

ASSOCIAÇÃO ENTRE IDADE, TEMPO DE PRÁTICA E DESENVOLVIMENTO DE HABILIDADES PARA A VIDA EM ESPORTISTAS ADAPTADOS BRASILEIROS: UM ESTUDO POR TIPO DE ESPORTE

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AGE, PRACTICE TIME AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFE SKILLS IN BRAZILIAN ADAPTED SPORT PARTICIPANTS: A STUDY BY TYPE OF SPORT

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Resumo

As habilidades para vida são habilidades adquiridas e necessárias para lidar com as demandas e desafios da vida cotidiana. Essas habilidades para a vida são particularmente importantes, pois através destas habilidades para a vida aprendidas através do esporte os jovens conseguem transferi-las para outros domínios da vida (educação, local de trabalho e relacionamentos pessoais). O objetivo do estudo foi identificar o papel preditor da idade e do tempo de prática no desenvolvimento de habilidades para a vida entre 210 participantes de esportes adaptados. A amostra incluiu 170 meninos e 40 meninas com idades entre 11-26 anos ($M = 24,05$, $DP = 1,59$) de modalidades coletiva e individuais. Os instrumentos utilizados foram a Escala de Habilidades para Vida para o Esporte e um questionário semiestruturado. A análise dos dados foi realizada por meio de Análise de Variância Multivariada, Correlação de Pearson e Regressão Múltipla ($p < 0,05$). Os resultados mostraram diferença significativa ($p < 0,05$) em todas as habilidades para a vida de acordo com o tipo de esporte, evidenciando maiores escores para o esporte coletivo. A regressão múltipla revelou que a idade e o tempo de prática apresentaram predição positiva em relação às habilidades para a vida em ambos os grupos. Na prática, os resultados sugerem que treinadores e pais devem incentivar os praticantes de esportes adaptado a desenvolver suas habilidades de vida através do esporte, especialmente os praticantes de modalidades individuais e que a idade e o tempo de prática apresentaram um papel preditor para o desenvolvimento de habilidades para vida.

Palavras-chave: Habilidades para a Vida. Desenvolvimento Positivo da Juventude. Esporte Paralímpico. Atividade Motora Adaptada.

Abstract

Life skills are acquired skills necessary to cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These life skills are particularly important, as through these life skills learned through sport young people can transfer them to other domains of life (education, workplace, and personal relationships). The aim of the study was to identify the predictive role of age and length of practice in the development of life skills among 210 participants of adapted sports. The sample included 170 boys and 40 girls aged 11-26 years ($M = 24.05$, $SD = 1.59$) from collective and individual sports. The instruments used were the Life Skills Scale for Sport and a semi-structured questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance, Pearson's Correlation and Multiple Regression ($p < 0.05$). The results showed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in all life skills according to the type of sport, evidencing higher scores for team sports. Multiple regression revealed that age and time of practice showed a positive prediction regarding life skills in both groups. In practice, the results suggest that coaches and parents should encourage practitioners of adapted sports to develop their life skills through sport, especially practitioners of individual modalities and that age and time of practice had a predictor role for the development of life skills.

Keywords: Life Skills. Positive Youth Development. Paralympic Sport. Adapted Motor Activity.

1 Introduction

Adapted sport emerged with a medical-therapeutic approach, aiming to rehabilitate soldiers wounded in combat. Over time, its development has contemplated beyond the rehabilitation of individuals, but also the improvement of psychosocial aspects of this population (CARVALHO; DE GRANDE, 2012). It is characterized as a sociocultural phenomenon in different forms of manifestation, being one of the main responsible for the inclusion of people with disabilities in society (SCHMITT *et al.*, 2017). Thus, adapted sport has been seen as a promising tool for the development of different behavioral, emotional, social and cognitive aspects that allow the athlete to deal with demands and adversities not only of the sports context, but also in other contexts in which he is inserted (TURNNIDGE *et al.*, 2014).

In this perspective, these aspects are related to Life Skills, which according to the World Health Organization (1999), are capabilities that aid in adaptive and positive behavior, allowing individuals to deal effectively with demands and challenges in various contexts, and can be classified into behavioral (such as communication skills), cognitive (such as decision-making skills), social (such as ease of teamwork) and emotional (control of their own emotions) (HOLT; NEELY, 2011). According to Gould and Carson, (2008) these skills (problem solving, emotional skills, teamwork, goal setting) can be learned, developed and refined intentionally through sport in order to promote transfer to other sectors of the athlete's life (work, home, university). Being parents, coaches, physical education teachers and psychologists are key pieces to this positive development through sport, although elements such as age and time of practice can influence this type of development through sport, influencing the life skills of young people (CRONIN *et al.*, 2019; CRONIN *et al.*, 2020; CRONIN;

ALLEN, 2017; CRONIN; ALLEN, 2018; FREIRE et al., 2021; FREIRE et al., 2020; NASCIMENTO JUNIOR et al., 2021).

Thus, some studies have been conducted in order to understand the characteristics and factors that favor the development of life skills through sport, evidencing the contributions of different sports modalities (CRONIN; ALLEN, 2018; NASCIMENTO JUNIOR et al., 2021; RIGONI; BELEM; VIEIRA, 2017), as well as the type of modality: collective (FREIRE et al., 2021; MOSSMAN; CRONIN, 2019; NASCIMENTO JUNIOR et al., 2021) and individual (FREIRE et al., 2020) since both require different psychosocial demands. However, all studies presented were conducted with sports participants without disabilities. In this sense, understanding how the sports context affects the perception of developing skills for the lives of young people with disabilities is extremely important to seek the greater development of these young people.

In the context of individual modalities, the requirements are focused on the individual himself, and not on a group, making the participant must deal alone with the demands related to decision making, performance load and pressure in competitions (AKELAITIS; MALINAUSKAS, 2018). On the other hand, the context of collective modalities requires a greater mastery of social skills, teamwork and leadership (CARRON; WIDMEYER; BRAWLEY, 1985; EYS; BRUNER; MARTIN, 2019). These distinct characteristics among the types of modalities evidence the need to investigate which life skills are enhanced in each of these contexts within the adapted sport.

In this sense, in the context of adapted sport, it is known that the insertion of the individual can already in adulthood. In this sense, Hodge, Danish and Martin (2013) point out that although youth sport is an area in which life skills have been successfully taught, it would be a mistake to limit the teaching of these skills only to young people. Thus, it is essential to investigate how learning skills through sport can be useful throughout the individual's life.

According to Cronin and Allen (2017), the interactive, emotional and social aspects of sport create a favorable scenario for the development of skills that can later be transferred to other contexts of life. From this perspective, it is understood that the practice of sport for people with disabilities can favor the development of life skills, evidencing the need to investigate this context and the development of such skills. Thus, this research becomes relevant since it provides knowledge for creating strategies for the training of the positive development and, consequently, for the development of life skills, besides contributing to the development of skills that can serve as protective factors in the development of participants and that are also of great importance in other phases of development throughout life (PAÍNA; FECHIO; PECCIN; DA COSTA

PADOVANI, 2018; PIERCE; GOULD; CAMIRÉ, 2017; YAZICIOGLU; YAVUZ; GOKTEPE; TAN, 2012). Thus, the present investigation sought to investigate the development of life skills in adapted sports practitioners, specifically seeking to compare the skills for life according to the type of sport, in addition to observing the association of sociodemographic variables (age and time of practice) in the development of life skills. The hypothesis of this study is that sociodemographic variables, such as age and time of practice in the modality, are associated with the development of life skills.

2 Methods

2.1 Participants

This cross-sectional study included participants included a convenience sample of 210 adapted sport participants who trained and participated with club and school teams on a weekly basis. The sample included 170 boys and 40 girls aged between 11–26 years (Mean = 24.05, SD = 1.59). Participants represented team sports (n=90) and individual sports (n=120). The inclusion criteria were as follows: 1) Practice the modality for at least six months; and 2) Be part of the team/club for at least three months. Only the participants who signed the consent term or had the term signed by the coaches (responsible for the participants in the event), were selected to the research.

2.2 Measures

Sociodemographic questionnaire – a questionnaire was elaborated by the researchers themselves with questions about age, gender, modality practiced and time of practice.

Life skills development. The Portuguese version (NASCIMENTO-JUNIOR et al., 2019) of the Life Skills Scale for Sport (CRONIN; ALLEN, 2017) was used to measure life skills development in their sport. This 43-item scale uses the stem “This sport has taught me to...” and is followed by items assessing: teamwork (7 items; “work well within a team/group”), goal setting (7 items; “set challenging goals”), time management (4 items; “manage my time well”), emotional skills (4 items; “use my emotions to stay focused”), interpersonal communication (4 items; “speak clearly to others”), social skills (5 items; “get involved in group activities”), leadership (8 items; “organize team/group members to work together”), and problem solving and decision making (4 items; “think carefully about a problem”). Participants responded to items on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Like in previous research (CRONIN & ALLEN, 2018), a total life skills score was also calculated. In the present study, the alpha values for the eight subscales and total life skills ranged from .70 to .94 indicating adequate internal consistency reliability (HAIR; RISHER; SARSTEDT; RINGLE, 2019).

2.3 Procedures

Initially, authorization was requested to carry out the research with the organizing committee and the coaches responsible for the teams. Afterwards, the study was approved by the Ethics Committee in Human Research under the opinion (nº 2.700.718). The first contact was made with the Brazilian Paralympic Committee (CPB), to request authorization for data collection during the Caixa de ParaAtletismo 2019 Brazilian Championship. The collections took place between September 27 and 29, 2019 at the Training Center Brazilian Paralympic, located in São Paulo/SP, Brazil. For the beginning of the collections, the trainers were informed about the research procedures during the technical meeting that took place on the first day of the event. Subsequently, the athletes were approached individually and invited to be part of the study.

The application of the questionnaires took place during the competitions and was carried out individually by two previously trained researchers with experience in the application of psychometric scales. Many athletes needed help from the researchers to fill in the instruments, since they were athletes with physical disabilities, and many had impairment or absence of upper limbs, making it difficult to apply them collectively. The data collection took place at the site of the competition, after the signature of the free and informed consent term and had a duration of approximately 35-40 minutes. Data collection was conducted by the authors of the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

Preliminary data analyses, descriptive statistics, correlations, comparison and standard multiple regression were conducted using SPSS version 23 (IBM CORPORATION, 2015). All major assumptions of the statistical tests conducted were met. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the life skills subscales and total life skills score according to type of sports. We calculated the effect size (d) for differences in the values of the two independent groups using Cohen (1992) recommendations, in which a value of $d=.20$ represents a small effect size; $d=.50$ is an average effect size; and $d=.80$ is a large effect size. Pearson's correlation was used to investigate the relationship of age and time of practice with the life skills subscales among paralympic athletes. A multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether age and time of practice predict the dimensions of life skills. Several models (nine) were conducted using the enter method to insert the variables in order to investigate the prediction of age and time of practice (independent variables) on life skills subscales (teamwork, goal setting, social skills, emotional skills, problem solution, leadership, time control, communication and total life skills) (dependent variables). All independent variables were included together in the model in the same block. There

were no sufficiently strong correlations between variables that indicated problems with multicollinearity.

3 Results

3.1 Preliminary Analysis

First, the data was screened for missing values. The second, there were no missing values as the lead researcher had ensured all surveys were fully completed during the data collection. The data were then screened for univariate and multivariate outliers, with no outliers found within the sample. Finally, the data were screened for normality. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) skewness values ranged from -.68 to -.89 and the kurtosis values ranged from -0,24 to 0,90, indicating reasonable normality.

3.2 Comparison Between Groups

In the comparison of the perception of the eight subscales and the overall score of life skills as a function of sport type (Table 1), there was significant difference between groups in all subscales and the overall score of life skills ($p < .001$). Participant's team sport had the highest score in all the the eight subscales and the overall score of life skills.

Table 1- Comparison of the dimensions of life skills of Paralympic athletes as a function of type of sport

Variables	Type of sport		p	d
	Team (n=90)	Individual (n=120)		
	M (Sd)	M (Sd)		
Life Skills				
Teamwork	4,35 (0,69)	3,54 (1,63)	<0,001*	0,64
Goal Setting	4,43 (0,60)	3,37 (1,73)	<0,001*	0,81
Social Skill	4,23 (0,70)	3,34 (1,75)	<0,001*	0,66
Problem Solving ^a	4,17 (0,84)	3,27 (1,74)	<0,001*	0,65
Emotional Skill	3,99 (0,76)	3,10 (1,72)	<0,001*	0,66
Leadership	4,26 (0,69)	3,09 (1,81)	<0,001*	0,85
Time Management	3,98 (0,96)	2,94 (1,83)	<0,001*	0,71
Communication ^b	4,27 (0,75)	3,13 (1,90)	<0,001*	0,78
Total Life Skills	4,21 (0,62)	3,05 (1,83)	<0,001*	0,84

MANOVA. * $p < .05$; M = Mean; Sd = Standard deviation; d= Effect size. ^aproblem solving and decision making; ^binterpersonal communication.

Source: own preparation

3.3 Correlational Analyses

In correlation about type of sport, we can see the statistically significant correlations between the study variables which are discussed below. The correlations revealed that eight subscales and the overall score of life skills were positively associated with age (r range = 0,30 to 0,36) in the individual sport. Social skill, emotional skill, communication, and overall score of life skills were positively associated with time of practice among individual sport participants (r range= 0,30 to 0,37). In the team sports participants, teamwork, social skill, leadership, time management, communication and overall score of life skills were positively associated with age (r range = 0,24 to 0,30) and time of practice (r range 0,18 to 0,25).

Tabela 2 - Correlation between age, time of practices and life skills among type of sport

Individual sports Team sports	Age		Life Skills								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.Age	-	.35**	.33**	.32**	.36**	.30**	.30**	.33**	.30**	.30**	.30**
2. Time of practice	.51**	-	.05	.13	.33**	.08	.30**	.16	.16	.30**	.37**
3. Teamwork	.22**	.21**	.71**	-	.56**	.36**	.55**	.26**	.62**	.28**	.58**
4. Goal Setting	.13	.07	.59**	.67**	-	.33**	.45**	.40**	.45**	.40**	.43**
5. Social Skill	.30**	.20**	.77**	.56**	.70**	-	.47**	.32**	.38**	.30**	.55**
6. Problem Solving ^a	.17	.15	.60**	.54**	.64**	.73**	-	.47**	.57**	.37**	.51**
7. Emotional Skill	.16	.16	.55	.63**	.61**	.57**	.67**	-	.40**	.47**	.36**
8. Leadership	.27**	.18*	.79**	.52**	.78**	.61**	.69**	.72**	-	.31**	.61**
9. Time management	.30**	.25**	.51**	.63**	.60**	.55**	.68**	.67**	.70**	-	.40**
10. Communication ^b	.24**	.20*	.71**	.59**	.69**	.67**	.52**	.74**	.60**	.60**	-
11. Total Life Skills	.28**	.23**	.82**	.77**	.85**	.79**	.80**	.80**	.89**	.81**	.83**

Pearson Correlations. Note. ^aproblem solving and decision making; ^binterpersonal communication. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: own preparation

3.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

From the table 3, we can see that standard multiple regression analyses revealed that our model which included the demographic variables explained a significant amount of the variance in eight life skills (R^2 range = .02 to .05 $p < .05$) and total life skills ($R^2 = .08$; $p < .001$) in the team sports. The eight subscales and the overall score of life skills made the largest positive contribution to age (β range= .18 to .34, $p < .05$). Teamwork, social skill, leadership, time management, communication and overall score of life skills made the largest positive contribution to time of practice (β range= .20 to .36, $p < .05$).

In individual Paralympic sports, we can see that standard multiple regression analyses revealed that our model which included the demographic variables explained a significant amount of the variance in eight life skills (R^2 range = .02 to .07 $p < .05$) and total life skills ($R^2 = .02$; $p < .05$). The eight subscales and the overall score of life skills made the largest positive contribution to age (β range= .01 to .15, $p < .05$) and time of practice (β range= .01 to .05, $p < .05$).

Table 3- Age and time of practices as predictors of life skills development among Brazilian Paralympics athletes in team and individual sport.

Predictors	Teamwork	Goal Setting	Social Skill	Problem Solving ^a	Emotional Skills	Leadership	Time management	Communication ^b	Total Life Skills
	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)	β (IC)
Team sports									
Age	.28 (.04, .15)**	.19 (.01, .18)*	.26 (.04, .20)**	.27 (.05, .23)**	.18 (.01, .18)*	.23 (.03, .18)**	.25 (.04, .24)**	.30 (.06, .22)**	.34 (.05, .17)***
Time of Practices	.24 (.01, .14)*	.24 (.02, .16)*	.28 (.04, .21)*	.18 (-.01, .16)	.15 (-.02, .17)	.20 (.01, .20)*	.36 (.09, .29)***	.27 (.04, .21)**	.34 (.05, .17)***
R^2	.05	.04	.02	.03	.03	.03	.04	.04	.08
F	7.640***	5.632***	3.719*	5.170**	4.383**	4.991**	6.026***	5.948**	9.818***
DW	1.738	1.747	1.956	1.870	1.885	1.822	1.849	2.110	1.818
Individual sports									
Age	.03 (.12, .10)*	.01 (-.08, .02)*	.04 (-.03, .06)**	.06 (.06, .24)*	.01 (-.01, .02)*	.09 (.09, .29)*	.11 (.09, .12)*	.15 (.06, .37)*	.04 (-.08, .09)*
Time of Practices	.01 (-.03, .03)	.01 (-.01, .01)	.05 (-.01, .09)*	.01 (-.01, .02)	.01 (-.01, .01)	.01 (-.01, .01)*	.05 (-.01, .06)*	.01 (-.01, .05)*	.04 (-.03, .08)*
R^2	.02	.06	.04	.07	.05	.07	.04	.07	.02
F	6.707**	3.916*	3.031*	4.604*	3.355*	4.473**	2.809*	4.622**	2.185*
DW	2.068	2.049	2.170	1.834	2.073	1.434	2.351	1.295	1.857

Note. Only the standardized regression coefficients which were less than our significance level of .05 are highlighted in bold. β = Standardized regression coefficient; CI = 95% confidence interval. ^aproblem solving and decision making; ^binterpersonal communication. DW= Durbin-Watson. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: own preparation

4 Discussion

The present study observed the development of life skills in adapted sports practitioners, specifically seeking to compare life skills according to the type of sport, in addition to observing the association of sociodemographic variables (age and time of practice) in the development of life skills. The main findings revealed that the practitioners of collective modalities presented a higher perception of development of life skills when compared to the practitioners of individual modalities (see Table 1). While age and time of practice were positively associated for the development of life skills in practitioners of collective and individual modalities (Table 3).

One of the main findings of the study was the comparison of life skills as a function of the type of sport, indicating that the type of sport seems to be an intervening factor in the perception of life skills development in adapted sports practitioners (Table 1). These findings demonstrate that all eight dimensions of life skills (leadership, social skills, communication) and total life skills are more evident in practitioners of collective modalities. Thus, we can infer those collective sports that have as characteristics activities in groups seem to favor the development of a range of life skills that lead practitioners to act more pro activity in their daily demands inside and outside the sports context (BRUNER et al., 2017; HOLT et al., 2017; RIGONI et al., 2017).

Côté et al. (2020) observed in a narrative review is the group dynamics is constructed within team sports seem to favor a higher positive development and consequently the development of a range of skills for life (communication, problem solving, goal setting) for the practitioner inside and outside the sports context. (CARRON; BRAWLEY, 2012). Mathieu et al. (2017) evidence that the team structure suggests that normative expectations within a team can influence the moral development of the athlete (NASCIMENTO JUNIOR et al., 2021), work ethic (SPINK; CROZIER; ROBINSON, 2013) and willingness to contribute to the goals of a team (NASCIMENTO JUNIOR et al., 2019).

Another relevant finding of this investigation refers to the positive predictor of age on the perception of life skills development in practitioners of individual and collective modalities (Table 3). These findings allow us to infer that the regular practice of collective and individual sports seems to favor the perception of development of life skills in adapted sports practitioners. Pierce et al. (2017) observed in a systematic review study that biological maturation is a factor that contributes to the development of various life skills.

It is worth mentioning that the associations were more evident in the collective modalities. Recent research shows that processes such as effective communication, teamwork, leadership and adaptive positional competition within youth teams have demonstrated associations with group cohesion (MCLAREN; SPINK, 2018;

NASCIMENTO JUNIOR et al., 2019) and satisfaction and performance of athletes (HARENBERG; RIEMER; DORSCH; KARREMAN; PARADIS, 2019) are more evident as practitioners gain more experience within the sporting context. Freire et al. (2021) they observed in a cross-sectional study with young Brazilians practicing futsal without disabilities that older young people had a higher perception of life skills development when compared to younger ones, in addition to observing that age positively predicted the development of life skills. In this sense, as age progresses, life skills tend to be enhanced inside and outside the sports environment. Thus, the findings found here corroborate the current literature, demonstrating that age is a precursor in the development of life skills among practitioners of individual and collective modalities in adapted sport (CAMIRÉ; SANTOS, 2019; FREIRE et al., 2021; HOLT et al., 2017).

Observing the predicting role of the time of practice on the development of life skills of adapted sports practitioners, it was observed that the time of practice positively predicts the perception of development of life skills, both individual modalities and collective modalities in parasport practitioners. Hansen and Larson (2007) claim that time of practice is a factor that can interfere in the development of life skills through sport. Eime et al., (2013) observed that the time of practice provides positive experiences within sports programs, providing young practitioners with the optimization of life skills, as well as the reduction of negative psychological factors (e.g., depression, anxiety).

Freire et al. (2020) observed in a cross-sectional study with young Brazilians practicing individual modalities (wrestling, swimming and athletics) without disabilities that the time of practice was positively associated with the development of life skills. Bowers et al. (2010) observed that development during youth through sports practice is related to a greater sense of competence, self-efficacy, self-esteem. The authors also argue that positive sports experiences promote positive behaviors within and outside the sports context, in addition to reducing the likelihood of the adoption of risky behavior (drugs and alcohol intake). Thus, the findings corroborate past investigations that demonstrate that the time of practice is a precursor in the development of life skills in young practitioners with disabilities (CAMIRÉ; SANTOS, 2019; HOLT et al., 2017; FREIRE et al., 2021; FREIRE et al., 2020).

4.1 Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of the present research bring relevant contributions to the literature in the understanding of sport as a tool for the development of life skills in parasport, however it is necessary to consider some limitations of this study. The present study is a cross-sectional study, allowing the verification of correlations between variables,

but it is not possible to infer about the cause-and-effect relationship of one variable over the others. In addition, aspects related to disability, such as the type of disability (acquired or congenital), and the degree of limitation of these participants (walking or wheelchair) were not considered in the analyzes of the present study. Still, other psychosocial variables such as motivation or the relationship with the coach were not investigated, these being fundamental aspects that directly interfere in the development of life skills. In addition, the experiences brought by athletes from other contexts of their life were not considered, since, in the case of a population with disabilities, who goes through various adversities in their life, from prejudices as well as issues of accessibility, it is important to understand how these experiences impact on the development of such skills. In this sense, it is emphasized the importance of future research to apply longitudinal investigations, as well as to associate other factors of the daily life of adapted sports, to expand the measures of the aspects that can influence the development of life skills of sports practitioners adapted.

5 Conclusion

It can be concluded that in the Brazilian adapted sport of the evaluated participants age and time of practice can be considered a positive predictor of the development of life skills among practitioners of individual and collective modalities. It is emphasized that the practitioners of team sports presented greater perception of the development of skills for life and a stronger association with age and time of practice. From a practical point of view, it is essential that physical education professionals and sports coaches provide positive sports experiences for practitioners to practice the sport regularly and in the long term, since such experiences act as a potentiating tool for the development of life skills in adapted sports practitioners.

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