Author’s response to reviews

Title: Sport and ageing: A systematic review of the determinants and trends of participation in sport for older adults

Authors:

Claire Jenkin (claire.jenkin@vu.edu.au)
Rochelle Eime (r.eime@federation.edu.au)
Hans Westerbeek (hans.westerbeek@vu.edu.au)
Grant O'Sullivan (grant.osullivan@vu.edu.au)
Jannique van Uffelen (jannique.vanuffelen@kuleuven.be)

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Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you for the review of our paper and your suggestions to improve this manuscript. Please see below our response to the reviewers' comments. In the attached revised manuscript, the changes are highlighted in tracked changes.

Reviewer 1:

General comment: I enjoyed reading this well written manuscript. It is important to determine why older adults participate or continue to participate in sport, so that we can support engagement in these activities for all the health and social benefits they provide.

Author response: Thank you. No changes required.

Title: I note the age range of the included studies, I feel that describing the populations included as 'middle to older age' would better cover the findings.

Author response: Whilst the age range of included studies does vary, we have only included results that are specific for adults that are defined as older adults in this article (aged 50+ years). Therefore we have left the title as is.
Abstract: Clear & concise. If word count allowed, it would be valuable to the reader to have an idea of the age range and that both qualitative and quantitative studies were included.

Author response: The age range and the type of studies included in this review have now been added on P2L32 and P2L39:

“Physical activity can positively influence older adults’ (aged 50 years and older) health.”

“English language quantitative and qualitative studies that provided specific results for community dwelling older adults’ sport participation were included and a quality ratings assessment was undertaken.”

Introduction: Good, P4L75-78 could be clearer.

Author response: This sentence has now been re-written (P4L73-75) and now reads:

“As the determinants of participation may vary for different forms of exercise (Martin and Sinden [24]), specific research for older adults and general community sport participation is required.”

Method:

1. Clearer definition of aims, especially determinants.

Author response: We have clarified the definition of determinants, using the Condello et al. (2017) reference provided (P6L109-112):

“Seven categories of determinants (biological, psychological, behavioural, physical, socio-cultural, socio-economic and policy) [36] that can influence participation or non-participation have been previously identified and were used in the inclusion criteria.”

Method:

2. Please write CINAHL in full.

Author response: This has been completed (P7L124).
Method:

3. Definition of older adults, as with my comment in the title, I would recommend terming older adults as over 60 in keeping with the WHO definition.

Author response: The age associated with ‘older adults’ is being regularly challenged. The WHO (2015) have argued there should be a shift away from chronological ageing, whilst others have argued for the move towards ‘social age’ (Hamilton, 2012). Furthermore, there seems to be no set international standard of the age for older adults. In sport, this is especially true, as Masters competitors can start from 20 years old to categories for 100+ years old. In community sport for example, Sport England define older adults (in their Active Ageing project) as 55 years and older. In the articles included in this paper that included Masters/Senior Games participants, the ages ranged from 52-89 years old. Also, other studies from this wider research project classifying older adults as 50+ years have been accepted in other high quality journals. We appreciate that in general physical activity, the age for older adults is often defined as 60 or 65 years old, however this is not the case for sport.

Method:

4. Figure 1 & 2 would be better placed in the results section.

Author response: We have followed the PRISMA Guidelines for Systematic Reviews (2009) for structuring the methods and results sections. These guidelines suggest that descriptions of the data collection process and the handling of the data should be placed in the methods section.

Method:

5. P8L163-169 requires clarity for the reader - I would recommend after 'not applicable' inserting (N/A) and actually stating that the n/a's were excluded from the quantitative studies final score by[insert P8L165-166]. I feel that the symbols would be better replaced by words to make it easier for the reader, for example replace - with minus, etc. And finally, stating there was no n/a option for the qualitative section.

Author response: As suggested, we have amended this section to enable readers to better understand how Kmet et al.'s quality ratings are calculated (P8L163-P9170):

“Response options (and score) for each quality rating item for both research designs were ‘yes’ (2), ‘partial’ (1), or ‘no’ (0). [39] For the quantitative studies, a ‘not applicable’ (N/A) score was also used. There were three stages to calculate the overall score. Firstly, the total possible score was 28 minus (number of N/A’s x2). Then the total score was (number of ‘yes’ x2) plus (number of ‘partial’ x1). The not applicable sections were excluded from the total score. Therefore the
summary score was calculated by the total score divided by the total possible score. The final score for each qualitative study was calculated by: Total sum equalled (number of ‘yes’ x2) plus (number of ‘partial’ x1) divided by the total possible sum of 20. The not applicable option was not available for the qualitative score. [39]"

Results:

1. P9L201 P<0.00, has this been rounded?

Author response: On SPSS, the output gave an approximate significance of 0.000. This is unfortunately a limitation of the software, but we have altered this figure in the text to read (p < 0.001) to accurately present the score (P10L202).

Results:

2. Table 2 - Extra line space in 'Health Determinants' row

Author response: We have amended this section of the table (P10L207).

Results:

3. Table 2 - Subthemes for competition - value, enjoyment…?

Author response: The sub-themes for competition have now been identified in Table 2 (P11L207).

Results:

4. Table 2 Sport Type - should this box be merged with the one below?

Author response: Thank you for picking up this formatting error. We have revised this accordingly.

Results:

5. P14L308 - "Majority" but n=2 for Germany and n=2 for Belgium

Author response: This text has been amended to now read (P16L303-304):
“The majority of the studies were located in Germany (n=2), [53, 57] and Belgium (n=2), [54, 55] with other studies undertaken in Japan (n=1), [58] The Netherlands (n=1), [59] Spain (n=1), [54] and the USA (n=1) [60] respectively.”

Discussion: Results and discussion are interesting.

I was surprised that environmental factors did not feature in the results, perhaps this should be included in the recommendations for more research in socio-demographic factors P20L437-L446.

Author response: The section on socio-demographic factors (P22L429) has been amended to include a reference to the physical environment:

“As these influences, such as gender, socio-economic status, physical environment and family background, have been shown to be influential for other age groups, [75-77] it is recommended that more research on these influences is undertaken to further investigate these findings and understand their importance (or lack of) for this age group.”

Reviewer 2

General comment: I think that this is a well written and well researched literature review on Sport and Ageing. As the authors have identified there is certainly a paucity of research amongst this age cohort where sport is concerned. I don’t have any real concerns with the paper as it provides a comprehensive analyses of the literature in this field.

I think that the methods were appropriate and well documented. To be frank, the findings are not overly "earth shattering " and they were to be expected. Having said that, the authors can only comment on the data that is at hand much of the data that has been conducted is somewhat bland. The next phase of this research field is to develop new and innovative sport based physical activity interventions for older adults. I think the recommendations the authors allude to are sound.

Author response: Thank you. No changes required.