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IC - (20943) - CHILDREN'S INDEPENDENT MOBILITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Inês A. Ferreira¹; Ferdinando Fornara¹; Marco Guicciardi¹; Vanessa Pinna¹; Andrea Manca¹

1 - Department of Pedagogy, Psychological Sciences and Philosophy, University of Cagliari

Background and objectives

Previous literature on children's independent mobility (CIM), i.e. the freedom to travel and/or play in outdoor spaces without adult supervision, has predominantly focused on its predictors. Less studies have analyzed its outcomes, with most of them focusing on the physical (Schoeppe et al., 2013) rather than the psychological (Waygood et al, 2017) consequences. The aim of this systematic literature review is to describe and analyse available literature on CIM and school-aged children's psychological development and well-being in urban neighbourhoods.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

A literature search was run between May and July 2021 using nine electronic databases. From 320 hits, 109 were selected for full-text analysis after abstract screening (excluding those not written in English, or not including a psychological variable in relation to CIM, or not empirical). After the exclusion of articles focusing solely on CIM's psychological predictors (n=74), 40 were submitted to an inter-rater full-text analysis, done by three judges. A final sample of 20 studies were selected for a thematic analysis.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Reviewed studies were conducted between 2001 and 2020, mainly in Europe. Most were quantitative studies, focusing on consequences of CIM in school-aged children up to 15 years old. Preliminary results suggest a prevalence of studies analyzing child psychological outcomes in terms of benefits for children's socio-emotional development (n= 12; e.g., reduced fear of crime, increased sociability and/or sense of community) and for their cognitive development (n= 8; e.g., increased spatial knowledge). Outcomes of the ongoing thematic analysis will be discussed.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Empirical studies on psychosocial consequences of CIM are lacking, perhaps partly due to the recent decline of CIM (Shaw et al., 2015). Moreover, physical activity benefits of CIM for children have been overlooked in relation to its psychological advantages. This review highlights CIM's contribute to children's cognitive and socio-emotional growth, emphasizing the need for more research on this topic.

Palavras-chave : CIM; development; well-being; psychological; literature review