

## PARENTAL VALUES ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BY THEIR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

Siti Khadijah Abdul Malek <sup>1</sup>

Nur Ain Abdul Malek<sup>2\*</sup>

Nur Izzah Abdul Malek <sup>2</sup>

Nur Hanisah Abdul Malek <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia  
(Email: khadijahmalek198@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia  
(Email: nurain630@uitm.edu.my)

\*Corresponding Author: nurain630@uitm.edu.my

<sup>3</sup> College of Computing, Informatics and Mathematics, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia  
(Email: hanisahmalek@gmail.com)

### Article history

**Received date** : 26-6-2024  
**Revised date** : 27-6-2024  
**Accepted date** : 21-9-2024  
**Published date** : 17-10-2024

### To cite this document:

Abdul Malek, S. K., Abdul Malek, N. A., Abdul Malek, N. I., & Abdul Malek, N. H. (2024). Parental values about participation in physical activity by their children with disability. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 9 (67), 29 - 36.

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**Abstract:** *The purposes of this study were to examine parental values about participation in physical activity by children with disabilities. The main focus of parental values was the influence of disability-related factors and demographics on parent's perceptions of likely benefits and important benefits related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities. The hypothesized correlates of children's physical activity included parental values, children's age and children's gender groups. Questionnaire on Physical Activity Values Survey was distributed to 262 parents to obtain information about their perceptions of physical activity benefits, physical activity participation, disability information, and demographics. Overall, parents of children with disabilities seem knowledgeable about physical activity benefits and value their children's participation in physical activity. The results of one way-ANOVA revealed that there was no significant main effect of children's age and of children's gender groups on likely benefits and important benefits of parental values. Overall, parental values were rated relatively high. This study provides valuable information about parental influence on physical activity participation by children with disabilities to several stakeholders, special school management.*

**Keywords:** *Parental Values, Physical Activity, Children, Disability*

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## Introduction

Physical activity is an important element to ensure a healthy lifestyle for everyone no matter what condition they are in. According to the World Health Organization (2023), physical activity provides numerous benefits for people with disabilities, including improved health, social engagement, and enjoyment. By engaging in physical activities, people with disabilities can reduce stress, pain, and depression. Additionally, physical activity can help mitigate stigmatization and counter negative stereotypes (American Psychological Association, 2022). It also can give enjoyment through social interaction of both fitness staff and disabled people including disabled children. Next, physical activities can give benefits in many ways no matter what type of disabilities they are. For instance, children who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, can get many advantages in terms of improving their physical and mental health. Recent studies have demonstrated positive effects of physical activities on manipulative skills, locomotor skills, and skill-related fitness in children with special needs (Smith et al., 2021).

Personality and lifestyle of an individual started to develop at an early age. Therefore, it is important for parents of children with disabilities to give positive influences in order to build a healthy development for them. Social, emotional and educational balance indicate the children have a healthy development. According to Albert Bandura who proposed Social Learning Theory, children tend to imitate what happens surrounding including their parents' behaviors. Parents' involvement is an important aspect of sports participation for youth with and without a physical disability. Parents assist their child athletes with transportation to sports events, coaching, and financial expenses for equipment and travel. Parents also play a role as important persons offering psychological support to their child athletes participating in sports by providing encouragement and opportunities for growth and development as an athlete (De Muynck et al., 2020). In particular, parents of youth athletes with a physical disability are often the individuals to help their child athletes position themselves to overcome being seen as a person with a disability. Thus, parents are the child's first teacher and should remain their best teacher throughout their life.

## Problem Statement

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank estimated that in some countries, being disabled is the major factor for children of never enrolling in school. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, parental shame and reluctance to accept their children's disabilities are among the primary reasons many parents refuse to enroll them as special needs students in government schools (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia, 2023). Usually, children are introduced to physical activity in school environment. Sport participation rates among people with disabilities are significantly lower compared to those without disabilities. Negative perceptions held by siblings and parents often deter individuals with disabilities from actively participating in physical activities. Sports and physical activity are arguably more crucial for people with physical disabilities due to their health and physiological needs related to their disabilities (Smith et al., 2022).

Additionally, sedentary lifestyles among individuals with disabilities contribute to obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Research indicates that 20% of children aged 10 to 17 years with special health care needs are obese compared to 15% of children of the same age group without special health care needs, as measured by Body Mass Index (BMI) (CDC, 2023). The lack of participation in physical activity among children with disabilities underscores the need

to understand parental attitudes toward physical activity to encourage participation. Sports and physical activity are arguably more essential for individuals with physical disabilities due to their health and physiological needs related to their disability (Smith et al., 2021). Many parents perceive that participation in sports and physical activities increases the risk of injury for their children and may discourage or prevent their involvement (Jones et al., 2019). However, there is a lack of in-depth exploration into parental perspectives on the benefits of physical activity for children with disabilities. Understanding parental attitudes is crucial because they influence why parents encourage their children with disabilities to participate in physical activities. Therefore, this study aims to assess parental attitudes toward physical activity participation by children with disabilities.

### **Research Objectives**

- RO 1: To identify the likely benefits factor on parental values related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities.
- RO 2: To identify most important benefits factor on parental values related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities.
- RO 3: To assess the differences of parental values between children's gender groups related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities.
- RO 4: To assess the differences of parental values between children's age related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities.

### **Research Questions**

- RQ1: What are most likely benefits factor on parental values related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities?
- RQ 2: What is important benefits factor on parental values related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities?
- RQ 3: Are there any differences in parental values on most likely benefits in terms of children's gender groups related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities?
- RQ 4: Are there any differences in parental values on important benefits in terms of children's gender groups related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Benefits of physical activity towards people with disabilities**

There are a number of quality benefits that one can gain from doing physical activity. Fitness is not only good for our arms, legs and core, it also works wonders for the health of our brain. Smith and Anderson (2022) found that regular physical exercise enhances brain functionality, aiding in memory retention and cognitive skill improvement. In spite of this, physical activity also can give us social fun as proven by research of Kim et al. (2020) that described contribution of physical and social activity participation to social support and happiness among people with physical disabilities. This study revealed that there is strong a relationship between social and leisure time physical activity. This is because those activities can give social benefits and improve life satisfaction disabled persons, especially among the Korean. Since this sampling method used is purposive sampling. Data were collected from 315 respondents who were diagnosed physically disabled. The result showed is they expressed happiness when doing physical activities since they can pair up with workout buddies for a sweat session. From the study, prospective trials to be conducted to examine whether greater social activity can give a

higher happiness and social support to disabled people. It also provides suggestions on how to handle and get involved with the persons who need special care. Furthermore, the number of Covid-19 cases are still increasing from time to time, people are asked to stay at home. Active living areas like sports centres, parks and schools have to close to minimize the risk of transmission of the disease. In this process, staying at home for an extended period of time makes it difficult for people with special needs to remain physically active as well as individuals generally in development. One of the articles by Yarimkaya and Esenturk (2020) aimed to remind folks that many physical activity strategies that they can employ to sustain their kids with disability, particularly in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) physically active during the Covid-19 outbreak. Improving attention and decision making, gaining flexibility, reducing anxiety, strengthening muscles and breathing are goals that can be determined by family when they arrange physical activity for their family member that are needs for special care. In addition, walking at home, food placement, climbing stairs, sit-up and push-up activities may also serve as inspiration to be active during the day (Chen et al., 2020).

### **Parental values towards their children physical activity**

All parents remain the only constant resource in the lives of handicapped children. Parents can lead by example and promote positive attitudes for their disabled child with respect to school and the need for education. Research has always shown that parents' values of physical activity and fitness have had a strong influence on the physical activity patterns of hearing children. Recent research has found significant positive relationships between parents' values towards physical fitness and sports participation and their children's physical activity and fitness stories, as well as between Deaf sport involvement by deaf parents and children's physical activity levels (Johnson et al., 2023). In addition, such a communication bond lends to sign language becoming a more efficient way of communicating and natural character of the deaf child's life when the parents themselves are deaf and using a language that they have previously mastered consistently on a daily basis. It provides greater financial backing to the theory that deaf parents, regardless of their communication method, may have a more serious understanding and influence on their deaf children as compared to hearing parents who may not experience as clear an apprehension of what it is like to be deaf.

### **Physical activity among children with disabilities**

Being physically active teaches people how to communicate effectively and the importance of teamwork, cooperation and respect for others. Research of Tindall et al. (2020) explored about achievements of Irish children with disabilities during an adapted physical activity programme. It is important to establish habits of being physically active because sometimes with kids with disabilities it makes even harder to be physically alive as they become bigger and older and their tolerance to exercise can decrease, thus encouraging it for the long run. Since we already know that children with disabilities are recommended to do physical activity 60 minutes per day. So, this study has been carried out by researchers in Ireland whether it is can be obtained or not by the children. 12 children with various disabilities been selected for this study. Data was collected using accelerometers. Its function is to analyse physical activity intensities. Results showed that children who completed the programme achieved  $\geq 75\%$  of their recommended daily physical activity requirements. This study mentioned that participating in programme will help children achieve daily recommendations for physical activity for children who need special care. Play is a lot of fun for children, it is also vital to emotional, social and physical development of the child. The child wants the time and opportunity to look at everything they see and to explore the workings of those things, including children with special needs. Research of Schenkelberg et al. (2020) described preschool environmental influences on physical activity in children with

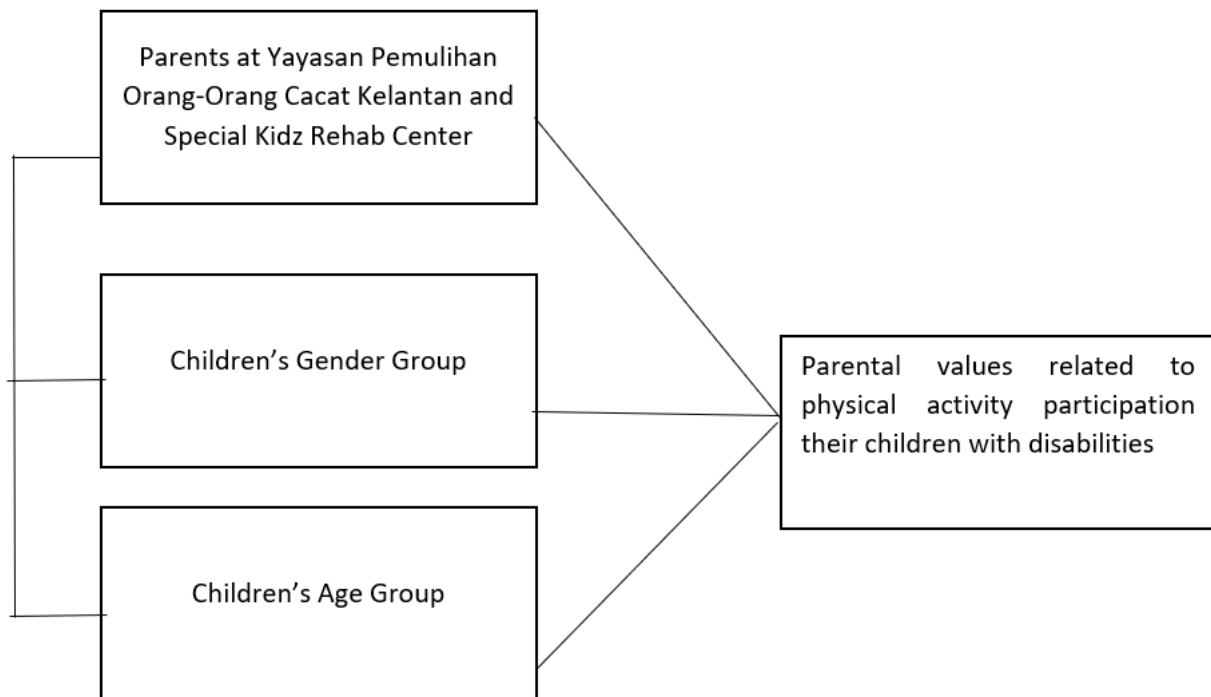
disabilities. Respondents were gained from 34 children with disabilities at pre-school. Method used in this study is by the Observational System for Recording Physical Activity in Children Developmental Disabilities version. From the observation, result showed that children with disabilities are sedentary when it comes to indoor learning. They were physically active when their teachers took them for outdoor learning. The children like open space since they can play with portable play equipment rather than fixed playground equipment. They also like to be individually active and doing one to one activity compared to team play. It is necessary to handle physical activity for children with disabilities in a spacious space to make them more comfortable to play around.

### **Parental influence on children's physical activity participation**

Parents are always the person that we will ask for permission to do any activity. One of the main influences of physical activity related behaviours for children is parental support. Unfortunately, inactivity among children has been linked to a variety of psycho-social factors, including parental beliefs and behaviours about physical activity. The perceived competence of parents regarding their child's physical ability and parental support are the main factors contributing to the physical activity behavior of children with disabilities (Thompson et al., 2022). For example, parents of children with disabilities can be more overprotective, have different expectations of physical activity behaviour, and have higher physical activity restrictions based on safety. All parents desire the best for their children, even during challenging times. More recently and in close connection with this research, Davis et al. (2021) described the decision-making process of parents regarding their children's participation in Special Olympics. The researcher examined the significance of parents' participation in the Special Olympics for their children with developmental disabilities and the factors influencing their decision-making. The researchers interviewed 12 mothers and six fathers (ranging in age from 39 to 69) about what participation in the Special Olympics meant to parents and families. Their results showed that parents encouraged their children with developmental disabilities to participate in Special Olympics for various reasons such as thoughtful instruction, finding the right fit, and a sense of belonging. Parents aimed to develop their children's skills, promote planning and goal achievement, and motivate their participation in Special Olympics. Additionally, parents perceived that the Special Olympics provided a safe environment to develop behavioural independence and empower both children and their parents to gain psychological control. The researchers recommended that Special Olympics meet parents' needs for their children with developmental disabilities by offering valuable and supportive teaching, fostering self-specified behaviours, improving psychological well-being, and ensuring participants feel successful (Martinez et al., 2023). In sum, research provides evidence that physical activity participation by youth both with and without a disability is significantly associated with parental influence. In addition, encouraging parents has a significant effect on increasing the participation of young people with and without disabilities in physical activity. Nevertheless, the degree of parental encouragement may be influenced by nature and severity of children's disability. In addition, parents' physical activity level should be examined in depth since it is the core to everything because every kid learns from their parents.

### **Research Framework**

Research framework was developed on the basis of a literature review that was carried out. In this framework, parents at Yayasan Pemulihan Orang-Orang Cacat Kelantan and Special Kidz Rehab Center were reviewed as independent variables, whereas parental values related to physical activity participation by children with disability is the one that is considered to be the dependent variable.



### Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach using Google Forms, an online survey to send questionnairesto respondents. This approach was chosen because it is an online platform that integrates people fromdifferent places with flexible time. Pilot study also has been carried out to ensure the validity and reliability of instruments since the questionnaire is adopted and adapted from Physical Activity Values and Concerns Survey (PAVCS) that was developed by Bomjin Lee (2004). Pilot study conducted since this study only focuses on parental values. Survey for parental concern has been taken out to avoid respondents becoming bored or fatigued answering a long survey. The developed questionnaire will be distributed to 50 parents of children with disabilities. This pilot study aims to improve the quality of the questionnaire and to examine whether respondents understand it or not. The population of this study consists of 262 parents who have a child with disabilities. As many as 300 sets of questionnaires were sent to prospective respondents via Google Form and 280 sets of questionnaires are returned with complete answers and further analysed which means that the response rate is 93%. After collecting data from the questionnaire thathas been distributed, the authors collect the results in Microsoft Excel which will later be transferredto SPSS to process and develop this research. The data analysis used includes descriptive analysis, one-way anova and pearson correlation.

### Result

From 262 participants involved, 55.7% were had children with disabilities at age of 6-10 years old, while 27.9% had their children from 11-15 years old and another 16.4% were parents of children at age16-20 years old. 69.5% were mother while 30.5% were father. Results indicated that all items and all factors of likely benefits were rated relatively high, whichare greater than 3.40 in a 4-point Likert scale. In this study, the most rated factors by the parents are fun, social benefits and skills while they rated least at health-related physical fitness, self- acceptance and winning. Results indicated high means on all items and factors for the important benefits of parental values. Among the important benefits, parents rated fun and health related physical fitness benefits relatively higher than other physical activity benefits (e.g., improving skills,

psychosocial and winning). This may reflect that parent are motivated to encourage their children with disabilities to participate in physical activity by internal factors such as children's happiness rather than external factors (i.e., win, reward, etc.). The result of t-Test analysis indicated there are no significant mean differences in parental values in likely benefits for both male and female children related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities since all the p-value perceived is higher than .05. The result of t-Test analysis indicated there are also no significant mean differences in parental values in important benefits for both male and female children related to physical activity participation by their children with disabilities since all the p-value perceived is higher than .05

## Conclusion

In this study, parents' perceptions of children's physical activity are interesting. The majority of parents perceived their children's physical activity level was higher than those who hold the same disabilities as their children, but lower than those who do not have disabilities compared to those without handicaps. The outcome revealed that there is no significance between children's gender groups and age on likely benefits and important benefits ratings. This study provides evidence that a study using a heavy and random sample is needed for fuller understanding of parental values about participation by children with disabilities.

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