

Communal Sport Policy In Switzerland And Their Relevance For Sports And Physical Activity Of Young People

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Aim of the research

Based on the variety of social functions, promoting sport and physical activity is a purpose of sport policy common to national and local governments (e.g. Rütten et al., 2014). In Switzerland, especially local municipalities promote sport and physical activity, for example, by maintaining local sport facilities. However, little is known about to what extent communal sport policy can influence sport and physical activity of young inhabitants.

Theoretical background and literature review

Sport and physical activity is influenced by many multilevel factors. Based on the theory of social action (Coleman, 1990), it is assumed that individual behaviour is not only determined by individual but also by structural and socio-cultural factors in which a person is socially embedded. In recent years, the socio-cultural and environmental factors of physical and sport activity have received increased attention, especially, in the health-promotion field (e.g. Rütten et al., 2014). However, the majority of these approaches have not specified the socio-cultural circumstances and sport-related conditions of the municipal context (e.g. sport policy). There is a “scientific lag in developing policy and environmental approaches to physical activity” (Rütten et al., 2001, p. 139).

Methodology, research design and data analysis

In 34 selected municipalities, multilevel data was gathered analysing possible influences of structural factors on sports behaviour. Using an online survey, 15 to 30 year old inhabitants (N = 4039, age: M = 21.48) were questioned about their physical activities, and their perception of sport-related structural characteristics in their commune (e.g. evaluation of the availability of facilities, their satisfaction with the local sports policy and the local sport facilities). To collect information about communes’ sport facilities and municipal promotion of sport, representatives of the municipal administration were interviewed. The results of the online survey were examined with a logistical multilevel analysis (sportive active or inactive as dependent variable) as well as a multilevel analysis with Poisson distribution (hours of sports and physical activity as dependent variable). To differentiate the status of communal sport policies, an unweighted summation index was calculated with the variables importance of the local sports policy, sports policy space, number of sports policy concepts, cooperation with local sports providers and organization of sports events.

Results, discussion and conclusions

First results show that the representatives of the municipal administration in communes with high physical-activity rates reported a higher status of the local sport policy (n = 15, M = 3.53, SD = .74) when compared to the representatives in communes with lower rates (n = 19, M = 2.89, SD = .88). This finding was confirmed by the results of the online survey because young inhabitants in communes with high physical-activity rates evaluated the local sport policy better (n = 1896, M = 3.7, SD = 1.09) than the communes with low rates (n = 1078, M = 3.36, SD = 1.15). Furthermore, logistical multilevel analyses reveal that an active communal sport policy fosters sport and physical activity of young inhabitants ($\beta = .05$, OR = 1.06). In addition, the sport and physical activity of young inhabitants depends on the existence of commercial sport providers in the municipality (proportion of sport clubs: $\beta = -.99$, OR = .37). Thus, in opposition to recent sport policy, it is not only the maintenance of classical sport clubs that drives the sport and physical activity in young inhabitants but the integration of commercial sport providers should be considered as well.

References

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