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## Background

- Children with developmental disabilities (DD) have been found to exhibit more behaviour problems than their typically developing peers (Baker, 2003).
- Previous findings suggest that these higher rates of behaviour problems can lead to increased parental stress and family problems (Hastings, 2002).
- While authors suggest that supports and psychological variables may mediate the behaviour-stress relationship, the role of a child's participation in sports has rarely been examined (Weiss, 2008).

## Method

Great Outcomes for Kids Impacted by Severe Developmental Disabilities (GO4KIDDS) is an ongoing research project examining the health, wellbeing and social inclusion of children with severe DD. The current study used data collected from a GO4KIDDS' Basic Survey completed by parents of children with severe DD from across Canada through an online survey system.

### Participant Characteristics:

Children:

- N = 268 children (30% girls)
- Range in age from 5-18 years ( $M = 11.05$ ,  $SD = 3.59$ )
- Had a range of DD's and ASD's

Parents:

- N = 268 parents (89% mothers)
- Range in age from 27-58 years ( $M = 41.90$ ,  $SD = 7.46$ )
- 75% of parents were married/commonlaw

### Measures:

- The Basic Survey asks brief questions about: Age, gender, parent ratings of child behaviour problems, frequency of child participation in sport
- *Activities Questionnaire* (Adapted from Solish et al., 2010)
  - Parents reported on child participation in recreational (sports team) activities. Frequency of participation was rated on a scale from 1 to 5: 1 = never, 5 = very often
- *Revised Caregiver Appraisal Scales* (Lawton et al., 2000)
  - Parents completed the Caregiver Burden subscale ( $\alpha = .89$ ) as a measure of parental burden
  - 9 items, e.g., 'How often do you feel very tired as a result of caring for \_\_\_?'

## Results

- A significant relationship was found between the predictor, child behaviour problems, and the outcome variable, parental burden ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ).
- A relationship was also found between the mediator, child participation in sport, and the outcome variable, parental burden ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ).
- A significant relationship was not observed between child behaviour problems and child participation in sports ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p = .07$ ).
- The mediator did not significantly reduce the strength of the relationship between child behaviour problems and parental burden. Child participation in sport as a partial mediator of the relationship between child behaviour problems and parental burden was not supported using a Sobel test (Sobel = 1.5,  $p = .13$ ).

## Purpose

- The purpose of the present study is to investigate the relationship among behavioural problems in children with DD, participation in child sports, and parental burden.

## Hypotheses

- Parents of children with more behaviour problems will report a greater sense of burden.
- Parents of children who participate more frequently in sport will report less burden.
- Child participation in sport will mediate the relationship between child behaviour problems and parental burden.

## Results

Figure 1. Frequency of child participation in sport as reported by parents

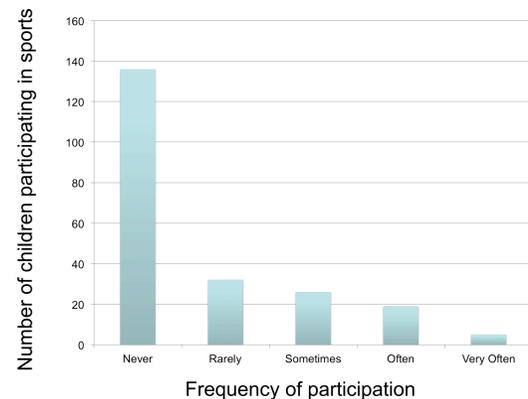


Figure 2. Frequency of child behaviour problems (aggressive and self-injurious behaviours) as reported by parents

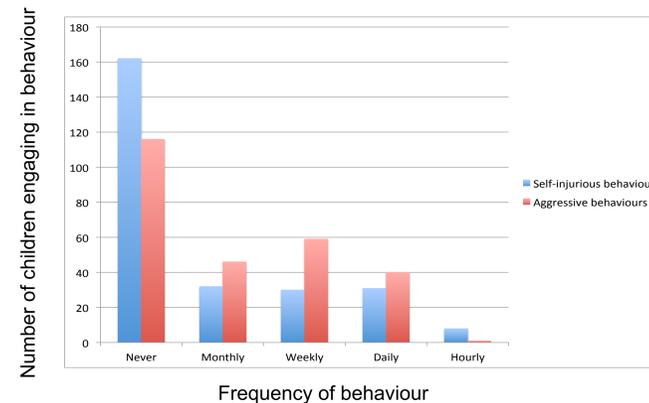


Figure 3. Relationship between child behaviour problems and parental burden

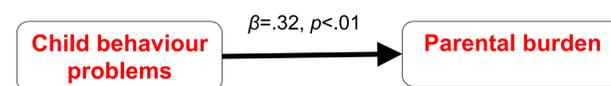
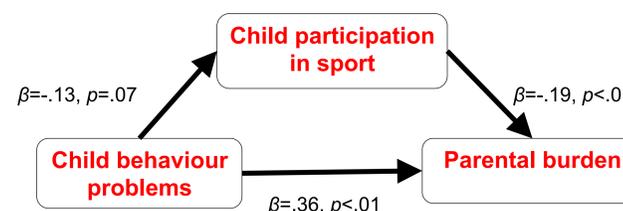


Figure 4. Mediating effect of child participation in sport on the relationship between child behaviour problems and parental burden



## Discussion

- As hypothesized, results suggest that a child's frequency of behaviour problems is related to caregiver burden. Specifically, more behaviour problems were predictive of greater reports of parental burden. These results support previous findings which suggest that having a child with DD with increased behavioural difficulties can lead to greater stress and burden for families (Hastings, 2002).
- Also as expected, a child's participation in sport was related to parental burden. More frequent participation in sport for children was predictive of lower parental burden. This finding complements previous studies which have found that the higher a parent's involvement in their child's sport, the lower their reports of stress (Weiss & Diamond, 2005).
- As well, a negative trend was found in the relationship between child behaviour problems and participation in sport. The degree of a child's behaviour problems may reduce the likelihood of their ability to participate in sport, as significant disruptions during practices or events may affect whether they can be involved in future events.
- The mediation model was not significant, such that the relationship between child behaviour problems and parental burden was not explained through child participation in sport. There are likely other difficulties for parents beyond child participation in sport and behavioural problems which could also affect a parent's sense of burden. Therefore a more complex model may be needed to understand the relationship among these variables.
- Future research could explore how other child and community variables (e.g., child health, sport access/availability, etc) may affect families' sense of burden.