Fuel Cells Bulletin
ISSN: 1464-2859

Play, Physical Activity, Sport and Play, Key to Emotional Self-Regulation and Executive Functions in Schoolchildren with Attention Deficit Disorders And ADHD

Data of Publication: 13 June 2024

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Abstract

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common neuropsychiatric condition that affects children's academic, social, and emotional development. This disorder is characterized by difficulties in emotional regulation and executive functions, including attention, impulse control, working memory, and planning. The aim of this article is to analyze the effects of play, sports, and physical activity on improving these areas in schoolchildren with ADHD. Through a literature review, the benefits of these activities, such as improving self-control, emotional regulation, and executive functions, are discussed, and limitations in interventions based on these strategies are identified. It is concluded that regular physical exercise, team sports, and structured games are useful tools in the complementary treatment of ADHD, although their implementation must be personalized and adapted to the needs of each child, with the collaboration of families, educators, and healthcare professionals.

Key terms-ADHD, emotional regulation, executive functions, play, physical activity

Introduction

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most prevalent neuropsychiatric disorders in children, with a significant impact on children's social, academic and emotional development. It is estimated to affect 5-7% of the world's population, with variations in its diagnosis and prevalence due to cultural and diagnostic differences (Polanczyk et al., 2018). This disorder is characterized by symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, which affect children's ability to perform everyday tasks properly and effectively. The difficulties associated with ADHD are usually more noticeable in contexts that require emotional self-regulation skills and control of executive functions.

Executive functions comprise a series of cognitive skills that allow individuals to organize their thoughts, make decisions, inhibit impulses, and maintain sustained attention. For children with ADHD, alterations in these functions make it difficult to learn academically and interact socially. Emotional self-regulation, on the other hand, refers to children's ability to manage and express their emotions appropriately, an aspect also compromised in children with ADHD. This deficit in emotional self-regulation can result in frustration, anger, or anxiety, which affects your overall well-being.

Although pharmacological treatments, such as stimulants (methylphenidate and amphetamines), are widely used to manage ADHD symptoms, they do not comprehensively address the emotional and social difficulties of affected children. In this context, non-pharmacological interventions, such as physical exercise, sports, and structured games, have emerged as effective strategies to improve both executive functions and emotional self-regulation. These activities not only provide cognitive benefits, but also promote the social integration and general well-being of children with ADHD.

This article aims to analyze the effects of play, sport and physical activity on the improvement of emotional self-regulation and executive functions in schoolchildren with ADHD. Through a documentary review of recent studies, both the benefits and limitations of these interventions in the educational and therapeutic fields are identified. This analysis seeks to provide recommendations on the integration of these practices into ADHD treatments, in order to improve the academic, social, and emotional outcomes of affected children.

Scientific research has been revealing that physical activity not only improves the physical condition of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but also plays a crucial role in the development of their executive functions, emotional self-regulation and improved general well-being. Integrating physical activity into ADHD treatment is not just a therapeutic adjunct, but a powerful intervention in its own right. In recent years, studies have begun to identify the mechanisms through which exercise can positively influence the symptoms of this disorder, which affect children's behavior, cognitive skills, and social interactions.

Results

Aerobic exercise is one of the most studied types of physical activity in children with ADHD because of its positive effects on the brain. Aerobic activities such as running, swimming or cycling increase blood circulation, which promotes greater oxygenation of the brain. This improves neuroplasticity, facilitating the formation of new neural connections. In children with ADHD, who typically show dysfunction in brain areas responsible for executive functions such as the prefrontal cortex, aerobic exercise has a noticeable impact.

Description of the main characteristics of ADHD and its impact on emotional self-regulation and executive functions in schoolchildren

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common disorders in childhood, affecting approximately 5 to 7% of the child population worldwide (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). It is mainly characterized by difficulties in attention, a high level of impulsivity and, in many cases, hyperactivity. These characteristics directly impact the development of various cognitive and emotional skills, especially emotional self-regulation and executive functions.

Main characteristics of ADHD

In original language Spanish

ADHD is generally classified into three types, based on the predominant symptoms: combined ADHD, inattentive ADHD, and hyperactive-impulsive. Diagnosis is based on the presence of symptoms that interfere with the child's daily life in at least two different settings, such as home and school. Although symptoms can vary considerably from child to child, there are certain common patterns that are observed.

1. **Inattention**: Kids with ADHD have trouble staying focused on tasks or activities for a long time. They often don't follow directions, have trouble organizing their work, and are easily distracted. Inattention can cause children with ADHD to have significant difficulties in the academic field, as they fail to complete tasks or miss important information during lessons (Barkley, 2015).
2. **Hyperactivity**: Children with hyperactive ADHD tend to move constantly. They find it difficult to sit still in situations where tranquility is required, such as in class. This hyperactivity can cause these children to get up from their seat

frequently, walk or run for no reason, and have difficulty participating in activities that require calm, such as reading or listening carefully to a teacher (APA, 2013).

3. **Impulsivity**: Impulsivity refers to the tendency to act without thinking about the consequences, which can lead to rash decisions. Impulsive children have trouble waiting their turn, interrupt others during conversations, and tend to talk excessively. This characteristic can generate conflicts in the classroom and in social interactions (Ramsay, 2014).

Impact of ADHD on emotional self-regulation

One of the most affected areas in children with ADHD is emotional self-regulation. Self-regulation is the ability to control our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in various situations. For children with ADHD, this ability is significantly altered, which can lead to a disproportionate emotional response to everyday situations.

Children with ADHD often experience increased levels of frustration, irritability, and, in some cases, aggression. These children tend to be more emotionally reactive due to the inability to regulate their emotions in the face of frustrations or challenges. According to Barkley (2015), a lack of control in emotional self-regulation is also associated with a greater tendency to experience anxiety and depression.

The emotions of children with ADHD tend to be more intense than those of other children, and their ability to manage stress and negative emotions is limited. Consequently, these children may have difficulty adapting to social and school situations, as their emotional reactions may be interpreted as immature or inappropriate for their age (Zentall, 2017). A study by McGoey et al. (2016) found that children with ADHD are more likely to show intense emotional reactions when faced with obstacles, which prevents them from regulating their responses effectively.

In addition, studies have identified that children with ADHD have a greater tendency to develop comorbid disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders, which originate, in part, due to this dysfunction in emotional self-regulation (Wymbs et al., 2017). The inability to manage their emotions contributes to poor adjustment at home and in the school environment, often resulting in a vicious cycle of frustration and poor performance.

Impact of ADHD on Executive Functions

ADHD also has a profound impact on the development of executive functions (EF), which are a set of cognitive skills that allow us to plan, make decisions, solve problems, and control our emotions. EFs are essential for learning and school performance, as they allow us to organize our activities and direct our efforts towards long-term goals.

Executive functions include several skills, such as working memory, sustained attention, inhibitory control, and planning. Children with ADHD have significant difficulties in all of these areas. According to Zentall (2017), deficits in working memory affect these children's ability to remember and process information simultaneously. For example, they may forget directions mid-task or not be able to keep the steps of an activity in mind, making it difficult to complete academic tasks efficiently.

Sustained attention is another area affected in children with ADHD. This deficit refers to the inability to maintain concentration for an extended period of time. Kids with ADHD have trouble staying focused on tasks that are monotonous or require prolonged cognitive effort, such as reading or solving math problems. Loe et al. (2018) found that these children have trouble resisting distractions and can switch activities quickly without finishing what they started, which translates into poor academic performance.

Inhibitory control is another crucial executive function that is impaired in children with ADHD. Inhibitory control is the ability to control impulses and delay gratification. Children with ADHD have difficulty inhibiting their impulsive responses, which often manifests itself in behaviors such as interrupting others, speaking out of turn, or acting without thinking about the consequences. This deficit is related to social problems, since impulsive responses can generate conflicts in the classroom or at home (Barkley, 2015).

Finally, planning is another executive function that is affected in children with ADHD. These children have difficulty organizing their thoughts and activities in the long term. They may be very disorganized, forgetful, and have trouble initiating tasks or breaking down large projects into more manageable steps (Ramsay, 2014). This difficulty in planning directly affects their academic performance, as it is difficult for them to structure their time and fulfill schoolwork efficiently.

Types of games, sports, and physical activities that have been shown to be effective in the intervention of schoolchildren with ADHD

The treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has evolved over the years, and one of the most promising strategies in the intervention of this disorder is the use of games, sports and physical activities. Not only do these activities offer physical health benefits, but they also have a positive impact on improving attention, emotional self-regulation, and executive functions for children with ADHD. The following describes the types of games, sports, and physical activities that have been shown to be effective in the intervention of schoolchildren with ADHD, based on recent studies and empirical evidence.

Games and recreational activities

In original language Spanish

Games are essential tools in the development of cognitive and emotional skills in children. For kids with ADHD, games that require focus and self-control can be particularly effective in improving attention and emotional self-regulation. Some of the types of games that have shown effectiveness include:

1. **Board games**: Board games that require turns, rule-following, and patience, such as Monopoly, Jenga, and Scrabble, have been shown to be helpful in improving the ability of children with ADHD to regulate their impulses and increase their sustained attention (Barkley, 2015). These games help children focus on tasks, stay focused for longer periods, and develop skills to inhibit impulsive responses.

2. **Building games**: Activities such as Legos or block building games help children improve their organization and planning. Children with ADHD often have difficulty organizing their thoughts and activities, so these games provide them with the opportunity to work on problem-solving and spatial planning skills (Faraone et al., 2017). In addition, the process of following directions and completing a task also encourages emotional self-regulation, as children learn to manage frustrations when things don't go as expected.

3. **Attention games**: Games like Simon Says, Memory, and others that require concentration and remembering rules are also effective in improving sustained attention and the ability to concentrate of children with ADHD. These games are suitable for developing inhibitory control skills and increasing children's awareness of the environment, which helps in the improvement of executive functions (Shaw et al., 2014).

Physical activity: active sports and games

Sports and other physical activities are also crucial in the treatment of ADHD, since hyperactivity and difficulties in emotional regulation are common features of the disorder. Not only do sports and physical activity provide an avenue for channeling children's energy, but they also have direct effects on the brain, particularly in improving executive functions and emotional control. Below are some sports and physical activities that have been shown to be effective in ADHD intervention.

1. **Individual sports**: Sports such as swimming, tennis, or gymnastics have been shown to be effective in improving concentration and emotional control in children with ADHD. Playing individual sports requires the child to focus on specific tasks and control his or her body in a coordinated manner. According to Nigg (2016), children with ADHD often have difficulty adjusting to structured environments, but sports such as swimming can offer a quiet space to improve emotional self-regulation. In addition, these sports also benefit sustained attention and the ability to follow clear instructions and rules.

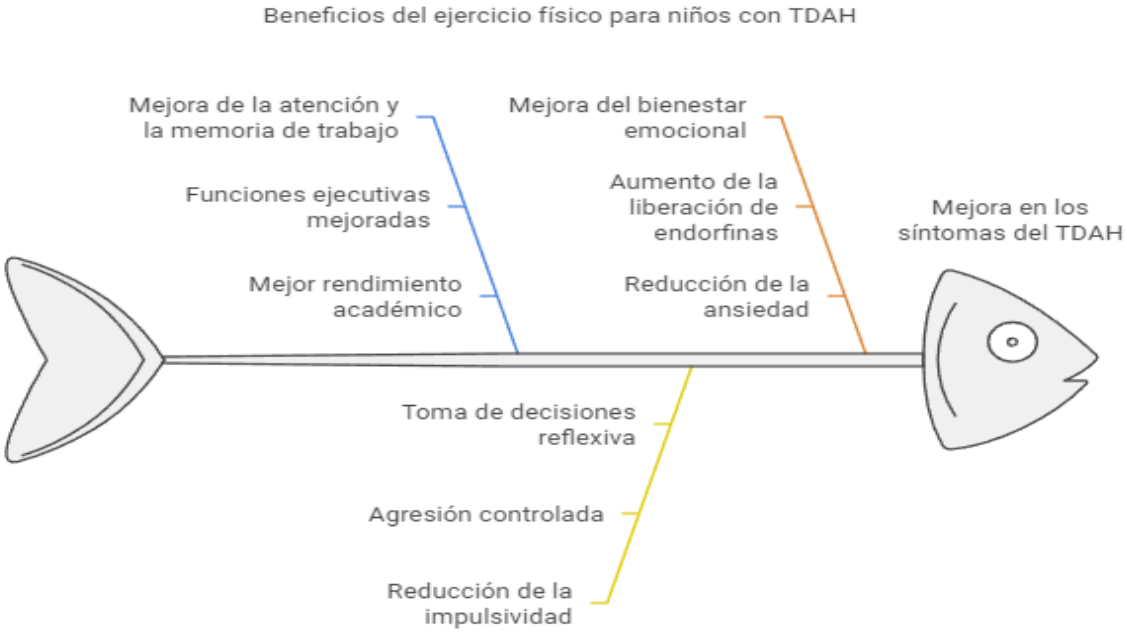
2. **Team sports**: Team sports, such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball, are also effective for children with ADHD, as they help develop social skills and improve motor coordination. These sports require kids to work as a team, follow directions, and control their impulses to make quick decisions on the field. According to Etnier et al. (2017), football and other team sports are also beneficial for the improvement of executive function in children with ADHD, as they require them to make quick decisions and solve problems during play. In addition, these sports allow children to release energy in a structured way, which has a positive impact on their behavior.

3. **Aerobic exercise**: Aerobic exercise, such as running, biking, or dancing, has also been shown to be an effective intervention for children with ADHD. Research has indicated that aerobic exercise increases levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain, neurotransmitters that are involved in regulating attention and behavior. According to Pontifex et al. (2017), children who regularly participate in aerobic activities show improvements in attention, working memory, and inhibitory control. Aerobic exercise also helps reduce anxiety and impulsivity, common characteristics in children with ADHD.

4. **Relaxation and mindfulness activities**: Relaxation techniques, yoga, and mindfulness are becoming increasingly popular in the treatment of ADHD. These practices help children regulate their emotions, reduce impulsivity, and improve attention. A study by Zylowska et al. (2017) found that children with ADHD who participated in mindfulness programs showed a significant reduction in symptoms of inattention, impulsivity, and anxiety. Yoga, on the other hand, can also be effective for children with ADHD, as it promotes self-control, concentration, and emotional well-being (Hughes et al., 2016).

Benefits of physical exercise in ADHD

Physical exercise has a positive impact on several areas of functioning for children with ADHD. First, it improves attention and concentration, two crucial areas for academic performance. In addition, regular exercise helps children manage impulsivity and hyperactivity, allowing them to behave more appropriately in school settings.



In original language Spanish

The following are the main benefits of physical activity for children with ADHD.

1. **Improved attention and working memory**: Regular physical exercise is associated with improvements in executive functions, particularly working memory and sustained attention. According to Etnier et al. (2017), children who participate in physical activities show an improvement in their ability to focus on academic tasks and remember relevant information, which positively impacts their school performance.
2. **Reduced impulsivity**: Physical exercise helps children with ADHD control their impulses. Participation in sports and physical activities, especially those that require discipline and self-regulation, such as taekwondo or judo, allows children to learn to wait their turn, control their aggression, and make decisions in a reflective manner (Zentall, 2017).
3. **Improved emotional well-being**: Physical exercise is also linked to improving the emotional well-being of children with ADHD. Physical activity releases endorphins, chemicals in the brain that generate feelings of happiness and well-being. According to Pontifex et al. (2017), regular exercise can reduce anxiety and improve the overall mood of children with ADHD, helping them better manage social and academic situations.

Evaluation of the benefits of physical activity in improving self-control and the ability to manage emotions in children with ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological disorder that primarily affects executive functions, attention, and self-control in children. These problems can interfere with daily activities, both in and out of the school environment, and underlie many of the symptoms seen in children with ADHD, such as impulsivity, difficulty managing emotions, and hyperactivity. However, in recent years, various studies have shown that physical activity plays a crucial role in improving self-control and emotional management in children with ADHD, being an effective therapeutic tool that complements other traditional interventions such as behavioral therapy or the use of medication.

The Impact of Physical Activity on Emotional Self-Regulation

One of the most affected areas in children with ADHD is **emotional self-regulation**, which includes the ability to manage one's own emotions appropriately and emotional responses to stimuli from the environment. Children with ADHD often have difficulty managing intense emotions, which can lead to emotional outbursts, frustration, and impulsive behaviors. Physical activity has proven to be an effective tool for regulating children's emotions, improving their ability to cope with complex emotional situations with greater control and adaptability.

According to Pontifex et al. (2017), regular physical exercise increases the levels of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine, which are essential in controlling emotions and regulating mood. These neurotransmitters are linked to overall emotional well-being and stability. Through regular physical activity, children with ADHD can experience reduced levels of anxiety and stress, which translates into an improvement in their ability to handle complex emotional situations.

Studies such as those conducted by Zylowska et al. (2017) have shown that combined mindfulness and physical exercise programs can significantly improve emotional regulation in children with ADHD. These activities allow children to learn to recognize and control their emotional responses before they become impulsive or destructive. In addition, yoga and other physical activities that incorporate aspects of controlled breathing and body awareness can also have positive effects on emotional self-regulation, as they encourage control of emotions and mindfulness in the present moment.

Physical activity and improved self-control

Self-control is another critical area for kids with ADHD. Since these children tend to act impulsively, without stopping to think about the consequences of their actions, self-control becomes one of the most important goals in their treatment. Physical activity offers a space in which children can practice and improve this self-control, as many activities require quick decision-making and the ability to take turns, follow directions, and control impulses.

Participation in sports and structured physical activities helps children train their ability to inhibit impulsive responses. According to Zentall (2017), sports such as taekwondo, which emphasize discipline and self-control, are especially effective in improving

impulse control in children with ADHD. Not only does this type of activity teach kids how to control their body, but it also promotes a mindset of self-mastery and focus.

In addition, regular physical activity has also been associated with an improvement in executive function, which includes the ability to plan, organize, and manage emotions in stressful situations. According to Faraone et al. (2017), children who exercise regularly have a better ability to organize themselves, plan their tasks, and manage emotional challenges more effectively. Difficulty getting organized is a common feature in kids with ADHD, and physical activity can provide structure that helps them tackle these challenges more efficiently.

Benefits of physical activity in reducing impulsivity

Impulsivity is one of the most characteristic symptoms of ADHD, and it often manifests itself in behaviors such as interrupting conversations, making decisions without thinking, or displaying aggressive behaviors. Physical activity, by engaging motor coordination and body control, helps children with ADHD channel their energy in a controlled and structured way, which reduces impulsive behaviors.

High-intensity exercises, such as running or jumping, have a direct impact on regulating dopamine levels in the brain, which helps improve impulse control. According to Etnier et al. (2017), high-intensity physical activity is associated with improvements in executive function, especially in the ability to inhibit impulsive responses. These benefits are even more pronounced in children with ADHD, who tend to be more sensitive to stimuli and have a greater need for activity to maintain an adequate level of dopamine and norepinephrine in their system.

Team sports also help children regulate their impulsive behavior, since team play requires following rules, waiting for turns, and controlling emotions in the face of frustration. For example, in sports such as basketball or soccer, children must learn to control their impulses to avoid aggressive behaviors and work together with their peers. According to Shaw et al. (2014), the fact that team sports involve cooperation and turn-waiting encourages patience and self-control, essential skills for emotional management and impulse management.

Impact of physical activity on improving overall well-being

The benefits of physical activity in children with ADHD are not limited to self-control and emotional management. Physical activity has widespread effects on children's physical and psychological well-being, which also has a positive impact on their ability to regulate their emotions. According to Barkley (2015), physical exercise reduces stress levels and improves the mood of children with ADHD, which in turn improves their ability to face social and academic situations with greater calmness and self-control.

In summary, physical activity plays an essential role in improving self-control and emotional management in children with ADHD. The benefits of participating in sports, active play, and structured exercise include improved emotional self-regulation, reduced impulsivity, and an overall increase in physical and mental well-being. Therefore, physical activity should not only be seen as a form of exercise, but as a key therapeutic intervention that complements other treatment strategies for children with ADHD.

Analysis of the effects of sport and play on the development of executive functions, such as attention, working memory and planning, in schoolchildren with ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is mainly characterized by alterations in executive functions, which are cognitive processes essential for controlling behavior, decision-making, planning, and executing tasks. Executive functions comprise a range of mental skills including attention, working memory, inhibition of impulsive responses, planning, and organization. These skills are critical to learning and behavior in the school setting, and in the case of children with ADHD, they are often significantly altered, affecting their academic and social performance.

Recently, physical activity, especially sports and structured play, has been recognized as an effective means of improving executive functions in children, including those with ADHD. Physical exercise, by engaging both the body and mind, has beneficial effects on cognition, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills. Several studies have documented the positive effects of these activities on executive functions in children with ADHD, providing evidence that sport and play can help improve key aspects such as attention, working memory, and planning.

Effects of sport and play on attention

Attention is one of the most affected executive functions in children with ADHD. These children often have difficulty concentrating on tasks for extended periods of time, which interferes with their ability to complete academic tasks and follow directions in the classroom. However, several studies have shown that physical exercise can significantly improve attention in children with ADHD, contributing to a better ability to focus on academic activities and reduce distraction.

According to Pontifex et al. (2017), physical activity has a direct effect on attention-related neural systems, particularly in the prefrontal region of the brain, which is key to executive functions. Research has shown that children who engage in regular physical activity have a greater ability to concentrate and are better able to maintain attention during demanding tasks. The benefits of physical activity on attention are especially noticeable when it comes to activities that require coordination and mental focus, such as team sports.

A study by Chang et al. (2014) found that children with ADHD who participated in moderate-intensity exercise programs showed significant improvements in their ability to maintain attention and perform cognitive tasks that require concentration. The improvement in attention can be explained by the impact of exercise on the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and norepinephrine, which are directly involved in the processes of attention and cognitive control.

In addition, structured play, such as team play, can offer an opportunity to train attention, as children must focus on following rules, taking their turn, and anticipating the actions of their peers. These aspects of play require a high level of focus and planning, which in turn can benefit children with ADHD in their ability to maintain attention in the school environment.

Impact of sport on working memory

Working memory refers to the ability to hold and manipulate information in the mind for short periods of time, which is essential for activities such as problem-solving, learning, and decision-making. In children with ADHD, working memory is frequently impaired, making it difficult for them to perform tasks that require retaining information during various stages.

Physical exercise has been shown to have a positive impact on working memory, especially when combined with activities that stimulate both the mind and body. A study by Best (2010) found that children who participated in high-intensity physical activities showed a significant improvement in working memory. The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the fact that physical activity activates areas of the brain related to working memory, such as the prefrontal cortex, which contributes to improving cognitive performance.

Team sports also have beneficial effects on working memory, as children must remember plays, sequences of actions, and the positions of teammates and opponents during play. These activities offer a structured environment that encourages the exercise of working memory in a dynamic and emotionally charged context.

According to Faraone et al. (2017), regular physical activity also improves executive function in terms of working memory in children with ADHD. This is because exercise stimulates the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, which is crucial for the functioning of short-term memory and the manipulation of information in the mind.

Improved planning through sport and play

Planning is another executive function that is affected in children with ADHD. The ability to plan, anticipate events, and make decisions is critical to organizing activities, solving problems, and achieving goals. In children with ADHD, difficulty planning can result in problems with academic performance, time management, and solving complex tasks.

Physical activity also has a positive influence on improving planning skills. Through sports such as football or basketball, children learn to plan plays, anticipate the opponent's behavior and make quick decisions under pressure. These activities encourage decision-making and mental organization, which translates into improved planning both inside and outside the sports context.

According to Diamond (2016), sports and games that require a combination of strategy and execution are particularly effective in improving planning. In these sports, children must be mentally organized, anticipate the next step, and coordinate their actions with those of others, skills that can be transferred to the school context and help children with ADHD improve their ability to plan and organize academic tasks.

To propose the use of play, sports and physical activity as complementary strategies in the education and treatment of schoolchildren with ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological condition that affects a significant percentage of school-age children. It is characterized by persistent difficulties in attention, impulsivity and, in some cases, hyperactivity, which can generate problems in the academic performance and social relationships of affected children. Since traditional interventions, such as drug therapy and psychotherapy, are often not sufficient on their own, the use of complementary strategies, such as play, sport, and physical activity, has been proposed as effective tools to improve the cognitive and emotional functions of children with ADHD.

Play, sport and physical activity as complementary strategies in the treatment of ADHD

Current scientific research suggests that exercise-based interventions, such as sports and structured play, have a positive impact on children with ADHD by offering benefits in various areas of development, including executive functions, self-control, emotional regulation, and attention. Implementing these activities in the educational and therapeutic setting can be an effective avenue to complement traditional treatments and help children with ADHD better manage the challenges associated with their condition.

The use of games and sports can not only improve the physical fitness of children with ADHD, but also contribute to their emotional well-being and cognitive development. These benefits come from the social interactions they promote, the reinforcement of problem-solving skills, the increase in self-esteem and the improvement of the ability to regulate emotions. Through structured play, children can learn to follow directions, take turns, cooperate with others, and control their impulses—skills that are critical to both their academic performance and social development.

Integration of play and sport in the school environment

The school environment is crucial for the development of children with ADHD, as it has been identified as one of the contexts where their difficulties are most evident. School is a place where high concentration, mental organization, and behavior regulation are demanded, skills that are often compromised in children with ADHD. Therefore, it is essential to design educational programs that integrate physical strategies such as sports and play, with the aim of offering these children additional tools to improve their academic performance and social adaptation.

Integrating play and sport within the classroom or as extracurricular activities has multiple benefits. According to the American Association of Pediatrics Study (2018), activities such as free play, aerobic exercises, and team sports not only help children release energy, but also improve attention, working memory, and emotional resilience, areas commonly affected in children with ADHD. In fact, these activities foster an environment that promotes discipline, concentration, and self-control, skills that are essential for academic and social success.

Team sports, for example, offer a platform for children to interact socially, develop teamwork skills, resolve conflicts, and learn to follow directions, which helps them improve their self-regulation skills. In a study by Verret et al. (2016), children with ADHD who participated in team sports showed significant improvements in their ability to make decisions and maintain attention during cognitive tasks.

Physical activities as tools for emotional self-regulation

A key area in ADHD treatment is emotional regulation, a crucial component of managing behavior in school and social situations. Children with ADHD often have difficulty managing their emotions, which can lead to impulsive behaviors, interpersonal conflict, and social adjustment problems. In this context, physical exercise is presented as an invaluable tool to help these children manage their emotions more effectively.

Physical activity has been shown to be particularly beneficial in improving emotional regulation in children with ADHD. A study by O'Connor et al. (2017) shows that regular physical exercise improves the ability of children with ADHD to manage frustration, anxiety, and stress, resulting in better emotional adaptation. Exercise has neurochemical effects that promote the release of dopamine and serotonin, neurotransmitters that play a key role in emotional regulation.

In particular, structured play, which includes low- or moderate-impact physical activities, allows children with ADHD to release tension and learn to handle stressful situations, while fostering empathy and respect for others. These positive social and

emotional experiences can help reduce anxiety and improve children's ability to regulate their emotions, contributing to better adjustment in school and healthier social relationships.

The importance of physical activity in improving executive functions

Executive functions comprise a range of cognitive skills that allow individuals to plan, make decisions, control impulses, organize tasks, and solve problems. These functions are essential for academic success and social adjustment, and are frequently impaired in children with ADHD. However, several studies suggest that regular physical activity has a positive impact on the development of executive functions, particularly attention, working memory, and planning.

Regular physical activity can improve the executive functions of children with ADHD by promoting brain plasticity and strengthening connections between brain areas responsible for cognitive and emotional control. In a study by Smith et al. (2018), children who participated in structured physical exercise programs showed improvements in their ability to plan, organize, and solve problems, fundamental skills both in school and in daily life. In addition, regular sports practice strengthens working memory, which is crucial for retaining information and performing complex tasks.

Implementing Physical Activity-Based Strategies in the Treatment of ADHD

Implementing educational and therapeutic programs that include games and sports as complementary strategies can have a big impact on ADHD management. Educators and therapists can integrate rounds of physical activity during the school day, such as outdoor activities, structured play, and team sports, to help kids regulate their energy, improve their attention, and reduce impulsivity. In addition, these activities can be part of a multidisciplinary approach that includes cognitive and psychoeducational interventions, providing a comprehensive strategy to address ADHD symptoms.

Successful implementation of these strategies depends on collaboration between educators, therapists, and parents to make sure activities are appropriate for each child's individual needs. It is essential to tailor programs to the specific characteristics of children with ADHD, taking into account their activity level, interests, and emotional needs.

Conclusion

ADHD is a complex disorder that affects multiple areas of children's development, particularly emotional self-regulation and executive functions. Key features of ADHD, such as inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, interfere with children's ability to manage their emotions and make decisions thoughtfully. In addition, deficits in executive functions, such as working memory, sustained attention, and inhibitory control, hinder academic and social performance.

This impact on emotional self-regulation and executive functions underscores the need to develop interventions that not only address the behavioral symptoms of ADHD, but also help children improve their cognitive and emotional skills. Understanding how ADHD affects these areas is critical to designing educational and therapeutic programs that provide comprehensive support for these children.

The use of games, sports and physical activities in the intervention of schoolchildren with ADHD has been shown to be highly beneficial. Activities that require concentration, inhibitory control, and planning, such as board games, individual sports, and aerobic exercises, help children improve their attention, emotional self-regulation, and executive functions. In addition, the benefits of physical exercise go beyond the academic field, as they also have a positive impact on the emotional well-being and social integration of children with ADHD. The inclusion of these activities in therapeutic and educational intervention programs is essential to provide comprehensive support to children with ADHD.

Sport and structured play are effective interventions to improve various executive functions in children with ADHD, especially those related to attention, working memory, and planning. Regular physical activity improves concentration, the ability to remember information, and mental organization, all of which are critical for children's cognitive and academic development. The positive effects of physical activity on these executive functions provide a solid foundation for the use of sports and play as part of a comprehensive approach to ADHD treatment.

play, sports, and physical activity can be powerful and effective tools for improving the cognitive and emotional skills of children with ADHD. By integrating these activities within the educational and therapeutic setting, a complementary strategy is provided that can improve executive functions, facilitate emotion management, and optimize academic performance. Scientific evidence supports the incorporation of these interventions, demonstrating that physical activity not only improves physical fitness, but

also has a positive impact on the comprehensive development of children with ADHD. Therefore, educational programs should consider physical activity as a key tool in the treatment and improvement of the skills of children with ADHD, favoring their academic and social success.

In conclusion, physical activity is a powerful and effective tool to improve ADHD symptoms in children. The benefits of physical activity include improvements in emotional self-regulation, impulse control, attention, working memory, and other essential executive functions. While there are some limitations and considerations to be taken into account, such as the need to personalize interventions and ensure a structured approach, the research results strongly support the integration of physical activity into ADHD treatment. It is critical that educators, therapists, and parents work together to create environments that encourage regular physical activity, providing children with ADHD with an additional tool to overcome the difficulties associated with their condition. The inclusion of physical activity in therapeutic and educational programs is, without a doubt, a valuable strategy to promote the integral well-being of children with ADHD.

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