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School participation of pupils with physical and psychosocial limitations: A comparison

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Introduction: Several features in the school environment affect pupils with disabilities serving as either supports or barriers to their school participation.

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to investigate and look for differences in the pupil-environment fit of students with physical and psychosocial limitations, using the School Setting Interview (SSI). The SSI is a client-centred instrument which focuses on school activities where adjustments need to be made to accommodate pupils with disabilities and to enable their participation.

Methods: Descriptive statistics and Mann Whitney U tests were employed to compare the fit of the two groups and their school environment.

Results: The findings reveal that in order to actively participate, both groups of pupils required adjustments to many school settings. Pupils with physical limitations frequently need adjustments, but their needs were met by the schools to a more satisfactory extent than were the needs of pupils with psychosocial limitations. **Conclusion:** The findings support the usability of the SSI for pupils with various types of limitations.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: Information about barriers to participation in school as perceived by the pupil, increases the likelihood that the occupational therapy interventions will meet these needs. The results thus stress the importance of eliciting the perspectives of the pupils themselves in order to facilitate the planning and implementation of client-centred occupational therapy interventions in school.