The aim of the study was to know the factors that influence boys and girls? perceptions for performing physical activity during playground recess from their own perspective. Ninety-eight schoolchildren aged 8?11 years from five schools from Cuenca (Spain) participated in 22 focus groups and carried out 98 drawings following the socioecological model as a theoretical framework. A content analysis of the transcripts from the focus groups and drawings was carried out by three researchers. Results showed that, in spite of boys and girls identified same barriers, there were gender differences in their perceptions. Gender socialization was the key as central category and helped to understand these differences. Boys preferred play football and this sport had a monopoly on the recess space. Weather was a barrier for boys. Girls and boys, who did not play football, were relegated to peripheral areas and lack of materials was a barrier for them. Teachers were a barrier for all children who did not play football. Thus, in order to promote recess physical activity, researchers, teachers and educational policy makers should take into account gender socialization and promote inclusive non-curricular physical activity in schools. © 2017 The Author(s).
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