

COMMUNITY

Variables and indicators for
evaluating the educational
quality of the socio-sports
meetings linked to the
Community project



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 5 |
| Methodology | 7 |
| Informants | 8 |
| Instruments | 9 |
| <i>Anecdotal Record</i> | 9 |
| <i>Informal group interviews</i> | 10 |
| Procedure | 11 |
| Data Analysis | 12 |
| Variables and indicators to assess the quality of socio-sports meetings for refugees | 15 |
| General Characteristics | 15 |
| Participants | 15 |
| <i>Variables and quality indicators</i> | 15 |
| <i>Checklist</i> | 17 |
| Activities | 18 |
| <i>Variables and quality indicators</i> | 18 |
| <i>Checklist</i> | 20 |
| Learning outcomes | 20 |
| <i>Variables and quality indicators</i> | 20 |
| <i>Checklist</i> | 21 |
| References | 23 |

INTRODUCTION

The Community project is based on the belief that the practice of physical exercise and sports is key to improving the well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers. It assumes that simply doing any type of physical exercise on a regular basis is essential for these groups. In addition to providing a whole series of physical, psychological and emotional benefits, it also allows them to perform an activity in a natural social context in which they must test and improve their communication and interpersonal relationship skills.

The Community project also aims to establish key criteria and guidelines so any social and educational organisation can carry out a similar project based on social and educational principles. As a consequence, the research done during the development of the Community project has primarily focused on the following main objective.

Identifying criteria and indicators that guide professionals working in physical activity and sports in designing and evaluating educational programmes based on holding weekly socio-sports meetings, aimed at empowering refugees or asylum-seekers and at creating stable networks of support and cooperation among all participants.



METHODOLOGY

Research establishing the effects of physical activity and sports programmes on refugees or asylum-seekers has usually been approached with methods based on phenomenology or ethnography.

Broadly speaking, these studies aim to understand the impact that these programmes have had on their physical, psychological, social or emotional well-being or to explain the intentions and effects of the relationships established among the members of a certain group or community that practices physical exercise, including forced migrants such as refugees.

However, both the objective and the characteristics of the Community project are distant from the intentions of phenomenological or ethnographic studies. Since the purpose of the study is to develop certain communicative and social skills and competencies that help refugees to deal with their situation successfully through their participation in socio-sports meetings, we understand that the most appropriate methodological model is a mixed methodology.

In this sense, a mixed methodological design would be exploratory and sequential (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). These types of designs aim to carry out an in-depth qualitative study to identify and describe a whole series of key elements or factors with respect to the subject of study in the first phase of the programme. Then, in the next phase, a qualitative instrument is designed and validated that can be applied in the following phase to gather objective data to determine the influence of the phenomenon of the study on a certain group, community or population.

For the Community project, the first phase of the study was aimed at collecting detailed information on the development of the activities scheduled in the socio-sports meetings, as well as the relationships established between those attending them before, during and after they were held. Once this information was analysed and processed, the second phase consisted of identifying the criteria and corresponding indicators to be considered in a checklist on the actions to take for organisations wishing to replicate the programme both in terms of designing and implementing these socio-sports meetings and when evaluating their quality and social and educational importance.

The following sections detail the most important aspects that were taken into account for implementing this sequential exploratory design, meaning in the first exploratory phase and in the second phase on identifying and defining quality indicators.

The most appropriate methodological model to evaluate the educational quality of the socio-sports meetings is a mixed methodology

Informants

The relationship of informants in the exploratory study corresponded to the participants in the socio-sports meetings. As highlighted in Table 1, two complementary roles were established regarding the type of information provided.

Table 1

| Participant | Role | Information |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Facilitator of the socio-sports meetings | Observation and recording of data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees' participation in the proposed activities. • Relations established among those attending the meetings. • Creation and evolution of the group. • Influence of the proposed physical activities on the participants' motor-skill interactions and social relationships. |
| Assistants and collaborators | External observers and informants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships established among those attending the meetings. • Influence of the proposed physical activities on the participants' motor-skill interactions and social relationships. |
| Education professionals | Informants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships established among those attending the meetings. • Influence of the proposed physical activities on the participants' motor-skill interactions and social relationships. |
| Refugees attending the meetings | Informants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings perceived when performing the activity. • Influence of the social-sports meetings on their daily routine and activities related to their personal situation. |

The information provided by the participants in the socio-sports meetings has focused both on the development of the activities carried out in the scheduled sessions and on their impact on the group and on the participants.

Instruments

To collect the data provided by the informants, face-to-face and observation-based techniques were used complementarily. These techniques were administered by the facilitator of the socio-sports meetings and consisted of an anecdotal record and informal group interviews. The purpose and main characteristics of both are explained below.

Anecdotal record

The purpose of the anecdotal record was to collect anecdotes, opinions and important details that emerged before, during and after the activities carried out in the weekly socio-sports meetings. Despite being a relatively unstructured instrument, the record was systematised and focused on the following units of information:

- **The group:** information referring to the relationships that were established among all the participants in the socio-sports meetings. Specifically, attention was paid to the links between the members of the group and how group cohesion was evolving.
- **Physical and sports activities:** information related to how the type of activities practiced affected both the behaviours and motor-skill interactions established among the participants in the meetings. Among other aspects, attention was paid

To collect the data provided by the informants, face-to-face and observation-based techniques were used complementarily



to the way in which a motor-skill challenge was resolved individually or collectively, to the participants' initiatives to change and implement variations of the proposed activities to guarantee the participation of all members of the group or to lengthening times for practicing physical exercise.

- **Emotions:** information related to the effect of the activities and the socio-sports meetings. Specifically, emphasis was placed on the ability to produce feelings of well-being and positive emotions, an atmosphere of safety and trust to express and share feelings and problems and references to the meetings' positive impact on their personal development and empowerment. Teamwork and inclusion, including horizontality and distributed leadership, shared responsibility and the promotion of prosocial behaviour among the participants of both groups.
- **The network of relationships:** information related to the meetings' contribution to establishing and consolidating social networks and stable collaboration among the members of the group. Specifically, attention was paid to how the group helps to jointly treat and solve personal problems and to raise awareness, analyse and overcome cultural, religious and gender stereotypes.



Informal group interviews

The informal group interviews were implemented at the end of the meeting after the proposed activities had been carried out, during the time set aside for reflection and closing and the subsequent snack time.

The facilitator, assistants and collaborators of the socio-sports meetings were all in charge of leading these types of interviews. As previously, even though the script was poorly structured, the questions usually raised in these relaxed and informal moments of the weekly meetings usually touched on the following aspects:

- Aspects about the physical and sports activities or the session carried out
- Tasks to be carried out for the proposal or change to the physical and sports activities for the next session
- Activities performed during the week and during free time
- Training activities carried out or to carry out in formal or informal contexts during the week
- Current status of their administrative situation

Procedure

Based on the structure of the socio-sports meetings explained in the guide, the following procedure was used to collect data on the subject of the research conducted while they were being held:

Firstly, the person in charge of facilitating the meetings used the times when the participants were carrying out the proposed activity to observe and take notes on the anecdotal record sheet. The facilitator also took advantage of the time before and after the session to note down any aspects to highlight with respect to the previously defined units of information. This recording was done systematically during the duration of the Community project.

Secondly, during the reflection period and the informal snack time, the person in charge of facilitating the project, the assistants and the collaborators were all in charge of conducting the informal interviews,

Informal group interviews were implemented at the end of the meeting after the proposed activities had been carried out

The facilitator took advantage of the time before and after the session to note down any aspects to highlight

asking all the participants about the aspects indicated in the previous section. Like for the anecdotal records, the person responsible for organising the meetings was also in charge of recording the participants' opinions in a specific notebook to guarantee their anonymity and confidentiality, as it was considered inappropriate to make an audio recording of the informal group interviews.

Data analysis

Finally, considering that the data collected was qualitative, content analysis was conducted, assisted by the programme Atlas-Ti. v.23.

In this case, the main actions to conduct this analysis were as follows:

1. Grouping and categorisation of the content of the anecdotal records and the opinions collected through the group interviews.
2. Accounting for the frequency or appearance of the identified categories.
3. Selection of terms or phrases most representative of the identified categories to confirm the interpretations taken from analysing the content of the data collected.



The criteria of credibility considered for selecting and presenting the most representative results taken from the textual data were as follows:

1. High frequency of appearance (or rooting) of the codes and key concepts detected.
2. Saturation and relevance of quotes, words and key concepts supporting the interpretations made of the content of the records.
3. Frequency of the interrelationships or co-occurrences between the codes or categories emerging from the content analysis.
4. Supplementation of the content of the identified categories with the frequency of the responses obtained in the records.
5. Confirmation and contrast of the descriptions and interpretations made with findings obtained from other similar studies.





VARIABLES AND INDICATORS

To assess the quality of socio-sports meetings for refugees

The result of this inductive analysis process based on the opinions of the participants in the Community project has allowed the development of the evaluation instrument Quality of Socio-Sports Meetings for Refugees (CESD_REF). The most important aspects of this instrument are detailed below.

General characteristics

The general characteristics of the CESD_REF instrument are as follows:

- Structured in three dimensions: actions focused on the participants in the meetings, characteristics of the proposed activities and learning outcomes taken from participation in the meetings
- Dimensions specified in observable criteria and indicators
- Dimensions, variables and indicators deduced from analysing the content of the instruments applied during the socio-sports meetings planned during implementation of the Community project
- The presented instrument is based on an operational definition of the dimension and the criteria that compose it and in relation to the list of indicators specifying the previously defined criteria

This inductive analysis process has allowed the development of the evaluation instrument 'Quality of Socio-Sports Meetings for Refugees (CESD_REF)'

Participants

The purpose of this dimension is to verify the key characteristics and the participants' level of participation in the socio-sports meetings.

Variables and quality indicators

In this dimension, four distinct variables correspond to the participants' different roles in the meetings: the person responsible for organising them; the students performing volunteer functions; the refugees attending the meetings and the education professionals and members of the participating organisations supporting those attending the meetings.

The following quality indicators are found in the variable “Responsible for facilitation”:

- Specific training and experience in physical activity, physical education and sports and in social action and intervention
- Commitment to and concern for the stability and cohesion of the group
- Availability to meet the participants’ demands and needs
- Ability to manage and resolve unforeseen organisational events
- The variable “Students” encompasses the following indicators:
- Regular attendance of the meetings
- Stable number of student volunteers during the meetings
- Participation and commitment to the activities proposed during the meetings
- Self-balance of the skills and knowledge necessary to do their professional work with groups at risk of social exclusion

The variable “Education professionals” encompasses these indicators:

- Regular support for the refugees
- Participation in and commitment to the activities planned during the meetings
- Interest in transferring the activity to their organisations



The variable “Refugees” is defined based on the following indicators:

- Diverse and varied constitution of the group in terms of geographic origin, gender and social and cultural capital
- Degree of cohesion and acceptance of the members of the group and the rest of the participants
- Participation in and commitment to the activities planned during the meetings
- Assumption of the responsibilities assigned in adapting and managing the games and activities proposed to the rest of the group members

Checklist

| Variable | Indicators | | | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Responsible for facilitation | Training and experience | Commitment | Availability | Unforeseen event management |
| Students | Attendance | Stability | Participation – commitment | Self-balance |
| Education professionals – volunteers | Support | Participation – commitment | Transfer | |
| Group of refugees | Constitution of group | Atmosphere – cohesion | Participation – commitment | Responsibilities |

Activities

This dimension identifies the key elements of the physical and cross-cutting activities carried out in the socio-sports meetings.

Variables and quality indicators

This dimension consists of five dimensions related to the organisational aspects of the activities included in the socio-sports meetings, the cultural elements to be considered as part of the sessions, the characteristics of the physical and cross-cutting activities to be carried out in the various parts of the weekly sessions and the aspects to be considered for applying and transferring these activities to other contexts or similar programmes.

The key indicators for the “Organisation” variable are:

- Layout and management of spaces and available material
- Identification of critical or problematic elements
- Resolution and improvement of the elements that cause the detected problem
- Actions to spread knowledge about the socio-sports meetings and where they take place

The variable “Cultural elements” refers to identifying and controlling social and cultural aspects that may shape the proper development of the activities planned for the meetings.

In this project, indicators to consider for this variable are:

- Physical contact
- Aspects related to gender equality
- Matters of a religious nature
- Other social and cultural elements

The variable “Physical activities” encompasses aspects to be considered when designing and modifying the motor-skill situations in the different sessions of the socio-sports meetings.

The key indicators for the “Physical activities” variable are:

- Modification of games and traditional ways of playing, transforming them into cooperative challenges
- Educational principles that guide the design and modification of these games and ways of playing: enjoyment of physical activity, inclusion and involvement of all attendees, objectives achievable by all members of the group, adaptation to the different levels of motor skill
- Educational strategies that encourage the participation and involvement of all group members and mutual collaboration to resolve the motor-skill challenges raised

The variable “Cross-cutting activities” refers to the activities carried out before or after the part of the session dedicated to physical exercise.

These three key indicators are distinguished for the “Cross-cutting activities” variable:

- Snack time: informal moment where all attendees explain or comment on any aspect raised by the exercise or on their personal situation
- Attendance of complementary training sessions as part of the Community project
- Activities carried out during vacation periods or outside planned sessions

The variable “Replication – transfer” refers to the project’s activities carried out with the heads of the organisations participating in it or any organisation interested in replicating or adapting the philosophy of the socio-sports meetings.

The key indicators for the “Replication – transfer” are:

- The creation of collaboration agreements
- The provision and adaptation of facilities to hold the meetings
- The provision of specialised education professionals and volunteers through activities like service learning

Checklist

| Variable | Indicators | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Organisation | Spaces and material | Critical points | Resolution and improvement | Dissemination |
| Cultural elements | Physical contact | Gender equality | Religious | Customs – traditions |
| Physical activities | Games | Educational principles | Educational strategies | |
| Cross-cutting activities | Snack time | Attendance of meetings | Informal activities | |
| Replication –transfer | Agreements | Facilities | Specialised education professionals | Volunteers |

Learning Outcomes

This dimension identifies the key lessons learned by the participants in the socio-sports meetings via the networks of relationships that have been made informally throughout the weekly sessions conducted as part of the project.

Variables and quality indicators

This dimension consists of two variables related to the key skills developed by the participants and the basic knowledge useful in dealing with their personal situation.

The variable “Key skills” corresponds to the fundamental instrumental skills performed in everyday and formal situations and that are put in practice until achieving a basic level of mastery through the interactions that occur during socio-sports meetings (via physical and cross-cutting activities). The main indicators of this variable are:

- Language skills
- Socialisation skills

The variable “Everyday resources” refers to knowledge related to the host culture or to the origin of those attending socio-sports meetings, issues related to the administrative procedures that they must know to regularise their legal situation and basic resources to deal with unforeseen personal situations. The indicators linked to this variable are:

- Administrative culture
- Everyday resources
- Intercultural knowledge

Checklist

| Variable | Indicators |
|------------------------|---|
| Key skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills • Socialisation skills |
| Basic knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative culture • Everyday resources • Intercultural |





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