

Youth leaders' representations about the role of youth organizations in physical activity promotion



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Statement of the problem

- ◆ Multisectorial actions are needed to fight against sedentariness and all components of the community should be integrated into a general project (Sallis et al. 2006).
- ◆ Youth organizations (YO) gather thousands of children and adolescents each weekend. In a survey focusing on the leisure activities of Belgian adolescents (Wallonia), 23.9% of them answered that they were attending to YO (Cloes et al., 1997).
- ◆ YO propose to develop all dimensions of the individuals and to contribute to the education of the youth (Jadin, 2007): non-formal education, education by action, learning of group living, action for the youth by the youth. YO are firstly involved in the social development.
- ◆ Few studies have reported data about the impact of the YO on physical activity (PA) and healthy lifestyle (Dworkin et al., 2002; Rosenkrantz et al., 2010).

Goals of the study

- ◆ To analyze youth leaders' (YL) representations about PA.
- ◆ To describe their representations about the role of YO in PA promotion.



Methods

- ◆ Development of a questionnaire (pilot study designed to determine the most effective way to collect data among youth leaders): paper-pencil questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions (4-point Likert scale, multiple choices), short open-ended questions and one critical incident.
- ◆ The representations about PA focused on the PA definition, examples of PA, recommendations for PA in youth and adults, PA benefits, assessment of the PA level of the youth; the representations about the role of YO analyzed three levels (YO in general, activities organized by the staff, impact on youth's PA). The critical incident collected data about concrete examples of specific activities during which PA was promoted.
- ◆ 232 youth leaders (21,9 ± 7 years) fulfilled the questionnaire during their meetings (preparation of the activities during the week, special periods for continued education during the weekends).

Results and discussion



Youth Organizations and ...



... their role in PA promotion

- ◆ YOs are clearly considered as a context in which youths can be physically active. It points out that more studies should analyze the real impact of these activities on the youth overall energy expenditure, particularly during weekend days.



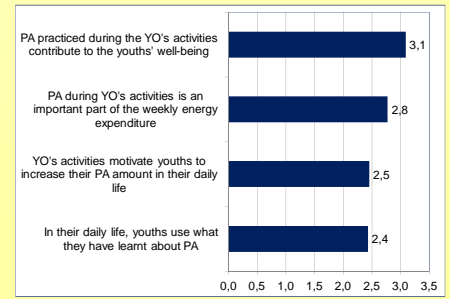
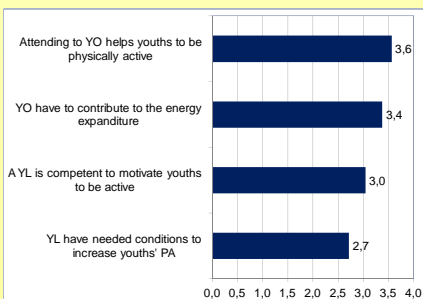
... the place provided to PA during the activities

- ◆ The traditional organization and content of the activities proposed to the youths is based on an active model, corresponding to the general guidelines of the YOs. Physical skills are naturally developed (Thurber, 2007).



... their influence on youths' daily PA

- ◆ YO leaders were convinced that the energy expenditure amounted during the activities brings positive effects on youth well-being. This is related to the positive climate that is sought through socialization rather than on competition.



... their role in PA promotion

- ◆ If the YO leaders felt competent to motivate the youths to be physically active, they considered that they do not have enough resources to reach high levels. This might be related to the multidimensional educational goals that are stated.



... the place provided to PA during the activities

- ◆ If many physically active situations are proposed during the activities, their sports facet is not presented as determining; PA is integrated to the natural way of life in YOs but nothing is specifically planned to improve it.



... their influence on youths' daily PA

- ◆ Again, the answers confirmed that PA is a mean and not an end. All situations planned during the activities aimed to develop the individuals, through a large array of tasks, but PA promotion itself is not one primary objective.

In conclusion: YOs represent a real interesting contributor to youth weekly PA. This context of life should be more investigated in lifestyle studies.