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Photographing Ugandan Physical Activity: Perspectives From Mbararan Youth

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What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- To characterize physical activity in the lives of Ugandan youth using the rich medium of photography as a focused, creative research tool.
- More specifically, this project has two aims:
 1. to document the current situation regarding physical activity in a Ugandan community; and
 2. to explore issues surrounding physical activity in the lives of youth.
- This community-based participatory research approach allows local youth to help others understand their perspectives, realities, and experiences as only those immersed in a culture can do.

What Is the Problem?

- The world is seeing a rise in deaths attributed to physical inactivity.
- In many countries, developed and developing, fewer than one third of young people are sufficiently active to benefit their present and future health.
- Little is known about the role of physical activity in the lives of rural Ugandans.

What Are the Findings?

- Youth were able to successfully capture digital data on cameras that document physical activity in their daily lives.
- High-quality, artistic digital images are a powerful tool to explore research questions.
- Analysis of photographs, surveys, and interview data reveal that Ugandan youth are active in many physical activities.
- Identifiable themes of photographs and discussions included:
 1. Physical activity related to daily tasks of living (e.g., gathering firewood, collecting water, farming);
 2. Cultural physical activities unique to Southwest Uganda (e.g., Banyankole tribal dances and Ankole cattle herding);
 3. Organized sports (e.g., football [American soccer], volleyball); and
 4. Children's school games and play (e.g., Skipping rope, swinging, tire rolling, swimming)/
- A majority of youth participate in more than 1 to 2 hours of physical activity per week.
- Barriers to physical activity for youth include lack of materials, lack of organization, and lack of sports equipment.

Who Should Care the Most?

- Clinical practitioners of primary care medicine in Uganda and internationally. Management of musculoskeletal injuries can be better achieved when the practitioner understands the activity base of a local people. Additionally, it prepares medical providers to provide culturally relevant and applicable medical care.
- Health educators. As globalization increases, the need for individuals and cultures to address issues related to inactivity is likely to increase. Educators, the sports community, city planners, and developers all play a role in these future needs.
- Qualitative researchers and those wanting to develop the use of photography as a research tool may also apply results of this study to other African and developing communities.

Implications and Recommendations for Action

- This project should encourage researchers to consider more strongly the use of photography as an effective tool in exploring research questions in developing countries. This includes places where barriers to the use of technology exist.
- This project helps researchers to understand that community interest in research projects may be enhanced by creative, high-quality visual images.
- Youth participation in successful research projects is achievable and their participation may shed light on issues that researchers may identify as new, previously overlooked or unidentified concerns or assumptions.
- Youth participants identified the need for research into the barriers youth have for participating in physical activity and new and innovative ways to encourage physical activity without significant financial investment.
- Researchers identified the need to understand a community's types of physical activities to further explore injury patterns and to address health prevention in developing countries.

Tharenos, C.L., Santorino, D. Photographing Ugandan physical activity: Perspectives from Mbararan youth. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action*. The Community Policy Brief is intended to inform community based organizations, public health policy makers, and other individuals whose primary interest is not research, but who would be interested in the application and translation of research findings for practical purposes.