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# Motives of participation in Paraná School Games of students-athlets in Brazil

# Motivos de participación en los Juegos Escolares de Paraná de estudiantes-atletas en Brasil

# Motivos de participação nos Jogos Escolares do Paraná de estudantes-atletas no Brasil

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**ABSTRACT**

Some surveys pointed out that only one part of the children and youths practice sports with some regularity, and that those who start a sports practice, there is a high rate of abandonment. In this sense, experts point out that understanding the reasons that lead to a sport practice can be an important way to understand this phenomenon, especially for the school athlete. Thus, the objective of this study was to identify the reasons for sports practice of school athletes participating in the School Games of Paraná 2016 and the variables, gender, age, and training time. In total, 2014 school athletes participated in the study. The results demonstrate that school athletes gave greatest importance to aspects related to improvement in technical skills, tackling challenges and exposure to risks, learning new skills, and moving to a higher level.
**Keywords:** school athlete, sport and motivation.

**RESUMEN**

Algunos levantamientos han señalado que sólo una parte de la población juvenil practica deporte con cierta regularidad, y entre aquellos que inician la práctica deportiva, existe un elevado índice de casos de abandono. En ese sentido, los expertos apuntan que entender los motivos que llevan a la práctica del deporte puede ser un importante camino para el entendimiento de este fenómeno, principalmente para el atleta escolar. Así, el objetivo de este estudio fue identificar los motivos para la práctica del deporte de atletas escolares participantes en los Juegos Escolares de Paraná - 2016 y las variables, sexo, edad y tiempo de entrenamiento. Participaron del estudio 2014 atletas. Los resultados demuestran que los atletas escolares asignaron mayor importancia a aspectos equivalentes a las razones relacionadas con el perfeccionamiento de las habilidades técnicas, el enfrentamiento de desafíos y exposición de riesgos, aprender nuevas habilidades y seguir hacia un alto nivel.
**Palabras clave:** estudiante atleta, deporte y motivación.

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**RESUMO**

Alguns levantamentos têm apontado que apenas uma parcela da população infantil e juvenil pratica esporte com alguma regularidade, e dentre aqueles que iniciam a prática esportiva, existe um elevado índice de casos de abandono. Nesse sentindo, especialistas apontam que entender os motivos que levam a prática de esporte pode ser um importante caminho para o entendimento deste fenômeno, principalmente para o atleta escolar. Assim, o objetivo desse estudo foi identificar os motivos para a prática de esporte de atletas escolares participantes dos Jogos Escolares do Paraná – 2016 e as variáveis, sexo, idade e tempo de treino. Participaram do estudo 2014 atletas escolares. Os resultados demonstram que os atletas escolares atribuíram maior importância para aspectos equivalentes às razões relacionadas ao aprimoramento das habilidades técnicas, ao enfrentamento de desafios e exposição de riscos, aprender novas habilidades e seguir para um alto nível.

**Palavras chave:** atleta escolar, esporte e motivação**.**

## INTRODUTION

When any Brazilian child or adolescent is asked why they practice sports, it is common to hear: "Because I want to be a rich and famous player"; "Because my parents want me to practice sport"; or "Because I like to play with my friends". Although there are obviously other reasons, taken together these certify that sport is one of the most evident phenomena of modern society. Introduced as an extracurricular aspect, school sport enables motivation of students in the academic context, helping in the acquisition of habits of study, aiming at a healthy lifestyle and a harmonious structure in school and athletic life (Lucas, Pereira and Monteiro, 2012). The term student or school athlete can be characterized by two social attributions linked to the individual themself. According to Da Conceição (2015) these attributions involve two fields: school and sport. Both demand attitudes and behaviors recognized by each of the institutions they represent (schools and clubs). The union of these fields results in the intersection of two scenarios that have a common goal: the possibilities for a promising future, since the development of the young person as a citizen and future professional is directly associated with the support provided by these two scenarios (Crous and Fouke, 2019). In short, the school athlete is primarily involved in a sports training activity, planning possible professionalization or simply the development of their health; while, concomitantly, developing their schooling. In this context, the school plays an important role in the pedagogical project of compensating the school athlete, that is, adequate flexibility. This flexibility makes reference to the adopted practices that facilitate the continuity of the young person in the school (Da Conceição, 2015).

In this perspective, it is highlighted that a contingent of 67.3% of young Brazilians play sports or declare themselves to be practicing physical activity (Disporte, 2015). However, some international surveys have pointed out that only a portion of children and adolescent practice sports with some regularity, and among those who start sports, there is a high drop-out rate (Capranica and Millard-Stafford, 2011; Delorme, Chalabaev and Raspaud, 2011; Jõesaar and Hein, 2011). A very important problem for professionals working with the issue of sports participation in young ages is understanding the reasons children and adolescents participate in sports modalities (Keegan, Spray, Harwood and Lavallee, 2010).

In this sense, experts point out that these reasons could be considered as relevant aspects to start the practice of sports, to explain permanence in the sport, and to reduce the cases of drop-out, since they are determined as the key to controlling human behavior (Delorme, Chalabaev and Raspaud, 2011; Jordalen, Lemyre and Durand-Bush, 2016). As Smith points out (2007), identifying and measuring the size of the reasons for sport practice at young ages can offer the best possible environment for school athletes to enhance their experiences, i.e., a favorable motivational climate. As the main hypothesis of this study is expected that school athletes evaluated value the motivational aspects related to physical fitness due to the benefits of sport practice for the health and well-being, especially in children and adolescents, have been widely described in the scientific literature (Babiss and Gangwisch, 2009; Bechter, Dimmock, Howard, Whipp and Jackson, 2018). Thus, the objective of this study was to identify the reasons for the sports practice

of school athletes in different sports modalities according to: sex, age, and training time.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### *Design*

For the preparation of the present study, a database was used, which was supported by the cross-sectional research project entitled "Physical abilities of young people practicing different sports: relationship between psychosocial dimensions and somatic maturation". This project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Londrina in accordance with the norms of Resolution 196/96 of the National Health Council on research involving human beings opinion no. CEP/UEL 007/2014. In view of the objectives established for the present study, a comparative associative strategy was used with cross-sectional design (Ato, López and Benavente, 2013).

### *Participants*

The reference population for the present study was school athletes who were part of the final phase of the Paraná School Games 2016, phases A (15 to 17 years of age) and B (up to 14 years of age). According to the Sports Department of the State of Paraná, 6000 school athletes participated in this stage of the games. For the selection of the sample, the casual non-probabilistic method was used. Those responsible for the athletes were informed about the nature, objectives, and procedures of the study and signed a Free and Informed Consent Form allowing the school athletes to participate in the research. Through ratification by the free and informed consent term, 2014 school athletes (1050 girls and 964 boys) agreed to participate in the present study.

### *Instruments*

The data related to the reasons for the practice of sports were obtained through the application of the PMQ instrument (Participation Motivation Questionnaire). Originally designed in English (Gill, Gross and Huddleston, 1983), and subsequently validated, translated, and adapted for use in young Brazilian athletes (Guedes and Silvério Netto, 2013a), the PMQ is the most prominent instrument in the area and is composed of 30 questions equivalent to the list of possible reasons that could lead athletes to practice sports, grouped into eight reasons for practicing sports: (a) social recognition; (b) group activity; (c) physical fitness; (d) emotion; (e) competition; (f) technical competence; (g) affiliation; and (h) fun. To complete the questionnaire, the respondent indicates the degree of importance that most applies to their sport practice, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "not important" to 5 = "very important"). The PMQ instrument translated and adapted to the Portuguese language achieved good psychometric performance compared to the sample of the present study, presenting high Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated for the generated motivation factors. The confirmatory factor analysis with Varimax rotation enabled the generation of eight motivating factors that, together, can explain the proportion of variance close to 67%. The factorial solution generated was similar to that originally presented in the study by Gill, Gross and Huddleston (1983) and in most of the published studies using the same experimental design. It is noteworthy that the participants answered a document with general questions, such as: age, sex, sport they practice, training time, date of the assessment, date of birth, name of the school where they study and the city where they live.

### *Procedures*

The instrument was applied individually to each school athlete by a team of researchers at the athlete community center (resting place available for athletes during competition days), in a room with tables and chairs provided by the Paraná Sports Department, in order to avoid situations of pre- or post-competition stress. This place was a different area from the local where the games took place. The researcher submitted the questionnaire to each school athlete providing instructions for completing the questionnaire correctly. Any doubts expressed by the athlete were answered by the researcher responsible for the delivery of the questionnaire, in a way that left were no more doubts about the completion.

### *Statistical Analysis*

Initially the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to verify the normal distribution hypothesis. In addition, the Levene's test was applied to the hypothesis of homogeneity of variances. The differences between the sexes, dimensions, and practice the game

(individual and collective) were obtained by applying the two-way ANOVA test, followed by the multiple comparison test with Bonferroni adjustment. Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet editor was used to extract data from the PMQ instrument and others informations about the participants in this study. Data were analyzed using the statistical package SPSS version 23.0. The results complied with a significance level of $P<0.05$.

## RESULTS

The characteristics of the school athletes with respect to the phase of the competition in which they participated, as well as age (age groups were created for the analyzes; G1, G2 and G3), training time, and practice the game are described in table 1. The final categorization was performed according to practice the game and category, subdivided into collective and individual sports. The individual modalities evaluated were athletics, badminton, cycling, rhythmic gymnastics, judo, Olympic wrestling, swimming, shuttlecock, skateboarding, taekwondo, table tennis, and chess. The collective modalities evaluated were basketball, soccer, futsal, handball, volleyball, and beach volleyball.

Within the individual modalities, a high proportion of athletics (15.2%) was observed, followed by chess (7.5%), judo (2.8%), beach volleyball (2.3%), table tennis 2.2%), and badminton (2.2%), respectively. For the collective modalities, the highest proportion was futsal (18.3%), followed by volleyball (17.8%), handball (16.9%), and basketball (11.3%), respectively. In addition to the values of the variables of the PMQ instrument and age of all participants in this study, which are described as mean and standard deviation, the values of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, asymmetry and kurtosis are described in table 2.

**Table 1**. General characteristics of the school athletes analyzed in the study.

| | | GIRLS (n = 1050) | BOYS (n = 964) | BOTH SEXES (n = 2014) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PHASE** | **A** | 405 (38.6%) | 459 (47.6%) | 864 (42.9%) |
| | **B** | 645 (61.4%) | 505 (52.4%) | 1150 (57.1%) |
| **AGE** | **(G1) 10-12 years** | 170 (16.2%) | 100 (10.4%) | 270 (13.4%) |
| | **(G2) 13-14 years** | 671 (63.9%) | 539 (55.9%) | 1210 (60.1%) |
| | **(G3) 15-17 years** | 209 (19.9%) | 325 (33.7%) | 534 (26.5%) |
| **TIME OF TRAINING** | **≤ 2 years** | 412 (39.2%) | 409 (42.4%) | 821 (40.8%) |
| | **3-4 years** | 327 (31.1%) | 250 (25.9%) | 577 (28.6%) |
| | **5-6 years** | 205 (19.5%) | 148 (15.4%) | 353 (17.5%) |
| | **≥ 7 years** | 106 (10.1%) | 157 (16.3%) | 263 (13.1%) |
| **MODALITIES** | **INDIVIDUAL** | 204 (19.4%) | 250 (25.9%) | 454 (22.5%) |
| | **COLLECTIVE** | 846 (80.6%) | 714 (74.1%) | 1560 (77.5%) |

Information regarding the reasons for sports practice of the school athletes is described in figure 1. Greatest importance was placed on the Technical Competence dimension (4.40 ± 0.70), followed by the Competition dimension (4.26 ± 0.88). The Physical Fitness dimension was next in the sequence of reasons for the practice of sports, to which the school athletes assigned a great degree of importance (4.05 ± 0.92). For the presentation of the next results it is important to emphasize the categorization performed from the

age group of the participants of this study. Figure 2A shows the reasons for the sports practice of school results of school athletes between 13-14 years of age and, finally, figure 2C presents the data of school athletes between 15-17 years of age. The only significant difference found in figure 2A was in athletes between 10-12 years of age and their comparisons. In the same way, figure 2B identifies the relation to the Physical Fitness dimension in both sexes when comparing the individual and collective modalities.

| Variables | M | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | Kolmogorov-Smirnov – *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 14,24 | 1,58 | 0,15 | -0,88 | 0,161 |
| **Social Recognition** | 3,54 | 0,94 | -0,37 | -0,69 | 0,077 |
| **Group Work** | 4,03 | 0,89 | -0,94 | 0,28 | 0,142 |
| **Physical Fitness** | 4,05 | 0,92 | -1,18 | 0,97 | 0,152 |
| **Emotion** | 3,61 | 0,96 | -0,47 | -0,45 | 0,112 |
| **Competition** | 4,26 | 0,88 | -1,27 | 1,27 | 0,227 |
| **Technical Competence** | 4,40 | 0,70 | -1,46 | 2,30 | 0,206 |
| **Affiliation** | 3,84 | 0,95 | -0,60 | -0,35 | 0,132 |
| **Fun** | 3,65 | 0,93 | -0,50 | -0,42 | 0,102 |

**Table 2.** Results of Kolmogorov-Ismirnov test, skewness, kurtosis, mean and standard deviation of the study variables (n=2014)

The younger school athletes, who participated in the individual modalities, attributed a lower degree of importance (3.37 ± 1.35) to the question of maintaining fitness or being in good physical condition. The Social Relationship dimension showed a significant difference for boys compared to girls (Chart 2B), since they ascribed a higher degree of importance (3.69 ± 0.91). In addition, the dimensions Group Activity (4.11 ± 0.83), Technical Competence (4.47 ± 0.62), and Affiliation (3.95 ± 0.90) presented a significant difference for boys when compared to girls. The data on the comparison between the individual and collective modalities were significantly smaller for the boys practicing individual modalities (figure 2B) for the dimensions Social Recognition (3.40 ± 1.01), Group Activity (3.71 ± 0.99), and Fun (3.46 ± 0.91). Still in this outcome, however, for the most experienced school athletes (figure 2C), significantly smaller data were found for boys in the Group Activity dimension (3.69 ± 1.02). With reference to girls in this comparison, Physical Fitness (4.02 ± 1.05) and Emotion (3.57 ± 0.91) presented significantly lower values. Another significant difference between the sexes was identified in the Social Recognition dimension (3.69 ± 0.91), where the boys attributed more importance than the girls to this dimension (Figure 2B). For the dimensions Technical Competence (4.36 ± 0.73) and Affiliation (3.76 ± 0.98), the girls participating in collective modalities declared less significant importance when compared to boys (Figure 2B).

Girls who participated in collective modalities had a significantly higher result than boys of the same category (Figure 2C), especially for Group Activity (4.16 ± 0.82), Emotion (3.96 ± 0.84), and Fun (3.78 ± 0.88). Even girls who participated in individual modalities had higher scores than boys in the same category (Figure 2C) for the Group Activity dimension (3.88 ± 1.03).

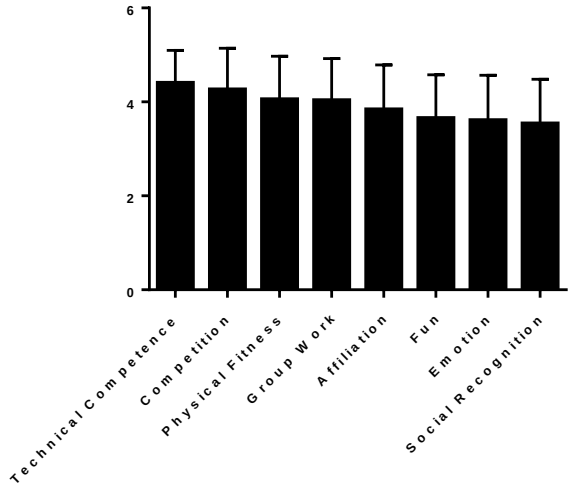


**Figure 1**. Reasons for sports practice of the school athletes (n = 2014).

The final analysis of the results is unique up to the present moment in research related to reasons for sports practice and, specifically for this instrument. To complete the questionnaire, the respondent indicates the degree of importance that most applies to their sport practice, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "not important" to 5 = "very important"). Therefore, the frequency of responses greater than or equal to 4 on the five-point Likert scale was analyzed according to divisions between boys and girls, individual and collective sports, 10-12 years, 13-14 years, and 15-17 years of age (table 2). Thus, the highest percentage of most positive responses was for Technical Competency for boys between 10-12 years of age (81.8%) and female athletes of collective sports between 15-17 years of age (79.9%).

## DISCUSSION

Firstly, it is important to note that none of the studies analyzed and used for the discussion of this work mentions the term student or school athlete, that is, a large part of the research performed for the purpose of establishing the reasons for sports practice is carried out with young people already included in the systematized practice of training. In Brazil, in spite of the limited literature on this theme, the young person who is distinctive in the sport begins their sports career in school, in school games or championships.

When analyzing the results of the present study with school athletes, it is notable that the reasons for the practice of sport in school athletes, in general, are similar to some other studies, as they also obtained results that the dimensions Competition and/or Technical Competence are the most important for the practice of sports (Guedes and Silverio Netto, 2013b; Zambrin, 2015; Kopcakova et al., 2015). According to Guedes and Silverio Netto (2013b) this finding should not be seen as unusual, since it is totally understandable that this population has a preference for reasons that are associated with success in the sporting context. This intensified search for success in sports can give meaning to the lives of children and adolescents both as students and as athletes, as there is a significant index of school athletes who become socially known for their potential in sports and attracting interest from tallent scouts in the sports field. Thus, it is possible that many school athletes will ascend economically via competitive sport.

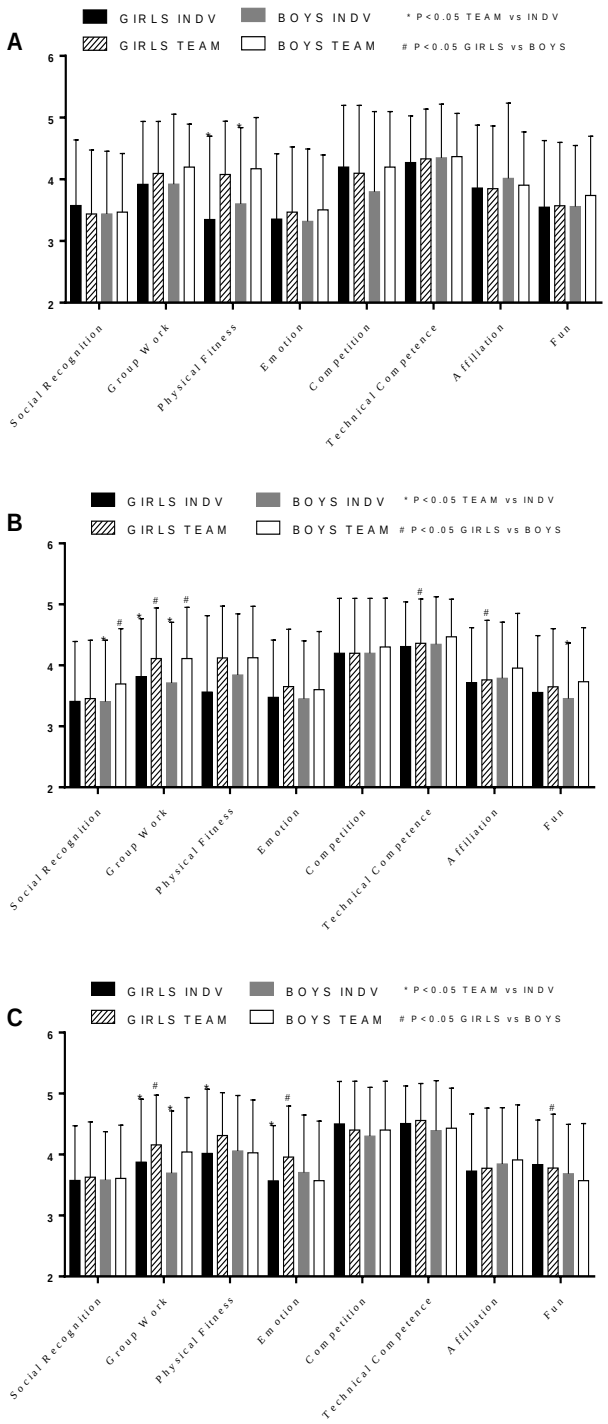


**Figure 2.** Sport participation motives of the school athletes

aged 10-12 years (2A), 13-14 years (2B), 15-17 years (2C).

| | | 10-12 years | | 13-14 years | | 15-17 years | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | IND | TEAM | IND | TEAM | IND | TEAM |
| **Social Recognition** | **GIRLS** | 39.4% | 33.6% | 30.6% | 29.3% | 32.0% | 36.5% |
| | **BOYS** | 27.3% | 32.1% | 30.6% | 39.7% | 31.6% | 34.6% |
| **Group Work** | **GIRLS** | 54.5% | 57.7% | 40.5% | 57.6% | 46.0% | 60.4% |
| | **BOYS** | 63.6% | 52.6% | 43.2% | 55.8% | 38.5% | 53.4% |
| **Physical Fitness** | **GIRLS** | 36.4% | 54.0% | 42.1% | 60.4% | 60.0% | 62.9% |
| | **BOYS** | 45.5% | 61.5% | 45.9% | 58.4% | 55.6% | 55.3% |
| **Emotion** | **GIRLS** | 27.3% | 32.1% | 24.8% | 32.0% | 26.0% | 48.4% |
| | **BOYS** | 22.7% | 25.6% | 25.2% | 31.5% | 36.8% | 30.3% |
| **Competition** | **GIRLS** | 57.6% | 57.7% | 59.5% | 57.5% | 70.0% | 66.7% |
| | **BOYS** | 45.5% | 55.1% | 54.1% | 60.5% | 62.4% | 64.9% |
| **Technical Competence** | **GIRLS** | 66.7% | 67.9% | 60.3% | 70.2% | 76.0% | 79.9% |
| | **BOYS** | 81.8% | 70.5% | 69.4% | 72.0% | 76.9% | 73.1% |
| **Affiliation** | **GIRLS** | 42.4% | 47.4% | 37.2% | 39.6% | 34.0% | 43.4% |
| | **BOYS** | 59.1% | 44.9% | 42.3% | 47.0% | 41.0% | 47.1% |
| **Fun** | **GIRLS** | 39.4% | 34.3% | 33.1% | 34.9% | 36.0% | 44.0% |
| | **BOYS** | 31.8% | 39.7% | 23.4% | 36.7% | 30.8% | 31.3% |

**Table 3**. Frequency of responses greater than or equal to 4 on the five-point Likert-type scale between boys and girls, individual and collective sports, 10-12 years, 13-14 years, and 15-17 years of age.

For the school athletes themselves and their caregivers, this outcome has a relationship directly proportional to the school sports system (Simões, 2009).

Likewise, Kopcakova et al. (2015) demonstrate that aspects related to perception of success, to win, to be good in a sports modality, or only gain approval of parents, are important motivating factors for adolescents to join sports practice. Since the study associates the reasons for the practice of sports and physical activity, the authors believe that from the aforementioned motivating factors it is possible to direct intervention projects aiming at a large scale increase in the level of physical activity of adolescents. In addition, as it also disregards the result of the most important reasons for the practice of sports being related to the search for improvement and maintenance of technical skills, Zambrin (2015) emphasizes attention on the dimensions that were pointed out with lesser value of importance in his study: Affiliation and Emotion. There are hypotheses that these dimensions associated with intrinsic motivation could be responsible for the decision to practice a sport modality (Rodríguez-Martínez and Guillén, 2017). For example, one of the reasons that may explain the result of the present study is the posible ambition of school athletes to become professional athletes in the future, allowing the systematized practice of training to be an important opportunity for students seeking social and financial ascension. This fact may change the school environment related to intrinsic (learning-oriented) motivation into an environment linked to a view that the sole purpose of sport is elevation of the social status of the victors and the search for social recognition and prizes (extrinsic rewards).

Some authors argue that the intrinsic motivation for the practice of sports is strongly associated with issues related to quality of life and health, confirming a relevant factor for the accomplishment of activities (Paim and Pereira, 2004; Willians, 2013; Rodríguez-Martínez and Guillén, 2017). Moreover, they affirm that the dissemination of the practice of sport as a health promoting agent, optimizing the quality of life, contributes to greater appreciation of the Physical Fitness dimension. According to Paim and Pereira (2004), young people usually care about health and seek a healthy lifestyle to acquire or maintain health

and strength and develop better physical conditioning, as well as being concerned about the aesthetic issue.

In relation to the comparison of the reasons for the practice of sport among girls and boys, a contradictory result was identified regarding the scientific literature. In the present study, the boys valued the Social Relationship dimension more than the girls, a result antagonistic to other research (Balbinotti et al., 2012; Dawes, Vest and Simpkins, 2014). That is, for this result to be possible there is a paradigm shift in the reasons for the practice of sport between girls and boys, even if this tendency is analyzed empirically.

Another counterpoint observed in this study compared to the literature was the number of girls and boys participating in sports competitions, as the number of girls participating in this study, and consequently sporting competitions (n = 1050) was higher than the number of boys (n = 964). According to Dawes, Vest, and Simpkins (2014) boys are more likely to have more consistent motivational factors than girls. However, the authors point out that the existing theories provide divergent perspectives on the possibility of variation in the reasons for sports practice based on the participants' sex.

The comparison between the reasons for the practice of sports and the age range of the school athletes presents the Emotion dimension as more valued when it was compared between the phases of the competition. That is, significant differences were found in school-aged athletes. These results contradict the outcomes of other studies (Zambrin, 2015; Erdogdu et al., 2014). According to Martínez et al. (2008), younger age athletes value, to a considerably greater degree, the reasons for the practice of sports related to fun, recreation, and playfulness, and later these reasons will give rise to factors related to competition and acquisition of technical skills. This finding may be a result of the impact of socialization by age group, as, normally, these children and adolescents are situated in the period of maturity making up the final stage of basic education: high school. It is probable that this impact of socialization is manifested in the reasons for the practice of sport for girls and boys.

Still in relation to age, the literature highlights this factor as being inversely proportional to the level of physical activity, i.e., the level of physical activity tends to decrease with increasing age, especially in the period of adolescence (Kann et al., 2016; Riddoch, 2004). Although the Competition and Technical Competence dimensions, in general, were the most valued in this study, the fact that school athletes start practicing sports for different reasons and remain in the habit of this practice when older is justified by participation in training and competitions that are organized and systematized (Wagnsson, Lindwall and Gustafsson, 2014). According to Kwon et al. (2015), these types of practice are considered more effective for maintaining and even increasing levels of physical activity. That is, regardless of the more valued reasons for the practice of sports by the school athlete, participation in training and competitions makes it possible to raise the level of physical activity of the athlete and consequently improve aspects related to health.

In order to have more theoretical support for the question of the way in which the type of sport can be an important motivator for practice, it is possible to base this vision on a cultural approach. Since high-level athletes from some countries are considered as a reference for the children of these countries, the young people can mirror the attitudes of these high-end athletes, starting with the practice of the same sporting modality as the reference athlete. Considering the relationship between training time and the phases of the competition, it was possible to contrast some data on the reasons for the practice of sports and age group. According to Erdogdu et al. (2014), athletes included in younger age groups tend to show more interest in the recreational aspects of the sport, valuing playfulness, and this behavior tends to decrease in school athletes of more advanced ages.

However, this behavior was not reproduced in the present study, since the school athletes located in the group with more than two years of training identified to a greater intensity with social motives and teamwork, team spirit. This finding points to the recognition of the importance of group coexistence by school athletes with more advanced age, as well as identification with their peers and an emphasis on personal relationships in the group in which they are included. The specialized literature on this subject, identified through the databases selected for review studies (Bernardes, Yamaji and Guedes, 2015; Bento et al., 2017), confirms the importance of production in

this area, evidencing an increase in scientific production. Although the majority of the identified studies present terms such as young athlete or athlete of a young age, scientific productions that address issues related to student/school athletes are scarce (Côté, Baker and Abernethy, 2007).

## CONCLUSIONS

This information on school and sport is considered significant as this study is one of the few that involves issues of psychology and sport in a population with a specific terminology: the school athlete. In addition, there is the possibility of social attributions linked to the two fields associated with this population, sport and school, being strong influencers of the reasons for the practice of physical activity. Although the current study presents a different object of study, reasons for the practice of sport by school athletes, it is worth noting the existence of some limitations that must be considered when analyzing the results.

Even though the number of school athletes evaluated is considerably higher than the majority of studies (Bento et al., 2017), generalization of the results is still limited, impeding the representativeness of the results to other school athletes, from other states or countries. In addition, the fact that the instrument used is considered self-report, means the possibility of the reasons for practicing sport being overestimated or underestimated should be taken into account.

## PRATICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The results demonstrate that the evaluated school athletes participating in the School Games in Paraná - 2016, assigned greater importance to aspects related to improvement in technical skills, coping with challenges and exposure to risks, learning new skills, and moving to a higher level. The hypothesis, supported by the present study, for this outcome is the bottleneck that exists in school competitions, where only the best athletes advance to the next stages, and finally, only the best school athletes will reach a national level.

It should be noted that, in Brazil, the number of studies with this specific sample, school athletes, is very limited, added to which, when there are particularities, such as how to identify the reasons for the sports practice of this population, the number of studies at the national level is even scarcer. The strong point of this study is precisely this particularity, since this theme has implications for social importance, where the scientific knowledge produced will contribute to knowledge of the most relevant aspects for the adoption of physical activity and sport practices.

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