28 - STUDY ON THE REASONS THAT INFLUENCED ADOLESCENTS TO BEGIN THE PRACTICE OF SWIMMING.

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The context which motivated the research and its objective

The number of specialized establishments that enable a guided or autonomous practice of physical activities is currently high. Although there are few systematized studies following-up the involvement of the Brazilian population in the regular practice of physical activities; informal reports and some non-systematized observations indicate that in the last years the absolute number of individuals of different age groups interested in or somehow motivated to practice physical activities has been increasing regularly.

Although there is a high number of individuals who, for different reasons and needs, currently practice some type of regular physical activity, the literature reveals that this rate, when compared to the rate of people who do not exercise regularly, is still low, and so is the number of those who keep motivated and engaged in a physical activity program for a long period of time. Some individuals interrupt it for a certain period and return later; while others abandon it definitively (NAHAS, 2001).

Campaigns and programs related to the education and the promotion of health, both from the perspective of primary prevention or training models, are becoming a growing focus of investments and interventions resulting from public policies in countries from different continents. Although this "trans-cultural" and international movement admits the "multi-factorial" character of health (FARINATTI and FERREIRA, 2002), it holds as one of their assumptions that a sedentary life is one of the main risk factors associated with the advent or aggravation of degenerative-chronicle diseases. Consequently, it has been indicated in the specialized literature as one of the highest causes for the high morbidity and mortality rates in society (PAFFENBARGER et al., 1986; BLAIR et al., 1993; LEE AND PAFFENBARGER, 2000).

This scenery has motivated the investment in the development of researches aiming at identifying the difficulties alleged by individuals for not exercising regularly, as well as the principal factors and reasons influencing them to begin, to stick to and/or to abandon the regular practice of physical activities (REBELO, 1994; RYAN et al., 1997; MYERS and ROTH, 1997; DUNLAP and BARRY, 1999).

In Brazil, investments in the accomplishment of studies of this nature are recent. This seems to justify the still reduced number of researches on the subject, as well as the variability of the revealed results (SCALON, 1998; STEFANELO, 1998, ANDREOTTI, 2001).

In the specific case of swimming, we have found out that there were few studies accomplished to investigate the reasons that influence the individuals to begin, to adhere to or even to abandon the swimming programs (PINTO, 1992; BENASSI and SHIGUNOV, 1993; ABREU, 1993; COSTA, 1999). Most of these studies approach topics related to the techniques of the four official styles, the physical training, the physiologic answers, the biomechanics of the official styles, the teaching-learning methodologies, and the contributions of the swimming practice to the motor development (RESENDE et al., 2004).

Therefore, we have found out that there is a gap in the knowledge produced on the reasons alleged by individuals to begin the swimming practice.

In this context, the present research aims at identifying and analyzing the main reasons that influenced non-athlete adolescents to begin the practice of swimming. The relevance of researches of this nature lies in making it possible for managers of teaching-learning swimming programs, as well as for the teachers of this modality of physical activity, to plan their pedagogic interventions taking into account their students' motivations, expectations, needs, and objectives.

In order to draw the limits of our work, we decided to investigate the reasons that influenced non-athlete adolescents in the age range between 13 and 18 years old, to begin the practice of swimming. We also investigated the reasons alleged by adolescents that practice swimming at three places: SESC Madureira unit; Academia Rômulo Arantes Tijuca unit and Academia Rômulo Arantes - Vila Isabel unit. We have chosen these places because they are swimming teaching-learning establishments that privilege the possibility students engage in continuous swimming learning and practicing physical activity guided by different motivational demands (utilitarian learning, leisure, health, therapeutics, etc.), regardless of their age group.

Even so, this option does not allow the generalization of its results when compared to other places and groups with different characteristics. However, the analysis and the interpretation of the collected data can supply important information for the elaboration and the accomplishment of new investigations involving different age groups, as well as other places and other physical activities.

Methodology

The present study has applied the principles and the characteristics of a descriptive research type. The methodological "design" resembles the studies of the collection type ('survey') studies since we aimed to diagnose the reasons that influenced adolescents to begin the swimming practice.

The sample group was made up of 98 (ninety-eight) individuals, 42 (forty-two) of whom were enrolled at SESC Madureira unit, 26 (twenty-six), at the Academia Rômulo Arantes Tijuca unit, and 30 (thirty), at the Academia Rômulo Arantes Vila Isabel unit. The selection of the sample group was done at random.

In order to identify the main reasons that led the investigated group to begin the swimming practice, we generated an instrument for data collection based on the literature on the factors and reasons that influence the adolescents to adhere to physical activities programs (MOTA and SALLIS, 2002, SALLIS et al., 2002).

The developed instrument is composed of two parts. The first part is made up by questions that demand objective replies to identify the characteristics of the investigated group. The second part is constituted by a central question and 16 options of reasons that can justify the individuals' decision to begin the practice of a physical activity. In this chart, the informant was told to mark up to three reasons, in order of importance, that influenced him/her to begin the practice of swimming, labeling number '1 ' for the main reason, number '2 ' for the second main reason and number '3 ' for the third main reason. The informant also had the possibility to indicate up to three different reasons in case none of the 16 options corresponded to his/her reasons.

Outcomes and Data Analysis

The presentation and the outcomes of this study were organized in two parts. The first one corresponds to the characterization of the sample group. In this part we present the principal characteristics of the investigated group, such as: sex, age of the informants, age when they began the practice of swimming, the time of swimming practice, the frequency of

practices a week and how the access to the practicing place occurs. In the second part we present the main reasons alleged by the investigated adolescents to begin the practice of swimming.

- *Description of the Data Referring to the Characteristics of the Sample Group*

Out of the 98 (ninety-eight) swimmers involved in the present research, 68% (n=67) were male and 32% (n=31) were female, in the age range between 13 and 18 years. The average age of the group is 14.7 years, with an average standard error of 1.67 years.

Most of the informants (75%, n=73) began the practice of swimming after they were six years old, and 64% (n=63) have been engaged in the swimming programs for more than six months.

AS to the rate of frequency individuals practice swimming, we have found a larger percentage of adolescents practicing swimming twice a week (70%, n=69), although nobody has mentioned he/she practices it just once a week.

Another detected information shows that most of the adolescents walk from the origin place to where they practice swimming (66%, n=65). The others admitted they depend on a means of transportation such as a bus (23%, n=22), a car (10%, n=10) or a bicycle (1%, n=1). We also identified a larger percentage of adolescents (82%, n=80) with autonomy to move to the respective place of swimming practice without having to have somebody else's company.

Finally, we have found that 77% of the informants (n=75) thought the place where the swimming practice takes place was 'very close' and 'close' to their homes.

- *Description of the Data Referring to the Main Reasons that Influenced the Adolescents to Begin the Practice of Swimming*

Regarding the reasons that influenced the investigated group to begin the practice of swimming, the results revealed that the main reasons resulted form the informant's intrinsic motivation, in other words, the reasons related to the individual's pleasure and satisfaction in practicing swimming (16.04%). The second reason is the influence of parents or people responsible for the informant (14.95%), the doctor's order (12.97%), the intention to practice a physical activity that can provide a desirable level of physical conditioning (10.45%) and, finally, from a utilitarian perspective, the need to learn to swim (10.27%). These five reasons together represented 64.68% of the total of points obtained in the answers (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Main reasons alleged by the adolescents to begin the swimming practice

Reason	Points	%
Because I have always enjoyed swimming	**89**	**16.04**
My parents or responsible decided that swimming was important for me	**83**	**14.95**
Because the doctor ordered so	**72**	**12.97**
To improve my physical fitness	**58**	**10.45**
Because I didnt know how to swim	**57**	**10.27**
To avoid medical problems	45	8.11
Because I wanted to have a beautiful body	31	5.59
Because I wanted or needed to lose weight	26	4.68
Because I wanted to feel physically and emotionally well	24	4.32
Because I wanted to become a professional swimmer	22	3.96
Because I wanted to be with my friends and to make new ones	13	2.34
Because I wanted a different physical activity	13	2.34
Because swimming brings different challenges	10	1.80
Because it was the only activity available near my house/working place/studying place	7	1.26
Because I could afford paying for it	2	0.36
Because those who practice swimming are more recognized	1	0.18
Others	2	0.36
Total	**555**	**100**

In “other” there were answers alleging the need to practice swimming 'to surf better' and 'to take an entrance exam'.

It is worth pointing out the nature of the reasons that obtained a larger punctuation in the sample group, despite of the type of treatment given to the collected data. We applied the explanatory categories of the human conduct suggested by Lovisolo (1995) to infer that the principal reasons presented by the informants included the three dimensions approached by the author: the norm (“because my parents or responsible decided that swimming was important') the usefulness (“because I didn't know how to swim”, “to improve my physical fitness” and “because the doctor ordered so”) and similar (“because I have always enjoyed swimming”). It is interesting to point out that the reasons presented by the informants for the beginning of the swimming practice were not just limited to one of the motivational categories suggested by Lovisolo.

Although there have been few studies that checked specifically the reasons alleged by adolescents in the age range between 13 and 18 years old to join swimming programs, we observed that the outcomes of this research present some similarities with those revealed in investigations carried out with youths focusing on other physical activities programs. Santos and Barcelos (2004), for instance, detected by means of a questionnaire filled out by 17 athletes with the average age of 18 years from a male handball team in the city of Catanduva-SP that 41% of the guys began to practice handball because of their friends' influence, 24% for leisure, 23% for curiosity and 12% because of the media influence.

In the same conditions, in a research carried out with 10 sport rhythmic gymnastics athletes from the Brazilian group of youths, Botti and Vieira (2004) found out that most of them began the practice of this sport due to their friends' influence.

Actually, the literature related to the focused thematic area indicates that the support and the incentive of companions, family and friends influence the children's and adolescents' involvement in physical activities programs (MOTA and SALLIS, 2002).

On the other hand, analyzing the studies that investigated other age groups, we observed that the reasons related to health are also frequently mentioned in the researches. Costa (1999), for instance, concluded that the interest in acquiring and/or preserving health was the main reason to motivate 64 individuals, of both sexes, in the age range between 16 and 60 years old, to join swimming classes in sports centers in Limeira-SP. Similarly, analyzing the reasons that influenced 137 individuals, of both sexes, aged over 9 years, to begin the practice of swimming in the city of Maringá, Benassi and Shigunov (1993) concluded that the most common reasons given for the practice of swimming were those related to health and to the well-being (71.2% of the answers).

Vieira and Ferreira (2004) investigated the profile of individuals that practice physical activities on the Maracanã

1 In this research we are conceiving 'physical activities' as those practiced intentionally, focused on the different forms and modalities of the physical exercise, gymnastics, games, sports, dances, among other cultural manifestations and expressions of the human movement, practiced for the prevention of diseases, health promotion, motor education and re-education, physical-sporting performance, leisure, besides other practices guided by objectives historically identified with the tradition of the Physical Education (Edit CNE/CES # 58/2004). However, we recognize that an expressive group of specialists conceives 'physical activities' in a wider perspective, embracing daily activities such as domestic services, cleaning the backyard, carrying lightweight, walking to the workplace, going up stairways, among many others (NAHAS, 2001; MATSUDO et al., 2002).

2 Refers to the learning how to swim for safety in the aquatic way (ESCOBAR and BURKHARDT, 1985).

3 In order to analyze the principal reasons that influenced the investigated adolescents to begin the practice of swimming, we attributed three points to the answers marked with the number 1, two points to those with the number 2, and one point to the answers with the number 3. The purpose of this kind of treatment was to identify the items that obtained larger punctuation, starting from the sum of the points registered in each item.

stadium track, in Rio de Janeiro, and concluded that in a sample of 289 individuals of both sexes, at ages over 15 years, there was a larger percentage of informants (72.3%) that began to practice physical activities due to health reasons. This percentage is similar to the one revealed by the research carried out by Benassi and Shigunov (1993) with swimming students (71.2%). Other reasons also identified by the researchers were the need to lose weight, the obedience to the doctor's orders, leisure and aesthetics.

An interesting study that aimed to check the socio-demographic profile of 44 individuals, of both sexes at an average age range of 69.6 year-old, who joined the 'Programa Autonomia para a Atividade Física PAAF' (Autonomy Program for the Physical Activity), developed in the School of Physical Education and Sport of USP concluded that friends' indication, the faith in the benefits of the physical activity for the health, the medical orders and the search for social life were the main reasons that influenced the investigated group to join the mentioned program (ANDREOTTI and OKUMA, 2003).

Due to the presented facts, we can infer that there are some similarities between the results revealed in the researches diagnosing the principal reasons that influenced the individuals to join physical activities programs. However, we considered it difficult to generalize and to compare those results because each researcher used a different instrument of data collection, and because they investigated different age groups.

Therefore, it is still necessary to perform more studies of this nature, so that the results can be either better compared and susceptible to generalizations. Studies of this kind will possibly supply theoretical subsidies for the definition of public policies and for the organization of classes capable to attain the objectives and expectations of individuals of different age groups who join several of the physical activities programs available.

Final considerations

In Brazil, the investment in the development of researches aimed at identifying the reasons and factors that influence the individuals' beginning and permanence in physical activities programs is recent and, therefore, its results are still incipient. We have not reached precise and reliable conclusions on terms of Brazilian population.

In the specific case of swimming, the outcome of this research revealed that the parents' support, the doctor's orders, the pleasure and the personal fulfillment stemming from practicing swimming, the desire to learn how to swim, and the need to improve physical fitness were the principal reasons that influenced the adolescents to adhere to the swimming programs.

However, due to the limitations of this study concerning the place where the data were collected, the characteristics of the investigated group and the instrument of data collection, the results presented are but a sample of the reality.

As final recommendations, we point the need of the accomplishment of new studies of this nature, involving other age groups, physical activities, places of practice as well as groups with characteristics different from the ones presented in this study. We also suggest new researches to check and analyze the reasons alleged by individuals for adherence or drop out from swimming programs.

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STUDY ON THE REASONS THAT INFLUENCED ADOLESCENTS TO BEGIN THE PRACTICE OF SWIMMING.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to identify and analyze the main reasons that influenced non-athlete adolescents to begin the practice of swimming. In order to collect information for the study, a questionnaire was prepared and applied to a sample group made up of 98 non-athlete adolescents, in the age range between 13 and 18 years, of both sexes, who practice swimming in three specific establishments of teaching-learning and practicing swimming. The outcome of this research revealed that the main reasons that influenced the investigated group to begin the practice of swimming were their parents' support, doctor's orders, the pleasure and the personal fulfillment stemming from practicing swimming, the desire of learning to swim, and the need to improve their physical fitness.

Keywords: Swimming, Adolescents, Adhesion

ÉTUDE DES MOTIFS QUI ONT INFLUENCÉ LES ADOLESCENTS À COMMENCER À PRATIQUER LA NATATION

RÉSUMÉ

L'objectif de cette étude, c'est l'identification et l'analyse des principaux motifs qui ont influencé des adolescents, qui ne sont pas athlètes, à commencer la pratique de la natation. Dans ce propos, on a construit et appliqué un questionnaire pour la collecte des donnés. Le groupe d'échantillonnage a été composé par 98 adolescents, qui n'étatient pas d'athlètes, entre 13 et 18 ans d'âge, des deux sexes, pratiquants de natation dans trois établissements espécifiques d'enseignement-apprentissage et de pratique de natation. Les résultats trouvés dans cette recherche ont domtré que les principaux motifs qui ont influencé le groupe étudié à commencer la pratique de la natation ont été l'appui des parents, le conseil du médecin, le plaisir et la satisfaction personnelle de pratiquer la natation, le désir d'apprendre à nager et le perfectionnement du conditionnement physique.

Mots-clés: Natation, Adolescents, Adhésion

ESTUDIO DE LOS MOTIVOS QUE HAN INFLUENCIADO A LOS ADOLESCENTES A EMPEZAR LA PRÁCTICA DE LA NATACIÓN

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es identificar y analizar los motivos principales que han influenciado los adolescentes no-atletas a empezar la práctica de la natación. Para eso, se elaboró y aplicó un cuestionario para colecta de datos. El grupo de muestrario fue compuesto por 89 adolescentes no-atletas, entre 13 y 18 años, representantes de los dos sexos, practicantes de natación en tres establecimientos específicos de enseñanza-aprendizaje y de práctica de natación. Los resultados de la investigación muestran que los motivos principales que han influenciado el grupo estudiado para iniciar la práctica de la natación fueron el apoyo de los padres, los consejos del médico, el placer y la satisfacción personal de la práctica de la natación, el deseo de aprender a nadar y el perfeccionamiento del condicionamiento físico.

Palabras-llave: Natación, Adolescentes, Adhesión.

ESTUDO DOS MOTIVOS QUE INFLUENCIARAM ADOLESCENTES A INICIAR A PRÁTICA DA NATAÇÃO

RESUMO

O objetivo desse estudo foi identificar e analisar os principais motivos que influenciaram adolescentes, não atletas, a iniciar a prática da natação. Para este propósito, foi construído e aplicado um questionário de coleta de dados. O grupo amostral foi composto por 98 adolescentes não-atletas, entre 13 e 18 anos, de ambos os sexos, que praticam natação em três estabelecimentos específicos de ensino-aprendizagem e de prática da natação. Os resultados encontrados nessa pesquisa revelaram que os principais motivos que influenciaram o grupo investigado a iniciar a prática da natação foram o apoio dos pais, o aconselhamento do médico, o prazer e a satisfação pessoal em praticar natação, o desejo de aprender a nadar e o aprimoramento do condicionamento físico.

Palavras-chave: Natação, Adolescentes, Adesão.