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INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITIES: ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABILITY AND ENJOYMENT IN AN ADAPTED SPORTS PROGRAM

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Abstract: It is essential that future teachers consider the type of inclusive Physical Education that they want to teach to students, conceiving the potential it has in affective, motivational and social insertion aspects. The objective of the present study was to analyze the attitudes of university students towards students with intellectual disabilities and the enjoyment of university students after the implementation of an adapted sports program. 47 students participated, of which 23 were students of the Physical Education major in the Primary Education degree, and 24 were students of a Program for socio-labor insertion for people with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. The instruments used were the Inventory of Attitudes towards People with Disabilities (IAPD) and the Physical Activity Enjoyment Measurement Scale (PACES). A single-group retrospective ex post facto design was planned. The results showed that, at older ages, university students presented more positive feelings and emotions and greater support and acceptance towards people with disabilities. However, the age of the university students was negatively related to the perception of autonomy as well as the integration of people with intellectual disabilities. Regarding the variable enjoyment of physical activity, it was negatively correlated with the age of the university students, although a very weak and non-significant trend was observed. The results of the present study suggest that the more contact with people with disabilities at early stages, such as university, would improve attitudes towards disability and enjoyment of inclusive practice.

Keywords: Physical education; acceptance; autonomy; integration.

INTRODUCTION

The DSM-5 (APA, 2013) conceptualizes intellectual disability as a neurodevelopmental disorder that entails various types of deficits, which must occur during the individual's development period. On the one hand, intellectual deficits (reasoning, problem solving, abstract thinking, planning, learning, etc.) that must be confirmed through clinical evaluation, as well as individualized and standardized assessment of intelligence. On the other hand, adaptive deficits that make it difficult to achieve socio-cultural standards for personal independence and social responsibility. These mean that, in the absence of support, the person's functioning is limited in one or more of the activities of daily living (social participation, independent living) in different contexts (home, school, work and/or community). Likewise, the definition offered by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities also indicates the presence of these intellectual and adaptive deficits (AAIDD, 2011). However, it must be noted that these deficits can also result from genetic diseases (for example: Down syndrome), acquired damages (for example: cerebral palsy), and other neurodevelopmental disorders (for example: autism spectrum disorders). Therefore, the causes of intellectual disability can be diverse, being more appropriate to talk about pre, peri and/or postnatal exposure to certain biomedical, social, behavioral and/or educational risk factors (AAIDD, 2011).

Regarding physical activity, sedentary lifestyle and obesity are emerging as the new epidemic of the 20th century. XXI, since 35.3% of the Spanish population between 15 and 69 years old does not reach the level of healthy physical activity recommended by the WHO (Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Welfare, 2018). Despite the multiple risks that physical inactivity can entail, such

as premature aging and obesity, among others (Aranceta-Bartrina, Gianzo-Citors and Pérez-Rodrigo, 2020), it remains an insufficient practice in the population worldwide. (Van Sluijs et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the university context there are higher sedentary lifestyle figures than in other stages (Ferreira and Gomes, 2022). Therefore, it is considered important to reflect on these figures, as well as the barriers and predictors of the practice of physical activity that the scientific literature has been studying, to raise awareness and act on this growing social problem through the promotion of physical activity. especially due to the benefits provided by practicing physical activity from an early age (Bull et al., 2020).

For the group of people with intellectual disabilities, this sedentary lifestyle is even more alarming, and awareness of the importance of practicing physical activity is growing, since this group has worse health than the general population (Olasagasti-Ibargoién, Castañeda-Babarro, León-Guereño and Uria-Olaizola, 2023). However, the literature on the promotion of physical activity in people with disabilities is limited and more awareness on the subject is needed (Camargo et al., 2023). These investigations for this population must be oriented more towards the measurement of physical activity and intervention designs (Pitchford, Dixon-Ibarra and Hauck, 2018).

Likewise, at the European Union level, 61% of people with severe intellectual disabilities and 35% of people with moderate intellectual disabilities report being inactive (HNS, 2019). In the sports field, it is necessary to increase the practice of federated sports in people with disabilities, because as Pinilla and Pérez-Tejero (2017) say, less than 2.53% of people with disabilities practiced federated sports compared to 21.49% of Madrid residents who had the special card to access municipal sports facilities. That is why it becomes vitally important to analyze how to acquire healthy

habits in the different stages of life as well as study the relationship between these adopted lifestyles and present and future health at a physical, psychological and social level (Ruiz Juan, García Montes and Piéron, 2009).

In the population with intellectual disabilities, the fact that they participate in physical activities not only depends on their own concern to do so, but also on the inclusive social environment (Olasagasti-Ibargoién et al., 2023). Among the main reasons why people carry out physical activity is enjoyment, understood as a positive attitudinal response towards the sporting experience that reflects sensations such as pleasure, pleasure or fun, related to an optimal psychological state that leads to carrying out an activity mainly by itself (Ruiz Juan et al., 2009). In the educational field, enjoyment in the practice of physical activity has been related to better academic results in students (Fraile-García, Tejero-González, Esteban-Cornejo & Veiga, 2019), also acting as an important predictor of involvement in Physical Education classes and the daily level of physical-sports practice (Ning, Gao and Lodewyk, 2013). Therefore, developing physical activity interventions is essential to promote an active lifestyle (Chung and Leung, 2018), even more so if they promote enjoyment during physical activity, to achieve greater adherence to it (Moreno-Murcia, González -Cutre, Martínez, Alonso and López, 2008).

In this scenario, it is essential that both future teachers and those who are currently practicing rethink what type of Physical Education they want to teach to students, conceiving the potential it has in affective, motivational and social insertion aspects (Moreno- Murcia, Joseph and Huéscar, 2013). Therefore, encouraging student reflection during their learning will enable critical analysis of the process and, at the same time, the acquisition of content that will be

useful in their professional development. It is about combining the process of adapting new teaching methods with a research and analytical practice that provides data on a more adapted and participatory way of teaching (Romero, 2009).

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is developed in a socio-labor insertion program for young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities, located at a university. Within the study plan, specifically in the first course of the two that make up the program, the subject Values, Free Time and Sports is included, which aims to provide students with positive values and attitudes through carrying out physical-sports activity, for adaptation in the personal, social, academic and especially work areas. During the work carried out in previous courses, certain deficits have been detected in relation to motor skills, as well as a certain lack of motivation among students towards practicing sports. These deficiencies are sometimes a product of previous periods of schooling, of traditional teaching methods in the area of Physical Education, disconnected from the reality of the individual and of the absence of teaching programs adapted to the needs of this population. In relation to young people with intellectual disabilities, the educational practices that have been implemented in recent years have made it possible for these students to achieve a certain level of social integration, but measures are still needed for effective integration.

In turn, the primary education degree of a Spanish university has the subjects Teaching and Learning of Physical Education and Adapted Physical Activity, with the mention of Physical Education. Through these subjects, it is intended that students acquire the knowledge and skills corresponding to the curricular contents of Physical Education, delving into

the didactic elements that will lead to the implementation of the contents of the area. Through knowledge of the conceptual and methodological bases in the teaching-learning process of Physical Education, the adequate training of the teacher in charge of teaching the subject in Primary Education is sought. Likewise, it is intended that students know and put into practice different physical and sports activities, appropriate to the interests, abilities and limitations of all students. For this reason, and taking into account the existence of people with disabilities who expect to be cared for by professionals suitably trained in the subject, it is necessary to train teachers who have the necessary skills to address diversity and are capable of providing an effective response to the demands of this group. Now, students value the Physical Education specialty positively for teaching ability but would like the presence of a greater number of practical credits (Moreno-Murcia and Conte, 2001).

For all of the above, the objective of this study was to analyze the attitudes of university students towards students with intellectual disabilities and the enjoyment of the former after the implementation of an adapted sports program.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 47 students participated, of which 23 were students of the Physical Education major in the Primary Education degree (52.2% women; 47.8% men) from two different promotions ($n_1 = 12$; $n_2 = 14$), when they were taking the subject Activity Adapted Physics, with a mean age of $M = 20.30$ ($SD = 2.72$); and 24 were students of a social-labor insertion program for young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities ($n_1 = 12$; $n_2 = 14$). The latter, aged between 19 and 37 years ($M = 24.08$, $SD = 4.57$), had a

recognized disability of 33% or more and an adjusted social behavior, without suffering from physical illnesses that required adapting the planned sessions.

INSTRUMENTS

To measure the variables object of the study, two questionnaires were administered to the participants, in addition to a series of initial questions to collect sociodemographic and sports data.

The first was the Inventory of Attitudes towards People with Disabilities (IAPD; Alcedo, Gómez and Fontanil, 2013). The IAPD evaluates attitudes towards people with disabilities through 40 items established in five dimensions: 1) Attribution of autonomy, independence and capacity (11 items; for example: *When I talk to a person with a disability: a. I can't stop thinking that he is different from others b. I do not think about his disability*); 2) Personal acceptance of people with disabilities (seven items; for example: 3. *People with disabilities are happier: a. When they are with people like them b. When they are with all types of people*);

3) Support, social distance and knowledge of the disability (seven items; for example: *I think that: a. I wouldn't mind having a friend with a disability b. It would be a little annoying to have a friend with a disability*); 4) Work, school and community integration (five items; for example: *I think that: a. People with disabilities are more clumsy than others b. They are not more clumsy than others*); and 5) Feelings and emotions towards people with disabilities (six items; for example: *I think that people with disabilities: a. Are less happy than others b. Are just as happy as others*). The scale presents a Likert-type response format from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (Almost always). Cronbach's Alpha indices were $\alpha = .807$, $\alpha = .611$, $\alpha = .702$, $\alpha = .662$, $\alpha = .603$ for the five dimensions, in the order of table 1, of the

initial questionnaire (Alcedo et al., 2013).

To evaluate enjoyment in physical activity, the Spanish version (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2008) of the *Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale* (PACES; Molt et al., 2001) was used. The Physical Activity Enjoyment Measurement Scale consists of 16 items (all predicted by the phrase *When I am active, doing physical exercise or physical activity, playing a sport or game*), evaluating enjoyment directly, with positive feelings towards the activity. physical activity (nine items; for example: *I enjoy it, I find it pleasant*) and vice versa, with feelings of rejection towards physical activity (seven items; for example: *I don't like it, it frustrates me*). It is an instrument that yields a total score obtained as the sum of the scores collected through a Likert-type response scale from 1 (totally disagree/agree) to 5 (totally agree/disagree) depending on the items. written directly/inversely. This scale obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.89 (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2008).

PROJECT

For the present study, a single group retrospective *ex post facto* design was planned (Ato, López and Benavente, 2013), in which the relationship between the sex and age of the participants in the Primary Education degree with contact with people with disabilities (reason and frequency of contact and type of disability) and the enjoyment of physical activity.

PROCEDURE

After obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee of the University xxx, the professors responsible for the aforementioned subjects were contacted to explain the purpose of the study and establish the relevant appointments. A standardized procedure was used to ensure that instructions were the same for all participants. Prior to completing

the questionnaire, the students voluntarily signed their collaboration in the study, since since the students were of legal age, informed consent from their families was not required. The questionnaires were completed under the supervision of the research team in sessions of approximately 20-25 minutes.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Basic descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for an initial description of the variables under study. The differences in means between groups were calculated using the Mann-Whitney U statistic (hypothesis contrast on the difference between two groups). To detect relationships between variables, Spearman correlations were carried out. All statistical analyzes were carried out with IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27.0) for the Windows operating system.

RESULTS

ATTITUDES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Age was a variable that correlated positively with the dimensions Feelings and emotions ($r_{xy}=.328$), Support, social distance and knowledge of the disability ($r_{xy}=.116$) and Acceptance ($r_{xy}=.111$), and negatively, with the dimensions Attribution of autonomy ($r_{xy}=-.357$) and Work, school and community integration ($r_{xy}=-.149$), although without statistical significance.

Regarding the sex of the students, statistically significant differences were detected in the dimension Attribution of autonomy, independence and capacity (Women = 8.25; Men = 13.50; U = 82.500; p < .05).

| | Man | Woman |
|------------|-------|-------|
| Factor I | 13.50 | 8.25 |
| Factor II | 11.50 | 11.50 |
| Factor III | 12.14 | 10.86 |
| Factor IV | 12.91 | 10.09 |
| Factor V | 10.00 | 13.00 |

*p < .05

Table 2: Average ranges and attitudes towards people with disabilities based on sex

Factor I = Attribution of autonomy, independence and capacity; Factor II = Personal acceptance of people with disabilities; Factor III = Support, social distance and knowledge of the disability; Factor IV = Work, school and community integration; Factor V = Feelings and emotions towards people with disabilities

Those students in the mention, who had previous contact with disability, showed higher scores in almost all dimensions of attitudes towards disability. In Factor I (Average range = 12.00; Mann-Whitney U = 44.000); Factor II (Average range = 12.50; Mann-Whitney U = 48.000); Factor IV (Average range = 12.25; Mann-Whitney U = 50,000); and Factor V (Average range = 14.00; Mann-Whitney U = 36.000). Regarding Factor III, the trend was reversed since higher scores were observed in students without previous contact with the disability (Average range = 11.93; Mann-Whitney U = 62.000). No statistically significant differences were detected in any of the relationships.

The type of relationship of the participants with the disability that showed the highest percentage was sporadic (17.4%), followed by family and friendship/leisure (both 13%), and finally almost permanent (8.7%).

| | <i>M(DE)</i> | Age | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---------------|--------------|-----|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Age | 20.30(2.72) | - | -.357 | .111 | .116 | -.149 | .328 |
| 1. Factor I | 1,41(.096) | | - | .000 | .191 | .235 | -.034 |
| 2. Factor II | 1,71(.050) | | | - | -.044 | -.010 | -.134 |
| 3. Factor III | 1,11(.100) | | | | - | -.030 | -.067 |
| 4. Factor IV | 1,70(.138) | | | | | - | .441* |
| 5. Factor V | 1,75(.214) | | | | | | - |

* $p < .05$

Table 1: *Correlations between age and attitudes towards people with disabilities*

Factor I = Attribution of autonomy, independence and capacity; Factor II = Personal acceptance of people with disabilities; Factor III = Support, social distance and knowledge of the disability; Factor IV = Work, school and community integration; Factor V = Feelings and emotions towards people with disabilities.

ENJOY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AFTER AN ADAPTED SPORTS PROGRAM

Regarding the enjoyment of physical activity, higher scores were observed in male university students (Average range = 12.36; Mann-Whitney U = 62.00, $p > .05$), with an age range of less than 20 years (Range average = 11.96; Mann-Whitney U = 54.500, $p > .05$) and with previous contact with the disability (Average range = 13.06; Mann-Whitney U = 51.50, $p > .05$). No statistically significant differences were observed in the relationships between the aforementioned variables, perhaps due to the small sample size.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The educational and social inclusion of people with disabilities does not only consist of eliminating architectural barriers or giving them visibility as a group, but attitudes (or prejudices) can represent more limiting barriers to their social integration than those derived from their own disability (Suriá, Villegas and Rosser, 2016). Furthermore, normalization and inclusion as a philosophy are widely accepted principles, but their implementation is a pending challenge (Alcedo et al., 2013).

The proposed model of attitudes towards disability is based on a multidimensional and dynamic conception of attitudes, based

on the cognitive and affective components (Alcedo et al., 2013). This cognitive aspect is reflected in the thoughts, beliefs, opinions or perceptions that people without disabilities present towards factors related to the acceptance, support or integration of people with disabilities. This knowledge generates an attitude, which in part leads to prejudices and stereotypes about people with disabilities.

The prejudices present in the university environment (Gurdián-Fernández et al., 2020) and the results of this study show modest but positive data on the part of the students of the Physical Education major in the Primary Education degree towards people with disabilities. At all times, the study participants showed a very high predisposition, involvement and affection towards all colleagues with disabilities. Although at a general level, the functional diversity of people is internalized as disability, handicap or deficit for specific tasks, putting the focus more on the part that they cannot perform, than on the person as a whole (Gurdián-Fernández et al., 2020). Studies such as this one offer encouraging data towards an inclusive society in the university environment, since age seems to be a problem for the consideration of the group with disabilities, and is a fundamental stage for raising awareness among young people such as university students.

Prejudice, even though it is a social construction, seems to be inherent to human beings, since we tend to prejudge. This generates negative social consequences, since thinking is reflected in attitudes, and possible differential, and even discriminatory, treatment (Gurdián-Fernández et al., 2020). It is important to remember that prejudices are the preconceived ideas we have about other people without barely knowing them. In fact, we remember that in addition to the cognitive aspect on which attitudes are based, mentioned above, there is the affective aspect (evaluated in Factor V), which includes the emotion associated with the idea, that is, the presence or absence of fears, or negative experiences towards these people (Alcedo et al., 2013). For this reason, it is possible that those students with prior contact with people with disabilities were found to have better average ranges in feelings and emotions towards people with disabilities. According to its authors, the dimensions that make up the IAPD include a series of basic components for the evaluation of this determining aspect of the quality of life of the group of people with disabilities. Furthermore, this study corroborates that through the development and implementation of appropriate programs, such attitudes can be improved, in line with what was stated by Alcedo et al. (2013).

Even increasing the duration of the programs, since students' attitudes towards disability evolve favorably over time (Suriá et al., 2016).

In Factor III (Support, social distance and knowledge of the disability), an inverted trend was obtained with respect to the rest of the factors, since those students who had no prior contact with the disability believed that there was greater social support for them, disability. This could be due to the fact that they receive information about disability but do not know well the needs of people with disabilities, as

those who had had previous contact could know better, coinciding with Torres et al. (2019). And physical activity or adapted sport is a very powerful tool to guarantee the social inclusion of people with disabilities (Macías and González, 2012).

Regarding enjoyment in participating in physical activities, although modest, the results showed positive data on the part of the students majoring in Physical Education (degree in Primary Education). Despite no relationship and/or statistically significant differences being observed between age and sex with the enjoyment of physical activity, the younger group of men showed higher scores in the variable enjoyment of physical activity. Furthermore, all participants with previous contact with people with disabilities showed greater enjoyment in practicing sports.

These data coincide with other studies where no differences were found in the enjoyment variable (Sánchez-Redondo et al., 2018). These authors stated that although participation in physical activities promotes enjoyment in these activities in children with and without physical disabilities, they did not find significant differences. In this sense, it is encouraging to continue collecting data to guide awareness-raising programs and even physical activities adapted to the age groups and characteristics that need the most contact to improve their attitudes and increase enjoyment in said participation. Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyze the benefits for students with intellectual disabilities of practicing joint physical activity with university students, since a very high level of involvement and satisfaction was observed on the part of all participating students.

This work contributes to enhancing the development and implementation of strategies, with studies focused on attitudes, with the ultimate purpose of favoring and actively promoting non-discrimination of people with

disabilities (Alcedo et al., 2013). Above all, also to identify possible negative attitudes towards people with disabilities, since they act as invisible barriers, preventing the inclusion and participation of said population in educational settings, especially in higher education institutions (Torres et al., 2019).

Although as a limitation of the study, the low sample has been found because these programs have a much lower ratio than that of university students without disabilities per class, and to obtain a representative sample it is conducted for several years to have cohorts. It would be necessary to continue collecting data to have a more representative sample and continue comparing it with the data obtained to date.

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It is also proposed for future lines of research to analyze the benefits in the group with disabilities of this type of programs, since a very high involvement and satisfaction was observed, which is so contrasted in the literature that it leads to greater adherence to physical activity. regulate (Aznar-Ballesta and Vernetta, 2023), and therefore, improve the health of the group of people with disabilities who need it so much (HNS, 2019).

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