

## **Sport and Leisure Policies for Elderly People in Brazil: Theoretical Approaches**

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**Abstract:** Open University for the Elderly (UNATI) is a program widely implemented in higher education institutions in Brazil. Thus, the objective of this study was to analyze the practice of physical activity for elderly people inserted in these Open Universities in light of Sports and Leisure policies. The study carried out a review about what the literature has pointed out about the current panorama of the Open Universities existing in the country. From the review carried out, it was noticed that the programs of insertion of the elderly in Open Universities to the Third Age, have contributed significantly to a better quality of life in the aging process. These programs are already widespread among universities, with a large number of elderly people participating in the multidisciplinary activities offered. However, Brazilian higher education institutions still do not participate effectively in the research that involves the subject and the theme of sports and leisure policies in this particular area is still little discussed, which makes it necessary to elaborate new studies that contemplate a institutions and present an expanded panorama of the theme in the Brazilian context, its characteristics, contributions, limitations and challenges.

**Keywords:** Aging. University Open to the Elderly. Sports and Leisure Policies.

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### **1. Introduction**

Regular physical activity plays a key role in the prevention and control of non-communicable chronic diseases, better mobility, functional capacity and quality of life during aging. It is important to highlight that, as important as encouraging the regular practice of physical activity, the adoption of an active lifestyle is a fundamental part of aging with health and quality (MATSUDO, 2009).

Thus, what is known is that the population that reaches a higher age often finds it difficult to adapt to current living conditions, because, in addition to the physical, psychological, social and cultural difficulties resulting from aging, they feel relegated to secondary plans in the job market, within the family and in society in general (GOLDMAN, 2004).

Beginning in the 1990s, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends prescribing moderate-intensity cardio exercise for  $\geq 30$  min/day for  $\geq 5$  days for a total of  $\geq 150$  min/week. Or high-intensity cardio exercise for  $\geq 20$  min/day  $\geq 3$  days for a total of  $\geq 75$  min/week. And finally, a combination of moderate-to-high intensity exercise. The ACSM describes cardio exercise as “exercise that uses large muscle groups and is done for 30 – 60 minutes.”

Other descriptions include slow, long-distance exercise, an activity that raises the heart rate to a level at which the person is training, or an exercise that increases the oxygen demand for the muscles. But, as mentioned above, all forms of exercise do what these descriptions indicate: for example, weight training, Yoga, Pilates, just to name a few. The difference is that cardio exercise is a steady state exercise and is performed for a relatively long period of time (RASO; MATSUDO; MATSUDO, 1997).

Because of these recommendations, in Brazil, from the 1990s, there was a multiplication of programs aimed at elderly people in Brazilian Universities.

Between 1990 and 1999, these programs grew from six to about one hundred and forty. Currently, these institutions are spread throughout the country, with about 200 programs in public and private institutions (PALMA, 2000).

For an individual to join a physical activity program, he encounters some barriers mainly related to internal motivation. When seeking the necessary motivation for such a change in lifestyle, it goes through stages (REICHERT; BARROS; DOMINGUES; HALLAL, 2007) ranging from the lack of knowledge of the benefits of the practice (“pre-contemplation stage”), where the greatest barriers, up to the “maintenance” stage, where physical activity was incorporated into their daily lives, becoming a habit.

In the case of elderly people, the adoption of an active style is not always observed, as the vast majority do not have the necessary motivation to enter a physical activity program, either due to external structural and physical factors, or due to internal factors of a physical nature. psychological (REICHERT; BARROS; DOMINGUES; HALLAL, 2007).

From the point of view of Sports and Leisure Policies for the elderly Missias Moreira *et al* (2013) understand that they must ensure social rights for the elderly, creating conditions to promote their autonomy, integration and effective participation in society and reaffirming the right health at different levels of care, so that aging must be lived with health, so that individuals feel free and willing to perform any type of daily activity, maintaining an active and independent life.

Thus, the following guiding question for this study arose: how to understand the aging process and its relationship with the practice of physical activity from a point of view of Sports and Leisure Policies in Brazil?

The objective of this study was to analyze the practice of physical activity for elderly people included in Universities Open to the Third Age in the light of sports and leisure policies.

## **2. Sports and Leisure Policies for older people in Brazil**

Authors such as Andrade *et al* (2013) point out that according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in 2000 the number of people over 60 years of age in Brazil reached about 15 million, and in 2010 the proportion of elderly people had increased from 8.6% to 11%, and in the age group aged 80 and over, the growth reached almost 65%. In absolute numbers, in 2010 we reached more than 20 million elderly people.

They also point out another fundamental issue that concerns the accelerated Brazilian aging process that has been taking place amid serious difficulties in expanding the social protection system for all age groups, in particular for the elderly, a situation that differs from what happened in developed countries. Since in the European continent, population aging found a favorable socioeconomic scenario, which allowed the expansion of its social protection systems (ANDRADE *et al.*, 2013).

From there, discussing about Sports and Leisure Policies for elderly people in Brazil requires overcoming issues, among which we highlight two that we consider important. The first is prejudice against old age, the second is society's denial of this phenomenon that contributes to the difficulty of thinking about specific policies for this group.

It should be said that from the recognition of population aging in Brazil, by the federal government, on January 4, 1994, Law No.96 (BRAZIL, 1994). The purpose of this law was to ensure social rights, guarantee them in order to ensure the promotion of integration, autonomy and effective participation of the elderly in society, aiming at the exercise of their citizenship.

In this sense, in 2003, based on the sharp growth of elderly people in Brazil, the Elderly Statute was created, which emphasized the guarantee of comprehensive health care for this population through the Unified Health System (SUS), at all levels. of care, thus fostering the discussion on care for the health conditions of the elderly, assuring them equal and universal access, in an intertwined context of services and actions aimed at the protection, promotion, prevention and recovery of health.

From then on, with the creation of the National Policy for the Elderly (PNI), the National Health Policy for the Elderly - (PNSPI) and the Elderly Statute, a movement began in the country based on these guiding devices for social and social actions. health, to guarantee the rights of the elderly and the State's obligation to protect them.

However, the implementation of a public policy requires a conscious, ethical and citizen attitude of those involved and interested in living aging in the healthiest way possible, in which the State, health professionals, the elderly and society in general are co-responsible for this process. process (ANDRADE *et al.*, 2013).

However, it is known that there is still an abyss between the law and the reality of the elderly in Brazil, considering that society will only be ethical when it recognizes the potential of its members, when it fights for the law to recognize them as citizens and, finally, , when all of them have their citizenship recognized and guaranteed.

Brazil then begins to worry about these issues and after the period of social redemocratization and incorporation of the 1988 Constitution, some laws have been implemented in an attempt to meet the new needs in an attempt to meet the new needs of the global trend and national urgency of the aging.

Policies for the elderly in Brazil must be in line with the country's reality and always strive for a policy of being healthy, whether biologically, psychologically or socially. Therefore, being healthy means fighting gerophobia, ensuring a health policy that considers the characteristics of old age (MISSIAS MOREIRA *et al.*, 2013).

For these authors, the importance of reflections on issues inherent to the elderly, observing the practices and strategies of public health policies and their impact on their quality of life, marks a starting point for the link between different fields. knowledge, which represent a fundamental support for the problematization and

recognition of the demands and needs of this population specifically in the context of health, and also the strategic guidelines for the development of care and reception actions in an effective and efficient way.

The Brazilian legislation has been established in relation to the care of the elderly population through various ordinances, laws and documents, being quite advanced; however, in reality the practice is still unsatisfactory, as there are numerous bureaucratic and political barriers that prevent the proper development of actions aimed at the elderly, reflecting on difficulties in accessing medical treatments and care services.

In this scenario, understanding the aging process of human beings requires firstly understanding the existing contradictions between old age and well-being and even the relationship between old age and disease; In this way, there is an increasing need for public policies that qualify Brazilian health, and for adequate strategies, so that the elderly acquire a satisfactory quality of life, actions that can significantly contribute to a better development of new ways. of intervention with this population (MISSIAS MOREIRA *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, for Wolff (2009) it is in the happy and successful old age that the new challenges of policies reside, as diseases are no longer the main obstacles to overcome, as advances in medicine are increasingly contributing to the quality and maintenance of the physical and emotional structure of the subjects. Current perspectives must also observe qualitative issues, the formation of new opportunities and policies that promote and provide aging with quality.

Seeking to contribute objectively to the issues surrounding successful aging Wolff (2009) points out suggestive possibilities of public policies for the elderly in Brazil, they are:

- that the legal achievements and the experiences and actions developed so far can serve as support for the development of new achievements in a continuous process of action/reflection/action;
- that local and regional experiences be socialized and re-signified, favoring new opportunities in other contexts;
- that the principles of “vital continuity”, “particularity” and “participation” of the elderly are taken into account in all trajectories. This will encourage them to exercise their autonomy, promoting the construction of individual and collective projects that meet their interests. In this case, the Rights Councils may present themselves as facilitators;
- that the participation of specialists in the field of Gerontology be given an opportunity, guaranteeing the scientific and/or technical reference that the proposals may present;
- that education, sport and leisure be provided for life, both in formal and non-formal spaces, with conditions for choices and opportunities, including the qualification of existing programs.

## **2.1 Open Universities for the Third Age**

University programs for the elderly were conceived in 1973 at the University of Social Sciences in Toulouse, France, by Professor Pierre Vellas. Concerned with the isolation of the elderly in society, particularly retirees, he thought of a space within the university aimed at improving the health of the elderly and modifying their image in society (CACHIONI, 2003).

The creation of Open Universities for the Third Age (UnATIs) in Brazil had its heyday in the 1990s. According to Cachioni (2003), between 1990 and 1999 the programs increased from six to approximately 140 in Brazil. These programs are located in 18 Brazilian states, mainly in São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio de Janeiro and Bahia.

Worldwide, the number of people aged 60 and over has grown beyond any other age group. It is estimated that, in 2025, there will be 1.2 billion people over 60 years of age in the world, and Brazil will be the sixth country in the world in number of elderly people (FARINATTI, 2008).

In old age, the risk factors that prevent the maintenance of a good quality of life are, among other factors, the lack or loss of social contacts, history of previous depression, widowhood, stressful life events, institutionalization in nursing homes, low income, dissatisfaction with social support, social isolation, anxiety, lack of social activities, low educational level and use of antidepressant medication (DJERNES, 2006), with depression being one of the most common and important psychiatric problems in elderly people.

Population aging is a general phenomenon and affects everyone, men and women. Solidarity and intergenerationality must be the basis for the actions of society and states. Aging has important consequences in all sectors of human life, such as economic, health, social security, leisure and culture (GOLDMAN, 2004).

Care models for this population segment need to be person-centered, considering such characteristics. In Brazil, since the 1990s, there has been a multiplication of programs aimed at adults and the elderly in Brazilian universities. Between 1990 and 1999, these programs grew from six to about one hundred and forty. Currently, these institutions are spread throughout the country, with about 200 programs in public and private institutions (PALMA, 2000).

According to Mazo et al (2009) the programs were created due to the visibility achieved by old age in the 1990s, as the concern with aging and improving the quality of life of elderly people is recent.

The goal of the Universidade Aberta à Terceira Idade (UNATI) is to provide permanent education programs of a university and multidisciplinary nature (CACHIONI, 2003), to review the stereotypes and prejudices associated with old age, to promote self-esteem and the rescue of citizenship, to encourage autonomy, independence, self-expression and social reintegration in search of a successful old age.

Programs aimed at successful aging are relevant to the economic success of countries that, like Brazil, face a marked aging process and, consequently, a growing demand for services, mainly in the area of public health (MAZO *et al.*, 2009).

### **3. Method**

This study is an exploratory, narrative-type research (MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2001) with the aim of approaching the theme of sports and leisure policies for elderly people in Brazil.

To survey the elements that make up the research, the SIELO, PUBMED and Google Scholar databases were used, using the descriptors: Public policies for sport and leisure, public policies for the elderly, physical activity for the elderly, Universities Open to the Third Age, issues related to the aging process; practice of physical activity for elderly people, to give theoretical support to the discussions raised here. In the next step, the texts were selected by theme to facilitate the writing of the text and their respective analyses.

In this text, we focus on some characteristics of the aging process, as well as the practice of physical activity present today in Open Universities throughout Brazil.

Some information was searched online on the Ministry of Education (MEC) portal to verify the list of all Brazilian Universities and University Centers.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

What has been noticed based on the literature is that the projects that offer physical activity to the elderly in the country have common objectives, and these can be summarized as follows: the UNATIs aim to contribute to a better quality of life. Elderly people's lives, offering guidance, training courses and opportunities for leisure and entertainment. These programs also aim to develop actions that promote the integration of seniors with the university community and society in general, so that they can maintain autonomy and physical, social and intellectual independence.

According to the literature consulted, there was an increase in the creation of projects from the year 2000 onwards. The first Brazilian project in favor of the elderly began with the creation of the Escola Aberta à Terceira Idade do Serviço Social do Comércio (SESC), in Campinas ( SP), in 1977, but the first care program for the elderly, carried out at a university, appeared only in 1982, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (CACHIONI, 2003).

Since then, some higher education institutions began to take an interest in the social issue of the elderly and population aging in Brazil, leading to the emergence of several programs aimed at this population (GOLDMAN, 2004).

In a study carried out by Cachioni (2003), the author found that it was with the efforts of the departments and the rethinking of the professors who sought to reduce the distance between academia and society that these courses emerged, attracting older adults and elderly people to university extension programs. The demand of the elderly person to carry out new activities has increased over the years, despite the short time these projects have been in force, they have been arousing the interest of this population, probably because they represent one of the only possibilities of significant experience in the scope of leisure (FENALTI E SCHWARTZ, 2003).

In the study by Valério (2001), three reasons were identified that led elderly people to participate in programs in social groups or in universities with projects for the elderly. The first is related to health, often due to the awareness of the elderly themselves of the need to perform physical activities and participate in programs of this type. The second reason involves psychological aspects, aiming, among others, at improving self-esteem, well-being and willingness to perform routine activities. The third refers to the occupation of free time.

The growth in the number of vacancies for these programs was probably due to the increase in the elderly population and the demand for these academic services, so, in order to serve as many people as possible, institutions end up, over the years, increase your service capacity.

Thus, it is clear that psychosocial changes in the behavior of the elderly person can directly and positively influence their degree of satisfaction with life and their relationship with the environment. Despite being considered elderly people only at the age of 60, some universities do not use chronological age as an inclusion criterion, accepting individuals under the age of 60, as long as they meet the other criteria.

Most of these programs are characterized as permanent education or continuing education proposals (CACHIONI, 2003). Permanent education is conceived as a global educational fact, which arises from the need to equip man to live with the changes that occur in all aspects of human life, both at an economic, political and cultural level, as well as at a scientific and cultural level. in the interpretation of nature and the universe.

We believe that, in the UNATIs, the ideal is to have a continuing education project, without a fixed term, leaving the individual with a free choice of whether or not to remain in the program. For this, it is necessary to implement an educational policy, promoting the inclusion of this discussion and the development of more research in the area.

For authors such as Fenalti and Schwartz (2003), different university institutions started the work of UNATIs with different pedagogical procedures, which go beyond the communication of formal scientific knowledge. They aim at personal valorization, group coexistence, strengthening of social participation, and the formation of a citizen aware of their responsibilities and rights, promoting their autonomy and quality of life. This demonstrates that there is no standardization in the execution of projects, but in their objectives.

Palma (2000) highlights that the UNATIs have as main objectives to review the stereotypes and prejudices associated with old age, promote self-esteem and the rescue of citizenship, encourage autonomy, independence, self-expression, and social reintegration, in quest for a successful old age. Regardless of the objectives and ideas that universities present, we believe that multidisciplinary must always be included, so that the program is complete and adequate.

Thus, it is necessary to elaborate new studies on the subject, for mapping the UNATIs in Brazil. However, for these studies to be reliable and effective, there is a need for greater participation of universities in research. It would be important for those responsible for the UNATIs to be aware that the more research they have in this area, the greater will be the dissemination of these projects, which will provide their growth and, consequently, more elderly people will benefit.

In Brazil, even with a lower percentage of elderly people than in European cities, there is a growing offer of specific programs, and physical activities are part of the daily life of elderly people, especially in municipalities with universities, where most of the Software. In universities, the programs have not had financial support, only some resources to promote research and extension. The lack of resources to manage the physical activity program is increasing, overloading university professors with extension activities.

Considering the efforts of different agencies and the individual awareness that each person is responsible for their own health, it is clear that the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits, and the number of elderly people who seek these programs is still small.

## 5. Conclusion

From the narrative review carried out here, it can be seen that programs for the insertion of the elderly in the academic environment, such as the Universities Open to the Third Age, are activities that have significantly contributed to a better quality of life in the aging process. In Brazil, these programs are already widespread among universities, with a large number of elderly people participating in the multidisciplinary activities offered.

However, Brazilian higher education institutions still do not participate effectively in research involving the subject, especially when it comes to public policies for sport and leisure, a fact that makes it necessary to develop new works that include a greater number of participating institutions. and present an expanded panorama of the theme in the Brazilian context, its characteristics, contributions, limitations and challenges.

The offer of physical activity programs for the elderly in different municipalities is presented as a new trend in progress in social policies that will have repercussions on new customs and lifestyles. We are experiencing a growth of governmental institutions that invest in physical activity programs with a view to sensitizing the general population to an active life, although, in Brazil, it is still far below what is necessary.

It is known that, many times, behind these proposals are implicit economic interests, such as reduction of expenses with hospital admissions and human resources.

There is a need to establish an articulated network of public social programs and services and other bodies available in Brazilian communities, to compose the policy of promoting a dignified and healthy life for the elderly population, privileging the active aging process, with quality of life and a subjective sense of well-being and happiness of elderly people living in different cities in the country.

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