

McGeown, Christopher (2016) An investigation into whether or not there is a link between children's level of participation in external activities outside of school and their level of participation in extra-curricular activities. The STeP Journal (Student Teacher Perspectives), 3 (1). pp. 73-91.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/2867/>

Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

provided that

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
- a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

You may not

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing insight@cumbria.ac.uk.

**An investigation into whether or not there is
a link between children's level of
participation in external activities outside of
school and their level of participation in
extra-curricular activities**

The STeP Journal
Student Teacher Perspectives
Copyright © 2016
University of Cumbria
Vol 3 (1) pages 73-91

**Christopher McGeown
St Mary's University College, Belfast**

Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine the correlation between children's participation in extra-curricular activity and their participation in external activities. The subjects are primary school pupils from 6 primary schools in Northern Ireland. Each school ranged in size, location and backgrounds. The subjects are in primary seven and aged 130.6 ± 3.0 months which is equivalent to 10.9 years. There were 165 subjects who took part, 83 females and 82 males. In order to obtain information about the children's level of participation in extra-curricular and external activities each child was asked to fill in individual questionnaires. In these the children recorded the days of the week that they took part in an extra-curricular activity and also what the activity was. Similarly, for levels of participation in external activities the children recorded what days of the week they participated in an activity and also what the activity was. It has been suggested in a number of studies that there is a correlation between participation in extra-curricular activity and external activities for children in Key Stage 2. However the Spearman Rank Test was used as an independent statistical analysis and it suggested that there is a weak correlation between a child's level of participation in extra-curricular activity and external activities.

Key words

Activity; Extra-curricular; External.

Introduction

Background to the Study

The Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) states that in order for teachers to meet the needs of all pupils that they must provide them with access to physical activity as well as extracurricular activities CCEA (2007). Not only this, but according to the NIC the schools extra-curricular programme should provide opportunities for all children to extend and develop skills and interests acquired during the Physical Education programme.

The benefits of children taking part in extra-curricular activities are well documented. Darling et al (2005) completed a study that concluded that pupils who take part in extra-curricular activities reported higher grades and had higher academic aspirations. This is backed up by Marsh and Kleitman (2002) who note the effects of participation in extra-curricular activities include having a positive effect on a child's school grades, their general educational and occupational aspirations as well as the social benefits and increase of self-esteem.

Many scholars note the various health benefits participating in external activities, such as sports, can provide children with. Bailey (2006) completed a study that suggests that sport has the potential to

Citation

McGeowen, C. (2016) 'An investigation into whether or not there is a link between children's level of participation in external activities outside of school and their level of participation in extra-curricular activities', *The STeP Journal*, 3(1), pp.73-91.

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

make distinctive contributions to the development of children's fundamental movement skills and physical competences, which are necessary precursors of participation in later lifestyle and sporting physical activities. They also, when appropriately presented, can support the development of social skills and social behaviors, self-esteem and pro-school attitudes, and, in certain circumstances, academic and cognitive development.

Warburton et al (2006) go into further depth about the benefits of sports as being able to foster habitual levels of physical activity that children will carry through into their adult lives. In this review it is noted that there is irrefutable evidence of the effectiveness of regular physical activity in the primary and secondary prevention of several chronic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis) and premature death. There appears to be a linear relation between physical activity and health status, such that a further increase in physical activity and fitness will lead to additional improvements in health status. Sothorn (1999) also emphasises the benefit of children taking part in sports as they found that taking part in activities of even a moderate intensity may enhance a child's overall health and help prevent chronic disease in at-risk youth. Janssen and LeBlanc (2010) also back up this argument as they associate physical activity with numerous health benefits. They agree that moderate physical activity can have positive health benefits for at-risk children, but would suggest that the more children are partaking in sports, the greater the health benefit to them.

Need for the Study

Concerns about appropriate levels of physical activity among young children and whether or not they are achieving these is an ongoing concern among experts today. Researchers continue to investigate the role and benefits that can be gained from a higher level of participation in these external activities as well as extra-curricular activity. There have been various investigations regarding the various factors that may affect children's participation in in extra-curricular activities however there is a dearth of research directly investigating the correlation between participation in extra-curricular activities and external activities.

Sport NI (2009) carried out an investigation in primary schools to see if they were meeting the 60 minute guideline set out for daily physical activity. The study found that only 24% of 9-11 year olds were meeting this target. A study is necessary to determine what factors may or may not be contributing to an increase in children's daily activity through extra-curricular activities. As a prospective teacher, with an interest in childhood development, this area of study is of relevance to my future teaching career. It is hoped that the results from this study will be useful and raise awareness, as ongoing research is needed to delve into the issue of what factors contribute to increased child participation in extra-curricular activities.

Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of this study are to investigate Key Stage 2 children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities and its link with their level of participation in external activities and establish if there is a direct correlation between these two variables. Children's level of physical activity is a prevalent issue in our society today as the WHO (2015) asserts that the physical activity within extra-curricular activities contains numerous health benefits for children.

Aims

- To determine children's daily level of participation in extra-curricular activities
- To determine children's daily level of participation in external activities
- To explore the correlation between the two

Objectives

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
Questionnaires and statistical analysis will meet the aims.

Review of Literature

"An investigation into whether there is a link between children's level of participation in external activities outside of school and their level of participation in extra-curricular activities."

Extracurricular activity

Extracurricular activities (ECA) within schools are those that fall outside of the normal curriculum of school or university education, performed by students. Within the primary school setting schools offer children with the opportunity to participate in various forms of physical activity that they may not have access to outside of the school environment. The Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) states that in order for teachers to meet the needs of all pupils that they must provide them with access to physical activity as well as extracurricular activities CCEA (2007). Not only this, but according to the NIC the schools extra-curricular programme should provide opportunities for all children to extend and develop skills and interests acquired during the Physical Education programme. Thus this emphasises the importance of offering children multiple opportunities to experience an array of physical activities within their extra-curricular programme.

The benefits of children taking part in extra-curricular activities are well documented. Darling et al (2005) completed a study that concluded that pupils who take part in extra-curricular activities reported higher grades and had higher academic aspirations. This is backed up by Marsh and Kleitman (2002) who note the effects of participation in extracurricular activities include having a positive effect on a child's school grades as well as general educational and occupational aspirations. The links of participation in extra-curricular activity and academic achievement are also noted by Beckett (2002). However he goes on to say that this is not prevalent in all cases and that participation in some activities can actually diminish academic achievement.

Mahoney et al (2002) also note that the school dropout rate among "at risk" students was remarkably lower for those who had participated in extracurricular activity compared to those who had not. This is backed up by Gilman (2001) whose study indicated that children who participate in extracurricular activity within the school setting have a higher school satisfaction. Darling et al (2005) also highlight the link between the participation in ECA and increased school satisfaction. These studies point to the conclusion that a higher level of participation in extracurricular activities can result in an increased level of school satisfaction, as well as decrease the school drop-out rate of certain students.

Marsh and Kleitman (2002) note the social benefits that participation in ECA's can offer children in the school by stressing the positive effect it can have on their self-esteem. Beckett (2002) weighs in with further social benefits to the child by claiming that participation in interscholastic sports promotes students development and social ties among students, parents and schools.

Although providing children with a variety of extra-curricular activities is mandatory aspect of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, it does come at a cost to the schools themselves as well as the parents. Bartlett (2013) reported for The Daily Mail that the average cost for parents per annum for paying for their children's extra-curricular activities is £1268. Within Northern Ireland the NI Direct Government Services (2014) have established Extended School services that are, *"...designed primarily to raise standards of achievement and allow children to realise their full potential in an environment where education is valued."*

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The Department of Education Extended Schools programme provides additional financial support to eligible schools to help improve the life chances of children and young people, particularly from deprived areas. For the course of 2015-2016 they have made over £10 million worth of funding available. With this money schools are helped to provide stimulating activities, skills classes and additional learning support. The ECA's provided by this programme are not limited to physical activities but also can help fund; breakfast club, after schools club, summer schemes, drama, music, ICT, cookery, language and arts and crafts. The vast support and benefits of this programme are not only for the children in the school but they can also benefit the parents and general community surrounding the school by providing; parenting and family support, increase community access and local adult learning and career development opportunities.

External activities

External activities such as sport outside of the school setting are described as an activity including physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment. Typically for children in Northern Ireland this involves taking part in sports such as gaelic football, hurling, camogie, soccer, basketball, netball, rugby, swimming as well as many others.

Many scholars note the various health benefits participating in sports can provide children with. Bailey (2006) completed a study that suggests that sport has the potential to make distinctive contributions to the development of children's fundamental movement skills and physical competences, which are necessary precursors of participation in later lifestyle and sporting physical activities. They also, when appropriately presented, can support the development of social skills and social behaviours, self-esteem and pro-school attitudes, and, in certain circumstances, academic and cognitive development. However the review also notes that these benefits do not simply derive from mere participation and that the effects are likely to be mediated by the nature of the interactions between students and their parents and coaches who work with them.

Warburton et al (2006) go into further depth about the benefits of sports as being able to foster habitual levels of physical activity that children will carry through into their adult lives. In this review it is noted that there is irrefutable evidence of the effectiveness of regular physical activity in the primary and secondary prevention of several chronic diseases (e.g., cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis) and premature death. There appears to be a linear relation between physical activity and health status, such that a further increase in physical activity and fitness will lead to additional improvements in health status. Sothorn (1999) also emphasises the benefit of children taking part in sports as it was found that taking part in activities of even a moderate intensity may enhance a child's overall health and help prevent chronic disease in at-risk youth. Janssen and LeBlanc (2010) also back up this argument as they associate physical activity with numerous health benefits. They agree that moderate physical activity can have positive health benefits for at-risk children, but would suggest that the more children are partaking in sports, the greater the health benefit to them.

Murphy et al (2008) emphasise the benefits of physical activity are universal with all children but also including those with disabilities. According to them, the participation of children with disabilities in sports and recreational activities promotes inclusion, minimises deconditioning, optimises physical functioning, and enhances overall well-being. However they go on to emphasise how these children are at a disadvantage in their ability to participate due to lower levels of fitness as well as pediatricians and parents often overestimating the risks of physical activity and sports for children with disabilities.

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

A further disadvantage of children's involvement in sport is that there are health risks that are associated with such a high level of physical activity. Cairne et al (2006) speak of a growing concern for the increase in the number of stress related physical injuries, particularly in the lower extremities. Jones et al (2011) point to young peoples increased level of participation in sport and physical activity in recent years to be a direct cause of the increase in sports injuries among children.

Violence in sports is also a seriously growing concern among experts such as Goral (2008) who claims players, coaches, parents, fans and media all contribute to the "...epidemic of violence in sports today". This level of violence witnessed at a senior level in sports filters down to our youth games and Fields (2007) claims this not only puts the children at a physical risk, but also such incidents can cause considerable emotional damage. Other negative outside influences of participating in sport for children are noted by Siegenthaler and Gonzalez (2000) who claim the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and character development are compromised when parents and coaches engage in youth sport as their own serious leisure.

Extracurricular activity and external activities

To date there is a dearth of research on this area however this merely emphasises the importance of delving into the potential correlation between children's participation in club sports and extracurricular activity within the school. As stated in the Northern Ireland curriculum, a schools extra-curricular curriculum should help make the children be '*...aware of the opportunities to participate in physical activities in the local and wider community*'(CCEA, 2007).

The Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) have taken steps to ensure their extra-curricular programmes provide the pupils with such opportunities. According to Ulster GAA (2007) schools are provided with coaches who provide the children with expert coaching in generic physical literacy skills as well as gaelic football, hurling and camogie. From their experience in these extra-curricular activities within the school the children may choose to get involved with a local sports team in the same activity. Not only this but those children who already take part in such activities may be more likely to participate in the extra-curricular activities provided by the school.

Another DENI funded initiative is working closely with the Irish FA (2013) who employs 30 specialist coaches who provide the associations Curriculum Sports Programme in over 270 schools nationwide. This means that on a weekly basis around 15,000 children and 300 teachers get access to the programme. These coaches often have links to local clubs and will encourage the children to participate in these outside of the school setting.

Schools in Northern Ireland not only avail of these DENI funded initiatives but also benefit from the services of outside coaches in other sports to take extra-curricular activities such as basketball, netball or gymnastics. However this may come at a cost to the school itself or even the parents of the children who may have to subsidise the cost.

In England the PESSCL (Physical Education, School Sports and Club Links) initiative was launched in an attempt to provide 85% of children with the experience of a minimum of two hours high-quality PE and schools sport within and beyond the curriculum each week as reported by the Teaching Times (2005). Therefore the aim was to create more habitual levels of physical activity among children by providing a positive experience of physical activity within the school setting and creating strong links with outside sports clubs.

Kirk (2005) however, completed a study that identified structural problems with the delivery of physical education and school sport in England despite the unprecedented level of funding that the PESSCL initiative received from the Government. It is reported that negative early learning

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

experiences within the schools were having an adverse effect on children's level of lifelong participation in physical activity. As well as this the report also asserts that secondary school physical education programmes in England have been ineffective in promoting lifelong physical activity participation.

While Myers et al (2002) suggest that the majority of physical activity in children occurs after school, they also emphasise the link between no participation in extra-curricular physical activity during school and less physical activity outside of school.

Methodology

Research Design

The main objective of this study is to investigate whether or not there is a link between children's participation in extracurricular activities within the school setting and their participation in outside sports clubs/activities. Carrying out research is a crucial part of this investigation. In order to achieve reliable results, the correct research techniques and methods should be used.

In order to gauge a child's level of participation in extracurricular activity within the school each child will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. This will be used to record which (if any) day(s) that the child participates in an extracurricular activity either before, during or after school and also, what the activity is.

Within the same questionnaire the children will be asked to record which (if any) day(s) that they participate in a sports club/activity outside of the school setting and also state what the sport/activity is.

Subjects

The subjects are primary school pupils from 6 primary schools in Northern Ireland. Each school ranged in size, location and backgrounds. The subjects are in primary seven and aged 130.6 ± 3.0 months which is equivalent to 10.9 years. There are 83 females and 82 males in the study.

Procedures

Before collecting the results required for this investigation, it was essential that formal consent procedures were followed. It was necessary to get permission from both the principal and the parents of the children who were participating in the investigation. A letter was sent to each of the principals to ensure that consent was given before proceeding with the study. This letter included details about the objective of the study, what was expected from the school and the pupils who would be involved. It also promised confidentiality and professionalism with any of the information collected. The second letter was sent to the parents/guardians of the children involved in the study, which outlined the purpose of the study, who would be conducting the study and what information would be required from their children. Each letter had a consent form attached, which had to be signed and returned to the school by the parents/guardians in order for a child to be able to take part in the investigation. Once the forms were returned and the school granted authority, the research, collection of data and testing could begin.

Collecting Data

Collecting data about children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities within school

To measure children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities within the school, each child was asked to complete a questionnaire. In this, each child indicated the days that they participated in extra-curricular activities within the school setting and also recorded what these activities were. The results were recorded on a spreadsheet document leaving it much more efficient and easier to read when analysing results.

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Collecting data about children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities outside of school

To measure children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities outside of school, each child was asked to complete a questionnaire. In this, each child indicated the days that they participated in extra-curricular activities outside of school setting and also recorded what these activities were. The results were recorded on a spreadsheet document leaving it much more efficient and easier to read when analysing results.

Analysis

A spearman rank correlation was conducted to see if there was a correlation between children's level of participation in extracurricular activities and their participation in sports/activities outside of the school setting.

Results

Introduction

The following section seeks to outline the key findings relating to the correlation between levels of participation in in-school extra-curricular activities and levels of participation in external activities in Northern Ireland.

Subjects

The subjects are primary school pupils from 6 primary schools in Northern Ireland. Each school ranged in size, location and backgrounds. The subjects are in primary seven and aged 130.6 ± 3.0 months which is equivalent to 10.9 years. There are 83 females and 82 males in the study.

Extra-curricular activities

The subjects' participation in extra-curricular activities was recorded using questionnaires. The results of these questionnaires were recorded on the computer software programme *Microsoft Excel 2013* spreadsheet document in an effort to make data analysis more efficient and convenient.

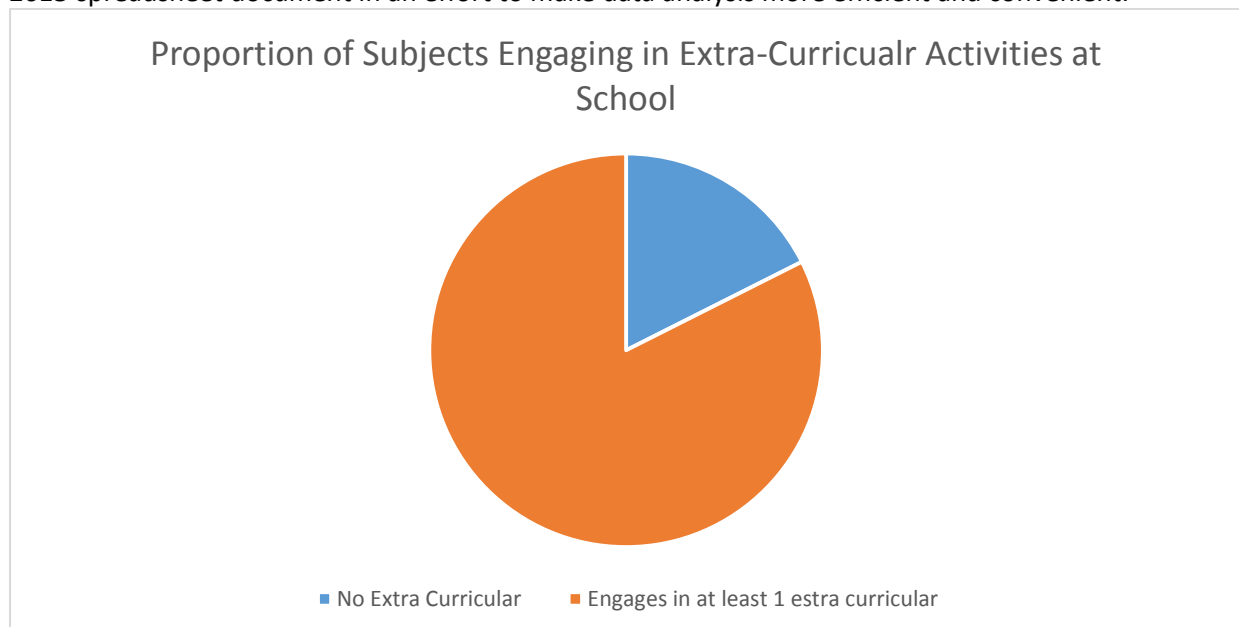


Figure 4.1. Proportion of subjects engaging in extra-curricular activities at school

Out of the 165 subjects, 29 do not participate in any extra-curricular activities while 136 participate in at least one (*figure 4.1*). It is notable that the level of participation of the subjects in this study in extra-curricular activities stands at 82%. This is supported by the findings of Cadwallader et al (2003)

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

who completed a study which reported that 82.1% of the general population of America had taken part in at least one type of extra-curricular activity.

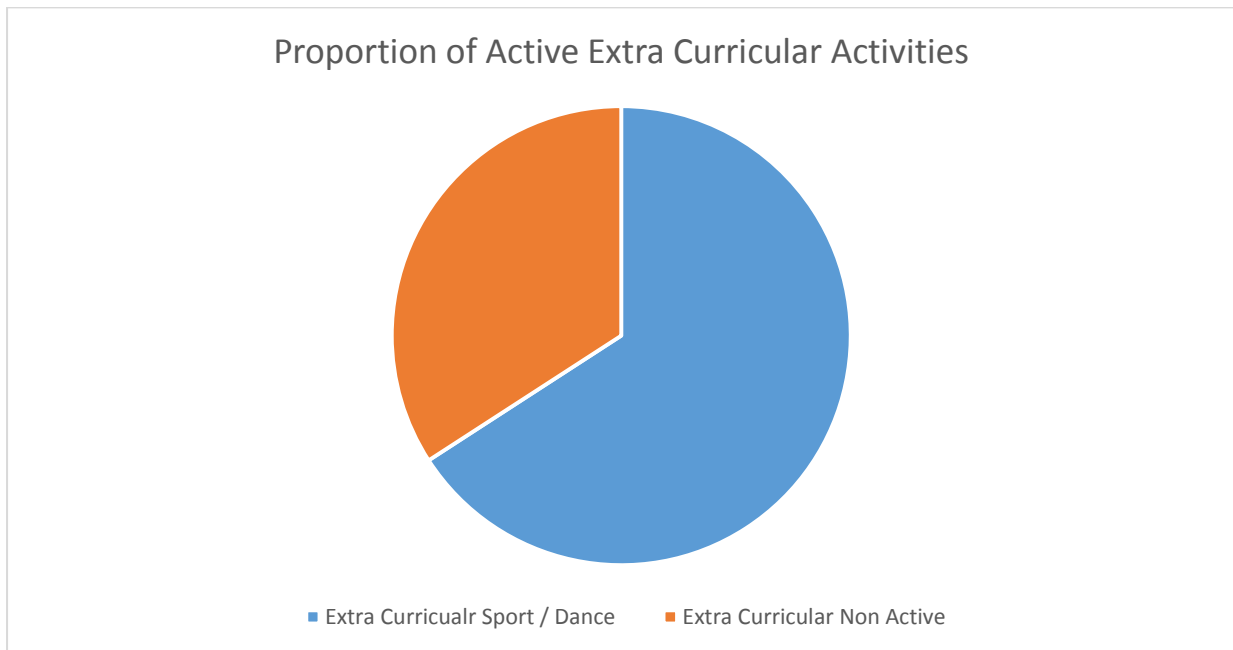


Figure 4.2. Proportion of active extra-curricular activities.

The study recorded that there were 287 extra-curricular activities participated in amongst the 165 subjects. Of these activities, 189 were active extra-curricular activities such as sport and dance and 98 were non-active extra-curricular activities, as shown in figure 4.2. Therefore the average number of activities participated in for each subject was 1.74 of which 1.15 were active. The percentage of subjects from this study who participate in active extra-curricular activities therefore stands at 66%. This is supported by the findings of the U.S. Census Bureau. In December 2014 who reported that 57% of children between 6 and 17 years old participate in at least one active after-school extra-curricular activity. Janssen and LeBlanc (2010) argue that certain physical and health benefits of participation in extra-curricular activities can only be achieved if the extra-curricular activity is active. This is supported by Daley (2002) who claims that physical activity during the school day may play a key role in developing positive exercise behaviour patterns in children, and participation in these activities could lead to young people becoming physically active adults in the future. While Myers et al (2002) suggest that the majority of physical activity in children occurs after school, they also emphasise the link between no participation in extra-curricular physical activity during school and less physical activity outside of school.

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

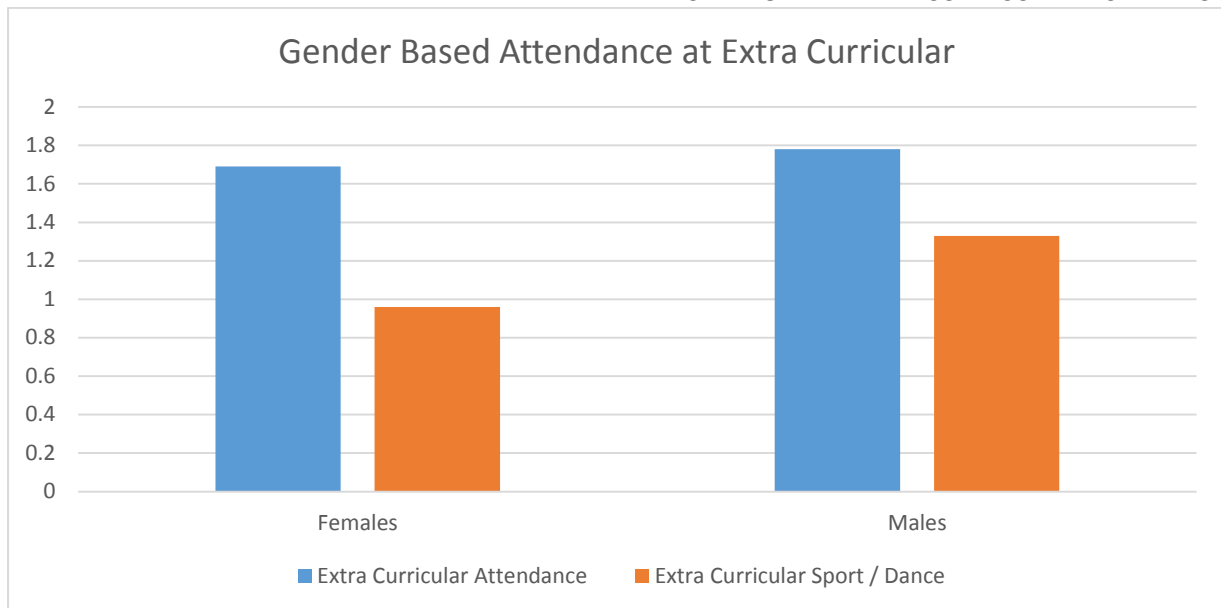


Figure 4.3. Gender based attendance at extra-curricular activities.

Figure 4.3 shows that the number of extra-curricular activities participated in for female subjects per week averaged at 1.69. Of these, 0.96 were active activities. Also it shows that the number of extra-curricular activities participated in for male subjects per week averaged at 1.78. Of these, 1.32 were active activities. This is supported by the findings of the British Heart Foundation (2013), who found that more boys were reaching the recommended physical activity target than girls. According to the NHS (2000), in order for children and young people aged between 5 and 8 to maintain a basic level of health, they are expected to participate in at least sixty minutes of physical activity every day. This should range from moderate activity, such as cycling and playground activities, to vigorous activity, such as running and tennis. Based on the figures produced by this study some children in our schools could be hindering themselves from reaching this recommended figure by not taking part in physical extra-curricular activities in any form.

External activities

The subjects' participation in the external activities of sport and dance was recorded using questionnaires. The results of these questionnaires were again recorded on the computer software programme *Microsoft Excel 2013* spreadsheet document in an effort to make data analysis more efficient and convenient.

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

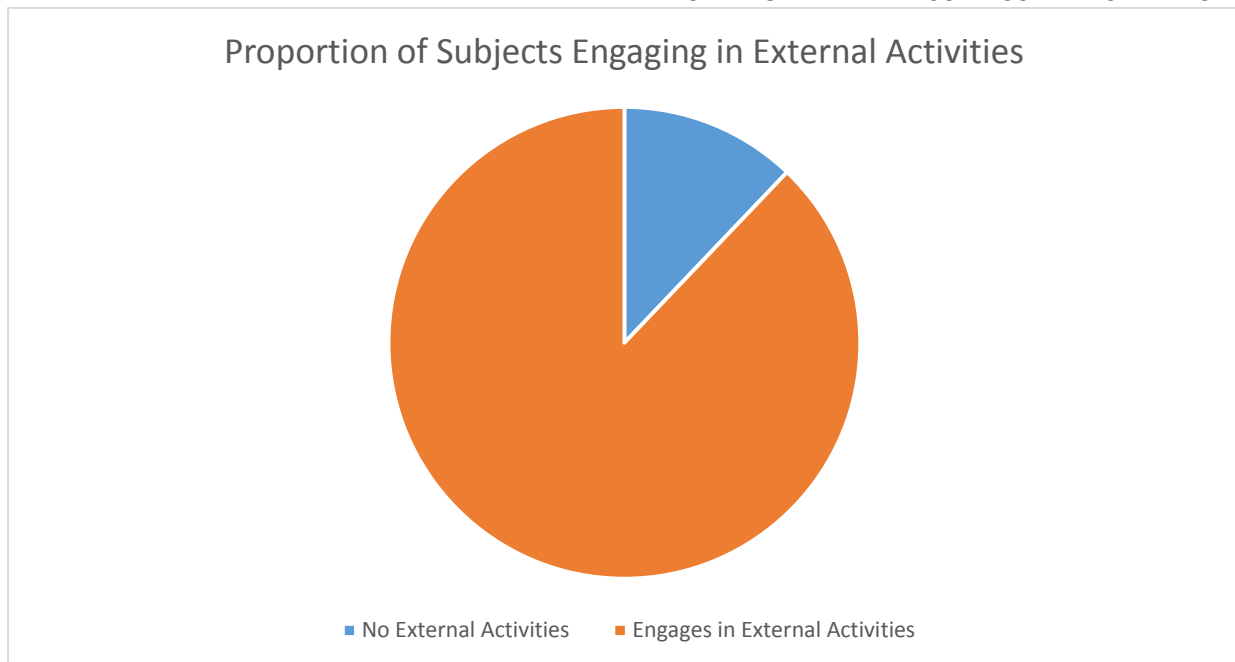


Figure 4.4. Proportion of subjects engaging in external activities .

As shown in figure 4.4, of the 165 subjects, 20 do not engage in any external activities and 145 do engage in external activities. The percentage of subjects who participate in external activities such as sport and dance is 88%. Participation in activities outside of school is well documented, by advocates such as Warburton et al (2006), for the social and physical benefits they can have on a child. However the Aspen Institute (2014) notes that there is a decrease in number of children participating in activities outside of school. They suggest that this is a combination of factors such as the children's own choice as well as a lack of resources/access to programs which meet their needs. This issue seems prevalent in Northern Ireland as The Sport Matters strategy noted that in terms of sporting facilities, Northern Ireland is under-provided for in comparison with other regions in the UK and Europe and that in 2012 35% of the population lived more than 20 miles away from an accredited, high quality facility (Hull 2012). A lack of accessibility to suitable facilities may be hindering some of the subjects' participation in a wider range of external activities. The results are supportive of Myers (2002) who suggested that children's participation in activity within schools (82% of the subjects participate in extra-curricular activities) is reflective of activity levels outside of schools (88% of the subjects participate in external activities). This figure is higher than the findings of Howie et al (2010) who completed a study of children in America which found that 75% of children participated in external activities outside of school.

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

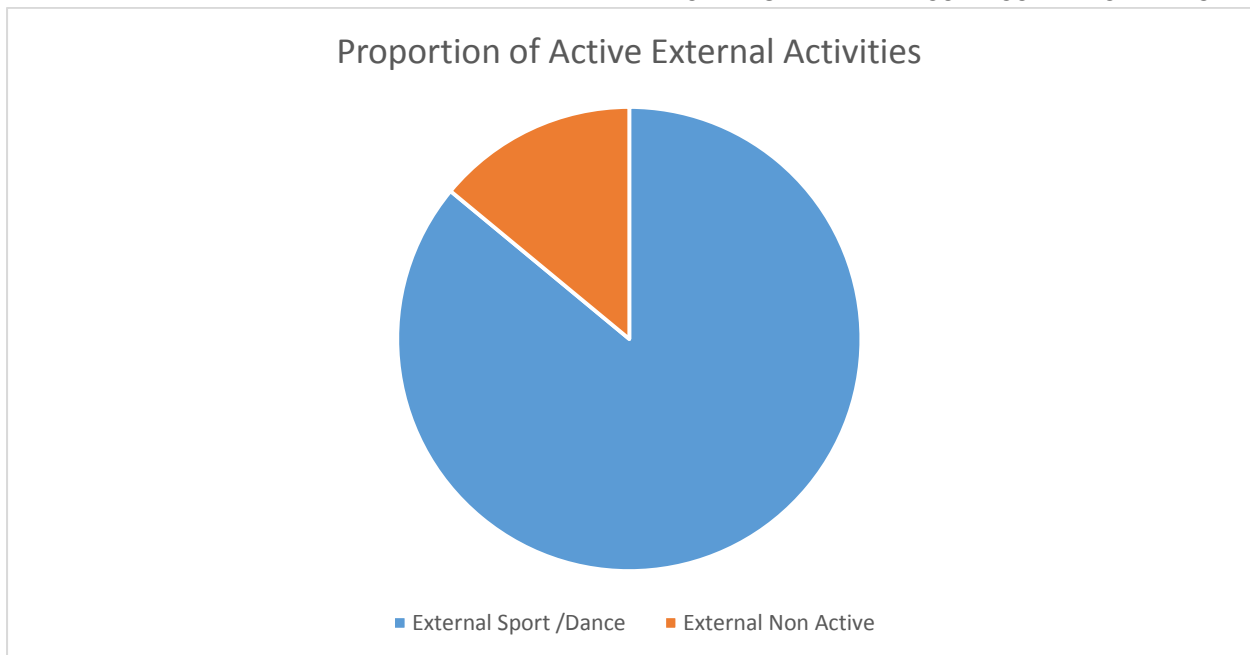


Figure 4.5. Proportion of active external activities.

The study recorded that there were 400 external activities participated in amongst the 165 subjects. Of these activities, 344 were active activities such as sport and dance and 56 were non-active activities, as shown in figure 4.5. Therefore the average number of external activities participated in for each subject was 2.42 of which 2.08 were active. The percentage of subjects from this study who participate in active external activities therefore stands at 86%. This figure is higher than what was reported by Howie et al (2010) who found that of the children who did take part in external activities, 79% of them took part in active external activities.

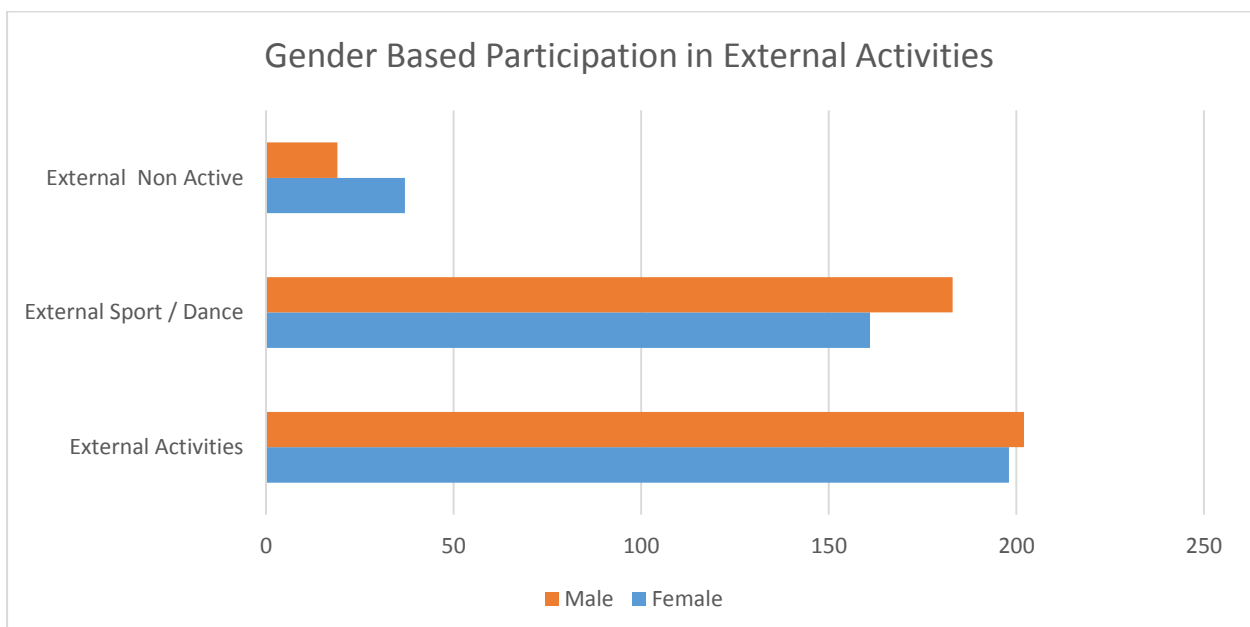


Figure 4.6. Gender based participation in external activities.

Figure 4.6 shows that the number of external activities participated in for female subjects per week averaged at 2.39. Of these, 1.94 were active activities. Also it shows that the number of external

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

activities participated in for male subjects per week averaged at 2.46. Of these, 2.23 were active activities.

Hull (2012) claims there is evidence which suggests that participation in sport has begun to rise again after some years of decline in Northern Ireland, though there remain groups within society which participate somewhat less than the average. For example, 34% of males but just 18% of females achieve the recommended 2.5 hours of activity per week. This is reflected in the results of this study which shows a greater amount of male participation in external activities than female participation. This trend was also noted by University College London researchers who found just 51% of the 6,500 children they monitored achieved the recommended hour of physical activity each day. For girls, the figure was just 38%, compared with 63% for boys. Although the study found that levels of activity varied among groups. For example, children of Indian origin and those living in Northern Ireland were among the least physically active with 43% achieving the recommended levels, compared to 53% in Scotland.

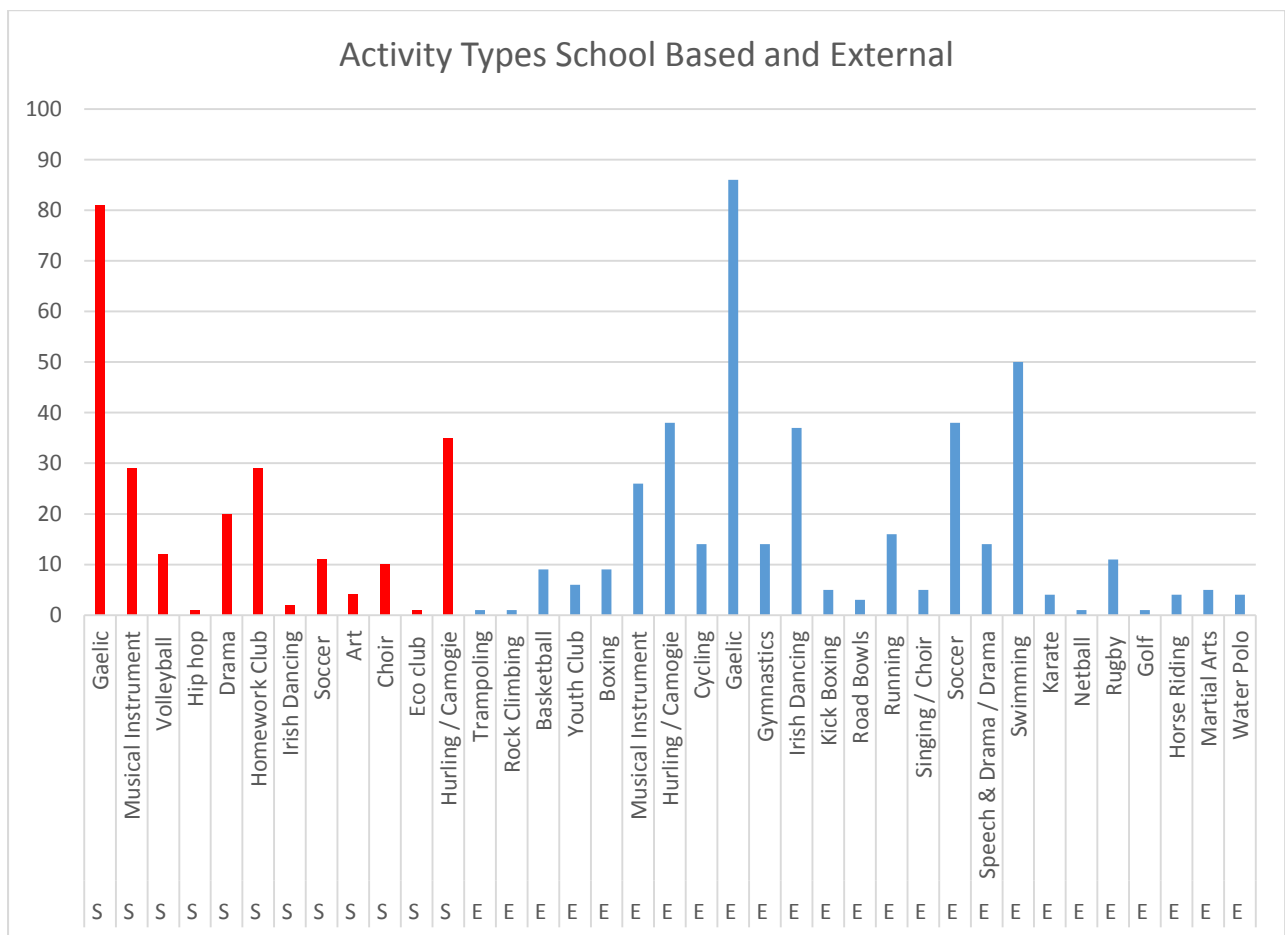


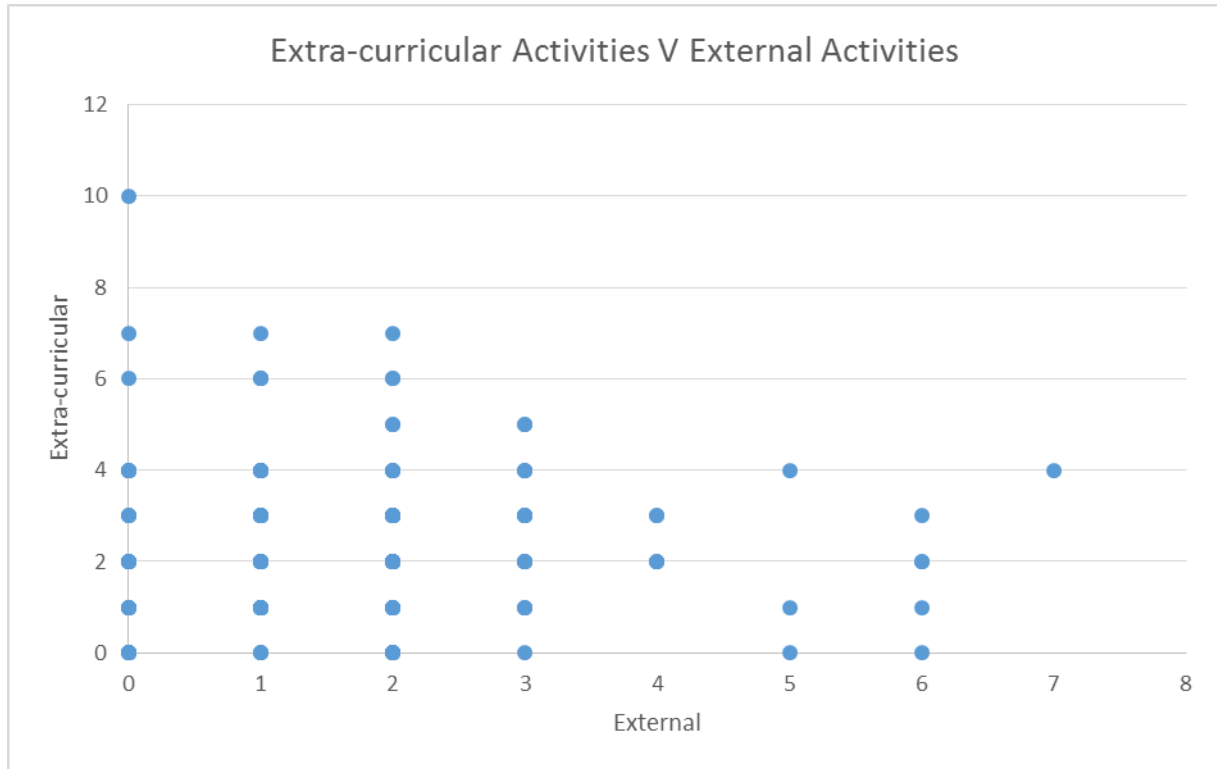
Figure 4.7. Activity types school based and external.

Figure 4.7 shows all of the types of external and extra-curricular activities participated in by the 165 subjects of this study. 12 different extra-curricular activities were recorded with attendances highest in Gaelic with 81 and lowest in Hip-Hop and Eco club – each with 1 attendance. 25 different external activities were recorded with attendances highest in Gaelic with 86 and lowest in Trampoline club, Rock Climbing, Netball and Golf – each with 1 attendance. Information from Sport NI indicates that over the last three years, £68,143,471 has been provided in sports funding, with around 47% of this allocated to grassroots projects. (Hull 2012). As a result there is now a greater variety of activities

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

available to children in Northern Ireland as reflected in the diverse array of external activities recorded in this study.

Correlation between Extra-curricular and External Activities



A spearman rank correlation (see figure 4.8) was conducted to see if there was a correlation between children's level of participation in extracurricular activities and their participation in sports/activities outside of the school setting. The findings indicate a P value of 0.15. This is a small weak positive correlation, thus indicating a minimal correlation between school-based extra-curricular activities and external activities. While there is a small correlation between children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities and external activities, is it not strong enough to support a firm link that children who participate in more extra-curricular activities are also those children who participate in a greater number of external activities. In an attempt to explain this weak correlation, it is possible that children who participate in more activities within the school setting do not participate in as many external activities due to a lack of time or finances. The weak correlation is only partially supportive of Myers (2002) who emphasises a strong link between children's level of participation in activities in school and their level of participation in external activities.

Conclusion

After undergoing many hours of research, gathering, collecting and critically analysing results, it can be concluded that there is a weak connection between children's level of participation in extra-curricular activity and their level of participation in external activities. However there is no concrete evidence or support to suggest that the participating in external activities will affect a child's level of participation in extra-curricular activities. After analysing the results of the pupils' levels of participation in both extra-curricular activities and external activities, as well as reading relevant literature concerning this topic, initial weak correlations can be made.

Previous research suggested that participation in external activities could lead to health and psychological benefits to the child. In particular, it is suggested that participation in active external

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

activities can help foster a lifelong level of habitual physical activity (Marsh and Kleitman 2002).

However there is insufficient evidence to suggest that a higher level of participation in external activities will lead to a higher level of participation of extra-curricular activities within the school setting. Therefore the relationship between the two variables requires further analysis.

In addition, a spearman rank test was used to statistically analyse the results from the findings and it indicated a P value of 0.15. This is a small weak positive correlation, thus indicating a minimal correlation between school-based extra-curricular activities and external activities.

Recommendations

Having completed this study, there are a number of recommendations to be made. Overall, this study was a very small scale study with 165 subjects taking part. In order to investigate this study with maximum efficiency and to enhance the collection of data, there needed to be an increased number of subjects to produce more valid results. This study looks at children's level of participation in organised activities both in and outside of school. However children's level of participation in non-organised activities such as free play, are not accounted for. In future studies this factor could be considered as it may provide produce more valid results about children's level of participation in activities outside of the school setting. This study investigates the link between children's level of participation in extra-curricular activities and external activities. However future studies may wish to consider these two factors as separate entities rather than testing for a correlation between the two. Investigating potential reasons for varied participation of each of these may yield more comprehensive results.

Limitations

From investigating and assessing the results, it was evident that there were some limitations, which consequently affected the overall outcome of the study. The first limitation of the study was the number of subjects who took place (165). This sample size should be increased in order to obtain more valid results and a more rounded picture. The results from the data were collected over one day and on reflection, the study would have yielded more comprehensive results if children's participation in both extra-curricular activities and external activities were recorded over a longer period of time. However due to time restraints this was not possible. The geographical locale used to record these results was also relatively small (Northern Ireland) and because of this the results were not as comprehensive as they might have been. Ideally the results should be gathered from a larger area.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me to successfully complete this study. I would firstly like to give me full appreciation and greatest thanks to Dr Elaine McLaughlin for her time, effort and excellent guidance throughout this study. From the very beginning you have been there to support me and your expertise is something I really appreciate and will not forget. Secondly, I would like to thank each of the principals, teachers and pupils for allowing me to carry out my research in their schools. I am deeply grateful, without their help and support this study would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the other members of my research group. It was a pleasure to gather and share results effectively throughout this study. Finally I would like to thank all of my friends and family for their constant support and continuous motivation and direction throughout my four years at St. Mary's University College.

Go Raibh Míle Maith Agaibh

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

References

- Aspen Institution (2014) *Sport Participation Rates among Underserved American Youth* [Internet Source] (Accessed 23/10/2015) <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/education/Project_Play_Underserved_Populations_Roundtable_Research_Brief.PDF >
- Bailey, R. (2006) 'Physical Education and Sports in Schools: A review of Benefits and Outcomes' Vol. 76, Issue 8, pages 397–401.
- Bartlett, D. (2013) 'Extracurricular activities, transports and breakfast clubs push costs up.' The Daily Mail 10th July 2013
- Beckett, A. (2002) 'Linking Extracurricular Programming to Academic Achievement: Who Benefits and Why?' Vol. 75, No. 1, pp. 69-95.
- British Heart Foundation (2013) *Physical activity statistics 2013*
- Cadwallader, T. et al (2003) *Life outside the classroom for youth with disabilities*, Menlo Park, CA: SRI International
- Cairne, D. et al (2006) 'Physcal injuries in children's and youth sports: Reason for Concern?' Vol. 40, Issue 9, pp. 749-760.
- CCEA, (2007) *The Northern Ireland Curriculum: Primary*, Belfast: CCEA
- Daley, A. (2002) 'School based physical activity in the United Kingdom: Can it create physically active adults?' Vol. 54, Issue 1, pp. 21-33.
- Darling, N. et al (2005) 'Participation in school-based Extracurricular Activities and Adolescent Adjustment', Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 51-76.
- Fields, S. et al (2007) 'Conflict On the Courts: A Review of Sports-Related Violence Literature' Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 359-369.
- Goral, M. (2008) *Violence and fair play in sport*, Kutahya: Medwell
- Gilman, R, (2001) 'The relationship between life satisfaction, social interest and frequency of extracurricular activities among adolescent students' Volume 30, Issue 6, pp 749-767.
- Howie, L. et al (2010) *Participation in activities outside of school hours in relation to problem behavior and social skills in middle childhood*, Rockville Pike: U.S. National Library of Medicine
- Hull, D. (2012) *Grassroots sport in Northern Ireland: A summary of participation and potential challenges*, Belfast: The Northern Ireland Assembly
- Irish FA (2013) *Grassroots Curriculum Sports Programme*, [Internet Source] (Accessed 19/10/2015) <<http://www.irishfa.com/grassroots/primary-school-coaching-programme/> >
- Janssen, I. and LeBlanc, A. (2010) Review; *Systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school aged children and youth*: International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity, 7:40.
- Kirk, D. (2005) 'Physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation: the importance of early learning experiences' Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 239-255.
- Mahoney J.L. et al (2002) 'Do extracurricular activities protect against early school dropout?' Vol. 33, pp. 241-253.
- Marsh, H. and Kleitman, S. (2002) 'Extracurricular School Activities: The good, the bad and the non-linear' Vol. 72, Issue 4.
- Murphy, N. (2008) 'Promoting the Participation of Children With Disabilities in Sports, Recreation, and Physical Activities' Vol. 121, Issue 5.
- Myers, L. et al (2002) 'Physical and sedentary activity in school children grades 5-8: the Bogalusa Heart Study' Vol.
- NHS (2015) *Physical activity guidelines for young people*, [Internet Source] (Accessed 23/10/2015) <<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-young-people.aspx> >
- NI Direct Government Services (2014) *Extended Schools*, [Internet Source] (Accessed 27/10/2015) <<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/extended-schools> >

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Siegenthaler, K. and Gonzalez, G. (2000) *Youth Sports as Serious Leisure* Vol. 21, No.3, pp.298-314.

Sothorn, M.S. et al (1999) *The Health Benefits of Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents: Implications for chronic disease prevention* Vol. 158, pp.271-274.

Sport Northern Ireland, (2009), Report; *a Baseline Survey of Timetabled PE in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland*: Belfast, Sport Northern Ireland.

Ulster GAA (2007) *DENI Schools Coaches*, [Internet Source] (Accessed 19/10/2015) <
<http://ulster.gaa.ie/coaching-old/deni-schools-coaches/> >

Warburton, D. et al (2006) *Health Benefits of physical Activity* Vol. 174, No. 6.

Other resources

World Health Organisation (2015) *Childhood overweight and obesity*, [Internet Source] (Accessed 25/10/2015) <<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/childhood/en/>>

Teaching Times (2005) *What is PESSCL*, [Internet Source] (Accessed 19/10/2015)
<http://www.teachingtimes.com/articles/school-sport.htm> >

US Census Bureau (2014) [Internet Source] (Accessed 24/10/2015) <
<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2014/cb14-224.html> >

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Appendices

Appendix 1



191 Falls Road
Belfast
BT12 6FE
13th November 2015

Dear Principal,

I am a 4th year BEd student at St. Mary's University College, Belfast. As a component of my final year project I am investigating extracurricular activity participation levels in Primary School children against a number of variables. These variables include academic attainment; class size; external activity participation and teacher characteristics.

With your permission I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to use a sample of Key Stage 2 pupils from your school to participate and assist in my investigation.

Completing this section of the investigation in your school would involve:

- Extracurricular Activity Participation: A short questionnaire (5 minutes)
- Academic Attainment: Access to pupils reading ages from the last time of measure.
- Class Size: Access to a class list.
- External Activity Participation: A short questionnaire (5 minutes)
- Teacher Characteristics: A short questionnaire (5 minutes)
-

Your co-operation would be greatly appreciated. We would aim to minimise disruption by completing all tasks on one school day at your discretion. We guarantee that the confidentiality of both the school and the pupils will be maintained at all times. Furthermore we will provide you with the results which could be consequently used to inform your practice. Should you require any further information or details on any aspect of the study then please do not hesitate to contact me or the project supervisor on the numbers below.

Yours Sincerely,

Christopher McGeown
Student
07894560585

Elaine McLaughlin
Project Supervisor
07841538694

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Appendix 2



13th November 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Physical Education student at St. Mary's University College Belfast. As a component of my research I am investigating the levels of participation in extracurricular activities in Primary School children against a number of variables. The variables are class size, reading age, teacher characteristics and external activity participation. This will be completed in 8 primary schools in Northern Ireland. With your permission I would greatly appreciate the opportunity for your child to participate and assist in my investigation.

We would aim to minimise disruption by completing all tasks on one school day, at the discretion of the school. We guarantee that the confidentiality of both the school and the pupils will be maintained at all times. The collective results of the cohort will be returned to the school to inform current practice.

Please complete the informed consent below and return to the school at your earliest convenience. Your co-operation would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Christopher McGeown

Parental Consent

I consent for my child _____ to take part in the study outlined above.

Parent / Guardian _____ Date _____

MCGEOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN CHILDREN'S
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND THEIR LEVEL OF
PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Appendix 3

1. What age are you?

Years - _____ Months - _____

2. Please circle your gender.

Male Female

3. How many people are there in your class?

4. Tick the box for any day you take part in an extra-curricular activity and write down what activity it is.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning extra-curricular activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Afterschool extra-curricular activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Tick the box for any day that you take part in an extra-curricular activity outside of school and write down what that activity is.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____