

The Role of Parents in Encouraging Physical Activity for Young Children Outdoors

Elisa Pitria Ningsih

Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

e-mail: elisapitria@student.uny.ac.id

INFO ARTICLE

Accepted : 02 May 2024

Revised : 10 May 2024

Approved : 17 May 2024

Keywords:

Parents; Early Childhood; Physical Activity; Outdoor Play.

ABSTRACT

The increasing use of technology in early childhood has created a situation where children's outdoor physical activity is declining. This study aims to understand parents' practices, perceptions, and experiences in motivating their children to engage in outdoor physical activity. A qualitative approach was used, with interviews as the main data collection method and observation. Participants in this study were parents who have children aged 3-6 years. The results highlighted various strategies used by parents, including behavioral modeling, creation of a supportive environment, and direct involvement in playing with children. In addition, factors such as parents' education level and perceptions of the importance of physical activity also influenced how parents supported children. The implications of these findings are for the development of educational programs for parents and policies to increase early childhood physical activity outdoors.

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements and modern lifestyles today come with both positive and negative impacts; young children are no exception to the effects of technological progress. With these advancements, children tend to spend more time indoors with electronic devices, such as televisions, computers, and cell phones, which can reduce their opportunities to move around and play outside. Children are increasingly engaging in fewer outdoor physical activities, even though outdoor physical activity plays a crucial role in early childhood development. Physical activity in early childhood is a key factor in supporting children's growth and development (Ramdhan et al., 2024). Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle for all individuals (Septian & Izatulislami, 2021). Physical activity and outdoor play play a significant role in the physical, cognitive, and social development of young children. This trend toward modernization has led to a decline in children's participation in such physical activities.

The current situation, driven by technological advancements, requires parents' attention as it directly impacts children's growth and development. If a child's development is not properly monitored, it can have negative consequences. In today's modern era, the increasing use of technology among young children is evident, and this trend is accompanied by a lack of access to safe outdoor play areas. This can lead to children spending less time on physical activity, as well as reducing their motivation and opportunities to engage in activities such as running, jumping, and moving actively. If this pattern continues, children's physical-motor development may be hindered. It is

important to note that physical-motor development during the preschool years is a key indicator of a child's future development (Mochamad Surya et al., 2023).

Previous research indicates that young children today are experiencing a decline in physical activity due to their reliance on technology, which has become an integral part of their daily routines. This has drawn the attention of researchers across various fields, including technology, health, and physical activity (Ramdhan et al., 2024). Traditional games that children once frequently played in their backyards, on playgrounds, or in the areas around their homes are now being played less and less. In fact, in the eyes of the public, children today tend to prefer using smartphones rather than gathering and engaging in play that involves physical activity. Before the era of globalization and the widespread popularity of gadgets as we see today, children spent more time outdoors, gathering, and playing together (Kuswanto et al., 2022). To address the issue of insufficient physical activity among children, activities that involve physical movement are necessary. One enjoyable and common activity for children is playing (Tangse & Dimiyati, 2021). Children can engage in play activities in the neighborhood, such as in the backyard, a park, or a field near their home. They can play with their friends. When children play outdoors, they must remain under adult supervision. The role of parents is not only to care for children but also to educate and guide them (Yulianingsih et al., 2020; Nugroho et al., 2022).

Parents have a significant influence on shaping children's behavioral patterns, including in terms of physical activity. Parents play a crucial role in a child's life because they are the child's first and primary educators (Ningsih, 2024). The educational process involves several activities, including physical education or motor skills development (Shaleh, 2023). Parents can utilize physical activities such as running, jumping, and playing to maximize children's physical (motor) development. Additionally, optimal support from parents can help children's growth and development reach their full potential (Huda & Halimatus, 2024). The role of parents in encouraging young children to engage in outdoor physical activities is crucial. Parents who can put practices into action, possess the right perceptions, and have relevant experience can help identify effective strategies to increase children's participation in physical activities that benefit their health and development. Furthermore, the literature on this topic indicates that the home environment and parenting styles have a significant impact on children's propensity for physical activity. Therefore, further research is needed to understand how parents can play a more active role in guiding children to engage in outdoor physical activities. The role of parents in facilitating children's outdoor physical activity is becoming increasingly important; thus, this study will explain how parental involvement encourages outdoor physical activity among young children.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand the role of parents in encouraging young children's participation in outdoor physical activities. The participants in this study are parents of children aged 3–6 years. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure variation in characteristics such as children's age, parental education, and socioeconomic background. Data collection techniques included interviews with a number of parents of young children (ages 3–6) and observation. The data obtained will be analyzed and then presented in the results and discussion sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research findings indicate that parents play a crucial role in encouraging outdoor physical activity among young children. Based on interviews with parents of young children aged 3–6 years, it was concluded that parents have a significant influence on shaping children's behavioral patterns and habits regarding outdoor physical activity. The formation of habits in children begins with the parents because parents serve as role models for their children; what parents demonstrate and do becomes a standard for children in how they behave. Parents' behaviors and various attitudes have a profound impact on the habits and personality development of children. Parental behavior significantly influences children's personality development because children tend to imitate what they observe without conscious thought, regardless of whether it is appropriate or not (Khotimah & Zulkarnaen, 2023).

Through daily interactions and the examples they set, parents directly influence their children's preferences and tendencies toward physical activity. Support and motivation can be provided by encouraging children to play outdoors; parents can make time to play with their children; parents and children can engage in sports together; and they can participate in outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, and exploring nature. And, of course, parents must actively participate in organizing and joining physical activities with their children; this helps instill positive values regarding the importance of an active lifestyle. Setting a good example by participating in such activities has a significant impact on children's development (Khotimah & Zulkarnaen, 2023). Additionally, how parents provide and facilitate access to outdoor environments also plays a role in fostering children's interest in physical activities in the great outdoors. Therefore, parents' role is not merely as role models but also as essential facilitators in helping children develop healthy habits and an active lifestyle from an early age. Parents serve as the primary facilitators in their children's educational journey by creating an environment that supports children's exploration and growth (Ameilina Esafitri, 2023).

Parental support, motivation, and involvement play a crucial role in inspiring children to actively participate in outdoor physical activities. The support provided by parents can take the form of emotional, physical, and practical support, which helps children feel supported and motivated to engage in physical activities in the great outdoors. Motivation demonstrated by parents through praise, encouragement, and recognition of children's efforts and achievements can also increase children's interest and desire to engage more actively in outdoor physical activities. Parental motivation involves more than just encouragement; it also includes providing emotional support, instilling values, and creating a positive environment for development (Jahir & Hasyim, 2024). Additionally, the role modeling provided by parents whether through direct participation in physical activities or by consistently demonstrating a healthy lifestyle serves as a positive example that inspires children to adopt similar behaviors. Therefore, parents play a key role in creating an environment that supports and motivates children to make outdoor physical activity an integral part of their lifestyle.

Creating a supportive environment and providing access to facilities and open spaces also play a crucial role in increasing children's participation in outdoor physical activity. A supportive environment includes factors such as safety, the availability of safe and engaging play areas, and adequate infrastructure for physical activity, such as parks, playgrounds, or walking paths. When the environment around the home or community provides attractive and easily accessible facilities, children are more likely to engage in physical activity outdoors. Furthermore, good accessibility to facilities and open spaces

also provides greater opportunities for children to explore nature, play, and interact with their surroundings, which positively impacts children's physical, emotional, and social health. Therefore, efforts to create a supportive environment and facilitate access to facilities and open spaces are crucial in promoting an active lifestyle and children's health.

These findings underscore the importance of parents' role as key agents in promoting an active lifestyle and health in young children. Parents not only set a direct example for their children but also provide support, motivation, and a supportive environment to facilitate children's participation in outdoor physical activities. Furthermore, these findings also highlight the importance of collaboration between families, schools, and the community in creating a supportive environment for children's physical development and well-being. This collaboration among various stakeholders enables a holistic approach to promoting an active lifestyle and children's health, as well as creating a child-friendly environment that facilitates children's participation in physical activities. Close cooperation between families, schools, and the community is key to creating a supportive environment for the physical development and well-being of young children.

In addition, parents' educational level also influences how they understand the importance of physical activity for children. Parents with higher educational backgrounds tend to have a better understanding of the health and developmental benefits of physical activity and outdoor play. Parents' educational level refers to the highest level of formal education they have completed. Parents' educational level can influence many aspects of a child's life, including education, health, and behavior. Parents with higher educational levels tend to have greater access to information and educational resources. Parents may have a better understanding of how to support their children's development in various aspects, including physical activity. Parents may also be better able to help their children understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and encourage them to participate in physical activity. On the other hand, parents with lower levels of education may face challenges in accessing information and educational resources. This can affect parents' understanding of the importance of physical activity for children. However, this is not always the case. Parents from various educational backgrounds can still have a strong understanding of the importance of physical activity and play an active role in encouraging their children to live healthy lives. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that educational level is not the only factor influencing parents' knowledge about physical activity and children's health. Factors such as personal experience, culture, family values, and access to resources can also play a significant role in shaping parents' understanding and practices regarding children's physical activity.

These findings highlight the importance of a holistic approach that involves parents in efforts to increase children's participation in physical activity and outdoor play. Parent education programs that enhance parents' understanding of the benefits of physical activity and provide them with the skills to guide their children in outdoor play can be an effective strategy.

CONCLUSION

In an era where children are increasingly glued to electronic devices, the role of parents in encouraging children's participation in physical activity and outdoor play is becoming increasingly important. Parents who understand practices, perceptions, and experiences can design educational programs and activities aimed at increasing children's

participation in physical activity. Parents have a significant influence in motivating and facilitating children's physical activity. The encouragement, support, and environment created by parents have a major impact on children's level of participation in outdoor physical activity. Parents who set a positive example and encourage their children to play outdoors tend to have children who are more physically active. Parents' educational level also influences their understanding of the importance of physical activity for children. Therefore, interventions and educational programs for parents can help improve parents' understanding of the benefits of physical activity and how to support their children in leading a healthy lifestyle.

LITERATURE

- Ameilina Esafitri. (2023). Sinergi Pendidikan: Membangun Fondasi Kokoh Melalui Kolaborasi Guru dan Orang Tua dalam Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini. *Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang*, 1(3), 221–231. <https://doi.org/10.28926/bocil.v1i3.1283>
- Huda, M., & Halimatus, E. (2024). *Feelings : Journal of Counseling and Psychology Kontribusi Orang Tua Terhadap Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini di Era Digital*. 1(1), 44–52. <https://doi.org/10.61166/feelings.v1i1.5>
- Jahir, A. S., & Hasyim, M. Q. (2024). Peran Orang Tua dalam Meningkatkan Prestasi Anak pada Olahraga Senam Andi. *Jurnal Dunia Pendidikan*, 4(3), 1435–1444. <https://doi.org/10.55081/jurdip.v4i3.2095>
- Khotimah, K., & Zulkarnaen, Z. (2023). Peran Orang Tua dalam Membentuk Kemandirian Anak Usia 4-5 Tahun. *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(1), 587–599. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v7i1.3832>
- Kuswanto, C. W., Pratiwi, D. D., & Denata, G. Y. (2022). Eksistensi Permainan Tradisional sebagai Aktivitas Fisik Anak Usia Dini Pada Generasi Alfa. *KINDERGARTEN: Journal of Islamic Early Childhood Education*, 5(1), 21. <https://doi.org/10.24014/kjiece.v5i1.16525>
- Mochamad Surya, C., Islami, S., Kusniati, Y., Suhartini, T., & Nurjanah, S. (2023). Kegiatan Pembelajaran Untuk Mengembangkan Fisik Dan Motorik Anak Usia Dini. *Plamboyan Edu*, 1(1), 75–82. <https://jurnal.rakeyansantang.ac.id/index.php/plamboyan/article/view/324>
- Ningsih, E. P. (2024). Peran Keluarga dalam Membangun Kesadaran Keagamaan Anak Usia Dini : Perspektif Pendidikan Islam Abstrak. *AL-Ilmu*, 1(1), 8–14.
- Nugroho, R., Artha, I. K. A. J., Nusantara, W., Cahyani, A. D., & Patrama, M. Y. P. (2022). Peran Orang Tua dalam Mengurangi Dampak Negatif Penggunaan Gadget. *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(5), 5425–5436. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i5.2980>
- Ramadhan, A. F., Suherman, A., Jajat, Sultoni, K., Damayanti, I., & Ruhayati, Y. (2024). Kepatuhan terhadap Pedoman Aktivitas Fisik WHO pada Anak Usia Dini : Evaluasi dengan Metode Machine learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Kesehatan Rekreasi*, 10(1), 184–195. <https://doi.org/10.59672/jpkr.v10i1.3490>
- Septian, D., & Izatulislami, N. (2021). Hubungan Aktivitas Fisik Dan Kualitas Hidup Siswa Sekolah Dasar Negeri Kedunggoro IV Surabaya. *Ursing Inside Community*, 4(1), 6–13.
- Shaleh, M. (2023). Pola Asuh Orang Tua dalam Mengembangkan Aspek Sosial Emosional Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun. *Murhum : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(1), 86–102. <https://doi.org/10.37985/murhum.v4i1.144>

- Tangse, U. H. M., & Dimyati, D. (2021). Permainan Estafet untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Motorik Kasar Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(1), 9–16. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i1.1166>
- Yulianingsih, W., Suhanadji, S., Nugroho, R., & Mustakim, M. (2020). Keterlibatan Orangtua dalam Pendampingan Belajar Anak selama Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 5(2), 1138–1150. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v5i2.740>