



Comparing participation in out of school activities between children with visual impairments, children with hearing impairments and typical peers



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ABSTRACT

Hearing or visual impairments may negatively affect child's development and participation. Yet the literature about participation of children with hearing or visual impairments is insufficient. The present study aimed to compare participation patterns of children with visual impairments to those of children with hearing impairments and to typical peers and to examine the correlations between participation and socio-demographic parameters in each group.

Participants were 70 children between the ages of 6–11: 25 with hearing impairments, 20 with visual impairments and 25 typical peers. All children filled the Children's Assessment of Participation and Enjoyment (CAPE). This self-report refers to participation in daily out of school activities.

Children with hearing or visual impairments showed significant limited participation compared to typical peers, expressed in lower number of activities, lower participation intensity; more activities performed at home and with someone else. The limited participation was more emphasized among children with visual impairments. Socio-demographic variables (age, mother's education and socio-economic level) correlated with participation dimensions in both study groups.

In conclusion, children with hearing or visual impairments may have restricted participation in out of school activities. Socio-demographic parameters may play a role in encouraging child's participation. Participation among these populations should be further studied in order to assist service providers to create intervention programs together with the child, for enhancing his/her inclusion in the community.

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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) defines participation as "involvement in a life situation". The WHO categorizes participation in terms of personal maintenance, mobility, information exchange, social relationships, home life, education, work and employment, economic life, and community, social, and civic life (WHO, 2001).

Participation is essential for the child's psychological, emotional, and skill development (Law, Petrenchik, King, & Hurley, 2007). Through participation, children learn to build friendships and develop the skills to become successful in their homes, communities, and in life (King et al., 2003; Larson & Verma, 1999). School environment contributes significantly to this

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development. However, studies also highlight that participation in out of school activities has been shown to benefit children's emotional well-being, life satisfaction, peer relations and academic outcomes (King et al., 2003; Law et al., 2003).

Physical disabilities together with the social and emotional difficulties that accompany them may reduce child's participation (King et al., 2006). Prevalent physical disabilities resulting from sensory impairments are expressed in the visual and auditory systems (Visual, 2013).

According to the WHO, about 19 million children are visually impaired (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/>). A visual impairment can be defined as any chronic visual deficit that impairs everyday function and is not correctable by ordinary spectacles or contact lenses. Visual impairments include blindness and low vision (Corn & Koenig, 1996). Hearing impairment refers to both complete and partial loss of the ability to hear (Mathers, Smith, & Concha, 2000). It is considered as the most frequent sensory deficit in human populations, affecting more than 250 million people throughout the world (Deafness, 2013).

Both visual and hearing impairments in children may delay development of various abilities such as cognitive and motor abilities as well as communicational skills (Engel-Yeger, Durr, & Josman, 2011; Rine et al., 2000). Thus, hearing or visual impairments may negatively affect child's interpersonal relationships, self esteem (Engel-Yeger & Weissman, 2009) and well-being (Gilman, Easterbrooks, & Frey, 2004; Leigh, Maxwell-McCaw, Bat-Chava, & Christiansen, 2009).

As previously mentioned, a child's development and well-being is directly influenced by meaningful participation. Few studies discuss the limited participation of children with visual/hearing impairments. However, these studies focus on specific activity types (social; sports). For example, Anmyr, Olsson, Larson, and Freijd (2011) who examined participation in team sports of children with hearing impairments, found that children with hearing aids expressed significantly more hearing problems in team sports and outdoor activities than those with cochlear implants. Children with visual impairments were also found to have lower participation in physical activities (Houwen, Hartman, & Visscher, 2009). This was expressed among young children as well as among adolescents (Aslan, Calik, & Kitiş, 2012).

When referring to social participation, evidence emphasizes that although children with hearing/visual impairments show good development, they might have limited social participation resulting from communication difficulties in groups of people and problems related to social skills (Punch & Hyde, 2011) expressed both in classroom and playground settings (Preisler, Tvingstedt, & Ahlstrom, 2005). Moreover, social participation is highly valued by children with sensory impairments as well as by their parents and teachers. Yet, the sensory characteristics limit their participation. For example, Punch and Hyde (2011) found that although children with cochlear implants valued friendships with both deaf and hearing peers, some of them had little contact with other deaf children. Among children with visual impairments, participation in social activities with peers was also found to be reduced in one-to-one and in larger group interactions. This may result from difficulties related to body language, play skills, cooperation skills, and expression and recognition of emotions skills (Caballo & Verdugo, 2007) and have additional negative outcomes. Punch and Hyde (2011) found that teens with cochlear implants struggled with feelings of self consciousness about their deafness and external cochlear implant equipment and expressed their concern about friendships, dating, and their future status in the world.

Studies highlight that children with disabilities who participate in various activities, express better skills and performance (Houwen, Visscher, Hartman, & Lemmink, 2007). Hartman, Houwen and Visscher (2011) reported that 43% of deaf elementary school children participated in organized sports and showed better motor performance in general. Children with sensory loss who participated in social activities within and outside school experienced better quality of life (Hintermair, 2011).

Taking it all together, limited participation of children with hearing or visual impairments may negatively affect child's development, self esteem and quality of life (Hintermair, 2011). While efforts are given to the inclusion of these children in school settings, there is a growing need to refer to their participation in out of school activities as well. This knowledge may contribute to their inclusion not only in the limited circle of school, but also in the wider circle of the community.

To the best of our knowledge, no previous research has compared participation patterns of children with hearing impairments to those of children with visual impairments. Additional knowledge is needed regarding participation of these populations as expressed in various activities and in various dimensions, such as with whom or where the activities are performed, and how much the children enjoy them.

Several assessments examine children's participation. Most of them rely on Parents' or teachers' reports (e.g. Borders, Barnett, & Bauer, 2010; Punch & Hyde, 2011). Based on the client-centered approach (Law, 1998), the evaluation and intervention process should include children's self-reports of their own abilities and participation in daily life (Engel-Yeger, Jarus, Anabi, & Law, 2009). Information that originates directly from the child may assist in determining intervention goals, enhance child's involvement in therapy and lead to better intervention outcomes (Dunford, Missiuna, Street, & Sibert, 2005; Engel-Yeger & Hanna Kasis, 2010).

One of the assessments for measuring participation in out of school activities is the Children's Assessment of Participation and Enjoyment (CAPE) (King et al., 2004). The CAPE gathers information about several dimensions of participation (Law et al., 2003).

The aim of the present study was to broaden the knowledge about participation in out of school activities of children with sensory impairments. Specifically, this study aimed to (1) compare participation patterns of children with visual impairments to those of children with hearing impairments and to children with typical sensory abilities; (2) examine the correlations between participation patterns and socio-demographic parameters in each group.

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