

Barriers and facilitators of sports in children with physical disabilities: a mixed method study



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Aim

Providing comprehensive information about barriers and facilitators of sports participation for children with physical disabilities with data from children, their parents and their health care professionals.

Methods

All children registered at the Prince Johan Friso Mytylschool, their parents and health professionals. Children and their parents were invited to complete a questionnaire, and health care professionals were interviewed via semi-structured interviews. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously and combined in a mixed methods design, after which results are triangulated¹.

Results

Twenty-six child and parent pairs were obtained. Seventeen health care professionals were interviewed. Ninety-six percent of the children participated in sports at school and 77% also participated in sports after school. The mean age (SD) of the children was 14.1 (2.9) years old, 58% were boys, and 67% of the children had cerebral palsy. The most commonly practiced sports were swimming, cycling and football.



Table 1. Reported barriers and facilitators of sport participation.

	Child	Parent	Health care professional
Barriers:			
Disability	+	+	+
Fatigue	+	+	+
Lack of transport	+	+	+
Costs	+	+	+
Dependency of others	+		
Attitude of family			+
Facilitators:			
Health	+	+	+
Fun	+	+	+
Losing weight	+	+	+
Social contacts	+	+	+
Medical advice	+	+	
Providing sports after school hours			+

Conclusion

- Children, their parents and health care professionals experienced different factors influencing sports participation.
- Sports participation is a complex phenomenon.
- Sports might be more physically challenging for children with severe physical disabilities, as daily activities take much energy.
- Sports advice from rehabilitation professionals should emphasize on psychosocial benefits of sports and should be tailor made.

References

¹ Tashakkori A. and Teddlie C. Principles of Mixed Methods and Multimethod Research Design. 2003: 189-191.
² www.pjfharen.nl

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