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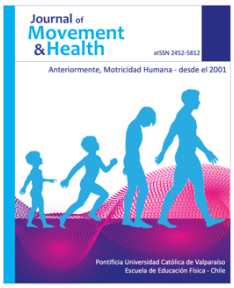

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Original article

Primary school teacher´s perception on the implementation of an active breaks program (Activa-Mente)

Percepción de los profesores de primaria sobre la implementación de un programa de descansos activos (Activa-Mente)

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Abstract
Objective: To identify teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the Activa-Mente active breaks program. **Methods**: Interpretive paradigm, within the qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Six teachers who implemented the Activa-Mente active breaks program in a sixth-grade class at a public school in the Valparaíso region participated. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview and analyzed using ATLAS.ti 23 software. **Results**: Teachers perceived that implementing the Activa-Mente active breaks program was a good idea for incorporating physical activity into the classroom. In addition, they observed that active breaks improved student participation and behavior. However, teachers felt that physical activity should be linked to the academic content of each subject and also that there should be a greater amount. **Conclusion**: Teachers perceive that the implementation of active breaks through the Activa-Mente program is appropriate for incorporating physical activity during classroom activities, and that even younger ages should be considered for its implementation.

Keywords: physical activity program; active break; perception; teachers

Resumen
Objetivo: Identificar la percepción docente de la implementación del programa de descansos activos Activa-Mente. **Métodos:** Paradigma interpretativo, en el ámbito del enfoque cualitativo con un diseño fenomenológico. Participaron seis profesores quienes implementaron el programa de descansos activos Activa-Mente en un sexto básico de un colegio público de la región de Valparaíso. Los datos fueron recolectados mediante una entrevista semi-estructurada y fueron analizados en el software ATLAS.ti 23. **Resultados:** Los profesores perciben que implementar el programa de descansos activos Activa-Mente fue una buena idea para incorporar actividad física en el aula. Además, observaron que los descansos activos mejoraron la participación, así como el comportamiento de los estudiantes. Sin embargo, los profesores percibieron que los descansos activos deberían estar articulados con el contenido académico de cada asignatura y también que debería haber una mayor cantidad. **Conclusión:** Los profesores perciben que la aplicación de descansos activos a través del programa Activa-Mente es adecuada para incorporar actividad física durante las actividades en el aula, así como también que se deberían considerar edades aún más tempranas para su aplicación.

Palabras clave: programa de actividad física; descanso activo; percepción; profesores

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Key points

- The teachers' perceptions, was positive of the Activa-Mente active breaks program implementation.
- These active breaks interventions through audiovisual capsules help to capture students' attention and break class monotony.
- The teachers suggest that the active breaks aligned with the curricular content.

Introduction

Currently, the benefits of physical activity for people's integral health are well known, however, most children do not comply with the minimum recommendation (60 minutes daily of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity) of daily physical activity proposed by the World Health Organization[1]. Moreover, it has been indicated that the daily levels of moderate and vigorous physical activity decrease with age, with a marked decline during the Primary Education period[2,3]. Thus, the promotion of an active lifestyle during childhood has become a primary educational and public health objective in today's society. In this sense, school is the ideal environment for promoting the practice of physical activity (PA) in children and teenagers throughout schooling period[4,5], since the mandatory nature of schooling allows educational activities to reach all children, regardless of its individual characteristics. Nevertheless, academic teaching and learning activities inside the classroom are predominantly sedentary[6], prompting students to remain seated 70% of the school day[7].

In order to interrupt the prolonged sedentary behavior in which students are found[8], diverse studies recommend the PA incorporation inside the classroom[9-12]. These interventions have the potential to improve PA levels and to reduce children and teenagers' sedentary time, and could even positively influence academic activities[13]. In this context, the active breaks (ABs) strategy arises, which constitutes one of the recommended ways to perform PA during the class periods[12]. Such initiatives are attractive, because with an efficient use of time[8] increases have been reported in the level of both moderate and vigorous intensity of physical activity, in addition to a positive influence of academic behavior[14,15]. The implementation of interventions that incorporate ABs could be affected by school context, in other words, teachers' knowledge, school's willingness, academic record, students' behavior, among other factors[16].

Regarding the factors mentioned above, one of the main ones is teachers' disposition, since they are directly involved in their execution in the classroom. In this sense, the previous evidence suggests that teachers are willing to find ways for students to be physically active during normally sedentary activities in the classroom[17]. In fact, it has been reported that when ABs is easy to apply and involves no additional effort, teachers show a better willingness to incorporate it in their lesson planning with the purpose of strengthening work on students' academic tasks[18]. However, the ABs implementation has not yet been systematically incorporated into classrooms, since its study is currently at an early stage[19] and more studies about the acceptability of these interventions are needed[20]. Specifically, it is necessary to know the enabling elements and the difficulties generated by the different variables of school context, in order to contribute and to improve the design of interventions with ABs.

Therefore, analyzing teachers' perceptions of the implementation of ABs programs is fundamental in deciding which ABs program to apply, in order to facilitate decision-making regarding the incorporation of physical activity in the classroom [21]. Considering this background, the objective of this study is to identify teachers' perception on the implementation of the ABs program Activa-Mente, implemented in a school in the Valparaíso region of Chile.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5027/jmh-Vol23-Issue1(2026)art275

Methods

In order to understand teachers' perception on the implementation of the ABs program Activa-Mente (Table 1). The program was implemented for six weeks and was applied daily, six times during each school day[19]. The study is positioned under an interpretive paradigm, in the framework of qualitative approach with phenomenological design[22].

Table 1. Description Active Break of the Activa-Mente program

Approaches	Organization: Activa-Mente video (audiovisual stimulus)	Duration
Students beside their desks	Beginning: general instructions	1 min
Teacher's instructions to the class	Physical activity: 6 activities	3 min
Instructions of the video guide	Execution of each activity (e.g., skipping, jumps, jumping jacks)	20s
	Recovery and explanation of following activity	10s
Instructions from the video guide	End: reincorporation to the other class activities	30s
	Total time active break Activa-Mente	4min 30s

min: minutes; s: seconds.

Participants

Participants were selected through intentional sampling[23], since the informants were the teachers who implemented the program. Which allows the selection of cases according to specific criteria established by the research team. According to this selection strategy, the selected informants are characterized by providing information that is relevant, through a high capacity for reflection on the topic under study[23,24]. The informants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: a) to have at least two years of work experience in the educational institution where the ABs Activa-Mente program was implemented, b) to have implemented the ABs Activa-Mente program through the audiovisual capsules at least 6 times a day for 6 weeks, c) to conduct systematic classes in various subjects of the school curriculum, except physical education, d) have a minimum of 4 years of teaching experience. The informant teachers taught classes in the sixth grade of elementary school, with students with an average age of 11.7 years. The participants of the Activa-Mente program implementation were 7 teachers, of whom only 6 were included in the sample (1 of the teachers was separated from the school). Specifically, three men and three women with an average age of 46 years participated in this study and an average of 19±10.9 years of experience in the school system (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' Characteristics

Participant N°	Age (years)	Education experience (years)	Subject	Years in the school	Teacher's school role	Weeks of ABs	Data type
T1	39	4	Visual Arts	2	ST	6	I
T2	40	18	Mathematics	7	ST, LT	6	I
T3	51	30	English	10	ST	6	I
T4	32	10	Natural Science	3	ST	6	I
T5	52	20	Language	8	ST	6	I
T6	62	32	Natural Science	NS	ST	6	I

NS: Not Specified, T: Teacher, ST: Subject Teacher, LD: Lead Teacher, I: Interview, ABs: Active breaks.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5027/jmh-Vol23-Issue1(2026)art275

Data collection

The data collection instrument used was a semi-structured interview of 8 questions[22]. The purpose of the semi-structured interview is to learn about relevant aspects of people's lives, to inquire about their perspective, as well as to collect information as accurately as possible[23,24,25]. In the case of this study, the purpose of the interview was to inquire about the perceptions that teachers had when implementing the ABs Activa-Mente program, as well as the factors that most influence its implementation, its strengths and weaknesses. This instrument was reviewed and validated by a group of three experts from different areas (qualitative research, educational psychology and ABs). The experts reviewed the interview script based on the following criteria: wording, coherence, clarity and relevance to the topic[28] (Table 3).

Table 3. Dimensions and Questions for Teachers Regarding the Activa-Mente Program

Number	Dimension	Question
N.° 1	What is teachers' perception on active break?	Before putting in application the Activa-Mente program, did you meet or know about active breaks? Explain it. In relation to the previous question, do you know other program about active breaks?
N.° 2	What are the factors that teachers identify that may influence the implementation of the Activa-Mente program?	Could you describe the behavior of your students during and after the application of the active break conducted in your classes? Do you consider that the Activa-Mente program is a technological tool to be implemented in your classes? Why? To conduct the active breaks, video capsules were used, do you suggest or would you implement other methodology to perform the active breaks? Considering the audiovisual capsules production of the active break (taking into account the exercise types, music, animations, among others), what is your opinion about these types of interventions?
N.° 3	What are the strengths and weaknesses of implementing the Activa-Mente program?	Could you mention a strength or weakness about the implementation of active breaks in your classes? Finally, would you implement the Activa-Mente active breaks program in your classes? Why?

The interviews, which had an estimated duration of 15 minutes, were conducted by two members of the research team, specially trained for the application of semi-structured interviews. The dynamic used was to contextualize each participant about the interview, and then start recording and taking notes of the answers on the question script. The data collection had a duration of three days and was carried out in the school building where the Activa-Mente program was implemented.

Ethic

The study is part of the Activa-Mente Project, approved by the Scientific Ethics Committee of the Universidad de Playa Ancha (Nº 005-2022). The participants signed an informed consent in order to participate in the interview and therefore maintain data's confidentiality.

Data analysis

For data analysis, the content analysis technique was used with an open coding system[26]. In addition, systematic searches were performed on the information collected to detect emerging patterns in all types of data[27]. The analysis was carried out using the following procedure: patterns related to teachers'

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5027/jmh-Vol23-Issue1(2026)art275

perceptions of the ABs program were established, which was from several systematic readings of the interview transcripts and reflective annotations of the responses. Subsequent searches of the data resulted in the identification of themes related to key features of program implementation in relation to teachers' preferences. Data associated with each participant were analyzed individually and constant comparison methods were used to identify the most frequently referenced characteristics within each theme across all cases[31]. To ensure the validity, depth and breadth of the results, researcher triangulation has been used[32].

The triangulation analysis was carried out by the researchers, which allowed the data to be coded, and subsequently the different themes were analyzed, allowing the categorization of the training and verifying the possible appearance of emerging topics. The qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti (23) was used. To support the collected audio data, it was first transcribed into text and incorporated into ATLAS.ti software. Then, key segments were coded by creating citations and identifying codes/labels to thematically organize the collected information. This allowed for the construction of connections between codes and concepts, facilitating the interpretation of the findings.

Results

The teachers interviewed had an average of 15 years of experience in the school context. On the other hand, in accordance with the objective of the study and teachers' answers, categories were articulated and formed, which allowed to organize results in the following items (Table 4). In this category, contextual factors that influence the Activa-Mente program implementation are presented in relation to the perception and characteristics that teachers identified most relevant. Teachers highlighted that, during the ABs application, teachers commented that students showed interest and participation in most exercises. However, after the activity, students occasionally remained active and presented difficulties to resume class activities: "They stayed in the mood to talk to each other in a more cheerful way…" TP2); "During the application of these breaks I saw students' participation, most of them did all the exercises…" T1); "It was not easy to return to the activity that was taking place before and resuming is very difficult…" T2).

On the other hand, teachers also identified that students' age (pre-adolescence) influenced the lack of motivation to move during the ABs application. Despite this, they mention that there was a noticeable additional attention from students to the class tasks after performing ABs: "I think age also plays a big part, the pre-adolescence to not wanting to do what is imposed…" T3); "It is a little difficult age stage because they are pre-adolescents…" T2); "I saw that same attention reflected in the class after carrying out this activity…" T1).

Strengths and weaknesses of the Activa-Mente program implementation

The main strength of the Activa-Mente ABs program identified by teachers was the use of audiovisual stimuli (capsules), as they helped to reactivate students' mood and motivation, as well as to capture their attention more effectively. In addition, these ABs broke with the classes monotony and allowed the vast majority of students to participate in a dynamic way, avoiding that some were ignored or marginalized during breaks, since these are inclusive (with the use of sign language, adaptation to motor difficulty, subtitled instructions and audio). They also considered it positive to take students out of their passive state and get them more involved in academic activities, which is beneficial for their commitment to the class: "Reactivating a little bit the students' mood and motivation and mostly all the attention…" T5); "The strengths were to break the scheme of monotony of classes…" T2); "Strengths, I would say, that it has to do with the fact that everyone participates more dynamically and no one is ignored or left out of the break…" T1); "As a strength I say, and repeat again that it is good to suddenly get the children out of being so passive…" T6).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5027/jmh-Vol23-Issue1(2026)art275

Besides, some weaknesses detected in the Activa-Mente program implementation were that some students did not want to participate, and in relation to the capsules, it was pointed out that the reduced number of capsules led to the repetition of these on some occasions: "Weakness I think was the issue of when some students wanted to participate and others did not…" T4); "There were very few capsules and they were repeated at some point…" T2); "They did not work well, some activities were repeated…" T6).
Teachers' perception on the Activa-Mente ABs program implementation

Table 4. Organization of the results of the teachers' perception.

Category	Subcategory
Perceptions on active breaks	Knowledge about active breaks.
	Benefits of active breaks.
	Lack of knowledge about active breaks in school.
	Active breaks very in other working areas.
Factors teachers identify that influence the implementation of the Activa-Mente Program	Students' behavior after the active breaks.
	Students' motivation in relation to the Activa-Mente program.
	Students' participation in the Activa-Mente program.
	Students' age.
	Students' general behavior during the Activa-Mente program implementation.
Strengths and weaknesses of the Activa-Mente Program	Activa-Mente Program Weaknesses.
	Activa-Mente Program Strengths.
Perception on the implementation of the Activa-Mente Program	Support in teaching work.
	Methodology implementation used by the Activa-Mente program.
	Recommendations for the Activa-Mente Program.
	Reflections and observations about the Activa-Mente program.

Note: The data presented in this table come from the teachers' stories obtained through the semi-structured interview.

To understand this phenomenon in a simpler way, a general perception was formed considering the categories of analysis with respect to the Activa-Mente program implementation. In relation to this, teachers established that: Implementing this program is a good idea, especially at early ages, as it enhances the students' participation and behavior, it helps to redirect the students' attention and breaks with the monotonous routine of the class: "At earlier ages, because they will take it much more seriously…" T3); "After finishing the ABs there was a noticeable additional attention to what was happening in class…" T5); "I consider that it's true, I think that it is a good routine breaker…" T2).

However, they suggested that the ABs implementation must be planned so that teachers could adapt the recoveries to the class content, as well as that changes could be implemented in the physical space or carry out the ABs in moments of distraction for students. Moreover, they propose that the activities be planned in a varied way in order to maintain the students' interest, since some teachers mentioned that the implementation would depend on the moment and situation of the ABs application, as well as on students' motivation: "More focused on the pedagogical activities of the subject. Maybe doing an activity linked to some content, perhaps adding the physical space, changing the space…" T2); "I would

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5027/jmh-Vol23-Issue1(2026)art275

implement it considering the students' moments of distraction and as a way to get their attention back and that allows me to redirect the class…" T1).

Regarding the use of technological tools, teachers mentioned that, although it is not the ABs central axis, it is a dynamic way of carrying out the ABs and a visual tool that helps to bring back students' attention, as well as to enrich teachers' work: "If you add this activity, I feel that you are going to encourage them to continue…" T6); "I think that it is a great support for the work a teacher can perform…" T5); "It's enriching for maybe some teachers like me that don't know very well about this…" T3).

Discussion

The ABs is a promising option for increasing the PA levels inside the classroom[33]. In this sense, the study was focused on knowing the primary teachers' perceptions on the ABs program Activa-Mente implementation, for the purpose of identifying the different factors that may influence in the implementation of this type of programs. Taking into account the complexity of the factors that could influence the ABs intervention's implementations[11], this study contributes to expanding the previous results in relation to the enabling elements and the difficulties found by teachers during its implementation.

This study's results indicate that teachers considered the Activa-Mente ABs Program implementation to be positive. This finding coincides with the study conducted by Martin and Murtagh[34] in which it is mentioned that teachers positively perceived AB interventions in the classroom during English and mathematics lessons. On the other hand, the results also show that teachers propose adapting the ABs to the content taught in each session, which coincides with the previous scientific evidence on implementing AB adapted to curricular needs (subject content) in order to increase the viability of the program[9].

Among the strengths that teachers identified on implementing this type of ABs was the audiovisual tool use (capsules/videos) that effectively captured students' attention. Likewise, they also identified that after performing the ABs, teachers noticed an additional attention to the class tasks. This perception of the teachers coincides with a systematic review that compares the ABs performed in children inside and outside the classroom[15]. On the other hand, teachers indicated that implementing these audiovisual capsules is very helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the material and it may enrich teaching work, which responds to the evidence that establishes that teachers need help to incorporate ABs in the classes[18,21]. From the above, the use of technological resources such as those described in this study, are a potential tool which is being used in developing countries. For instance, the European project Eumove is currently developing a variety of didactic resources that promote physical activity in the educational context.

Among the weaknesses found, teachers pointed out that, over time, the activities carried out in the Activa-Mente program became repetitive due to the certain number of audiovisual capsules available (32 capsules). This could be complemented by a study conducted with children between 8-12 years old, where teachers used "Activity Breaks cards" to implement in a simple and varied way the AB inside the classroom[35]. The relevance of this study findings lies in responding to the need to research on the implementation of ABs programmes[21] and also opens the possibility of knowing the strengths and weaknesses of using this type of interventions at school from teachers' perception.

Conclusion

From teachers' perceptions, a positive evaluation of the Activa-Mente program implementation was evident, detecting more strengths than weaknesses in the program's execution. Mainly, they pointed

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5027/jmh-Vol23-Issue1(2026)art275

out that these ABs interventions through audiovisual capsules help to capture students' attention and break class monotony. However, the weakness they emphasized most was the small number of video capsules available for use. In conclusion, the teachers who implemented the Activa-Mente ABs program have a favorable perception of using this type of intervention, as it generates students' interest and participation. They also consider that it helps redirect their attention to the class content. Moreover, they suggest that these ABs interventions should be carried out at times when students are distracted and aligned with the curricular content covered in the class. It is recommended that this line of research be continued in order to expand the existing knowledge of teachers' perceptions of school-based programs that incorporate ABs. Additionally, future research should refine its methodological design, especially in terms of sample size. It is advisable to increase the sample size and strengthen the objectivity, validity, and reliability of the evaluation instrument.

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