

Physical fitness, activity and health status among primary school children

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to provide data on physical activity level, fitness and health among the primary school children at Amravati primary schools run by Amravati Municipal Corporation. 106 children were randomly selected from 5 primary schools. A self-administered questionnaire (demographic and socio-economic) was used. Fitness test and physical activity record were used for the collecting data. Anthropometric measurement, height, weight, waist and hip circumference were conducted to determine Body Mass Index (BMI) and Waist Hip Ratio (WHR) of each subject. All the data were analyzed using SPSS and presented as mean of \pm SEM. The study sample comprised of 40 SC, 32 OBC and 21 other caste and 13 other religion students. The mean age of all the subjects were 10.8 ± 0.04 years, ranging from 10-11 years old. Majority of subjects were having the family income of Rs. 5000-10,000 and most of all subject's parents academic qualification was above secondary level (96.3%). The mean height and weight of all subjects were 1.44 ± 0.007 kg and 39.19 ± 10.11 kg, respectively. The mean BMI and WHR values of the subjects were 18.38 ± 0.66 kg/m² 0.81 ± 0.005 cm, respectively. Physical fitness tests were assessed in the study as sit and reach test, situp test and endurance shuttle run for all the subjects. The health status of the subject was at the satisfactory level based on the fitness level. However, the subjects in the present study were towards the negative trends on physical fitness and physical activity. Thus, the health education programme emphasizes on importance of physical activity and fitness should recommend to tackle this phenomena. Further research in children's physical status and health status should be conducted for better understanding on effect of physical activity among the children.

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Regular physical activity helps to maintain functional independence of children and enhances the quality of life for people physical functions of all ages. Pate *et al.* (1995) described that regular physical activity is especially important for people who have joint or bone problems and have shown to improve muscle functions, cardiovascular function and physical performance. For people who are active, even small increases in physical activity are associated with measurable health benefits. As research continues to illustrate to link between physical activity pattern optionally to individual preferences with health risk and physiologic benefits (Pate *et al.*, 1995).

In order to develop a lifelong habit of exercise for children, education must be given from an early age, about the importance of physical activity in maintaining good health. Physical education class provided at school is one of the ideal ways to encourage activity and develop fitness among children and for many children it will be one of their preparations for an active lifestyle.

There are several factors influencing health, wellness

and physical fitness as shown in the Fig. 1 below:

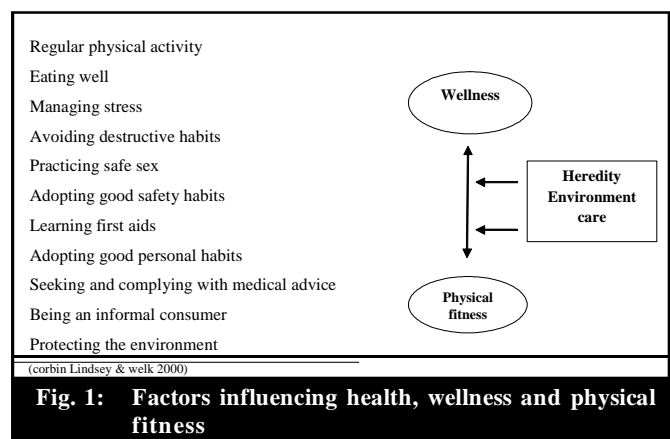


Fig. 1: Factors influencing health, wellness and physical fitness

Benefits of regular physical activity are generally considered on the basis of cardio-respiratory improvement benefits in other health related components of physical fitness including muscular strength and endurance