



Association of Physical Fitness Indicators with Health Profile and Lifestyle of Children

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ABSTRACT

Objective: High physical fitness (PF) level is a significant health determinant in children and adolescents so that it is important to identify the factors affecting PF in this population. Despite available studies highlighting the relationship between PF and characteristics of children, there is still a need to uncover how the health status and lifestyle of children impact different PF indicators. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between physical fitness, and the health profile and lifestyle of children.

Methods: This study was conducted with 110 (58 girls; age 11.85±0.35) adolescents between February and March 2020. The predictors of PF which were gender, body mass index, physical activity level (PAL) measured via Physical Activity Questionnaire (PAQ), motivation measured via Participation Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ), sleep time, and tablet usage time regressed against PF related outcome measured using 6 Minutes Walk test (6MWT), T-Test, vertical jump test and broad jump test (BJT).

Results: There were significant associations between T-test performance, and gender, BMI (being obese), and PAL. PAL and gender were also significant predictors for 6MWT and BJT respectively. PF was not significantly associated with motivation, sleep, and table usage time. A high level of physical activity, being male, and low BMI score resulted in better PF performance.

Conclusion: The health profile and lifestyle of adolescents may estimate the significant proportion of variabilities observed in physical fitness levels in adolescents.

Keywords: Physical Fitness, Adolescent, Physical Activity, Healthy Lifestyle

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical Fitness (PF) is defined as a state of health associated with aerobic capacity, flexibility, muscular endurance, and muscular strength, which is linked to the ability to perform aspects of sports and outdoor recreational activities (1).

Improving physical fitness during adolescence is crucial to avoid the development of chronic disease in adulthood (2, 3) and to improve health-related quality of life (4). It is an important factor leading to success in youth sports and athletic events (5, 6). Further, youth's academic achievement (7, 8), and participation in physical (9) and social activities (10) have also been linked to physical fitness.

Studies in the adult population emphasized the impact of biological and lifestyle factors on physical fitness (11). Sex, for example, is reported as an important determinant for physical activity level and participation in sports in adults; yet, the difference between sex was not conclusive in youth (12). Also, the relationship between body mass index (BMI) and fitness level has been largely documented in both adult (13)

and adolescent populations [14] relating to the prevalence of obesity (15). Although several studies illustrated an inverse relationship between the BMI and physical fitness level (16), the trend was opposite in others (17).

One of the worrying findings is that sedentary lifestyle and inadequate physical activity are becoming more common in adolescents (18) which is carried into adulthood (19). Recent studies highlighted the use of electronic devices as the most important factor in this behavior (20,21). It was shown that the use of electronic devices has significantly deteriorated the level of physical activity in adolescents (22, 23). Studies were done in Turkish adolescents also contributed evidence to this phenomenon; where they showed a significant association between the use of the mobile device and the reduced time invested for physical activity (24). A longitudinal study in England adolescents also showed that physical activity was affected inversely by the increase in screen time (25). Despite the recommendations from health agencies like World Health

Organization (WHO) to reduce the time spent on the screen (26), the use of mobile devices is becoming more common in adolescents which in turn influences their physical fitness levels (25). Understanding the relationship between lifestyle factors, health profiles, and level of physical fitness is still a research area of interest to better design interventions for adolescents and prevent them from moving into unhealthy adulthood.

The purpose of this study is to estimate the extent to which physical fitness levels are associated with sex, BMI, physical activity, sedentary, tablet using, sleep time in healthy adolescents.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

Healthy adolescents aged between 9 to 14 years who are secondary grade schools in Istanbul participated in this study. The data was collected between February-March 2020 in two secondary grade schools in Istanbul. Those two schools were selected across Istanbul using a random sampling method.

A total of 110 adolescents (average age 11.85 ± 0.35 ; 47% male) with no diagnosis of neurological, cardiovascular, metabolic, rheumatic, or vestibular diseases, no injuries or previous surgery participated in the population-based cross-sectional study.

Written informed consent from parents and assents from the adolescents were obtained before participating in this study. Assessments were conducted within the school hours as permitted by the school administration.

The study's ethical approval was obtained from Marmara Research Ethics Committee (No:178 Date: 05.12.2019).

2.2. Measurements

2.2.1. Personal factors

Age, sex, height, and weight were obtained using a standardized data collection form created by the researchers. Additionally, information on sleep times and tablet usage times were obtained.

2.2.2. Physical fitness assessment

The outcome of this study is Cardiorespiratory Fitness (CRF) which was measured using the 6 Minute Walk Test (6MWT) according to American Thoracic Society Guidelines (27). The distance walked within 6 minutes was measured.

2.2.3. Physical Activity Level

The activity level was obtained from the Physical Activity Questionnaire (PAQ). The PAQ includes 10 items that capture

activities in and out of school during the last seven days. Except for the last question, each item scores on a 5 Likert scale and produces an activity score between 1-5. Score 1 implies low physical activity whereas a score of 5 implies high physical activity. The points given to the 9 questions are collected and the total score was obtained by dividing the number of questions. Psychometrics of PAQ for the Turkish version was conducted by Erdim et al (28).

2.2.4 Motivation in Participating in Sports

Participation Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ) consists of 30 items including the reasons for participation in sports. The PMQ has 8 dimensions which are skill development, team membership / spirit, entertainment, friend, achievement / status, physical fitness /energy spending, movement / being active, and contest. It is scored on a 3 Likert scale. (1 very important, 2 less important, 3 not important). Psychometrics of PAQ for the Turkish version was conducted in 9-17 aged group students by Oyar et al (29).

2.2.5 Agility

Agility is measured using the T-test. The completion time of the 4-cones course at a certain distance is recorded. T-Test was applied according to Semenick's Test Protocols (30). The assessment was repeated only one time.

2.2.6 Vertical Jump and Broad Jump Test

Vertical and Broad Jump tests were used to measure the lower limb muscle strength (31). The Eurofit test battery was applied for the test procedure. In the Vertical jump test, the person jumps vertically with support from the knees. The distance between the endpoint the person reaches and the starting point is measured. Standing Broad Jump Test is measured on a non-slip floor, double foot jumping as far as possible. The distance between the starting point and the heel after landing is measured. Two attempts were allowed in both tests. The vertical jump test is a variation of the Broad Jump Test (32).

2.3. Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic information of the participants and all performance scores. The distributions of the data were visually evaluated by histograms, and Quantile-Quantile plots; and tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Before the main analysis, the collinearity among independent variables was examined using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and regression correlation matrix for Klein Goldberger model. The outcomes of interest, 6MWT, T-test, vertical jump test, and broad jump test, were regressed against six independent variables: sex, BMI percentile, sleep time, tablet usage time, PMQ, and PAQ. The categorical variables (sex and BMI percentile) were included in the regression models. Reference categories for was normal level for BMI (>5 and <85th percentile) and

female for sex. The model was visually evaluated for linearity, heteroscedasticity, and normality of the residuals. The alpha level was set .05. All analyses were done in R statistical software using the packages of 'olsrr' and 'lubridate' (Version 3.6.0, St. Louis, Missouri, USA) (33).

3. RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the demographic and characteristics of participants including age, gender, BMIz, sleeping time, tablet usage time, participation motivation questionnaire, physical activity questionnaire, 6MWT, T-test score, vertical jump test, and broad jump test.

Table 1. Baseline characteristics and predictors

Variables (n)	Mean (SD)	N (%)
Age	11.85 (0.35)	
Gender		
Female	-	58 (53)
Male	-	52 (47)
BMI WHO classification		
BMI percentile <5:Underweight		4 (4)
BMI percentile ≥5 and <85:Healthy Weight		65 (59)
BMI percentile ≥85 and <95:Overweight		26 (24)
BMI percentile ≥95:Obese		14 (13)
BMIz score	0.19 (0.03)	134 (100)
Life-style and activity		
Sleeping time (m)	528.12 (77.32)	90 (100)
Table usage time	128.79 (102.69)	90 (100)
PMQ	40.87 (6.70)	90 (100)
PAQ	2.83 (0.68)	134 (100)
Physical fitness		134 (100)
6MWT (m)	541.59 (58.42)	134 (100)
T-test (s)	16.42 (2.58)	
Broad jump (cm)	124.63 (25.68)	134 (100)
Vertical jump(cm)	25.64 (4.43)	134 (100)

BMI: Body Mass Index, PMQ: Participation Motivation Questionnaire, PAQ: Physical Activity Questionnaire, 6MWT: 6 Minutes Walk Test. SD: Standard deviation

Multiple regression analysis

The result of multiple regression analyses is presented in Table 2. The correlation coefficients between predictors were tolerable ($r < 0.5$) (34). The predictors included in the analysis explained 16-41 % of the variation in physical fitness indicators (Table 2). The analyses showed that only three of the predictors-gender and BMI and PA – had significant relationships with physical fitness indicators (Table 2). Being female was associated with increased time in the T-test and shorter distance in BJT (Table 2). Being obese was also significantly related to a longer time in the T-test. On the other hand, having a higher PAQ score was significantly associated with a shorter time in the T-test and higher distance in 6MWT. There were no significant relationships between physical fitness indicators and three predictors (motivation, sleep, and table usage time) (Table 2).

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis: relationship between each predictor and physical fitness indicators

PREDICTORS (range)	OUTCOMES (PHYSICAL FITNESS INDICATORS)							
	6 MWT score		T test score		VJT score		BJT score	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Gender (female)	4.438	0.715	1.24	0.007	-1.029	0.292	-12.44	0.018
BMIz								
Underweight <5 th percentile	-8.125	0.786	0.946	0.367	-1.171	0.626	6.457	0.613
Overweight >85 and <95 th	-26.15	0.401	1.432	0.217	-2.593	0.299	-4.509	0.733
Obesity	-59.48	0.090	4.423	0.001	-4.41	0.115	0.285	0.285
Sleep time (360,840)	-23.09	0.552	0.701	0.625	-0.755	0.806	-3.98	0.808
Table usage time (0,600)	13.78	0.06	-0.304	0.264	-0.381	0.515	-4.504	0.149
PMQ (30,57)	-46.60	0.22	2.681	0.064	-5.016	0.107	-26.62	0.107
PAQ (1.31,4.41)	98.52	0.002	-4.647	0.001	4.24	0.109	25.79	0.066
R²	0.20		0.41		0.16		0.28	

BMI: Body Mass Index, PMQ: Participation Motivation Questionnaire, PAQ: Physical Activity Questionnaire.

4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to show the relationship between physical fitness indicators and characteristics and lifestyle of adolescents aged 11-12 years. Based on the results, the health profile and lifestyle of adolescents may estimate the significant proportion of variabilities observed in physical fitness level in adolescents that was ranged from 16 to 41 %. Being female and being obese were significantly associated with a low fitness level while a high level of participation in physical activity was a significant indicator of better fitness. On the other hand, the motivation and time spending on sleep and table usage were not significantly related to the physical fitness level of the participants.

Physical fitness is a significant health marker of adolescents that predict their aerobic and anaerobic capacities allowing us to estimate the risk of cardiac and health problems in adulthood, participation in social and physical activities, academic performance, and psychosocial problems. This study adopted 6MWT to measure the aerobic capacity and endurance rather than direct measures of VO₂ max expenditure to reflect adolescents' ability to perform daily activities. Where VO₂ max was measured, boys were consistently reported to have a higher level of VO₂ max capacities than girls (35). Though, the gender differences in 6MWT were not as conclusive in the literature (36,37). The current study reported no differences in distance covered within six minutes between gender which was inconsistent with the previous study done in a similar population, Turkish children and adolescents, where Kanburoglu et al presented outstanding performance of boys compared to girls (38). Comparable performance between gender in the current

study may be a result of unmatched characteristics between girls and boys in the lifestyle or physical activity level of the participants. Kanburoglu et al compared the performance of girls and boys after separating the participants with respect to physical activity (PA) level as sedentary, active, and very active (38). The group differences were evidence in each PA level where boys covered a greater distance than girls. On the other hand, compatible with the current study, they found no differences among the adolescents with different levels of BMI in 6MWT. Indeed, 6MWT is presented as a valid test that can distinguish obese adolescents from those with normal weight (39) which was not the case in Turkish adolescents (38). In regard to oxygen uptake, obese adolescents typically presented with higher or relatively comparable oxygen consumption level with those with normal weight (40) which may be a factor leading to a comparable performance in 6MWT considering the nature of the test measuring aerobic capacity and endurance.

This study also showed that the fitness levels of Turkish adolescents highly vary dependent on the amount of time they invest in physical activity. A negative relationship between a sedentary lifestyle and physical fitness has been consistently shown in adolescents with varying age groups. Carson et al, for example, showed poorer cardiorespiratory capacity and endurance in adolescents who spent time on screen more than their peers (21). Nevertheless, the results of our study did not provide supportive evidence; on the contrary, the table usage time and sleep time were not significantly associated with physical fitness level through physical activity time was.

Increased screen time has also negatively affected the locomotor skills and muscular strength of adolescents in some studies (25,41). Despite these strong evidences, a recent meta-analysis reported no significant relationship between sedentary time and physical fitness level in either boys or girls (42). Studies suggest lifestyle with sports participants contributor for PA levels (42). Higher PA habitual benefit for cardiorespiratory and agility strength as an important healthy biomarker (43). Participants who have higher PA levels show greater performance in the T-test as agility test and 6MWT as cardiorespiratory capacity. These results were similar to current studies which provide an association between PA, sedentary behaviors, and physical fitness (4). The evidence indicates meeting the recommended PA level contributes to spending less time (44,45).

Although evidence emphasized that PA and sedentary time different dimensions of lifestyle (46,47). There are inconsistent results in the studies. Studies found that children who spent time on the screen, they less active. On the other hand, these studies found that active adolescents spend a lot of time on screen (48).

Telama et al. suggested that PA habitual tends to PA in adulthood in their 21 tracking study (49). PA represents any physical movement produced by skeletal muscles, it improves physical fitness status (50).

There was no available evidence for Turkish adolescents to show the relationship between physical fitness and lifestyle. This study provides to determine the effect of gender, BMI, physical activity, sedentary, tablet using, sleep time on the physical fitness levels in Turkish adolescents. The predictors included that three of the predictors-gender and BMI and PA – had significant relationships with physical fitness indicators. Obesity was also significantly related to a longer time in the T-test. On the other hand, PA was significantly associated with a shorter time in the T-test and higher distance in 6MWT.

Future studies may also investigate the effect of lifestyle intervention on physical fitness levels in adolescents.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of the current study present that the health profile and lifestyle parameters may contribute to physical fitness such as cardiorespiratory fitness and agility in Turkish adolescents. In conclusion, lifestyle management and obesity should be a major focus in public health.

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