

Physical activity and the influence of educational and familial factors among Advanced Level national school students in the Jaffna Education Zone

S. Mohanadarshan¹, A.C.F. Unaiza¹, R. Merlyn¹, R. Surenthirakumaran², S. Kannathasan³

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

²*Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

³*Department of Parasitology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

Background and objective: Physical activity is protective against non-communicable diseases, facilitates learning by improving concentration and stress reduction. This study aims to assess the level of physical activity and the influence of educational and familial factors on the level of physical activity among G.C.E A/L national school students in the Jaffna Education Zone.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among Advanced level national school students (2020 batch) in the Jaffna Education Zone. A multistage cluster sampling method was used. A pretested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Statistical analysis was done with SPSS (Version 21). Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Results: In total, 727 students participated in this study, including 402 males and 325 females. A greater proportion of male students (63.6%) were physically active compared to female students (48.6%) ($p < 0.001$). Among educational factors, key deterrents were excess amount of tuition classes ($p = 0.017$) and preparing for competitive exams ($p = 0.018$). Parents giving more priority to education than physical activities was not significantly associated with level of physical activity ($p = 0.212$). With respect to familial factors, the availability of vehicles ($p = 0.023$) and electronic devices ($p = 0.038$) were associated with level of physical activity.

Conclusion: Female students are considerably less physically active than male students. Level of physical activity is also associated with tuition classes, preparing for competitive exams, availability of vehicles and electronic devices.

Keywords: Physical Activity, Secondary School Students, Jaffna