

Perception of primary school children about the playful and sport practice

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ABSTRACT

The study of the perceptions of physical activity is a topic with great interest at present, and can help to implement a change to an active lifestyle of schoolchildren. The objective of this study was to establish the perception of physical activity (play and sport) by students of primary school education by their classmates at school and at leisure active play and sport practice. The sample consists of 1009 children of elementary school (boys=50.3% 507; girls=49.7%); with the age average = 10.85, SD = 0.79. They were studying in schools in the provinces of Lugo, A Coruña, Ourense and Pontevedra (Galicia, Spain). We found a directly proportional association between gender and the perception that schoolchildren have about the leisure play and sports of their peers ($p < 0.001$), as well as a directly proportional relationship between gender and the perception of practice of active play involvement at school, and there is a significant association with gender ($p < 0.001$). Girls perceive that their classmates of the opposite sex practice more physical activity than they do both in their leisure time and at school. Regarding age ranges, there are no differences in the perception of physical activity practice. **Keywords:** Subjective perception; Physical activity; Children; Primary school education.

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INTRODUCTION

Physical activity practice is related to motivations and perceptions of schoolchildren about it. The study of these perceptions about physical activity is a subject of great interest at present, since the behaviours related to health are influenced by personal, environmental and sociocultural factors; this knowledge can contribute to the modification of lifestyles in school population (Keating, Guan, Castro & Bridges, 2005). Therefore, the objective of this study was to know the perception of physical activity by elementary students in relation to their classmates at school and voluntary sports practice.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

1009 children of elementary school participated, 507 were boys and 502 girls; with 10, 11 and 12 years old (average =10.85, SD=0.79) from different educational centres in the provinces of Lugo, A Coruña, Ourense and Pontevedra (Galicia, Spain).

Measures

The Inventory of Physical Activity for Schoolchildren (IAFHE) validated by García-Cantó (2011) was used to evaluate the perception of physical activity of children with respect to their peers in relation to their leisure play and sports and also in school context.

Procedures

For the realization of this study, permission was requested to school management as well as to legal tutors of the students. Only the children who had signed informed consent participated. Subsequently they completed the physical activity inventory in Physical Education class without the presence of the teacher.

Analysis

Descriptive statistical analyses were performed. For the study of the association between categorical variables χ^2 of Pearson statistic test was used with the contingency coefficient for the comparisons related to regular practice of leisure physical activity outside school and at school context according to Age (10, 11 and 12 years) and gender (boys vs. girl).

The statistical analysis was performed with SPSS v.20.0 for Windows. The level of statistical significance was established at $p=.05$.

RESULTS

From the results obtained, we can say that there is a statistically significant association between gender and the perception that schoolchildren have about the sports practice by their peers ($\chi^2 (4) = 27.327, p<0.001$), as well as a statistically significant relationship and directly proportional (contingency coefficient = 162, $p <0.001$), but not in age. Regarding the perception of practice and sports involvement in school, there is a significant association with gender ($\chi^2 (4) = 39.867, p <0.001$) with a statistically significant and directly proportional relationship (contingency coefficient = 199, $p <0.001$), this does not happen with age.

Table 1. Perception of physical activity practice with respect to their classmates according to age and gender

		Age			Gender		Total
		10	11	12	Boys	Girls	
Boys and girls of my age practice sports ...	A lot more than me	9 (0.9%)	22 (2.2%)	16 (1.6%)	15 (1.5%)	32 (3.2%)	47 (4.7%)
	More than me	68 (6.7%)	109 (10.8%)	29 (2.9%)	89 (8.9%)	117 (11.6%)	206 (20.4%)
	Like me	207 (20.5%)	317 (31.4%)	98 (9.7%)	315 (31.2%)	307 (30.4%)	622 (61.6%)
	Less than me	29 (2.9%)	54 (5.4%)	26 (2.6%)	67 (6.7%)	42 (4.2%)	109 (10.8%)
	Much less than me	11 (1.1%)	9 (0.9%)	5 (0.5%)	21 (2.1%)	4 (0.4%)	25 (2.5%)
Boys and girls of my age practice sports at school ...	A lot more than me	8 (0.8%)	19 (1.9%)	14 (1.4%)	18 (1.8%)	23 (2.3%)	41 (4.1%)
	More than me	53 (5.3%)	71 (7.0%)	31 (3.1%)	50 (5.0%)	105 (10.4%)	155 (15.4%)
	Like me	235 (23.3%)	361 (35.8%)	107 (10.6%)	361 (35.8%)	342 (33.9%)	703 (69.7%)
	Less than me	21 (2.1%)	49 (4.9%)	15 (1.5%)	60 (5.9%)	25 (2.5%)	85 (8.4%)
	Much less than me	7 (0.7%)	11 (1.1%)	1 (0.7%)	18 (1.8%)	7 (0.7%)	25 (2.5%)

DISCUSSION

The great majority of schoolchildren perceive that peers perform the same physical and sport activity as them. On the other hand, it is observed that girls perceive boys practice more physical activity or sport than they do. The boys perceive that girls perform less sport activity than they outside the school environment as occurs in studies such as those of Garcia-Soler (2015). As can be seen, most students consider that students of their age perform the same physical activity and sport as they do in school, with very small percentage of students who consider that older children do more physical-sport activities than their peers. These findings aren't in agreement with those of Higher Sports Council (CSD, 2011) which indicate that as age increases, physical activity increases to. Maybe this happens because these ages are very similar.

CONCLUSIONS

Girls in this study generally perceive that their classmates of the opposite sex engage in more physical activity than they do, both on a regular basis and at school. Regarding age, there is no difference in the perception of physical activity practice.

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