

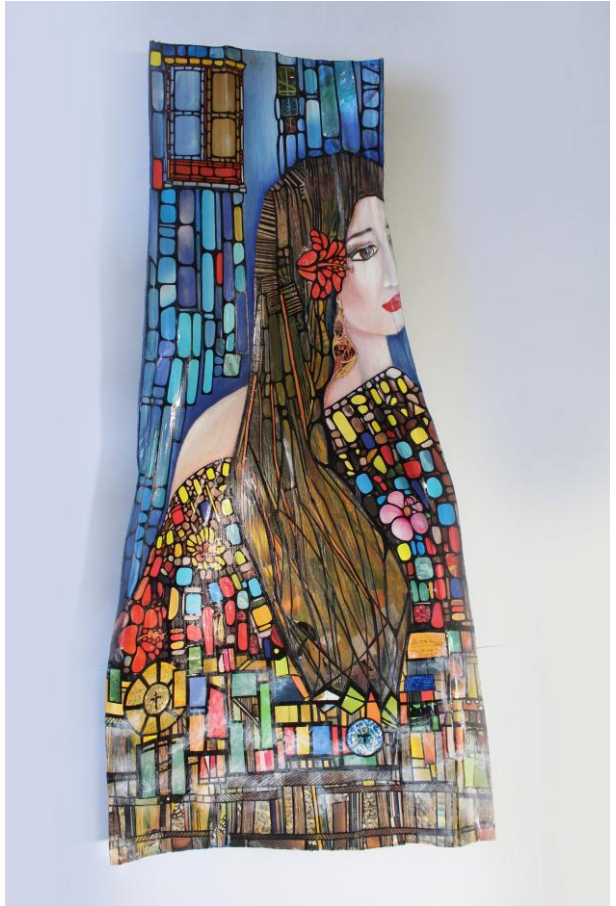
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# Role of Parents in Fostering the Practice of Physical Exercise and Activities

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## Abstract

This study aims to identify the role of parents in fostering physical exercise and activities amongst children via descriptive and inference statistics. Descriptive statistics included the use of percentage, mean and standard deviation. By contrast, inference statistics involved the use of t-test and one-way ANOVA. Results show a substantial difference in the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on race and academic qualification. In conclusion, parents should play a significant role in fostering the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst their children, in which race is immaterial but the fostering applies to parents.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Exercise, Healthy Lifestyle, Kindergarten.

# Papel de los padres en el fomento de la práctica del ejercicio físico y las actividades

## Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo identificar el papel de los padres en el fomento del ejercicio físico y las actividades entre los niños a través de estadísticas descriptivas y de inferencia. Las estadísticas descriptivas incluyeron el uso de porcentaje, media y desviación estándar. Por el contrario, las estadísticas de inferencia implicaron el uso de la prueba t y ANOVA de una vía. Los resultados muestran una diferencia sustancial en el papel de los padres en el fomento de la práctica del ejercicio físico y las actividades basadas en la raza y la calificación académica. En conclusión, los padres deben desempeñar un papel importante en el fomento de la práctica de un estilo de vida saludable entre sus hijos, en el que la raza es irrelevante, pero el fomento se aplica a los padres.

**Palabras clave:** Conciencia, Ejercicio, Estilo de Vida Saludable, Jardín de Infancia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A healthy lifestyle is a balanced life pattern in the physical and mental aspects of a prosperous life. The rapid development of a country has changed the pattern of people's lives. This phenomenon has indirectly led to overweight and obesity problems amongst children and adults. Additionally, nearly 30% of children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 have overweight and obesity problems. The causal factors of overweight and obesity problems amongst preschool

children are lack of physical activities, short sleep time, extended screen time, high intake of sugar sweetened beverages and unhealthy food consumption. In Australia, full-time working mothers are likely to engage in adequate physical activities and limited screen time with their children. Mothers often spend more time with their children than fathers; hence, the attitude of a mother towards a healthy and active lifestyle will affect her children's participation in organised sports activities. Children from poor socioeconomic families rarely participate in organised sports activities. By contrast, children from high socioeconomic families are likely to participate in organised sports activities because they receive superior logistics and extensive financial support (Golan, 2011).

Unhealthy eating habits and lack of physical activity will definitely affect a person and may cause overweight or obesity problems. The role of parents is crucial in overcoming these problems because they are the most important individuals in educating children in the practice of a healthy lifestyle. This idea coincides with the assertion that parents are the change agents for the most successful strategy in curbing childhood obesity. Additionally, healthy lifestyle practices, such as engaging in physical exercises, should be nurtured from childhood to enable these practices to become a naturally adopted regimen amongst children throughout their lifetime (Hendrie et al., 2012). The saying to strike while the iron is still hot means that nurturing or educating children is beneficial when they are still young. Parents should encourage and ensure that their children practice a healthy lifestyle by regularly engaging in physical exercises.

Additionally, parents should be the best examples for their children because the latter tends to imitate the former's behaviors. Thus, parents are an essential element and play a significant role in fostering a healthy lifestyle, such as through physical activities, among children. This idea coincides with the theory of morality by Algahazli (1980) in the book *Ihya Uloomuddin*. This theory states that every baby is born in a pure and clean form. It is up to the parents to make it Jewish, Christian and Majusi. Hence, when a child is educated to engage in good practices regularly, such practices will become a way of life over time (Haseeb, Hassan, Azam, & Suryanto, 2018).

Accordingly, researchers were inspired to conduct a study on the role of parents in fostering the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst children in the district of Kuala Selangor. This study uses the previously discussed problems as bases to determine the level of parents' role in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst their children. The current study also aims to identify the role of parents in promoting the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst children based on gender, race and level of education (Collins et al., 2011).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The current researchers used the survey method as the research methodology. A survey was conducted using quantitative methods to collect objective and numerical data for analysis. The stratified random sampling method was used to obtain sufficient samples from the study

population. The researchers used a questionnaire to analyse the role of parents in fostering their children's physical exercise and activities.

## **2.1 Participants**

The study involved a total of 150 parents (i.e. 51 fathers and 99 mothers) of children in the district of Kuala Selangor, Malaysia. The racial classifications of the respondents are as follows: 40 Malays, 60 Chinese and 50 Indians. For their level of education, 97 parents obtained certificates for their academic qualification, whilst 53 parents hold degrees (Konting, 2005).

## **2.2 Measurement**

The questionnaire comprised 10 questions on the role of parents on the practice of their children's physical exercise and activities. A five-point Likert scale developed by the researchers was used to rate the respondents' answers (i.e. 5 – Strongly agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Moderately agree, 2 – Disagree and 1 – Strongly disagree). Two experts in the field of research instrument evaluated the questionnaire items to verify the language and relevance accuracy of each item. A pilot study that was conducted on 30 respondents determined that the research instrument was reliable and can be used in the actual study (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85).

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests were used to analyse the differences of the parents' role in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst children based on gender, race and academic qualifications. The data were analysed using the SPSS 25 software.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Differences in Parents' Role Based on Gender

The data normality for the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on gender should be determined prior to the t-test. The respective skewness and kurtosis values for the roles of mothers (-5.5, 0.62) and fathers (-0.26, -1.20) show that the data obtained were distributed normally. Hence, the independent t-test could be used on the data.

Table 1. Results of the Independent t Test

Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Males	51	3.38	0.94	-1.307	148	0.193
Females	99	3.56	0.68			

\*The mean difference is significant at the 5% level.

The results showed that no significant difference exists in the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities

based on gender  $t(148) = -1.307$ , ( $p > 0.05$ ). In terms of the mean, the mothers ( $M = 3.56$ ) and fathers ( $M = 3.38$ ) have a similar contribution in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst children.

### 3.2 Differences of the Role of Parents Based on Race

The data normality for the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on race was determined by the researchers before conducting the one-way ANOVA test. The respective skewness and kurtosis values for Malay (-1.38, 2.60), Chinese (-0.22, -0.93) and Indian (-0.51, 0.07) parents and Levene's test  $F(2,147) = 0.745$  ( $p > 0.05$ ) show that the data obtained were normally and homogeneously distributed. Moreover, a one-way ANOVA test could be performed.

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA Test

edSource	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.568	2	2.784	4.807	0.010
Within Groups	85.132	147	0.579		
Total	90.700	149			

\*The mean difference is significant at the 5% level.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test revealed a significant difference in the role of parents towards fostering healthy physical exercise and activities based on race  $F(2,147) = 4.807$   $p < 0.05$ . In terms of the mean, the Malay parents ( $M = 3.82$ ) had a higher role than the



Chinese (M = 3.36) and Indian (M = 3.41) parents. A post-hoc Scheffe test was used to identify the differences in more detail

Table 3. Post-Hoc Scheffe Test

(I) Race	(J) Race	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Malays	Chinese	0.46*	0.16	0.015
	Indians	0.41*	0.16	0.046
Chinese	Malays	-0.46*	0.16	0.015
	Indians	-0.05	0.15	0.942
Indians	Malays	-0.41*	0.16	0.046
	Chinese	0.05	0.15	0.942

\*The mean difference is significant at the 5% level.

The results of the post-hoc Scheffe test showed a significant difference in the roles between the Malay and Chinese parents ( $\bar{d} = 0.46$ ) and between the Malays and Indian parents ( $\bar{d} = 0.41$ ). However, no significant difference was determined between the Chinese and Indian parents ( $\bar{d} = 0.05$ ).

### 3.3 Difference of the Role of Parents Based on the Academic Qualifications

The data normality for the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on academic qualifications were determined by the researchers prior to the t-test. The respective skewness and kurtosis values for certificate qualification (-3.4, -4.1) and degree (-1.02, 0.99) showed that the

data obtained were normally distributed. Moreover, an independent t-test could be performed.

Table 4. Result of ANOVA Test

Academic Qualifications	N	M	SD	t	df	Si g.
Certificate	97	3.37	0.79	-2.752	148	0.007
Degree	53	3.73	0.70			

\*The mean difference is significant at the 5% level.

The independent t-test showed a substantial difference in the role of parents towards fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on academic qualifications  $t(148) = -2.752, (p < .05)$ . In terms of the mean, parents with a degree qualification have a higher role ( $M = 3.73$ ) than those with a certificate qualification ( $M = 3.37$ ). That is, the higher the academic achievement of parents the higher their role in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst children.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The results showed that no significant difference exists in the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on gender. This result suggests that gender is not an influential factor for parents to inculcate the practice of physical

exercise and activities amongst their children. The reason is that parents have the same awareness on the importance of physical exercise amongst children. The results of this study revealed that parents are concerned with the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst their children by providing facilities and spending time with them to do physical exercises. This statement is consistent with Kazemi et al. (2010) and Horst et al. (2007) who stated that parental involvement could influence children to become involved in exercise and sports. Hence, both parents contribute a similar role to the healthy lifestyle amongst children (Bastug, 2018).

The ANOVA test results showed the differences in the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on race. This result shows that race also plays an important role in instilling the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst children. Accordingly, each race knows about the importance of physical exercise and activities amongst children. The results show that Malay parents have a higher role in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities compared with the other races, thereby showing that Malay parents have considerable awareness of their children's health. Given the research data in Malaysia, many Malay children have problems with obesity. Furthermore, cultural and social issues influence the problem that affects food intake and physical activities amongst multiracial communities. The results of this study support Asfour et al. (2015), who determined a link between food safety, children's diet and non-active behaviours based on ethnicities. The multiracial community in Malaysia (Malays, Chinese and Indians)

also influences the role of parents in promoting a healthy lifestyle amongst their children (Chow et al., 2015).

The independent t-test showed a significant difference in the role of parents in fostering the practice of physical exercise and activities based on academic qualifications. This result shows that the education of parents has an important influence in inculcating physical exercise and activities amongst the children. Parents with higher education have higher fostering influence on the practice of physical exercise and activities amongst children. Education affects parents in terms of their knowledge of a healthy lifestyle that helps them inculcate the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst their children. Education also helps parents to gain knowledge on the importance and advantages of exercising and physical activities for the children. Moreover, parents learn about the best healthy lifestyle practices for their children through education. Dinkel et al. (2017) determined that families with a good educational background show a remarkable increase in nutritional knowledge and self-efficacy when making healthy food choices, choosing a healthy diet, engaging in physical activities and reducing the intake of sugar-sweetened beverages. Therefore, parents should have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyle practices such as physical exercise and activities for their children (Hair et al., 1995).

Parents should ensure that their children engage in physical activities in a sustainable manner. These activities can be done on weekends because the majority of parents do not work on these days.

Parents who have free time during weekends are able to monitor the involvement of their children in physical activities. Moreover, parents should spend weekends inculcating a healthy lifestyle for their children by doing physical activities. However, to gain positive effects, the children's level of fitness should be considered to enable parents to determine the suitable physical activities or exercises. Additionally, parents should encourage their children to have an active life by engaging in daily physical activities instead of merely bringing the children to the recreational park periodically. Furthermore, parents should monitor their children's activities to ensure that the exercises are performed based on their health and fitness levels. Parents are the most important people in cultivating the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst children. Campbell et al. (2006) supported this evidence based on family members being the people who can continuously develop a healthy behavior on someone since childhood. However, the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices is actually everyone's responsibility. Cooperation amongst professionals, parents and experts is expected to lead a considerable intervention in promoting a healthy lifestyle whilst preventing overweight problems amongst children (Hamilton et al., 2013).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The majority of parents give importance to the well-being of their children by performing physical exercises on a daily or regular basis. Therefore, parents should play a significant role in fostering the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst their children, in which race is

immaterial but the fostering applies to parents of all races. Malay, Chinese and Indian parents are required to perform their responsibilities in the effort of fostering the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst children. In the process of adopting healthy habits for the children, parents should continuously update themselves with relevant knowledge about a healthy lifestyle for the purpose of giving their children advance exposure to the proper practices. Hence, the role of parents is crucial in fostering the practice of a healthy lifestyle amongst children regardless of their gender, age, race and level of education being the closest people to their children. Therefore, parents are the most powerful influencers on the well-being of their children.

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