

# Influencing Factors in Adolescent Sports Practice According to Gender

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## About the Study

Adolescence is a crucial stage for the establishment of healthy lifestyle habits, including adherence to regular physical activity [1]. During this period, adolescent sports practice is influenced by multiple factors that could create differences in sports participation according to gender, among which gender stereotypes, the media and the environment closest to adolescents stand out, due to the influence on the sports practice of this population [2,3]. The influence of gender stereotypes seems to be one of the most determining aspects, since adolescents practice certain sports activities and leave others to avoid being questioned by society when practicing sports considered not very masculine or feminine [4,5]. Research to date considers that gender stereotypes affect adolescent boys and girls equally [6], but the origin of these is diverse, making it difficult to eradicate them. However, in recent years, changes have been carried out in public policies and media coverage, making it possible to break certain gender stereotypes that were still present in sport [7]. With respect to the media and the environment close to adolescents, they have also been shown to be relevant factors for the practice of sports by adolescents [8], but questions remain as to the real influence they exert, as well as that exerted by gender stereotypes.

In order to answer these questions, set out the following objectives:

- To determine which types of sports were most practiced by adolescent males and females; and
- To analyze the relationship of gender stereotypes, the type of sport observed and the personal environment, to the type of sport practiced, depending on the adolescent's gender.

To this end, a total of 632 adolescents (317 males and 315 females) completed the questionnaires "Lifestyle in Sport with a Gender Perspective" and "International Questionnaire of Physical Activity for Adolescents". Both instruments had been validated in previous research and allowed information to be obtained on the beliefs and attitudes of adolescents towards sports practice, and the level of practice they engaged in. To conduct the data collection, the students completed both questionnaires individually and anonymously. After the data collection, the sports with the highest participation of boys (such as basketball or indoor football), girls (like artistic gymnastics or hiking) and those with similar participation (such as martial arts or tennis) were determined, as

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well as the gender stereotypes present in adolescents and the type of sport seen in the media.

The results showed significant differences according to gender in the type of sport practiced ( $p < 0.05$ ), in the membership to sports clubs ( $p < 0.001$ ), and in the participation in competitions ( $p < 0.001$ ). It was found that family ( $p < 0.005$ ) and friends ( $p < 0.05$ ) were the social agents that most influenced the choice of the type of sport practiced, and that the type of sport watched live ( $p < 0.005$ ), and in the media ( $p < 0.001$ ), was related to gender and the type of sport practiced. In contrast, the gender stereotypes of the adolescents themselves were not related to the practice of sports ( $p = 0.605$ ).

## Conclusion

Sports with a similar participation between males and females have continued to gain relevance over the years and make up the vast majority of the sports modalities included in the research. Membership in sports clubs and the participation in competitions were found to be similar in the sports most practiced by males and those with similar participation rates, regardless of the gender of the adolescents, confirming that the gender gap in sports is narrowing. Gender stereotypes did not seem to be a determining factor in sports practice. The environment closest to the adolescents was related to the type of sport practiced by those adolescents. There were also differences according to gender in the type of sports they watched as spectators, but in most cases no differences were found according to the type of sport practiced.

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