

Article

Sivaratnam, C., Howells, K., Stefanac, N., Reynolds, K., & Rinehart, N. (2020). Parent and Clinician Perspectives on the Participation of Children with Cerebral Palsy in Community-Based Football: A Qualitative Exploration in a Regional Setting. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(3), 1102.

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Adaptive Sports/Recreation Topic Categories

- Participation in Sports/Recreation

Research Questions

- What are the clinician and parent perspectives on the factors influencing participation in a community-based Australian-Rules Football program for primary school-aged children with CP in a regional setting?

Methodology

- 2 focus groups of 6 female Allied health clinicians -4 PT,1 OT, 1 Speech pathologist
- 1 focus group of 2 parents of children with CP or combined CP and ASD. Participants were sent the focus group questions one week prior to the session to either if they wished to decide to not enter the study or to give them time to consider the questions and write down some notes before the session.
- Focus groups were facilitated by a senior physiotherapist experienced focus group moderator and with experience with people with disabilities.
- A research assistant assisted with audio recording of the session.
- A 60 minutes session was recorded and was transcribed using verbatim and analysed by NVivo software.
- Facilitators and barriers to participation in community football activity were discussed with relevance to broader regional community for children with disability.
- Codes and themes were generated independently by two researchers.

Results

- 7 themes were generated influencing participation.
- Main barriers and facilitators to participation reported for each theme are following:
- Child characteristics: Age, child's physical and cognitive capacity differences with peer group was a barrier.
- Resources: Family resources like time, finance limitation, limited access to information like adapted facility for enrolling children in a community club were barriers.
- Communication: Clinicians frequently reported the lack of a a centralised system of communication for parents, coaches and professionals and the need for "key contact" or "inclusion officer" at clubs for an initial contact.
- Communication between clinicians and coaches for sharing knowledge and feedback about sport specific skills of children was also needed.
- Knowledge and previous experience: Parents', club's or coach's confidence and clinicians previous experience in sport played a key role.
- Attitudes and expectations: Mixed response about inclusion to mainstream or adapted sports was reported by parents. Parents worry about acceptance and inclusion or safety was a barrier, while a club's positive attitude was a facilitator.

- Game factors: Game rules may be challenging for the children, there is a need for adapted rules, some commands like ‘stop, free pass’ may not be comprehensible by children with cognitive issues. Use of visual aids to help children understand verbal commands was mentioned as facilitators. The size (“huge”) or surface of the ground was also considered a barrier. Time also of games with suggestions to move session indoors during winter. Also, fatigue was a problem with suggestions for benches to sit or pairing children with a better skilled ‘Buddy’ during play.
- Community and Cultural relevance: A community culture and sense of communal identity were facilitators.

Discussion/Conclusion

- The results suggest that besides child-related factors, which were predominantly non-modifiable, a range of environmental factors were identified by clinicians and parents as influencing participation.
- Clinicians and parents largely discussed similar personal factors influencing participation, many of which aligned with existing empirical findings.

Article Strengths

- An explorative methodologically well-designed qualitative study
- Parents and allied health clinicians discussed about facilitators and barriers for participation of children with CP in community-based football sports.

Article Weaknesses

- The sample of the focus group was small (n=8) and children were not included.
- Most of this research focusses on children with minimal disability, including parents with moderate to severe disability would have revealed many more challenges.

Take Home Messages

- The role of family, clinician and coaches is important in promoting participation in PA.
- Communication between the professional and parents in terms of strengths and weaknesses related to specific sports is necessary.