

CHILDREN'S SOCCER AS A TOOL FOR SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: COMPETITIVENESS, COOPERATION AND PLAYFUL LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD



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ABSTRACT

Children's soccer, in addition to being a sport, plays an essential role in the socio-emotional development of children. Based on the studies of Côté, Baker and Abernethy (2007), which highlight the importance of sports experimentation in childhood, this research aimed to

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analyze the influence of soccer practice on the construction of skills such as emotional resilience, engagement with others and self-management in children aged 4 to 5 years and 11 months. The methodology adopted involved the application of virtual forms to parents and guardians of children who practice soccer, as well as to teachers who work in this age group, in two schools in the municipality of Caucaia. The results corroborate the findings of Bettega et al. (2021), when they indicate that, even at early ages, competition should be understood as a means of learning and developing skills, and not just as a search for victory. The data revealed that, when entering the sport, many children faced challenges in social life and emotional regulation, but, over time, they showed significant advances, especially in teamwork and in the ability to deal with frustrations. The testimonies collected reinforced that the pedagogical dynamics of training, group exercises and occasional competitions contribute directly to this progress. Thus, the research concludes that soccer, when conducted in a pedagogical and playful way, is an important tool for the integral development of the child, promoting essential skills for life.

Keywords: Children's Soccer. Socio-emotional development. Playful Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Sports practice in childhood plays an essential role in the integral development of children, especially in the construction of socio-emotional skills. Soccer, as one of the most popular and accessible sports, stands out as a fruitful tool in this process, allowing preschoolers to develop skills such as cooperation, empathy, self-control, and resilience. In this context, understanding how soccer can contribute to children's socio-emotional formation becomes relevant both for the academic community and for education and sports professionals.

Childhood is a crucial period for the development of socio-emotional skills, as it is at this stage that the child begins to interact with the world in a more structured way, learning to deal with emotions and establish interpersonal relationships. According to Durlak et al. (2011), activities that promote social interaction in a structured environment, such as sports, are fundamental for the development of socio-emotional skills, contributing to children's social adaptation and psychological well-being.

The study by Durlak et al. (2011), conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis on the effects of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in school contexts. Although the study does not specifically address sports activities, its findings highlight that structured interventions that promote social interaction are fundamental for the development of socio-emotional skills, contributing to children's social adaptation and psychological well-being. The results indicate that students who participated in SEL programs showed significant improvements in social skills, attitudes, behaviors, and academic performance.

In the context of children's soccer, authors such as Galatti et al. (2017) highlight that the modality not only favors motor development, but also acts directly in the construction of values such as respect, teamwork and responsibility. According to the studies by Côté and Hancock (2016), sports practice in structured environments allows children to learn to deal with challenges, overcome difficulties and frustrations, fundamental aspects for socio-emotional formation.

Living in competitive environments contributes to the improvement of emotional control, helping to regulate anxiety and stress in various circumstances of daily life. In the context of children, the practice of soccer enables experiences that help in the development of self-confidence, self-control and resilience, fundamental skills for facing challenges on and off the field. For Choi, Johnson and Kim (2014) emphasize that adapting to competitive scenarios in sports favors emotional control and anxiety management,

essential aspects for the integral formation of children. Rana and Lehri (2017) make the following statement based on the studies of Choi, Johnson and Kim (2014):

Notably, through competition, children have excellent opportunities to develop their skills, enhance their social adaptation, integration, and emotional growth. In addition, competition is believed to contribute to children's ability to work as a team to achieve common goals. When it comes to long-term success, competition helps children better prepare for the challenges they will face in the future, while also helping them learn effective emotional and psychological skills and strategies for dealing with wins and losses, as well as success and failure. (Rana and Lehri, 2017 p. 75)

In this way, soccer consolidates itself as a valuable pedagogical tool, promoting not only physical, but also social and emotional benefits in childhood.

Therefore, the scope of this research was to investigate the relationship between the practice of soccer and the development of socio-emotional skills in preschool children. The relevance of this study lies in the possibility of contributing to more effective pedagogical and sports practices, providing subsidies for educators, coaches and families on the importance of sport as an educational tool. In addition, by exploring this theme, it is expected to strengthen the academic understanding of the intersection between sport, education and child development, emphasizing the need for strategies that enhance the benefits of soccer in the integral formation of children.

METHODOLOGY

To carry out this study, a qualitative approach methodology was adopted, as this focus allows the analysis of aspects that cannot be reduced to numbers or statistics. Maria Cecília Minayo, in her work *Social Research: Theory, Method and Creativity*, emphasizes that qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena in a deep and contextualized way. According to the author, this methodology values subjectivity, the meanings attributed by the participants and the complexity of the scenarios studied, highlighting that its purpose is to explore the meanings of human actions and relationships, which cannot be simply expressed through equations or statistical averages (Minayo, 2006, p. 22).

Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the Social Sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified [...]. This set of human phenomena is understood here as part of social reality, as the human being is distinguished not only by acting, but by thinking about what he does and by interpreting his actions within and from the reality lived and shared with his fellow human beings. The universe of human production, which can be summarized in the

world of relations, representations and intentionality and is the object of qualitative research, can hardly be translated into numbers and quantitative indicators. (Minayo, 2006, p.21)

The main objective of this research was to develop a thorough and in-depth analysis of the practice of children's soccer and its contribution to the development of socio-emotional skills, without necessarily seeking causal explanations. The focus was on understanding the relationships between variables, identifying patterns of behavior, and analyzing the perceptions and experiences of the participants.

For the investigation, methods such as in-depth interviews, document analysis and content analysis were adopted. These approaches allowed the collection and interpretation of data in a broader and more contextualized way, contributing to a better understanding of the phenomenon studied. The results obtained offer relevant insights both for the construction of theories and for practical decision-making in different areas of knowledge.

The interviews were conducted through the Google Forms® platform, using questionnaires with objective and subjective questions. The research was carried out in two soccer schools, in classes of children aged between 4 and 5 years and 11 months. Parents and teachers of children practicing the sport participated in the investigation. The activities took place between February 2024 and February 2025.

Data collection revealed significant aspects for the study, such as the influence of soccer on the development of children's socio-emotional skills and the impact of this practice on behavior and social interactions. In addition, it was possible to understand the perception of teachers and parents about the importance of sport in the emotional and social formation of children. The results also indicated the interest of educators in continuing to apply pedagogical strategies that encourage the development of these skills through sports practice.

The theoretical foundation of this research brings together contributions from several scholars who help to understand the impact of soccer practice on the development of socio-emotional skills in preschool children. These theoretical frameworks provide an essential conceptual basis for further study, allowing a more detailed analysis of the relationship between sport and child development.

Among the main authors on which this research is based, Piaget (1979) and Vygotsky (1998) stand out, whose theories on child development and the relevance of social interactions are essential to understand how soccer contributes to the construction of

socio-emotional skills. Goleman (1995) analyzes the influence of socio-emotional skills on the integral development of children, evidencing their impact on the educational and social trajectory. In addition, Durlak et al. (2011) demonstrate that structured activities strengthen social adaptation and psychological well-being, while Galatti et al. (2017) and Bettega et al. (2021) highlight soccer as a means of teaching values such as respect, cooperation, and responsibility, expanding the view of its importance in children's education, reinforcing the role of sport in this process.

The research is also supported by institutional studies, such as those of the Ayrton Senna Institute, which highlight the importance of socio-emotional development in childhood.

WHAT ARE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Socio-emotional skills encompass a set of essential skills for an individual to be able to recognize and manage their own emotions, in addition to establishing healthy interpersonal relationships and interacting positively with the environment. These skills are fundamental for personal and social growth, directly impacting academic performance, professional trajectory, and quality of life. Zins & Elias define socio-emotional competencies as "the ability to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others" (Zins & Elias, 2007, p. 234).

Lee and Shute (2009), in their work, define socio-emotional competencies by a set of elements that include (a) variables such as attitude, values, interest and curiosity; (b) personality or temperament variables, such as conscientiousness and extraversion; (c) variables of social relationships, including leadership, social sensitivity, and the ability to work with others; (d) self-constructs such as self-efficacy and personal identity; (e) work habits, such as effort, discipline, persistence and time management; and (f) emotions in relation to a specific task, such as enthusiasm and anxiety. (Farkas, 2003 and Messick, 1979 *apud* Lee; Shute, 2009, p. 06)

The Ayrton Senna Institute (IAS) has stood out as one of the main institutions in Brazil to research and promote the development of socio-emotional skills in education. His research shows that these skills, such as self-management, collaboration, resilience and empathy, are fundamental for school success and for the integral formation of school-age children. The institute works in partnership with education networks, developing methodologies and practices that integrate socio-emotional development into the school

curriculum, contributing to the improvement of learning and preparing students for the challenges of personal and professional life. In addition, their investigations point out that children and young people who develop these skills have better academic performance and greater ability to deal with adversity.

According to the IAS, socio-emotional skills are "individual capacities that are manifested in ways of thinking, feeling, and behaviors or attitudes to relate to oneself and others, set goals, make decisions, and face adverse or new situations" (IAS 2020, p.6).

The Ayrton Senna Institute divides socio-emotional competencies into five macro-competencies that are subdivided into seventeen competencies described below:

Self-management – determination, organization, focus, persistence, and responsibility.

Engagement with others – social initiative, assertiveness, and enthusiasm.

Kindness - empathy, respect, and trust.

Emotional resilience – tolerance to stress, self-confidence, and tolerance to frustration.

Openness to the new – curiosity to learn, creative imagination and artistic interest.



Source: IAS, 2020.

CHILDREN'S SOCCER AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY ALIGNED WITH THE BNCC

The development of socio-emotional skills in childhood is a fundamental aspect for the integral formation of children, as it directly influences their ability to deal with emotions, establish interpersonal relationships, and face challenges throughout life. In the educational context, the construction of these competencies should be encouraged in a systematic way, using methodologies that favor social interaction and learning through

experience. Sport, especially children's soccer, emerges as a useful pedagogical tool in this process, as it provides a structured environment for the development of skills such as cooperation, respect, resilience and self-confidence (DURLAK et al., 2011; GALATTI et al., 2017).

Playing soccer in childhood allows children to experience different emotions, learn to work as a team, and develop self-discipline when dealing with rules and challenges inherent in the game. Palma and Peixoto (2022) highlight that success in a sport does not depend only on physical and technical improvement, but also on psychological strengthening, which includes the ability to manage stress, maintain concentration, and believe in one's own potential. In this sense, the introduction of soccer as a pedagogical strategy in the context of early childhood education can contribute significantly to the construction of essential skills for the academic and social life of students.

In addition, the adaptation of sports activities to the characteristics of children, as suggested by Côté et al. (2017), is essential to ensure that sport fulfills its educational role. Creating diverse experiences and encouraging the learning of multiple skills allow children to not only improve their motor coordination and physical fitness, but also strengthen aspects such as empathy, leadership, and decision-making. Thus, children's soccer is no longer just a recreational practice and becomes a means to promote socio-emotional development.

In the context of Early Childhood Education, the practice of sport and targeted physical activity must be aligned with the fields of experience proposed by the National Common Curricular Base – BNCC (2018), especially *Body, Gesture and Movement* and *The Self, the Other and the We*. The *Body, Gesture and Movement field* emphasizes the importance of movement in the construction of knowledge and in the development of motor coordination, expressiveness and body perception, essential aspects for the experience of sport in childhood. The field *The Self, the Other and the We* reinforces the need for social interactions that promote cooperation, empathy and respect for differences, skills widely worked on in sports dynamics. In this way, by integrating children's soccer into the Early Childhood Education curriculum, a pedagogical environment is created that not only encourages motor development, but also strengthens children's socio-emotional skills, preparing them for healthy interactions and more meaningful learning.

Teles (2024) in his studies states that among the ten general competencies proposed by the BNCC (2018), "five of them are directly linked to socio-emotional

competencies through emotional skills in the student's learning process" (Teles, 2024 p. 47):

1. Understand, interpret, and use different languages: This competency involves not only the ability to understand texts and express ideas clearly, but also the ability to interpret and communicate emotions appropriately, both verbally and nonverbally.
2. Develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving: Here, socio-emotional skills such as persistence, mental flexibility, and the ability to deal with frustrations are essential for finding innovative solutions and overcoming challenges.
3. Argue consistently: The ability to argue consistently involves not only mastering information and concepts, but also the ability to express and defend opinions in a respectful and empathetic manner, taking into account different points of view.
4. Knowing yourself, appreciating yourself, and taking care of your physical and emotional health: This skill highlights the importance of self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-care, which are fundamental components of socio-emotional skills.
5. Collaborate and cooperate: Working in a team requires skills such as empathy, effective communication, conflict resolution, and mutual cooperation, all of which are related to social-emotional competencies. (Teles, 2024 p.47)

In view of the above, it is possible to observe that socio-emotional competencies are fundamental elements in the BNCC (2018), as they cross all areas of knowledge and contribute to the integral formation of students. The BNCC reinforces the need for teaching that goes beyond traditional content, promoting skills such as self-management, empathy, cooperation, and resilience, preparing students for the challenges of life in society. In this sense, the practice of children's soccer proves to be a pedagogical strategy aligned with this proposal, as it provides an environment conducive to the development of these skills through interaction, teamwork and overcoming challenges. By integrating soccer into the educational context, it is possible to enhance the construction of children's socio-emotional skills, ensuring meaningful learning in line with contemporary educational guidelines.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Child development occurs through a sequence of stages that involve cognitive, emotional, motor and social transformations. Several scholars of developmental psychology, such as Piaget and Vygotsky, point out that social interactions play a fundamental role in the growth of children, influencing their autonomy, communication skills, and the construction of socio-emotional skills. Among the critical periods of development, the age group between 4 years and 5 years and 11 months stands out as a phase of great evolution in the way the child perceives the world and interacts with it.

At this age, children experience significant advances in language, symbolic thinking, and socialization. According to Piaget's theory, this period corresponds to the preoperative stage, in which the child develops his imagination, begins to understand basic social rules and improves his ability to express himself. However, it is still common for them to have self-centeredness, that is, they have difficulties seeing the other's perspective, making social interactions essential for improving this skill.

Vygotsky, in turn, emphasizes that learning occurs through interaction with the social environment and with more experienced individuals, such as adults and peers. Thus, at this stage of childhood, experiences that involve collective play, the sharing of objects and the resolution of conflicts in a guided way, contribute directly to the development of empathy, cooperation and respect for rules. It is in this context that environments such as school and sports activities become fundamental, as they offer structured opportunities for children to learn to deal with emotions, negotiate interests and strengthen their autonomy.

Teles (2024) on the studies of Vygotsky, Piaget and Wallon makes the following statement:

By relating the ideas of these theorists to the concept of social skills, it can be seen that the development of these skills does not occur in isolation, but rather in interaction with the social and cultural environment. The theories of Wallon, Piaget and Vygotsky emphasize the importance of social interactions, language and adult mediation in the construction of children's social skills. (Teles, 2024 p.28)

Social interactions during this period are essential for the construction of the child's identity and emotional security. Through contact with other children and adults, they begin to understand concepts such as friendship, collaboration, and reciprocity. In addition, they learn to deal with frustrations, improving their emotional resilience. Activities that encourage socialization, such as games, sports, and group play, provide a safe space for the development of these skills, preparing the child for future challenges in different contexts of life.

Thus, it is evident that the stages of child development are marked by important transformations, and the age group between 4 and 5 years and 11 months represents a crucial period for the formation of socio-emotional skills. Social interactions at this stage not only favor learning, but also promote balanced growth, helping the child to become a more adapted, confident and prepared individual for living in society.

THE PRACTICE OF CHILDREN'S SOCCER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Sports practice in childhood plays a fundamental role in the integral development of children, going beyond the physical and motor benefits to directly influence the formation of social skills and socio-emotional competences. Sport, by providing experiences of cooperation, respect for rules, overcoming challenges and living in a group, becomes an environment conducive to learning essential values for life in society.

Among the sports modalities, soccer stands out as one of the most accessible and popular practices, promoting interaction between children and favoring the development of skills such as communication, empathy, resilience, and teamwork (Galatti et al., 2017). According to Durlak et al. (2011), structured activities (especially sports activities) strengthen social adaptation and psychological well-being, helping children to learn to deal with emotions and challenges in a more balanced way. In this sense, authors such as Goleman (1995) emphasize that the emotional intelligence acquired in these environments directly impacts the personal and academic success of individuals.

In addition, Vygotsky's (1998) sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions in learning and in the construction of child development, making sports practice a powerful tool to stimulate these interactions in a playful and educational context. Gardner (1994), in turn, highlights bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligence as fundamental for human development, showing that sport contributes to these dimensions by integrating physical movements and interpersonal relationships in a dynamic environment.

Thus, understanding sports practice in childhood as an instrument for the development of socio-emotional skills reinforces its relevance both for education and for the formation of citizens who are more prepared for life's challenges. Investing in sport as a means of learning and social development is, therefore, an essential strategy to enhance children's skills, promoting a more complete education aligned with the demands of the twenty-first century.

The practice of sports in childhood becomes beneficial for numerous factors. Teles (2024) states that:

Participating in physical and sports activities at school can help students develop a positive body self-image, improving their self-esteem and self-confidence that, by acquiring such skills, can improve their physical performance, gain confidence in themselves and their abilities, providing an environment conducive to the

development of important social skills, such as cooperation, teamwork, communication and conflict resolution. (TELES, 2024 p. 7)

In the context of children's soccer, this perspective is especially relevant, as sports practice contributes to the development of fundamental socio-emotional skills, such as self-confidence, resilience, emotional control, and focus. Palma and Peixoto (2022) highlight that success in any area of life, including sports performance, depends not only on physical improvement, but also on the strengthening of essential psychological aspects.

In addition to physical training, which seeks to improve technique and conditioning, it is equally important to pay attention to the development of psychological aspects. Skills such as concentration, self-confidence, stress management, and resilience play a crucial role not only in sports performance but also in various challenges of everyday life. The ability to face difficulties, deal with pressures and overcome obstacles is directly influenced by these mental skills. In this way, an integral development, which involves both physical and mental preparation, becomes essential to achieve success in different areas of life, providing a necessary balance for lasting success.

Football is a highly competitive sport, where the search for victory and the desire to stand out are natural aspects. However, to achieve success, it is essential that children understand the importance of working as a team and developing skills that favor collaboration. While competitiveness is an intrinsic feature of the game, it must be balanced with engagement and mutual respect among players, so that the group is strengthened as a whole.

In this process, the role of the teacher is crucial. When acting as a mediator and advisor, he must apply pedagogical strategies that promote not only the technique, but also the social and emotional development of the young athletes. Especially in the age group between 4 and 5 years and 11 months, when children are in the middle of the training process, the educator has the responsibility to teach values such as cooperation, empathy and respect, fundamental for good performance on the field and for the personal growth of each one.

It is in this balance between competitiveness and teamwork that children can learn to harmonize their individual goals with collective ones, creating an environment of respect and mutual learning. The development of these socio-emotional skills, in addition to boosting performance in sports, prepares the little ones for life in society, teaching them how to deal with challenges and work effectively with others.

CÔTÉ, BAKER, ABERNETHY, (2007) *apud* Bettega et al. (2021 p.2) in an observation of children of a higher age group brings the following statement "Between six and ten years old, it is expected that children are experiencing a stage of sports experimentation", adding that "even if competitive results are important within the context of Brazilian football, The fundamental purpose of the competition for children between 8 and 10 years old should be centered on the development and learning of skills through a playful environment." (Bettega et al., 2021, p. 11)

In view of what was exposed in the study by Bettega et. al. (2021), it is reflected that soccer for children aged 4 to 5 years and 11 months requires special care in the approach to the sport, which goes beyond competitiveness. At such an early stage of development, the focus should not be exclusively on the search for results, but on the construction of socio-emotional skills that are fundamental for the formation of the individual. While competitiveness is a natural and important trait in the context of football, it must be balanced with the development of skills such as teamwork, empathy and emotional management. The quote from Bettega et al. (2021), when stating that football for children between 8 and 10 years old should be centered on learning and experimentation in a playful environment, reinforces the idea that, in younger age groups, such as between 4 and 5 years old, this attentive look at emotional and social development becomes even more crucial.

At this stage, children are taking their first steps in understanding rules, motor development, and interacting with others. Sport, when well conducted, can be an excellent tool to teach notions of collaboration, respect, and resilience. The experience of playing soccer should be seen as an opportunity for children to learn to deal with the frustrations of not always winning, to celebrate achievements as a group and to understand that collective effort is more important than individual victory.

In addition, it is at this time that children begin to form their social identity, and it is in the sports environment that they can learn to work together, to trust the other and to express themselves in a healthy way. For this, the teacher has an essential role, by creating pedagogical strategies that integrate both the pleasure of playing and the learning of cooperative behaviors. A teacher who prioritizes socialization and emotional development not only contributes to the formation of good players in the future, but also to the construction of citizens who are more aware and prepared to deal with social dynamics.

Therefore, contrary to what many may imagine, football for children in this age group should not only be about winning or losing, but about learning to deal with emotions, with others and with one's own body. Learning socio-emotional skills at this stage is the basis for the development of more complex sports skills in the future, making children not only have fun, but also grow in a balanced and healthy way.

RESULTS

The research carried out through virtual forms applied to parents, guardians and teachers of children who practice soccer in schools in the municipality of Caucaia revealed significant data on the impacts of the practice of sport on the development of socio-emotional skills. The sample, collected voluntarily, included both children who started practicing soccer at 4 or 5 years of age and the educators responsible for these classes, allowing a broad analysis of the relationship between the sport and the emotional growth of children.

The results obtained indicated that most children started soccer training at 5 years of age (60%), while 40% started at 4 years of age. This demonstrates that, for many parents and guardians, soccer is seen as an activity that can start at an early age, contributing to the development of both motor and social skills. Regarding the children's experience with sports, 26.7% have been practicing soccer for less than 6 months, while 26.7% have been practicing soccer for more than 2 years, which suggests a good continuity in involvement with sports activity over time.

The research also addressed the initial difficulties that children had before having contact with soccer practices. The answers indicated that, for most children, the main challenge was emotional resilience (26.7%), followed by difficulties with openness to the new (20%) and engagement with others (13.3%). Notably, 40% of the caregivers reported that their children did not have difficulties in these competencies, which may reflect a favorable level of previous development, or the lack of an adequate context to assess these competencies.

After a minimum of 6 months of training, parents and guardians observed significant improvements in several areas. Emotional resilience was the most prominent competency, with 40% of respondents pointing to improvements in this area. In addition, 26.7% perceived advances in openness to the new, while 20% observed better engagement with others and 13.3% noted developments in self-management. These results indicate that the

practice of soccer can play an important role in the construction of socio-emotional skills, such as the ability to deal with frustrations and challenges, in addition to improving social interaction among children.

Another relevant point of the research was the unanimity of parents and guardians when they answered that the pedagogical dynamics of training, group exercises and punctual competitions may have contributed to the development of these skills. All participants stated that the structure of the training was a positive factor for the children's emotional progress, indicating that, by offering a collaborative and challenging learning environment, football can act as an effective tool in the development of emotional and social skills.

The interview conducted with teachers who work in teaching soccer to children revealed valuable insights about the impact of the sport on the socio-emotional development of the little ones. All the teachers interviewed, with more than two years of experience in teaching soccer, work with groups of children between the ages of 4 and 5. This period of performance allows an in-depth view of how sport can contribute to children's emotional and social growth.

When asked about the main difficulties they observe in children when they arrive at classes, 50% of the teachers indicated that the most common difficulties are related to **self-management**, while the other 50% pointed to **engagement with others** as the biggest initial difficulty. These results reflect the complexity of the developmental stage of children, who, at this stage, are still learning to control their emotions and engage with their peers in a cooperative manner.

After the start of training, all teachers observed a significant improvement in **engagement with others**, which indicates that group work, team dynamics and the collective environment of football have a direct impact on children's social interaction. This data corroborates the idea that, when challenged to work together, children develop essential social skills, such as communication, collaboration and mutual respect.

In addition, all the interviewees agreed that the pedagogical dynamics of the training, the group exercises and the punctual competitions contributed to the development of these skills. When justifying their answers, 50% of the teachers highlighted that children positively influence each other during training, creating an environment where the exchange of experiences and behaviors favors emotional and social development. The other 50% stressed that teamwork and group dynamics are key to generating personal and

emotional growth, as they allow children to learn to deal with others in a more empathetic and cooperative way.

These results suggest that, for children aged 4 to 5 years, soccer is a tool not only for physical development, but, above all, for the strengthening of socio-emotional skills. The sport's playful and collaborative environment provides the little ones with the opportunity to practice and improve their social interaction skills, which are fundamental for their growth in various areas of life. The contribution of teachers, by structuring activities that promote engagement and teamwork, is essential for soccer to fulfill its role in the integral development of children.

Finally, the survey showed that all the adults of reference interviewed would recommend soccer as an activity for the development of socio-emotional skills in children. This data reinforces the idea that sport is not only a form of entertainment or physical enhancement, but also a powerful platform for the development of fundamental emotional skills, such as empathy, resilience, and the ability to work in a team.

In summary, the results of the research indicate that soccer, when practiced in a structured way and with a focus on emotional development, can be an effective tool for the formation of more balanced, resilient and socially competent children. The integration of appropriate pedagogical dynamics and the encouragement of active participation in groups are key elements to achieve this goal.

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey, which involved both parents and teachers, provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of children's soccer on the development of children's socio-emotional skills. The pedagogical dynamics of training, group exercises and punctual competitions were pointed out as crucial factors in this learning process. The parents' answers, especially their statements, clearly reveal how soccer has been fundamental for the emotional and social growth of their children.

When questioning parents about the contribution of pedagogical dynamics to the development of socio-emotional skills, the statements revealed valuable insights. One of the parents commented: "Football, because it is collective, brings this notion of the WHOLE as greater than the parts added together." This statement highlights how sport, by requiring cooperation and teamwork, teaches children the importance of the collective, making them realize that their actions impact the group and not just themselves. Another testimony

highlighted the dedication of the professors: "The professors are very dedicated and make the work easier." This reflects the importance of well-guided teaching, which manages to integrate technical learning with socio-emotional training effectively.

Competitions were also cited by many parents as an essential component of children's learning. One of the testimonies mentioned: "The competitions were fundamental in this learning process, winning and losing is part of it. The important thing is to participate and have fun." This report reflects the understanding that soccer should not be seen only as an incessant search for victory, but rather as an opportunity for children to learn to deal with victories and defeats in a balanced way. The notion that healthy competition can be a learning experience is key at this stage of development. Another parent added: "The intentional pedagogical dynamic enables the child to understand that he can get frustrated and keep trying." This comment underlines the role of the teacher in creating an environment where emotional resilience is not only taught but also experienced by children.

In addition, many parents have observed improvements in their children's social and emotional behavior. One statement clarified: "He is lighter, willing to listen." The practice of soccer has the power to transform children's attitudes towards others, making them more receptive and collaborative. Another parent noted that soccer favors "the creation of social bonds, learns to work in a team, develops a sense of discipline, improves concentration, team spirit." These aspects are crucial for the development of an emotionally healthy child, able to handle challenges and interact positively with others.

The issue of frustration was also a widely commented point. Competition, often seen as a source of stress for children, has been approached constructively in soccer schools. One parent reported:

"My son has never had a problem with emotional resilience, but competing helps him to improve working more and more, the fact of losing, winning and not scoring a goal. He gets better and better and doesn't get frustrated. So the little school helps him learn that competing is healthy."

This testimony reflects how sport can be a powerful tool for strengthening emotional resilience, helping children learn to deal with losses and overcome them without discouragement.

In addition to the emotional aspects, many parents highlighted the advances in their children's social skills. One of the most revealing testimonies was: "He also developed the control of sharing, passing the ball to his teammate when scoring the goal, not being

selfish. And have the patience to wait for the right moment to make any move." This statement emphasizes the importance of learning cooperative behaviors and developing empathy, which are essential not only in soccer, but also in children's daily interactions.

When asked about the recommendation of soccer as a sport for the development of socio-emotional skills, the parents' answers were unanimous and extremely positive. One of the testimonies mentioned:

"I realized that soccer was fundamental in raising my son. In addition to practicing a sport creating a healthy habit for him for years, he also developed this healthy part in competitions, that is, the important thing is to compete. Winning or losing is part of it. Another point was in building new friendships, it was very good for his socialization with other colleagues."

This comment demonstrates that, in addition to its benefits for emotional development, soccer also provides a valuable space for socialization, forming bonds of friendship and respect among children.

In summary, the parents' testimonies reflect the importance of soccer not only as a physical activity, but as a powerful tool in the development of socio-emotional skills essential for children's well-being and growth. Sport, when well guided and conducted in an appropriate pedagogical environment, offers unique opportunities for strengthening skills such as resilience, self-management, empathy and cooperation, fundamental aspects for the integral development of children.

CONCLUSION

The research carried out on the impact of soccer on the development of socio-emotional skills in children aged 4 to 5 years and 11 months revealed significant results that corroborate the idea that sport, when well conducted, plays a fundamental role in the emotional and social formation of children. The analysis of the answers of parents, guardians and teachers showed that the practice of soccer goes beyond a simple physical activity, being a powerful tool for the development of essential skills for social life, such as resilience, engagement with others, self-management and cooperation.

The data obtained indicate that, when starting training, children face significant challenges in the areas of self-management and engagement with others, difficulties that are naturally overcome with time and involvement in the dynamics of soccer. The answers indicated that, after participating in the proposed activities, there was a clear improvement, especially in social engagement. This suggests that the collective environment and the

interactions that occur during training and competitions favor the development of essential social skills, such as teamwork, empathy, and mutual respect. The practice of soccer, with its collaborative and challenging nature, seems to offer an ideal space for children to learn to deal with frustrations, gain confidence and develop a spirit of collectivity.

The statements of parents and guardians corroborated these results, by highlighting the importance of competitions and pedagogical dynamics in the learning process. Testimonials such as "The competitions were fundamental in this learning process, winning and losing is part of it. The important thing is to participate and have fun" reflect the understanding that the football experience teaches children that healthy competitiveness and learning from victories and defeats are crucial aspects of their emotional growth. In addition, many parents observed that their children developed skills such as patience, discipline and the ability to work as a team, evidencing the positive impact of soccer on social and emotional behavior.

The research also revealed that the performance of teachers, with their intentional pedagogical practices, is a determining factor for the success of the process. The teachers' responses highlighted the relevance of activities that involve collaboration and sharing of group tasks, as well as the understanding that soccer offers opportunities for emotional growth, by teaching children to deal with frustration and persist in the face of adversity. The dedication of educators, as mentioned by parents, is key to creating a safe and nurturing environment in which children feel motivated to learn and develop.

In conclusion, the results of the research show that soccer, when combined with an appropriate pedagogical approach, plays a crucial role in the development of children's socio-emotional skills. The practice of sport provides a valuable space for strengthening skills such as resilience, teamwork, self-management and empathy, in addition to favoring socialization and the creation of bonds of friendship. Thus, the research reinforces the importance of seeing soccer not only as a physical activity, but as an integral tool for the emotional and social formation of children, preparing them to face the challenges of daily life with more confidence and balance.

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