

“Feeling Unsafe”: A Photovoice Analysis of Factors Influencing Physical Activity Behavior Among Malaysian Adolescents

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Abstract

Understanding the factors influencing physical activity (PA) in the Asia-Pacific region is critical, given the high prevalence of inactivity in this area. The photovoice technique explores the types of PA and factors influencing PA among adolescents in Kuching, Sarawak. A total of 160 photographs were collected from participants (adolescents, $n = 22$, mean age = 14.27 ± 0.7 years, and parents, $n = 8$, mean age = 48 ± 6.8 years). Data analysis used constant comparison methods of a grounded theory. The Analysis Grid for Environments Linked to Obesity was used to categorize PA factors. Study findings were centered on the concept of safety, facilities, parental restriction, friends, cultural traits, media, community cohesiveness, and weather. The central theme was “feeling unsafe” when being outdoors. To promote PA behavior, provision of PA facilities needs to be supported by other programs that build on peer support, crime prevention, and traffic safety, together with other educational campaigns.

Keywords

adolescents, low-income neighborhood, physical activity, photovoice, grounded theory, Analysis Grid for Environments Linked to Obesity framework

Background

Inactivity is putting the least-active individuals at greatest risk for a variety of chronic diseases, functional impairment, and all-cause mortality.¹ Today, 31.1% of adults and 80.3% of adolescents worldwide are inactive.² Physical activity (PA) decreases significantly as children move into the adolescent years and continues to decrease as adolescents progress into young adulthood.³

Although physical inactivity is more prevalent in high-income countries, it has also increased greatly in low-income countries. Malaysia was ranked tenth in the world and highest among Southeast Asian nations, scoring 61.4% on the inactive index.² About 43.7% out of 5.5 million Malaysian adults are inactive.⁴ Also, more of the urban (16%) population has adequate exercise

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