

The Patterns and Levels of Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior of Primary School Learners in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

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Abstract : Background: This study was designed to assess PA levels and sedentary behavior among primary school learners in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Methods: A cross-sectional study was adopted to assess the patterns and levels of PA and sedentary behavior using the Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children (PAQ-C). Results: Using complete case analysis, 870 randomly selected participants (boys = 351 and girls = 519) aged 9 to 14 years were retained. The sample comprised of primary school learners, both boys and girls; aged 9-14 years old, who were randomly selected from rural, urban and peri-urban areas in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Overall, the sample had a mean PAQ-C score of 2.33 ± 0.43 . The mean of PA in boys was significantly higher ($p = 0.003$) in comparison with the girls. The 13 to 14 age group had a significantly higher PA level ($p = 0.014$). Learners from urban areas ($n = 136$; 77.3%) engaged more in sedentary behaviour as compared to those from rural areas ($n = 252$; 54.9%). Conclusion: The findings demonstrated low levels of PA and high engagement of sedentary behavior, which have negative implications on the health, growth and development of children. The study, therefore, recommends relevant stakeholders to implement interventions aimed to promote the increase in PA and reduction in sedentary behaviors for primary school learners in the Eastern Cape province in South Africa.

Keywords : learners, physical activity, sedentary behavior, south Africa

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