

ABSTRACT

Extra-curricular activities (ECA) are a component in the current education curriculum. ECA are thought to play a role in the academic, social and health development in adolescents. However, factors associated with children's interests in ECA participation is poorly defined in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this cross-sectional study was carried out to determine the extent of participation in extra-curricular activities and factors associated in grade ten school children in Matale Municipality Area (MMA).

Six hundred and twenty (620) students of Government Sinhala Medium schools in the MMA participated in the study. The selection of the sample was done using cluster sampling. The study instruments included a self-administered questionnaire, data extraction sheet and a focus group discussion guide.

The availability and types of extra-curricular activities in schools differed according to type of schools. In the study population, 65.3% participated in ECA. Those who participated were involved in sports(46.9%), aesthetics(11.1%), clubs and associations(18.5%) and leadership activities(29.8%). School type was found to be significantly associated with participation in sports ($p < 0.001$), aesthetics ($p = 0.025$) and clubs and associations($p = 0.04$) as well as with overall ECA participation ($p = 0.002$). ECA participation by sex was significantly associated with academic performance ($p = 0.029$). Factors within the social context of children such as sex ($p = 0.007$) and siblings' involvement in physical exercise ($p = 0.007$) were found to be significantly associated with ECA participation. Thus, there was significantly higher participation by

males than females. Focus group discussions revealed that majority of the students wanted to participate in ECA but their participation had been limited by the academic work load and competitiveness in the education system. Their participation was further limited by lack of facilities in schools as well as by financial problems in families.

To conclude, this study shows that a variety of ECA are carried out in schools and the number of ECA as well as the types of ECA differ according to the type of school .ECA participation in Grade 10 students is affected by many factors. Male sex and siblings' participation in ECA increase the ECA participation and that there is no association between ECA participation and academic performance. Yet, ECA participation by sex is significantly associated with academic performance. It also highlights the importance of improving school facilities to enhance extra-curricular activity participation in school adolescents.