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Motivational factors and effects associated with physical-sport practice in undergraduate students

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Abstract

Current high level of physical inactivity in undergraduate students is due to reasons that can be classified into external barriers such as time, lack of social support or internal barriers such as apathy toward physical activity. These obstacles may vary depending on the cultural and social context, age and gender of students. The purpose of this study was to identify the specific motivational factors and effects associated with physical-sport practice in undergraduate students, a literature review was developed, focusing on motivational student's perceptions and effects, and identifying research gaps for further researches. The lifestyle-related health and active behavior of an undergraduate student is complex, since it depends on motivational factors for physical practice as extrinsic factors (disease prevention, fitness) and intrinsic factors (pleasure, wellness, stress management), highlighting in students the motivation to achieve their goals, enjoyment or pleasure in practicing an activity. Among the results, students who participate in physical-sport practice are more physically active, so it is important to develop and encourage current programs to maximize their retention, stimulate self-motivation, feelings of autonomy, self-confidence and relatedness and work team.

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1. Introduction

In the year 2002, World Health Organization (WHO) defined the sedentary lifestyle as “a little movement”. Some authors indicate that “a person is sedentary when participate in physical activities in periods of time less than 20 minutes per day, with a weekly frequency lower than 3 times per week” (García y Correa, 2007; Verschuren, Mead,

Visser-Meily, 2015). Furthermore, according to WHO reports at least 60% of world population does not practice physical activities to obtain benefits for health (OMS, 2010).

In this context, the National Survey of Nutritional Situation shows that Colombian citizens have this same tendency, where is observed that the prevalence of minimal physical activity in adolescents between 13 and 17 year old was 26% and in people between 18 and 64 years old was 42.6% (Varela et al., 2011). The previous indicator shows a serious problem of public health, because according to OMS (2010), the physical inactivity constitute the fourth risk factor more important in mortality rates (6% of total mortality), while the overweight and obesity are the 5% of total mortality. However, the encouraging of sport participation is more than health promotion. Also, this promotion reaches the important social objectives as deterrent of crimes and the promotion of social integration and cohesion (OMS, 2010).

Besides of the convenience offered by physical-sport practice for the maintenance and improvement of health, it has been confirm that this practice is associated to a series of psychological benefits as the improvement of character and quality lifestyle, stress reduction, state of anxiety and depression improvement (Hülya, Asçi, 2003, cited in Gallegos & Piéron, 2009). Furthermore, there is a relationship between physical activity and self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-image of the person (Watkins & Dhawan, 1989, cited in Gallegos & Piéron, 2009). Consequently, physical activity and sport should be cultural and socially considered as an important factor in the body care, because improve the body and mental health, and quality life of people (Mozafari, 2002 cited in Salehnia et al., 2012; Wriessnegger et al., 2014).

However, numerous of benefits were set out, and available data from now show that physical activity reduces with the age, and there is a reduction more marked in late adolescence (between 15 and 18 years old) and adulthood (between 20 and 25 years old), ages where sedentary lifestyle behaviors are fixed (Ministerio de educación y Cultura, 2008). This aspect affirms the importance of the study of physical-sport practice in young people, because many behaviors of health habits of adults are established in late adolescence and adulthood, with regard to the reduction of physical activity in these ages is a worrisome tendency (Buckworth & Nigg, 2007) and special relevance within university institutions, since practically all undergraduate students are adults with multiple responsibilities that make they practice less physical activities. In the same way, the knowledge in the physical-sport practice in undergraduate students and their determinants can proportionate a fundamental basis to the change of inactive lifestyle of students and having physically active adults in future (Keating et al., 2008; Honari, Goudarzi & Heidari, 2010).

2. Contextualization of studies oriented to assess physical-sport activities in undergraduate young

According to OMS (2010) people with ages between 18 and 64 years old should accumulate 150 minutes minimum per week in a moderate physical activity or 75 minutes per week in a high physical activity or a combination between both. When this recommendation is compared to found data, it is observed low levels of intensity and frequency of the physical-sport practices in undergraduate students, an evidence of an unhealthy lifestyle.

This high level of physical inactivity in undergraduate students can be by reason that can be classified in external barriers as time, social support shortage or internal barriers as apathy to physical activities (Devecioglu, Sahan, Yildiz, Tekin & Sim, 2012). These obstacles can vary according to cultural and social context, age and gender of students. The analysis of these barriers is an essential step before planning strategies with the aim to increase the motivation and adherence to an active behavior (Niñerola et al., 2006, cited in Gómez López, Gallegos, & Extremera, 2010).

Additionally, current studies in Spain universities indicate a high rate of inactivity by university community (Dias et al., 2008). With the aim of knowing the Colombian context, it is important to note some studies carried out in the country, where obtained results have been worrisome. In this way, Gómez et al. (2004, cited in Varela et al., 2011) in a research with a sample of 1045 women between 18 and 69 years old from Bogotá, found that 79.1% women did not do any moderate physical activity for 10 minutes minimum per day. In the same vein, Lema et al. (2009, cited in Varela et al., 2011) in a research with a sample of 598 students from Cali, they found that 77% of respondents did do little or any physical activity for at least 30 minutes minimum, with a frequency of three time per week.

Similarly, in a study about perceived barriers by undergraduate students in the practice of physical activity at the University of Murcia, Spain, the perception of external barriers like time, money, lack of facilities and social support have more importance than the internal barriers like apathy for physical-sport practice (Gómez López, Gallegos & Extremera, 2010). Linked to this, researches about barriers to physical activity in Brazilian undergraduate students show

that the aspects related to sedentary behavior during this stage of life are the lack of time, lack of motivation, distance from the place where exercise practice can be realized and lack of social support (Bianchini et al., 2009). In this regard, it is important to identify as an important external barrier, the lack of strategies focused on undergraduate students, where sport is stimulated as an integral part of their lives, considering that after graduation sport activity decreases (Andrijasević, Ciliga, & Jurakić, 2009).

3. Motivation for physical-sport practice in undergraduate students

Motivation is a psychological phenomenon that is generated as a result of intent, the need, interest or desire of a person. Motivation is the heart of many of the most interesting problems of sport, as the result of the development of social environments such as competition, persistence, learning and performance (Vallerand, Deci and Ryan, 1987 cited in Pelletier et al., 1995).

In student sport practice are involved motivational factors that encourage or discourage. According to the theory of self-determination, motivation is divided into two dimensions: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is characterized by its close identification with social recognition, prizes and rewards. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation is considered more autonomous and refers to the innate tendency of human beings in search of new challenges, such as the ability to learn and explore in itself, without worrying about receiving awards or external rewards (Ryan and Deci, 2000, cited in Dias et al., 2008). Once it is determined the reason, those involved have no difficulty in improving the level of participation in sport activities (Khan, Shah, & Khan, 2011). On the other hand, exercise is also mediated by environmental and social factors, but it is believed that psychological factors are preponderant in maintaining this behavior (Legnani et al., 2011).

Before exposed is consistent with the analysis by Gallegos & Piéron (2009) on the factors that motivate Almerian undergraduate students to the practice of physical-sport activities, where is observed a great importance for this population group the motivations of intrinsic character as pleasure, health and evasion factors that are associated with this dimension, because through them development and personal enrichment as well as the inherent rewards to the activity as fun is intended to (Cecchiniet et al., 2004 cited in Gallegos & Piéron, 2009).

On the other hand, students from the Londrina State University (Brazil) describe four motivational factors that stand for physical practice separated into two extrinsic factors (disease prevention, fitness) and two intrinsic factors (pleasure and comfort and stress control) (Legnani et al., 2011). In addition, Piéron et al. (2007, cited in Gallegos & Piéron, 2009) conclude that the determination and characterization of a lifestyle related to health and active behavior is clearly complex, multifactorial and dependent of motivational factors both intrinsic and extrinsic, and there are numerous correlates of participation in physical-sport activities, which include psychological, cognitive and emotional, highlighting in them motivation with goal orientation, enjoyment or pleasure activity and self-motivation.

In the national context, Varela et al. (2011) in their research on sport motivation of undergraduate students of some Colombian universities claim affirm that the main motivation informed by students to conduct the practice of physical activities, were "benefit their health" (45.8 %) and "improve their figure" (32%). This latter reason was informed mostly by women, while health benefit was chosen by both genders. According to the undergraduate students, the main reason not to do (or abandon) a physical activity was laziness (61.5 %).

4. Sport practice perception on undergraduate population

According to a study at the University of Zagreb, most of students (73.76 %) recognize that physical activity is important for their health, being practiced daily, while 23.26% of undergraduate students responded that they should practice "occasionally". It was also observed that 3.98% of them believe that physical activity does not affect their health (Andrijasević, Ciliga, & Jurakić, 2009).

In addition, it was found that undergraduate male students enjoy sports and outdoor activities in nature, so they can have freedom of movement; while women show a tendency to activities that put more emphasis on aesthetics (Andrijasević, Ciliga, & Jurakić, 2009). On the other hand, a study in Czech Republic, Austria, Britain and the United States identified that students have a positive attitude towards sport, showing a significant difference between the

attitude that students have to the sport and their gender, perceiving a better attitude towards the sport by male students (Salehnia et al., 2012).

To analyze the factor perception of students, Webber & Mearman (2009) used a questionnaire self-report with closed questions designed to gather evidence for and against the sport perception of undergraduate students, using a sample of 85 students of full time dedication. The questions attempt to capture the diversity of motivations for practicing sports found in the academic literature and presents a series of topics that address the types of sports practiced, the limitations that they have (such as cost, access to sports facilities and the ability to play sports), the demands on their time, physical, psychological and social reasons for sport participation and details of the sports played. (Webber & Mearman, 2009).

On the other hand, for Gísladóttir, Matthíasdóttir & Kristjánadóttir (2013) universities should invest in improving its sports because this strengthens the conditions for people at this stage of life are motivated to follow a healthy lifestyle through exercise. In this study, the relationship between participation of adolescents, the subjective perception of mental and physical conditions and future expectations is investigated. Participants were 10,987 students in the last three years of compulsory education in Iceland (age 14-16 years, ready students to enter university). Questionnaires were completed by participants regarding health and behavior. The study revealed that those who play sports often have better fitness and better positive image of themselves as well as being more likely to have a positive mental state (they are more positive about the future in terms of income, work and a happy life). In addition, it was observed that participants who said practicing sport often had greater desire to continue their education at university level.

Thus, one of the factors that have greater influence on students' participation in sports activities is the presence of a university physical-sport offer with quality and adapted to students, with regard to the characteristics of the offered programs as existing facilities, since the proximity of these facilitates, promotes and increases the frequency of physical-sport practice (Reed & Phillips, 2005; Reed, 2007, cited in Gallegos & Piéron, 2009).

In the local context, the results obtained by Varela et al. (2011) in some universities of Colombia, show that more than half of the sample (51%) of undergraduate "practitioners" affirm handling "sufficient" information about the offered sport services of their university. However, 34% said that such information is "low". Something very similar happens with the undergraduate "non-practitioners", 51% said handle "sufficient" information and 35% indicate that such information is "low". This indicates that the promotion done by universities may not be enough to make the university community aware of the sporting activities of their respective university, from this a questionnaire is set out to establish a parallel between three Galician universities, contrasting results in healthy fitness levels. This study concludes that most students do not make use of facilities and sports infrastructure of the university. Furthermore, there are a percentage of undergraduate both "practitioners" and "non-practitioners" who have little information about the offered sport services of the university (Fernández, 2010).

Finally, from the arguments suggested by various authors, it is observed that physical inactivity and its impact on the integrity of citizens form a major public health and social welfare. To combat this problem, is essential to implement programs to promote active lifestyles in undergraduate students. However, the effectiveness of these programs depends on the study of the motivations in their intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, affecting the physical-sport practice of undergraduate students. In this sense, intrinsic motivation is associated with fun, health and evasion, while extrinsic motivation is associated with social recognition, prizes and rewards. In addition, it is the responsibility of educational institutions generating strategies and adequate spaces for the development of sport activities that promote participation and sportsmanship in the quest to improve the quality of life of the university community.

5. Conclusions

It is important to denote that physical-sport practice is relevant to develop and encourage in students the maximization of retention, stimulate self-motivation, feelings of autonomy, self-confidence and relatedness and work team, because these behaviors are important to their adulthood, where habits abilities and attitudes of lifestyle are more difficult to change. In academic field, when students are more active and have before exposed benefit when physical-sport activities are practiced they have benefit and best academic results.

Since, when students practice physical-sport activities, there is a relationship between physical activity and self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-image of the person, confirming that this practice is associated to a series of psychological benefits as the improvement of character and quality lifestyle, stress reduction, state of anxiety and

depression improvement. Important results that have to be taken into account by high educational institutions, since a lack of strategies focused on undergraduate students, where sport is not stimulated as an integral part of their lives, considering that after graduation sport activity decreases, student will have bad lifestyle habits in their future.

This aspect affirms the importance of the study of physical-sport practice in young people, because many behaviors of health habits of adults are established in late adolescence and adulthood, with regard to the reduction of physical activity in these ages is a worrisome tendency and special relevance within university institutions, since practically all undergraduate students are adults with multiple responsibilities that practice less physical activities. In this way, high educational institutions have to proportionate the physical-sport practice in undergraduate students and this, is a determinant that can proportionate a fundamental basis to the change of inactive lifestyle of students and having physically active adults in future and a better academic results.

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