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Initiation in Baseball and Family Adjustments in Favor of their Educational Role

[La iniciación en el béisbol y la preparación de la familia para favorecer su función educativa]

[Iniciação ao beisebol e preparação da família para sua função educacional]

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Family is the most important agent of socialization through which the students who start sports training develop their identities and learn the rules and values of their social settings.

Aim: To spread the results of the design and implementation of a set of educational actions that will prepare the families of stater baseball athletes (7-8-year-old children) in the municipality of Sancti Spiritus.



Materials and methods: The methods used were empirical: survey, interview, observation, document review, pool analysis, and pre-experiment, along with theoretical and mathematical-statistical methods. The sample consisted of fifteen families of starter baseball athletes in the 7-8 yea-old class, at the Julio Antonio Mella Sports Facility in Sancti Spiritus.

Results: the actions taken produced a major quality change in all the dimensions (cognitive, procedural, and attitudinal) with their respective indicators associated with family preparedness for integration into the sports initiation process as educators.

Conclusions: The families were empowered for better integration into the work of baseball coaches in the sports facility, thus enabling a broader educational role in the process.

Keywords: family, sports initiation, baseball, educational role

RESUMEN

Introducción: la familia es considerada como el agente de socialización más importante, a través del cual los educandos devenidos principiantes en la iniciación deportiva, desarrollan sus propias identidades y aprenden las reglas y los valores del entorno social donde conviven.

Objetivo: socializar los resultados del diseño e implementación de un conjunto de acciones educativas para la preparación de las familias de los niños principiantes al béisbol de la categoría 7-8 años del municipio de Sancti Spíritus.

Materiales y métodos: se emplearon como métodos empíricos: encuesta, entrevista, observación, estudio de documentos, grupo de análisis y pre-experimento, combinados con otros teóricos y matemático-estadísticos. La muestra se conformó por quince familias de los niños iniciantes al Beisbol de la categoría 7-8 años del Combinado Deportivo Julio Antonio Mella de Sancti Spíritus.

Resultados: las acciones implementadas lograron un salto en los resultados de cada una de las dimensiones (cognitiva, procedimental y actitudinal) con sus respectivos indicadores de la preparación de las familias para su integración al proceso de iniciación deportiva en favor de la función educativa.



Conclusiones: se logró potenciar la preparación de las familias y con ello, una mejor integración de las mismas al trabajo de conjunto con los profesores de beisbol del área deportiva, favoreciéndose la función educativa en este proceso.

Palabras clave: familia; iniciación deportiva; beisbol; función educativa

RESUMO

Introdução: a família é considerada o mais importante agente de socialização, por meio do qual os alunos iniciantes na iniciação esportiva desenvolvem suas próprias identidades e aprendem as regras e os valores do meio social em que vivem.

Objetivo: socializar os resultados da concepção e implementação de um conjunto de ações educativas para a preparação das famílias de iniciantes de beisebol de 7-8 anos de idade no município de Sancti Spiritus.

Materiais e métodos: Foram utilizados os seguintes métodos empíricos: pesquisa, entrevista, observação, estudo documental, análise de grupo e pré-experimento, combinados com outros métodos teóricos e matemático-estatísticos. A amostra foi composta por quinze famílias de crianças iniciantes no beisebol na categoria de 7 a 8 anos do Complexo Esportivo Julio Antonio Mella, em Sancti Spíritus.

Resultados: as ações implementadas conseguiram um salto nos resultados de cada uma das dimensões (cognitiva, procedimental e atitudinal) com seus respectivos indicadores da preparação das famílias para sua integração no processo de iniciação esportiva em prol da função educativa.

Conclusões: Foi possível melhorar a preparação das famílias e, com isso, uma melhor integração das famílias no trabalho com os professores de beisebol na área esportiva, favorecendo a função educativa nesse processo.

Palavras-chave: família, iniciação esportiva, beisebol, função educacional, iniciação esportiva.



INTRODUCTION

Knowledge about and interest in families have grown over time, (Espada *et al.*, 2009; Dominguez, 2011; Ossorio, 2012; Ramos & González, 2017; Valenzuela *et al.*, 2018; Campos, 2020; Bernal *et al.*, 2020; Avila & Giannotti, 2020; Calle *et al.*, 2020; Porto *et al.*, 2021; Morejón *et al.*, 2021; Ponce *et al.*, 2022; Díaz *et al.*, 2022; Soriano *et al.*, 2022) with coincidences in the recognition of the relevant roles of households in the education of their children and beginners of sport practice. Families are the natural group of humans, the most stable institution throughout the history of society, depending on the epoch and the existing socioeconomic conditions, which helps identify feelings of belonging, need satisfaction, and the solution to family problems.

The complexity of modern life and the need to create a favorable educational environment in sports initiation demands parent orientation directed to assuming themselves as a family group, how to do in terms of children's education, and changes depending on the basic learning for life, which, according to García (2022) the, most important thing in an initiation process is that the child explores every possibility of movement and interaction with their bodies and those of their peers, depending on their experiences, rather than the technical improvement in some specific sport. Besides, they must develop as part of the general base of the personality formation process of new generations.

Scholars take it as one of the multiple ways of dealing with the study of family, from the general stance of Cuban researchers, according to Caro *et al.*, (2019). They think that family is the agent that mediates the influence of teachers on their students with educational actions oriented in schools.

As usual, the responsibility of school education rests, in essence, on such institutions. However, several agents co-exist throughout the process, which has a remarkable influence on the education of learners (the community and family). The community is involved because it is the ideal space to perform educational programs (curricular or extracurricular) that include sports initiation, whereas the family (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2018) is a critical part of socializing the process.



Kubayi *et al.* (2014), cited by Porto *et al.*, 2021 and Morejón *et al.*, 2021, noted that family is the most important agent of socialization through which starter sport training students develop their identities and learn the rules and values of their social settings. Generally, families provide children the first opportunity to begin the practice of sports, a pivotal factor to continue or give up systematic sports practice. Dunn *et al.* (2016) and Sheridan *et al.* (2014), cited by Porto *et al.*, (2021 said that from the beginning of sports practice to the first results, parental guidance is determinant in the education and the sports lives of children.

Espada *et al.* (2009) said that the household and educational facilities provide habits and that a favorable perception of sports practice by the family, and their active engagement have a very effective influence on their children's practice. Ponce *et al.* (2022) noted that due to the particularities of sports initiation, greater support is needed from the families; when a child has begun practicing a sport, families must make important adjustments in terms of time, effort, economy, and effective support.

What actions could lead to enhanced family educational preparedness to support the children who begin sports practice in the 7-8-year-old class in the municipality of Sancti Spiritus.

Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to spread the results of the design and implementation of a set of educational actions that will prepare the families of starter baseball athletes (7-8-year-old children) in the municipality of Sancti Spiritus.

This paper is part of a wider project named Optimization of starter, selection, and training sport processes at the Faculty of Physical Culture, the Jose Marti University of Sancti Spiritus, with the engagement of the Group for Sports Initiation Studies in Sancti Spiritus (GEIDESS).



MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research followed the precepts of dialectic materialism as the general method of scientific knowledge on which a mixed research methodology rests. This permits a homogeneous combination of quantitative and qualitative data through theoretical methods.

The theoretical method used was the analytical synthetic to determine and generalize the particularities and characteristics of family preparedness to support the initiation of new baseball players. The historical logical method permitted the study of family preparedness throughout history. Modeling was useful to structure the educational actions directed to encourage family preparedness to assist their 7-8-year-old children who took up baseball, with all the different components and stages.

Participatory observation was one of the empirical methods used in the parents' meetings, how the family receives preparation to assume their educative roles and integration to initiation in baseball. The survey helped confirm the actual state of family preparedness in their educational roles in the children's initiation of baseball as a sport. The interview helped verify the role of sports executives in the family preparation process.

The documentary review was useful to check how the ruling documents of baseball teacher performance are dealt with during the initiation of the sport. Brainstorming enabled analysis, reflection, and assessment of the preliminary version of educative actions, whereas methodological triangulation helped contrast information gathered from the implementation of several methods and techniques.

Experimentation: A pedagogic pre-experiment was performed as a methodological variant, with no difference from the control group. The intervention, measurement, and control were made on the sample selected, initially and following the implementation of educative actions to validate their effectiveness in pedagogic practice.



A qualitative measurement scale was used to evaluate variable family preparedness for their educative role, to be part of the initiation in the sport of baseball, Low (1), Mid (2), and High (3), according to the different levels of development to measure and compare the initial and final states of each dimension and the general preparedness, individually and collectively. The ordinal scale permits a quantitative analysis and derives the qualitative assessment of the phenomenon studied.

Sample

The sample was selected intentionally; it consisted of 15 families (7 mothers, 8 fathers), 9 were professionals and the others were skilled workers. The sample also included three sports teachers (bachelors of Physical Culture) with a professional experience of 10 years, on average; two were executives, also bachelors, and the 15 male children (7-8 years old) who play for the little league baseball team at the Julio Antonio Mella Sports Facility, in the municipality of Sancti Spiritus, the 4 de abril junior baseball field. The researcher also was close to the teaching setting, derived from her previous performance at the University of Physical Culture in Sancti Spiritus.

From a statistical-mathematical perspective, the percentage calculation and descriptive statistics were used to characterize and represent the results. They were also helpful for the interpretation and quantitative assessment of the results.

Dependent variable

Family preparedness was conceptualized according to its educative role to be part of the initiation in the sport of baseball, an improvement from the results of the acquisition and optimization of knowledge, procedures (skills and actions), and the attitude of families to collaborate through their educative roles with the baseball teachers during the initiation stage of the sport.



A reorganization of these aspects helped set up various dimensions and indicators to enhance family preparedness as educators to become part of their children's initiation in baseball.

1. Cognitive dimension.

1.1. Knowledge the family has about their child's initiation in baseball.

1.2. Knowledge the teachers have about ways of integrating the family into the initiation process in baseball.

1.3. Knowledge the families have about ways of collaborating with the baseball teacher as an educator.

1.4. Knowledge the baseball teacher has about the use of the families' educational role.

2. Procedural dimension.

2.1 Families know what to do to integrate their work with that of the teacher with their children.

2.2 They can determine why every task will be oriented by the teacher to the children.

2.3 The families know beforehand how the tasks oriented by the teachers will be done.

3 Attitudinal dimension.

3.1 Understanding and awareness by the families of the need to encourage family preparedness to be part of their children's initiation in baseball.

3.2 Responsibility and satisfaction expressed by the families to be part of their children's initiation in baseball.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was divided into four stages, namely: diagnostic, design of educational actions, implementation and evaluation of the effects of educational actions.

The diagnostic relied on the operationalization of the dependent variable family preparedness in their educative role to be part of their children's initiation in baseball, with three dimensions (cognitive, procedural, and attitudinal), and nine indicators that guide the creation of the instruments used to collect valid and reliable information.

Results from participatory observation during the school and sports year in five of the nine parent meetings held. In that sense, parent attendance increased progressively, from an initial 60 % to a final 100 %. The topics dealt with the children's learning rate, most common technical problems, ways of overcoming them, interest, discipline, practice games plan during the stage, and logistic and infrastructure issues.

The survey helped confirm the actual state of family preparedness in their educational roles in the children's initiation of baseball as a sport. The surveyed subjects recognized having little knowledge about this topic (50%) (indicators 1.1,1.2, 1.3, and 1.4) about sports initiation in baseball, and their educative roles to become part of this process as collaborators of sports teachers. As to procedures (indicators 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3), more than 60% of the surveyed families acknowledged a lack of skills and procedures to determine what to do, why, and how, to be part of the teacher's job with the children.

Indicators 3.1 and 3.2 related to the attitudinal dimension by the family as educators to be part of their children's initiation in baseball, over 70 % expressed certain understanding and awareness, as well as responsibility and satisfaction to encourage preparedness to become part of the sports teaching process in which their children are engaged.

Meanwhile, the interview of teachers responsible for the sports initiation in baseball aimed to get information related to the family-sports facility relationship background, their notion of family involvement with the baseball facility, the characteristics of family



involvement, the influence of family involvement in the sports facility during the children's initiation, and if they had ever taken educational actions to promote family-sports facility bonds.

The two executives surveyed confirmed that the families collaborate when they are asked by the teachers, but there is no real connection between the families and their children's initiation process in baseball and referred to the educative roles of parents in that process.

Documentary review, particularly, the analysis of the Comprehensive Program for Athlete Preparedness (baseball), showed that this matter has not been dealt with by the redactors of this ruling document for baseball teachers during the initiation of the sport.

Two brainstorming sessions were attended by 5 mothers and 6 fathers (over 50%) related to the children in the study, belonging to the Julio Antonio Mella Sports Facility in the municipality of Sancti Spiritus. Their opinions were quite unclear due to their lack of knowledge about the topics discussed (educative aspects in which parents can participate and contribute), about the need to understand that the results are not as important as the cheerful participation and joy during the game, having no pressure for victory.

All the information collected through the methods and techniques used was contrasted through methodological triangulation. The most significant weaknesses and shortcomings were associated with the procedural and cognitive dimensions, while the attitudinal dimension showed some positive behavior, though with the express desire of families to be willing to improve. No previous organized and systematic working plans were found in terms of family collaboration as educators of their children, who started baseball in the 7-8-year-old class.



As previously shown in the diagnostic, the families of the children enrolled at the Julio Antonio Mella baseball facility in Sancti Spiritus had noticeable weaknesses in terms of readiness to help with the educative work, which is significantly important in this teaching-learning process. Sports teaching must reach instructive and educative relevance, not only for the beginners to reach proper physical, technical-tactical, and intellectual development, and enjoy the sport, or become great athletes in the future but also foster roles that make them better humans, more proactive and transforming in the society they live in.

Therefore, the families' educative role in the initiation of baseball players as socializing agents of children athletes is critical. Families should set up the pertinent boundaries to keep the novel players from family pressure, which instead of encouraging better performance in the field, leads to emotional and psychological damage that might linger in future stages, and hinder proper sports education.

Educative actions to encourage the families of starter baseball athletes in the 7-8 yea-old class, at the Julio Antonio Mella Sports Facility in Sancti Spiritus

The educative actions were designed according to the following criteria: These processes target partial objectives that respond to the motives of the activity they are part of. It requires mastery of skills like what to do and how to do it, which are procedures per se. The educative action will focus on what will be done, why it will be done, and how the process will be completed (Tourrián, 2022).

The educative actions designed are stated below:

1. An overall diagnostic of the beginner and his class, and of the families with children who joined the baseball facility.
2. Joint attendance and participation of the baseball facility's teachers and the families to the parent meetings summoned by the elementary school.
3. Announcement of bi-monthly parent meetings at the baseball facility together with the sports teachers to evaluate the children's performance, learning,



- discipline, interest in learning, and possible parent support to complete the teaching program.
4. Parent schools, which provide knowledge to the children's tutors about their educative roles to support the work of baseball teachers in the sports facility.
 5. Talks with the starter children's tutors about sports and values for life.
 6. Teamwork and its importance in baseball.
 7. Victories and defeats in baseball initiation.
 8. Umpires and their roles in baseball initiation.
 9. Baseball practice in the 7-8-year-old category, and time management with children.
 10. Information to parents about the conclusions of educative meetings conceived in the teaching program of the sports course.

The results from each dimension were compared before and after implementing the educative actions to evaluate family preparedness to support the baseball athletes in the 7-8 year-old class, at the Julio Antonio Mella Sports Facility in Sancti Spiritus.

The table below shows the main inferences with a synthesis of each dimension's results (Table 1)

Table 1. - Results of the dependent variable behavior

Indicators	Pre-test			Post-test		
	Low (1) %	Mid (2) %	High (3) %	Low (1) %	Mid (2) %	High (3) %
1.1	53.3	46.7	0.0	6.7	26.7	66.7
1.2	0.0	73.3	26.7	0.0	13.3	86.7
1.3	80.0	20.	0.0	0.0	26.7	73.3
1.4	80.0	20.	0.0	0.0	33.3	66.7
Cognitive	53.3	40.0	6.7	1.7	25.0	73.3
2.1	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	26.7	73.3
2.2	66.7	33.3	0.0	13.3	40.0	46.7
2.3	73.3	26.7	0.0	6.7	33.3	60.0
Procedural	68.9	31.1	0.0	6.7	33.3	60.0
3.1	26.7	73.3	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0
3.2	20.0	+80	0.0	0.0	26.7	73.3



Attitudinal	23.3	76.7	0.0	0.0	23.3	76.7
Total	51.9	45.2	3.0	3.0	27.4	69.6

As shown in Table 1, the results of the post-test were qualitative and quantitative higher than the ones in the pre-test, as the cognitive dimension, particularly indicator 1.2 (86.7 %), was considered High. It expresses the assessment made by families, and the performance of baseball teachers to engage them in initiation in baseball. It is a positive reflection of the confidence given by these sports professionals.

In the procedural dimension, the three indicators (2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) showed higher values; however, in 2.2 (how to determine and why each task will be oriented by the teacher to the children), several shortcomings were observed. They can determine why every task will be oriented by the teacher to the children.

Concerning the attitudinal dimension after implementing the educative actions, the values observed were over 70% in the two indicators (3.1 and 3.2). It shows that families have a more conscious, responsible, and satisfying perception of their educative roles, and are willing to assume their part in the integration into the initiation process of their children to baseball.

Overall, following the post-test, the dependent variable (Table 1) confirms that the educative actions implemented contributed to higher family preparedness to support the 7-8-year-old children who begin the practice of baseball. Accordingly, there was a favorable change in the indicators of every dimension, from the lowest to the highest levels.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the bibliographic review, and the confirmation of the several approaches and trends related to family roles, this study offers an approximation to the definition of the object of this research for a sport that is part of the national culture.



The actual state of family readiness to support their 7-8-year-old children enrolled in the baseball facility in Sancti Spiritus during their sports initiation showed quantitative and qualitative shortcomings and flaws caused by the lack of knowledge of this process, which hinders proper sports teacher-family-beginner interaction, a critical triad that determines outcomes in sports.

The educative actions designed and implemented led to a transformation in family preparedness to promote their educative roles and integration into the sports initiation process in baseball. Consequently, the outcomes observed in each dimension and indicator of this variable were higher.

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Conflict of interest statement:

The authors declare having competing interests.

Author contribution statement:

The authors have participated in the redaction of the manuscript and the documentary review.



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