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## ORIGINAL

### PROFILE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS PROFESSIONALS WORKING ON DISABILITY

### PERFIL DE LOS PROFESIONALES DE ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA Y DEPORTE QUE TRABAJAN EN DISCAPACIDAD

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## ABSTRACT

The study analyzes the training and job profiles of physical activity and sports professionals who work with people with disabilities in Spain. Using a descriptive, quantitative methodology, standardized questionnaire-based interviews were conducted with 214 people working in this sector. The results indicate that the professionals do not receive quality initial training and when offered various training activities, they prefer to attend courses. An analysis of the employment status shows that most professionals work in companies, many without a formal employment contract or as temporary staff. Adequate initial training and varied continuing education can fulfill the need for professionalization of physical activity and sport for people with disabilities in Spain.

**KEY WORDS:** training, employment, professionals, physical activity and sport, disability

## RESUMEN

El estudio analiza el perfil formativo y laboral de las personas que desempeñan funciones laborales de actividad física y deporte con personas con discapacidad en España. La metodología es cuantitativa de corte descriptivo, utilizando la entrevista estandarizada por medio de cuestionario para entrevistar personalmente a 214 personas que trabajaban en este sector. Los resultados muestran que este ámbito de desempeño profesional sigue estando ocupado por personas sin la titulación adecuada en su formación inicial y que, dentro de las actividades de formación permanente, asisten preferentemente a cursos. El análisis de la situación laboral muestra que la mayor parte de las personas trabajan en empresas y un porcentaje significativo de ellas no tiene contrato o es temporal. El estudio muestra la necesidad de profesionalizar la actividad física y el deporte con personas con discapacidad en España partiendo de una adecuada formación inicial y complementada con una sólida y variada formación permanente.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** formación, empleo, profesionales, actividad física y deporte, discapacidad.

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of physical activity and sports (PAS) in our society lies in its influence on health, quality of life, social inclusion, economy, sustainability and education (European observatory of sport and employment, 2017). It is a dynamic sector with great capacity for growth and capable of providing a wide range of services for all ages and populations (Campos-Izquierdo, González-Rivera & Taks, 2016; Organic Law 5/2002, of 19 June on Qualifications and Vocational Training), not to mention the inclusive nature of its practice (Hutzler & Barak, 2017). The PAS professionals play a major role in its practice and development, which can be

achieved through adequate initial PAS-oriented training (Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016). This training equips the staff with the necessary competencies for a quality professional performance (Hortigüela, Pérez-Pueyo & Abella, 2016).

The adaptation of the PAS sector to social transformations (Barnet, Segura, Martínez-Ferrer & Guerra, 2015) and the advances made in the field have favored the inclusion of people with functional diversity in the different modalities of PAS: therapeutic, educational, recreational and sports. They also have improved the position and visibility of PAS for people with disabilities in the society (Sanz-Rivas & Reina-Vaillo, 2012). This evolution has evidenced the lack of professionalization in terms of training and competence (Barnet et al., 2015), raising concerns among PAS experts PAS and professionals (Díaz del Cueto, 2009; Jiménez-Monteagudo & Hernández-Álvarez, 2013; Nascimento, Rodrigues, Grillo & Merida, 2007; Sanz-Rivas & Reina-Vaillo, 2012).

One of the goals of the Spanish State should be to guarantee the quality, professionalism, safety and efficiency of PAS service, as well as to ensure and enhance its various health-related, educational, economic and social benefits. The programs should also prepare the ground for people with the relevant qualifications to organize, design, plan, direct, develop and/or evaluate the practice of PAS (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to have a state law for the regulation of the professional practice of PAS which defines its functional scope and necessitates an initial training. It should also taking into account the specificity and exclusivity (functional reserve) of training and professions with a logical and coherent structure. Likewise, this regulation would not only regulate, but also order, promote and boost the PAS sector and the training and professional system itself (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010, 2016; Law 6/2016, November 24, which regulates the exercise of sports professions in the Community of Madrid). In most of the Autonomous Communities, there is a law regulating the practice of sports professions (Catalonia, Extremadura, La Rioja, Madrid, Andalusia, Murcia, Castilla y León, Navarra and Aragón) and in some, the law is in the process of drafting and approval. However, there is a need for a state law that homogenizes the different autonomous regulation laws.

The PAS training in Spain is extensive and widely diversified as shown in the analysis carried out by Campos-Izquierdo (2016). The different levels of education encompass various heterogeneous PAS qualifications, forming their training context (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Official training courses in Physical Activity and Sport in Spain.

TRAINING	EGF LEVEL
<b>UNIVERSITY EDUCATION</b>	
University Master's Degree in different areas of professional activity.	
For example <i>Master's Degree in Physical and Sports Activities for the Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities.</i>	7

Degree in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences. Specialist Teacher in Physical Education or Degree in Primary Education with a focus in Physical Education.	6
<b>PROFESSIONAL TRAINING</b>	
Superior Technician in Physical and Sports Activities Animation. Superior Technician in Physical Conditioning. Superior Technician in Teaching and Socio-sports Animation. Superior Sport Technician (of each sport or sport modality)	5
Technician in Natural Environment and Leisure Guide. Technician in Equestrian Activities. Sports Technician (of each sport or sport modality). Access and Conservation in Sports Facilities.	4
<b>PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATES</b>	
Physical conditioning in a multipurpose training room. Group physical conditioning with musical support. Swimming activities. Physical-sports and recreational animation. Physical-sports and recreational activities for people with disabilities. Aquatic fitness and hydrokinesis. Coordination of lifeguard services in aquatic facilities and natural spaces. Yoga instruction.	3
Lifeguarding in aquatic facilities. Guide for low and medium mountain itineraries. Guide for bicycle routes. Guide in white waters. Guide for dry or aquatic ravines. Guide for equestrian itineraries in the natural environment. Lifeguarding in natural aquatic spaces. Track marking, signaling and lifeguarding in skiable areas. Underwater driving and initiation in sport diving. Caving guide. Sport initiation in speleology. Sport initiation in equestrian and equestrian sports. Sport initiation in swimming and its specialties. Sport initiation in sailing with free and fixed rigged boats. Initiation and sports promotion in judo and self-defense. Sport initiation in the modality of rescue and lifeguarding in aquatic facilities. Sport initiation in fencing. Sport initiation in golf. Sport initiation in canoeing. Sport initiation in tennis. Sport initiation in karate. Sport initiation in rugby. Sport initiation in taekwondo. Dynamization of recreational activities in high altitude adventure parks. Sport initiation in athletics. Sport initiation in handball. Sport initiation in basketball. Sport initiation in climbing.	2
Auxiliary operations in the organization of activities and operation of sports facilities.	1

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Note: The table was adapted from “A formação dos profissionais da atividade física e esporte na Espanha” by Campos-Izquierdo, 2016, p. 1356.

Similarly, continuing PAS education in Spain is extensive and heterogeneous, and essential for updating and improving knowledge, skills and professional development (González-Rivera & Campos-Izquierdo, 2014; Mallet, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009). It is an element that contributes to employability (European Parliament, 2008) and serves as a complement to initial training, but cannot be considered as a qualification for professional practice (Campos-Izquierdo, 2016).

Regarding the specificity of PAS for people with disabilities, the Spanish legislative proposal has been oriented towards improving the training level of personal resources, as well as making progress in the organization of PAS. It also aspires to mitigate one of the main problems of the access of people with disabilities to the PAS services, i.e. the inadequate training of the professionals and educators (Izquierdo-Gómez & Díaz del Cueto, 2017; Leardy-Antolín, Pérez, Díaz, & Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities, 2018). The laws regarding the PAS professions in the different autonomous communities require the persons providing PAS services for people with disabilities to possess the corresponding PAS qualifications.

This is in compliance with the provisions of Article Four of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Spain's commitment to design, develop and implement policies, laws and measures that favor the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Spanish society (Instrument of Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008; Leardy-Antolín et al., 2018).

The studies analyzing the educational and/or labor profile of people working in PAS are varied and have been approached from different perspectives. It is important to highlight the lack of qualified personnel in the professional performance in the different PAS occupations (Bernabé, González-Rivera & Campos-Izquierdo, 2017; Campos-Izquierdo, 2010, 2016, 2019; González-Rivera, 2015; González-Rivera & Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; Martínez-Serrano, Campos-Izquierdo, Pablos, & Mestre, 2008). An example is the study by Campos-Izquierdo (2016) showing that 38% of people working in the field of PAS in Spain did not have a PAS-related qualification in their initial training.

The lack of qualified PAS personnel capable of working with people with disabilities has also been reflected in various studies (Castro, Ng, Novoradovskaya, Bosselut, & Hassandra, 2018; Crawford, 2011; Jiménez-Monteagudo & Hernández-Álvarez, 2013; Kwon & Block, 2017; Nascimento et al., 2007). Despite the social advances in this field, it is a highly segmented profession that in some countries is still developed by volunteers (Ferreira & Morgulec-Adamowicz, 2011). This circumstance has led experts to direct studies towards the attempt to establish unavoidable training standards for professionals (Ferreira & Morgulec-Adamowicz, 2011; Klavina & Kudláček, 2011).

Regarding the labor profile, a large group of PAS professionals are hired on a temporary and part-time basis (Campos-Izquierdo, 2005). This situation interferes with the quality of the PAS services for people with functional diversity. The PAS professionals who work with people with disabilities are also support figures, a key personal resource that not only directs the PAS practice, but also guides the person with functional diversity in his or her personal development and contributes to improving his or her quality of life (Schalock & Verdugo, 2007). Therefore, the specific training of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities (Barnet et al., 2015; Martínez-Ferrer, 2004) and the stability of supports during the practice of PAS are necessary to provide professionals with knowledge, skills and specific resources that allow them to make appropriate adaptations and adjustments in the field (Hutzler & Barak, 2017).

Based on the analysis of the context, the importance of specific PAS training and the need to improve the employment situation of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain, the study focuses on analyzing the training and employment profile of people who perform job functions in this field.

Focusing on the professionals who work with people with disabilities in Spain, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To determine the initial qualifications in PAS, as well as the education of PAS professionals.
- To analyze the initial qualifications and education of PAS professionals according to gender, age and experience.
- To describe the employment situation.
- To analyze the employment situation of PAS professionals according to gender, age and initial training.

## **METHOD**

### **STUDY DESIGN**

The methodology used in the study is quantitative and descriptive (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012) in order to objectively understand the social reality and the characteristics of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain. A sectional survey (Rodríguez, 2002) was carried out based on face-to-face interviews conducted by previously trained experts. The "PROAFIDE" questionnaire (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011) was used which focuses on the PAS professionals who work in Spain.

The study is included in the Non-Oriented Fundamental Research Project of R+D+i DEP2009-12828 and has received an ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Polytechnic University of Madrid.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The study is part of a broader investigation that analyzes 2,500 PAS professionals in Spain. The population considered for this study included 214 PAS professionals who work with people with disabilities in Spain. The job functions considered are teaching physical activity and sports, physical education, extracurricular activities and physical activity and sport contents in courses, coaching individuals or teams, physically training individuals or groups, readapting, recovering and physically re-educating through PAS, developing basic physical conditioning in groups and developing sports entertainment-recreation (Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016).

Regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample, of the 214 PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain, 63% were men and 37% were women; with an age range between 16 and 70 years old ( $M= 32.00$ ,  $SD = 10.019$ ) (Gutiérrez & Campos-Izquierdo, 2019).

The probabilistic multistage stratified clustered sampling was used in the first phase (Thomas, 2005). The sample allocation was proportional to the demographic size of the autonomous communities, provinces and strata of the municipalities of Spain, thus reaching all the PAS professionals (Campos-Izquierdo, 2016). Various sub-samplings were employed to improve the estimates (Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2016; Thomas, 2005).

## **INSTRUMENT**

The standardized interviews based on the "PROAFIDE" questionnaire (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011) were conducted. It is an adaptation and expansion of the Campos-Izquierdo (2005) questionnaire used in several previous investigations and has been validated by several expert specialists out of the research team (Campos-Izquierdo, 2016).

The "PROAFIDE" questionnaire consists of 57 closed questions on sociodemographic dimensions, job functions, professional performance, training characteristics and job characteristics of PAS professionals in Spain (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011).

The dimensions used in the study include sociodemographic characteristics of gender and age, training characteristics related to initial and continuing education, and finally the job characteristics including years of experience, type of entity in which they work and their employment relationship, all of which are related to PAS

professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain (Campos-Izquierdo, 2011).

## DATA ANALYSIS

Univariate and bivariate analyses containing the Pearson  $\chi^2$  value and the Phi correlation coefficient were used. The SPSS for WINDOWS (V 19.0) software package was employed for data analysis.

## RESULTS

The results show that 32% of the PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain do not have initial PAS training.

Among those with PAS training, 26% were graduates in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences (PASS), 19% were Physical Education Teachers (PET), 12% Sports Technicians (ST), 10% Senior Technicians in Physical Activities and Sports Entertainment (STPASE) and 1% were Technicians in Physical Activities and Sports Management in the Natural Environment (TPASMNE) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Initial training of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain.*

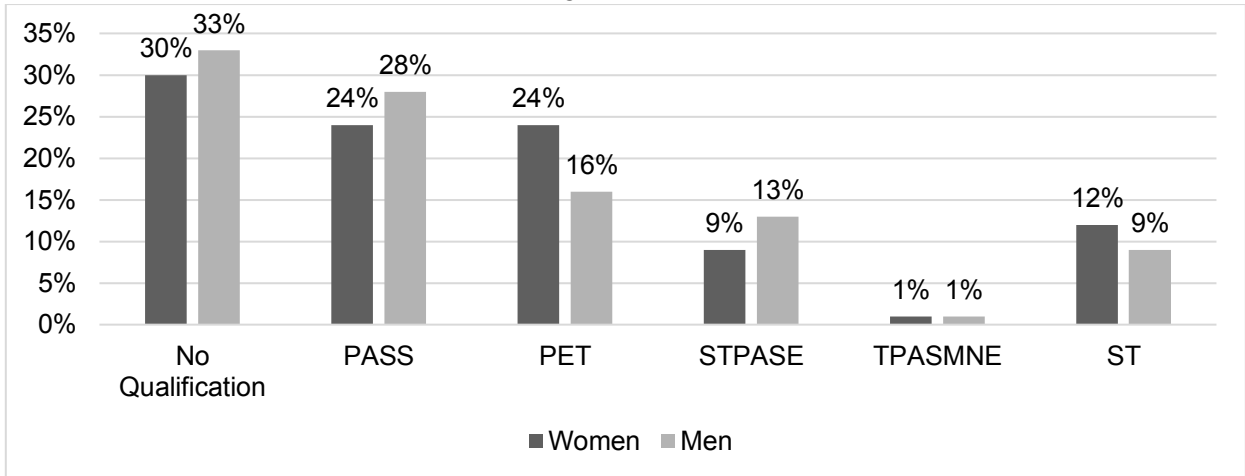
<b>Initial training</b>	
No qualifications in physical activity and sport	32%
Graduates in Physical Activity and Sports Sciences	26%
Physical Education Teachers	19%
Higher Technicians in Physical Activities and Sports Entertainment	10%
Sports Technicians (including Sports Technicians and Advanced Sports Technicians)	12%
Technicians in Conduction of Physical-Sports Activities in the Natural Environment	1%

Note: the table was prepared by the authors.

The analysis of initial training according to gender shows that 30% of the total number of men had no PAS training. Of the men who had a PAS degree, 24% were PASS and 24% were PET. Likewise, 33% of women who work with people with disabilities had no PAS-related qualification. On the other hand, 28% of the women working in the field were PASS and 16% were PET. The percentage of PASS women is higher than that of men (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Initial PAS training of people performing PAS job functions in Spain from the point of view of gender.



Note: figure prepared by the authors.

It is worth noting that 39% of people over 44 years of age and 38% of people with less than 10 years of experience do not have a PAS qualification. The relationships between PAS degree with gender, age and experience are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), being between moderate ( $\chi^2 = 12.516$ ,  $\Phi < 0.242$ ) and high ( $\chi^2 = 51.298$ ;  $\Phi = 0.490$ ) (Table 3).

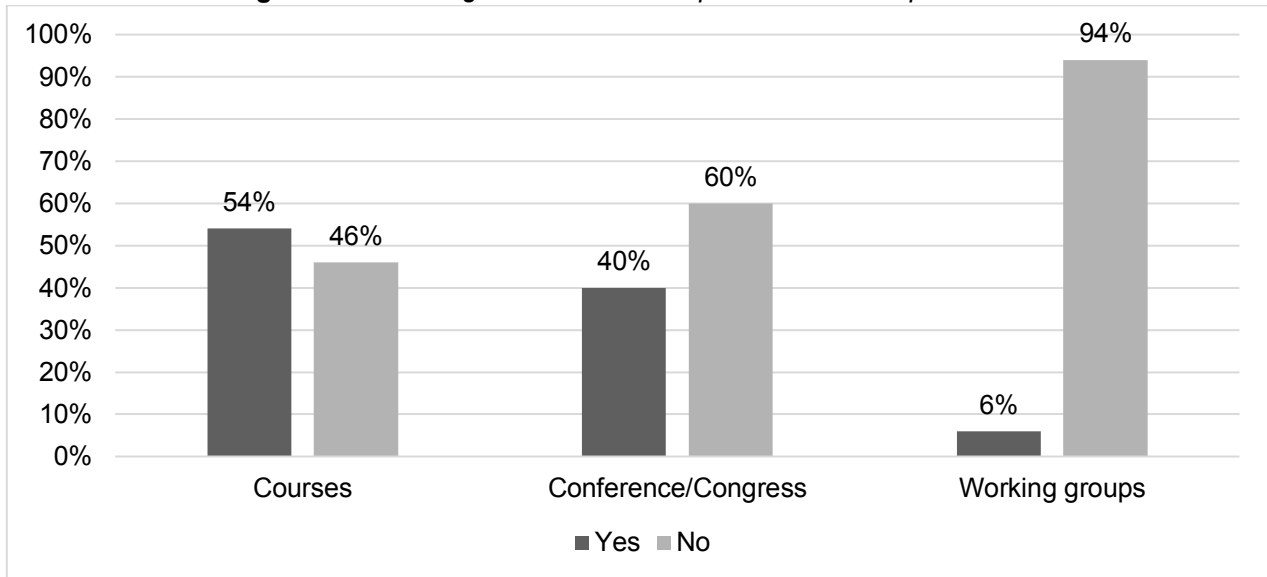
**Table 3.** Initial training of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain according to gender, age and experience

		No Qualification	PASS	PET	STPASE	TPASMNE	ST
Gender	Men	30%	24%	24%	9%	1%	12%
	Women	33%	28%	16%	13%	1%	9%
Age*	16-29	29%	29%	11%	17%	3%	11%
	30-44	29%	22%	33%	7%	1%	8%
	45-70	39%	25%	8%	6%	0%	22%
Experience*	<10	38%	22%	17%	12%	3%	8%
	>10	24%	29%	25%	7%	0%	15%

Note: \*Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) moderate ( $\chi^2 = 12.516$ ;  $\Phi < 0.242$ ) and high ( $\chi^2 = 51.298$ ;  $\Phi = 0.490$ ) relationships. The table was prepared by the authors.

Regarding the level of education, taking courses was the most popular activity. Fifty-four percent of the people have taken courses, 40% have attended conferences and congresses and 6% have participated in working groups (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Continuing education of PAS professionals in Spain



Note: The figure was prepared by the authors.

The data on education according to gender show that 56% of men and 51% of women took courses. It is also observed that the men attended more conferences and congresses than women. On the other hand, women had higher percentages of participation in working groups than men. Likewise, the participants under 30 years of age and with less experience took courses more than other groups, while those over 44 years of age and with more experience opt for working groups. The relationships of attendance at courses, conferences and congresses and working groups with age and experience are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ): between low ( $\chi^2 = 9.186$ ;  $\Phi = 0.207$ ) and moderate ( $\chi^2 = 22.853$ ;  $\Phi = 0.327$ ). In the case of gender, however, the statistical relationship is not significant (Table 4).

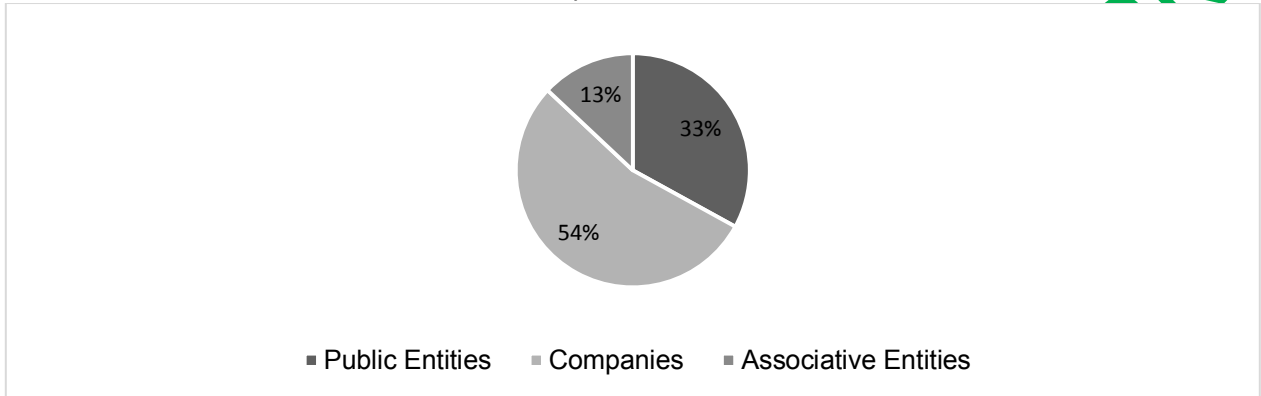
Table 4. Continuing education of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain according to gender, age and experience

		Courses	Conference/Congress	Working groups
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	56%	42%	2%
	<b>Women</b>	51%	37%	12%
<b>Age*</b>	<b>16-29</b>	59%	41%	0%
	<b>30-44</b>	53%	41%	6%
	<b>45-70</b>	50%	37%	13%
<b>Experience*</b>	<b>&lt;10</b>	57%	41%	2%
	<b>&gt;10</b>	52%	39%	9%

Note: \*Significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ), low ( $\chi^2 = 9.186$ ;  $\Phi = 0.207$ ) and moderate ( $\chi^2 = 22.853$ ;  $\Phi = 0.327$ ). The table was prepared by the authors.

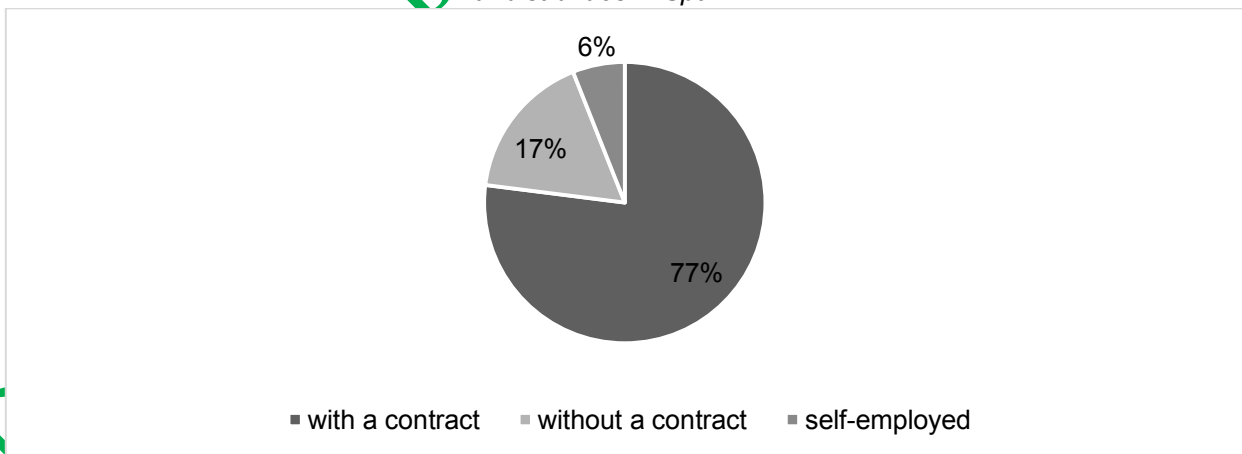
Regarding employment status, the data show that 54% of the people worked in companies, 33% in public entities and 13% worked in associative entities (Figure 3). In the case of hiring, 77% of the people had a contract, of which 63% had an indefinite contract. It should be noted that 17% of the PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain do not have a contract (Figure 4).

**Figure 3.** The types of organization where PAS professionals work with people with disabilities in Spain.



Note: The figure was prepared by the authors.

**Figure 4.** Employment relationship with organizations of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain.



Note: The figure was prepared by the authors.

According to the results, the type of entities and the employment relationship vary according to gender, with 54% of men working in companies and 29% in public entities. However, among women, 55% work in companies and 40% in public entities, with a higher percentage of women working in public entities than men. In

the employment relationship, it is observed that the percentage of men who work without a contract is higher than that of women (20% vs. 12%).

Considering the age, it is observed that as age increases, the professionals are more likely to work in public entities than in companies. The data show that 64% of people under 30 work in companies and 27% of those over 44 work in companies. It should be noted that people over 44 years of age represent the highest percentage of people without a contract (29%) but at the same time, they are the ones with more permanent contracts (100%).

Based on the data on the typology of the entities, the graduates in PET constitute the highest proportion in the public entities (62%). The results also show that 22% of the persons who do not have a qualification in PAS work with individuals with disabilities in Spanish public entities. Likewise, STPASE and TPASMNE graduates represent the highest percentage of people working in companies (73%) followed by non-PAS graduates (68%). Likewise, in the analysis of the employment situation according to training, it is observed that those with the PET degree have the best working conditions, with 92% working with a contract and 77% with an indefinite contract.

It should also be noted that 23% of the people who do not have a PAS degree do not have an employment contract and of those who are employed, 41% are temporary staff. The relationships of gender, age and PAS degree with work entities are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), and are between moderate ( $\chi^2 = 14.371$ ;  $\Phi < 0.403$ ) and high ( $\chi^2 = 97.568$ ;  $\Phi = 0.675$ ). The relationships between PAS degree and employment relationship and type of contract are also statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), and are between low ( $\chi^2 = 8.081$ ;  $\Phi < 0.194$ ) and very high ( $\chi^2 = 122.096$ ;  $\Phi = 0.831$ ) (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Employment status of PAS professionals working with people with disabilities in Spain according to gender, age and education.

		Typology of Organizations			Job Relation			Type of Contract	
		Public Entity	Company	Associative Entity	With contract	Without contract	Self-employed	Temporary	Indefinite
<b>Gender*</b>	<b>Men</b>	29%	54%	17%	73%	20%	7%	37%	63%
	<b>Women</b>	40%	55%	5%	83%	12%	5%	36%	64%
<b>Age*</b>	<b>16-29</b>	19%	64%	17%	80%	19%	1%	51%	49%
	<b>30-44</b>	35%	56%	9%	78%	12%	10%	26%	74%
	<b>45-70</b>	54%	27%	19%	66%	29%	5%	0%	100%
<b>Initial Training*</b>	<b>With qualification in PAS</b>	22%	68%	10%	65%	23%	12%	41%	59%
	<b>Qualification in PASS</b>	31%	54%	15%	78%	18%	4%	21%	79%
	<b>Qualification in PET</b>	62%	28%	10%	92%	6%	2%	23%	77%
	<b>Qualification in STPASE and TPASMNE</b>	15%	73%	12%	88%	8%	4%	37%	63%

Note: Significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ ), moderate ( $\chi^2 = 14.371$ ;  $\Phi < 0.403$ ) and high ( $\chi^2 = 97.568$ ;  $\Phi = 0.675$ ) relationship. Low ( $\chi^2 = 8.081$ ;  $\Phi < 0.194$ ) and very high ( $\chi^2 = 122.096$ ;  $\Phi = 0.831$ ) relationships. The table was prepared by the authors.

## DISCUSSION

According to the results, 32% of the PAS professionals who work with people with disabilities in Spain, do not have PAS qualifications. This shows that there is a high number of insufficiently trained staff who work with people with disabilities (Castro et al., 2018; Crawford, 2011; Jiménez-Monteagudo & Hernández-Álvarez, 2013; Kwon & Block, 2017; Nascimento et al., 2007). Unfortunately, the lack of training in PAS is recurrent in the field (Campos-Izquierdo, 2016; Campos-Izquierdo et al., 2008; Campos-Izquierdo & González-Rivera, 2010).

Regarding the analysis of lifelong learning, it is obtained that 54% of the participants attend courses to complement initial training. This percentage is well above those who attend conferences and congresses and those who attend working groups. These results were generalized to the rest of PAS occupations since studies by Bernabé et al. (2017), Campos-Izquierdo (2016), Campos-Izquierdo, Lalín and González-Rivera (2010), Salinas, Miranda and Viciano (2006), Soriano and Delgado-Noguera (2011) show that courses constitute the main lifelong learning activity. It should be noted that people over 44 years of age have a more diversified lifelong learning. This situation is also observed in the study by Bernabé et al. (2017) in which people with more advanced and experienced ages attended more varied training activities. The study by Salinas et al. (2006) also shows the interest of PAS professionals with older ages towards diversification in lifelong learning.

The lifelong learning pathways used by PAS professionals working with people with disabilities are of significant importance. This training is aimed at perfecting the knowledge and skills acquired during the initial training and is considered to be a necessary complement to achieve the excellence of professional performance (Campos-Izquierdo, 2016; Soriano & Delgado-Noguera, 2011). For example, University Master's Degrees in PAS with people with disabilities can help to specifically improve professional performance with training based on the specific characteristics of each disability.

Regarding the employment situation, it is observed that there is a significant percentage of submerged employment in this field of PAS. This raises concerns for the future of the profession and PAS professionals (Campos-Izquierdo, 2010; Garrigós, 2001). An example of this is that 17% of the people who work in PAS with people with disabilities in Spain do not have an employment contract. From a gender point of view, the percentage is higher in men than in women, and increases in the case of unqualified people and those over 44 years of age. This absence of hiring in PAS has also been observed in the studies by Campos-Izquierdo (2005), González-Rivera (2015) and Martínez-Serrano et al. (2008).

Regarding the entities, 54% of the PAS professionals working with people with disabilities are employed by the companies which are the main entities in relation to this occupation. The groups working in companies are STPASE and TPASMNE

graduates (73%) and people without a qualification in PAS (68%). The increase in the performance of PAS in private entities was already observed in the studies by Campos-Izquierdo et al. (2010) and Campos-Izquierdo and González-Rivera (2010). Regarding gender, this study shows that the percentage of women working in public entities is 40%, being higher than the percentage of men (29%). These results are lower than those obtained in the study by Campos-Izquierdo and González-Rivera (2010) in which the percentage of PAS working in public entities was 50%. This decrease in the hiring of PAS professionals in public entities was already obtained in the studies by Almeida (2007) and Augustin (2003). It should be noted that 22% of the people who perform PAS job functions with people with disabilities and who work in public entities do not have a PAS qualifications.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that a considerable percentage of professionals working in PAS with people with disabilities do not have a PAS-related degree, and among those who have a PAS degree, the majority are PASS and RET. In the analysis of initial training according to gender, age and experience, similar results were also obtained.

Among professionals in general, the main training activity chosen for continuing education is to take courses, which also predominates in the analysis based on gender, age and experience. Similarly, it was found that among older and more experienced professionals, the diversification of continuing education is high.

In addition, it was found that these professionals work mainly in companies and have a contract. However, there are some staff working without a contract. From the points of view of gender, age and experience, the data are similar, although the number of people working without a contract is higher among those who do not have a PAS-related degree.

Therefore, there are still PAS staff working with people with disabilities without the appropriate qualifications. This has a negative impact on the professionalization of this field, despite the evolution and social recognition of adapted and inclusive PAS.

Adequate disability-oriented PAS qualifications ensures that the educational, health and social benefits provided by PAS have a direct impact on people with functional diversity and guarantees in turn an access to PAS services adapted to the needs and characteristics of each person. This way their inclusion in the physical-sports and social level will increase.

To achieve these goals, it is appropriate to continue working on the creation of policies that ensure that all people with disabilities receive PAS services from professionals with adequate PAS qualifications. Therefore, it is necessary to include adapted and inclusive PAS in the curricula of all PAS degrees, as well as

the implementation of adequate education that meets the specific training needs and expectations. Another important aspect that must be taken into account is the importance of appropriate working conditions for the PAS professionals. This leads to job stability.

Therefore, it is essential to pass a state law to regulate the professional practice of PAS in order to guarantee the quality, professionalism, safety and efficiency of its services for people with disabilities, and ensuring and enhancing the social, health-related and educational benefits of the adequate and frequent practice of PAS.

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