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Occupational Therapy’s Role in Reducing Barriers for Team-Based Sports Participation for Adolescents

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BACKGROUND

Researchers have identified that engagement in team-based sports correlates to improved “cardiorespiratory fitness and function, improved self-esteem, social interactions, positive perception of health, and fewer depressive symptoms” (Costalonga et al., 2020, p. 1). McLoughlin et al. (2017) discusses limiting factors that prevent individuals from participating in sports such as low income, disability, lack of time, and lack of awareness.

School-based occupational therapists focus on play and leisure, social interactions, ADLs, and transition/work skills with a primary goal of supporting a child’s access to the educational curriculum (AOTA, 2017). The services provided by school-based occupational therapists includes activity and environmental examination and modification with the purpose of limiting any barriers to participation in the educational curriculum (AOTA, 2017). Limited research has been addressed on how occupational therapy offers a role in a consultant or educator for adolescents in team sports participation.

PROBLEM

There are numerous factors that restrict adolescents’ participation in team-based sports. This project will work to understand the different barriers to engagement in team sports.

PURPOSE

- Understand the barriers and motivators to participation in team sports.
- Identify ways for OT to support school administrators and athletic programs to facilitate participation.

METHODS

Needs Assessment

- Thematic analysis, initial coding, line-by-line coding, & organized to common themes.
- Questionnaires & Semi-structure interviews
- 114 students participated in the questionnaire.
- Six students participated in additional interview.

Participants

- 74 identified as male, 34 as female, 1 prefer not to state.
- 33% wanted to play football, 28% for soccer, & 22% for volleyball.
- 85% usual mode of transportation was “car”.
- 50% reported satisfied with overall quality of life & 49% reported satisfied with overall health.

Needs Assessment Findings

Common Barriers:

- Financial Management
- Lack of Transportation
- Time Management
- COVID-19
- Physical/Athletic Skill

Common Motivators:

- Social Interactions
- Increased Health & Fitness
- Competition

Top 3 Barriers: “my grades not good enough, not comfortable with participating, & takes too much time from school.

Top 3 Facilitators: “Fun, increased health & fitness, & competition.

PROGRAM

A webpage with resources was designed and proposed to the staff at Hesperia High School in hopes to promote team-based sports participation by decreasing barriers. Findings was presented to the staff in a presentation. In addition, A post-questionnaire was provided to Hesperia High School in an effort to examine the efficacy of the proposition and recapitulate suggestions for future adjustments.

- Health education.
- Hesperia bus routes.
- Scholarships, scholarship tools, scholarship data bases, & non-profit databases.
- Tutoring resources.
- Free home exercises for beginner athletes.

Webpage References



RESULTS

Webpage Proposal/Presentation

- 8 staff participated in post-questionnaire.

The results from the post-questionnaire assess the effectiveness of the webpage displayed the resources as “useful”. In addition, the webpage would be recommended to the students. Furthermore, the results showed that the resources on the webpage addressed all the barriers identified from the students. However, one participant from the post-questionnaire suggested that another barrier to participating in team sports may include “family responsibilities”. The specifics of “family responsibilities” was not clearly stated, thus making it a limitation.

OT IMPLICATIONS

The intent of this capstone project was to focus on differentiating the requisite for occupational therapy within the adolescent population to reduce barriers and promote participation in team sports. There has been limited research on how occupational therapy offers a role in consultant or educator for adolescents in team sports participation. For instance, an occupational therapist can educate individuals to seek out the necessary resources and provide knowledge for individuals with specific barriers to promote engagement in team sports. Education to find grants, funds, scholarships, or donations, education on local transportation accessibility, or education on school or online tutoring resources can also help increased team sports participation.

Theoretical Frameworks:

- Model of Human Occupation & Ecology of Human Performances