

Reasons for girls' evasion from Social Inclusion Projects through sport**Jose Antonio Viannaⁱ**

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Abstract

This exploratory study, with a quali-quantitative approach, sought to verify the perception of teachers and former students in Social Inclusion Projects through sports on the reasons for the dropout of female participants. Twenty-three teachers (M age = 37.7 years) answered the semi-structured questionnaire and ten former students (M age = 17.1 years) were interviewed in two Social Inclusion Projects located in the interior of favelas in Rio de Janeiro. The extracted information respected the narrative analysis criteria, being triangulated with the theoretical framework of the area. Reasons for social, pedagogical, psychological and management evasion were identified. The need to work and study were the main reasons given for evasion. The didactic procedures in the classes were also highlighted, in addition to the discontinuity of public policies for sport and leisure for the lower classes.

Keywords

gender; sports; social inclusion; evasion; girls.

**Motivos para a evasão das meninas em Projetos de
Inclusão Social por meio do esporte****Resumo**

Este estudo exploratório, de abordagem quali-quantitativa, procurou verificar a percepção de professores e ex-alunas em Projetos de Inclusão Social por meio do esporte, sobre os motivos para a evasão dos participantes do gênero feminino. Responderam ao questionário semiestruturado 23 professores (M idade = 37,7 anos) e foram entrevistadas dez ex-alunas (M idade = 17,1 anos) em dois Projetos de Inclusão Social situados no interior de favelas no Rio de Janeiro. As informações extraídas respeitaram os critérios de análise de narrativa, sendo triangulados com o referencial teórico da área. Foram identificados motivos para a evasão de ordem social, pedagógica, psicológica e de gestão. A necessidade de trabalhar e a de estudar foram os principais motivos apontados para a evasão. Os procedimentos didáticos nas aulas também foram citados com destaque, além da descontinuidade das políticas públicas de esporte e lazer para as camadas populares.

Palavras-chave

gênero; esportes; inclusão social; evasão; meninas.

Razones para la evasión de las niñas de los proyectos de inclusión social a través del deporte

Resumen

Este estudio exploratorio, con enfoque cualicuantitativo, buscó verificar la percepción de docentes y exalumnos en Proyectos de Inclusión Social a través del deporte sobre los motivos de la evasión de las participantes femeninas. Veintitrés profesores (M edad = 37,7 años) respondieron el cuestionario semiestructurado y diez exalumnos (M edad = 17,1 años) fueron entrevistados en dos Proyectos de Inclusión Social ubicados en el interior de favelas de Río de Janeiro. La información extraída respetó los criterios de análisis narrativo, siendo triangulada con el marco teórico del área. Se identificaron las razones de la evasión social, pedagógica, psicológica y gerencial. La necesidad de trabajar y la de estudiar fueron las principales razones aducidas para la evasión. También se destacaron los procedimientos didácticos en las clases, además de la discontinuidad de las políticas públicas de deporte y ocio para las clases populares.

Palabras clave

género; deportes; inclusión social; evasión; chicas.

1 Introduction

Currently, we observe an increase in campaigns to encourage children and young people to participate in physical activities, particularly in some more vulnerable groups justified according to the United Nations (UN) by the risks of worsening chronic diseases and/or the sedentary lifestyle observed in these populations in the face of a set of new social practices, certainly more attractive for the use of their leisure time.

Taking into account that the most vulnerable population groups are those that lack social opportunities and physical and sports stimuli, in particular, the age groups that comprise children and young people (5 to 17 years), which led the UN (2018), and also reflects the World Health Organization (WHO) concerns, to suggest to this target audience the daily practice of moderate to intense physical activity, to provide a more active and healthy lifestyle.

Nowadays, sport encompasses a more global aspect of education in which children and teenagers, girls or boys, can learn more than motor skills, but also affectivity and positive attitude change (ZALUAR, 1994). Taking advantage of this capacity is transforming sports into a powerful pedagogical tool.

The WHO and UN propositions have been made into campaigns disseminated by the media and by the governments of several countries (CLARKE; JONES; SMITH, 2021) and in Social Inclusion Projects through sport (SIP), aimed at the most vulnerable populations, seeking to influence people to assimilate positive beliefs about the regular practice of physical activities (KRAVCHYCHYN; OLIVEIRA, 2015; VIANNA; LOVISOLO, 2011).

In Brazil, from the 1980s, the government developed educational programs to assure social inclusion through sport or work for target population groups, thus translating into benefits such as reducing the number of school dropouts and combating child labor. In addition, those programs lowered the rate of drug trafficking during childhood and adolescence in their communities (ZALUAR, 1994).

It's believed that SIP is capable of impacting the lives of children and adolescents, more specifically in the lives of girls living in communities in the city of Rio de Janeiro, considering the social pressures imposed on them, especially during puberty, as it imposes barriers for physical and/or sports practice (ONU WOMEN, 2016).

The social pressures that occur among Brazilian girls up to 15 years of age contribute to the sports dropout rate, which stands at 34.8%, while, among boys, the sports dropout rate is 19.3% (BRASIL, 2015). This information suggests the need for investments in research that address the enrollment, retention, and evasion of girls in sport, with the perspective of expanding and deepening the understanding of this phenomenon.

Despite the growing number of researches about gender in Brazil (SILVA; DIAS; RIOS, 2020), when searching for articles whose central themes were “gender”, “sport” and “social projects” in three platforms of scientific production (SciELO, Capes e Lilacs), Medeiros (2020) identified 643 publications in the period between 2013 and 2019. The author selected 80 articles for the integrative review, thus were identified that 36.25% of the articles (29) highlighted the gender relationship based on biological aspects; 20% (16) on gender and sexuality differences in sport; 5% (4) on the effects of sports practice in children and/or adolescents by gender; and 2.5% (2) about transgender people in sport. Among the selected studies, only 10% (8) addressed the issue of gender in the field of SIP and its impacts on girls' social and school life.

One aspect to be considered is that the social impact assessment surveys in SIP focused on subjects active in sports facilities, but with little attention to the various reasons individuals participating in SIP abandoned sports activities, particularly the females. To investigate this phenomenon, the present study aimed to verify the perception of teachers and former students in SIP about the reasons for female participants dropping out.

2 The theoretical context

Studies referring to the social organization of the relationship between the sexes (SCOTT, 1990) and the distinction of people by gender, color, among other specific differences in human nature (DACOSTA *et al.*, 2005), had a direct impact on the sports environment because helped to understand what is socially and culturally constructed in a given space/time as being associated with men and women in a segregated way - related to perceptions about bodies, gestures, representations of health, beauty and performance (GOELLNER, 2013).

According to Goellner (2013), the studies developed in this period contributed to breaking paradigms and common sense concerning the discourses that hierarchize men and women socially, reproducing and reaffirming such practices. This break in gender paradigms also contributes to social awareness on the subject, highlighting the need for greater attention to the definition of public policies that promote equal rights between genders in different fields of knowledge, including sports.

In Brazil, Bertollo and Schwengber (2017), when analyzing the three National Plans of Policies for Women (PNPM), concluded that sport, along with leisure, gained space in these documents as the editions passed, until elaborating, in its third edition, an action plan with defined strategies and goals that would impact the lives of Brazilian women through sport and its manifestation in the field of leisure.

The hierarchy between genders also appears in Physical Education classes. Altmann, Ayoub, and Amaral (2011) and Bittencourt and Bassalo (2021) assessed in speeches of male and female teachers that situations of conflict between boys and girls occur due to a difference in skill and strength between them. According to the authors, the stimuli provided by the teacher contribute to minimizing conflicts and

fostering the inclusion of girls in activities in the classroom. Aniszewski *et al.* (2019) draw attention to the Physical Education classes' content selection since the predominance of sports is more motivating for boys than for girls and other groups that do not fit into the gender binarism diversity (PRADO; RIBEIRO, 2014) and favoring more the boys' skills.

These results derived from studies in a school environment allow us to consider the need to seek balance in activities offered that they can appeal to the female audience and all gender diversity as a fundamental strategy to meet their needs and demands in the various environments of sports practice so helping to build and enhance the preference for sports and physical practices in general. It also seems necessary to know the interests and needs of the public for whom the activity is taught, to enable agreement between institutional proposals, beliefs, teachers' values, and students' aspirations and expectations.

3 Methodology

This exploratory research emphasized the search for information, details, and gaps relevant to the reasons for girls to drop out of sports classes and corporal activities in social projects. We chose to collect quantitative and qualitative data that helped describe the main characteristics and information of this phenomenon (MINAYO, 2009) in two SIP, both located in favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro, places with similar characteristics of social vulnerability.

The subjects of this study were divided into two groups with the following composition: Group 1 (G1): 23 teachers working on the project (8 Female/ 15 Male), with an average age of 37.7 years; and Group 2 (G2): 10 former students at SIP with an average age of 17.1 years.

The subjects of G1 answered a self-administered questionnaire composed of 15 questions, developed specifically for this study so that they could express their perceptions about the reasons for the dropout of girls in the SIP.

The G2 participants were selected from the registration and enrollment forms in the SIP files. The number of subjects was established according to the saturation level in the frequency of responses, that is, the responses became repetitive. The technique

for data collection was an individual interview with open questions, in which the interviewee could talk about her reasons for dropping out of SIP, in a non-directive way. (CRESWELL, 2007; MINAYO, 2009). The interviews were carried out individually in the sports facilities where the SIP was developed. For a more detailed analysis, the interviews were recorded (audio only) and transcribed.

In both groups, the process of classifying and organizing the subjects' statements into categories was carried out using some criteria: a) Semantic: words and expressions with similar purport and meanings; b) Theoretical: the use of words and expressions that compose or are part of the same concept or idea present in the literature. With the analysis of the information, we sought to collect recurrences in the answers.

The data collected and the information extracted complied with the narrative analysis criteria proposed by Certeau (1998) for further triangulation with the national and international literature on the subject (CRESWELL, 2007). This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under the number 15352219.5.0000.5282.

4 Results and discussion

In this section, we present the results that may help identify the reasons that contributed to the SIP ex-students abandoning the sports activities promoted by the programs implemented in the Rio de Janeiro favelas.

The analysis of the responses of SIP teachers and former students on the reasons for dropping out were grouped into categories to facilitate the understanding of the facts that contributed to the departure from the activities. In the analysis of the speeches, the following reasons stood out: "Social" (need to work, have to pay more attention to studies or not have company to go to SIP); "Pedagogical" (questions directly related to the school); "Management" (interruption of classes at SIP for political and social reasons); and "Psychological" (not liking the modality, not identifying with the modality and others).

The following reasons for evasion were identified in the perception of the teachers who participated (table 1).

Table 1 – Teachers' perception of the reasons for female dropout in SIP

Motives	Social		Pedagogical		Psychological		Management	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Early pregnancy	10	13						
Not having friends in class	8	10.4						
Housework	8	10.4						
Fights with boys	6	7.8						
Prejudices	3	3.9						
Involvement in drug trafficking	1	1.2						
Not liking the class			15	19.5				
Did not achieve personal goals			4	5.2				
Do not like the activity/modality			4	5.2				
Insecurity					9	11.7		
Did not identify with the activity					6	7.8		
No talent/skill					3	3.9		
Total	36	46.7	23	29.9	18	23.4	--	--

Source: Authors' own.

*Multiple responses were allowed.

The data reveal that teachers consider that the main reasons for girls to abandon activities in the SIP are of a social nature (46.7%), with emphasis on early pregnancy, housework and not having friends in the chosen activity. Among the aspects mentioned by the teachers, only the need to work or study was confirmed in the speech of former students, which suggests the need to establish intersubjective agreements that favor the effectiveness of pedagogical proposals (ZALUAR, 1994). Fights with boys, prejudice in practicing activities considered masculine, and involvement with drug trafficking were identified by teachers with less emphasis.

Not liking the class, not having achieved personal goals, and not liking the modality/activity were considered pedagogical reasons (29.9%) because they are related to teaching procedures and strategies that can promote adherence, affiliation, or the dropout of participants. In this category, disliking classes was the most frequently mentioned reason among all indicators for dropout. It's necessary to emphasize that the didactic procedures are the instruments to enable the use of the content as a means for the integral development of the student and to enable the student to achieve their aspirations. For the previous reasons, there is an exclusion process motivated by factors external to the participant.

Also, according to the teachers, in third place (23.4%) are the reasons with psychological characteristics (insecurity in practicing with boys, judging themselves without talent/ability to practice, or not identifying with the modality), which can cause the self-exclusion. However, as in the research by Vianna, Souza and Reis (2015) with students in the school environment, most of the participating teachers understand that cases of dropout by girls caused by the embarrassment generated by boys occur “few times” (9 mentions) or “never” happened (10 mentions). While three respondents stated that this fact often happens.

The analysis of the data collected with the former students reveals points of agreement and divergences between the perception of the investigated teachers. Although social reasons also had a greater recurrence in the speech of former students, the answers mainly concerned: a) the need to start working to help with family income or for their own livelihood. We understand that these concerns derive from the interviewees' age group, who, being in the last years of schooling and without prospects of continuing their formal education, enter the workforce; b) the demand for school work or the incompatibility of schedule with classes, which appear associated with their entry into higher education after work hours. These factors justify, according to the following excerpts, leaving the sports activities offered through the SIP.

[...] as I wasn't studying anymore, I wanted a course to study for the university exams that wasn't all day [...], but that would help me. And then I did Saturdays, for free. [...].

Then they were referring to the Apprentice program, and then I happened to be selected for it, and then that year I started working and also took college classes in the evenings.

[...] I get off work and go to college at night. [...] there is nothing else to do during the week. (EX-STUDENT G2-3, 19 years old).

Through this account, we perceive the changes in their priorities, which change according to new interests and perspectives regarding the present and the future, or according to the social opportunities that appear outside the SIP, as highlighted in the report below:

The reason was my choice. There comes a time in life when we have to make choices, then I had to choose between ballet and gymnastics [...]; I think it was because of the opportunity too because there [at the ballet school] I was going to have a dance teacher training course. (EX-STUDENT G2-4, 17 years old).

It's worth mentioning that the SIP doesn't have the intention of professional training in the activity practiced, similar to the training promoted by a dance school or by a higher education course for male and female dancers. However, it's of great importance for the SIP to understand this educational demand for girls, as these spaces are, for many of them, the first contact with a sport, martial arts, or dance. We believe that not meeting the expectations of girls in this first contact can generate a negative experience, whose tendency would be to drop out (MEDEIROS; VIANNA, 2021; VIANNA; LOVISOLO, 2018; VOTRE *et al.*, 2011).

About the acquisition of sports skills and competencies in the spaces of the SIP, it's essential to ensure that the demands are minimally met, to contribute to the permanence of the participants, and guarantee the success of the socialization and citizen training actions promoted by the institution over time. In a longitudinal study with young Indians Bhan *et al.* (2020), identified that practicing sports can increase social participation and increase the benefits for the life of teenagers. In addition to reducing the trend of child marriages and increasing the use of contraceptives among girls, which corresponds, from the perspective of the local culture to raising the social capital and expanding the social opportunities of the participants (HILLS; WALKER; BARRY, 2019).

By not meeting girls' initial demands, SIP can reinforce the statistics of macrosocial surveys on the level of physical activity in Brazil. These studies highlight that females are more sedentary and have a lower level of physical activity than males during adolescence and adulthood (HENRIQUE; ANISZEWSKI; SIMÕES, 2020). In addition, they may not contribute to modifying the low level of active Brazilians (30% of the population), which mainly affects subjects from the lower classes (UNDP, 2017). On the other hand, by contemplating the interests of participants, SIP can contribute to girls' participation and promote a better level of physical activity and body weight within the recommended levels.

The influences of the social environment that determine male and female social roles, such as undertaking housework (unpaid work, which is, in most cases, performed by women), must be considered as an aspect that contributes to the biggest evasion of the girls (BRASIL, 2015; ONU WOMEN, 2016). According to Votre *et al.* (2011), in the relationship between unpaid domestic work and leisure, the latter ends up occupying an

unimportant space in the lives of females, who must prioritize domestic life and tasks. Leisure for women is lighter domestic activities or leisure activities within the space of the house itself, such as watching television, for example; while, for men, leisure is considered a time for practicing sports or other activities that go beyond the spaces of their home, their leisure is associated with fun, sport and escape from routine.

As well to the work performed by both genders, physical and sports activities also suffer from the social divide for what is destined for the male and female universe. The subjects don't perform activities together, as they socially learn from an early age that boys and girls play and practice different exercises, under the bias that they are biologically different. Even today, when gender equality has been gaining ground in physical and sports issues, gender segregation is still a mark of some spaces and modalities (VOTRE *et al.*, 2011).

In the interviews with former students, mentions of social reasons – “Not having anyone to take them to SIP” – stood out, more associated with students aged 10 to 14 years, who need to be accompanied to the SIP facilities, with less risk of grooming and misconduct caused by local crime or of being victimized in violent confrontations between perpetrators and police.

As in the data collected with the teachers, the pedagogical aspects in the SIP classes are seen in the speech of the former students as the second most recurrent reason in the categories of this study, which can be represented as follows:

Gradually, that didn't bring me the joy to stay. So, little by little, I gave up. [...] I dropped out of swimming and to this day no one has come to ask me: 'Ah! Why have you left?'. I don't think anyone must have noticed that. (FORMER STUDENT G2-5, 18 years old).

This report reminds us of the fact that not meeting demands can not only generate evasion but, above all, it can cause some feelings of frustration and rejection in the participants. In the speech of interviewee G1-5, it's possible to see the importance of the teacher paying attention during classes to the signals given by the participants in the activities, opening space for feedback on the quality of the classes, the impact on the students' progress and eventually on the occurrence of evasion of SIP.

Cely *et al.* (2017) say that the teachers must take responsibility for promoting strategies that respect the level of knowledge and skills of all their students. These guidelines seem appropriate in this context of education through physical activities, as well as in other social environments that train subjects in situations of social vulnerability. Therefore, it's important that the teachers assume a receptive and mediating posture and that the contents of the class are welcoming and respect the different students' demands (LOPES; SILVA; FERREIRA, 2020). In the same line, Constantino and Silva (2015) state that, in addition to teachers giving importance to the different postures, personalities, and demands of students, what is fundamental for their teaching action is that it be a pedagogical practice based on strategies suited to the particularities of students and the social context in which teaching takes place.

Another pedagogical reason identified in the data was the learning perspective, which was also identified in the studies by Vianna and Lovisolo (2009) and Zaluar (1994). Meeting the aspirations of participants to learn more and improve performance in sports would be a factor to motivate participants to remain in SIP activities.

Not liking the teaching strategies, the modality, or the classes taught by the teachers (table 1) may be a sign that the didactic and pedagogical procedures in the SIP classes didn't meet the expectations of the girls who abandoned the activities. It seems imperative to promote pedagogical agreements with different age groups, taking into account the needs and demands of each group. When considering that technical competence is a motivational factor considered important by SIP practitioners for physical activity (BENTO *et al.*, 2019), the teachers have to take on the role of mediator and they need to conduct the pedagogical dialogue to establish rules and agreements between staff and students.

As a teaching strategy that can be used to encourage the participation of girls from the lower classes in physical sports activities, the creation of peer groups based on social characteristics (such as daughters of single mothers) (SCHAILLÉE; THEEBOOM; VAN CAUWENBERG, 2015) and provide leadership responsibilities (BEAN *et al.*, 2015).

Former students also mentioned public policy management elements as reasons for dropping out of SIP – such as “interruptions in SIP classes” associated with the discontinuity of government sports and leisure policies, which promote the

discontinuity of activities and discourage permanence in the activities practiced. The same was not seen in the group of teachers, who don't seem to realize that the negative effects of discontinuing activities cause deepen the effects of social exclusion and poverty in the lives of children and teenagers from the lower classes, which cause participants to drop out so they don't get the benefits of the practice (COLLINS; HAUDENHUYSE, 2015).

These reasons for evasion warn about the need to adopt public policies that are capable of providing a quality service without breaking continuity. In particular, the most socially vulnerable populations are routinely affected by the interruption of classes in schools and social programs due to confrontations motivated by violent crime. The Municipal Government denying or interrupting these services is also a violation of the constitutional rights to sport and leisure (ZALUAR, 1994), which can have a negative implication in the formation and increase of the social capital of the participants served by the social inclusion policies through the physical and sports activities (PIKE; PAGE; VINAS, 2018).

Aspects of a psychological nature, such as not liking the sport and not identifying with the activity (from the perspective of the former students) and feelings of insecurity; not identifying with the activity, or judging themselves as lacking in talent for the practice (teachers' perspective), among others, were verified with less emphasis than the social and pedagogical aspects, in both groups. The offer of diversified activities seems to be fundamental to allowing participants to experience various modalities until they choose the one they most identify with.

Activities with predominantly male participation don't seem to contribute to female adherence and result in evasion, shortening the period of permanence in SIP activities. This short-term experience can compromise psychological benefits, such as the perception of motor, cognitive and global competence (BRAUNER; VALENTINI; SOUZA, 2017) and resilience (BHAN *et al.*, 2020; CORTÊS NETO *et al.*, 2020), which are come with the practice of the activity for a longer period.

5 Final considerations

Regarding the reasons expressed by the teachers and former students of SIP in the city of Rio de Janeiro, we consider that the small number of the sample doesn't allow us to make further considerations about other reasons that eventually contribute to the evasion of social inclusion programs through the physical activities and sports.

Despite this, we can interpret that the age variable may express different reasons. If we take into account that the reasons for the evasion of older students are associated with the search for a job, university courses, or pre-university classes, while the most relevant reasons for the evasion of younger former students are due difficulties to make the commute to the activities without the company of a responsible person, for safety reasons.

Some of the reasons revealed by both groups seem to be common, are strictly linked to issues of a social nature, and conditioning the presence or absence of young women in the facilities where physical and sports activities take place. These may result from the discontinuity of public sports and leisure policies for the subjects of the lower classes, from confrontations or disputes between police forces and some outlaw groups - or even between opposing groups existing in these communities -, which contributes to discouraging the participants from the activities promoted by the SIP.

Other reasons that stood out in the investigation are related to the teaching procedures adopted in classes by teachers in different activities and modalities. These can make the students lose interest in the chosen activity, as well as the perception of the lack of a utilitarian perspective of the practice chosen by the girls. Therefore, identifying a lack of meaning to their permanence in the programs offered.

In the opposite direction to what was mentioned regarding the utilitarian perspective of the activity, we reveal the expression of the reason that contributes to the continuity of some students, when associated with eventual training courses that allow them to be future teachers of the modalities they chose to practice.

By way of synthesis of the collected data, we consider that the reasons evidenced by the ex-students of the social inclusion programs through sport allowed us to classify them as being of a social, pedagogical, management, and psychological nature. Thus, we believe that a larger number of alumni samples could consolidate the

nature of the reasons mentioned here, as well as bring to light other reasons that we were not allowed to perceive in this analysis.

The socialization process that establishes the patterns of behavior, attitudes, and thoughts of what it means to be male or female can help young people choose the socially expected social role. For future studies, we believe that investigations are important that seek to identify the teaching strategies that are most effective so that these female demands in sport are met, thus ensuring their permanence in SIP.

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