

Reasoning of dissertation topic and competency of potential supervisor for admission into LSU biology doctoral studies with a participation of Tartu university 2024

Area of research (title and code)	
Field of research (title and code)	
Topic of research	
Institution	LSU

Potential supervisor

Pedagogical and scientific degree	Name, surname	Academic position
Docent, PhD Sport Pedagogy	Kwok Ng	Chief Scientist

Short reasoning of proposed dissertation topic

Title
Physical activity levels among children with disabilities in general schools
<p>Short research description (including aims and objectives).</p> <p>This research project aims to provide evidence of self-reported physical activity (PA) by children with disabilities (CwD) from a national representative sample of Lithuania. There are four studies in this research. In study 1, a systematic literature review on the instruments used to measure disability through self-report surveys of school-age children. In Study 2, psychometric properties testing of the self-report disability questionnaire by adolescents with and without disabilities in general school settings. In study 3, in cooperation with Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HBSC) Lithuania, data will be collected from children in general school, with the aim to investigate the PA levels of CwD. In 4th study, an international comparison on PA levels is made on CwD.</p> <p>Overall PA is an important behaviour that has multiple physical, social, and mental health benefits (WHO, 2020). Evidence of the PA recommendations for children with disabilities remains low (Martin Ginis, 2021), which has led to a lack of uniform global guidelines. For example, the WHO recommends CwD participate in an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous PA per day (Carty et al, 2021), yet the UK Chief Medical Officer outlines a guideline of an average of 20 minutes per day (Smith et al, 2022) to benefit health. With recent changes in Lithuanian laws on the inclusion of CwD into general schools (Lithuanian, 2000), CwD are involved in general school surveys, but, to date, data has not been disaggregated by disability. It is therefore important to have a scientifically tested measure of disabilities for self-report surveys, produce national data on levels of PA, and compare them internationally.</p>

Relevance of the problem, its novelty at national and international level (maximum 1500 characters).

In 2022, a national reform took place in Lithuania, whereby all children, irrespective of their abilities, have the right to attend the closest school (Lithuania, 2000). This made inclusion in school a common practice, and collection of surveillance data easier. Yet, it can also affect the overall outcomes on PA levels when data is not disaggregated by disability. For example, most CwD do less PA than their peers without disabilities. Yet, if there were 15% of CwD who respond to the national surveys, then the rates of PA of the general population would be lower than the „true“ value, unless data is reported separately for CwD and without disabilities. An instrument is therefore needed to identify who these children are. Questions like, „do you have a disability?“ have been heavily criticised and other methods should be used instead (Ng et al, 2017). Of the countries involved in the Para Report Cards, Lithuanian were the only European country that did not have sufficient data on overall PA levels of adolescents with disability (Ng et al, 2023). The HBSC study is a World Health Organisation collaborative study, comprised of researchers in public health, educational sciences and psychology, as well as policy makers. PA data collected from the HBSC study are used for making national (for trends) and international comparisons, yet not all countries have data on disabilities so that PA data can be disaggregated

(Ng et al, 2017). As such, there is an urgent need to carry out research that can 1. verify the psychometric properties to measure self-report disabilities, 2. investigate PA levels of CwD, 3. and make comparisons between different countries.