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The Role of Parents in Encouraging Children to Extracurricular Kinesiological Activities

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Abstract: *Extracurricular kinesiological activities, in addition to providing the opportunity for actively spend leisure time, significantly contribute to the improvement of children's health and the development of their abilities, knowledge and achievements, so it is desirable to encourage and direct them. The aim of the study was to assess parents' attitudes about physical activity and about encouraging children to extracurricular kinesiological activities in their leisure time. Also the aim was to determine the differences in parental attitudes about encouraging activities with respect to the child's involvement in organized extracurricular kinesiological activities. The research was conducted on a sample of 191 parents of third and fourth grade primary school students. An anonymous questionnaire assessed parents' attitudes about physical activity and about encouraging children to extracurricular kinesiological activities. Frequencies of answers were calculated, and the significance of the differences was determined by Man-Whitney U test. 79,58% of children were involved in organized extracurricular kinesiological activities, while 20,42% weren't. Man-Whitney U test indicates the existence of statistically significant differences in parental attitudes related to activity encouragement. Parents whose children attend organized extracurricular kinesiology activities are more likely to encourage children to engage in physical activity. In directing children to extracurricular kinesiological activity and encouraging an active lifestyle, the role of parents will be significant only if parents have positive attitudes about physical activity.*

Key words: *children, extracurricular kinesiological activities, parent's attitudes, the level of physical activity.*

Introduction

The period of younger school age is accompanied by a series of changes in anthropological characteristics that are noticeable in children, and which create the basis for the development of certain abilities. If certain abilities are not developed adequately by the appropriate age, they will later be difficult to develop to a satisfactory level. Systematic participation in various forms of physical activity certainly contributes to the development of children and young people, but in modern society, which is characterized by advances in technology in terms of increasing application of digitalization, physical activity is increasingly declining. Previous research indicates that high use of technology is significantly associated with low levels of physical activity in children and youth (Alotaibi, Almuhanna, Alhassan, Alqadhib, Mortada, & Alwhaibi, 2020; Kenney & Gortmaker, 2017), as well as lower motor skills (Martin & Staiano, 2019). In addition to the regular physical education class at school, extracurricular kinesiological activities also provide an organized form of active leisure time outside the school, which is carried out according to the preferences of students. Organized extracurricular activities can be encouraged by peers, teachers or family, but of all educational settings, families and parents are the ones who should have the greatest influence because they know their children and their interests best and know how to guide and motivate them for an activity. Although the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) points out that a child needs a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, numerous studies suggest a steady trend of declining physical activity (Krivokapić and Bjelica (2014) according to Iveković, 2020). An analysis of physical activity based on 1.6 million children and adolescents in 146 countries shows that most adolescents do not meet the guidelines for physical activity, thus endangering their current and future health (Guthold, Stevens, Riley & Bull 2020). Organized physical activity that is carried out for children and young people in school 2 to 3 times per week in the form of a physical education class does not meet the daily requirement for physical activity. A systematic review of previous research of the level of physical activity

during physical education class (PA class) in children and adolescents in the period 1987 to 2019 suggests that the level of physical activity during PA class is insufficient, and that less than a quarter of children and adolescents reach 30 minutes of moderate physical activity during PA class (Grao-Cruces, Velásquez-Romero & Rodriguez-Rodríguez, 2020). Children most often see role models in their parents, and numerous studies indicate that parents' lifestyle and habits are closely related to children's habits (Trajkovski & et al., 2014), ie that physical activity of both parents is significantly associated with frequent participation of children in multiple sports (Rodrigues, Padez & Machado-Rodrigues, 2018). The role of parents in encouraging children to engage in extracurricular kinesiological activities can be stimulating or limiting, and depends on a number of factors. For example Brown et al. (2011) according to Iveković (2020) in their research point out that parents encourage more male children to sports activities, while female children are primarily directed to sedentary activities based on fine motor skills. In addition, the results of the Pew Research Center (2015) indicate a greater involvement of fathers in encouraging children to play sports (37% of fathers said they encourage children to train and 27% of mothers). Furthermore, parental influence on targeting sports activity decreases by the age of children. According to a study by the Pew Research Center (2015), 38% of parents of young school-age children indicated that they participate in encouraging their children to take part in sports activities, while 26% of parents do the same in a sample of adolescents. In general, the current literature shows that the age of children in relation to gender has a much greater impact on participation in organized sports activities (Iveković, 2020). According to the research Vidaković Samaržija & Alić (2019), children in lower grades of primary school participate more in kinesiological activities in their leisure time than students in higher grades of primary school, which also indicates a negative trend of declining kinesiological activity with age.

The aim of this study was to assess parental attitudes about physical activity and encouraging children to extracurricular kinesiological activity in their leisure time. The secondary goal was to determine the persistence of differences in parental attitudes towards encouraging activities with regard to the child's involvement in organized extracurricular kinesiological activities.

Methods

Study participants

The research was conducted on a sample of 191 parents of 3th and 4th grade students of primary schools in Cavtat, Gruda and Župa Dubrovačka, Croatia. The research was approved in advance by the Faculty Council of the Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education of the University of Zadar, Croatia. The research was voluntary and anonymous.

Variables

A survey questionnaire consisting of 24 questions was used. The first part of the questionnaire was aimed at collecting socio-demographic data on age, gender, and involvement in extracurricular physical activity. The second part of the questionnaire was focused on parents' attitudes about physical activity and encouraging children to attend organized extracurricular kinesiology activities. The degree of agreement with a particular statement was assessed on a Likert-type scale (1- disagree at all, 2- disagree, 3- do not know, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree).

Statistical analisis

The collected data were processed by the program Statistica 7.0. Basic descriptive indicators were calculated: arithmetic mean, standard deviation and response frequencies of individual particles. The normality of the distribution was tested by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the distributions of the tested variables deviated significantly from the normality, the Man-Whitney U test was applied for testing significant differences in attitudes about physical activity. For this purpose, the median and quartile rank, z-values and significance level (p) were calculated.

Results

The study involved 191 parents of the 3th and 4th grade students of primary schools. Descriptive indicators (arithmetic means and standard deviations) and the response frequencies of parental attitudes were calculated and shown in Table 1. The values of arithmetic means in most items are extremely high and indicate positive attitudes of

parents about physical activity. The values of standard deviations indicate a small variance in the results of all variables except the variable *I take children to sports events*, which indicates that the range of responses is varied. This is evident from the frequencies of answers to the question (53.84% of respondents do not take children to sports events, and 41.03% of them are not sure).

Table 1. *Descriptive parameters and response frequencies of parental attitudes about physical activity and encouragement to attend organized extracurricular kinesiological activities*

	M±SD	I don't agree at all	I disagree	I do not know	I agree	I agree completely	Max D	K-S
I talk to the children about the importance of playing sports	4.02±0.78	0	10.26	33.33	51.28	5.12	0.26	p < .01
I spend my leisure time with children on walks outdoors	3.95±0.86	0	12.82	20.51	53.85	12.82	0.25	p < .01
I take children to sporting events (matches)	3.25±1.30	15.38	38.46	41.03	2.56	2.56	0.16	p < .01
I encourage children to be more physically active. it is important for their overall development	4.57±0.61	0	5.13	7.69	48.72	38.46	0.38	p < .01
I encourage children to spend more leisure time outdoors than in front of screens	4.80±0.47	0	2.56	5.13	20.51	71.79	0.49	p < .01
Playing sports contributes to the improvement of health	4.89±0.32	0	0	0	15.38	84.62	0.53	p < .01
Playing sports contributes to the development of responsibility	4.80±0.44	0	0	2.56	25.64	71.79	0.49	p < .01
Children should be encouraged to engage in sports activities from an early age	4.75±0.47	0	0	2.56	20.51	76.92	0.47	p < .01
Both girls and boys can play any sport	4.53±0.79	5.13	0	7.69	38.46	48.72	0.39	p < .01
In sports self-satisfaction is more important than success	4.81±0.44	0	0	0	12.82	87.18	0.50	p < .01

All respondents (parents) believe that playing sports contributes to improving health (100%), and contributes to the development of responsibility (97.43%). Extremely high response rates indicate positive attitudes about the benefits of physical activity. Of the total number of respondents, 79.58% of parents answered that their children are involved in organized extracurricular kinesiology activities (a total of 152 students, of which 86 boys and 66 girls), while 20.42% answered that their child does not participate in such a form of activity (a total of 39 students, of which 18 students and 21 students).

The Man-Whitney U test was applied to determine the significance of differences in parents attitudes toward physical activity with respect to children's involvement (N = 152) and non-involvement(N = 39 in extracurricular kinesiological activity. In most of the items, the values of the arithmetic means of the parents of students involved in organized extracurricular kinesiological activities were higher, but only in some items differences were large enough to be significant (Table 2).

Table 2. *Determining the persistence of differences in parental attitudes related to the encouragement of activities with regard to the child's attendance and non-attendance of extracurricular kinesiological activities*

	MED/QR N=152	MED/QR N=39	Rank Sum Group 1	Rank Sum Group 2	U	Z	p-level
I talk to the children about the importance of playing sports	4.00/1.00	4.00/1.00	15825.00	2511.00	1731.00	4.00	0.00*
I spend my leisure time with children on walks outdoors	4.00/2.00	4.00/1.00	15218.00	3118.00	2338.00	2.03	0.04*
I take children to sporting events (matches)	4.00/3.00	2.00/1.00	16013.50	2322.50	1542.50	4.62	0.00*
I encourage children to be more physically active. it is important for their overall development	5.00/1.00	4.00/1.00	15550.00	2786.00	2006.00	3.11	0.00*
I encourage children to spend more leisure time outdoors than in front of screens	5.00/0.00	5.00/1.00	15027.00	3309.00	2529.00	1.41	0.16
Playing sports contributes to the improvement of health	5.00/0.00	5.00/0.00	14791.50	3544.50	2764.50	0.65	0.52
Playing sports contributes to the development of responsibility	5.00/0.00	5.00/1.00	14961.00	3375.00	2595.00	1.19	0.23
Children should be encouraged to engage in sports activities from an early age	5.00/0.00	5.00/0.00	14602.00	3734.00	2954.00	0.03	0.97
Both girls and boys can play any sport	5.00/1.00	4.00/1.00	15226.00	3110.00	2330.00	2.06	0.04*
In sports self-satisfaction is more important than success	5.00/0.00	5.00/0.00	14435.50	3900.50	2807.50	-0.51	0.61

MED- QR- median-quartile range; Z-z score; p- statistical significance*

Significant differences were obtained in the items related to the encouragement of physical activity, so parents of children involved in organized extracurricular kinesiology activities more significantly *talk with children about the importance of sports*, more significantly *spend leisure time with children walking outdoors*, more significantly *take children to sports events* and more significantly *encourage children to be physically active* because it is important for their overall development. In the items focused on attitudes about physical activity, it is evident that parents of both groups equally believe that sport contributes to health and the acquisition of work habits, and that children should be directed to sport from an early age. Significant differences were obtained in the items aimed at encouraging children to participate in sports activities, as well as in the items aimed at choosing sports. Parents of children who engage in extracurricular kinesiology activities have less stereotypical thinking and believe that children, regardless of gender, can engage in all kinds of sports.

Discussion

Parents' attitudes about the importance of physical activity as well as its contribution to children's health can have a significant impact on guiding and involving children in organized extracurricular sports activities, and are therefore often the subject of numerous studies. In this paper, the aim was to assess the attitudes of parents about physical activity and encouragement of extracurricular sports activities in their leisure time. High values of the arithmetic means of the answers indicate predominantly positive attitudes about physical activity. Specifically, in this study 100% of parents believe that physical activity contributes to health, over 90% of parents believe that playing sports contributes to the acquisition of work habits and responsibilities and that children from an early age should be encouraged to engage in sports activities, while over 80% of parents encourage children to physical activity because they feel it is essential to their overall development. Such results coincide with the results of the Bešlić (2018) research, according to which more than 80% of parents fully agree with the claims about the positive impact of sports. The positive attitude of parents about extracurricular sports activities is defined by numerous studies (Yılmaz & Güven, 2019) in which the authors emphasize parental awareness of the positive impact of kinesiological activi-

ties on the child (Trajkovski et al. (2014); Vidić et al. (2018) according to Iveković, 2020) or as pointed out by Van der Eecken, Spruyt and Bradt (2019), parents seek to involve their children in leisure activities because they believe that this will enable them to acquire better skills. Positive attitudes of parents about the benefits of physical activity certainly contribute to the inclusion of children in kinesiological activities, especially if their positive attitudes are manifested by encouraging activity, discussing the importance of physical activity and joint participation in outdoor sports activities. In this study, the aim was to determine whether there are differences in parents' attitudes regarding the involvement of children in extracurricular kinesiological activity. A large proportion of parents pointed out that their children were involved in the activity (79.58%), which is similar to the results of some previous research (Prskalo, 2007), and significant differences in individual variables were obtained. Parents of children involved in extracurricular kinesiology activities talk much more with children about the importance of playing sports, spend significantly more leisure time with children outdoors in a sports activity, take more children to sports events and generally significantly more encourage children to be physically active. Parents' lifestyle and their habits are closely related to their children's habits (Sothern (2004) according to Trajkovski et al., 2014), which was confirmed by the results of this research. More precisely, if the parents are physically active enough and if they often participate in physical activities with their children, then their children will also adopt the habit of daily physical activity. The participation of children and adolescents in extracurricular sports activities is related to their immediate environment (Romero-Blanco, Dorado-Suárez, Jiménez-Zazo, Castro-Lemus, & Aznar, 2020), so it is important to emphasize the importance of establishing physical activity habits from an early age in a family setting. Extracurricular physical activity of children and adolescents can contribute to achieving the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) on the daily level of physical activity (Romero-Blanco, Dorado-Suárez, Jiménez-Zazo, Castro-Lemus, & Aznar, (2020) necessary for their overall development. A number of studies published in the last 20 years have concluded that a large proportion of children and young people are insufficiently physically active (Guthold, Stevens, Riley and Bull 2019; Steene-Johannessen et al. 2020). Insufficient levels of children's physical activity can be strongly influenced by time spent in front of screens and owning electrical appliances, so parental involvement is needed to shorten children's exposure to technological screens (Alotaibi, Almuhanna, Alhassan, Alqadhib, Mortada, & Alwhaibi, 2020). A significant number of parents believe that the use of technology has a negative impact on their child's physical activity and suggests that less access to technology would result in increased activity levels, but there are still large numbers of dissenting opinion (Beech, Philp, Pandyan, Mccluskey, 2020). In addition to the fact that children's participation in extracurricular kinesiological activities can contribute to increasing the level of daily physical activity (Belton, Prior, Wickel, & Woods, 2017), regular participation can also contribute to increasing children's motor skills and knowledge (Skowroński et al. 2019; Reverdito et al. 2017), and improving their physical fitness (Ricci, Clevenger, Sellers, Davenport, & Pfeiffer 2020; Golle, 2014).

Concluson

The study points to positive attitudes of parents about children's participation in this form of activity and emphasizes that the role of parents will be significant only if parents have positive attitudes about physical activity, especially if their positive attitudes are manifested by encouraging activity, discussing the importance of physical activity and joint participation in outdoor sports activities. Extracurricular kinesiological activities are mostly available to children, and systematic encouragement of their participation can significantly contribute to the overall level of physical activity and their overall development.

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