

## 21 - A STUDY ON THE PHYSICAL DISABILITY AND BODY SATISFACTION THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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### INTRODUCTION

Most of the time, people with physical disabilities are seen as far from the ideal body model established by the standards of modern society, mostly due to the differences existing in their bodies, which are not normally considered ideal. We constantly notice that some physically disabled people are excluded from social life because they do not match the ideal body stereotype. This can cause changes in their body image, which is, as stated by Tavares (2003), the mental representation of body identity and is influenced by physiological, sociological and emotional aspects. According to Ferreira and Guimarães (2003), in our current society there is an overvaluation of what is considered beautiful, new, strong, useful and productive. Individuals with physical disabilities, different from the valued ones, have stigmas of being unproductive, imperfect and useless. Therefore, they can establish negative relationships with their bodies, given the influence people they are in contact with may have in the creation of their body image (Ferreira, 2005; Schilder, 1999).

In this way, it is known that movement offers a group of new sensations and perceptions to an individual, different from those experienced during a state of stillness, which will provide a more unified body identity (Schilder, 1999). Such a unified identity will be the precursor of a complete body image that will bring healthy and positive relationships with their own bodies. However, is this premise also true among disabled individuals?

The aim of the present study was to check whether the practice of physical activities influences the level of satisfaction regarding the body image of physically disabled people. In this study the concept of dissatisfaction consists of the discrepancy between the body considered representative of the real one and the body considered representative of the ideal one (Furnham, Badmin & Sneade, 2002; Gardner, 2004).

### Methodology

This is an exploratory and quali-quantitative study.

### Sample

8 male individuals were evaluated, all with physical disabilities, living in the city of Juiz de Fora /MG, where 3 individuals had paraplegia, 2 disabled people due to a congenial cause, 2 handicapped due to amputation and 1 with hemiplegia. All of them declared themselves as practitioners of physical activity, at a weekly average of 2.63 ( $\pm 1.598$ ). The average age of the individuals is 30.63 ( $\pm 9.303$ ).

### Tools

Since no valid or accurate tools have been found to assess the body satisfaction of people with some kind of physical disability (Campana; Tavares, 2009), a semi-structured interview was created and adapted by the authors, based on the models of França and Azevedo (2003) and Cooper et al, (1987, as mentioned in Interdonado & Grecol, 2009, p. 4), where the questions were in relation to the level of satisfaction with body image: Are you happy with your body? Do you feel good with your body? Have you been worried about your physical shape? Would you like an appearance different than the one you have? Do you trust your body? Have you ever felt ashamed of your body? Do you avoid wearing certain types of clothing due to your physical disability? Do you think the practice of physical activities enhances your physical appearance?

The interview also included the type of physical disability, the age of the person being interviewed and the frequency of weekly physical activity, aiming at correlating the level of body image satisfaction with the practice of physical activities.

### Data analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively and with statistical data treatment, using the SPSS v17.0 software for the descriptive and inferential analysis.

### Results and Discussion

In the analysis of the results, it is possible to conclude that the majority of individuals with physical disabilities who took part in the present study have shown high concerns towards the body and body dissatisfaction. It was found that 62.5% of the interviewed men frequently think about their body and they are very concerned with their physical shape. Another finding is that all the participants replied affirmatively when asked whether they would like to have an appearance different than their real one. This data allows a consideration about the impact the desire to have an ideal body, different than the one with the disability, may have on the body image of that individual. The desire for an appearance different than the actual state may reflect a condition of dissatisfaction with one's own dimensions and body shape, and with the appearance of oneself, which may suffocate the individual's subjectivity and lead him or her to psychic and eating disorders.

Other results show that 75% of the participants replied they do not trust their bodies, emphasizing the condition of dissatisfaction with their function. When it comes to the practice of physical activity, 75% of the participants said the practice enhances their appearance. This is relevant data within the study, and may promote among Physical Education professionals the belief that the practice of physical activity is a relevant facilitator of healthy relationships between disabled people and their own bodies. Therefore, it would be possible for Physical Education teachers to take preventive and therapeutic actions when teaching physical activities to physically disabled students.

Finally, it is noticeable that although body dissatisfaction has been demonstrated in the present study, physical activity is pointed out by the majority of the participants as a major factor in the development of body image satisfaction. According to Tavares (2007), physical education can be one of the options for full development of body image. It can be emphasized through leisure, game, dance, recreation, body arts in general, as well as the exercise of discovery and search for acceptance, and the overcoming of limitations.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Semi-structured interview related to the level body satisfaction:  
Name ..... Age .....

Disability?

Frequency practicing physical activity?

Are you happy with your body?

You feel good about your body?

You have been worried about his fitness?

Would you like to have the appearance is different from that?

You have confidence in your body?

Have you ever felt ashamed of your body?

Do you avoid using some clothes because of their disability?

Do you consider that physical activity improves your physical appearance?

**CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to assess whether the practice of physical activities influences the level of satisfaction with the body image of physically disabled people. According to the reports made by the individuals with physical disabilities who took part in this study, the practice of physical activities has a significant influence on the level of satisfaction with their bodies. The majority, represented by 75% of the participants, stated that the practice of physical activities enhances their appearance and makes them feel more pleased with their bodies.

However, the results of this study need more robust data in order to be confirmed, since a valid and accurate tool is needed for such purpose. According to Campana (2007), none of the tools that are available to the Brazilian researchers nowadays allow the assessment of the satisfaction with the Body Image of disabled people. This is corroborated by the need of the authors to adapt and create a questionnaire which reflected the obtained results.

Physical activity appears in this research as an important facilitator of healthy relationships between people with physical disabilities and their body. Relevant to highlight that it can increase the possibilities of body experiences, providing more quality of movement as a basic element of the integrated development of disabled people. We suggest, from this study, further and greater discussions about the body image of physically disabled people, including a consideration of new evaluation methodologies.

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**A STUDY ON THE PHYSICAL DISABILITY AND BODY SATISFACTION THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

People with physical disabilities, most often, are considered far from ideal body type dictated by the standards of contemporary society, primarily by differences in their body, which normally are not accepted as ideal. Constantly, we see that some people with physical disabilities are excluded from social life did not fit the stereotype of the perfect body. This can cause changes in their body image, since the latter, as stated by Tavares (2003), is the mental representation of the body and identity is influenced by physiological, sociological and emotional.

The aim of this study was to examine whether physical activity influences the level of satisfaction with body image of people with physical disabilities. Were 8 males with physical disabilities living in the city of Juiz de Fora / MG. All reported that they are physically active with weekly average of 2.63 ( $\pm$  1.598). The average age of those assessed is 30.63 ( $\pm$  9.303). Finally, we can see that although body dissatisfaction has been shown to be recurrent in this study, physical activity is identified by most participants as a major factor in the development of satisfaction with body image. According to Tavares (2007) physical education may be one of the possibilities for the full development of body image. It can be emphasized by means of leisure, play, dance, recreation, arts body in general as well as the pursuit of discovery and quest for acceptance and overcoming limits.

**KEY WORDS:** Body Image, Body Satisfaction, Physical Disability.

**UNE ETUDE SUR LE HANDICAP PHYSIQUE ET SATISFACTION DU CORPS par l'ACTIVITÉ PHSIQUE**

Les personnes ayant un handicap physique, le plus souvent, sont considérés comme loin de type corporel idéal dicté par les normes de la société contemporaine, principalement par les différences dans leur corps, qui normalement ne sont pas acceptés comme idéal. Constamment, nous voyons que certaines personnes ayant une déficience physique sont exclus de la vie sociale ne correspondait pas au stéréotype du corps parfait. Cela peut causer des changements dans leur image corporelle, puisque celle-ci, comme l'a déclaré Tavares (2003), est la représentation mentale du corps et de l'identité est influencée par des facteurs physiologiques, sociologiques et émotionnel.

L'objectif de cette étude était d'examiner si l'activité physique influe sur le niveau de satisfaction à l'image corporelle des personnes handicapées physiques. Étaient de 8 hommes ayant un handicap physique qui vivent dans la ville de Juiz de Fora / MG. Tous ont déclaré qu'ils sont physiquement actifs avec une moyenne hebdomadaire de 2,63 ( $\pm$  1,598). L'âge moyen des personnes évaluées est 30,63 ( $\pm$  9,303).

Enfin, nous pouvons voir que, bien que l'insatisfaction corporelle a été montré à être récurrente dans cette étude, l'activité physique est identifié par la plupart des participants comme un facteur majeur dans le développement de la satisfaction de l'image corporelle. Selon Tavares (2007) d'éducation physique peut être l'une des possibilités pour le développement intégral de l'image corporelle. Il peut être souligné par le biais des loisirs, au jeu, la danse, sports, arts du corps en général ainsi que la poursuite de la découverte et la recherche de limites d'acceptation et de surmonter.

**MOTS - CLÉS:** l'image corporelle, la satisfaction des corps, le handicap physique.

**UN ESTUDIO SOBRE LA DISCAPACIDAD FÍSICA Y SATISFACCIÓN DEL CUERPO A TRAVÉS DE LA ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA**

Las personas con discapacidades físicas, más a menudo, se consideran ahora de un tipo de cuerpo ideal dictados por las normas de la sociedad contemporánea, sobre todo por las diferencias en su cuerpo, que normalmente no se aceptan como ideal. Constantemente, vemos que algunas personas con discapacidades físicas son excluidas de la vida social no se ajustaba al estereotipo del cuerpo perfecto. Esto puede causar cambios en su imagen corporal, ya que este último, según lo declarado por Tavares (2003), es la representación mental del cuerpo y la identidad se ve influida por fisiológico, sociológico y emocional.

El objetivo de este estudio fue examinar si la actividad física influye en el nivel de satisfacción con la imagen corporal de las personas con discapacidades físicas. Fueron 8 varones con discapacidad física que viven en la ciudad de Juiz de Fora / MG. Todos informaron de que son físicamente activos con un promedio semanal de 2,63 ( $\pm$  1,598). La edad media de los evaluados es 30,63 ( $\pm$  9,303).

Por último, podemos ver que a pesar de la insatisfacción corporal se ha demostrado que es recurrente en este estudio, la actividad física se identifica por la mayoría de los participantes como un factor importante en el desarrollo de la satisfacción con la imagen corporal. Según Tavares (2007) la educación física puede ser una de las posibilidades para el pleno desarrollo de la imagen corporal. Se puede señalar por medio de esparcimiento, al juego, la danza, la recreación, el cuerpo de las artes en general, así como la búsqueda del descubrimiento y la búsqueda de los límites de aceptación y superación.

**PALABRAS - CLAVE:** imagen corporal, la satisfacción corporal, el cuerpo, la discapacidad física.

**UM ESTUDO SOBRE O DEFICIENTE FÍSICO E A SATISFAÇÃO CORPORAL ATRAVÉS DA ATIVIDADE FÍSICA**

As pessoas com deficiência física, na maioria das vezes, são consideradas distantes do modelo de corpo ideal ditado pelos padrões da sociedade contemporânea, sobretudo, pelas diferenças em seu corpo, que, normalmente, não são aceitas como ideais. Constantemente, percebemos que algumas pessoas com deficiência física são excluídas do convívio social por não se enquadrarem no estereótipo do corpo perfeito. Isto pode provocar alterações em sua imagem corporal, já que esta, como afirma Tavares (2003), é a representação mental da identidade corporal e é influenciada por aspectos fisiológicos, sociológicos e emocionais.

O objetivo deste estudo foi verificar se a prática da atividade física influencia o nível de satisfação da imagem corporal das pessoas com deficiência física. Foram avaliados 8 indivíduos do sexo masculino, com deficiência física, residentes na cidade de Juiz de Fora / MG. Todos relataram que são praticantes de atividade física com média semanal de 2,63 ( $\pm$  1,598). A média de idade dos avaliados é de 30,63 ( $\pm$  9,303).

Por fim, pode-se perceber que, embora a insatisfação com o corpo tenha se mostrado recorrente neste estudo, a atividade física é apontada pela maioria dos participantes como um fator preponderante no desenvolvimento da satisfação com a imagem corporal. Segundo Tavares (2007) a educação física pode ser uma das possibilidades para o desenvolvimento pleno da imagem corporal. Ela pode ser enfatizada por meio do lazer, do jogo, da dança, da recreação, das artes corporais em geral, bem como o exercício da descoberta e busca de aceitação e superação de limites.

**PALAVRAS – CHAVE:** Imagem Corporal, Satisfação Corporal, Corpo, Deficiência física.