Barriers to women’s participation in sport and active recreation

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Abstract
The aim of the paper is to provide the information of barriers to women and girls participation. This paper will be a helpful resource for the government organizations, women’s organizations, sport and recreation sector and other stakeholders who are seeking to develop policies and/or programs to increase or improve women’s and girls’ participation opportunities. The literature shows that the participation of women and girls in sport and active recreation fluctuates throughout the lifecycle. At different stages of life, many events and factors appear to negatively influence women’s and girls’ participation. The literature had also shown that there are many different barriers of women’s participation, and the barriers to girls’ and adolescents’ participation. These barriers are identified through a review of literature.

The different barriers to women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation are as follows:
1) Barriers of girls’ participation: Competing priorities, Girls perceive that physical education is not an important subject, Physical education classes do not cater well for girls, Friends who do not participate, Perceptions about being feminine, Lack of parental Support, Bodily Image and sports uniforms, Mixed-gender participation, Lack of motivation, Negative experiences, Cultural issues.

2) Barriers of Women’s participation: Competing priorities and lack of time, Lack of appropriate and affordable childcare, Poor access to or availability of venues and places to participate and a lack of appropriate facilities for women, Poor access to programs, Feeling unsafe, Cultural factors and social norms, Personal perceptions and motivation, Injury and health problems, Cultural factors and social norms.

Researches had shown that there are different type of barriers to participation experienced by women and girls. Research is helpful to find that there is a need of specific programs according to these specific problems to improve participation in sport and active recreation for overcoming these barriers. Despite the plethora of research exploring women’s and girls’ participation in sports there is a need of making policies, implementation of them and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programs for increasing participation.

Keywords: Barriers, recreation, perceptions.

1. Introduction
The aim of the paper is to provide information of barriers to women and girls participation. This paper will be a helpful resource for the government organizations, women’s organizations, sport and recreation sector and other stakeholders who are seeking to develop policies and/or programs to increase or improve women’s and girls’ participation opportunities.

The literature shows that the participation of women and girls in sport and active recreation fluctuates throughout the lifecycle. At different stages of life, many events and factors appear to negatively influence women’s and girls’ participation. The literature had also shown that there are many different barriers of women’s participation, and the barriers to girls’ and adolescents’ participation. These barriers are identified through a review of literature.

2. Procedures
The different barriers to women’s and girls’ participation in sport and active recreation are as follows:
3. Barriers of girls’ participation
3.1 Competing priorities
Competing priorities are a barrier for girls in both early and late adolescence. As girls move through adolescence, they place a greater priority on activities other than sport and recreation. Competing priorities include:
• School work – school work is seen as a competing priority, particularly as girl’s transition from early to late adolescence.
• Other leisure activities – both early and late adolescent girls note that they reduce their participation in sport and recreation to engage in other activities, such as socializing with friends; older girls report that they have more leisure activities from which to choose.

3.2 Girls perceive that physical education is not an important subject
Among older adolescents, PE is a lower priority than other school subjects. The timetabling of PE classes is also a barrier, particularly for older students, for whom PE is not a compulsory subject. Teachers also perceive the timetabling of PE subjects as a barrier (Craike et al. 2009; Halyk et al. 2010) [4, 6].

3.3 Physical education classes do not cater well for girls
PE classes do not appear to cater well for girls. Girls report that they would be more likely to participate in PE classes and would enjoy them more if activities were more varied (Australian Government 2006; Craike et al. 2009; Hay & Macdonald 2010; Slater & Tiggemann 2010; Halyk et al. 2010) [10, 5, 10, 4].

3.4 Friends who do not participate
Girls belonging to a friendship group that is perceived to be “not sporty” are less likely to participate. Conversely, friends are an enabler to girls’ participation if their friendship group is “sporty” (Allender et al. 2006; Australian Government 2006; Craike et al. 2009) [1, 4].

3.5 Perceptions about being feminine
Many girls do not see participation in sport and recreation as a feminine pursuit and therefore do not participate (Craike et al. 2009; Slater & Tiggemann 2010; Lee & Macdonald 2010) [4, 8, 10]. Hay and Macdonald (2010) [3] found that school teachers and boys perceive that girls are less motivated and less able to participate and do well than are boys in senior PE classes.

3.6 Lack of parental Support
Parents influence girls’ participation in sport and recreation negatively by not providing access or transport to opportunities, and by discouraging participation in sport and recreation while encouraging participation in other activities, such as jobs, school work and school subjects other than PE.

3.7 Competitiveness
Girls’ participation in sport and recreation declines because the activities are perceived as less fun and more competitive as the girls become older. Sport becomes more competitive during the transition from primary school to high school and from junior to senior high school.

3.8 Body Image and sports uniforms
Girls of all ages report that poor body image affects their participation (Slater & Tiggemann 2010) [10]. A related issue, feeling uncomfortable in mandated uniforms, is a barrier for all girls (Allender et al. 2006; Australian Government 2006; Slater & Tiggemann 2010) [1, 10].

3.9 Lack of facilities
A lack of community facilities is a barrier to participation. (Halyk et al. 2010; Lee 2010; Lee & Macdonald 2010) [8, 11].

3.10 Mixed-gender participation
For some girls, having to participate with boys in PE classes and outside school sport is a barrier because boys are perceived as being too competitive and not supportive of their participation. Girls from different communities perceive this as a barrier to participation (Craike et al. 2009; Knez 2010) [6, 7].

3.11 Lack of confidence
Lack of confidence to engage with sport and active recreation activities is a barrier to participation in girls of all ages (Slater & Tiggemann 2010; Australian Government 2006) [10].

3.12 Poor team relationships
Poor team relationships, including conflict, bullying and being left out, influence participation (Slater & Tiggemann 2010) [10].

3.13 Negative experiences
Girls who experience negative experiences in PE classes or in outside-school sport or recreation are less likely to participate (Allender et al. 2006; Hay & Macdonald 2010) [1, 9].

3.14 Lack of motivation
Some studies have found that some girls do not want to participate in sport or recreation due to lack of motivation from the parents, teachers and peer group (Halyk et al. 2010; Knez 2010) [6, 7].

3.15 Cultural issues
Some girls do not participate for cultural or religious reasons (Knez 2010) [7].

4. Barriers of Women’s participation
4.1 Competing priorities and lack of time
Competing priorities and a lack of time is a barrier for young women and mid age women. Women perceive that they are time poor. Women tend to take on the burden of domestic responsibilities, including housework and caring roles (Australian Government 2006; Caperchoine, Mummery & Joyner 2009; Kowal & Fortier 2007) [3, 8].

4.2 Lack of appropriate and affordable childcare
There is a consistent lack of access to appropriate, regular and affordable childcare to enable women to participate in community sport and recreation (Australian Government 2006, Caperchoine et al. 2009) [9].

4.3 Costs of Participation
The cost of participation, including associated costs such as childcare and transport, is a barrier to participation for young women, older women, disabled women (Australian Government 2006; Caperchoine et al. 2009; Sawrikar & Muir 2010) [3, 9].

4.4 Poor access to or availability of venues and places to participate and a lack of appropriate facilities for women
Poor access to venues, including venues with appropriate facilities, is a barrier to participation for young women, disabled women and rural women. Poor access can be compounded by a lack of transport and a lack of information on available facilities. A lack of physical access to premises and a lack of venues and facilities with suitable equipment are
5. Conclusion

Researches had shown that there are different type of barriers to participation experienced by women and girls. Research is helpful to find that there is a need of specific programs according to these specific problems to improve their participation in sport and active recreation for overcoming these barriers. Despite the plethora of research exploring women’s and girls’ participation in sports there is a need of making policies, implementation of them and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programs for increasing their participation.

6. References