

"Physical, Recreational, and Sports Activities for Priority Population Groups to Optimize Leisure and Free Time "

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Abstract

The study aims to promote physical, sports, and recreational activity in the general community through the implementation of methodological strategies that encourage a healthy use of free time and leisure, preventing risk situations and diseases associated with a sedentary lifestyle. It examines how these activities contribute to the physical, emotional, and social well-being of priority groups, as well as promoting their inclusion. Through a theoretical and documentary review, the biopsychosocial benefits of these practices are identified, and the necessary interdisciplinary approaches and public policies to guarantee their effective implementation are highlighted. A structured survey was used for parents and student interns (teachers); the data was analyzed descriptively and through thematic analysis. The findings confirm that physical activity, sports, and recreation, when developed from an inclusive and

adapted perspective, are beneficial. The importance of physical, recreational, and sports activity is revealed as a key tool for the optimization of leisure and free time in priority groups, specifically for people with disabilities, children and adolescents between 5 and 16 years of age who are in a vulnerable situation. The limited population consisted of 219 children enrolled in the vacation course and 300 teachers, under the outreach project: "Promotion of physical, recreational, and sports activity for priority groups and the general community for the optimization of free time and leisure".

Keywords: Priority Attention, physical activity, sports, recreational.

Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo fomentar la actividad física, deportiva y recreativa en la comunidad en general mediante la implementación de estrategias metodológicas que promuevan un uso saludable del tiempo libre y el ocio, previniendo situaciones de riesgo y enfermedades asociadas al sedentarismo cómo estas actividades contribuyen al bienestar físico, emocional y social de los grupos prioritarios, así como promover su inclusión. A través de una revisión teórica y documental, se identifican los beneficios biopsicosociales de estas prácticas y se destacan enfoques interdisciplinarios y políticas públicas necesarias para garantizar su implementación efectiva. Se utilizó la encuesta estructurada a los padres de familia y estudiantes pasantes (docentes), se analizaron los datos de

forma descriptiva y análisis temático, los hallazgos confirman que la actividad física el deporte y la recreación, cuando se desarrollan desde una perspectiva inclusiva y adaptada. Se revela la importancia de la actividad física, recreativa y deportiva como herramienta clave para la optimización del ocio y tiempo libre en grupos prioritarios, para personas con discapacidad, de niños y adolescentes entre 5 y 16 años de edad que se encuentran en situación de vulnerabilidad, la población limitada de 219 de niños inscritos en el curso vacacional y 300 docentes, bajo el proyecto de vinculación: “Promoción de la actividad física, recreativa y deportiva para grupos prioritarios y la comunidad en general para la optimización del tiempo libre y ocio”.

Palabras claves: Atención Prioritaria, actividad física, deportiva, recreativa.

Introduction

In contemporary societies, the appropriate use of leisure and free time has become essential for overall well-being. Physical, recreational, and sporting activities represent a powerful tool not only for promoting health but also for fostering inclusion, social integration, and personal development. These benefits take on an even more significant dimension when directed toward so-called priority population groups, who face conditions of social, economic, or functional vulnerability that hinder their full participation in community life.

According to Loor (2019), “priority population groups are those who have historically been placed at risk due to their social, economic, cultural, and political conditions, age, or ethnic origin, preventing them from fully participating in development processes and accessing improved living conditions and well-being.”

In this context, priority groups, such as people with disabilities, older adults, women at risk, and indigenous communities, among others, often face structural barriers that limit their access

Physical, recreational and sporting activity

Physical activity refers to any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure (WHO, 2020). It ranges from everyday activities to regular exercise and sports. Recreation, on the other hand, refers to activities that people engage in

to spaces for recreation, sports, and physical exercise. This reality presents the challenge of designing strategies that not only recognize their specific needs but also guarantee their right to active leisure and a healthy and dignified life.

This research seeks to analyze the importance and level of satisfaction derived from physical, recreational, and sporting activities as a means of optimizing the use of leisure and free time in priority groups. It examines their contributions to physical and mental health, their role in social inclusion, and the need for policies and programs that promote equitable access to these activities. Addressing this topic requires adopting an inclusive view of human development, where free time is not perceived as a luxury, but as a space for rights, growth, and participation.

Physical activity, recreation, and sports play a key role in optimizing leisure and free time for priority groups, providing biopsychosocial benefits that enhance their quality of life. Its effective implementation requires an inclusive approach, accessibility, and institutional commitment.

voluntarily during their free time for the purpose of enjoyment, relaxation, or fun (Dumazedier, 1972). According to the Council of Europe (1992), sport is any form of physical activity that, whether organized or not, aims to improve physical and mental well-being, foster social relationships, or achieve results in competitions. These activities not only promote physical well-being, but also

psychological, social, and emotional well-being, serving as essential tools in the processes of inclusion and personal and collective development.

Education in Ecuador is undergoing constant evolution, particularly regarding student integration into the educational system. This development aims to make each student visible and integrated individually, with a more intensive and determined approach. (Sarango, 2024).

Priority population groups

Priority groups, also known as vulnerable groups or groups facing inequality, are those populations that face the greatest barriers to accessing rights and services. According to organizations such as the UN and ECLAC, these groups may include: people with disabilities, older adults, people living in poverty, indigenous peoples, women, children, adolescents, and at-risk youth, among others.

The participation of these groups in physical, recreational, and sports activities must be adapted to their specific conditions, ensuring accessibility, safety, cultural relevance, and equity.

When discussing priority groups, (Zúñiga, 2019) notes that social problems have affected the population, particularly children and adolescents, who continue to face limited access to education and training due to a lack of vocational resources; in the case of adolescents, this leads them to take jobs in low-productivity and low-wage

sectors, resulting in physical labor that goes unrewarded and thus limiting their chances of achieving a better standard of living. This, in turn, underscores the intergenerational transmission of poverty and occupational segregation cited by (Vásquez Paredes, 2015).

Leisure and Free time

Leisure is defined as the set of activities freely chosen by an individual that provide enjoyment and satisfaction and contribute to their personal and social development (Cuenca Cabeza, 2000). Free time is the period during which a person is not required to perform work, domestic, or educational activities and can decide how to spend that time.

Effective leisure management enables people to develop skills, build interpersonal relationships, reduce stress, and improve their quality of life.

In this section, (Ruiz, 2021) notes that in the social sphere, the goal is to reduce costs and the side effects of medication and chemical treatments by implementing recreational activities as alternatives for older adults, in addition to supporting other research aimed at improving these individuals' quality of life.

In the field of Physical Education, free time plays a fundamental role in relaxation and recovery after a period of high-intensity physical activity (Posso, 2020). This time should be used to carry out activities that benefit the student's learning process, such as board games to improve mental capacity, or activities

to enhance fine motor skills. (Rosario, 2023)

Relationship between physical activity and leisure in priority groups

Several studies have shown that regular physical, recreational, and sporting activities significantly contribute to optimizing leisure time, especially for priority groups. These activities can:

- To foster self-esteem and a sense of belonging.
- To promote social inclusion.
- To reduce risky behaviors.
- To encourage autonomy and empowerment.
- To facilitate therapeutic or rehabilitative processes.

When leisure is used actively and meaningfully, it becomes a powerful resource for holistic human development. In this context, the intervention of public policies, community programs, and educational institutions is key to guaranteeing equitable access to and participation in these types of activities.

Methods and materials

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive cross-sectional design. The study population consists of 219 children with various physical, intellectual, visual, and hearing disabilities. Additionally, 300 university students majoring in Physical Education, Elementary Education, and Dentistry participated in the study as part of their community service practicum under the following project:

Interdisciplinary approach and public policies

The planning of physical and recreational activities for priority groups should adopt an interdisciplinary approach, integrating knowledge from physical education, psychology, social work, health, and cultural management. Likewise, public policies should incorporate a human rights and equity perspective to ensure that leisure and sport are not privileges, but rather accessible rights for all.

On the other hand, (Aldaz, 2024) mentions that the recognition and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups is an obligation of every State, not only because the Constitution establishes it, but also because the international community has approved various human rights instruments that oblige national States to create laws, public policies and legal procedures to ensure that vulnerable groups receive specialized and priority attention in the public sphere, in order to safeguard their rights and eliminate the barriers that limit their exercise.

“Promotion of physical, recreational, and sports activities for priority groups and the general community to optimize free time and leisure.” Data were collected through structured surveys administered to parents and student interns (teachers), and the data were analyzed using descriptive and thematic analysis.

The qualitative research approach explores phenomena through interviews and content analysis. It is exploratory,

descriptive, correlational, explanatory, and experimental, as it involves manipulating research variables. The research design is cross-sectional, since data collection occurs at the end of the study.

The total population consists of 219 children with various disabilities enrolled in priority care programs and 300 student teachers completing their community service practicums. The sample is purposive and non-probabilistic, selected randomly.

The technique used was the semi-structured survey under the bank of questions and validated by experts in the area of knowledge, it was applied to the parents and student interns to, through the interpretation of results, the level of satisfaction and their preparation and experience in holiday courses for children with disabilities.

Interpretation of results

The descriptive analysis of the following questions from the survey conducted with the 30 parents of the inclusive vacation program 2025 of the Faculty of Physical Activity Sciences of the UG reveals a high degree of satisfaction and approval of the program, the results of which are presented below.

How did you find out about the 2025 inclusive vacation course?

The main source of information was the Institutional Email (56.66%), while 36.66% found out through the UG website, and 6.66% through Facebook.

What is your child's disability or priority need?

Disabilities: sensory, physical, intellectual, psychosocial, speech, other.

It was shown that 50% had a sensory disability, 26.66% a physical disability, 13.33% an intellectual disability, 6.66% a psychosocial disability, and only 3.33% a speech disability.

How were the conditions of the facilities where the sports activities took place?

86.66% of parents rated the conditions of the facilities as Excellent, while 10% said good, and only 3.33% indicated fair, and no one considered them poor.

How was the administrative support for the 2025 inclusive holiday course?

93.33% rated the administrative support as excellent, while 6.66% considered it good, and no one said it was fair or poor.

How would you rate the organization of the 2025 inclusive holiday course?

The organization of the holiday course was rated as excellent by 90% of respondents, good by 6.66%, fair by 3.33%, and poor by no one.

Would you recommend others participate in the 2025 inclusive vacation program?

Almost all respondents (99.66%) said they would always recommend others participate in the inclusive vacation program, while only 3.33% said almost always, and 0% said sometimes or never.

Are you satisfied with the teaching methods used by the teachers in the 2025 inclusive vacation program?

100% of parents responded that they are always satisfied with the teaching methods, indicating absolute consensus, while the other options were considered by 0%.

Do you consider the activities carried out to be appropriate for the 2025 inclusive vacation program?

100% of respondents strongly agreed that the activities carried out were appropriate, while the remaining options did not register agreement.

Which of these sports activities did you most enjoy participating in the 2025 inclusive vacation program?: Soccer, Basketball, Swimming, Dance Therapy, and all of them.

100% of respondents indicated that they enjoyed all the sports activities offered at the inclusive vacation program, while the other options did not receive a response..

What other physical, sporting, or recreational activity would you like to see offered at the 2025 inclusive summer camp?

Of those surveyed, 43.33% indicated combat sports, while 23.33% mentioned gymnastics, and 20% indicated athletics and volleyball.

In this regard, a positive evaluation of the 2025 inclusive vacation course by parents is shown, with the majority of responses falling into the highest satisfaction and approval categories, including "excellent," "always," and "strongly agree." The main area for

improvement or future interest focuses on the inclusion of combat sports and gymnastics for future additions.

Furthermore, the analysis of the survey conducted with 30 teachers from the community outreach vacation program at the Faculty of Physical Activity Sciences (Pedagogy of Physical Activity program) and the Faculty of Philosophy (Basic Education program) at the University of Guanajuato (UG) is described. This program is aimed at students with priority needs.

How prepared are you to teach, motivate, and instruct children with special educational needs in the Vacation Program?

The majority of teachers feel well prepared, with 53.33% very prepared and 30% prepared, while 16.66% feel somewhat prepared and 13.33% not at all prepared.

What is the level of interest in participating in training to teach children with special educational needs?

In response to this question, 100% of the teachers expressed strong interest in participating in training to teach children with special educational needs.

Are you prepared to make adjustments to address the different priority needs of the participants?

53.33% feel very prepared and 30% prepared, while 16.66% feel somewhat prepared and 13.33% not at all prepared.

Do you believe that the attention, communication, and coordination between the teachers and the organizers of the Vacation Program is effective?

In this question, there is complete consensus on effectiveness, with 100% of teachers fully agreeing with the attention, communication, and coordination between teachers and organizers.

Do you consider the teaching resources used to be important and necessary for teaching children with special educational needs? The vast majority (96.66%) fully agree that the teaching resources are important and necessary, while only 3.33% disagree, representing a minority of teachers.

How capable do you feel of evaluating the progress and performance of children with special needs in the summer program?

The results show a split distribution: 43.33% feel capable, another 43.33% feel somewhat capable, and only 13.33% feel fully capable of evaluating the progress and performance of children with special needs in the summer program.

Are you interested in participating in training or workshops to improve your professional skills in teaching children with special needs?

The interest in participating in training was 100% among the participants, as they consistently reaffirmed their total

Conclusions

The literature review allowed us to deepen our understanding of each of the variables in this study, such as primary stress and physical, sports, and recreational activities. The methodology used allowed us to assess parents' satisfaction levels and the preparedness

commitment to professional development.

Regarding the inclusion of children with special needs, are you prepared to integrate them into activities?

In response to this question, 76.66% said they are always prepared to integrate children with special needs into activities, while 20% said almost always, and 3.33% said sometimes.

How challenging did you find working with children with special needs?

The majority response was that the work was not very complicated (43.33%), while 46.66% found it not very complicated, 26.66% found it very complicated, and only 10% considered it not complicated at all.

Would you be willing to teach children with special educational needs again?

This question demonstrates a high willingness to repeat the experience, with 93.33% responding "always," only 3.33% "almost always," and another 3.33% "sometimes."

The results of this survey reflect a high commitment to the education of children with priority needs; it also reveals some critical areas of professional development carried out with technical and evaluative skills.

of each teacher responsible for a particular sport; consequently, the study was classified as qualitative, descriptive, and applied, since its objective was not only to generate theoretical knowledge but also to solve practical problems and evaluate the effectiveness of a specific intervention in a real-world context.

This program has a solid operational structure and a highly motivated and experienced team; the primary focus for future editions should be to capitalize on the widespread interest in training to strengthen the skills of participating

teachers, particularly in curriculum adaptation and inclusive assessment, which will have a direct impact on reducing the perception of difficulties and raise the level of technical preparedness.

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