

# PROMOTION OF SCHOOL SPORTS: A SURVEY OF THE PERCEPTION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT PUBLIC TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS IN TSHWANE, SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate learners' views about sport promotion at public primary and secondary schools in Tshwane, the capital city of South Africa. A total of 773 school children aged 12–18 years volunteered to participate in the study. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire. Overall, the results showed that both primary and secondary school children



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indicated that quality of sport facilities, school sport bursaries, safety after school hours, competition and sport equipment should be made available to all children at schools. The implication of the findings for effective planning and delivery of sports programmes in schools are discussed.

**Keywords:** school sports, promotion, perception, learners

## INTRODUCTION

In the ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ on the integrated school framework between the Department of Basic Education (DoE) and the Department of Sports and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) in 2011, the ministers committed to deliver a sustainable integrated plan to provide children the opportunity to participate in physical education and organised school sport (Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa 2011). It is important that the interests of children be well catered for at schools in sport. Sport has a meaningful role to play in promoting physically active lifestyles among the youth of the country. The National Sport and Recreation Plan (2011) indicated that the promotion of sport and physical education at schools plays an important role in creating the motivation for, and commitment to life-long participation. In view of the pressing need to promote school sports, the DoE and the SRSA (2009) aimed to achieve the following objectives in their school sports policies: entrench the democratic value-system, to accelerate the transformation and integration of society, to ensure and increase access and accessibility of facilities and school sport, develop the capacity of: i) delivering quality school sport programmes that will lead to lifelong participation in sport; ii) offering school sport programmes as part of their integrated curriculum; and iii) rehabilitate, maintain and manage infrastructure for school sport activities. Despite these objectives, very little progress has been made to develop school sports. Rather, the condition is becoming deplorable with Physical Education (PE) and school sport almost totally neglected in public schools (Amusa and Toriola 2008). Physical education no longer exists in the South African school curriculum, which is of a great concern as this has had a negative impact on the promotion of physical activity and school sport in the schools.

In an attempt to promote school sports, it is imperative to understand why children continue or discontinue participating in sports. A model of sport participation developed by Wann (1997) postulates that an individual’s decision to participate in sport is not based on a single incident or individual. Rather, a person’s decision to play sport consists of a process involving a variety of factors. For example, children participate in sports to have fun, enjoy and socialise with their friends. The model of sport participation further indicated that the social agents (media, parents, schools, peers and siblings) play an important role in promoting children’s participation in sports (Wann 1997).

In response to the pressing need to promote sport and physical activity in South African schools as a strategic priority, the Minister of Sport and Recreation, Fikile Mbalula, launched the South African school sport programme in 2012. This initiative is aimed at inculcating physically active lifestyles among the youth and promoting sustainable sports development in the country. In spite of the importance of school sport as a co-curricular activity, very few studies, if any, have been carried out to assess learners' views regarding sport promotion in public schools. It is envisaged that this study will provide baseline information upon which future studies on promotion of sports in South African schools can be based. The purpose of this study was to examine learners' views concerning the promotion of school sports in the City of Tshwane, South Africa.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

A total of 773 children aged 12–18 years, attending public primary and secondary schools in Tshwane, volunteered to participate in the study. From the comprehensive list of schools provided by the Department of Education, 40 primary and secondary schools were randomly selected.

### Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire of 14 close-ended items was scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 4 (Agree) to 5 (Strongly agree) and used to collect data. The instrument had three sections. Sections A and B consisted of questions that sought information on the participants' demographic profile (age, gender, language, type of school, grade level), while section C elicited the learners' views regarding school sport participation. The questionnaire was designed based on interviews conducted with school sport managers and children, and was validated by a statistician. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.89 was obtained for the entire questionnaire.

### Ethical consideration

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was granted by the Gauteng Department of Basic Education and the governing bodies of the various schools. Ethical clearance was also received from the Central Research Committee of Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa. The children participated in the study after parental informed consent was obtained in accordance with approved ethical procedures (Thomas, Nelson and Silverman 2011).

## Data collection procedure

Supervised data collection was undertaken by trained research assistants who were postgraduate students at the Department of Marketing, Logistics and Sport Management, Tshwane University of Technology. To avoid the disruption of school lessons, data were collected after school hours. The children were guided to fill the questionnaires independently, which took approximately 30–45 minutes to complete.

## Data analysis

The data were captured and analysed using the SPSS, version 21. Descriptive statistical methods such as means, standard deviations, percentages and frequencies were used to analyse the data. An independent *t-test* was applied to examine differences in the views of learners towards sport participation in the primary and secondary schools. A probability level of 0.05 or less was used to indicate significance.

## RESULTS

The learners included 441 girls (57%) and 332 boys (43%). A total of 516 learners were secondary school students and 257 primary school pupils participated in the study. A breakdown of the learners according to age category was as follows: ages 10 to 12 years (25%); 13 to 15 years (35%); 16 to 18 years (36%) and 18 years and older (4%). The majority of the learners mainly participated in team sport activities such as netball, athletics and soccer.

**Table 1:** Learners' views regarding sport promotion in primary and secondary schools

Variable	Primary school	Secondary school	All	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	t-value
Schools should regularly inform children about sport opportunities offered by the school	4.22 (1.00)	4.21 (1.00)	4.21 (1.00)	.189
Sport facilities should always be kept clean and in good condition	4.44 (.95)	4.39 (.93)	4.41 (.94)	.699
Good quality sport equipment should be made available to all children at schools	4.28 (1.06)	4.28 (.95)	4.28 (.99)	.117
Sport activities (e.g. practice sessions, games times etc) should be made more convenient for all school children	4.17 (1.02)	4.16 (.99)	4.16 (1.00)	.136
Teachers should be passionate about school sport	4.16 (1.08)	4.11 (.96)	4.13 (1.00)	.593
Schools should give children the opportunity to compete against other schools in sport	4.34 (1.05)	4.32 (.93)	4.32 (.97)	.292
Schools should have security, to protect the terrain for those playing sport after hours	4.32 (1.09)	4.33 (.97)	4.32 (1.01)	-.106
All schools should participate in school sports leagues	4.33 (.99)	4.18 (.98)	4.23 (.99)	1.994*
Community sports teams should recruit players from schools	3.94 (1.11)	3.88 (1.05)	3.90 (1.07)	.766
Schools should establish committees for each sports programme	4.00 (1.12)	3.93 (.95)	3.95 (1.01)	.954
School should give sport bursaries to children excelling in school sports	4.29 (1.03)	4.37 (.98)	4.34 (1.01)	-1.037
Schools should find a way to offer/present sports or physical activities during normal schooling hours	3.89 (1.15)	3.64 (1.16)	3.72 (1.16)	2.859*
Schools should motivate children to participate in sport	4.08 (.95)	4.08 (.92)	4.08 (.94)	-.075
Schools should hire/appoint people to specifically teach children about sport	4.08 (1.06)	4.08 (.98)	4.08 (1.01)	.028

\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$ 

Table 1 illustrates the views of the learners towards promotion of school sports according to type and were ranked as follows: 'Sport facilities should always be kept clean and in good condition' (M=4.41), 'School should give sport bursaries to children excelling in school sports' (M=4.34), 'Schools should have security, to

protect the terrain for those playing sport after hours' ( $M=4.32$ ), 'Schools should give children the opportunity to compete against other schools in sport' ( $M=4.32$ ) and 'Good quality sport equipment should be made available to all children at schools' ( $M=4.28$ ). When the t-test was used to examine differences between the primary and secondary school children, significant differences were found regarding the following: 'All schools should participate in school sports leagues' ( $t=1.94$ ,  $p=0.05$ ) and 'Schools should find a way to offer/present sports or physical activities during normal schooling hours' ( $t=2.86$ ,  $p=0.004$ ).

**Table 2:** Learners' views concerning sport promotion by gender

Variable	Boys	Girls	t-value
	M (SD)	M (SD)	
Schools should regularly inform children about sport opportunities offered by the school	4.28 (.98)	4.16 (1.01)	1.713
Sport facilities should always be kept clean and in good condition	4.36 (.92)	4.44 (.94)	-1.228
Good quality sport equipment should be made available to all children at schools	4.30 (.94)	4.26 (1.02)	.637
Sport activities (e.g. practice sessions, games times etc) should be made more convenient for all school children	4.20 (.98)	4.14 (1.01)	.759
Teachers should be passionate about school sport	4.08 (.97)	4.16 (1.02)	-1.05
Schools should give children the opportunity to compete against other schools in sport	4.36 (.93)	4.29 (1.00)	.941
Schools should have security, to protect the terrain for those playing sport after hours	4.30 (1.03)	4.34 (.98)	-.636
All schools should participate in school sports leagues	4.32 (.96)	4.17 (1.00)	2.049*
Community sports teams should recruit players from schools	3.98 (1.02)	3.84 (1.10)	1.821
Schools should establish committees for each sports programme	3.97 (1.02)	3.94 (.98)	.352
School should give sport bursaries to children excelling in school sports	4.36 (.98)	4.33 (1.01)	.335
Schools should find a way to offer/present sports or physical activities during normal schooling hours	3.67 (1.12)	3.75 (1.18)	-.929
Schools should motivate children to participate in sport	4.04 (.95)	4.11 (.93)	-1.089
Schools should hire/appoint people to specifically teach children about sport	3.98 (1.03)	4.15 (.98)	-2.190*

\* Significant at  $p<0.05$

In terms of gender, Table 2 summarises the learners' views about promotion of school sports. Boys indicated that: 'Sport facilities should always be kept clean and in good condition' ( $M=4.36$ ), 'Schools should give children the opportunity to compete

against other schools in sport' (M=4.36), 'School should give sport bursaries to children excelling in school sports' (M=4.36), 'All schools should participate in school sports leagues' (M=4.32), 'Schools should have security, to protect the terrain for those playing sport after hours' (M=4.30), and 'Good quality sport equipment should be made available to all children at schools' (M=4.30). Among the girls, the following mean values were obtained: 'Sport facilities should always be kept clean and in good condition' (M=4.44), 'Schools should have security, to protect the terrain for those playing sport after hours' (M=4.34), 'School should give sport bursaries to children excelling in school sports' (M=4.33), "Schools should give children the opportunity to compete against other schools in sport" (M=4.29) and "Good quality sport equipment should be made available to all children at schools' (M=4.26). Significant gender differences were observed concerning the following variables: 'All schools should participate in school sports leagues' ( $t=2.037$ ,  $p=0.042$ ) and 'Schools should hire/appoint people to specifically teach children about sport' ( $t=-2.190$ ,  $p=0.29$ ).

## DISCUSSION

This study evaluated learners' views about sport promotion at public primary and secondary schools in Tshwane, the capital city of South Africa. Overall, the majority of learners indicated that sport facilities should be kept clean and in good condition. Evidence from research has shown that children participate in sport because of the attractiveness of the sport facilities. For instance, Mchunu and Le Roux (2010) were of the view that most learners get discouraged from participating in sport because of the lack of accessible and well maintained sport facilities. Another important finding that emerged from this study is that learners indicated that quality sport equipment should be available to all. Therefore, in an effort to motivate learners to participate in sport, it is important that the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Sports and Recreation in South Africa provides public schools with adequate sport equipment and facilities.

Primary and secondary school learners indicated that children who excel in sport should be provided with sport bursaries. Previous studies such as that by Van Hout *et al.* (2013) concluded that most people in previously disadvantaged communities do not have enough resources to enrol their children in local sporting clubs or pay for transportation so that they can participate in extra-mural sport activities. Thus, awarding children a school sport bursary will serve as a motivation to learners who are coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and will also help the learners to acquire basic necessities of life (i.e. food and clothes). This finding mimics those of a previous study (Nthangeni, Haycock and Toriola 2009), in which female university students indicated that being awarded a sport bursary would motivate them to participate in sports.

Additionally, learners indicated that it is not safe for them to participate in sports after school hours. A similar finding was reported by Amesty (2003) and Pule (2007) who found safety concerns and fear of crime an obstacle to sport and physical activity participation in communities and schools, respectively. A concern that might be raised in this study is that learners indicated little interest in sport or physical activities during school hours. However, a plausible reason for this finding could be that teachers either often asked pupils to go out and play or used the time slot for physical education lessons for drama, arts, debate, culture and other unsupervised activities in schools (Van Deventer 2008).

Furthermore, with regard to gender, more boys indicated that they should be given the opportunity to compete with other learners. This finding is not surprising as there is empirical evidence suggesting that males and females participate in sport for various reasons. For example, Klipatrick, Herbert and Bartholomew (2005) found that men were interested in competition and enjoyment, whereas females were greatly interested in losing weight and staying in shape (Tergerson and King 2002). On the other hand, girls indicated that the schools should motivate them to participate in sports. In an attempt to promote sport and physical activity participation among girls, teachers should provide them with the opportunity to socialise, interact and cooperate with others (Czyz and Toriola 2012). Furthermore, according to the model of sport participation developed by Wann (1997), a child's final decision concerning participation is not complete until one considers various motivations to continue and discontinue participation. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of young athletes and sustain their participation in sports, schools should provide children with basic equipment, facilitate access to sport facilities and ensure that playgrounds are safe and properly maintained.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, primary and secondary school learners indicated that there should be good quality sport facilities and equipment, sport bursaries, security after school hours and competitions organised for learners. These results have implications for DoBE, and SRSA in effectively and efficiently planning and delivering sports programmes in schools. Participation in school sport plays an important role in learners' wellbeing. Therefore, sport and PE should be embraced and prioritised in schools.

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