater improvement compared to the SSG group in most tests related to strength and power, unlike in VO₂max in which the results were similar for both groups. The results of this study suggested that the SBT group in maximum intensity training may be more effective than SSG training in improving physical performance characteristics.

In these studies, it was verified that training using SSG with smaller settings (3×3; 4×4) over time can bring benefits concerning functional performance such as aerobic capacity, anaerobic capacity, jump height (strength), power; since the results were similar to traditional methods^{28,30}. These studies corroborate others that did not enter the results in the databases, such as the one by Los Arcos et al.³⁵, in which they compared the effects of training using SSG × interval training on physical fitness and the Physical Activity Satisfaction Scale (PACES) for 11 sessions for 16-year-old athletes. There was no significant difference in the improvement of cardiorespiratory capacity levels between the groups, however, the group that performed the SSG training program demonstrated greater engagement during the activity, in which they reported greater satisfaction with the SSG method. Other studies have also reported no significant difference between interval running training and SSG³⁶⁻³⁹.

Only in the study by Runacres et al.²⁹, the relationship between somatic maturation and physical demands

was verified, which is rarely addressed in research related to SSG. It was found that, adhering to an allometric scale and properly accounted for and correlated, there were no significant differences in performance gain between the different levels of maturation. In terms of physical preparation, both methods are suitable for improving conditioning skills, however, it is in the SSG that the specificity of the game is included. Thus, in addition to developing physical qualities²³, SSG increases engagement³⁵, therefore, influences the relationship of players with the task, enabling a learning environment with stimuli for decision-making, dependent on the interaction with individual and collective behaviours inherent to the game, with possibilities of increasing exploratory behaviour, fundamental for the development of creativity, ensuring, consequently, a transfer (adaptation, accommodation, and understanding) of tactical-technical behaviours at the most contextual level possible, that is, in the game^{40,42}. For the coaching staff, there will be an optimization of time and gain in training quality in activities contextualized in the game. Despite this, there are still some gaps in the cited articles, such as the lack of clarity regarding the rules and settings of the SSG, as in some of them, the size of the field and number of players were not described, which fact interferes with having a better interpretation of the results, since the external load is influenced by the structural conditions in the SSG²⁵, being, therefore, a fundamental variable to control which types of configurations will better develop certain physical capacities.

Another factor considered is the category related to the age group. Two studies compared different categories. Best et al.³³ with three different age groups (under-16, under-17, and under-19) used a different amount of endurance training for each category, in which the under-17 category performed more SSG training than the other categories. After the 5-week training intervention, the running speed of the under-16 and under-19 players at the individual anaerobic threshold and at the 4 mmol thresholds increased significantly, unlike the under-17 category. Coutinho et al.³⁴ using only attackers, analyzed two groups, a control group, and an experimental group in each category (under-15 and under-17). The experimental group had complementary training aimed at improving physical performance, technical gesture (creative aspects), and tactical behaviour of players aimed at physical literacy (consists of combining fundamental movement skills such as running, with fundamental game skills such as creating space and passing lines) and differential learning (explores increased fluctuations in players' movement patterns, requiring them to adaptive mechanisms in the perception-action system by no repetition of movement and no corrections during the learning process)⁴². Regarding physical performance, the results revealed that the under-15 category improved the performance of the jump and the

repeated change of direction, while the under-17 only improved the performance of the jump. Regarding the creative aspects using notational analysis through LongoMatch Software, the under-15 category showed improvements in all variables, while the under-17 improved only in submissions. From the positional point of view with the GPS SPI-PRO, there was a moderate increase in the amplitude index and a decrease in longitudinal and lateral regularity in the under-15. In turn, the under-17 showed a moderate increase in the space exploration index and a small decrease in the amplitude index. Only the general principles of the contents of the complementary training were described, therefore, it is not highlighted which SSG configurations were used predominantly, nor the frequency. These findings show that, possibly, the older categories need a greater training structure with increased volume or intensity and even rules, so that there is an overload better adjusted to age. Best et al.³³ used SSG involving numerical superiority and equality, but like the study by Coutinho et al.³⁴, the authors did not highlight the frequency used involving SSG and the dimensions involved, thus making it difficult to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the real impact of the use of SSG during a training program at different ages. It is worth mentioning, however, that there are still difficulties in the applicability of SSG in the basic categories, not only when it comes to physical and tactical conditions, but also that they are involved with the methodology of the club and the coach, thus creating an identity.

In practice, each coach has its methodology and uses some preferred methodological approaches, however, they must be adequate to the processes of physical and cognitive adaptation of learning, considering aspects related to the child's age and stages of development. and/or adolescent, so that there is a substantial progression of physical literacy and tactical creativity⁴¹.

When it comes to comparing different game configurations, Praça, Custódio, and Greco³¹ compared the physical demands of 3×3, 4×3, and 3×3+2. A total of 36 games were observed in three weeks, in which players had previously had one week of familiarization. A reduction in physical demands was observed for games in unbalanced situations (4×3), including a lower total distance covered, distance covered at higher intensities, and acceleration demands. Similar results were observed for 3×3+2 compared to 3×3, i.e., the presence of additional players changed the physical demands of the players. Therefore, it was reported that the smallest games, especially those that were used 3×3, are more intense, that is, in a physical conditioning character, they are the ones that can usually be used more. In addition, it was found that in situations of numerical superiority, there is a reduction in physical demands, probably because there are more options for passes and, consequently, a smaller displacement between players when their team has the ball. These types of con-

figurations of numerical superiority and inferiority about physical aspects do not seem to be so interesting, however, there are changes concerning tactical behaviour as shown in the study by Praça et al.⁴³ when compared to numerical equality games. This will also depend on the type of game, rules, and what the coach wants to stimulate with training. So that there is also no physical untraining of the team that has numerical superiority, the coach together with the technical committee must seek other alternatives during the activity itself, and if they really need these strategies related to the increase in intensity.

One of the studies proposed to compare the intensity of small-sided games with an official game. In the study by Asçi³², all players participated in five SSG sessions (3×3, 4×4, 5×5, 7×7, and 9×9 with goalkeepers) and the match was held in the fourth week of the study. The results showed that the 3×3 game had significantly higher HR and %HRmax than other SSGs, and the 3×3 to 5×5 SSG formats provided players with more time in high-intensity zones, where they were closer to the demands of the game. As in the previous topics, games with smaller dimensions and fewer players show to be more intense in areas close to official matches.

Finally, three studies used SSG^{31,33,34} with changes in structure and rules compared to the formal game. However, they are all referred to as small-sided games and not as Conditioned Games. This shows that there is still no consensus in the literature on the ideal term to use in certain types of games, which also interferes with the results of possible searches for studies in the literature.

Control of training content during interventions

Only one of the studies analysed was the control of the content of daily training sessions during the intervention described by the researchers. In the study by Best et al.³³, these sessions were described using an observational method. The researchers divided the training into six sections: warm-up, endurance, technical, strength, small-sided games, and games. The percentages of the types of training in each category in a pre-season used by their respective coach were analyzed. The category that used a methodology with more games in this period (under-17) did not obtain a significant improvement in running speed and anaerobic threshold. Does this result, then, show that reduced games in preseason are not advised? There is no clear description of the field dimensions, but it is assumed in the text that the categories kept the same size standard. The field for the larger categories could have been increased or also inserted smaller games like 3×3 and 4×4 that is considered more intense than 6×6 and 8×8, in addition, different categories also have different levels of maturation, which respond differently to training, which prevents making a more robust comparison. Therefore, coaches and physical trainers should pay attention to the type of SSG configuration according to the

physical and tactical goals they want to prioritize in a pre-season or during the season considering the biological level. Regarding the evaluation of tactical performance levels using SSG, there were no studies of this type found during the searches, however, there are two studies to our knowledge that deal with the subject. One of them is the longitudinal study by Souza et al.²², in which the development of young people's tactical behaviour through games using the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) method was analysed. In their research, the authors describe activities aimed at offensive and defensive fundamental tactical principles, but the types of training that were used (based on TGfU) were not pointed out, in addition to the external and internal load in order to verify the intensity of these sessions. The other study is by Aquino et al.⁴⁴ in which they systematized 37 classes using three training methods (formal games; reduced games; adapted games) in 10- and 11-year-old athletes. The results showed a significant increase in improvement in the tactical component, consolidating that the systematized process sequentially and progressively using SSG was sufficient to promote the development of offensive and defensive tactical principles. Borges et al.⁴⁵ showed in a cross-sectional study the relationship between tactical performance, somatic maturation, and functional performance, in which they indicated weak associations between the indices of tactical performance and somatic maturity, functional capacity, and anthropometric attributes, but found that in the under-13, aerobic resistance had a 36% contribution with defensive actions, suggesting that the less matured (Pre-PVC) somehow try to compensate for the lower functional performance than the others (Post-PVC) in this way. In a way, the information from the methodology used during the “formal” training in the collection period of these studies would be important data to verify if the training content can influence these results. The control of training content during the sessions can help to have better control in relation to the interventions using SSG and the gains to the athlete and, if there is a need to use systematized SSG programs or if only the methodology already imposed and incorporated by the coach to the team are enough for physical and tactical development.

Conclusions

We found in this review that research involving small-sided games training programs, to assess tactical performance gain, is still scarce in the international literature, especially when it comes to young athletes. Of the eight studies that were analysed, all had as their main objective to evaluate physical performance. Of these, we highlight four studies^{28,30-32} that converge on the use of smaller SSG, mainly in 3×3 (with dimensions between 20×25 m and 27×36 m) and 4×4 (30×35 m to 30×40 m)

between three to five sessions per week in at least one month, in which there are beneficial effects in relation to physical performance for young athletes, however, care must be taken to adjust the load (configuration of the SSG) according to the age and objectives that the coaching staff wants to achieve so that there is an adequate training overload. Despite studies showing that SSG has similar physical performance to those methods considered traditional, the high level of engagement of athletes in the SSG method seems to be a positive differential in relation to traditional methods. In common, we verified the scarcity of studies that approach the tactical performance with the use of SSG from the intrinsic relationship with the training content, since in most studies there is no control of the training content of the daily sessions, in addition to the intervention itself, during the collections carried out. In addition, some studies were unclear about the frequency of SSG types during the intervention time. This shows that there is a lack of research that addresses the training content more clearly, providing data such as methodology, objectives, content, frequency, and external load and that has better control of the systematization of the type of SSG practiced during the interventions to verify if the increase in physical performance is being influenced by other means and training methods and/or other variables which can be monitored. When it comes to relating the physical demands with the tactical behaviors of young athletes in soccer in SSG, there are still few studies in the international literature, with only the cross-sectional study by Borges et al.⁴⁵. The reduced number of longitudinal studies involving intervention programs using small games is possibly due to some factors. First, it the difficulty for coaches to allow these types of training during sessions; second, having a control group in the same environment that did not do the same type of training during a part of the session or that did not participate in a complementary training, making this type of research even more complex. The training programs that contained SSG during the intervention period were effective in improving physical capacities, but there is no literature on whether small games can also develop tactical capacity concomitantly, controlling the level of maturation in an intervention period. We also miss the use of SSG being configured from the proposition of the team's game model and not just for the physical-technical-tactical development. The search for studies in other languages, such as Spanish and Portuguese, was added in comparison with other reviews on the same topic, however, no articles in these languages were included at the end of the selection criteria. This review is intended to help coaches and technical committee to better reflect and analyse the criteria used to program training in small-sided games in its physical, tactical, and technical dimensions for the development and/or selection of young soccer athletes.

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