Moving in the Margins

A qualitative study into the role of physical activity in marginalised communities

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mauri ora

Mauri tū

"An active soul is a healthy soul"

INTRODUCTION

Physical activity is an essential aspect of health and well-being that has been described as a human right (Messing et al., 2021). However, marginalised groups that are characterised by financial precarity and housing insecurity often experience reduced access to physical activity (Withall et al., 2011). In Wellington, the charitable organisation Wellington City Mission works to reduce financial barriers to physical activity by providing clients with passes to facilities such as leisure clubs and swimming pools, or sports equipment. Prior to this project, no research has investigated the outcomes of such subsidies.

Primary Research Question: What were the outcomes for clients receiving physical activity subsidies from Wellington City Mission?

METHOD

Semi-structured interviews with Wellington City Mission clients (N=12).

Key question

What outcomes have you experienced as a result being supported to be physically active?

Analysis

Interview transcripts verbatim were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS

Wellington City Mission provided participants opportunities for a wide variety of physical activities including swimming, sports, and martial arts. Participants described how they were given the opportunity to shape their own health and well-being in four interweaving areas: mental, behavioural, social & physical.

Management of existing mental health conditions

"You just push yourself, 'right I'm going to the gym, I'm gonna do this'... and that sort of kick-starts you out of your depression"

Improved body image and self-esteem

"I don't hate seeing outside some days feel like being

myself in a mirror... I genuinely would not go because I just didn't seen...but that's not stopping me anymore"

An alternative to maladaptive relationships

"I know for myself, meeting my friend, it's been good having someone else to talk to because I cut everyone out of my life that was in the drug scene"

Breaking down social barriers

"All of a sudden, you're talking away with someone you don't know, who has a completely different lifestyle...it takes you out of your world"

SHAPING HEALTH

Mental

Hinengaro

"When you've got someone who's lost weight, quit smoking, wants to go back to work, their faculties all back and is inspired again to start working for herself, you've got a win"

Positive outcomes that were transferable to other life areas

"Not only for me, for my kids to see me doing something positive... you can't buy that"

Opportunities to role model positive behaviours for tamariki

Physical Behavioural Tinana Whanonga

around the block, I could walk four times around because of the swimming and it increased my strength in the back...that's the best bit actually"

> Improvements in physical fitness

"Instead of walking once

"Walking down to the swimming pool on the concrete...it's very painful, so when I get in the water it's a relief... swimming has been a Godsend"

Management of chronic physical pain

CONCLUSION

By providing access to physical activity opportunities, Wellington City Mission have empowered people to positively shape their own health and lives and increase social capital within marginalised communities.

The results closely align with several models of well-being, including the pillars of Te Whare Tapa Whā model (including Hinengaro/mental, tinana/physical, and whānau/social) (Durie, 1985) and the psychological needs (autonomy, competence, & relatedness) outlined within **Self-Determination Theory** (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

From a wider societal context, these physical activity outcomes also aligned with tenets of Bailey et al's (2012) Human Capital **Model** (e.g., physical, social and individual capitals).

RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

There were some challenges in terms of securing interviews, due to the fact that participants often had competing priorities. However, this resulted in feeling privileged to have heard participants' stories.

THE FUTURE

Social

Whānau

Supporting marginalised communities to undertake physical activity can reap many benefits. By ensuring ongoing funding to support physical activity subsidies, organisations such as Wellington City Mission are in a strong position to uphold and improve the social capital and the health and wellbeing of the people in these communities.

> "I can feel the aroha in this building and it definitely, you know, what you give is what you get back, so it's helping to build everyone in the community to become better and stronger as a unit."

RESEARCH IMPACT

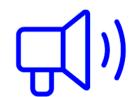
Brings scientific inquiry and rigor to a community setting

Highlights the social impact of the work of organisations such as Wellington City Mission





Giving communities a voice to be heard



Provides an evidence base for the purpose of future funding for physical activity



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