

UNDERSTANDING DETERMINANTS OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE BEHAVIOURS AMONG OLDER CHILDREN

PERSPECTIVES OF OLDER CHILDREN IN SINGAPORE



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INTRODUCTION

- Early adolescence is a critical period for developing and establishing healthy lifestyle habits that can track into adulthood
- An understanding of the determinants that drive lifestyle behaviours from older children's perspective is important for designing effective health promotion interventions
- However, research in this area is limited, particularly in Asian and Singapore context

AIM: To understand the contextual factors that influence diet and physical activity behaviours in older children

* Due to the large amount of data, only the factors that influence the physical activity of older children are presented here.

METHODS



2 primary schools in Singapore
Boys and girls, aged 9 to 12 years old
Convenience sampling



- 12 Focus Groups
- Stratified by school, age and sex
*Age (3 groups): 9-10, 11, 12 years old
 - All groups attended one session of discussion focusing on physical activity
 - Discussions moderated by the same researcher throughout, along with a note-taker



Topic guide developed based on the social-ecological model



Discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis

Transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis

- Codebook was developed, discussed and refined multiple times before identifying themes and sub-themes

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Physical activity behaviour of older children are influenced by their personal preferences, but largely modulated by their social influences and physical environment
- Future interventions to increase physical activity in older children should target the different levels of influence:
 - ❑ Help children identify the types of physical activities they enjoy
 - ❑ Parents to allow more outdoor playtime, as well as participate in activities with children
 - ❑ School to put more emphasis on being active during PE lessons and recess
 - ❑ Increase availability and accessibility of facilities for physical activity close to home
 - ❑ Organisation of physical activities in a neighbourhood or community context, as this would allow children to meet peers who could be potential playmates

RESULTS



Demographics

Mixed ethnic groups (39 Chinese, 8 Indian, 6 Malay)
Aged 9-10 (n=18, 8 males), aged 11 (n=23, 10 males), and aged 12 (n=12, 6 males)

Barriers

Personal

- Inertia towards physical activity
 - Feeling lazy to engage in physical activity
 - Tiredness from other activities (e.g. school activities or tuition)
 - Preference for screen time over physical activity

“if they say go out and play right, me and my bro- my brother usually go to my friend's house, just play the computer there.” (FG12PA, M, 12 years old)
- Negativity towards physical activity
 - Physical discomfort, negative past experiences, feeling self-conscious

Parents and Family

- Parents perceive physical activity to be of low priority
- Parents' permission needed to go outdoors to engage in physical activity
- Unavailability of parents and siblings

Facilities

- Cleanliness of facilities for physical activity

“But sometimes I don't like [playgrounds that are] too dirty or too old” (FG01PA, F, 9-10 years old)
- Lack of access to facilities for physical activity near home

Peers

- Judgement from peers
- Lack of peers or peer groups to play with outside of school

Teachers and School

- Insufficient physical activity time in school curriculum
- Short recess time limits choice of activities

“[Stopped playing during recess] because I had to eat my food ... not enough time” (FG08PA, M, 11 years old)

Personal

Interpersonal

Environmental

Facilitators

Personal

- Engage in physical activities that they enjoy
- Aware of the positive health benefits associated with physical activity
- Receive rewards after exercise

Peers

- Availability of friends to play with them
- Encouragement from friends
- To avoid being judged by peers

“If you don't keep fit, everyone will call you fat” (FG06PA, F, 11 years old)

Teachers and School

- Encouragement from teachers by imparting knowledge
- Teachers mandate participation during PE lessons
- School organises physical activity enrichment class apart from PE

Facilities

- Close proximity of facilities for physical activity

“It's like two basketball courts or one, one very big then one soccer court ... [near] my house there” (FG11PA, M, 12 years old)

Parents and Family

- Allow children freedom to go out on their own
- Provide encouragement by imparting knowledge and/or participating in activities with them



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