

Article Title

Having Fun and Staying Active! Children with Disabilities and Participation in Physical Activity: A Follow-Up Study

Article Citation

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Adaptive Sport/Recreation Categories

- Participation
- Physical Activity
- Children with Disabilities

Study Type: 15-month longitudinal quasi-experimental single group pre-/post-test design

Summary

Longitudinal research of the effect of intervention programmes on participation of children with disabilities are scant. 152 children (age 6-17 years) with multiple disabilities completed a three week, live in, goal directed, resource focused rehabilitation programme at the Beitostølen Health Sports Center in Norway. As part of the study, participation was measured as an outcome using the Children's Assessment of Participation and Enjoyment (CAPE; King et al., 2004) at baseline (start of their intervention), three months post-intervention and 15 months post-intervention. Of the 152 participants, 80 children completed all three data while 72 children withdrew. Overall diversity and intensity of participation in 55 leisure activities declined at 15 months, with the greatest decline in the known "at risk" age group of 10-13 year olds. However, when considering the sub group of physical and skill based activities, participation was stable for all age groups suggesting a positive, sustained outcome. Gender differences were found with boys reporting significantly higher diversity and intensity of participation in active physical activity at 15 months; while girls showed a decline in active physical activity. Conversely, girls scored significantly higher on diversity of skill-based activities after 15 months than boys. Children reported highest levels of enjoyment in their preferred activities.

Article Strengths

- A live in, goal directed intervention programme with follow up in the community, supports an evidence-based approach to rehabilitation and therapy
- Longitudinal follow up (15 months) study on participation
- Follow up period included measures at specific time points to account for season-dependent effects, therefore a wider variety of potential activities could be included
- Large cohort of children (n=80) with a wide age range (6-17 years) and a variety of disabilities means findings could potentially be more easily generalised
- Standardised, reliable and valid participation outcome measure used - CAPE

Article Weaknesses

- Global outcome measures may be less able to identify specific changes in participation
- Pre-post test study design allows only trends to be described and not the effects of the intervention
- Diversity, intensity and enjoyment are only some of the constructs influencing participation
- Not much information provided about the intervention nor the intervention plan

Take Home Messages

- A goal directed, resource focused three week intervention programme may help children with physical disabilities sustain their participation specifically in physical activities (but not all areas of leisure activity participation)
- Girls participate more in skill-based activities and boys in active physical activities
- Preferred activities are those which children find the most enjoyable
- Sustained participation is considered essential for long term well-being and health but is rarely studied

Impacts on Clinical Practice:

- Helping children and their families find preferred and enjoyable activities may help promote long term, sustained physical activity participation.
- Resources for participation in physical activities are essential
- The well documented decline in physical activity participation in the adolescent years (10-13 years) must be targeted early