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Association of proximity to sports facilities and parental perceived barriers with sports participation for children in Portugal

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Introduction:

Physical activity (PA) is associated with numerous positive health outcomes however, few children worldwide, including in Portugal engage in sufficient levels of physical activity per day. Girls, compared to boys, have a reduce probability of meeting daily recommended PA levels. In addition to individual characteristics, environmental factors are assumed to explain disparities in physical activity participation.

Objective:

The aim of this study was to observe the associations between children's extracurricular sport participation and parents' self-reported existence of recreational sport facilities and number of barriers, according to children's sex.

Material and Methods:

A sample of 834 children (50.8% girls) aged 6-10 years was analysed in a cross sectional study carried in the Midlands, Portugal.

Through a questionnaire, parents reported barriers and existence of different recreational facilities as well as children's sport participation (Yes/No). Chi-square tests and multivariate logistic regression were used to observe the risk of children not being engaged in a sport with the number of barriers and the existent facilities reported by parents, according to children's sex. Results are presented crude and adjusted for children's age, family income, parental education, and urbanization of the place of residence.

Results:

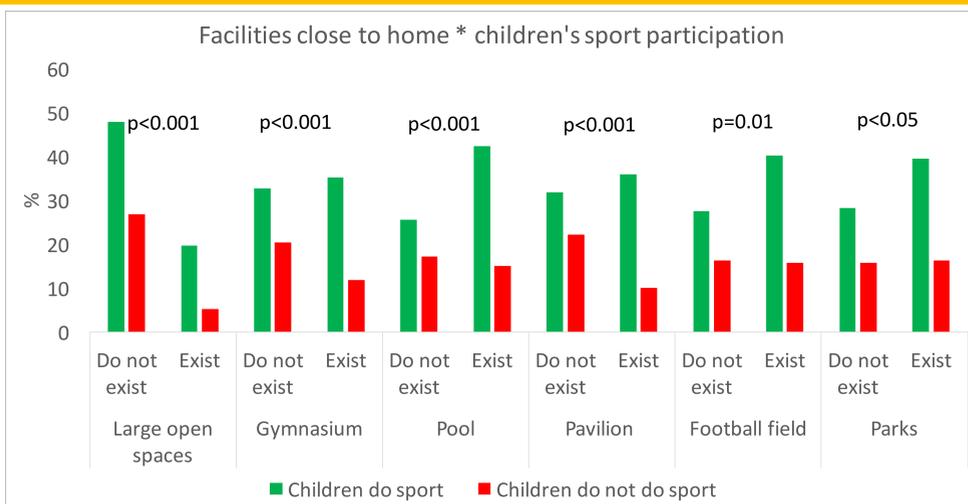


Figure 1. Relation between the existence of facilities close to home and children's sport participation.

- Parental perceived barriers were inversely related with children's sport participation. Parents who did not reported any barrier had more than four times the odds of their sons and daughters being engaged in a sport (Table 2).

- Children that lived close to those facilities were more likely to participate in a sport than children whose parents report those facilities as not existent (Figure 1).
- The results varied according to children's sex (Table 1). For girls, the inexistence of large open spaces in the place of residence was associated with half the odds of participating in an extracurricular sport. Among boys, gymnasium, pavilion, and football field were associated with sport participation, even after adjustment.

Conclusion:

Improving the proximity of recreational facilities is likely to be important for children's sport participation. However, the importance of facilities varied according to children's sex. Future interventions and designs to improve children's physical activity should take in consideration children's sex. Also, those guidelines need to take into account parental concerns regarding the perceived barriers. We hope this study highlight some of the environmental factors that should be addressed in programs to promote child physical activity.

Table 1. Association between the not existence of recreational facilities close to home with children's sport participation (*p<0.05, **p<0.001).

Facilities close to home		Crude				Adjusted			
		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys	
		OR	95%CI	OR	95%CI	OR	95%CI	OR	95%CI
Large open spaces	Do not exist	0.41*	0.24;0.71	0.55*	0.33;0.91	0.50*	0.27;0.95	0.64	0.35;1.16
	Exist	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Gymnasium	Do not exist	0.63*	0.42;0.95	0.43**	0.28;0.68	0.92	0.55;1.56	0.57*	0.34;0.98
	Exist	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Swimming pool	Do not exist	0.51*	0.34;0.77	0.54*	0.36;0.83	0.81	0.49;1.35	0.75	0.45;1.26
	Exist	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Pavilion	Do not exist	0.36**	0.23;0.55	0.44**	0.28;0.69	0.61	0.36;1.02	0.58*	0.34;1.00
	Exist	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Football field	Do not exist	0.76	0.51;1.14	0.57*	0.38;0.87	1.01	0.60;1.70	0.48*	0.27;0.83
	Exist	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Parks	Do not exist	0.74	0.49;1.11	0.73	0.48;1.11	0.82	0.49;1.36	0.75	0.45;1.23
	Exist	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	

Table 2. Association between the parental perceived barriers with children's sport participation, according to children's sex (*p<0.05, **p<0.001).

Perceived barriers by parents		Crude				Adjusted			
		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys	
		OR	95%CI	OR	95%CI	OR	95%CI	OR	95%CI
Number of barriers	None	5.03**	2.30;10.99	4.94**	2.15;11.32	6.99**	2.63;18.60	4.10*	1.54;10.87
	Two or less	1.59	0.90;2.82	1.37	0.74;2.54	1.92	0.98;3.76	1.01	0.49;2.11
	More than two	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	

Note for Table 1 and 2. Results presented crude and adjusted for children's age, household income, parental education, and urbanization of the place of residence.