

Let's Play! Kids' Thoughts About Active Playtime

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HOMESTYLES

HEALTHY HOME HEALTHY FAMILY

Abstract

Objective: To investigate children's physical activity behaviors and factors promoting and hindering active play.

Methods: Children (n=44) 6 to 11 years in NJ, WV, and FL participated in focus groups conducted by trained moderators. Researchers trained in content analysis used constant comparison to determine data saturation and themes.

Results: Children reported engaging in active playtime, including organized sports and unstructured outdoor activities, such as playing tag. Kids engaged in active playtime after school most days, describing social playtime and recreational sports as ways to improve health. Some kids spent after-school time in non-active activities, including watching TV and playing video games. Most believe active playtime is important for staying healthy, getting stronger, and avoiding injury. Kids recognized the social aspect of active playtime and enjoyed playing with friends. Most kids said parents encouraged them to play actively to keep weight healthy, manage social relationships, and limit screentime. Children reported that parents discouraged indoor active play due to physical hazards, noise, and limited space. Some indicated parents' offered play time as an incentive for completing chores. Poor weather and lack of supervision were key reasons kids were not allowed to play outside. Children felt parents could promote active play by encouraging and scheduling active playtime, providing outdoor toys, and offering incentives (money, screentime). Kids thought playtime with parents was a special time for them. Some encouraged parents and siblings to engage in active play, but found convincing them could be difficult. Others suggested that convincing parents that active playtime was healthy for them too would get parents to play actively with them. Having routines and schedules, getting reminders of health benefits, and completing homework and chores were ways kids helped ensure they got frequent active playtime. Children reported that parents play an authoritative role in making them play actively outside and reminding kids about the health benefits of exercise.

Conclusion: Most kids engaged in regular active play and recognized the benefits. They felt parents played a significant role in helping them be physically active but needed help overcoming barriers to outside playtime.

Methods

Sample

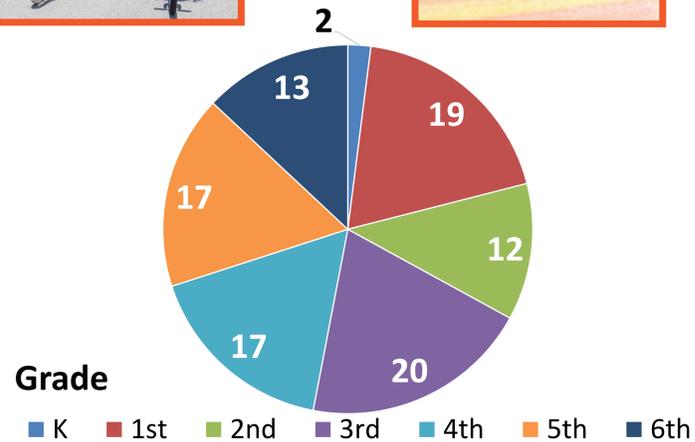
- Children aged 6-11 years old
- Residents of Florida, New Jersey, or West Virginia

Data Collection: Focus Groups

- 15 focus groups
- N=43 kids
- Conducted by trained moderator

Data Analysis

- Qualitative
 - Constant comparison and identification of themes
 - Coded by 2 trained researchers who reached consensus
- Quantitative
 - Descriptive statistics to describe the sample population



Kids said this about physical activity...

"It is important, because it improves your health. You could also have fun and it gives you a break from school work."

"We can't run around the house because of the downstairs neighbors."

"Parents could say, if you go outside, no chores for a week or they will bring us to the theater."

"If parents played with us, we would want to play, too."

"Parents playing with us would help, because mom would be playing and would be more active."

Results

Types of Active Play Time Reported by Kids

- Structured organized recreational sports
 - Soccer, Football, Basketball, Kickball, Baseball
- Unstructured outdoor activities.
 - Bicycling, Tag, Hide and Go Seek, Play Catch, Running

Kids' Thoughts on Active Play

- Kids believe active playtime is important for:
 - Staying healthy
 - Getting stronger
 - Avoiding injury
- Kids recognized the social aspect of active playtime and enjoyed exercising with friends

Barriers to Active Playtime Identified by Kids

- Watching television
- Playing videogames
- Poor weather
- Lack of supervision
- Discouragement of indoor physical activity by parents

Facilitators for Active Playtime Identified By Kids

- Encouragement from parents to play actively
- Scheduled playtime
- Availability of toys to promote activity (bikes, trampolines, basketball hoops)
- Incentives (money, additional screentime) for playing actively
- Parental involvement in physical activity and playtime
- Reminders of health benefits

Kids Thoughts on Parent:Child Co-play

- Kids reported that active playtime with parents has a dual benefit of social interaction with their parents and health benefits for their parents
- Kids attempt to convince parents to play actively, but found convincing them could be difficult

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

- Diverse sample (FL, NJ, WV)
- Data coded by 2 researchers trained in qualitative data analysis
- Researcher training to increase uniformity of data collection across states

Limitations

- Data collected by different researchers in each state

Conclusions

- Most kids reported regular active play including organized recreational sports and unstructured outdoor play
- Kids feel parents played a significant role in helping them be physically active
- Kids recognize the importance of physical activity for health
- Some barriers inhibit kids from engaging in active playtime at home (screentime, weather)
- Parents may influence child active playtime by taking an authoritative role, scheduling time for active playtime, offering incentives to children for being physically active, and reminding kids of the health benefits of being more active

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