

Original Article

Recreational 5-a-side football as an activity to improve mental and physical well-being

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Abstract:

This study examines the perceptions of health and well-being arising from the activity of one of the most practiced sports, recreational 5-a-side football. In particular we focus on the perceptive aspects specific to this sport, trying to understand what may be the parameters that have a greater physical benefit and what are the psychological improvements. Through some questions asked to a group of 20 boys, aged between 23 and 29, it was found that, for the sample examined, recreational football on a physical level could lead to an improvement in physical endurance (65%), but that does not greatly affect the decrease in body fat (45%). While on a psychological level, it is considered a very relaxing sport (80%) and socially aggregating (95%). Therefore, according to many other studies, this type of activity, both in terms of perceptions and real data, significantly improves the general physical and psychological well-being of the person who practices it.

Key words: qualitative research, wellness state, enjoyment

Introduction

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of sport in improving health and certain body areas (D'Isanto, 2016). There are researches carried out on specific sports, such as recreational 5-a-side football, aimed at demonstrating what improvements can come from their practice (Altavilla et al., 2018; Bangsbo et al., 2006; Dal Monte, 1983). The professor. G. Raiola has carried out numerous researches on different sports, such as volleyball or football, demonstrating their efficiency in helping the body and mind to reach strengths in various parts of the body (Raiola, 2013; 2015). Focusing instead on recreational 5-a-side football, Prof. Krstrup has demonstrated, through several studies over time, the effectiveness of this sport in improving body components, making significant increases in physical health (Krstrup et al., 2010; 2009). In summary, we can say that recreational football, being a sport with certain characteristics, helps to enhance health through processes that trigger improvements in various body components (Bangsbo et al., 2007; 2009).

The aim is to evaluate the perceptions of health and well-being generated by the 5-a-side football played in a recreational manner, in accordance with the abovementioned research (Krstrup et al., 2009; D'Isanto et al., 2017; 2019). In particular, it focuses on the perceptive aspects of individual practitioners, trying to understand what may be the parameters that gain a greater benefit on a physical level and what are the psychological improvements by practicing this activity (Weineck, 2009).

Method

A random sample of participants in the soccer activity was examined, which in the case of this study consisted of 20 male boys, all of whom declared to practicing recreational football in the research period. 15% of the participants have practiced competitive football in the past, while as regards the attendance, 80% of them practice regularly recreational football, while 20% practice it with low frequency. Regarding the collection of information, it was decided to undertake a quantitative approach by adopting a structured questionnaire as a survey tool, which was drafted based on the objectives fixed by the study. All the questions in the questionnaire are closed-ended, in some cases multiple answers could be chosen simultaneously, to try to form a sort of ranking with the answers given by the subjects. The questionnaire was prepared through Google Forms, an online platform that allows to build these types of tests in a very simple way through standardized interviews. The questionnaire was sent to the interviewees, who were able to complete it and subsequently send the answers anonymously, where all the information was collected in the form of graphs using spreadsheets. The final questionnaire consists of two main topics: in fact, the perceptions and knowledge relating to physical well-being arising from the activity of recreational football are investigated. While on the other hand we analyse the perceptions and knowledge relating to psychological well-being arising from this type of activity. The answers have been revised in percentage to make the results easier to use, so as to allow an easier discussion with more direct conclusions.

Results

As a first question, it was asked if "there is an improvement in physical endurance by practicing 5-a-side football" and 65% of the participants responded positively to the question, while 35% of them said they did not perceive improvements in this physical parameter. Subsequently it was asked "if a decrease in fat mass is perceived in the practice of recreational 5-a-side football" and 45% of respondents answered in the affirmative to this question, while the remaining 55% of them expressed not to perceived improvements in this regard. Reconnecting to the previous question, it was asked if "there is an increase in lean mass by practicing this type of activity", and 55% of the participants responded positively, confirming the perception of the increase in this parameter, while 45% of them responded not to perceive increases of this value (Fig. 1.).

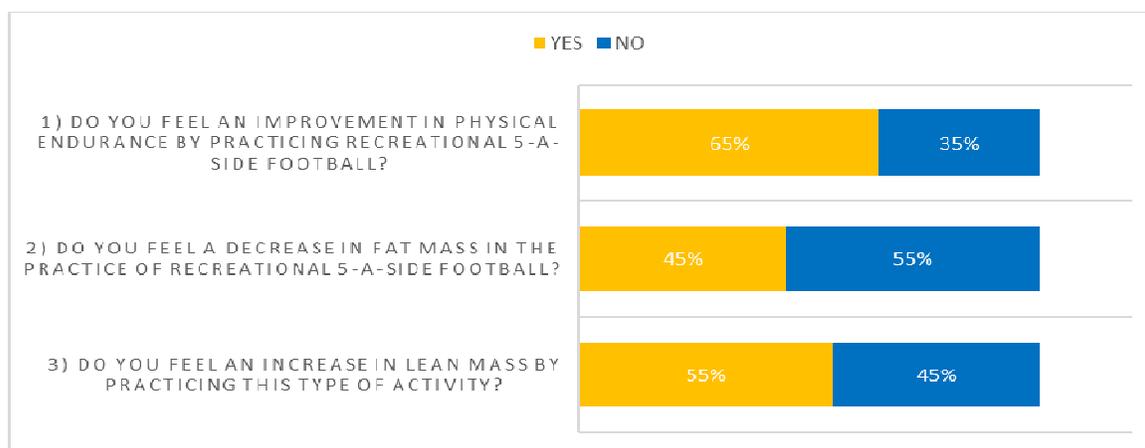


Fig. 1. perception physical wellness

In the next question, it was decided to focus to the psychological aspect, and it was asked if "a relaxing effect is felt in the practice of this sport". 80% of the participants responded positively, confirming the relaxing effect of 5-a-side football, while 20% of them said they did not perceive this type of feeling. Subsequently it was asked if "a perception of fulfilment is perceived in terms of physical and psychological performance by practicing this type of activity" and 60% of the participants responded positively to this question. While 40% of them said they did not recognize any feeling of satisfaction. In the next question it was asked if "a sense of social gathering is perceived by practicing recreational 5-a-side football" and 95% of the participants responded positively, confirming the strong social value of this activity. Only 5% of them responded negatively (Fig. 2.).

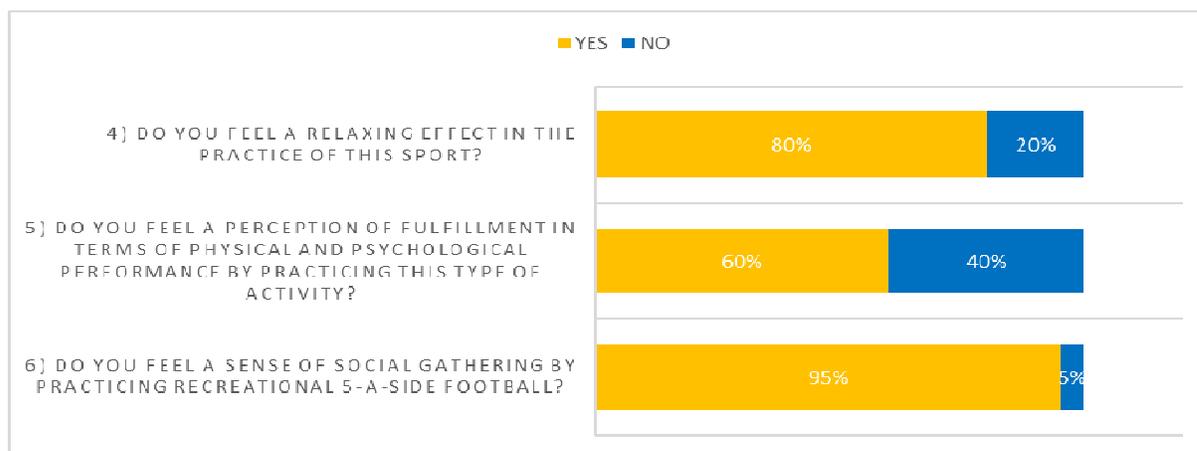


Fig. 2. Perception psycho-social wellness

In the last question instead, it was asked if "a physical improvement or a psychological improvement is perceived more". 45% of the interviewees perceived more physical improvement, while 55% of them perceived a psychological improvement more (Fig. n.3).

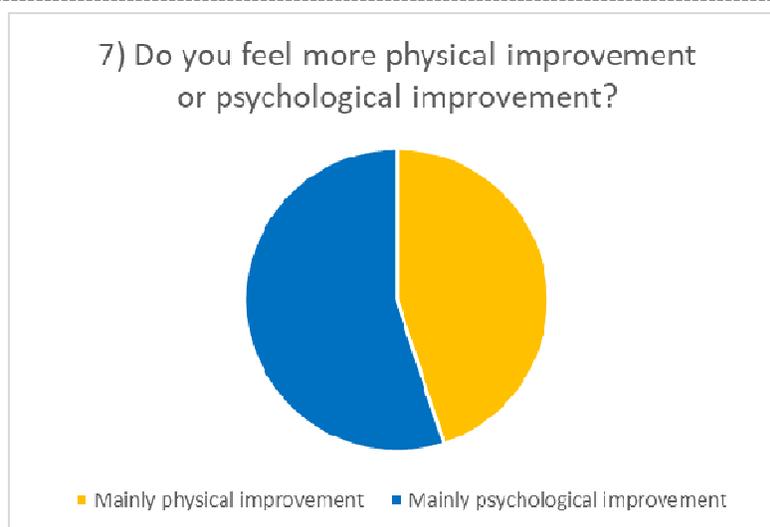


Fig.. 3 psycho-physical wellness perception

Discussion

The data found have shown that, even in terms of perceptions and knowledge, recreational football can bring benefits, improving some fundamental physical parameters for well-being (Altavilla & Gaetano, 2018; D'Elia, 2019). In fact, analyzing the data resulting from the questions asked in the questionnaire, it is clear that the subjects perceive improvements both physically and psychologically, with a greater propensity towards the progress achieved at a psychological level (Impellizzeri et al., 2006; Coombs, 1964). In fact, the participants even only at the level of perceptions, recognize an improvement in physical endurance, which is one of the parameters that indicate a general well-being, in agreement with numerous other studies, but which can however affect other physical aspects such as the decrease in mass fat and the increase in lean mass (Aagaard et al., 2001; Saltin et al., 1979).

Regarding the perceptions and knowledge related to the psychological aspect, it was found that subjects are aware that this type of activity can bring benefits, since a relaxing sensation is perceived in the practice of this sport (Fredericson et al., 2007). Furthermore, according to many other studies, the participants perceive the feeling of social aggregation resulting from the practice of recreational football, confirming its benefits, not only from the point of view of psychophysical well-being, but also in the inclusion of the subjects who practice it (Stein et al., 1990; Shaw et al., 2005; Raiola et al., 2018).

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that recreational 5-a-side football can bring benefits both physically, leading to improvements in physical endurance and helping to decrease fat mass and increasing lean mass, and psychologically, leading to a feeling of relaxation and psychological fulfillment to those who practice this sport (Aagaard et al., 2002, Borg, 1970). In addition, social aggregation increases, increasing the inclusion of all those who take part in it (Cornelissen & Fagard, 2005; Gaetano et al., 2015).

It can therefore be said, in agreement with many other studies, that practicing this type of activity can bring complete improvements in any body district, bringing significant enhancements to live a healthy life and to reach a psychophysical well-being.

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