



Epidemiological Study About the Objectives of Adolescents With Physical-Sportive Activity Practice

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ABSTRACT

The practice of sports and physical activities in our society has been significantly increasing due to the development of a new awareness on the importance of practicing these activities regularly to improve people's quality of life. The present study attempts to establish the aims and reasons for practice and drop out of sports and physical activity concerning 15, 16 and 17 year-old teenagers. This investigative process is characterized as a quantitative investigation of non-experimental methodology and of transversal study type. The instrument used was a questionnaire carried out with students from the public education system in the city of Novo Hamburgo, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. As a result, it was found that having some fun and leisure during free time and body shape concern, are the main objectives in both male and female students concerning physical activity. Comparing the objectives of male and female teenagers, it is possible to notice that competing is an objective more associated to male than female teenagers.

Keywords: students, exercise, sports.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of sports and physical activities in our society has been significantly increasing due to the onset of new awareness on the importance of practicing physical activities regularly to improve people's quality of life. Massive research stresses that the practice of a physical activity in a suitable way, from some frequency, intensity and duration parameters, contributes to the wellness and quality of life of society⁽¹⁻³⁾.

The increasing interest from the part of the general population and especially among youngsters, has called attention from the researchers of different topics, leading them to study the habits of sports practice of the population⁽⁴⁻⁸⁾.

Sports and physical activity practice is considered an important component in a healthy life style, since its systematic and somehow frequent practice constitutes a factor of health protection and prevention of different disorders due to the important physiological and psychological benefits associated with it⁽⁹⁻¹¹⁾. As physical activities have become important to the population, especially to adolescents, they also brought interest to researchers who were trying to understand this phenomenon as well as issues linked to them. Among the investigated characteristics, we highlight the reasons and aims which lead the adolescents to engage in physical and sports activities practice⁽¹²⁻¹⁴⁾.

This investigation allows not only to describe the types of sports and physical practice of adolescents but also to acknowledge their interests and aims with this practice. Therefore, both measures which prevent the drop-out from the sports and physical activities during adolescence and establishment of policies which promote them can be suggested.

METHODOLOGY

The present investigation process is characterized as quantitative, of non-experimental methodology, and its study is transversal. The used instrument was a questionnaire applied in students from the public system, of the Novo Hamburgo city, Rio Grande do Sul state.

The universe of this research was composed of students from four public schools of Novo Hamburgo city. The research was carried out in the period between 2006/2007, time when the number of adolescents aged 15, 16 and 17 years, according to data from the 2nd Educational Regional Office of Rio Grande do Sul, was of 8,870 students, 3,918 boys and 4,952 girls. Thus, for suitable performance of the study, techniques which permitted the questions reply with a reduced number of participants (sample) were applied. The sample was composed of 1,048 students representing the universe of students from public schools of Novo Hamburgo city. Out of these students, 447 were boys with mean age of 16.1 ± 0.8 years and 601 girls with mean age of 16.0 ± 0.8 years. All these students were regularly enrolled in the respective schools, with regular class frequency.

All procedures concerned with the collaboration of these youngsters in the present research were performed according to the ethical conduct from the 196/96 resolution (Regulated Research Guidelines and Norms involving Humans) from the National Health Board (Health Ministry, 1997), using the Clarified and Free Consent Form. The students who participated in the research were informed on the voluntary nature of it, as well as reliability and anonymous nature of the information connected to them.

Due to the coherent between the investigation outlining and attention to the characteristics of the analyzed problem, the instrument chosen for data acquisition was the commonly used questionnaire.

Since a qualified questionnaire which involved the adolescents

as well as the reasons for not practicing sports and physical activities was not available, there was a need to devise and later assess the questionnaire's reliability on the aims of the adolescents aged between 15, 16 and 17 years with sports and physical activities who study in the Novo Hamburgo city. Therefore, we understand by reliability the concordance between information derived from different observers or from the same observer when performing distinct measurements, being this one of the essential stages for assessment of the collected data. Concerning self-replied instruments, such as the mentioned questionnaire, one of the ways of performing this assessment is by the test-retest procedure^(15,16).

After the questionnaire designing, there was an interjudge blind evaluation performed by three health professionals with technical knowledge on the fields related to adolescents and sports and physical activities. Subsequently, the questionnaire was applied in a group of students of a school in Novo Hamburgo, in the Vale dos Sinos region – Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil and, after two weeks, we returned to the same school to apply the instrument on the same students. The test-retest was performed between 15 and 30 of October, 2006, and neither the group nor the school visited in the questionnaire's qualification was included in the main study.

RESULTS

The found results as well as their discussion are separately presented and organized according to the study's aims. Out of the 1,048 adolescents who replied the questionnaires in the main study, 637 reported practice of any sports or physical activity, while 411 have informed to have not been practicing any activity.

Regarding the aims of the adolescents with sports activities practice, in the four researched schools, it was observed that the majority, that is to say, 56% (357) of the sample have chosen the reply 'to have a fun and leisure activity', followed by 48.2% (307) who have chosen 'for the concern with body figure'. On third position, it was observed the reply 'for enjoying to practice activities', replied by 41.6% (265) of the sample, on fourth position 'for health concern, mentioned by 38.0% (242) and on fifth position, the option 'to meet friends', chosen by 36.3% (231) of the adolescents (table 1).

When the aims of the adolescents classifying them under female or male gender were verified, the results in table 2 were obtained, with highlight that the variable 'for enjoying competing' is more associated with male than female adolescents.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The present work assessed the universe of adolescents, a group which belongs to a phase characterized by many changes and alterations, both physical and emotional; hence, we should consider the obtained results carefully. Within this context, we do not aim to elaborate generalizing formulas, as well as we should be careful when comparing them with studies carried out with adolescents from other educational systems. One example are the investigations on the sports habits performed in Brazil and in other countries, where the number of non-practitioner adolescents surpasses the practitioner one⁽¹⁷⁻²²⁾. In the present investigation the contrary fact was observed, since it had the participation of 1,048 students, in which the number of adolescents who regularly performed sports and physical activities (n = 637, that is, 60.7%) surpassed the number of those who did not practice them (n = 411, that is, 39.3%).

Table 1. Aims of the adolescents with sports activities practice

Aims	NC	(%)
'to have fun and leisure'	357	(56.0)
'for concern with body'	307	(48.2)
'for enjoying to practice activities'	265	(41.6)
'for health concerns'	242	(38.0)
'to meet friends'	231	(36.3)
'for enjoying to compete'	114	(17.9)
'for using the free time'	111	(17.4)
'to chill out'	35	(5.5)
'to become a professional athlete'	7	(1.1)
did not reply	2	(0.3)
'to improve skills'	1	(0.2)
'to become a Physical Education teacher'	1	(0.2)

NC: number of comments;
(%): frequency, in percentage, that the question was mentioned.

Concerning the aims presented by the adolescents when practicing a sport and physical activity, generally speaking, the reply 'to have a fun and leisure activity' is highlighted, which appeared as the first aim, chosen by 56.0% (n = 357) of the sample. The alternative 'for concern with body figure' was mentioned by 48.2% (n = 307), as well as 'for enjoying to practice activities' by 41.6% (n = 265) of the sample, being hence on the second and third positions, respectively, as the most mentioned aims. Since the main aim, that is to say, the most mentioned by the majority of adolescents who participated in the research was 'to have a fun and leisure activity' it is important to mention that both having fun and leisure are opposite to the obligations of the daily routine. To have fun and leisure was also the determining aim for sports and physical activity mentioned by the adolescents in many investigations carried out in many different cultural contexts^(23,24).

Inter-gender comparison of the aims of the adolescents showed a tendency of presenting the same aims, including in the same order of the general sample. However, some diverging correlations can be identified concerning genders, such as the time aim 'for enjoying to compete', which is more associated with male than female adolescents. Therefore, it is possible to state from the results that the aim 'for enjoying to compete' was more frequently present in the

Table 2. Aims of the adolescents with sports activities practice classified by gender

Aims	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
'to have fun and leisure'	56.6% (201)	55.3% (156)	56.0% (357)
'for concern with body'	43.9% (156)	53.5% (151)	48.2% (307)
'for enjoying to practice activities'	45.9% (163)	36.2% (102)	41.6% (265)
'for health concerns'	33.5% (119)	43.6% (123)	38.0% (242)
'to meet friends'	36.9% (131)	35.5% (100)	36.3% (231)
'for enjoying to compete'	23.9% (85)	10.3% (29)	17.9% (114)
'to use the free time'	18.9% (67)	15.6% (44)	17.4% (111)
'to chill out'	5.6% (20)	5.3% (15)	5.5% (35)
'to become a professional athlete'	2.0% (7)	.0% (0)	1.1% (7)
did not reply	0.3% (1)	0.4% (1)	0.3% (2)
'to improve skills'	0.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (1)
'to become a Physical education teacher'	0.0% (0)	0.4% (1)	0.2% (1)
Total	100% (951)	100% (722)	100% (1673)

* $\chi^2 = 35.3$; $gl = 11$; $p = 0.001$

The values in percentage represent the frequency at which the question was mentioned and between parentheses the number of comments.

Statistical program SPSS, version 11.5.

male than female gender. These results are in concordance with other investigations which identified reasons related to competition and performance to men, while the reasons related to healthy aspects

of exercising, therapeutic aims and body aesthetics were related to women ^(25,26).

Once the differences between male and female aims for sports and physical activity practice are known, we try to correlate these data using some specialized literature in order to obtain explanations concerning this phenomenon. Thus, it was stated that women prefer aims far from competitive models, while men enjoy the challenge of competition in the sports and physical activities practice ^(27,28). In another moment, the literature states that women are more interested in the physical activity relation with aesthetics and body image ⁽²⁹⁾.

Nevertheless, we should remember that participation of women and men in sports and physical activities is not simply quantitative, but also depends on factors such as type of activity, motivation with the practice, easiness and difficulty of access to it, disposition and availability to free time of each individual ⁽³⁰⁾.

CONCLUSIONS

The designing of conclusions, a phase considered an ending point, is also becoming a starting point. It is known that for better understanding on the topic mentioned here, that is, adolescents and physical activity, further discussion and reflexion which may somehow be latent is necessary. These new ways of thinking are certainly relevant to the designing of policies which focus on the participation of adolescents in sports and physical activities programs. It is believed that such fact would enable the adoption of a more active life style which could be maintained along an adolescent's life, since adolescence is a decisive phase for acquisition and consolidation of life styles.

The analysis of the results originated from the present epidemiological study on the aims of the adolescents with sports and physical activities practice expose that 'to have fun and leisure', and 'for concern with body figure' were the main aims of male and female genders, respectively. It should be also highlighted that the aim 'for enjoying to compete' is more associated with male than female adolescents.

Having the aims mentioned by the adolescents as a starting point, it is observed there is a need that sports and physical activity professionals are capable of articulating alternatives which stimulate the adolescents to remain engaged in these activities. Finally, despite the characteristics and limitations of this study, further investigation with other methodological outlinings which is in concordance or not with the results found here becomes necessary. However, the idea that sports and physical activities practice during adolescence seems to effectively contribute to an adult life more active and less sedentary is stressed.

Since habits of physical activity acquired during childhood and adolescence tend to be kept throughout one's lifetime, it is crucial that policies which promote the practice of sports and physical activities in the younger groups are developed; reminding that Physical Education in schools seems to be the way to dissolve and promote these policies.

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