



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Physical activity in adolescents: analysis of the social influence of parents and friends[☆]

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Atividade motora;
Adolescentes;
País;

Abstract

Objective: to analyze the association between physical activity and social support from parents and friends on the physical activity level among adolescents.

Methods: data from 2,361 adolescents (56.6% females; mean age 16.4; SD = 1.2), from public and private high schools were analyzed. The physical activity level of the adolescents, parents, and friends were measured through a questionnaire. Parents' and friends' support and self-efficacy were measured using two previously tested scales. Data analysis was performed using the structural equation modeling in IBM® SPSS® Amos™ 20.0.

Results: physical activity of friends was directly associated with physical activity level of adolescents. Physical activity of the father was associated with that of their sons, and the physical activity of mother was associated with that of their daughters. An indirect association was identified between the physical activity of parents and friends with physical activity level of the adolescents, mediated by social support. Social support was directly associated with physical activity in adolescents of both genders and indirectly mediated by self-efficacy.

Conclusions: parents and friends have a social influence on adolescents' level of physical activity through the mechanism of behavior modeling or through social support, mediated by self-efficacy.

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Atividade física em adolescentes: análise da influência social de pais e amigos

Resumo

Objetivo: analisar a associação da prática de atividade física e do apoio social dos pais e dos amigos com o nível de atividade física dos adolescentes.

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Amigos;
Apoio social

Métodos: foram analisados dados de 2,361 adolescentes (56,6% do sexo feminino, média de idade = 16,4; dp = 1,2) do ensino médio de escolas públicas e privadas. A atividade física dos adolescentes, dos pais e dos amigos foi mensurada por questionário. O apoio social dos pais e dos amigos e a autoeficácia foram mensurados por duas escalas previamente testadas. A modelagem por equações estruturais foi utilizada para análise dos dados, recorrendo-se ao programa AMOS 20.0.

Resultados: a prática de atividade física dos amigos se associou diretamente ao nível de atividade física dos adolescentes, enquanto a prática do pai se associou diretamente com a do filho e a da mãe com a da filha. Também foi identificada uma relação indireta entre a prática de atividade física dos pais e dos amigos e o nível de atividade física dos adolescentes, sendo parcialmente mediada pelo apoio social desses dois grupos. O apoio social dos pais e dos amigos se associou diretamente à atividade física do adolescente, e foi mediado, indiretamente pela percepção de autoeficácia.

Conclusões: pais e amigos exercem influência social sobre a prática de atividade física dos adolescentes por meio da modelação do comportamento e do fornecimento de apoio social.

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Introduction

Social influence is one of the factors associated with practice of physical activity in adolescents,¹ and is characterized by the influence exerted by parents, friends, teachers, and relatives, among other groups, on physical activity. This influence may occur either directly - through social support, and indirectly - through behavior modeling.^{2,3}

The practice of physical activity and social support from parents and friends represent forms of social influence most often studied in adolescents.^{4,5} The modeling of human behavior is one of the constructs of the theory of social learning and assumes that human behavior is acquired and modified from the observation of the behavior of and learning experiences from socially important people.^{5,6} In this sense, it is understood that the physical activity of parents and friends would act as a model for the practice of adolescents.^{7,8} Thus, adolescents with physically active parents and/or friends are more likely to be more active. However, study results are still inconclusive in this regard.^{4,5}

The physical activity of these two groups can also indirectly influence the physical activity of adolescents through social support. There is evidence that more physically active parents and friends offer more social support,⁴ and that social support is positively associated with physical activity among adolescents.⁶ Parents and friends may influence the adolescents' participation in physical activities by providing different types of social support (by encouraging, stimulating, practicing together, providing transportation for the adolescents to the practice sites).⁹ Social support can also exert an indirect influence, increasing the perception of self-efficacy.^{4,5} Higher levels of self-efficacy have been observed among adolescents who received more social support from parents and friends.^{10,11} This construct has been consistently associated with higher levels of physical activity among adolescents.¹² However, few studies have assessed these associations simultaneously.^{5,11}

Therefore, identifying the mechanisms by which parents and friends can influence the physical activity of adolescents is important for the construction of more effective interventions to increase physical activity levels in this group.^{4,5} This

study assessed direct and indirect associations of physical activity and social support of parents and friends with the level of physical activity among adolescents.

Methods

This was a cross-sectional study involving adolescents aged 14 to 19 years, of both genders, from public and private high schools in the city of João Pessoa, state of Paraíba, Brazil. An outcome prevalence of 50%, a confidence interval of 95%, a maximum tolerable error of three percentage points, a design effect (deff) equal to 2, and a 30% increase in the sample size to compensate for possible losses and refusals were considered in order to determine the sample size.

The sample was selected by two-stage cluster sampling. In the first stage, 30 high schools were systematically selected, proportionally distributed by type (public or private) and geographic region of the municipality (north, south, east, west). In the second phase, 135 classes were selected, proportionately distributed by shift (day and night) and grade (10th, 11th, and 12th grades, since in Brazil, elementary school comprises 1st to 9th grades).

All data were collected through a questionnaire, completed by the students in the classroom, during a regular class. Data collection took place between May and September of 2009, by a previously trained staff consisting of six undergraduate students of physical education.

Adolescents who were outside the age range studied (< 14 or > 19 years old), who left several questions unanswered, or those who had any physical or mental impairment were excluded from the study.

The sociodemographic variables were gender, age, and socioeconomic class. The methodology of the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (Associação Brasileira de Empresas de Pesquisa - ABEP)¹³ was used in order to determine the socioeconomic class of the adolescents. This proposal groups the families of the adolescents in the following classes: A (highest), B, C, D, and E (lowest).

Nutritional status was verified by body mass index (BMI = body weight [kg]/height [m]²), using self-reported measures

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