

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN SPORT IN A CONTEXT OF VULNERABILITY: PERCEPTION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

### *Participación juvenil en el deporte en un contexto de vulnerabilidad: percepción de experiencias positivas y negativas*

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### Abstract

**Abstract - Aim:** A growing body of research has investigated the participation of youth in sport in the context of vulnerability and often associated with a variety of positive experiences. However, the experience perceived by young people in sport in these contexts is not well understood. The aim of the present study was to understand feelings experienced by young people, which are associated with sports participation in the extracurricular program. **Methods:** This is a qualitative, exploratory and interpretive study. Participants in the study were young adults (n=11) who participated in *Programa Segundo Tempo* (PST) [Second Half Program] when they were youth, and were from five municipalities of different states having the longest partnership with the Ministry of Sports (seven consecutive years). Data were collected from interviews held with a digital video recorder. **Results:** The feelings experienced by an individual performing an activity are one of the main forces involved in the process of positive development. A predominance of positive experiences was found regarding activity, individual, and family. Negative experiences were associated with socio-structural factors and the coaches. **Conclusions:** For these young people, sports participation triggered feelings and processes that belong to the scope of person-context interactions, principally of the nature of: activity, the coach's role, and family participation. **Keywords:** Sport participation; Youth; Positive development; Social vulnerability; Sport pedagogy.

### Resumen

**Resumen - Objetivo:** un creciente cuerpo de investigación ha investigado la participación de los jóvenes en el deporte en el contexto de la vulnerabilidad y, a menudo, asociado con una variedad de experiencias positivas. Sin embargo, poco se conoce acerca de la experiencia percibida por los jóvenes en el deporte en estos contextos. El objetivo fue comprender los sentimientos experimentados por los jóvenes que están asociados con la participación deportiva en el programa extracurricular. **Métodos:** estudio cualitativo, exploratorio e interpretativo. Los participantes eran adultos jóvenes (n = 11) que asistieron al "Programa Segundo Tempo" (PST) cuando eran jóvenes, los cuales eran de cinco municipios de diferentes estados brasileños; el programa tiene unidades en todo Brasil, y fueron elegidas cinco unidades que tenían la asociación más larga con el programa (siete años consecutivos). Los datos se obtuvieron de entrevistas realizadas con una grabadora de video digital. **Resultados:** los sentimientos experimentados por un individuo que realiza una actividad son una de las principales fuerzas involucradas en el proceso de desarrollo positivo; el predominio de experiencias positivas se encontró con respecto a la actividad, el individuo y la familia; las experiencias negativas se asociaron con factores socio estructurales y entrenadores. **Conclusiones:** Para estos jóvenes, la participación deportiva desencadenó sentimientos y procesos que pertenecen al alcance de las interacciones persona-contexto, especialmente la naturaleza de: actividad, el rol del entrenador y la participación familiar. **Palabras clave:** participación deportiva; Juventud; Desarrollo positivo; Vulnerabilidad social; Pedagogía del deporte.

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## Introduction

Participation in sports has been investigated and singled out as a positive experience in the development process throughout the course of life (Côté & Hancock, 2016; Gonçalves, 2013; Holt, 2008; Matthew Vierimaa, Erickson, Côté, & Gilbert, 2012). The feelings experienced in an activity are fundamental to maintaining engagement in it, on a stable time basis. In this sense, a consensus exists on the sport being able to influence positive youth development. However, little is known on what exactly in these activities can keep a person engaged, and what are the feelings experienced by the players. Many studies have focused on contextual factors, but neglected feelings acting in the development process. Understanding the feelings experienced by young people in sports is essential to the promotion of environments that favour positive development.

Theories of positive development (Larson, Walker, Rusk, & Diaz, 2015; Lerner, Lerner, Urban, & Zaff, 2015), by breaking from the paradigm of the studies that focused on youth as a problem that needed to be solved, began investigating young people as having the potential to sustain positive development processes, valuing their competencies, interests, and contributions that favour individual and social well-being. Positive youth development is recognized as an umbrella term of interdisciplinary character (Bronfenbrenner, 2011; Lerner et al., 2015; Winkel, Saegert, & Evans, 2009), involving intrinsic motivations, several contexts (programs, families, schools, communities), and promotion of access to positive experiences (Benson, 2007; Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2007; Larson, Perry, Hang, & Walker, 2011; Lerner et al., 2015).

From the Bioecological Model of Human Development (BMHD) perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2011), the experience indicates conditions, both objective and subjective manners, in which feelings are experienced by a person in an environment such as “anticipations, forebodings, hopes, doubts or personal beliefs, emotionally and motivationally laden”(44-45). These feelings may be related to the person (self), close people (family, friends), and to activities in which the person is engaged. To Bronfenbrenner (2011), feelings of the experiential world are the main energy involved in the process of human development (Agans et al., 2014; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006). The quality and intensity of engagement in significant activities are essential to the experienced feelings.

The engagement of young people in meaningful activities is one of the primary forces for positive experiences in the process of human development (Agans et al., 2014), especially in voluntary activities. Larson (2000, 2011a, 2011b) argues that structured activities, in which young people can voluntarily engage, are a fertile environment for positive development, since they combine intrinsic motivation and high concentration level, thereby sustaining a time-based action towards an objective. Other characteristics of these activities are: they offer progressively complex challenges (Bengoechea, 2002; Benson et al., 2007), and possibilities for reciprocity in interpersonal relationships, with lasting emotional connections (Larson, 2011b). Thus, as an extracurricular activity, sport can be considered one of the most accessible and significant organized activities for young people (Larson, 2011a; Larson et al., 2006; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2009).

Sport is considered an activity that comprises a set of elements (objects and symbols) that are able to involve small children, adolescents, and young people, and to keep them engaged on a stable time basis (Boiché & Sarrazin, 2007; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Hansen, Skrupski, & Arrington, 2010; Lindsey & Grattan, 2011; Reverdito et al., 2017). The nature of activity reaches different levels of physical, cognitive and emotional effort, individually or collectively, depending on the sporting modality, purposes and contexts. It involves unpredictable situations, increasing levels of complexity, and conflicts of objectives. In addition, in the whole of human activities, it happens in a space-time different from the routine activities. Thus, in this space-time, processes and interactions are unleashed that can hardly be explored in other environments, or that is even impossible.

Understanding the feelings experienced by young people in sports participation is essential to the promotion of environments that can be significant and positive to development. Thus, we aim to understand feelings experienced by

young people and which are associated with sports participation in an extracurricular program. The feelings experienced by young people extend to the activity, the self, and other people. Moreover, negative experiences are associated with contextual factors. The focus of this study is on the feelings that emanate from young people experiences when participating in sports.

## Methods

This study consists of a qualitative, exploratory and interpretive study (Creswell, 2014) (Sampieri, Collado, & Lucio, 2006). The research was conducted with young adults, who were participants of *Programa Segundo Tempo* (PST) [Second Half Program]. PST is an initiative of the Brazilian Ministry of Sports, aimed at caring for children, adolescents, and young people who are vulnerable, and which has sport as its main content. Therefore, the study subjects were former participants ( $n = 11$ ) of PST, selected from five ( $n = 5$ ) Brazilian municipalities having the longest time of alliance with the Ministry of Sports (7 years), spanning 2003 to 2013, out of 498 municipalities. These municipalities are located in the South ( $n=1$ ), Southeast ( $n=2$ ), and Northeast ( $n=2$ ) regions of Brazil.

The criteria for including participants who were former PST participants were: being 18 years and above and haven been indicated by coaches with longer teaching experience in the PST. The researcher requested the coaches to indicate former PST students (former youth participants) using the following criteria: "former participants indicated (male and female) which in your perception PST has played a fundamental role in the process of personal development." Chart 1 presents the profile of indicated participants, highlighting age, and the time spent in participating in PST, extracurricular experience in the sport, interview duration, and academic background.

**Chart 1.** Former youth participants (Ex-students), age, time participating in PST (estimated), interview duration, and academic background.

Municipality Ex-student	State	Sex	Age	Time (months) at PST	Extracurricular experience in sports	Duration of Interview min./sec.	Academic background
1: M-1.1	RS	M	21	84	PST	23'36"	SC – PE
					Initiation: football		
2: M-1.3	RS	F	22	36	PST	21'04"	SC – PE
					Initiation: various modalities		
3: M-2.2	MG	M	20	36	PST	23'29"	HS
4: M-3.1	RN	M	19	36	PST	14'43"	HS
5: M-3.2	RN	M	23	36	PST	09'43"	HS
6: M-3.4	RN	M	19	24	PST	11'49"	HS
					State Football Club		
7: M-4.1	RJ	F	27	36	PST	16'25"	SC – PE
8: M-4.2	RJ	M	21	60	PST	33'10"	SC – PE
9: M-5.1	BA	F	18	60	PST	16'11"	SHS
10: M-5.2	BA	M	21	24	PST	19'06"	HS
11: M-5.3	BA	F	18	24	PST	11'48"	SHS
			<b>M = 20.81</b>	<b>M = 41.45</b>		<b>□ = 199'04"</b>	

Abbreviations: Some College (SC), High School (HS); Some High School (SHS); Physical Education (PE).

### **Research instruments and procedures**

Interviews were conducted in the PST context, in each of the selected municipalities. For the interview, a script was used, with open and closed questions, initially focused on general aspects of sporting experience, and, subsequently, to participation in the PST sporting activities (Sampieri et al., 2006). The interview was scheduled according to time and location of preference of the subjects. Initial contact with the participants occurred with the mediation of the coaches. In Brazil, only professionals with Physical Education degree can work as sports coach, even in social programs, that is why we use “coaches” and no other denomination, as “educators”. The central axis of the interview was the perception of sports experience, whether positive or negative. The first generating question was “based on your involvement in sport, did you have positive and negative experiences? What are they?” Interviews were conducted by a single trained researcher, registered in a Sony ICD-PX312 digital recorder and fully transcribed. The data were analysed after transcription.

According to the ethical aspects of research (Protocol no. 466/12), each interviewee signed an informed consent form. The study was submitted to and approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings of the School of Medical Sciences (CAAE: 34480114.1.0000.5404).

### **Data analysis**

After the interview, the data were fully transcribed, allowing a pre-analysis of the text. A pre-analysis was conducted first on a floating basis, with the purpose of defining documents (interviews) that would be used and the formal preparation for analysis. The selected data were organized and analysed, using Windows NVivo10 software for encoding, categorization, and inference processes (Bardin, 2011). The process of codifying experience in the sport, positive or negative, was guided by the feelings related to anticipations, forebodings, hopes, doubts and personal beliefs. Categorization was performed regarding the individual (self), close people (family and friends), and activity (sport), motivationally and emotionally charged (love and hate, happiness and sadness, curiosity and boredom, desire and repulsion).

### **Trustworthiness**

In a qualitative manner, the reliability of the study was approached through the four adopted strategies (Creswell, 2014). In the first place, integration of the researcher in the context in which the subjects participated in the program was undertaken for 7 days, by following the activities carried out in the program, interacting with the coaches, students and community members (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Koller, Morais, & Paludo, 2016). The insertion of the researcher in the context of the program allowed the recognition of symbols and meanings relate to the community in which the interviewee was inserted, establishing a relationship of trust with the interviewee and knowing the program daily routine. Secondly, we considered the time of the coaches' involvement in the program. The interviewees were indicated by coaches with the longest time of involvement in the program ( $M = 81.81$  months), ensuring the recruitment of subjects that could reflect the experience in the sport in that context. Thirdly, the fact that the interview was conducted by a single researcher. Thus, besides assuring the same approach and procedures in the interviews, it allowed elucidating elements in the discourse that it would hardly be possible to recognize otherwise. Finally, the procedure for data coding: after transcription of the data, the researcher responsible for the interview initially coded the data. Then, with the preliminary coded data, three experienced researchers (Doctorate in the field of Sports Sciences, Publications in scientific journals, experience in the content analysis) met to analyse and express agreement (or not) regarding the interpretation of the data. The categories and interpretations presented are the results of exhaustive analysis and agreement among all researchers. In addition, the strategies adopted to support the validity of this study have already been documented (Holt et al., 2013; Luquetti, Oliver, Dantas, & Kirk, 2017; M. Vierimaa, Turnnidge, Bruner, & Cote, 2017).

## Results and Discussion

Charts 2, 3, and 4 present the perception of experiences considered positive by former PST students (former youth participants). In Chart 5, the perceptions of negative experiences are presented. The charts present excerpts of the transcriptions that could better represent the categories of analysis, which are positive and negative experience, and experiences regarding the individual and other people.

Concerning positive experiences directly associated with the activity (Chart 2), the expressed feelings, in participants' perception, are of profound voluntary devotion ("I really loved"; "I like it very much"; "sport was everything"). To Bronfenbrenner (2011), this subjective sphere of feelings is the energy required as the driving force of human development. From Larson studies (Larson, 2000, 2011a, 2011b), dealing with the development of initiative, which is defined as the ability to devote effort over time to achieve an objective, it is possible to correlate these feelings with the voluntary devotion of youth in sustaining the immediate environment of class/training. Scales et al.(2011) point that this profound feeling, associated with voluntary devotion in the activity, is one of the forces of development.

Voluntary devotion appears as a demand, determined by the nature of sport as an activity, since no exterior motive was attributed to it, such as participating in sports to improve health, earn medals or develop some cognitive ability. These aspects are results of sports participation experience ("I wanted to be"; "I succeeded"). Another aspect of the activity is related to challenging and progressively complex situations, which extend to physical, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, perceived in the learning, dedications, and effort processes, and in the exploration of new situations. The study by Bruner et al.(2014) on young athletes confirms this result, pointing the fact that sport has, in its configurations, a high focus on the task at hand. This result demonstrates the need to understand what sports means to children, adolescents, and young people, which is often coercively superimposed by coaches and parents, leading to stress situations and abandonment of sporting practices due to the establishment of objectives and expectations that are beyond what is constructed between the individual and the nature of sport as an activity.

**Chart 2.** Positive experience in sport related to activity perception by ex-student (former youth participants) of PST.

Subject	Record of ex-students' perception on sport participation
M-1.1	From sport, I always sought this issue, of trying to feel good.
M-1.3	[...] I participated in everything and I always liked it very much, I felt satisfied and happy with it[...] In football, volley, basketball. All sports, I took part every time it happened.
M-2.2	[...] the fun side, [...] [...] there was a ball, so I used to play from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, after I would come back to play more, and then I used to leave. I was addicted to football [...] [...] I loved, really loved. [...] I used to cry when the coach would say: you are grounded and will not play ball. [...] threw me a ball and I was satisfied already.
M-3.1	[...] I like it more [...] There's nothing better than sport [...] [...] I really used to like PST; the things they presented there [...] learning other sports [...] I miss it, of course. [...] meeting new sports, dedicating myself more to a sport life [...] [...] in PST, I learned a little bit of everything: volley, [...]
M-3.2	[...] We used to like playing ball. [...] Entertainment. [...] Nevertheless, all the time I liked playing ball. Always more in football. [...] I liked to play ball.
M-4.2	[...] you feel pleased to be doing it [...] [...] I also got involved, [...] really give yourself to what you like [...] [...] I tried volley, futsal, dance [...] [...], the exercise, in itself, is something pleasant to do,
M-5.1	I learned all about volley, [...] The tournaments. I participated in many, [...] [...] competitive spirit [...]
M-5.2	The pleasure that was provided [...]
M-5.3	[...] experiences was playing abroad, [...] competing in open games, [...]

Regarding the individual (self), sport experience was associated with feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment, and with the personal belief of positive changes in life. We also highlight the development of capacities, abilities, behavioural changes, and personal achievements (Chart 3). These results are supported by other studies (Whitley, Hayden, & Gould, 2016), which have highlighted the relationship between participation in sports and positive identity, commitment to learning, self-regulating behaviour, and a meaning for life. Studies by Whitley, Hayden, and Gould (Whitley, Hayden, & Gould, 2013; Whitley et al., 2016), based on youth intervention for a sustainable development of sport in the community, highlight the role of sport as a tool to develop competencies that can help them to cope with challenges that arise in the community.

**Chart 3.** Positive experience in sport related to self in the perception of former student (former youth participants).

Subject	Record of ex-students' perception on sport participation
M-1.1	[...] feeling good, as a person [...], [...] is a matter of health and quality. [...] a larger vision of the society, as a person. [...] living more and with greater quality. [...] awareness for the future.
M-1.3	[...] for me sport was everything. [...] I felt satisfied and happy with it [...] a matter of discipline, of rules.
M-2.2	[...] I was brought up [...].
M-3.1	[...] improving my health, [...] I also learned to be a man, [...] for being a shy boy and just staying home, I started to know new sports, [...]
M-3.2	I was part of teams here in town, [...] has always been of joy. [...] there it was all good.
M-4.1	[...] I learned to live and cope with the group [...], sometimes I did not accept what people put to me [...]. Therefore, what I learned, I could also pass to other people.
M-4.2	[...] I also got involved, you really give yourself to what you like and from there you get a notion of the area you will follow; if you want to have a career in sports. [...] more for health, [...] a great gain, as in the future, since the age is near, the practice of sports will help me reduce these problems. [...] is the most positive side, the more rewarding aspect, this teamwork.
M-5.1	I learned all about volley, [...] I have had many experiences and learned a lot.
M-5.2	The opportunity of knowledge, of learning new things, is very positive, the opportunity to escape [...] if I had not join <i>Segundo Tempo</i> [...] I would be today in the same place my friends are. [...] I managed to walk a different path. [...] Through sport, I got out of it. [...] If I did not study, I would have to leave the project, and then it was also an incentive to study. [...]

When it comes to close people (friends, teachers, and family) (Chart 4), the positive sport experience is marked by the possibility to expand and maintain significant interpersonal relationships (Holt, Knight, & Prinstein, 2011; Neely & Holt, 2014; Nicholson, Brown, & Hoyer, 2013; Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012; Turnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014). The quality of interpersonal relationships in sports participation environment is noted as predictive of positive development (Scales, 2011), sustaining engagement in activities charged with feelings of emotional attachment.

The coach, in this context, appears to be the main significant adult, associated with strong feeling of affection. At different levels of sport participation (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2014; Erickson & Côté, 2016; Gould, Flett, & Lauer, 2012; Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012), the coach appears as the most important and essential adult for a positive sports experience. The positive experience involves the competence and ability of the coach in creating environments that favour the development of successful relationships, as our results suggested for this group. These relationships between coaches and students, according to Holt and Knight (Holt et al., 2011), must be based on trust, respect, belief, support, and understanding. Camiré, Trudel, and Forneris (Camiré et al., 2014), studying coaches in a high school environment, highlight that, to do so, it is important for the coaches to be open and exposed to a wide range of learning situations.

On observing the ability of coaches to positively or negatively influence the diverse factors involved in the intervention (different social roles, family, social factors) and the potential of development throughout life, it is necessary then to investigate and ensure the training process for those professionals who are working in extracurricular programs of sports participation (Milistetd et al., 2016). Studies on this matter are still emerging, for instance, the PST. Although Brazil has the most comprehensive program for sports participation (Reverdito et al., 2016; Santos, 2013), and in a context with specific elements, it has no systematic studies on the coaches who work in the PST. Gould and Carson (Gould & Carson, 2008), theorizing about current and future directions of studies on sport for youth development, highlight studies on the coach as one of the most important axes of research.

Moreover, in this context, close relatives do not appear in the subjects' regarding perceived experiences (positive or negative) for participating in sports. In this respect, our results differ from studies that point out the family influence in sports participation (Holt et al., 2011; McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008; Neely & Holt, 2014), either positively (support, adherence to the sport) or negatively (excessive pressure and expectation, control). Reasons for this difference may be related to two aspects of the context. First, when it comes to treating social vulnerability contexts, it may be associated with low family involvement in the monitoring of extracurricular activities, whether as result of work, neglect, or perceived notion of the activity, leading young people to a condition of independence and autonomy from the family. The second reason may be limiting the possibility of establishing meaningful relationships with the immediate sport environment as shown in the study of Kay and Spaaij (2011), which was conducted on a social project in Brazil. The influence of the family on the potential of sport for development in social vulnerability contexts needs to be investigated, especially looking for possibilities to participate in the program, since it is recognized as a fundamental support for the positive development of young people.

**Chart 4.** Positive experiences in sports related to people, in former students (former youth participants) perception.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Record of ex-students' perception on sport participation</b>
M-1.1	[...] making new friends [...] like your kids are, having respect for people; they are honest. In early childhood my parents said: find something;
M-2.2	[...] a friend today, who has been my coach, [...] taught me a lot [...], I remember what they passed to me. [...] brought up by my teachers. [...] my teachers helped me, [...]
M-3.1	[...] new friendships.
M-3.2	[...] friendships we end up creating, [...]
M-3.4	There is no shortage of opportunity for me to play. Everywhere, people come to me; call me.
M-4.2	[...] attention the teachers and interns treated us, [...] exchange of information between student and coach, [...]
M-5.1	[...] teachers [...] talked to us a lot [...] interacted with us [...] were always encouraging.
M-5.2	A coach sometimes is very annoying, because he keeps bothering you. Only the day he does not bother you anymore, you will miss it [...] Our friendship [...], our coach until today, it was his annoyance that brought our friendship together. Today we are old friends and, my coach, I do not call him coach, and I call him friend, [...]
M-5.3	Meet new people [...] discover new friendships. [...] friends training, everything! [...] I've known several people from other neighbourhoods, [...] there is someone worrying about you, about you going out, staying in the streets [...] the known the coach [...] the coach who taught, who started from the beginning, it was him.

Concerning negative experiences (Chart 5), although they have been highlighted, they were mostly related to positive dimensions for personal development, as part of the learning process for life. In this sense, the experience of sports participation can be associated with self-efficacy development (Brusokas & Malinauskas, 2014; Coalter, 2013; Gallagher & Ramachandran, 2012; Reverdito et al., 2017), as it refers to the individual belief in accomplishing difficult tasks as a challenge to be overcome, rather than something to be avoided. Positive experiences, most intensely in the dimensions of activity and individual (self), are associated with challenging situations, goals, and expectations. To Coalter (2013), the

characteristics of sports provide properties that are essential to self-efficacy development such as an emphasis on practice, skills development, self-regulation, learning from and dealing with others.

Experiences highlighted as negative in sports, considering the force/intensity or regularity with which they were cited, do not appear continuously in the historical time dimension for this group. These results differ from those found in the studies of MacDonald et al. (2011) and Bruner et al. (Bruner et al., 2014), since there was no relation with inappropriate comments, drug use, and stressful situations because of the activity. Positive development studies suggest that this difference may be explained as a result of contextual facts, stating that the vulnerable youth (Agans et al., 2014; Blomfield & Barber, 2011; Scales et al., 2011; Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner, 2010) perceive more the positive effects of extracurricular programs than their peers in contexts with more available resources.

Negative experiences highlighted here were associated with socio-structural factors, which limit the possibilities of sports access, such as violence, lack of material and encouragement, inadequate structure, and non-continuity of projects, corroborating the studies by Holt et al. (2009) and Souza, Castro, and Vialich (2012). However, studies have been documenting negative experiences in different contexts of participation in sports (Davis & Menard, 2013; Gould & Carson, 2010; MacDonald et al., 2011; Spaaij, 2014). Thus, for this group and context, negative experiences regarding participation in sports ought to be investigated, by observing the nature of activity, the context, and the quality of participation, so that we can develop sports participation environments that favour the positive experiences.

**Chart 5.** Negative experiences in sports in the perception of ex-students (former youth participants) of PST.

Subject	Record of ex-students' perception on sport participation
M-1.1	[...] everything I went through was a learning experience. [...] but they were, in essence, things with failure, defeat, things I learned.
M-1.3	[...] disappointment in the League [...] the team lost because I missed the penalty. [...] one time I was sailing and it was very windy, and even then, the coaches wanted us to be brave and sail with a lot of wind.
M-2.2	[...] I hurt my thigh [...] finance [...] sometimes the coach used to only get in the court and give the ball; we used to fight terribly [...]
M-3.1	[...] I could not devote myself [...] because of my religion [...], play ball, or go to church [...] let me wear only pants.
M-3.2	[...] too bad it did not last the whole time, because of those pauses [...]
M-3.4	[...] and you know the player must suffer to grow in life. I even starved and I do not deny it to anyone.
M-4.1	[...] matter of prejudice [...] but the fact of being a girl [...] demotivation [...] negative facts [...] some neighbourhood should have and they do not have.
M-4.2	[...] no material available [...] these changes of polo teachers [...].
M-5.1	[...] too sunny [...] space was too small for volley.
M-5.2	[...] is the lack of incentive [...] there is no continuity [...] there is no project continuity [...] the end, the day it ended [...].

## Conclusion

In contemporary times, the expansion of the sport phenomenon and the advances in theories of positive youth development have mobilized different sectors of the society, with the purpose of developing actions, programs, and public policies for participation in sports. However, little is known about youth experiences in the area, especially in the social vulnerability contexts. Thus, our study aimed to understand the experience of young people in an extracurricular program of participation in sports.

Under the subjective sphere of young people's feelings, participation in sports unleashes processes that extend to the activity, the individual (self), and close people. In the activity, the characteristics that prevail are the voluntary devotion and the increasing complexity levels, allowing the individual to explore the limits of self-domain and of dominance over the space. Concerning the individual, participation in sports is marked by perception of satisfaction,

accomplishment, and personal belief in positive changes for life. Interpersonal relationships with peers and coaches, who are the significant adults, were the main positive experiences related to other people.

Paradoxically, negative experiences, when related to the activity and the individual, were associated significant learning for the life of these individuals. Feelings from negative experiences were associated with contextual factors, ranging from coaches' involvement to socio-structural factors. This conclusion points the need for studies that address the relation between contextual factors and coaches' intervention, since they are predictive dimensions for positive development, and reinforce the significant role of sport to the youth.

Engagement in the immediate sport environment triggers processes that belong to individual-context interactions, extending the subjective sphere of feelings. Although, mobilized feelings associated with sports participation can be explored in other human activities, there are attributes that are particular to this interaction, which is regulated by the dynamic balance between voluntary devotion (intrinsic motivations) and the nature of activity (sport), conferring meanings that can only be understood in its context. Thus, considering the characteristics of an exploratory and qualitative study, our results have brought new perspectives in the understanding of youth experience in sports, especially on the nature of sport as an activity, the role of coaches, and family participation.

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