



CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN CONGOLESE STUDENTS: CENTRAL AFRICAN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Absenteeism reveals certain unknown aspects in the Western world (overcrowded classrooms, glances with respect to other disciplines) that emerge from the variety of situations in physical education teaching. **Objective:** This article puts into perspective the different expressions of the failure to attend school to practice physical education among a school population in Brazzaville, Congo. **Methods:** Based on a survey of 447 chronically absentee students from 6 January to 30 April 2015, a quantitative approach was realized for the counting of the questionnaire included several types of questions relating to absenteeism. **Results:** The authors explain the reasons for absenteeism in seven major trends (self-image, peer relations, infrastructure, teacher-student relationships, parental attitudes, methods of evaluation of physical education, socio-cultural environment). Considered as a whole, these failures to meet the academic requirements of the practice of physical education are indicative of the fragilisation of a fraction of pupils, the growing difficulties of managing overcrowded classes, and in particular the relegation of students to weak physical abilities; they also reflect the bad side of an evaluation that does not take into account the control of execution of motor gestures in the practice of physical and sports activities. The latter contributes to reinforce the disinvestment of absentee students in the practice of physical education. **Conclusion:** The results obtained clearly show the need to combat chronic absenteeism in physical education classes in order to avoid dropping out of school.

Key words: chronic absenteeism, physical education and sports, secondary education, evaluation, socio-cultural environment

1. INTRODUCTION

For many years, student absenteeism has been a source of concern for school stakeholders. In fact, absenteeism is one of the most powerful predictors of dropping out [1, 2]. It also deprives the student of certain learning opportunities and has a negative impact on student achievement [3]. Student absenteeism also contributes to a better perception of the level of violence at school among teachers. Teachers seem to feel the absence of students as a challenge to their own role, which may affect their professional commitment.

Empirical studies of the determinants of student absenteeism in physical education and sports (PES) classes are few in comparison to school dropouts [4]. While published studies provide valuable information, they often suffer from certain weaknesses. In general, either they involve a small number of students or they use relatively summary statistical analyzes. The process of comparing groups of regular students with groups of students who are frequently absent during PSE leads to a loss of information on a range of "intermediate" students and processes [5]. Most importantly, the majority of absenteeism studies are based on very weak theoretical bases [1] (for one exception). They are primarily aimed at examining the effect of a particular variable on absenteeism or identifying variables that discriminate against students who are absent from those who are not absent [6]. Despite their interest, the results of this research provide little information on the dynamics leading to absenteeism [7].

Probably because of theoretical poverty, existing studies reveal a wide variety of risk factors for absenteeism, such as from weak socio-economic backgrounds [8] or from ethnic minorities [9], having doubled a class [10], feeling academically unstable [11], conflicting relationships with peers [12] or coping with highly controlled educational practices [13], for example. Some of these risk factors relate to the socio-demographic characteristics of students and are clearly distal variables, over which members of educational teams have relatively little control. Others are more relevant to students sports experiences and are more proximal variables, over which educational teams may have more influence [14]. A central question is therefore to establish the respective weight of the socio-demographic characteristics of students and their school experience in explaining chronic absenteeism in PES. Despite the diversity of risk factors identified, the voluntary absence in PES is, for some authors, a withdrawal behavior that results from a feeling of non-integration of PES at school, not to taking into account what is going on in a PES session and deciding on it, and the disinvestment that follows, in short what might be called a "negative interiorization" compared to the session of PES [1, 7, 15, 16].

In Congo, the interministerial decree for the application of the school law reorganizing the education system in the Republic of Congo, the coefficient 2 is assigned to this discipline in state examinations (Brevet of the second cycle, Baccalaureate) for to find a place in the educational environment compared to other disciplines deemed more serious (mathematics, physical sciences, life and earth sciences, French, English, etc.). In this sense, the PAS should reflect its educational value in terms of value, socialization, development of the person and be credible in the eyes of Congolese students and their parents. In the program (official instructions of 1970), the aims are classified in three categories: the exercises aimed more particularly at the control of the environment; exercises aimed more particularly at mastering the body; exercises aimed specifically at improving psychological qualities and relationships with others. However, it is clear from our teaching practices and observations that most Congolese PES teachers feel disarmed by the insufficient number of hours per class (2 hours per week), overcrowded classes (between 70 and 100 students), inadequate infrastructure, etc. Regarding students, we found in colleges and high schools a significant number of students taught in PES courses and physical examinations of state exams. In transition classes, some students do not feel valued in relation to their classmates; they feel a sense of rejection and/or failure that can go as far as seeking a dispensation. Because in PS failure is not "discreet": "the fear of doing harm to others, to feel in a situation of failure is often a factor of demotivation, search for avoidance and therefore exemptions from complacency" [17]. In addition, the works consulted on student absenteeism in PES show that absenteeism affects girls more than boys and increases as students progress through school [18, 19]. The results of other authors give some indications on the causes of absence from the pupils and the explanatory factors for this phenomenon [20, 21]. However, their generalization cannot be automatic for Congolese students, although there are similarities with black students in sub-Saharan Africa [22]. What about reality on the ground in Congo? What do absences in PES in the secondary cycle mean? Is PES absenteeism in secondary education a social background? Is it related to the evaluation method as practiced today by PES teachers? To answer these multiple questions, we can emit the idea that the period of adolescence, the environment of the student (peers, parents) and the mode of evaluation in PES justify the chronic absenteeism of the pupils. Moreover, the measurement of the number of absences itself raises reliability problems. The most common measure is to resume absences recorded by schools. However, apart from the fact that certain absences are not detected by schools, the distinction between justified and unjustified absences (which are only taken into account for sanctions against pupils) is partly arbitrary. Indeed, according to the members of the Research and Action Pedagogical Groups (RAPG) in PES in high schools, some students make fake proofs by imitating the writing of their parents; others obtain fake medical certificates, not to mention major students who can sign their own receipts. Added to this are absences that will not be recorded for internal school policy reasons or those that are unjustified from an administrative point of view but perfectly justified by the students' life circumstances, that is, who do not reflect a choice on their part.

Therefore, it seems interesting to cross the observations of teachers and parents with a self-reported measure. A central hypothesis of this study is that the negative internalization of PES is the most proximal predictor of chronic absenteeism, beyond the socio-demographic characteristics of students, parental attitudes, and teaching practices. If this hypothesis is true, it remains to identify the variables that explain this feeling of negative interiority. Several studies indicate that the sense of belonging [23] and the types of goals pursued by students [24] in other words their "academic motivation" influence student satisfaction with school. However, students who feel recognized and valued within their school and students who are looking to develop their skills (learning goals), report a higher level of satisfaction. Inspired by goal theory, Midgley and his colleagues have conducted a large number of studies incorporating the various variables cited above [25]. That being said, the aim of the study is to test the theoretical model of the attributions of the goals to the problem of chronic absenteeism in PES. The specific objectives of this work are: 1) to identify and analyze the factors causing chronic absenteeism of Congolese students during PES, in order to identify remedial perspectives; 2) to examine the weight of the sociodemographic characteristics of students in the explanation of absenteeism; 3) to analyze the effect of the assessment methods used by PES teachers on absenteeism; 4) to identify the influence of parental attitudes on child absenteeism. The interest of the study is to report on the social use of physical education and sports.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Topics

The study, analytical and transversal, was carried out in Brazzaville (capital of the Republic of Congo), from January 6, 2015 to April 30, 2015. The source population of this city was estimated at 1.743526 inhabitants of which 27% of subjects schooled in the secondary cycle (high school) (National Center for Statistics and Economic Studies, 2014) [26]. The target population was high school students enrolled in public schools during the study period. The sample finally selected [447 students: 169 (38%) boys and 278 (62%) girls] was derived from the target population. It consisted of students regularly enrolled in high schools, free of pathologies that contraindicated the practice of PES and volunteers to participate in the study. The subjects were divided into 3 age groups: 14-17 years old; 18-21 years old; 22-25 years old. Table 1 reports the numbers of subjects by sex and age group.

Table 1: Distribution of surveyed subjects by age group and sex.

	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
14-17 years	128	28.8	214	47.7	342	76.5
18-21 years	32	7.2	46	10.2	78	17.4
22-25 years	9	2.0	18	4.0	27	6.0
Total	169	38	278	62	447	100

n: number; %: percentage.

2.2. Methods

The study sample was randomized according to a two-stage cluster survey, stratified by sex and the sectoral inspection that manages the facility. It was created from nine sectoral inspections of sports and physical education in the city of Brazzaville. For each sectoral inspection, all the public secondary schools were identified and each sectoral inspection constituted a cluster. A total of 9 clusters were selected for the study. Within the cluster, in order to determine the sample size of the chronic absentee students, a systematic random sampling was carried out which consisted of randomly repeating (random draw) the students who composed the sample. This was done on the basis of a calculation of a sampling step. This result from the simple formula: population/sample [27]. As a first step, the sample size of each school was defined by calculating the percentage of high school relative to the reference population. Subsequently, the appropriate sampling rate was determined to arrive at the total of 19 observation units (19 high schools identified and selected) in the sample.

The reference population was 4465 chronic absentees, calculated from the formula [28]

$$N = Nb^2 / [(N-1)e^2 + b^2] \quad (1)$$

Where N is the total population of students with chronic absenteeism, e is the estimation error, b is the probability threshold at 95% and σ is the standard deviation. In our case, we have: $N = 4465$; $e = 2.43$; $b = 1.96$; $\sigma = 0,037$. Chronic absenteeism was defined as 20 days of unmotivated absence and over, 80 class periods and more or more than 10% [29]. By agreeing to work with a margin of error of 7% [27], we built a random sample at 1/10th of the source population, a sample of 447 students, the sampling step being equal to $4465/447$, a step of 10. This step was applied to the exhaustive list of all pupils still absent during the PES courses of each selected institution. For each school, we chose the first student from the list of chronic absentee students, then the 11th, the 21st, and so on until the number of chronic absentee students is forecast. This print was made by computer.

At the end of the procedure, a list of 447 randomly selected long-term absentees, covering the entire population of reference, was made. During the study period, as a first step, we went through all the high schools of Brazzaville to maintain all the teachers of PES in order to know the number of students absent during PES during the first two (2) trimesters of the school year by level and grade. The figures obtained were then compared with those given by the general supervisors of each establishment. Subsequently, we went back to these same establishments to interview the students selected for the survey by explaining the reason for our presence in their respective institutions. During our meetings with the students, a questionnaire was given to them individually. For these purposes, all useful explanations have been given to facilitate the filling of the latter.

The data collection instrument chosen was the anonymous survey questionnaire. The survey used indirect observation because "direct observation is when the researcher directly collects the information himself without addressing the subjects concerned. It makes direct use of its sense of observation" [30]. While "in the case of indirect observation, the researcher addresses the subject to obtain the information sought. By answering the questions, the subject intervenes in the production of the information (p.164).

Our investigation was at the level of an explanation / understanding research, it is thus a quantitative approach was realized for the counting of the questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included several types of questions relating to: identification of interviewees (age, sex, level of education and establishment); marks obtained in the various activities practiced during the past year; number of absences and justification of absences; how to calculate the final grade; need to introduce criteria other than performance to score; relationship between lack of optional practice and absence from PES; causes of absences. This part of the questionnaire was mixed: closed questions; semi-open questions; open questions. The second part of the questionnaire dealt with perceptions of goal structures through teachers' teaching practices and teacher-student relationships. Nine Likert-type items with seven response modalities ranging from 1 (totally false) to 7 (quite true) were designed for teaching practices. The score was calculated by averaging the item responses. This scale has already been validated by French-speaking Belgian pupils [4]. Five items related to pedagogical practices related to the optimal development of the physical potential of all students in PES class, that is, to the perception of a goal structure centered on the learning of programmed PAS (for example, "in high school, we can make errors of the moment we learn", α Cronbach = 0.72). Four items related to pedagogical practices that focused on the selection and promotion of the brightest students in PES, that is, the perception of a structure of goals for motor performance (for example, "when teacher of PES asks the realization of a technique, it is especially to the good students that he asks to execute it ", α Cronbach = 0.58). With respect to teacher-student relationships, the scale consisted of 12 items that described the extent to which students rated teachers as listening, fair, and supportive of them [25]. These were items such as "in high school, the teacher of PES took the time to correct the gestures of weak students in the execution of gestures" (α Cronbach = 0.77). The questionnaire included several types of questions relating to: identification of interviewees (age, sex, level of education and establishment); marks obtained in the various activities practiced during the past year; number of absences and justification of absences; how to calculate the final grade; need to introduce criteria other than performance to score; relationship between lack of optional practice and absence from PES; causes of absences. The questionnaire was mixed: closed questions; semi-open questions; open questions. The questionnaire was tested in real life, with about ten students from a randomly selected institution. This test served as a check on the level of comprehension of the sentences, the relevance of the words, the correct organization of the questions, etc. The internal consistency level of the questionnaire was estimated to be 0.83 from the α Cronbach index.

2.3. Variables studied

This section presents all the variables necessary and sufficient for the search and visualization of the relations existing between them, with a view to a better explanation and/or understanding of the absenteeism phenomenon studied. The construction of this framework was intended to highlight the links postulated between the targeted variables and in terms of verifying the study hypotheses.

Age, sex, education level, home institution, grade quality, and causes of absence were the input variables.

The evaluation method used and the choice of activities represented the process variables.

The effect variable was absenteeism. It was a component variable macro: number of absences; justification of absences.

2.4. Statistical analysis

The content analysis of the data collected from the chronic absentee students was done in three stages. The first step was to count all the answers. For each question posed as a variable, possible response methods were indicated. The second step was the statistical processing done with the Excel software. For data processing, SPSS version 23.0 processing software was used. The results are presented in the form of frequency distributions by variable. The data of each table is in the form of absolute frequency, relative frequency and cumulative frequency. For a scale variable such as age or ordinal rank as the level of study, statistical indices of central tendency or dispersion were calculated.

In addition, the results are also presented as a frequency distribution. After this level of analysis, further statistical studies were based on the crossover of variables and the use of inferential tests (in particular the khi-square test and multivariate analyzes). For the crossing of the variables, we have constructed two-way and three-way cross tabulations, to relate the variables supposedly related to the formulation of our hypotheses in order to affirm or deny this link; for example, we crossed the quality variable of the note and the variable number of absences. The statistical significance level for all tests was set at 5%.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Sociodemographic characteristics

The number of second-grade classes was higher than the others: 204 (45.6%) respondents [69 (15.5%) boys and 135 (30.1%) girls] compared with those of the first class [160 (35.8%) respondents] and terminal classes [83 (18.6%) respondents].

3.2. Frequency of absences

It was observed that all 447 respondents were absent during the previous school year (2014). Students absent from PES 3 or more times accounted for 70.7%, a statistically higher rate ($p < 0.01$) than students absent less than 3 times (Table 2). Sex did not influence the number of absences ($\chi^2 = 0.159$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 2: The table presents the number of absences during the past year.

	<3 absences		≥3 absences		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Boys						
14-17 ans	16	64.0*	9	36.0	25	100
18-21 ans	23	37.7	38	62.3*	61	100
22-25 ans	8	9.6	75	90.4***	83	100
Total 1	47	27.8	122	72.2**	169	100
Girls						
14-17 ans	18	47.4	20	52.6	38	100
18-21 ans	38	25.0	114	75.0**	152	100
22-25 ans	10	11.4	78	88.6***	88	100
Total 2	66	23.7	212	76.3***	278	100
Grand total	113	25.3	334	74.7**	447	100

*: $p < 0.05$; **: $p < 0.01$; ***: $p < 0.001$

3.3. Reasons for absenteeism

Among the justifications for student absences (Table 3), 20 students (12 boys versus 8 girls) mentioned their justifications for excessive parental permissions. The presentation of a temporary medical certificate was a reason for absence in 77 students (25 boys versus 52 girls, $p < 0.05$); it was an annual medical certificate for and 10 students (4 boys and 6 girls). As for unjustified absences, 340 students did not justify their absence (28.7% boys versus 47.2% girls).

Table 3: The table presents the justifications of absence during PES.

	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parental allowance	12	60.0	8	40.0	20	4.5
Temporary medical certificate	25	32.5	52	67.5**	77	17.2
Annual medical certificate	4	40.0	6	60.0	10	2.2
Without justification	128	37.6	212	62.4**	340	76.1*
Total	169	38	278	62	447	100

**: $p < 0.01$.

The other reasons for absenteeism in PES, mentioned by the students, are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: The table presents the breakdown of students by other reasons for absence in PES.

	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Difficulties related to self-image	67	41.6	94	58.4	161	36.0
Sociocultural difficulties	21	55.3	17	44.7	38	8.5
Lack of security during PES course	136	41.8	189	58.2	325	72.7
The lack of infirmary in schools	65	41.1	93	58.9	158	35.3
Lack of showers, toilets and changing rooms	162	38.5	259	61.5*	421	94.1
The activities practiced are essentially athletic	58	35.4	106	64.6*	164	36.7
The teacher's way of recording	103	38.3	166	61.7*	269	60.1
Inability to practice physical activity at choice	27	31.4	59	68.6*	86	19.2
The poor grades given by the teachers	112	43.1	148	56.9	260	58.1
The rejection of "weak" students by teachers	78	37.3	131	62.7*	209	46.8
Teacher behavior	84	47.7	92	52.3	176	39.3
Lack of adequate equipment	39	32.0	83	68.0*	122	27.2
Religious difficulties	12	20.0	48	80.0**	60	13.4

*: $p < 0.05$; **: $p < 0.01$

The lack of minimum hygiene conditions (lack of showers, toilets and changing rooms) in schools was mentioned by 421 pupils surveyed (36.4% boys and 57.8% girls, $p < 0.05$). Other reasons for absence were: lack of security during the PES course, 72.7% of students (30.6% boys and 42.1% girls); teacher's rating, 60.1% of citations ($n = 269$); poor marks,

58.1% of citations (n = 260); and the rejection of "weak" students, cited by 209 students, ie 46.8% (37.3% of boys and 62.7% of girls, p <0.05). Absences were due to teacher behavior for 176 students (84 boys versus 92 girls). The use of mainly athletic activities as a means of teaching PES was a reason for absence for students, 164 citations (36.7% of which 64.6% of girls, p<0.05). Reasons related to self-image were expressed by 161 students (41.6% of boys and 58.4% of girls); the lack of infirmity in schools had been mentioned by 158 students. The lack of adequate equipment for PES practice was cited by 122 students (32% of boys and 68% of girls, p <0.05). The impossibility of practicing elective activities was emphasized by 86 students. Concerning the religious and socio-cultural difficulties, these were mentioned respectively by 60 pupils (20% of boys against 80% of girls, p <0.01).

3.5. Absenteeism and schooling

In the first two quarters of the past year, 182 students (30.8% of boys versus 69.2% of girls, p<0.05) scored less than 10/20 (Table 5). Grades greater than 13/20 were found in 96 students including 61 girls (63.5%, p <0.05).

Table 5: The table presents the quality of grades obtained in PES during the past year

	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	n	%	N	%
Notes below 10	56	30.8	126	69.2*	182	40.7
Ratings ranging from 10 to 12	78	46.2	91	53.8	169	37.8
Ratings ranging from 13 to 15	23	30.3	53	69.7*	76	17.0
Notes greater than 15	12	60.0	8	40.0	20	4.5
Total	169	38	278	62	447	100

*: p <0.05

3.6. Assessment and absenteeism

In response to the important criteria to score in PES (Table 6), 427 students answered this question. Attendance and technical mastery were selected as the main criteria for assessing performance by respectively 228 (53.4%) and 148 (34.7%) students. This was for attendance and technical mastery of 64.9% of girls (p <0.05). Progress, on the other hand, was only mentioned by 11.9% of students (n = 51).

Figures 1 and 2 show that the boys who failed were absent more. Among those who were successful, the absences decreased with the improvement of the grade. The same trend was found in girls. However, girls scoring less than 10 were absent more than boys.

3.7. Parents attitudes towards absenteeism

The different attitudes of parents to their children's absenteeism are recorded in Table 6. The wait-and-see attitude of parents was the first attitude found in the face of their children's absenteeism, 107 citations (94.1%; p<0.001). The other attitude involved in the PES absenteeism of the pupils surveyed was the lack of knowledge of the behavior of their children (72.7% of citations, n = 195).

Table 6: The table presents the parents reactions to chronic absence in PES

	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
My parents say nothing	12	25.5	35	74.5*	47	36.0
My parents motivate my absences by their interjections in domestic work	8	22.9	27	77.1**	35	8.5
My parents do not know I am absent from PES	82	42.1	113	57.9	195	72.7
parents do not accept that I miss the PES course but I hide it	47	74.6**	16	25.4	63	35.3
parents do not say anything when I miss PES	20	18.7	87	81.3**	107	94.1***
Total	169	37.8	278	62.2	447	100

*: p <0.05; **: p <0.01; ***: p <0.001

Table 7 reports the means and standard deviations of scores for perceptions of perceived goals through teachers' teaching practices.

Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviations of Scores for Perceptions of Purpose of Teaching Practices

	Male (n=169)	Female (n=278)	Ensemble (n=447)
Structure centered on learning (/ 7)	4.12±1.08	3.92±1.54	4.02±1.31
Performance-based structure (/ 7)	4.34±1.43	4.17±1.08	4.26±1.25
Performance orientation (/ 7)	3.63±1.26	3.25±1.32	3.44±1.30

Absenteeism was positively correlated with teaching practices, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Standardized correlation coefficients between the number of absences and the attributes of teaching practices

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Structure centered on learning	--				
2-Structure centered on the performance	-0.51 ^a	--			
3-Orientation towards the performance	0.35 ^b	-0.14 ^b	--		
4-Avoidance of work	-0.20 ^b	-0.17 ^b	-0.40 ^a	--	
5-Number of absences	0.47 ^a	0.44 ^a	0.41 ^a	0.49 ^a	--

a: $p < 0.05$; b: $p > 0.05$

4. DISCUSSION

This study, whose objectives were to identify and analyze the reasons for absenteeism in PES courses for students in Brazzaville, Congo, shows that students totaling more than twenty days of unmotivated absence in the year, that is two days per month represented a rate of 5.8%; thus, chronic absenteeism is very common that one could believe it by merely reading the official census statistics of absences made by the Ministries in charge of education. Girls ranked first, the reasons cited were poor school performance in PES (low marks in 94.1% of cases), lack of security during the PES course, and the evaluation method used by teachers. (Motor performance-based assessment, 72.7% of citations), neglect of weak students by coaching during learning lessons, teacher behavior, and students' misrepresentation of self-image. The bad grades were related to the number of absences. The wait-and-see attitude of parents and the impact of peers were key factors in absenteeism.

Our rate of chronic absenteeism among public secondary school students is higher than the national rate in France, 3.9%, reported by Blaya (2010) [20]. This observation can be explained in principle by the motivation of French students in PES increased because of quality of sports facilities, the level of competence of teachers and the parents' view of this discipline. Our study also shows that absences are more frequent among young people who have repeated, absenteeism being one of the possible indicators of school disinvestment.

It is interesting to note that although families are often questioned about absenteeism and that it is rooted in family environments that are not conducive to school integration [31]. Most of the reasons given by young people concern the school environment and in particular the relationship with PES teachers, thus joining the work of Potvin and Rousseau (1993) on the importance of the quality of the teacher / student relationship on school dropout [32]. This does not detract from the behavior of some families whose lifestyles are contrary to school culture [33]. We have been able to show that a number of parents need their children to stay at home to care for them or their siblings. Our results confirm the existence of what Reid (2002) and Hayden (2002) describe as utilitarian parents keeping their children at home to help them perform certain tasks such as caring for younger children. But whatever it is, it is the educational link that most strongly questions our results [34,35].

A typology has been established by Bernard Toulemonde which includes absenteeism due to lack of motivation, comfort, academic consumerism, breathing, due to economic necessity, constraint, chronic absenteeism [36]. We will add to this dodging absenteeism, which tries to avoid humiliation situations related to the sporting experience [37].

Some of the girls explain their absence in PES courses by mentioning their health problems such as stomach pain (menstruation) or overweight problems. We know that at the time of adolescence, children must appropriate the changes in their bodies, which is not always easy [38]. Moreover, especially among girls, puberty, through menstruation, is presented to adolescent girls as a potential source of disorder or even shame and disgust [38]. They see in the transformations of their bodies a legitimate explanation for their absences. Parents (especially mothers), moreover, tolerate relative absences relatively well. Michelle, 18 years old, enrolled in first class, evokes in a straightforward way her problems of painful menstruation, accompanied by migraines, and even her difficulty in presenting herself in this state during PES. These are legitimate explanations in his eyes to the school institution, especially as they are endorsed by his mother. Medical appointments and bed-rest periods during menstrual pain seem to predominate over the observance of attendance at PES courses, even though the evidence provided does not cover all absences, far from it.

Two other teenagers, remarkable for their obesity, have in common that they are young and old at the same time, but for different reasons. The extra maturity they had to show during their childhood puts them at odds with their generation. If, from their point of view, the practice of PES does not make sense, on the other hand, they made their thought revolution earlier than other teenagers. The situations experienced accelerated the process of psychic decentering. Therefore, they are perfectly able not only to decode the universe of adults, but also to perceive the contradictions in which they are taken.

However, as Thin and Millet (2005) points out, each case of absenteeism is particular in the combination of its different dimensions: family, school, institutional and juvenile [39].

Among other reasons for absenteeism, the feeling of being present in a class where the student does not have a real physical capacity, is stated by the greatest number of students absentee surveyed. Others evoke directly the role of their peers and their attachment to a form of adolescent culture (street or Gothic ...) that are not compatible with attendance at PES courses, the practice is supposed to develop the musculature (body diagram distant from that of a young elegant). Some complain of harassment by PES teachers regarding their feminized sportswear. Finally, a minority report absenteeism to intra-family conflicts or the precariousness of their living conditions.

While certainly pointing to self-presentation strategies, these ways of explaining their absenteeism also reflect their school experience and their way of constructing their identity.

Some, however, do not have the means to develop a response strategy in this context and then express what comes to mind or remain evasive and sometimes not very prolix. Their comments may be supplemented or provoked by those of their parent (s). Overall and through the discussions, all of these views reflect the different facets of absenteeism in PES. One of the objectives of this study was to examine the weight of different categories of variables in the explanation of school absenteeism. In relation to our hypothesis, the results are extremely clear: negative internalization is a significant predictor of the number of absences. The number of absences is related to the perception of the quality of teacher-student relationships. Our results also suggest that aspects related to the assessment of PES students are at least as important in explaining absenteeism as conventional "sociological" determinisms.

The question of the relationship to teachers and the legitimacy of their judgments changes fundamentally from high school to high school. Relationships between peers are gaining in importance, and juvenile cultures are contradicting school standards in a more significant way [40, 41]. In case of academic difficulty in the practice of PES (especially in events such as triple jump, shot put, javelin throw, hurdles race, etc.) the use of indiscipline is used by pupils as a means of constructing an identity, deviant in relation to school standards but in conformity with the juvenile norms. Fragilized in the school system, they become "outsiders" [42], especially since indiscipline is often practiced collectively. Indiscipline may at the same time constitute a risk factor in a process of deschooling [43]. The intense sense of self-deprecation experienced by students with academic failure is confirmed by Canadian researchers who describe the school experience of future dropouts as negative, frustrated and failures [44].

But we should not consider only the interactions between teachers and students, outside the institutional context in which they are located. Congolese PES teachers live very directly the contradiction between the intentions displayed by the educational institution and the reality of teaching in schools: to involve PES in all pupils of the same age group in the same context, respect and develop "equal opportunities", without institutionally, the means are provided to those concerned so that they can implement these objectives. The temptation is great then to "separate the wheat from the chaff", to finally keep only students who meet the requirements of the school system as it is organized today at the level of physical education. We then observe the formal respect of the evaluation standards based in large part on the motor performance. The large numbers of classes do not allow to focus on the mastery of execution of the gestures. The adoption of this evaluation method is then accompanied by repeated and prolonged absences at PES courses.

5. CONCLUSION

Beyond the differences of position, which often cover different methodological postures, the question of the causality of chronic absenteeism in PES courses in Congo is questioned. This phenomenon, multifactorial, depends on the interactions between the teachers, the pupils themselves and their close entourage (family, peers). The results clearly show the need to fight against absenteeism, even occasional. The vast majority of them are first and foremost young people who are withdrawn from sports activities, even if they follow the sporting events at home. It is in the pedagogical relationship that we must read the most frequent origin of the problem, and therefore the key strategic direction of its remediation. This is the case of chronic absenteeism as well as of its alter ego school dropout: the improvement of the school climate, sports infrastructures and the relationship with teachers of PES is the best prevention [45, 46].

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