

# DISCONTINUING SPORT PARTICIPATION AND LIFESTYLE AMONG THE YOUNG POPULATION OF FAIAL (AZORES ISLANDS)

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This study analyzes sport drop out and compare the lifestyle of young athletes with their non-athlete and former athlete peers. Based on the number of registered students, a personal identification questionnaire was handed out to every student (N=1030) in order to determine the sport participation rate. Participants were all the individuals who were, at least during a whole sport season, enrolled in an institution (boys=276, girls=131). A subset of former athletes (87 boys, 89 girls) was asked to rate importance of reasons for discontinuing their involvement. In addition, a lifestyle questionnaire was used on 218 adolescents. About 29% of boys have dropped out whereas 48% of girls were no longer athletes. For both sexes, items for explaining sport drop out are related to time management. Data also show that former athletes do not study more than present athletes and spend approximately the same amount of time watching television and playing video games.

YOUTH SPORTS, DROP OUT, LIFESTYLE.

## INTRODUCTION

The policies to increase sport participation tend to be oriented towards recruiting new participants, disregarding the factors that account for the annual losses of subjects that have experienced organized sports. For any federation or club, the study of sport drop out should constitute a strategic issue since the maintenance of the participants represents not only as a sport level indicator, which is fundamental for obtaining government funding, but also as an indicator of satisfaction with sport activity (Torres, 1997).

Katzmarzyk and Malina (1998) studied the contribution of organized sports in daily energy expenditure among 12 to 14-year-old adolescents. Male adolescents spent 20.4% of their daily expenditure in sport activities whereas female adolescents spent 16.3%. The percentages of sport participation in moderate-to-vigorous activities were 55% and 66%, respectively for the males and females. These data emphasize the importance of organized sports as an instrument to combat sedentariness.

This study analyzes sport drop out in the Azores. It will increase the knowledge regarding social development, complementing prior projects focused on growth status and physical fitness of the school population (Sobral, 1989; Sobral & Coelho e Silva, 2001).

Located right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Azores consists of nine volcanic islands divided into three groups: the western (Flores and Corvo), the central (Terceira, S. Jorge, Graciosa, Pico and Faial) and the eastern (S. Miguel and Santa Maria). On the whole, the archipelago extends over a total area of 2333 Km<sup>2</sup> and the population stands at 243.895 inhabitants. The Atlantic climate is characterized by a small variation of the average temperatures between 14° and 22° and by strong precipitation throughout the year.

The purpose of this article is to: describe the popularity of sports; determine sport drop out prevalence; identify the reasons for sport drop out and compare the lifestyle of young athletes with their non-athlete and former athlete peers.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research project was presented to the executive boards of the elementary schools. Based on the number of registered students and counting on the collaboration of the Physical Educators, a personal identification questionnaire was handed out to every student. This instrument allowed us to determine the sport participation rate and activities according to sex. Participants were all the individuals who were, at least during a whole sport season, enrolled

in an institution (sport club or school sport group) that provided them a technical supervision and participation in competitive settings.

**Table 1.** Frequencies of non-athletes, former athletes and athletes by sex.

	Males (n=492)	Females (n=544)
Non-athletes	103 (21%)	294 (54%)
Former athletes	113 (23%)	120 (22%)
Athletes	276 (56%)	131 (24%)

Later on, former athletes were asked to rate importance of reasons for discontinuing their involvement based on the “Sport Drop Out Inventory” (Gould et al., 1981 – Portuguese version adapted by Matos e Cruz, 1997). The questionnaire had a 73% and 74% feedback, respectively for males and females. That is, 87 boys and 89 girls returned the questionnaire fully answered.

In addition and in order to study lifestyle according to sex and sport participation status, the lifestyle questionnaire proposed by Sobral (1992) was used on 218 adolescents – see Table 2

**Table 2.** Respondents to the lifestyle questionnaire.

	Males	Females	Total
Non-athletes	35	39	74
Former athletes	37	34	71
Athletes	38	35	73

## RESULTS

### ***Social stimuli for sports and physical activities***

The material stimuli for sports and physical activities show a gender related variation. Among males, the items with a percentage above 50% are: the bicycle (86%), the soccer ball (84%), the fishing-rod (62%) and the ball to play basketball (57%). Among female adolescents, the bicycle (75%) and the skipping rope (67%) top the list of material incentives. The balls to play soccer, basketball and rugby register lower percentage values among girls.

**Table 3.** Material play stimulus by gender

	Rapazes (n=110)	Raparigas (n=108)	P
Bicycle	86%	75%	n.s.
Motorbike	32%	11%	*
Roller skate	36%	43%	n.s.
Skate board	49%	19%	**
Ball to play soccer	84%	38%	**
Ball to play basketball	57%	43%	n.s.
Ball to play volleyball	34%	44%	n.s.
Ball to play rugby	06%	01%	n.s.
Racket to play tennis	33%	22%	n.s.
Racket to play badminton	15%	13%	n.s.
Racket to play table tennis	46%	11%	**
Baseball equipment	09%	00%	n.s.
Fishing-rod	62%	32%	**
Surf board	09%	06%	n.s.
Windsurf board	09%	06%	n.s.
Skipping rope	17%	67%	**
Roller sledge	12%	00%	n.s.

n.s. (not significant), \* ( $p \leq .05$ ), \*\* ( $p \leq .01$ )

For the most scored items as well as for the items showing differences between males and females, data are similar to the statistics of Coimbra's district (Coelho e Silva *et al.*, 2003). However, comparatively to the study carried out in the Midlands, there is a higher tendency, among the Azorian young population, for owning a fishing-rod, windsurf board, surfboard and bodyboard.

### ***Sport participation***

In both sexes the choice over team sports prevails. Among boys, the popularity is led by soccer while basketball is the sport that most girls choose.

**Table 4.** Participation rates in different sports among boys and girls.

Masculinos		Femininos	
Futebol	57%	Basquetebol	33%
Andebol	12%	Voleibol	30%
Basquetebol	09%	Andebol	10%
Voleibol	06%	Atletismo	10%
Vela	05%	Futebol	04%
Ténis	03%	Vela	02%
Karaté	02%	Ténis	02%
Atletismo	02%	Ginástica	02%
Canoagem	02%	Outras	07%
Outras	02%		

**Sport drop out: comparison between the reasons indicated by boys and girls**

The comparison between male and female adolescents suggests the existence of but a few differences between these two groups as far as the motives for explaining sport drop out are concerned. Male respondents are less satisfied with the importance given to winning ( $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, and comparatively to girls, male athletes' decision to continue practicing seems to be more influenced by the beginning of amorous activities and by the activity's financial costs (items 36 and 37 of Table 5). Finally, the "studies came first" item is more referred to by girls.

**Table 5.** Comparison between males and females in the reasons for discontinuing sport participation.

Item	Male (N=87)	Female (N=89)	p
1. Did not have enough time	2.78 ± 1.41	2.70 ± 1.46	n.s.
2. Too much emphasis on winning	2.03 ± 1.20	1.66 ± 1.09	*
3. Not enough fun	2.07 ± 1.45	2.20 ± 1.31	n.s.
4. Did not like to compete	1.99 ± 1.14	1.74 ± 1.05	n.s.
5. Had other things to do	2.51 ± 1.16	2.58 ± 1.30	n.s.
6. Not as good as wanted to be	1.87 ± 1.15	1.96 ± 1.03	n.s.
7. My skills did not improve	1.99 ± 1.24	1.98 ± 1.14	n.s.
8. Did not like the pressure	1.94 ± 1.12	2.11 ± 1.19	n.s.
9. Not enough challenge	1.93 ± 1.23	2.16 ± 1.17	n.s.
10. Wanted to play another sport	1.87 ± 1.17	1.97 ± 1.36	n.s.
11. Did not like being on the team	2.00 ± 1.28	2.06 ± 1.41	n.s.
12. Did not participate (compete) enough	1.85 ± 1.11	1.93 ± 1.16	n.s.
13. The trainings were too time-consuming	2.28 ± 1.22	2.27 ± 1.41	n.s.
14. Did not win enough	1.86 ± 1.16	1.80 ± 1.13	n.s.
15. Did not get enough recognition	2.06 ± 1.23	2.09 ± 1.24	n.s.
16. I was injured	1.86 ± 1.30	1.67 ± 1.10	n.s.
17. Did not like the coach's methods	1.97 ± 1.26	2.22 ± 1.25	n.s.
18. Did not receive enough rewards	2.24 ± 1.36	2.10 ± 1.23	n.s.
19. Did not like the coach	1.95 ± 1.35	1.91 ± 1.26	n.s.
20. Studies came first	3.00 ± 1.18	3.61 ± 1.09	**
21. Had poor academic performances	2.07 ± 1.25	1.80 ± 1.26	n.s.
22. Family stopped supporting my participation	1.89 ± 1.20	1.80 ± 1.24	n.s.
23. The trainings was too hard	1.74 ± 1.02	1.61 ± 0.91	n.s.
24. Friends no longer participate	1.78 ± 1.14	1.94 ± 1.27	n.s.
25. Not able to be with my friends	1.89 ± 1.20	1.93 ± 1.26	n.s.
26. Parents no longer wanted me to participate	1.84 ± 1.37	1.80 ± 1.28	n.s.
27. Was not popular	1.90 ± 1.10	1.81 ± 0.99	n.s.
28. Did not learn new skills	1.85 ± 1.18	1.91 ± 1.09	n.s.
29. It was too serious and competitive	1.75 ± 1.04	1.98 ± 1.19	n.s.
30. Did not receive coach's attention	1.95 ± 1.30	1.78 ± 1.16	n.s.
31. Did not meet new friends	1.63 ± 1.09	1.81 ± 1.49	n.s.
32. It was boring	1.87 ± 1.19	1.84 ± 0.90	n.s.
33. I got ot interested in other things	2.32 ± 1.27	2.25 ± 1.40	n.s.
34. Did not have my favorite sport	2.17 ± 1.42	1.94 ± 1.36	n.s.
35. Coach too bossy	1.77 ± 1.11	1.83 ± 1.17	n.s.
36. Started dating	1.86 ± 1.27	1.30 ± 0.84	*
37. I spent too much money for participating	1.85 ± 0.92	1.29 ± 0.95	**

n.s. (not significant), \* ( $p \leq .05$ ), \*\* ( $p \leq .01$ )

### **Activities inside the house**

If we add the first two categories shown in Tables 6 and 7 – “watch television” and “video games, computer and internet” – we can conclude that leisure activities vary between a minimum value of 11.3 hours/week for girls that have never participated in any sport activity and a maximum value of 15.5 hours/week in the case of boys without any sport experience.

Sport participants, whether male or female, constitute the group that spends more time with friends. This conclusion is consistent with several studies that have identified the reasons that lead adolescents to participate in sport activities (Gill *et al.*, 1983; Gould *et al.*, 1985; Coelho e Silva *et al.*, 2003).

**Table 6.** Time spent (hours per week) in indoor activities among males.

	Never practiced (n=35)	Former athletes (n=37)	Athletes (n=38)	p
Watch television	8.6	7.8	8.2	n.s.
Play video games, computer, internet	6.9	6.4	6.4	n.s.
Read	2.1	2.0	2.3	n.s.
Spend time with friends	5.9	10.2	10.5	**
Other hobbies	3.3	5.2	3.4	n.s.
Help parents in household tasks	2.9	4.3	4.3	n.s.
Help parents with their jobs	1.4	3.6	2.5	n.s.
Study	5.6	4.3	4.2	n.s.

n.s. (not significant), \* ( $p \leq .05$ ), \*\* ( $p \leq .01$ )

The fact that boys and girls who have dropped out from sport do not spend more time studying comparatively to their athlete peers should also be emphasized. In the case of girls, those who do not have any sport participation experience tend to be more active in helping their parents in household tasks.

**Table 7.** Time spent (hours per week) in indoor activities among females.

	Never practiced (n=39)	Former athletes (n=34)	Athletes (n=35)	p
Watch television	7.9	9.0	8.7	n.s.
Play video games, computer, internet	3.5	3.1	4.1	n.s.
Read	3.9	2.9	3.6	n.s.
Spend time with friends	5.3	6.6	10.5	**
Other hobbies	3.5	3.0	5.1	n.s.
Help parents in household tasks	7.2	6.0	5.1	n.s.
Help parents with their jobs	1.1	1.8	1.1	n.s.
Study	6.5	5.9	6.9	n.s.

n.s. (not significant), \* ( $p \leq .05$ ), \*\* ( $p \leq .01$ )

### **Activities outside the house**

**Table 8.** Time spent (hours per week) in outdoor activities among males.

	Never practiced (n=35)	Former athletes (n=37)	Athletes (n=38)	p
Go to the cinema, the theatre	1.1	1.1	1.5	n.s.
Watch sport events	1.9	3.1	3.8	*
Go to the coffee-shop	2.1	2.9	3.1	n.s.
Go to dances/clubs	2.0	1.9	3.4	n.s.
Spend time with friends	8.2	9.1	10.4	n.s.
Street games	3.4	4.6	4.1	n.s.
Go to the sport club/collectivity	0.8	1.1	4.5	**
Stroll around without any particular purpose	1.5	2.6	2.2	n.s.
Farm work	1.1	2.6	2.3	n.s.
Tutoring classes, language schools	1.0	1.2	1.1	n.s.
Rehearsals: music, folklore	0.9	0.9	0.7	n.s.
Scouts	0.4	1.6	0.1	n.s.

n.s. (not significant), \* ( $p \leq .05$ ), \*\* ( $p \leq .01$ )

Tables 8 and 9 suggest that adolescents with sport participation experience tend to watch sport events more frequently. For both sexes, respondents who have never participated in any sport activity spend less time with their peers.

**Table 9.** Time spent (hours per week) in outdoor activities among females.

	Never practiced (n=39)	Former athletes (n=34)	Athletes (n=35)	p
Go to the cinema, the theatre	1.1	1.1	1.2	n.s.
Watch sport events	1.6	2.9	3.5	**
Go to the coffee-shop	1.9	3.2	2.2	n.s.
Go to dances/clubs	2.5	2.9	3.4	n.s.
Spend time with friends	6.0	8.8	10.7	*
Street games	2.5	2.4	2.9	n.s.
Go to the sport club/collectivity	0.3	0.4	3.4	**
Stroll around without any particular purpose	2.4	2.9	2.4	n.s.
Farm work	0.3	0.2	0.2	n.s.
Tutoring classes, language schools	0.8	2.1	1.5	n.s.
Rehearsals: music, folklore	1.1	0.9	0.9	n.s.
Scouts	0.4	1.1	1.3	n.s.

n.s. (not significant), \* ( $p \leq .05$ ), \*\* ( $p \leq .01$ )

## CONCLUSIONS

Bearing sampling as well as instrumental limitations into consideration, the present study may be summarized in a set of conclusions and interpretations as follows:

- The sport club is the main agency of social participation for boys as well as for girls, with the category “sport affiliation” being higher among male adolescents (68%) than among female adolescents (58%);
- Male respondents tend to have more material stimuli for sports and physical activities at their disposal. That is, boys seem to be exposed to a greater social influence in terms of sport participation;
- Data regarding the sport participation situation confirm the male/female contrast as a trait that stubbornly persists in the Portuguese society. Around 54% of the girls have never participated in any sport, against only 21% of the male adolescents who also never did. Given its known formative value, it would be advantageous if a greater number of adolescents were not deprived of experiencing sport participation;
- Adolescents without any sport participation experience spend less time in sport collectivities and watch less sport events;
- Girls who have never participated in any sport are more involved in helping their parents in household tasks;
- Sport participation deficit in individual games such as gymnastics, swimming and athletics may derive from the high level of technical supervision required for these activities;
- Of the 389 boys that stated having participated in a sport activity, 29% have dropped out whereas 48% of the 251 girls who have experienced organized sport participation were no longer athletes by the time this inquiry was carried out;
- For both sexes and in the same order, the highest scored items for explaining sport drop out are related to time management: “studies came first”, “Did not have enough time”, “Had other things to do”;
- Apparently there aren’t substantial differences between reasons for dropping out from individual as well as from team sports;
- Comparatively to adolescents without any sport experience, former athletes and present athletes spend a considerably greater amount of time with their peers. That is, the active involvement in sport participation may be an element generating social competences;
- Although sport drop out is explained by reasons related to time management, data show that former athletes do not study more than present athletes and spend approximately the same amount of time watching television and playing video games, around 14 to 12 hours/week, respectively for boys and girls.

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