

Examining and addressing constraints to sport participation among ethnically diverse female adolescents

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Research Context

Participation in sport is lower among girls than age-matched boys – 1/3 Canadian males vs 1/6 of females reported regular sport participation (Heritage Canada, 2013)

Adolescence is a crucial developmental period during which lifelong patterns of sport participation and physical activity are solidified

Between 2005 and 2010, sport participation has decreased by 13% among adolescent girls 15 to 19 years age

Research on adolescent girls and young women has identified a range of correlates of sport participation; e.g. self-esteem, perceived physical appearance, recognizing associated benefits, lifestyle, social norms, self-consciousness, unsuitable weather, other demands, and lack of opportunities

Little is known about the interaction of these constraints in diverse milieus

Research Objectives

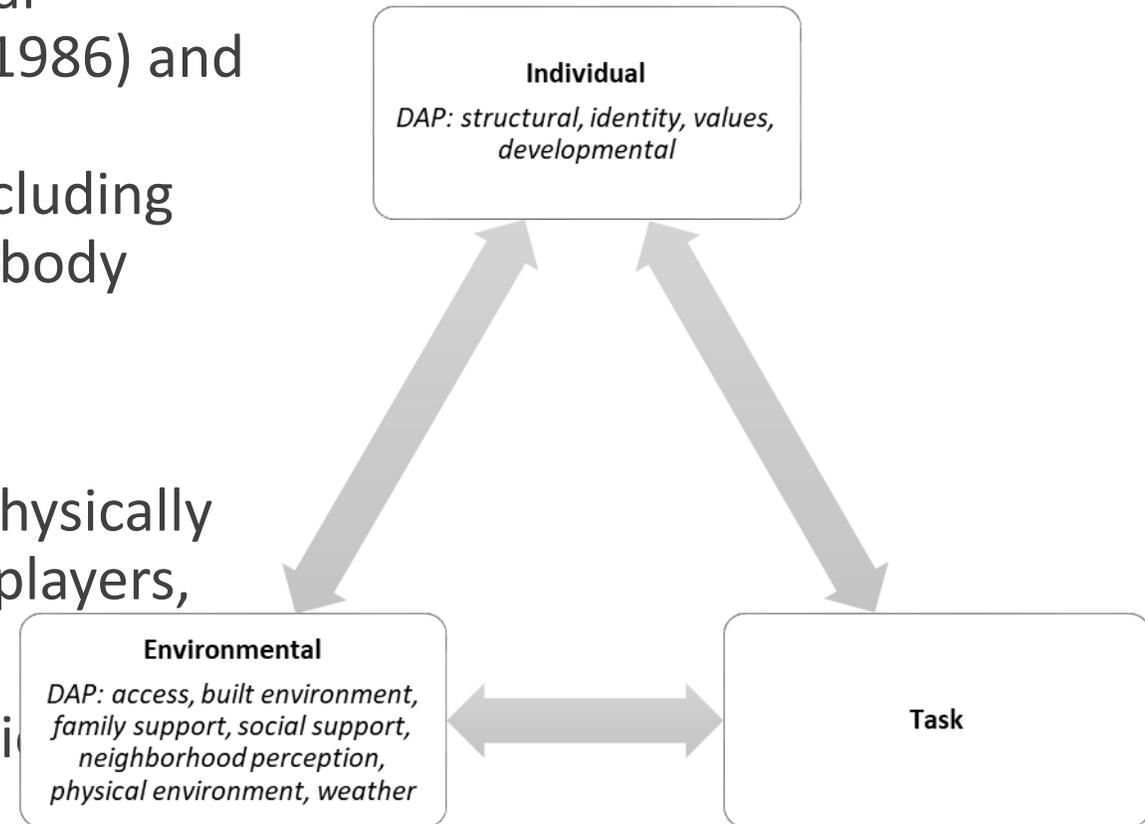
- i) To examine interactions of individual (e.g. self-efficacy, gender beliefs, birth place), environmental (e.g. available opportunities, social support, geographical location), and task (e.g. competency) constraints of sport participation among ethnically-diverse adolescent girls;
- ii) To identify the combinations of constraints that negatively influence sport participation among ethnically-diverse adolescent girls;
- iii) To gather in-depth knowledge on the sport needs of adolescent girls who are subject to a specific combination of constraints identified in Step ii; and
- iv) To provide evidence-based recommendations for the development of programs that have the capacity to increase sport participation among adolescent girls.

Method

Survey development based on two theoretical frameworks - Newell's model (K. M. Newell, 1986) and the DAP framework (Scales 1999) – 67 items: constraints & demographic characteristics including age, immigration status, parental education, body type, and employment

Task constraints: competitive, recreational, physically intense, strict rules, co-ed, contact between players, long duration, and perseverance.

Dependent variable - regular sport participation (times per week or more)



Participant recruitment, data collection, analysis

Non-probability voluntary sample method

Participant recruitment through school boards, private education programs, community organizations, and social media advertising

Quantitative analysis used IBM SPSS: t-tests of continuous variables, chi square for categorical variables, series of unadjusted and adjusted binary logistic regression models and three exploratory bivariate logistic regression models to determine which constraints significantly predicted sport participation ($p \leq 0.05$).

Qualitative thematic analysis by two researchers, and consisted of de-identifying and analyzing key themes that emerged from five focus groups and two one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

Results

825 female adolescents aged 13 to 19 years from Ontario, Canada,

STEP 1: Weather, social support, family support; Developmental, values, identity, lower age; competition; physical intensity, games of long duration, perseverance

STEP 2: Weather, developmental, and physically intense

STEP 3: The final regression model - no significant interactions

Qualitative analysis: support system, accessibility, and family environment; perceptions and beliefs, experiences, and time or energy; requirement of sport, development of skills

Analysis revealed an interplay of individual and environment factors that influence sport participation, mainly confidence and parental support

Conclusion

Results highlight the role of developmental experiences (previous sport experiences, belonging, and attitudes) and beliefs in predicting sport participation

Range of other constraints, e.g. Physical intensity of sport, weather, age, perceived competence, perceived skill, self-esteem, confidence, fear of embarrassment,...

Task constraints were present and interplay is evident – e.g. physical intensity - perceived competence – skill development

To enhance female participation in sports:

- target females at a young age with positive experiences that target their self-efficacy, enjoyment, and contribution in relation to sports
- gender messaging can address the positive aspects of sport participation
- range of intensities, physical environments, social environments such as leveraging family and peer support