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### Engaging adolescent girls in school sport: a feasibility study

Dean Dudley

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**ENGAGING ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN SCHOOL SPORT**

**A FEASIBILITY STUDY**

By

DEAN DUDLEY

From

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

2007

A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION (RESEARCH)

## **Abstract**

*Aim:* The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility, acceptability, and potential efficacy of a school-based physical activity program delivered during programmed school sport time and designed to meet the needs and interests of adolescent girls, as well as function effectively within the constraints of the school environment.

*Methodology:* 38 adolescent girls (Year 11) were recruited to participate in the program as either intervention (n=17) or control group (n=21) participants. The intervention program aimed at increasing physical activity by improving enjoyment, physical self-perception and perceived competence. Baseline and follow-up (11 weeks) assessments included enjoyment of physical activity (PACES), physical self-perception (PSPP), and physical activity (accelerometers). The study also contained qualitative data collection to formulate the intervention design and quantitative data to allow for greater understanding of the needs and wants of adolescent girls with regard to their school sport programs. This qualitative data was collected through focus group interviews, observations, and teacher/student commentary.

*Results:* The results were reported in terms of comparison between intervention and control groups based on the analysis of data from each of the collection instruments. Results also contain a discussion on the formative qualitative data.

*Conclusions:* Data highlights major barriers confronting adolescent girls' participation in school sport. Some of these include teacher attitudes and support, activities and

programming, purpose and distinction, and student input. Negotiating these barriers and overcoming them in a school setting appears feasible with support from the entire school community.

Furthermore, the study showed that the intervention was able to achieve a positive medium effect on enjoyment of physical activity and perceived body image (0.42 and 0.50 respectively, using Cohen's  $d$ ). A novel finding of this research was a slowing in the decline of physical activity even though intervention and control groups were engaged in programs with significantly different estimated rates of energy expenditure. Intervention and control group mean energy expenditure was 4.25 and 6.2 respectively indicating that future physical activity interventions should focus on interest and enjoyment rather than programming for increased levels of intensity.

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