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Folkesundhed i et velfærdssamfund under forandring – Hvordan skaber vi socialt bæredygtige løsninger?

Theme: Forebyggelse og sundhedsfremme i nærmiljøet

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Title

Active commuting; an effective and comprehensive activity to integrate enhanced physical activity into everyday life.

Presentation

Oral presentation in a session

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Keywords

Active commuting, cycling, walking, health, neighbourhood, students,

Background

A neighbourhood is categorised as a physical and social area where people interact with each other and their physical environment. In general, people spend most of their leisure-time in their homes and in the neighbourhood. Research studies investigating different neighbourhoods have found that comprehensive design with mixed landscape use and green areas has an impact on how we behave in every day.

In general, neighbourhoods within Denmark have mixed landscape use improving traffic safety, accessibility and well-being of the inhabitants. This could be one of the reasons that Denmark has a strong and well-developed cycling culture. Historically, the city planning and urban design of the infrastructure in Denmark has been comprehensive, with good walkable paths and cycle lanes, compared to other countries such as Mediterranean countries and the US [1]. A research study by Heinen et al. (2010) found that cycling routes, pathways, and infrastructure and traffic safety are factors that impact attitude towards active commuting.

Regularly walking and cycling to and from school, work or study area could be an effective and comprehensive way to integrate health enhanced physical activity into everyday life. The aim of this study was to investigate the

associations between commuting mode and environmental factors in a group of young students in Aalborg municipality in Denmark.

Theory and method

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the “Ecological model of four domains of Active living” developed by Sallis and colleagues in 2006. A cross sectional study design was developed of an internet survey for gather data about students` commuting behaviour and the influence of environmental factors.

Results and conclusion

In total, 348 students responded to the questionnaire which was distributed through Facebook. In total, 80.5 % were categorised as active commuters and 19.5 % were categorised as passive commuters. The results showed a significant difference between active and passive commuters. The active commuters perceived the traffic as more safe, were more content with the commuting routes and were more satisfied with maintain of the bicycling paths, than the passive commuters. On the other hand, distance was found to be the most prominent factor for passive commuters. Hence, environmental factors were found to be less important than distance when choosing transport mode among students.

Implications for further research, policy or practice

Well maintained commuting routes and bicycling paths seem to impact the way students choose to commute during their daily living activities. Thus, communities and municipalities should focus on initiatives that invest in well-maintained bicycles routes in all areas where people live.

Reference

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2. Heinen E, Van Wee B, Maat K: **Commuting by Bicycle: An Overview of the Literature.** *Transport Reviews* 2010, **30**(1):59-96.