Association of subjective social status and sociodemographic indicators in athletes

Associação do status social subjetivo e indicadores sociodemográficos em atletas

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Abstract – Subjective social status comprises the perception of individuals about their social status. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between subjective social status and sociodemographic indicators (age, educational level, marital status and economic level) in athletes from Santa Catharina. A total of 593 athletes of both sexes and mean age of 21.18 (± 5.58) years, 371 men, randomly selected, practitioners of individual and collective sport modalities, federated in clubs in the western region of Santa Catarina participated in the study. Social status perception was assessed using the MacArthur scale version for young people adapted to the sports context. For the association between perceived status and sociodemographic indicators, the Chi-square and Multinomial Logistic Regression tests were used, stratified by gender and adjusted for age variables, educational level, marital status and socioeconomic status. Dissatisfaction with status was found in 85% of the sample. Moreover, 46.9% of participants perceived themselves with low family status and 46% perceived themselves with intermediate status in their clubs. The association between groups showed statistically significant differences according to sex, age, educational level and marital status. The association between sociodemographic variables and status according to sex indicated that younger men, with less education, and single were more likely to be dissatisfied with their status. There is need for greater attention by health professionals regarding younger male athletes, with lower education and single regarding their status perception.

Key words: Athletes; Psychosocial impact; Social hierarchy.

Resumo – O status social subjetivo compreende a percepção de uma pessoa sobre sua posição social. O objetivo deste estudo foi verificar a associação entre o status social subjetivo e os indicadores sociodemográficos (faixa etária, grau de escolaridade, situação conjugal e nível econômico) de acordo com o sexo em atletas. Participaram deste estudo 593 atletas de ambos os sexos, com média de idade de 21,18 (± 5,58) anos, 371 homens, selecionados de forma aleatória, participantes de modalidades individuais e coletivas federados em clubes da região Oeste do Estado de Santa Catarina. A percepção do status social foi verificada por meio da Escala MacArthur versão para jovens, adaptada ao contexto esportivo. Para a associação da percepção de status com os indicadores sociodemográficos de acordo com o sexo, foram realizados os testes Qui-Quadrado e Regressão Logística Multinomial, bruta e ajustada pelas variáveis socidemeográficas investigadas. A insatisfação com o status foi encontrada em 85,0% da amostra. Além disso, os atletas se perceberam com um baixo status no contexto familiar (46,9%) e com um status médio no clube (46,0%). A associação entre as variáveis sociodemográficas com o status, de acordo com o sexo indicou que os homens mais novos, com menor escolaridade, e sem companheiros apresentaram mais chance de estar insatisfeito com o seu status. Atenta-se para a necessidade de uma maior atenção por parte dos profissionais envolvidos para com os atletas homens mais novos, com menor escolaridade, e sem companheiro(a) no que se refere a sua percepção de status.

Palavras-chave: Atletas; Impacto psicossocial; Hierarquia social.

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INTRODUCTION

The human being is both socialized and sociable by the feeling of belonging to a social group / society and communication among peers[1]. The study of this process involves several aspects, including social status, which is ubiquitous in social relationships, influencing the human personality organization[2].

The social status as a concept includes several meanings and generally its interpretation is determined by different factors such as: assessment carried out by people associated with superiority, inferiority and identified as a synonym for prestige or treated by a pure scale in the assessments of socioeconomic resources; and sometimes indicated by legal status such as marital status[3]. In this context, status maintains a strong link with hierarchy, which can be represented by a continuous scale from "best" to "worst"[4] and can be represented in all social contexts, such as neighborhood, work and sports teams[2].

Among the elements that compose status, subjective social status stands out[1], which is related to the perception of an individual about his social position on a scale[5-6] and can be related to socioeconomic status, education, occupation and income, to the extent that the socioeconomic resources that people have form the basis for their judgments of their social position in a given society or community[7].

Regarding the sporting environment, evaluation of subjective social status is configured as a possibility of operating as a source of collective identification, as the sport is understood as a social phenomenon[8]. Thus, knowing the psychosocial and subjective factors surrounding this environment becomes an important field for professionals through the establishment of relationships with objective variables and creation of risk hypotheses for certain phenomena[9]. Furthermore, the observation of these items in athletes, especially in the training period, becomes relevant for understanding the development of this individual in sport[4].

Overall, the few investigations about the subjective social status in athletes have been conducted indirectly, i.e., most studies have used the Scale of Reasons for Sports Practice (EMPE), which considers status one of the factors that compose the motivation for sports practice[10]. Campos et al.[10] found that status is one of the factors that also motivate individuals of both sexes on the volleyball modality[10]. However, in a similar survey conducted with female rhythmic gymnastics athletes, it was found that status is one of the variables that matter least in this group of athletes[11], indicating no convergence between investigations.

Therefore, studies dealing with the subjective aspects of sport psychology should be carried out to contemplate not only physical, tactical and technical aspects, but also the individual as a whole[12-14]. In addition, the technical level of teams is increasingly similar, so the development and addressing of psychosocial issues are fundamental to a better emotional preparation of athletes and for the differential and the excellence that we all

seek in sports[15]. In the case of subjective social status, for being related to social interaction of the group, the form of identity construction on issues such as leadership and hierarchy[16], its understanding stimulates a better understanding of the characteristics of different human processes in sport[17].

In this context, this study aimed to investigate the association between subjective social status and sociodemographic variables in athletes from Santa Catarina.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Study Characterization

This is a cross-sectional study, which is part of a broader project entitled "Sports and Artistic Identity of Athletes and Dancers", approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings of the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC) under protocol No. 275381/2013.

Study participants

The target population consisted of Santa Catarina athletes, practitioners of soccer, futsal, volleyball, handball, basketball, athletics, gymnastics, judo, swimming, karate, taekwondo, jujitsu, cycling, table tennis and chess.

The non-probabilistic sample was intentionally composed of athletes from the mesoregion of western Santa Catarina using the following inclusion criteria: have minimum age of 16, be federated by a club, association or sports office for at least one year, to be training in a systematic manner for at least 1 year at a frequency of 3 times a week and to be regularly training during the data collection period.

Instruments and data collection procedures

The subjective social status was assessed using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status Version for Young People[18]. This instrument is portrayed by a "social ladder" (Figure 1) representing the school, where are people with the highest grades, greater respect and higher social position are at the top of the latter (step 10), and people who have the lowest scores, no respect, no one wants to stay close and have low social status are at the bottom step (step 1). Thus, the individual mark an "X" the number (step) corresponding to his self perception. For the Brazilian context, this tool has not been validated. However, Goodman et al.[8] found intraclass correlation coefficient values of 0.73 for social context and 0.79 for family, indicating excellent reliability for the population to which it has been developed.

For this study, the scale was adapted to the sporting environment where athletes reveal their self perception of their position in the club and the position they wanted to be on the team, and also their position in the family context[4,18]. To verify the distribution of athletes in relation to the subjective social status, the indicators of this variable were categorized into tertiles (low, medium and high). Satisfaction with social status was assessed by subtracting the value obtained in the current status by the desired status,

the result was classified as "satisfied" values equal to zero; "dissatisfied for excess status" positive values and "dissatisfied with low status" negative values, as proposed and used by Medeiros et al.[4].

Figure 1. MacArthur Subjective Social Status Scale Version for Young People[18].

Sociodemographic indicators were obtained through a self-applied questionnaire and classified in sex, "male" and "female"; age, "≤19" years, "20 to 29" years and "≥30" years, based on age categories of the main sports; variable marital status was assessed by the options "single / no boyfriend (girlfriend)", "married / stable", "separated / divorced (a) / widow (er)" for the purpose of statistical analysis first and last option were grouped into "no partner" and the second option "with partner", which terminology has been used by several researchers[19].

Economic level was identified by the questionnaire of the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (ABEP)[20], which uses a point system, which together serves to divide the population into economic classes according to their purchasing power. The classes of criteria adopted by ABEP are five: "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E" in decreasing order of purchasing power, and economic classes "A" and "B" divided into "A1", "A2" and "B1", "B2", respectively. In this study, the economic level was divided into three classes: "High" ("A" + "B"); "Middle" ("C"); "Low" ("D" + "E"). Due to the low frequency of individuals in the lower classes, it was decided to use two categories, "low / medium" and "high". The level of education was verified by the question: What is your educational level, with response categories: elementary school, high school and higher education.

The sport modality has been identified by the researchers who carried out an interview with each coach in order to identify which athletes met the inclusion criteria and classified them into two large groups for statistical purposes, "team sports", whose reference is guided by the interaction between the components / athletes, namely: "soccer", "futsal", "volleyball",

"handball" and "basketball" and "individual sports, those with individual events" when the subject participates alone during the entire sport action, which were "athletics", "artistic gymnastics", "swimming", "judo", "karate", "taekwondo", "jiu-jitsu", "cycling", "table tennis" and "chess"[21].

Statistical analysis

For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution) were used to characterize the study variables. Regarding inferential statistics, the chi-square test was used to verify possible associations of sociodemographic variables (age, marital status, economic status, educational level) and sport modality with sex and dissatisfaction with the status social, stratified by sex.

The multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to verify the association of dissatisfaction with subjective social status (outcome variable) with independent variables (age, marital status, economic status, educational level and sport modality). We chose this analysis because the outcome presents more than two categories (satisfied, dissatisfied by excess status and dissatisfied by low status) using satisfied individuals as the reference category. Estimates of odds ratios (OR) and respective 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) were also obtained. Initially, a crude analysis was made. Then, an adjusted analysis was performed considering all sociodemographic variables evaluated in the model, without following any theoretical or statistical criteria. This analysis was stratified by sex, since it changes the effect of the association between independent variables and the outcome. The confidence level was set at 5%. Analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) ®, version 20.0.

RESULTS

The sample was composed of 593 athletes, which has a power of 85% to identify significant odds ratio of 1.5, proportions of 0.1 at a significance level of 5% and R^2 of 0.1, distributed in the following sports: athletics (n = 15), artistic gymnastics (n = 3), swimming (n = 7), judo (n = 63), karate (n = 2), taekwondo (n = 6), jujitsu (n = 31), cycling (n = 4), table tennis (n = 39), chess (n = 10), soccer (n = 64), futsal (n = 138), volleyball (n = 53), handball (n = 88) and basketball (n = 70), with mean age of 21.2 (± 5.6) years, 371 (62.6%) males and 222 (37.4 %) females.

Table 1 shows the general characteristics of the sample, in which the highest proportions of athletes had high school (49.3%), were unmarried (76,6,0%) belonged to low / medium economic strata (82.7%) and were athletes of team sports (69.7%). With regard to the subjective social status, most athletes perceive themselves with low status in their family context (46.9%), with intermediate status in their clubs (46.0%) and idealizing intermediate status in their clubs (49.4%). When stratified by sex, association was found only with variable place the athlete would like to be in the club (p = 0.007); however, there has been a tendency of association with

variables of collective sports (p = 0.055) and place in the club (p = 0.067).

Table 1. Absolute (n) and relative frequency values (%) of socio-demographic indicators, sports and subjective social status (family and club) according to sex.

Indicators	General		Male		Female		p
	n (%)	CI (95%)	n (%)	CI (95%)	n (%)	CI (95%)	
Educational level							
Elementary school	198(33.4)	29.3-37.4	130(35.0)	30.5-39.6	68 (30.6)	25.2-36.9	0.522
High school	293(49.4)	45.4-53.3	180(48.5)	43.7-53.6	113 (50.9)	44.6-57.2	
Higher education	102(17.2)	14.2-20.4	61(16.4)	12.7-20.2	41 (18.5)	13.5-23.4	
Marital status							
With partner	148(25.0)	21.8-28.7	99(26.7)	22.4-31.3	49(22.1)	16.7-27.5	0.209
No partner	445(75.0)	71.3-78.2	272(73.3)	68.7-77.6	173(77.9)	72.5-83.3	
Economic level							
Low/ Middle	514(86.7)	84.0-89.0	317(85.4)	81.7-88.9	197(88.7)	84.7-92.8	0.253
High	79(13.3)	10.6-16.0	54(14.6)	11.1-18.3	25(11.3)	7.2-15.3	
Sport							
Team	413(69.6)	65.9-73.5	248(66.8)	62.3-71.4	165(74.3)	68.5-79.7	0.055
Individual	180(30.4)	26.5-34.1	123(33.2)	28.6-37.7	57(25.7)	20.3-31.5	
Status in the family							
Low	278(46.9)	43.1-50.8	171 (46.2)	40.8-51.4	107(48.2)	41.9-55.0	0.895
Intermediate	174(29.3)	25.7-32.9	110 (29.7)	25.4-34.6	64(28.8)	23.0-34.7	
High	141(23.2)	20.1-27.2	89 (24.1)	20.0-28.4	51(23.0)	17.6-28.4	
Status in the club							
Low	248(41.8)	38.2-45.9	165(44.6)	39.5-49.7	83(37.4)	31.1-43.2	0.067
Intermediate	273(46.0)	41.9-50.3	157(42.4)	37.3-47.6	116(52.3)	46.4-58.6	
High	71(12.0)	9.5-14.7	48(13.0)	9.5-16.5	23(10.4)	6.3-14.4	
Ideal status in the club							
Intermediate	300(50.6)	46.1-54.4	171(46.2)	40.8-51.1	128(57.7)	50.9-63.5	0.007
High	293(49.4)	45.6-53.9	199(53.8)	48.9-59.2	94(42.3)	36.5-49.1	

* P-value for the chi-square test (p <= 0.05).

Regarding the prevalence of satisfaction with social status, the analysis revealed that 85.0% of subjects are dissatisfied with their status, and the highest prevalence was observed among male athletes (61%).

Table 2 shows the associations between sociodemographic variables (age, educational level, marital status and economic level) with dissatisfaction of social status, stratified by sex. Significant association between age group, educational level and marital status with dissatisfaction with social status for males was found (p <0.05). For females, no associations were found (p> 0.05).

According to the results of the multinomial logistic regression (Table 3), there is a trend that unmarried men aged less than or equal to 19 years with elementary or high school feel dissatisfied with the their social status compared to the same sex, aged over 30 years with higher education and with partner. However, to check the values of the adjusted analysis, only age remained associated with the outcome, and men up to 19 years were 3.4 times more likely to be dissatisfied with their social status compared to those over 30 years (OR : 3.43; CI 95%: 1.13-10.4). For females, statistically significant differences in crude and adjusted analysis were not found (p> 0.05).

Table 2. Prevalence of dissatisfaction with status in athletes stratified by sex.

Indicators	General		Male			Female		
	n (%)	CI (95%)	n (%)	CI (95%)	p	n (%)	CI (95%)	p
Age group								
≤19	288(57.5)	53.2-61.9	175(57.4)	52.0-63.2	.001	113(57.7)	50.5-65.3	.437
20 a 29	178(35.5)	31.4-39.6	101(33.1)	27.6-38.4		77(39.3)	31.9-46.3	
≥30	35(7.0)	4.6-9.2	29(9.5)	6.1-12.9		6(3.1)	1.0-5.5	
Educational level								
Elementary school	180(35.9)	31.7-40.2	118(38.7)	33.0-44.4	.001	35(17.9)	25.1-38.0	.626
High school	247(49.3)	44.9-53.9	148(48.5)	42.8-54.4		99(50.5)	43.7-57.7	
Higher education	74(14.8)	11.4-17.7	39(12.8)	8.9-16.7		62(31.6)	12.6-23.9	
Marital status								
With partner	384(76.6)	72.8-80.6	231(75.7)	71.1-80.8	.023	153(78.1)	72.1-83.9	.895
No partner	117(23.4)	19.4-27.2	74(24.3)	19.2-28.9		43(21.9)	16.1-27.9	
Economic level								
Low/ Middle	437(87.2)	84.2-90.2	263(86.2)	82.4-90.3	.357	174(88.8)	84.2-93.0	.962
High	64(12.8)	9.8-15.8	42(13.8)	9.7-17.6		22(11.2)	7.0-15.8	
Sport								
Team	152(30.4)	26.5-34.2	99(32.5)	27.2-37.9	.541	53(27.0)	20.8-3.7	.201
Individual	349(69.7)	65.8-73.5	206(37.5)	62.1-72.8		143(73.0)	66.3-79.2	

* P-value for the chi-square test (p <= 0.05).

Table 3. Factors associated with dissatisfaction with subjective social status for males and females.

Indicators	Male		Female	
	OR (CI95%)	OR (CI95%)**	OR (CI95%)	OR (CI95%)**
Age group				
≤19	5.17 (2.17-12.28)	3.43 (1.13-10.43)	2.89 (0.52-15.86)	3.41 (0.38-30.57)
20 to 29	1.04 (0.49-2.24)	0.83 (0.34-1.99)	2.33 (0.42-13.04)	3.03 (0.44-20.95)
≥30	1	1	1	1
Educational level				
Elementary school	2.60 (1.36-4.98)	1.72 (0.81-3.66)	1.21 (0.43-3.39)	1.10 (0.33-3.63)
High school	5.54 (2.51-12.23)	2.13 (0.81-5.60)	1.77 (0.53-5.91)	1.60 (0.33-7.85)
Higher education	1	1	1	1
Marital status				
With partner	1	1	0.93 (0.35-2.48)	1.45 (0.43-4.89)
No partner	1.90 (1.08-3.33)	0.89 (0.46-1.73)	1	1
Economic level				
Low/ Middle	1.39 (0.69-2.81)	1.43 (0.66-3.08)	1.03 (0.29-3.71)	1.08 (0.29-4.05)
High	1	1	1	1

OR: odds ratio; CI: confidence interval. ** OR adjusted for all variables.

DISCUSSION

According to previous literature review, there is no knowledge of other research aimed to evaluate the association between subjective social status and socio-demographic indicators in athletes. Thus, the results found in this study come to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the area, identifying that dissatisfaction with social status is associated with sex, educational level and to have or not a marital relationship.

The prevalence of dissatisfaction with social status (85%) identified in this study was high. These results corroborate those found by Medeiros et al.[4], which when evaluating the subjective social status of soccer players, found prevalence over 90% of dissatisfaction according to the function performed. This high prevalence found in studies may be linked to the need for

recognition among peers through a better place in the social hierarchy[22-23]. In addition, the high-performance sporting environment, for being characterized by constant relations of hierarchy and leadership, it is a fertile field for athletes to always seek to be the best in their modalities and to obtain recognition and status in other environments that surround them[24].

Regarding dissatisfaction prevalence with subjective social status according to sex, it was found that 61% of men and 39% of women were dissatisfied. This higher proportion of men can be explained due to the socio-cultural organization over time, in which prestige and high social status correspond to features found in men, which is unequal between sexes, a common process in many cultures where men give greater value to social visibility inherent to a more recognized social status that can increase the masculinity status[25-26].

Another aspect observed by this research was that a considerable number of athletes perceived themselves with low status in their family context (46.9%). Another study has shown that the search for legitimacy of sporting career is presented as a factor of status and social recognition in relation to family members[27]. Thus, athletes in the process of specialization, as those evaluated in the present study, may have low social status in the family context because they are yet consolidated in their career as athletes. According to results, there is need to consider this factor in the preparation of athletes, since family comprises one of the main sources of significant social relationship for sport career, and the withdrawal from family constitutes one of the obstacles in an athlete's career, particularly in the specialization phase[28].

Regarding socio-demographic indicators, age, marital status and educational level have been associated with social status for men, and male athletes, those aged less than or equal to 19 years, without a partner and with elementary or high school were more likely to be dissatisfied with their social status compared to individuals of the same sex, aged over 30, with higher education and with partner. However, analyzing the values of the adjusted analysis, only age remained associated with the outcome, and men up to 19 years were 3.4 times more likely to be dissatisfied with their social status compared to those over 30 years, which according to Goodman et al.[18], can be explained by the ability to identify, describe and understand the "social status" construct, which is greater with increasing age[18]. Thus, due to the lack of a consistent understanding about social status, younger individuals tend to be more dissatisfied with it.

For women, no associations were verified and it is believed that this result is a reflection of the little attention that they devote to social status due to historical and conflicting social transformations that women still face, and the gender stereotype created by society over the years, where men are seen as instrumental, practical and objective, which are in constant search of status; and women as typically expressive, sensitive, empathetic, flexible and the emotional basis of the family[25-26]. However, as there are no studies addressing this association in athletes, comparisons are made with other strata of the population that point to other aspects such as beauty, feminin-

ity, sensuality, among others. Thus, these results should be interpreted with caution, since the literature points out a distinct behavior of this variable.

There is lack of association between subjective social status and traditional economic indicators, also called objective indicators (such as family head income, individual income, educational level). These results are different from studies that found significant association between variables[29-30]. Singh-Manoux et al.[27] investigated British adults and found a moderate relationship between profession and subjective social status (r = 0.60), and this variable is also influenced by educational level and family income. In a Swedish study, the results showed a weak relationship with profession (r = 0.38), but the factor that best predicted the dependent variable was the family's financial situation[30]. However, the lack of association found in the current investigation can be justified by the fact that the ladder ranking reflects only objective variables, and monthly income values, for example, represent different items and come from specific resources. In addition, people can have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding at the same time of their position in a particular aspect of the subjective social status scale with strong cultural influences that have not been controlled in this study[30].

The main limitations of the study are: 1) the cross-sectional design, which prevents the establishment of causal inference relationships; 2) the use of the McArthur scale of subjective social status for young people, because this instrument has not been validated for the Brazilian population not for the sports context. However, the absence of national instruments or adapted for this population justify the use of this instrument; 3) the use of non-probability sampling that although large, does not allow extrapolating the results to the entire sports population.

As strength, the pioneering feature of this research in the country is emphasized, since to date there are no studies on the theme subjective social status and associated factors. Another strong point is the high number of investigated subjects, over 500, thus contributing to a better understanding of psychosocial phenomena present in the sport context and their influence on the day-to-day of athletes.

CONCLUSION

When considering the results of this study, it could be concluded that most athletes investigated perceived themselves with low status in their family context and with intermediate status in their clubs. It is noteworthy that there is a high number of athletes dissatisfied with their social status, and this rate is higher for male athletes.

It was found that subjective social status is related to age, educational level and having or not a partner for males, in which male and older athletes, with higher education and with partner tend to feel more satisfied with their social status. Among women, status was not associated with any of the sociodemographic variables investigated. Differences regarding the economic status among the sports studied were not found.

Further studies should be carried out to make a comparison of these indicators considering the tactical function of each sport and using sport performance as a control variable for better understanding of the interaction of these variables in the sporting context controlled by sex.

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