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Barriers of physical activity of Hungarian students with blindness or visual impairment

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Introduction

Children with disabilities are proportionately less physically active than their typically developing peers, and from the second decade of life, the number of children leading a sedentary lifestyle is increasing. As a consequence, they are at increased risk of health damage, and their mortality and morbidity indices are worse. Physical activity (PA) not only plays an important role in disease prevention, but also has a positive effect on mental health, socialisation and quality of life.

The aim of our research was to investigate participation in PE lessons and perceptions of PE among Hungarian students with blindness or visual impairment (BVI), and to identify barriers that prevent them from participating in PA.

Method

203 Hungarian students (grade 1-13) with BVI participated in the research, with varying degrees of VI (blindness: 45, severe VI: 30, moderate VI: 128 participants). 73,4% attend mainstream schools and 26,6% (N=54) special schools. Barriers were measured with The Physical Activity Barriers Questionnaire for Children and Youth with Visual Impairments short version.

Results

58,79% of the sample take part in general PE, 26,63% in "easy" or adapted PE, and 26,63% are excused from PE. The proportion of excused students increases by growing grades. On a 5-point Likert scale, students rated their preference for PE at 3.74 on average. There was no significant difference between students in mainstream and special schools (3,87 vs 3,69). The preference for PE decreases with growing grade level. Environmental barriers (average score: 3,53) are the main barriers to activity, followed by social (average score: 3,81) and personal (average score: 4,03) barriers, with statistically significant differences between subscales. Elementary school students feel fewer perceived barriers than high school students in all dimensions, and globally as well (average scores are: 11,98 and 10,67).

Conclusion

The results highlight the importance of overcoming environmental and social barriers, as young people with BVI are more willing to participate in activities and feel less constrained by personal factors.