

Introduction

- Physical activity is an essential element of health and is important for preventing obesity and chronic diseases (2,7,8).
- Lack of physical activity is the fourth leading risk factor for mortality in Canada (1,2).
- Racially visible individuals are less active than their White counterparts (4).
- A growing body of knowledge shows that the built environment determines an individual's participation in physical activity (6). For example, attractive walkways increase the walkability in low income neighbourhoods, enhancing the level of physical activity in such communities (5).
- This research has explored the built environmental barriers and facilitators to physical activity among African Nova Scotians in their respective communities, and has identified reasons why most African Nova Scotians are not actively participating in physical activity.



Fig. 1. Built environments that promote physical activity

Research Question

What features in the built environment of African Nova Scotian communities inhibit these individuals from engaging in physical activity?

Methods

Methodology and Methods

- A descriptive qualitative approach, using one-on-one, in-depth interview.

Participants and Recruitment

- 7 African Nova Scotians, aged 18 to 65, were recruited using a convenience approach model through posters and snowball sampling (peer recruitment).

Data Collection

- Face-to-face in-depth interviews using an audio-recorder and open-ended questions.

Data Analysis

- Interviews transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Open, axial, and selective coding were applied by both the researcher and supervisor to ensure reliability of findings.

Results

Findings indicate that among the 7 participants interviewed, all talked about various factors that hinder them from actively participating in physical activity.

BUILT ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS

Distance to outdoor exercise facilities

- "Those who live in the community have been there for some years; they don't have the transportation to get to these places" (PCG001).
- "Not everyone is within walking distance to the Commons ..., but for a lot of communities, I found that it is not accessible with its location because of transportation and that could be limiting to a lot of people" (PNW007).

Poor road system

- "We don't have a lot of sidewalks in our community so that would prevent people from walking. The people that I know that do walk daily, they walk in the neighbouring White community that does have sidewalks" (PJS002).
- "There is no sidewalks in the community, so if people wanted to walk safely, it's kind of hard to do so because obviously you are walking on the road" (PWE005).

OTHER BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Lack of partner/someone to go with

- "When I play, a group of friends will just come around to do some shooting, I don't play for a team, it's just like five of us or eight of us just go out and play basketball" (PTB003).
- "Because if you don't have that buddy to walk with or go to the gym with, it is very very easy to stay home and do nothing" (PJS002).

Cost

- "If you want to go skating there is cost to it, many parks now are putting fees on it, which causes limited accessibility" (PCG001).
- "There is a cost associated with it and that is sometimes a barrier for people coming out" (PWE005).

Technology

- "Kids today, their hindrance is technology. Like I said, technology is good but it also hinders" (PDUT006).

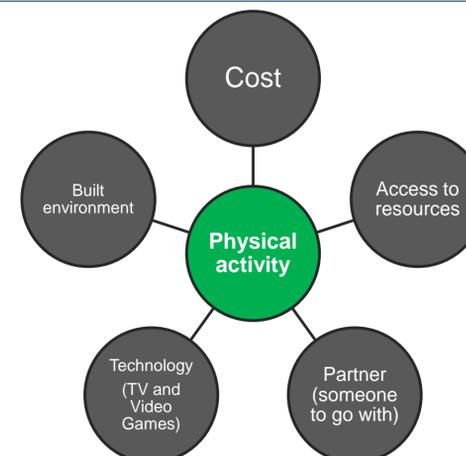


Fig. 2. Generally perceived barriers to physical activity among African Nova Scotians



Fig. 3. Built environmental barriers to physical activity in African Nova Scotian communities

Discussion

- The accumulated results from the research participants show that there is a notable link between participation in physical activity and the built environment, which influences participation in physical activity in communities dominated by African Nova Scotians.
- Lack of multipurpose outdoor playgrounds; poor road systems, which include inappropriate walkways, bikeways, and trails; cost of game gear and membership to facilities; and not having a partner/someone to exercise with makes it difficult for many African Nova Scotians to keep up with physical activity.
- These barriers may be reasons why many African Nova Scotians do not participate actively in physical activity, which implies that they are more susceptible to chronic diseases (4).
- Technology (television, video games, and computers) is a modern-day barrier to outdoor physical activity as most kids remain indoors watching television and playing video games.

Conclusion/Recommendations

- The general findings from this study show that participation in physical activity is influenced by multiple factors (see Fig. 2). These factors need to be addressed across all African Nova Scotian communities in order to achieve active lifestyle in this population.
- Research participants recommended the need for a multipurpose court (volleyball, soccer, baseball field), trails for walking, outdoor weight equipment, an open playground, a skating rink, a swimming pool, and a hockey rink.
- One participant stated "...a pool or even like a splash pad as well as green space whether it's a ballfield, soccer field, football field, or some type of field, something that is clear that people can go and enjoy multiple different things" (PWE005) would help make individuals more active.
- Another participant recommended a bigger park for the kids: "...a place for the kids, there is a park here, but this is small, something bigger for kids that is off the highway, and safe, where they will have fun" (PDD004).

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