

Determinants of Participation in Physical Activity among School Going Adolescents with Disabilities in Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract

Physical activity (PA) affords a wide range of health benefits to an individual. Among adolescents with disabilities, PA participation is thought to be related to the optimal development and functioning of physical, physiological, social and psychological processes. It is also widely believed that regular physical activity participation in adolescence leads to active adulthood and reduces the risk of chronic diseases of adulthood. Even with the well documented benefits of PA, there is a decline in PA as children progress from childhood to adolescence with more decline for adolescents with disabilities. Effective intervention strategies aimed at increasing participation depends on a good understanding of determinants of PA. This study assessed social and environmental determinants of participation in PA among school going adolescents with disabilities. The study employed descriptive survey research design to seek information through questionnaires on PA participation and the social and environmental factors that influence PA participation among adolescents with disabilities. Through stratified random sampling, 200 learners (127 boys and 73 girls) were selected from special units, special and integrated primary and secondary school in Kakamega County, Kenya. Their ages ranged from 10 to 21 years with majority (43%) aged between 13 and 15 years, 79% were in special schools, 17.5% in special units and 3.5% integrated in able bodied classes. Most adolescents (31%) were active three times a week with a high number (39%) active during the school officially scheduled games time. Socially, the adolescents indicated that their participation in PA was facilitated by encouragement from friends and peers (58.5%) as compared to family (38.5%) and teachers (35%). Lack of proper facilities 58.5% and appropriate equipment (63.5%) discouraged adolescents from being active in school. Other social and environmental dimensions had little influence. Given that most adolescents did not meet the recommended 60 minutes of PA daily, it is imperative that schools need to adapt programs and provide for more structured, disability specific PA to increase PA participation. Ensuring availability, accessibility and appropriateness of facilities and equipment would be central to ensuring adolescents have the opportunity to obtain the recommended PA. There is need for increased awareness and training among family members and teachers to increase support and advocacy of PA for adolescents with disabilities.

Keywords: Physical Activity, Participation

Full text:

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