

REFLECTIONS ON THE UNDERSTANDING OF LEISURE AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS REGARDING THIS INTERFACE

REFLEXÕES SOBRE A COMPREENSÃO DOS PROFISSIONAIS DAS ÁREAS DO LAZER E DA SAÚDE A RESPEITO DESSA INTERFACE

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RESUMO

A interface entre as áreas do lazer e da saúde é crescente no Brasil. Assim, se faz relevante investigar como os profissionais dessas áreas compreendem essa relação. Este trabalho tem por objetivo analisar como os profissionais afiliados à Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Estudos do Lazer e à Sociedade Brasileira de Atividade Física e Saúde compreendem a temática lazer e saúde, acadêmica e/ou profissionalmente. Esta pesquisa é qualitativa, transversal e exploratória. Participaram da pesquisa 80 pessoas (42,9±10,2 anos), sendo 41 do sexo feminino e 44 profissionais da SBAFS. Empregou-se o *Software* IRaMuTeQ para análises estatísticas sobre os *corpus* textuais, e a análise crítica de discurso. As análises tiveram um aproveitamento de 88,25% do *corpus* textual; foi gerada uma Classificação Hierárquica Descendente com três classes: 1) Qualidade de vida; 2) Direitos sociais; 3) Conhecimento Acadêmico. Os profissionais entendem existir uma interface entre o lazer e a saúde, sendo o lazer um importante meio de promoção do desenvolvimento humano. Contudo, identificou-se um hiato na intercessão e na construção de conhecimentos interdisciplinares que permitam a sua efetivação no cotidiano das pessoas, assim como a ampliação de políticas intersetoriais aproximando essas temáticas. **Palavras-chave:** Conhecimento acadêmico. Desenvolvimento Humano. Qualidade de vida.

ABSTRACT

The interface between the leisure and health fields is growing in Brazil. Thus, it is relevant to investigate how professionals in these areas understand this relationship. This research work aims to analyze how professionals affiliated with the Brazilian Association for Research and Graduate Programs on Leisure Studies and with the Brazilian Society of Physical Activity and Health understand the leisure and health field, academically and/or professionally. It is a qualitative, cross-sectional and exploratory research. Eighty people (42.9±10.2 years old) participated, being mostly women, 41, and SBAFS professionals, 44. The IRaMuTeQ software was used for statistical analysis of the textual *corpus* and for critical discourse analysis. The analyses had an 88.25% utilization of the textual *corpus*; a Descending Hierarchical Classification was generated with three classes: 1) Quality of life; 2) Social rights; 3) Academic knowledge. The professionals understand that there is an interface between leisure and health, with leisure being an important means to promote human development. However, a gap was identified in the intercession and construction of interdisciplinary knowledge that allows its effectiveness in people's daily lives, as well as the expansion of intersectoral policies bringing these themes together.

Keywords: Academic knowledge. Human development. Quality of life.

Introduction

In times when science in Brazil suffers hard blows for its consolidation, funding and contribution to construction of knowledge aimed at social development, the role of scientific associations becomes imperative¹. The latter foster scientific production in certain fields of science by encouraging the creation and/or development of research groups, the promotion, development and dissemination of results from scientific studies, professional training, in addition to acting in political debates.

In the Brazilian context, for instance, two scientific associations focus on the theme of leisure and health promotion studies, namely: the Brazilian Association for Research and Graduate Programs on Leisure Studies [*Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Estudos do Lazer*] (ANPEL) and the Brazilian Society of Physical Activity and Health

[*Sociedade Brasileira de Atividade Física e Saúde*] (SBAFS). It is important to emphasize that the members of these institutions are professionals from the academic environment and/or the labor market working directly in the production and dissemination of knowledge, whether in social projects or in government programs, and in the private sector, reproducing the discourses adopted in their respective areas. Therefore, they play an important role in shaping opinion in society.

The national literature presents a gap in relation to empirical studies that discuss, in a dialogic, interdisciplinary and interprofessional manner, the interface between the leisure and health themes². From this perspective, the studies developed by Pondé³, Silva et al.⁴ can be mentioned. In addition to the latter, publications with unilateral approaches were found, presenting criticisms and/or reflections about this interface⁵⁻⁷, establishing possible approximations⁸, discussing curriculum/academic training⁹, or reporting on intersectoral actions¹⁰.

The relevance of this fact is emphasized, considering that professional intervention must encompass the educational process, awareness and motivation for the adoption of leisure-related habits that directly influence human development. Professionals with solid training will promote the interface of themes related to leisure, health, quality of life, social rights, dialoguing appropriately with the population.

In this research work, leisure is understood as a need and means for human development¹¹, a social right¹², characterized by meaningful and enriching experiences^{13,14}. Social rights, as fundamental rights¹⁵, are recognized as protective rights, which guarantee the minimum necessary for an individual to exist in a dignified manner within a society administered by the democratic rule-of-law state, which must promote public policies that enable social development.

Health as a social right¹⁶ is understood by the authors of this research in a holistic¹⁷ and broad¹⁸ way, beyond the biomedical aspect and individual changes in behavior. Thus, health is directly related to different determinant social factors¹⁹.

Finally, human development consists of a lifelong process, which involves the enhancement of human capabilities (physical, emotional, cognitive), individual and social growth, enabling active participation in actions that allow for the valuation and improvement of quality of life²⁰. In this sense, the feasibility of social rights such as leisure and health are fundamental to promote human development.

Considering the role played by the aforementioned institutions and their respective members in the academic and social contexts, the objective of this study was to analyze how professionals affiliated with the Brazilian Association for Research and Graduate Programs on Leisure Studies and with the Brazilian Society of Physical Activity and Health understand the leisure and health theme, academically and/or professionally.

Methods

Sample

This research was qualitative, exploratory and cross-sectional²¹. The choice of the sample, both for institutions (ANPEL and SBAFS) and for participants, was intentional and non-probabilistic. At the time of the survey, according to data provided by the participating institutions, the number of members were 226 and 188, respectively. As inclusion criteria for participants, it was defined that they should: 1) Be a registered member of the institutions in question; 2) Have a degree in any field of knowledge of the Health Sciences; 3) Have, at least, a degree at the *Lato Sensu* level; 4) Act professionally with the leisure and/or health theme(s), whether academically and/or through intervention in the market; 5) Be a male or female; 6) Be of any age; 7) Be of any nationality; 8) Accept to participate in the research as

a volunteer. Initially, the consent term was obtained from both institutions, which subsequently sent an email to their respective associates, informing them about and requesting their participation in the research.

Procedures

In March 2021, a pilot study was carried out, with the participation of 11 people who met the aforementioned criteria in order for the adequacy of the stipulated procedures to be tested. To this end, a semi-structured questionnaire composed of two parts was adopted: 1) Socio-demographic data; 2) Open-ended questions aimed at comprehending: (i) Understanding about the relationship between leisure and health; (ii) Factors that interfere with the development of the relationship between leisure and health as social rights; (iii) Tendency of studies addressing leisure and health; (iv) Relationship between leisure and health in training and/or continuing and permanent education of professionals working in these fields.

Once the necessary corrections were made to the questionnaire, an email was sent to the associates of each institution, inviting them to participate in the survey by answering the questionnaire in Google Forms format, accessible through a link provided in the email; the survey was carried out in April 2021. Along with the questionnaire was the informed consent form that should be signed virtually. The participants had up to 15 days to fill out the instrument. The participants' sociodemographic data are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' sociodemographic data

Variables		General (f)
N		80
Average age (years)		42.9
Sex	Male	39
	Female	41
Undergraduate course	Physical Education	77
	Other fields	3
Graduate program	Specialization	69
	Master's	69
	Doctoral program	51
Field(s) of professional activity	Postdoctoral program	13
	Leisure	15
	Health	24
Both		41

Source: authors

The SBAFS associates were numbered from one to 44, with this institution being named Field 1 (health); in their turn, the ANPEL respondents were numbered from 45 to 80, and this institution was named Field 2 (leisure). In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to inform in which field(s) they normally work, namely: 1 = health; 2 = leisure; 3 = both fields.

The study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the University of São Paulo, under opinion No. 4.578.906. The participants signed the free consent and clarification term, in virtual format. All ethical procedures were followed.

Statistical analysis

In order to analyze the data from the questionnaires, the IRaMuTeQ software (*Interface de R pour les Analyses Multi dimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires*)^{22,23} was used. It is worth stressing that the instrument itself is not configured as a data analysis method, but is a tool capable of processing them, since the interpretation of the material will be the researcher's task. The latter plays an active role, as they are responsible for preparing the textual *corpus* to be analyzed, as well as scrutinizing the data based on the results from the instrument.

The software run classic lexicographic analyses, for statistical verification of the number of evocations and forms. The Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC) generated a dendrogram with the classes, disregarding words with $\chi^2 < 3.80$ ($p < 0.05$). The DHC was chosen because, according to Sousa²³, it is the main resource of the software, used in approximately 85% of research with the IRaMuTeQ – even though other analysis mechanisms were possible.

Results

The general *corpus* was made up of 80 texts separated into 617 text segments (TSs), with a utilization of 86.3%, while the desirable level is above 70%²². From the initial analyses, 14,170 occurrences (words, forms or vocables) emerged, of which 1,963 are distinct words, and 434 with a single occurrence. Based on the algorithms used by IRaMuTeQ, the DHC defines the categories of words that are most representative and associated with each other, forming lexical classes. With these classes defined, the researcher names them in accordance with the characteristics identified in each class, considering the theoretical framework adopted. In this study, the classes generated by the DHC were defined as: Class 1 - Quality of Life, with 266 TSs (43.1%), Class 2 - Social Rights, with 242 TSs (39.2%), and Class 3 - Academic knowledge, with 109 TSs (17.7%).

The three classes were divided into two branches (A and B) of the total *corpus* of analysis. Subcorpus A, referred to as “Academic knowledge”, includes class 3 (“knowledge”), referring to aspects of the academic environment. Subcorpus B, entitled “Human development”, covers class 1 (quality of life) and class 2 (social rights), concerning actions in the professional sphere and citizenship. Non-significant words, according to the software, were not mentioned in the dendrogram.



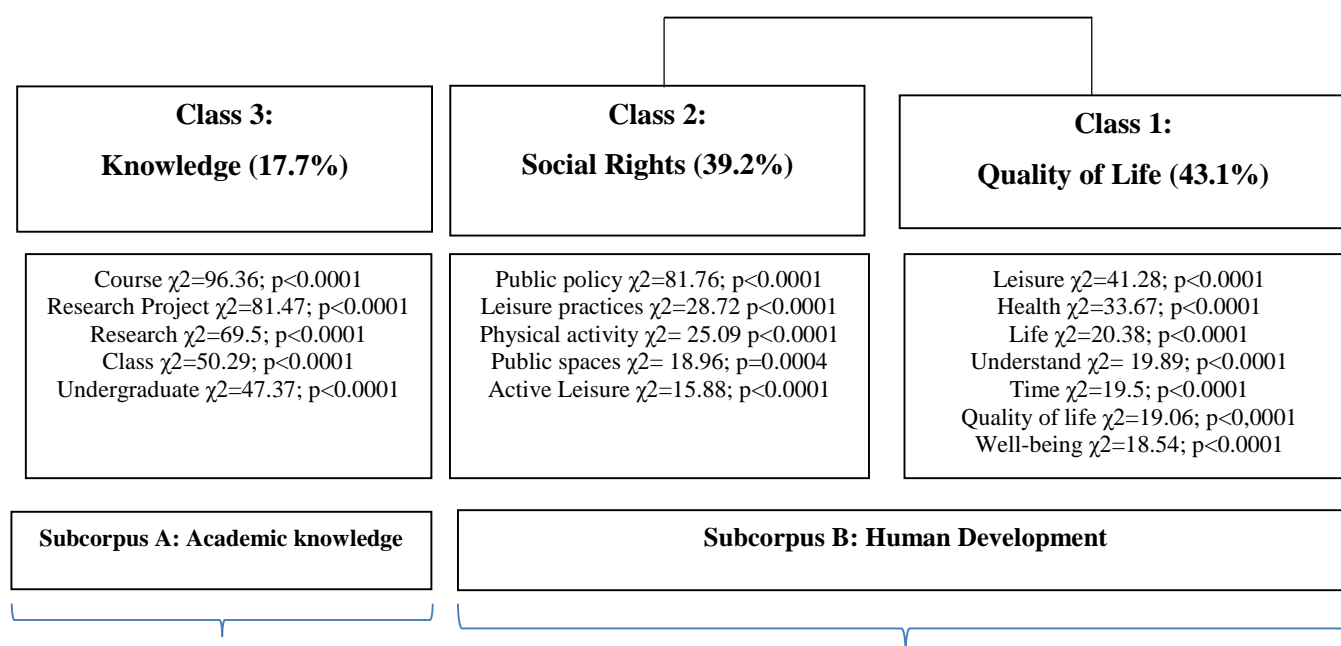


Figure 1. Descending Hierarchical Classification

Source: authors

Discussion

Bearing in mind that almost all participants in this research are from the Physical Education area ($n = 77$), the following discussion will focus on this field of knowledge. The participants' discourses show the relevance that academic training has in adequately preparing professionals to deal with issues related to the interface between leisure and health.

All lexical analyses performed were considered robust, as they met the criteria established by the software²². Said analyses made it possible to discriminate three classes of discourses – “quality of life”, social rights” and “academic knowledge” –, which formed two subcorpora, “academic knowledge” and “human development”, the latter being the most representative (82.3%).

Maciel, Saraiva and Martins²⁴ state that discourse as a social practice is influenced by ideological, social, cultural and temporal aspects, being reflected in professional training and intervention. These authors investigated the discourses of social actors (professionals and users) involved in a social physical activity program in Belo Horizonte/MG, identifying the predominance of the biomedical conception present in the professionals' narratives, reflecting on how users construct the social representation about the experience of leisure-time physical activity and health. Silva et al.⁴, in a cross-cultural study with students from Physical Education courses and similar ones in Brazil and in the United States, investigated the meanings assigned to professional practice in the health field and their understanding of leisure. The authors concluded that such an understanding is founded, above all, on the biological sciences and, in a modest way, on the sphere of the Human Sciences. A similar perception of this discourse was identified in a systematic review conducted by Silva et al.⁷ on the relationship between leisure-time physical activity and health.

Although there is still a predominance of this hegemonic view, the present study brings narratives that recognize the importance of promoting greater interlocution between the themes, highlighting the role of professional training and the interaction of the university with the community in order to establish this dialogue:

“[...] protagonism of the university and research groups proposing actions that articulate the two subjects; connection between the research fields in the health and leisure area [...] development of disciplines related to leisure studies in undergraduate Physical Education courses, as well as in extension projects and in debates and research in study groups; [...] specialization courses; partnerships between the representations of the two fields [...] carrying out diagnostic studies on the difficulties of access to health and leisure by minorities, subsidizing the elaboration of specific intersectoral policies for these populations” (Subj. 78. ANPEL. Works in the leisure field).

[...] extension projects must go beyond the information policy, thus moving forward to interventions” (Subj. 77. ANPEL. Works in the leisure and health fields).

“[...] integration of disciplines in undergraduate Physical Education courses and insertion of leisure practices in disciplines in the health field” (Subj. 5. SBAFS. Works in the health field).

“[...] emphasis on the importance of the themes with the inclusion of disciplines in the curricula of the courses, interventions in extension programs and research projects on the themes” (Subj. 38; SBAFS. Works in the health and leisure fields).

This discussion directly spans conceptions and propositions on professional training in this field of knowledge when debating the national curriculum guidelines [*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais*] (DCN). These guidelines are mandatory norms that direct curriculum planning and, consequently, define the necessary skills for the development of professional practice. It is known that there are disputes and different interests among the areas of the different fields of knowledge when defining the curricular proposal²⁵. Therefore, there are conflicts of power and hegemonies in the construction of knowledge, as well as implications for professional intervention²⁶. This discussion is present in different publications addressing the focus on health^{27,28}, leisure²⁹, besides seeking a dialogue between these themes¹⁰.

Oliveira and Andrade²⁷ state that professional training in this field of knowledge for the health sector is deficient in view of the demands of the Brazilian Unified Health System [*Sistema Único de Saúde*] (SUS). Also according to these authors, the proposed extinction of the Bachelor's degree, according to the 2015 Bill of Resolution minute, would further restrict training, as the challenges to training in Physical Education and health extrapolate the limits of a single modality. Santiago et al.²⁸ investigated the political pedagogical project of the Physical Education course at the University of Piauí, in force in 2009, concluding that the hegemonic theoretical assumptions of both the course and the field are distant from the principles of the SUS, reaffirming the gap between training policies in Physical Education and those of Collective Health.

In their turn, Vieira Júnior, Silva, Uvinha²⁹ analyzed the treatment given to leisure in the 2004 and 2018 versions of the DCN, aiming to identify and reflect on the current direction regarding leisure in the context of professional training in this field. According to these authors, a broad debate on these new guidelines is essential so that the importance of the pedagogical approach of leisure in professional training in Physical Education is not minimized. They state that the health theme, which dialogues with leisure, must be understood as a transversal and expanded dimension in the training of this professional, that is, regardless of the field of intervention (teaching and/or bachelor's degree).

Marcellino and Bonfim⁹ analyzed the relationship developed on the leisure and health theme, in leisure and recreation disciplines offered in the curricula of undergraduate Physical Education courses by public and private institutions (n = 6) in the State of São Paulo. The authors identified that only in two institutions these disciplines established a dialogue between the themes.

Oliveira and Gomes³⁰ conducted a literature review and identified three interpretive axes concerning the Physical Education field, when it comes to training for the health area: 1) teaching-service integration; 2) humanization/expansion of the concept of health-disease process; 3) dichotomies and internal differentiation in the area. The authors report the existence of challenges that safeguard some approximations and intersections that begin to influence training policies for the health field. Silva and Ferreira³¹ investigated the interface between leisure and health in the academic-scientific context, specifically in editions of the National Recreation and Leisure Meeting [*Encontro Nacional de Recreação e Lazer*] (Enarel). According to the authors, throughout the 29 editions of this event, this theme was not central in any of them. Still according to the same study, the interface between leisure and health was mentioned only in five editions, through two round-table discussions, two lectures and one workshop. Moreover, the authors pointed out that, in the academic environment, there equally is low exploration and articulation, which is also little emphasized in Physical Education curricula.

Through the discourses of the participants of this research, as well as through the aforementioned studies, the existence of gaps in the intersection and interlocution between the fields is perceived, and this distance needs to be shortened, not only in the academic context, but also extending to the school context³².

The discussions pointed out by the various studies mentioned dialogue with the narratives identified in the present research in relation to the need to build interdisciplinary knowledge between the fields, as well as interprofessional actions, not only in the academic environment, but also in interventions within these professionals' different fields of practice, such as in social programs aimed at physical activity and leisure, and in the school context.

Subcorpus B, Human development, comprised by the "quality of life" and "social rights" classes, presents narratives of participants who associate both leisure and health as important elements of this subcorpus:

"The leisure experience can influence all dimensions of life. The experience of leisure, when positive for the subject, will help them maintain a good state of health [...] including understandings about the benefits of leisure for health, stimulating the experience of this dimension of life in a balanced way" (Subj. 48. ANPEL. Works in the leisure and health fields).

"[...] Having access to or guaranteeing good health conditions is directly related to the socioeconomic conditions of the population. Leisure, I find it more complex to consider whether there is a factor that interferes with leisure in different contexts [...] public policies and actions by private organizations, or the third sector, in schools and universities" (Subj. 38. SBAFS. Works in the leisure and health fields).

"(...) information to the population about their social rights and greater investment in public policies both for awareness and for provision of means for leisure practices". (Subj. 17; SBAFS; Works in the health and leisure fields).

Art. 6 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution³³ recognizes leisure and health as social rights and, therefore, directly related to promotion of quality of life. The latter, however, is not yet a reality for a large portion of the Brazilian population due to existing social inequality.

A study carried out by Ferreira et al.³⁴, based on the 2013 National Health Survey, concluded that there is a reduced offer of access to leisure for the population. The researchers identified that only 20% of the Brazilian population knows about any public physical activity program, and only 9.7% claimed doing some physical activity in public programs, and about 30% are not interested in public programs.

These data are in line with statements made by other authors²⁹ who point out that, although leisure is gaining importance as a social issue and object of claim as a social right linked to quality of life in Brazil, the public power still does not develop sectoral policies that make this right a reality for the population.

With regard to health and quality of life, the inseparability between both themes is recognized. Health is intrinsically linked to social justice; therefore, it is imperative to reflect on the structural characteristics that interfere with the maintenance of social inequalities, so that they can be changed.

According to the results of this research, the interdependence of the “quality of life” and “social rights” classes is deemed as promoters of human development, with leisure being an important means to attain it. This topic was debated in 2000, during the 6th World Leisure Congress held by the World Leisure Organization³⁵, in the city of Bilbao, Spain. This discourse was identified transversally in the speeches of the participants of this research:

“Leisure, understood as a time and space for playful experiences, a place for organizing culture, permeated by relations of hegemony, presents itself as a privileged space for access to bodily practices and health education, understood as resulting from conditions concerning eating, housing, education, income, environment, work, transportation, employment, leisure, freedom, access to and ownership of land, and access to health services. In Brazil, immense social inequality compromises the population’s access to goods and services that enable their human development” (Subj. 67. ANPEL. Works in the leisure and health fields).

“[...] leisure is an important dimension of people’s lives and well-being. It is a relevant element for health in a holistic sense”. (Subj. 72; ANPEL; Works in the leisure field).

“[...] encourage health promotion actions that foster leisure as a social right, and make the population aware of leisure as a human need (Subj. 10. SBAFS. Works in the health field).

In this line of reasoning, studies point to the intrinsic relationship of leisure as a possibility to promote human development^{13,20,35}. According to these authors, leisure takes on this role throughout the life cycle, regardless of sex, as it brings about well-being in all dimensions that compose the human being, acting in the formation of identity, self-confidence, self-realization, access to culture.

Csikszentmihalyi et al.³⁵ state that leisure contributes to promoting optimal human development due to an increased development of the psychological complexity that results from two components: 1) differentiation, or refinement of autonomy, skill and individual capacity; 2) integration, or harmonious participation with the social and cultural

environment. In their turn, Monteagudo et al.²⁰ stress that, currently, society recognizes that leisure works improving people's general well-being, reaffirming feelings of satisfaction and meanings in life, thus playing a fundamental role in HD.

However, in order for this protagonism to occur, Ayuso³⁶ highlights the need for education to take leisure as an educational process aimed at developing values, knowledge and skills that support individual self-confidence in order to enable the enjoyment of enriching experiences. This process can take place in community centers, social projects, schools, where Physical Education professionals intervene.

Of similar importance, it is imperative that society offers the entire population conditions of access to leisure spaces and equipment, in order to maximize the benefits arising from different leisure contents. In this sense, it is necessary not only to create public policies, but to effectively implement them.

It is understood that the analyses carried out contributed to advancing knowledge in the field. However, some limitations are recognized, such as the intentional selection of participants and institutions; predominance of a sample composed of Physical Education professionals. Thus, as a suggestion, further studies should include more professionals for investigation, as well as different fields that dialogue with the theme in question.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind the relevance of the interface between leisure and health, this article aimed to analyze how professionals affiliated with the ANPEL and SBAFS understand this theme, academically and/or professionally. The analysis of the textual *corpus* using IRaMuTeQ identified three classes: "quality of life", "social rights" and "academic knowledge". In this sense, these professionals' understanding of the investigated theme is intertwined in these three classes, highlighting leisure as an important means for promoting human development. Besides this aspect, a gap is identified in the intercession and construction of interdisciplinary knowledge that allows its implementation in an expanded intervention, as well as the expansion of intersectoral policies, bringing these themes closer.

Considering the analyses conducted and the relevance of these scientific institutions, it is possible to suggest some unilateral and bilateral propositional actions that contribute to advancing the development of this interface, namely: 1) Approximation between scientific boards; 2) In national academic events – encouraging thematic round-table discussions; 3) Publications – releasing thematic issues in their respective journals; 4) Political actions with government bodies, such as the ministries of Citizenship, Education, Health, which carry out public policies and social projects on the topic, aiming at approximations and alignments in order to raise awareness about and potentiate actions related to the theme; 5) Political actions aimed at civil society – for instance, the Federal Council of Physical Education and Universities –, encouraging debates and a re-evaluation of the curricular proposal; 6) Awareness campaigns for the population and professionals in the field in different media, exploring the theme.

It is essential to raise awareness about leisure experiences beyond the perspective of active leisure, that is, of the physical-sporting content, as well as to understand physical activity as a right and a possibility of cultural and personal enrichment – and not just from a biomedical viewpoint. Moreover, it is necessary to encourage the experiences of different leisure possibilities (cultural, artistic, intellectual, tourist, manual) as a promoter of health dimensions (physical, mental, social and spiritual). Finally, it is deemed essential to promote university extension activities that explore this interface with the population, in addition to conducting interdisciplinary and interprofessional research, enabling the production of expanded knowledge.

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