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Do you like to be physically active? Parents and children enjoyment of physical activities as a predictor of children participation in extracurricular sport

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Introduction

The health benefits of physical activity (PA) are well established and for children, they include avoiding weight gain and hypertension, increased bone mineral density and a positive mental state.

Objective

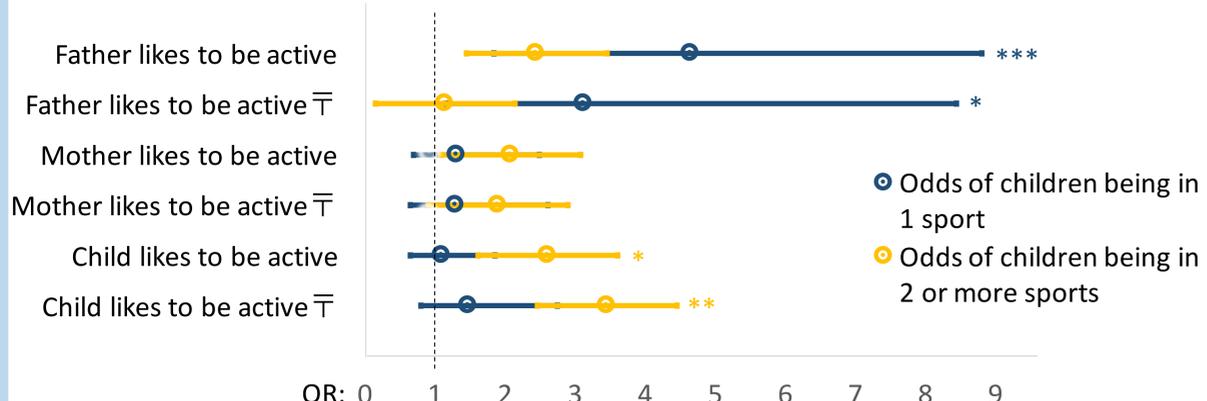
Observe if children participation in extracurricular sports was predicted by how much the father, the mother and the own child enjoyed participating in PA and sport.

Methods

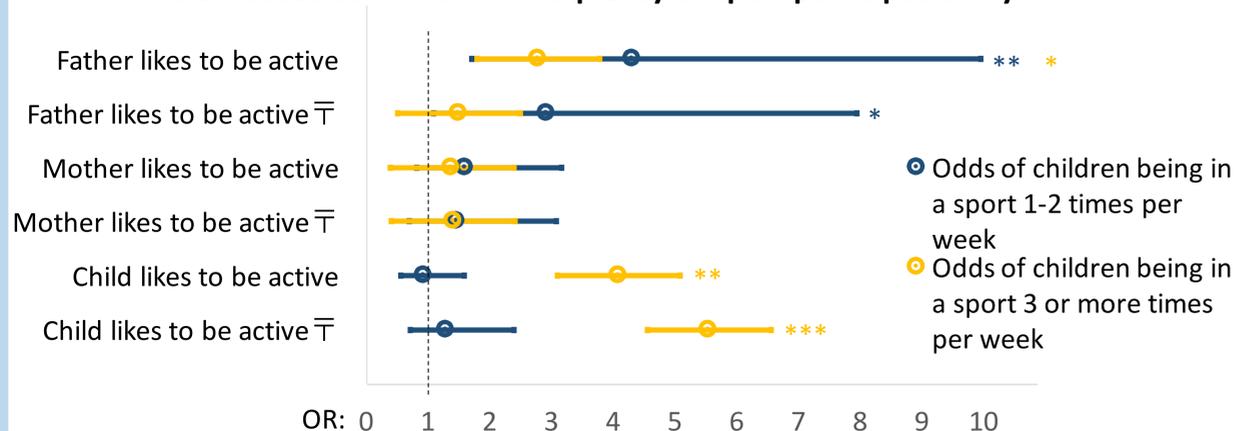
The study included 834 parents and their respective children (aged 6-10 years), living in Coimbra, Portugal. Through a questionnaire, parents reported: their PA habits, if they enjoyed to be physically active, socio-demographic data, and if their children were involved in extracurricular sports (number of sports - 0 sports, 1 sports, 2 or more sports - and frequency – never, 1-2 times per week, 3 or more times per week). During a semi-structured interview, children were asked how much they enjoyed PA and sports. Multinomial logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine associations between children’s participation in extracurricular sport (dependent variable) and parental/children reported enjoyment of PA and sports.

Results

Factors associated with the number of sports practiced by the child



Factors associated with the frequency of sport participation by the child



Note. Reference category is: child do not practice any extracurricular sport; \bar{T} model adjusted for children’s gender, age, parental education family income (below €1000, between €1000 and €1500, above €1500), OR=odds ratio, AOR=adjusted odds ratio, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

- Mother enjoyment of PA was not associated with children’s participation in sport;
- When fathers reported that they liked to be physically active, children had significantly higher odds of practicing one sport (OR=4.643; AOR=3.120), and practicing sport one to two times per week (OR=4.307; AOR=2.921) or three or more times/week (OR=2.778), compared with children whose fathers stated not enjoying to be physically active;
- Children who enjoyed PA and sport had significantly higher odds of practicing at least two sports (OR=2.602; AOR=3.445) and being in a sport at least three times per week (OR=4.084; AOR=5.542).

Conclusion

Children’s enjoyment of PA was the best predictor for participating in more sports per week and more frequently. Families and schools should listen to children’s opinions, promote a variety of sports and activities and create a challenging but fun environment for children in order to increase children’s enjoyment of PA and consequently increase sport participation.