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## Sport games: An analysis of representation

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### Abstract

The game of handball is a fast and physically demanding team sport in which natural moves and basic skills such as running, jumping and throwing are combined with speed, power, coordination and endurance. All major joints of the body (ankles, knees, elbows and wrists) are constantly being used during the game to successfully execute a wide range of individual and team actions that are performed with various types of effort (maximal effort, sub-maximal, medium alternated with very short break moments). Handball is a relatively new and young sport. There are people who argue that the game has its origins in Germany, but some other countries had games which were very similar to handball. Countries such as Denmark, Germany and Sweden are considered as the handball pioneers of modern times. Even today, these countries are amongst some of the powerful nations in European and world handball, alongside Russia, France, Norway, Hungary, Romania, Spain and Korea. The technique of the handball game comprises a variety of specific motor actions necessary to accomplish attacking and defensive tasks. The technique is closely connected to tactical aspects while physical qualities underpin the execution of technical elements. All these components of training condition each other; however, the technique is the main factor of the game.

Keywords: Sports game; handball; social representations.

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## 1. Introduction

The handball game can be considered a happy synthesis of basic motor skills: running, jumping, catching and throwing, which provides to it – besides its characteristics of team game practiced in competitions – the quality of additional physical education and sports means, with positive influences upon the physical training of athletes within other branches.

Handball is a collective sports game with a dominantly dynamic character because it unfolds in motion, most of the times while running. Accessibility is one of the most important characteristics of the handball game, due to the fact that most technical procedures are executed using the hands, thus easy to acquire even by individuals without special training. This is why handball can be organized and practiced in companies and institutions, in military units, faculties and mostly. The relatively simple technique confers to handball the possibility to be practiced in the sphere of sports for all, for recreational purposes or as physical education means, because it is accessible to everyone: children and young people of both genders; men and women; and even the elderly. The rules of the game are few, simple, and easy to understand and apply. The materials, equipment and installations necessary are simple and low-cost. Whereas handball allows physical contact between the opponents, the risk of injuries is pretty low if one respects the rules and the opponent.

Besides the simple, natural movements, handball comprises complex movements, such as changes of direction, fakes or defence motions; they influence motricity and they contribute to harmonious physical development and to the modelling of human beings (Gombos, 2012). Modern, advanced game is dominated by psychomotor conducts, (hand-eye coordination, static and dynamic balance, ambidexterity, foot ambilaterality, body schema, spatial and temporal organization), all while maintaining rhythm. All the aforementioned aspects require significant physical effort, but the spectacular character of the game reduces the difficulty of practicing it and creates emulation. The motor qualities present in the handball game are represented by combinations of the various basic motor qualities. An old, traditional sport in Romania, with many medals, handball has a special connotation in Romanians' collective mindset, which makes it more attractive than in other European countries.

The basic idea of this endeavour is to identify Romanians' view of handball compared to the view of other European citizens and to highlight everyone's attitude towards the practice of team sports. Their representations related to this sport complete the overall picture of this team sport, which is endowed with modelling valences regarding the cognitive, affective, and behavioural component of the human being.

The social representation decodes the environment, can decrease the intensity of conflicts through knowledge, it educates the social actors towards coherence by simplifying the object in the public discourse by making it simple and comprehensible. Wiliem Doise postulates that "social representations are principles which organize attitudes related to insertions specific in a set of social relations (Moscovici, 2001).

The term of representation has a wide n polysemics referring and "collective mind", referring to culture, language, beliefs community. Psiche collective consciousness comes from individuals, common thoughts that form representations of the group as a result of beliefs and sentiments members of a society. From mental representations that belong to a social actor in the collective archetypes found in, we arrive at the social, which may be associated with thoughts moving entity with personality.

To represent means to bring to the fore some others intended to explain one thing and thereby representation speaks and, because it has ability to play reality (subject their systems of interpretation) communicating. To identify representation about the handball game at the populations studied, we turn to the theory of social representations, which is focuses on two elements: the central system and peripheral system.

In the theory of the researchers at Aix-en-Provence, the central and the peripheral systems are significant of a certain social representation from the point of view of the principles organizing attitudes, there are three levels of analysis: the level of common cognitions within a population which reveal the similarities within the group regarding the beliefs specific of a certain social importance, this level is created through communication and has common language as a starting point. The level of inter-individual dissimilarities resulting from the individual's own system of knowledge which in its turn emerges from attaching himself to various beliefs; the level of interindividual dissimilarities considered from the point of view of anchoring the social representations in the collective realities or in the perceptions that the social actors interact with the social groups and categories (Neculau & Curelaru, 2003). A social representation is elaborated by a certain group in relation to another, that is why the social representation of violence in sports occurs in society in several forms.

Theories about social representation bring to the fore the fact that it is both a multifaceted conglomerate and individual-size articulated between the psychological and the social collective, fulfilling the role of mental-action representation and representation objectual.

In the area of sport, and not only social representations and practices are influenced by social behaviors. Often, the circumstances which determine the independence and accountability of the individual and social practices are those that shape and determine the system of representation or individual ideology. In many cases, the circumstances influence the individual's responsibility and independence, while social practices give shape and determine the individual's representation system or his ideology.

Using a tool focused on social representation theory, we tried to identify reporting students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport about handball game. According to those surveyed, this study will lead to new approaches to the curriculum.

## **2. The Research Objective**

The identification of social representation of handball game.

## **3. The research hypothesis**

Social actors, beneficiaries of higher education, have some position about the importance and role of handball in their life (specific Faculty of Physical Education and Sport): social actors in Romania have a different representation from those in Italy.

## **4. The research group**

The present study was conducted on a group of 70 students from the Faculties of Physical Education and Sport (35 from Italy and 35 from Romania).

## **5. Method**

The questionnaire was applied: in Italy (Faculty of Physical Education and Sport through Erasmus Mobility), in the seminars of the subject Communication in Physical Education and Sport in Romania. Survey instrument is composed of 2 items that targeted social representation of university sports game, according to the association of words technique, developed by P. Verges (2001), taking into account the frequency of claims and average ranks appearance.

## **6. Procedure**

The questionnaire data processing word association (the first two questions of the questionnaire to identify representation, which sought terms specify the frequency and average occurrence), I used the tabular technique Verges (2001). P. Verges's associative technique was based indicators and frequency of occurrence ranks environments, data were summarized in a table with four compartments. Items with high frequency of occurrence and appearance (below a certain threshold) will be considered

central, and those with low frequency of occurrence and the emergence of low average, will most likely be located on the periphery of social representation.

Application-categorical prototypical technique developed by P. Verges has allowed us to identify the central system and peripheral system of representation University sports game.

Basic indicators were rank frequency and average appearance, so combined: vertical was figuratively frequency and horizontal order of appearance. It chose a suitable value for the separation of strong frequency of occurrence and low score (below a certain threshold) the contents of the other three wells. Alveola left corner of the table contains elements that are able to be most central and the right corner, where the frequency is below the stated value and the rank of occurrence is lower, representing the peripheral.

## 7. Results and Discussion

Thus, the questionnaire applied to the Faculties of Physical Education and Sport of the two universities that participated to the research highlights their different representations concerning this sports game.

The first Table clarifies the overall view of the handball game in a population that does not practice this sport. The information comprised within the central core of the representation refers to motricity acquired by training (through any motor activity) and to the number of athletes, to the way participants conjugate their efforts in order to compete. These opinions fail to comprise personalized information; in fact, such type of information is purely theoretical and it refers to the general character of sports science. The peripheral system – easy to change; it ensures the flexibility of representation – contains the words *technique* and *psychomotricity*. Both words get the specifics of this game closer to the social actors who outlined the representation; the information tends to turn into something concrete, but we must also underscore the lack of specific knowledge.

**Table 1. Social representations of handball game in Italy**

		Rank of emergence	
		Lower than or equal to	Higher than 3
		3	
Frequency	Lower than or equal to 15	<b>Motricity</b>	Game
	Lower than 15	<b>Team sport</b>	Regulation
		Collaboration	<b>Technique Psychomotricity</b>

Furthermore, the social representation of Romanian social actors – considering the tradition of this sport in Romania – stands to show the specifics of this collective sport. The words comprised within the central core outline the image of handball and introduce it into the elite of complex sports, while the peripheral system concerns the spectacular and creative side of this game. Handball has become extremely popular in Europe; competitions are governed by rigorous rankings and by a marketing strategy very similar to soccer.

There are, however, similarities between the elements that make up the whole: note the existence psychomotor and technical words that are repeated with different positioning, importance varies from one group to another. For what may be the different positioning? Role assigned to each group effect handball in their professional lives. If the group of Romanian students consider handball game a complex game, which combines driving quality with psychic abilities have effects in social performance, the other group believes that this game as one useful harmonious physical development.

**Table 2. Social representations of handball game in Romania**

Rank of emergence			
		Lower than or equal to 3	Higher than 3
Frequency	Lower than or equal to 15	<b>Psychomotricity</b> <b>Competition</b> <b>Behavioral principles</b>	Aggressiveness
	Lower than 15	Empathy	<b>Technique</b> <b>Spectacle</b>

## 8. Conclusions

Interpretation of results highlighted how the students of the Faculties of Physical Education and Sports game see. Central System, has an important element, a phenomenon leads to highlight their experiences and unfamiliar approaches, putting his mark on the final design representation. Social representations guide social behavior defining what is normal and desirable in certain situations.

On the other hand, the representation warranted the individual's social behavior. Social actor thinks justifies conduct stemming from freedom and responsibility, articulating and behavior to the variables that come from the environment. According to Abric (2002), the system has a central role in determining the consistency of social representation refers to the homogeneity of a group being linked to the historical, cultural, ideological, social values.

The peripheral is organized around central system acting as a mediator between the core and the representation of a real situation occurs, with the purpose of protecting it, to alleviate external pressures and to allow representation to gain identity.

Peripheral system elements are linked to the central system, constituting the essential content representation, the dynamic of the whole vineyard. In their composition enter information collected from the environment, selected and analyzed, constructed reasoning about objects and the environment in which it exists, stereotypes and beliefs (Abric, 2002).

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