Purpose: To explore relationships between parents’ perceptions of DPA and their beliefs about the role of schools vs. families in PA promotion.

Introduction

- Ontario’s DPA policy mandates that all elementary school children participate in 20 minutes of sustained MVPA during instructional time each school day (Ontario Ministry of Education [OMOE], 2005).
- Province-wide research suggests 42–50% of elementary teachers adhere to the DPA policy (McGoey, 2016; Public Health Ontario, 2015).
- Parents are key partners in school policies (OMOE, 2006, 2014) and play influential roles in their children’s PA (Janssen, 2015).
- However, teachers identified a lack of parental engagement as a barrier to DPA implementation (McGoey, 2016).

Participants and Methods

Participants

- Self-identified parents/guardians (n = 172) of children attending elementary school in Ontario.
- Recruited using a snowball sampling technique.

Measure

- Items adapted from existing surveys² and developed based on PA literature. Pilot-tested with an expert panel (n = 4) for content validity and clarity.
- Source of Children’s PA (e.g., active play, sport, etc.) reported in a typical week (5 items).
- Perceptions of DPA and beliefs about PA promotion assessed according to the scales shown below.

Results

Descriptive Statistics for DPA Perceptions and Beliefs about PA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M (SD) / Mdn (Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPA Awareness</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>2.58 (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA Suitability</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>3.75 (1.25 – 5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA Importance**</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.33 (2.00 – 5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA Reporting**</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.00 (1.00 – 5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.00 (1.00 – 5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support†</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>3.56 (1.00 – 4.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home barriers²</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>2.80 (.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family responsibility</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.40 (3.20 – 5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School responsibility</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.50 (3.72 – 5.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(M/S) reported for normally distributed variables; M/dn (Range) reported for non-normal variables.

R² = .66, F = 51.3, p < .001
(β = .68, t = 9.91, p < .001)

What are parents’ beliefs surrounding DPA and PA promotion?

- Overall, parents rated the school’s responsibility for promoting and delivering PA as greater than family’s (F = 2.662, p < .01).
- DPA awareness is not associated with school’s vs. family’s responsibilities.
- Parent-teachers have different beliefs than other parents.
- Parents who were also teachers were more aware of the DPA policy (U = 127) = 2.37, p < 0.001) compared to non-teachers.
- Elementary teachers-parents rated DPA as lower importance (U = 306.5, p < .05), and disagreed that it should be included in report cards (U = 782, p < .01) compared with non-teachers.

What best discriminates parents who do and do not rely on schools for the majority of their child’s PA?

- Parents who supported an active lifestyle were more likely to believe that family plays an important role (β = .39, p = .001), and less likely to rely on schools for their children’s PA (β = .67, γ = .16) = 47.84, p < .001, discriminant function coefficient = .60.
- Those who reported more barriers to home-based PA were more likely to rely on schools for their children’s PA (U = 67, p = .001), discriminant function coefficient = .47.

Which beliefs predict parents’ perceptions of the school’s vs. family’s role in PA?

Multiple regressions: Solid lines represent significant predictors, while dashed lines represent non-significant contributors to the model.

Discussion

Parents’ Awareness and Perceptions of the DPA Policy

- The majority of parents were not aware of the DPA policy. This may reflect a lack of communication between schools and parents.
- Despite being previously unaware of it, most parents did agree that DPA is an important and feasible initiative in elementary schools.
- Most parents agreed that DPA should be on report cards; however, those who self-identified as elementary school teachers were less likely to do so, which may be reflective of teachers’ knowledge surrounding its actual implementation (McGoey, 2016).

Perceived Responsibilities of Home and Schools in Promoting Children’s PA

- Approximately 50% of parents rely on schools for at least an equal contribution to their children’s PA.
- Parents believe both institutions play important roles, with school having a greater perceived responsibility.
- However, the DPA policy was designed to contribute only 33% of the recommended amount of daily PA (Tremblay et al., 2016) and is not being implemented as directed (McGoey, 2016; Public Health Ontario, 2015).
- Findings add to evidence base advocating for parental support of children’s PA promotion (De Lepeleire et al., 2013; Gustaffson & Rhodes, 2006).

Implications

- Findings highlight the need to extend tenets of the policy into homes (OMOE, 2006) to increase parents’ capacity to provide support for their children’s PA.
- This may include improved communication with parents through:
  - Regular correspondence about DPA and healthy living education (e.g., using school websites and/or social media).
  - Inclusion of DPA information on report cards.
  - Engaging parents in DPA planning, promotion, and delivery (e.g., ‘active homework’).
- The involvement of parents in school-based programs is an important and modifiable underlying influence of children’s PA (Kulis, Maloney, Roberts, & Dolan, 2016). Further research is required to determine how to effectively foster this involvement.

A list of all reference information and the survey are available from the first author: m0259261@community.nipissingu.ca