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Introduction: Physical activity at school can be beneficial to all children's psychosocial well-being, if an inclusive and supportive environment is created. The purpose of this study was to investigate how pupils experienced a school physical activity intervention based on Self-Determination Theory and to assess how it affected the pupils' sense of competence, autonomy and relatedness.

Methods: The multicomponent intervention comprised recess, in-class activities and PE and lasted one school year. Two grade four classes (ages 9–10) and two grade six classes (ages 12–13) at two participating schools were selected for a qualitative case study. Ten semi-structured focus group interviews were carried out, involving 36 pupils. The data were analysed based on the principles of deductive content analysis

Results: Findings showed that the pupils' sense of relatedness was central to well-being and influenced their sense of competence and autonomy. Changing the physical activity climate to focus on competence development instead of competition was challenging, but resulted in positive experiences, especially for pupils with limited motivation. Finally, while being given influence and choice evidently promoted the sense of autonomy, some pupils felt uncomfortable with a responsibility involving others.

Conclusion: The findings from the current study support the basic principles of SDT, and point to some practical challenges in implementing a SDT-based PA intervention in a Danish school setting. A socially inclusive environment was found to be crucial to pupils' well-being at school, and influenced the sense of both competence and autonomy.

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One example of how teachers can promote an inclusive environment and feeling of relatedness in school (from focus group interview in 4th grade):

Moderator: Are the pupils in your class aware of whether everybody feels included?

Jana: No, not always! Sometimes our teachers ask us if everybody has someone to be with because they noticed someone had just gone alone. Then they asked us if someone could invite that person to participate in our recess-activities.

Moderator: What do you think about that?

Jana: Well, that's fine. Then that person is not alone. Nobody should be alone. Sometimes they are afraid to ask if they can participate. What if someone tells them that they can't participate or even that they are annoying.

Move for Well-being in Schools is a multicomponent school-based physical activity randomized controlled trial targeting competence, autonomy and relatedness. It enrolled 3124 pupils from 4th to 6th grade at 24 schools in Denmark.
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