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ORIGINAL

STREET WORKOUT: PSYCHOSOCIAL PROFILE OF ITS PRACTITIONERS

STREET WORKOUT: PERFIL PSICOSOCIAL DE SUS PRACTICANTES

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the main psychological characteristics of Street Workout practitioners, an emerging and booming sports modality in recent years. Through a descriptive and correlational study, with a sample of 116 practitioners from Spain, a psycho social profile was developed and includes the evaluation of the reasons for the practice, muscle appearance satisfaction, the cohesion and the psychological well-being; in addition, includes a comparison based on whether they compete. The results suggest that it is a male-dominated sport, all under 23 years old, whose main motivation is to find a balance between the concern about the health and their physical appearance. The levels of cohesion and psychological well-being are high, and low in four of the five dimensions of muscle satisfaction. Therefore, the data from this first approach support a positive view of the psychological characteristics of Street Workout practitioners and its practice.

KEY WORDS: Street Workout, motivation, well-being, cohesion, muscle satisfaction

RESUMEN

La presente investigación estudia las principales características psicológicas de los practicantes de Street Workout, una modalidad deportiva emergente y en auge en los últimos años. A través de un estudio descriptivo-correlacional, con una muestra de 107 practicantes de España, se elaboró un estudio piloto del perfil psicosocial que incluye la evaluación de los motivos de práctica, la satisfacción muscular, la cohesión y el bienestar psicológico; además de una comparación en función de si compiten. Los resultados señalan que es un deporte practicado mayoritariamente por hombres menores de 23 años, cuya principal motivación es hallar un equilibrio entre la preocupación por la salud y su aspecto físico. Los niveles en cohesión y bienestar psicológico son altos, y bajos en cuatro de las cinco dimensiones de la satisfacción muscular. Por consiguiente, los datos de esta primera aproximación apoyan una visión positiva de las características psicológicas de los practicantes de *Street Workout* de la muestra.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Street Workout, motivación, bienestar, cohesión, satisfacción muscular.

INTRODUCTION

In the last years, there has been a growth and expansion of new modalities of sportive practice that is transforming and generating new groups of practitioners and athletes (Maza et al., 2011). Among these, the *Street Workout* stands out as a quickly expanded worldwide phenomenon, gaining millions of active followers around the word in a few years; as well as increasing its popularity among young people (World *Street Workout and Calisthenics Federation*, WSWCF, 2018).

Street workout is an outdoor training modality, which uses urban equipment and infrastructures (available in parks or beaches, for example) such as bars, pull-ups of different heights, parallels or rings zones. It is based on the principles of calisthenics exercises, which seek to improve pyhisical shape and health through exercises oriented to work the musculoskeletal skills which includes two basic physical qualities: the muscle strength (resistance, power and hypertrophy) and balance (lumbopelvic, scapular and hand support stability) (Asociación Cultural y Recreativa Street Workout Zaragoza, 2015; Monje, 2017; Pérez, 2016).

The SW routines usually are dynamic and frequently include acrobatic and sportive gymnastics exercise, as well as exercises that contribute to improving health, the development of strength, resistance and flexibility (Perez, 2016). Through the

exercises carried out in the SW, the development of the motor skills of the practitioners is sought, in which it is also very important to know your own body and work on its control, meaning the cognitive training. The work performed through continuous SW training and its combination with cognitive training, will allow the subsequent performance of exercises in which the intensity, understood as the degree of effort required, is increasing. (Federación Española de Street Workout y Calistenia, FESWC, 2017; Jiménez, 2006).

Its practice, in addition to training in flexibility, strength and balance, implies a life style and philosophy based on the practice of regular exercise and of health life style habits, which are complementary. Likewise, it transmits the values of any sport in an explicit and conscious way, such as respect, persistence, determination, effort, mutual help, sportsmanship and personal growth (WSWCF, 2017). Despite being an individual sport, the group is very important as a transmission source of knowledge, support and instruction. Hence, cohesion is one of its main factors in the dynamic process, which reflects the group's tendency to remain united in achieving instrumental goals to satisfy the affective needs of the members (WSWCF, 2017; RTVE, 2014).

The origin of this phenomenon is unclear. However, it is associated with the *hip-hop* culture which is based on going out to the street and exercising outdoors with anything that could be found, taking of concept of " gym" anywhere in the city (Rodríguez, 2014; RTVEM, 2014). One of the first reliable references about its origins dates back to 2002 in the United States, on a DVD titled as " *Thug Workout: Fitness From the Streets".* The expansion of this sport was greatly powered by *YouTube* in 2005, reaching worldwide dissemination, especially in North America and West Europe (Pérez, 2016), through digital platforms and social networks.

In Spain, the first training group originates in 2010 and is called Barbarrio, which defines themselves as "a social and sportive collective that gathers to train physically in the streets, developing this activity under the following principles: a healthy life, solidarity, fun and integration (Perez, 2016, p.2). They adopted a congruent discourse with positive values associated with sportive practice and its role as fundamental part in the integral human development (Gutiérrez Sanmartín, 2004). It also contributes to generate tools that help people to properly perform in life (UNICEF, 2011).

The positive effects of sport practice in a physical, psychological and social level have been widely described so far, considering them as a fundamental part for all groups in society (Huebner, 2004; Heinemann, 2002; Pulgar and Fernández-Luna, 2019). Nevertheless, as Carcauel and Arbinaga (2010) or Arbinaba and Cantón (2013) state, as occurs in any other sport, the beneficial effects of its practice are not a direct consequence of the mere practice of exercise, but these are a result of healthy lifestyle habits, consciously promoted through that practice and depending of the type of sport. In the psychological dimension, a correlation has been found between the regular practice of sport and mental health indexes, currently relevant

such as psychological well-being and an improvement in self-concept (Balcklock, Rhodes and Brown, 2007).

On the other hand, social contact through sport is a double-edged sword, which can also have a negative side (Djal, 2015). In the same way that it has the potential to promote integration and cooperation through the type of interaction that takes place during practice, it can also contribute to the creation of conflicts, exclusion and discrimination (Elling and Claringbould, 20015) or the increase of stereotypes towards minority groups (Wlaseth and Fasting, 2004). The context in which the sport practice is executed influences in the type of interaction that takes place, whether promoting violent conducts and behaviors contrary to integration, or even encouraging conducts of ethnic identity preservation of a determined group over others, resulting in confrontation or isolation (Stodolska and Alexandris, 20014); it may also increase behaviors associated to alcohol and drugs abuse (Acero et al., 2002; Want et al., 2014).

Additionally, it is important to consider that in nowadays society physical appearance is frequently linked with success, self-control and other positive qualities (Rodrígez, 2007); which could lead to an obsessive cult of the promoted ideal by the social context. On several occasions, body and personal discontent easily emerge, which can be reflected in social anxiety and an imperative need for physical change (Rodríguez and Esnaola, 2009) through compulsive physical exercise or the use of substances that faciliate rapid muscle definition and mass growth. In the last few years, research has focused on exercises related with counter-resistance training or muscle training (Cantón and Arbinaga, 2013), due to their predisposition to development these behaviors (Ramos, Sansebastián and Madoz, 2001), which is greater among competitors (Arbinaga and Caracuel, 2007).

It is clear, then, the duality of sport and the need to encourage a practice carried out from a perspective that promotes its benefits; deepening the knowledge of new sport modalities oriented to positive and socially desirable values.

As a response to the lack of scientific literature about topics related to new growing sport modalities, this paper aims to contribute to the knowledge of this new modality trough the elaboration of a pilot study of the psychosocial profile of its practitioners in the zone of Valencia; assessing different psychological variables such as: practice motivation, cohesion, psychological well-being and muscle satisfaction. In addition, differences between groups are compared, according to whether they participate or not in competition and conferring to their migratory status.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A quantitative methodology was used, corresponding to a non-experimental study of cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational characteristics; allowing us to elaborate a pilot study of the psychosocial profile of the individuals of this sample.

Participants

The sample was made up of a total of 107 practitioners of *Street Workout*, aged between 18 and 34 (M=20, 7; SD=4), residents of Spain. A nonprobability, accidental population to disposition sampling was conducted, with only one-inclusion criteria: practicing *Street Workout* regularly (between two and three times a week, with a minimum of one hour per session).

Instruments

The selection of instruments corresponds to the identification of the best methods of evaluation available in our language and cultural environment, once the study variables have been established, reviewing previous works and studies (Arbinaga and Cantón, 2013; Taipe, Peris and Cantón, 2019).

Cohesion. The Spanish Version of the Multidimensional Sport Cohesion Instrument was used to assess this variable (MSCI; Andrade, Arce and Seoane, 2002). Consisting of 22 items distributed in four dimensions: work quality regarding execution, valued roles, unity of purpose and attraction to the group. The response options range from 0 to 10. The reliability coefficient goes from 0.92 to 0.75.

Muscle Satisfaction. The Spanish Adaptation of the *Muscle Appearance Satisfaction Scale* was used (MASS; Gonzáles-Martí et al., 2011). Consisting of 19 dichotomous items divided in five factors: bodybuilding dependence, muscle checking, substance use, injury and muscle satisfaction. The reliability coefficient is 0.71.

Psychological wellbeing. The Spanish Adaptation of the *Psychological Well-Being Scale of Ryff* was used (Díaz et al, 2006). Consisting of 29 items distributed in six factors: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. The response options range from 1 to 6. Cronbach´s Alpha goes from 0.81 to 0.72, except for Autonomy and Environmental mastery, which are 0.54 and 0.62 respectively.

Socio-demographic data. The information was completed with data regarding their age, sex, country of birth and residence, as well as their employment status. Data from sports activity was also included, as well as the main motivation for sport practice initiation and adherence.

Procedure

We attended the places where the *Street Workout* is frequently practiced, particularly the parks located in the city center of Valencia, as the most

concentrated places. Once the participants were informed of the objective of the study, their free and informed consent was obtained, guaranteeing the anonymity of their collaboration. Participants answered all of the items in the presence of the researches. The approximate time required was 20 minutes. Additionally, a digital version of the instrument was created on the *Google Docs Form* platform, accessible through a private link sent by e-mail. This option was only available to those interested in the study and those referred by the participants. We provided this instrument through social networks and groups dedicated to the practice of SW in Spain. In this case, we explicated the availability of researches to answer questions and clarify any doubt through e-mail. 65% of participants answered through the digital platform, while the remaining 35% of the participants responded through the traditional way. No differences were found in the form of response.

Statistical Analysis

In order to establish the psychosocial profile, descriptive analyses were carried out (frequency, means and standard deviations) of the socio-demographic variables, data associated with physical activity, motivation for sport practice initiation and adherence, and the previously mentioned psychological variables: cohesion, psychological well-being and muscle satisfaction. Comparisons between means were executed in order to learn the difference among groups, based on whether they competed or not or if they belonged or not to immigrant population. The non-parametric test of Mann-Whitney was applied for independent samples in the comparison of quantitative variables, analyzed using the SPSS statistical software program version 20.0.

RESULTS

The obtained results reveal that 96.3% of the participants were male, aged between 19 and 23 (49.5%), who have been practicing this sport for an average of 9.4 months (SD=7.11). Most of the participants were students (68.2%), a 16.8% worked, a 5.6% both studied and worked, and a 9.3% of them were unemployed. Also, a 21% of the sample were immigrants.

Regarding to the information related to the *Street Workout,* data reveals that they learnt about it mainly through friends and acquaintances (46%), through social networks such as *Facebook or YouTube* (44%) and through the observation of other people in adjacent parks (10%). Data show that most of them (68.2%) practice other sports complementary to SW, such as soccer, athletics, cycling or martial arts, among the most frequently stated.

The information regarding the motivation considered as important to initiation in the *Street Workout* practice showed as the most frequent ones: improving physical condition (88.4%), having fun (80.6%), increasing muscle mass (73.9%) and improving body image (70.7%). About to the reasons for practice adherence, we

found that: improving physical condition (82.2%) and having fun (67.3%) were the most frequent ones.

The results obtained on cohesion (Table 1) show high scores in the four dimensions, reflecting the tendency of the group to remaining united. In regards to muscle satisfaction, punctuations are low in *Muscle checking* (X= 0.22; SD= 0.27), *Use of Substances* (X= 0.27; SD= 0.22) and *Bodybuilding dependence (X= 0.3; SD= 0.23);* which indicates a low frequency of conducts of verification of the size of the muscles, a non- generalized use of supplements to enhance muscle growth among this sample, and a low tendency for compulsive practice of the exercise, respectively. On the contrary, we found moderate/ low punctuations in *Injury* (X=0.41; SD=0.35), which indicates that, for a part of our sample, pain is part of the training, even though it is not a generalized situation. Finally, scores reading to *Muscle Satisfaction* (X= zero, 7; DT=0, 36) are high, showing that participants are satisfied with the size and shape of their muscles. All of this reflects an extended muscle satisfaction, without the presence of data that could show the presence of any kind of problem or disorder related to it.

In regards to the measures obtained in *Psychological Well-Being,* data show that practitioners obtained moderate/high punctuations in the six dimensions of the instrument (Table 1). This denotes that participants of this research show high levels in this variable.

Table 1 Descriptive of MSCI Scale factors and Psychological Well- Being

	Mean	**SD**
Unity of purpose	8.5	1.87
Valued Roles	8.5	2.19
Attraction to the Group	8.8	1.18
Quality of work	8.1	2.1
	Mean	**SD**
Acceptance	5.0	089
Autonomy	4.5	0.82
Positive relations	4.8	1.05
Environmental mastery	4.0	0.75
Purpose in life	4.9	0.82
Personal Growth	5.1	0.81

Regarding to the comparisons between groups, the U Mann-Whitney test showed statistically significant differences between competitors and non-competitors, in the dimensions displayed in Table 2. Those participants who do not compete are the ones that show a higher punctuation in all dimensions, with significant differences.

Table 2. Significant differences between Competitors and Non-Competitors.

	Non-Competitors (n= 35)		Competitors (n= 72)			
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Z**	**p**
Acceptance (Well-Being)	4.9	0.90	5.2	0.85	-2.12	0.033
Autonomy (Well-Being)	4.4	0.80	4.8	0.77	-2.79	0.005
Environmental mastery (Well- Being)	3.8	0.72	4.3	0.69	-2.93	0.003
Purpose in life (Well-being)	4.8	0.80	5.1	0.82	-2.16	0.030
Unity of purpose (MSCI)	8.3	1.83	8.9	1.67	-1.97	0.049

Note: Significance level $p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to elaborate a pilot study of the psychosocial profile of the practitioners of Street Workout in the City of Valencia. The intention was to deepen in the knowledge of the practitioners of this sport in the collected sample, delineating cohesion, psychological well-being and muscle satisfaction as main variables of the study. These constructs were chosen taking into consideration the characteristics of *Street Workout.* Since it is an individual sport with an important group component, it was considered relevant to assess the cohesion level in the training groups. Additionally, as a sport modality with part of it oriented to the development of muscle strength, the relevance of including the muscle satisfaction evaluation of the muscle satisfaction and ruling out the presence of signs of dependence on the activity was assessed. Finally, psychological well-being was included as a mental health index related to sport practice.

The data of the socio-demographic profile show that in this research participants are mostly young men. This reinforces what other studies have found about sport practice according to gender, with women being less implicated in physical and sportive activities, mainly in activities related to muscle training (García, 2006) or skeletal-muscle activities (Zaragosa, Serrano and Generelo, 2004). As it happens in other physical and sportive activities such as Bodybuilding, a possible explanation is that SW involves force training, which might be seen as a male activity that threatens the ideal of the feminine body. Hence, women may choose other types of activities, but this could be a cultural pattern that might change over time (Sicilia et al., 2009).

77.6% of participants are not part of the labor market (students and unemployed) and 21% are immigrants, echoing sectors of the population more vulnerable to a sedentary lifestyle (Taverno et al., 2014), groups with further risks of suffering psychosocial problems and health related with a lack of physical activity.

In relation to the way participants discovered SW, the contact with friends or acquaintances that already practiced the sport made it easier to get in touch with it and was the main learning way of the sport, alongside the used of social media. These two elements consolidate the fact that in our sample those where the main ways of disseminating this sport and interaction with other participants. Also, the relevance of social support is reflected, since the presence of friends or acquaintances is linked and could determine the initiation of physical activity, directly influencing by providing information about the activity (Serra, Zaragoza and Generelo, 2014).

In regards to the *motivation for initiation and adherence* in the sport practice, participants in our study consider the reasons related to physical shape and enjoying the activity were the main ones, which have been stated as predictors or participation and continuity (Allender, Cowburn and Foster, 2006; Moreno et al., 2005; Torres, Carrasco and Medina, 2010). Additionally, for initiation in the sport practices, reasons related with the physical aspect were relevant as well, which reflects the approach based on the binomial between physical condition and appearance in our sample, consistent with the healthy lifestyle habits they promote (Moreno et al., 2014). Therefore, we observe a balance between aesthetics and the search to improve physical fitness.

In relation to cohesion, participants in this study show strong sentiments of belonging and identification with the training group, satisfaction with it, commitment with the working rules established by the group, as well as feeling valued for the rest of their training peers. These punctuations are congruent with social values transmitted by SW, promoted by their leaders, especially those related with mutual help and fellowship (WSWCF, 2017) in which people from different origins have in common one objective and work together to achieve their objectives: practicing Street Workout and advancing on this sport.

In relation to *muscle satisfaction,* also according to the philosophy they share, we observe a moderate predisposition of interest and acceptance for the development of muscle and a generalized rejection for the use of substances as a method to rapid and extreme muscle development (WSWCF, 2017; FESW, 2017). Data does not show risks of developing a muscular dysmorphia; or in other words, an excessive worry with the size and shape of muscles among participants (Cantón, 2010; González-Martí et al., 2012).

The *psychological well-being* of participants of this study is high and follows the line of other researches that state the positive effect of strength training provides vigor, self-esteem, and confidence (Wartburton, Gledhill and Quinney, 2011). Thus, participants on this study show interest for their progress and evolution (personal growth), positive attitudes towards themselves (acceptance), presence of goals and objectives (purpose in life), quality and close relationships with others (positive relations), as well as respect for their own individuality (autonomy). This correlates with the description of its own practitioners as an activity where values such as

constancy, effort and personal growth are promoted. In general, terms and according to Arruza et al. (2008), sport practice has a positive effect on the perception of the physical shape, as well as on the release of endorphins, which also has an impact in the state of well-being; which could incise in the predisposition observed on this study.

Regarding the differences between groups, the participants who compete show greater self-confidence, feel competent in their interaction with the context, have life purposes and show commitment to established norms, to a greater extent than those who do not compete. These data are consistent with the perfectionist trend of competitors, specifically bodybuilders, described as more realistic, practical and action-oriented (Arbinaga and Caracuel, 2007). Characteristics that could be explained by the need for greater preparation by competing athletes, compared to those who practice sport for mainly health-related reasons. In the case of our participants, this could happen in a similar way, since the competitions require a certain level and, therefore, require better physical preparation, which requires more training and dedication.

On the other hand, the lack of a difference between *immigrants and non-immigrants* makes us think that this group can be considered as integrated, since according to Yañez and Cárdenas (2010), those immigrants who manage to integrate in the host country report better indicators of psychological well-being than those who have not. In the case of our sample, the general level of well-being is optimal, regardless of the origin of the participants, which equates both groups.

These results are consistent with the characteristics of the Street Workout and the philosophy it promotes: a healthy lifestyle linked to an optimal physical condition achieved through regular training, a balanced diet and the active rejection of the consumption of substances harmful to health or prohibited by WADA (WSWCF; 2017). Similarly, the SW's most visible characteristics, such as exercises and acrobatics, make it an attractive activity for the public, which would facilitate initiation and would have an impact on its adherence (Torres et al, 2010), thus explaining its increasing popularity.

The limitations that have conditions this study are the lack of equity between the comparison groups, as well as the distribution in function of sex, which has prevented us from comparing these aspects and exploring the effects of interaction that may exist. In addition, the type of sapling does not allow generalizing about the population; therefore, future research should consider this aspect, as well as the physiological variables that complement psychological variables studied.

CONCLUSION

This study offers us information about the psychological characteristics of practitioners of the *Street Workout* in our sampling, contributing to increase the

limited scientific bibliography on this kind of modalities and suggests future research trends.

SW practitioners in this study showed optimal levels of psychological well-being, muscle satisfaction and cohesion, whose motivation for initiation and adherence to sport practice have a balance between physical concern, health and intrinsic motivational aspects, such as the fun produced by the practice itself. Based on the capacity of any other sport or physical exercise and the results presented, we assume that the tendency of regular practice of SW will be to positively influence the perception of sports ability and aspects of physical condition that influences the well-being, as well as improving the quality of life and mental and physical health.

Society can support these new sports modalities that are becoming so attractive, mainly for the youngest, thus helping the expansion of healthy lifestyles and the fight against sedentary lifestyle and its consequences, including obesity, diabetes or cardiovascular problems. Hence, it seems to be a useful activity and facilitator of social integration, thanks to the use of the urban resources already available, which eliminates a possible economic barrier for the participation of any person.

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