

Reasons for Ingression in Physical Exercise Programs Offered by the Social Service of Commerce – SESC-DF

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RESUMO: O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar os motivos de ingresso dos praticantes de exercícios físicos dos Centros de Atividades do SESC-DF e verificar se eles se diferenciam segundo sexo, idade e tipos de exercícios físicos. Uma amostra representativa de 986 indivíduos de ambos os sexos (≥ 15 anos) respondeu um questionário construído e validado por Alves et al. (2007), cujos dados revelam que os sujeitos ingressaram nos programas (a) por indicação médica, (b) para evitar problemas de saúde e (c) para melhorar o condicionamento físico. Esses resultados sugerem que o argumento da saúde é o principal motivo que justifica a adesão aos programas de exercícios físicos do SESC-DF.

Palavras-chave: Exercício. Motivação. Centros de Convivência e Lazer. Avaliação de Programas e Projetos de Saúde.

1 INTRODUCTION

With greater emphasis in the last two decades, physical activities have been signing as a significant social phenomena of the planet (Rubio, 2002). This phenomenon seems to reflect the consolidation of values that permeate the practice of physical exercise, since the Antiquity (LOVISOLO, 2002; RUBIO, 2002; SALLES-COSTA, 2003). These values are entered in accordance with historical and cultural context of societies, and have been rotated in order of priority, affecting ideals such as aesthetic modeling, disease prevention, physical conditioning and health maintenance.

In recent years, many of the studies that highlight the importance of the practice of physical exercise in leisure time and hence the reason to join a physically active behavior are motivated by the thematic association with health in the biomedical perspective. Based

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on this perspective, several studies were carried defending the idea that the regular practice of physical activities can contribute to the prevention of chronic degenerative diseases and to reduce morbi-mortality caused by these diseases (MATSUDO *et al.*, 2002; PITANGA, 2002).

Some research (SESC/SP, 2003) show that the population is aware and believing in the benefits of performing physical activity for health. However, there is a paradox between that belief and the adoption of a physically active lifestyle (LOVISOLO, 2002). Much is asked why after so many campaigns for this type of practice: *Mexa-se, Agita São Paulo*, Sport for All, TRIM, ParticipAction among others, the percentage levels of physically active individuals have not progressed in the world (Powell *et al.*, 1991). In response to this question, there is a gradual increase in research devoted to the complaint about the limitations of the biomedical approach, developing, in contrast, issues around an expanded understanding of health, which considers the socio-economic, environmental and historical-cultural context of individuals and populations, which could better explain the phenomenon of adherence to regular exercise (ESPIRITO SANTO; MOURÃO, 2004).

In front of the present situation, it is clear the need for increased research on the subject. In this direction, the present study, based on the reference of the Explanatory Theories of Human Behavior: standard, utility and taste (LOVISOLO 1995), the Theories of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive and the Trans-theoretical Model of Stages of Behavior Change (Dishman, 1994), aimed to identify the reasons that influence the adherence of practitioners of physical exercises that attend the programs offered by the SESC Activities Centers in the Federal District, and whether they differ according to gender, age and types of physical exercises.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Population and Sample

The sample was selected from the population of 12,845 individuals, aged from 15 years old, enrolled in at least one physical-sport forms of the six SESC/DF Activity Centers. We used the listing of students enrolled in all physical-sports forms of SESC/DF, removing, by drawing, the replication of students enrolled in more than one method or class in order to maintain the same probability of selection.

The sample was composed in a simple random way, being proportional and representative of the practitioners of each SESC/DF Activity Center (Table 1), totaling 986 individuals of both genders, defined by drawing.

SESC UNIT	POPULATION	SAMPLE
504 Sul	3,208	246
913 Sul	1,895	145
Gama	1,015	79
Guará	1,762	135
Taquatinga Norte	3,620	278
Taquatinga Sul	1,345	103
TOTAL	12,845	986

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This work followed the technical guidelines of the research method of the intersectional survey type (Babbie, 2001), whose data collection was performed from October 18th to 28th, 2005, by a self-administered questionnaire, constructed and validated by Alves et al. (2007). Despite being self-administered, individuals had the opportunity to solve doubts with the professionals responsible for the questionnaire. It was answered at the time of classes at SESC.

The first part of the instrument consisted of questions on the socio-demographic profile of population and the second part presented a closed issue, whose purpose was to identify the factors influencing participants to join the physical exercise program. In this second part the respondents could indicate up to three reasons for joining the physical exercise program practiced, giving, in order of importance, the number 1 for the main reason, 2 for the second main reason and 3 for the third main reason. For the answers marked with number 1 three points were credited, answer with number 2, two points, and answers with number 3, one point. Data processing was performed using the sum of the points recorded in each item selected by the respondents and thus the ones with the highest scores were identified. Those which obtained percentage value equal to or greater than 10%, by choice of informants, were classified as most important.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by the statistical package SPSS (version 13).

The characterization of the profile of the sample and data analysis was performed considering the following: gender, age, education, family income, types of exercise, marital status and reasons for joining the physical exercise program.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents a summary of socio-demographic characteristics of the sample studied, where only the items that had high prevalence and importance to the data analysis are described.

According to Dishman (cited by ANDREOTTI; OKUMA, 2003), personal factors, specifically the socio-demographic factors (Determinant Variables of Human Behavior), have important influence on individuals that join physical exercise programs, being more easily found among those who have joined the practice, individuals of good economic level and education, adults and married people. Data found on the given study confirm the author's argument.

Variables	Percentage Values
Age	
21-40 years old	44.60%
41-60 years old	28.19%
Gender	
Female	64.90%
Male	35.10%
Family Income	
Above R\$ 3,000.00	33.00%
Between R\$ 1,800.00 and R\$ 3,000.00	25.30%
Education	
Higher Education	41.40%
Other degrees	58.60%
Marital Status	
Stable Union	51.90%
Single	34.10%
Type of Activity	
Gymnastics	57.90%
Individual sports	38.40%

As can be seen in Table 2, the highest concentration of individuals who practice physical exercise at SESC/DF are young people, women, those with a good academic background, with high purchasing power, who living in a stable union situation, and whose preference for physical-sport activity is gymnastics.

Regarding age, most people who exercise at SESC/DF is between 21 and 40 years old, followed by the age group of 41 to 60 years old. These results show similarities with other studies, as the one conducted by Palma et al. (2003) and Monteiro et al. (2003).

Most of the group of physical exercise practitioners of SESC/DF is constituted by women (64.9%), a result that contradicts some studies that show that men are more physically active during leisure time than women (MONTEIRO et al. , 2003; SALLES-COSTA et al., 2003, IBGE, 1999). One hypothesis for these different results may be the type of exercise performed, as gymnastics appears as the major option, which supports study conducted by Salles-Costa et al. (2003) on gender and practice of physical recreation. This study found that male presence is greater in group sports like football and volleyball, as well as in weight lifting and running, while among women, the preference is for gymnastics, water aerobics, dance and walk.

Authors such as Palma et al. (2006) and Pate et al. (1995) claim that economic status has a direct relationship with the practice of physical exercise, which was confirmed in this study because it was found that participants of the physical exercise programs of SESC/DF with family income over R\$ 3000.00 constitute the majority of the sample.

Regarding education, 41.4% of individuals in the sample of this study have higher education. This finding is consistent with other researches indicating a direct relationship between education and practice of physical exercises (NUNES; BARROS, 2004; VIEIRA; FERREIRA, 2004).

Individuals at a stable union situation represent 51.9% of the sample and the single, 34.1%. These data corroborate the findings of the research by Vieira and Ferreira (2004) and Storch and Nahas (1992). The latter two found that practitioners of spontaneous physical activity of Florianópolis are 90.8% men and 78.7% married women. The assumption of the authors is that these data are justified when related to the age investigated group, characterized as middle-aged. This fact can also be considered in this study, since there was a predominance of participants in the age group between 21-40 years old (44.6%) and 41-60 years old (28.19%).

In the following tables, there are the main reasons given by individuals to join physical exercise programs (Table 3), and whether these reasons differ when related to variables: age (Table 4), gender (Table 5) and types of exercise (Table 6). On Table 3, only the reasons that achieved a score from 10% of prevalence stood out.

Reasons	Points	%
Doctor advised to	1,064	17.99
Prevents health problems	857	14.49
Improves physical conditioning	725	12.25
I wanted or needed to lose weight	588	9.94
I wanted to feel good physical and emotionally	495	8.37
I've always liked to do physical-sport activity(ies)	463	7.83
I feel happy to practice exercises	459	7.76
I wanted to have a prettier body	398	6.73
Ease of Access	265	4.48
Be with and make new friends	124	2.10
Learn/Practice new physical-sport activity(ies)	112	1.89
More affordable fees	90	1.52
I wanted to be an athlete	68	1.15
Guardians decided it would be good to do physical activity	67	1.13
Unanswered	46	0.78
Saw many ads, reports and programs	40	0.68
Make different challenges possible	37	0.63
People who practice are not valued	18	0.30
Total	5,916	100

Reasons	number	%
Age: 15 to 20 years old		
Wanted to have a prettier body	103	16.19
Always liked to do physical-sport activity(ies)	87	13.68
Improves physical conditioning	67	10.53
Age: 21 to 40 years old		
Improves physical conditioning	386	14.64
Prevents health problems	343	13.01
Wanted or needed to lose weight	316	11.98
Doctor advised to	303	11.49
Age: 41 to 60 years old		
Doctor advised to	401	24.04
Prevents health problems	292	17.51
Improves physical conditioning	192	11.51
Age: > 60 years old		
Doctor advised to	314	32.21
Prevents health problems	184	18.87

Reasons	number	%
Female		
Doctor advised to	794	20.68
Prevents health problems	597	15.55
Improves physical conditioning	443	11.54
Wanted or needed to lose weight	436	11.35
Male		
Improves physical conditioning	282	13.58
Doctor advised to	270	13.01
Prevents health problems	260	12.52
Always liked to do physical-sport activity(ies)	220	10.60

Reasons	number	%
Individual sports		
Doctor advised to	434	19.11
Improves physical conditioning	323	14.22
Prevents health problems	297	13.08
Group sports		
Doctor advised to	108	25.71
Prevents health problems	50	11.90
Gymnastics		
Doctor advised to	543	15.88
Prevents health problems	532	15.56
Improves physical conditioning	394	11.52
Wanted or needed to lose weight	390	11.40
Wanted to feel good physical and emotionally	342	10.00
Fights		
Wanted to have a prettier body	11	18.33
Always liked to do physical-sport activity(ies)	10	16.67
I feel happy to practice exercises	8	13.33
Wanted or needed to lose weight	8	13.33
Prevents health problems	7	11.67
Improves physical conditioning	6	10.00

Considering the results presented about the reasons for the group of individuals to join the SESC/DF physical exercise programs, there is little variation of the stated purposes when comparing the overall result shown in Table 3 with the partial results obtained from analysis of variables: age (Table 4), gender (Table 5) and types of exercise (Table 6).

Items related to health and physical conditioning were the most indicated in most variables.

It is appropriate to highlight the possibility that the individuals of the research provided a "politically correct answer", since health protection consists of a kind of discursive mark applicant among experts in health and in the mass communication media. Therefore, it is a reason quite widespread in society.

In a speech of conceptual consistency, the search for enhancement and maintenance of physical abilities (strength and muscular endurance, cardiorespiratory conditioning, flexibility and composition of the body), represented in this study by the option "It improves physical conditioning", is supported and distributed by experts identified with the movement for the physically active lifestyle as a reason that is articulated with health protection (NAHAS, 2001). The concept of physical fitness related to health has been widespread since the 1970s, from the protocols formulated by the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance as an essential fitness condition for life. For this concept, the work of physical capacity is fundamental to characterize an active lifestyle, with less risk of contraction of hypokinetic diseases and a greater prospect of a longer and autonomous life (NAHAS, 2001). Thus, it was expected that this reason appeared with an incidence similar to those related to biomedical health.

The reasons related to aesthetic and pleasure also appear among the most mentioned, but with less force than the first three. However, in conversations devoid of formalities, where the call for evidence for "politically correct" testimonials is lower, the association between the start of the practice of physical exercise and the purpose of seeking a standard aesthetic ideal is frequent. Some studies that used as methodology the analysis of content or speech show that this desire has great strength in the decision of individuals to initiate the practice of physical exercises (PEREIRA, 1996).

One datum that may have influenced the difference among the reasons turned to health in this study as the strongest ones and the one indicated by Pereira (1996) is the fact that the sample consists mostly of young adult and middle-aged individuals (Table 2), whose maturity can be a tendency for greater attention to issues related to health at the

expense of the one related to body aesthetic, reason that most appeared in the age group of adolescents (Table 4).

Despite these considerations, using the theoretical framework that serves as a support to the analysis of the results of this study, we can infer that, based on the Explanatory Theory of Human Behavior (LOVISOLO, 1995), individuals were influenced to join the physical exercise programs for more than one reason, usually related to the standard and utility (medical advice, prevention of health problems and improvement of physical conditioning), although the presence of all three reasons (rule, value and taste) were also found, but in a lesser number of variables. This result confirms that only one of the reasons, regardless of the other two, is unable to influence a particular behavior, when it comes to the universe of possibilities of access to the practice of physical exercises.

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Dishman, 1994) and the Determinant Behavior Variables, in terms of personal factors (DISHMAN quoted by ANDREOTTI; OKUMA, 2003), the results indicate that the sample acted, predominantly, influenced by belief and social norm, crediting the achievement the benefits to health to the practice of physical exercises. This result suggests the belief in the biomedical dimension of health that individual, ruled and physically active behaviors are the predominant factors in promoting health. This vision seems to be the strongest reason for the entry of young people, adults and elderly in physical exercise programs offered by SESC/F, whether men or women.

Appealing to what the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Trans-theoretical Model of Stages of Behavior Change (Dishman, 1994) proclaim, results suggest that there may be effectiveness of awareness campaigns, among other strategies that influence beliefs and behavior towards joining the practice of physical exercises, in perspective of health related to disease prevention. The Trans-theoretical Model of Stages of Behavior Change supports that in the pre-contemplation stage, the indicated strategy is to emphasize the benefits that can be achieved by recommended habit to ensure that individuals can be encouraged to start the practice. Actions of awareness based on the belief of the action benefits are also recommended by the Theory of Planned Behavior. These assumptions have been reinforced through the literature.

Andreotti and Okuma (2003), for example, mention that, to Dishman, the medical recommendation for the practice of physical exercise considerably stimulates the people to join the programs, especially the elderly. Vieira and Ferreira (2004) also admit that there

may be a tendency so the association between physical fitness and health is helping to join the practice of physical exercises. Moving in this direction we find that the reasons related to health are pointed out in most parts of the research on the subject. However, health is not always confirmed as the most important factor.

In a research conducted by Vieira and Ferreira (2004) on the practice of physical activities around the Maracanã football stadium, in Rio de Janeiro, we found that the main reasons that led the informants to practice exercises were health (72, 3%), weight loss (42.9%) and medical advice (35.9%).

Andreotti and Okuma (2003), after conducting a research on the socio-demographic profile and initial joining of elderly in a Physical Education program, found that the main reason for joining was an indication of friends, highlighted by 17 out of 44 questioned individuals. The reason "improve health" emerged as the second principal, indicated by 13 individuals.

Alves (2004), in a research on the reasons that influence young people to join and remain practicing swimming, found as main reasons the following: "because I always liked to swim" (16.04%), "because my parents or guardians have decided that it was important I practiced swimming"(14.95%), "because the doctor advised me to" (10.45%) and "because I couldn't swim "(10.27%). The item that shows the medical advice seems to show concern for health, related to issues related to pleasure, learning how to swim and influence by guardians.

Data collected in this study corroborate the findings of Ferreira and Vieira (2004), as far as they call the attention to the predominance of reasons related to health/disease prevention (classified as the main ones in most of the variables) as the greatest influence on the decision of individuals to join the SESC/DF physical exercise programs.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering the purpose of this study and the results that illustrate the reasons for members of the SESC/DF physical exercises programs to join them, it was found the presence of beliefs and interests related to the benefits of this type of activity for biomedical health, as a strong indicator of practice of physical exercise. It was clearly found health, through medical advice and the desire to prevent disease, as the main reasons given by informants in their reasons for joining.

Therefore, as demonstrated by data analyzed and by the literature used, insisting in the main argument of the biomedical health can contribute with relevant results to the initial joining (enrollment) of individuals in physical exercise programs. However, in spite of not having been the object of analysis of this study, it is appropriate to emphasize that Castro (2006) found data that suggest that this argument is not sufficient to maintain the practice.

Another datum given by the literature, and verified in the results of this study, concerns the prevalence of participants' profiles of privileged socio-economic level. It seems that many interventions, even if they have the same goal of accessibility and democratization of the practice, cannot involve and attract the least favored part of population, regardless of their possible interest (taste, usefulness and/or standard).

Making these practices more accessible to people of varied socio-economic levels is a challenge. But for this purpose it is necessary to recognize that to the less favored and more vulnerable part of population, there are also barriers imposed by the poor conditions of life determined by social inequalities (PALMA *et al.*, 2006; PALMA, 2000).

As advocated by some authors (Palmer, 2000), health is the result of living conditions of individuals and communities, reflected in income, housing, health care services, leisure, education, among others. In this sense, the role of public policies and intervention programs must be to ensure proper cultural education guarantee necessary means for people to have access to this cultural collection, understood as an inalienable right of every citizen and as an important heritage history of mankind and of the construction of human individuality.

Reasons for ingression in physical exercises programs offered by the social service of commerce-SESC-DF

Abstract: The objective of this study was to identify the reasons of adherence of the practitioners of physical exercises of the Centers of Activities of the SESC-DF and to verify if they differentiate according to sex, age and types of physical exercises. A representative sample of 986 individuals of both sexes (≥ 15 years) answered a questionnaire constructed and validated by Alves *et al.* (2007). The data reveal that the informants entered the programs (a) following medical indication, (b) to prevent problems of health and (c) to improve the physical conditioning. These results suggest that the argument concerning health is the main reason that justifies the adherence to the programs of physical exercises of the SESC-DF.

Keywords: Exercise. Motivation. Centers of Convivance and Leisure. Program Evaluation.

Las razones de ingreso en los programas de ejercicios físicos ofrecidos por el servicio social del comercio-SESC-DF

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio era identificar las razones del ingreso de las personas que hacen actividades físicas en los centros de las actividades del SESC-DF y verificar si ellas si distinguen según sexo, edad y los tipos de ejercicios físicos. Una muestra representativa de 986 individuos de ambos los sexos (≥ 15 años) contestó a un cuestionario construido y validado por Alves et al. (2007), cuyos datos divulgan que las personas habían incorporado los programas (a) por indicación médica, (b) para prevenir problemas de la salud y (c) para mejorar el condicionamiento físico. Esos resultados sugieren que la discusión de la salud sea la razón principal que justifica la adherencia a los programas de los ejercicios físicos del SESC-DF.

Palabras Clave: Ejercicio. Motivación. Centros de Ocio y Convivencia. Evaluación de Programas y Proyectos de Salud.

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Received on: 10.24.2007

Approved on: 06.17.2008