Articles

The inclusion of students with TDH in the physical education subject: implementation of an exercise system.

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Abstract: The inclusion of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in Physical Education classes represents an educational challenge due to difficulties associated with behavior, attention deficits, limitations in behavioral self-regulation, and social interaction. The general objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of an adapted exercise system based on traditional Ecuadorian games as an inclusive didactic strategy to improve participation, social integration, and self-regulation of students with ADHD in Physical Education. The study followed a mixed-methods approach and adopted a quasi-experimental design with pretest and posttest measurements, applied to a non-probabilistic, purposive sample consisting of seven students with a confirmed diagnosis of ADHD enrolled in the tenth year of Basic Education at an educational institution located in the Ecuadorian Amazon region. The intervention was carried out over eight weeks and included quantitative and qualitative instruments such as inclusion assessment scales, questionnaires, observation checklists, and teacher interviews. The exercise system was validated through expert judgment using the Delphi method. The results showed improvements in the motor (M = 3.64) and social (M = 3.56) dimensions, as well as progress in sustained attention and self-regulation, reflected in a reduction of impulsive behaviors. Expert validation reached an excellent rating (M = 4.98). It is concluded that the exercise system constitutes an effective and feasible pedagogical
Keywords: Educational inclusion, ADHD, traditional games, self-regulation, physical education.

Introduction

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) constitutes one of the neurodevelopmental conditions with the greatest presence in the child and adolescent population. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) describes ADHD as a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with social, academic, or occupational functioning, and whose symptoms must persist for at least six months and manifest before age 12 in two or more contexts (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Recent studies estimate the global prevalence of ADHD to be around 5% to 6%, reflecting its widespread nature and the need to strengthen educational responses aimed at this group of students (Thomas et al., 2023).

In parallel, educational systems face the growing challenge of attending to student diversity. In recent years, the number of students with specific needs for educational support has increased steadily, as evidenced by official reports that register more than 700,000 students identified within this category in the latest available report (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2020). This reality demands that teachers, including Physical Education teachers, have pedagogical tools that allow them to adequately respond to the particularities of each student. In the specific case of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), difficulties related to concentration, following instructions, and behavioral self-regulation are common, aspects that can affect their participation in school activities, especially when these lack motivating or dynamic elements. These difficulties are closely associated with alterations in executive functions, such as sustained attention, organization, and impulse control, which have been identified in recent studies as determining factors in the academic performance and school adaptation of students with ADHD (Ayano et al., 2023).

This topic arises from the researchers' concern to apply effective strategies aimed at the integration of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in the educational field, with emphasis on the Physical Education subject, based on the experience gained during teaching practice and evidence that these students show difficulties in maintaining attention, regulating their behavior, and participating in group dynamics, circumstances that not only limit their active participation during classes but also negatively impact their self-esteem and interpersonal relationships with their peers.

The stated problem is exacerbated by the absence of pedagogical teaching attention adapted to the particularities of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in the context of Physical Education classes, being subject to methodologies that tend to privilege group homogeneity, overlooking the cognitive and behavioral diversity that characterizes these students, who are regularly labeled as restless, distracted, or undisciplined, without considering that their behaviors respond to specific neurobiological needs that demand a differentiated instructional-educational approach.

Furthermore, the limited specialized training of teachers and the lack of relevant didactic resources increase the exclusion...

pertinence of their characteristics for the research purpose, specifically the confirmed diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), as well as belonging to the same course and educational level, conditions that guaranteed similarity in the intervention and evaluation process. Additionally, three teachers from the institution participated, who provided logistical and pedagogical support during the development of the study.

The development of this research was guided by ethical principles aimed at protecting the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants in all phases of the process. Prior to the start, informed consent was obtained from the legal guardians of the students, after a clear and accessible explanation of the objectives, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. At the same time, the voluntary assent of the students was guaranteed, recognizing and respecting their autonomy in the decision to participate, assuming strict measures to safeguard the confidentiality and preservation of the identity of participants and the institution.

Materials and methods

The theoretical-level methods used to comprehensively understand the inclusion of students with ADHD in Physical Education included several theoretical-level methods, such as:

- The historical-logical method, which allowed for the analysis of the evolution of educational approaches on inclusion and attention to diversity and contributed to identifying the current foundations guiding pedagogical intervention.
- The analysis-synthesis method, which facilitated the organization of the theoretical contributions reviewed in the scientific literature, intertwining the emotional, social, motor, and cognitive dimensions that underpinned...

using a five-level Likert-type scale (1 = very poor; 5 = excellent). Its application in this study allowed for obtaining quantifiable data on participation, interaction, motor adjustment, and understanding of activities in students with ADHD, facilitating a systematic evaluation of progress.

Educational Inclusion Questionnaire in Physical Education: This was applied during the diagnostic phase and allowed for identifying the initial levels of student participation, attention, and motivation. The information obtained was essential to establish the starting point of the intervention.

Observation Checklist: This was used for diagnosis and was based on a structured observation method that allowed recording the presence or absence of behaviors linked to attention, self-regulation, and social interaction.

Open Interview with Teachers: This was structured based on a quantitative evaluation form designed to assess the inclusion process of students in the Physical Education subject, considering four fundamental dimensions for their integral participation: emotional, social, motor, and cognitive.

This structure allows for obtaining a broad and detailed view of student performance, especially in game situations, group interaction, and adaptation to the conditions typical of physical activities.

Considering the document's scope, the interview begins with general student data---such as identification code (ID), gender, presence or absence of special educational needs (SEN), and age, in order to adequately contextualize the information obtained. Subsequently, a five-level Likert-type scale is presented, ranging from "Very Poor" (1) to "Excellent" (5), used to rate each of the indicators established in the evaluated dimensions....

This form of rating ensures a systematic, quantifiable, and comparable analysis between dimensions, facilitating the generation of conclusions about the student's level of inclusion in the Physical Education class. The use of this scale also allows for identifying strengths, areas of opportunity, and possible support needs to favor their full and equitable participation.

Mathematical-Statistical Methods

The data obtained through the Evaluation Form and the other instruments were organized in an Excel database. Measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for each evaluated dimension. The distribution of results allowed for identifying significant advances in the motor and social dimensions, as well as in the academic-cognitive and social scales. The cognitive, physical, and teacher dimensions showed medium levels, evidencing areas that require additional strengthening through inclusive pedagogical strategies.

Methodological Procedures.

The proposal based on a system of adapted exercises using traditional Ecuadorian games was developed in three phases, with a total duration of eight weeks.

The application took place between August 19 and October 14, 2025. This period, included in the first semester of the school year, allowed for continuous and uninterrupted implementation. The first week was dedicated to the initial diagnosis, the following six weeks constituted the central phase of applying the adapted exercises, and the eighth and final week was dedicated to the final evaluation and data collection to compare results.

Phase 1 (Week 1): August 19 - 23, 2025 Diagnosis: included the application of the questionnaire, the checklist, and the teacher's interview. This phase made it possible to determine the initial levels of student participation, attention, motivation, and interaction.

Phase 2. Implementation: The exercise system was implemented, incorporating activities aimed at strengthening active participation, emotional regulation, and social interaction among students with ADHD.

Phase 3: Evaluation: The Quantitative Evaluation Form was reapplied to compare initial results with those obtained after the intervention, allowing for an assessment of the system's impact.

Validation of the Proposal

Phase 2 (Weeks 2 to 7): August 26 – October 7, 2025. Implementation: The adapted exercise system based on traditional Ecuadorian games was implemented, structured into three stages: warm-up, development, and reflective closure. The activities included visual, auditory, and rhythmic adaptations, along with short breaks and positive reinforcement, promoting sustained attention, cooperation, and self-control.

Table 1.
System of Inclusive Exercises

Exercise (Base Game)	Key adaptations	Main Pedagogical Objective
Jump Rhythm (Hopscotch)	Visual and auditory stimuli, active pauses.	Enhance coordination and sustained attention.
Elastic Challenge	Brief instructions, short challenges, group cooperation.	Develop motor skills and impulse control.
Secret Mission (Hide and Seek)	Visual/auditory cues, short time frames.	Improve spatial orientation and self-regulation.
Chain Tag	Simple rules, active pauses, teacher guidance.	Promote teamwork and hyperactivity control.
Tag	Visual cues, guided preliminary exercises.	Develop agility and decision-making.
RecyGolf	Color guides and grouping in hoops.	Improve hand-eye coordination and control.
Rhythmic Broomstick Duel	Rhythmic movements with objects.	Stimulate overall coordination and body rhythm.

The proposed exercise system is characterized by its inclusive, versatile, and structured approach, designed to address the specific difficulties of attention, self-regulation, and impulse control that students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) present in Physical Education class. This approach integrates playful dynamics based on traditional games and specific activities to promote motor, cognitive, and socioemotional development.

Design and Methodological Principles

The system is based on the following principles:

1. Versatility and Organization: Integrates tasks aimed at maintaining participants' sustained interest through variation of stimuli.
2. Progressivity: Promotes gradual advancement in the mastery of motor skills and physical capacities through repetition and adjustment of resources.
3. Inclusion and Collaboration: Includes group interaction activities, alternating roles, and collaborative dynamics to reinforce emotional control, solidarity, and mutual understanding.
4. Simplified Resources: Uses simple and easily accessible materials (cones, balls, hoops, and cards) to ensure adaptability to different environments and groups.

Description of the Adapted Exercise System:

The system consists of ten main exercises, each with specific adaptations and a pedagogical rationale tailored to the needs of ADHD.

Phase 3 (Week 8): October 8–14, 2025 – Evaluation: Upon completion, the initial assessment tools were readministered to compare pre- and post-intervention results, highlighting improvements in student participation, behavior, and perception of inclusion.

Results

Application and Purpose

The assessment tools were reapplied at the end of the intervention (Phase 3: Evaluation) to measure the system's effectiveness. Results indicated a medium-to-high trend across dimensions and scales of inclusion.

Table 2
Questionnaire Results

Category	Dimension / Scale	Mean (M)	SD	Resulting Level
DDIPL (Dimensions)	Emotional	3.49	0.52	Medium
	Social	3.56	0.49	Medium
	Motor	3.64	0.44	High
	Cognitive	3.47	0.57	Medium
Inclusion Scales	Academic-Cognitive	3.67	0.60	High
	Social	3.73	0.74	High
	Emotional	3.65	0.68	High

Physical	3.42	0.57	Medium
Teacher-Related	3.47	0.63	Medium

Explicit Analysis of Progress (Scale 1 to 4)

The motor dimension reached a High level (M = 3.64), with improvements in coordination and precision.

The social dimension also recorded a High level (M = 3.56), associated with greater cooperation, coexistence, and participation.

The emotional (M = 3.49) and cognitive (M = 3.47) dimensions showed medium-high levels, indicating progress, although it is recommended to reinforce sustained attention and self-regulation.

Results of the Observation Checklist

Purpose and General Comparison

The replication of the Checklist in Phase 3 demonstrated improvements in participation, behavior, and the perception of inclusion when compared to the initial diagnostic.

Tabla 3.

Checklist Results

Aspect Evaluated	Improvement Achieved
Attention	Greater concentration due to clear structure and pauses.
Impulse Control	Reduced impulsivity with defined rules and turn-taking.
Social Interaction	Increased participation, empathy, and teamwork.

Global Synthesis of Findings

The results obtained through the mixed methodology are organized according to the diagnostic, application, and evaluation phases. Overall, the data indicate that:

• The general trend of inclusion was medium-high.

• The motor (M = 3.64) and social (M = 3.56) dimensions stand out, as do the social (M = 3.73) and academic-cognitive (M = 3.67) scales.

Additional Specific Results:

• Concentration: Occasional distraction during 25%–75% of the time.

• Self-Regulation: Impulsive reactions in 25%–75% of situations.

Teachers reported difficulties in sustained attention, behavioral regulation, and group integration, as well as insufficient specialized training and adapted resources.

This allowed for contextualizing the educational dynamics of the Fiscomisional Hermano Miguel Educational Unit, located in an Amazonian setting.

Impact of the Adapted Exercise System: Cognitive and Behavioral Benefits.

The system promoted sustained attention, self-regulation, and reduced impulsivity through clear structures, multisensory stimuli, and active breaks.

Motor Benefits:

Coordination, precision, and spatial orientation were strengthened through playful activities.

Socio-emotional Benefits:

Traditional games fostered positive interaction, empathy, emotional control, and collaborative work.

Initial Diagnosis: Characterization:

Results of the Checklist in the Diagnosis:

- Concentration: Distraction 25–75% of the time.
- Self-regulation: Occasional impulsivity in 25–75% of situations.
- Social Interaction: Absence in group activities approximately 75% of the time.

Teacher Perception:

Teachers reported:

- Lack of specialized training.
- Scarcity of adapted pedagogical resources.
- Difficulties with attention, behavior, and integration of students with ADHD.
- Rarely, absence in group dynamics 75% of the time.

Post-Intervention Quantitative Analysis (Record Sheet and Questionnaire)
Consolidated Results.
Table 4.
Post-Intervention Results

Category	Dimension / Scale	Mean (M)	SD	Resulting Level
Dimensions	Emotional	3.49	0.52	Medium
	Social	3.56	0.49	Medium
	Motor	3.64	0.44	High
	Cognitive	3.47	0.57	Medium
Inclusion Scales	Social	3.73	0.74	High
	Academic-Cognitive	3.67	0.60	High
	Emotional	3.65	0.68	High
	Physical	3.42	0.57	Medium
	Teaching	3.47	0.63	Medium

Interpretation

- Motor and Social Dimensions: High level, reflecting improvements in cooperation and motor execution.
  Emotional and Cognitive Dimensions: Medium level, with progress in emotional regulation and understanding of rules

Post-Intervention Qualitative Evidence Observed Results (Table 5)

Table 5. Qualitative Impact

Indicator	Impact
Concentration and Attention	Significant improvement, reduced distraction through visual/auditory stimuli and active breaks.
Self-Regulation	Notable reduction in impulsivity due to clear rules and planning exercises.
Social Interaction	Increased empathy, teamwork, and emotional control.

Triangulation of Results

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data leads to the conclusion that:

1. The link between motor skills and social integration was strengthened through play.
2. Clear rules and multisensory stimuli facilitated self-regulation.
3. The classroom environment became more predictable and secure, reducing anxiety and impulsivity.
   The success of the process lay in adapting the pedagogical environment, rather than suppressing ADHD traits, demonstrating the effectiveness of inclusive practices based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Discussion

The results of this study highlight significant progress in the inclusion of students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Physical Education classes, demonstrating that the implementation of an adapted exercise system based on traditional games can transform pedagogical practices into a more equitable and diversity-respecting model. It was observed that ADHD presents measurable challenges in the school setting—as reflected in the initial diagnosis with distraction levels between 25%–75% of the time and limited participation in cooperative activities—but that the educational environment can be adapted to promote the inclusion of these students in a safe and holistic developmental setting. In this regard, authors such as García and González (2022) emphasize that students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have specific psychomotor development needs that require differentiated pedagogical strategies, which aligns with the results obtained through quantitative evaluation, showing significant improvements.

especially in the motor (M=3.64) and social (M=3.73) dimensions.

Classroom observation revealed a shift from a pedagogical practice focused on managing disruptive behaviors toward an educational approach that enhances abilities through specific adaptations. This phenomenon has been reported by other researchers, noting that teachers who implement structured and predictable strategies achieve better outcomes in including students with ADHD (Martínez et al., 2023).

Regarding the results of teacher interviews, an evolution in their perception of the participation possibilities for students with ADHD was noted—a situation also reported in other studies (Fernández & López, 2021; Rodríguez et al., 2022). These studies emphasize that specific training in curriculum adaptations leads to more planned and inclusive pedagogical responses.

The qualitative analysis of observations revealed a transformation in student participation, overcoming initial contradictions between the desire to participate and self-regulation difficulties, thanks to the implementation of clear structures and visual supports. This aligns with findings reported by Thompson (2023) and Silva et al. (2022), who found that students with ADHD can achieve optimal levels of participation when provided with appropriate supports and a predictable environment.

Overall, these results reinforce the argument presented by Hernández-Álvarez et al. (2024), stating that true inclusion does not depend solely on student characteristics but on the educational environment's capacity to generate diversified strategies and meaningful participation opportunities. Thus, the value becomes evident from a transformation in teaching practice that considers curricular adaptations, scaffolding strategies, and effective communication that acknowledges the characteristics of neurodevelopment.

Expert Criterion Validation of the Adapted Exercise System for Students with ADHD in Physical Education Classes Using the Delphi Method

The proposal "Adapted Exercise System for Students with ADHD in Physical Education Classes" was theoretically validated through expert judgment using the Delphi methodology (Hurtado de Mendoza Fernández, 2017). For this process, a total of seven experts were selected (Hurtado de Mendoza Fernández, 2017; Cruz Ramírez & Martínez Cepena, 2019).

The Delphi method, as a structured and systematic consultation technique, is widely used for validating proposals and decision-making in educational contexts. It is based on gathering information through successive rounds of anonymous expert opinions, with feedback between phases and statistical analysis of the responses to reach a consensus (Díaz Ferrer et al., 2022; García Valdés & Suárez Marín, 2013; López Gómez, 2018).

The experts were selected according to various criteria to ensure the validity of the validation process, with a total of seven experts chosen who met the following requirements: third- and fourth-level training in the area of Special Education or Physical Culture, proven experience working with students with ADHD, publications on educational inclusion in Physical Education, and at least five years of experience in the educational system.

Additionally, the selection of the experts was carried out according to the protocol described by Cruz Ramírez and Martínez Cepena (2019) and applied according to Marín-González et al. (2021), the expert competence coefficient (k) was calculated using the formula:

$k = ½ (kc + ka)$

where:

• (ka) is the expert's argumentation or justification coefficient (self-assessment)

• (kc) is the expert's knowledge or information coefficient regarding the problem addressed.

Table 6.

Evaluation Criteria for the System of Adapted Exercises for Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Physical Education Classes Using the Delphi Method.

Criterion	Description
Relevance	Relevance of the exercise system to the educational needs and characteristics of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
Clarity	Clear wording, logical coherence, and understandable language
Internal Consistency	Logical relationship between the objectives, rationale, and components of the system
Feasibility	Possibility of implementing the system in a real school context
Adaptability	Ability of the system to be modified according to the specific level and needs of the students
Inclusiveness	Suitability for promoting equitable participation in the subject of Physical Education

Table 7.

Results of the expert evaluation of the System of Adapted Exercises for Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Physical Education Classes using the Delphi Method.

Indicators	Expert Ratings. Students with ADHD							Sum	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Relevance	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	5.0
Clarity	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	5.0
Coherence Internal	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	5.0
Consistency	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	5.0
Adaptability	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	34	4.86
Inclusivity	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	5.0
Overall Assessment	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35	5.0
Total								**244.9**	**4.98**

The results of the expert validation demonstrate a unanimous consensus regarding the quality and applicability of the proposed system, with an excellent overall rating (M=4.98). This supports its implementation in diverse educational contexts to promote the inclusion of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Conclusion

ADHD-type disorder alters the educational experience of the subjects in the study within the context of Physical Education. It becomes an opportunity to refine traditional pedagogical practices and promote cognitive and behavioral diversity. In this context, teachers must shift their perception towards a conception of stimulating differences to employ appropriate specific

strategies, pedagogical sensitivity, and support that strengthen the self-esteem and sense of belonging of those who exhibit it.

In this educational-teaching context, it is evident that the inclusion of students with ADHD in Physical Education classes is conditioned by both internal and external barriers linked to the lack of methodological adaptations and limited specialized teacher training. This situation requires a reinterpretation of individual disabilities as a mismatch of a pedagogical environment unable to ensure meaningful participation.

The implementation of a system of adapted exercises, structured around traditional Ecuadorian games and based on the principles of organization, progression, and inclusion, represents an effective pedagogical resource for promoting full participation and inclusion. This has been demonstrated through Delphi method validation, which not only confirmed the scientific relevance but also the feasibility and transformative potential of the proposal in real educational contexts.

It is acknowledged that the success achieved with the intervention reaffirms that inclusion does not depend solely on the student's presence in the classroom but is essentially supported by the teacher's attitude and the pedagogical design implemented.

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Nilton Joel Sánchez Aguirre, Licentiate: Participated in the application of research methods and instruments, the development of the activity program, and its application and implementation.

Ricardo Arencibia Moreno, PhD: Developed the research methodology and managed tutoring for the review and correction of the project.

Moyra Judith Velastegui Santander, Licentiate: Developed the theoretical framework and compiled the bibliographic references.

Giseya de la Caridad Maqueira Caraballo, PhD: Conducted and systematized the search for theoretical information. Developed the discussion and conclusions of the study.