

## Benefits of an activist approach to physical education in the participation of primary school girls in games

### Beneficios de un enfoque activista de la educación física en la participación deportiva de niñas de educación primaria

Carmen Sánchez Martín, Luis Miguel García López, Lucía Reyes  
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (España)

**Abstract.** The lack of participation of girls in sport underlines the persistence of gender inequalities in our society. The aims of this study were to learn about the barriers girls face in doing games in Physical Education (PE) classes and the benefits of applying the activist approach with girls. The study included 20 girls and 28 boys between the ages of 10 and 12, the PE teacher and the researchers. Two didactic units (DUs) were developed including reflective activities on gender issues. The work with the girls was designed to increase their participation through empowerment and to focus on the non-perpetuation of situations in which hegemonic masculinity is manifest. Data were collected through focus groups with the students, teacher interviews, and the gender-oriented reflexive activities themselves, on which narrative analysis was performed. The results showed improvements in girls' games participation as perceived by girls themselves, the teacher and the teacher-researcher, thanks to the critical and reflective daily work that contributed to their process of empowerment.

**Keywords:** Activist approach; participatory design; empowerment; gender; Physical Education.

**Resumen.** La falta de participación de las niñas en el deporte evidencia la persistencia de las desigualdades de género en nuestra sociedad. Los objetivos de este estudio fueron conocer las barreras que tienen las niñas para practicar deporte en las clases de educación física (EF) y los beneficios que tiene aplicar el enfoque activista con ellas. El estudio incluyó 20 niñas y 28 niños de entre diez y 12 años, la docente de EF y el equipo investigador. Se desarrollaron dos unidades didácticas (UU.DD) en las que aparecían actividades reflexivas sobre cuestiones de género en las cuales se trabajaba con las niñas para aumentar su participación mediante el empoderamiento y el tratamiento de la no perpetuación de situaciones en las que se manifestaba una masculinidad hegemónica. Se recogieron los datos a través de grupos focales con las alumnas, entrevistas a la maestra y las propias actividades reflexivas orientadas al tratamiento del género, sobre las que se realizó un análisis narrativo. Los resultados mostraron mejoras en la participación deportiva de las niñas desde las percepciones de las propias niñas, la docente y la docente investigadora gracias al trabajo diario crítico y reflexivo que contribuyó en su proceso de empoderamiento.

**Palabras clave:** Enfoque activista; diseño participativo; empoderamiento; género; Educación Física.

### Introduction

Currently, the participation of girls in physical activities in school games settings is limited (Lamonedá & Huerta, 2017). For example, Rodríguez-Fernández et al. (2021) highlight that, in the Autonomous Community of Galicia (Spain), only 40.7% of the girls participating in their study engaged in physical-sports activity on a voluntary basis. Similarly, Fraile-García et al. (2019) reported that, in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, boys present higher scores than girls on variables such as enjoyment of physical activity or motor self-efficacy, values that have an impact on the physical activity undertaken. Finally, Tapia López (2019) found, in a city in the Valencian Community, that the scores obtained by boys in almost all physical self-concept variables are significantly higher than those obtained by girls.

Furthermore, the low level of girls' participation in sport activities can be explained by the theory of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), where men have a dominant position and women, in practice, are subordinate, with the media exerting a powerful influence (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2015). This situation of hegemonic masculinity within the context of PE gives rise to a series of barriers to the participation of girls. These include the presence of gender stereotypes (Arenas et al., 2022; Serra et al., 2020), the lack of female references in sport (Gómez-Collel, 2015), and girls' negative experiences in PE classes (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010), mainly due to the dominant role that boys adopt in such activities (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020).

PE programmes fail to give girls the opportunity to reflect and acquire knowledge about their bodies and about the barriers to their sports participation (Oliver & McCaughy, 2013), with the presence of a "masculinised" curriculum continuing to dominate (Monforte & Úbeda-Colomer, 2019). The field of PE

needs to teach girls strategies to recognise and overcome these barriers (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012; Kirk & Oliver, 2014; Oliver & McCaughtry, 2013), which leads to increased motivation and empowerment, which, in turn, promotes participation on equal terms with boys (Lamb et al., 2018).

A key issue in using this process of empowerment to encourage girls to take part in games is that they perceive themselves as capable. For this reason, Oliver & Kirk (2015) developed the girl-centred activist approach, which focuses on providing critical spaces for girls to identify, critique, and negotiate the barriers that prevent them from valuing and leading physically active lives. This approach gives girls a role as co-researchers (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2012). Its goal is to form a climate of mutual understanding, respect, and learning for all students (Kirk et al., 2018; Luguetti et al., 2016). The activist approach presents four core elements: 1) student-centred pedagogy, which is defined as listening to what facilitates or hinders interest, motivation, learning and participation in PE; 2) the creation of spaces to critically inquire into their embodiment, which allows for greater participation and enjoyment of physical activity; 3) inquiry-based research, which consists of teachers' constant analysis of their own practice; 4) sustained listening and responding, which involves listening to student voice when planning teaching (Oliver & Kirk, 2014).

This work used the activist approach to determine the barriers faced by a group of girls when participating in PE classes and to verify whether applying reflective activities on gender issues related to sports increased their participation in games activities in such classes.

## Methodology

### *Context and participants*

The research was conducted during PE classes at a state school in a city in central Spain. The sample of students comprised 20 girls and 28 boys aged between 10 and 12 years (mean = 10.37;  $\sigma$  = 0.61). Due to the possibilities of access to the students at the time of the study, all the boys and girls from three natural 5th grade groups of Primary Education were included. The inclusion criteria were that the participating students were part of a 5th grade Primary Education group at the school where the study was undertaken and the teacher had agreed to collaborate in the study. No exclusion criteria were established within these groups, except for that of the families of the participating students failing to fill in the informed consent form. All the participants took part in the DUs, although the girls were the main participants in the activities oriented towards addressing issues of gender.

The boys participated occasionally in these activities in order to observe how the girls acted in their presence. Focus groups were used in this intervention because they facilitated a space where the girls could express their needs and concerns, and thus in adapting the programme of activities, their voices were listened and responded to. All the participating students and their families were informed of the nature of the research, and gave informed consent for their participation.

In addition to the children, the PE teacher and the research team participated in the research. The PE teacher did not participate in the classes, but, following the first phase of the model the teacher-researcher (Carmen), conducted a semi-structured interview with her to learn more about the group and to better observe their development. The research team held weekly meetings after implementing the activities, in which they discussed the events in the classes with a view to investigating and planning future sessions.

### *Procedure*

The activist approach is structured in two phases: the foundation-building phase and the activist phase. The first phase includes an inquiry-based approach and a learner-centred pedagogy (Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013). For this purpose, a six-session volleyball didactic unit (DU) was implemented, which served as the basis on which to develop a series of activities to learn about girls' interests and motivations when playing games in PE and the barriers they face (see Table 1). Additionally, information was collected by means of a personal sports autobiography undertaken by the girls themselves, as well as through a focus group and an interview with the teacher.

The building the foundation phase ended with the proposal for the students to take part in a colpbol DU. It was explained to the girls that, despite its being a game with physical contact, on the one hand, this would be limited by the rules of the game, and on the other, they were encouraged to take part, with the boys, in these type of games. The alternative nature of colpbol facilitated the decision to break with the idea of such sports being traditionally masculine. From this point on, the activist phase began. The colpbol DU covered nine sessions. Its design took into account the needs and interests of the girls identified in the previous phase, in order to generate a positive setting that would help them overcome the barriers to their participation in PE classes. To this end, in the final part of each session, we carried out activities oriented towards addressing gender issues, in which the girls' points of view were listened to, and used as a starting point to respond to their needs in the following sessions (see Table 1).

Table 1  
*Reflective activities carried out oriented towards addressing the question of gender*

DIDACTIC UNIT VOLLEYBALL
Activity 1: Personal sports autobiography Activity 2: Initial focus group
DIDACTIC UNIT COLPBOL
Activity 1: Intermediate focus group Activity 2: Women's football article analysis Activity 3: Reflection on participation in colpbol Activity 4: Debate and analysis of a football film Activity 5: Reflection on colpbol and its participation with the students Activity 6: Final focus group

### *Sources and data analysis*

The data were obtained from the following: the audio recordings of the focus groups (FGs) (9); the group activities (GAs) (12); the individual activity (IA) (3); the interviews with the teacher (TIs) (3); an observation diary on the sessions (OD) and the weekly meetings of the research team (WM) (7). The audio recordings of all the activities and participants' reflections were transcribed and anonymized.

The analysis was conducted following the recommendations of Bryman (2016). First, the information was read on a general level, which was followed by a second, more in-depth review, detailing possible categories and subcategories. In the third reading, these categories were redefined. The categories reflected the main focus of the study, with participation as the common thread and the basis for developing the narrative. The data were categorized into the barriers to their participation in physical activities perceived by the girls and the facilitators of changes in attitudes to participation in PE.

### *Trustworthiness*

The trustworthiness of this work is grounded in the process described above and in the triangulation of sources and systematic reflection (construct validity) (Lather, 1991). On the one hand, comparisons were made between the information obtained from the students and from the teacher, while, on the other, a process of systematic reflection was generated in weekly meetings where the data collected were discussed. These allowed the research team to interpret the results that were generated from session to session, following the critical theories taken as a reference. The activist approach proposes an initial phase of knowledge of the barriers to the girls' engagement in sports, and it was these activities from the preliminary phase that defined the design of the initial instruments. Thus, the design of the focus groups and interviews was based on the data obtained from the students themselves, which served to suggest the topics about which we should ask questions. For example, the girls' biographies informed about how their families were influencing their choice of physical

activity, so this topic was included as a question in the focus groups. This procedure of designing the focus groups and interviews based on the previous activities implemented has been used in previous studies drawing on the same methodology, such as those by Enright & O'Sullivan (2012), Kirk et al. (2018) or Oliver et al. (2009).

## **Results**

We now present the two narratives developed during the analysis of the results. The first reveals the barriers and contradictions that the girls encountered when engaging in physical activity, while the second describes, from the perspective of the girls, the teacher and Carmen, the teacher-researcher, how the activities implemented served to overcome these barriers, empower the girls and encourage their greater active participation.

### *"If we are on the same team as the boys, they're never going to pass to us": barriers and contradictions*

Our initial starting scenario was that of a group of girls who reported they were physically active, but, on observing them in class, their motor participation in PE was seen to be lower than that of the boys: "It's like there's no need for us to run or get the ball, because they pass it among themselves and move it from one to another"- Maite (FG, B Group, 19 April).

The lower participation of these girls is due to their being faced by a series of barriers that hinder their active engagement in sports. One of these barriers was their perceived lack of skill, i.e., the girls themselves felt less skilled than the boys. This perception can be explained by a lack of ability at technical and tactical level in these sports categories, which is a result of the type of physical activity they engage in outside school. In their leisure time, the girls in this study tended mostly to participate in physical and sports activities considered to be of an aesthetic nature, such as dancing, rhythmic gymnastics or skating. This is how their teacher described the situation:

Most of the girls do other types of sports, or are involved in dance or skating. However, boys do more traditional, competitive sports; some girls play these sports, but they're a minority. Why? Because they choose it themselves or it's chosen for them by the people around them. - Teacher (TI, 3 May)

In addition, their choices are an expression of the family influence stemming from gender stereotypes that establish certain activities as appropriate for

masculine or feminine roles: “I’ve been doing it (sports) since I was little, especially rhythmic gymnastics, because my parents thought it was a good idea to sign me up so I wouldn’t get bored in my free time” (Inés, IA, Group C, April 12).

As the girls had limited experience in more tactically complex games, such as team invasion games, they perceived their limitations from a technical and tactical perspective, leading to their lower participation. For example, the girls were unable to lose their markers, which led to their participating less, getting bored and being less interested in such sports:

Carmen: Why don’t they pass to you?

Ana: Because we don’t support whoever’s marking us (FG, Group C, 12 May)

The other barrier detected that complicates girls’ engagement in games is the dominance of boys during PE classes. The behaviours and attitudes shown by boys together with the practice of sports with a notably masculine tradition, such as soccer, reflect the persistence of hegemonic masculinity in such settings. The girls identify characteristics associated with this predominance of masculinity, such as the success or competitiveness of boys:

Having them there, thinking they’re better because they spend all their time doing the sport, means they don’t let you learn - Ana (FG, Group B, 3 May)

I feel that the boys, because they are boys, always think they’re right because they’re the best in the class. - Estrella (FC, Group C, 19 April)

Furthermore, given the high profile of predominantly male sports in the media, we can identify the influence of the social discourse in which most sports role models are male. Girls, on the other hand, are unable to recognize clear female role models in sports:

We haven’t seen them so much on TV, and because just now when you showed us the photos, you told us who each one was. But, if you show us Messi, for example we know who he is, and we didn’t recognize the girls because they don’t appear on TV and they’re not talked about so much. - Ana (IA, Group B, 28 April)

On TV, the channels usually show more of the men’s matches and only sometimes the girls’ sports. And also because there are albums with the men footballers, but they don’t make albums of the girls. - Maite (IA, Group B, 28 abril)

Consequently, due to the dominance of the boys during the PE classes, the girls felt under pressure to always do well because, if not, they would be criticized by their peers. This evidences the different type of interaction that occurred between the boys and the

girls and between the boys themselves. When mistakes were made in the game, the girls describe how the boys supported each other:

If a boy makes a mistake, they don’t argue so much with each other, but then with us they always have something to say- Lucía (FG, Group B, 19 April)

Sometimes, if they do something good, they say “well done” to each other, but when we do something good, they just ignore us - Paula (FG, Group B, 19 April)

On certain occasions, the girls highlighted the boys’ lack of self-criticism, since they were incapable of recognizing their own mistakes, even when the girls themselves pointed them out. Susana, for example said, “I thought they’d realize themselves that they were making mistakes and, since we were telling them, maybe they would improve or not make the mistakes again (FG, Group C, May 11).

Nonetheless, we came to see that the girls’ non-participation was not only due to the boys’ attitudes, but that it was the submissive and inactive inertia they had acquired that led them to adopt a passive role. Sometimes, they avoided the responsibility of the game, preferring to be player-spectators. Below, a boy claims that his not passing to the girls was not a question of not wanting to, but because they did not provide suitable passing opportunities by creating space:

Carmen: But why did you girls not go with the boys?

Paula: Because if we go with the boys, they never pass to us.

Mateo: Paula, that’s why we don’t pass to you, because you’re there in front of us with three people next to you (FG, Group A, 3 May)

Consequently, the assignment of roles and positions (forward, defence) in the activities reinforced the barriers encountered by the girls, with girls tending to adopt secondary roles (defence) and letting the boys take the leading roles and responsibility for the game (attack). The boys occupied the girls’ space and did not allow them to participate because they thought they would play badly and preferred to do it themselves:

I don’t like volleyball because people jump in before you go for the ball. If the ball comes towards you, people move, get in front of you and hit it. - Sara (FG, Group A, 19 April)

And when we take up positions, they say “go there (to defensive positions) because you’re no good where you are”, and if we want to play there (in attacking positions), we don’t understand why we can’t. - Adriana (FG, Group C, 19 April)

In this line, the boys’ criticism may reflect a high level of aggressiveness and lack of empathy. While

choosing teams, when a girl (Beatriz), considered one of the “worst” in the class by her classmates, was chosen, one boy even said: “No, not her, choose Adriana, at least she’s useful” (Gonzalo, OD, Group C, March 26). This is an example of actions that reinforce both the perception of girls’ lower ability and boys’ dominance in class. Confronted with these types of comments, the girls did not protest because, although they felt their opinion was important, they knew that the boys did not take them into account. Therefore, taking advantage of the privacy and anonymity of the focus groups, they highlighted this: “Sometimes when we play a game, they take notice of us, and in other games that they are better at, they just ignore us” (Teresa, FG, Group B, April 19).

### *“You can play the same as them”: Empowering the girls*

As one of the findings of the foundation phase was the girls’ disinterest in sports with a notably masculine tradition, such as football, and their consequent lack of active participation in the classes, the development of a DU based on the alternative sport known as colpbol was proposed. Following the recommendations of García López & Kirk (2021), this is a game where there was little difference in prior knowledge between the boys and girls, with no influence from the media, and which also involved less physical contact. Colpbol consequently presented the girls with a type of invasion game with a more neutral context, thus overcoming the prejudices they had about such sports, which they identified with football. Nonetheless, colpbol still featured a key characteristic of invasion games, namely contact, and it might be considered that the girls started with a slight disadvantage as they had less previous experience of this type of sport.

It was the reflective activities designed to address issues of gender that made the girls more motivated and participative. These activities allowed them to reflect on their level of ability during the classes and realize that they all had similar conditions for learning: “I think we can all be good at it if we practise. I mean, if the boys and the girls start without knowing anything, I think we could both do it well” (Maite, FG, Group B, April 19). In this sense, of special interest is the case of a girl who even dropped out of the classes because she felt she was less skilled than the others. She felt that she did everything wrong and that she would always be criticized. She did not participate in the reflective activities facilitated in the first phase of the programme. However, when the activist phase

began, she became more involved and even said “if you think I’m not moving around here, you should have seen me last week because I was literally sitting on a bench because I didn’t want to play” (Beatriz, FG, Group C, May 12).

Like Beatriz, at the start of the programme, many of the girls’ participated at a very limited level. However, by the end, the girls’ attitudes and thinking had changed. They themselves recognized their increased participation in the classes:

Ana: They’re passing the ball to me more every day  
 Paula: I was really pleased by the end of the class today ... I think they passed me the ball much more (FG, Group B, 11 May)

This change in attitude was also noticeable when forming groups. At the beginning of the study, the girls segregated themselves and made their own groups, separating themselves from the boys. Therefore, a new rule for forming groups was suggested: girls could only choose boys and boys could only choose girls. When choosing the teams, captains were appointed; if the captain was a boy, he could only choose a girl, and, then, when it was that girl’s turn to choose a teammate, she could only choose from among the boys, and so on. In this way, turns were taken when choosing the teams in order to promote the formation of heterogeneous groups.

As the days passed, the girls began to understand the dynamics of the new game and the importance of overcoming the barriers they faced. During the activities, the girls reflected on possible improvements and solutions to these problems. These activities served to empower them by helping them see they could improve their skills if they practiced and broke down the barriers to their participation. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the role played by Carmen in empowering the girls, working with them in this process and positively reinforcing their attitudes:

Carmen: So, why do you think they pass to you more now?  
 Paula: Because we ask for the ball and because we get into a position for them to pass it to us (FG, Group A, 12 May)  
 Carmen: So now you ask for the ball more, you get more involved and have more interest, before you were waiting for the ball to come to you  
 Paula: Yeah, because we didn’t use to get into a good space  
 Carmen: But you do know how to pass, you just don’t value yourselves enough. You can play just like them (FG, Group B, 12 May)

This example shows how the girls modified a key aspect of their games behaviour; they no longer stood



still waiting for the ball to come to them, but moved into a space, facilitating their teammates passing to them. The movement involved in creating space is crucial in this change of attitude. The girls also began to take on other types of responsibilities, going a step beyond mere participation. Thus, they started to call out their teammates when their actions were unfair, and complained about injustices when they occurred and not at the end of the end of the class:

Teresa: Mateo, you should have passed to me, I was all alone

Ana: Fernando, don't hog the ball, pass it to us (OD, Group B, 12 May)

They also took a leading role in the game by shooting at goal, whereas they had previously felt insecure and always passed to a teammate to avoid shooting. Finally, a change was observed in the boys' attitudes as regards the comments they made about the work girls' play, recognizing their good work:

The girls are playing really well today... See how you can do it? – Jaime (OD, Group C, 19 May)

Norma's on her own, pass to her...shoot, Norma – Adriana (OD, Group C, 19 May)

Across both phases of the activist approach, the girls understood the importance of their involvement in the PE classes, and had thus embarked on the process of overcoming the barriers they faced, increasing their participation, motivation and motor commitment.

## Discussion

The aims of the present study were to use the activist approach to determine the barriers facing a group of girls when participating in PE classes and to see whether implementing reflective activities on gender issues related to sports increased their participation in games activities in PE classes. The programme led to an improvement in the girls' participation thanks to the creation of a favourable environment and the implementation of reflective activities oriented towards addressing the question of gender in sport. This positive environment was mainly the result of selecting a game that did not involve an insurmountable barrier to the girls' participation, and the reflective activities led to a change in their attitude, improving their critical awareness and encouraging their empowerment.

Initially, the participation of the girls in the study sample in the games sessions on their PE classes was limited, which is consistent with the findings of works by Castillo-Viera et al. (2018), Lamonedá & Huerta (2017) and Mitchell et al. (2015); participation which is typically lower than that of boys (Gutiérrez & García López, 2012).

This low participation of girls is generally due to gender-related barriers, as described by Azzarito et al. (2006), and which Flintoff & Scraton (2006) specify as being the result of activities stereotyped as masculine and the bad experiences these generate among girls.

Connell (2005) posits that the dominant position of men and the subordination of women can be observed in different areas of our lives. These gender relations can also be seen during games activities, as we have observed in this study and as reported by Sánchez Hernández et al. (2020), who found girls initially adopted secondary roles as a result of a perceived lack of ability and the situation of dominance or hegemony of boys. The female gender is, then, associated with being weaker and less skilled (Muñoz et al., 2012). Therefore, male dominance can affect girls by making them feel inferior to boys. This is generated by the inferior treatment of feminine activities, with competitive and higher sport typically being viewed as masculine, and aesthetic and lower sports being seen as feminine (Arenas et al., 2022; Klomsten et al., 2005). This type of behaviour is enhanced, not only by boys, but also by the girls themselves, because they are unaware of the problem, and conform, without having the critical ability required to question such situations and to mobilize them to overcome the barriers (Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020). Monforte & Úbeda-Colomer (2019) underlined that the acceptance of stereotypes makes girls accomplice in their subordination. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is perpetuated and supported by both boys and girls (Connell, 2005).

This work provided a context to favour changes in the situation of girls in PE classes, by implementing activities in a colpbol didactic unit designed to address gender issues, resulting in their self-perceived increase in participation. This is consistent with the study by Van Acker et al. (2010), which showed that girls participated much more when invasion games were modified, and also with the research by Luis-de Cos et al. (2019), which reported that increasing girls' levels of competence improved their involvement PE classes. Colpbol, an alternative game that was unfamiliar to the students, broke with the dynamics of sports traditionally perceived as masculine. Thus, engagement in sport was not affected by the dominant position of boys versus the subordination of girls (Connell, 2005), and more opportunities were generated to develop girls' abilities through a more positive playing environment, which encouraged their empowerment (García López & Kirk, 2021; Jennings et al., 2006). This is in line with the findings of the study by Llanos Muñoz et al. (2022), who reported that the novelty of implementing an alternative game reduced students' levels of frustration and enhanced their satisfaction.

According to Jennings et al. (2006), in order to achieve the positive social bonds that contribute to empowerment, participation must be meaningful. Therefore, girls were provided with opportunities to take on responsibilities and participate in decision-making. They were able to move away from a secondary role that is more concerned with keeping the ball (Gutiérrez & García López, 2012), towards a focus on others parts of the game, such as shooting at goal, passing and moving into space. In addition, a safe and welcoming environment was created in which they felt supported, encouraged and valued, thanks to the care ethic (Gilligan, 1982) established by Carmen, the teacher-researcher. This allowed the girls to feel more empowered, not only individually, but also as a group (Lugueti et al., 2015). Based on the notion that simply being girls was viewed as an excuse not to play because they felt pressured when competing (Oliver et al., 2009), these factors led to the girls starting to be more aware and no longer conforming (Monforte & Úbeda-Colomer, 2019). This was developed through critical reflection, a key element of empowerment processes. These processes helped the girls to be critical and reflect on why they did not engage in these games.

### Conclusions

The results of the present study have enabled us to determine the barriers the girls themselves identified in the context of games in PE classes. Therefore, recognizing and overcoming these barriers to participation in games activities were found to be feasible and realistic goals. To this end, teachers should take two key elements into account when teaching games. The first of these is the choice and modification of games content, which should reduce the burden of factors that make it difficult for girls to engage in games, such as physical contact or the lack of previous knowledge that leads them to a situation of excessive initial difficulty. The second element is the creation of spaces for reflection for the girls, making them co-participants and co-protagonists in the process. The girls themselves are thus the ones that build the knowledge that leads them to recognize the barriers to their participation and how they can be overcome. Hence, this element corroborates the success of applying an activist approach to increase girls' participation in PE classes. Schools should embrace such practices, which avoid perpetuating hegemonic masculinity and guarantee a safe and positive learning environment. The results obtained show that changes are feasible and realistic, but it is necessary to train teachers to be capable of putting this approach into practice. Therefore, this type of teaching methodology should be present in both initial and in-service teacher training,

since few interventions are currently developed under an activist approach in Spain.

### Acknowledgments

This research is part of the project *Impact of a salutogenic physical activity programme on vulnerable adolescents' health and wellbeing (YouMoV)* (PID2021-122886OB-C21), funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Sapin – Agencia Estatal de Investigación and FEDER.

In addition, the authors appreciate the collaboration provided by the school and the physical education teacher.

### References

- Arenas, D., Vidal-Conti, J., & Muntaner-Mas, A. (2022). Estereotipos de género y tratamiento diferenciado entre chicos y chicas en la asignatura de educación física: una revisión narrativa. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 342-351. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v43i0.88685>
- Azzarito, L., Solmon, M. A., & Harrison J. L. (2006). "... If I had a choice, I would..." A feminist poststructuralist perspective on girls in physical education. *Research quarterly for exercise and sport*, 77(2), 222-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2006.10599356>
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Castillo-Viera, E., Tornero-Quinones, I., & García-Araujo, J. A. (2018). Relación entre actividad física, alimentación y familia en edad escolar. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 34, 85-88. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v0i34.52782>
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. Polity.
- Díez-Gutiérrez, E. J. (2015). Códigos de masculinidad hegemónica en educación. *Revista Ibero-americana de Educação*, 68, 79-98. <https://doi.org/10.35362/rie680201>
- Enright, E., & O'Sullivan, M. (2010). 'Can I do it in my pyjamas?' Negotiating a physical education curriculum with teenage girls. *European Physical Education Review*, 16(3), 203-222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X10382967>
- Enright, E., & O'Sullivan, M. (2012). Physical education "in all sorts of corners" student activists transgressing formal physical education curricular boundaries. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 83(2), 255-267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2012.10599856>
- Flintoff, A., & Scraton, S. (2006). Girls and physical education. In D. Kirk, D. MacDonald, & M. O'Sullivan (Eds.), *The handbook of physical education* (pp. 767-783). SAGE.
- Fraile García, J., Tejero-González, C. M., Esteban-Cornejo, I., & Veiga, Óscar L. (2019). Asociación entre disfrute, autoeficacia motriz, actividad física y rendimiento académico en educación física. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 36, 58-63. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v36i36.63035>
- García López, L. M., & Kirk, D. (2021). Coaches' perceptions of sport education: A response to precarity through a pedagogy of affect. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2021.1891211>

- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.
- Gómez-Collel, E. (2015). Adolescencia y deporte: ausencia de referentes femeninos en los medios para las adolescentes. *Apunts Educación Física y Deportes*, 122, 81-87. [https://doi.org/10.5672/apunts.2014-0983.es.\(2015/4\).122.09](https://doi.org/10.5672/apunts.2014-0983.es.(2015/4).122.09)
- Gutiérrez, D., & García López, L. M. (2012). Gender differences in game behaviour in invasion games. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 17(3), 289-301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2012.690379>
- Hamzeh, M., & Oliver, K. L. (2012). "Because I am Muslim, I cannot wear a swimsuit" Muslim girls negotiate participation opportunities for physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 83(2), 330-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2012.10599864>
- Jennings, L. B., Parra-Medina, D. M., Hilfinger-Messias, D. K., & McLoughlin, K. (2006). Toward a critical social theory of youth empowerment. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1), 31-55.
- Kirk, D., & Oliver, K. L. (2014). La misma historia de siempre: reproducción y reciclaje del discurso dominante en la investigación sobre la educación física de las chicas. *Apunts. Educación física y deportes*, 2(116), 7-22. [https://doi.org/10.5672/apunts.2014-0983.es.\(2014/2\).116.01](https://doi.org/10.5672/apunts.2014-0983.es.(2014/2).116.01)
- Kirk, D., Lamb, C., Oliver, K. L., Ewing-Day, R., Fleming, C., Loch, A., & Smedley, V. (2018). Balancing prescription with teacher and pupil agency: spaces for manoeuvre within a pedagogical model for working with adolescent girls. *The Curriculum Journal*, 29(2), 219-237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2018.1449424>
- Klomsten, A. T., Marsh, H. W., & Skaalvik, E. M. (2005). Adolescents' perceptions of masculine and feminine values in sport and physical education: A study of gender differences. *Sex Roles*, 52(9), 625-636. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-3730-x>
- Lamb, C. A., Oliver, K. L., & Kirk, D. (2018). 'Go for it Girl' adolescent girls' responses to the implementation of an activist approach in a core physical education programme. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(8), 799-811. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2018.1484724>
- Lamonedá, J., & Huerta, F. J. (2017). Análisis de la práctica deportiva recreativa, tipo de interacción motriz, uso del espacio e instalación en adolescentes en función del género. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 33, 30-34. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v0i32.49283>
- Lather, P.A. (1991). *Getting smart. Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. Routledge.
- Llanos Muñoz, R., Leo Marcos, F. M., López Gajardo, M. Ángel, Cano Cañada, E., & Sánchez Oliva, D. (2022). ¿Puede el Modelo de Educación Deportiva favorecer la igualdad de género, los procesos motivacionales y la implicación del alumnado en Educación Física? *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 46, 8-17.
- Lugueti, C., Dantas, L., Kirk, D., & Oliver, K. L. (2016). The development of an activist approach to working with boys from socially vulnerable backgrounds in a sport context and the emergence of learning aspirations. *AERA Online Paper Repository*.
- Lugueti, C., Oliver, K. L., Kirk, D., & Dantas, L. (2015). Exploring an activist approach of working with boys from socially vulnerable backgrounds in a sport context. *Sport, Education and Society*, 22(4), 493-510. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2015.1054274>
- Luis-de Cos, G., Arribas-Galarraga, S., Luis-de Cos, I., & Arruza Gabilondo, J. A. (2019). Competencia motriz, compromiso y ansiedad de las chicas en Educación Física. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 36, 231-238. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v36i36.64243>
- Mitchell, F., Gray, S., & Inchley, J. (2015). 'This choice thing really works ...' Changes in experiences and engagement of adolescent girls in physical education classes, during a school-based physical activity programme. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20(6), 593-611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2013.837433>
- Monforte, J., & Úbeda-Colomer, J. (2019). 'Como una chica': un estudio provocativo sobre estereotipos de género en educación física ('Like a girl': a provocative study on gender stereotypes in physical education). *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 36, 74-79. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v36i36.68598>
- Muñoz, A. P., Campos, J. M. L., Toro, E. O., & De Los Fayos, E. J. G. (2012). Programa para el desarrollo de actitudes de igualdad de género en clases de educación física en escolares. *Educación XXI*, 15(2), 271-291. <https://doi.org/10.5944/educxx1.15.2.142>
- Oliver, K. L., & Kirk, D. (2014). Towards an activist approach to research and advocacy for girls and physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 21(3), 313-327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2014.895803>
- Oliver, K. L., & Kirk, D. (2015). *Girls, gender and physical activity education: An activist approach*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315796239>
- Oliver, K. L., & McCaughtry, N. (2013). Lessons learned about gender equity and inclusion in Physical Education. En S. Dagkas y K. Armour (ED.), *Inclusion and exclusion through youth sport* (155-171). Routledge.
- Oliver, K. L., Hamzeh, M., & McCaughtry, N. (2009). Girly girls can play games: Co-Creating a curriculum of possibilities with fifth-grade girls. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 28, 90-110. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe.28.1.90>
- Oliver, K.L., & Oesterreich, H.A. (2013). Student-centred inquiry as curriculum as a model for field-based teacher Education. *Curriculum Studies*, 45(3), 394-417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2012.719550>
- Rodríguez-Fernández, J. E., Rico-Díaz, J., Neira-Martín, P. J., & Navarro-Patón, R. (2021). Actividad física realizada por escolares españoles según edad y género. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 39, 238-245. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v0i39.77252>
- Sánchez Hernández, N., Soler Prat, S., & Martos García, D. (2020). Pedagogía crítica para la concienciación en torno a la discriminación de género y la emancipación de las chicas en Educación Física. *Movimiento*, 26, e26035. <https://doi.org/10.22456/1982-8918.91171>
- Sánchez-Álvarez, I., Rodríguez-Menéndez, C., & García-Pérez, O. (2020). La educación física en educación primaria: espacio de construcción de las masculinidades y feminidades. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 38, 143-150. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v38i38.74343>
- Serra, P., Cantallops, J., Palou, P., & Soler, S. (2020). ¿Siguen existiendo los estereotipos de género en la Educación Física? La visión de las adolescentes. *Journal of Sport and Health Research*, 12(2), 179-192.
- Tapia López, A. (2019). Diferencias en los niveles de actividad física, grado de adherencia a la dieta mediterránea y autoconcepto físico en adolescentes en función del sexo. *Retos. Nuevas Tendencias en Educación Física, Deportes y Recreación*, 36, 185-192. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v36i36.67130>
- Van Acker, R., Da Costa, F. C., De Bourdeaudhuij, I., Cardon, G., & Haerens, L. (2010). Sex equity and physical activity levels in coeducational physical education: exploring the potential of modified game forms. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 15(2), 159-173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1740898902877609>











