

ARTICLE BY P. PORTUGAL - FOUR LANGUAGES ABSTRACTS

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SEARCHING FOR A LIFE/DEATH CONCEPT AMONG ACTIVE AND SEDENTARY SENIORS

The aim of this study was to deepen the knowledge on the death theme, hardly ever studied, especially in Sports Sciences. The objectives established were to analyse the death concept among the elderly citizens in an active and in a sedentary group; to compare the speech on death between the seniors from both groups and to understand how their active/sedentary life-styles influence their death concept. Six categories were established: anguish towards death; death as taboo; death as the end; death as a consequence of life; the relationship between old age and death/ the relationship between the being and death.

It was observed that the death theme brings about contradictory feelings, regardless of one's lifestyle. It was clear that sedentary seniors were more deeply anguished about death. They accept it more pacifically as well as the process that may lead to death, even when there is much suffering. The active elderly are more expressive in their answers, producing a more positive speech on the theme. Choosing an active lifestyle marked by dynamism, socialization, new and different appeals is an attitude towards life and death that offers people, especially the aged, a more expressive, more positive and more dignifying existence.

Key words: death; sedentary life; active life.

CONCEPTS DE VIE ET DE MORT PARMIS LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ACTIVES ET SÉDENTAIRES

La proposition de cette étude, c'était d'approfondir la connaissance sur le thème de la mort, rarement étudié, surtout dans le champ de l'Éducation Physique. Les objectifs étaient l'analyse du concept de mort parmi les âgés dans un groupe actif et dans un autre sédentaire ; établir la comparaison du discours sur la mort parmi les âgés des deux groupes et essayer de comprendre comment le fait d'appartenir à l'un des groupes peut influencer le concept de mort. Six catégories ont été établies : l'angoisse en relation à la mort ; la mort comme tabou ; la mort comme fin ; la mort comme conséquence de la vie ; la relation entre vieillesse et mort ; et la relation entre l'être et la mort.

Nous vérifions qu'indépendamment du style de vie le thème de la mort produit des sentiments contradictoires. Il a été clair que les âgés sédentaires présentent une angoisse plus grande en relation à la mort. Ils l'acceptent, aussi bien que le processus qui conduit à la mort, plus pacifiquement, même si elle est marquée par la souffrance. Quant aux personnes âgées plus actives, elles sont plus expressives dans leurs réponses, et perdusent un discours plus positif. L'option par un style de vie actif, marqué par dynamisme, socialisation, stimulus nouveaux et variés, c'est une attitude devant la vie et la mort qui permet que l'être humain, surtout le plus âgé, mène une vie plus expansive, expressive, positive et digne.

Mots-clés: mort ; sédentarité ; vie active.

CONCEPTOS DE VIDA Y MUERTE ENTRE LOS ANCIANOS Y SEDENTARIOS

La propuesta del presente trabajo fue de profundizar el conocimiento sobre el tema de la muerte, pocas veces estudiado, sobre todo en el campo de la Educación Física. Los objetivos fueron: analizar el concepto de muerte que tienen los ancianos, en un grupo activo y otro sedentario; comparar el discurso sobre la muerte entre ancianos de los dos grupos y comprender como el hecho de pertenecer a uno de los grupos puede influenciar el concepto de muerte. Seis categorías fueron establecidas: angustia en relación a la muerte; la muerte como tabú; la muerte como el fin; la muerte como consecuencia de la vida; la relación entre vejez y muerte; y la relación entre el ser y la muerte.

Percebimos que independientemente del estilo de vida, el tema de la muerte produce sentimientos contradictorios. Quedó claro que los ancianos sedentarios presentan una angustia más grande en relación a la muerte. La aceptan, así como el proceso que conduce a la muerte, más pacíficamente, aunque sea con sufrimiento. Pero los ancianos activos son más expresivos en sus respuestas, produciendo un discurso más positivo. La opción por un estilo de vida activo, marcado por dinamismo, socialización, estímulos nuevos y variados es una actitud delante de la vida y de la muerte que permite que el ser humano, sobre todo los más viejos, tener una existencia más expansiva, expresiva y digna.

Palabras-clave: muerte; sedentarismo; vida activa.

CONCEITOS DE VIDA E MORTE EM IDOSOS ATIVOS E SEDENTÁRIOS

A proposta deste estudo foi aprofundar o conhecimento sobre o tema da morte, raramente estudado, especialmente no campo da Educação Física. Os objetivos foram: analisar o conceito de morte dos idosos em um grupo ativo e outro sedentário; comparar o discurso sobre a morte entre idosos de ambos os grupos e entender como o fato de pertencer a um dos grupos influencia o conceito de morte. Seis categorias foram estabelecidas: angústia em relação à morte; a morte como tabu; a morte como o fim; a morte como consequência da vida; a relação entre idade avançada e morte; e a relação entre o ser e a morte.

Percebemos que independientemente do estilo de vida o tema da morte gera sentimentos contraditórios. Ficou claro que idosos sedentários apresentam uma angústia maior em relação à morte. Eles a aceitam, bem como ao processo que leva à morte, mais pacificamente, mesmo que seja marcada pelo sofrimento. Já os idosos ativos são mais expressivos em suas respostas, produzindo um discurso mais positivo. Optar por um estilo de vida ativo, marcado pelo dinamismo, socialização, estímulos novos e variados é uma atitude perante a vida e a morte que permite ao ser humano, especialmente aos mais velhos, uma existência mais expansiva, expressiva, positiva e digna.

Palavras-chave: morte; sedentarismo; vida ativa.

SEARCHING FOR A LIFE/DEATH CONCEPT IN ACTIVE AS WELL AS SEDENTARY OLD PEOPLE ^(E)

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INTRODUCTION

Around everywhere and through various ways we are being invaded – even when unconsciously – by information the media and publicity offer us, almost trampling. Such a society's characterising behavior influences the people's way of thinking and acting, altering their values and the importance they are given.

Aging as a demographic issue has been a determinant factor for a society's mobilisation. A bigger and more careful attention towards the elderly is taking place. This question's concern has become more intense and more and more one wishes and tries to get old better or retard the aging process. Attempts to find longevity recipes are made, which are but different ways of disguising what time and history don't let us forget. Places are created with the unique purpose of disguising the loneliness one feels and lives in. Investigation increases at all levels, thus trying to know and also for a better understanding of this unique and possessor of unique population's stories.

Sports Sciences have been paying attention to this phenomenon and have, in a discrete and wise way, being elaborating adequate and alluring strategies for the elderly, thus contributing for a more dignified life. Despite this evolution and the valuable contribute developed by Sports Sciences, we verify there are still some gaps on what profound reflexion is concerned, bearing in mind the elder person is not simply the old man who little else has to give or to take.

This population foresees death. This concept is referred by them with no dismay, which makes it so weird the fact Sports Sciences does not have a speech on this matter.

When trying to specify and get a deep knowledge of each and every theme to which Sports Sciences has been dedicating to, we realise the death theme occupies a limited area. An area to be thought of, to be talked about or even to be discussed. It's always astonishment for us, being death inevitable it will certainly not disappear simply by not talking about it.

PURPOSES

This astonishment led us to some work-oriented questions: how does the elderly life concept influences the death concept? Will the elderly who live a sedentary life have a speech on death different from those who lead an active one, organized physical activities included? Will the elderly with an active life, one that includes organised physical activities, have a more positive speech on what death is concerned than those leading a sedentary life?

To our belief, taking into account a previous bibliographic review, in which active old people have an attitude towards life less agonizing, usually classified as a more positive one than sedentary old people. Therefore were established as our work purposes: to analyse the elderly death concept in both groups; to compare the speech on death between the elderly from both groups and to understand how the concept of being of each elderly group influences their death concept.

METHODOLOGY

The actual study is a nature exploratory one, planned and elaborated with the purpose of initiating a deeper knowledge on a theme scarcely studied, especially in Sports Sciences.

According to the outlined purposes to this work, a bibliographic review took place for a better understanding of the theme as well as to define the analysis' categories by building a semi-structured interview script, subsequently applied to eighteen pensioners. For the actual study we chose a semi-structured interview script, containing some specific questions, some open questions and questions that came up during each interview, according to the information received. Therefore our work's final version of the interview's script has 13 questions, taking into account the established categories.

All interviews were voice-recorded and transcript to paper, thus forming the work's corpus, which was analysed and interpreted through the analysis' technique of contents in its heuristic

function. During each interview's transcription process, we tried to be as faithful as possible, risking keeping that fidelity on what emotions on each interview is concerned. As Cardoso stated (2002: 117) "the voice, the emotion, the cry, the pauses, the silence, words accentuation, ideas are not easily perceptible on paper."

Bardin's (1995) and Merriam's (1998) perspectives were taken into due account to the categorical system's construction. Six categories were established: category anguish towards death; category death as taboo; category death as the end; death as a consequence of life; category old-age concept/ death concept; category being concept/ death concept.

The material in this work was treated using a codification process. As Bardin (1995:103) asserts, this process corresponds "to a change – made according to precise rules – of the text's original data", thus making it possible to reach "a representation of the content, or its expression, susceptible of explaining the analyst about the text's features" by cutting out, aggregation and enumeration.

After treating the work's corpus it was possible to analyse it and interpret it according to the categorical system defined through the bibliographic review.

DEVELOPMENT

*"You will also visit me some day
Certainly I will not fall into forgetfulness.
The chain will be broken
Then my suffering will have an end.
Oh death, my dear sister,
I imagine you far and shadowy
Hanging over my misery,
You appear to me as a cold star.
The day will come when you will come near
Full of an abrasive desire
Come, my beloved, here you have me,
Take me; I am yours, my love."*

Hermann Hesse (2003: 154) presents us a view over certainty and proximity to death and the way of facing it through words used in a concise and simple way.

Aging imposes a transversal reflection, comprising all levels of our society, from the financial to the medical one. Rui Garcia (s/d p.74) states that "in effect, aging is a question that glides over the entire society, thus meaning it is not confined to a certain age but to man, being therefore necessary to understand it as a truly anthropological question". How can then Sports Sciences not address the death theme or yet, consider it a taboo?

To think of the old person is to face oneself with a life, a history, a path which certainly experienced several changes and as many adaptations.

Personal, social and cultural changes, inserted in an environment each person moves in and builds. To our judgement we cannot decompose neither forbid the elder of talking neither approaching, proportioning thought nor reflexion on all aspects that constitute that being.

After a deeper reflexion it's not enough trying to imbue neither telling our elderly – and even in a preventive perspective to all age quadrants, thus contributing for an education for the old age and for life - that being active is a determinant factor for a better dignity and a withdrawal from aging prejudices. Such cannot or should not be made by decomposing the way how each individual thinks and experiences life, for also the acceptance of this choice and its decision has a lot to do with the way one perspectives the being, life and death itself.

Death is part of the daily life of every human being because it's the fact one knows one is mortal that allows each individual to make his/ her choice of life or, at least, the option of living the life given to them.

Being birth something one didn't plan or asked for, it seems to us death as an end or an existence's passage, gives life a meaning. Birth is not projected whereas death makes a life's project possible. Death allows us to wish for a path, incites and moves in a certain direction, allowing us to be unique. Death intensifies life because it presents it as finite. Death gives life a meaning because it limits it, making man a connoisseur of an unknown time which simultaneously however, conditioning

us despite evolving us in mystery.

The old man is no longer a passive watcher of events but rather an integral part of the stage society presents us with. Therefore, to our understanding, a taboo over a theme that is a part of life and even gives it a meaning should not take place.

We are most likely trying to transmit the importance of rethinking the way we live life, knowing practising physical activities or the option for an active lifestyle, whenever allowed, is of extreme importance for an improvement on life dignity.

Aging is a contradictory stage. One wants to get there badly but one doesn't want to be old, neither do we accept its characteristics. Furthermore, being death full of emotion and affection, it also affords ambiguity and contradictions. Even when one believes one will go to a better place, the farthest one is from that moment, the better. Even understanding the end as normal and accepting it as a condition of being, when we think of no longer existing, we want to avoid and to postpone death.

Death is the imaginary; it's simply the fantasy that tranquilizes us. Life is certainty. Both are a mystery. Different mysteries; but undoubtedly mysteries. And man is the pawn, the object of those mysteries.

Time is real, but it is a built reality, not entirely felt. There are as many times as there are people in the world, but time is unique, where all differences fade away. Time equalizes man. Such as life and death are in their essence.

Life is given to us. As Delfim Santos (1982: 158) a twentieth century Portuguese demagogue defines it, "it's the gift that does not depend from man." Even though we are not allowed to choose in its whole it's drawing, we can define it shapes and give it meanings. We have the possibility of choosing a path full of life, where opting for an active life, practising physical activities offers and is a positive attitude that allows us to face our existence and our mortal condition better.

Thinking of or talking about death allows us feeling different reactions and emotions. Such for the poets' and philosophers' words, people who dedicate a lot of their time in reflecting on central themes from our condition of "being", as for the average citizens' words, whose feeling is centred in the moment and in the history of life mainly without accentuated dedication to deep thought we verify what death represents.

*"Any ancient knows what spring says
Let it go, old man, get into the grave
Give your room for exuberant young boys
Surrender and don't fear death"
(Herman Hesse, 2003: 80)*

"I don't fear death, I have a bad will against death, I don't want to die, it's different" and "I am not scared of death, I feel sadness in death, I realize death is a natural fact; therefore, I am not afraid to die, I am just sad" (Interviewed no. 12, active).

When themes which in some way interfere with our lives, may alter it or when we have no knowledge about the same ones, are brought to discussion, they awake in us feelings we not always realize neither can control. Feelings towards death are not universal once every culture, every person faces it in different ways, in an attempt of better satisfying their beliefs and values. We find however different feelings within the same culture through the speeches of our elderly. anguish towards death is the feeling or emotion presented when one approaches, thinks of or reflects on death; one's own death as well as the death of someone else. This feeling translates itself into fear, restlessness, on what death and/ or its process is concerned.

*"If we see death waiting over there
Let us not stay still waiting for it
It will be better to escape from it
It will be better to scare it off"
(Hermann Hesse, 2003: 44)*

"I don't think a lot about that, as well (...) I have never thought about that in a serious way", "it's better no to think about that", "it is not a pleasant theme (...) what a theme you found.. no one enjoys talking about that, it's a very annoying theme" (Interviewed no. 1, active)

Thinking of death breaks with the regular and demanded path on the society we live in. To die

is to no longer possess, to no longer be able to accumulate; it is therefore better to keep our minds off the mortal condition of being. This is the current western society's first thought on what death is concerned. As Abílio Oliveira (1999: 164), a researcher on psychological questions asserts "thinking of death of death may lead us to self-reflection" which may interfere with the lifestyle each individual adopts. This self-reflection demands time as well as attitudes' changes man doesn't even want to confront.

Death "is the end's phenomenon and simultaneously the phenomenon's end."
(Levinas, 2003: 72)

"To my mind there is nothing after death" (Interviewed no. 1, active)

One of death's representations may be to understand it as the end, the conclusion of everything that was experienced.

The absence of something beyond death may calm one down once the unknown has no place and so there is no mystery to be solved. On the other hand there's the certainty only memory will prevail and that nothing else may take place, there is not a passage or continuity to something else. The only possible certainty tranquilizes man.

"Death is not the end; it is, at most a mere passage or a goal in the individual's life, on its way to eternity"
(Urbain, 1997: 403)

"(...) I believe it's a natural thing, life's law. It's the life's law, so people are born, grow up, live and die like everything else." (Interviewed no. 6, active)

"It's something natural; one knows sooner or later death has to come", "one ends this life and starts another one, the eternal life (...) one ends and there is a passage" (Interviewed no. 9, sedentary).

Another way of facing death is as a consequence of life, the passage to something that, even when unknown, is imagined and even desired. Abílio Oliveira (1999: 100) refers "many human beings believe or find a logical meaning in the existence of a life (form) beyond death." This logic allows a greater tranquillity and security, once the individual believes he or she will have another place, therefore backing off the ANGÚSTIA of uncertainty which will lead him or her towards an end.

"When two old people meet they just talk about the damn GOTA, the rigid members and the lack of air when climbing the stairs; they shouldn't just talk about the sufferings and heartbreaks, they should also exchange the good experiences, share with the others the happy moments that console them."
(Hermann Hesse, 2003: 64)

"...well, taking into account the natural order of life, the individual keeps getting older.. their faculties lost.. the tiredness.. to my mind, old people are the first to die", "(...) I believe the elderly are closer to death, except certain exceptions, right?" (Interviewed n° 6, active)

Talking about old age is transporting ourselves to what is spent, what little can give; it is the farthest to vivacity and the closest to death. In fact this life's phase is closer to death for everyone. It's always an intense challenge for man to build an attitude based on dignity maintenance towards old age and death, as opposed to abandonment by his/ her condition of old person and of being.

"As we conquer maturity we become younger. That's exactly what's happening to me, for I have always kept the same feeling towards life since my boyhood; I never stopped facing my adult life and aging as a sort of comedy."
(Hermann Hesse, 2003: 7)

"Yes, if we face life with optimism, death will be faced with certain optimism as well." (Interviewed n° 1, active); "I believe people who feel a lot of anguish towards death are unhappier, really unhappier." (Interviewed n° 5, active)

One of the most challenging as well as important aspects of life is how each one faces the perspective of one's own death as well as the death of those who surround them. These are some

incognitos with which each generation has to deal with (Parkes, Laungani and Young, 2003). We certainly have to mention the perspective each one will build will have deep influences on one's own life's perspective as well as of being's perspective. We believe the way how we give meanings to our condition of being will influence how we build our painting, giving our colours, with our line, placing our way of facing life and death. As already mentioned life and death cannot be dissociated. When thinking of life we are also thinking of death. When building an attitude toward life we also build an attitude towards death.

With the present work we verify the death theme, on account of all the emotional cargo that carries with it, transports the individual to contradictory feelings, regardless of the lifestyle, because it involves different affections, feelings, emotions, memories which, by their complexity, imply a plurality of meanings.

Even being unpleasant talking about death, the same is faced as inevitable, normal of happening, regardless of the elder's lifestyle.

The way how they face the end of life varies a lot among the elderly. One verifies religious interference on their beliefs in the end as well as on what might there be beyond death.

Even not being present in the daily life that the elderly have of life's concept, it influences the death's concept they have and, not being an exercise of worry and reflection it's almost consensual how they live influences how they face death.

It was as well stated sedentary elderly present a more marked anguish towards death. They accept it more pacifically as well as the process that may lead to death, even when marked by suffering.

The active elderly are more expressive and expansive in their answers, giving more positive speeches.

Through words and attitudes it is verifiable death is faced by the way one lives, how one takes advantage of life and how one perspectives it, there seeming to be a strong connection between life and death.

Opting for an active lifestyle, marked by dynamism, by socialization, by answering to different as well as new stimulus, being in itself an attitude towards life and death, it allows the human being and especially the elder a more expansive, more expressive, more positive and more dignified existence.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this seems to be one more reason to instil into the elderly the idea of a physically active life.

After this work's conclusion several questions came up. It presented us as pertinent and relevant, justifying a deeper and more exhaustive research as well as reflection on the already mentioned themes, adding them a different context and a new plot.

A new astonishment took place: how does the environment where one is inserted influences the establishment of life and physical activity concepts on the elderly?

In fact, the environment where we are inserted in contributes in a large scale to foment the values as well as conceptions each person has as to what one wishes for from life, in the way how one intends to live life, to spend life. Bottom line is it contributes to the construction and reconstruction of each individual's identity.

The elderly are an active part, an integral part of what different societies are and represent, thus contributing to their characterisation, being also the reflex of their changes. It seems rather pertinent for us how the old person, with their entire path frequently drawn by a rural origin and ending on the urban complexity and fastness, or at least going through that phase, feel through their testimony.

Such as lifestyles from people who were born or live in a rural environment are different from those who were born or live in an urban environment, so their conceptions of life, occupation, activity, physical activity and death differ. The history of activity will have different paths on both environments. How people percept, understand and experience physical activity will be uneven as well, representing plots of unique directions.

We therefore intend to establish life stories and coming with them to an authentic ethnobiography, whose goals are: to establish life concepts inherent to rural and urban populations, to establish the concepts of physical activity inherent to the two populations, to relate the concepts

alluded to the environment where one lives in and to relate the life concept to the physical activity one on their objective conditions, according to the environment in question.

If it was our intention to approach the death theme in our doctorate dissertation, it is our intention to give the same continuity, approaching life in a profound way, in the doctorate, in each of the cases being death assumed as the paradigm of life.

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<p>L'ÉDUCATION PHYSIQUE COMME MOYEN DE PROMOTION CULTURELLE</p> <p>Célébré dans le Manifeste Mondial D'Education Physique FIEP 2000</p> <p><u>Vu que</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L'Éducation Physique, par sa portée conceptuelle, peut être considérée comme moyen de développement culturel ; • Le pluralisme culturel des nations e des régions exige que toutes les pratiques respectent la diversité culturelle, pour trouver les stratégies adaptées aox diverses réalités et caractéristiques ; • La <u>Lettre Internationale d'Éducation Physique et Sport</u> (UNESCO / 1978), dans son article 7°. établit que « en ce qui concerne l'Éducation Physique e le Sport on ne peut pas perdre de vue la défense des valeurs morales et culturelles ». • Le <u>XV. Congrès Panaméricain d'Éducation Physique</u> (Lima / 1995), dans ses conclusions, a suggéré le rachat et la préservation des valeurs culturelles et des traditions des peuples à travers l'Éducation Physique et la Récréation ; • La <u>3^e. Conférence Internationale de Ministres et Haut Fonctionnaires Chargés de l'Éducation Physique et du Sport</u> (MINEPS III / Punta del Este ~1999), à travers la <u>Déclaration de Punta del Este</u>, par son art. 8°. , a soutenu l'appui à une politique de conservation et valorisation des sports et des jeux traditionnels qui font partie du patrimoine culturel des régions et des pays ; <p><u>La FIEP conclut</u></p> <p>Art. 9 - L'Éducation Physique doit être toujours utilisée éthiquement comme moyen adéquat de respect et de renfor aux diversités culturelles.</p>
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