

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Increasing Participation in After-School Sport and Physical Activity among Children and Youth: A Case Study of Providers in Ontario, Canada

Key Details

KEY WORDS

After-school sports, physical activity, after-school programs, after-school providers, adolescents

POPULATION GROUP

All

STEPPING UP THEMES

Health and Wellness; Co-ordinated and Youth-friendly Communities

RESEARCH ORIGIN

Ontario, Canada

SOURCE

Academic

“Only about 12% of Ontario children and youth met or exceeded the recommended level of daily physical activity and many fail to use the after-school time to engage in active sport and physical activity.”

1. What is the research about?

This research explored strategies for increasing youth participation in after-school sports and physical activities (AASPA). The researcher explored two questions:

- From the perspective of after school sports providers, what are the main barriers to youth participating in programs?
- How can the experiences and participation of children in after-school sports programs be enhanced?

2. Where did the research take place?

This research took place in Ontario, Canada. Data was gathered from nine diverse regions across Ontario including Kitchener-Waterloo, St. Catharines, Burlington, Toronto, Kingston, Ottawa, Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

3. Who is this research about?

This research is about youth in the province of Ontario in the age group of late childhood to adolescence.

4. How was the research done?

This research used both quantitative and qualitative data obtained from after-school providers. An online survey gathered data on youth participation factors and their potential remedies to participation barriers. Personal interviews and focus group interviews were semi-structured around the intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental factors that impact youth participation in after-school programs. Participants for the interviews and focus groups were purposefully chosen. Confidentiality of all participants was ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Results from the quantitative and qualitative data were compared and triangulated.

5. What are the key findings?

Barriers that youth must overcome in order to benefit from after AASPA include:

Personal Barriers:

- A preference to work or use the computer, phone or TV rather than participate in the after-school sports programming activities
- Previous negative experiences, lack of motivation, lack of confidence
- Transportation and financial challenges

Interpersonal Barriers:

- Lack of participation of their friends
- Not having parental support or participation

Environmental Barriers:

- Inadequate co-ordination between organizations providing after-school sport programs participation
- Lack of opportunities in school/community
- Need for improvement in provincial policies

6. Why does this research matter for youth work?

This study suggests that in order to get more youth to participate in after-school sport programs, greater acceptance and accessibility measures have to be put in place. Youth workers can create integrate solutions to the above-mentioned barriers across the following three dimensions:

- To address personal barriers to participation youth workers could **initiate programs at the local level** that are **culturally sensitive** to the needs of the youth. This would help them overcome previous negative experiences. Youth workers could **use social media to create awareness** about the importance of ASSPA and the benefits of the same for one's physical and emotional wellbeing.
- To address interpersonal barriers to AASPA participation, youth workers can design initiatives that are **accessible** and enjoyable for the entire family or community.
- To address environmental barriers to AASPA participation, youth workers could **liaise with schools, community organizations and ASSPA** providers to develop programs that foster better collaboration and use of community resources to increase the popularity and accessibility of ASSPA programs for youth. This synergy could promote youth wellness and ensure coordinated youth friendly communities.



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