

Abstract

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Thesis Title	Factors affecting physical activity in people with physical disabilities: a qualitative evidence synthesis study		

Abstract of Master's Dissertation

Background

There are many potential benefits to physical activity (PA), including the reduction in risk of noncommunicable diseases, and improvement in quality of life. However, people with disabilities are less likely to be physically active compared to people without disabilities. Understanding the factors that affect PA participation in people with disabilities is an essential part of being able to promote PA in an appropriate way. While there have been multiple primary qualitative studies on this topic, there has not been a qualitative evidence synthesis (QES) study conducted on adults with physical disabilities. Through the synthesis of the qualitative findings from different studies, a QES study can allow for the development of themes that go beyond the findings of the original studies.

Objective

The objective of this QES study was to explore and synthesise the qualitative literature on the factors that affect PA participation in adults with physical disabilities.

Methods

A systematic search of relevant articles was conducted using PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, as well as through a manual search. Following a screening process using an inclusion/exclusion criteria, 27 articles were included in the analysis. The articles were read through and a quality assessment was conducted on all articles. The key characteristics and findings were extracted, and the findings were then analysed. A thematic synthesis approach was used to analyse the data, which involved line-by-line coding of the findings before categorising them into themes. Additionally, reflexive memos were written

throughout the research process.

Results

Eight themes that affect PA participation were identified in this study: 1) identity and normality; 2) health and well-being; 3) knowledge and information; 4) professional and social relationships; 5) characteristics and motivation; 6) resources; 7) government and society; 8) other physical environmental factors. Identity and normality was found to be a major factor, as the identity that one develops or the identity development process itself can affect PA participation. This theme can further be linked with other themes, such as professional and social relationships, and government and society. Healthcare professionals may have important roles in this process, which should be utilised further through collaboration with other sectors.

Conclusion

Through the synthesis of multiple qualitative studies, this QES study offers a deeper understanding of the factors that can affect PA in people with physical disabilities, especially in relation to the concept of identity and normality. Future research should be conducted on people with other types of disabilities, as well as people with disabilities in non-Western or low- and middle-income countries. Further research investigating any potential gender differences in these factors are also needed.

(429 words)