


REASONS PRESENTED BY ELDERLY PEOPLE FOR PARTICIPATING IN A SOCIAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROJECT IN FORTALEZA-CE

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ABSTRACT

This investigation analyzed the reasons given by the elderly to participate in a social physical activity project in Fortaleza/CE. This is a qualitative study, with an ethnographic focus. Nine elderly people of both sexes participated in the research, seven females and two males, with a mean age of 70.1 ± 6.7 years. The research was carried out at a private university, which has a social project of physical activity. For data collection, certain resources were used, such as participant observation, a field diary, and in-depth interviews. The material was examined through thematic analysis, typical of ethnographic studies. As a result, it could be noted that health prevention, medical indication, and socialization were the reasons that led the participants to join the project, in common with research of a biomedical nature. Thus, it is concluded that the reasons that led the elderly to join the social physical activity project are strongly influenced by biomedical perspectives, in addition to the desire for socialization.

Keywords: Reason. Elderly. Physical Activity.

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INTRODUCTION

The number of elderly people is on the rise in Brazil, as it is across the globe (VERAS; CORDEIRO, 2019). According to the United Nations (2019), it is estimated that the number of individuals aged sixty or over will increase by 46% between 2017 and 2030. In this context, one of the habits recommended for healthy aging is physical activity (RAI et al., 2019; OLIVEIRA; FRANCO; ANTUNES, 2019; OLIVEIRA et al., 2020).

As pointed out in the literature (RAI et al., 2019), the elderly make up the least physically active segment of society, due to several causes, including health problems, a history of physical inactivity, and beliefs about the aging process. In the broad spectrum of research that focuses on the reasons that lead such a contingent to practice activity, the following stand out: health prevention (CAVALLI, et al., 2014; FRANCO, et al., 2015; HARRIS et al., 2020; LADEIRA et al., 2019; PATEL et al., 2013; SILVA et al., 2016), socialization (BAVOSO et al., 2017; BIEDENWEG et al., 2014; CAVALLI et al., 2014; FRANCO, et al., 2015; LADEIRA et al., 2019; LIMA et al., 2020; PATEL et al., 2013; SILVA et al., 2016); medical advice (BAVOSO et al., 2017; GUTIÉRREZ; CALATAYUD; TOMÁS, 2018; LIMA et al., 2020; PATEL et al., 2013); and recommendations observed in the media (LIMA et al., 2020). Parentheses are necessary here. What would be a “motive” according to the specialized literature? “Motive”, according to Gomes and Mota (2016), refers to the reason or purpose that drives someone to act in a certain way.

In this line, studies indicate that the reasons attributed by elderly people for practicing physical activity are mostly close to biomedical and utilitarian aspects, with a focus on the systematization and mechanization of human movement (COSTA, 2019; MACIEL, 2018). For this reason, Surdi and Kunz (2010) argue that what cannot be understood or researched empirically has no meaning, for example, the internal aspect of human movement and its intentionality. It is not surprising, then, that most research related to physical activity is developed with biomechanics and physiology as its basic axis, to optimize results. Such research neglects the individuality of the practitioner (SURDI; KUNZ, 2010, SURDI, 2019).

It is in the wake of this perspective that Maciel et al. (2019) consider that the biomedical discourse naturalizes the proposal of a healthy life. In other words, in general, government organizations, the media, and health professionals recommend physical activity as a means of promoting a healthy life and, in the case of the elderly, specifically, as a way to mitigate the harmful effects of aging (LADEIRA et al., 2019). Therefore, for

Maciel et al. (2018), the experiences of physical activity are normally enjoyed uncritically by practitioners, permeated by utilitarianism and stereotyped movements.

As an alternative to the hegemonic discourse on physical activity, body practices seek to understand the human being in movement, their gestures, and their ways of expressing themselves bodily, attributing values, senses, and meanings to the practice of physical activity. The terminology, used by scholars of the Human and Social Sciences and, in particular, Physical Education, aims to offer new reflections on the traditional view of physical activity, permeated by biomedical and utilitarian aspects (CARVALHO, 2016; MENDES; CARVALHO, 2015). Without a shadow of a doubt, the theory of body practices is essential to (re)think about the topic in question.

Another possibility for discussing human movement, in addition to utilitarianism, is the phenomenological approach (MACIEL et al, 2018; SURDI, 2019), which seeks to value the subjectivities and intentions arising from the practice of physical activity. According to these authors, the biomedical approach reduces important characteristics alluding to human movement. It should be noted that, in both works, the scholars do not deny the legitimacy of biomedical knowledge and bodily practices, but seek to offer new points of view to the field of physical activity in general.

Having the phenomenological approach as its basic axis, Maciel et al. (2018) propose the humanization of physical activity, that is, it seeks to understand it as an autotelic phenomenon – with an end in itself – therefore, characterized by subjectivities and intentionality. For these authors, much more than conceiving physical activity as a means, aiming to achieve certain results, it should be seen as an end, that is, with a focus on the satisfaction resulting from this type of experience. Humanized physical activity is, therefore, an alternative to physical activity based on the utilitarian perspective, given that it values human movement as a means of life power (MACIEL et al., 2018) and a provider of meaningful experiences (ADERALDO; AQUINO; SEVERIANO, 2020). ; LARROSA, 2002).

Given the above, it is essential to reflect on the guiding question of this text: what are the reasons that lead the elderly to practice physical activity? This study aimed to: a) analyze what motivates the elderly, participants of a social project in the city of Fortaleza/CE, Brazil, to practice physical activity, b) describe the dynamics of the classes held in the project.

METHOD

NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

This research is characterized as qualitative (YIN, 2016), with an ethnographic bias (AGUIRRE; MARTINS, 2014; PARKER-JENKINS, 2016), and descriptive and exploratory. It is worth mentioning that, for Aguirre and Martins (2014) and Parker-Jenkins (2016), the ethnographic method is intended to be dialogical, based on the binary (emic-etic). The term “emic” refers to the description of the meanings attributed by the subjects of the study to a given phenomenon; while the term “etic” refers to the description based on the researcher’s perspective.

PARTICIPANTS

Nine elderly individuals enrolled in a social project led by a private university in the city of Fortaleza/CE participated in the study. Of these, seven were female and two were male, with an average age of 70.1 ± 6.7 years. It should be noted that the choice of the location and participants was intentional. The inclusion criteria were: participants must be 60 years of age or older; have practiced physical activity for at least one year, with a frequency of at least two days a week; and reside in Fortaleza/CE. It should also be noted that the number of participants was defined using the data saturation criterion (SAUNDERS et al., 2018). Table 1 presents, in a concise manner, particularities about the elderly. The latter will be referred to by pseudonyms, based on characteristics of their personalities, identified in the research field.

Table 1 - Information about the research participants

Participants	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Profession
Mrs. Graciosa	F	83	Widow	CE	Retired Seamstress
Mr. Engraçado	M	66	Married	CE	Retired Painter
Mrs. Sorridente	F	80	Widow	PE	Housewife
Mrs. Alegria	F	71	Married	CE	Housewife
Mrs. Caminhante	F	70	Single	CE	Retired Administrative Assistant
Mr. Fortaleza	M	62	Married	CE	Retired Bricklayer
Mrs. Saúde	F	63	Married	CE	Retired Housekeeper
Mrs. Carinhosa	F	69	Married	CE	Retired Cafeteria Worker
Mrs. de Rosa	F	67	Married	CE	Retired Office Assistant

Source: Research data

LOCUS

A private university in the city of Fortaleza/CE was selected as the research locus. It had a social project for the elderly, which was coordinated by the Physical Education course. The choice of location was intentional because it houses a significant number of

physically active elderly people, as well as because it is a consolidated project – which has been in effect for 18 years (when the research was conducted, in 2018). It is important to highlight that the vast majority of students lived in a low-income community, close to the educational institution, which provided employment opportunities for residents, as well as health services to the local population, in addition to offering a variety of activities – as was the case with the project.

The project, free and open to the community, aims to promote an active lifestyle for elderly people of both sexes but also welcomes their companions and overweight people – a small portion of the participants at the time of the research. The activities generally took place in the school's multi-sports gymnasium on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Occasionally, however, the walks specifically took place outside the gymnasium. It is important to note that the classes were taught by eight interns, students in the Physical Education course about to complete their degree, who were under the watchful eye of the project's coordinating teacher. The classes lasted one hour, starting at 7:30 a.m. In these environments, the participants walked, danced, and practiced functional activities. In total, approximately 40 students were enrolled (the number varied throughout the year), of which 30 were seniors. Of the students, only four were male, three of whom were seniors. The small number of men was due, as confirmed in the interviews, to several factors. Firstly, the inhibition of participating in activities such as dancing, for example. Another relevant aspect to consider in this case was the difference in lifestyle of the male and female participants. While women dedicated themselves to household chores, which allowed them greater flexibility in their routine, men, even retired, continued to work in occupations – to supplement the family income –, with more rigid schedules.

DATA COLLECTION

Regarding data collection, this research used participant observation and in-depth interviews, typical of ethnographic studies (AGUIRRE; MARTINS, 2014; MINAYO; COSTA, 2018). It is important to note that the fieldwork was carried out by one of the authors of this work. In this way, the ethnographer, by sharing the group's routine, was able to better understand the day-to-day life and the reasons that led the elderly to join the physical activity program. To record the information from participant observation, a field diary was used (AGUIRRE; MARTINS, 2014).

Additionally, a substantial amount of data was obtained through interviews

(MINAYO; COSTA, 2018). For this study, we chose to use in-depth interviews, which started with the following question: what reasons led you to practice physical activity? They were previously scheduled and carried out individually between October and December 2018, in a private location, lasting approximately 60 minutes. It is worth noting that the reports were recorded through audio and later transcribed verbatim. It is important to note that the research was undertaken in 2018, for a cumulative period of one year. According to Aguirre and Martins (2014), ethnographic work begins from the demarcation of the research field and continues until the preparation of the final report, as was the case in this research. Two weekly visits to the research environment were carried out, on Mondays and Wednesdays, as agreed with the project coordinator. Frequency is considered sufficient for data collection.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the information from the field research, participant observation enabled the ethnographic report, which aimed to describe the field of investigation in its entirety. To this end, the researcher's impressions and experience in the ethnographic field served as a basis for the interpretation of the collected material (AGUIRRE; MARTINS, 2014; PARKER-JENKINS, 2016). According to Spradley (1980), one of the ways to examine data from field research is thematic analysis, in which the ethnographer identifies patterns of meanings – present in the participants' discourse – and organizes them into categories. At the end of the analysis process, the category that stood out the most was: “reasons that lead the elderly to practice physical activity”.

ETHICAL ASPECTS

Regarding the ethical point of view, this research followed the criteria for investigations involving human beings, based on the resolutions Resolutions 466/2012 and 510/2016, both from the National Health Council. It is important to emphasize that all the elderly individuals signed the informed consent form, and those responsible for the project agreed that the research would be conducted on the University premises, as stated in the Letter of Consent. Finally, the study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee, under the opinion [information temporarily suppressed to guarantee the anonymity of the authorship].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After defining the research field, the researcher contacted the professor coordinating the project, who, over time, became the ethnographer's main informant. She had information about the classes, as well as knowledge of the peculiarities of the life stories of the elderly individuals participating in the study since she had been leading the project for over three years. The researcher also obtained data from the interns who taught the classes. However, they provided more superficial information, since contact with the elderly was limited to one academic semester. It is worth noting that the project was the stage for investigations of various courses at the University, especially Nutrition and Medicine. For this reason, the ethnographer did not encounter any obstacles in undertaking the investigation. After a few days of observing the class, the researcher asked the coordinating teacher if he could participate in subsequent classes. The time had come to effectively join the group and conduct participant observation. The response was positive. Thus, at the beginning of September 2018, the teacher informed the students and interns that, for a few months, the class would have a new student who would conduct research in that environment. During the warm-up exercises, in particular, the first contacts with potential participants were sought. It was the ideal time to interact, since the activity allowed for greater interaction with the participants. In this way, the researcher sought to learn names and individual characteristics. Always welcoming, the students talked about their lives and asked specific questions about the research. After establishing more solid contacts with the elderly, the researcher then invited them to participate in the investigation. Below, descriptions of the profile of the elderly and the project classes will be presented. Finally, the reasons that led the elderly to practice physical activity will be analyzed.

THE ELDERLY IN THE PROJECT

1) "Mrs. Graciosa"

Mrs. Graciosa was the oldest in the class and one of the oldest participants in the project, having been part of the first class. At 83 years old, she was very lucid and physically fit. She lived alone with her grandson. Sometimes, she complained about spending too much time alone at home. The elderly woman stopped attending the project activities for more than a month, due to bladder surgery. With a calm voice and always having a welcoming manner, she seemed to be the "darling" of the class.

2) The "Funny Mr." Mr. Funny suffered from bursitis in both arms, as well as back

pain due to some “parrot beaks.” In addition, he had discomfort in both knees due to osteoarthritis. In the past, as a painter, he had to carry a lot of weight. In the past, he swam in the pool on the campus of the university in question. During the research period, he limited himself to project activities, always accompanied by his granddaughter and wife. His characteristic feature was his whitish mustache, which he constantly moved since he was always smiling. 3) The “Smiling Lady” The Smiling Lady, as her pseudonym suggests, was always smiling when doing physical activity. She used to walk slowly and was usually one of the last to arrive. It was possible to see her from afar, given her very white hair. With circulation problems, the elderly woman wore compression stockings. Due to this difficulty, she intended to add water aerobics to her routine. Her voice was low. Her pleasant smile was “adorned” by some silver fillings.

4) “Lady Joy”

Lady Joy used to laugh out loud during classes while doing the exercises. With reduced hearing in one of her ears, she used a hearing aid to hear more clearly. Due to issues of violence in the city, she traveled to the University by bus. The elderly woman sparingly performed exercises that involved rotating her head, as she claimed to have labyrinthitis. Because she felt pain in her body due to osteopenia, she followed her doctor’s advice and practiced physical activity regularly.

5) “Lady Walking”

Lady Walking lived with her brother, who, according to her, was deaf and mute. The elderly woman’s residence was far from the University. Even so, she would walk with some friends from the project. A few years ago, she had breast cancer. However, she complained of joint problems, which, according to her, were natural for her age. With thin, reddish hair – which highlighted her presence –, she was always surrounded by her “gang” of friends.

6) “Mr. Fortaleza”

Mr. Fortaleza played soccer since he was a child. His father raised 20 children – at the time, 14 were alive. Of the 19 siblings, eight played on their father’s soccer team. The interviewee was one of these players. However, approximately 12 years ago, the elderly man suffered a motorcycle accident, leaving him in a coma for a month. The doctors considered amputating his leg. Because he did physical therapy and psychotherapy, he used to leave classes early. However, his leg is in perfect condition, to the point of running and doing almost all exercises.

7) “Mrs. Health”

Mrs. Health was married to Mr. Funny. Due to health problems – diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity –, she started to practice physical activity regularly. She had noticed some benefits since then, such as lower blood pressure (it used to be 18/10; and, during the research period, it had dropped to 12/8), weight loss (she weighed over 90 kilos; and, during the interview, she weighed 82 kilos) and lower blood sugar levels. Shy in class, “Saúde” seemed focused when doing the exercises.

8) The “Caring Lady”

The Caring Lady dealt with a series of health problems, including diabetes, cholesterol, and high blood pressure. For this reason, she used many medications, such as insulin. Years before, she contracted Chikungunya. She still complained of the pain caused by the disease. A retired lunch lady, “Carinhosa” started working as a maid at the age of 13. She always seemed tired and, from time to time, between one exercise and another, she would sit on a bench. 9) The “Lady in Pink”

The Lady in Pink used to wear a pink blouse. Due to her excess weight and high cholesterol levels, the elderly woman, under the guidance of her doctors, began to walk regularly. The Lady in Pink complained of back pain caused by her weight, in addition to physical consequences arising from problems with her thyroid gland. She was quiet and always seemed tired. During certain exercises, she would sit on one of the benches and watch the classes.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT CLASSES

At 7:15 a.m., it was already possible to notice the presence of elderly people in the facilities of the University’s multi-sports gym. Since the vast majority of the students lived near the educational institution, they usually walked, so they were rarely late. Their conversation was so loud that it drowned out the sound of the birds, which are common outside the facility. At that time, subjects such as health and family problems, as well as peculiarities of their routines, were discussed. At 7:30 am, the students were called to enter one of the courts, the starting point for all activities. During the investigative work, it was noted that the classes were always planned by a pair of interns, with the others acting as assistants. The activities generally had the following structure: stretching; walking around the courts of the multi-sports gymnasium – on certain days, they took place outside the facility –; functional exercises; dancing; and relaxation exercises.

The stretching, led by one of the interns, lasted no more than five minutes.

According to Mr. Engraçado, the exercises “unlocked the body”. Then, the students were instructed to walk around the courts, inside the gymnasium. This activity allowed for more interaction between the elderly since they talked most of the way. It was a kind of “warm-up” for the subsequent activities. On certain days, the walking sessions took place outside the sports facility. On these occasions, the group of students became more lively. The opportunity to walk outdoors and be exposed to the sun's rays seemed to stimulate the elderly. The sound of conversations mixed with the chirping of birds and the noise of cars driving through the university campus. The terrain was somewhat uneven, unlike the gymnasium surface, which was made of hardwood. This characteristic did not matter much to the group. And it was noted that each elderly person followed their own pace when walking.

Meanwhile, the interns prepared the soundtrack – pop music predominated – and worked out the details for the execution of the functional exercises. For this moment, the class was divided, almost always into six groups. Hula hoops, cones, dumbbells, weights, balls, sticks, and elastic bands of all kinds made up the hardwood floor. The students used these instruments to perform functional exercises, designed to work different muscle groups, which were performed in circuits. One of the interns stood in the center of the court and guided the change of stations. The other interns explained how the exercise should be performed, as well as the number of repetitions to be performed. m developed. In this part of the class, the focus was on the students' movements. Corrections were made individually. Conversations in such an environment were limited to brief comments about the activities. It was also noted that the time between each circuit followed a strict interval, which made it difficult for the elderly to interact. "Change stations!" instructed the intern, stationed in the center of the court. In certain exercises, one or another student did not participate due to health problems. "Man, I can't do that exercise. I still have a lot of pain from Chikungunya. I'm going to sit on the bench," said Mrs. Graciosa. Without a shadow of a doubt, the activity that most aroused interest among the majority of the group was dancing. The ladies smiled and danced in the most varied styles possible, such as funk, forró, pop, electronica, and samba. One of the interns dictated the steps to be performed. The elderly women danced in the way that best suited them and danced among themselves. With each song, the cry “Urru!” could be heard. The men, who were fewer in number, swayed with somewhat limping and shy steps.

The final five minutes were intended to “relax the muscles” and reduce the heart

rate. The interns usually received feedback from the class regarding the lesson. Finally, the interns said goodbye to the students and announced the project activities. While the seniors were leaving the gym, the teacher met with the interns to make corrections and reinforce the positive aspects of the activities carried out. This meeting lasted approximately 20 minutes.

ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS: REASONS THAT LEAD ELDERLY PEOPLE TO PRACTICE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The scientific literature points out several benefits provided by the regular practice of physical activity, namely: gain in muscle mass, reduction in lipolytic rates, improvement in cardiorespiratory functions, reduction in weight/excess fat, and prevention of the development of non-communicable diseases (OLIVEIRA et al., 2019). In the case of elderly people, specifically, health protocols recommend 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week (RAI et al., 2019), as recommended in the university project.

In this study, health prevention and medical advice were unanimously the main reasons that encouraged elderly people to practice physical activity in the aforementioned project. The data are consistent with much of the specialized literature (BAVOSO et al., 2017; BIEDENWEG et al., 2014; CAVALLI et al., 2014; FRANCO et al., 2015; GUTIÉRREZ; CALATAYUD; TOMÁS, 2018; HARRIS et al., 2020; LADEIRA et al., 2019; LIMA et al., 2020; PATEL et al., 2013; SILVA et al., 2016), which is permeated by the biomedical discourse of physical activity (COSTA, 2019; MACIEL et al., 2019). This fact, for example, is made explicit by some reports:

I do these activities because of my diabetes, high blood pressure, and cholesterol. It is because of these problems that I do them (Caring Lady, 69 years old).

My doctor at the health center said I had to do an activity, otherwise I would get all stiff. An old and stiff one is not good, because I have extreme osteopenia (Mrs. Joy, 71 years old).

For health, for health. I am hypertensive due to medication. I am not diabetic, but I have high blood pressure and cholesterol. Only those two. I have problems with my spine, in my arms, bursitis, and I have osteoarthritis in my knees. I am all worn out (Mr. Funny, 66 years old).

Health. I don't feel tired, I am healthy, I am doing cardiology exams and I am doing well. For my age, I think these exercises are doing me good (Mrs. Walker, 70 years old).

The doctor found that my cholesterol was very high. He recommended that I walk to see if it would lower my cholesterol. At that time, I was still working outside the home. That's when I started, to lower my cholesterol (Mrs. Pink, 67 years old).

Based on these discourses, the reasons given by participants for joining the physical activity program were related to health, supported by clinical aspects and regulations established based on biomedical standards. This highlights the direct relationship between the practice of physical activities and improvements in the population's health parameters.

For Patel et al. (2013), the reasons that lead elderly people to practice physical activity are strongly influenced by sociodemographic factors, such as chronic health conditions. As found in the aforementioned study, elderly people with three or more chronic diseases perceived more benefits from practicing physical activity than participants in the same age group without comorbidities. It is worth mentioning that the main chronic diseases that affect the elderly population are: cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, diabetes, and cancer (OLIVEIRA et al., 2020). Therefore, following the utilitarian guidelines of the World Health Organization (2020), encouraging physical activity in this perspective acts as a means to prevent diseases and promote healthy aging, as stated by the participants:

I had high blood pressure. I arrived here weighing 90 kilos. As I'm telling you, I'm 80, 81, 82, at most, 82 [current weight]. My blood pressure is normal, 12 by 8. I arrived here with blood pressure that seemed to be 18 by 10. I almost have a heart attack (Mrs. Health, 63 years old).

For my health [...] the doctor told me to go for walks to lower my cholesterol and change my diet. I've had this circulation problem for 2 years, and my feet swell. If I stay still, it gets worse (Mrs. Smiling, 80 years old).

It is worth noting that socializing was another reason given by one of the participants for taking up physical activity. In this case, it can be inferred that the elderly woman's contact with her colleagues in the project was considered a goal, a necessity, moving away from the pure satisfaction of performing physical activity, as highlighted in the excerpt:

It's this communication because I live with my grandson and we're alone because he works. I'm alone at home. Here we don't stop talking [...] it's communication, people. Communication is important. Communication is important. (Mrs. Graciosa, 83 years old).

It was therefore inferred that the participant does not understand socialization as an end in itself, but as a means to achieve personal desires – that is, to avoid loneliness, corroborating what is stated in some research on the subject (BIEDENWEG et al., 2014; CAVALLI et al., 2014; FRANCO, et al., 2015, LADEIRA et al., 2019; LIMA et al., 2020; SILVA et al., 2016). According to Ladeira et al. (2019), the inclusion of elderly people in

physical activity programs generally has socialization as one of the reasons. In the other elderly people surveyed, this aspect was overshadowed by the discourses related to health prevention and medical guidance (HALLEY et al., 2021). The only manifestation most identified with the phenomenological perspective of physical activity (MACIEL, 2018; MACIEL et al., 2018; SURDI, 2019) was that of Mr. Fortaleza (62 years old), as can be seen below:

It's nice, because in the morning, very early, at 7 am, we get that early morning wind. That's why I come early because we feel the dawn of the day, and the wind starts to blow on our bodies. From the entrance of the university, it feels like I'm entering my own house. I feel good. [...] Nowadays, I wouldn't give up the activity for any amount of money. For me, it's a life that's being born. It is, like, a seed that a person plants. The day you don't come, the plant gets sad.

The excerpt in question suggests that the reason Mr. Fortaleza joined the project was the simple satisfaction of practicing physical activity. In addition to a procedural practice aimed at health, it can be inferred that the elderly man attributed meaning to his life based on the relationship with such activities offered by the University. In other words, physical activity brought him closer to his existential projects and the surrounding reality – in line with the propositions of body practices and the phenomenological perspective of physical activity. It is important to mention that this does not oppose the biomedical bias, as the biopsychosocial benefits resulting from physical activity are undeniable. For Maciel et al. (2018) and Surdi (2019), however, one should not disregard the meanings that movement can provide.

Epistemologically anchored in the phenomenological bias, Maciel (2018) substantiates the proposal for humanized physical activity. The recent proposal highlights the intentionality and subjectivities arising from the experience of physical activity, not being restricted to the mere activity itself. At this point, it is necessary to present a brief clarification on two concepts, namely: experience and experience. According to certain authors (ADERALDO; AQUINO; SEVERIANO, 2020; LARROSA, 2002), while the first construct refers to living an action with social meaning, the second arises from an experience of a subjective nature and individually qualified by the subjects. It is reasonable to assume, based on Mr. Fortaleza's speech, that the reason for joining the practice of physical activity was not restricted to speeches propagated by the media or by health professionals. What awakened the elderly person's desire to enter the university project was, in general terms, the simple experience – a psychosocial phenomenon capable of

promoting self-discovery, valuing life, and guided by self-telism. Maciel et al. (2018, p. 1242) argue that the experience of physical activity should not be standardized, since “people may have different reasons for doing it” and that, over time, this may change. In other words, a person may start practicing physical activity imbued with a biomedical bias and, later, enjoy the same experience from the perspective of humanized physical activity, and vice versa.

Therefore, the spectrum of reasons that encourage the elderly to practice physical activity is broad. And physical activity. Although still modestly present in research on the subject, humanized physical activity and the phenomenological approach should continue to gain ground in specialized literature as they offer new perspectives on the field of traditional physical activity and body practices.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research aimed to analyze what motivates elderly people participating in a social project in the city of Fortaleza/CE to practice physical activity. Ultimately, the main reasons that led the elderly to practice this activity were health prevention, medical advice, and socialization, in line with the existing literature on the subject. However, another motivator was noted, although reported, that escaped biomedical and utilitarian logic, namely: the satisfaction of enjoying the practice of physical activity, approaching the phenomenological perspective. This fact reinforces the prevalence of the hegemonic discourse of physical activity as a social representation among the participants.

This research sought to broaden the analysis of the reasons that lead the elderly to practice physical activity, without forgetting the intentions and subjectivities imbued in such an experience. In this sense, one cannot neglect the autotelic character, an end in itself, that physical activity can assume, depending on the meaning attributed by the practitioner. Although the aspects discussed in this study, especially the biomedical and phenomenological ones, present idiosyncrasies, the legitimacy and the possibility of dialogue between them are recognized. Despite the contributions offered, this research has some limitations that need to be considered. It is worth highlighting, initially, the small number of participants, so that the data cannot be generalized. Furthermore, the study, with an ethnographic bias, was limited to a single social project, which has certain particularities, such as the vast majority of participants being low-income individuals and living in needy communities, in addition to the activities being limited to dancing, walking,

and functional exercises. Thus, new research should be undertaken, aiming to foster discussions on the topic at hand.

It is hoped that the results of this study will provoke reflections on the reasons that lead the elderly to practice physical activity and body practices, not only from a biomedical perspective but also from a phenomenological and cultural perspective. There is, therefore, fertile ground to be explored: humanized physical activity. This recent proposal, with a still modest number of publications, focuses on subjectivities and the autotelic nature of physical activity. After all, it is legitimate to assume the existence of other “Fortress Lords” in society.

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