

A Descriptive Study of Wrestling Practice in the Youth School Games in Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract:

Background: In Brazil the highest competitive achievement for youth in school age is to win the 'Youth School Games' (YSG). The YSG has a sport-education perspective focus thought to encourage a pedagogical perspective for developing young athletes. The aim of the present study was to describe the overall practice aspects of the students who participated in the Rio de Janeiro selective of the 2018 YSG: (a) training location, (b) period of practice, and (c) previous sports experience. The research question we sought to answer was: Do the wrestling competitors of the YSG from the state of Rio de Janeiro practice wrestling in school environment as suggested by the sporting event?

Materials and Methods: In this quantitative research, 67 students from twenty schools participating in the selective for the YSG in Rio de Janeiro answered to a questionnaire in 2018. By descriptively analyzing the data, we found that 85.1% of the competitors participating in the YSG in 2018 trained wrestling.

Results: The competitors who practiced wrestling trained at two public schools' Experimental Olympic Gymnasium (EOG) (44.8%), and in sports clubs (34.3%). The competitors who did not practice wrestling trained judo in clubs (20.9%). All the wrestling competitors came from schools from Rio de Janeiro and Niterói.

Conclusion: In conclusion, from the 20 schools present at the YSG, only two public schools offered wrestling practice. Thus, students from 18 schools needed to look for other environments to practice wrestling. Therefore, students seek to practice wrestling, which can be an opening for developing new projects to widen the opportunity for youth to practice wrestling and catch the attention of institutions such as the Ministry of Sport.

Key Word: Physical Education, School Sports, Martial Arts, Youth Sports.

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I. Introduction

Physical education (PE) and sports can have positive and profound outcomes for youth with multiple educational benefits including the whole personal development spectrum: the physical, affective, social, and cognitive aspects of the practitioner (Kirk, 2013). It is noteworthy that PE needs to take different forms and pedagogical perspectives to overcome the current traditional 'one-size-fits-all', sport technique-based form to fulfill its potential of providing positive experiences that encourage students to engage in lifelong physical activity (Kirk, 2013). Furthermore, school PE plays an important role in fostering students' interest in sports (Galahue, Ozmun and Goodway, 2013). Students who are around 13 to 15 years old are considered by Galahue, Ozmun and Goodway (2013) suitable to engage in a sports specialization process (Côté, 1999).

The National Common Curricular Base (NCCB) in Brazil is an official document issued by the Brazilian government defining the nationally mandatory basic school curriculum. This document contains all the contents and subjects that should be taught in basic and public schools in all disciplines. Following the guidelines of the NCCB, the PE curriculum should include many different practices such as games, sports, dances, combat sports, and adventure sports (Brasil, 2018). Although included in the curriculum contents of PE, combat sports are still not widely practiced in school PE, mainly due to the need of better professional development of PE teachers, lack of adequate infrastructure in schools, and negative stereotypes that are still present in the Brazilian culture about these practices (Ferreira, 2006; Rufino and Darido, 2012, Rodrigues and Antunes, 2019).

Notwithstanding these constraints, students are encouraged to participate in competitions representing their schools throughout the year. Thus, in addition to being part of the school curriculum, combat sports are also part of students' competitive activities. Several sporting events at the national, state, or regional level, contemplate school sports and include combat modalities such as judo and wrestling. The Youth School Games

(YSG) is a nationwide championship and it is the most important event in the school competition circuit in Brazil. It is, therefore, the event that most students look forward to engaging in.

In 2005, the 'Youth School Games' (YSG) was developed by the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) to encourage sport participation in schools in the entire country. COB aimed to improve future Olympic performances. According to the program's website (COB, 2018) YSG are the biggest student competition in Brazil. The students who participate in the games go through municipal and state selective competitions. More than two million students aged 12 to 17 years old, representing 40 thousand schools from 3,950 municipalities and 26 states participate in the YSG every year. According to the competition website, this movement helped to develop Olympic athletes such as Sarah Menezes and Mayra Aguiar, both Judo Olympic champions. Wrestling is one of the sports represented in the YSG, thus it should be offered for students practice in the schools who compete in this championship. Wrestling is an individual sport marked by a long and rich history, with its Olympic form going back to ancient Greece (Jarman and Hanley, 1983, Poliakoff, 1987). Its technical characteristic includes grabbing actions, unbalancing and launching the opponent to the ground, and keeping the opponent's back on the ground in submission (Jarman and Hanley, 1983).

The aim of the present research is to describe the practice context of the students competing wrestling at the Rio de Janeiro YSG selective in 2018. The aspects we investigated referred to the training location, duration of student's wrestling practice, and their previous sports experience. Furthermore, the research question we sought to answer was: Do the wrestling competitors of the YSG from the state of Rio de Janeiro practice wrestling in the school environment as suggested by the sporting event? To tackle this question, we inquired all students who competed wrestling in the 2018 Rio de Janeiro state selective of the YSG. We believe that the findings of this research can favor reflections on the growing interest of youth in Rio de Janeiro towards wrestling, to encourage the development of new sport programs in the school environment and raise the interest of PE teachers to include combat sports in their classes, awakening new research on wrestling and combat sports to improve pedagogical practice for youth in sports and PE.

II. Material And Methods

Context

Rio de Janeiro state (RJ) is located in southeastern Brazil with an estimated population of 17.264.943 in 2019. Composed of 92 cities, among them those of residence of the study volunteers (Rio de Janeiro and Niterói). The age group 6 to 14 years old correspond to 12.4% of the population in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and 10.8% in the city of Niterói. Youth 15 to 24 years old correspond to 15.4% and 14.7% of the population of the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Niterói respectively (IBGE, 2010).

The YSG was developed in 1969 and is managed by the Brazilian Olympic Committee. There is a competitive division for youth from 12 to 14 and another from 15 to 17 years old. Athletes are selected in regional and state competitions to participate in the official national YSG (Arantes *et al.*, 2012; COB, 2020). According to Arantes *et al.* (2012) the objectives of the YSG are educational and important to reveal sports talents. In its inception in 1969 there were five sports played by 315 athletes, whereas today more than 4500 athletes compete in 14 different sports, namely athletics, badminton, chess, basketball, cycling, futsal, rhythmic gymnastics, handball, judo, swimming, table tennis, volleyball, beach volleyball and wrestling (Arantes *et al.*, 2012; COB, 2020).

Participants

All 67 students who competed wrestling in the Rio de Janeiro selective for the 2018 YSG participated in this study. With 13.8 ± 1.42 average age the athletes represented 20 educational institutions from the cities Rio de Janeiro and Niterói (RJ). Two of the participating schools were private and had 14 participating students, where as 18 were public schools bringing 53 students.

Procedures

All participants volunteered to participate in this research. The legal guardians of the youth authorized their participation and signed a consent form before the surveys were completed. The first author was responsible for collecting the data during the competition day. The researcher contacted the wrestling competitors and their legal guardians to explain the procedures and objective of the study. After all questions were answered by the researcher, the volunteering students and their legal guardians who agreed to proceed answered a ten-question survey that took around five minutes to be completed.

Instruments

The research was carried out through the Survey method (Freitas *et al.*, 2000). The survey was self-applicable, and the participants answered using pencil and paper. The survey had ten structured questions, the first six related to demographics (age, gender, weight, height, school name, and city), the following four referred

to (i) where the students had their first contact with wrestling; (ii) where the students currently practiced wrestling; (iii) the students' practice frequency; and (iv) what other sports the students practiced besides wrestling.

Analysis

The authors used Microsoft Excel® version 2011 to analyze the data through descriptive statistics. The data were presented by number of participants and corresponding gender, age, the distinction between enrolled in public or private schools, as well as their previous experience in wrestling, other combat sports, and sports in general. The data described by percentage aimed to draw comparisons between the results of that specific aspect with the whole group.

III. Result

Table 1 brings an overview of the places where the students competing wrestling trained. Not all participants who competed wrestling at the 2018 Rio de Janeiro state selective of the YSG practiced this sport. We found that 57 (85.1%) of the competitors actually trained wrestling, while the other ten (14.9%) trained judo at sports clubs. Judo is a sport with some similarities to wrestling. The students who trained wrestling at public schools came from two Olympic Experimental Gymnasiums (OEG). These students represented 30 (44.8%) of the total of wrestling competitors. The other 23 (34.3%) students from public schools, trained wrestling in sport clubs in their home city. The four (6.0%) athletes representing the private schools also trained in sport clubs.

Table 1. Overall training sites of the students who competed wrestling at the 2018 Rio de Janeiro YSG selective

| | Public-school participants | Private-school participants |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total students who train wrestling | 53 | 4 |
| Students who train in sport clubs | 23 | 4 |
| Students who train in school | 30 | 0 |

Source: research data

We found that 42 (62.7%) students trained other sports. This data is presented in Table 2. Some students trained combat sports with similar characteristics to wrestling, such as Brazilian Jiu-jitsu 3 (4.5%) and Judo 22 (32.8%). The students also practiced other sports, as follows: 6 athletics practitioners (8.9%), 3 Chess (4.5%), 2 Handball (3.0%), 2 Basketball (3.0%), 2 Swimming (3.0%), 1 Volleyball (1.5%), and 1 table tennis 1 (1.5%).

Table 2. Sports besides wrestling practiced by the students.

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Only wrestling | 25 (37.3%) |
| Judo | 22 (32.8%) |
| Athletics | 6 (8.9%) |
| Brazilian Jiu Jitsu | 3 (4.5%) |
| Chess | 3 (4.5%) |
| Handball | 2 (3.0%) |
| Basketball | 2 (3.0%) |
| Swimming | 2 (3.0%) |
| Volleyball | 1 (1.5%) |
| Table tennis | 1 (1.5%) |

Source: research data

IV. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to check the practice context of the students competing wrestling at the 2018 Rio de Janeiro YSG selective. While wrestling is a widespread Olympic sport in the United States and Europe, it is not at all popular in Brazil, especially in educational institutions. We believe that positive sport

experiences can motivate youth students to engage in a physically active lifestyle (Côté, 1999, Kirk, 2013). The participants of this study were in average 13 years old, what is indicated by Côté (1999) and Galahue, Ozmun and Goodway (2013) as the beginning of the sports specialization phase. The specialization phase can also be represented in this study by the high incidence of students who practice other combat sports of projection and submission type, such as Brazilian jiu-jitsu and judo, that are somewhat similar to wrestling. Thus, the engagement in similar sports can be understood as students' motivation to specialize in certain types of sports, what can soon result in the choice for one specific modality (Côté, 1999).

Only two of the 20 studied schools offered wrestling practice. This can indicate lack of tradition of wrestling in Brazil, lack of wrestling projects or professional development for PE teachers that can enhance the possibilities to teach combat as a content in their classes. Hence, there are still disagreements regarding the training process, age groups, and development methods for young athletes engagement, this is reflected by the lack of an organized national model for this purpose (Oliveira, 2017). In this research, we found that wrestling is not promoted in extracurricular projects in schools, even though it is an Olympic sport and part of the YSG. Only two schools offered wrestling practice for youth, this represents the current panorama of this sport in schools in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, schools and coaches use their students' sports experiences in environments outside of schools, such as sport clubs and, in some cases, with combat sports similar to wrestling.

The YSG aims to encourage teachers to promote positive sporting activities to youth in the school environment. We understand that recruiting students who are athletic to represent their schools without offering the students the opportunity to engage in sports in the school environment does not fulfill the YSG main objective. PE and after-school programs should promote a safe and equitable environment for students to empower themselves and transform their barriers to engage in a physically active lifestyle (Oliver and Kirk, 2016, Tischler and McCaughtry, 2011). Furthermore, we believe that selecting the athletic students that in most part practice sports outside of school to participate in championships that represent the school promotes the school without accountability or responsibility on the students' sport education. Furthermore, this selection process promotes competitiveness that values only the athletic students undermining the sport experiences and engagement of the less skilled students, promoting negative experiences (Tischler and McCaughtry, 2011), and a segregated learning environment (Haegele and Sutherland, 2015).

The findings of this study suggest that wrestling is not being developed widely, or at least in an organized way, in public and private schools. However, wrestling is offered in other spaces such as sport clubs. We believe that new research should be conducted in other sports to verify youths' sport participation in schools. With this, new pedagogical practices may be encouraged in PE and in after-school sports programs with governmental institutions assistantship.

V. Conclusion

This study described the practice of Wrestling at the 2018 Rio de Janeiro YSG state selective. We found that many of the students who compete wrestling at the state level in Rio de Janeiro do not have the opportunity to practice this sport in school and some do not even practice wrestling. These findings can mean that there is a lack of management or interest in promoting the practice of sports that are not culturally widespread in Brazil, especially in the school environment. Future studies could research students practice in other sports in school or wrestling in other states of Brazil.

VI. Limitations

This study brings a local analysis of the practice of wrestling in youth competitions. The participants came from two large cities in the state close to the investigated championship. Thus, it may not be representative of other competition contexts or places. The absence of participation of other students in the championship is consistent with the lack of support and national structure for sports in schools (Gervásio Neto, 2017). However, although Rio de Janeiro is one of the most populous states in Brazil, further studies are suggested in other states and at the national level.

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