

Exercising Rates among Hong Kong Youngsters

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Introduction

Physical activity is a crucial component of a healthy lifestyle, particularly for youngsters. It aids in the development of muscles and bones, improves mood and mental health, and lowers the risk of numerous diseases. However, there is a concerning trend in Hong Kong, where engagement in physical activities among children and adolescents is notably low. The objective of this paper is to shed light on the current exercising rates among youngsters in Hong Kong, drawing comparisons with global statistics and seeking to understand the underlying reasons behind this phenomenon. It will further employ the Health Belief Model to propose viable strategies aimed at improving the situation. It is essential to address this issue to ensure the well-being and holistic development of the younger generation. Many instances from around the world portray various levels of physical activity, but the particular case of Hong Kong necessitates a closer look.

Global Exercise Rates among Youngsters

Across the globe, varying levels of physical activity among youngsters are observed, which are influenced by myriad factors including geographic, socioeconomic, and cultural circumstances. The World Health Organization recommends at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity daily physical activity for adolescents and children to maintain a healthy life (World Health Organization, 2022). Many countries strive to attain these standards by



to foster a healthier and more active younger generation, to combat the growing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases and conditions.

In the context of Hong Kong, a worrying picture emerges, as depicted by Huang et al. (2023) in their report card on physical activity for children and adolescents, which reflects unfavorably low levels of overall physical activity (D-**) and high levels of sedentary behavior (D). This trend, seemingly at odds with the otherwise high grades in organized sports and physical activity (B-), active transportation (B+), and school environment (B), signals a disconnect between these domains and the overall physical activity levels of youth. This disconnect is likely due to a lack of integration of physical activity into the daily lives of children and adolescents, as well as a lack of supportive environments and policies targeted towards this demographic. For example, Scandinavian countries have impressive levels of physical activity among youth, attributed largely to the integration of physical activity in daily life and a strong emphasis on outdoor play and learning (Hertting, 2019). Governments and communities in these nations often facilitate a conducive environment, providing ample opportunities, resources, and encouragement for children and adolescents to engage in physical activities. This stark contrast to the situation in Hong Kong provides an intriguing perspective and invites further exploration into the underlying reasons and potential solutions for the observed low levels of physical activity among Hong Kong's youth.

Underlying Factors for Low Exercise Rates in Hong Kong

Cultural Factors

In Hong Kong, culture plays a big role in shaping the exercise habits of youngsters. The society places a high emphasis on academic success, often putting it above other aspects like physical health and sports. Many parents push their children to focus on schoolwork, leaving little time for outdoor activities and exercise (Tam et al., 2021). Family values also weigh heavily, with elders often preferring traditional indoor activities over more active outdoor

pursuits. In some cases, there is a perception that physical activities are not as important or worthwhile as excelling in academics. This mindset trickles down to the youth, leading to a lack of interest or motivation to engage in regular exercise. Thus, cultural beliefs and values are significant obstacles to improving the physical activity rates among youngsters in Hong Kong.

Socioeconomic Factors

Economic conditions in Hong Kong also play a big role in the low exercise rates among youngsters. Living in a densely populated city with high living costs means many families may not have easy access to large open spaces or sports facilities. This makes it more challenging

to find suitable places for their kids to play. Additionally, many families may not have the time or resources to engage in organized sports or activities. Therefore, economic barriers and lifestyle constraints significantly contribute to the lack of physical activity among youngsters in Hong Kong.

their kids. There's also the issue of safety; some parents may be reluctant to allow their children to play outside unattended. Therefore, economic barriers and lifestyle constraints significantly contribute to the lack of physical activity among youngsters in Hong Kong.

Political Factors

Government policies and actions can also impact how much youngsters in Hong Kong exercise. While there are some efforts to promote physical education in schools, these programs often don't get as much attention or funding as academic subjects. This sends a message that physical activity is less important than academics.

Moreover, the government's focus is more on economic development, leaving health and wellness to take a back seat. In this context, the role of political decisions and priorities in limiting opportunities for youth physical activity becomes clear.

Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model, or HBM, is a helpful tool to understand why people make certain health choices. It looks at six main things: how likely people think they are to get sick (perceived susceptibility), how bad they think the sickness is (perceived severity), the good things they think will come from taking action (perceived benefits), what could stop them from taking action (perceived barriers), cues or triggers that make them act (cues to action), and how

them. This model is good for making strategies that speak to the specific worries, hopes, and situations of Hong Kong's youth. It gives us a way to approach the problem in a targeted manner, making solutions more effective.

Strategies for Improving Exercise Rates (Using HBM)

Perceived Susceptibility

One of the first steps to get Hong Kong's youth moving is to help them understand that they can get health problems if they don't exercise. This is known as perceived susceptibility in

or even fun games could be used to make this information easy to understand. The goal is to make youngsters see that they are not immune to these health issues, which can make them more willing to be active. The more they believe they could face health problems, the more likely they are to take exercise seriously.

Perceived Severity

Understanding the seriousness of health issues linked to lack of exercise is another important part. This is what we call "perceived severity" in the Health Belief Model. Schools could invite health experts to give talks, sharing real-life stories and data about how bad health

can get if you don't exercise. Videos showing the hardships people face due to such illnesses

the severe risks, they might start to view exercise as something that's not just good to do, but necessary.

Perceived Benefits

In any effort to boost exercise rates, highlighting the positive outcomes of being active is crucial. This part of the Health Belief Model is known as "perceived benefits." Schools, parents,

focusing on the direct benefits they will see in their everyday lives, youngsters may be more motivated to engage in physical activity. When kids understand the immediate and long-term gains, the act of exercising becomes far more appealing.

Perceived Barriers

Talking about the good parts is important, but we also need to tackle what's stopping

schedules. Surveys can be done to find out what other barriers exist and then make plans to fix them. Removing or lessening these barriers can make the path to being active much easier for youngsters. Addressing these hurdles head-on allows us to create practical solutions.

Cues to Action

Sometimes all it takes to make a change is a little nudge, or what the Health Belief Model calls "cues to action." These are prompts or triggers that help people make the choice to

act. In the context of exercise, this could be a school exercise challenge, a fun run organized by the community, or even a mobile app that reminds you to move every hour. These cues can be particularly effective when they come from trusted figures like teachers, doctors, or even popular local celebrities. By creating various cues that fit different lifestyles and preferences, we can prompt more youngsters in Hong Kong to start exercising regularly.

Self-Efficacy

The last part of the Health Belief Model is "self-efficacy," which is all about building

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of support helps youngsters see that they are capable of being active, making it easier for them to make it a regular part of their life.

Conclusion

In summary, the rate of exercise among youngsters in Hong Kong is worryingly low compared to global standards. This issue is complicated and influenced by cultural, economic, and political factors. But there's hope. Using the Health Belief Model, we can create strategies that really speak to kids' lives and concerns. This includes making them aware of the health

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can not only improve physical activity rates but also enrich the quality of life for Hong Kong's youth. It's a big task but a very important one for the future well-being of the younger generation in Hong Kong. Therefore, the time to act is now, for the health of our youth today will shape the society of tomorrow.

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