

Serious Leisure, Perception of Health and Quality of Life among Students of the city of Imperatriz, Maranhão, Brazil

Kayro Silva¹, Francisco Campos², Ricardo Melo³

¹Coimbra Education School, Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Brazil, kayroairy_ef@hotmail.com

²Applied Sport Sciences Research Unit, Coimbra Education School, Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Portugal, franciscampos@esec.pt

³Applied Sport Sciences Research Unit, Coimbra Education School, Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra; Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, ricardo.es.melo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Sport, physical activity and leisure are important tools for improving health and quality of life. The early beginning of these practices is crucial to prepare children for a healthy and active lifestyle during their adult and elderly ages. Some authors^[1,2] frame some sports and physical activities in the Serious Leisure perspective, which concept includes six distinctive qualities: Benefits, Career, Effort, Ethos, Identity and Perseverance. Despite Serious Leisure qualities were analyzed in different sport activities such as surfing, kayaking, snowboarding and mountain climbing^[2,3], and related with different areas, such as tourism^[4] and education^[5], few studies about their relation with the health area was published until now^[6]. **OBJECTIVE:** The main goal of this work was to understand the relation between the six qualities of the Serious Leisure and the profile and constrains of the practice of sports and physical activities, and perception of health and quality of life. **METHODS:** For this purpose, a survey by questionnaire was applied to a sample of 217 students, aged between 14 and 18 years (40.1% males and 59.9% females), from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade of the "Graça Aranha Teaching Center", in the municipality of Imperatriz, located in the State of Maranhão, Brazil. Data gathered through the questionnaires was subjected to statistical treatment using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS v.22, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). **RESULTS:** The data revealed that: 69.1% of students are currently participating, 27.6% are ex-participants, and 3.2% never participated in sports; most (64.7%) sports participants of our sample are practicing sports frequently (more than three times per week); the main reason that led teens to practice sports or physical activities is to improve their health, and the main constrain for the practice is the lack of time. **CONCLUSIONS:** The results also demonstrated a strong and positive relation between the Serious Leisure qualities and the perception of health and quality of life (the higher the Serious Leisure qualities, the higher the perception of health and quality of life). This study allowed to understanding the relation between Serious Leisure and sports practice and the perception of health and quality of life in a sample of

Brazilian students and the results can help in the development of strategies of sports and physical activities promotion by school directors and public health policy managers in order to improve an active and healthier lifestyle of their citizens.

Keywords: *Health, Quality of Life, Physical Activity, Serious Leisure, Sport*

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