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Can P.E. Foster a Lifelong Commitment to Physical Activity?
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**Background**

Children’s fitness (CRF) is declining globally by 4.3% per decade\(^1\)
- CRF attenuates the impact of adiposity\(^2\)
- Lack of evidence as to how P.E. can increase CRF\(^3\)

**Methods**

- Pupils aged 13/14
  - Questionnaire to determine perceived ability in P.E
  - Interviews (n=14) regarding P.E. experiences with low and high scores/boys and girls

**Analysis**

- Template analysis\(^4\)
- SDT\(^5\) provided a priori themes
- New themes generated from the data

**Results**

- **“Like in a team if you do it wrong they’re like ‘why did you do it like that?’ Like trampolining you’re doing it for yourself”**
- **Control:**
  - Activities: Children wanted a choice, not to be forced to take part in activities they do not enjoy
  - Exertion levels: Children resented being “pushed” further than they were comfortable with
- **Uniform:** Children wanted to wear clothes of their choice

**Competency:**

- **Activity:** the less skilled preferred individual not team games where inadequacy is on show
- **Physical competency:** bigger children felt at a disadvantage in running activities, poor co-ordination led to dislike of ball games

**Relatedness:**

- P.E. teachers: children felt some teachers were too “pushy” during P.E. lessons and preferred the more relaxed approach in out of school activities
- Peers: less competent children did not enjoy being mocked by their peers

**Conclusions:**

1. Give children a choice: An engaging curriculum that meets needs of all children not just those with sports skills
2. Treat children with respect: Support individual goals rather than bullying them into meeting expected outcomes
3. Results were not gender specific
4. Control, competency and support lead to intrinsically motivated behaviour which is more likely to continue into adulthood.

**References**

- Deci EL, Ryan RM. Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life’s domains. Canadian Psychology 2008; 49(3)