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Parental perceived barriers/opinions on sport and children's sport participation in different geographic settings

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INTRODUCTION

Majority of children are far from achieving the recommended levels of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per day, inclusive in Portugal⁽¹⁾, and particularly in rural settings compared with their urban peers⁽²⁾. In addition, girls are at greatest risk of falling PA recommendations according to numerous studies^(1,3,4).

Identifying factors associated with PA could contribute to the development of strategies that aim to change the afore-mentioned situation.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to identify perceived barriers and opinions, including gender stereotypes on sport, which could influence child sport participation in urban and non-urban settings.

RESULTS

Table 1. Frequency of reported barriers and parental opinions about sport, and respective statistically differences between the two geographic places.

Barriers/opinions	Parents' perceived barriers and opinions on sport and PA					
	Total sample		Girls		Boys	
	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban
Time	56.7%*	43.3%*	58.6%	41.4%	54.7%	45.3%
Health	30.6%*	69.4%*	34.8%	65.2%	26.9%*	73.1%*
Money	56.5%*	43.5%*	55.6%	44.4%	57.7%*	42.3%*
Places	57.6%	42.4%	54.3%	45.7%	61.5%*	38.5%*
Child interest	49.6%	50.4%	40.7%*	59.3%*	57.1%	42.9%
Mean values (SD) of the EFA's factors						
Stereotypes	0.01(0.95)	-0.01(1.05)	0.04(0.94)	0.01(1.10)	0.07(1.01)	-0.08(0.98)
Sports	0.03(1.05)	-0.04(0.94)	0.09(1.23)	0.02(0.97)	-0.04(0.95)	-0.09(0.91)
Importance	0.01(0.99)	-0.01(1.01)	-0.05(0.97)	0.06(1.04)	-0.02(0.97)	-0.04(1.01)

Note. Results presented as percentage (%) of parents who referred those barriers as existent; *p<0.05 (considered significant).

Parents perceived barriers differed within places according to children's sex. Non-urban parents of girls perceived less child interest than urban parents. Among boys, parents from the urban setting reported more lack of money and places, compared with their non-urban peers (Table 1).

Perceived barriers were inversely related to children's sport participation in the non-urban setting. Lack of time and money were associated with lower odds of boys participating in sport, while lack of places, child interest and more stereotyped ideas about sport were related with girls' participation in organized sport (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

Non-urban children, particularly girls, are at a greater risk of not being engaged in any sport if their parents perceived more barriers or have stereotyped ideas about sports. Present results suggest that parental support (e.g., interest, motivation) is more important for girls while parental logistic support (e.g., money and time) are major influences for boys' sport participation. Future interventions should include sex specific strategies, while addressing the family, economic, and environmental factors highlighted in this study.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A sample of 834 children (50.8% girls) aged 6-10 years was analysed in a cross sectional study of different geographic settings, Coimbra and Lousã, both situated in the central area of Portugal. For the purposes of this study, Coimbra and Lousã were defined as urban and non-urban, respectively, in which urban areas are defined as a city with >500 inhabitants/km² or >50 000 inhabitants⁽⁵⁾.

Parents self-reported perceived barriers and opinions on sport and physical activity (Likert-scale), and stated children's extracurricular sport participation (Yes/No). Factors were observed according to children's sex and place of residence.

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using the principal component analysis method was conducted to examine the Likert-scale in which the first three factors generated accounted for 51.46% of the variance. First factor was related with parents' stereotypes on sport and PA, the second factor with the lack of sport (too expensive or inexistent) in the place of residence, and the third, parents attributed less importance to sport participation.

Chi-square and ANOVA test were used to compare parents' perceived barriers and opinions with the place of residence. A multivariate logistic regression was used to observe the risk of not participation in sports with parental opinions and perceived barriers, adjusted for sex, age, and income.

Table 2. Association between parental perceived barriers for physical activity and opinions about sport with children's participation in extracurricular sport in the urban and non-urban setting.

Barriers /Opinions		Child participation in extracurricular sport activities							
		Girls				Boys			
		Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban
		OR	95%C.I.	OR	95%C.I.	OR	95%C.I.	OR	95%C.I.
Time	Yes	0.60	0.31;1.16	0.85	0.44;1.64	1.10	0.57;2.16	0.38*	0.19;0.78
	No	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Health	Yes	0.54	0.12;2.52	1.17	0.34;3.96	0.76	0.13;4.72	0.86	0.29;2.59
	No	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Money	Yes	1.06	0.55;2.03	0.62	0.31;1.21	0.66	0.34;1.28	0.41*	0.20;0.85
	No	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Places	Yes	0.40*	0.18;0.90	0.29*	0.12;0.71	0.64	0.30;1.34	1.29	0.51;3.26
	No	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Child	Yes	2.55	0.69;9.44	0.29*	0.10;0.88	1.49	0.60;3.71	1.06	0.40;2.80
	No	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Stereotypes		0.92	0.66;1.30	0.67*	0.48;0.93	0.99	0.70;1.41	1.05	0.75;1.49
Sport		0.92	0.68;1.25	0.74	0.52;1.05	0.87	0.61;1.25	0.73	0.48;1.09
Importance		0.87	0.63;1.21	1.00	0.72;1.39	1.13	0.80;1.59	0.75	0.52;1.07

Note. The reference category is: child do not participate in an extracurricular sport; results are presented adjusted for children's age and SES; OR=odds ratio, CI=confidence interval, *p<0.05 (considered significant).

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