

**31**

TERCERA ÉPOCA  
ENERO-JUNIO 2018

# IPS

# Pedagogía Social

REVISTA INTERUNIVERSITARIA

MONOGRAPH

Education and leisure  
of vulnerable youth



# PEDAGOGÍA SOCIAL

REVISTA INTERUNIVERSITARIA

TERCERA ÉPOCA  
(ENERO-JULIO 2018)



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http://sips-es.blogspot.com  
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Redacción, dirección de intercambios y sección correspondencia:  
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Maquetación: INTERGRAF  
ISSN: 1139-1723.  
Depósito legal: V-4110-1998.  
DOI: 10.7179/PSRI

Periodicidad: Semestral.  
Fecha de inicio publicación: 1986  
Tasa de rechazo: 53%

La dirección de la revista no se responsabiliza de las opiniones vertidas por cada autor en su texto.

La versión traducida de cada uno de los artículos es responsabilidad de la revista.

#### **PEDAGOGIA SOCIAL. REVISTA INTERUNIVERSITARIA ESTÁ INDEXADA EN:**

##### **BASES DE DATOS NACIONALES:**

ISOC del Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), PSICODOC, DIALNET, REDINED (Red de Bases de Datos de Información Educativa), BEG (GENCAT).

##### **BASES DE DATOS Y DIRECTORIOS INTERNACIONALES:**

BANCO DE DATOS SOBRE ED. IBEROAMERICANA, IRESIE Índice de Revistas de Educación Superior e Investigación Educativa (México), ULRICH'S Periodicals Directory, Redalyc, Academic OneFile, Informe de Revistas en Español, InfoTrac Custom (Cengage Gale), DOAJ.

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Emerging Sources Citation Index (Thomson Reuters)  
Recyt (Repositorio Español de Ciencia y Tecnología - Fecyt)  
IN-RECS  
Latindex  
RESH,  
DICE (Difusión y Calidad Editorial de las Revistas Españolas de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas)  
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Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria  
Nº 31. Enero / January / Janeiro - Junio / June / Junho 2018

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SIPS - PEDAGOGÍA SOCIAL. REVISTA INTERUNIVERSITARIA [(2018) 31, 7-9] TERCERA ÉPOCA

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## PUBLISHING

### SOCIAL EDUCATION, OR THE RIGHT TO A COMMON GOOD BEYOND SCHOOLS

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In an intriguing although unequal contribution that a wide number of authors make to the political dimension of human rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (VVAA, 2015), they have been displayed as a battlefield where they have found unlike discourses and practices, often irreconcilable. So much so, they admit, that the most traditional approach to human rights, involving inviolable attributes adhered to people once and forever without exception, ceased to exist. Or at least, they exist in the way agreed seventy years ago, back in 1948 –due to the urgency caused by horror, devastation and misery that the Second World War led to–: in a *common ideal*, recognizing the intrinsic dignity of people and nations, anchoring freedom, justice, peace, tolerance... as inherent principles to human family.

The realities in the world today, which spread from sociopolitical and economic positionings of the powers that be to unfair and inexcusable poverty, exclusion, abuse and violence conditions in which billions of people live, grow away, more than ever, from the hopes that encouraged the drafting of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as well as from the explicit willingness to find a balance between formal and material dimensions. Accepting that maybe there would be no need for these rights “to be protected, reclaimed, achieved and ratified by a multitude of conventions and social practices” (De la Rosa, 2015: 19), we keep on feeling compelled to embrace the impossible... building new scenarios of opportunities, reflection and critical action, of proposals and accomplishments leading the yearning for a

fuller life, individually and collectively, to everyday situations.

We affirmed that years ago when we considered the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as the only plausible explanation, despite the questionings provoked by its ambition to fulfill every need, for any change of course with transforming aspirations, freeing mankind from the multiple bonds which have imprisoned them for decades. A liberation that the expansion of markets and its insatiable stock values arrogate to themselves, as if production and consumption –evident bastions of liberalism and its neo manifestations– could incarnate all the ethical, civic and cultural values that are required in local / global cohabitation, peaceful, harmonious, among humans and in relation to biodiversity on Earth.

We are talking about a huge and challenging task, in which education and culture are called to play a crucial role: the role to be assumed by every person and community in order to build a civilizing mapping alternative to our mindsets, *modus operandi* and ways forward, mainly inherited since the industrial revolution. That is to say, to establish a way to exist and coexist in a planet that is out of control, holding cities which are continuously growing while its inhabitants are more and more immerse in its risks and uncertainties.

As is well known, the article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* expresses – unequivocally, it might be said– that each person has the right to free and compulsory education, which can provide decisive results to the total development

of human and social personalities, understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and ethnic and religious groups.

However, this education, considered into the framework of schools, rather than likened to schooling and school system –the so-called educational system–, is reduced to the formal context (official, regulated, academic, systematic, etc.); education is reduced to elementary education, pedagogical culture to teaching culture, knowledge and teaching and learning to the curriculum vitae, to the specific subjects of a syllabus and its effective communication, childhood to students, life to a single phase...

It is even when, with the best of intentions, education proclaims the needs to radically reconsider itself in order to face the complex social and environmental problems of our world (García, 2015), through new concepts and educational, academic, organizational, curricular methodologies. Picturing “another possible education”, we reduce its options to teach “students to face uncertainty and the unexpected, assuming a perspective opposed to the logic of the predominant school culture, which remains committed to transmit convictions, unchangeable truths with reference to the interpretation of the world” (*Ibid.*: 158-159).

The alternative to conventional education is “another” school, not *other* educations which are even not considered existing. In the account of the many different ways to educate and get educated in society, however much memory and history enable the reporting of its respective identities, remain partial. And this is how we always turn back to traditional education, insisting in a new approach –although it is not new if we bring justice to reformist hypotheses of *Progressive Education* and other initiatives focused on educational innovation in classrooms and educational centers– which explains that educational problems should be reformulated from a didactic perspective. We agree on that; however, it do not seem enough.

The topic of “facing” or, most sympathetically, “complementing” formal and non-formal education has many ideological and typological diversions, where international organizations and a significant part of educational theorists have inclined to. Even when recognizing that culture, world, plurality of knowledge and life run out of control through wide avenues, it is becoming increasingly evident that education cannot flow through the narrow path that is school. The incalculable sea of education, beautiful metaphor by Violeta Núñez (1999) cannot and must not be subdued to a single river, necessary and important although this water is to inscribe education in the course of life, in each and every ecosystem in which we live from childhood to old age.

Arguments, or the lack of arguments, transcend authors in order to acquire greater significance in institutions, when –as it occurs in the latest report by UNESCO (2015a)– with the intention of rethinking education in a rapidly transforming world, political and pedagogical debate is sought to be stimulated regarding the aims of education and learning organization, in a society which is turning increasingly complex, unforeseeable and contradictory. An education characterized as a universal common good, inspired in a humanistic vision of development, based on respect and dignity, equality of rights, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity and shared responsibility for a future hoped to be ecologically and socially “sustainable”.

These are words which, perpetuating the inherent motivations of *Millennium Development Goals* (2000-2015) and *Sustainable Development Goals* (2016-2030), claim in asserting that “education is the measure and premise of progress”, “education above all”, or “sustainable development begins with education”; expressions which remind to the commitments undertaken in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000), ratified in its expectations in the *Declaration of the World Education Forum*, held in Incheon (2015), when endorsing that “quality, inclusive and equitable education, promoting ongoing learning through every life stage must be guaranteed”.

A laudable pursuit; nonetheless, after decades of attempts, it is not being consistent with the achievement of a “universal primary education” –more than 60 million children do not go to school nowadays and more than 120 million do not complete elementary school–, nor with the main target on the *World Declaration on Education for All* (EFA): to fulfill the basic learning needs, with emphasis on the consideration of education as a fundamental human right; the opportunity for mankind to become more human.

There are evidences, as confirmed year after year by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, with meaningful titles to prove the frustrated transitional phase from “should” to “be”; among others, those titles displaying “commitment to gender equality”, “the imperative of quality”, “literacy as a vital factor”, “reaching excluded people”, not to overlook the “undercover crisis of military conflicts and education”, placing among the priorities “of youth and competences: working with education” or enabling education and learning to achieve quality for everyone. All of them have been overshadowed by the conclusions of a report by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2015b: 3) which balanced the period from 2000 to 2015 and admitted unreservedly that “educational

inequalities have increased, and poor and disadvantaged people are suffering the worst consequences. The probability of not being in school is four times higher among the poorest children in the world, and it is five times more probable not to complete elemental studies. Conflicts still remain tremendous barrier to education, and the already huge proportion of children out of school living in conflict zone is on the rise. Globally, poor quality education in elemental school causes millions of children to drop out of school without a basic knowledge”.

Facing these and other circumstances which make more visible the existing distance from the current education to the education that we actually need –and claim–, we have recently argued (Caride, 2017: 33) that the right to educate is indissoluble to the right to get educated anytime, anywhere, beyond curricula –regardless its importance and significance–, attendance to school and academic success or failure reflected in grades and reports, whatever the institutional accreditations required in a local, national or international ambit.

In other words, it is not enough, just as new and old discourses by the UNESCO (2015a: 51) said, to say that “learning in class faces a challenge after the enlargement of the access to knowledge outside schools, universities and other educational institutions”; or that, perpetuating this reasoning, social media or massive open online courses (MOOC) are establishing “synergies between formal education and training institutes, so that the current context of transformation of the educational landscape provides opportunities to reconcile all learning spaces, experimentation and innovation”.

Certainly, a step forward, in the paths to a visionary conception of education and training. However insufficient, we must say, if we do not refer to Social Education, Popular Education, Socio-cultural Animation or others which might achieve what is missing, according to the same Report: “a more fluid approach, which considers learning as continuous, displaying a closer relation between educational institutions (and formal education) and other educational experiences less standardized” (UNESCO, 2015a: 51), since childhood to every life stage. As far as we can see, it is less controversial to talk about what is *formal* and *less*

*formal* in education than to talk about “other” formal education, as *formal* as it can be in its identity and socio pedagogical entity.

We will conclude noting that it will be less credible that teaching and learning can be “permanent” without a Social Education that make them possible in each and every family, community, institutional, civic, etc. reality in which –with different degrees of formality– they are inscribed, and without acquiring, from itself and from society, the level of knowledge and recognition that it is reaching in Universities and in professional practices, in research and in daily action-intervention.

This recognition is no stranger, given the intention of conferring Social Education with a “law”, the sooner the better, in the terms that it has been demanded for the past few months by social educators through a campaign promoted by the *General Council of Associations of Social Educators (CGCEES)*, which the *Ibero-American Society of Social Pedagogy (SIPS)* has adhered to with the firm belief of its necessity and with the changes that may be introduced into its regulatory processing. Its justification refers to considerations and fundamentals which, claiming that education ceased to be an exclusive prerogative of school, go beyond the legitimation of socioeducational processes of a training-profession transforming contexts and people. Moreover, it makes it indispensable by expressing that “Social Education enables the incorporation of the subject of education to the diverse reality of social networks, understood as development of sociability and social movement, and cultural and social promotion, understood as an opening to new opportunities to acquire cultural goods that will broaden educational, working, leisure and social participation perspectives”.

It can be said louder but not any clearer. The proposal has been made; the answers –as Bob Dylan would say– are blowing in the wind: Is there anybody on the *other* side who listens to these “formalities” as well? Will education be a right for everyone? Will this right mean a right for every education and for everything in education? Could education be reconsidered without changing the ways to name it in a world which is changing its own ways to be named? Will Social Education and its Pedagogies have the opportunity to be “formalized”?

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## PRESENTATION

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In recent years, social changes are being originated at a rapid pace and context has moved further and further away from past, abandoning traditions and building a future based on the processing of information and the use of technology, with everything that entails. Barely “liquid modernity culture is no longer conceived as learning culture based on accumulation... it now looks more like disengagement, discontinuity and oblivion” (Bauman, 2005, p. 83).

These changes are a step forward the emergence of new scenarios where time and space are not linear, which means new educational and leisure challenges for both vulnerable youth and professionals and institutions that care for them. In this way, processes as: globalization, the increase of people with functional diversity, the weakening of the primary care network along with growing individualism, migrations, evolution of technologies within the *Knowledge Society*, as well as deficit in the economy and its crisis –which stress destructuring of employment and the worsening of working conditions- which causes youth to be more exposed to vulnerability and precariousness compared to other groups and age brackets (Rodríguez, De-Juanas & González, 2016)-; bring along new demands and learnings that are required to properly interact in whichever particular context (García-Castilla & Meneses, 2009, pp. 346-347).

In this sense, different national and international institutions (European Commission, 2005) are displaying a special interest in observing the current situation of youth in advanced societies, promoting through EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 a programme of measures to create more and better opportunities for this group in areas of education and employment, as well as to foster social inclusion through the promotion of active citizenry and solidarity among young people. (Boetzelen, 2010).

At the same time a social displacement has occurred, calling into question education, leisure practices and the use of free time of youth in the face of the economic and social crisis over the past few years (Pérez & De-Juanas, 2014; INE, 2017).

Given these changes, new challenges and social difficulties have arisen, different to those which youth faced barely ten years ago. That way, new generations of young people have to live in a world where the ones who choose to study must combine it with other activities, and the ones who work tend to do it longer hours and with little or no social protection. In this world, accelerated social change, the virtual interaction are predominant, and fewer people live without the permanent company of their smartphones (Melendro, García-Castilla, & Goig, 2016). In fact, it is difficult to understand current society without *Information and communications technology*, which has

established itself as a fundamental element for social development, especially in socialization processes of youth, from a positive and resilient approach based on preventive and protection programmes and policies (Haenens, Vandoninck, & Donoso, 2013), as well as exerted its potential as a tool for empowerment (Vaquero, 2013).

At the same time, in this world, that faces environmental issues, great efforts are made for citizens to enjoy healthy spaces and to practice activities enabling the achievement of physical, psychological and social well-being (Murga-Menoyo & Novo, 2017; Caride, 2017). The institution of the family is also being transformed as a reflection of society, as well as its internal relationships, still playing a significant role in socialization and full development of youth (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009; Caballo, Gradaille, & Merelas, 2012; Ruiz-Corbella & De-Juanas, 2013; Valdemoros-San Emeterio, Ponce de León, Sanz, & Caride, 2014; Doistua, Lázaro, & Bru, 2017).

All these conditions are affecting free time of youth and the way that they deal with it socially or individually (Cuenca & Goytia, 2012; Caride, 2012; De-Juanas & Fernández-García, 2015). Aware of these enormous challenges, in the unique context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a need to understand that this reality has a greater impact in less prepared, vulnerable or at-risk youth (Kaztman, 2000). Professionals and researchers focused on youth and social problems are mainly concerned about education and cultural capital available for young people to properly transform the information received, which is an essential capability in this digital age (Lugo, 2015). For this reason, this monographic issue has been developed in order to tackle this topic from a particular sensitivity and a comprehensive concern for the understanding of the reality that is affecting youth and that would be invisible if it was not for the efforts of the many authors presented here. Likewise, education and leisure of vulnerable youth has also had a considerable social impact (Caballo, Varela, & Nájera, 2017; Cuenca & Madariaga, 2017; Monteagudo, Ahedo, & Ponce de León, 2017), more than any reader might think, given the situation of potential social exclusion of this specific group of people. Dealing with these situations, we consider that the opportunity for change means to seriously confront what young individuals do and how do they use their available free time in order to analyze the situation afterwards and enable the development of efficient socio-educational interventions.

Therefore, this issue of **Pedagogía Social Revista Interuniversitaria**, gathers seven original contributions about education and leisure

of vulnerable youth. The project of the monographic was born five years ago and it has been sculpted with a very defined style as a result of the joint investigation of several groups of researchers belonging to various Spanish universities' in cooperation with other foreign researchers. The list of articles presented here needed a significant amount of meetings and joint efforts in order to publish this issue. Each article of this monographic issue present the outcomes of experimental works on leisure practices of this group of people, and they are in the collective interest of social educators, although we consider the content of these papers to be interesting for everyone who intends to approach this subject, even without a scientific perspective, showing a willingness to know social reality of vulnerable youth or those groups that present a higher risk of becoming vulnerable.

To begin with, the first two articles focus on the leisure practices of vulnerable youth and its benefits for this group. The first paper, entitled "Preferences, renunciation and opportunities in leisure practices of vulnerable young people", is written by professors Francisco Javier García-Castilla and Miguel Melendro Estefanía from National University of Distance Education (UNED) in cooperation with professor Catherine Blaya from Haute École Pédagogique du Canton de Vaud (Switzerland). The authors make an in-depth study -through a questionnaire on leisure time- about the preferences, renunciations and leisure opportunities of more than 700 young students in Spain, considered as vulnerable and in the age bracket from 16 to 18 years old. The authors point that social relationships and a lack of resources affect the leisure practices of this group and emphasize leisure poverty as a feature of their situation.

The second article by Ángela L. de Valenzuela Bandín, José Antonio Caride Gómez and Rita Gradaille Pernas from University of Santiago de Compostela. "Leisure practices and its education in the processes of social inclusion: a comparative study with youth in foster care in Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid". They make an interesting contribution about the most common leisure practices in youth in foster care or formerly in foster care in Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid. The paper is the result of the doctoral thesis "Los tiempos de ocio en la vida cotidiana de la juventud en situación de riesgo y dificultad social: problemáticas específicas y alternativas pedagógico-sociales", based on a purposive sampling from all the references obtained from Federation of Entities offering Assisted Projects and Apartments (FEPA). The authors used an *ad hoc* instrument implemented to about 150 young individuals in the age bracket from 16 to

21. The outcome of this work focuses on the possibilities and limitations offered by leisure practices in the processes of social inclusion, as well as on the need to promote socio-educational initiatives with this group.

After these initial articles, two other papers related to sportive – physical activities in vulnerable youth are presented. The first one is entitled “Sports leisure in potentially vulnerable young people: perceived benefits and organization of practice”. The authors, Raúl Fragüela Vale from University of La Coruña, Ángel De-Juanas Oliva from National University of Distance Education (UNED) and Ricardo Franco Lima from Sport and Leisure Graduate School of University of Melgaço (Portugal), are aware of the vast socialising and educational power of sportive practices. They present the results of a quantitative investigation whose main target was to describe leisure habits of young people at risk of vulnerability and non-vulnerable youth. For that purpose, a questionnaire was administered to around 2700 Spanish students, and 785 were considered as participants in risk of vulnerability. The outcome obtained by the authors affirm that youth at risk of vulnerability present less active habits than non-vulnerable youth. In turn, attention is drawn to the fact that the most vulnerable youth perceived less benefits from sportive leisure practices, which might entail the need for structured socio-educational interventions in order to foster sportive leisure practices in this group.

The second article, “Time dedicated to physical-sportive leisure and time perspectives: revealing/concealing vulnerabilities”, also focuses on physical activity in youth leisure. The authors, Nuria Codina Mata and José Vicente Pestana Montesinos from University of Barcelona, along with Ana Ponce de León Elizondo from University of La Rioja, based their research on the influence exerted by the time spent practicing sportive physical leisure as well as the benefits obtained and on the time perspective in a sample of nearly 150 young individuals in the age bracket from 18 to 24 years old. Two tests were applied in order to conduct this work. First, an ad hoc questionnaire on the structure and characteristics of *Time Budget* from the contributions of Neulinger, as well as the adjustments formerly made by the authors in other studies. The second test was *Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory*, adapted to Spanish population by Díaz-Morales in 2006. The outcomes of the study revealed relationships between the variables addressed in both tests and the experience in sportive physical leisure. The authors emphasize in a higher vulnerability in girls compared to boys regarding sportive leisure practices.

After these four articles, we present the fifth, which focuses on youth leisure activities and its presence in social networks. Its title is “Leisure activities and their presence in social networks in potentially vulnerable youth” and it is written by Rosa Ana Alonso Ruíz and M. Ángeles Valdemoros-San Emeterio from University of La Rioja along with Nuria Codina Mata from Universidad of Barcelona. This article accurately conveys the importance of digital literacy, as well as the presence and diffusion in social networks of leisure activities of potentially vulnerable youth in Spain, in relation to different socio-demographic variables. The study starts from a proposal of quantitative investigation carried out on a sample of 140 students in the age bracket from 17 to 18 years old. An ad hoc questionnaire and inferential and descriptive analyses were applied. The authors stress that more than half of the participants disseminate their leisure activities in social networks. At the same time, young people living in the North and center of Spain are the ones who communicate their physical activities on social networks more often, and students living in the East of Spain disseminate their cultural experiences more frequently. The article finishes with a well-argued justification on the keys to optimize education in digital leisure of this population.

Then, the sixth article is presented as other great incentive of this monographic issue: “Leisure for vulnerable young people: importance, satisfaction and self-management”, written by professors Ana Eva Rodríguez Bravo from National University of Distance Education (UNED), Ángel Luis González Olivares from University of Castilla La Mancha and Fernando López Noguero from University Pablo de Olavide. With this study the reader will have an approach to one of the issues that have a greater impact on youth: the perceived importance of their leisure time, the entailed satisfaction and its self-management. The starting point of this work, mentioned by the authors in the beginning of the text, is the paramount analysis of whether the assessment made by vulnerable youth of their own leisure experience differs from the assessment made by non-vulnerable youth. For this purpose, the authors conduct a quantitative study with nearly 2700 participants; almost 800 were identified as vulnerable. The results obtained verify that vulnerable youth attach great importance to their leisure practices and are satisfied about it. At the same time, it is revealing that, according to this article, vulnerable youth attach less importance than non-vulnerable youth.

Finally, the monographic issue ends with the article “The professional practice of social agents in youth leisure: strategies for intervention”, written



by Fátima Poza Vilches from University of Granada, Ana Fernández García from National University of Distance Education (UNED) and João Paulo Ferreira Delgado from the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (Portugal). This article focuses on professionals on leisure of vulnerable youth. The authors tackle, from a methodologic frame focused on the qualitative investigation, the analysis of 34 professional experiences in the field of youth leisure in Spain. The work starts with a review of professional practices of social agents working in the field of leisure and youth. Subsequently, the authors present the

research methodology and the open-ended questionnaire technique used for data collection with these social agents, which presented an age bracket from 26 to 55 years old and an extensive training and with six years of professional experience, even reaching twenty years in some cases. The outcomes of the study enable authors to provide new approaches and fields of interest for socio-educational interventions from leisure and targeting vulnerable youth. They fundamentally identify eight different indicators serving as a reference in order to generate intervention strategies.

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## Note

- <sup>1</sup> The network of Spanish universities is linked to the research project “*De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: «La construcción cotidiana de la condición juvenil en una sociedad de redes. Problemáticas específicas y alternativas pedagógico-sociales»* (coordinated project EDU2012-39080-CO7-00), cofinanced within the framework of the National Plan R&D&I assisted by the Minister of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness and the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER, 2007-2013).

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**MONOGRAPH**

**EDUCATION AND LEISURE  
OF VULNERABLE YOUTH**



## PREFERENCES, RENUNCIATION AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LEISURE PRACTICES OF VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

### PREFERENCIAS, RENUNCIAS Y OPORTUNIDADES EN LA PRÁCTICA DE OCIO DE LOS JÓVENES VULNERABLES

### PREFERÊNCIAS, RENÚNCIA E OPORTUNIDADES NA PRÁTICA DE LAZER DE JOVENS VULNERABLES

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Received date: 13.IX.2017

Reviewed date: 25.IX.2017

Accepted date: 21.XI.2017

#### KEY WORDS:

leisure  
vulnerable youth  
training  
opportunities  
socio-educational  
intervention

**ABSTRACT:** We present the outcome of an investigation carried out between 2013 and 2016 which inquires about the preferences of leisure activities of vulnerable youth in Spain and the reasons for their renunciation of these practices. We also aim to explore the possible relationship between gender and renunciation. Finally, we analyze the effect of the renunciation of the leisure practices of young people on their training capacities, considered as opportunities for their life trajectories. To this end, we conducted a descriptive and quantitative study which applied an ad hoc questionnaire on a sample of 2.694 participants, finding that a total of 783 individuals were identified as vulnerable. The information gathered showed that preferential leisure practices of vulnerable youth coincide with the preferred activities of the rest of young population in Spain, pointing out sports, ICT activities and music. It also confirmed the leisure poverty approaches, which state that young people quit practicing their favorite leisure

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FUNDS: The current article is linked to the subproject of the research "De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales". Ocio, formación y empleo de los jóvenes en dificultad social" (EDU2012-39080-Co7-07), included within the Research Project De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: «La construcción cotidiana de la condición juvenil en una sociedad de redes. Problemáticas específicas y alternativas pedagógico-sociales» (coordinated project EDU2012-39080-Co7-00), cofinanced within the framework of the National Plan R&D&I assisted by the Minister of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, 2007-2013).

	<p>activities due to relational causes and a lack of resources, especially in the case of women. Furthermore, we found differences on the renunciation or no renunciation regarding the importance that vulnerable youth give to capabilities such as creativity and innovation and to conflict management, being young individuals who actually quit practising leisure activities the ones who value to a greater extent these capacities. These results provide precise guidelines for more effective socio-educational interventions on this vulnerable group.</p>
<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> ocio jóvenes vulnerables capacitación oportunidades intervención socioeducativa</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> Se presentan los resultados de una investigación realizada entre 2013 y 2016 que tiende a indagar sobre las preferencias de la práctica de actividades de ocio de los jóvenes españoles más vulnerables y los motivos de renuncia a su entretenimiento; asimismo, se pretende explorar la relación entre la renuncia a la práctica de ocio de esta población y su sexo. Por último, se trata de analizar el efecto de la renuncia a la práctica del ocio sobre la importancia en las capacidades formativas, entendidas como una oportunidad para la trayectoria de vida de estos jóvenes. Para ello, se realizó un estudio cuantitativo de tipo descriptivo en el que se aplicó un cuestionario elaborado ad hoc a una muestra de 2.694 participantes. De ellos 783 fueron identificados como jóvenes vulnerables. Como resultado, las prácticas de ocio preferentes de los jóvenes vulnerables coinciden con las del resto de la población juvenil española, destacando las actividades deportivas, las relacionadas con las TIC y con la música. Se confirman, los planteamientos sobre la pobreza del ocio de estos jóvenes, que renuncian frecuentemente a sus prácticas de ocio preferidas por falta de recursos y por motivos relacionales, especialmente las mujeres. Además, se hallan diferencias en función de renunciar o no a alguna práctica de ocio en relación a la importancia que los jóvenes vulnerables otorgan a las capacidades de creatividad e innovación y en la de gestión de conflictos. Los jóvenes que renuncian a las actividades de ocio son los que más valoran estas capacidades. Estos resultados facilitan orientaciones precisas para una intervención socioeducativa más eficaz con este colectivo.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> lazer juventude vulnerável treinamento oportunidades intervenção socioeducativa</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> Os resultados de uma investigação realizada entre 2013 e 2016 são apresentados, que tendem a indagar sobre as preferências da prática de atividades de lazer dos jovens espanhóis mais vulneráveis e os motivos para renunciar ao seu entretenimento; também, o objetivo é explorar a relação entre a renúncia à prática de lazer dessa população e seu sexo. Finalmente, o objetivo é analisar o efeito de renunciar à prática do lazer sobre a importância das capacidades de treinamento, entendidas como uma oportunidade para a trajetória da vida desses jovens. Para isso, foi realizado um estudo descritivo quantitativo no qual um questionário preparado ad hoc foi aplicado a uma amostra de 2.694 participantes. Destes, 783 foram identificados como jovens vulneráveis. Como resultado, as práticas de lazer preferenciais de jovens vulneráveis coincidem com as do resto da população juvenil espanhola, destacando as atividades esportivas, as relacionadas às TIC e à música. Eles confirmam, as abordagens sobre a pobreza do lazer desses jovens, que frequentemente renunciam às suas práticas de lazer preferidas devido à falta de recursos e por razões relacionais, especialmente as mulheres. Além disso, existem diferenças dependendo ou não de renunciar a alguma prática de lazer em relação à importância que os jovens vulneráveis colocam nas habilidades de criatividade e inovação e na gestão de conflitos. Jovens que renunciam a atividades de lazer são aqueles que mais valorizam essas habilidades. Esses resultados fornecem diretrizes precisas para uma intervenção socioeducativa mais eficaz com este grupo.</p>

## 1. Introduction

“(…) In essence, vulnerability can be seen as a state of high exposure to certain risks and uncertainties, in combination with a reduced ability to protect or defend oneself against those risks and uncertainties and cope with their negative consequences. It exists at all levels and dimensions of society and forms an integral part of the human condition, affecting both individuals and society as whole” (United Nations, 2003, p. 8)

Regarding the United Nations approach on vulnerability, Katzman (2000) indicates that vulnerable youth population is characterized by the

“inability to take advantage of available opportunities, in different socio-economic areas, in order to improve their welfare situation or prevent their deterioration” (Katzman, 2000, p. 281) and whose vulnerability also implies “the risk of being harmed by the change or permanence of specific external and / or internal situations” (Busso, 2005, p. 16).

The group of vulnerable young people has, on the other hand, large living spaces dedicated to leisure, understanding this concept as occupation of *free time*, which is its traditional reference in studies about leisure (Cuenca, 2014). In this field, we have many studies about leisure practices of youth. However, there is very little information available – beyond the extensive documentation

on casuistry and particular experiences - regarding these practices in the most vulnerable young people (MacDonald & Marsh, 2005; Woelfer, 2014; Melendro, García-Castilla & Goig, 2016).

Recalling the definition given above by Kaztman, the use of the available opportunities has to do, at first, with the possibility of such opportunities actually occurring. This is much more difficult in the case of vulnerable young people, whose *leisure poverty* is linked to structural disadvantages and to the scarce or insufficient availability of spaces and resources; among them, the economic resources stand out (Alguacil, Camacho, & Hernández, 2014; Corr, 2014; Temes, 2014). As Alguacil, Camacho and Hernández proposed (2014), these structural disadvantages relate with the idea of social vulnerability considered as downward mobility, which is a concept that mediates between inclusion and exclusion and that often refers to both social groups and territories or places at risk or in decline, joining therefore the double bind between space and social structure. As these authors noted, social vulnerability expresses a complex problem which, in order to be addressed, “requires an analysis and a multi-dimensional intervention” (Alguacil, Camacho, & Hernández, 2014, p. 77-78).

Along with this, this use of opportunities is directly related to the training of young people so that they can identify and address them, especially during their leisure time. Several investigations have stressed on this topic and have raised the importance of the idea that professionals working with vulnerable youth at social risk should help them develop diversified skills in relation to the search for resources, decision-making and personal initiative in their leisure practices. It has been proven that, when this condition is fulfilled, their motivation and perception of success improve, while reducing anxiety and fear of failure and increasing self-confidence (Darling, 2005; MacDonald & Marsh, 2005; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007; Larose et al., 2010). As stated by Firzly, Sirois-Leclerc and Blanchard (2015, p. 668-669), in their research work, “educators consider themselves responsible for the development of diverse skills of young people, such as the decrease of anxiety and fear of failure, and a better organization of leisure and positive personal development that increases self-confidence”. On the other hand, Haudenhuysse, Theeboom and Nols (2013, p. 11), in their study on socio-educational practices with vulnerable youth in the leisure time dedicated to sport, indicate the need to develop “an educational attitude that can focus on the well-being of young people and tackle an educational practice not based on abstract ideas about

pro-social or positive development through sport, but based on the particular needs of young people and their life situations... Any framework used must be flexible enough to effectively address the ever-changing challenges faced that young people face”. Therefore, it will be important to investigate the elements of these diversified capacities and their presence in the main leisure practices of vulnerable young people in Spain. Among this list of leisure practices, we stand out sporting and ICT activities, as well as cultural performances such as movies or concerts. However, a significant amount of their leisure time can be considered as passive, and this would include the time spent with friends, watching TV, going out and at home alone (Corr, 2014; López-Noguero, Sarrate, & Lebrero, 2016). This does not differ much from the main leisure practices of young people in Spain, who listen to music and go out with friends in 90% of cases, and use the computer, watch television, practice sports, rest or do nothing in 70-89% of cases (INJUVE, 2016, p. 337).

All in all, the aims of this research are: analyze the preferences in the practice of leisure activities of vulnerable young people; explore the renunciations of a leisure activity that they like, their reasons to do it and the possible relation to gender; and finally, find out if the importance that they give to the training capacities differs depending on whether they quit practicing any leisure practice. We consider capabilities as opportunities for vulnerable young people to take advantage and improve their personal and social life and, ultimately, their social inclusion.

## 2. Methodology

The present work provides partial results of the research project R&D&I *Resortes* about leisure, training and employment of young students, conducted between 2013 and 2016. This is a quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional study. Its main target is to determine if the most vulnerable young people can take advantage of the opportunities that arise from their leisure practices in order to improve their life trajectories. First, we carry out a descriptive study which seeks to identify the preferences in leisure activities. Secondly, we investigate the difficulties that they find through the study of the reasons why they quit practicing some type of leisure activity that they like, and if there are significant differences regarding gender. Thirdly, we analyze whether the renunciation of the leisure practices affects the importance that young people give to their training capacities, considered as opportunities for their life trajectories.



Consequently, two working hypotheses are proposed according to the set objectives in this article: 1) the renunciation of a leisure activity is related to gender of vulnerable young people; 2) the renunciation of a leisure activity affects the importance that vulnerable young people give to their training capacities.

### 2.1. Participants

The sample gathers young people in Spain who study Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, Intermediate Level Vocational Training and Initial Professional Qualification Programme (PCPI) in every autonomous community. The total sample of the research included 2694 students

(men, n = 1385, 51.4%, women, n = 1309, 48.6%). Using a simple random sampling, we chose youth population in Spain in the typology of studies and programs indicated above. Also, proportional allocations were carried out according to strata taking into account: the amount and distribution of students from all autonomous communities, type of study, ownership of the educational centers, course and gender. For this sample selection, a confidence level of 95% was established.

In the sample we can find students between the ages of 16 and 19 years old, most of them reaching the age of majority ( $M \pm DE$ : age: 18.15  $\pm$  1.51). However, we selected for this work a sub-sample based on young people displaying more variables related to situations of vulnerability.

Gender	Vulnerable young people		Non - vulnerable		Total Jóvenes	
	young people	Total	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Woman	366	46.7	943	49.3	1.309	48.6
Man	417	53.3	968	50.7	1.385	51.4
Total on the sample	783	100	1.911	100	2.694	100

An estimation was made on those cases that met at least one of the following criteria: (1) student belonging to a family unit presenting incomes equal to or less than 500 euros per month; (2) student studying Initial Professional Qualification Programme (PCPI); (3) student whose situation presents the lack of a mother or father and / or student who are in foster care; (4) student presenting unemployment situation of the parents or having one of them unemployed and the other dedicated to household chores; (5) student presenting a situation where neither parent / legal tutor completed their studies; (6) student with an average score lower than 5 points (out of 10) in their studies; and (7) student which are scarcely or not at all satisfied with their family life (due to loss of attention or opportunities, impaired communication or permanent family conflicts, etc.). As a result, the sample of vulnerable young people for this study reached 783 students (men=417, 53.3%, women=366, 46.7%). The average age coincides with the age of majority ( $M \pm SD$ : age: 18.19  $\pm$  DT: .493).

### 2.2. Tool

Data collection was performed through an ad-hoc questionnaire that studied the elements of youth and consisted of 44 items categorized in seven dimensions aimed at the students: sociodemographic data, school life, family life, leisure time, health and quality of life, studies and labor market in the future, entrepreneurship and training.

The questionnaire was validated by 14 experts in the field and external to the project context, as well as through a pilot test conducted on a 10% of the sample, in eight autonomous communities. Specifically, this article focuses on the demonstration of the results of the block corresponding to Leisure Time by means of the items 21, 32 and 33 and the block corresponding to Training and Entrepreneurship using item 44, referred to capacity building. The students had to express their preferential practice of leisure activity, whether quit practicing some type of leisure activity and the reasons why they give up. They also had to express the degree of agreement with the statement

presented in each of the items in a rating scale based on Likert-type scale from 1 to 5 (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree).

### 2.3. Procedure

The questionnaire was applied one single time, completed in pencil and paper format in one sole session held during school hours in every educational center. The duration of the survey was approximately forty-five minutes. The participants were informed of the purposes of the study; their participation was voluntary and anonymous, and followed specific guidelines. Total confidentiality of responses was assured and the bias avoided. The fieldwork was undertaken during the years 2015 and 2016.

Likewise, the application of the questionnaire was conducted in educational centers during school hours. The anonymity of the participants remained fully guaranteed and the ethical principles of social research were fulfilled (Mesía, 2007).

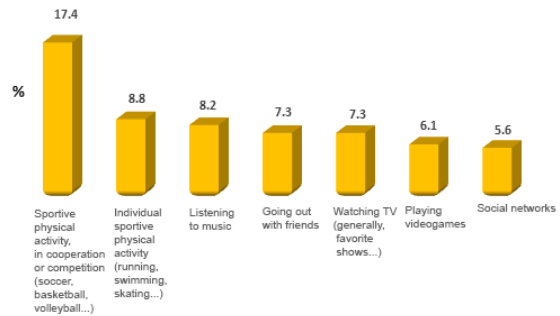
### 2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive analyzes were performed to statistically represent the sample and determine the leisure practice preferences of vulnerable young people as well as their reasons for renunciation of any leisure activity that they like. Once the database was defined, and in order to examine the relationship between the categorical variables, an analysis of the different items was applied using: contingency tables, *Pearson's chi-squared* test and its significance and the *Phi* coefficient and *Cramér's V*. In order to measure the effect of the renunciation of some leisure activity over their capabilities, Student's t-distribution was used. The confidence level established was 95% ( $p < .05$ ). All analyses were performed using the SPSS v.22.0 software.

## 3. Results

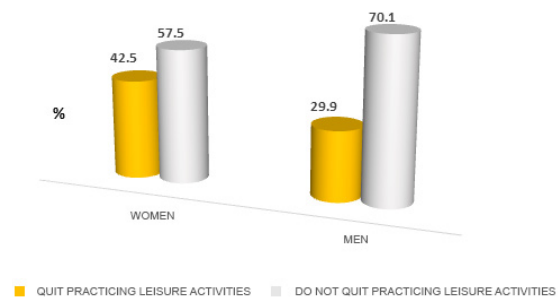
A first descriptive study was carried out to know the first option of the preferential leisure activities of the potentially vulnerable students. This information is collected in the item 21.a, which gathered responses of 60.5% of the sample of vulnerable youth (474 out of 783), and, as mentioned in this article, in relation to other researches, the

majority of students in situation of vulnerability for the practice of a leisure activity choose to perform a sportive physical activity, in cooperation or competition (soccer, basketball, volleyball...) and / or individually (running, swimming, skating...) representing 26.2% of the activities practiced during their leisure time and followed by listening to music, going out with friends or using ICT's (videogames or social networks).



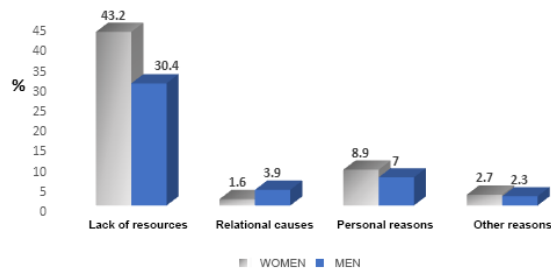
**Figure 1. Main leisure activities chosen as 1st option by vulnerable young people**

The reasons for the renunciation (item 33) of a leisure activity that they like are multiple. We recoded the variable into four categories to group this information. The four categories of reasons for renunciation are: lack of resources, relational reasons, personal reasons and other reasons.



**Figure 2. Vulnerable young people quitting the practice of a leisure activity according to gender**

The reasons for the renunciation (item 33) of a leisure activity that they like are multiple. We recoded the variable into four categories to group this information. The four categories of reasons for renunciation are: lack of resources, relational reasons, personal reasons and other reasons.



**Figure 3. Reasons for the renunciation to a leisure activity according gender of vulnerable young people**

Figure 3 exposes a comparison according to gender of vulnerable youth explaining the reasons for renunciation of a leisure activity that they like. First, we find a relationship between the two variables in a situation of vulnerability and reasons for renunciation of the practice of a leisure activity ( $\chi^2 = 10.9$ ;  $p = .027$ ;  $Cramér's V = .027$ ), especially in relation to resource availability. Similarly, it is observed that the variable gender stands out in the population of vulnerable youth ( $\chi^2 = 12.6$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $Cramér's V = .000$ ), which seems to make a difference, even among the most vulnerable young people.

Specifically, in terms of monetary resources, vulnerable young people have 15 euros a week on average for their expenses, 6 euros less (28.5%) than the average of young people their age, who have 21 euros a week (INJUVE, 2016, p. 344). On the other hand, it is confirmed that vulnerable young people who attend compensatory education (PCPI / Basic Vocational Training) give up to a greater extent to their leisure practices, due to the lack of resources or relational reasons (I have nobody to practice with, my family forbids it...), clearly more than the population of young people who come, in general, from other type of educational resources ( $\chi^2 = 24.3$ ;  $p = .019$ ;  $Cramér's V = .019$ ).

Then, and following our second hypothesis, it is observed in table 2 that there are differences between the assessments on the abilities of vulnerable young people who quit practicing leisure activities that they like. As we can see, the renunciation of the practice of some leisure activity influences the importance that vulnerable young people give to the capacities to be trained, that is to say, they actually differ in their evaluations depending on whether they quit or not practicing a leisure activity.

**Table 2: Assessment made by youth on the presence in their training of capabilities whose response was / was not related to the renunciation of a leisure activity.**

Capabilities	Renunciation to a leisure activity	Media	Standard deviation	Similar variances?	Student's t-test		
					t	gl.	Sig.
Leadership	Yes	3.13	1.256	no	.660	552.767	.510
	No	3.07	1.298				
Commitment and motivation	Yes	3.65	1.074	no	1.645	551.370	.101
	No	3.52	1.107				
Creativity and innovation	Yes	3.56	1.181	no	2.392	538.469	.017
	No	3.34	1.188				
Conflict management	Yes	3.54	1.059	no	.052	574.270	.959
	No	3.53	1.145				

Capabilities Vulnerable youth	Renunciation to a leisure activity	Media	Standard deviation	Similar variances?	Student's t-test		
					t	gl.	Sig.
Own time and team's time management	Yes	3.22	1.149	no	2.031	571.235	.043
	No	3.03	1.240				
Negotiation and decisión-making	Yes	3.38	1.116	no	-.001	554.177	.999
	No	3.38	1.146				
Own time and team's time management	Yes	3.28	1.101	no	-.601	544.412	.548
	No	3.34	1.134				
Search for resources	Yes	3.33	1.180	no	.737	507.621	.461
	No	3.27	1.154				

Source: Own elaboration.

This second hypothesis is partially fulfilled because only two out of the eight capabilities present different values. In particular, the choice of quitting or not quitting affects the assessment that vulnerable youth makes of the capability *creativity and innovation* (3.56), reaching a higher value when the renunciation actually happens. In addition to that, dispersion (DT:1.181) is moderate, so the degree of agreement in the response is similar among the participants.

Regarding the *conflict management* variable, we can also find differences in vulnerable young people depending on whether the renunciation happens or not. Likewise, students who quit practicing a leisure activity are the ones who give the higher rate to this capability for their training (3.22), unlike students who do not give up (3.03), even though when the dispersion of data (DT:1.240) in the group of those who do not resign is slightly higher than in the group of students who actually give up. For this reason, we can conclude that the dispersion of the data shows a lower degree of agreement on the tendency of responses given by those who do not give up, in contrast to those who actually quit.

In any case, both results show that giving up on practicing a leisure activity is related to a tendency to value in a greater degree the importance in the training of such capabilities as creativity and innovation and conflict management. Our

objective consisting in the analysis of the influence of the reasons for the renunciation or not of a leisure activity in the assessment of vulnerable young people in order to prove the importance of determined capabilities is completely fulfilled.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

In line with the target set in this research, we have provided relevant information about the different ways which young people in Spain can take advantage of the opportunities emerged from their leisure practices in order to enhance their personal and social lives, as stated in the outcome obtained. Consecutively, we interpret the main results and discuss them in connection with other studies about the same topic.

Firstly, regarding the preferences in the leisure practice of vulnerable young people, we can observe that they are quite similar to the likings of the rest of youth population in Spain (INJUVE, 2016). In the specific case of vulnerable people, the results of the investigation indicate as preferential, from top to bottom, sporting activities (26.3%), ICT activities (18.9%) and music activities (8.2%) (García-Castilla *et al.*, 2016). Youth in Spain Report 2016 (INJUVE, 2016) points out as preferential activities, from top to bottom: sportive physical activities and music activities (more than 90% in both cases) and ICT activities (between

70% and 89%). The only difference noted is the preference to choose ICT activities rather than music activities in the case of vulnerable young people.

However, while the leisure practices of vulnerable young people are mainly passive, such as watching TV, going for a walk around the neighborhood, sharing with friends or being alone in their bedrooms (Corr, 2014; López-Noguero, Sarate & Lebrero, 2016), leisure practices of youth in Spain is far more diversified, including activities as travelling, reading books, newspapers and magazines (50%-69%), or less frequently, hiking, going to museums or exhibitions, going to the theatre and conferences and colloquia (20%) (INJUVE, 2016, p. 337).

Secondly, regarding the renunciation of the leisure practices of vulnerable young people, the concept of *leisure poverty* mentioned in the introduction of the present work is substantially confirmed (Alguacil, Camacho & Hernández, 2014; Corr, 2014; Temes, 2014). As seen in the section for results, this research highlights the relationship between the variables *at-risk of vulnerability* and *reasons for the renunciation* of a leisure practice that they like, particularly in relation to resource availability (73.6%). Similarly, we observe that in the group of vulnerable young people, the variable gender stands out, making a difference and generating a gap even in the case of this group. This contrasts with the researches on youth population as a whole, where the renunciation of the leisure practices is caused fundamentally due to the lack of free time, especially in the case of women (Stodolska, 1999; Jackson, 2000; Madariaga, A., & Romero da Cruz, 2016).

Thirdly, and as we stated in the introduction of the present article, the seizing of opportunities is closely connected to youth training to identify them and tackle them through leisure activities. In this respect, our research inquired young individuals about those capacities linked to leadership, commitment and motivation, creativity and innovation, communicative capacity, conflict management, negotiation and decision-making, own time and team's time management and search for resources for the seizing of opportunities in their life trajectories (Busenitz, West, Shepherd, Nelson, Chandler, & Zacharakis, 2003; Osorio & Pereira, 2011; Marulanda, Montoya, & Vélez, 2014). As stated by Bandura (1977), people tend to avoid the risky situations that they feel incapable to face, while they get involved more easily in activities when they feel capable of facing them.

As confirmed in the outcome of this research, even though the differences in the rating are not very significant, if we take a look to the

capabilities analyzed by young people we can find that they feel better trained at commitment and motivation, creativity and innovation and communicative capacity (3.6 - 3.5 out of 5), while they feel that they are less prepared in leadership, conflict management (despite their positive opinion on this capability), search for resources and own time and team's time management (3.1 - 3.3 out of 5). The work by Rodríguez, De-Juanas and González (2016) also reveals the benefits of vulnerable youth regarding the formative aspects and capacitation destined to the achievement of more and better opportunities for their life trajectories.

Comparing the practice of leisure activities and the capabilities and skills of vulnerable young people, understood as opportunities, we can assert that, in the field of physical-sportive practices, which are the favorite leisure activities of vulnerable young people, many researches point out that these physical activities enable the development of certain and fundamental capacities as self-regulation, self-efficacy, participation, sense of coherence in action and sense of collective belonging (Lindström, 2010; Super, Hermens, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2014; Haudenhuysse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2013; Toering, Elferink-Gemser, Jonker, Van Heuvelen, & Visscher, 2012). Australian authors Kermer, et al. (2014) explain how depressive symptoms in vulnerable youth decrease when the levels of physical activities are higher and the use of screens is lower. On the other hand, we find the investigation on youth and the protection system in the Netherlands by Super et al. (2014) particularly interesting in this sense, given that it highlights the importance of self-regulation through sports in this population. Self-regulation displays high rates in its different elements (planning, monitoring, self-assessment, effort, reflection and self-efficacy) and correlates a higher capacity of youth to gain knowledge and skills in different fields and to overcome situations of social disadvantage. As stated by researchers, "from the perspective of a positive development of youth, self-regulation capabilities can be considered an internal asset which may help youth to get ready for a healthy and productive adulthood" (Super et al. 2014, p. 703). Finally, and as García-Castilla et al. (2016, p. 31) emphasized, we cannot forget gender differences regarding the preferences in sportive physical leisure activities: "while women practice physical activities to a lesser extent and prefer other type of leisure practices, men prefer collective sports as compared with women, who lean more towards other physical activities related to art, corporal expression and / or recreation outdoors".

With reference to the use of ICT technologies as the second choice in the list of preferential

activities of vulnerable youth, they have been studied as a training resource particularly interesting as an opportunity for them (Livingstone & Hawdon, 2009), given that the starting point of this special group is located in a less balanced position when comparing them to the rest of youth population in such training areas as formal education, family context or work environment. As Ferreira, Pose and De Valenzuela (2015) explained, vulnerable youth spends significantly more time than the rest of youth population in electronic leisure activities, like using chats and social networks, using their cell phones as entertainment (between 33% and 41%), as well as watching videos in YouTube (Davies, Coleman, & Livingstone, 2014). It is also relevant the high degree of satisfaction (84%) attributed to ICT leisure activities by vulnerable youth (Melendro, García-Castilla, & Goig, 2016). This interest and dedication to ICT technologies involves a growing distance of family life, given that, as Valdemoros, Sanz-Arazuri and Ponce de León (2017) formulated, when ICT technologies are not a preferential leisure practice in kids, their relational capabilities (cohesion, flexibility, family functioning) are enhanced.

In contrast, the use of ICT technologies might as well strengthen diverse capabilities, since they increase interaction and communication possibilities, helping to a better use of opportunities to build inclusive personal and social trajectories or to avoid risky situations or behaviors (Valdemoros, Sanz-Arazuri & Ponce de León, 2017; Blaya, 2015; Lepicnik & Samec, 2013; Morduchowicz, 2012). Melendro, García-Castilla and Goig (2016) explain how the positive assessment of the training that vulnerable youth receive via ICT technologies must include the capability for conflict management and, along with it, other ones as communicative and leadership capacities. For their part, Hermosilla and Torres (2012), in their studies on the inclusive and transforming use of ICT technologies, proposed the training and capacitation of vulnerable youth using certain basic elements that go beyond the simple instrumental learning. To name but a few, the elaboration of personal and collective communication methods and the creation and development of interpersonal relationships to promote respect, tolerance, debate and reflection.

Finally, we tackle music activities, which are the third group of preferred activities chosen by vulnerable youth. As Woelfer (2012) stated, even

though music is considered an important part of adolescence and youth, little we know about the relationship between music and excluded and vulnerable and excluded youth. In their research, a significant part of homeless youth listens to music everyday (98%) and present eclectic musical tastes. Music plays an important role in their emotional control and regulation of relationships with people. This work also notes the significant relation between music activities and a massive use of ICT technologies. Wald (2011) explains how participation in musical activities boost competences and capabilities in homeless youth, such as self-confidence, self-esteem, interest in group activities, teamwork and perception of new attitudes in society, among others.

In conclusion, we check that is essential to fight *leisure poverty* of vulnerable youth in order to facilitate vital and social opportunities. On the one hand, by using resources that can reduce the high percentage of renunciations of leisure practices because of this. On the other, improving the access to those opportunities and its proper use through socio-educational interventions planned in accordance with the elements highlighted in this article: take as referential point the preferences in leisure practices –sportive physical activities, music and ICT technologies– as a motivational and training reference, and the capabilities which make vulnerable youth feel secure and competent, such as commitment and motivation, creativity and innovation and communication skills. Moreover, interventions on other capabilities where young people feel vulnerable, such as conflict management, search for resources, time management, decision-making or leadership must be strengthened.

However, this study has limitations in its analyses, and it is necessary to deepen into the reasons of renunciation of vulnerable students in order to obtain more detailed information, as well as into those variables which affect female students and make them give up more often than men. Further studies on these issues will predictably have a significant effect in the approaches of socio-educational interventions on this group of population and in strategy development and creation of resources that can combat exclusion processes and promote participation and social commitment of vulnerable youth in our society (Cuenca, 2011; Goyette, Pontbriand, et Bellot, 2011; Goyette, Mann-Feder, Turcotte, & Grenier, 2016).

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

García-Castilla, F.J., Melendro, M., & Blaya, C. (2018). Preferencias, renuncias y oportunidades en la práctica de ocio de los jóvenes vulnerables. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31 21-32. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.02



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## **LEISURE PRACTICES AND ITS EDUCATION IN THE PROCESSES OF SOCIAL INCLUSION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE IN CATALONIA, GALICIA AND MADRID**

**LAS PRÁCTICAS DE OCIO Y SU EDUCACIÓN EN LOS PROCESOS DE  
INCLUSIÓN SOCIAL: UN ESTUDIO COMPARADO CON JÓVENES (EX)  
TUTELADOS EN CATALUÑA, GALICIA Y MADRID**

**AS PRÁTICAS DE ÓCIO E A SUA EDUCAÇÃO NOS PROCESSOS DE INCLUSÃO  
SOCIAL: UM ESTUDO COMPARADO COM JOVENS (EX)TUTELADOS NA  
CATALUNHA, GALIZA E MADRID**

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Received date: 12.IX.2017

Reviewed date: 25.IX.2017

Accepted date: 21.X.2017

**KEY WORDS:**

youth leisure  
pedagogy of leisure  
social education  
youth in foster care  
social inclusion

**ABSTRACT:** Leisure, to whose most conventional practices –ludic, festive and recreational– have been added in the last decades, experiences and livings which extend and/or diversify their protagonism in people's daily life, represents an ambit of special importance for human development. Without neglecting the inherence in their realities, the main objective of our research is acquiring knowledge and analyzing what are the leisure-time activities. Involving young people (between 16 and 21 years old) with two well differentiated profiles: on the one hand, those who are being in foster care have been object of some degree of attention, protection or social insertion; on the other hand, those who have maintained their family ties

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FUNDS: The paper that is presented took two research projects as a reference that, in the framework of two calls of the National R+D+I Plan, have been funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain and the ERDF funds from the European Union: "From educational times to social times: the daily construction of being young in a network society. Specific problems and social-pedagogical alternatives" (EDU2012-39080-C07-01 to 07\_RESORTES) and "Educate leisure: Realities and prospects in an intergenerational, comprehensive and inclusive key in a network society" (EDU2015-65638-C6-1-R\_ENREDOS).

	<p>under “normal” circumstances like students of Post-compulsory Secondary Education. This research, which has as an empirical support the information obtained through the application of surveys elaborated ad hoc to two samples of both groups in Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid, highlights the coincidences and divergences in their preferences, revealing the possibilities and limitations between those preferences and the leisure time activities that both youth groups carry out. This set of circumstances demands a proper leisure education, which contributes with new perspectives in social and pedagogical code; and, along with them, new opportunities in order to build the equality and the social inclusion of youth in the society we inhabit...</p>
<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b>                  ocio juvenil                  pedagogía del ocio                  educación social                  jóvenes tutelados                  inclusión social</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> El ocio, a cuyas prácticas más convencionales –lúdicas, festivas y recreativas– se han añadido en las últimas décadas experiencias y vivencias que amplían y/o diversifican su protagonismo en la vida cotidiana de la gente, representa un ámbito de especial trascendencia para el desarrollo humano. Sin obviar las controversias inherentes a sus realidades, el objetivo principal del trabajo que presentamos reside en conocer y analizar cuáles son las actividades de ocio en las que participan jóvenes (entre los 16 y los 21 años) con dos perfiles bien diferenciados: de un lado, los que siendo tutelados o ex tutelados han sido objeto de alguna medida de atención, protección o inserción social; de otro, los que han mantenido sus vínculos familiares en condiciones de “normalidad” como alumnos de Educación Secundaria Postobligatoria. El estudio, que tiene como soporte empírico la información obtenida mediante la aplicación de cuestionarios elaborados ad hoc a dos muestras de ambos colectivos en Cataluña, Galicia y Madrid, pone de relieve las coincidencias y divergencias en sus preferencias, desvelando las posibilidades y limitaciones entre aquellas y las prácticas de ocio que unos y otros jóvenes llevan a cabo. Un conjunto de circunstancias ante las que se reivindica una educación del ocio que aporte nuevas perspectivas en clave pedagógica y social; y, con ellas, nuevas oportunidades para construir la equidad y la inclusión social de la juventud en las sociedades que habitamos.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b>                  ócio juvenil                  pedagogia do ócio                  educação social                  jovens tutelados                  inclusão social</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> O ócio, a cujas práticas mais convencionais –lúdicas, festivas e recreativas– se acrescentaram nas últimas décadas experiências e vivências que ampliam e/ou diversificam o seu protagonismo na vida quotidiana das pessoas, representa um âmbito de especial transcendência para o desenvolvimento humano. Sem obviar as controvérsias inerentes às suas realidades, o objetivo principal do trabalho que apresentamos reside em conhecer e analisar quais são as atividades de ócio em que participam jovens (entre os 16 e os 21 anos) com dois perfis bem diferenciados: por um lado, os que sendo tutelados ou ex tutelados foram objeto de alguma medida de atenção, proteção ou inserção social; por outro, os que mantiveram os seus vínculos familiares em condições de “normalidade” como alunos de Educação Secundária Postobrigatória. O estudo, que tem como suporte empírico a informação obtida mediante a aplicação de questionários elaborados ad hoc a duas amostras de ambos os grupos na Catalunha, Galiza e Madrid, põe de relevo as coincidências e divergências nas preferências, desvelando as suas possibilidades e limitações e as práticas de ócio que uns e outros levam a cabo. Um conjunto de circunstâncias perante as quais se reivindica uma educação do ócio que traga novas perspetivas na dimensão pedagógica e social; e, com elas, novas oportunidades para construir a equidade e a inclusão social da juventude nas sociedades que habitamos.</p>

## 1. Introduction

In its more conventional meanings, leisure used to be defined as a time of rest and inaction, in which the cessation of work or family obligations allowed activities considered to be rewarding and satisfying to be freely carried out, either with a ludic, festive or recreational intention. This has been reflected in dictionaries, where it is quite common for leisure to be associated with a person’s free time, to the activities that an individual performs voluntarily to release himself from their family, professional and social obligations, or in fun or restful occupation. Although it is implicitly interpreted that its practices involve experiences and livings with a special importance for human

development, through which personal and collective needs and expectations are met, we are still far from its realization as a social right, which increases and democratizes opportunities that the population as a whole has within its power, “previously reserved for certain strata of age, gender or socio-economic status” (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 1998, p. 541).

This means that any reference to leisure, as a privileged area of *kairos*, subjectivity and emotions, by way of a “pattern of time to evaluate other times, especially those of work” (Lasén, 2000, p. 200), in contemporary societies acquires levels of complexity, problematization and controversy that were unknown historically, largely determined by the new concepts raised around time in

the information era (Castells, 1998), projecting its meanings in aspects as diverse as the biography of each subject, the evolution of civilizations, the connectivity of the real with the virtual, the public and the private, emotional well-being or quality of life.

We refer to time as one of the most valuable realities that we have, which has increased our desire to “measure it, control it, sell it, record it, represent it, immortalize it and make sense of it... becoming a stubborn force that dominates our lives” (Garfield, 2017, p. 18). There are a lot of indications of value of time and its circumstances, either as an everyday possibility or limitation, amongst which Ma Ángeles Durán (2007, p. 18) mentions those that name leisure and its impact on social life, insisting that “the available data on leisure are many, which do not match the many sources, and nobody seems to agree on the border between the time of boredom and the real time of fun”. A time that in young people –without us going into the differences that exist between biological age, chronological age and social age– is incorporating unprecedented transformations, of flexibility, adaptability and resistance as heterogeneous as contradictory, with changing allegiances to worlds and experiences in conflict (Tabboni, 2006). Although, at times, it seems that they are a clear exponent of the presentism induced by *carpe diem*, everything indicates that ultimately they are a sign of the times that inhabit time or –as argued by Graciela Speranza (2017)– of “a time without time”, which as it is not able to be released from the tyranny of the clocks succumbs to the expansion of consumption, the accelerated pace of production and commodification, digital revolution, instant connection and the cult of speed.

### 1.1. Youth leisure as a subject-problem under study in the network society

Leisure offers the possibility of being studied and analyzed from different paradigms, from parameters of objectivity and subjectivity that should not be interpreted as necessarily against each other but as two complementary readings on the same reality:

From an objective paradigm this is often confused with the time dedicated to something with the resources invested, or simply with activities. From a subjective paradigm it is especially important to consider the satisfaction that each perceives in his experience. Also of interest is its experiential and the opinion and personal meaning, leisure is part of our way of being and how we appear, and therefore is one of the modes of expression of our personality. Subjectively the

word leisure is synonymous of fun, loved occupation, and therefore freely chosen. The experience of the leisure does not depend on the activity in itself, or of the time, economic level or, in some cases, the training held by the subject... [but] with the sense of each experience... for whom the experience... with the world of emotion and, consequently, with happiness (Cuenca, 1998, pp. 256-257).

That being so, leisure is a time that exists by itself, favoring a broad and diversified set of activities that people do voluntarily –once they have responded to their obligations– to rest, have fun and/or to disinterestedly develop knowledge and skills (Dumazedier, 1971). In this regard, Caride (2014, p. 38) affirms that leisure goes beyond time released or that is left over from carrying out other activities, since “more than a time, leisure is an opportunity to activate and develop human experience in all its facets”.

As we have already stated, at present, leisure times are generally considered as a fundamental area in the development of people, a key factor to understanding lifestyles in contemporary societies (Faché, 2002; Cuenca, 2009 and 2014; Caballo, Caride & Meira, 2011), invoking and demanding, before the triumph of “time is money” sponsored by capitalism and neo-liberal thinking, new links in the human and the temporary: a change of a paradigm converging with a cultural transformation, “from ethics for sustainability through solidarity and the change in our consumption patterns” (Elizalde, 2012, p. 61). New ethics of consumption and citizenship in the global-local world that we live in (Cortina, 2002). We refer to a “valuable leisure” (Cuenca, 2014), which promotes integration, cohesion, inclusion, social identity and belonging. A main support in socialization processes, being some of the aspects that are promoted *in* and *with* leisure: social relations, compliance, dialog and exchange, which must be given a great relevance in the social construction of childhood and youth (Ortega & Bayón, 2014; Uceda-Maza, Navarro-Pérez & Pérez-Cosín, 2014).

Valuable leisure, Cuenca (2014) would say, would be the scientific evolution of what this author has conceptualized as humanist leisure: a comprehensive, creative, substantial and active leisure; an experienced and experiential leisure, whose knowledge, between reflection and action, has awoken the need to take it to reality. That is, a time that being inherent to the well-being of people is projected in essential aspects of human living –health, identity, integration, coexistence, etc.– it is a time that educates, “from which we expect a decisive contribution to the improvement of people’s well-being and their quality of life” (Caride,

2014, p. 301). For this reason, educating in values, attitudes, meanings, behaviors, etc. that leisure provides to human development, is a task with which the Social Pedagogy must actively commit to, with an innovative, emancipatory and transformative vision. If so, “leisure in itself, is capable of simultaneously preventing and promoting; very few pedagogical practices achieve this facet in the key of positive growth in unison” at the same time that they favor social development (Uceda-Maza, Navarro-Pérez & Pérez-Cosín, 2014, p. 50).

According to Ken Roberts (2012 and 2014) skills, tastes and interests relating to leisure are developed during childhood and youth, with the “leisure capital” being formed that will substantiate the practices in this area over life; despite the fact that these may change over time or are specially conditioned by the austerity that economic and social crises bring about. That was why the study of leisure in these stages of development is of special interest to leisure researchers and the youth sociologists. In turn, Pérez Serrano, Fernández García and Poza Vilches (2015), indicate that based on a review of various documentary sources, the trend in the “forms of youth leisure” is that young people lack information on recreational activities and that their participation in their planning is not real; indicating that there are differences between boys and girls regarding the perception of free time and the activities carried out. As far as the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, they indicated that if there is a sedentary lifestyle, it is possible that the consumption of these substances will be greater; showing an increase in the consumption of alcohol among youth and a change in their consumption pattern. In addition, they identify that there is a significant correlation between going out at night, consuming substances and having unprotected sex.

### **1.2. Leisure as an opportunity to mediate between social exclusion and inclusion**

The fact that leisure of adolescents and young people is related to their experiences and at the same time offers different opportunities to improve the socialization processes, affecting their social perceptions and representations, as well as in their subsequent habits in free time, means that what we have come to call “youth leisure” cannot be understood exclusively with age-related criteria or the social context. Without being able to evade them, there is a need for other perspectives and approaches, which take into account “the new ways in which young people relate not only among themselves, but also with the public, social and political space, belonging to a historical

moment marked by very serious problems as well as unprecedented opportunities” (Ortega & Bayón, 2014, p. 9); therefore, it is necessary to be furnished with a broad, scientific and academic, civic and social way of looking, in the analysis of the relations that are established between leisure, youth and development (Cuenca & Carreño, 2016). Young people in the network of a network society, which opens up new doors and windows for communication, interaction and social participation, to the point that “the data seem to point to the fact that, the more committed they are in the design and care processes of the spaces for shared leisure with their peers, the greater the socio-educational returns will be that young people draw from their experiences of leisure” (Ortega & Bayón, 2014, p. 11).

From this perspective, it is important to know and reflect on leisure time of youth who is in a situation of social difficulty due to the fact social-family reality, marked by lack of affection and/or materials, which has been imposed; in particular, in young fostered people or, more appropriately, former foster cared people: boys and girls who have lived under the protection of the Public Administrations until reaching legal age and that, at that moment, or shortly after, must leave the resource that had been sheltering them, having to learn to be adults long before –and with their own means– than young people of their same age whose family background is more positive and stable.

In the face of this reality, in Spain there are entities that offer projects and resources to support the emancipation process of these boys and girls in a situation of social difficulty. The *Federación de Entidades con Proyectos y Pisos Asistidos* (FEPA, Federation of Entities offering Assisted Projects and Apartments) is an organization that brings together institutions which, at national level, carry out these projects to promote the autonomy and emancipation of young people –especially those in and formerly in foster care– favoring their transition to adulthood and independence from an integral perspective; specifically, through projects in the socio-personal, residential, education and training scope, to help in job placement, as well for financial support.

Having to deal with a series of demands that are not required from youth as a whole –emancipating themselves without family support, lacking the necessary resources, without having acquired a certain level of autonomy and social emancipation– places them in a situation of “added” vulnerability. Leisure, during a time that may favor “normalization” and decrease stigma, is presented as an element of particular relevance to “equate”

this inequality and contribute to social equity and to a better quality of life for these boys and girls, either by circumstances related to migration processes, of marginalization and social exclusion, vulnerability, etc. (Alonso, Varela & Teijeiro, 2011; Navarro-Pérez, Pérez-Cosín & Perpiñán, 2015; Villa, 2015; García, De Juanas & López, 2016).

In this sense, young people who were formerly in foster care participating in the research “Young People from a Public care Background: Pathways to Education in Europe” (YIPPEE) in the Spanish context coincide in pointing out that having to carry out tasks in the home, look after their family of origin and having to juggle studies with work – especially when they get older– made them feel “different” with regard to the boys and girls of the same age. A feeling that dissipated when they were with their friends or partner and in leisure time, because, except for the fact of having less free time– in these situations they felt as if they were one more; therefore

the environment of friends and leisure programs represented, for these young people, the opportunity to experience a situation of normality and feel like other children their age. This was also a way to be freed from the situation in their homes, and a door to fun, support and learning (Montserrat & Casas, 2012, p. 160).

According to Villa (2015), having a social support network is essential in the emancipation process of young people; for this to be successful it is important to develop initiatives to expand its social context. Leisure plays a key role in this process, being essential both to know the interests and motivations of young people in this field, as well as to have their own spaces beyond the organized activities in which they participate.

The results of the research project YIPPEE evidence –according to the in-depth interviews with a life history approach made to thirty-five young people formerly in foster care in the Spanish context– that during their passage through the protection system they carried out the same leisure activities as boys and girls of their age. The participation in the same activities as their peer group, as well as having friends outside the institution (which were integrated into the school system) were two factors that helped their motivation to continue with studies; establishing the friends as a reference group and belonging helping to favor a neutralizing positive social identity of certain stigmatizing elements (Montserrat & Casas, 2012).

In the study undertaken by the *Red Jóvenes e Inclusión Social* (Youth Network and Social Inclusion) we see that “young people formerly in

foster care interviewed show difficulties in developing positive and satisfactory leisure” (Ballester, Rodríguez & De Juanas, 2016, p. 237). Some of the aspects that according to this research can limit the occupation of their free time are, on the one hand, the lack of friendships and relationship skills –identified in the records and life stories– and, on the other hand, the lack of economic resources to gain access to certain activities. Leisure has an ambivalent sense: on the one hand, it is a time inhibitor, while on the other it is a time to strengthen personal development (Cuenca & Carreño, 2016).

Faced with this reality, Social Pedagogy in general and Leisure Pedagogy, in particular, have a central role to play, to educate in values and meanings that leisure provides in human development is an inevitable task, which does not have to respond to a univocal pedagogical conception but a plural one... “that humanizes us in everything that is human” (Caride, 2012, p. 311). A pedagogical and social leisure that enables the acquisition of various skills and attitudes, such as: “creativity, imagination, autonomy, the ability of cooperation, responsibility, acceptance of self and others”, etc. (Suárez Sandomingo & Ingerto, 2009, p. 49). Hence Leisure Pedagogy is aimed at fostering the development and life satisfaction of people through knowledge and qualities associated with leisure (Cuenca, 2009); referring to the “art of education *in and for* the experience of a human and quality leisure” (Cuenca, 2004, p. 94) and assuming “the major challenge that involves opening the lives of people to another future, in which aspiring to happiness is not reduced simply to being entertained” (Ferreira, Pose & De Valenzuela, 2015, p. 46).

In connection with the approach of the socio-educational actions with boys and girls in social difficulty it should be noted that the *Estrategias Flexibles de Intervención Socioeducativa* (EFIS, Flexible Strategies of Educational Intervention), a methodology that bases its guidelines for action in the diversity of situations that characterize young people in social difficulty, as well as their changing nature and that, according to Melendro (2007), has provided relevant results such as, for example, that most of the young people who participate in programs and centers with this type of flexible methodology start their adult life with employment; a fundamental aspect for their future. In this line, there are authors (Bravo & Del Valle, 2009) that, owing to the diversity of circumstances, consider that there is a need for a new socio-educational intervention model that relies on a network of differentiated services adapted to the existing needs.

## 2. Methodology

The results presented are derived from a dissertation project which, under the title of “Leisure time in the daily life of youth at risk and in social difficulty: specific problems and social-pedagogical alternatives”, is generally aimed at knowing and analyzing how youth in a situation of vulnerability, difficulty, exclusion or social risk –in particular those in foster care and/or formerly in foster care– experience leisure on a daily basis; with the aim of providing educational alternatives that will help to ensure their inclusion and active participation in society. The reference population is boys and girls who are between the ages of 16 and 21 years old, who are under a care action for insertion, in a foster care home, assisted apartment or center for the protection of minors in the Spanish state. A dissertation that registers its theoretical, methodological and empirical framework in two research projects that have been funded by some calls of the National R+D+I Plans with the acronyms RESORTES (EDU2012-39080-Co7) and ENREDOS (EDU2015-65638-C6-1-R), both financed by the Secretary of State for Research, Development and Innovation of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, with contributions from the ERDF funds of the European Union.

The design of the sample attended a casual non-probabilistic approach, taking as a main reference the entities that are part of the *Federación de Entidades con Proyectos y Pisos Asistidos* (FEPA, Federation of Entities offering Assisted Projects and Apartments), using the province as a segmentation variable. However, for reasons of accessibility and in order to ensure greater reliability of the sample, institutions that do not belong to the Federation also participated in the study. The reasons why the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid were chosen are the following:

- *Catalonia* has a long history of collaboration between the Public Administration and social entities, as well as in the care of young people who were formerly in foster care, favoring the consolidation of a legal framework and programs in the different areas that constitute the emancipation processes (Villa, 2015). It is also characterized from having, since the 1990's, a pioneering system in the field of policies, services and programs to support the emancipation of young people formerly in foster care; with the Spanish territory having the most initiatives for this purpose (Sala-Roca, Arnau, Courtney & Dworsky, 2016).
- *Galicia* was chosen as it is the Autonomous Community that has the research group to

which this paper is ascribed to. In addition, it was considered relevant in order to represent the boys and girls belonging to a territory with less population and that differs from those that tend to have a leading role research with this group.

- *Madrid* is the community in which the majority of the references found on the transition to adult life of adolescents and young people in social difficulty are focused; usually through collaboration between the National Distance Education University (UNED), the Fundación ISOS (Institute for Social Sustainability) and Opción 3. Iniciativa Social (Option 3. Social Initiative). Hence this territory is also a leader in working with this group.

Methodologically this research is part of a descriptive survey type approach, using the questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. This was developed *ad hoc* and validated by an expert opinion and young people in foster care and formerly in foster care were sent this through postal mail (although in some cases was sent by e-mail), being a professional of the entity the person responsible for the mediation in the process. In this way, we collected a total of 149 valid questionnaires; a significant figure that allows the practices of these young people to be x-rayed, however –as it is not statistically representative– the information studied cannot be extrapolated to the whole of young Spaniards in their status as in foster care and/or formerly in foster care. All in all, this allows the opportunities and constraints with which these young people experience their leisure time on a daily basis to be seen.

The questionnaire, semi-structured in nature, is divided into different thematic blocks that try to investigate the leisure practices carried out by these young people, as well as to know the different motivations that brought them to practice them or not. Of all the issues raised, this paper presents data relating to two specific questions: on the one hand, which are the three commonly practiced leisure activities and, on the other hand, if that they would like to undertake, but do not do so; indicating, if this is the case, the two reasons –from among a list of seven– that prevents or hinders this.

Also, in order to be able to know the similarities and differences between the young people who live or have lived under the guardianship of the Public Administration and those who have not, and taking into account that the comparative studies analyzed the relationships and differences between two or more groups with respect to a variable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005),

comparative analysis have been carried out with the data derived from the RESORTES Project – already mentioned– relating to the study of the educational and social times of boys and girls enrolled in Post-Compulsory Secondary Education in the Spanish State and who are between 16 and 18 years old; taking into account, in particular, the derivatives of the questionnaire addressed to the students of the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Galicia and Madrid (n=931).

To facilitate the comparative analysis between the two groups of young people (in foster care/ formerly in foster care, and those who have not been institutionalized), the responses have been grouped together in response to the eleven blocks that made up this question in the questionnaire of the RESORTES project, developed *ad hoc* by the research group constituted for this purpose, with the participation of the Universities of Barcelona, Burgos, Deusto, La Rioja, Santiago de Compostela and National Distance Learning University (UNED). In addition, the processing and analysis of the data was performed with the SPSS computer software (version 20.0 for Windows).

### 3. Results

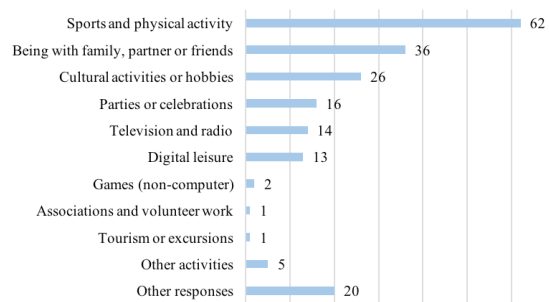
In line with the objective that guides this work, the results obtained are articulated around two paragraphs in accordance with the typology of young people in the sample. On the one hand, we focus on the ludic preferences of young people in foster care and formerly in foster care, as well as the reasons referring to not performing them; on the other hand, we analyze the leisure activities of young people who do not live –or have lived– in an institutionalized manner. This comparative perspective will make it possible to know the different activities being carried out by the young people in their free time taking into account their “institutionalized” status.

#### **a) Leisure activities practiced by young people in foster care and formerly in foster care and reasons for giving up from undertaking them.**

To find out what leisure activities are undertaken by young people who are, or have been– in foster care, a question was raised where they were asked to indicate what three activities they carried out on a daily basis in their free time. Thus, the variety of responses were grouped into different categories, fundamentally, they were responding to a classification which brought together digital entertainment (“television and radio” and “digital entertainment”), sports activities (“sport and physical activity”), leisure in the nature (“tourism

and hiking”), cultural activities (“cultural activities or hobbies”), recreational (“parties and celebrations”, “games [that were not on the computer]”), and regarding social relations (“associations and volunteer work”, “being with their family, partner or friends”), as well as “other responses”.

The data<sup>1</sup> reveals that the practice of sports, being with family, partner and/or friends, and participating in cultural activities or enjoying their particular hobbies, become activities in which young people in foster care and formerly in foster care occupy most of their free time, compared to others (associations, tourism, etc.) which have a more residual presence in their daily life. Some activities in whose background a motivation to promote social relations can be hidden. Nonetheless, and perhaps as was to be expected in this group, the physical-sport activities are –by far– what they do the most in their leisure time (62%); with football (mainly boys) and going to the gym (both sexes) being the activities most in demand (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Leisure activities practiced by young people in foster care and formerly in foster care (%)**

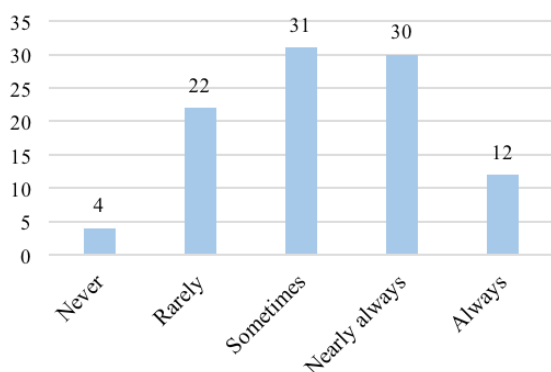
However, beyond practicing sport and caring for their health through exercise, the boys and girls of this age group indicate that they like to spend their free time “with their family, partner and friends” (36%), although it is more usual to be sharing these periods with their friends. Some young people that –most likely– share tastes and hobbies, so enjoy “cultural activities and hobbies” becomes the third most demanded option (26%), with music being the preferred option.

These ludic initiatives are far from those more directly linked with the enjoyment of leisure in nature (tourism and excursions, 1%), associations and volunteering (1%) or the games that are not computer (2%), where the percentage values are absolutely residual.

However, the fact that the young people carry out these activities does not mean that they are of their total preference; but –from among their possibilities– they choose those that are most appealing for them to carry out. This explains why

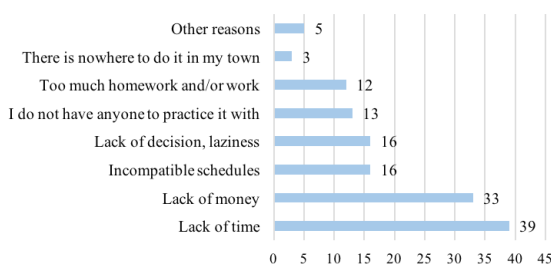


only 12% “always” carries out all the activities, compared to 30% that do them “almost always” or the 31% that indicates to doing them “sometimes” (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Do you do all the leisure activities that you like?%**

On inquiring into the reasons that motivate young people in foster care and formerly in foster care not to carry out all the activities they like in their free time, it is clear that the lack of “time” (39%) and of “money” (33%) are the reasons to use to justify their abstention. To this lack of time is also linked the incompatibility of time with their training-work responsibilities and with the times and pace of the centers in which the undertake their daily life, as well as the homework and/or work overload, making it difficult for conciliation and complicating their realization; two circumstances that affect, respectively, 16% and 12% of the total. However, the reasons that these young people have for not carrying out these activities fall mainly on external factors, while some internal and/or more personal factors such as the “lack of decision, laziness” (16%) or the “not having to do it” (13%) also determine their daily practice (see Figure 3).

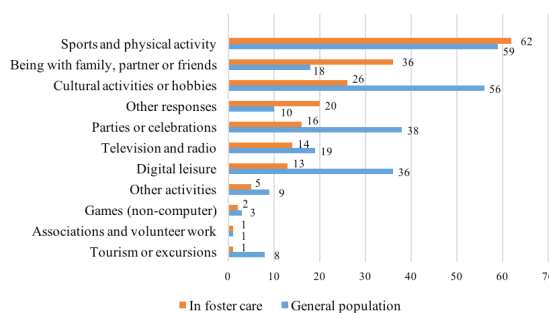


**Figure 3. Reasons why they do not do all the leisure activities that they enjoy (%)**

**b) Leisure activities carried out by young people that do not live or have not lived in an institution from a comparative perspective with the boys and girls in foster care/formerly in foster care.**

With the intention of portraying the reality with which young people in foster care spend their leisure time every day, it is necessary to contrast it with that do not live –or have not lived– in foster care under the Public Administration, to check if these practices are similar and in which aspects they differ fundamentally from those carried out by the boys and girls of the same age.

As well, and considering that in order to indicate a number of activities the percentage does not refer to 100%, the result shows notable differences with respect to the leisure activities practiced by some (in foster care and formerly in foster care) and others (young people of the same age who have never been institutionalized) (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Leisure activities practiced (%)**

The physical-sporting practice is the activity which both groups of young people most favor in their free time, regardless of the status of being in foster care or not. However, the most notable differences can be seen in other types of sporting practices that are more relational, such as for example enjoying their free time with their family and/or friends. In this sense, for young people in foster care it is essential to share time with their family, partner or friends (36%, with a significant difference of  $\chi^2=24.239$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), perhaps because life in a center makes it difficult to spend free time with those closest to them; a circumstance that is not as a determinant (18%) for those other young people who live daily with their families and/or friends.

Their status as foster care or formerly in foster care also conditions the participation in other activities; thus, these young people choose with a difference of 29 percentage points ( $\chi^2= 44.648$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) compared to those who have never lived under the foster care of the Public Administration

to participate in certain cultural initiatives or to carry out their personal hobbies; this is the category that includes the third highest percentage value of those identified by boys and girls in foster care and formerly in foster care, however, certain aspects related to the institutionalization (rules of the center, time restrictions, economic resources, etc.) determine the time for carrying them out, hence, when it is possible, they choose these types of activities. The same happens with parties and celebrations, as the young people who have never lived in care centers are the ones who come more often to this type of event (38%,  $\chi^2_1 = 26.195$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); as well as enjoying digital entertainment (36%,  $\chi^2_1 = 31.215$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) compared to other types of leisure activities.

As happened with the leisure practices of young people in foster care and formerly in foster care, tourism and/or hiking ( $\chi^2_1 = 8.048$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) as well as the activities related to associations and volunteer work those which the youth of this age group least undertake. In the case of those who are or have been in foster care under the Administration, perhaps, as mentioned previously, the lack of money will motivate the few moments that indicate devoted to tourism; and the lack of time can hide the reason for not participating in activities related to associations and volunteer work.

#### 4. Discussion

The data presented show that the young people in foster care/formerly in foster care like those who have not lived institutionalized carry out virtually the same leisure activities; although there are significant differences between both groups with respect to the practice and frequency with which they carry out some of them.

Therefore, and even though the activities that these young people do in their free time are varied, sports and physical exercise are converted into the activity that mainly occupies their leisure time regardless of whether or not they are under care in a center for juveniles; because they believe it brings satisfaction, enjoyment and fun, followed by an improvement of the physical shape and condition, and, thirdly, the increase of their interpersonal relationships (Valdemoros, Ponce de León & Gradaille, 2016). It is therefore an activity whose practice transcends that which is merely to do with sports and health care, since it favors social interactions and becomes a strategy to encourage the discipline and the assumption of rules and responsibilities; as has been reflected -for many years- by various authors that emphasize the importance of physical-sporting practice in foster care and reform centers (Petrus, 1999), in

extra-curricular contexts (Fraguela, Varela, Caride & Lera, 2010) or, in general, in human development (Valdemoros, Ponce de León & Gradaille, 2016).

In this regard, Pelegrín, Garcés de Los Fayos and Cantón (2010) assert that the boys and girls who practice sports manifest behaviors that are more outgoing, sensitive and respectful towards people, in addition to presenting greater compliance with rules, self-control, security and confidence in themselves; some attitudes that decrease the risk of developing aggressive and deviant behaviors.

Similarly, research carried out with young people under protection and reform of the administration (Fernández-Simo & Cid, 2017) shows the opportunities offered by sport for their development, it was found that sports activities favor -among other positive aspects- the "natural" configuration of pro-social support networks and the acquisition of skills for the transition to adult life; hence sports practices should be considered as an opportunity and pedagogical strategy of particular relevance.

In this paper, sport is the activity that the young participants listed in a higher percentage. Although its frequency or the motivations that determine its realization have not been delved into, they may only do so due to the physical-sport dimension without being really aware of the benefits of its daily practice. In any case, sport practiced on a regular basis -in generating a greater degree of involvement, commitment and attachment- favors more intense and satisfying experiences.

The research undertaken by Monteagudo (2016) confirms that family and the group of friends can have a determining role in the practice of sport, both due to the social support they provide at the beginning of this type of activity, such as the support they offer in the continuity and regularity of its development.

Outside sport, enjoying time with family and friends is an activity that virtually no young person in foster care or formerly in foster care wants to give up. This is what authors such as Montserrat and Casas (2012) confirm; when they indicate that minors who were in the protection system spent their free time with their friends and performed the same leisure activities as the boys and girls of their age.

In essence, we refer to a form of "being" and "enjoying leisure" as an experience that promotes a sense of identity and belonging, and that consists of sharing time and space with the peer group (Uceda-Maza, Navarro-Pérez & Pérez-Cosín, 2014). In this sense, it should be noted that friends favor the intergroup confidence and self-esteem through the development of social

skills, impacting positively on the development of people; but they can also lead to deviant and unhealthy behavior, leading to situations of risk and/or social exclusion (Pérez Serrano, Fernández García & Poza Vilches, 2015).

All this explains that participation in structured leisure activities is a factor of prevention and protection from risk behaviors, in finding some correlation between the criminal trajectories (initial, moderate or consolidated) of adolescents in conflict with the law and the type of leisure activities (unstructured or wandering the streets, scheduled and solitary). Thus, as criminal behavior increases, the tendency to unstructured leisure is in a majority, while the predisposition to scheduled leisure and solitary leisure is less and, in general, is similar in the three profiles of adolescents in conflict with the law (Uceda-Maza, Navarro-Pérez & Pérez-Cosín, 2014).

In relation to cultural activities and hobbies there are significant differences between the young people in foster care/formerly in foster care and the boys and girls who are not, with the latter presenting a greater percentage value. In this sense, Ferreira, Pose and De Valenzuela (2015) note that age is a determining variable in the practice of a pedagogically active, creative and formative leisure; so that the younger the young people are the greater the frequency with which they carry out artistic, ludic and recreational activities is and going to bars and spaces of minor diversion, as this increases with age. With all this, we shall not go into the variable age here, but in the fact that young people that are institutionalized or not, in spite of the relevance this has in their daily realities.

Another of the activities linked to the free time of adolescents and young people is related with digital entertainment; a trend that has not only transformed the type of activities that youth usually undertakes, but that has changed the way of understanding and carrying them out. A few practices which, in the post-modern society in which we are immersed, are based on the immediacy of information, the culture of entertainment, make public that which is private, in the accommodation of these small fragments of leisure to the different social times that make up everyday life, etc., awarding and adding value to the fact of being connected to a network and virtual space. A new culture of virtuality that has resulted from the fear of disconnection, boredom, isolation and loneliness (Turkle, 2012).

Perhaps these arguments explain that young people increasingly make use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), since, in addition to using them to communicate and entertain,

they favor socialization and social inclusion, they serve to achieve a certain social recognition (status) and prevent isolation (Martínez-Gras & Espinar, 2012). Therefore, for these young people, social networks constitute a “way of life” that facilitates communication and social integration, in addition to constituting spaces of learning and training that serve to strengthen their social skills and increase their social network.

However, this practice has resulted in serious cracks in family dynamics, since adolescents spend more time connected to virtual environments than interacting in person with other people. Therefore, other studies (Valdemoros, Sanz & Ponce de León, 2017) show that a lower digital consumption digital in children is related to families that have a greater strength in the emotional bonding between their members; so that an abuse of this tool could be detrimental to family life. Hence, it is necessary to develop educational actions aimed at the acquisition of skills for their correct and responsible use (Pérez Serrano, Fernández García & Poza Vilches, 2015), as well as training of the parents on the digital world (Fernández-Montalvo, Peñalva & Irazabal, 2015).

If the reasons that determine which young people in foster care/formerly in foster care do not carry out all the leisure activities that they would like to, the data reveals the difficulty of balancing their activities with their study and work times (mainly as they get older) and economic problems (Montserrat & Casas, 2012), as the most pressing factors. However, the “lack of money” is –in many cases– a determining factor, since a part of the entertainment “revolves around consumption and therefore its accessibility is a key factor of social inclusion and belonging” (Uceda-Maza, Navarro-Pérez & Pérez-Cosín, 2014, p. 54). However, the measures of an economic crisis such as the one that has been experienced in the last decade and new forms of leisure have put into context this issue, because, when leisure means excessive spending– young people seek cheaper alternatives such as the practice of sports and going for a walk with friends compared to other types of activities that mean a higher economic outlay.

## 5. Conclusions

On the basis of a conceptualization of leisure that emphasizes its consideration as an experience where “demands or expectations are met for rest, intellectual and moral culture, strengthening of self-esteem, adaptation and integration into the group dynamics, interaction with the physical and cultural environment, for recreational tourism, cooperation and solidarity, etc.” (Caride, 2014, p.

43), these temporary fragments that occur in the everyday life of the young people acquire special relevance. But not only because of the enriching elements that favor their personal development, but also by the perception that exists in the imagination of society with regard to the manifestations of harmful youth leisure. Hence, it is necessary to promote

education on, for and of leisure, in order to promote enriching experiences that respond not only to the demands and aspirations of youth but to the new social realities they face, in order to motivate them as well as to generate the knowledge necessary to achieve greater autonomy that allows them to draw a better future (Gradaílle, Varela & De Valenzuela, 2016, p. 60).

So, in response to the diversity and complexity that characterize the contexts from which they come and in those young people in situation of social difficulty carry out their everyday life, these educational initiatives and processes must be flexible (Melendro, García-Castilla & Goig, 2015). The participation and involvement of young people in the organization, choice and/or development of the leisure activities they carry out constitutes a fundamental area, since they must be freely chosen without being mediated by the interest of adults, even where youth are in foster care under the Public Administrations.

We refer to leisure experiences or practices that must be “created” and self-managed by the people who are involved in them, favoring the establishment of times and spaces that transcend to other social areas. To do this, it is necessary that young people -in foster care and those that are not-, learn to combine the dimensions of *being* and *feeling* with regards to leisure activities. In this regard, the first refers to the identity, to aspects inherent to the person, and the second refers to a temporary and transitory situation; a few nuances that substantially change the meaning and significance that these activities have in the daily life of the people.

In the final analysis, to promote educational initiatives linked to the leisure activities of young people becomes a complicated task, as exciting as it is challenging. They are often experiences or initiatives that move away from the educational and relational dimension to settle in practices that occupy the free time of young people without a greater purpose than to fill a temporary void. An issue that is much more worrisome when we speak of young people in situation of vulnerability that are going onto adult life. Hence the importance of emphasizing a socio-educational

action-intervention to avoid making the integral development of future generations of young people who have to go through similar situations and that contribute to the construction of a truly sustainable and caring society (Melendro, Rodríguez Bravo, González Olivares & De Juanas, 2013).

In the *Charter for Leisure Education*, drawn up in one of his first versions by the World Leisure and Recreation Association (WLRA) and published by the Institute of Leisure Studies, now two decades ago (Gorbeña, González & Lázaro, 1997), it was stated that one of the main purposes of leisure lies in its educational potential, so as to contribute to the development of values, attitudes, knowledge and skills that will enable all persons, regardless of age, to feel more confident and gain greater enjoyment and satisfaction in life. It is no small matter for Social Pedagogy and all educations that it enables, or for public policy, international agencies and Administrations (State, Regional and Local authorities, in the Spanish case), if we really want to contribute to the education of these young people being fully aware of their civic rights and responsibilities: young people called to be fully involved in the construction of a society that recognizes their full potential, expanding their opportunities to lead their lives for a more just and equitable future, overcoming the adversities of a past of foster care and/or dependent on the decisions that deprived them of the gift of choice.

The *Manifiesto por un ocio valioso para el desarrollo humano* (Manifest for a valuable leisure for human development), promoted by the Institute of Leisure Studies within the framework of the celebration of its 25th anniversary, thus reflects it, on the basis of the research, experience and knowledge acquired during these years, in which the *Red OcioGune* (OcioGune Network) has also collaborated, in which research groups integrate into the Leisure Studies of different Spanish Universities. A manifest that as well as having an impact on the promotion of values, capacity development, the protection of cultural diversity, the promotion of the welfare or the guarantee of conviviality claimed the need for a “valuable leisure able to empower individuals and communities” (Cuenca, 2014, p. 481). A empowerment -the manifest insists- that “requires the convergence of political and educational actions aimed at encouraging the co-creation and sharing through leisure”, ensuring the “universality of access to ICT and digital literacy, which have made possible the creation of a leisure without the traditional temporal leisure barriers”; among other things, it must be said, those that in the space and time have also imposed measures for foster care for young people who have “gone through” them.

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## Note

- <sup>1</sup> The sum of the percentages that we reflect does not come to 100%, since each person could indicate a total of three activities.

## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

De Valenzuela, A., Gradaílle, R., & Caride, J.A. (2018). Las prácticas de ocio y su educación en los procesos de inclusión social: un estudio comparado con jóvenes (ex)tutelados en Cataluña, Galicia y Madrid. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 33-46. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.03

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## SPORTS LEISURE IN POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE: PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND ORGANIZATION OF PRACTICE

OCIO DEPORTIVO EN JÓVENES POTENCIALMENTE VULNERABLES:  
BENEFICIOS PERCIBIDOS Y ORGANIZACIÓN DE LA PRÁCTICA

JUVENTUDE DESPORTOS DE LAZER POTENCIALMENTE VULNERÁVEIS:  
PERCEBIDA BENEFÍCIOS E ORGANIZAÇÃO DE PRÁTICA

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Received date: 27.VII.2017

Reviewed date: 18.IX.2017

Accepted date: 26.IX.2017

### KEY WORDS:

youth  
sports  
leisure time  
physical activities  
socialization

**ABSTRACT:** The acquisition of a frequent sports leisure practice is one of the objectives that our society must achieve in order to ensure proper health and an improvement of life quality of young people. In turn, sport leisure practices are considered a frontline tool to foster socialization of potentially vulnerable young people. This study examined the effect of vulnerability in sports leisure habits in young people; in their preferences of physical and sporting practices through an organized or autonomous way; and finally, in the perceptions of the benefits that these practices entail. For this purpose, a quantitative research design was conducted, administering an *ad hoc* questionnaire to a sample of 2694 post-obligatory and non-university students in Spain; 785 of them were labelled as students at potential risk of vulnerability. The results revealed the existing differences between potentially vulnerable

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FUNDS: The present study results from the following research projects: <<De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: la construcción cotidiana de la condición juvenil en una sociedad de redes. Problemáticas específicas y alternativas pedagógico-sociales>> (Coordinated Project EDU 2012-39080-Co7-00) and subprojects: <<De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: la construcción cotidiana de la condición juvenil en una sociedad de redes: Problemáticas específicas y alternativas pedagógico-sociales>> (EDU 2012-39080-Co7-01) and <<De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: Ocio, formación y empleo de los jóvenes en dificultad social>> (EDU 2012-39080-Co7-07), cofinanced within the framework of the National Plan R&D&I assisted by the Minister of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, 2007-2013).

<<Educar el ocio: realidades y perspectivas en clave intergeneracional, integral e Inclusiva en una sociedad de redes>> (Project EDU 2015-65638-C6-1-R), funded within the framework of the National Plan R&D&I, assisted by the Minister of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness.



	<p>and non-vulnerable young people regarding sports leisure practices. The population at risk of vulnerability displayed less active leisure habits than the rest. Likewise, it was found that vulnerable youth had a greater tendency to practice sports leisure activities in an autonomous way, unlike non-vulnerable young individuals, who preferred an organized practice. Similarly, potentially vulnerable young people obtained fewer benefits from sports leisure activities than non-vulnerable ones. The results proved the need to implement structured socio-educational interventions in order to promote sports leisure practices among the most vulnerable young people.</p>
<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b>                  juventud                  deportes                  tiempo de ocio                  actividades físicas                  socialización</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> La adquisición de un ocio físico deportivo habitual es uno de los objetivos que debe conseguir nuestra sociedad para lograr que nuestros jóvenes tengan una salud adecuada y mejoren su calidad de vida. A su vez, la práctica de ocio deportivo es reconocida como una herramienta de primer orden para lograr la socialización de los jóvenes potencialmente vulnerables. Este estudio analizó la incidencia de la vulnerabilidad en los hábitos de ocio deportivos de los jóvenes; en sus preferencias de práctica físico deportiva de forma estructurada o libre; y, finalmente, en la percepción sobre los beneficios que conlleva esta práctica. Para ello se realizó un diseño de investigación cuantitativo en el que se aplicó un cuestionario elaborado <i>ad hoc</i> a un total de 2694 estudiantes españoles de Educación Post-obligatoria no universitaria, de los que 785 fueron considerados como participantes en potencial riesgo de vulnerabilidad. Los resultados revelaron que existen diferencias entre los jóvenes potencialmente vulnerables y no vulnerables en cuanto a la práctica de actividades de ocio deportivo. La población en riesgo de vulnerabilidad manifestó hábitos de ocio menos activos que los no vulnerables. Asimismo, se encontró que los jóvenes vulnerables tenían una mayor tendencia a la práctica de ocio deportivo por su cuenta, frente a los no vulnerables que preferían realizar deporte de forma organizada. De la misma forma, los jóvenes potencialmente vulnerables percibieron menores beneficios de la práctica deportiva que los no vulnerables. De los resultados se deriva la necesidad de aplicar actuaciones socioeducativas estructuradas para promocionar la práctica de ocio deportivo entre los jóvenes más vulnerables.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b>                  juventude                  desporto                  tempo de lazer                  atividades físicas                  socialização</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> A aquisição de hábitos de lazer na atividade física e desportiva é um dos objetivos da nossa sociedade para que os nossos jovens tenham uma saúde adequada e uma melhor qualidade de vida. Por sua vez, a prática desportiva como lazer é reconhecida como uma ferramenta fundamental para desenvolver a socialização dos jovens potencialmente vulneráveis. Este estudo pretende analisar a incidência da vulnerabilidade nos hábitos de lazer desportivo dos jovens; na sua preferência na realização das atividades físicas e desportivas de forma estruturada e livre; e, finalmente, na percepção sobre os benefícios que advém da prática desportiva. Para isso, realizou-se um desenho de investigação quantitativo em que se aplicou um questionário elaborado <i>ad hoc</i> a um total de 2694 estudantes espanhóis de Educação Pós-obrigatória não universitária. Da totalidade dos participantes, 785 foram considerados como potenciais risco de vulnerabilidade. Os resultados revelam que existem diferenças entre os jovens potencialmente vulneráveis e não vulneráveis no que respeita à prática de atividades de lazer desportivo. Evidencia-se que os participantes de risco vulnerável manifestam hábitos de lazer desportivo menos ativo do que os não vulneráveis. Ainda, os jovens vulneráveis têm maior tendência para a prática de lazer desportivo, enquanto os não vulneráveis preferem realizar atividades desportivas de forma organizada. Da mesma forma, os jovens vulneráveis percebem menores benefícios da prática desportiva quando comparados aos não vulneráveis. Os resultados obtidos apresentam a necessidade de aplicar estratégias socioeducativas estruturadas para promover a prática de desporto como lazer entre os jovens mais vulneráveis.</p>

**1. Introduction**

In our current society, lifestyles of people are closely related to the use of their spare time. The enjoyment of these periods of time is a basic and individual right that must be ensured and promoted for all citizens (Cuenca, 2014). Among young people, sedentary activities related to the use of technological devices are becoming increasingly widespread. The rise of communication technologies as means of personal entertainment is gaining prominence among individuals of new generations, the so-called digital natives, at the expense of other forms of leisure (Melendro,

García-Castilla, & Goig, 2016; Valdemoros, Sanz, & Ponce de León, 2017). This rapid change towards sedentary lifestyles places daily physical activity levels of Spanish population below the recommendations of the World Health Organization (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad, 2014), being considered as one of the major risk factors closely linked to increased obesity, diabetes, hypertension and other non-communicable diseases (Sotomayor, Aquino, Jiménez, & Trejo, 2014).

Facing passive leisure, sports leisure practices are presented as a considerable power of attraction among young people in our society. It should

not be forgotten that sports spread among youth population as social entertainment under the influence of mass media (Gómez, Puig, & Maza, 2009). The media contributes to the promotion of sporting models based on high performance, becoming the lure for many young people deciding to begin with the practice of sporting activities.

Sports leisure practices have become gradually popular because of the benefits associated to the promotion and maintenance of bodily health; however, in recent times, sportive physical activity practices related to image enhancement have increased significantly, especially among girls (Olive, Byrne, Cunningham, & Telford, 2012; Valdemoros, Sanz, & Ponce de León, 2012). This concern over body image stands out as one of the main reasons to practice sportive physical activities along with vital satisfaction per se and the fun related to this type of leisure (Zullig & White, 2011; Pedisic, Greblo, Phongsaban, Milton, & Bauman, 2015; Ahedo & Macua, 2016; Fraguera, Varela, & Sanz, 2016).

Sports leisure has other benefits that are less visible for young people, but especially relevant from a social perspective. This way, sports have a great potential for integration, promote communication and interaction among people of different nationalities and cultures (Consejo Superior de Deportes, 2010) and enables socialization processes in youth environments (Gutiérrez del Pozo, 2011). Sports activities have been traditionally used as a resource for the prevention of antisocial behavior, favoring the adoption of responsibilities, decision-making and resilience (Hellison, 2011). Therefore, sports leisure practices among potentially vulnerable young people are considered a tool for development and integration in different social contexts (Spaaij, 2009; Haudenhuyse 2013; Fernández-García, Poza-Vilches, & Fiorucci, 2015; López-Noguero, Sarrate, & Lebrero, 2016). Thus, Martínez (2016) underlined the importance of sports habits in vulnerable youth by associating them with health care, socialization and affective-social containment. In the same vein, Chalip and Hutchinson (2016) emphasized the need to propose sports activities focused on the development of social skills in this population.

Despite the studies reviewed, very few of them compare sports leisure practices of potentially vulnerable young people and non-vulnerable individuals. Data from the Survey of Sporting Habits in Spain 2010 inform that, despite the trend of the past few years showing that sports leisure of the youth population in general has increased its presence in our society, a relevant decrease among young individuals without schooling or with a low socioeconomic status has been identified. Likewise, regarding the organization of

sports practice, there seems to be a widespread increase of non-organized practice among young people between 15 and 24 years old. Sports leisure (either through free or organized practices) is a factor to take into account, given that it affects the adherence to sportive physical activities and its benefits among our young people (Ahedo & Macua, 2016). This way, during youth, the practice of organized leisure activities enhances social relations and contributes to the consolidation of sports habits in adulthood (Ransdell, Vener, & Sell, 2004), while self-management of sports leisure activities improves intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of young people (Lazcano-Quintana & Caballo-Villar, 2016).

## 2. Justification and objectives

This study responds to partial results of a large network research on leisure time of young people. Regarding leisure during youth, social dimension of sportive physical activities goes beyond the promotion of feelings of belonging and participation. Sports are considered a tool which contributes to social cohesion and inclusion of vulnerable young people (Comisión Europea, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the study of sports leisure habits of potentially vulnerable young people and investigate the existing differences between them and non-vulnerable young people. For the present paper, three objectives are defined. The first goal is to describe sports leisure habits of young people at risk of vulnerability and non-vulnerable young people. The second one is to analyze the preferences of potentially vulnerable and non-vulnerable young individuals when performing sports leisure activities in an organized or autonomous way. Finally, the third aim is to examine whether the perception of the benefits from sportive physical leisure for vulnerable youth follows a similar pattern to that of their non-vulnerable peers.

## 3. Methodology

This research has followed a quantitative methodological process within the framework of a coordinated network project conducted by seven Spanish universities. This transversal study has worked with a descriptive, inferential and ex post facto design. For this work, sports leisure choices of potentially vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people have been explored. Likewise, the goals mentioned in the previous epigraph lead to the two hypothesis guiding this study, which are presented below. The first hypothesis is that the variable vulnerability makes a difference in the preference of organized sports practices. The

second one considers that the variable vulnerability may influence the perception of the benefits from sportive physical leisure activities.

### 3.1. Participants

In order to select participants, a probabilistic stratified sampling using proportionate allocation

was performed, establishing as a territorial reference the Nielsen areas and, within them, type of educational center, gender and grade. A total of 2694 post-obligatory and non-university students participated. Participation was high, ensuring the representativeness of the sample with a 1.9% margin of error and a confidence level of 95%:

Age $\bar{X}$ (DT)	Gender (%)	Vulnerability (%)	Type of centre (%)	Area' (%)
19.15 (1.57)	Boy (51.3) Girl (48.7)	Yes (29.1) No (70.9)	Public school (78.6) Secular private school (4.5) Religious private school (16.9)	Northwest (17.6) East (12.8) South (28.4) Centre (22) Northeast (11.2) North (8)
Source: Own elaboration.				

### 3.2. Instruments

An *ad hoc* questionnaire on the organization of academic and leisure time was prepared. This article shows the results for the following variables, corresponding to description of students, free time and health and quality of life in the blocks of the questionnaire:

**Vulnerability:** in order to study vulnerable youth, a variable was created according to the following criteria:

- **Studies:** All the students of Initial Professional Qualification Programs (PCPI) and Basic Vocational Training (FPB) were included.
- **Household income:** students belonging to family units presenting incomes at or below five hundred euros were selected.
- **Family situation:** the situations chosen displayed students having no mother or father, being in foster care or categorized as 'others' (because they do not fit into any of the most common family types).
- **Professional status of parents:** cases of unemployed parents or cases where at least one of them was unemployed and the other stayed at home performing household chores were included, as well as those situations in which the student only had a single parent who was unemployed or stayed at home performing household chores.
- **Educational level of parents:** cases in which none of the parents had completed studies (or the person with whom the student lived in the cases of a single parent) were included.
- **Average grade:** all students with an average grade inferior to 5 were included.

- **Family satisfaction:** all cases of students who were little or no satisfied with their family life (presenting values of 1 or 2 out of a maximum value of 5) were included.

Once the cases that met at least one of the criteria were selected, we obtained a population of 785 individuals at potential risk of vulnerability (29.1% of the total sample).

**Sports leisure (among the three most important leisure activities):** participants were asked to indicate their most important leisure activity of a list of 49 possibilities. These activities were grouped into nine categories: *television and radio, digital leisure, sports and physical activities, tourism and hiking, cultural activities, parties / celebrations, games (other than computer games), associations and volunteering and other activities.* Based on the results of these three variables, the variable *sports leisure* is created with the following categories: *none, one activity, two activities and three activities* (depending on the number of times that a sport and physical activity has been pointed out as one of the three most important leisure activities).

**Perceived benefits:** Young people indicated the main benefits obtained when they practiced their most significant leisure activities, namely: *fitness improvement, fun, learning-creation, skills development and socialization.* Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, they valued the level of agreement on the existence of these five benefits. In cases where youth performed more than one sports leisure activity, the arithmetic mean was calculated for each benefit. For example, regarding the improvement of physical fitness, if a student rated

one activity with 4 and another with 2, his or her overall sports leisure experience concerning this specific benefit was rated with 3.

*Organization of practice*: the survey specified whether they performed the activities *freely* (independent practice), in an *organized way* or *both*. In the case of a student performing more than one sports leisure activity, the variable was recoded according to the organizational modalities of the different activities. This way, for example, if a student practiced a sport freely and another one in an organized practice, the final way to describe the organization of the sports leisure was *both* (organizational types).

### 3.3. Procedure

Two researchers went to each school to implement the questionnaires in classrooms. Young students participated in the research anonymously and voluntarily, with parental consent and authorization from the management teams of each center, being appropriately informed of the objectives of the research. Field work was carried out during the academic year 2015-2016.

### 3.4. Data analysis

A descriptive and inferential analysis was performed. For the descriptions of participation in sports leisure, organization and perceived benefits, frequency analysis and measures of central tendency were used. The *Mann-Whitney U* test was used to value the effect of the vulnerability factor on variables related to the benefits of sports leisure. The same test was made with the variables *sports leisure* and *practice organization* through *Pearson's chi-squared* test.

For the statistical treatment of the data, SPSS 22.0 software was used. As in most investigations using this design, it is not possible to establish causal relationships between dependent and independent variables.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sports leisure and vulnerability

As shown below, Figure 1, more than half of young people in Spain list some kind of sportive physical activity among their three main leisure activities. In the list of 9 means of entertainment studied (electronics, culture, sports, celebrations, etc.), sports leisure is by far the activity most practiced activity. Despite that, almost 45% of participants do not practice any sportive physical activity during their free time.

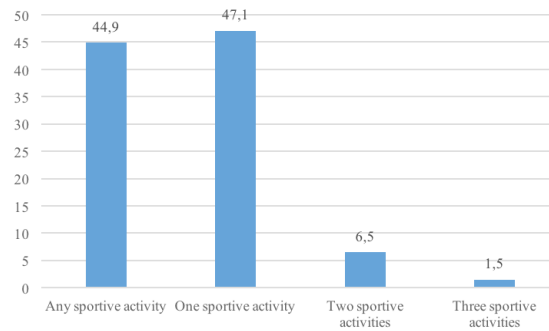


Figure 1. Sports leisure in young people in Spain

Next, we highlight the differences between vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people regarding the practice of sports leisure activities. People at risk of vulnerability have less active leisure habits than their peers. They tend to choose sports leisure among their three main leisure activities to a lesser extent, unlike non-vulnerable young people (*Chi-square* = 24.428,  $p < .01$ ). Figure 2 studies the difference between both groups of people regarding their leisure preferences. The analysis of adjusted standardized residuals indicates that the greatest differences between both groups emerge in the categories *any sportive activity* and *one sportive activity*.

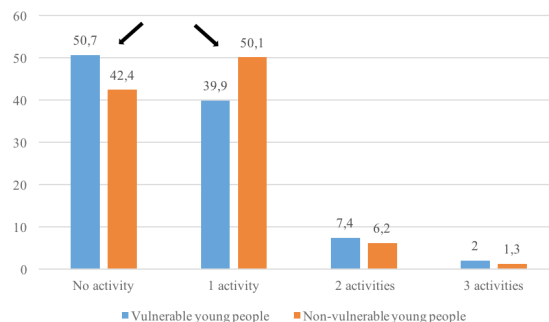


Figure 2. Sports leisure activities and vulnerability

Vulnerable youth tend not to practice any sportive activity in their free time to a greater extent than their peers, whereas the opposite happens in the category *one activity*.

With regard to young people presenting 2 or 3 sportive activities among their top three favorite leisure activities, we find a similar behavior in both groups. It seems that sports leisure is the main reference for a minority of young people –vulnerable and non-vulnerable– (8% of the sample and 14.5% of those who practice some sportive leisure activity) whose leisure interests are mainly or exclusively sportive.

### 4.2. Sports leisure organization and vulnerability

In the following analysis we will exclusively focus on the part of the sample who actually practices sportive physical activities in their free time (55.1%, 1486 youngsters). Young people practice sports leisure activities mainly in an organized way in clubs, associations, etc. (42.6%). The second option is to practice it autonomously (34%) and, finally, 23.4% combines both. The variable vulnerability makes a big difference in the organization of sports leisure activities (*Chi-square* = 11.135,  $p < .01$ ). Vulnerable young people have a greater tendency towards autonomous sport practice than non-vulnerable people, who clearly prefer to practice sports in an organized manner (figure 3). The analysis of adjusted standardized residuals indicates that the greatest differences between both groups of people are found in categories *independent practice* and *organized practice*. Behavior in category *both* is almost identical in both groups.

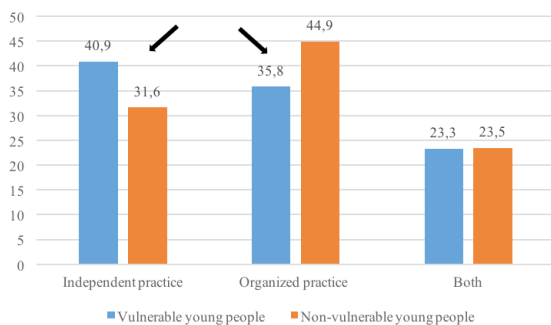


Figure 3. Sports leisure organization and vulnerability

The profile of sportive practice in vulnerable young people tends to be more individual and

less structured, in contrast with the profile of non-vulnerable youth. In the next subsection, we will study whether there is a relationship between the vulnerability and the acquisition of benefits entailed by sportive practice.

### 4.3. Sports leisure benefits

Regarding the acquisition of benefits through sports leisure practices we can point out satisfaction and an improvement of physical fitness. The relational dimension is also present among young people (Table 2).

Table 2: Benefits from sports leisure

Benefits (valores 1-5)	$\bar{x}$ (DT)
Physical fitness	4.57 (.74)
Satisfaction	4.65 (.67)
Creativity	3.55 (1.27)
Skills	4.04 (1.18)
Socialization	4.12 (1.17)

Source: Own elaboration.

Comparing the acquisition of benefits from sports leisure in potentially vulnerable youth and non-vulnerable youth, it is highlighted that almost in every case (except for creativity) potentially vulnerable young people present lower scores than non-vulnerable people. In the cases of physical fitness, satisfaction and socialization, the differences are statistically significant (Table 3).

Table 3: Benefits from sports leisure and vulnerability. Mann-Whitney U test.

	N	Vulnerable vs Non-vulnerable $\bar{x}$ (DT)	Z
Physical fitness	1330	4.47 (.83) vs 4.61 (.70)	-2.375*
Satisfaction	1317	4.56 (.76) vs 4.68 (.64)	-2.466*
Creativity	1288	3.59 (1.26) vs 3.54 (1.27)	.655
Skills	1300	3.99 (1.17) vs 4.05 (1.18)	-1.081
Socialization	1297	3.99 (1.18) vs 4.16 (1.16)	-2.732**

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$   
 SOURCE: Own elaboration.

Therefore, young people at risk of vulnerability not only practice sports to a lesser extent than non-vulnerable people, but also perceive fewer benefits from these practices.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Regarding our first target, which was to represent leisure sports habits in groups of young people at risk of vulnerability and non-vulnerable youth, the findings confirm the data provided by the Sports Statistics Yearbook (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2015) which reflects that, in the age range from 15 to 24 years old, 40% of the most vulnerable individuals claim to practice sportive physical activity. This information also agrees with the results obtained in the study by García-Castilla, De-Juanas and López-Noguero (2016), carried out with a similar sample. The description of the leisure sports habits of potentially vulnerable youth has also demonstrated that this group tends not to practice sports activities during leisure time to a larger extent, compared with individuals which are not vulnerable. To this respect, the results of the UNICEF report (2010) about well-being in rich countries in the world are confirmed. According to this study, Spain is considered one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of vigorous physical exercise activities. This report highlights that the level of practice of disadvantaged students aged 11, 13 and 15 is well below national average. In this way, regarding "vigorous physical exercise activities, the Netherlands present the lowest inequality, closely followed by Switzerland and Norway. The highest levels of inequality in the bottom end of the scale correspond to France, Italy and Spain" (UNICEF 2010, p.15). The Survey of Sporting Habits in Spain 2010, drawn up by the National Sports Council (CSD), points in that direction as well. Survey data indicate that young people aged 15 or more with no schooling or a lower socioeconomic status express a reduced interest in sports. This situation has negative implications in vulnerable young people's health, and not only at the present time, but also as a prospect of less active leisure habits in later life stages. Furthermore, if we take into consideration that these results propose the presence of sport practices in family background as an influence over the actual sport practice of individuals aged 15 or more, then young people are predisposed towards the replication of the parental model in the practice of sports leisure. Nonetheless, the incidence of this contextual and family factor in leisure sports in vulnerable young people must be further explored.

Likewise, in line with our first goal, the outcomes consider the existence of a group with great affinity for sport practices as leisure activities (people selecting two or three sporting activities among their three main entertainment preferences), group that is left out of the relation between the existence of vulnerability and sport practices. In this particular case, the behavior of individuals has been very similar regardless of their situation of vulnerability, to a point where they are considered as a homogeneous group. In this way, socioeducational interventions designed to promote practices of sports leisure among vulnerable young people should focus specifically in individuals showing a moderate interest in sports leisure (those who do not practice sport activities in their free time) since they are clearly the group displaying a greater risk of acquiring passive activities in order to fill their free time.

Concerning our second target, related to the analysis of preferences about the type of organization in sports leisure of potentially vulnerable young people as well as non-vulnerable individuals, recent studies observed a general increase of the non-organized practices in the whole youth population (Consejo Superior de Deportes, 2010; Ahedo & Macua, 2016). This trend is even sharper in the vulnerable young people segment: in our research this group is characterized by weak structure and less social engagement, given that they choose to practice sport individually. In this respect, we agree with Lazcano-Quintana and Caballo-Villar (2016) when they point out that signing up for organized sport activities involve a higher level of social commitment and influence the continuity of the practice. All of this confirms the first hypothesis in this research, since vulnerable young people participate less in sports, and those who actually practice it tend to do it on their own. This fact reflects a tendency towards a weaker relation with active leisure of this specific collective of young people. From a broader perspective, less structured practices and the lack of a sense of belonging to a group are determining factors for a higher risk of giving up sports practice in the short or medium term. In any case, there is a need for further investigation on the reasons why potentially vulnerable young people tend to carry out non-organized activities whereas the rest of young individuals do not. Particularly, it is worth examining the background variables which might be affecting the decision of practicing sports autonomously and their effects in this community.

With reference to our third aim, focused on exploring the perception of benefits from sports leisure in vulnerable young people and non-vulnerable young people, there is a trend that displays

fewer benefits from sports leisure for potentially young people than for the rest of young individuals, and mainly when we talk about the three most valued benefits at these ages. Therefore, our second hypothesis is confirmed: potentially vulnerable young people enjoy less, enhance to a lesser extent their physical fitness and do not relate with their peers through sports leisure experiences. The result of this perception has a negative impact on the continuity of sports practice, since those individuals who do not achieve benefit from an activity tend to quit easily. This would ruin the adherence of this group to sports practice and would contribute to promote social degradation, in which many of these young individuals are suffering from, because they would show interest in less healthy forms of leisure (OMS, 2013), not forgetting that it implies the cessation of other benefits granted by sports leisure, especially the

socializing potential, which promotes the development of abilities that can be transferred to all walks of life (Ramos, Ponce de León, & Sanz, 2010).

On the other side, the group of vulnerable young people shows a similar interest in the enhancement of abilities through sport and in its socializing dimension. Non-vulnerable young people for their part, even though they are also interested in the development of their abilities, consider that sport enables to a greater extent the possibilities to relate to others. This data may be suggesting a practical use of sports for vulnerable groups instead of a social use. This interpretation should be treated with caution since the differences are not great; however, we can indicate a tendency to a lesser importance of the social dimension in sports leisure in vulnerable young people, which is consistent with their lower participation in organized activities.

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## Nota

- <sup>1</sup> Although the areas are a total of 10 (Northeast, East, South, Centre, Northwest, North, Gran Canaria, Tenerife, Barcelona city and Madrid city), we decided to reduce them in order to facilitate field work and the effectiveness of the model, including Canarias in South area, Barcelona within the frame of Northeast area and Madrid in Centre.

## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Fraguela-Vale, R., De-Juanas, A., & Franco, R. (2018). Ocio deportivo en jóvenes potencialmente vulnerables: beneficios percibidos y organización de la práctica. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 47-56. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.04



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## TIME DEDICATED TO PHYSICAL-SPORTIVE LEISURE AND TIME PERSPECTIVES: REVEALING/CONCEALING VULNERABILITIES

### TIEMPOS DEDICADOS AL OCIO FÍSICO-DEPORTIVO Y PERSPECTIVAS TEMPORALES: (RE)VELANDO VULNERABILIDADES

### TEMPOS DEDICADOS AO LAZER FÍSICO-DESPORTIVO E PERSPECTIVAS TEMPORAIS: REVELANDO / OCULTANDO VULNERABILIDADES

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Received date: 26.VII.2017

Reviewed date: 14.IX.2017

Accepted date: 15.XI.2017

#### KEY WORDS:

leisure  
physical-sportive  
leisure  
time perspective  
leisure experience  
time budget

**ABSTRACT:** Leisure is one of the activities that contribute the most to the integral development of youth, but it can also be a source of problems. This ambivalence may be the result of the temporal intensity with which certain leisure activities are or are not practiced; and also, the person's subjective ratings of the activity. Based on these ideas, the relations between two conceptions of temporality - time spent and time perspective - and the experience of leisure in daily life - specifically, the perceptions of one's freedom of choice and satisfaction - are analyzed with regards to physical-sportive leisure. The participants were 147 young people (63 girls and 84 boys) aged between 18 and 24 years ( $M = 21.18$  years,  $SD = 2.00$ ). The information was collected with two instruments: an ad hoc questionnaire akin to the Time Budget and the Time Perspective Inventory). The results indicate that the time spent and the weekly frequency of physical-sports leisure are adequate, with differences between girls and boys - favoring the boys - with regard to the dedication to this activity. The time perspective is characterized by being predominantly positive, having the girls lower values in the negative past compared to that of boys. The inter-influences between one's freedom of choice and the satisfaction felt about physical-sport leisure, as well as the positive aspects of the time perspective, give support to the need of studying leisure as a way of behaving in one's free time, which is related to certain positive attitudes about the past, the present, and the future. In a broader sense, the above-mentioned inter-influences open new perspectives that could shed light on the vulnerabilities that can leisure may reveal/conceal.

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<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> ocio ocio físico-deportivo perspectiva temporal experiencia de ocio presupuesto de tiempo</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> El ocio es una de las actividades que más contribuyen con el desarrollo integral de la juventud, pero también puede ser fuente de problemas. Esta ambivalencia puede derivarse de las intensidades temporales con las que se practican o no ciertos ocios; y, asimismo, de las valoraciones personales que hace la propia persona de la actividad. Con base en estas ideas se analizan, en el contexto del ocio físico-deportivo, las relaciones entre dos concepciones de la temporalidad –tiempo invertido y perspectiva temporal– y la experiencia del dicho ocio en la cotidianidad –específicamente, la elección propia y la satisfacción percibidas. Los participantes fueron 147 jóvenes (63 chicas y 84 chicos) con edades comprendidas entre 18 y 24 años (<math>M = 21,18</math> años; <math>DT = 2,00</math>). La información se recogió mediante dos instrumentos: un cuestionario ad hoc con características del Presupuesto de Tiempo y el Inventario de Perspectiva Temporal de Zimbardo (ZPTI). Los resultados indican que el tiempo invertido y la frecuencia semanal del ocio físico-deportivo son adecuados, si bien se observan diferencias entre chicas y chicos –y a favor de ellos– con respecto a la dedicación a esta actividad. Por lo que respecta a la perspectiva temporal, ésta se caracteriza por ser predominantemente positiva, observándose que las chicas presentaron menores valores en el pasado negativo con respecto a los chicos. Las interinfluencias entre la elección propia y la satisfacción experimentadas con el ocio físico-deportivo, con las vertientes positivas de las perspectivas temporales, apoyan la necesidad de estudiar el ocio como una manera de comportarse en el tiempo no comprometido –que se relaciona con determinadas actitudes positivas respecto al pasado, al presente y al futuro. En un sentido más general, las mencionadas interinfluencias abren nuevas perspectivas que podrían arrojar luz sobre las vulnerabilidades que puede (re)velar el ocio.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> lazer lazer físico-deportivo perspetiva temporal experiência de lazer gestão de tempo (time budget)</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> O lazer é uma das atividades que mais contribuem para o desenvolvimento integral da juventude, mas pode ser também uma fonte de problemas. Esta ambivalência pode derivar da conjugação do tempo e da intensidade com que se praticam ou não se praticam determinadas atividades de lazer, assim como das avaliações pessoais que cada sujeito faz da sua própria atividade. Com base nestas ideias, analisa-se, no contexto do lazer físico-desportivo, as relações entre as concepções de temporalidade –tempo investido e perspetiva temporal e a experiência desse lazer na vida quotidiana– especificamente, as percepções de liberdade de escolha e de satisfação. Os participantes foram 147 jovens (63 meninas e 84 rapazes), com idades compreendidas entre 18 e 24 anos (<math>M = 21,18</math> anos, <math>DP = 2,00</math>). A informação foi recolhida através de dois instrumentos: um questionário ad hoc para inventariação da gestão de tempo (o Time Budget) e o Inventário da Perspetiva Temporal de Zimbardo (ZPTI). Os resultados indicam que o tempo investido e a frequência semanal do lazer físico-desportivo são adequados, ainda que se observem diferenças entre meninas e rapazes –com vantagem para eles– no que respeita à dedicação ao lazer. A perspetiva do tempo é caracterizada por ser predominantemente positiva, tendo as meninas menores valores negativos no passado em comparação com os rapazes. As interinfluências entre a liberdade de escolha e a satisfação sentida com o lazer físico-desportivo, bem como os aspetos positivos da perspetiva do tempo, dão suporte à necessidade de estudar o lazer como um modo de se comportar no tempo livre –que se relaciona com determinadas atitudes positivas relativas ao passado, ao presente e ao futuro. Em sentido mais geral, as mencionadas interinfluências abrem novas perspectivas que poderão ajudar a esclarecer as vulnerabilidades que o lazer pode revelar ou ocultar.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Leisure is crucial in young people's lives since, among other things, it is an area where they have more autonomy and control than in other areas of everyday life (Barber, Abbott, Blomfield & Eccles, 2009; Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). Through leisure, young people satisfy their needs –feeling free, discovering what they are interested in, perceiving changes and ultimately, having meaningful experiences–, which can all contribute to the positive development of identity and the necessary skills for the world of work (Barber *et al.*, 2009; Coatsworth, Sharp, Palen, Darling, Cumsille & Marta, 2005; Codina, Pestana & Stebbins, 2017). There is a great deal of agreement among scholars that leisure is one of the activities that contributes most to the overall development of young people

(Caldwell & Faulk, 2013, Freire, 2013, Kleiber, 1999). However, the contribution of leisure to personal development is not always positive, which is why leisure is said to be ambivalent. It can be conducive to either the most constructive or the most pathological outcomes (Csikszentmihayi, 1993, Munné & Codina, 1996). Leisure can therefore be either a positive or a negative influence on young people's development (Coatsworth *et al.*, 2005, Darling, 2005, Mahoney, Larson & Eccles, 2005).

In addition to certain practices that can potentially make leisure either constructive or pathological (for example –and respectively–, by engaging in reading or taking drugs), leisure practices can also be defined by their temporal intensity (and by whether they are engaged in or not). Although from the perspective of leisure there is no consensus on the optimal time to be dedicated to certain

activities, from a psychological perspective, undertaking a varied range of activities is more advisable than engaging in a single leisure activity (Codina, Pestana, Castillo & Balaguer, 2016), as performing multiple leisure activities strengthens the overall development of the individual, in line with the proposals made by Kleiber (1999) and Linville (1987). The other element used to assess leisure as being either constructive or otherwise is made up of the personal assessments that an individual makes of the activity. Apart from motivation, there are two major components of the leisure experience: perception of freedom and satisfaction (among others: Codina, 1999, Csikszentmihayi, 1990, Cuenca, 2000; Gorbeña & Martínez, 2006; Neulinger, 1980). Considering these aspects, for example, ten hours a day of profound enjoyment of a video game of choice, ten hours a day of great dissatisfaction with imposed physical activity, or ten hours of daily enjoyment watching Charlie Chaplin films, are psychosocially non-constructive leisure activities, that is, they induce vulnerabilities.

Without disregarding this potential ambivalence of leisure, one of the hobbies that is deemed to be more constructive in the development of young people is that of sports activity (sports or physical activity practised regularly: Broh, 2002, Zarret, Fay, Carrano, Phelps & Lerner, 2009). There are a considerable number of studies that show the physical, psychological and social benefits of these practices (Balaguer, 2002, World Health Organization, 2010, Ponce de León Elizondo, Sanz Arazuri & Valdemoros San Emeterio, 2015; Torregrosa, Belando & Moreno-Murcia, 2014). Numerous social interventions have also been carried out based on the promotion of sports activities as a strategy to prevent or overcome vulnerable situations (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, & Nols, 2012). Without claiming to be exhaustive, there are some studies in support of these interventions that show that participation in sports activities organised by a club reduces the probability of subsequent social exclusion (Feinstein, Bynner & Duckworth, 2005), as these activities are attractive to young people from different social classes (Feinstein, *et al.*, 2005; Vanhoutte, 2007).

These studies leave no doubt about the constructive potential of the physical and sports activity in itself, but certain behaviours around this activity may weaken its qualities and/or render them pathological. Regarding the time devoted to physical and sports activity throughout the week, the World Health Organisation (2010) recommends that adults over 18 years old should devote at least 150 minutes per week to moderate

aerobic physical or sports activity (or 75 minutes if it is vigorous), whereas between 150 and 300 minutes of moderate physical or sports activity (or 150 minutes of intense activity) is considered to be optimal. While there are some young people who scarcely spend enough time performing physical and sports leisure activities to enjoy their benefits, others allocate to these activities a time bordering on the pathological. Consequently, the temporal issue may be indicative of a leisure practice that is vulnerable rather than healthy, and potentially pathological rather than constructive.

Physical and sports practice has a potentially positive or negative impact on the development of young people, depending both on the experience itself and on the time spent on it. This study assesses the relationship between the aspects involved in this practice and the temporal orientation of young people. This is a decisive aspect of life attitudes and of present and future behaviour (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and therefore, an essential variable for the scientific study of social vulnerability.

Several authors have investigated how the past, the present and the future are articulated in human behaviour (i.e., their past and its consequences: Nurmi, 1989, & Nuttin & Lens, 1985, among others). A particular concept, the Time Perspective (TP) by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), has been gaining in prominence. Conceptually, the Time Perspective or orientation is considered by most authors to be a basic aspect of individual subjective experience (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004, p.8), and a fundamental psychological process (Luyckx, Lens, Smits & Goossens, 2010, p 243). Specifically, according to Zimbardo and Boyd (*ibidem*), the TP is composed of the categories of: the past-negative, the past-positive, the present-fatalistic, the present-hedonistic and the future (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Each of these temporal dimensions may be either dominant or balanced with the rest of the categories. The optimal TP is a balanced one, or one that at least is characterised by the perspectives of past-positive, present-hedonistic and future (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004, Laghi, Baiocco, Liga, Guarino, & Baumgartner, 2013). An optimal TP must interweave present, past and future, but how these interweave both influences and is influenced by certain appropriate conditions. In this paper the optimal temporal perspective is considered to be one associated with an optimal physical and sports practice, in other words, a practice in which sufficient time is invested, while also leaving other timeslots for the performance of other leisure activities.

## 2. Rationale and objectives

Three elements give rise to the research presented in these pages. Firstly, the importance that leisure has for the young person, and whether or not a certain activity plays a constructive role. Secondly, the importance of sports and physical leisure in youth, the physical, psychological and social benefits of which can have a positive effect on the development of those who engage in the activity. And thirdly, but not least importantly, the influence of the different physical and sports leisure times, and how they contribute to positive development and, by extension, to confront the vulnerabilities that can affect young people.

From these three elements it follows that how beneficial sports and physical leisure can be for youth involves considering the temporal intensity of its practice together with the perceived experience of this leisure activity. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the relationships between two conceptions of temporality (time invested and Time Perspective) and the experience of physical and sports leisure in a sample of young people.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

A total of 147 young people (63 girls and 84 boys) aged between 18 and 24 years old participated in a study ( $M = 21.18$  years;  $SD = 2.00$ ) on the uses of time by 938 young people in Spain (for more information, see the note on research funding). This sample was obtained from an online panel according to proportional allocation, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 3.2%. The quotas used for the sample, based on the census of inhabitants of Spain as of 1 January, 2015 (INE, 2015), were sex and age (aged 18-24 years old). Taking into account the objectives set, the sample included those who had carried out a physical and/or sports activity at the time of the data collection, and the questions concerned the activities carried out on the previous day (see section 2.3 Procedure below).

### 3.2. Instruments

Two tests were used. The first consisted of an ad hoc questionnaire that was structured similarly to Neulinger's Time Budget (Neulinger, 1986) (for the suitability of this instrument in the analysis of behaviour over time, cf. Andorka, 1987; Steinbach, 2006). Specifically, it was adapted following the recent applications carried out to the context of this study (Codina, 2004, Codina & Pestana, 2016,

2017, Codina *et al.*, 2016). The questionnaire recorded the activities engaged in on the day before the questionnaire was administered.

The analytical variables of leisure recorded were based on Codina (1999): firstly, time invested (number of minutes spent performing the activity) and the weekly frequency of physical and sports leisure activities (number of times a week the activity was usually practised); and secondly, the leisure experience, which consisted of the perceptions about activities of their choice and satisfaction with those activities. The incorporation of these variables provided an overview for each activity to be placed in the context of everyday life. Time Budget can address the social desirability that underlies questions (of specific questionnaires) about activities such as, for example, reading or physical and sports activity which, while being recommendable, does not usually meet the standards advocated by international organisations; for some examples in the Spanish context, see Chillón *et al.*, 2009; Moscoso & Moyano, 2009; Varo, Martínez & Martínez González, 2003.

After completing the questionnaire, the participants completed the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI: Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), which consisted of 56 items referring to five factors: two related to the present (hedonistic, fatalistic); two related to the past (positive, negative); and one related to the future (regarding planning and perseverance with respect to the future, without distinction between positive and negative). The responses to the ZPTI were registered on a Likert-type scale with five response options (ranging from 1 = 'does not describe me at all' to 5 = 'perfectly describes me'). The adaptation to the Spanish population by Díaz-Morales was used in this case (2006, for recent uses of this instrument in relation to activities and leisure experience, see Codina & Pestana, 2016).

### 3.3. Procedure

The field work was preceded by two preparation phases, following the guidelines of previous research conducted in the field of leisure activities (Codina & Pestana, 2012, 2016, 2017). In the first phase, the research team worked with specialist IT staff to include the items of both instruments in the software and design the format that the participants would see. In order to prevent data loss, the questionnaire was programmed to ensure that all questions needed to be answered; in this way, progress could only be made if the previous question shown on the screen had been answered (otherwise, a warning appeared). The response categories for each question were visible

on the same screen, to ensure participants would not need to scroll through it. Once the last items of the questionnaire programming were verified, the second phase began with a pilot test, which served as the basis to make any necessary format adjustments.

Following some final operational checks, an email was sent to the participants to invite them to be part of the study, with a direct link to the instrument (a single link which they could not return to once the answers had been sent). The questions were available to be answered during the month of November 2015.

### 3.4. Data analysis

The following variables were used: sex of the participants; characteristics of the physical and sports activities carried out (time invested, weekly frequency and leisure experience, that is, perceptions about their personal choice of activities and satisfaction with them); and factors related to perception of time (present-hedonistic, present-fatalistic, past-positive, past-negative and future).

The associations between the variables were calculated by: the chi-squared coefficient (between the sex of the participants, the time invested and the weekly frequency of physical and

sports leisure activities); and Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r$  (between perceptions of the leisure experience and Time Perspective factors). Associations for sex, time invested and weekly frequency with the leisure experience and time perspective factors were assessed by the use of Student's  $t$  test and an analysis of variance as appropriate.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Physical and sports leisure. Time invested and weekly frequency

As shown in Table 1, 27.2% of the participants stated that they had spent up to 60 minutes per week performing physical and sports activities; 23.1% of them engaged in this type of activity for 91-120 minutes; 20.4% did between 61-90 minutes of physical and sports leisure activities; 12.2% of participants did between 121-150 minutes of physical and sports activity; and 17.0% devoted more than 150 minutes to this type of leisure.

With regard to the weekly frequency of physical and sports leisure (*ibidem* Table 1), the highest proportions corresponded to those who engaged in it 4-5 times/week (35.4%) and 2-3 times/week (34.0%). Consequently, there was a minority who carried out this activity once a week or less (15.0%) and 6-7 times/week and above (15.6%).

**Table 1: Time spent and weekly frequency of physical and sports leisure activities. Prevalence according to sex**

Time spent	General sample (N = 147)		Girls (n = 63)	Boys (n = 84)	$\chi^2$	p
	Frequency	%				
Up to 60 min	40	27.2	55.0	45.0		
61-90 min	30	20.4	43.3	56.7		
91-120 min	34	23.1	26.5	73.5		
121-150 min	18	12.2	27.8	72.2		
More than 150 min	25	17.0	56.0	44.0	9.57	.048
<b>Weekly frequency</b>						
Once a week or less	22	15.0	63.6	36.4		
2-3 times / week	50	34.0	48.0	52.0		
4-5 times / week	52	35.4	32.7	67.3		
6-7 times / week or more	23	15.6	34.8	65.2	7.22	.065

Significant differences were observed for both indicators on time spent engaging in sports and physical leisure, according to the sex of the participants (*ibidem* Table 1). In the case of the time spent ( $\chi^2 = 9.57$ ;  $p = .048$ ), the girls were in the majority among those who spent up to 60 minutes on the type of activity under consideration (55.0% as opposed to 45.0% of boys) and more than 150 minutes (56.0% against 44.0% of boys). Therefore, girls were in a minority in spending between 60 and 150 minutes on this kind of activity. With regard to the weekly frequency of physical and sports leisure ( $\chi^2 = 7.22$ ;  $p = .065$ ), girls spent less time on the activity concerned (once a week or less: 63.6% of girls compared to 36.4% of boys); in other words, boys prevailed in terms of weekly practice frequency in excess of 2-3 times per week.

#### 4.2. Physical and sports leisure experience and time perspectives

The evaluations with respect to the experience of physical and sports leisure showed that the means of the perceptions concerning personal choice ( $M = 8.38$ ) and satisfaction ( $M = 8.25$ ) indicated high and similar values, that is, scores in excess of eight points (over a maximum of ten points). It should be noted, however, that the variations in the scores of personal choice ( $SD = 2.42$ ) were higher than those of satisfaction perception ( $SD = 1.80$ ). Taken together, these data indicate that the experience of sports and physical leisure was characterised by perceptions of personal choice and high satisfaction in the sample studied. It should also be noted that no significant differences were observed between girls and boys in the scores obtained about the leisure experience.

**Table 2: Physical and sports leisure experience and time perspectives. Differences according to sex**

Experience	General sample (N = 147)		Girls (n = 63)	Boys (n = 84)	t	p
	M	DT				
Own choice	8.38	2.42	8.17	8.53	0.85	.392
Satisfaction	8.25	1.80	8.48	8.08	-1.31	.192
<b>Time perspective</b>						
Present-hedonist	3.32	0.53	3.34	3.30	-0.39	.693
Present-fatalist	2.78	0.51	2.82	2.71	1.29	.197
Past-positive	3.37	0.48	3.38	3.37	-0.13	.892
Past-negative	3.05	0.67	2.95	3.13	1.71	.088
Future	3.34	0.51	3.40	3.30	-1.14	.255

Note. Experience, measured on a scale from 0 to 10; Time Perspective, measured on a scale from 1 to 5.

From the time perspectives considered (*ibidem* Table 2), the highest scores (which were also similar to each other) were found in the cases of the past-positive ( $M = 3.37$ ), the future ( $M = 3.34$ ) and the present-hedonistic ( $M = 3.32$ ). Consequently, the lowest scores among these five factors corresponded to the present-fatalistic ( $M = 2.78$ ) and to

the past-negative ( $M = 3.05$ ). Variations in the averages of these perspectives were around 0.5, with the exception of the past-negative ( $SD = 0.67$ ).

It is in the negative view of the past where significant differences were observed according to sex ( $t = 1.71$ ,  $p = .088$ ), as boys ( $M = 3.13$ ) had a more negative view about the past than girls ( $M = 2.95$ ).

**Table 3: Inter-correlations between the scores obtained in the physical and sports leisure experience and time perspectives (n = 147)**

Experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Own choice	-						
2. Satisfaction	.397**	-					
<b>Time perspective</b>							
3. Present-hedonist	.191*	.130	-				
4. Present-fatalist	-.045	-.113	.410**	-			
5. Past-positive	.165*	.204*	.372**	.038	-		
6. Past-negative	.098	.013	.071	.257**	-.002	-	
7. Future	.083	.166*	-.048	-.031	.169*	-.018	-
Note. * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). Experience, measured on a scale from 0 to 10; Time Perspective, measured on a scale from 1 to 5.							

The correlations between the leisure experience and the Time Perspective factors (Table 3) were as follows: in one case, between the perceptions of personal choice, satisfaction and appropriation; and in another case, between the Time Perspective factors.

Among the indicators of the leisure experience, the most robust correlation was found between personal choice and satisfaction ( $r = .397$ ), although the other two were equally significant for  $p < .01$ . As to Time Perspective factors, the present-hedonistic had two suggestive—and significant—correlations ( $p < .01$ ): specifically, these were found between the present-hedonistic with the present-fatalistic ( $r = .410$ ) and the past-negative ( $r = .257$ ).

Finally, the most remarkable correlations found between the leisure experience and the Time Perspective were those between personal choice and the present-hedonistic, ( $r = .191$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and the past-positive ( $r = .165$ ;  $p < .05$ ); and between satisfaction with the past-positive ( $r = .204$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and the future ( $r = .166$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The results show the existing relationships between two conceptions of time (invested time and time perspective) and the experience of sports and physical leisure. These data, in addition to characterising leisure, point towards young people's potential vulnerabilities.

The time invested and the weekly frequency of physical and sports leisure can be considered to be adequate for the whole of the sample studied, as they were within the time and frequency recommended by the WHO for this activity to be beneficial (World Health Organization, 2010). However, the low proportion of sports and physical leisure practitioners ( $n = 147$ ) over the general sample of the general study was rather striking ( $N = 938$ ). In addition, some vulnerability was observed among girls with respect to boys regarding the practice of physical and sports leisure activities. The fact that the girls were in the majority in the two extremes of time invested (less than an hour, and more than two and a half hours, respectively), as well as in the lowest weekly frequency, suggests that this type of leisure activity is engaged in either sporadically, or now and again but intensively, that is, without the regularity that the practice of physical and sports leisure requires for its benefits to be felt. These results also suggest that the way girls practice these activities may be structured or guided by an event linked to dance (which is the activity most practised by girls: Codina *et al.*, 2016).

Time Perspective (the other conception of time investigated here), was characterised by being predominantly positive and therefore optimal. These results corroborate previous findings (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). However, the scores of the past-negative (higher among boys



than among girls) and the directly proportional relationship between the positive and negative aspects of the present, suggest the need to obtain further insight into the influence that past experiences have on the current perception of the past and of these time perspectives on leisure (and, by extension on other areas of behaviour). In this sense, a greater presence of a past-negative with some robust positive time dimensions points to the involvement of a resilience process in which the role of sports and physical leisure should be assessed. It can be stated that the young people studied on the whole presented good levels of time investment and frequency of physical and sports practice and that they also showed a positive time orientation, which made them less vulnerable.

The data obtained on the leisure experience with respect to personal choice and satisfaction confirm the positive effect of freedom on leisure (Munné and Codina, 1996). In addition, the interrelated influences identified between both aspects of the physical and sports leisure experience and the positive aspects of present and past time perspectives support the need to study leisure not only as a given leisure practice, but as a way of behaving in non-committed time that relates to certain positive attitudes towards the past, the present and the future. These interrelated influences also open up new perspectives that could shed light on the vulnerabilities that can be revealed by leisure activities. Ultimately, laying claim to the deep meaning of freedom may be the best antidote to prevent possible exposures.

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Codina, N., Pestana, J.V., & Ponce de Leon, A.M (2018). Tiempos dedicados al ocio físico-deportivo y perspectivas temporales: (re)velando vulnerabilidades. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 57-67. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.05

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## LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND THEIR PRESENCE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS IN POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE YOUTH

### ACTIVIDADES DE OCIO Y SU PRESENCIA EN LAS REDES SOCIALES EN JÓVENES POTENCIALMENTE VULNERABLES

### ATIVIDADES DE LAZER E SUA PRESENÇA EM REDES SOCIAIS EM JOVENS POTENCIALMENTE VULNERÁVEIS

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Received date: 22.VII.2017

Reviewed date: 14.IX.2017

Accepted date: 20.XI.2017

**KEY WORDS:**  
social networks  
basic vocational  
training  
vulnerable youth  
leisure  
interactivity  
social interaction

**ABSTRACT:** Attention to groups at risk of social exclusion concerning digital literacy must play a greater role in educational and social research. The objective of the study is to analyze the presence and dissemination in the social networks of the leisure activities of a collective of potentially vulnerable youth, relating it to sex and the geographic areas of residence. The sample was made up of 140 Spanish students of Basic Vocational Training. A questionnaire structured in different thematic blocks was applied, from which we selected 3 items that explored the topic under study. Descriptive and inferential analyses were carried out. The results show that 62.8% disseminate their leisure activities on the social networks, with physical activities being the experiences most frequently shared by this group. The boys publish more festive activities. The northerners and the residents of the center of Spain communicate more physical activities in social networks, and the easterners share more cultural experiences. The findings of this study have provided keys to optimize the digital leisure education of students of Basic Vocational Training in the critical and constructive use of social networks, which would contribute to the digital literacy of this collective and, therefore, would help minimize the likelihood of their belonging to risky scenarios.

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FUNDS: The current article is linked to the research project «De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: la construcción cotidiana de la condición juvenil en una sociedad de redes. problemáticas específicas y alternativas pedagógico-sociales» (Coordinated project EDU 2012-39080-Co7-00) and to the subproject «De los tiempos educativos a los tiempos sociales: la cotidianidad familiar en la construcción del ocio físico-deportivo juvenil» (EDU 2012-39080-Co7-05), cofinanced within the framework of the National Plan R&D&I assisted by the Minister of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, 2007-2013). The research has also collaborated with research projects from Universidad de La Rioja (Ref: APPI 16/09).

<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> redes sociales formación profesional básica jóvenes vulnerables ocio interactividad interacción social</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> La atención a los colectivos en riesgo de exclusión social en referencia a la alfabetización digital ha de tener mayor protagonismo en la investigación educativa y social. El objetivo del estudio es analizar la presencia y difusión en las redes sociales de las actividades de ocio de un colectivo de jóvenes potencialmente vulnerable, relacionándolo con el sexo y las áreas geográficas de residencia. La muestra ascendió a 140 estudiantes españoles de Formación Profesional Básica. Se aplicó un cuestionario estructurado en diferentes bloques temáticos, del que se seleccionaron los 3 ítems que indagaban en el tema objeto de estudio. Se llevaron a cabo análisis descriptivos e inferenciales. Los resultados manifiestan que un 62.8% difunden sus actividades de ocio en las redes sociales, siendo las actividades físicas las experiencias más compartidas por este colectivo. Los chicos publican en mayor medida actividades festivas. Son los norteños y quienes residen en el centro de España los que más comunican en las redes sociales las actividades físicas y los levantinos quienes más comparten las experiencias culturales. Las conclusiones de este estudio han proporcionado claves que optimizan la educación del ocio digital de los estudiantes de Formación Profesional Básica para un uso constructivo y crítico de las redes sociales, lo que contribuirá a la alfabetización digital de este colectivo y, por ende, a minimizar las posibilidades de pertenecer a escenarios de riesgo.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> redes sociais treinamento vocacional básico juventude vulnerável lazer interatividade interação social</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> A atenção aos grupos em risco de exclusão social em relação à alfabetização digital deve ter um papel maior na pesquisa educacional e social. O objetivo do estudo é analisar a presença e difusão nas redes sociais das atividades de lazer de um grupo de jovens potencialmente vulneráveis, relacionando-o com o sexo e as áreas geográficas de residência. A amostra totalizou 140 estudantes espanhóis de Formação Profissional Básica. Um questionário estruturado foi aplicado em diferentes blocos temáticos, dos quais foram selecionados os 3 itens que investigaram o tópico em estudo. Foram realizadas análises descritivas e inferenciais. Os resultados mostram que 62,8% divulgam suas atividades de lazer nas redes sociais, sendo as atividades físicas as experiências mais compartilhadas por este grupo. Os rapazes publicam atividades mais festivas. São os habitantes do norte e os que residem no centro da Espanha que mais comunicam nas redes sociais as atividades físicas e Levantinos que compartilham as experiências mais culturais. As conclusões deste estudo forneceram chaves que otimizam a educação digital de lazer dos alunos da Formação Profissional Básica para um uso construtivo e crítico das redes sociais, o que contribuirá para a alfabetização digital deste grupo e, portanto, para minimizar as possibilidades de pertencer a cenários de risco.</p>

## 1. Introduction

The pair of concepts science and conscience gains predominance in 21st century society (Fernández-Buey, 2005) and demands the attention of vulnerable groups within the framework of our digital society (Fuente-Cobo, 2017), which implies that concepts as social exclusion must expand their presence in national and international social political agendas (García-Blanco, 2016).

Digital literacy, from a positive and resilient approach, and considered as a support for prevention policies, enables opportunities to abandon high-risk environments (Haenens, Vandoninck & Donoso, 2013), and it is for this reason that it is necessary to use its high potential as a mechanism for the empowering of the most vulnerable group (Vaquero, 2013).

Previous studies have brought into question the access, social impact and benefits of the use of Internet (Cloquell, 2015, Ochaita, Espinosa & Gutiérrez, 2011). Youth is the main group creating and editing its own virtual spaces, standing out as the real consumer of digital communication and virtual social networks (Colás, González & De Pablos, 2013, Espinar & González, 2009; Llamas & Pagador, 2010; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Michikyan, 2015).

Recently, Valdemoros, Sanz and Ponce de León (2017) established social networks as the primary digital leisure experience for young people in post-compulsory secondary education. In this line, Almansa, Fonseca and Castillo (2013) stated that young individuals shape their typologies through social networks, and Muros, Aragón and Bustos (2013) confirmed that chatting, sharing photos and playing are the main usages of social networks among young people.

It has been confirmed that social recognition is what leads young people to the use of social networks (Almansa *et al.*, 2013, Bernal & Ángulo, 2013, Colás *et al.*, 2013) and that the characteristics of friendships which are established through social networks by young people relate to their leisure behaviors (Marks, De la Haye, Barnett & Allender, 2015).

It also emerges that exclusion increases in the Information Society (Tezanos, 2001), given that it is linked to educational and relational disadvantages, as well as to lack of opportunities. Furthermore, it is closely related to the concept of “digital divide”, in other words, to the possibilities for access to technological devices and communication networks, as well as to their proper use, since this is one of the essential conditions for full participation in our Network Society (Fuente-Cobo, 2017).

One of the benefits of digital literacy is that it provides an opportunity for vulnerable groups to design strategies for e-inclusion and e-facilitation in order to regain their skills for social interaction and civic participation (Abad, 2014; Cáceres, Brändle & Ruiz, 2015). In this respect, we could talk about strategies for empowerment of young people that could teach them to use production technologies, enabling the implementation of initiatives that otherwise would not have the opportunity to become more visible (Aguaded & Sánchez, 2013 ; Saorín & Gómez, 2014). This promotes cyber activism and cyber solidarity through social technologies.

The scientific literature examining the use that vulnerable youth make of social networks is scarce. Some authors (Melendro, García & Goig, 2016) certify that it is similar to the use made by the rest of youth population, although they give priority to certain worrisome elements that should be considered in the social and educational action regarding this group. First, and in relation to gender, vulnerable young girls use digital social entertainment to a lesser extent when compared to girls who belong to non-vulnerable groups. Also, the recurrence and intensity of its use is greater in vulnerable boys, as well as its use while alone. Finally, this vulnerable group displays a lower capacity to transform the information received through these means into actual cultural wealth.

## 2. Justification and objectives

The Organic Law on the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE, 2013) justifies the introduction of Basic Vocational Training in a need for the decrease of early school dropout rates and the fight against social exclusion consequently caused. Royal Decree 127/2014 also requires Basic Vocational Training courses as a measure to foster the permanence of students in the educational system and offer them increased possibilities for their personal and professional development.

The current investigation focuses on Basic Vocational Training students in Spain, given that these courses are destined to a group of potentially vulnerable young people. Most of them are boys and girls presenting school failure rates who could not achieve professional qualifications in the traditional educational system, which classifies them, a priori, as the most vulnerable group in the personal, social and working fields (García, 2014, Sanjuán-Roca & Méndez-Lois, 2009).

The aim of this article is to analyze the presence and dissemination of leisure activities of a group of potentially vulnerable young people through social networks, taking into account gender and geographical areas of residence. This will provide better understanding of methods of social interaction of Basic Vocational Training students. Likewise, it will help the classification of their most popular leisure activities, which will provide keys to optimize their digital leisure education in the constructive and critical use of social networks, situation that requires specific training for a better management of a large amount of information shared in virtual environments (García Valcárcel & Tejedor, 2010).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Population and sample

The population is configured by 73.523 Basic Vocational Training students in Spain enrolled in the 2013-2014 academic year, with a sample of 140 participants, a sampling error of  $\pm 2,3$  and a confidence level of 95%.

The majority of students in the sample (65%) are 17-18 years old: 23,6% women ( $n = 33$ ); 76,4% men ( $n = 107$ ).

A simple random sampling was conducted, trying to preserve a proportional allocation in every zone in which the Spain was divided (6 areas), including Ceuta and Melilla (table 1).



**Table 1. Territorial areas used in the sample**

Denomination / Location	Autonomous communities and / or provinces
A1-Northeast	Cataluña, Aragón (except Teruel) and Baleares
A2-East	Comunidad Valenciana, Murcia and Albacete
A3-South	Andalucía, Islas Canarias, Ceuta and Melilla
A4-Center	Madrid, Castilla-La Mancha (except Albacete), Castilla-León (except León, Palencia and Burgos), Cáceres and Teruel
A5-Northwest	Galicia, Asturias and León
A6-North	Cantabria, País Vasco, La Rioja, Navarra, Burgos and Palencia

Fuente: elaboración propia

### 3.2. Variables

There are 2 variables that explain the sociodemographic characteristics of Basic Vocational Training students:

- Gender: dichotomous variable with two categories, male or female.
- Territorial areas: Spain (including Ceuta and Melilla) is divided in 6 zones, establishing the geographical areas of residence and providing 6 categories: A1-Northeast; A2-East; A3-South; A4-Center; A5-Northwest; A6-North.

There are 3 variables that organize the leisure activities published by this group in social networks:

- Most important leisure activities: 8 categories to identify the favorite leisure activities among Basic Vocational Training students:
  - Television or radio activities: watching TV in general; watching TV shows; sports programs; cultural programs or listening to the radio.
  - Digital activities: searching for specific information on the Internet; surfing the Internet without a specific goal; posting entries in my own blog or web page; sharing information; participating in chats, discussion forums or virtual communities; social networks; playing video games; online betting and gambling.
  - Physical activity: artistic and expressive physical activities; physical activities in the natural environment; cooperation and competition physical activities; competition activities one versus another; and individual activities.
  - Tourism or hiking: travelling; sightseeing; camping; excursions to the countryside; the mountains or the beach; hunting or fishing.

- Cultural activities: listening to music; watching movies; reading books that I like; going to the theater, to museums, galleries or exhibitions; concerts or festivals; attending sporting events; doing some artistic, musical or literary activity, etc.
  - Parties or celebrations: going out to have a drink, to the disco; going out with friends; going to traditional celebrations in my neighborhood or city; participation in the organization and development of celebrations in my neighborhood or traditional festivals.
  - Games (other than computer games): board games; pool, table football or other indoor games; role playing games; other games.
  - Others: taking care of animals; shopping; gardening; crafting activities; collecting; association or volunteering.
- Number of most important leisure activities spread on social networks: it specifies which activities from a list of three chosen as preferential by Basic Vocational Training students are disseminated on social networks.
  - Typology of most important leisure activities published on social networks.

### 3.3. Tools

A questionnaire structured in different thematic blocks was applied, so it gathered much more extensive information than the one reflected in this article. It was validated by an expert judgment formed by 14 researchers belonging to 7 Spanish universities and a pilot test carried out in 8 autonomous communities.

For the present study, items 1 (gender), 5 (family situation) and 28 (activities that have a presence in social networks) are used.

### 3.4. Procedure

The questionnaire was randomly applied in the student body belonging to a Basic Vocational Training course of educational centers located in each of the 6 established geographical areas, with prior permission of the General Director of Education of each autonomous community as well as of principals of every educational center, informing them of the details of the study. Two properly trained researchers were responsible for the implementation of the questionnaires, explaining to students the right way to answer the questionnaire in order to reduce experimental mortality.

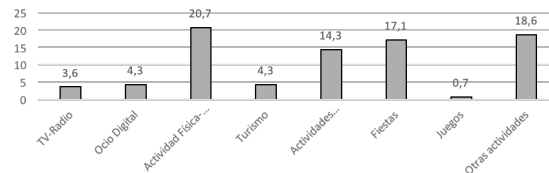
### 3.5. Data analysis

First, a descriptive analysis was conducted to quantify leisure activities disseminated in social networks and register the most common ones. Next, Student's t-distribution was used for independent samples, in order to establish the relationship between the sociodemographic characteristics of this group and the number of priority leisure activities that they spread on social networks. Finally, we calculated through contingency tables analysis the relationship between the sociodemographic characteristics and the type of main leisure activities that are most disseminated by Basic Vocational Training students, using Phi coefficient and Cramér's V, while respecting a level of significance of  $p < 0.05$ .

## 4. Results

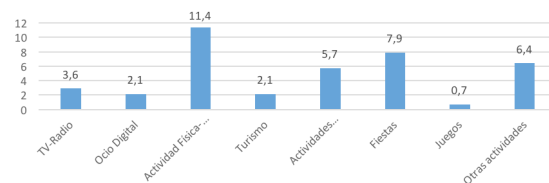
Two out of three Basic Vocational Training students post at least one of their three preferential leisure activities in social network profiles: 42.1% shares one of them, 10.7% shares two of them, 10% shares all three of them.

Physical activities are, in the list of leisure experiences posted online by Basic Vocational Training students, the most widespread, given that 20.7% claim to share these practices in the network, followed by 18.6% declaring other activities, 17.1% posting parties and celebrations and 14.3% posting cultural activities. In contrast, playing board games (0.7%), watching TV (3.6%) and sightseeing and sharing digital leisure (4.3% each one) are the activities which Basic Vocational Training students posted online to a lesser extent (figure 1).



**Figure 1. Frequency of types of leisure activities posted online by Basic Vocational Training students**

Likewise, 11.4% of Basic Vocational Training students who rank physical activities the first one of the list of three preferential activities post them online. A lower proportion is noted among those students posting parties (7.9%), other activities (6.4%), cultural activities (5.7%), watching TV (2.7%), sightseeing and digital activities (2.1%) and games (other than digital) (0.7%) as their top favorite leisure experience (figure 2). Regarding the dissemination in social networks of the second priority activity, physical activities stand out once again (7.9%).



**Figure 2. Frequency of Basic Vocational Training students who publish their main activity of leisure in social networks**

There are no significant differences according to gender when disseminating and publishing leisure activities ( $p=0.001$ ;  $\bar{x}_m = 1.03 \pm 1.4748$  vs  $\bar{x}_h = 0.91 \pm 0.09346$ ), since the inferential analysis reports that the vast majority of leisure activities shared in social networks are published to the same extent by potentially vulnerable girls and boys, with no significant differences regarding television or radio ( $p=0.848$ ;  $m=3\%$  vs  $h=3.7\%$ ), digital activities ( $p=0.919$ ;  $m=3\%$  vs  $h=4.7\%$ ), physical activity ( $p=0.936$ ;  $m=21.2\%$  vs  $h=20.6\%$ ), sightseeing ( $p=0.164$ ;  $m=0.0\%$  vs  $h=5.6\%$ ), cultural activities ( $p=0.122$ ;  $m=6.1\%$  vs  $h=16.8\%$ ), games (other than digital) ( $p=0.577$ ;  $m=0.0\%$  vs  $h=0.9\%$ ), as well as in the category called other activities ( $p=0.948$ ;  $m=18.2\%$  vs  $h=18.7\%$ ). The same has not however occurred with party activities ( $p=0.005$ ;  $m=33.3\%$  vs  $h=12.1\%$ ), given that they are significantly more popular among boys.

Nor were any significant differences found when comparing geographical areas of residence of these Basic Vocational Training young students, given that the propagation in social networks of television or radio, digital leisure, tourism, parties and games (other than digital games) occurs

equally in all residential areas. However, it is when referring to physical (Cramér's  $V = .311$ ;  $p = .019$ ), cultural (Cramér's  $V = .302$ ;  $p = .026$ ) and other activities (Cramér's  $V = .409$ ;  $p = .000$ ) when we find significant differences, weak or moderate depending on the different zones.

Northerner young people at risk of exclusion are singled out as the ones who communicate

their physical activities on social networks more often, followed by the students living in the center of Spain. Northeast students report their practices in the network to a lesser extent, followed by students from the East, the Northwest and the South (Table 2).

**Table 2. Contingency table: physical activities shared in social networks according to territorial areas**

Physical and sporting activities published on social networks	A1- Northeast	A2- East	A3- South	A4- Center	A5- Northwest	A6- North
No count % within areas	4 100%	22 95.7%	22 88%	35 68.6%	16 88.9%	12 63.2%
Sí count % within areas	0 0%	1 4.3%	3 12%	16 31.4%	2 11.1%	7 36.8%

Cramér's  $V = .311$ ;  $p = .019$

Basic Professional Training students living in the East of Spain disseminate their cultural experiences more frequently than their colleagues in the rest of the country, being closely followed by northwest and northeast students, respectively.

At the end of the scale, students living in the center of Spain share these practices to a lesser extent, followed by northerner and southerner students, respectively (table 3).

**Table 3. Contingency table: cultural leisure shared in social networks according to territorial areas**

Cultural leisure shared on social networks	A1- Northeast	A2- East	A3- South	A4- Center	A5- Northwest	A6- North
No count % within areas	3 75%	16 69.6%	22 88%	49 96.1%	13 72.2%	17 89.5%
Sí count % within areas	1 25%	7 30.4%	3 12%	2 3.9%	5 27.8%	2 10.5%

Cramér's  $V = .302$ ;  $p = .026$

Finally, we highlight that the northern group of young people at risk of vulnerability is the one disseminating other activities through social networks to a greater extent, followed a long way

behind by students from the South, center and Northwest of Spain. Students from the Northeast presented fewer posts about other activities in the social networks (table 4).

**Table 4. Contingency table: other activities shared on social networks according to territorial areas**

Other activities shared on social networks	A1- Northeast	A2- East	A3- South	A4- Center	A5- Northwest	A6- North
No count % within areas	4 100%	21 91.3%	21 84%	44 86.3%	16 88.9%	8 42.1%
Sí count % within areas	0 0%	2 8.7%	4 16%	7 13.7%	2 11.1%	11 57.9%

Cramér's  $V=.409$ ;  $p=.000$

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

It is satisfying to observe that Basic Vocational Training students use digital means to post their leisure experiences, proving that social networks are a way of communication and a significant connecting link for them (Almansa, Fonseca & Castillo, 2013; Espinar & González, 2009). This contributes to their digital literacy and, consequently, to the achievement of opportunities for avoidance of risk contexts (Haenens, Vandoninck & Donoso, 2013).

The present work reveals that in the list of activities disseminated via Internet by Basic Vocational Training students, physical activities are the most common, closely followed by participation in parties and celebrations. In contrast, playing board games, watching TV and sharing tourism and digital leisure activities are published to a lesser extent.

This group of potentially vulnerable people does not display significant differences between males and females regarding their postings of leisure activities in social networks, except for festive activities, which can be found more often in male profiles. This could be in line with Colás *et al.* (2013), who state that men present a higher tendency towards the pursuit of social recognition through dissemination of information by means of social networks.

Our research sees the existence of differences in the type of leisure experiences published online by this group at risk of social inclusion depending on their place of residence, given that, according to the information revealed, physical activities are more common among students in the northern

and central Spain, and cultural activities are more likely to be posted by East Spain students, followed by northwestern and northeastern ones. Further investigations should be carried out to deepen on the possible causal links between this situation and the existing leisure activities options in every geographic area of Spain.

In the present research, we considered Basic Vocational Training students as a potentially vulnerable group, given that its members are boys and girls with higher school failure rates who could not achieve professional qualifications in the traditional educational system and are more likely to have the perception of failure in personal, social and working levels (García, 2014; Sanjuán-Roca & Méndez-Lois, 2009). Nonetheless, we consider that, in order to provide a greater scientific rigour in this study, the sample should be broadened to include other groups at risk of social exclusion which do not belong to this educational level.

Owing to the lack of research in this matter, it would be very interesting for the scientific community to ascertain whether the situation of potentially vulnerable young people is similar to the rest of youth population, such as Melendro *et al.* (2016) investigated. They focused on certain worrisome elements to consider when comparing vulnerable and non vulnerable groups, particularly regarding a more frequent use of electronic devices while alone in the case of young people at risk of social exclusion and their problems to transform in cultural wealth the information gathered through these means. Therefore, professionals of education are entrusted to educate in the proper and responsible use of social networks (García Valcárcel & Tejedor, 2010).

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Valdemoros, M.A., Alonso, R.A., & Codina, N. (2018). Actividades de ocio y su presencia en las redes sociales en jóvenes potencialmente vulnerables. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 69-78. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.06

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## LEISURE FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE: IMPORTANCE, SATISFACTION AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

### EL OCIO DE LOS JÓVENES VULNERABLES: IMPORTANCIA, SATISFACCIÓN Y AUTOGESTIÓN

### O LAZER DOS JOVENS VULNERÁVEIS: IMPORTÂNCIA, SATISFAÇÃO E AUTOGESTIÓN

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Received date: 28.VII.2017

Reviewed date: 13.IX.2017

Accepted date: 24.X.2017

#### KEY WORDS:

leisure  
youth  
social vulnerability  
research  
participation

**ABSTRACT:** In recent decades leisure has become increasingly significant as a means of self-development, self-realisation and personal fulfilment. After years of economic crisis and transformation, it is more important than ever to discover the views that young people, especially those who are most vulnerable, have and the decisions they make about their leisure activity. As economic difficulties undermine their leisure options, this has an effect on their personal development, self-realisation, social relationships and, ultimately, on their quality of life. The aim of this paper is to analyse how young people in vulnerable situations assess their leisure activities in terms of the importance they attribute to them, their satisfaction, and how they manage their own leisure activities. To do so, a questionnaire was administered to 2,694 participants, including 783 cases (29.06% of the total sample) considered to be in a vulnerable situation. We sought to identify whether their assessment differed from that of young people who were not in a vulnerable situation. Ultimately, the aim was to determine if there were any relationships between the different assessments made by vulnerable young people about their leisure activity.

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**FUNDS:** Research project EDU2012-39080-Co7-00. 'From educational times to social times: the construction of youth in a network-based society'. IP. José Antonio Caride Gómez. Jointly funded by a grant within the National R & D & i Plan of the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, and by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, 2007-2013). National R & D & i Plan (2012-2015). The following universities have participated in the project as part of the RESORTES Network: Universities of Santiago de Compostela, University of Burgos, University of La Rioja, University of Barcelona, University of Deusto, UNED.



	<p>The results revealed that vulnerable young people attach great importance to their leisure activity, and are highly satisfied with it. They consider that being involved in organising it and/or managing the places used for leisure would not increase their satisfaction with or the benefits they receive from it.</p>
<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b>                  ocio                  juventud                  vulnerabilidad social                  investigación                  participación</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> El ocio se ha convertido en una realidad que ha ido cobrando en las últimas décadas cada vez más importancia, como medio de desarrollo, autorrealización y satisfacción personal. En los momentos que estamos, tras años de crisis y transformación de la economía, debe ser un objetivo conocer y saber qué piensan y qué deciden los jóvenes, especialmente los más vulnerables, sobre su ocio, porque las dificultades económicas lo deprimen y, por tanto, su desarrollo personal, su autorrealización, sus relaciones sociales y, en definitiva, su calidad de vida.</p> <p>Para compensar esta situación la sociedad debe esforzarse, otorgando la importancia que tiene el ocio en sí, además del valor pedagógico que puede tener en cualquier intervención socioeducativa y, especialmente, con colectivos en riesgo de exclusión, vulnerabilidad social, etc., un valor actualmente desaprovechado en muchas ocasiones en el trabajo con jóvenes. La finalidad del presente artículo se concreta en analizar cómo valoran los jóvenes en situación de vulnerabilidad su actividad de ocio desde el punto de vista de la importancia que tiene para ellos, la satisfacción que les reporta y la autogestión que realizan de la misma, a través de un cuestionario a 2.694 participantes, siendo 783 casos (29.06% del total de la muestra) considerados en situación de vulnerabilidad. También, se busca identificar si su valoración difiere de la que realizan los jóvenes que no se encuentran en situación de vulnerabilidad. Finalmente, se trata de determinar si existen relaciones entre las distintas valoraciones que realizan los jóvenes vulnerables de su actividad de ocio.</p> <p>Los resultados revelan que los jóvenes vulnerables conceden una elevada importancia a su actividad de ocio, al tiempo que se muestran altamente satisfechos con ella; sin embargo, consideran que participar en su organización y/o en la gestión del espacio no incrementaría su satisfacción ni los beneficios que les reporta.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b>                  lazer                  juventude                  vulnerabilidade social                  investigação                  participação</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> O lazer converteu-se numa realidade que tem ido cobrando nas últimas décadas a cada vez mais importância, como médio de desenvolvimento, autorrealização e satisfação pessoal. Nos momentos que estamos, depois de anos de crises e transformação da economia, deve ser um objectivo conhecer e saber que pensam e daí decidem os jovens, especialmente os mais vulneráveis, sobre seu lazer, porque as dificuldades económicas o deprimem e, por tanto, seu desenvolvimento pessoal, seu autorrealização, suas relações sociais e, em definitiva, sua qualidade de vida.</p> <p>Para compensar esta situação a sociedade deve esforçar-se, outorgando a importância que tem o lazer em si, além do valor pedagógico que pode ter em qualquer intervenção socioeducativa e, especialmente, com coletivos em risco de exclusão, vulnerabilidade social, etc., um valor actualmente desaprovechado em muitas ocasiões no trabalho com jovens. A finalidade do presente artigo especifica-se em analisar como valorizam os jovens em situação de vulnerabilidade sua actividade de lazer desde o ponto de vista da importância que tem para eles, a satisfação que lhes reporta e a autogestão que realizam da mesma, através de um questionário a 2.694 participantes, sendo 783 casos (29.06% do total da mostra) considerados em situação de vulnerabilidade. Também, se procura identificar se sua valoração difere da que realizam os jovens que não se encontram em situação de vulnerabilidade. Finalmente, trata-se de determinar se existem relações entre as diferentes valorações que realizam os jovens vulneráveis de sua actividade de lazer.</p> <p>Os resultados revelam que os jovens vulneráveis concedem uma elevada importância a sua actividade de lazer, ao mesmo tempo em que se mostram altamente satisfeitos com ela; no entanto, consideram que participar em sua organização e/ou na gestão do espaço não incrementaria sua satisfação nem os benefícios que lhes reporta.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Leisure has shifted from being an added bonus and a privilege extended to a few, to being essential for the personal fulfilment of all people. It is also seen as a lever for development and social cohesion, which is important for the whole of society. For specific groups such as that forming the subject matter of this study, it is a priority, as it defines and justifies a way of life and a whole set

of characteristics that describe life attitudes. The social and cultural context of the young people often influences the leisure activities that they pursue.

This study begins with a review of the existing literature on the importance of leisure for social participation and cohesion, especially the leisure for young people in vulnerable situations.

After years of economic crisis and transformation, it is essential to learn the views of young

people, especially the most vulnerable, about their leisure activity, and the decisions they make in this regard. It is particularly important to explore these aspects when dealing with young people in vulnerable situations, as it has not been done before and previously this was not an issue for consideration.

This study aims to investigate how young people in vulnerable situations assess their leisure activity from the point of view of how valuable it is to them, their enjoyment of it, and their management of their own leisure activities. The responses of 2694 young people to a questionnaire were analysed. A total of 783 cases (29.06% of the total sample) were considered to be in a vulnerable situation. We sought to identify whether or not their assessment was different from that of those young people who were not in a vulnerable situation. Finally, the aim was to determine if there were any relationships between the different assessments made by vulnerable young people about their leisure activity.

The results revealed that vulnerable young people attach great importance to their leisure activity, and are highly satisfied with it. The results also showed that having greater responsibility in organising leisure activities and/or managing leisure venues would not increase their satisfaction or the benefits they enjoy. They also revealed that these assessments were similar to those made by young people who were not in a vulnerable situation, and that there was a positive dependence between the assessments that vulnerable young people make of their leisure activity.

## 2. Rationale and objectives

Leisure has become increasingly important in recent decades, as a means of development, self-realisation and personal satisfaction and, therefore, as an inexhaustible source of quality of life and social well-being (Cuenca Cabeza, 2011, 2013, Lebrero Baena, Páez Gallego, & Tasende Mañá, 2014; Valdemoros San Emeterio, Ponce de León Elizondo, & Gradaïlle Pernas, 2016). It is also considered to be a prime instrument for social revitalisation and socio-educational intervention, especially among youth in a vulnerable situation (López-Noguero, Sarrate Capdevila, & Lebrero Baena, 2016).

In recent years, social and educational intervention, where leisure has a leading role, has become a fundamental right and an important strategic line of action for both European and global policies, especially as regards the youngest and most vulnerable sectors of the population (Bendit & Miranda, 2015; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015).

As pointed out by Salazar and Arellano Ceballos (2015), the social and cultural context where young people live often has an impact on the leisure activities that they participate in.

As is the case with other variables related to youth, such as the level of education attained, which does not depend only on individual motivational factors, but also on family, social class, the labour market and macroeconomic conditions (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1999, Erikson & Jonsson, 1996, Schoon, 2008 & Moreno, 2015), Salazar and Arellano Ceballo (2015) noted that how a young person's daily life is organised influences their leisure, the type of leisure activities carried out, their level of participation and the importance leisure has for them.

As society is in constant transformation and change, it is essential to defend this right of the most vulnerable, as well as to provide training to all involved in the crucial, positive use of leisure in achieving full realisation throughout life (López-Noguero & Sarrate Capdevila, 2014).

The International Charter on Leisure Education of the WLRA (World Leisure and Recreation Association) noted how leisure has become a fundamental resource for the social cohesion of developed societies, emphasising the training and necessary qualification of the professionals engaged in this field, among other issues (WLRA, 1994).

The economic difficulties encountered during the current crisis undermine leisure opportunities for the most vulnerable and, therefore, their personal development, self-realisation, social relations and, ultimately, their quality of life. The 2013 FOESSA study showed how 84% of the poorest people, including young people, had reduced their leisure activities as a result of their precarious economic situation (FOESSA, 2014, p. 471).

In our opinion, it is necessary for society to make an effort to compensate for this deficit currently being experienced by the most vulnerable sectors of society, while highlighting the pedagogical value that leisure can have in any socio-educational intervention and especially, in those with groups at risk of exclusion, socially vulnerable population, etc., as it is currently often underused when working with young people.

The studies by INJUVE (2013, 2014) and Anderson (2017) are particularly noteworthy in this area, as they take into account the articulation between leisure and socio-educational intervention. Fernández García, Poza Vilches & Fiorucci (2014) also made an outstanding contribution to this field, as they undertook an exhaustive meta-theoretical analysis of forty studies from between 2009 and 2013 that suggestively mapped out the trends in the field of youth leisure.

Yesimilarly, the studies by Moscoso, Martín, Pedrajas and Sánchez (2013) on the leisure, physical activity and lifestyles of Spanish youth are to be highlighted, as well as the analysis carried out by Jiménez Ramírez (2012) of inclusive socio-community and educational activities with students at risk of social exclusion. Another interesting study is that by López-Noguero *et al.* (2016) on the leisure of young people in a vulnerable situation through the use of a discourse analysis of interviews.

Yesimilarly of note is the interesting study by Uceda i Maza, Navarro Pérez, Montón Sánchez, and Pérez Cosín (2012), which looks at the spaces and times used for leisure as an educational promotion tool with adolescents who are in conflict with the law. This study stressed the need to design leisure spaces for young people based on three key elements: participation, sharing and creativity.

On the specific issue of ICTs in youth leisure, which is increasingly prominent among this age group, the findings by Melendro Estefanía, García Castilla and Goig Martínez (2016) on the use of ICTs in leisure and the training of vulnerable youth, and the study by Vasco González and Pérez Serrano (2017) on digital leisure for young people in hardship are particularly interesting.

The current social context has undergone a process of accelerated modernisation in many areas (cultural, technological, economic, relational, communication-related, etc.). There is therefore an even greater need for the agents of social change to adapt to these processes in order to fully meet the new demands of the current crisis (López-Noguero, 2004, 2005).

The Renaissance-like aspirations to leisure have re-emerged in these accelerated, postmodern times (Caride, 2012). They are based on the need for and the social right to personal growth, and valuable leisure experiences. The aim is to have experiences that are not constrained by socioeconomic circumstances and are a lever for change for vulnerable groups, including a substantial proportion of young people today.

To this end, young people's communication and social interaction processes should be prioritised, building and reconstructing areas and spaces, timelines and different types of youth leisure activities (Salazar & Arellano Ceballos, 2015, p. 13).

This effort requires more resources, as well as improving the training of the actors involved, in order to recognise and accept of the diverse, autonomous forms of youth activity and creativity, and give material and technical support to the young people who participate in them. In this way, they will be able to experience themselves more fully, attain self-realisation and, at the same

time, contribute to the social and community development of society (Bendit, 2000, p. 55). This training should take into account the current Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020 (ET2020) and future actions that make it sustainable, since it seeks to promote lifelong learning and equity, social cohesion and active citizenship in youth.

In our opinion this last aspect is fundamental, that is, encouraging young people to take a leading role and achieve their development in diverse facets of their personal and social lives through inclusive leisure activities (López-Noguero & Sarrate Capdevila, 2014). As Socrates pointed out thousands of years ago, 'leisure time is the best of all acquisitions'.

Moscoso *et al.* (2013) noted that young people are seen, analysed and spoken to, but they are usually not listened to. As indicated by Uceda i Maza *et al.* (2012) adolescents and young people are one of the most invisible groups, and that also has the most difficulties in being heard. Encouraging research that explores the values and attributes of young people in their different life areas (including leisure), and in particular, those of vulnerable young people, is of great importance to enhance their role in leisure activities (Benedicto, Fernández, Gutiérrez, Martín, Martín & Morán, 2014; Bravo, De-Juanas & González Olivares, 2016; López-Noguero, Sarrate Capdevila, & Lebrero Baena, 2016).

New areas and spaces that lead to valuable leisure experiences need to be made available; leisure practices that are less consumerist, more sustainable and, above all, that facilitate new experiences (Caballo Villar, 2014); that provide satisfaction and personal development to improve the quality of life of young people and are a decisive lever of change in vulnerable situations, enabling those concerned to be drivers of their own lives (López-Noguero, 2005)

This study has three objectives. Firstly, to analyse how young people in vulnerable situations assess their leisure activity from the point of view of the importance it has for them, their satisfaction, and the self-management of their leisure activity. Secondly, to identify if their assessment differs from that of young people who are not in a situation of vulnerability. Thirdly, to determine if there are relationships between the different assessments made by vulnerable young people in their leisure activity.

### 3. Methodology

This paper outlines the results of a study on leisure, training and employment among young people in

hardship. Both quantitative and qualitative methodology was used within a network-based project<sup>[1]</sup> carried out by seven Spanish universities.

This paper presents the results obtained from a cross-sectional *ex post facto* (Bryman, 2012) quantitative study aimed at exploring the assessments that vulnerable young people make of their leisure activity, the importance they accord to it, the satisfaction they obtain, and the self-management of their leisure activity.

### 3.1. Participants

Initially, a simple random sampling was carried out of the whole population of students of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), Vocational Training (Level 2), Initial Vocational Training Programmes (hereinafter, *PCPI*, as they are known by their initials in Spanish) and Baccalaureate of private, state-funded private, and state schools in all of the autonomous regions in Spain. It was then decided to use a probabilistic sampling design through proportional allocations according to strata, using the region as the main criterion. The Nielsen Areas that divide the Spanish territory into ten regions were employed. Yesx of these were used in order to improve the efficiency of the field work.

In total, 2,694 students participated, distributed as follows: Northwest (17.6%), East (12.8%), South (28.4%), Centre (22%), Northwest (11.2%) and North (8%). Of these, 783 cases (29.06% of the total sample) were considered to be in a vulnerable situation compared to the rest of the students (1,911 students, 70.94%).

All the students who fulfilled at least one of the following requirements were included in the selection of vulnerable participants: (a) those students engaged in Initial Professional Qualification Programmes (*PCPI*); (b) those whose family unit had an income equal to or less than 500 euros; (c) those who did not have a mother or father and/or were in foster care; (d) those whose parents were both unemployed, or who had one parent who was unemployed and the other carried out domestic tasks in the household; those in single-parent families whose parent was unemployed or doing housework were also included; (e) those whose parents had not completed their education (or those who lived with someone who had not completed their education); (f) those who reported that they had an average mark lower than five points out of ten in school; and (g) those who were rather dissatisfied or not satisfied at all with their family life.

In the sample studied, males (53.3%) predominated compared to females (46.7%), and young

people aged 17 and above were more numerous (58.2%) than young people aged 17 and below (41.8%).

### 3.2. Instrument

The instrument used for the collection of data was an *ad hoc* questionnaire on the construction of youth. This tool used paper and pencil and was divided into the following blocks: *description of the students; school life; free time; family life; health and quality of life; education, and labour market in the future; and entrepreneurship.*

This paper presents some of the results of the block corresponding to *free time*, specifically those related to the assessments the participants made of their leisure activity. This part consisted of 6 items, which have been grouped around three variables. The first of these variables was the importance they give to their leisure activity, assessed by the item *This activity is very important in my life*. The second variable studied the participants' satisfaction with their leisure activity, as assessed by the item *I am satisfied with this activity*. The third variable referred to the self-management of their leisure activity, analysed through the answers to four items: *I have responsibility for organising the activity; I would enjoy the activity more if I assumed a greater role in organising it; Being involved in organising the space is related to the benefits I get from the activity; and I practise this activity in spaces that I organise myself.*

The students were asked to express their degree of agreement with the statement that was presented to them in each of the items on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5 (1 being 'I totally agree' and 5 being 'I totally disagree').

The questionnaire was validated by fourteen external assessors. The instrument was adjusted taking into account the results of its administration to a pilot sample of 140 subjects from eight autonomous regions. Pilot administration of the questionnaire was carried out between 2014 and 2015.

### 3.3. Procedure

The participants were informed of the aims of the research (both quantitatively and qualitatively), and their participation was totally voluntary.

The field work for the quantitative study was carried out between 2015 and 2016. The questionnaire was administered in the schools during school hours.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Once the database was completed, a descriptive statistical analysis, a comparison of means (Student's *t-test*) and Pearson bivariate correlations were performed using SPSS 22.0.

### 4. Results

Firstly, Table 1 shows the value that the vulnerable young people who participated in the study accorded to their leisure activity, both from the point of view of how important this activity was, and from the perspective of their satisfaction with it. Secondly, it provides information on the degree to which the participants themselves engaged in managing and organising their leisure activity and the spaces in which they practised it, as well as their satisfaction and the benefits they gained from their leisure activity and from self-managing it.

As can be seen, the sample studied considered their leisure activity to be very important and they

expressed a very high level of satisfaction with it. However, the level of dispersion of responses related to their satisfaction with the activity was lower (SD = 0.927) than that related to the answers linked to the importance they accorded to their leisure activity (SD = 1.208).

In contrast, when inquiring into the self-management of their leisure activity, it was seen that they had a greater involvement in the organisation of the activity than in the management of the spaces in which leisure took place, since they did not tend to practise leisure activities in self-managed spaces. In addition, when asked about the benefits they believed that they would gain if they participated more in managing the activity themselves, a low level of agreement was identified, which was more pronounced regarding the organisation of leisure tasks than spaces, although the level of dispersion of the responses in both cases was high and fairly similar (organisation SD = 1.460, SD spaces = 1.485).

**Table 1: Importance, satisfaction and self-management of leisure activity (vulnerable youth)**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation	Variance
ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT						
Importance	651	1	5	4,11	1,208	1,459
Satisfaction	654	1	5	4,52	,927	,859
ACTIVITY SELF-MANAGEMENT						
Responsibility for organisation	658	1	5	3,54	1,461	2,136
Practised in self-organised spaces	645	1	5	2,90	1,610	2,593
Satisfaction with assuming a greater role in organisation	642	1	5	2,43	1,460	2,133
Benefits from organising space	636	1	5	2,88	1,485	2,205
N valid (by list)	615					

Table 2 shows the results obtained when comparing the assessment that vulnerable young people made of their leisure activity and the assessment made by young people who were not in vulnerable situations. It indicates that only in three of the six items analysed did the mean scores represent significant differences.

First, both groups strongly agreed with in the item *This activity is very important in my life* and

consequently, they gave a very favourable assessment, with an average score in excess of four. However, the difference between the scores of the two groups was significant ( $p = .010$ ), which implies that the importance vulnerable youth give to their leisure activity (4.11) was somewhat lower than the value attributed to it by young people who were not in a vulnerable situation (4.25). In addition, it should be noted that of all the items

analysed, this was the one where response dispersion was the second lowest (vulnerable SD = 1.207, non-vulnerable SD = 1.091).

Second, there were statistically significant differences ( $p = .003$ ) in the item *I practise this activity in spaces that I organise myself*. There was little agreement with this premise both among vulnerable and non-vulnerable youth; nevertheless, the vulnerable young people who participated in the study gave a somewhat higher score (2.89) than that of non-vulnerable young people (2.67), which could indicate that the former carry out their leisure activity in self-managed spaces more often than the latter. It should be taken into account that the results for this item showed the highest

degree of response dispersion (vulnerable SD = 1.611, non-vulnerable SD = 1.565) of all the items studied.

Finally, the analysis yielded interesting data referring to the item *I would enjoy the activity more if I assumed a greater role in organising it*. Although the average scores obtained for this item were not very high for either group (Vulnerable = 2.42, Not vulnerable = 2.27), the difference between the two was significant ( $p = .023$ ). Therefore it could be argued that vulnerable young people are somewhat more in agreement with the premise that assuming a greater role in the organisation of the activity would positively affect their enjoyment of it.

**Table 2: Importance, satisfaction and self-management of leisure activity (vulnerable vs. not vulnerable young people)**

	Vulnerability	Average	Typ dev.	Are equal variances assumed?	Levene's test for equality of variances		T-Test for equality of means		
					F	Yesg.	t	gl.	Yesg.
ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY									
Importance	Yes	4,11	1,207	No	12,433	,000	-2,714	2344	,010*
	No	4,25	1,091						
Satisfaction	Yes	4,52	,926	Sí	6,072	,014	-1,313	2358	,189
	No	4,57	,850						
SELF-MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITY									
Responsibility for organisation	Yes	3,54	1,463	Sí	1,961	,162	-,672	2352	,502
	No	3,58	1,422						
Practised in self-organised spaces	Yes	2,89	1,611	Sí	,554	,457	3,007	2321	,003*
	No	2,67	1,565						
Satisfaction with assuming a greater role in organisation	Yes	2,42	1,460	No	8,410	,004	2,331	2315	,023**
	No	2,27	1,395						
Benefits from organising space	Yes	2,88	1,486	Sí	,770	,380	,013	2289	,990
	No	2,88	1,505						
*. The test is significant at the .01 level. **. The test is significant at the .05 level									

Finally, the relationships between the different assessments made by young people in vulnerable situations about their leisure activities were analysed. Table 3 shows that the analysis confirmed

that there was a positive and highly significant correlation between almost all of the variables studied. The most outstanding were: *I have responsibility for organising the activity; Being involved*

*in organising the space is related to the benefits I get from the activity; and This activity is very important in my life, as they relate to all the other items studied.*

**Table 3: Correlation between the responsibility assumed by vulnerable young people regarding their leisure activity**

		Responsibility for organisation	Satisfaction with greater role in its organisation	Benefits organising space	Practised in self-organised spaces	Satisfaction	Importance
Responsibility for organisation	Pearson correlation	1	,203	,318	,215	,201	,256
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000*	,000*	,000*	,000*	,000*
Satisfaction with greater role in its organisation	Pearson correlation	,203	1	,402	,125	-,018	,136
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000*		,000*	,002*	,656	,001*
Benefits organising space	Pearson correlation	,318	,402	1	,226	,142	,222
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000*	,000*		,000*	,000*	,000*
Practised in self-organised spaces	Pearson correlation	,215	,125	,226	1	,050	,122
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000*	,002*	,000*		,204	,002*
Satisfaction	Pearson correlation	,201	-,018	,142	,050	1	,483
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000*	,656	,000*	,204		,000*
Importance	Pearson correlation	,256	,136	,222	,122	,483	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000*	,001*	,000*	,002*	,000*	

\*. The test is significant at .01 level. \*\*. The test is significant at .05 level.

### 5. Discussion and conclusions

The results show that vulnerable young people attach great importance to their leisure activity, and are highly satisfied with it. These data are consistent with the studies that indicated that in recent decades leisure has become increasingly important as a means of development, self-realisation and personal satisfaction and, therefore, as a source of quality of life and social well-being (Cuenca Cabeza, 2011, 2013; Lebrero Baena, Páez Gallego, & Tasende Mañá, 2014; Valdemoros San Emeterio, Ponce de León Elizondo, & Gradaïlle Pernas, 2016). Likewise, they reinforce the studies that advocated defending the right of the most vulnerable to leisure (López-Noguero & Sarrate Capdevila, 2014; Bendit & Miranda, 2015; Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015) in a society in which they are at permanent risk due to economic difficulties,

considering the opportunities it provides for personal and social development.

Moreover, the study has also highlighted that vulnerable youth accord less importance to their leisure activity than young people who are not in a vulnerable situation. This piece of data can be better understood by comparing them with the results of the 2013 FOESSA report, which revealed that in situations of economic difficulty such as the one experienced in recent years, people in a hardship situation, including young people, forego their leisure activities.

In addition, the analysis has made it possible to observe the scant interest shown by both vulnerable and especially non-vulnerable young people in self-managing their leisure activity. They consider that assuming more responsibility in organising their leisure activities and managing the spaces where they carry out those activities would not

increase their satisfaction with or the benefits gained from their leisure activity.

These data necessarily refer back to the conclusions and recommendations provided by those studies that advocate: a greater role for young people in their leisure activity, in order to contribute to their individual and social development (López-Noguero & Sarrate Capdevila, 2014; López-Noguero, Sarrate Capdevila, & Lebrero Baena, 2016); socio-educational intervention as a means to provide young people with valuable leisure experiences, with a non-consumerist approach, enabling experiences that result in better life quality and well-being, while offering opportunities for change and improvement in hardship situations (Caride, 2012; Caballo Villar, 2014); as well as a socio-educational intervention that prioritises the processes of communication and social interaction of young people, constructing and reconstructing environments and spaces, timelines and different types of youth leisure activities (Salazar & Arellano Ceballos, 2015).

It can be concluded from the study that vulnerable young people attach great importance to leisure in their lives, and that it gives them much satisfaction. An assessment that they share with those young people who are not in a vulnerable situation, although the importance the former attribute to leisure is somewhat lower. As reported by vulnerable young people, leisure activities would

not bring them more satisfaction or benefits if they could have more responsibility for organising and/or managing the space where they are carried out. Again, this assessment is similar to that made by young people who are not in a vulnerable situation, although vulnerable young people are more in agreement with the premise that assuming a greater role in the organisation of their leisure activity would enable them to enjoy it more.

The correlation analysis performed shows that, based on the operation of the study variables and the results obtained, most of the variables studied are related to each other. There is a positive dependence between the assessment that vulnerable young people make of their leisure activity regarding how important it is for them, their satisfaction with it and the self-management of their leisure.

Finally, it would be valuable to complement this analysis with a qualitative study that could provide further insight into the reasons and motivations inherent in the assessments of vulnerable young people on the importance of their leisure activity, their satisfaction with it, and their self-management of leisure. This qualitative data would make it possible to carry out a needs analysis that would support the design of a socio-educational intervention project, oriented at promoting the right to valuable leisure of those most vulnerable and their driving role in leisure activities.

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Rodríguez-Bravo, A.E., Lopez-Noguero, F., & González-Olivares, A.L (2018). El ocio de los jóvenes vulnerables: importancia, satisfacción y autogestión. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 79-89. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.07

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## THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF SOCIAL AGENTS IN YOUTH LEISURE: STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION

### LA PRÁCTICA PROFESIONAL DE LOS AGENTES SOCIALES EN MATERIA DE OCIO JUVENIL: ESTRATEGIAS PARA LA INTERVENCIÓN

### A PRÁTICA PROFISSIONAL DOS AGENTES SOCIAIS EM MATÉRIA DE ÓCIO JUVENIL: ESTRATÉGIAS PARA A INTERVENÇÃO

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Received date: 25.VII.2017

Reviewed date: 14.IX.2017

Accepted date: 19.X.2017

#### KEY WORDS:

leisure time  
youth  
research  
social indicators  
evaluation

**ABSTRACT:** This paper analyses the professional practice of thirty-four social agents who work in the field of youth leisure in Spain. It focuses on the strategies they use in intervention, namely objectives; inter- and intra-institutional methodology and coordination; funding sources; communication and dissemination strategies; and evaluation system. The main objectives were to identify professional practice in youth leisure from the perspective of social agents and define indicators that could serve as a starting point for identifying good practices in this field. The methodological framework used evaluative research that was diagnostic, exploratory and descriptive in nature. A pilot study was conducted. Data on the professional practice of the respondents were initially collected by the use of an open-ended questionnaire, followed by the administration of a closed questionnaire based on the content analysis of the answers given to the first questionnaire. The aim was to identify common indicators of professional practice and establish a benchmark that could be validated. The results identified eight key indicators that could be used as benchmarks to develop high-quality intervention in youth leisure, which relied on the work and the assessment of the experts consulted.

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<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> tiempo de ocio juventud investigación indicadores sociales evaluación</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> Basándose en una muestra de treinta y cuatro (34) agentes sociales, este artículo analiza su práctica profesional en materia de ocio juvenil, a nivel nacional. Se incide en las estrategias utilizadas en la intervención, a saber: objetivos; metodología y coordinación inter e intra institucional; fuentes de financiación; estrategias de comunicación y difusión; y sistema de evaluación. Ante ello, se afrontan como principales objetivos identificar la práctica profesional en materia de ocio juvenil desde la perspectiva de los agentes sociales y definir indicadores que sean el punto de partida para identificar buenas prácticas en este campo.</p> <p>Se aborda un marco metodológico centrado en la investigación evaluativa de carácter diagnóstica, exploratoria y descriptiva. En este contexto, se configura un estudio piloto, cuyas técnicas de recogida de datos sobre la práctica profesional de los encuestados han sido en primer lugar, el diseño de un cuestionario abierto, seguido de un segundo cuestionario cerrado que ha partido del análisis de contenido de las respuestas dadas al primero, con el fin de identificar indicadores comunes de la práctica profesional y así poder establecer un patrón de referencia que pueda validarse desde la misma.</p> <p>Finalmente se identifican ocho indicadores clave como referentes para desarrollar una intervención de calidad en materia de ocio juvenil, desde el trabajo y las valoraciones de los expertos consultados.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> tempo de ócio juventude investigação indicadores sociais avaliação</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> Baseado numa amostra de trinta e quatro (34) agentes sociais, este artigo analisa a sua prática profissional em matéria de ócio juvenil, a nível nacional. Incide nas estratégias utilizadas na intervenção, a saber: objetivos; metodologia e coordenação inter e intra institucional; fontes de financiamento; estratégias de comunicação e difusão; e sistema de avaliação. Neste sentido, os seus principais objetivos são identificar a prática profissional em matéria de ócio juvenil desde a perspectiva dos agentes sociais e definir indicadores que sejam o ponto de partida para identificar boas práticas neste campo.</p> <p>A abordagem metodológica utilizada centra-se na investigação avaliativa, de carácter diagnóstico, exploratório e descritivo. Neste contexto, desenvolveu-se um estudo piloto, cujas técnicas de recolha de dados sobre a prática profissional dos questionados foi em primeiro lugar, o desenho de um questionário aberto. Seguiu-se um segundo questionário fechado, que partiu da análise de conteúdo das respostas dadas ao primeiro, com o fim de identificar indicadores comuns da prática profissional e assim poder estabelecer um padrão de referência que pudesse validar-se a partir da mesma.</p> <p>Finalmente identificam-se oito indicadores chave como referentes para desenvolver uma intervenção de qualidade em matéria de ócio juvenil, desde o trabalho e das avaliações dos peritos consultados.</p>

## 1. Introduction

This study is focused on the professional practice of social agents who work in the field of leisure and youth. The evaluation of their intervention is essential to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of their work performance. Several authors, including Orte, Amer, Pascual and Vaqué (2014), have defended the idea that ‘the evaluation of professionals’ implementation [of intervention strategies] constitutes an instrument for the communication and legitimisation of the role of these professionals. It is important to understand their assessments and collect the maximum amount of information by way of feedback’ (p. 179).

This aspect is fundamental to understand how programmes, projects and activities are carried out in the field of leisure and youth and whether they are successful; and to learn about the role played by social agents in the use of multiple intervention strategies. Evaluation is a tool that supports the planning process (objectives, methodology, resources, coordination, dissemination...) in order to discover future actions based on the knowledge obtained after interventions have been implemented.

Finally, establishing indicators (Pérez Juste, 2000) is important in order to identify good practices for intervention with young people in the field of leisure. This is the main area of interest in this study, with a view to improving the quality of life and the overall development of this population group.

## 2. Study rationale and objectives

### 2.1. Leisure and youth

Young people spend a large part of their free time engaging in leisure activities. This, combined with study and/or work, allows them to balance social and life commitments. Youth has never enjoyed so many means and resources to have fun and enjoy themselves. However, a significant percentage are bored and others do not have healthy leisure models in their immediate circles (García-Castilla, De-Juanas, & López-Noguero, 2016). Some only find enjoyment in forms of non-advisable consumption, such as alcohol and drugs, which are sometimes the main cause of accidents or problems related to sexuality and/or violence. These

issues also have an impact on their education and qualification.

In this sense, 'consumption among young people (not only regarding leisure, but also in terms of status within their peer groups) causes imbalances in young people's education' (Doistua Nebreda, Pose Porto, & Ahedo González, 2016, P. 135). For this reason, in order to improve youth leisure and enable strategies that reduce the effects of unhealthy leisure consumption, it is a priority to identify the actions carried out in this field, establishing strengths and weaknesses, while identifying action strategies for improvement (Pérez-Serano, Poza-Vilches, & Fernández-García, 2016).

It is essential to avoid carrying out a segmented, decentralised intervention, and to opt instead for social action that promotes shared work scenarios and youth inclusion processes, in an attempt to meet to social needs and seek public and/or social legitimacy, as well as to make an impact on the interaction and participation of young people (Paz & Unás, 2010; Fantova, 2007).

In view of the above, a quality intervention is necessary to justify the actions performed by the professionals who work with youth.

## 2.2. Evaluating interventions for improvement

Designing the indicators was the first task in evaluating the quality of the interventions in this study. Establishing these parameters is helpful in planning, managing and evaluating the interventions carried out regarding leisure in a more rigorous and participative way. The need to reinforce the planning conducted by schools and programmes was confirmed, including evaluation indicators that allowed a systematic collection of information, evaluating its quality and participants' satisfaction. It is also important that all those involved actively participated in the planning processes (FEAPS, 2007).

Depending on the scope of the evaluation, there are different types of indicators: 'social indicators can be used for macro-social analysis, in the evaluation of a national plan, policy or programme. At programme or project level, evaluation indicators are used to identify the changes implemented and their impact' (Picado, 1999, p. 3).

There are different definitions of indicator, each of which highlights its most important characteristics. Following the definition of the *Agencia para el voluntariado y la participación social* (Agency for volunteering and social participation) (2002, p. 1), indicators 'are specific quantifiable facts or expressions whose scores make it possible to measure the suitability, effectiveness and efficiency of a project'. This definition also

acknowledged that 'to make a proper evaluation, it is necessary to specify indicators and make them apparent from the beginning' (p. 1).

The *Asociación Española para la Calidad* (Spanish Association for Quality) (2017, p.1) defines indicators as 'means, instruments or mechanisms used to evaluate to what point or to what extent strategic objectives are achieved'. Mondragón (2002) agrees with the above definition and specifies that 'indicators are essential [...] in assessing institutional performance aimed at achieving the goals and objectives set in each of the areas of action of government programmes' (p. 54).

Based on these and other definitions of this concept, the most important characteristics of evaluation indicators include the following: they are part of a theoretical or conceptual framework (Mondragón, 2002); specific and explicit (Mondragón, 2002); temporally available (Mondragón, 2002, Martínez, 2010); relevant, useful and appropriate (Mondragón, 2002; Martínez, 2010); not restricted to a specific action (Mondragón, 2002); clear and easy to understand (Mondragón, 2002, Martínez, 2010); valid, reliable and comparable (Mondragón, 2002, Picado, 1999, Martínez, 2010); sensitive to changes in the phenomenon concerned (Mondragón, 2002); and they meet the objectives set in the programmes and projects (Picado, 1999), while also allowing for the evaluation of strategies, processes and achievements (Quintero, 1996).

By establishing an action framework based on this definition of indicators, social agents will be able to identify problems and make the necessary changes in the process in order to achieve a continuous improvement in the quality of the work performed, as well as to evaluate the results obtained and their role and tasks in the field of youth leisure.

## 2.3. Professional practices in youth leisure

The challenge for the experts who work in this field is to design and implement intervention projects that respect the social and cultural diversity of young people, with the aim of enabling them to participate in healthy and sustainable leisure activities, based on the principles of respect and equality, regardless of their origin (nationality, race, culture, gender, religion), or any inherent social and/or personal features (Poza-Vilches, Pozo-Llorente, Gutiérrez-Pérez, & López-Alcarria, 2017).

Public recognition of the work carried out by an institution or group of professionals involves the identification of good practices.

Good practices can be defined as 'successful experiences, with high quality standards, which

have been demonstrated to have positive effects on the target population based on evidence or on predetermined criteria' (*Boletín del Observatorio de la Exclusión Social* [Bulletin of the Social Exclusion Observatory], 2017, p. 1). However, 'the detection of good practices not only serves to reward or recognise a job well done. Publicising successful experiences facilitates common learning, the expansion of high quality standards in social intervention, and the creation of new innovative projects and ideas' (*Boletín del Observatorio de la Exclusión Social*, 2017, p. 1).

For this reason, all of the social and institutional agents working in youth interventions need to be extremely committed, and therefore they should have a leading role in the process. Finally, it is worth noting that the work of social agents in leisure and youth is not always sufficiently funded or resourced. In this sense, participation is key, 'since despite a possible budget reduction, the commitment of the different agents and of the participants can maintain a high level of quality for a given project, and enable it to evolve over time' (Doistua, Pose & Ahedo, 2016, p. 141).

Bearing these theoretical foundations in mind, the objectives of the study are:

- a) To identify professional practices in youth leisure from the perspective of social agents.
- b) To define indicators to be used as a starting point for the identification of good practices in the field.

### 3. Methodology

The methodological framework was focused on evaluative research, specifically, on a diagnostic, exploratory and descriptive evaluation carried out on the basis of 34 professional experiences in the field of youth leisure in Spain.

Making an evaluation of this kind involved considering professional intervention as a reflective action that provides an opportunity for practice-based ongoing learning and improvement, taking an educational perspective; and including a summative dimension by weighting the results based on the objectives set in the intervention, so as to qualify and establish new strategies (Tejedor, 1990, Villar & Medina, 1998, Pérez Juste, 1999, McDonald, Boud, & Gonczi, 2000 and Marí, 2007).

The design of indicators emerging from the self-evaluation of the social intervention was essential for the identification of good practices in the field of youth leisure. The evaluation indicators would make it possible to define the actions, characterise practices and establish their

strengths and weaknesses, in order to reflect on the actions taken and establish new intervention guidelines for improvement to meet the leisure needs of young people (Gullone & Cummins, 2002; Casas, 2010).

#### 3.1. Instruments

Given that this was an exploratory pilot study, it was considered that the most appropriate method to collect data on the participants' professional practices was an open-ended questionnaire. This was followed by a closed questionnaire, based on a content analysis of the answers provided in the first questionnaire. The aim was to identify converging points to identify indicators and establish a benchmark validated by the practices of the social agents involved. The questionnaire was deemed to be the best tool to ensure that professionals would be able to respond freely (Bisquerra, 2009). Bearing in mind that this is an exploratory study, the questionnaire was used as a starting point to help to delimit similar cases of intervention, as well as the discrepancies to design a protocol of indicators to validate high-quality professional practices in the field of youth leisure.

This questionnaire was structured into two blocks, which clearly delimited the information collected:

1. The independent variables were: age; sex; highest qualification obtained; autonomous region where their practice was based; years of experience; employment situation; and position currently occupied.
2. The dependent variables were: objectives; inter and intra-institutional methodology and coordination; funding sources; communication and dissemination strategy; evaluation system.

The open-ended questionnaire was based on seven questions that referenced the independent variables and five others which collected information on each of the dependent variables.

In the closed questionnaire the independent and dependent variables indicated above were taken as reference. The independent variables corresponded to the first 7 items and the remaining 36 referred to the dependent variables, with the following distribution: objectives (4 items), methodology and coordination (16 items), funding (4 items), communication and dissemination (6 items), system evaluation (6 items). All of these were assessed on a scale of 1 to 3, depending on the degree of importance attributed to them (1 = indifferent; 2 = important; 3 = very important).

### 3.2. Participants

A sample of thirty-four experiences was analysed, based on the opinions of the social agents who had been selected through convenience sampling. The sample included 59% men and 41% women.

Of the participants, 32.4% were between 46 and 50 years old; 20.6% were between 41 and 45 years old; 14.7% were between 51 and 55 years old; 11.8% were between 26 and 35 years old; and only 5.9% was between 36 and 40 years old.

The social agents represented eight Spanish autonomous regions: Madrid (30.3%); the Basque Country (24.2%); Castilla y León (18.2%); Andalusia (15.2%); and Galicia, Aragon and Asturias, with 3% each.

Regarding their qualifications, 41.2% had honours degrees (*licenciados/graduados*); 29.4% had a master's degree; 11.8% had ordinary degrees (*Diplomados*), 8.8% had a PhD; and 8.8% had been trained up to the second level of Vocational Training.

The working life of the experts was more than 21 years for 37.5%; between 6 and 10 years for 28.1%; from 16 to 20 years for 18.8%; and between 11 and 15 years for 15.6% of the participants.

Their professional practice occurred primarily in positions related to social organisations (39.4%), the public administration (36.4%) and private companies (15.2%). The remaining 9% were volunteer social agents, volunteer workers in social organisations, and volunteer workers in private companies and social organisations (3% each), as shown in Figure 1.

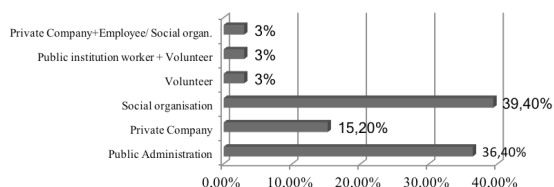


Figure 1. Employment situation

### 3.3. Procedure

In general terms, the information obtained in the first questionnaire was analysed according to the steps used in content analysis of qualitative data, as follows:

- Transcribing the information provided in the answers given by the 34 participant experts.
- Processing the data using the Atlas.ti 7.0 programme in order to classify the responses into categories.
- Coding the data through a mixed coding process: fast coding vs. manual coding
- Interpreting the data according to the meta-category tree and the nodes defined in the coding.

Following Poza-Vilches (2008), this strategy does not analyse so much the style of the text, but the ideas expressed in it; the perceptions that professionals expressed regarding their professional practice were used to discover trends and even identify possible intervention benchmarks that would help to define quality indicators in this practice.

SPSS (v.23) was used to conduct descriptive statistical analysis of the data obtained from the second questionnaire. The analysis was highly reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.844).

## 4. Results

The results are discussed according to the five dimensions of analysis employed. The results obtained from the second questionnaire were used to qualify the data through the statements provided by the social agents in the first, open-ended instrument.

Regarding leisure-related objectives, it was found that fostering youth involvement and carrying out actions that promote cross-cutting values are key to successful professional practice involving youth leisure. All the agents surveyed considered both objectives to be especially important. The first objective had an average of 2.88 (out of 3), a standard deviation of 0.33 and a coefficient of variation of 0.11, which confirmed the high level of consensus reached. The second most valued item was related to the design of actions that promote cross-cutting values and rapport to meet the needs of this target group. Its mean of 2.79 and a coefficient of variation of 0.17 also showed the degree of consensus and unanimity reached in the responses, as shown in Table 1.



**Table 1. Priority objectives in social intervention from practice**

OBJECTIVES	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Indifferent (%)	Average	S.D.	Variation Coeff.
• Encourage youth involvement in leisure activities demanded by this group	88.2	11.8	.0	2.88	.33	.11
• be involved in healthy leisure activities that promote cross-cutting values in youth relationships and meet the demands of this group	82.4	14.7	2.9	2.79	.47	.17
• Strengthen network structures among bodies / companies that promote joint actions on youth leisure	55.9	44.1	.0	2.56	.50	.20
• Establish new dissemination and communication strategies for both these activities and existing resources in this area that motivate youth to participate and integrate.	55.9	38.2	5.9	2.5	.61	.25

This was confirmed in the answers given by the professionals to the first questionnaire, which emphasised the importance of:

‘Implementing programmes and measures for healthy leisure, in order to meet the needs and demands of young people, by providing spaces, technical experts, recreational resources, etc., as well as offering a broad range of activities in various forms: focused on entertainment, recreation, sports, culture, art, etc., including those that promote values education and equal opportunities on a cross-cutting basis’ (E 28).

Other professionals reiterated the importance of values education:

‘Values education, conflict management and resolution, vision of the future, the importance of training, rules to ensure rapport ...’ (E 3); ‘Encouraging work in values’ (E 12).

All this is based on the prominence given to the involvement of young people in their leisure, by:

‘Developing activities that have are important for young people’ (E 15); and ‘developing and supporting

leisure actions based on the demands that have been identified through the direct involvement of participants’ (E 6).

In terms of methodology and coordination, those with the highest score out of the 16 items were identified. As previously stated in the objectives, the participant social agents attributed a key role to the involvement of young people, which is a requirement for quality interventions. The respondents noted that the item ‘motivating youth and getting them involved in the activities that are proposed for their development’ was crucial in quality interventions, with an average of 2.85, a standard deviation of 0.36 and a coefficient of variation of 0.13. The item ‘building an action plan that makes young people key actors’ was given a high degree of importance by 100% of the agents, which was also corroborated by its mean (2.82) and its coefficient of variation (0.14). These were followed by other highly valued items that revolved around network-based coordination and the cost-effective and efficient management of resources to satisfy the demands of young people, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Methodology and coordination**

METHODOLOGY AND GENERAL COORDINATION	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Indifferent (%)	Average	S.D.	Variation Coeff.
• Motivate youth to be involved in the activities that are proposed for their development	85.3	14.7	.0	2.85	.36	.13
• Carry out an action plan that makes each young person a key player in their life process	82.4	17.6	.0	2.82	.39	.14
• Network coordination between the different resources: institutional, educational, social, contextual	70.6	29.4	.0	2.70	.46	.17
• Promote activities that address the profiles, concerns and needs of young people as a group	67.6	32.4	.0	2.68	.47	.22
• To make available or profitable the resources in the city or district as open spaces for meeting and developing an inclusive and integrating leisure.	67.6	32.4	.0	2.68	.47	.18
• Positively and profitably manage human and administrative, economic, political and social resources in the intervention in youth leisure.	61.8	38.2	.0	2.62	.49	.19

The experts surveyed revealed that another fundamental aspect was the need to:

‘Strengthen the autonomy of youth groups by fostering and supporting their own initiatives, providing them with spaces and making resources available to them’ (E 13); and to ‘promote personal development through leisure, to ensure that leisure activities are fulfilling for the individual’ (E 4).

It was also noted that young people need to feel motivated and be offered proposals that are attractive enough to satisfy their needs and expectations, encouraging them to have a leading role. The underlying premise was that:

‘The methodology used should be participatory, allowing young people to express their opinions and

needs, and making them the key players in the educational action’ (E 8). Also ‘the participation of parents in youth leisure activities needs to be encouraged’ (E 10).

In order to achieve high-quality interventions, there was a high degree of consensus when it came to the basic funding sources, which most participants thought should be mainly (national) public (as corroborated by an average of 2.76 (out of 3) and a coefficient of variation (0.16)), and also from the European Union, with an average of 2.70 and a coefficient of 0.16. These agents did not explicitly consider co-financing or even private financing as a proposal for economic management in social intervention. Therefore, for these agents, advocating public funding is a basic priority for the development of quality actions, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Funding**

FUNDING	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Indifferent (%)	Average	S.D.	Variation Coeff.
• Public funding (municipal, provincial, regional and national)	76.5	23.5	.0	2.76	.43	.16
• European funds	73.5	23.5	2.9	2.70	.52	.19
• Co-funded by private social organisations	39.4	54.5	6.1	2.33	.59	.26
• Private funding (contribution from fees)	30.3	48.5	2.2	2.09	.72	.35

Below are some quotations from the professionals involved regarding the above. They defended that:

‘Public funding should support and guarantee stable, long-standing leisure programmes for young people in hardship’ (E 16). This funding includes, for example, financial support from ‘town councils, county councils, autonomous regions ...’ (E 1).

In contrast, other professionals who worked in specific programmes reported that their resources come from the specific bodies that endorsed them.

‘The funding sources were from the programme itself (European Social Fund)’ (E 2). Such as the Erasmus + Programmes, European Youth Exchanges, among others.

However, it should be noted that funding is deficient and difficult to obtain in this area of work. The participants voiced their dissatisfaction with this issue:

‘It is one of the weaknesses; since we are a training institution, it is difficult for us to find funding sources for activities related to youth leisure’ (E 7).

**Table 4. Communication and dissemination**

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Indifferent (%)	Average	S.D.	Variation Coeff.
• Use of virtual social networks and other means related to the use of ICT (social networks, emails, digital newsletters, ...)	79.4	20.6	.0	2.79	.41	.15
• Information through word of mouth	52.9	41.2	5.9	2.47	.61	.25
• Specific information and dissemination campaigns (meetings, talks, workshops)	47.1	41.2	11.8	2.35	.69	.29
• Information points strategically distributed for decentralised mass dissemination and by topic	44.1	50.0	5.9	2.38	.60	.25
• Printed dissemination (posters, brochures, flyers, ...)	29.4	58.8	11.8	2.18	.63	.29
• Use of traditional media: radio, press, television	23.5	70.6	5.9	2.18	.52	.24

As stated by the social agents surveyed, the use of social networks and ICT media is essential for gaining accessing to young people, and ensuring that information and resources are made available to them within each specific social action. This was reflected in an average of 2.79 and a variation coefficient of 0.15, as shown in Table 4.

Several experts stressed the significance of information and communication technologies to achieve effective maximum dissemination.

'Through new technologies and the use of social networks as fundamental tools for channelling and disseminating information aimed at the young population: web pages by the Local Council Youth Department, the Employment Area and the local government web portal, local officials' notice board, Facebook, Twitter, weekly mass mailing of electronic newsletters, emails with specific information to young people who are likely to participate in specific programmes, municipal electronic information panels located at different points in the city, etc.' (E 1).

Additional means included:

'The systematic use of new technologies as fundamental means of dissemination among young people: Youth Department website, Facebook and Twitter, weekly mass mailing of electronic newsletters, etc.' (E 5). The 'use of information and communication technologies: web page, blog and social networks; which must be constantly updated' (E 12). 'Use of social networks. Facebook, Twitter, etc.' (E 18)

As has been shown throughout this paper, it is essential to establish indicators in professional practice, especially when working with young people, measure achievements, follow up on the actions implemented and establish lines of action for improvement that improve the standard of intervention processes. The agents involved highlighted this (with an average of 2.82 and a coefficient of 0.14), and considered this item to be the most important to enhance the quality of interventions. This is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Evaluation system**

EVALUATION SYSTEM	Very important (%)	Important (%)	Indifferent (%)	Average	S.D.	Variation Coeff.
• Establish evaluation indicators (quantitative + qualitative) that measure the achievements obtained and that make follow-up actions possible	82.4	17.6	.0	2.82	.39	.14
• Importance of analysing and guaranteeing the fulfilment of the foreseen and executed.	67.6	32.4	.0	2.68	.47	.18
• Importance of an internal evaluation to analyse the organisation, management and coordination systems.	63.6	36.4	.0	2.64	.49	.19
• Close with an evaluation of participants' achievements	61.8	38.2	.0	2.62	.49	.19
• Starting from the different evaluation stages (diagnosis-follow-up-end-impact)	55.9	41.2	2.9	2.53	.56	.22
• Audit-based evaluation System: internal + external	47.1	50.0	2.9	2.44	.56	.23

The experts surveyed affirmed that both the evaluation of the process and the final evaluation are important:

'The evaluation system used includes both the annual monitoring phase and the final evaluation and impact phase. To this end, a series of reports are made that

contain the results and analysis of the data recorded during the whole process, according to the quantitative and qualitative indicators specified' (E 1). 'Defining follow-up and final indicators for the systematic and continuous collection of quantitative and qualitative data to be included in the annual evaluation

reports, according to the strategic lines and specific objectives set' (E 17).

In the evaluation process, social agents take into account many aspects, such as: participation; the quality of the interventions; the degree of completion of the actions foreseen in each measure; the functioning of coordination and control mechanisms, internally, externally and inter-institutionally; users' satisfaction; equipment, infrastructures, materials... These measure the scope and cost-effectiveness of the dissemination methods used: quantity, type and frequency, among others.

The final evaluation seeks to address issues such as:

'The level of compliance with the strategic lines that defined the plan; the degree of suitability of organisational procedures, the degree of general participation, user loyalty, etc.' (E 24).

Undoubtedly, evaluation is a very important aspect to take into account, as reflected in the following statement.

'We rely on the maxim that everything has to be evaluated, we must not be afraid of it and we must strengthen our self-assessment skills' (E 22).

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The results obtained show the need to evaluate professional practice in order to identify the skills

that the social agents put into play during their interventions; locate the strengths and weaknesses in the social management of youth leisure; and explain the minimum requirements that an intervention should meet to have good quality standards. These findings were based on the perspective of the social agents involved.

This initial approach is one of the strengths of this research. The starting point to provide strategies for improvement is becoming aware of the bureaucratic, political and economic constraints and the difficulties regarding participation management that exist in many of the youth leisure programmes, both public and private, and of the motivations that agents and young people have to promote change.

In contrast, the use of a very small sample of social agents and the idiosyncrasies of the individual circumstances encountered by these agents in their interventions, means that the 34 experiences analysed are unique experiences. This has made it difficult to find common patterns that validate minimum quality indicators for interventions. This weakness could be minimised by expanding the sample, especially in the administration of the second questionnaire, in order to establish trends and validate the indicator protocol used in this exploratory research.

As a summary, eight key indicators were identified by the sample of agents participating in the research as benchmarks for the development of high-quality intervention in youth leisure, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Key indicators**

1. Encourage youth involvement in leisure activities demanded by this group
2. Be involved in healthy leisure activities that promote cross-cutting values in youth relationships and meet the demands of this group
3. Motivate youth to be involved in the activities that are proposed for their development
4. Carry out an action plan that makes each young person a key player in their life process
5. Public funding (municipal, provincial, regional and national)
6. EU funds
7. Use of virtual social networks and other communication media related to the use of ICT (social networks, emails, digital newsletters, ...)
8. Establish evaluation indicators (quantitative + qualitative) that measure the achievements obtained and make follow-up actions possible

The first four indicators address the importance of youth participation and involvement to ensure meaningful social interventions that fulfil the main objective, namely satisfying the demands of the young people for whom they are designed. From this perspective, as proposed by Francés (2008) and Vecina-Merchante, Alomar-Marí, Segura-Rotger, & Efedaque-Aguilar (2016), the young people concerned must be at the centre of these actions from the very beginning. Three factors should be taken into account (French, 2008): inclusivity, by ensuring true participation of all young people; intensity (young people should play a key role, since they execute these actions); and lastly, influence (the young population, their actions, their needs, their interests and expectations condition and influence the public policies of the context where the actions take place).

Indicators five and six show the importance of financial support for high-quality intervention strategies; and in particular, public funding and access to European funds. As was made clear in the *Plan Estratégico del Tercer Sector de Acción Social* [Strategic Plan for the Social Action Third Sector] (2010), 'public funding must be an important part of the overall funding, because it is the responsibility of the different State administrations to cover the cost of social actions, for which they have obligations and responsibilities (pursuant to their jurisdictional competences)' (p.52). In this same Strategic Plan, it was also noted that a new, more transparent funding model needs to be developed, which promotes accountability under standardised control and monitoring mechanisms, and guarantees the stability and effectiveness of the actions. This takes into consideration that, as the social agents of our study made clear in the first questionnaire, public budget allocation is often inadequate and insufficient to carry out the interventions, and to ensure that high standards are observed in their performance.

Regarding indicator seven, access to ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and

to the infinite possibilities available through their use is part of the daily life and activities (García & Del Hoyo, 2013) of young people (or, as they are currently called, of 'digital natives') (Prensky, 2001).

This indicator is particularly significant because, as García and Del Hoyo (2013) confirmed in a study on ICTs and young people, 'networks are clearly an information medium for this sector of the population, and young people select a particular network according to the type of need they wish to satisfy' (page 118). In other words, while Twitter tends to be the network they would use to keep themselves informed (according to 64.4% of the young people surveyed), Facebook (22%) and Tuenti (15%) were reported to be a medium used for their leisure activities and social relations.

Lastly, indicator eight refers to the need to define criteria, indicators and standards that make it possible to monitor interventions in order to quantify and qualify the achievements obtained, based on: the initial objectives, needs to be met, effectiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of the results, and impact. This will make it possible to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the process and channel proposals for improvement and quality enhancement. As San Fabián (2014, p.36) noted, 'the evaluation of public services and policies is today a demand for any management process that relies on the right to citizenship'. It is necessary to 'apply evaluation and social control processes both in the use of resources and in the relevance and effectiveness of their projects' (San Fabián, 2014, p.36).

To summarise, this system of indicators is only a starting point to continue researching what the requirements must be for social intervention to improve and enhance its quality. From this perspective, these standards will also enable the detection and identification of good practices in social action, and specifically, in working with young people in leisure issues, in order to use them as benchmarks for social development.

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Poza-Vilches, F., Fernández-García, A., & Ferreira-Delgado, J.P. (2018). La práctica profesional de los agentes sociales en materia de ocio juvenil: estrategias para la intervención. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 91-103. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.08

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# RESEARCH



## THE LEISURE EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### LA EXPERIENCIA DE OCIO EN LAS PERSONAS JÓVENES CON DISCAPACIDAD

### A EXPERIÊNCIA DE LAZER EM JOVENS COM DEFICIÊNCIA

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Received date: 10.VI.2016

Reviewed date: 12.XII.2016

Accepted date: 17.I.2017

#### KEY WORDS:

youth  
disability  
leisure experience  
leisure activities

**ABSTRACT:** This article describes leisure practices and experiences of disabled youth, understanding leisure as a field of human development and a universal right, with particular emphasis in the importance of leisure experiences as an instigator for full development and in youth as an evolutionary period essential to build and assemble full development of individuals. Spain is possibly the country with a higher amount of studies on youth in Europe, with a multitude of research (Ortega, Lazcano & Manuel, 2015) analyzing social reality regarding leisure of youth, although the number declines when the focus tilts towards disabled youth (Doistua, Lazcano & Madariaga, 2011; Madariaga & Lazcano, 2014). Results focusing on this topic show that disabled youth, as the rest of youth population, value leisure as an important part of life, as a vital space suited for the creation of new friendships and as sphere for personal development. This article also reveals the need to develop leisure strategies which enable the promotion of fulfilling experiences and participation of disabled youth in the range of leisure opportunities. We describe leisure experiences of several groups of youth with different disabilities (hearing, physical, intellectual and visual disability). The aims of this research are: (a) identify and establish typologies of the most significant leisure practices practiced by disabled youth regarding different fields of leisure (culture, tourism, sports, entertainment and others) and, (b) describe leisure experiences of disabled youth according to their opinions, preferences, motivations and values.

#### PALABRAS CLAVE:

juventud  
discapacidad  
experiencia de ocio  
actividades de ocio

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo describe las prácticas y experiencias de ocio de las personas jóvenes con discapacidad. Entendiendo el ocio como un ámbito de desarrollo humano y un derecho universal, y haciendo especial hincapié en la importancia de las experiencias de ocio como elementos promotores del desarrollo integral, y en la juventud como un periodo evolutivo esencial para construir y armar el desarrollo integral de la persona. España es posiblemente

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	<p>el país de Europa con una mayor tradición en estudios sobre juventud, existiendo multitud de investigaciones (Ortega, Lazcano y Manuel, 2015) que analizan la realidad en cuanto al ocio de las personas jóvenes, no siendo estos tan abundantes si el foco de atención se centra en el colectivo de jóvenes con discapacidad (Doistua, Lazcano y Madariaga, 2011; Madariaga y Lazcano, 2014). Los resultados centrados en la demanda muestran que la juventud con discapacidad, al igual que el resto de la población joven, valora el ocio como un elemento importante en sus vidas, como un espacio vital adecuado para fraguar nuevas amistades, y como un ámbito de desarrollo personal. En este trabajo además, se pone de manifiesto la necesidad de desarrollar estrategias de ocio que permitan avanzar para fomentar la promoción de experiencias y vivencias satisfactorias de ocio e impulsar la participación de la juventud con discapacidad en la oferta de ocio.</p> <p>Este artículo describe las experiencias de ocio de diferentes grupos de jóvenes con discapacidad (auditiva, física, intelectual y visual). Los objetivos de este trabajo son: (a) caracterizar y tipologizar las prácticas de ocio más significativas que tienen lugar en el colectivo de las personas jóvenes con discapacidad en función de diferentes ámbitos del ocio (cultura, turismo, deporte, recreación y otros) y, (b) describir las experiencias de ocio de los jóvenes con discapacidad en base a sus opiniones, preferencias, motivaciones, y valores.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> juventude deficiência experiência de lazer atividades de lazer</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> Este artigo descreve as práticas e experiências de lazer de jovens com deficiência. Compreender o lazer como uma área de desenvolvimento humano e um direito universal, com ênfase especial na importância das experiências de lazer como elementos integrantes para promover o desenvolvimento e para a juventude como um período evolutivo essencial para construir e construir o desenvolvimento integral de a pessoa. A Espanha é possivelmente o país da Europa com maior tradição nos estudos juvenis, há muitas pesquisas (Ortega, Lazcano e Manuel, 2015) que analisam a realidade em termos de lazer para os jovens, não sendo tão abundante se o foco O foco está no grupo de jovens com deficiência (Doistua, Lazcano e Madariaga, 2011, Madariaga e Lazcano, 2014). Os resultados centrados na demanda mostram que os jovens com deficiência, como o resto da população jovem, valorizam o lazer como um elemento importante em suas vidas, como um espaço de vida adequado para forjar novas amizades e como uma área de desenvolvimento pessoal Este trabalho também destaca a necessidade de desenvolver estratégias de lazer que permitam o progresso para promover a promoção de experiências e experiências bem-sucedidas de lazer e incentivar a participação de jovens com deficiência na oferta de lazer.</p> <p>Este artigo descreve as experiências de lazer de diferentes grupos de jovens com deficiência (auditiva, física, intelectual e visual). Os objetivos deste trabalho são: (a) caracterizar e tipologizar as práticas de lazer mais importantes que ocorrem no grupo de jovens com deficiência de acordo com diferentes áreas de lazer (cultura, turismo, esportes, recreação e outros) e, (b) descrever as experiências de lazer de jovens com deficiência com base em suas opiniões, preferências, motivações e valores.</p>

## 1. Introduction

This paper discusses the leisure experiences of young people with different types of disabilities and describes leisure practices within various leisure areas. The descriptive variables of leisure activities used are: organisers, participants, frequency, and location. The article also describes the opinions, preferences, motivations and values of young people with disabilities in relation to their leisure experiences.

This section contains a brief conceptual outline of the topics that are most closely related to the leisure experiences of young people with disabilities, with the aim of providing the theoretical background for the discussion of the data presented later.

The most significant change regarding leisure in recent decades refers to how it is perceived, as it is currently considered socially necessary (Cuenca, 2014). It also encompasses a broad range

of activities with multiple outcomes, both for society and for the individual. The relationship between leisure and human development (Cátedra Ocio y Discapacidad, 2014) means that a large part of the efforts are focused on people's needs, in an attempt to identify and interpret their demands and motivations, and how they relate to building fuller lives (CERMI, 2012). Leisure is presented as a fundamental environment for the overall development of the individual for any population group, not only for people with disabilities (Madariaga & Lazcano, 2014).

It has also been noted that leisure plays a significant role as an area of overall development throughout life (Cuenca, 2014). Various studies support the view that leisure is a basic human right, and an important area for personal development and life quality. Leisure contributes to the promotion of physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects at both the individual and the social level (Madariaga & Romero, 2016). Participation in

leisure activities promotes personal development and has various additional benefits (King, Rigby & Batorowicz, 2013). It can therefore be said that leisure practices and experiences contribute to the development of human potential, and it is essential that young people with disabilities overcome the barriers that prevent them from accessing different leisure experiences that promote their full development (Lorenzo, Motau, Van der Merwe, Janse van Rensburg, & Cramm, 2015; Law, Anaby, Imms, Teplicky & Turner, 2015; Shogren & Shaw, 2016).

Youth is understood here as the evolutionary period in which key aspects of a person's life are defined at social, emotional, intellectual and physical levels (Moscoso, Sánchez R, Martín & Pedrajas, 2015). The path towards an adult future begins in this period, which relies on an exaltation of the present reality by constructing (or acquiring) a specific identity, that of a young person. Yet, it is worth remembering that youth is not a homogeneous group (Lazcano & Caballo, 2016).

Disability is understood as a personal circumstance and social event resulting from the interaction between a person who is different from the standard and an unsuitable environment (designed for the standard person). That environment thus becomes inappropriate and limiting (CERMI, 2012). The differences displayed by some people are indicators of human diversity. They are to be welcomed by an inclusive and open society, as they contribute to enriching and expanding society, as well as adding more humane values to it.

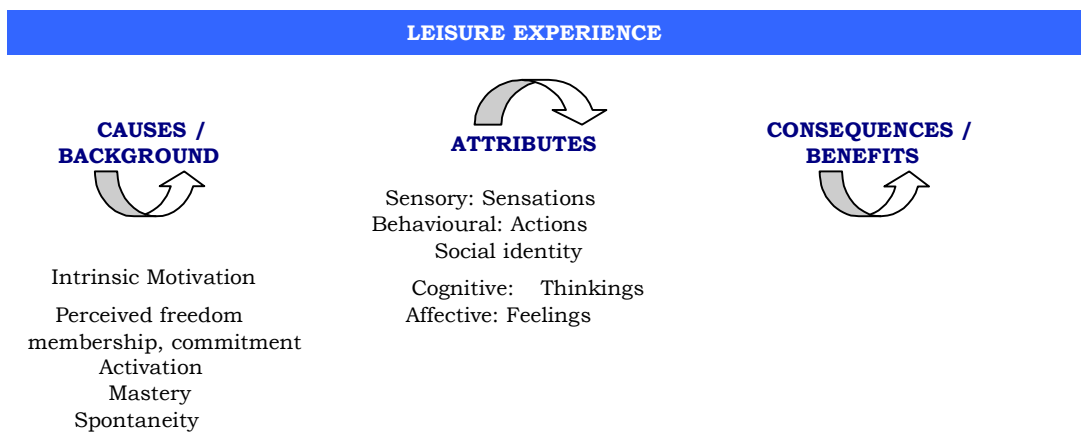
For young people with disabilities leisure time has acquired a hitherto unknown importance, since today it is considered to be a fundamental parameter of life quality—as it is for the rest of society (Cuenca, 2014). All these changes have generated a new mentality that perceives leisure as a right for all. Consequently, efforts are being made by different agents to achieve equality of opportunities (Madariaga & Lazcano, 2014), including legislation which has a more inclusive underlying philosophy and an awareness of the need to satisfy the demands of young people in this area.

The life experiences of young people give rise to distinctive youth lifestyles, marked to a large extent by the practices and experiences linked to their free time (Moscoso *et al.*, 2015). They are

constructs that encompass the ways of thinking, feeling and behaving of a specific group, belonging to a specific environment. But it is also a set of habits, features and activities that serve to differentiate one social group from another. In short, they are shared practices that also have the capacity to structure and organise most of the daily life of a specific group of individuals (Rodríguez & Agulló, 1999). In the 1980s the World Health Organisation noted that leisure experiences are closely related to health and quality of life, and that they are associated with behaviour patterns such as physical activity, eating habits, stress levels and stress-combating strategies, and the consumption of substances such as alcohol or tobacco. Ultimately, leisure experiences become behavioural patterns that structure the social system, time organisation and leisure activities, that is, a type of leisure understood as a differentiated itinerary supported by specific personal and social characteristics.

Leisure studies view leisure as a human experience that is free, satisfactory and an end in itself; it is voluntary and separate from needs, understood as primary needs. A differential feature of leisure experiences is the personal satisfaction they provide, and that they produce affective and emotional outcomes. Leisure, as a satisfactory experience, has an impact that goes beyond the personal and the individual, and extends to community and social levels. Leisure experiences are generators of experiences (Cuenca, 2014) that tend to be repeated and improve the satisfaction they provide, and they are sources of individual and social human development. An experience is optimal (Csikszentmihaly, 1997) when the individual perceives what they want and must do something (perception of challenge) that they are capable of doing (that they have the skills to do). The interest of leisure experiences lies not so much in the type of activity, but in the 'challenges' that it provides for the individual and in the enjoyment involved.

A leisure experience can be studied from three points of view. It can be analysed from the point of view of the background that makes it possible, from the perspective of the consequences or benefits that it brings and, finally, from the viewpoint of the attributes that characterise it.



**Figure 1. Focuses for the study of the leisure experience**

Source: Goytia (2008), based on Tinsley and Tinsley (1986)

The study of the background refers to the study of the prerequisites that are necessary for a leisure experience to exist. This analytical perspective suggests the question: What leads an individual to perceive an experience as leisure? The study of consequences refers to the benefits derived from the leisure experience. Each of the perspectives proposed involves different starting points for research questions.

This paper uses the perspective that focuses on the attributes of the leisure experience, and considers what characterises a leisure experience. In other words, it seeks to identify what individuals do, think and feel when they engage in the practice of leisure (Ortega, Lazcano & Manuel, 2015). The question that arises is the following: What constitutes a leisure experience? What is required for a given practice to be a leisure experience? Given the subjective definition of it, is it possible to consider the existence of some elements or attributes? Do all participants experience a leisure experience in the same way?

Tinsley and Tinsley (1986) provided some answers to these unknowns by identifying six cognitive and affective attributes that shape the leisure experience. Their definition of the leisure experience was framed within psychology-based leisure studies. It relies on the subjective definition of the person who has the experience, giving prominence to individual or personal aspects that notably include emotions. This study is consistent with these authors' points, and with the contribution made by Goytia (2008), in which the individual point of view, and more specifically, emotions are a very important component of the leisure experience. But are emotions the only essential component? This paper considers that it is not at all clear that emotions are the only attributes of leisure experiences, even though research on

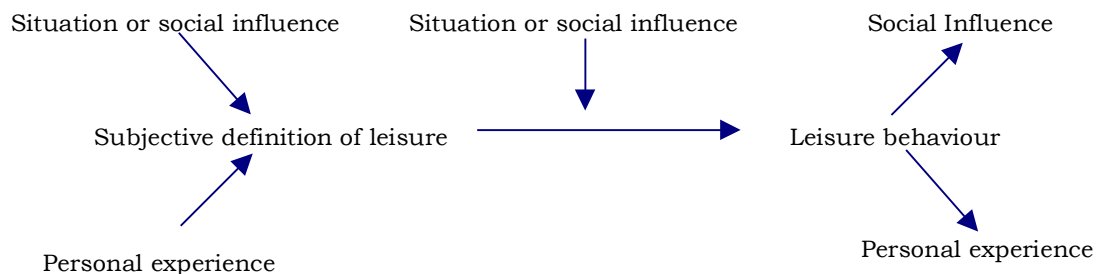
leisure experiences has frequently been operationalised in this way.

From a psychological perspective, a leisure experience is understood as a subjective mental state, resulting from free choice and carried out for intrinsic reasons, which seems to depend exclusively on the person who experiences it (Iso-Ahola, 1980). However, in addition to the cognitive and affective elements, it is necessary to consider that human beings are inherently political and as such, their experiences are influenced by society and by the environment in which they live. This includes leisure experiences. Without diminishing the importance of the personal or individual constraints that allow, foster or facilitate the experience of leisure (Neulinger, 1980), it refers to a mental state derived from the interrelation between participants and their environment; an environment also affected by social and/or situational variables. Therefore, a fundamental characteristic of the leisure experience is that it is dynamic, as well as being subjectively defined.

As other researchers have proposed (Goytia, 2008), the analysis of the leisure experience used in this study is not only psychological, but also psychosocial in nature. The studies by Iso-Ahola (1980) are especially interesting, as they include both personal and situational variables or, in our terms, social and cultural variables. Iso-Ahola relied on a personal definition of leisure, while also adding the importance of social and situational factors to the psycho-sociological analysis. A more psychosocial stance is thus adopted, aptly including the influence that both social situations and personal experiences have on the subjective definition of the leisure experience. Social situations play an important role in shaping the leisure experience, since they allow each person to provide a subjective definition of what leisure is for him/her.

This article describes the leisure experiences of different groups of young people with disabilities (auditory, physical, intellectual and visual). The study's objectives are: (a) to characterise and typologise the most significant leisure practices that take place among young people with disabilities as

a population group in different leisure areas (culture, tourism, sports, recreation and others), and (b) to describe the leisure experiences of young people with disabilities, based on their opinions, preferences, motivations, and values.



**Figure 2. Subjective definition of leisure**

Source: Iso-Ahoa (1980)

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

It was decided to use a stratified random sampling design, applied to the young population of the Basque Country who belonged to a disabled people's association (aged 15-29 years old). It was considered that the sample size should be 400 young people, and this resulted in a level of confidence of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. In order to distribute the sample equitably, it was stratified according to type of disability, sex and age. The proportion of young people with disabilities was equally distributed (between auditory, physical, intellectual and visual disability (25% of each). Among the participants, 51.3% were men, 34% had had completed their secondary education (9% had university education) and 49% were employed.

### 2.2. Procedure

All associations with disabilities registered in the Basque Country were approached to form the young people's sample. The people in charge of the organisations were contacted and informed of the aim of the study and the confidentiality of the data. Voluntary participation by young people was requested to answer a questionnaire in paper format. Parents' authorisations were also requested in those cases where the participants were minors.

### 2.3. Instrument

An instrument was designed *ad hoc* for the 'Leisure for young people with disabilities' study

carried out by the Institute of Leisure Studies of the University of Deusto and funded by the Basque Youth Observatory. It was used to investigate the leisure experience and practice of young people with disabilities in the Basque Country. In addition to the variables related to the identification and description of the sample, others were selected that related to the leisure practices carried out:

- *Leisure activities engaged in*: 29 activities grouped into 5 areas (sports, culture, tourism, recreation and others) were presented to the young people in the sample. The activities in the area of sport included 'individual sport', 'walking' and 'attending sporting events', among others. 'Listening to music', 'going to museums' and 'making crafts' were some of the activities in the cultural area. 'Having holidays' and/or 'going on day trips' were associated with tourism. 'Watching TV', 'playing board games' and/or 'being with friends' referred to recreation and, finally, 'collaborating with the association' and 'hobbies' were grouped in the 'others' category.
- *Organisation of activities*: This variable is categorised with the following response options: 'the individual', 'family', 'friends' and 'the association'.
- *Participants in the leisure activity*: The response options were: 'alone', 'family', 'friends with disabilities', 'friends without disabilities' and 'support', the latter referring to the young person's support staff.
- *Frequency*: '1 day a week', '2-3 days a week', '1 or 2 times a month', 'holiday periods' and 'others' were taken into account.



- *Location*: In order to know where they carried out their main leisure activities, the categories 'house', 'association' and 'community' were included, the latter referring to the public environment or space in the areas where they reside.

This article deals with the leisure experiences of young people with disabilities, and it should be noted that no single activity or sum of activities constitutes an experience. The descriptive approach was based on the assumption that each individual subjectively defines the activities they practice. Hence, other aspects need to be added in order to complete the behavioural approach. This study is completed by a cognitive approach, focused on the analysis of the opinions and preferences that a person has regarding a given practice for it to become a leisure experience. The motivational dimension will be addressed later, as it is understood that emotions have a motivational effect, in addition to organising cognition and action. Motivation is therefore considered because it is the element with the greatest intrapsychic component of the concept of experience. Finally, the cultural dimension is also studied, including a sociological or socio-cultural analysis, which analyses the consumption of leisure as a social act and a cultural event. The analysis of values is important in the cultural dimension, since values are a reflection of the influence of the culture in which the person lives, so they affect their life path and, consequently, their leisure experiences.

It was decided to adapt the tool used by Goytia (2008), which was specifically related to the culture dimension, as it ensured reliability of the results. The reason was the difficulty involved in

devising and administering a scale that was suitable to the particularities of the sample group. The study analysed four dimensions (behavioural, cognitive, motivational and cultural).

1. Behavioural dimension. It was considered important to identify the behaviours of young people with disabilities during their leisure activities. Preference for certain activities was analysed.
2. Cognitive dimension. This included a psychographic perspective focused on the analysis of an individual's opinions and preferences regarding a particular practice that lead to it being considered a leisure experience.
3. Motivational dimension. Emotions, in addition to organising cognition and action, have a motivational effect. This accounts for the inclusion of the element with the greatest intra-psychic component: motivations related to leisure.
4. Cultural dimension. This includes a sociological or socio-cultural analysis of the consumption of leisure as a social act and a cultural event. This analysis also discusses values, as they reflect the influence of the culture in which the person lives, and are considered to have an impact on an individual's life path and choices, and on their leisure experience.

### 3. Results

These are the main results from the administration of the questionnaire, focusing on the variables presented to describe leisure practices and experiences, and their relationship with the opinions, preferences, motivations and values held by the participants in connection with leisure.

<b>Table 1: Main leisure practices carried out</b>					
	Main leisure practice		Secondary leisure practice		T
	N	%	n	%	
Deporte	287	71.8	148	39.2%	-48.4%
Cultura	72	18.0	161	42.6%	123.6%
Turismo	14	3.5	22	5.8%	57.14%
Recreación	22	5.5	43	11.4%	95.4%
Otros	5	1.3	4	1.1%	-20.0%

T= Relative variation rate

The main leisure practice engaged in by the young people with disabilities who took part in the study was sport (71.8%). The second most widespread leisure practice was cultural activities.

Looking at the main leisure practice engaged in by the young people surveyed, practically in half of the cases it was the young people themselves who organised leisure activities. In 84% of cases, young people engaged in their main leisure

activity alone. Regarding the frequency of the activity, 43% practised it 2-3 days a week, while 23% dedicated 1 day a week to the leisure activity. Only 5% of the young people interviewed engaged in their leisure activity during holiday periods. Lastly, the young participants usually carried out their leisure activity within the community (57.7%), that is, in the environment where they found themselves.

<b>Organisation of activities</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Young people on their own	172	45.9
Family	46	12.3
Friends	90	24.0
Association	67	17.9
<b>Company activities</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Young people on their own	123	83.7
Family	11	2.8
Friends with disabilities	12	3.0
Friends without disabilities	1	0.3
<b>Leisure Activity frequency</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
1 day a week	90	23.0
2-3 days a week	168	43.0
1-2 times a month	37	9.5
Holiday periods	19	4.9
Others:	77	19.7
<b>Leisure activity location</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Home	87	23.1
Association	72	19.1
Community	217	57.7

It should be noted that young people as a whole value leisure activities very highly, and find them a suitable life space or area to forge new

friendships. Therefore, they do not consider leisure to be a waste of time or money, but as something essential to them.

Opinions	Average	Standard deviation
An important element in my life	2,86	0,37
A way to make friends	2,85	0,39
An opportunity to gather strength	2,81	0,43
A time to enjoy the outdoors	2,80	0,51
An opportunity to progress personally	2,80	0,43
A time to learn new things	2,79	0,46
A time to rest	2,78	0,54
A time for enjoyment	2,76	0,47
A time to be in nature	2,73	0,54
A way to disconnect from daily obligations	2,72	0,54
A time to help others	2,62	0,59
A time to do sports	2,54	0,74
An occasion to be useful, help	2,53	0,61
A time to do intellectual activities	2,50	0,68
A time to be with my family	2,43	0,76
A time to buy things	2,39	0,76
A time to read, go to museums, exhibitions	2,35	0,76
A way of spending money	1,28	0,50
A waste of time	1,25	0,52

The views obtained (in parallel with the underlying factors) showed that there were six different general opinions about leisure, one of which was negative. Leisure was perceived as and identified with socialisation, solidarity, relax, personal development and recreation. The most valued aspects

of leisure were reported to be socialisation and relax. A large number of opinions were also found (although to a lesser extent) to the effect that leisure is a space for solidarity, personal development and a time for recreation.

Leisure as socialisation	A time to be with my family
	A way to make friends
Solidarity leisure	A time to help others
	An occasion to be useful, help
Leisure as rest	A time to rest
	A way to disconnect from daily obligations
	An opportunity to gather strength
Leisure as development	A time to learn new things
	An opportunity to progress personally
	A time to read, go to museums, exhibitions
	A time to do intellectual activities
	A time to do sports
Leisure as recreation	A time to enjoy the outdoors
	A time for enjoyment
	A time to buy things
	A time to be in nature
Negative leisure	A way of spending money
	A waste of time

Preferences refer to what the individual considers to be their ideal leisure activity. The main preferences for young people with disabilities

were mainly going out and visiting different places; in other words, they preferred to move and discover new spaces.

**Table 5. Leisure preferences of youth with disabilities**

	Average	Std. Dev.	
I don't like to go out	2.8	.5	I really like to go out
I prefer to go somewhere and stay there	2.6	.7	I prefer to go to different places
I prefer to be with my family	2.3	.7	I prefer to meet new people
I prefer to be in the city	2.2	.8	I prefer to be in nature (field, beach ...)
I prefer to go as a group, with organised plans	1.9	.8	I like to organise my free time on my own
In my spare time I like to be calm, do nothing	2.3	.8	In my free time I look for new adventures
In my free time I especially watch TV, read, listen to music	2.0	.8	In my free time I try to exercise, move
I prefer to go to places where there are many people	2.2	.8	I prefer to go to a quiet place, with few people
I usually spend my free time almost always in the same place	2.3	.8	I try to go to different places
I prefer to go to places I know	2.4	.8	I like to try new things
I usually go to places where there are shops to buy things	1.9	.9	I prefer to go to places where there are no shops

Two major factors emerged after gathering the answers in groups, which underlie the preferences indicated above. On the one hand, there were young people with disabilities who preferred novelty and emotion in their leisure experiences, as opposed to having quiet, safe experiences. On

the other hand, there was a group of participants who preferred authenticity and independence to high quality in leisure activities. In general terms, the participants tended to prefer leisure practices and experiences full of novelty and emotion, to quiet, safe experiences in their leisure time.

**Table 6. Factors underlying opinions about leisure**

Emotions and novelty vs peace and security	I really like to go out
	I prefer to meet new people
	In my free time I look for new adventures
	In my free time I try to exercise, move
	I prefer to go to a quiet place, with few people
	I like to try new things
Authenticity and Independence vs Quality	I prefer to be in the city
	I prefer to go as a group, with organised plans
	I usually go to places where there are shops to buy things
	I prefer to go somewhere and stay there
	I usually spend my free time almost always in the same place

This motivational dimension is consistent with the conception that emotions, in addition to organising cognition and action, have a motivational effect. The first table shows the opinions organised by the scores obtained (scale from 1 to 3, 1 being the lowest score). As a group, the participants reported that they had different motivations for leisure activities. It is worth noting the positive assessment they made of sharing time with other people, as well as the motivation to learn new things.

**Table 7. Leisure motivations among youth with disabilities**

	Average	Std. Dev.
Learn things	2.9	.4
Make friends	2.9	.3
Be with other people	2.9	.4
Have a good time with my friends	2.9	.2
Test my skills	2.8	.5
Relax physically	2.8	.5
Discover places and things	2.8	.5
Relax mentally	2.8	.5
Use my imagination	2.7	.5
Have a feeling of belonging	2.7	.5
Be in a quiet place	2.7	.6
Avoid the daily hustle and bustle	2.4	.7

When the motivations were grouped according to their underlying factors, they revealed three types of motivations that could encourage the practice of leisure activities. Leisure can be a space and a time for an individual to make contact with other people, a time for personal development, and an opportunity to relax. The socialisation factor was the most essential for the young people with disabilities who participated in the study, but all three motivational factors were important to them.

**Table 8. Factors underlying leisure motivations**

Socialisation	Make friends
	Be with other people
	Have a good time with my friends
	Have a feeling of belonging
Competition	Learn things
	Test my skills
	Use my imagination
	Discover places and things
Relax	Avoid the daily hustle and bustle
	Relax physically
	Relax mentally
	Be in a quiet place

The importance that young people give to having certain values and, in other words, the influence of the sociocultural environment on leisure practices and experiences, was the last element in the analysis (a scale from 1 to 3 was used, where 1 was the lowest score). It should be noted that young people as a whole reported that they give importance to various different values in life.

**Table 9. Values of youth with disabilities**

	Average	Std. Dev.
Enjoy life, have fun, feel pleasure	3.0	.1
Feel satisfaction with the things I do well	3.0	.2
Take my life with enthusiasm	2.9	.3
Feel safe	2.9	.3
Feel comfortable with myself	2.9	.3
Have a good concept of myself	2.9	.4
Maintain affectionate relationships with others	2.9	.3
Feel integrated	2.8	.4

By grouping the values according to their components, two major factors emerged that could

determine to a greater or lesser extent the experience of each person in their practice of leisure activities. Both factors were important for the group under study, although self-esteem was a few percentage points higher.

**Table 10. Factors underlying the values**

Integration	Feel integrated
	Maintain affectionate relationships with others
Self-esteem	Live with enthusiasm
	Feel safe
	Feel comfortable with myself
	Enjoy life, have fun, feel pleasure
	Have a good feeling about myself
	Feel satisfaction with the things I do well

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

One of the areas where young people's values become apparent are free time and leisure (Moscoso *et al.*, 2015, Freixas & Porcio, 2004). Leisure time is a very important sphere in their lives and is increasingly becoming more important, both in terms of quantity and quality. Young people are concerned about quantitative and qualitative aspects linked to their leisure activities.

The role played by leisure has evolved in the last decade. Currently it is an area of vital importance for the full development of the individual (Madariaga & Lazcano, 2014). The ability to have access to ordinary and extraordinary leisure activities is considered essential for people with disabilities.

Although the main leisure practice of the young people with disabilities analysed is sport, experiences were described differently in terms of the leisure activity under study.

In sports, leisure is autonomous, activities are organised and practised by the young person involved. Sports practices are held once a week in the community environment in which the participants live or interact.

Culture is also an autonomous leisure practice, although it is engaged in less often and takes place to a greater extent in the participants' homes.

Focusing on tourism, there are more social activities organised and carried out with friends during holiday periods. The same happens in the

recreational field, although this differs from tourism in that it is more active, since the young participants stated that they practise recreational activities 2-3 times a week.

Finally, the experiences encompassed under 'others' are the most dependent of all, since this is a heterogeneous space where leisure practices are organised and managed by the disabled people's association in question. Therefore, these are practised with friends who also have a disability. Organised activities are practised 2-3 times a week.

Young people with disabilities have a network of associations that provide leisure services (cultural, tourism-related, recreational or sports-related) depending on the demands of their members, so it could be said that there are sufficient activities available for this population segment.

Leisure for a person with disabilities provides opportunities for participation and enjoyment in environments similar to their peers (Echeverría, 2012), develops skills, fosters choice and participation in community activities (Gorbeña, Madariaga & Rodríguez, 2002), and promotes personal dignity through empowerment (Delgado, and Humm-Delgado, 2017).

But it should be added that there are leisure options in the community environment that are neither accessible nor inclusive (Alexander, 2015). Therefore, the study also proposes the need to develop work strategies to promote inclusion in leisure.

By way of conclusion, the demands identified in relation to the field of leisure and its environment (equipment, services, programmes and activities) are based on the leisure needs of the different groups of people with disabilities. All of them focus on two aspects, namely participation (King, Rigby & Batorowicz, 2013) and equal opportunities (Madariaga, 2011). In order to guarantee the right to leisure of young people with disabilities, it is essential to: enable interaction and socialisation opportunities between people in different leisure spaces; develop individual accompaniment services; liaise between associations and community leisure programmes to organise the provision of services (CERMI, 2011); encourage participation in leisure activities within the community environment; guarantee equal participation; ensure adapted access to new leisure experiences; and develop projects that cater for each person's individual needs (CERMI, 2013).

The main limitation of this study is that it provides a general overview of the leisure practices and experiences of young people with disabilities. Living with a disability presents very heterogeneous challenges, particularly considering that each

type of disability describes very different situations and needs that can determine the practices, opinions, preferences, motivations and values in the field of leisure.

Future lines of research include the applicability of the questionnaire to other groups of young people and other segments of the population of a different age group. It is also necessary to

consider the development of sectoral leisure and youth projects focused on disability subgroups (auditory, physical, intellectual and visual). Finally, studies should also be conducted on the professional profiles of the leisure and disability sector and on the elements that need to be incorporated to implement more inclusive strategies in leisure projects.

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Lazcano, I., & Madariaga, A. (2018). La experiencia de ocio en las personas jóvenes con discapacidad. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 107-119. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.09

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## RESIDENTIAL RESOURCES FOR THE TRANSITION TOWARDS ADULT LIFE FOR FOSTERED YOUTHS IN CATALONIA

LOS RECURSOS RESIDENCIALES PARA LA TRANSICIÓN HACIA LA VIDA  
ADULTA DE LOS JÓVENES TUTELADOS EN CATALUÑA

OS RECURSOS RESIDENCIAIS PARA A TRANSIÇÃO PARA A VIDA ADULTA  
DOS JOVENS TUTELADOS EM CATALUÑA

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Received date: 8.XI.2016

Reviewed date: 6.II.2017

Accepted date: 4.XII.2017

### KEY WORDS:

foster care  
care leavers  
emancipation  
programs  
autonomy  
transition to  
adulthood

**ABSTRACT:** In Catalonia, Youths in care and Care leavers can apply for a housing program from 16 up to 21 to support their emancipation process. The aim of this study is to describe the housing program for transitioning to adult life for former foster youths in Catalonia, as well as the profile of young people, their educators and the work carried out in them. To this end, 5 methacategories were established: Identification data of the entity and its housing program, characteristics of the young residents, educational and support aspects to the youth, access and permanence in the housing program and leaving of the housing program. A semi-structured interview was used to interview 26 professionals. Professionals pointed out that the youth who stay longer are the ones who have a clear emancipation project and accept the educative supervision and program rules. The professionals explained that having an educative project and being enrolled in a training process increase the stay, because the financial subsidises they receive don't provide enough financial stability. Professionals pointed out that reasons for leaving the program were the lack of labour opportunities because subsidises they receive don't brings them enough financial stability. The reasons to left the program were the economic and labour stability. Due to the social and economic situation and the lack of job opportunities, most young people leave the program without having had the opportunity to prove themselves.

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<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> jóvenes tutelados extutelados ayuda a la emancipación autonomía transición a la vida adulta</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> Los jóvenes tutelados y extutelados en Cataluña pueden acceder al programa de vivienda de apoyo a la emancipación desde los 16 a los 21 años. El objetivo de este estudio es describir los recursos residenciales de transición a la vida adulta para los jóvenes extutelados en Cataluña, así como el perfil de los jóvenes, sus educadores y la labor que en éstos se realiza. Para ello se establecieron 5 metacategorías: Datos identificativos de la entidad y sus recursos, características de los jóvenes residentes, aspectos educativos y de apoyo al joven, acceso y permanencia en el recurso y salida del recurso. Se entrevistó a 26 profesionales de las entidades que gestionan estos recursos residenciales mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas que fueron transcritas y codificadas para realizar posteriormente un análisis centrado en las categorías propuestas en el diseño. Los profesionales apuntaron que los jóvenes que permanecen en el programa son aquellos que tienen un proyecto claro de emancipación y aceptan las orientaciones educativas y las reglas del recurso residencial. También apuntaron a que tener un proyecto educativo y tener un proceso formativo en curso, aumentaba el tiempo de permanencia en el programa y que la falta de oportunidades laborales disuadía a los jóvenes a abandonar el programa, ya que las prestaciones económicas que reciben no les aporta la suficiente estabilidad financiera. En cuanto a las razones para abandonar el programa, mencionaron la estabilidad económica y laboral. Debido a la situación social y económica y la falta de oportunidades de trabajo, la mayoría de los jóvenes abandonan el programa sin haber tenido la oportunidad de demostrar su valía.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> jovens tutelados extutelados ajuda à emancipação autonomia transição à vida adulta</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> Os jovens tutelados e extutelados em Catalunya podem aceder ao programa residencial de apoio à emancipação dos os 16 aos 21 anos. O objectivo deste estudo é descrever os recursos residenciais de transição à vida adulta para os jovens extutelados em Catalunya, bem como definir o perfil dos jovens, dos educadores e o trabalho que estes realizam. Para isso estabeleceram-se 5 meta categorias: Dados identificativos da entidade e seus recursos, características dos jovens residentes, aspetos educativos e de apoio ao jovem, acesso e permanência na casa de acolhimento e respetiva saída. Foram entrevistados 26 profissionais das entidades que gerem estes recursos residenciais mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas que foram transcritas e codificadas para realizar posteriormente uma análise centrada nas categorias propostas no desenho. Os profissionais apontaram que os jovens que permanecem no programa são aqueles que têm um projeto claro de emancipação e aceitam as orientações educativas e as regras da casa de acolhimento. Também apontaram que ter um projeto educativo e ter um processo formativo em curso, aumentava o tempo de permanência no programa, e que, a falta de oportunidades de trabalho dissuadia os jovens a abandonarem o programa, já que as prestações económicas que recebem não lhes dariam a estabilidade financeira desejada. Quanto às razões para abandonar o programa, mencionaram a estabilidade económica e o trabalho. Devido à situação social e económica e à falta de oportunidades de trabalho, a maioria dos jovens abandonam o programa sem ter tido a oportunidade de demonstrar sua valia.</p>

## 1. Introduction

In 2014, 42.867 Spanish children and youths were under the foster care of the public administrations (Observatorio de la Infancia, 2016). This protective measure ends when the youths reach adulthood. Melendro (2010, 2015) points out the concept of “young adults”, which has been used in several studies in this millennium to refer to youths who *have not yet clearly transitioned to independent adult life*, and establishes different factors that affect their independence: work, social, family and economic factors, which are attained in a non-linear fashion and at an increasingly later age. The transition to adult life is particularly difficult for foster youths, but even more so in a country with high levels of youth unemployment and difficulties accessing housing, like Spain. This is why foster youth are dealing with a shorter, more accelerated and compressed transitions towards

adulthood than their parents (Lopez, Santos, Bravo & Fernández del Valle, 2013). This transition must also be made with an impoverished support network (Bravo & Fernández del Valle, 2001; Bravo & Fernández del Valle, 2003; Martín, 2011; Martín, García & Siverio, 2012; Martín, Muñoz, Rodríguez & Pérez, 2008; Sala, Villalba, Jariot & Arnau, 2012), which is so necessary for the successful transition to adult life (Montserrat, Casas, González, Malo, Araujo & Navarro, 2010). Youths are often oriented towards their family even if the family does not have the ability to provide them the support they need (París, Hernando, & Martínez, 2017).

However, the difficulties are not solely constrained to the hostile socioeconomic context and the early age when youths fostered by the administration must become independent from their “corporate parent” (Courtney, 2009); instead, the vast majority must make this difficult step with low educational levels, low job qualifications and

smaller social support network. In fact, the majority of foster youths suffer from problems of under-employment, job instability and poverty (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Courtney *et al.*, 2005; Courtney *et al.*, 1998, 2001, Jariot, Sala & Arnau, 2015; among others). A meta-analysis of 32 studies found that having a stable home and education are the most determining factors (Gypen, Vanderfaellie, De Maeyer, Belenger, & Van Holen, 2017).

In a country with a high youth unemployment rate, educational level is the first filter used to choose the possible candidates for a job. Numerous international studies have found that foster youths have educational levels that are far beneath their peers (Courtney, 2009; Courtney *et al.*, 2001; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Festinger 1983; Pecora *et al.*, 2006), as well as much lower percentages of graduation from compulsory secondary school compared to the general population (Montserrat, Casas, Malo & Bertran, 2011; Montserrat, Casas & Malo, 2013; Montserrat, Casas & Bertran, 2013; Montserrat, Casas & Baena, 2015; Sala, Villaba, Jariot & Rodríguez, 2009).

There are numerous factors that affect this low graduation rate: a previous history of low education in the birth family, high rates of disability and psychological disorders, low educational support, the emotional upset they experience, constant school changes, and the prioritisation of informal educational pathways due to the low educational expectations held by the professionals that deal with the youths, coupled with the fact that they have to fend for themselves after they turn 18 years old (Casas, Montserrat & Malo, 2010; Courtney, 2009; Fernández del Valle, Sinero & Bravo, 2011; IARS, 2009; Sala, Villalba, Jariot & Arnau, 2012).

In fact, Courtney, Hook and Lee (2010) observed that former foster youths with a higher educational level are more likely to find jobs, have a stable home and avoid problems with the legal system and are less likely to become adolescent parents. Leaving the protective system usually generates lower salaries and higher unemployment levels, and consequently more situations of poverty (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). Hook and Courtney (2011) found that staying in the protection system longer can act as a protective factor against these situations. In the same vein, the results of the meta-analysis performed by Heerde, Hemphill and Scholes Balog (2016) underscore the benefits of transitional programmes in housing, jobs and education. This is why, pioneering services to support the transition started to be developed in Catalonia in 1994, and they are currently

under the supervision of the ASJTET (Support Area for Current and Former Foster Youths) and provided for in Law 14/2010 on the Opportunities and Rights of Children. The ASJTET offers different services (social-educational supervision, legal advice, job advice, housing and economic support) geared towards foster and former foster youths aged 16 and older who do not have the possibility of returning to their family and show a high risk of exclusion after turning 18. In 2014, 537 youths benefited from the housing programme (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015). The majority of these homes are small units supervised by a wide web of varied entities (foundations, cooperatives or associations) which have reached agreements with the ASJTET. Many of these entities belong to the Federation of Entities with Assisted Projects and Flats (FEPA), a state-wide organisation. For this reason, the programmes to support the transition to adult life for foster youths in Catalonia are a referent worth considering when implementing these services in other regions in Spain.

The purpose of this study is to describe the residential resources for the transition to adult life for former foster youths in Catalonia, as well as the profile of the youths, their social workers and the job the latter perform. To do so, 5 meta-categories were established: information identifying the entity and its resources, characteristics of the resident youths, educational aspects and support for the youths, access and time spent at the residence, and departure from the residence.

## 2. Methodology

The study performed is a descriptive study that seeks to gather information that will allow us to identify the characteristics of the housing programme for former foster youths and the profiles of the youths. The methodology is predominantly qualitative, although some quantitative information was also gathered. A descriptive transactional design was used. To gather the information, a semi-structured interview was designed in which the entities were asked about the number of residential resources and places, the profiles of the youths they attend to, the profile of the social workers, the goals and strategies of their interventions, the amount of time the youths stay at the residence and the reasons they leave it. The interview was validated by 4 experts in this field of research. Likewise, we requested the ASJTET's permission to perform the study. The design of the study was approved by the Ethics Committee on Animal and Human Experimentation at the

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (CEEAH) with report number 2272.

Professionals from 25 of the 29 entities that manage 59 residential resources for former foster youths in Catalonia were interviewed. The main criterion was that they have at least one residential resource exclusively for former foster youths, and regarding the criterion for choosing the person to interview, they had to be a manager or a professional with managerial responsibilities within the residential resource so that there could be conceptual representativeness as they responded to the questions. These entities were contacted by phone to request an interview with a professional with responsibilities in the entity, and a day was agreed upon to hold the interview. Before it was held, the interviewee was informed of the content of the interview and the objectives of the study, and they were asked to participate voluntarily. A source from the ASJTET was also interviewed to ascertain the access and case referral criteria. The interviews were recorded so that they could later be transcribed.

The data gathered were analysed through descriptive matrixes. The analysis method was categorical content analysis. The categorisation process was mixed deductive-inductive.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Transitional residential resources, access requirements and length of stays

Two of the main characteristics of the housing programme are fragmentation and small sizes. The 59 residential resources analysed belong to 25 entities, most of which arrange their places with the public administration (89%). Only 6 residential resources have public infrastructures, but their management is delegated to a private entity. Thus, we find entities that manage just a single residential resource (28%), others that manage two or three residential resources (60%) and a few that manage 4 or more residential resources (12%).

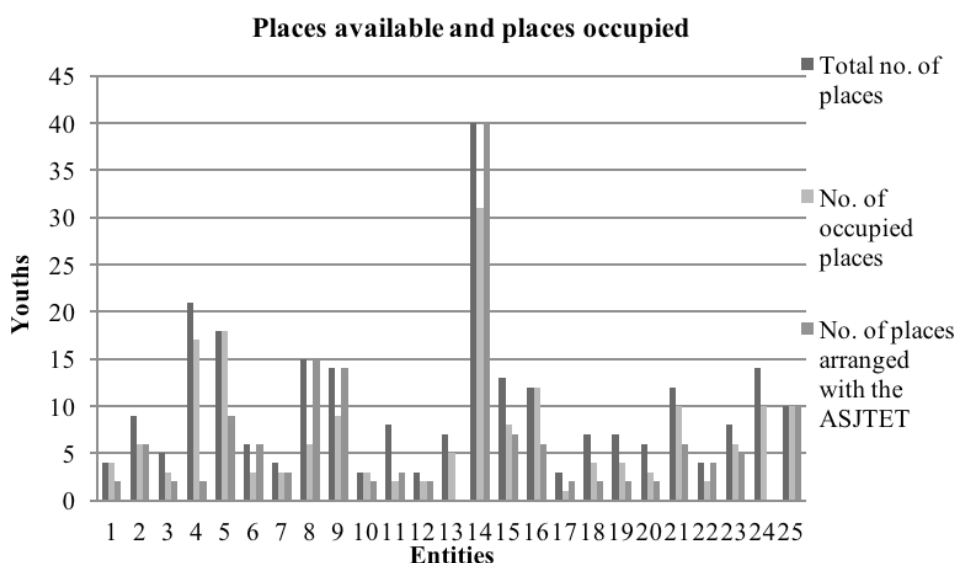


Figure 1. Places available, occupied and agreed upon with the Administration

All told, these entities offer 267 places, 196 of which (73% of those available) were occupied at the time of the interview. The residential resources had between 2 and 7 places, with homes with 4-5 places predominating (49%), followed by homes with 2-3 places (37%). Homes with 6-8 or more than 8 places are somewhat uncommon (7% each). These small formats seek to create environments that are as normal as possible in which the youths must take responsibility for their home and live with other youths:

Here the only thing I have here which is not like a flat is the cleaning responsibilities, so when there are three of them there are three; and when there are two of them they combine it between them. But other than that, everything else works like a normal student flat [...] I also want them to know that they are at home and that I'm in a space that I don't want to bother them (Entity 12).

The social worker's supervision is an intrinsic part of all the residential resources; in most cases

this involves occasional visits to the home but daily telephone availability (88%). Only in a few (12%), those targeted at the less independent youths, offer social worker support 24 hours a day.

Youths who want to access these residences have to apply with ASJTET before they turn 18, and they have to develop an educational plan and demonstrate acquisition of minimum competencies for independence. The ASJTET experts evaluate their candidacy and suggest them to the residential resource. These applications are generally accepted because in their careers the experts have proven their ability to choose the youths, although they can also reject them. Finally, the interested party is proposed the residential resource.

[...] Then there is a pre-selection [...] they are generally offered just to the kids that someone or the social workers from the CRAE [Residential Centre for Educational Action] or the experts of ASJTET think may work out, that is, there aren't [...] places for everyone who leaves the CRAEs. So there is a population that is already sort of pre-chosen or elitist or which is going to have good chances of working out. (Entity 4)

Another requirement which the centres tend to request for immigrant youths is having a residence permit, or having applied for one, since this is a requirement for accessing courses or job offers, and if they do not have one, it hinders the work that the social workers can do with them.

[...] in general, all my kids who enter the flats have residency, and if they don't I try to get it for them because the process takes a very long time. I always tell them that it's better for them to be in the centre, since there is more educational experience, and they can do workshops and stuff. If they don't have a residence permit they can't take any courses and they get bored. Of course, I push for it: "You don't have residence? Well, I want it as soon as you get it". (Entity 8)

Finally, another frequent criterion that the residential resources insist on before they accept a youth is that they cannot show any serious psychiatric or drug consumption problems; this is due to the lack of specialised staff to provide quality social-work assistance.

Once in the resource, the youths are required to commit to and take advantage of it. They must accept the social worker's efforts and fulfil the basic rules needed for peaceful cohabitation. The flexibility of these criteria can be seen in terms of the youths' situation and circumstances, as a form of individualised work.

If we established an overly strict filter, no one is going to live here. Look, a girl disappeared for two weeks in the summer and that was reason enough for her to lose her spot, but I decided that that wasn't the best course and now the girl is studying and working and living alone in a rented flat. You have to know how to provide opportunities. The criteria are flexible and very individual. We don't apply the rules as rules per se; we apply them to the person and I think that this is fundamental. (Entity 16).

### 3.2. *The professionals*

The entities interviewed had a total of 61 staff workers in social worker jobs, which is equivalent to an average of 1 social worker per residential resource and a mean ratio of one social worker per 4.5 youths. More than half of the educators are in the 30-40-year-old age bracket (50.82%), and only 4.9 are over the age of 50. This reflects the entities' intention to have staff that is young but old enough to distance themselves from the users. Females predominate, with 69%, over males with the remaining 31%. In terms of education, more than half of the professionals (64%) are social workers, one-fourth have other university degrees (28%), and some have done the upper-level vocational training course in social integration or sociocultural organisation (8%).

### 3.3. *Purposes and intervention strategies of the residential resources*

All the interviewees agree that the purpose of the residential resources is to accompany the youths towards independence; therefore, one of the main spheres of work in all the entities is job insertion. Due to the current economic situation, the entities view job insertion as somewhat unfeasible and focus their efforts on training and on ensuring that the youths have enough resources to deal with their situation when they leave the residential resource, which is considered disproportionate for the age of these youths.

[...] it's not like the youths leave here with jobs and a flat... no, because these objectives cannot be met, they are very difficult. The objectives are for the youths to have the tools they need to live alone, that they are capable of dealing with a job interview, that they can somehow compete for a job and know how to live in a space where there are now social workers and they can live alone. (Entity 9)

Another sphere of assistance is emotional support. The entities provide an adult reference figure who helps them and offers them security in

their doubts and concerns or allows them to share their successes, changes or future plans. The social workers stress a greater need for this assistance among the girls, in order to empower them and minimise their dependence on their partner as they construct their personal future plans.

They should be capable of living alone, of taking charge, of having their network of friends, and this friendship should not necessarily entail a sexual or partner relationship. [...] Creating a network of friends who have been meaningful and who care for her, but without having to depend on anyone, either affectively or economically. In women, I think it's primarily the independence of not having to be with a man or a woman. (Entity 18)

Money management is a specific area on which all the entities work. The youths develop a spending plan along with their guardian, which includes the money needed to pay for food, everyday expenses and co-pays for services not covered by all the expenses of the flat. However, it is also used to teach about money management and to familiarise the youths with the real costs of housing. This co-pay varies among entities (from €45 to €250), as well as according to the youths' whereabouts. Under no circumstances is not earning any income and being unable to pay the co-pay and maintenance a reason for evicting the youths from the residential resource. If they cannot maintain themselves, the entities help them with maintenance and cover their costs.

The objectives of each youth's educational intervention are captured in an individualised working plan, and their progress is reported to the public administration every quarter. The goal is to get the youths involved in this process. This involvement is perceived differently by each centre; some entities insist that the project must arise from the youths and not be imposed, while others expect the youths to follow the professionals' instructions.

The pathway should be marked by the youths, but many times they are lacking the tools. Then the work that can be done in the flats is to help them in this process, but obviously not imposing it; they have to do it themselves and believe in it. As a social worker, you have to be able to give them these tools and instruments so they can decide, too. (Entity 14)

Well, yes, if I tell them to go somewhere they do, and if I say they have to take a Spanish class they take it. But I don't have to keep watch over what time they get up. (Entity 8)

The entities also use external resources to cover the youths' needs, such as immigrant care services, psychological services and municipal job-training services, as well as to cover the needs of the teams, such as advice for social work teams, among others.

### **3.4. Profile of former foster teens in transitional residential resources to adult life**

A total of 196 youths were using the residential resources at the time of the interview; the proportion of boys was higher than girls (58.2% vs. 41.8%). Just a few residential resources are co-ed, partly to prevent youths of different sexes from living together, as this is a stage in which affective relationships impact the development of their personal plans, in a space without the continuous presence of a reference adult.

Of course, in a flat where there isn't a social worker 24 hours a day, with boys and girls aged 18, 19, 20 with their hormones raging... it can be complicated (Entity 7).

However, the entities that do have co-ed flats have had positive experiences with them.

It's much better. And I'll tell you something else: co-ed living works much better in the flat when there are two of each of them than when there are 4 boys [...], I mean it's more natural. (Entity 11)

Most of the youths are between the ages of 18 (39.8%) and 19 (31.9%), although there are also youths aged 20 (18.7%) and 21 (6%) (mean = 18 years 11 months).

Regarding the geographic provenance of the former foster youths, half of them have immigrant backgrounds (54%), which does not match the proportion in the foster population. This can be explained by the fact that most of these youths have no family in Spain to whom to turn.

Ninety percent of the youths who were living in the residential resources at the time had no job, only 8% had a job contract and 2% were working without a contract. As mentioned above, the immigrant youths faced particular difficulties finding work since many of them did not have a work permit and they tended to have little education.

We are talking about the fact that the specific population that we have today is all immigrants, and they do have a residence permit, but it's really hard for them to get a work permit. It's kind of a Catch-22 situation: "we can't give you a work permit until you have a contract", but then the company says: "if you don't

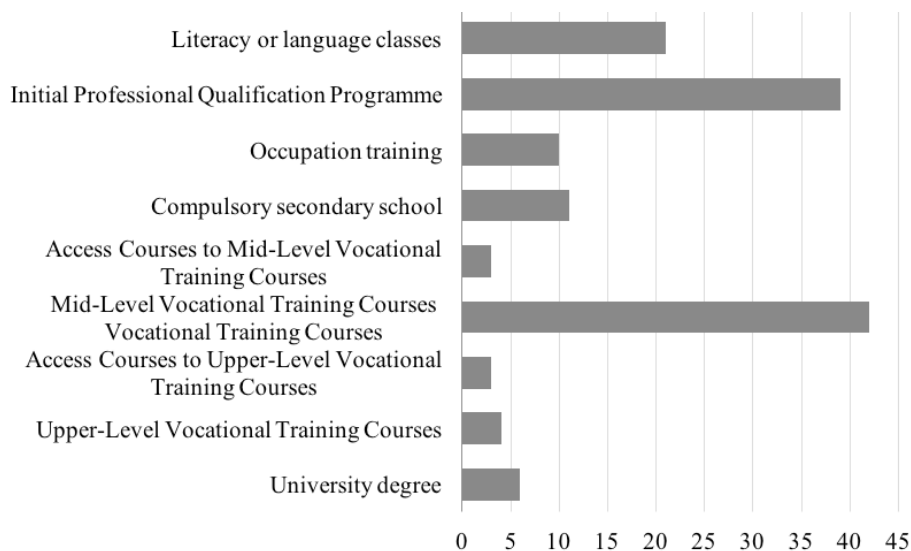
have a work permit...". They are not well-informed about how much this could cost them; they think that they have to pay much more, and the kids aren't well educated so you're not going to say, "Wow! A business owner is going to really stand up for this kid" because their education is extremely basic. [...] So they keep getting training, course after course, but they have hardly any opportunities (Entity 3).

The youths who work primarily do so in government-sponsored entities which aim to provide jobs to groups with difficulties. These entities offer the youths the chance to regularise their work situation, but they offer training contracts that last a limited amount of time and salaries that do not allow them to live independently.

These difficulties, coupled with the lack of job opportunities, explains why most of these youths are engaged in some kind of training.

There has been a major change. The profile 7 or 8 years ago was a youth who was working and everything was most clear. Here there are two factors which compound each other: first, the expansion of training possibilities for youths, such as a benefit or the "La Caixa" scholarships, and secondly the economic crisis. (Entity 14).

Regarding the training, we can see a dichotomy between youths whose prime objective is an education plan and those who prefer to work but who decide to study because of a lack of job opportunities. Thus, on the one hand we find a group which is studying for a Mid-Level or Upper-Level Vocational Training Courses (30% and 3%, respectively) or a university degree (5%), and on the other we find youths who are taking an Initial Professional Qualification Programme (28%), literacy or language classes (15%), occupation training (7%), compulsory secondary school (8%) or Access Courses to Mid-Level Vocational Training Courses (2%).



**Figure 2. Studies in which the youths are engaged**

Number of youths and % by kind of education they are pursuing.

### 3.5. Length of stay and departure from residential resources

The highest abandonment rate of the residential resources is at the age of 20, and the average stay lasts 1 year and 8 months. The entities concur that 10 years earlier, the youths gained independence earlier and that they have been extending their stays in the residential resources due to their difficulties finding a job.

However, there is a variety of factors that lead a youth to leave the residential resource before the age of 21, and it is not always because they have achieved their independence objectives.

Some youths do not have clear plans and cannot find a reason to keep staying in the residential resource, so they end up leaving it either on their own decision or on the suggestion of the social worker. Others decide to leave the residential resource when they receive a benefit, oftentimes driven by the desire not to have to comply with the rules imposed and be accountable to the social worker. In the case of girls, the social workers note that they primarily leave the project because of partner relationships; although they also have a more decisive, autonomous attitude which allows them to gain independence before the boys.



The issue of a partner heavily influences the girls. Many of them have left to go live with their partner, and you are wringing your hands with a horrible paternalistic feeling because they tell you that they want to be mothers at the age of 19 or 20 and 'I want to marry him' or 'I want to be happy with him'. [...] With partners it's 'well I'm going to live with this one' or 'I'm going to live with that one' or 'I'm going to live with the other guy'. I mean, you get it because it's natural, but of course you say, 'you're leaving an entire process of studying, even though you could get admitted into the university if you wanted, and you're working and all and you have some kind of stability and coherence. Do you want to leave it to go live with this person?' 'Yes'. (Entity 21)

On the other hand, there are youths who have a hard time leaving the centre. Some of the interviewees attribute these cases to the emotional bonds with the social worker or the entity.

However, the girls who extend their stay tend to do so in order to complete their education plans or because they are mothers, since they have greater responsibilities that make them seriously consider taking this leap.

In some cases, the professionals are the ones who decide that the young person should leave the residential resource, in a more or less agreed-upon fashion, either because they believe that the youth has achieved the goals for which they were in the flat or because of an extreme situation which leads them to believe that the youth cannot continue living there. Expulsions are primarily conditioned upon a lack of predisposition and repeated noncompliance with the rules of the residence through mild demerits - bad behaviour, disrupting the peaceful coexistence of the flatmates - or serious demerits, which are regarded as direct expulsions, such as aggression, thefts in the flat or commission of a crime. However, some professionals question the strict application of the rules, stating that they would not be so strict with their own adolescent child.

[...] the third time our attention is drawn because they've found people in the flat, because we've found alcoholic drinks or because they aren't going to school, they are thrown out onto the street. Perhaps we're a bit too strict in this sense, and perhaps that's why we have the flat empty. I'm not sure. But you question it, you know? Because I have kids and I forgive my kids for lots of things in life. That's what I mean. Of course, they're my children and these others aren't, but... you know what I mean, right? (Entity 11)

When the decision to leave the residence is taken by the youth, it is usually motivated by their

lack of agreement with the social workers' control, being fed up with the protection system, because the residence does not meet their expectations or, to a lesser extent, because the possibility arises of returning to their family or going to live with their partner.

The interviewees stated that when the youths leave the centre, the majority of them go to live in shared flats or they rent rooms. Another common reason for departure among local youths is that they return to their families or go to live with their partner or their partner's family, primarily the girls. In the case of the immigrant population, returning to their home country is not an option they consider as they perceive it as a failure in their migratory process.

Most of the entities state that the youths leave without work or at best with occasional jobs or poor working conditions. Most of them leave the residential resources having studied a Mid-Level Vocational Training Courses or Initial Professional Qualification Programme, and earning the non-contributing benefit of the minimum insertion income (RMI) and having earned the assistance offered by the ASJTET, while they lived at the residence. The interviewees also state that these youths' social networks are limited at the time they leave the residence.

Many of the entities offer to keep in touch with the youths when they leave the residence to help them or provide them with advice on occasional problems they may have in securing documentation and other paperwork.

#### 4. Limitations

The design of the study included the participation of all the entities in Catalonia which house foster youths (no.=29); however, because of some entities' availability, we were only able to access 25 of them. In one of the entities, the interviewee did not hold a managerial post, as required, due to last-minute problems in the calendar of the person in charge of the residential resource. This replacement limited the responses to the questions that are the most closely related to management of the flats, which were not taken into consideration in the data analysis.

#### 5. Discussion

The data from the study have allowed us to learn more about the housing programme to support the transitional process to autonomy of former foster youth; the job of the social workers; the profile of the youths and professionals; and the access, length in and departure from this programme.

Without a doubt, these resources fill a very important function which can be crucial in the results of this transition to adulthood. In fact, as noted in the Midwest study (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Courtney *et al.*, 2007), the youths who received this kind of support had more successful transitions. Along the same lines, after analysing the transitional processes of youths attended to by the ASJTET, Montserrat, Casas and Sisteró (2013) concluded that the transitional services brought an improvement in the educational levels comparable to the youths in the general population. The programme provided the stability and guidance needed in a complex period, adolescence, when the youth can take a life course with risks that are difficult to reverse when they lack a support network like the family.

Many of the youths seem to satisfactorily take advantage of the residential resource, although it is surprising that in a place like Spain, with high unemployment rates and serious difficulties finding housing, 70% of the youths leave the residences before the age of 20. The report presented by the ASJTET (2011) noted that 59% of the youths had a departure that their social workers deemed appropriate, but 29% had only partly achieved the objectives and 11% were not following the working plan. In the study presented by Montserrat, Casas and Sisteró (2013), 47.5% of the youths achieved their objectives, 28.4% abandoned the programme on their own will, and 24.2% had largely unfavourable results. The interviewees noted that even though some of the youths left the residence because they achieved the autonomy they needed, a considerable part did so for reasons like failure to comply with the rules, failure to take advantage of the resource and lack of satisfaction with the social workers' supervision, which they perceived as controlling, an aspect which has also been found in other countries (Munson, Stanhope, Small, & Atterbury, 2017). These figures are worrisome, and deserve in-depth analysis, if we also consider the fact that many youths never even enter this kind of resource because they lack the independent-living skills needed, or because they do not have a clear educational plan. On the other hand, the study by Olson, Scherer and Cohen (2017) states that these youths would have fewer decision-making skills than their peers not in foster care.

One of the first questions to emerge in this regard is: why do so many youths fostered in the protection system not reach the age of 18 with the minimum basic skills needed to start a learning phase in a shared flat? In this sense, perhaps the social work programmes for minors focus mainly on covering their basic needs and on access

to education and healthcare services and do not place enough emphasis on developing their basic independent-living competences, which the majority of youths learn at home (cleaning, shopping, cooking, laundry, money management, managing friends' visits and taking responsibility for their behaviour during these visits, etc.). We should also bear in mind that many of these youths who enjoy the housing programme were fostered in their adolescence and enter the programme with entrenched habits and values that are difficult to change in the brief time they spend in the centres. In fact, the majority of participants in the programme are young unaccompanied immigrants, some of whom, prior to their journey to Spain, had lived on the street, in hostile environments, and with the values needed to survive on the street, which could conflict with the rules of the programme.

Another factor worth considering is the high school dropout rate among this population (Montserrat, Casas & Baena, 2015). When the everyday school experience leads to the conviction that "studying isn't worth it" and the students have not had the chance to discover what particular skills they possess, it is difficult to for them visualise an educational pathway in which they could be successful. This aspect requires urgent attention. Many of the foster children had significant educational deficits before being fostered. The centres should not be satisfied just with ensuring that the children attend school every day but should also develop educational plans which are capable of providing individualised support in order to lower the deficits or delays that the children may have and support them in their progress, in addition to helping them discover their own talents and vocations.

Viewing social workers' efforts as "control" is another aspect which is often mentioned as the reason why the youths leave. Even though we have social workers who are better trained in mentoring (Sala, Arnau, Courtney, & Dworsky, 2016), the youths' lack of involvement is a problem which also occurs in other countries. Many of the interviewees expressed their dilemma with regard to the need to ensure that the youths respect the rules and the need for a patient attitude with adolescents. The educational relationship is another aspect that requires more in-depth study. However, this orientation is essential when a high percentage of youths reach adulthood without a clear plan (Lemus, Farruggia, Germa, & Chang, 2017) and when not all the foster youths have similar profiles or the same needs (Miller, Paschall, & Azar, 2017). In fact, Rome and Raskin (2017) found

that the mentorship of an adult is a protective factor in this transition.

On the other hand, one of the reasons cited for abandonment is the difficulty of having to live with youths that they have not chosen, with whom they may feel no affinity. In fact, the analysis of the type of resources in the programme shows that most of the residences are shared flats with discontinuous supervision, which require the youths to have a high degree of autonomy and responsibility, and there are few residences for youths with less autonomy (continuous supervision). One of the resources offered by the ASJTET that is not described in this report because it is not strictly a residential service is the SAEJ (Specialised Mentoring Service of Fostered and Former Foster Youths). This service provides youths living in rental flats and rooms available on the market with intensive social mentoring. This kind of mentoring can be more normalising and does not require the youth to break with their small network of acquaintances, friends or other support people to go live in a residence that has an open spot. Other alternatives for youths who cannot adapt to the available residences could also be considered. In Illinois, in these cases they apply "alternative contracts" with a reference adult that the youth chooses, as long as the public administration deems that it is a safe environment and the adult can provide the supervision needed (Sala, Arnau, Courtney, & Dworsky, 2016).

The difficulties accessing the job market are one of the recurring issues in the interviews. In this sense, the entities resort to external programmes for normalised youths or for populations at the risk of exclusion. The ASJTET has a team of 7 job placers who provide guidance to the social workers and youths who request it, and it arranges these external programmes with some entities, although there are no specific programmes for

foster youths. Some countries have specific job insertion programmes because they believe that the foster youths' deficit in competencies when accessing the job market are more serious than those of the majority of disadvantaged youths who use these programmes, and that therefore they are unable to take proper advantage of them (Sala, Arnau, Courtney, & Dworsky, 2016).

We should not forget that half of the youths in the housing programme are unaccompanied immigrants with a residence permit but without a job permit, which poses a barrier to their accessing training programmes and the job market. This is one of the aspects on which the interviewees expressed the most concern, which would require the public administration to design some kind of measure.

Finally, the study points to two different kinds of youth profiles: first, those with a clear educational plan, for whom staying in the residence provides security in aspects like money and housing so they can continue their studies and thus extend their stay; and secondly, a group of youths who have a life plan focused on job insertion, who cannot find work or do not have permission to work and take low-level training courses in the hopes of finding internships in companies which can provide them with a job opportunity. In these cases, the disappointment at not meeting expectations may be the reason they break the agreements made with the social worker, as well as the cause of distress and abandonment of the residence. It would be worthwhile to explore the option of creating a network of companies sensitive to these youths which could offer them real job placement possibilities.

More studies are needed that make an in-depth analysis of the educational relationship and satisfaction with the resources from the standpoint of the youths served.

## Listado de siglas utilizado

ASJTET: Área de Apoyo a los Jóvenes Tutelados y Extutelados. De sus siglas en catalán de Àrea de Suport als Joves Tutelats i Extutelats.

CAM: Curso de Acceso a Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio

CAS: Curso de Acceso a Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior

CFGM: Ciclo Formativo de Grado Medio

CFGS: Ciclo Formativo de Grado Superior

CRAE: Centro Residencial de Acción Educativa

ESO: Educación Secundaria Obligatoria

FEPA: Federación de Entidades con Pisos y Proyectos Asistidos

PCPI: Programa de Cualificación Profesional Inicial

RMI: Renta Mínima de Inserción

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Comasòlivas, A., Sala-Roca, J., & Marzo, T.E. (2018). Los recursos residenciales para la transición hacia la vida adulta de los jóvenes tutelados en Cataluña. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 121-133. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.10

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## PSYCHOSOCIAL ACTION WITH WOMEN VICTIMS OF SOCIOPOLITICAL VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

### ACCIÓN PSICOSOCIAL CON MUJERES VÍCTIMAS DE VIOLENCIA SOCIOPOLÍTICA EN COLOMBIA

### AÇÃO PSICOSSOCIAL COM MULHERES VÍTIMAS DE VIOLÊNCIA SOCIOPOLÍTICA NA COLÔMBIA

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Received date: 10.VI.2016

Reviewed date: 12.XII.2016

Accepted date: 17.I.2017

#### KEY WORDS:

psychosocial action  
women  
victims  
sociopolitical  
violence  
community  
psychology

**ABSTRACT:** Psychosocial action with women in contexts of sociopolitical violence in Colombia is a challenge for institutions and academia, it constitutes a source of reflection for social action located. This possibility of thinking about the task from a critical perspective calls for the inescapable need to systematize the experiences to learn from them (Ghiso, 1998), to return to praxis to build new knowledge and new ways of acting. The reflection on the experience during the process of psychosocial accompaniment constitutes a source of knowledge and reflective practices oriented to the construction of theoretical-methodological models from the praxis itself. From there, the systematization of experiences of psychosocial accompaniment with victims of sociopolitical violence in the city of Medellín was raised as a research interest, with the intention of understanding the emerging dimensions, from the characterization and analysis of its contents, events, components and changes.

The approach of inquiry was placed in a socio-critical proposal of qualitative research, assuming an ontological and epistemological conception of a subject agent and constructor of reality. From the case study it was sought to recover the axiological, theoretical and methodological dimensions, emerging from the participants' narratives (community and professionals) of a community action process with victims of sociopolitical violence in the city of Medellín. The results of the study raise the need to promote narratives of agency, solidarity and community clinic practices that facilitate individual, group and community empowerment in the processes of psychosocial action with, for and from a gender perspective.

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<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> acción psicosocial mujeres víctimas violencia sociopolítica psicología comunitaria</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> La acción psicosocial con mujeres en contextos de violencia sociopolítica en Colombia es un reto para las instituciones y la academia, se constituye en fuente de reflexión para la acción social situada. Esta posibilidad de pensar sobre el quehacer desde una mirada crítica convoca a la ineludible necesidad de sistematizar las experiencias para aprender de ellas (Ghiso, 1998), de volver sobre la praxis para construir nuevos conocimientos y nuevas formas de actuación. La reflexión sobre la experiencia durante el proceso de acompañamiento psicosocial se constituye en una fuente constructora de conocimientos y prácticas reflexivas orientadas a la construcción de modelos teórico -metodológicos desde la praxis misma. Desde ahí se planteó como interés investigativo la sistematización de experiencias de acompañamiento psicosocial con víctimas de la violencia sociopolítica en la ciudad de Medellín, con la intención de comprender las dimensiones emergentes, desde la caracterización y el análisis de sus contenidos, acontecimientos, componentes y cambios suscitados.</p> <p>El enfoque de indagación se situó en una propuesta socio crítica de la investigación cualitativa, asumiendo una concepción ontológica y epistemológica de un sujeto agente y constructor de realidad. Desde el estudio de caso se buscó recuperar las dimensiones axiológicas, teóricas y metodológicas, emergentes en narrativas de los participantes (comunidad y profesionales) de un proceso de acción comunitaria con víctimas de la violencia sociopolítica en la ciudad de Medellín. Los resultados del estudio plantean la necesidad de fomentar narrativas de agenciamiento, solidaridad y prácticas en clínica comunitaria que faciliten el empoderamiento individual, grupal y comunitario en los procesos de acción psicosocial con, para y desde un enfoque de género.</p>
<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> ação psicossocial mulheres vítimas violência sociopolítica psicologia comunitária</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> A ação psicossocial com mulheres em contextos de violência sociopolítica na Colômbia é um desafio para as instituições e a academia, e constitui-se em fonte de reflexão para a ação social situada. Esta possibilidade de pensar sobre a tarefa desde uma visão crítica, convoca a inadiável necessidade de sistematizar as experiências para aprender delas (Ghiso, 1998), de voltar sobre a práxis para construir novos conhecimentos e novas formas de atuação. A reflexão sobre a experiência durante o processo de acompanhamento psicossocial se constitui em uma fonte construtora de conhecimentos e práticas reflexivas orientadas à construção de modelos teórico-metodológicos desde a práxis em si. Desde então se propôs como interesse investigativo a sistematização de experiências de acompanhamento psicossocial com vítimas da violência sociopolítica na cidade de Medellín, com a intenção de compreender as dimensões emergentes, desde a caracterização e a análise dos seus conteúdos, acontecimentos, componentes e mudanças suscitadas.</p> <p>O enfoque de investigação foi situado numa proposta sócio crítica da pesquisa qualitativa, assumindo uma concepção ontológica e epistemológica de um sujeito agente e construtor de realidade. Desde o estudo de caso, procurou-se recuperar as dimensões axiológicas, teóricas e metodológicas, emergentes em narrativas dos participantes (comunidade e profissionais) de um processo de ação comunitária com vítimas da violência sociopolítica na cidade de Medellín. Os resultados do estudo propõem a necessidade de fomentar narrativas de agenciamento, solidariedade e em clínica comunitária que facilitem a empoderamento individual, grupal e comunitário nos processos de ação psicossocial com, para e desde um enfoque de gênero.</p>

## 1. Introduction

The contemporary world, liable to multicultural tensions, seems to need models of psychosocial action linked to the contexts, problems and community resources present in the specific sociocultural settings where the subjects live and develop themselves. “The scientific standards that fit a culture, do not necessarily respond efficiently to the problems that arise elsewhere” (Alveano & Farías, 2011, p. 1), in this sense, it is necessary in the social action, the construction of models of approach constituted from a situated knowledge perspective, that rescues the particularities of the environment, social, economic, political and historical conditions in which the problems and the own resources for their approach emerge (Pujol & Montenegro, 2003).

Reflecting on professional practices becomes an imperative in the knowledge construction and the generation of emancipating community actions, actions that must start from the experiences that professionals and communities acquire in this dialogical relationship and that are developed through participation and involvement from themselves in the processes, as proposed by the Latin American movement that from popular education and action-participatory research promotes spaces for reflection on socio-educational projects from an episteme of action and in the horizon of a critical pedagogy (Messina & Osorio, 2016; Corona & Kaltmeier, 2012). The learning that emerges in this interrelation between professionals and community becomes the source of the scientific and applied development of a discipline. In this sense, the research group “Educación y Desarrollo” from

the Psychology Faculty of the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia has been conducting research aimed at reviewing experiences in the community field, specifically in relation to the accompaniment of victims of sociopolitical violence as an input for reflection on the implications of psychosocial action in contexts of conflict and post-conflict, a topic that other research indicated as imperative in the reconstruction of the social fabric and the construction of peaceful environments (Alvarán, García, Gil, Caballer & Flores, 2011).

During the last decades a multiplicity of proposals for “psychosocial intervention” with victims of socio-political violence have been presented in the city of Medellín-Colombia, each one with a particular nuance according to the entity that leads the development of it. Within these proposals are found and designed different strategies of psychosocial approach oriented to the reconstruction of the social fabric and the emotional recovery of the victims. (Morales, Hincapié, & Martínez, 2008). The possibility of experience during the process of psychosocial accompaniment is a source of knowledge and reflective practice subject of research that allows progress in the construction and redefinition of theoretical-methodological models from the praxis itself. From there, the current study considers the emerging dimensions in processes of psychosocial accompaniment with women victims of sociopolitical violence, with the objective of characterizing the approaches and components of community action constructed in this practice.

In Colombia, gender violence is a violence rooted in the hegemonic discourse of a patriarchal and androcentric culture that subordinates women and establishes various forms of domination, marginalization and naturalization of exclusionary practices against women (Bluter, 2007; Linares & Sierra, 2014). “In the context of Colombian violence, in addition to suffering the macho and patriarchal intimidation of daily life, like children, the main victims of war” (Cadavid, 2014, p. 304).

Women have been one of the population groups most affected by the armed conflict in Colombia, according to the number of the Unified Victims Registry (RUV, 2016), there are currently 3,958,997 women registered in the official register of victims of the armed conflict. According to government reports until 2013, they were documented 2,420,887 cases of forced displacement, 1,431 cases of sexual violence, 2,601 cases of forced disappearance, 12,624 cases of homicide, 592 cases of antipersonnel mines; 1,697 of illicit recruitment and 5,873 of kidnapping. (National Center for Historical Memory, 2013, p. 305); However, other social organizations warn that the figures are higher

due to fear, intimidation, silencing and normalization of violent acts against women that hinder effective registration and documentation (Pacific Women’s Route, 2013; Cadavid, 2014).

Forced displacement, is one of the crimes with greater female victimization in Colombia, becomes a complex event that significantly alters the existence and life projects of each family member, being an experience that involves several simultaneous losses and transformations: economic and property losses, of places and social and affective relationships. (Gonzales, 2012). This phenomenon makes women in many cases as the responsible for their children, and the older members of their family. Being stripped, exiled, with a fracture of its social support network, she is exposed to a radical change in her vital environment, as well as to the loss of material, educational and spiritual resources that it previously enjoyed as building elements of her well-being and her family (Churruga & Meertens, 2010; Alvarán, García, Gil, Caballer & Flores, 2011).

Displacement is the first strategy that allows them to preserve life, but it is only the first of many challenges for the reconfiguration of the vital project. Many of the women in displacement condition in Colombia, enter the new places, the reception spaces with enormous disadvantages: low levels of schooling, knowledge linked to socially devalued work in the cities; they are also deeply affected by the brutality of the violence, by their abrupt and untimely departures, and disoriented by the strangeness of the neighborhoods where they arrive. These circumstances condemn them to maintain or exacerbate their conditions of poverty and they are a clear manifestation of the violence that is exerted against them (Churruga & Meertens, 2010; Meertens, 2000).

In addition to forced displacement, women in Colombia have been victims of sexual violence as a war crime, armed groups have used sexual abuse as a form of intimidation, repression and weapon. Sexual violence in Colombia has become one of the weapons of war, its use lies in turning it into an instrument of collective and individual terror, representing a means to achieve, directly or indirectly, the objectives and interests of armed groups through intimidation, humiliation and use of the female body as spoils of war (Wood, 2012).

Rape also causes strong emotional impacts to witnesses, to sons and daughters of raped women, or to their younger brothers and sisters, who witnessed the rape or heard the verbal offenses of the rapists, as well as the shouting and the pleas of the victims. In the case of women, after the abuse, they must face difficult situations such as abandonment of the couple, family rejection

and precarious living conditions, which resulted in abrupt and negative life changes (Churruca & Meertens, 2010; Wilches, 2010).

The consequences on women victims of the armed conflict go through the intentional effects of terror and mourning. The life of the victims is tied to the past of traumatic experiences that break the sense of continuity of their lives. The destruction, the uprooting, the exile, the breaking of the bonds of support, the losses are the ravages of the war that women in Colombia must face, however, in the middle of desolation, anguish, impotence, rage, there are resilience factors that allow women to move from ignominy, silencing, community fear to peaceful resistance and the constitution of a political subject, as studies in this topic have shown (Matthew, 2013, Villa, 2013, Velásquez, 2011).

The majority of studies on women in Latin America have been the product of various social events, such as the development of feminist approaches, situations of armed conflict, the struggle for civil rights, union struggles, peasant resistance, the promotion of the processes of international cooperation in contexts of socio-economic vulnerability, among others (Bonilla & Rodríguez, 1992; Estrada, 1997; Cortés, 2012; Ibarra, 2008; Gurza & Isunza, 2010; Meertens, 1995 and Rodríguez & Ibarra, 2013; León, 2007).

In relation to the lines of inquiry into gender, there are studies on women, violence and collective action, mostly linked to qualitative traditions of knowledge, with an emerging interest in the development of processes of systematization of experiences that reveal the scope and intentionalities of the developments of the social organization of women victims of violence, as well as a marked interest in recent years to make visible the processes of female resistance. (Ibarra, 2008, Mateo, 2013, Sánchez, 2013, Parra, 2014).

These studies have been oriented to reflect on unconventional ways of doing politics in the context of war contexts, putting the accent on social organizations, networks and the women's movement. The mobilization of Colombian women has been studied, from the analysis of their symbolic and civil actions, their processes of social mobilization and the achievements of the demands of the feminist movements in recent years (Ibarra, 2007, Ibarra, 2008; Ibarra & Victoria, 2010, Gómez & Zuñiga, 2006).

On the other hand, the studies are focused on reflection on the effects of sociopolitical violence on community development and on the subjectivity of women (Alvarán, García, Gil, Caballer & Flores, 2011; Ochoa & Orjuela, 2013; Pareja & lanez, 2014; Villa, 2013). Investigations that have

allowed to see the magnitude of the affectations of the conflict in the daily plot of the subjects and the communities.

## 2. Methodology

The project takes the socio-critical approach of qualitative research as a guiding paradigm of the process, and the systematization of experiences as a method that implies a situated understanding of the processes, trying to understand and interpret the event, from an ordering and reconstruction of what has happened (Jara, 1999). For the collection of the information, documentary analysis tools and interactive techniques were used, assumed as devices that activate the expression of people, making it easier to see, to speak, to recover, to recreate (García, Gonzáles, Quiroz, & Velásquez, 2002).

Now, the word systematization usually and under certain approaches refers to classifying, cataloging, ordering data and information, to "put them in a system", however, from the approaches of popular education, qualitative social research and critical perspectives., the term is assumed not as the data organization procedure, but refers to a process of critical review of experiences (Jara, 2001).

The systematization of experiences enables the reflection of the practice as a source for the generation of knowledge, rediscovering and revealing those discourses, narratives and emergencies of the process, in this perspective, the systematization is configured as a:

Heuristic procedure that, appealing to the reflection of experience as a source of knowledge on contextualized practices, discovers the pieces of discourses and actions that had been silenced, allowing to open the gates that repressed and concentrated information on decisions and operations, letting sprout what is possible to understand, communicate, do and feel (Ghiso, 1998, p. 5).

The purpose of the systematization of experiences is that the subject participate in a practical process where he recovers his relationship with the action, organizing what he/she knows of his/her practice to make it known to others. From there systematization not only becomes a research possibility derived from the action, but it becomes an imperative for those who, in the middle of a society of speed, information, and immediacy, try to stop and reconstruct the knowledge from emerging experiences, contributing not only to qualify the particular professional practice but contributing to the construction of theoretical and methodological knowledge in the area of community psychology.

The population universe was constituted by the female population victim of the sociopolitical violence in the city of Medellín (COL) linked to the single registry of victims (RUV) implemented by the Colombian government; For the study, a non-probabilistic and intentional sampling by snowball was used, in this type of sample “the choice of the elements does not depend on the probability, but on the research characteristics” (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2006, p. 249).

Taking into account the characteristics of the study, the team defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, guided by the protection and voluntariness of the participants, thus forming a group of 45 women victims of sociopolitical violence belonging to different organized groups of the city of Medellín and a team of 15 professionals participating in a psychosocial care process.

Primary and secondary sources were used for the collection of the information, using participative interview (EP) described by Montero (2006) and focus groups, as well as the development of interactive techniques, within which the photo word and the cartography were selected, facilitating the expression of the participants. The instruments (the interview script, the script for a focus group and the interactive techniques planning sheet) were submitted to content validation by expert judgment and a pilot test was applied to guarantee the validity and reliability of the same.

The organization and analysis of the data was carried out using the content analysis strategy of a categorical or thematic type, seeking to highlight the most important topics and the emerging or hidden narratives in the texts produced. The information analysis plan includes the steps of the categorical content analysis procedure in the sense proposed by Montero (2006, p. 279):

- Preparation of the obtained material: Systematic elaboration of the narrations and stories from the repeated readings of the transcription made after having listened several times to the recordings, videos and reviewed the graphic products elaborated in the different techniques.
- Preparation and ordering of topics: Preparation of the material and archives of the information recollected on the various aspects that contribute to the critical reconstruction of the experience according to the research objectives.
- Selection of analysis unit: Choice of paragraphs, phrases, graphics taken from the material obtained that account for the emergence of key elements to recover the network experience.
- Codification of units of analysis: this refers to the attribution of a code for phrases, words, texts or graphic elements that refer to the same topic or fact. The coding process “tries to express the data and the phenomena in the form of concepts, to this end, the data is first unraveled, then the expressions are classified by their units of meaning (individual words, short word sequences) to assign them annotations and the most important, concepts and codes” (Flich, 2004, p.193).
- Construction and definition of emerging categories: Grouping of all the codes that are related to each other by configuring a topic or sub-topic treated in the narrative. Coding and categorization take the organization of content into themes, stages or sections. In this sense they are part of the content analysis of the narratives obtained.
- Preparation of analysis matrices: that allow to highlight the predominant emergent aspects, and the emerging trends on the experience.

After reviewing, organizing, ordering and coding the information in the categorial system, the interpretative phase was continued, which allowed to account for the emerging thematic nuclei in the discourse of the participants based on the shared experience. The analysis of the information was made with the support of the Atlas software. Ti. Version 6.2.

The analytical categories that guided the interpretation of information focused on the **systematization** dimension, assumed as a critical reflection of the experience lived in the process of psychosocial accompaniment with women victims of sociopolitical violence, this dimension covers three analytical categories in this study: *The psychosocial*, that is, from what theoretical-methodological bets the approach of accompaniment is assumed in, from and with this population group, on the other hand the *experience* category that comes from the Latin *experiri*, which means to prove, the experience is an encounter or a relationship with something that is proven, “is what happens to us, what comes to us” (Larrosa, 2003, p 168). Larrosa argues that experience is not limited to what happens, to the specific fact, but implies a process of internalization of what happens.

And finally, the *praxis* category, assumed as “a reflective practice conducive to theory” (Montero, 2004, p.293), intentional practices that guide the community’s work and the transformation of reality by allowing not only to approach but it will guide it to what it should be, to blur the systems of marginalization and asymmetry existing between grassroots communities and the social groups that

hold power, in terms of Fals Borda (1985) cited by Baró (1986, p. 230). praxis should be oriented towards a participatory intervention “only when participating “occurs <<the voluntary and experiential breakdown of the asymmetric relationship of submission and dependence, implicit in the subject / object binomial”.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. About the psychosocial accompaniment approaches with women victims of the armed conflict in Colombia

Following the postulates of Liz Arevalo (2009, p. 106) “the psychosocial is irreverent against psychological attention processes and focused on individuals and invites actions to integrate the emotional and relational with an understanding from the context”. The *psychosocial perspective* favors the understanding of the particularity of the population, victim of sociopolitical violence and the recognition of its multiple social, cultural and political contexts as areas in which identity and the emotional world are constructed and deconstructed, therefore, from where it acts to transform.

We march, we walk to tell the violent ... look here we are! ..... is what we as a group bet and we keep betting .... it is an interest in rejecting violence and, above all, that we say to the state, to the violent ones, here horrible things happen, no more (Camila, female participant, P3: 32).

In reference to the emerging results, a series of tendencies is found in the participants' discourse and the documentary analysis in front of the accompaniment approaches, these tendencies show three possible perspectives of psychosocial action in the framework of collective work of social organization:

- Clinical-community approach: It is situated in the generation of individual and / or group therapeutic spaces oriented towards the attention of the psychic and psychosocial-type effects emerging in the significance of adverse experience, as well as the restitution of the socializing link. This clinical approach in the experience with victims of violence is inscribed from an interactive, preventive and participatory perspective, aimed at the development of strategies to contain the effects of suffering and strengthen the possibilities of the population social inclusion. Likewise, there it is evident of a trend in the implementation of narrative, artistic and cultural intervention

strategies in the processes of emotional recovery of victims of sociopolitical violence in the city of Medellín (Villa, 2013).

It is accompanied from the legal, but also the human side, people need to be heard, that it can say all that anger, the pain of so many years of silence about what happened in this war (Mary, female participant, P15: 48).

In the participants' narratives, this need for spaces of emotional restraint is mentioned, which makes possible a relational approach, located in the meanings and affects that emerge in naturalized violence practices, silenced and hidden during years of armed conflict.

- Community social approach: This focus emphasizes the reconstruction of the social fabric, the invigoration and community participation, its interest is centered “on the collective relationships that the person builds and in which he or she registers, for example: family, group and social networks”. The purpose of this approach is to rebuild networks and social organizations. This focus on accompanying victims of sociopolitical violence has been oriented to the strengthen of mobilization processes and victims' social participation in local and national settings. It is important to clarify that the clinical-community approach is incorporated into the socio-community approach complementing it “as a strategy of restitution of the socializing link through the therapeutic relationship. It means: in the interaction of the therapeutic space the particularities of the link are redefined”. Naranjo, G, González, A, Restrepo, A, Giraldo, C & Pineda, A (2003). As a victim I am now also a manager, the manager is a person who is always very active, who receives information and shares it with the community. It is a person who struggles because participation and community life will be alive, we all collaborate with the difficulties (Ofelia, female participant, P20: 23).
- Rights Approach: Psychosocial attention from this perspective is based on the protection and / or reparation of the violated rights in those affected. This component implies a development of empowerment of rights from a participatory perspective and development of social organization. This implies, according to Gloria Naranjo (2003) that in the psychosocial intervention, the community organization is necessary for the population to participate in the decisions that affect their rights, and also for the decisions to be consensual and effective. From this approach, psychosocial

accompaniment seeks to empower social actors, citizens who develop within the framework of affordability, promotion, restitution and guarantee of their rights and duties. Castaño, B., Jaramillo, L., & Summerfield, D. (1998). Prioritizing actions for treatment and attention from a gender differential approach that allows the recovery of victims from a gender reading, where the particularities of women and the effects of war on them in the restoration of violated rights are recognized, similarly this emphasis seeks to question the conditions of oppression of women in the context of patriarchal societies, the problematization of women in the conflict and peace processes, as well as the struggle for the decolonization of the female body and sexuality, agency processes of recognition of women not as victims of the conflict but as a fundamental social actor in the negotiation of the cessation of war, the reinsertion of ex-combatants, the construction of peace and the demilitarization of everyday life.

A characteristic of us and that now more than ever we want to show the effects that this war has brought on us women, to show those traces in our body, in our same sexuality, that for the war they have seen, because for example, many of us carry shame in our bodies and can say the rights violated (Ana, female participant, P22: 34).

The claim against the violation of rights becomes an incentive in psychosocial action with women in the midst of war, their narrative is placed in social denunciation as an emancipatory and reconstructive practice of new links and even processes of subjectivation of the violent experience on their own body.

### **3.2. About the components of a psychosocial assistance experience with women, victims of violence**

For community psychology, social transformation appears as a central interest in their work, involves a constant search to promote and build “a socially sensitive social psychology” that meant, transform many things: “the habitat, the way of life, the conception of themselves, as people living in a society and forming part of a community, and the community itself, then, in transforming it, also the transformers became others” (Montero, 2010, p. 51).

“For community psychology, both in Latin America and in other parts of the world, it is very important that, in pursuing a transformation in a

community, this occurs through the participation and commitment of organized groups and interested people in a community” (Montero, 2010 p. 53), it means, the transformation goes through the invigoration of participation and organizational as a fundamental aspect for the construction of self-management practices, in these experiences the key aspects of this dialogical accompaniment emerge as following components:

Generation of group therapeutic spaces: Mental health more than a purely clinical practice, psychosocial accompaniment must be an empowerment practice, which stimulates resilient factors and allows the establishment of actions or processes of coping, creative and affirmative aimed at comprehensive well-being. From this perspective, the possibility of perceived emotional support in the constitution as a collective became a therapeutic tool in the construction of new vital meanings and in the same subjectification of violent experience.

What cure? The release of pain ..... that's ..... and I do not need a professional to come here to give me the cure or the psychological treatment ... the group itself with the love, the help between us frees you (Paula, female participant, P7: 54).

From the evidenced in the narratives of the practitioners, the therapeutic alludes to a discursive form related to the possibility of support and emotional transformation that supposes the belonging to spaces of self-help and feminine association, there it is assumed the denomination “therapeutic” as an allusion to the “healing” and re-signification burden of the painful experience that is instituted in the speakers linguistic practices, in no way is it linked to a biomedical, organic and individualistic view associated with mental health, quite the opposite evokes the “healing” from the community resources of containment, listening and identification.

Generation of productive projects: the formulation, establishment and training of women for economic self-sustainability, constitutes another fundamental aspect of the accompaniment praxis, leaving aside the installed competence, this aspect is oriented to the construction of productive projects that allow strengthen the women agency capacity. During the process, the participants have been trained in productive activities of their interest (confections, beauty, baking) complemented the training with advice on the formulation of work cooperatives and seed capital management consultancy. Currently, women are organized into three income-generating groups that meet the

subsistence needs in decent conditions and support the development of their communities.

*Strengthening of social support networks:* Social networks constitute a real community force, these organizations become collective, complement each other, nourish each other, thus stimulating the capacity to respond. This component proposes the articulation of social networks in order to empower the victims of sociopolitical violence, rooted in a substrate that encourages the deployment of their potential, that facilitates the protection of some minimums for life, that extends the coordinates of the inhabited territories, that multiplies the processes of exchange and confers them routes of citizen participation.

I no longer go out to march for myself, I already understood that this is up to us all, to feel the pain of the other is our own, it is to help from the accompaniment to women who lived directly and be in solidarity with them (Clara, female participant, P3: 23)

The natural social networks that women configured, constitute a true community force, these forms of organization become collective, they complement each other, nourish each other, thus stimulating the ability to respond. This action supposes a component of the recognition of the other, from the solidarity, from the mutual support as guarantor of the processes of collective action and identity transformation.

Assuming that the human being naturally tends to seek the company of others for their welfare and adjustment to environmental conditions, this trend emerges more clearly in coping processes in situations of social vulnerability and adversity, given that social support can reduce the uncertainty and anxiety about them. In this way, sharing the experience with other women victims is configured as a social network in the sense of producing a continuous exchange of ideas, services, objects in order to satisfy a collective need. (Madariaga, Abello, & Sierra, 2003). Organized women become a support network in the face of the need for survival in an adverse socio-economic environment, the re-meaning of the painful experience, the need to affirm their identity and adaptation to unfavorable means.

*Strengthening the institutional response capacity (institutional networks):* It is important not to lose sight of the strengthening of the human resource response capacity of the institution, especially when social realities are essentially complex and dynamic. The interaction with excluded populations in the local context imposes the challenge of a constant updating of the theoretical foundations and the methodologies that underlie the praxis.

*Strengthening organizational capacity from the rights perspective:* This component seeks to empower the organization by providing them with tools to assume their citizenship building process, developing within the framework of affordability, promotion, restitution and guarantee of their rights and duties. A self-management approach based on political and citizen participation.

The forms of social organization of women narrated in these experiences emerge as collective actions of emotional support and civil resistance, in an interest to build spaces of sense and meaning, shared in the face of individual and community experiences of sociopolitical violence. The organizations emerge as a possibility of action transformed into the framework of war, a commitment to the anti-militarization of everyday life in urban spaces and the commitment to a negotiated and peaceful solution to the conflict, as well as the denunciation of the atrocities suffered by the women in the Colombian conflict. There the psychosocial professions act as catalysts and companions of the processes of political advocacy, emotional containment and articulators of strategic alliances with national and international networks and platforms, causing the subjectification of violent experience to be transfigured into resistance actions and the construction of political subjectivities.

The social community organization consists of women victims of different types of socio-political violence (forced disappearance of relatives, displacement, massacres, threats, sexual abuse and intimidation) and by various armed actors. These women, during the process of psychosocial accompaniment, decide to organize themselves and build a series of collective actions to mitigate the subjective and intersubjective impact of the experience but also to become a leading actor in local decision-making regarding the care of the victim population.

#### 4. Discussion

In relation to the interpretive nuclei, the emergence of key components for the psychosocial accompaniment of victims of sociopolitical violence from the logic of participation and social organization as an element and tool of transformation is evidenced in the categorial interrelation:

The need to promote *narratives of agency* is to elaborate a narrative of the “agency”, which assumes that the subject deploys and develops its capacity for control and reconstruction and thus not fall into the processes of “victimization” derived of directed models of psychosocial intervention (Montenegro, 2001). The capacity of agency does not refer only to the one-dimensional idea

of 'doing' or 'acting', but also that of 'being', in the same sense in which Amartya Sen (Blanco, 2007) refers to the concept of quality of life in terms of expansion of potentialities and performances. The above leads to include subjective experience (identities, feelings of belonging, views on "the other" as an essential dimension to understand the potential of people in the process of reconstructing their life projects, that is, an intervention that turn his gaze to the development of popular virtues, as proposed by Martín Baró, I. (1990).

An approach related to the emergence of a *community-clinic*, this perspective implies a questioning about the forms of therapy in contexts of vulnerability, problematizing the making of a clinical psychology that must occur not only in the community, but also with the community as a mental health promotion and social support agent. This emerging approach in practice points to the positive role of social networks present in the community as a tool for reconstruction of life projects. The emergence of a community clinic (Montero, 2010; Rodríguez, 2011) imply in the context of sociopolitical violence to assume a participatory and interactive view of the subject in the therapeutic spaces, it is to go beyond the treatment in the community, to arrive at treatment with and for the community: integration and social support together with psychotherapy, in which the community and interested people within it, will actively contribute. It is the community as a co-therapist and collective body that provides knowledge that must be explored and incorporated, forms of popular knowledge that can contribute to the maintenance of health.

These resources used by speakers imply a conception of health / illness in the context of social interaction, this implies a turn in the biomedical view to promote an integrative approach, focused on community potential, as well as the resources of mutual support and solidarity to the time to read health, disease and health care.

From this reading that the vast majority of participants do, traditional conceptions of health linked to the absence of disorders, pathologies and to the proper functioning of the human organism are problematized. This type of considerations based on the traditional medical model (organic and individualistic coping with problems related to health) leave the subject itself and focuses on understanding the disease and not the network of relational configurations where the behaviors are framed in health, the problem of these conceptions points out (Martín-Baró, 1990)

"It lies in a poor conception of the human being, reduced to an individual organism whose functioning could be understood based on its own

characteristics and features, and not as a historical being whose existence is elaborated and realized in the web of social relations". From an ontological and epistemological conception of the human being as a historical, social, political and cultural subject, health is assumed in the same community discourses as a basic aspect of human relationships and not as an exclusively organic substratum.

From the reflexivity, women's discourses show how they recognize that health-related behavior occurs and takes place in a social context, so a purely individual psychological approach, probably only offers a limited and alienating challenge to overcoming and transformation of pain. This aspect assumes a perspective on health linked to the field of interpersonal experience and interexperience, where from the exchange of meanings, resources and affects are woven therapeutic processes that configure the processes of subjectification of violent experience and constitute elements to give it sense to the actions undertaken to rebuild their life project (Arango, 2003).

*The recovery of solidarities* (Cabarlleda, 2008), psychosocial action involves the reconstruction of the social fabric in front of a fragmented social fabric, practices oriented to the development of self-management capacity through mutual help, cooperation, collaboration and the construction of a sense of solidarity that allows us to face the tensions, the adversities and the challenges imposed by the changes in this population group, as recent studies on the role of collective memory in the recovery of victims warn (Villa, 2013).

Female solidarity persists as a resource for overcoming unsatisfied basic needs and the construction of mutually supportive scenarios that facilitate the emotional recovery of victims of socio-political and urban violence, overcoming health care approaches and understanding of the effects of conflict in the subjectivities. Hence, the association and more specifically the collective actions of symbolic resistance should be considered as a reading and analysis tool that allows us to move from a perspective that "psychologizes" and / or reduces health problems to merely individual determinants, in order to expand the spectrum to community, non-professional and mutual support practices that facilitate processes of emotional recovery and overcoming adversity.

For the group is essential, solidarity, and the need for change: all raising our voice to end the silence that makes us victims and accomplices at the same time of this absurd war which we do not want to participate in and demonstrate that it is never too late to react in solidarity with the victims of violence. (Gladys, female participant, P10: 25).



This implies, that studies and psychosocial support in the field of conflict victims care, observed in this research should focus and turn their gaze on the influence of social support in maintaining health, the establishment of social relations of support, collaboration and mutual help, meanwhile, those have a significant effect on the individual and groups well-being, their presence reduces anxiety and helps reduce stress, on the contrary, their absence maintains or increases stress and anxiety. Epidemiological studies, in this line have already warned and have raised how social support has a positive effect on psychological and physical health. (Herrero, 2004), however, in the operationalization of health practices, the traditional biomedical model is perpetuated, with its corresponding conventional actions that make certain alternative and socio-community practices invisible.

## 5. Conclusions

Reviewing an experience from contextualized practice becomes an element to rethink the scenarios of psychosocial accompaniment to victims of social and political violence that transcend traditional clinical attention and psychologizing perspectives, especially when situations of social catastrophe generate not only changes in the individual order but impacts on the basis of social relations: as Martí Baró points out, “the most deleterious effect of the war on the mental health of the people must be sought in the undermining of social relations, which is the scaffolding where we build ourselves historically as persons and as a human community” (Martín Baró, 1990, p. 508). From this approach and the results observed in the speeches of the participants, the processes of accompanying victims of violence should be placed in relation to the effects on the foundations of social coexistence and psychosocial processes; and from there, to build strategies and practices that allow to recognize key issues for the reconstruction of the social fabric and the emotional recovery of the victims. This implies an approach that manages to recognize the collective construction of psychosocial processes and facilitates reflection processes on the effects of sociopolitical violence in the daily life of the communities, as well as on the particular ways of intervening in these contexts.

The results allow to show from the experience and the community life, the approaches and practices emerging in the process of psychosocial accompaniment with victims of violence. In this way, it is pointed out that psychosocial work, born from the recognition of victims as protagonists in the processes of social transformation, being solidarity a key tool in the reconstruction of vital and community projects, this perspective allows us to overcome the relationship between care and dependency link with the professionals that appear in various processes of “psychosocial intervention” implemented and advance in a model of strengthening the capacities, resources and the agency of rights with violence victim population. However, the limitations of this research, especially regarding the difficulties of accessing areas to information gathering, the distribution and size of the sample, as well as the descriptive scope of the data, could be overcome in future investigations.

The reflection on the processes of psychosocial intervention with victims of violence becomes an imperative for the same possibility of accompaniment, from the opportunity it offers to recognize and identify some ways through which professional activity can be channeled (redefining actions), and from these approaches to praxis, develop appropriate strategies to problematize the peculiarity of social issues. This demands in the formation in community psychology and in the same task of the psychology in Colombia several challenges that Martín Baró already named a few years ago but that in the case of the Colombian psychology are updated: to know more closely the social reality of our contexts, review the professional practices and from this reflexivity contribute with the professional knowledge to the construction of fair and inclusive societies. (Martín Baró, 1990). What is observed in the research points to the need to foster a critical and reflective stance on psychosocial action within the framework of protracted armed conflicts, where social links and interaction are reaffirmed as the pillars of subjectivity and intersubjectivity and therefore of the proposals for individual, group and community care, overcoming the pathogenic vision of accompaniment processes with victims of sociopolitical violence.

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## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Martínez, A.M. (2018). Acción psicosocial con mujeres víctimas de violencia sociopolítica en Colombia, *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 135-147. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.11

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**WHAT TYPE OF IMPACT COULD SOCIAL MENTORING  
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**QUE IMPACTO PODEM TER OS PROGRAMAS DE MENTORÍA SOCIAL  
NA SOCIEDADE?  
UMA EXPLORAÇÃO DAS AVALIAÇÕES EXISTENTES E PROPOSTA  
DO QUADRO ANALÍTICO**

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Received date: 2.III.2017

Reviewed date: 2.V.2017

Accepted date: 9.X.2017

**KEY WORDS:**

social mentoring  
social inclusion  
social innovation  
cohesion

**ABSTRACT:** This study carries out a review of the existing scientific literature in the field of social mentoring and its effects on youth at risk of social exclusion as well as on other vulnerable groups. We start by presenting the range of programs evaluated and the different ways these evaluations have been approached. An analytical framework is also presented to delve into the study of the orientation and socio-political context of social mentoring, as well as a definition of the concept in accordance with emerging new social realities. To conclude, we emphasize the need for a wider range of research and evaluation that can better inform about the practice of social mentoring programs that are emerging in Spain, Europe and Latin America.

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<b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> mentoría social inclusión social innovación social cohesión	<b>RESUMEN:</b> Este trabajo realiza una revisión de la literatura científica existente sobre la mentoría social y sus efectos en jóvenes en riesgo de exclusión social y otros colectivos. Comenzamos presentando la variedad de programas que han sido evaluados y las diferentes perspectivas que abordan dicha evaluación. También se presenta un marco analítico para ahondar en el estudio de la orientación y el contexto socio-político de la mentoría social, así como una definición del concepto de acuerdo con las nuevas realidades sociales emergentes. Finalmente, destacamos la necesidad de contar con un abanico mayor de investigaciones y evaluaciones que puedan informar mejor acerca de la práctica de los programas de mentoría social que están emergiendo en España, Europa y Latinoamérica.
<b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> mentoría social inclusão social inovação social coesão	<b>RESUMO:</b> Este trabalho realiza uma revisão da literatura científica existente sobre a mentoría social e os seus efeitos em jovens em risco de exclusão social e outros grupos. Começamos apresentando a variedade dos programas que foram avaliados e as diferentes perspectivas que abordam dita avaliação. Também é preciso ter um quadro analítico maior para o estudo da mentoría social, assim como uma definição do conceito de conforme com as novas realidades sociais emergentes. Finalmente, realçamos a necessidade de ter diferentes tipos de investigações e avaliações que possam dar uma melhor informação dos programas de mentoría social que se estão realizando em Espanha, Europa e Latinoamérica.

## 1. Introduction

Increasingly, scientific research has focused on observing the effects of mentoring on the social inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion. Some authors have identified the benefits it has when it arises naturally and spontaneously (informal mentoring). For example, in the North American context, Erikson, McDonald and Elder Jr. (2009) observed how disadvantaged youth that had a mentor were more likely to reach college.

In this vein, Robert Putnam (2015) stresses the need to encourage greater presence of support networks and social capital since two-thirds of the most vulnerable adolescents do not have the company of an adult to accompany them in their transition to adult life (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). To respond to this need we find the increasing emergence, in different contexts, of mentoring programs promoted by civic organizations (formal mentoring) that are aimed at promoting the positive development of young people at risk of social exclusion. This is the case in Europe, for example, where the number of social mentoring programs has grown exponentially during the last decade 2007-2017, coinciding with the budgetary constraints that most European governments have promoted to manage the economic crisis. This situation has led third sector organizations to seek new strategies to meet the social challenge posed by the arrival of a significant number of unaccompanied immigrant youth and/or refugees who have left their countries of origin due to war or because of the economic, political and social instability experienced by many countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean arch. In the United States, the emergence of social mentoring was different. It spread during the 1990s as a substitute strategy for certain redistributive

policies. These programs were driven by various philanthropic organizations and endorsed by the Bush and Clinton governments. The goal was to actively involve middle-class citizens who would guide young people at risk of social exclusion from the American dream, empowering young people to be individually accountable for their own development and destiny.

In this article, the authors first propose a broad definition of what we mean by social mentoring that goes beyond the North American context, employing a concept that is better suited to the different emerging social realities and the different forms that mentoring can have according to the socio-political context and the actors that drive it. While social mentoring can be used in a neoliberal policy framework as highlighted; it can also be carried out in other more redistributive contexts as a piece of the puzzle of social support for young people at risk of social exclusion. Second, a critical meta-analysis is presented on the results of the main research published in the last twenty years that aims to evaluate the impact of social mentoring programs. Last, based on this meta-analysis, we recommend an analytical framework on the different orientations these programs can have and the consequences for their final recipients.

### 1.1. Definition of social mentoring

Before entering into the analysis, we must define what we mean by social mentoring and why, in this article, we use a broader concept than mentoring for young people, literal translation of youth mentoring. The concept of mentoring for young people seems to us to limit mentoring to only one stage of life and excludes others. While it is true that the majority of existing social mentoring

programs target adolescents or young people at risk of social exclusion, increasingly, mentoring programs are emerging that are aimed at the inclusion of the foreign or adult refugee population, at combating the loneliness of people over 65 years of age, at assisting those over 45 to gain employment, at helping disabled persons, etc. In this sense, we prefer to use the concept of social mentoring because it is more inclusive. It also differs from mentoring programs in their simplest form that have no social purpose since their participants are usually people who are in a comfortable position, whether in terms of education, employment or the social structure as a whole (for example, senior university professors who mentor junior university professors or executives who provide support to newly incorporated workers in a company). In short, by social mentoring programs we refer to those programs that encourage new peer or group relationships with the aim of influencing the social inclusion of people who are at risk of social exclusion.

## 1.2. Origins and expansion of social mentoring programs

In recent decades, mentoring programs that aim to support groups at risk of social exclusion have grown exponentially not only in Anglo-Saxon countries but also in other contexts (Blakeslee & Keller, 2012). One of the most successful programs in terms of both participants and trajectory, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America (BBBSA hereinafter), was born in 1904 and currently has about 100,000 mentoring pairs in the United States<sup>1</sup>. This program was driven by Ernest Coulter, an officer in the juvenile court in New York who was concerned with the growing number of unaccompanied minors, many of whom were foreign-born, arriving in the courts. Coulter created a volunteer program in which adults accompany over a period of time young people at risk of social exclusion, arguing that many of the problems observed would be reduced or disappear with this type of mentoring. Most of the mentoring programs of this type (youth mentoring) in the United States have experienced the greatest growth in their history in the last twenty-five years. For example, at the beginning of the 1990s, an estimated 300,000 young people at risk of exclusion were enrolled in a formal mentoring program, compared with 4.5 million at present (MENTOR the National Mentoring Partnership, 2015). Another indicative fact to note is that only 18% of mentoring programs had more than fifteen years of experience in 2000 (Rhodes, 2002). This growth in participants and programs was due to the institutional and economic

support of the United States federal government in the 1990s and 2000s, which supported the development of these programs managed locally or regionally as part of its social policy (DuBois, *et al.*, 2011).

In Europe, social mentoring programs are also growing significantly and there are an estimated one thousand, most of them newly created (Petrovic, 2015). In fact, some relevant research in Europe on the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as the immigrant population, highlights the need to promote social mentoring as a complementary or integral part of the education system (Crul & Schneider, 2014). In Catalonia, as well as in the rest of Spain, over the last twenty years we have been working in this direction from different sectors, promoting mentoring programs that provide welfare networks and community ties to foster the inclusion of young people of foreign origin who lack these. Some of these programs already have a consolidated track record and have shown good results in favoring the social inclusion of students of immigrant origin in the school environment, such as the *Rossinyol* project (Prieto-Flores, Feu & Casademont, 2016; Feu, 2015), or in the transition to adulthood of young foreigners who leave behind processes of guardianship such as the project *Referents* (*Coordinadora de Mentoria Social*, 2014). In addition, the government of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia launched a social mentoring program in January 2017 in which five hundred mentors work to promote the social inclusion of the refugee population residing in Catalonia (*Pla Català de Refugiats*, 2017).

There are criticisms about how the American model of mentoring has tried to extrapolate to other contexts either through the delegations of Big Brothers and Big Sisters International or through other programs that attempt to replicate the same model. For example, Philip (2003) points out how this model tries to equip youth with the tools to assume dominant values and practices with an uncritical view of social inequalities. In a similar vein, Colley (2003) notes that some programs may be preconceived from the needs of the socially dominant groups. Both authors coincide in pointing out that these programs start from a highly individualistic practice without taking into account, for example, how the friendships of young people play an important role in their life trajectories or how some elements of social structure such as gender, ethnicity or social class can condition their biographies. In the same context, recently, after years of experience, other authors including Smith *et al.*, (2016) argue that mentoring can be a good tool since it can be applied in many



possible formulas and generates an opportunity for a change of paradigm in social policies, moving from hierarchical relationships between the social worker and young people or other users to informal support relationships in which the mentoring relationship can encourage young people to enter into an emancipatory process of their own. These authors also stress that social mentoring alone is not sufficient and that it may have limitations in responding to existing structural inequalities that affect the most vulnerable young people. In this connection, it is not recommended that social policies only emphasize mentoring programs and transfer all responsibility for social policies to the community, using the austerity policy of neoliberal governments as an excuse.

## 2. Methodology

The aim of this paper is not to review all available studies on social mentoring but rather to carry out a selection of the most representative works in different areas in order to obtain an overview of the field. It is an exploration of the diversity of research and evaluative approaches that exist in addition to pointing out the many knowledge gaps that remain to be analyzed in this field. It is likely, then, that some readers will identify some models of mentoring or specific studies that have not been mentioned in this analysis.

The selection of these studies corresponds to the last twenty years (from 1997 to the present) in which the scientific literature has grown considerably. To find the most relevant articles and books, several searches were carried out in the Web of Science and in Google Scholar. The terms used in this process were “Mentoring” and “Youth mentoring” separately or combining them with other words like “Assessment”, “Meta-analysis” and “Evaluation”. The criteria for selection of articles and books we found were as follows: 1) those scientific articles and books that had obtained more citations taking into account the year of publication (ten or more citations per year in CrossRef), 2) the characteristics of the social mentoring programs evaluated (one-on-one mentoring, group or youth-initiated mentoring), 3) the target population (adolescents, young people, the elderly, immigrants and refugees, women...), and 4) the methods used in the evaluation: a) if only Randomized Control Trials were used, b) other quantitative techniques, c) only qualitative methods, or d) if mixed methods were used. In general, we not only wanted to observe the evaluative canon of social mentoring programs, but also the diversity of types of programs evaluated and the methodological plurality present in the scientific evaluations.

In total, fifty-two evaluations of mentoring programs were identified and analyzed. Some of these are meta-analyses that compile eighty-five other evaluations not previously included. Therefore, we can specify that the analytical corpus of which this work derives from is approximately one hundred and thirty-seven evaluations.

As parameters to carry out the analysis of these works and to develop the subsequent analytical framework the authors took into account, on the one hand, which indicators and dimensions were used in the selected studies and, on the other, the scientific discipline from which the authors come from who performed these evaluations. We believe that the disciplinary approach used in the analyzed works is important because this can condition how the object or subjects of study are evaluated as well as their political and social implications.

It is also worth mentioning that the elaboration of the proposed analytical framework is the result of conversations generated in the last ten years in different research networks that the authors of this article are part of, such as the International Nightingale Mentoring Network, the UNESCO Global Youth Mentoring Network or the European Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring.

This work has a number of limitations since the selection of the evaluations is conditioned by the selection strategy described previously. In this regard, there may be very interesting and recent works that are still little known by the scientific community and have not been identified. Another limitation to be taken into account is the working language used since, mainly, studies published in English were explored. Most likely there are evaluations in other languages that have not been addressed in this analysis and that may also make interesting contributions to the study of social mentoring.

## 3. Results of the main evaluations

The growth of social mentoring programs has been accompanied by a considerable increase in the amount of research aimed at evaluating its effects (DuBois *et al.*, 2011). Most of these studies have been developed from clinical psychology and developmental psychology and 80% have evaluated one-on-one mentoring programs (Rhodes, 2002). The evaluation of social mentoring still requires a more interdisciplinary approach to address the study of its effects since it starts from premises that can condition its evaluation and the identification of what is effective and what is ineffective.

The majority of research analyzed (80%) in this review of the literature is based on the concept

of resilience and how mentoring can accompany young people in providing them with a context where this flourishes and endures. One of the most cited theoretical frameworks in the field is Jean E. Rhodes' (2002) model of mentoring relationships. Rhodes argues that the effects of mentoring relationships can increase in function of the degree of trust and closeness between the participants. In this line, it is necessary to empirically explore how close relationships can be generated that are both lasting and positive for the development of participants. Most of the effects that mentoring relationships normally have on mentees (*protégés*) are an improvement in their emotional and cognitive skills, a better development of their identity and a greater enjoyment of well-being (Rhodes *et al.*, 2006). While Rhodes emphasizes the need to further explore the effects that mentoring has on the social field, he does not delve into this and it remains a knowledge gap in which more research and wider theoretical and interdisciplinary frameworks are needed to guide the actions of organizations that carry out social mentoring programs. In this sense, we do not yet have much information on the effects of mentoring in promoting greater social justice, in combating discrimination, in participation in community social activities, or in promoting acts of service to the community, among others.

The results of the meta-analyses so far are very similar. These emphasize that mentoring generally tends to improve the emotional, social, academic and behavioral development of mentees. By contrast, those young people who do not participate in mentoring programs tend to worsen in the same indicators (DuBois *et al.*, 2002, 2011; Rhodes, 2008; Eby *et al.*, 2008). According to these authors, the impact of mentoring programs is generally moderate (0.2 on average in net effects). These studies perform a mean of all effects of seventy-three studies that evaluate different types of programs. The results indicate that while there are programs that have a high impact there are others that have negative effects on young people. For example, Wood and Mayo-Wilson (2012) concluded that there is no evidence to show the impact that mentoring programs have on academic achievement, truancy or behavior and attitudes of young people in school. However, it should also be noted that these authors only analyzed twelve studies and therefore the results cannot be generalized to the totality of mentoring programs.

One of the most important concerns in this area of study is to answer the question why some programs that have a clear intention to promote the development of young people can have either negative or positive results. Rhodes, Liang and

Spencer (2009) observed that this situation is due to the fact that certain programs are not based on a clear code of ethics or ethical framework. Some of these requirements are, for example, that mentors actively promote the welfare and safety of the mentee, be responsible and trustworthy, act with integrity, promote justice and respect the rights and dignity of individuals. The good intentions of mentors alone are not enough. Participants are often people who have suffered situations of vulnerability and have experienced relationships characterized by a lack of confidence. If a mentor fails them serious consequences may result; therefore, it is necessary for mentoring programs to be designed with caution, and to be based on those practices that research has proven to be more sound, and to follow clear ethical principles.

In the case of group mentoring programs some results found are notable for their high impact. An example of this is the *Becoming a Man* program that aims to reduce crime and increase the graduation rate of young people living in high-crime neighborhoods of Chicago, United States. Heller *et al.*, (2017) observed that participant' arrests declined by 32% and their graduation rate increased by 19% due to the substantial improvement in the development of their emotional and social skills after passing through the program. Qualitative studies of similar programs have highlighted how these types of formal programs can generate bonds of friendship, trust and support among the young participants that help them greatly in their emotional and social development (Sánchez *et al.*, 2016).

In recent years a series of mentoring programs have emerged in Europe in which the target groups are neither adolescents nor young people. An example of this is the *Nightingale Senior* program in Malmö (Sweden), linking seniors over seventy years of age with university students. The idea is that older people have a larger social circle and reconnect with society not only through the relationship with their mentor. University students also benefit from new ways of understanding and thinking about the world beyond those that are strictly academic and formal. The evaluation of programs of this typology shows how mentoring relationships help older people to form new friendships and to participate in social activities, thus combating the feeling of loneliness that many report (Andrews *et al.*, 2003).

Another group is that of refugees and immigrants. In Denmark, the *KVINFO* organization's *Mentor-netværket* program connects about two thousand middle-aged immigrant or refugee women with native women in order to help them find work and join new networks of friendship in

Danish society. Bloksgaard (2010) emphasizes that the program addresses the integration of foreign and refugee women from different angles; not only does it improve the personal dimension by fostering improved communication and language skills but also more structural dimensions such as labor or social insertion, enhancing the visibility of the mentored woman as an active and empowered person by discrediting existing racist stereotypes in Danish society.

Unfortunately, there are still few scientific evaluations that can contribute to determining the effects on society of such social mentoring programs. In order to have more information about the impacts of the wide variety of social mentoring programs, more evaluations are required that can provide greater knowledge about these new experiences.

### 3.1. Effective elements

Some research has emphasized that there are a number of elements that are vitally important in the effectiveness of social mentoring programs regardless of the target population. These are the following: a) the objective and focus of the programs - how different orientations of the program generate one type of interaction or another in mentoring pairs (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010); b) the training of mentors - knowing how, based on the interests of the adolescent or young person, to help them speak openly about their dreams and organize activities that are connected with their motivations (Miller, 2007); c) the selection of mentors and pairing or matching, selecting, for example, mentors who have had previous experience with minors (Raposa, Rhodes & Herrera, 2016) or matching people who have similar hobbies by taking into account the voice of both actors - mentors and mentees (Karcher, Nakkula & Harris, 2005); d) connecting the activities with the objectives of the program by encouraging meaningful conversations that favor the development of virtues and service activities towards others as well as the improvement of intercultural competences (Prieto-Flores, Feu & Casademont, 2016), and e) the monitoring and evaluation of the pairs in the programs to obtain results consistent with the objectives initially proposed (Herrera, DuBois & Grossman, 2013).

In addition, a transversal criterion to be taken into account in establishing mentoring relationships is time. Some research suggests that the minimum time required for a trusting relationship to be established that leaves a mark is six months (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). It has also been shown that the longer and more trustful the

mentoring relationship, the greater the impact it will have on its participants (Rhodes *et al.*, 2014).

## 4. Methods used in the evaluations

We live in an era in which there is still a certain methodological hierarchy of the quantitative over the qualitative, especially in relation to studies of causal inference. Studies that have an experimental methodological design are usually the most common in assessing the effects of social mentoring on participants. Traditionally, they are studies carried out from clinical and developmental psychology, disciplines that often recurrently use the counterfactual model of causality that consists of interviewing both a treatment group and a control group in two or more moments in time to observe the effects of social mentoring programs on their participants. This situation implies that Randomized Control Trials (RCTs hereinafter) may appear to be the only valid method for assessing social mentoring. This methodological priority is also found in the discourses of some researchers who openly emphasize that academic rigor derives from having more studies that are governed only by this perspective. For example, Rhodes and DuBois affirm the need to evaluate new forms of social mentoring emerging in different contexts only through "using RCTs" as a methodological tool (2006, p. 651). Indeed, there have been attempts to replicate this type of evaluations in Europe, as in the case of the evaluation conducted by Brady and O'Regan (2009) of the program *Foróige*, the Irish version of BBBSA, or the program *Baluund du* developed in Germany (Drexler, Borrmann & Müller-Kohlenberg, 2012).

In fact, 70% of the 130 studies found in this review, also taking into account meta-analyses, use this impact assessment model. There are few studies that still employ mixed or only qualitative methods for this purpose. It is also worth noting that one of the limitations of RCTs is that it only observes the differences that may exist between two groups (one participant and another control) over a short period of time (six and fifteen months depending on the time difference with which pre-tests and post-tests take place). The research with the longest time between the pre-and the post-test is the exploration carried out by Carla Herrera *et al.*, (2007) of the project BBBSA -fifteen months. It was observed that there are significant but modest improvements in reducing school absenteeism, infractions and the attitudes of its participants. This study is also useful to observe how longer mentoring relationships were also those that had a greater effect on mentees.

The hegemonic use of inferential causal models may not visualize new knowledge that can be gathered through other methods and that can be helpful to organizations that carry out social mentoring programs. For example, social sciences increasingly emphasize the need to complement the analysis of social processes with other perspectives of causality such as Comparative Qualitative Analysis or the identification of social mechanisms (Small, 2013). The first uses not-so-large samples and focuses more on causes (for example, it would not be a matter of observing the effects of mentoring but rather what might be the causes that encourage high-quality mentoring relationships to emerge and be maintained over time). The second, on the other hand, would focus more on responding to what mechanisms connect cause and effect (Elster, 1999), i.e., whether certain types of mentoring relationships could induce certain changes or not.

It would also be necessary to have a more extensive body of mixed method research using quantitative and qualitative techniques or ethnographic research on the effects of social mentoring. A recent study that clearly reflects the contributions of ethnography in the field is the study of Amanda Barrett Cox (2017) which highlights the way in which certain organizational structures can enable African American students at risk of social exclusion to benefit from social capital networks that facilitate their access to the university.

Through qualitative methods it is easier to see what substantive changes social mentoring has produced in the lives of its participants, what epiphanies were experienced by participants, and what the meaning of the relationship is that was created within the framework of the program over time. Some interesting qualitative research allows us to capture a richness that, otherwise, is not collected; for example, taking into account the contribution of mentoring to the biographical construction of individuals or the development of programs. In this line, some qualitative studies have observed how certain practices affect participants, for example, the identification of different closures of mentoring relationships at the end of the program and their consequences (Spencer *et al.*, 2014), how mentoring affects other actors such as family members (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico & Lewis, 2011), or how mentoring programs may be connected to community development, though appearing to be one-on-one mentoring programs (Brady & Dolan, 2009).

Another gap still to be covered in the evaluation of social mentoring and the most interesting debates is whether the effects of the programs persist over time, whether they have structural consequences or fade away. This is an issue that remains unclear and there are very few longitudinal studies that can provide evidence in this regard. Rhodes and DuBois (2008) examined in depth the only six longitudinal studies that exist and emphasize that the effects continue beyond mentoring, but we do not know how or in what way. There are very few longitudinal studies that track participants through the transition from youth to adulthood. In fact, this is a necessity that researchers in the field have highlighted and that could help shed light on what the effects of mentoring are in the medium or long term. One of the main difficulties in carrying out such studies is that they are expensive and require time to see their results. Even so, these are quite necessary because the results have very relevant political and practical implications. Two examples that obtain different results are the longitudinal studies of two school-based mentoring programs, the Quantum Opportunity program (Rodríguez-Planas, 2012) and the SMILE program (Karcher, 2008, 2016). In the first case, no significant results were found between those who participated in the program and those who did not. The benefits it could offer in the short term (two years) would fade five years later. In the second case, the opposite occurred. Initially, Karcher (2008) found no significant results in the grades and social skills of mentees. Ten years later he re-interviewed the same participants and observed how mentees had committed fewer offenses and had more post-compulsory studies than non-mentees (Karcher, 2016). These results made Karcher recognize that he had to retract certain statements he had made ten years earlier in not recommending such programs aimed at minority youth; lesson that probably has to do with the fact that the results of social mentoring programs require time and patience in order to see how the seed that was deposited germinates and grows. It will also be necessary to observe what the common characteristics are of the social mentoring programs in which this seed grows in a more secure and stable way.

The following table lists some types of social mentoring programs according to the focus, structure, target group, or the results of research that has analyzed their impact:

**Table 1. Some evaluations of social mentoring programs analyzed**

Type of program	Program and main results obtained	References	Method used in the evaluation	Target population (territory)
One-on-one mentoring	<i>Various</i> . The average in net effects of the evaluation of 73 mentoring programs is 0.2. These studies highlight their positive effects but also their variability in outcomes depending on the program.	DuBois <i>et al.</i> , 2002, 2011	Meta-analysis	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
One-on-one mentoring (CBM) <sup>1</sup>	<i>Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America</i> . Young people improve their emotional and cognitive skills and better shape their identities. They are also less likely to fall into alcohol and drugs, show reduced absenteeism and improve their behavior in school. These studies also highlight the need to create quality relationships, know how to properly end the relationship and encourage family participation in the process.	Grossman & Tierney 1998; Rhodes 2006; Rhodes <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Raposa, Rhodes & Herrera 2016; Herrera <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Spencer <i>et al.</i> , 2011, 2014	RCT <sup>2</sup> ; In-depth interviews	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
One-on-one mentoring (SBM) <sup>2</sup>	<i>SMILE</i> . Decrease in crime rate and increased participation in post-compulsory education.	Karcher 2008, 2016	RCT	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
One-on-one mentoring (SBM)	<i>Quantum Opportunity Program</i> . There are no significant changes between participants and non-participants.	Rodríguez-Planas 2012	RCT	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
One-on-one mentoring (CBM)	<i>Nightingale - Rossinyol</i> . Improves communication skills, self-esteem, behavior in school, and educational expectations. It also improves the intercultural competencies of mentors.	Prieto-Flores, Feu & Casademont 2016; Feu 2015	RCT; Mixed methods	Adolescents of foreign origin or Roma (Spain)
One-on-one mentoring (CBM)	<i>Baluand du</i> . Improves the quality of physical and emotional well-being of the children involved. It also improves their school motivation by positively affecting their performance.	Drexler, Borrmann & Müller-Kohlenberg 2012	RCT	Children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Germany)
One-on-one mentoring (CBM)	<i>KVINFOs Mentor-netværk</i> . Improvement in communicative and linguistic skills, greater access to the labor market and social image of empowerment.	Bloksgaard, 2010	Discussion groups	Foreign or refugee women (Denmark)
Group mentoring (SBM)	<i>Becoming a Man</i> . Decrease in arrests and an increase of 19% in the graduation rate of participants. Generation of bonds of friendship and mutual aid among participants.	Heller <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Sánchez <i>et al.</i> , 2016	RCT; In-depth interviews	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
Group mentoring (SBM)	<i>Posse</i> . The program generates vertical and horizontal social support networks that help facilitate access to the university for young people from ethnic minorities.	Barrett Cox 2017	Ethnography	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
One-on-one mentoring (CBM)	<i>Foróige</i> . Similar programs to BBBSA in other contexts that, when connected with civic and community activities promote community development and the active citizenship of their participants.	Brady & O'Regan 2009, Brady & Dolan 2009	Mixed methods	Young people at risk of social exclusion (Ireland)

Type of program	Program and main results obtained	References	Method used in the evaluation	Target population (territory)
One-on-one mentoring (CBM)	<i>Age UK</i> . Reduces the feeling of loneliness of the elderly, new friendships are forged and the relationship with their environment increases.	Andrews <i>et al.</i> , 2003	Mixed methods	People over age 65 (United Kingdom)
Youth-initiated mentoring	<i>National Guard Youth Challenge Program</i> . Educational, occupational and behavioral improvements are found in those cases where relationships that are more lasting have been constructed. The most enduring relationships occur when young people choose their mentors and when they are of the same ethnic origin.	Schwartz, Rhodes, Spencer & Grossman 2016	Mixed methods	Young people at risk of social exclusion (USA)
Youth-initiated mentoring	<i>Several organizations that implement this modality in Netherlands with young people under care guardianship</i> . Eight out of ten young people who participated in the program identified an informal mentor among their social networks within five weeks.	Dam <i>et al.</i> , 2017	Case-file analysis	Young people under guardianship care (Netherlands)

Source: Authors' elaboration.  
Notes: (1) CBM = Community-Based Mentoring.  
(2) SBM = School-Based Mentoring.  
(3) RCT= Randomized Control Trial.

## 5. Analytical framework for identifying the orientation and the context of social mentoring programs

Next, we present a modest analytical framework that can help us understand the direction social mentoring programs may take and the potential consequences for their participants. This framework has been built on the basis of the literature review we carried out and the identification of some gaps to be covered, based on the particularities of the new programs that are being developed in various contexts, not just the North American one. In this regard, the analysis of social mentoring programs must take into account how the programs can be positioned in three axes of action according to the context in which they are developed. For example, it could not be generalized that all mentoring programs have an individualistic and preventive orientation as there are more and more programs that have a clear focus on generating community ties and empowering mentees (axis *individualization versus community*); neither can they be identified exclusively as paternalistic since there are an increasing number of programs that highlight the mutual benefits of mentoring, and fewer that resort to paternalism to "save the unfortunate and teach them the way of the American dream" (axis *unidirectionality*

versus *bidirectionality*). Finally, on the one hand, mentoring programs can be developed in a neoliberal context with a strong reduction of welfare state redistributive policies as happened in the United States during the 1990s and 2000s. On the other hand, they can also be developed as complementary (non-substitutive) actions of traditional redistribution policies since they have the capacity to generate new social relations of solidarity that the Administration does not usually attain, as in the Danish case (*axis neoliberal model versus social model*). See Figure 1 below for *graphic representation*.

a) *Individualization versus community*. Some mentoring programs are based on a more individualistic approach with special emphasis on the resilience of the individual overcoming the obstacles they will encounter on the path to being successful in today's society. All this is usually disconnected from the context of young people. The idea is to get them out of their neighborhoods so that they can experience another reality. In this type of programs emphasis is placed on the development of those skills that the young person or adult must have to adapt to the norms that the labor market or society imposes. On the other hand, other mentoring programs start from a more civic conception

of social mentoring, taking into account the development of civic virtues or how the mentor can consciously accompany mentees in their empowerment by participating in cultural or community events, activities of service to the community and neighborhood improvement, etc. To delve deeper into this line, it is necessary, as Stanton-Salazar (2011) points out, to have more programs that can serve as a model, additional research and broader theoretical frameworks on the processes through which people at risk of social exclusion can be empowered in their relationship with significant others. To do this, it is necessary to go beyond the theoretical frameworks of developmental psychology and complement them with critical social theories on social networks and socialization to understand how mentoring processes can be connected with social structure and how they can create mechanisms of resistance to combat social inequalities. It is also necessary for mentors to be aware of the social forces that hinder the human development of young people, adults and older people at risk of social exclusion, to provide active support and to act as institutional agents<sup>2</sup>. In recent years, we find some programs and approaches that seek to promote this path of empowerment. For example, Schwartz and Rhodes (2016) emphasize the need to promote what they call youth-initiated mentoring (YIM), a new form of mentoring in which young people learn to build informal mentoring relationships in their natural support networks by identifying adults in their environment who can become mentors (Schwartz, Rhodes, Spencer & Grossman, 2013). This type of mentoring is not only found in the North American context but also in Europe (Dam *et al.*, 2016).

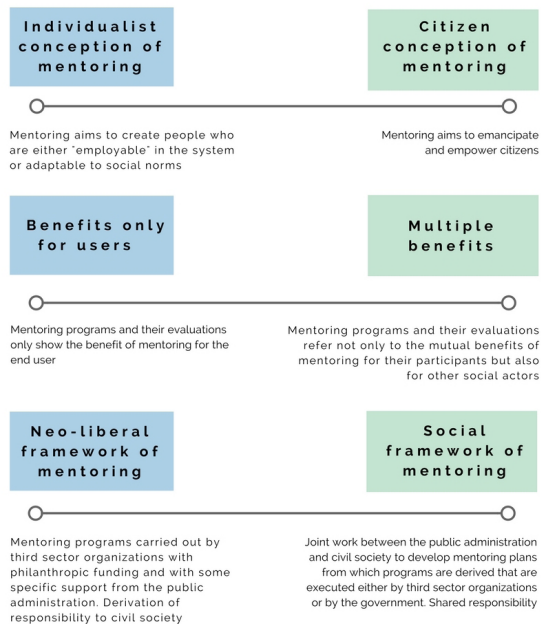
b) *Unidirectionality versus bidirectionality.* One option that social mentoring programs and their evaluations have is to make visible only the benefit of their programs to the end user, whether in the prevention of drug use, school failure or delinquency. On the other hand, there are also programs and evaluations that highlight the mutual benefits generated by mentoring for its direct participants (mentees and mentors) as well as other related agents (family, community, etc.). This situation is much more common in Europe than in the United States (Prieto-Flores, Preston & Rhodes, in press). While this situation may be due to the fact that European programs have younger mentors who

usually carry out mentoring as part of service learning programs; also the relationships that arise tend to be more egalitarian because in European programs there is less distance between the ages of mentees and mentors. In order to observe the bidirectional or multilateral nature of the benefits of mentoring, it is necessary to create indicators and new evaluation systems that broadly show the effects that are generated by different kinds of relationships. This information is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of programs that promote social inclusion and social cohesion. For example, some studies have shown that social mentoring also improves intercultural competences of mentors (Sánchez *et al.*, 2014; Prieto-Flores, Feu & Casademont, 2016), or can promote community development (Brady & Dolan, 2009) as well as having positive effects on the social inclusion of the final recipients.

c) *Neoliberal model versus social model.* Social mentoring can be promoted as social policy within the welfare state from different perspectives. On the one hand, it can be promoted from a neoliberal framework in which civic organizations rely on philanthropic contributions as their main source of funding to carry out their programs. While the State can also contribute to their funding (as in the case of the United States), organizations seek to implement mentoring programs without regard to the relationships adolescents or young people at risk of social exclusion may have with others socializing agents such as the school, social workers or other professionals working with youth or the immigrant population. From this point of view, the responsibility for social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups rests with themselves and with the capacity of organized civil society to “show them the road to success”.

On the other hand, a social framework can be fostered in which responsibility is shared and the State, together with organized civil society, works in concert to carry out mentoring programs that are complementary to existing public policies. The objective is to work in coordination with other actors to reach where the Administration does not, with social mentoring being one ingredient of a comprehensive public policy model. The application of this model could run the risk of ending up with excessive bureaucratization of the processes of mentoring due to a strong colonization of the relationships of everyday life by the system; that is to say,

that the Administration appropriates and can stifle fresh and flexible practices. However, we have examples where such a balance is possible, as in the case of *KVINFO* in Denmark, where mentoring programs for the inclusion of foreign women have been complemented in the last fifteen years (2002-2017) by redistributive public policies related to gender and social inequality promoted by the Danish authorities.



**Figure 1. Analytical framework for social mentoring programs and evaluations**

Source: Authors' elaboration.

## 6. Conclusions

There are many scientific studies that highlight the role of non-family adults (neighbors, monitors, teachers or others) in social inclusion and well-being in the most vulnerable groups (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Sánchez, Esparza & Colón, 2008, Portes, Aparicio & Haller, 2016). In order to foster this type of relationship, social mentoring programs seeking to promote these relationships in the community have emerged strongly in recent years. This growth is accompanied by the need for third sector organizations and the public administration to better articulate existing volunteerism in our societies. The growing presence of these programs has also been accompanied by a significant increase in the amount of research that attempts to explain social mentoring relationships and how these programs can become more effective. However, the existing research is not very extensive and has been carried out generally from only one discipline of knowledge and focuses only on the case of young people. Interdisciplinary work is needed to address the many knowledge gaps that still exist in the field, as well as new analytical frameworks that help us to better understand the processes of social mentoring and the context in which they are implemented. This paper attempts to contribute to filling this gap by providing an analytical framework that can help to critically identify the orientation and socio-political context in which they develop. This analytical framework allows us to identify how social mentoring programs are not only possible in the neo-liberal contexts in which they were born, but can also be developed in social-democratic political contexts from a differentiated perspective, emphasizing the empowerment of the most vulnerable groups, not only young people, thus being a formula culturally closer to several European and Latin American countries.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Big Brothers & Big Sisters of America. <http://www.bbbs.org> (Web accessed on February 8, 2017).
- <sup>2</sup> Mentors can help mentees learn to navigate safely through the systems of oppression to defend their interests. They give them direct support and can provide them with access to spaces and scenarios that were previously denied them.

## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Prieto-Flores, O., Feu, J. (2018). ¿Qué impacto pueden tener los programas de mentoría social en la sociedad? Una exploración de las evaluaciones existentes y propuesta de marco analítico. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 149-162. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.12

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## THE OPINION OF PRISON-SERVICE PROFESSIONALS IN ANDALUCIA REGARDING “RESPECT DEPARTMENTS”

### LA OPINIÓN DE LOS PROFESIONALES DE LOS CENTROS PENITENCIARIOS DE ANDALUCÍA SOBRE LOS MÓDULOS DE RESPETO

### A OPINIÃO DOS PROFISSIONAIS DOS ESTABELECIMENTOS PRISIONAIS DA ANDALUZIA SOBRE OS MÓDULOS DE RESPEITO

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Received date: 25.IV.2017

Reviewed date: 6.VI.2017

Accepted date: 10.VII.2017

<p><b>KEY WORDS:</b>          prison officer          technical team          managerial team          prison          penitentiary          treatment</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT:</b> Relatively few studies have focused on the group of professionals who work in the Respect Departments, which are internal units within the prison. Our aim was to understand the opinion of prison professionals in relation to these modules, and, in particular, to identify if there was any relationship between these opinions and the professional group to which they belonged, including prison officers, professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, and other members of the technical and management teams. This study used the descriptive method, developing our own questionnaire titled “Questionnaire for Professionals on the Respect Departments”, which was tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha (.766) whilst validity of its main components was analyzed, which explained 61.102% of the variance. A sample of 315 subjects from the eight Andalusian provinces of the three sectors participated in the study. Contingency analysis was applied and the results revealed that the Respect Departments were viewed differently both as an educative tool and in general, depending on the group to which the prison staff belonged.</p>
<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b>          funcionario de prisiones          equipo técnico          mando directivo          prisión          tratamiento          penitenciario</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> El grupo de profesionales que trabajan en los Módulos de Respeto está poco estudiado. Son un sistema de organización interna de la prisión. Nuestro objetivo era conocer su posicionamiento sobre estos módulos; y de forma específica, averiguar si había alguna relación entre el concepto de estos y el grupo profesional al que se pertenecía: funcionario, equipo técnico y mando directivo. Nos apoyamos en el método descriptivo y aplicamos un cuestionario de elaboración propia “Cuestionario para Profesionales sobre los Módulos de Respeto”, al que sometimos al alpha de Cronbach para la fiabilidad (.766) y al análisis de componentes principales para su validez de contenido que explicó el 61.102% de la varianza. Participó una muestra de 315 sujetos de las ocho provincias andaluzas de los tres sectores.</p>

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	Se aplicó el análisis de contingencias y los resultados mostraron que los Módulos de Respeto, como herramienta formativa y lo que se entendía por este concepto, se relacionaban de forma distinta en función del sector profesional.
<b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> funcionário de prisões equipa técnica coordenação diretiva risão tratamento prisional	<b>RESUMO:</b> O grupo de profissionais que trabalham nos Módulos de Respeito encontra-se pouco estudado. São um sistema de organização interna da prisão. O nosso objetivo era conhecer o seu posicionamento sobre estes módulos; e de forma específica, averiguar se existia alguma relação entre o conceito destes eo grupo profissional ao qual pertenciam: funcionário, equipa técnico ecoordenaçãodiretiva. Apoiámo-nosno método descritivo e aplicámos um questionário de elaboração própria “Questionário para Profissionais sobre os Módulos de Respeito”, ao qual submetemos o alpha de Cronbach para a fiabilidade (.766) ea análise das componentes principais para a sua validade de conteúdo, que explicou os 61.102% da variação. A participação contou com uma amostra de 315 sujeitos das oito províncias andaluzas, dos três sectores. Foi aplicada a análise das contingências e os resultados demonstraram que os Módulos de Respeito, como ferramenta formativa eo que se entendia por este conceito, se relacionavam de forma distinta na função do sector profissional.

## 1. Introduction

The penitentiary world has been widely studied in our country from a number of different perspectives (psychological, sociological, criminological, and educational) of which Martín, Vila and De Oña (2013) have conducted a comprehensive review, describing the state of the art in terms of educational research in this environment.

The studies have primarily focused on the prison population, including the effects of imprisonment, drugs, gender, age, and mental problems (Añaños, 2017; García-Legaz & Crespo, 2014; Martín, 2008), with very few being carried out on the Respect Departments (RDs), and even fewer have focused on the professionals working in these modules, namely, surveillance officers and technical teams.

The research presented here is the first study of its type to be conducted in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, and is concerned with exploring the opinions held by prison professionals regarding RDs, given that their maximum involvement is needed for the success of these modules.

At a national level, there has been a lack of research on the professionals who work in these modules. Within the area of penitentiary research we have found number 22 of 2016 of the “Journal of Social Education. (BEEF)”; the 2013 monograph of the “Journal of Education”; number 22 of 2013 of the Journal of “Social Pedagogy, the Journal Interuniversitaria” and number 59 of 2014 of the “Galega Magazine of Education”. The only specific references to professionals are in terms of prisons in general - but not RDs - as in the studies by Anton (1998) and Valderrama (2010).

In the international arena, there are no references to RDs, since this is a construct that is unique to the Spanish prison system (Belinchón,

2009), and was created in 2001 and has since been exported to some European countries such as France and England. Although since the seventies there have been experiences that share the socializing purpose of the RDs, they do not follow either its structure or organization. In the last decade, some of these practices have been characterized by mentoring programs (Cook, McClure, Koutsenok & Lord, 2008, Marlow, Grajeda, Lee, Young, Williams & Hill, 2015), social therapy programs (Suhling & Guéridon, 2016), social reintegration through work (Novo-Corti & Barreiro-Gen, 2015), or the commitment to a sociological application (Guy, 2011).

## 2. Respect departments: professionals and purpose

Case law advocates reinsertion, but what about re-education? At present, the Basic Law that constitutes all regulations in penitentiary matters is the Organic Law 1/1979, of 26 of September, General Penitentiary (here after OLGP) (BOE nº392, of 5th of October). It establishes - as a fundamental purpose of custodial sentences - the re-education and social reintegration of the convicted.

This is also reflected in Article 25.2 of the Spanish Constitution, which states that security measures should be directed towards re-education and social reintegration (Añaños, Fernández-Sánchez & Llopis, 2013, Cervelló, 2016). Of these two concepts,

the former is more frequently shunned because it implies the internalization of values, which means that the latter has more acceptance as a social reincorporation far removed from the crime, understanding it not as direct actions toward the subject, but as a way creating the social conditions necessary to produce a lower rate of crime. (Cervelló, 2016, p. 41).

The solutions adopted, in any case, will be “methodologically plural and open to pedagogic activities” (Caride & Gradaille, 2013, p.36). Such solutions are specifically operational in prison procedures. They can be medical, psychiatric, psychological, pedagogical, work-related, or social. Although not systematized by OLGP, they refer to group psychotherapy, pedagogical counseling and behavior therapy, with activities such as work, sports, education, culture, or leisure.

In our view, the RDs represent the first step toward the development of an approach that uses programs to reeducate and re-socialize, surpassing therapeutic and clinical techniques (Añaños & Yagüe, 2013). This new approach must be directed toward an educational and moral sense of performance (Gil, 2010, 2016). This implies commitment to the inmates on the part of all professionals. That is to say, they have to be understood, both without judgment and with the mere objective of improving those who wish to live according to the law. Therefore, the RDs is a methodology that offers a future within the penitentiary.

The RD has been defined as “an intervention program with defined and systematized instruments, dynamics, structures and guidelines for action and evaluation” (Belinchón & García, 2014, p. 162). According to Valderrama (2016, p. 31), these are internal organizational structures that “on the basis of voluntariness and commitment to participation, both in activities and in the operation of the module itself, are designed to generate flexible spaces, coexistence, and facilitators of intervention programs”.

The re-socializing and re-educating experiences in the Spanish prison system are scarce, but varied. Del Pozo and Añaños (2013) have committed to programs of coexistence (social and personal skills, autonomy, and leadership), interculturality, and values. Valderrama (2016) leads a project based on a dialogical-communicative approach, generating mechanisms of shared management. Lorenzo, Aroca, and Alba (2013) advocate the Prosocial Thinking Program, which, in the Spanish context, has been applied to various populations. The experience of the Good Lives Program (Gil, 2013) is another possible way of re-education whose foundation is rooted in a legislative, ethical, and anthropological framework of human rights. In other words, it is a question of thinking about the potential of human rights from a juridical point of view, favoring penitentiary legislative reforms and prison management along with the educational possibilities of human rights and the right to education in prisons.

For re-socialization and re-education for work, the prison administration is needed. This is

organized around unipersonal organizations and collegiate bodies with fully specified functions. The former are composed of the director, deputy director, administrator, and head of service; whilst the latter consists of the board of directors, the board of administration, the technical team, the disciplinary commission, and the economic-administrative board. As professionals not classified within any of these bodies, the surveillance officers carry out their work within the prison center.

In our study, we are interested in understanding the work of the different professionals in order to interpret their roles within the prison system. The director is the highest figure, whose functions consist of directing, coordinating, and supervising the guidelines of prison life, such as procedures, regimes, health, personnel, economic-administrative management, representation, and disciplinary order (Cervelló, 2016).

The technical team takes care of the inmate's life in prison. This is achieved by implementing treatment programs or individual intervention models. The team may consist of a lawyer, a psychologist, a pedagogue, a sociologist, a physician, a medical technician / university graduate in nursing, a teacher or workshop manager, an educator, a social worker, a sociocultural or sports supervisor and a department manager. However, as Valderrama (2016, p. 34) puts it, “the professional profiles that currently form the body of correctional technicians are basically those of lawyers and psychologists, there being a general absence of pedagogues.” The figure of the social educator whose actions surpass therapeutic, legalistic, and criminological approaches “is focused on designing demanding occupational activities that favor personal and social change, both in attitudes and values.” (Gil, 2016, p. 61)

The Directorate General of Penitentiary Institutions (DGPI, 2007) indicates that in the RD, the functions of the technical team are: a) to conduct weekly meetings in informal sessions; b) to evaluate inmates and the progress of the program; and (c) to establish standard setting and organization, and advise on coordination between the team, officials, and inmates. In addition, these teams also have the task of encouraging, motivating, and locating the prisoner inside the module, based on the individualized profile of each prisoner (Cendón, Belinchón & García, 2011).

In-house or security officers ensure that security and order are maintained within the prison. The DGPI (2007) understands that they must be volunteers and trained in the dynamics of operation of the RDs. Their roles are: a) to take responsibility for coordinating the activities of the inmates, b) to be familiar with the program, c) to evaluate

each inmate on a daily basis, and d) to participate in the weekly meetings with the technical team.

However, the DGPI itself expresses a certain fear, since, despite the functions of the RDs being stipulated in terms of generating fewer conflicts, playing a more positive role and changing the type of interpersonal relations, – because here it is no longer the enemy of the prisoner “who limits the freedom that is allowed?” (Galán, 2015, p. 366), but instead it presupposes an approach – and to augment its function, it is possible to find resistance or at least not entirely unconditional support for the RDs. This originates from confusion with respect to the role that they have to play and from mistaken ideas about the concept of the RDs.

For their part, prison centers must therefore transmit, to those professionals developing their work in the RDs, the philosophy of the system and its advantages, both from the point of view of the aims of the Prison center, as well as for their professional satisfaction, and the important role that they play as professionals in its functioning (Cendón, Belinchón & García, 2011).

The professionals most directly involved in the RDs – namely educators and surveillance officials – will focus on two issues: first, they will focus on the situation as a collective social problem rather than on the subject as a problem in itself (Valderama, 2013), or as people with the internal potential to change their values and attitudes (Gil, 2016, 2010); and second, on training (Añaños & Yagüe, 2013). We argue that both types of professional must have knowledge of the instruments and techniques that are needed to develop their work properly, but above all, must be “committed.”

We also recognize that training in the processes of diagnosis, execution, and evaluation that are required for re-education and re-socialization are not clearly assigned to different professionals (Valderrama, 2016). Such specialized intervention would allow for coherence and effectiveness of these processes and is the best approach to adopt (Del Pozo, 2013).

In any case, if the managers, technical teams, and surveillance officers are to be noted for “the responsibility of understanding to intervene better” (Scarfó, Breglia & López, 2016, p.85), then regardless of the professional knowledge they possess, the significance of their performance ultimately “will depend on their ethics, values, and principles” (Expósito & Llopis, 2016, p. 81) in their daily work within the RDs.

In this regard, our research objective was to explore the opinion of the various professionals working within the prison (surveillance officers, technical team, and managers) in relation to the RDs.

### 3. Methodology

For inclusion in the study, participants needed to belong to the civil service sector, including internal or surveillance officers, technical teams (lawyers, psychologists, pedagogues, educators, and social workers) or managers (directors, assistant directors, and chiefs of service). According to the data included in the Workplace list of the penitentiary centers of Andalusia, this population was composed of 2327 subjects.

Our sample, which was representative with a confidence level of 95%, comprised 315 professionals from the Andalusian penitentiary centers. This was obtained by applying the simple random sampling technique, considering the finite population, following Tagliacarne (1968).

9,5% of the total of the sample was from Almería, 11,1% from Cadiz, 8,3% from Cordoba, 11,7% from Granada, 18,1% from Huelva, 11,4% from Jaén, 19,7% from Malaga, and 10,2% from Seville. 76,2% were men and 23,8% were women. With regard to sector, 66,6% were surveillance officers, 31,2% were technical staff, and 2,2% were managers. In terms of professional experience, 35,5% had more than 25 years of service, 27,1% between 15 and 25 years and only 3,2% had less than 5 years of service. Regarding the number of years of working in the RD, 52,4% had given between 1 and 3 years service, 25,4% between 3 and 5 years and 13,3% over 5 years. 54,9% preferred RDs compared with 31,7% who preferred the ordinary modules.

In our research we employed the self-designed questionnaire method (Cohen & Manion, 1990) and for data collection, being consistent with the method, a questionnaire was used (McMillan and Schumacher, 2005) known as “Questionnaire for Professionals on Respect Departments”. This was structured in three parts. The first refers to identification data: sex, professional group, section in which the participant was working, experience as a prison professional and in RDs, as well as where they preferred to carry out their daily work. The second part comprised the bulk of the questionnaire and was divided into four blocks with a Likert-type response scale consisting of categories 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5: (a) general position regarding RDs (items 1, 2, 8); b) training tool (items 3 to 7); c) utility of the RDs (items 9 to 12); and d) feasibility (items 13 to 16). The third part was composed of a group of six open-ended questions, as follows: What is the best aspect of the RDs in comparison with the other departments of the Center? What is the worst aspect of the RDs in relation to the other departments of the Center? What would you change from the current RDs? What would

you eliminate from the current RDs? and the last two questions: add any proposal for improvement in relation to the RDs that you think important and necessary; and add any proposal for improvement in relation to the Penitentiary Institution that you believe to be important and necessary.

The self-made questionnaire was constructed following a review of the literature – both academic and legislative – on the RDs. The procedure followed for the collection of the information was the questionnaire delivered by hand to the professionals, since we had the permission of the Ministry of the Interior. The General Subdirectorate of Institutional Relations and Territorial Coordination opened the way with a circular addressed to the directors of the penitentiary centers in Andalusia. Following ethical criteria, the participants also gave informed consent.

To determine the validity of the questionnaire, we used principal component analysis, which confirmed the validity of the content. Through this analysis, we identified how the items were interrelated (Rodríguez, Olos & Martínez, 2012) with a cut-off of .04 (Cea, 2001) to locate the items in a factor. The KMO value for sampling adequacy was .830 and Barlett sphericity was significant at  $p = .000$ , with the sample having an adequate distribution. We obtained 4 factors that explained 61.102% of the variance, which indicated the degree of homogeneity of the data (Quispe, 2014) in each one of the factors, which were practically in line with the structure of the questionnaire presented. Thus, the “general position” factor held two of the three variables (2, 8); “training tool” was reproduced in full with items 3 to 7; the “utility” factor constituted all the items and added two more (1, 15); and the “viability” factor collected three of the four items.

To calculate reliability, following Bisquerra (1987), we applied the  $\alpha$  of Cronbach. We obtained a coefficient of .766, indicating moderate reliability (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005) and an acceptable degree of internal consistency, above .600, in accord with Thorndike (1997).

#### 4. Results

We approached our objective by exploring the possible significant associations, through contingency analysis, using the statistical package SPSS 20 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). For the open-ended data, we conducted content analysis (Kelchtermans, 1993), which yielded six categories:

the best aspects of RDs compared to other modules, the worst or more negative aspects of RDs compared with other modules, aspects to modify (points that would have to be changed within the RDs), aspects to eliminate (aspects to suppress), aspects to improve (aspects that could be kept but improved) and aspects for development (suggestions for rethinking the philosophy of the RDs).

For the statistical data (Table 1), we found significant relationships between the sector to which the participants belonged with both their position regarding the *concept of RDs* and with their opinion of the RDs as a *training tool*. However, no associations emerged with the utility of the modules or their viability.

With regard to the *concept of RDs*, both the surveillance officers and the technical teams showed a positive appreciation of the inclusion and development of the RDs in the prison; similarly, the managers (57.1%) greatly valued the inclusion and development of the RDs. The same pattern was found regarding the question of how detrimental the creation of RDs could be for the remaining modules, where both officers (58%) and the technical team (45.3%) felt that it did not harm anything. However, among the management teams there was disagreement, since only 28.6% did not think it would harm anything.

As a *training tool*, we found that the officials believed that the formal education or training activities that were taking place inside the RDs were sufficient (30.5%). In contrast, for technical teams these were regarded as abundant (34.7%). On the other hand, there was no unanimous criterion among the managers, since their opinions were distributed with the same percentage giving the responses of “lacking” and “abundant”.

Surveillance officers (40%) thought that productive workshops, regulated by Royal Decree 782/2001, in which the inmates were insured with Social Security and received a monthly payment, were not considered inside the RDs. In this regard, technical teams (28.5%) and managers (42%) recognized that they existed, but maintained that they were scarce.

The sports activities programmed in the RDs were regarded as sufficient by officials (32.9%), technical teams (38.9%), and management (42.8%). The belief that training or job placement courses were sufficiently developed within the RDs was shared by officials (24.7%) and technical teams (28.5%); in contrast, the management pointed out that these were lacking (42.9%).



**Table 1. Associations by sector**

1. Do you positively value the inclusion and development of the RD within the prison center?									
		%						$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	29,753	.040
Sector	Surveillance officer	9	5,3	19	32,9	33,8	100		
	Technical team	5,3	8,4	15,6	36,9	33,8	100		
	Management	0	0	0	57,1	42,9	100		
3. Are education activities or formal academic training developed within the RD?									
		%						$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	36,603	.006
Sector	Surveillance officer	14,8	9	30,5	26,7	19	100		
	Technical team	6,3	7,4	20	31,6	34,7	100		
	Management	14,3	28,6	14,3	28,6	14,2	100		
4. Within the RD are productive workshops held that are regulated by RD 782/2001 (With Social Security and monthly payments for inmates)?									
		%						$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	43,689	.000
Sector	Surveillance officer	40	17,5	14,8	17,1	10,6	100		
	Technical team	17,9	28,5	17,9	16,8	18,9	100		
	Management	28,6	42	0	28,6	0	100		
6. Are sporting activities developed within the RD?									
		%						$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	42,564	.001
Sector	Surveillance officer	2,9	13,2	31	32,9	20	100		
	Technical team	2,1	9,5	15,8	38,9	33,7	100		
	Management	0	28,6	14,3	42,8	14,3	100		

7. Are training courses or work placements developed within the RD?									
		%						$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	34,693	.009
Sector	Surveillance officer	17,2	21	24,7	23,8	13,3	100		
	Technical team	7,4	14,7	28,5	27,4	22	100		
	Management	14,3	42,9	14,3	28,5	0	100		
8. Does the creation of the RD have a detrimental effect on the other modules?									
		%						$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		1	2	3	4	5	Total	32,469	.006
Sector	Surveillance officer	58	11	9,5	10,5	11	100		
	Technical team	45,3	22,1	10,5	7,4	14,7	100		
	Management	28,6	28,6	14,2	28,6	0	100		
Response Key: 1 none, 2 a little, 3 sufficient, 4 high, 5 very high									

The information obtained through the open questions is presented as a function of the 6 categories extracted.

In relation to the first category, the three sectors pointed out that *the best aspects* of the RDs were cleanliness; no conflicts; respect for authority by the inmates; an improvement in their behavior; a quiet and peaceful environment; more occupations and activities; a life that was more reminiscent of freedom; an environment in which order, discipline, respect, and education prevailed; and the module was drug-free with increased participation, autonomy, and sanitation.

For the second category i.e. *the worst aspects* of the RDs, in the opinion of the three groups of professionals these were: increased bureaucracy, relaxed security, promotion of delation, lack of command of the officials and a reduction in their powers when dealing with greater authority of the technical team, not all profiles of prisoners were included, the program was not fulfilled as it was thought, it looked like a “facelift of prisons”, prisoners were believed to have more rights and fewer obligations, even an inmate could punish another partner, the system of selection of inmates, use of the RDs as a “dump” to separate incompatible prisoners in other modules. It was a “pantomime and a theater” for society, norms were not adapted to the realities of society, and hypocrisy and artificiality were evident because the behaviors were simulated.

In the third category, the points to be modified were: the selection of the prisoners and their classification, as well as access and exit from the module. They also valued the power relations between the officials, the board of administration, and the board of directors. Officials wanted more weight and technical teams wanted more power in front of the board. It was requested to increase the number of RDs, with more resources, personnel and intellectual activities with fewer sports, questioning the over-authority of the inmates and internal organization.

The fourth category, referring to what they would eliminate, elicited the following: they stated that the meaning of the RDs were “pure facade”, and they would dispense with the confidantes, the uninvolved inmates, the stupid rules, the inmates point scoring between them and, in sports, body-building and boxing.

Suggested improvements primarily centered on everyone having the same opportunity to be involved; the inclusion of complicated inmates and any officials who wanted to participate in the program (not only those that had been “given a way in”); more staff and resources; more vocational training and education and more productive work; commitment to training and work; more productive workshops; more courses; more recognition of the work of the officials; greater collaboration between the technical team and officials; more follow-up of the inmates and their attitude and aptitude; removal of power from the inmates;

less paternalism; a more exhaustive selection procedure; more planned outings; and greater control of NGOs.

Finally, the development of the RDs was another key aspect. The view of the three sectors was that these modules should be redirected towards vocational training, training in values, along with a regulated study environment and productive work. In addition, they mentioned the consolidation of work habits, education, training and overcoming conflict with mutual respect. It was also suggested to not limit the RDs to patterns of coexistence, but move towards reinsertion and reintegration - in the words of the professionals - there is a "necessary evolution, because currently only the rules of urbanity matter." They suggested the need for coordination, because the RDs had become "behavior simulation factories". It was also deemed necessary to raise the prisoner's awareness of the problem that led him to prison.

## 5. Discussion & conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the views of the various professionals working in prison (surveillance officers, technical team, and managers) on the RDs.

Following analysis of the numerical data, we observed significant relationships between the opinion of the RDs as a *training tool* and *its concept*, but not between its utility or viability.

In our view these latter two results are unsurprising, since the usefulness - collected after the qualitative analysis of the information using open questions - is not in doubt, since the RDs (see annex) adopts a

"less punitive conception of prison and places more emphasis on education, based on the voluntary commitment of inmates to comply with norms and patterns of behavior that are appropriate for coexistence, not so much in the sense of discipline but rather in terms of social relations with other inmates and personal hygiene habits or non-use of drugs" (Cervelló, 2016, p. 271),

care for the environment and interpersonal relationships (Casado, 2013). The "proper functioning of the RDs favors social reintegration" (Galán, 2015, p. 325). The viability of the RDs is not questioned, and the placement of 257 modules distributed in 68 centers at national level has not been in vain, placing 19289 inmates (SGIP, 2016).

In contrast, the *concept of RDs* is highly valued by officials and technical teams. The fact that these professional figures create the RDs is fundamental to its development and success. As suggested by Lerman and Page (2016), the prospects of prison officials affect their behavior in the

workplace, which has consequences for staff-prisoner relationships, policy implementation, and routine prison operations. Galán (2015, p. 321) argues that

the professionals who are part of a RDs are an indispensable part of the program, since they are in charge of supervising the correct functioning of the module. In addition, a greater degree of involvement on the part of this group is necessary for making the RDs a viable alternative for those inmates who want to live together under more adequate conditions within prison.

Belinchón (2009) expressly states in his RDs handbook that it is essential to have the direct and permanent involvement of the Director of the center as a promoter of the project, along with the Technical Team responsible for day-to-day management.

As a *training tool*, it is the officials and the technical team who see these as sufficient and abundant, respectively, whilst in terms of the opinion regarding academic activities, the management do not clarify if these are sufficient or lacking. This result is consistent with the idea that the RDs must be redirected away from (but not abandoning) academic emphasis in favor of a more professional stance, designing occupational workshops and more productive work, as well as working toward the formation of values (Del Pozo & Añaños, 2013; Gil, 2010). It would be a matter of "designing demanding occupational activities that favor personal and social change, both in attitudes and values" (Gil, 2016, p. 61)

The idea that there are few or no productive workshops in which the inmates are registered for Social Security and are remunerated is a point on which all agree. Indeed, all three sectors justify their implementation in terms of the implied benefits for the inmate. Such benefits include socio-economic advantages, since it will imply economic remuneration (Viedma & Frutos, 2012); the penitentiary will also benefit in that it will allow him to "dignify himself as a person, prepare for his future release, avoid unemployment and, above all, channel the degree of anxiety and stress generated by confinement, coming to regard the employment relationship as an essential element in their daily life"; whilst another benefit is the educational and therapeutic function that these workshops presuppose (Esteban, Alós, Jódar & Miguélez, 2014). According to these authors, the benefits are manifold, since "inmates internalize attitudes associated with work" (p. 192) such as punctuality, responsibility, or duty and because it mitigates the prison culture. The educational function of work is an idea associated with the need to promote general, professional, and occupational

training through the process of socialization through education, and this is particularly important given that prison work is the first consistent employment experience for some prisoners (Alós, Martín, Miguélez, & Gibert, 2009). However, it appears that there is a lack of proper management when organizing these workshops, as pointed out by Salamanca (2016), who showed that there are 12500 working prisoners, but there are facilities for 20000, that is, there are equipped workshops that are empty because there are no companies that carry out their work there.

For the three sectors, the sports activities that are programmed within the RDs are regarded as sufficient, and they are undoubtedly considered to be beneficial. This fact is confirmed by studies on sport in prisons, the results of which show the benefits of coexistence and self-control in inmates (Castillo, 2005). Although these studies do not differentiate between sports, the officials prefer to dispense with the bodybuilding and boxing rooms and instead try different types of activities that do not involve bodybuilding.

The development of training courses or labor insertion are recognized as sufficient by officials and technical teams, but are regarded as lacking by the management. As argued by Del Pozo y Añaños (2013), education is a challenge, a right and a deontological principle. Martín (2008, p. 23) is in favor of “pedagogical interventions that lead to re-education”, i.e., according to his words, the educational component should preside over the actions that take place within prisons.

Do we disagree with our quantitative results? Absolutely not. Our findings show the Andalusian reality as viewed by the people working in the various professional sectors in prisons. But it is also worth discussing the perspective obtained from the categories defined from the open questions.

*The strongest attribute* of the RDs is that it achieves each and every one of the objectives for which it was created, and the following are recognized by all three sectors: participation, autonomy, health, respect, and a drug-free environment. These are the axes on which these modules are embedded and are thus recognized (Belinchón, 2009; Belinchón & García, 2014; Cendón, Belinchón & García, 2011).

*The worst aspect*, in the opinion of the officials and technical teams, is the simulation of the conduct of the inmates. Therefore, the reward system should be reviewed along with the professionals who manage the rewards that the inmates are given (Valderrama, 2016). Officials question whether rewards can be sanctioned among the inmates themselves, and consider that this power should be withdrawn and their over-authority reviewed.

They also believe that they have to *change* the system of access to the module, because they understand that, in reality, not all inmate profiles are included in the program. This idea is very important. If those who work within the module have reservations about the type of access, it would be necessary to think about this issue, since, as Galán (2015, p. 365) points out, the people outside these modules, officials and inmates, coexist with the premise that the “program houses sneakers, rapists and inmates in prison” and this will be a variable that disrupts their development.

What they would change are the power relations between officials and technical teams. It recognizes the lack of awareness of the prison staff and the lack of coordination at the different levels (Añaños & Yagüe, 2013). Specific training and the clear definition of roles and responsibilities would be helpful in this regard. Galán (2015) argues that both officials and technical staff must ensure that the RDs works, and must also evaluate the behavior of the inmate and make the relevant decisions. According to Valderrama (2016) the field of action of each professional is well defined, because, at the three established levels, the first is occupied by the surveillance officer who completes a daily record sheet on the progress of the inmate; The second is done by the person responsible for the specific daily activity; and the third is a weekly assessment by the Technical Team in which the surveillance officers participate.

What they *would improve*, particularly the technical teams, would be the programmed outings and the greater control of the NGOs. And we share the idea that it is difficult to undertake reintegration processes, segregating the population into which they are reinserted and isolating them from contact with society (Martín, 2008). On the other hand, there is a need to address the educational deprofessionalization in the prison sector (Gil, 2010), which could account for the fact that many of the activities within prisons are carried out by NGOs. Our claim is, therefore, that it is necessary to professionalize the actions carried out in prison.

Finally, we would like to stress the unanimity of the three sectors when considering that the RDs *should evolve* in other directions. We must overcome the idea of “learning rules of urbanity” (which has already been achieved, and which works very well in terms of the absence of conflicts) because what fundamentally underlies this is a “factory of behavior simulation.” It is really a question of approaching a new RDs concept based on moral and ethical values (Martín, 2008). The aim is to reorient the modules towards a new “ethics of accountability” (Martín, Vila & De Oña,

2013, p.29). That is to say, it would imply an educational methodology that shifted from blaming to taking responsibility and working with each person towards being responsible for their actions and experiences and living in a “more committed” way within society. In the same vein, Caride and Gradaille (2013, p. 44) pronounce “a special emphasis on the ethical commitments of and to those who are in prisons”. It is a question of overcoming an exemplary moral machination, and as Savater (2012, p. 16) rightly points out, “ten or fifteen commandments, or one or two codes of good conduct, are not to be learned. Ethics is the practice of reflecting on what we are going to do and the reasons why we are going to do it”. Undoubtedly the whole design of future formative-educational-professional-occupational actions should consider this new purpose “the why”.

The general view of the RDs is favorable. We conclude, in the light of our results, that there are no significant associations between being a surveillance officer, belonging to the technical team or being part of the management with regard to their viewpoint on the viability and usefulness of the RDs. Thus, the opinion on feasibility and utility is not related to belonging to one sector or another. It is, however, relevant when understanding the RDs as a training tool in which academic activities, productive workshops, sports activities, and training courses are held, since the opinions of all three sectors differ. There is also a significant difference of opinion with regard to the general concept - both its inclusion and creation - where it is recognized that there is no unanimity among the sectors.

The major contribution of this research is that it analyzes, at a regional level, the RDs from the perspective of the agents involved in its development, which include the management, technical team, and surveillance officers. But above all, an

important feature of the present work is that it picks up on the suggestions made by the studied sectors with respect to the RDs and the need for them to develop. It is necessary to reformulate the modules with a greater educational and productive dimension, with an emphasis on commitment to society and a focus on working on the “attitude” of prisoners and professionals towards wanting to change. The RDs cannot be social containers of good behavior, but instead must be the place that prepares the inmates for society in terms of a sense of ethics and social co-responsibility. This leads us irremediably to rethink both the meaning of the RDs and the profile of the professionals involved in its operation, and be sensitive to the necessary educational and social rethinking of the prison sector.

We must highlight some limitations of the present study. Despite having the approval of the General Sub-directorate of Institutional Relations and Territorial Coordination, the participation of the managers has not been as in-depth as we would have liked. Another possible limitation is that this investigation is confined solely to the autonomous community of Andalusia, and in addition, it has not taken into account the specific idiosyncrasies of the different penitentiary centers in the different provinces. In this regard, we have been cautious in discussing the results and conclusions in light of the restrictions discussed. Our work opens up the possibility of expanding this line of enquiry by gathering the voice of the inmates and adopting a biographical-narrative research approach in order to understand the RDs from the viewpoint of all sectors.

A further step in this work will be to communicate the findings to the Sub-directorate of Penitentiary Institutions with the aim of “listening to the voice of opinion” of the different sectors, which we have been able to collect and analyze in both a quantitative and qualitative manner.

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## Anexo

### Módulo de respeto, cultura, educación y deporte. Centro Penitenciario de Albolote (Granada)

#### Normas de convivencia en el módulo 13

- 1ª Debes cuidar tu aspecto utilizando el vestuario adecuado para cada ocasión, siendo obligatorio la ducha diaria y el cambio de ropa interior.
- 2ª Queda terminantemente prohibido el consumo de toda clase de drogas.
- 3ª Sólo se permite fumar en las dependencias autorizadas (patio y celda).
- 4ª La celda estará en perfecto estado de limpieza y ordenada, teniendo el vestuario debidamente colocado en su lugar habilitado.  
Diariamente se pasará revista a la celda. En caso de incumplimiento de la normativa, los internos que se alojen en la misma obtendrán una valoración negativa que se reflejará en la "hoja de valoración" y se tendrá en cuenta para la evaluación semanal.
- 5ª Queda prohibido cualquier almacenamiento de alimentos en las celdas con la excepción de dos piezas de fruta y dos botella de agua por interno.  
Se autoriza a lavar la ropa en la celda.
- 6ª No arrojar nada al suelo, ni escupir, utilizando las papeleras y ceniceros. Quedando terminantemente prohibido arrojar basura y objetos por la ventana de la celda.
- 7ª No se permite el acceso a la celda de otro interno sin estar el titular de la misma presente.
- 8ª Al toque de diana se levantará el interno, se aseará y pondrá en orden su celda. Durante los recuentos, el interno estará de forma respetuosa.
- 9ª La asistencia y puntualidad a todo tipo de actividades, asambleas o reuniones es muy importante.
- 10ª El interno respetará los turnos establecidos (comida, teléfono, economato, consultorios, etc.). En el comedor no hay sitio propiedad del nadie, no se puede entrar con ropa deportiva ni chanclas de goma, tampoco con camiseta de tirantes o cortadas.
- 11ª En horario de actividades, no se puede subir a las celdas sin autorización de los funcionarios y por algún motivo serio.
- 12ª El interno tendrá muy presente el espíritu de fomentar el objetivo del módulo, basado en el RESPETO, LA CULTURA Y EL DEPORTE.

**El incumplimiento de las presentes normas de convivencia será motivo de estudio por los miembros del EQUIPO TÉCNICO, y en su caso, la expulsión.**

En Albolote, a \_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_ de 20\_\_

Fdo. El interno: \_\_\_\_\_



## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Fernández, F., Pérez-García, P. (2018). La opinión de los profesionales de los centros penitenciarios de Andalucía sobre los Módulos de Respeto. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 136-176. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.13

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## **SOCIAL SUPPORT AND GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY: THE POTENTIAL OF THE LSNS-6**

### **APOIO SOCIAL E DIVERSIDADE GERACIONAL: O POTENCIAL DA LSNS-6**

### **APOYO SOCIAL Y DIVERSIDAD GENERACIONAL: EL POTENCIAL DE LA LSNS-6**

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Received date: 16.V.2017

Reviewed date: 5.VIII.2017

Accepted date: 6.XI.2017

#### **KEY WORDS:**

social support  
social network  
intergenerational  
programs  
LSNS-6

**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to deepen the knowledge of the social support of a local community population through a quantitative study in which the authors sought to know how social support varies depending on age subgroups, and how it is related to key socio-demographic variables. The sample comprised 385 subjects from the parish of Bonfim in the city of Porto, divided into three age groups: youth and young adults (n=165), middle-aged adults (n=110) and elderly adults (n=110). The statistical analyses allowed us to conclude that age is in itself a risk factor, but it is also significantly associated with the following characteristics: being a woman, having low levels of education, low income, living alone or institutionalized, being a widow, being divorced/separated, being unemployed or retired. The knowledge and information resulting from this study is an important contribution to the organization of social intervention strategies, namely through Intergenerational Programs that could be seen as a planning tool to expand and strengthen binding social networks, contributing to the well-being, quality of life and social integration not only of the elderly, but also of different generations and groups identified as being potentially at risk. The innovative aspect of this study was the validation of the abbreviated version of the Lubben Social Network Saclae (LSNS-6) - originally developed for the elderly group - for all age groups.

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<p><b>PALAVRAS-CHAVE:</b> apoio social rede social programas intergeracionais LSNS-6</p>	<p><b>RESUMO:</b> Neste artigo, procurámos aprofundar o conhecimento do apoio social da população de uma comunidade local através de um estudo quantitativo em que se procurou saber de que forma o apoio social varia em função de subgrupos etários e como se encontra relacionado com variáveis sociodemográficas chave. A amostra envolveu 385 pessoas da freguesia do Bonfim, da cidade do Porto, distribuídos por três grupos etários: jovens e adultos jovens (n=165), adultos de meia-idade (n=110) e idosos (n=110). O teste de hipóteses permitiu-nos concluir que a idade é, por si, um fator de risco social, mas também que o mesmo se encontra associado às seguintes características: ser mulher, ter baixos níveis de escolaridade, baixos rendimentos, estar desempregado/a ou reformado/a. A informação e conhecimento emergentes deste estudo permite organizar estratégias de intervenção social, nomeadamente através da planificação de Programas Intergeracionais, enquanto ferramenta para alargar e solidificar redes sociais vinculantes, contribuindo para o bem-estar, a qualidade de vida e a integração social não só dos adultos idosos mas também das diferentes gerações e dos grupos de risco potencial. O aspeto inovador deste estudo consistiu na validação e utilização da Escala Breve de Redes Sociais de Lubben (LSNS-6) - originalmente construída para o grupo dos adultos idosos - a todos os grupos etários.</p>
<p><b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> apoyo social red social programas intergeneracionales LSNS-6</p>	<p><b>RESUMEN:</b> Este artículo tiene por objetivo profundizar en el conocimiento del apoyo social de una comunidad local a través de un estudio cuantitativo en el que los autores buscan conocer cómo el apoyo social varía dependiendo de subgrupos de edad, y cómo se relaciona con variables socio-demográficas clave. La muestra comprendía 385 individuos pertenecientes a la freguesia de Bonfim de la ciudad de Oporto, divididos en tres grupos de edad: jóvenes y adultos jóvenes (n=165), adultos de mediana edad (n=110) y mayores (n=110). El análisis estadístico nos permitió concluir que la edad es en sí misma un factor de riesgo, pero también se asocia de manera significativa con las siguientes características: con el hecho de ser mujer, de tener un nivel educativo bajo, bajos ingresos, vivir solo, ser viuda, estar separado o divorciado, estar desempleado o jubilado. El conocimiento y la información resultantes de este estudio suponen una importante contribución a la organización de las estrategias de intervención social, especialmente a través de Programas Intergeneracionales que pueden verse como instrumento de planificación para ampliar y fortalecer las relaciones en las redes sociales, contribuyendo al bienestar, calidad de vida e integración social no sólo de los mayores, sino también de diferentes generaciones y grupos identificados como potencialmente en riesgo. El aspecto innovador de este estudio consistió en la validación de la Escala Breve de Redes Sociales de Lubben (LSNS-6) - desarrollada en su origen para el grupo de mayores - para todos los grupos de edad.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Demographic ageing is a social reality of the contemporary societies. Although happening at different rhythms, it is a universal and irreversible phenomenon which requires, on the one hand, public policy changes and new ways of socio-educational action (Lóngas, 2016) and, on the other hand, the taking into account of other factors that can extend the functional skills, the autonomy, the independence and the quality of life in the last phase of every individual's life cycle (Oliveira Lima & Silva, 2016), such as social networks and social support.

The terms social network and social support are multidimensional constructs that refer to social and support relations and to their complex characteristics and dimensions, being its definition not at all simple (Ramos, 2004; Berkman & Glass, 2000). Studying the trends underlying the concept of social networking, Guzmán, Huenchuan and Montes de Oca (2003) come to define the social network "as a symbolic and cultural practice that includes a set of interpersonal relations that connect the individual to its cultural environment and allows it to maintain or improve its

material, physical and emotional well-being, at the same time contributing to avoid real or imagined damages resulting from difficulties, crises or conflicts that affect the subject" (p. 43). This definition addresses the new sociological paradigm, which Martins (2010) refers as urgently in need of establishment in complex contemporary societies - a paradigm that could recognize "the indisputable presence of small dynamic systems, called *social networks*, which function as new regulating instruments for conflict, tensions and agreements between individuals and minority groups" (p. 402). In this article, it is not in our interest to enter the discussion concerning the paradigmatic perspectives of social networks, although we recognize its great value, but rather to focus on the social support that these networks provide.

We understand *social support* as being interpersonal and social transactions which involve assistance, affection, trust, encouragement, empathy, solidarity and assertiveness (Khan & Antonucci, 1980; Ramos, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) and that it is through social networks that the flow of resources, actions, solidarity, support and information are exchanged and circulate among individuals, groups and generations (Jong, Mooienaar,

Osagie & Phielix, 2016; Ramos, 2008, 2013; Santos, 2009).

The social network is built by the individual, over a lifetime, and its scope will depend on demographic factors, cultural factors and personality factors. Several studies have shown that, as age increases, so does the size of the network decrease (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987; Cukrowicz, Franzese, Thorp, Cheavens & Lynch, 2008; Portero & Oliva, 2007; Rosa, Benício, Alves & Lebrão, 2007), due to the loss of family and friends, the onset of illness and entry into retirement. Literature has shown the positive effects of social support in all stages of life, especially in the later stages of the life cycle. Guzman et al. (2003) have put together several studies that demonstrated that people with more social support present better health conditions (physical and psychological) and better quality of life. On the other hand, literature has also shown that low rates of social support are related to the emergence of diseases, isolation, loneliness, exclusion, the deterioration of health condition and greater social risks (Antonucci, 1990; Ramos, 2004; Esgalhado, Reis, Pereira & Afonso, 2010; Mohamad, Alavi, Mohamad, M., Mohamad, N.S. & Sallem, 2016), as well as infant and elderly mortality (Ramos, 2005a; Mazzella et al., 2010). Other studies also prove that high levels of social support are related to the well-being of the general population, namely the older generation (Rubinstein, Lubben & Mintzer, 1994; Mohamad et al., 2016) and with the increase of satisfaction with life in the elderly (Bishop, Martin & Poon, 2006). And that the lack of social support is a negative indicator of quality of life and well-being (Ramos, 2004, 2008, 2013; White, Philogene, Fine & Shina, 2009) and increases the risk of exclusion and institutionalization (Bowling, Farquhar & Browne, 1991; Cummings, 2002; Esgalhado et al., 2010). The various investigations mentioned thus make the paramount importance of social support for all individuals unquestionable.

The most common form of social support is provided by the family network (Perez & Montero, 2016), but although the family continues to play a key role and is the primary source of support, it may be at risk or hampered. Indeed, the changes in the family structures of the last hundred years have hampered the family's ability and desire to provide the necessary social support to its members, especially the elderly and the younger (Ramos, 2005b, 2008, 2013). Therefore, one can understand the importance of building, extending and solidifying binding social networks that complement the social support given by the family network, contributing to the well-being, quality of

life and social integration not only of the elderly but also of those of different generations.

A useful means to achieve this goal are the intergenerational programs (which we will hereinafter call IP) that bring together people of different generations into activities that allow them to interact, stimulate, educate, support themselves and, in general, reciprocally take care of each other and which Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako define as "vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations" (2000, p. 3). It is through these programs that intergenerational education is put into practice, understood as

a pedagogical process that brings together people from different generations to perform activities and tasks that respond to their needs and interests, in a dynamic of participation, cooperation, interaction, exchange and intergenerational dialogue, developed in an egalitarian relationship, of tolerance and mutual respect. Its main purpose is to facilitate and ensure that people of different generations learn, develop and share knowledge, skills, attitudes and values and transform themselves in the relationship with one another. (Villas-Boas, Oliveira, Ramos & Montero, 2016, p. 133).

Literature has pointed out several benefits of IP. Citing just a few examples related to social support and social networks, we can mention the development of mutually supportive relationships between the participants that will allow them to provide and receive care at different times of their lives (MacCallum et al., 2006, 2010; Ramos, 2005b, 2008), the reintegration in the family and in community life (MacCallum et al., 2006, 2010; Bressler, Henkin & Adler, 2005), the reduction of isolation and social exclusion (Power & Maluccio, 1999; Ramos, 2004, 2005a), the reconstruction and construction of social networks, social integration and positive effects on the social capital of the people involved (Granville, 2002; Souza & Grundy, 2007; Souza, 2011), etc.

Therefore, social support networks are built in these programs, in other words, relational networks that are advantageous for individuals and their communities. In these communities, and above all, emotional support is transacted (transmission of affection, empathy, love, concern for others, etc.) as well as cognitive support (transmission of information, expertise, advice, suggestions). But instrumental support is also transacted (the search for work, doing tasks, time, transportation, etc.) and materials (money, food items, cooked food, clothing, etc.). However, in order to ensure the transaction of this support between

people involved in the IP, planning and implementation with time, knowledge and care is fundamental (Villas-Boas, Oliveira, Ramos & Montero, 2015).

We start by testing the abbreviated version of the *Lubben Social Network Scale* (LSNS-6), as an instrument capable of assessing the lack of social support and the risk of social isolation of all generations, and not just those of people of an advanced age. This scale was specifically built to be used with the group of *older adults*, and although there are studies in which LSNS or LSNS-6 are used with people of other generations (e.g. Emler, 2006; Fernández-Ballesteros, Moya, Iñiguez, Zamarrón, 2004; Guerrete & Smedema, 2011; Honeycutt, Nasser, Banner, Mapp & Dupont, 2008), we have not identified any instrument validation study for its use with other age groups. Next, we deepened our knowledge with regard to the population's social support by testing several hypotheses, concerning social support in accordance with the age group and of different variables - information and knowledge which we consider to be fundamental for the planning of IP, as a social intervention strategy.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

In this study, 385 residents of the parish of Bonfim in Porto, aged 15 and over, participated in three age groups: *youth and young adults* (42.9 %), *middle-aged adults* (28.6 %), and *elderly adults* (28.6 %). About 96.1 % of the sample is of Portuguese nationality<sup>2</sup>, 57.1 % of the people being female and 42.9 % male. The level of education that is most represented is the completed primary school (27.3 %), followed by secondary education/high school (19.2 %), post-secondary levels (17.1 %), degree (15.4 %), higher secondary education (10.4 %), less than 4 years of schooling (6.2 %) and, finally, the masters/PhD (4.2 %). As regards the socio-economic level<sup>3</sup>, the monthly income of more than a half of the sample (54.5 %) is less than the national average income 26.8 % have an average income and 5.5 % a high income. Note that 13.2 % of the sample under study did not answer this question. With respect to the employment situation, 37.4 % are working, 33.8 % are retired, 19 % are unemployed, and 9 % are students.

### 2.2. Instruments

In our work we have used two of the five sections of questions of the Questionnaire on the Needs, Interests and Potential for Development of Inter-generational Programs (QNIPDPI). From section

I - Socio-demographic questions, we have used those relating to age, gender, education level, socio-economic level and employment situation. From section IV - Quality of Life, Health and for Social Support we have used the abbreviated version of the *Lubben Social Network Scale* (LSNS-6).

LSNS-6 is the short version of the instrument *The Lubben Social Network Scale* (LSNS), developed in the late 1980s by Lubben (1988) specifically for the group of *elderly adults*. This instrument determines the social isolation of people and provides information on the type of social relationships, the size of the network and the familiarity with the members of the supporting network. The LSNS-6 consists of 6 items which are divided into two sub-scales, three of which correspond to the *Family* sub-scale (which assesses family relations) and the remaining three are part of the *Friends* sub-scale (which assesses the relationships of friendship). The answer to each question is on a Likert scale that ranges from "no-one" and "9 or more people". The overall score of the instrument is obtained by adding the scores of 6 items, ranging from 0 to 30 points (Lubben, Blozik, Gilman, Liffe & Kruse, 2006), the *Likert scale* being scored from 0 to 5. Lubben et al. (2006) consider a score of 12 as the cut-off point of the sum of the LSNS-6 and a score of 6 for the *Family* and *Friends* sub-scales; scores lower than the cut-off point of the LSNS-6 and its sub-scales indicate risk of social isolation. When applied to *elderly adults*, this scale demonstrated good psychometric qualities in both the original study - internal consistency of 0.83 (Lubben et al., 2006) - and in the study for the validation of the Portuguese version, the internal consistency of which is 0.80 (Ribeiro et al., 2012).

### 2.3. Procedure

**Data collection:** Data were collected between March and May 2015 in schools, institutions and organisations within the parish of Bonfim, covering only parish residents. Questionnaires were administered individually in three different modes: in-person, assisted by the interviewer, or administered by the interviewer. The latter format was used especially with *elderly adults* and people with poor literacy skills. The response rate was 98 %.

**Ethics:** During the personal contact and on the first page of the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the study's objectives, data confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the participation, and were asked to give honest answers. Dr. James Lubben was asked to give his permission to use the instrument<sup>4</sup>.

**Data processing:** According to the objectives of our study, in this section we present the results of the statistical analyses that focused on the *total sample* (n=385), and three age sub-samples, namely: *youth and young adults* aged between the ages of 15 and 44 (n=165), *middle-aged adults*, between the ages of 45 and 64 (n=110), and *elderly adults* aged 65 and over (n=110). We tested hypotheses regarding social support, by age group, and different variables, such as gender, socio-economic level and employment situation, using, for that purpose, the *t-test* and *ANOVA*, according to the number of groups involved. We also sought to obtain the pattern of correlations between the LSNS-6 and the *Family* and *Friends* sub-scales and schooling. Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS software, version 22. In all analyses, a significance level of 0.05 was considered.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Validation of the LSNS-6 scale and of the Family and Friends sub-scales for various generations

##### 3.1.1. Analysis of the dimensional structure of the scale

After confirming the requirements for this type of test (KMO = 0.73; Bartlett's test:  $p < 0.001$ ; MSA > 0.5), and according to the Kaiser criterion, the PCA resulted in two factors that explain 75.2 % of the total variation - identical to those found in the study by Lubben et al. (2006) and in the Portuguese version by Ribeiro et al. (2012). The first component, corresponding to the *Family* sub-scale, explains 53.9 % of the total variance, and the second one, relating to the *Friends* sub-scale, explains 21.2 % of the total variance. The adequacy of the PCA for all age groups was verified, always resulting in a two-factor structure. In all age samples, the first component (*Family*) is the one that explains a higher percentage of the total variance, with percentages ranging from 51 % to 56 %; the explanatory potential of the second component (*Friends*) was of 25.5 % in the *elderly adults* sample, much higher than the other samples, whose total explained variance ranged from 19 % to 20 % (Table 1).

**Table 1: Rotated component matrix of the LSNS-6 for the total sample and age sub-groups**

Item LSNS-6	COMPONENTS	
	Family	Friends
<b>Global sample (n=379)</b>		
1. Family: number of elements	<b>0,786</b>	0,168
2. Family: asking for help	<b>0,896</b>	0,186
3. Family: discussing personal issues	<b>0,874</b>	0,185
4. Friends: number of elements	0,022	<b>0,799</b>
5. Friends: asking for help	0,287	<b>0,865</b>
6. Friends: discussing personal issues	0,306	<b>0,818</b>
Eigenvalues	3,23	1,27
% of Variance	53,9	21,2
<b>Subsample 15-44 years (n=160)</b>		
1. Family: number of elements	<b>0,707</b>	0,115
2. Family: asking for help	<b>0,886</b>	0,211
3. Family: discussing personal issues	<b>0,848</b>	0,25
4. Friends: number of elements	0,027	<b>0,820</b>
5. Friends: asking for help	0,301	<b>0,868</b>
6. Friends: discussing personal issues	0,366	<b>0,802</b>
Eigenvalues	3,26	1,15
% of Variance	54,4	19,1
<b>Subsample 45-64 years (n=109)</b>		
1. Family: number os elements	<b>0,834</b>	0,143
2. Family: asking for help	<b>0,876</b>	0,195
3. Family: discussing personal issues	<b>0,850</b>	0,323
4. Friends: number of elements	0,163	<b>0,755</b>
5. Friends: asking for help	0,220	<b>0,881</b>
6. Friends: discussing personal issues	0,229	<b>0,852</b>
Eigenvalues	3,35	1,19
% of Variance	55,8	19,9

Item LSNS-6	COMPONENTS	
	Family	Friends
<b>Subsample 65 plus (n=110)</b>		
1. Family: number of elements	<b>0,828</b>	0,217
2. Family: asking for help	<b>0,921</b>	0,154
3. Family: discussing personal issues	<b>0,897</b>	0,044
4. Friends: number of elements	-0,069	<b>0,790</b>
5. Friends: asking for help	0,270	<b>0,877</b>
6. Friends: discussing personal issues	0,270	<b>0,822</b>
Eigenvalues	3,1	1,53
% of Variance	51,6	25,6

### 3.1.2. Reliability analysis

As shown in Table 2, the *Cronbach alpha* was 0.824 for the LSNS-6 scale, 0.845 for the *Family sub-scale*, and 0.807 for the *Friends sub-scale*, very close to the values found in the research by Lubben et al. (0.83) and by Ribeiro et al. (0.80). Considering the different age sub-groups, the values found also come close to those found for the total sample, with the total scale showing a good internal consistency, the same applying to the sub-scales in all sub-groups under analysis (particularly so given that it contains a very small number of items), which is a good indicator of the adequacy of this instrument for all age groups.

**Table 2: Internal consistency of the LSNS-6 scale for the total sample and age sub-groups**

Samples	Alpha of Cronbach		
	LSNS-6	LSNS-3 Family	LSNS-3 Friends
Global Sample	0,824	0,845	0,807
Young adults and adults (15-44 years)	0,825	0,795	0,812
Middle-aged adults (45-64 years)	0,839	0,856	0,816
Older adults (65 plus)	0,799	0,879	0,796

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the LSNS-6 scale items for the total sample, the items with the highest mean scores being those that refer to the size of either the *Family* ( $M=3.42$ ) or *Friends* ( $M=3.6$ ). The lowest mean scores relate to the number of people with whom the respondents talk about personal issues, such as *Family* ( $M=2.35$ ), or *Friends* ( $M=2.1$ ). As to the standard deviations of items, they are all greater than 1, showing a good variation in the answers to the scale's items. Asymmetry indices are between 0.3 and -0.84; kurtosis indices stand between -0.67 and -0.19, and the analysis of the item-total correlation of the total sample (by applying the corrected correlation coefficient) shows scores between 0.420 and 0.684, indicating that they all contribute to assess the construct under analysis.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the LSNS-6 scale items**

Item LSNS-6	M/SD	Skewness (SE)	Kurtosis (SE)	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. Family: number of elements	3,41 (1,36)	-0,56 (0,12)	-0,36 (0,25)	0,55	0,80
2. Family: asking for help	2,73 (1,38)	-0,11 (0,12)	-0,67 (0,25)	0,64	0,78
3. Family: discussing personal issues	2,35 (1,32)	0,17 (0,12)	-0,44 (0,25)	0,62	0,79
4. Friends: number of elements	3,6 (1,49)	-0,84 (0,12)	-0,19 (0,25)	0,42	0,83
5. Friends: asking for help	2,43 (1,42)	-0,08 (0,12)	-0,64 (0,25)	0,68	0,77
6. Friends: discussing personal issues	2,1 (1,41)	0,29 (0,12)	-0,58 (0,25)	0,65	0,78

### 3.2. Results of the population's social support

In order to classify the elderly adults in relation to their social networks, in particular social risk, the original authors of the LSNS-6 scale stated that 12 is the cut-off point, and below this score social isolation is said to exist (Lubben et al., 2006). The current study shows that 22 % (n=85) of the total sample, 14 % (n=23) of *youth and young adults*, 26 % (n=29) of *middle-aged adults* and 30 % (n=33) of the *elderly adults* are in this situation.

If we look at the scores of the LSNS-6 scale and of the sub-scales according to age group (Table 1), it can be seen that *youth and young adults* have a higher social support mean score at 17.6 (SD=5.41), followed by the group of *middle-aged adults* with a mean score of 15.9 (SD= 6.36) and by the group of *elderly adults*, which has the lowest

social support mean score, 15.5 (SD=6.63). These differences are statistically significant ( $F_{(2)}=4.61$ ;  $p=0.01$ ). The results in the *Family* and *Friends* sub-scales are very similar: *youth and young adults* show a higher social support mean score - 8.9 (SD=3.15) and 8.6 (SD=3.14), respectively. This is followed by the *middle-aged adults* with a family social support mean score of 8.2 (SD=3.65) and of 7.7 (SD=3.75) for friends; correspondingly, the lowest social support mean score rests with the *elderly adults* - 7.8 (SD=3.93) and 7.6 (SD=4.20). With regard to *Family* and *Friends*, the difference between the age groups is statistically significant [ $F_{(2)}=3.50$ ;  $p=0.031$  and  $F_{(2)}=3.12$ ;  $p=0.045$ ], respectively. It can be concluded on the basis of these figures that as age increases so does social support decrease. (Table 4)

Table 4: Results for social support according to the different age groups					
	N	M	SD	Df	F (sig.)
<b>LSNS-6</b>					
Young adults and adults (15-44 years)	165	17,6	5,41	2	4,61 (p=0,010)
Middle-aged adults (45-64 years)	110	15,9	6,36		
Older adults (65 plus)	110	15,5	6,63		
<b>Subscale LSNS-3 Family</b>					
Young adults and adults (15-44 years)	165	8,9	3,15	2	3,5 (p=0,031)
Middle-aged adults (45-64 years)	110	8,2	3,65		
Older adults (65 plus)	110	7,8	3,93		
<b>Subscale LSNS-3 Friends</b>					
Young adults and adults (15-44 years)	165	8,6	3,14	2	3,12 (p=0,045)
Middle-aged adults (45-64 years)	110	7,7	3,75		
Older adults (65 plus)	110	7,6	4,2		

The results of the comparison of social support according to the gender of participants show that the social support is greater in men ( $M=17.2$ ;  $SD=6.07$ ) compared to women ( $M=16.0$ ;  $SD=6.10$ ), but the difference is hardly significant for the statistics ( $t_{(383)}=1.92$ ;  $p=0.056$ ). As for the sub-scales, there are no statistically significant differences regarding *Family* between the sexes ( $t_{(383)}=0.28$ ;  $p=0.78$ ). On the other hand, in the sub-scale *Friends* these differences are highly significant ( $t_{(383)}=2.94$ ;  $p=0.003$ ) especially for men. A comparison between social support according to gender

and the three age samples under consideration reveals no significant differences between the sexes on the total scale for none of the samples. The only exception in which women show greater social support ( $M=8.6$ ;  $SD=3.0$ ) than men ( $M=7.8$ ;  $SD=4.1$ ) is in the *Family* sub-scale, although not significant ( $t_{(108)}=-1.14$ ;  $p=0.25$ ).

Considering the education level and bearing in mind that the sample presents considerable variability in this respect and that the sizes of sub-samples varied considerably, we have calculated the Spearman's  $\rho$  and have noted that, for



the total sample, the higher the education level, the greater the social support, whether considering the 6 items ( $\rho=.274$ ,  $p<.001$ ) or analyzing the *Family* ( $\rho=.201$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and *Friends* ( $\rho=.260$ ,  $p<.001$ ) sub-scales. In the three age sub-groups, it has been found that the relation between these variables is highly significant in the *youth and young adults* group ( $\rho_{(164)}=.233$ ,  $p=0.003$ ) and the *middle-aged adults* group ( $\rho_{(110)}=.293$ ;  $p=0.002$ ), and significant in the *elderly adults* group ( $\rho_{(110)}=.0183$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). Moreover, social support and education level are significantly related

in the *Friends* sub-scale in the case of the *youth and young adults* group ( $\rho_{(164)}=.0298$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), as well as in the *middle-aged adults* group ( $\rho_{(110)}=.0199$ ;  $p=0.037$ ) and *elderly adults* group ( $\rho_{(110)}=.0212$ ;  $p=0.026$ ). In respect of the *Family* sub-scale, the correlation between social support and education level is not significant in the *youth and young adults* group ( $\rho_{(164)}=.0103$ ,  $p=0.191$ ) and in the *elderly adults* group ( $\rho_{(110)}=.090$ ,  $p=0.352$ ), but it is significant in the *middle-aged adults* group ( $\rho_{(110)}=.0276$ ,  $p=0.004$ ) (Table 5).

Table 5: Correlations between social support and education level of the total sample and of the three age sub-groups			
	LSNS-6 Scale Total	LSNS-3 Subscale Family	LSNS-3 Subscale Friends
<b>Global sample (n=384)</b>			
rho of Spearman	,274**	,201**	,260**
Sig.	,000	,000	,000
<b>Young adults and adults (n=164)</b>			
rho of Spearman	,233**	,103	,298**
Sig.	,003	,191	,000
<b>Middle-aged adults (n=110)</b>			
rho of Spearman	,293**	,276**	,199*
Sig.	,002	,004	,037
<b>Older adults (n=110)</b>			
rho of Spearman	,183	,090	,212*
Sig.	,055	,352	,026
**The correlation is significant at $p<0,01$ (two-tailed).			
* The correlation is significant at $p<0,05$ (two-tailed).			

As regards the socio-economic level variable, we note that in the total sample the people with a higher income show a higher social support mean score, 19.0 (SD=4.35), followed by those with an average income, 17.6 (SD=6.03), while those with a lower income show the lowest social support mean score, 15.3 (SD=6.36). These results are statistically significant ( $F_{(2)}=7.14$ ;  $p<0.001$ ). The results in the *Family* and *Friends* sub-scales are identical, those with a higher income having greater social support and those with lower incomes having less social support. These differences are also significant for the *Family* sub-scale ( $F_{(2)}=5.59$ ;  $p<0.004$ ) and *Friends* sub-scale ( $F_{(2)}=5.04$ ;  $p<0.007$ ). The analysis of the different age groups shows that in

all groups the people with higher incomes have greater social support. However, in both the *youth and young adults* and *middle-aged adults* groups the differences between individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds are not statistically significant, neither in the LSNS-6 Scale nor in its sub-scales. Nevertheless, the *elderly adults* group shows statistically significant differences between people with a high income and those with a low income ( $F_{(2)}=4.50$ ;  $p<0.013$ ), whereas these differences are not significant in the *Family* sub-scale ( $F_{(2)}=1.48$ ;  $p<0.231$ ), but are in fact significant in the *Friends* sub-scale ( $F_{(2)}=4.82$ ;  $p<0.010$ ).

As regards the employment situation, for the total sample, the people with a higher social

support mean score are the students, 19.1 (SD=4.85), followed by employed people ( $M=18.8$ ;  $SD=5.86$ ), retired people ( $M=15.2$ ;  $SD=6.34$ ) and unemployed people ( $M=15.0$ ;  $SD=5.87$ ), the differences being statistically significant ( $F_{(3)}=8.46$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In the *Family sub-scale* and *Friends sub-scale*, the results are similar, the students being the group with the highest social support scores and the unemployed showing the lowest scores. The differences in both sub-scales, *Family* ( $F_{(3)}=5.66$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and *Friends* ( $F_{(3)}=6.24$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) are significant. In the *youth and young adults* group, the students show a higher social support mean score ( $M=19.1$ ;  $SD=4.85$ ), followed by employed people ( $M=18.1$ ;  $SD=5.41$ ); again, the differences are statistically significant ( $F_{(3)}=4.38$ ,  $p<0.005$ ), both sub-scales showing similar results. With regard to the *middle-aged adults* group, the higher social support mean score rests with the employed people ( $M=17.2$ ;  $SD=6.49$ ), followed by the unemployed ( $M=15.3$ ;  $SD=6.12$ ) and, finally, by retired people ( $M=13.5$ ;  $SD=5.77$ ). The differences in this age group are not statistically significant in either the LSNS-6 scale ( $F_{(3)}=2.87$ ,  $p<0.061$ ) or the two sub-scales. Only retired people were considered in the *elderly adults* group, as the number of employed respondents (2) and unemployed respondents (3) is less than 5. Thus, retired elderly show a social support mean score of 15.5 ( $SD=6.42$ ) in the LSNS-6, 7.8 ( $SD=3.92$ ) in the *Family sub-scale* and 7.6 ( $SD=4.05$ ) in the *Friends sub-scale*.

#### 4. Discussion

Since the LSNS-6 scale was designed specifically to be used on the elderly population, it was necessary to validate the scale so that it could be used with other age groups. The LSNS-6 and its sub-scales LSNS-3 *Family* and LSNS-3 *Friends* have demonstrated good psychometric qualities not only for the total sample, comprising 385 individuals, but also for the three age sub-samples. It has proved to be a valid instrument, suitable to be used in comparative studies between different generations, and in the framework of intergenerational practices.

Knowing that the social network is built by the individual, over a lifetime, and that its scope will depend on socio-demographic, cultural, economic and personality factors, we have considered some aspects concerning the variation of results of the LSNS-6 and of the sub-scales regarding some socio-demographic variables, by age group. As far as age is concerned, we have noted that people of all ages are at risk of social isolation, which demonstrates the need to create strategies with a view to increasing social networks and social support for them. As regards gender, we have found

that women are more at risk of social isolation than men. In our study, men from all age groups present a higher social support mean score than women, similar to the results found by Pinto, Gracia, Bocchi e Carvalhaes (2006), Stringhini et al. (2012) and Ribeiro et al. (2012), even though these authors dealt only with samples of elderly people. We have also found that men are supported more than women, especially by *Friends*, a result similar to that found by Ribeiro et al. (2012), the only exception in which women have a higher social support mean score being in the sample of middle-aged adult women, in terms of family social support. These data seem to emphasize the idea that as women assume a prominent role within the family (in the support, organisation, caring for the health of their close relatives and in their children's education, etc.), on the one hand they increase the family social support and, on the other hand, become more secluded in relation to social contact outside the family compared to men (Pinto et al. 2006). As far as education level is concerned, we have noted that better-educated people have a higher social support mean score, the results of which are identical to those found by Pinto et al. (2006).

Several studies on the elderly population have confirmed that the economic conditions and the economic status contribute to the extent of the social network (Rosa et al., 2007; Honeycutt et al., 2008). The conclusion of our research are along the same lines, and we also found that people with higher incomes have a higher social support mean score across all age groups, meaning that the low income factor increases the risk of social isolation.

Finally, we have noted that the fact that there is no "compulsory" occupation, such as working or studying, increases the risk of social isolation. Our analysis has shown that students and employed people have a greater social support than the unemployed and retired people in all age samples, both in the LSNS-6 scale and in the *Family* and *Friends* sub-scales.

#### 5. Conclusion

While we have seen that age is in itself a risk factor, we have also realised from the analysis by age group that, regardless of age, people have characteristics that influence their social support, such as: being a woman, having low levels of education, low income, and being unemployed and retired. We believe that these characteristics should be taken into account when planning and selecting the participants of intergenerational programs, in the knowledge that a heterogeneous group – one that includes people with a strong social support

and people at social risk – will add to the expansion and strengthening of binding social networks, contributing to the well-being, quality of life and social integration not only of *elderly adults*, but also of different generations.

The innovative aspect of this study was that we proved that the LSNS-6 can be used to plan and develop Intergenerational Programs (IP). Therefore, because it can be quickly and easily used, we suggest that it be applied at three distinct moments of the Intergenerational programs. As a first step, the LSNS-6 should be applied when selecting the participants, or if these have already been established at the start of the IP. This first application will serve as a pre-test for a later comparison, at the post-test level, that is, in the final assessment phase of the program (second moment), and even in follow-up cases. Since we agree that the evaluation is a *sine qua non* for a good Intergenerational Program, hence why we need to evaluate the results in the short, medium

and long term (Sánchez, 2007), we suggest that the LSNS-6 be applied in a third moment, a few months after the program has ended, to measure the impact of the IP on the social network and on the social support of its participants in the medium and long term.

Due to space constraints, we were unable to demonstrate all the capabilities of the LSNS-6, more specific analyses being needed on the three items that form the LSNS-3 *Family* and LSNS-3 *Friends*. Such an analysis would allow us to question if the size of the network would foresee relationships of help and familiarity; if help would be asked from people with whom they have contact and are close to, or only from people they are close to; would it compare the relationships of familiarity between the different generations? And would it explain the differences regarding the aforesaid questions in relation to the *Family* e *Friends* subscales? These and other questions raised herein will certainly be food for further thought.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This concept is associated with the feeling of belonging to a community, of concern for the people who are part of it and the conviction that these people, in turn, care about others. Mutual trust, the sharing of values and norms, cooperation and networks are all indicators of the social capital of a community.
- <sup>2</sup> 1.3 % are Spanish; 0.5 % are French; 0.5 % are Belgian and 0.3 % are from Mozambique, Angola, Guinea, Italy, Brazil, respectively, in a total of 14 people.
- <sup>3</sup> The average monthly wage in Portugal, in 2013, was about 963€ - GEE/MEE (2013) - Statistical Bulletin of November 2013. Available at <http://www.gee.min-economia.pt> [16/01/2016].
- <sup>4</sup> On the Boston College website at <http://www.bc.edu/bc-web/about.html>

## HOW TO CITE THE ARTICLE

Villa-Boas, S., Oliveira, A.L., Ramos, N., & Montero, I. (2018). Apoio social e diversidade geracional: o potencial da LSNS-6. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 31, 183-196. DOI: 10.7179/PSRI\_2018.31.14

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# INFORMATION





## BOOK REVIEWS

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### EDUCAR CON AMOR Y FIRMEZA

Tiani, S (2017). Madrid: Narcea . 112 páginas.  
ISBN: 9788427723580

The Education in the 21st century is not only in show and share knowledge, is a process of accompaniment which the educator must be conscious and responsible. This book comes to show how can educate from the positive emotions, accompanying the young in their process of life from love, without apply painful stimulus, but with discipline.

The book begins with a brief introduction explaining the basis on which are built the following chapters. Expresses its author the idea that educate with love and firmly pursues the objective that the child learns from a constructive and positive experience. Talk about this idea does not like technique if not as a skill that is developed according to our own life process. This work provides tools to enhance personal skills of educators and families with the ultimate objective to offer new growth opportunities to children and young people.

The manual is divided in ten chapters, the author distributed in the following manner. The first one is based on the value of education as a responsible and decisive in the personality that we acquired throughout life. Tiani Brunelli, Talk about punishment as perpetuator element throughout history and how it has gone from a stiffness in the educational model of the mid of the last century to a permissiveness excessive late twentieth century and early twenty-first to reach the conclusion that when the educate or is rigid, the child learns, but usually does not feel love and when the educator is weak the child is happy, but learns, rather

little. Why Tiani Brunelli proposes to considerer about loving education and firm education.

This introductory chapter generates the following four chapters a deepening of education based on the management of social skills and communication based on the experience of the limit. From chapter two to five topics as important as educating from kindness, deal with the relationships, and the experience of the limit. When this lives right way, explaining the lower what is the reason for the limit and what is the exact point where you must stop, the young feels mature and able to make use of their skills and experience limit correctly.

The Chapters, sixth and seventh, dealing with the prevention of difficulties, the different stages of learning (explanation by the educator, experimentation by the child and checking of acquired learning) and its accompanying to the acquisition of competence to acquire. The eighth chapter is about discipline and gives the reason of because it is important to use this term from which is the ability to order thoughts, feelings, words and actions based on a purpose. The discipline occurs thanks to a free and conscious choice.

Finally the author through the last two chapters try to explain that any process can be improved and to develop a skill is always determined we must follow a series of steps, such as firmness to the goal and stay in the effort to get it. He concludes the book inviting the reader to discover the beauty of each person. This has been during all the work thread. Beginning each chapter with the question do something nice for me? Which answers a child or a young person and the response serves introductory link for the chapter.

It is a practical book, but with deep reflection, this book is an elaborate work throughout years

of educational experience which creates two processes in the book. On the one hand, share a few ideas starting from the work done by the author and on the other hand delve into a type of education which is not usually give or dealing in educational instances, as it is emotional education, this manual in a way positive. With vocabulary and terms in the field of education, but affordable

reading for anyone interested in improving the education of children. So it makes this book required reading for educators and families that have children and young people in charge.

David Caballero Franco  
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### **SISTEMAS Y POLÍTICAS DE BIENESTAR. UNA PERSPECTIVA INTERNACIONAL**

**Pastor, E. (ed.) (2017). Madrid: Editorial Dykinson, 211 páginas. ISBN.: 978-84-9148-407-3**

#### **Welfare systems and policies. An international perspective.**

Social Work is at an important crossroads because it must face new challenges in a context of crisis that requires the professional to develop new ways of facing situations that demand new solutions that can not start from the individual, but must be built from an international perspective. In the case of welfare systems and policies, this international perspective is essential to overcome challenges in a global way and to learn from the different experiences of different countries that contribute to a necessary discussion and analysis on matters of interest and socio-political impact. The book is structured around twelve chapters where unpublished research results are collected through contributions and research knowledge transfers, academics and international professionals from different universities, research centers, public institutions and social organizations: University of Milano Bicocca (Italy), Presses de l'EHESP de Rennes (France), Pablo de Olavide University (Spain), University of Murcia (Spain), University Michigan (United States), University Institute of Lisbon (Portugal), University of Education Distance (Spain); The Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel (Israel), University of Vigo (Spain), General Council of Social Work (Spain), University of Buenos Aires (Argentina), University of Salamanca (Spain) and Public University of Navarra (Spain). The 21 authors of the different chapters are academics, researchers and Social Workers

from eight countries: France, Italy, Spain, United States, Portugal, Israel, Argentina, Mexico, all of them with great experience in research and with deep knowledge related to social welfare systems and policies from an international perspective.

The manual compares the different social welfare systems and policies that are currently being developed at the international level. In the different chapters the following examples of great interest are treated: social protection and activation social policies in France (chapter 1); the political practice in Italy and the incidence of social workers (chapter 2); welfare policies at the local level in Spain (chapter 3); the Welfare State in the United States (chapter 4); public housing policies and the situation of poverty and exclusion in Portugal (chapter 5); public and social policies in Israel (chapter 6); the system of social services and dependency in Spain (chapter 7); social policies in Argentina (chapter 8); policies for the protection of children in Spain and Argentina (chapter 9); the system and health programs in the penitentiary system in Spain (chapter 10), the ethics applied to social welfare policies (chapter 11) and poverty and exclusion from Social Work (chapter 12).

The book is coordinated by Enrique Pastor Seller, professor of the University of Murcia in the Department of Social Work and Social Services, specialist in social and community participation and mediation.

In short, this is an international research knowledge transfer book of high strategic interest that aims to contribute to the analysis of current social welfare systems and policies and will be very useful for professionals, teachers and students of Social Work from different countries thanks to its international perspective.

Hernando Carlos Gomez Prada  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

## THESIS ABSTRACT

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### ACCIÓN SOCIOEDUCATIVA Y LOCURA. TRAMAS, NARRATIVAS Y EXPERIENCIAS EN EL ÁMBITO DE LA SALUD MENTAL EN GALICIA

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**Fecha de defensa:** 09/06/17.

**Localización web:** <http://hdl.handle.net/10803/405844>.

The research addresses local worlds of experience where interpersonal dynamics connect corporeal states to collective realities which determine the reality of madness. In diverse scenarios and from different points of view, this analysis seeks to discern the conditions of possibility for a socio-educational action based on experience and occurrence. It focuses in particular on the frames of meaning, on biographical narratives, as well as on the experiences of diagnosed people (and also in the testimonies of their families and professionals) in order to understand the mechanisms by which the subjects come to identify themselves or disagree with the hegemonic representations

that set out the way in which we should live madness as a disease. In these intersubjective universes power and anti-power games come into play and they generate diverse identities, and at the same time, the dominant benchmarks related to how psychological suffering is produced, recreated and refuted.

The socio-educational action revolves around the interpretative forms of phenomena that the normality regime establishes as pathological, dysfunctional or deviant. Based on a critical detachment of these notions, the approach addresses the plurality and complexity of the expressions of human discomfort.

The political-educational task is based on the pretext of enabling new identifications and transitions for these subjects, from the construction of their own biographies, their social records and their own sense experiences. Closely related to benchmarks, identities and scenarios, this work outlines how strategies are developed for the construction of autonomy and the management of suffering. The problematization of these elements stands out as a touchstone for an educational action whose *raison d'être* lies in welcoming or initiating that which is different, beyond rigid diagnostic categories.

## EL CAPITAL SOCIAL COMO FUNDAMENTO PARA LA EVALUACIÓN DE LA SOSTENIBILIDAD PARA LOS TELECENTROS DE CATALUÑA: LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL REFERENTE DE BUENA PRÁCTICA

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**Fecha de defensa:** 2017.

### **Social capital as basis for evaluating sustainability with Cataluña's telecentre: building a good practice model**

Telecentre offer communities great opportunities for increasing flexible access to ICT. But not only. They offer places where people meet, generate new ideas, opportunities for change are offered and, in some cases, are a vital and integral part of the social infrastructure of the community. The main objective of this investigation is to propose social capital the key to generate sustainable actions within Cataluña's XPT [Xarxa Punt TIC] network of telecentres.

Specific objectives of this study are the following: (1) to propose a battery of sustainability indicators for telecentres; (2) to design and validate an instrument measuring social capital in telecentres; (3) to describe and evaluate actions developed to implement sustainability in Cataluña's telecentres ; (4) to elaborate a model of good practice for sustainability in XPT's.

On a theoretical level, this study develops a view on telecentres which is both, actual and

global, covering their objectives, models, services, needs and challenges. It intends to offer a detailed analysis of the dimensions of sustainability, to propose six dimensions of sustainability and to elaborate on the factors which have an impact on it. Social capital contribution will thus be looked at in terms of its development, potential and measure, as applied to the socio-educational dimension of the telecentres. At the end of this phase, the various possibilities offered by the social capital to the sustainability of telecentres should emerge.

An instrument was created thereafter, with the intent of creating a social capital profile of the telecentres and identify those actions which reinforce or increase its sustainability. Both types of results have allowed us to build a model of good sustainability practices based on experiences made by the five telecentres of the XPT network.

We consider that sustainability in telecentres is possible thanks to their appropriation by the community benefitting from it, as well as the relationships existing between policymaking agents, community leaders and the various entities constituting the community. Thus, sustainability is finally the intertwining of networks based on trust, proximity and horizontality generated within. It's the concept of social capital which allows an in-depth analysis of all those networks.

Thus, social capital is generated via connectivity of structures which are both participatory and integrated, as for example networks of proximity and horizontality. It is created by the capacity of people to connect with others in the community. For them, these telecentres have become a vital and integral part of the local community's social infrastructure.

**POTENCIALIDADES E PRÁTICAS DE INTEGRAÇÃO DAS DIMENSÕES SOCIOCULTURAL E BIOFÍSICA EM EQUIPAMENTOS PARA A EDUCAÇÃO AMBIENTAL: ESTUDOS DE CASO NO EIXO ATLÂNTICO (NORTE DE PORTUGAL E GALIZA)**

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**Fecha de defensa:** 2015.

**Potentialities and practices of integrating both biophysical and sociocultural dimensions in environmental education facilities: case studies in Eixo Atlântico (Northern Portugal and Galicia)**

The present investigation has focused on the resources of environmental education (EE) called “Environmental Education Facilities”, specifically located in the territory of the Euro Region of *Eixo Atlântico of the Peninsular Northwest* - Northern Portugal and Galicia (Spain). Taking in consideration the potentialities of these resources, such as of the community development, this study seeks to analyze the practice of integrating both biophysical and sociocultural dimensions of educational projects within a set of EEF. As specific objectives, the research aimed at identifying the factors that optimize and others that difficult that integration. It was also a goal to analyze the pedagogical strategies, the level of population’s involvement and characteristics of the EEF educators.

The geographical delimitation is justified by an absence of compared research on EE in two territories that are geographical and culturally similar. Moreover, EEF in Portugal and Galicia are, in general, centered on the natural heritage’s conservation, which reveals a reduced articulation between biophysical and sociocultural dimensions of the reality.

The denomination *Environmental Education Facilities* or *Environmental Education Centres* corresponds to a set of heterogeneous initiatives of non-formal education, with the following elements: 1) *facilities* for EE purposes; 2) an *educational program*; 3) a *stable educational team*; 4) *material and mythological resources*; 5) an *environmental management model*; 6) an *evaluation system*; 7) *programs* that are planned according

each type of *visitors*. The study is also based on the concept of “EEF’ social impact” which comprises the criteria of the level of visitors’ participation; contact with the local reality; duration of the activities.

Concerning the methodology, the research follows a qualitative structure - a depth multiple case study strategy, employing in depth and semi-structured interviews with directors of EEF and EE experts. The EEF sample was selected considering a set of criteria (*a priori* categories) related to the concept of sociocultural integration and impact, having resulted in a total of 29 EEF, located in the coast and inland of Eixo Atlântico. Following *a priori* and emergent categories from the interviews, there were reached four main themes: general and political characterization of the EEF; characterization of the educational project and of the educational team; characterization of EEF connections with their surroundings.

Reflecting on the factors influencing the sociocultural integration and social impact, two opposite phenomena are highlighted. On one hand, there are similar phenomena to the rest of the Eixo Atlântico’s territory, with elements that seems to difficult the integration and impact:

- i) There are limitations of financial and human resources;
- ii) The most mentioned objective of educational projects is the awareness for biodiversity conservation, showing reductionist visions of EE;
- iii) The scholars are the major segment of the public, comparing with stakeholders such as decision makers;
- iv) Activities’ themes in urban areas are often out of that EEF context;
- v) The EEF set includes passive forms of activities and a reduced critical sense of place;
- vi) The existing EEF networks are still incipient, and the EE strategies at a regional and national level have little relevance on EEF;
- vii) Most of the EEF directors and educators are initial trained exclusively on Natural Sciences, existing a lack of opportunities for continuous training (e.g. educational areas).

On the other hand, there are different aspects from the rest of Eixo Atlântico and that reveal a high level of integration:

- i) The EEF sample has a large spectra of projects with sociocultural objectives;
- ii) There are more activities of medium and long duration (e.g. several days);
- iii) There is a high level of engagement from some segments of the population and in active ways;

- iv) There is a larger diversity of partnerships;
- v) The deepest connection to the local community occurs in EEF that develop local improvement projects (biophysical and socio-economic types).
- vi) Educators feel a higher satisfaction with their profession.

The exchange between EEF of each border region was found to be under developed. The demographic factor of land use (urban Versus rural/natural EEF) is another reason for the disparities between EEF in Eixo Atlântico.

These and other challenges make keeping the conviction that, as long as are guaranteed the conditions, EEF can be efficient social facilitators. Thus, it turns relevant to deepening the knowledge about the difficulties and solutions to those facilitators, as well as valuing the strengths in Eixo

Atlântico, as a model to the other regions of Spain and Portugal.

Furthermore, the fostering of the following processes is recommended:

- (1) Increasing educators' training on educational strategies to better address urban problems and on evaluation systems of EEF;
- (2) Creating a cooperation network of EEF in Eixo Atlântico which might address: i) the coordination between the EEF and local/regional sectoral strategies; ii) the coordination between EEF and significant institutions of Eixo Atlântico.

Note: This work was supported by the Foundation for the Science and Technology, Portugal (SFRH/BD/69059/2010 and SFRH/BPD/116379/2016).

## EDUCACIÓN Y CIUDADANÍA. EMPODERANDO DESDE LA PROPIA DINÁMICA SOCIAL DE UN BARRIO

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**Fecha de defensa:** 2017.

### Education and citizenship. Empowering from the own social dynamics of a neighborhood

This study, along five chapters, presents a research on the perception of a given space from the perspective of development agents. In this case the citizen entities or associations.

The theoretical chapter situates from the critical theories, as much of the social pedagogy as of the education for the development. This means understanding that the issues that bring situations of poverty and systemic vulnerability are marked by traditional structures. The importance acquired by citizens' participation in the processes of emancipation is considered, together with the territory, they are the two main elements when it comes to defining what the emancipatory dynamics of a specific context.

Thus, in order to promote emancipatory education actions adapted to the dynamics of citizenship, it is necessary to answer whether it is really possible to address the concerns of a neighborhood and how these demands are channeled to

the Public Administration. As specific objectives susceptible of analysis, they are defined:

- Identify the different social agents that act as channeling the demands of the San Jerónimo neighborhood; as well as the actions they carry out in terms of the promotion of emancipation.
- Inquire about the formative processes (conscious or not) of these actions, in the different areas of citizen socialization in San Jerónimo, approaching the role that they can play as emancipatory training agents.

Definitely shows the system of categories of analysis designed around two general dimensions: emancipatory dynamics (social agent, places in the context, creation of networks, perception of the neighborhood, guiding principles, action, organizational culture) and formative strategies (training strategies, purpose and scope of action, trainer, tools and evaluation).

By having limited time and resources, was considered the relevance of locating in a specific territory; Considering the Barrio, as the spatial delimitation most suitable to approach a context as large as the municipality of Seville (Andalusia, Spain).

Chapter two, leads us to know the context from the analysis of the official documentation made available to the public. It offers a panoramic view of the neighborhood of San Jerónimo; in terms of urban, population, socioeconomic, social welfare, distribution of resources and equipment, and associationism. In this way, the institutional, public and private actions that are developed in the context are analyzed.

The operationalization of these issues is defined exhaustively in the third chapter. The content includes the methodological approach of the research, where the process of selection of the participants; as well as the techniques and instruments for collecting information.

From the interview, fundamental elements are detected in which to deepen on the concrete practice that is why observation takes center stage. The analysis of the information, from the perspective of hypothesis of progression, facilitated the establishment of levels of analysis. These levels are presented according to each of the units of analysis that make up the selection of participants in this study. The extracted information is related through the techniques designed to respond to the categories of analysis of each of the dimensions and subdimensions described.

In this sense, it has been explained from the point of view of the participants how they

perceive each of the elements that, we believe, favor an emancipatory dynamic; as well as those that consciously or unconsciously from their own dynamics are proposed with a formative nature.

Results ends with the presentation of the observation sheets made for each of the spaces that have been considered in this research as spaces for social coexistence and with the potential to work on raising awareness and channeling citizen demands.

We finish, presenting the main contributions, as well as the challenges, limitations and future lines of research that emanate from this study. In definitive, a way of approaching the knowledge of a neighborhood from the emancipatory perspective of it is presented, giving value to knowledge, movement and trust created by associations that maintain a continuous trajectory and commitment in the neighborhood.

### MODELOS DE ACCIÓN SOCIOEDUCATIVA CON INFANCIA Y ADOLESCENCIA EN LOS SERVICIOS SOCIALES MUNICIPALES DE LA CAV

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**Fecha de defensa:** 18 julio 2016.

The doctoral thesis, MODELS OF SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ACTION IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE IN THE BASQUE AUTONOMOUS REGION MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES, arises from two previous research projects in which the author participated in the years prior to writing this thesis, and from her experience of more than 20 years as a social educator in the field of childhood.

The initial hypothesis was: "The professional cadre of social educators has the potential to build an alternative model of socio-educational action".

The objectives defined were as follows:

- Analyse professionals' daily practice in socio-educational action.
- Identify the existing models of socio-educational action currently in existence in the context of the Basque Country.
- Develop recommendations with regard to socio-educational action in childhood in situations of risk.

The study of socio-educational models (Geibler and Hege, 1997; Giménez, 2014; Medina, 1997; Núñez *et al.*, 2010; Úcar, 2004; Varela, 2013) explains and justifies the educational practices observed, as the latter display different approaches, objectives and results depending precisely on the models from which they arise. These models were analysed and classified according to the participative dimension (Pericacho, 2012; Núñez *et al.*, 2010).

We have adopted the term "models of socio-educational action", as it focuses on pedagogy and, therefore, on education, with a sense of possibility in the project and the future, bypassing proposals based on deficit (which is transmitted by the more usual term, "intervention"), as indicated by several authors (Geibler and Hege, 1997; Lucio-Villegas, 2005; Núñez *et al.*, 2010; Sáez, 1993).

With regard to methodology, the qualitative approach was selected as it allows access to the perspectives of social partners - that is, to their interpretations, knowledge and experiences, which are the specific focus of this thesis - through three key elements of communicative methodology:

- Horizontality between the world of science and the subjects of study;
- Visibility of excluding and transforming factors; and
- Generation of change for social transformation.

With regard to the production of data, a total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted and 8 focus groups comprising more than 80 professionals. An Advisory Council was formed of participants in the study to guarantee scrutiny of the objectives, the research process itself, the instruments and also



the interpretation of the results being gathered. As such, this structure entails a democratisation of the research process, as it involves bringing real life and science together (Alonso et al, 2012b; Gómez et al., 2006; Yuste, Serrano, Girbés and Arandia, (2014). Likewise, criteria of scientific and ethical rigour have been followed (Miyata and Kai, 2009; Gómez et al., 2006; Tellado et al., 2014; Tracy, 2010).

A lot of information has been obtained over the course of the research process on the basis of the dimensions and categories I have defined, and through which the profession's expertise in working with children can be appreciated. These dimensions are: the professional practice dimension (areas, dimensions, objectives, activities, physical spaces, strategies, protocols, interprofessional relationships and schedules, institutional responsibility and social responsibility, and the evaluation of content and who should conduct it), the subject dimension (the subjects, i.e. the children and their families, the professional worker and everything

relating to the educational relationship), and the context dimension (the legislative context, i.e. the institution as a framework, legislation and the organisational context, with respect to membership bodies).

With regard to the conclusions, it is fair to state that we are considering a very young profession, focused on action and with diverse and mixed theoretical sources. Tensions between the models of socio-educational action render it urgent to overcome the conflict between the model of work imposed by public institutions and the model on which social educators base their work. These professionals express their confidence in a model that emphasises social change and transformation, taking community participation as a foundation, progressing toward a model based on dialogue and participation, although for the time being this goal requires a greater professional effort as it entails the abandonment of homogenising monitoring practices for all citizens.

