

Should the Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Data Collection Move Online?

Finnegan, K.,
Kavanagh, A.,
Gavin, A.,
Költő, A.,
Kelly, C.,
Nic Gabhainn, S.

Health Behaviour in
School-aged
Children (HBSC)
Ireland, Health
Promotion Research
Centre, National
University of
Ireland, Galway

INTRODUCTION

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a cross-national research study that is conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). This study takes place every four years with the aim to increase our awareness and understanding of young peoples' health and wellbeing. HBSC is a school-based survey administered in classrooms.

OBJECTIVE

The current method of data collection is self-completed paper questionnaires. We were interested in the views of schools in relation to the mode of data collection and specifically whether they would prefer traditional paper and pencil or online survey administration.

METHODOLOGY

All schools that had been included in the HBSC Ireland 2018 sample were invited to participate. Data were collected using an online survey tool that asked various questions relating to internet access, availability of desktops, laptops and tablets for student use, and preferences for using online or paper questionnaires for future HBSC studies. We also asked schools what issues they would anticipate if the mode of data collection was changed.

RESULTS

Of the 111 schools who responded, 82% (n=91) had taken part in the 2018 HBSC survey, while the remainder had originally declined to participate; 54.5% were primary and 45.5% were post-primary schools. All schools reported that they had access to the internet. Overall, 60% of schools preferred the questionnaires to be completed online, while 13.6% reported that they would prefer paper based questionnaires for administration in classrooms. Furthermore, 26.4% said either method of data collection would suit their school. In general, larger schools and post-primary schools were more likely to report that they would be willing to participate in the HBSC study online if it were an option. Facilitating factors for online survey completion included that they were perceived as saving time, as being easy to administer and as being more environmentally friendly. On the other hand, limited access to facilities, infrastructure and poor internet capacity were reported as key barriers.

CONCLUSION

A change in mode of administration of a large study such as HBSC Ireland requires appropriate consultation with all stakeholders. Findings suggest that most schools would be willing to move to an online survey, but an important minority prefer traditional data collection mechanisms.

PRESENTED

As a poster presentation at the Health Promotion Conference 2019 - Building a Healthy Ireland, Promoting Health and Wellbeing in Educational Settings in the National University of Ireland, Galway on June 13th, 2019.

FUNDING

This research has received funding from the Department of Health.