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The meaning of parental and peer support for elementary school children's physical activity

Sahbana Ridha[1], Eko Wahyudi[2]
[1,2] Universitas Sapta Mandiri, Indonesia
Email: sahbanaridha@univsm.ac.id[1], ekowahyudi@univsm.ac.id[2]

ABSTRACT

Background: Physical activity participation among Indonesian elementary school children remains concerningly low, with 58% failing to meet daily recommendations. **Objectives:** This study explores the meaning of parental and peer support for children's physical activity participation within Indonesian families whose children engage in futsal extracurricular activities at an Islamic school in Banjarbaru. **Methods:** This qualitative phenomenological study involved 20 parents of children enrolled in futsal activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations using purposive sampling. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's framework. **Results:** Seven interconnected themes emerged. Parents demonstrated behavioral modeling through active lifestyles, provided emotional support via encouragement and praise, and offered instrumental support, including equipment, transportation, and a monthly financial investment (Rp300,000-Rp1,000,000). Peer support strengthened participation through shared identity and healthy competition. Socioeconomic variations influenced support forms, yet emotional commitment remained consistent. Gender dynamics showed progressive attitudes toward girls' participation. Families employed adaptive strategies to overcome barriers. **Conclusion:** Parental and peer support synergistically sustain children's physical activity participation. Multi-level interventions strengthening family and peer systems while respecting cultural values are essential for promoting inclusive physical activity among Indonesian elementary school children.

Key words: Parental support; peer support; children's physical activity.

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Correspondence Address:

Sahbana Ridha
Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Sapta Mandiri, Indonesia.
Email: sahbanaridha@univsm.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Physical activity plays a crucial role in maintaining health and well-being, particularly during childhood. Regular physical activity not only helps maintain physical health by reducing the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, but also provides psychological benefits such as improved mood, reduced stress levels, and enhanced sleep quality (Azis et al., 2024; Ridha et al., 2024). Elementary school-aged children typically enjoy engaging in various physical activities such as playing, running, cycling, and participating in activities that involve body movement (Rachman et al., 2024). These activities contribute to the development of physical fitness, motor skills, cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and children's self-confidence. From a theoretical perspective, Bronfenbrenner (1979) posits that children's behavior and development are influenced by multiple interconnected environmental systems, including

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microsystems such as family and peer groups (Veziroglu-Celik et al., 2025). This framework provides a lens through which to understand how social support from parents and peers operates as key environmental factors shaping children's physical activity engagement.

However, empirical evidence indicates that children's participation rates in physical activity remain relatively low. According to the World Health Organization (2024), approximately 58% of children and adolescents aged 10-14 years in Indonesia do not meet the recommended minimum of 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Consistent with this finding, research conducted by Hanifah et al. (2023) revealed that approximately 57% of Indonesian children have insufficient levels of physical activity and tend to engage more in sedentary behaviors, such as prolonged gadget use and television viewing. This finding is further corroborated by research conducted by Prasetyawati et al. (2023) on children aged 9-11 years, which demonstrated that elementary school-aged children's activity levels fall within the low physical activity category. These studies collectively underscore that elementary school-aged children in Indonesia continue to face significant challenges in establishing active and healthy lifestyle habits. Therefore, the role of family and social environment, including peers, is essential in promoting children's engagement in physical activity from an early age.

The family, as the first social unit a child encounters, plays a pivotal role in shaping healthy lifestyle habits. Parents who are physically active tend to serve as role models for their children and are more likely to encourage participation in physical activity (Hu et al., 2021). In the context of physical education programs, research by Nurhidayah et al. (2024) highlights the importance of parental involvement and broader support systems in creating environments that support children's physical activity participation.

Furthermore, differences in socioeconomic status also influence families' capacity to provide instrumental support. Families with limited economic resources often struggle to provide sports equipment, transportation to training venues, or club membership fees, which can ultimately impede children's participation in physical activity (Hosokawa et al., 2023). Forms of family support for children's physical activity can be categorized into emotional, instrumental, and motivational support (Ezzati Arbat & Hosseinzadeh Peyghan, 2023; Cai et al., 2022). Emotional support includes encouragement and attention, instrumental support involves the provision of sports facilities and infrastructure, while motivational support encompasses providing enthusiasm and positive reinforcement to encourage active participation.

In addition to family support, peer support also plays a significant role in enhancing children's engagement in physical activity. Peers can influence children's interest and motivation to participate through invitations,

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companionship, or even healthy competition. Research by Zou et al. (2023) demonstrated that children who have physically active peers are more likely to participate in group sports activities. Peers also serve as an important source of social and emotional reinforcement, particularly during elementary school age when social interactions begin to dominate children's daily activities (Fahrezy et al., 2025). This aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn and adopt behaviors through observation and modeling of others in their social environment, suggesting that peer influence operates through mechanisms of observational learning and social reinforcement (Egele et al., 2025).

Several empirical studies have examined social support and children's physical activity with varying approaches and findings. Hu et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of 14 studies from a social ecological model perspective, identifying that peer and parental support were significant positive predictors of physical activity participation across multiple countries. However, their review predominantly included Western populations and cross-sectional designs that could not capture temporal dynamics. Zou et al. (2023) surveyed 2,087 Chinese adolescents and found that peer support directly influenced exercise adherence ($\beta = 0.135$, $p < 0.001$), with additional indirect effects through self-efficacy (42% of total effect) and self-regulation (11% of total effect). Despite these important quantitative findings, their study did not explore the subjective meanings children attribute to peer support. Rachmawati et al. (2024) examined 355 Indonesian mothers and identified that maternal exercise habits (OR = 3.37; 95% CI = 1.18-9.65) and children's sports habits (OR = 5.18; 95% CI = 1.64-16.26) significantly influenced parental support for moderate to vigorous activities. While valuable, this study focused exclusively on parental perspectives without examining peer influences or children's own experiences. Three critical gaps remain: first, quantitative methods cannot capture lived experiences and subjective meanings; second, parental and peer support have been examined separately without investigating their interaction; third, insufficient evidence exists from Indonesian socio-cultural contexts where collectivist values may shape support mechanisms differently than Western individualistic settings.

Thus, the novelty in this research is threefold. First, unlike previous quantitative studies (Hu et al., 2021; Rachmawati et al., 2024; Zou et al., 2023), this study employs a phenomenological design to explore lived experiences and subjective meanings that children attribute to social support in their physical activity engagement. Second, while existing research examined parental and peer support separately, this study investigates how these two sources interact and mutually influence children's physical activity behaviors. Third, this research provides empirical evidence from the Indonesian socio-cultural context, where

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collectivist values, strong family bonds, and community-oriented structures may shape social support differently than Western contexts. These findings will inform culturally appropriate interventions to promote children's physical activity in Indonesia and similar collectivist societies.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the meaning of parental and peer support for elementary school children's physical activity. Employing a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and observations, this research is expected to reveal how children understand, experience, and respond to various forms of social support they receive from family and peer environments. Specifically, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) How do elementary school children perceive and interpret parental support in relation to their physical activity engagement? (2) What meanings do children attribute to peer support in the context of physical activity participation? and (3) How do parental and peer support interact to shape children's motivation and sustained engagement in physical activity? The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to efforts aimed at increasing children's participation in physical activity in both school and home environments.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore perceptions of family support for physical activity. The study was conducted at Al-Halaby Islamic School in Banjarbaru City, where the futsal extracurricular program had 58 actively enrolled students. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: (a) parents whose children had participated in futsal for at least three months, (b) willingness to participate and share experiences, (c) ability to provide informed consent, and (d) availability for interviews and focus group sessions.

Of 58 eligible parents, 35 expressed initial interest. Due to time constraints, work commitments, and scheduling conflicts, 20 parents (14 mothers, 6 fathers) completed all data collection procedures. Data saturation was achieved at the 18th participant, with two additional interviews confirming no new themes emerged. This sample size aligns with recommendations for phenomenological studies, where 15-25 participants are typically sufficient when data saturation is achieved (Lincoln et al., 2018). The sample represented diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures, ensuring rich data capturing the complexity of parental and peer support dynamics.

Data were collected through three complementary methods: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant using an interview guide covering topics such as forms of family support, the influence of such

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support on children's physical activity participation, and perceived barriers and facilitators. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission. Two focus group sessions were organized, each consisting of 8-10 participants and lasting 90-120 minutes, to facilitate interactive discussions of shared experiences. Participant observations were conducted during physical activities over four weeks to directly observe parent-child interactions and supportive behaviors.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied established qualitative research criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as consistently employed in recent qualitative research, based on the framework of (Lincoln et al., 2018). Credibility was established through data triangulation using multiple sources and member checking, whereby participants reviewed their interview transcripts. Dependability was ensured through peer debriefing involving peer researchers in the analysis process. Confirmability was achieved by maintaining a detailed audit trail, and transferability was facilitated by providing thick descriptions of the research context and findings. All participants provided written informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained by assigning pseudonyms and securely storing data in password-protected files.

FINDINGS

Qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations with 20 parents revealed five main themes related to parental support and children's participation in physical activity. These themes encompass various dimensions of support that profoundly influence children's engagement in futsal extracurricular activities.

1. Parental Role as Behavioral Models and Demonstration of Active Lifestyles

Parents who were actively involved in physical activity emerged as strong role models for their children. Analysis revealed that many participants demonstrated active lifestyles that profoundly influenced their children's participation patterns. One father (P07) stated: "I always play futsal every weekend with colleagues from work. My child sees this and becomes enthusiastic about joining his school's futsal team. He says he wants to be like his father."

Parental active involvement transcends mere verbal encouragement. They participate in recreational sports, jogging routines, and weekend physical activities, thereby creating a family culture that normalizes and enjoys physical activity. One mother (P03) shared: "I usually take my child to futsal practice every weekend. Initially, he just watched his father play futsal with friends, then became interested in joining practice at school. Now every Sunday I always accompany and watch him practice. I think small support like being present and providing transportation can make children more enthusiastic."

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A similar sentiment was expressed by a father (P10): "I don't want to just tell my child to be active, but I also must set an example. Every afternoon I invite him to play futsal with friends at the field near our house. There we also chat and encourage each other to stay motivated to exercise. From there, he becomes more enthusiastic about joining futsal practice at school."

Meanwhile, a mother (P08) shared her experience: "My husband and I often watch futsal matches together, both on television and when my husband plays with his friends. Our child often watches and appears very enthusiastic. Gradually, he wanted to join futsal practice at school. I think if children see their parents have an interest in sports, they will be interested and imitate without being told."

This form of involvement is not only recreational but also has social and emotional impacts on children. A father (P11) revealed: "I often invite my son to the field near our house to play soccer every weekend. I want to show that sports are not a burden, but an enjoyable activity. Now he often invites me to play first."

In agreement, a mother (P06) added: "We have a small habit, every Saturday afternoon the whole family plays ball together in the yard. Although only briefly, this activity makes my child happy and motivated to join practice at school. I think habits like this are important, so children get used to being active."

Observational data confirmed that parents who attended their children's practices and matches demonstrated consistent behavioral patterns that reinforced the importance of physical activity. Their presence communicated implicit messages about valuing sports participation, perseverance, and skill development. Children whose parents regularly exercised showed higher levels of attendance and commitment in futsal extracurricular activities compared to children whose parents led sedentary lifestyles.

Overall, active parental involvement plays an important role in shaping family norms and values related to physical activity. Through behavioral modeling and healthy lifestyle habits, parents indirectly instill long-term motivation and commitment to an active lifestyle in their children.

2. Emotional and Motivational Support

Emotional support emerged as a critical factor influencing children's sustained participation in physical activity. Parents provided various forms of emotional encouragement, including praise, positive reinforcement, and empathetic understanding during difficult times. A mother (P12) explained: "When my daughter feels tired or wants to stop futsal practice, I always remind her of her achievements. I praise every small progress, such as better ball

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control or successful passes. This makes her feel valued and motivated to continue."

A father (P08) expressed: "I always try to be present when my child competes. Although not every time, I make sure he knows I support him. After matches, whether winning or losing, I always tell him I'm proud of him. I want him to know that effort is more important than results."

Meanwhile, a mother (P04) shared: "My child sometimes loses motivation when losing a match. Usually I talk to him calmly, I tell him that defeat is part of learning. I also help him remember positive things from previous practices or matches so he doesn't focus only on his failures."

A similar sentiment was conveyed by a father (P15): "If my child is lazy to practice, I don't get angry immediately. I ask first why he's not motivated. Sometimes he's tired from schoolwork. After talking, I usually give motivation by reminding him of his goals, for example wanting to become a great player or participate in tournaments. After that, he becomes motivated again."

Data revealed different patterns of emotional support. Almost all parents routinely provided positive feedback and praise to their children. Parental attendance at children's sporting events was very high, with the majority consistently attending matches and competitions. Almost all parents celebrated both victories and skill improvements, regardless of the magnitude of achievement. Most parents provided consolation and perspective after defeats, showing strong emotional presence during difficult times.

Parents who balanced achievement pressure with unconditional support created psychologically safe environments where children felt comfortable taking risks, making mistakes, and persevering through challenges. This emotional scaffolding proved essential for developing intrinsic motivation and long-term commitment to physical activity.

3. Instrumental Support: Provision of Facilities and Resources

Instrumental support manifested through tangible provisions that enabled children's participation in physical activity. This dimension of support proved highly significant, as it directly addressed practical barriers to sustained engagement.

a. Equipment Provision

Parents invested in sport-specific equipment to facilitate their children's participation. Analysis identified several categories of equipment provision, particularly futsal-specific equipment. Many parents purchased professional futsal shoes for their children. Many parents provided training balls for home practice. Almost all parents bought shin guards and other protective equipment. All participants provided training clothes and jerseys for their children. One parent (P3) explained in more detail: "I bought my

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child professional futsal shoes for Rp800,000. Initially I thought it was expensive, but seeing his enthusiasm and performance improvement, I realized this investment was very valuable. He practices at home almost every day with the ball I bought."

Several parents provided cross-sport support, recognizing the benefits of diverse physical activity. Some participants invested in swimming equipment including goggles, swimming caps, swimsuits, fins, and kickboards, as well as pool membership cards. A mother (P15) shared her experience: "Besides futsal, I enrolled my daughter in swimming lessons. I bought complete swimming equipment goggles, cap, and good swimsuit. Swimming helps improve her stamina for futsal. She swims twice a week and plays futsal three times a week."

b. Financial Support

Parents allocated a significant portion of their household budget to support children's physical activity. All parents paid extracurricular membership fees. Almost all parents bore the costs of transporting children to practice venues. Most parents paid tournament registration fees, while some parents even provided additional training sessions. Nearly half of parents provided nutritional supplements to support their children's athletic performance.

Average monthly expenditures for supporting children's futsal activities ranged from Rp300,000 to Rp1,000,000, depending on socioeconomic status and family commitment level. This variation reflected different economic capacities but equally strong commitment to children's health and development.

c. Transportation and Logistics Support

Transportation emerged as a crucial supporting factor, especially considering the time-sensitive nature of practice schedules. Analysis revealed that many parents personally drove their children to and from practice. Some parents arranged carpooling with other parents, and a small portion provided transportation money for older children. A father (P8) noted: "I adjust my work schedule to take my child to futsal practice three times a week. The practice venue is quite far from home, about 4 kilometers. Although tired after work, I prioritize this because I see how happy and healthy he is through this activity."

This sacrifice of time and energy demonstrated parents' deep commitment to their children's well-being. Another form of support was visible through carpooling initiatives, where several parents cooperated to arrange turns picking up and dropping off their children. A mother (P11) explained: "We have a small parent group on WhatsApp. Every week we

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divide the schedule of who can pick up and drop off the children. This way, all children can still attend practice without burdening one party."

Additionally, a small portion of parents provided indirect logistical support in the form of transportation money for children who were more independent. A mother (P5) shared: "My child is already in sixth grade and usually takes a regular motorcycle taxi to the practice venue. I always make sure his transportation money is sufficient and he arrives safely."

These findings indicate that transportation and logistics support is not only about physical access to practice venues but also reflects parental commitment to ensuring children's sustained participation in futsal. Active involvement, both directly and through coordination among parents, shows that the success of children's sports programs is greatly influenced by family readiness to provide consistent practical and emotional support.

d. Facility Access

Parents actively sought and provided access to quality sports facilities. All participants utilized available school-based facilities. Nearly half of parents accessed community sports centers in their neighborhoods. Some parents rented private futsal fields for additional practice, demonstrating significant financial investment. Most parents designated specific areas in their yards or garages as practice spaces for children.

4. Peer Influence and Social Support Networks

Parental support serves as an important foundation in encouraging children's engagement in physical activity, but the role of peers is equally significant in strengthening children's commitment to remain active, particularly in futsal. The interaction between parental support and peer support creates a synergistic effect that encourages children to remain active and participate sustainably. Children whose parents facilitate social relationships with friends who are also active in futsal show more consistent participation levels and higher motivation.

Most parents employed various strategies to strengthen this social support network. They organized joint practice sessions between children and their schoolmates, facilitated social activities after practice such as eating together or casual play, and formed small futsal groups involving children and parents. This approach not only fostered a sense of togetherness but also created a positive social climate around children's futsal activities. A mother (P11) explained: "My child's friends from school also play futsal. I sometimes invite them to practice together at the field near our house. This creates a sense of togetherness and healthy competition. They motivate each other and celebrate each other's progress."

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A similar sentiment was expressed by a father (P06): "I often help arrange joint exercise schedules between my child and his schoolmates. After practice, they usually buy snacks together or play briefly. From there, it's very clear they become closer and more motivated to practice."

Several parents also highlighted the positive social impact emerging from children's involvement in futsal groups. A mother (P14) shared: "My child was quite shy before, but since joining futsal and having teammates, he has become more confident. I see for myself how his friends encourage each other during practice."

Meanwhile, a father (P08) added: "I sometimes chat with other parents on the sidelines, and we agree to support each other, so the children practice regularly. Sometimes when my child is lazy, his friend invites him first. So, they encourage each other."

Forms of social support also appeared in casual interactions that created a family atmosphere. A mother (P09) shared her experience: "When the children play futsal together, I and several parents often bring small snacks for them to eat after practice. The atmosphere becomes like a big family. The children become more cohesive and motivated to practice."

This aligns with the statement of a father (P12) who said: "I think peers have a big role. My child is motivated to practice because he wants to match his friend who has been good for longer. But they still support each other and learn together. So, the competition is healthy."

The social dynamics formed through interactions with peers create a supportive and motivating environment. Children feel a shared responsibility toward the team, are encouraged to practice harder, and obtain emotional satisfaction from the togetherness that is formed. The presence of parents who actively facilitate these interactions further strengthens the sense of togetherness and increases children's consistent participation in futsal.

Data revealed that peer support operated through various interconnected mechanisms. Children developed shared identities as "athletes" or "futsal players," which reinforced their commitment to the activity. Comparison with peers motivated skill improvement through healthy competition. Team membership fulfilled important social connection needs for child development. Peer expectations encouraged consistent attendance in practice and team activities.

5. Socio-Cultural Context and Gender Considerations

This research identified significant variations in support patterns based on socio-cultural context and gender, providing important insights into how these factors shape children's participation in physical activity.

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a. Socioeconomic Variation

Parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds showed different instrumental support patterns. Some families with higher socioeconomic status purchased premium equipment such as branded shoes and professional gear. They enrolled children in additional private training sessions and provided access to various sports activities.

Many families with middle socioeconomic status balanced quality and affordability in equipment purchases. They prioritized more affordable school-based extracurricular activities, provided occasional investment in private training, and focused on one main sport for cost efficiency.

Some families with lower socioeconomic status primarily relied on school-provided equipment. They emphasized use of free community facilities and had limited participation in tournaments requiring registration fees.

Despite economic variation, all parents demonstrated commitment through non-financial forms of support, including time investment, emotional encouragement, and presence at children's activities. This indicates that effective support transcends economic capacity alone.

b. Gender Dynamics

Research conducted in this Islamic school context revealed nuanced gender considerations in children's participation in futsal. Among families with daughters involved in futsal activities, most parents initially showed hesitation due to cultural concerns regarding the appropriateness of physical activity with gender norms. However, after witnessing the resulting benefits such as increased self-confidence, better health, and teamwork ability, almost all parents eventually provided full support.

Some parents also established certain conditions such as use of modest sports attire and selection of special practice sessions for girls. A father of a female participant (P16) reflected: "Initially, I was worried about my daughter playing futsal, thinking it might be too rough. However, after seeing positive changes such as increased self-confidence, better health, and strong friendships, I fully support her. I bought her proper futsal shoes and always attend her practices."

In line with this, a mother (P17) shared: "I was hesitant before because I was afraid my daughter would be judged as a tomboy by the environment. But after attending her practice several times, I saw she was very happy and confident. Now I regularly take her and prepare her futsal equipment every weekend."

A similar view was expressed by another father (P18) who said: "I think futsal is not only for boys. If girls have an interest, why not? I'm

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proud because she dares to appear and can work in a team. I hope the school also continues to provide space for girls to practice."

Meanwhile, for boys, almost all parents gave approval without hesitation from the beginning. They tended to show more active support by investing in sports equipment and encouraging children to participate in tournaments or competitions. Father presence at every boy's match was also more frequently observed, reflecting support patterns still influenced by traditional gender roles. A father (P19) explained: "For boys, I fully supported from the beginning. I even help train when I have time. I encourage him to join inter-school tournaments so he can have competition experience and achievement motivation."

A similar statement was also expressed by a mother (P20) who said: "My son is very active. My husband and I never forbid, we even help by buying new shoes and balls. We also often come to watch his matches to give direct encouragement."

Overall, these findings indicate that despite differences in support patterns based on gender, both girls and boys obtain positive benefits from involvement in futsal. The change in parental attitudes toward girls' participation in sports signals a shift in societal values toward more inclusive and equal views of children's involvement in physical activity, particularly in team-based sports such as futsal.

6. Barriers and Facilitating Factors

Parents identified several barriers to consistent support for children's participation in physical activity. The most common barrier was time constraints, mentioned by most parents. They faced difficulties balancing work schedules with children's practice times. Financial limitations became a concern for some parents in managing equipment costs, membership fees, and transportation. Academic pressure became a significant concern for many parents who worried about the balance between sports and their children's academic performance. Some parents faced transportation challenges due to distance to practice venues, and some experienced disruptions due to weather conditions, especially during the rainy season affecting outdoor activities.

To overcome these barriers, parents developed creative adaptive strategies. They coordinated with coaches for more convenient and flexible practice schedules. They emphasized how physical activity actually improves academic performance to reduce concerns about educational priorities. Parents utilized indoor facilities during bad weather to ensure practice continuity. They also adopted gradual commitment approaches, starting with school-based activities before making larger external investments.

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7. Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability

Sustained parental support strongly correlated with children's long-term participation. Parents who maintained consistent support over extended periods reported that their children developed autonomous motivation for physical activity. This long-term support also increased overall family health awareness, with all family members becoming more active. Parents reported stronger parent-child relationships through shared interests in sports. Children showed improved self-discipline and time management skills that extended to other life areas. A mother (P19) shared: "For one year, I consistently supported my child's futsal activities. Now, at age 8, he independently manages his practice schedule and maintains his equipment. This sport has taught him responsibility beyond just physical fitness."

This testimony illustrates how sustained parental support contributes to the development of important life skills.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study provide comprehensive understanding of the complexity of parental and peer support in shaping children's physical activity participation.

1. Parental Role as Behavioral Models: Social Cognitive Theory Perspective

The main finding of this study confirms the importance of the parental role as behavioral models, conceptually rooted in Social Cognitive Theory (Egele et al., 2025). Bandura's theory emphasizes that learning occurs through observation and imitation of others' behavior, particularly significant figures such as parents. In the context of physical activity, children observe and internalize their parents' behavioral patterns, which then shape their perceptions about the importance and value of physical activity.

Research results show that physically active parents provide strong influence on children's participation in futsal, consistent with findings by Kaseva et al. (2017) who found that parental physical activity is a significant predictor of children's physical activity. Furthermore, a longitudinal study by Maltby et al. (2018) confirmed that parental modeling has long-term effects on children's physical activity behavior into adolescence. The mechanism of this influence is not limited to direct observation, but also includes the creation of a "family culture" that normalizes and enjoys physical activity as an integral part of daily life.

Research by Su et al. (2022) in their meta-analysis found a positive correlation between parental and child physical activity, although the effect varies based on child age and activity type. The findings of this study strengthen this evidence by showing that modeling is not merely the physical presence of

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parents in activities, but also includes implicit communication about values such as perseverance, commitment, and skill development.

The concept of "vicarious learning" in Bandura (2018) Social Cognitive Theory is highly relevant for explaining this phenomenon. Children learn not only from their direct experiences, but also from observing the consequences of their parents' behavior. When children see their parents enjoying physical activity, experiencing health improvements, and obtaining social satisfaction from sports, they develop positive expectations about physical activity that then motivate their own participation.

2. Emotional Support and Intrinsic Motivation Development

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), parental emotional support is essential for sustaining children's participation, a relationship that has been consistently supported by recent empirical studies (Ntoumanis & Moller, 2025).

Emotional support provided by parents emerged as a critical factor in sustaining children's participation in physical activity, a finding that aligns closely with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by (Ryan & Deci, 2020). SDT posits that intrinsic motivation is fostered when three basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are satisfied. Recent empirical studies grounded in SDT have consistently shown that parental emotional and autonomy-supportive behaviors play a central role in enhancing children's motivation and long-term engagement in physical activity (Howard et al., 2025).

Parental emotional support in this study, including praise, positive reinforcement, and consolation during difficult times directly fulfills children's competence needs by acknowledging their achievements and strengthening their self-efficacy perceptions. This finding is consistent with research by Williams et al. (2022), showing that parental emotional support plays an important role in enhancing children's long-term enjoyment and commitment to sports through a positive motivational climate. Furthermore, a study by Laguna-García et al. (2025), demonstrates that parental support plays an important role in fostering athletes' intrinsic motivation and satisfaction through fulfilling psychological needs such as autonomy and competence.

An interesting finding from this study is parents' emphasis on process rather than outcome, as revealed in the statement effort is more important than results. This approach aligns with the concept of an autonomy-supportive motivational climate as described by Reeve (2018), which emphasizes learning and personal improvement over social comparison and outcome-based evaluation, an approach that has been consistently associated with more adaptive and sustainable motivation in recent empirical studies (Chen et al., 2020). Research by Moraes (2022) confirms that parents who create a mastery

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climate through appropriate emotional support facilitate the development of autonomous motivation in children in the sports context.

Emotional support also plays an important role in building children's psychological resilience. Parents' ability to provide perspective after defeats and help children focus on positive aspects reflects effective emotional scaffolding strategies. This concept is supported by research by Chen et al. (2025) who found that resilient young athletes have parents who provide consistent emotional support and help them develop adaptive coping strategies.

3. Instrumental Support: Overcoming Structural Barriers

Instrumental support provided by parents including equipment provision, financial support, transportation, and facility access plays a fundamental role in enabling children's participation, a finding consistent with Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes that child development is influenced by various interacting systems, including microsystem (family) and exosystem (community resources). Recent studies applying ecological and socio-ecological frameworks have further demonstrated that parental instrumental support operates across these systems to shape children's physical activity behaviors in contemporary contexts (Veziroglu-Celik et al., 2025).

Research by Rosete et al. (2022) identified access to facilities and equipment as key determinants of children's physical activity, especially for organized sports like futsal. The findings of this study extend this understanding by showing the spectrum of instrumental investment made by parents, from basic equipment to professional training and nutritional supplements. Monthly financial investment ranging from Rp300,000 to Rp1,000,000 reflects parents' substantial commitment to children's physical activity.

An important finding to note is that instrumental support is not only transactional but also communicative. As revealed by Xu et al. (2025), parents' resource provision communicates implicit messages about family values and priorities. When parents invest time and money in children's physical activity, they indirectly communicate that the activity is important and valuable, which then shapes the child's value system.

Transportation support emerged as a highly critical factor in this study, consistent with findings by Karo et al. (2024) who identified transportation as one of the main barriers to children's physical activity participation. The time sacrifice and work schedule adjustments made by parents to take children to practice demonstrate commitment that transcends mere verbal support.

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4. Peer Influence: Social Dynamics in Physical Activity Participation

Drawing on Social Identity Theory Tajfel and Turner (1979), children's participation is significantly influenced by peer socialization processes through which group membership shapes attitudes and behaviors, as evidenced by recent empirical research in physical activity contexts (Huang et al., 2025).

In the context of this research, children involved in futsal develop identities as "athletes" or "futsal players," which strengthens their commitment to the activity. This finding aligns with longitudinal research by Zhou et al. (2023) who found that peer support is a strong predictor for physical activity in children and adolescents, with effects strengthening with age.

Peer influence contributes to children's sustained engagement in physical activity through psychosocial processes such as social comparison, confidence, perceived acceptance, and sensitivity to social evaluation, which can function either as facilitators or barriers to participation, particularly within school-based physical activity contexts where body image, peer presence, and perceived judgment shape motivation and involvement in sport and physical activity (Atikurrahman & Aswara, 2024).

Research by Zhou et al. (2023) on peer relationships in youth sport shows that friendship quality in the sports context predicts enjoyment, commitment, and intrinsic motivation. The findings of this study enrich this understanding by showing the active role of parents in facilitating peer relationships through organizing joint practice sessions and social activities. This strategy creates a synergistic effect between parental and peer support, where both mutually reinforce in encouraging sustained participation. Peer influence shapes physical activity participation through social support, shared engagement, and positive peer interactions that enhance motivation and persistence in school-based physical activity contexts (Iwanta et al., 2023).

5. Socioeconomic Variation in Support Patterns

Research findings on variations in parental and peer support across socioeconomic groups provide empirical support for the concept of differential parenting based on available family resources. This perspective aligns with the Family Stress Model (Conger, 2025), and the Family Investment (Hosokawa et al., 2023), which explain how economic stress influences parenting practices and parental investments in child development.

Research by Zheng (2025) found significant disparities in children's physical activity participation based on family socioeconomic status, especially for organized sports requiring financial investment. However, an important finding from this study is that despite variation in forms of instrumental support, parents' emotional commitment to children's physical activity remains high

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across all socioeconomic levels. This indicates that effective support does not solely depend on economic capacity, but also on family values and priorities.

Research by Owen et al. (2022) through systematic review and meta-analysis found significant disparities in organized physical activity participation based on family socioeconomic status. Children and adolescents from high socioeconomic status families were 1.87 times more likely to participate in organized sports compared to those from low-status families. The findings of this study support this approach, where families with limited resources utilize school and community facilities to facilitate their children's participation.

6. Gender Dynamics in Physical Activity Participation

Research findings about differences in support patterns based on gender provide important insights into how gender norms still influence children's physical activity participation, despite shifts toward more inclusive attitudes. This aligns with Gender Schema Theory, which explains how individuals organize information and behavior based on gender categories learned from society, as also demonstrated in recent studies on gendered parental support and children's physical activity (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017).

Extensive research has documented the gender gap in physical activity participation, with girls consistently showing lower activity levels compared to boys (Guthold et al., 2020). The findings of this study reveal the complexity behind this disparity, where parents' initial hesitation regarding girls' participation in futsal reflects cultural concerns about gender appropriateness. However, attitude changes after witnessing positive benefits indicate potential for gender norm transformation through direct experience.

A study by Sharman et al. (2024) found that parental perceptions about gender appropriateness in sports influence their support for girls' participation, consistent with the findings of this study. However, what distinguishes this is the Islamic school context, where religious and cultural considerations become the main foundation in parental considerations regarding dress and sports behavior in the educational environment. Islamic values emphasize the importance of maintaining modesty and honor (ḥifẓ al-'ird) as part of character formation of students (Arfina et al., 2023). Therefore, sports activities in Islamic schools are not only oriented toward physical fitness, but also toward strengthening students' religious and moral identity. Negotiation between modern sports rules and principles of modest dress reflects Islamic educational institutions' efforts to integrate sharia values in sports practice, as explained in Firdaus and Salahudin (2024) article that maintaining honor is a concrete form of implementing maqāṣid al-syarī'ah in the educational environment.

Research by Peral-Suárez et al. (2020) shows that parental support can mitigate negative effects of gender stereotypes on girls' physical activity

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participation. The findings of this study support this perspective by showing that when parents provide full support to their daughters albeit with certain conditions these children obtain the same benefits as boys in terms of self-confidence, health, and social skills.

Drawing on Social Role Theory proposed by Eagly, which emphasizes socially constructed gender roles in parenting, recent empirical evidence indicates that boys tend to receive more immediate approval and active paternal support, reflecting enduring gendered expectations (Jiang et al., 2024). More dominant father presence in supporting boys' physical activity is consistent with An et al. (2021) findings about fathers' role in boys' sports socialization.

Drawing on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2018), the value shift observed in this study can be understood as a process through which cultural norms evolve via exposure to new information and positive experiences. Increasing numbers of parents acknowledging the importance of physical activity for girls signal a transition toward more egalitarian views on gender and sports. Recent empirical studies on social norm change and parental attitudes toward children's physical activity provide strong evidence that such shifts are facilitated through observational learning, reinforcement, and repeated positive social experiences (Egele et al., 2025).

7. Integration of Parental and Peer Support: Synergistic Model

One important theoretical contribution of this study is the demonstration of synergistic effects between parental and peer support. Although previous literature tended to examine these influences separately, the findings of this study show that both operate in an interconnected and mutually reinforcing system.

The concept of "developmental cascades" Masten and Barnes (2018) is relevant for understanding this phenomenon. Developmental cascades explain that developmental influences in one domain can spread and affect functioning in other domains over time. In the context of this research, parental support creates a foundation that enables children to engage in physical activity, which then opens opportunities for peer interactions. These peer interactions, in turn, strengthen children's motivation and commitment, which is then further mediated and facilitated by parental support.

The Youth Physical Activity Promotion Model (YPAP Model) developed by Welk et al. (2023) provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding this complex interaction. The YPAP Model identifies four key questions influencing children's physical activity participation: "Is it worth it?" (value perception), "Am I able?" (competence perception), "Am I ready?" (physical and psychological readiness), and "Do I have the opportunity?" (enabling factors). Parental support influences all four dimensions: modeling and emotional support

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shape value and competence perceptions, while instrumental support provides opportunities. Peer influence primarily operates through the "Is it worth it?" dimension by creating social value from participation.

Research by Zhao et al. (2025) using multilevel analysis shows that peer and parental influences have independent and interactive effects on children's physical activity. The findings of this study extend this understanding by showing that parents actively facilitate positive peer influence through organizing social activities and creating opportunities for interaction, which then creates multiplicative rather than merely additive effects.

8. Barriers and Adaptive Strategies: Resilience Perspective

The identification of barriers and development of adaptive strategies by parents in this study provides important insights into family resilience in supporting children's physical activity. The concept of "family resilience" Walsh (2021) explains how families can face and adapt to challenges through effective communication, organization, and belief system processes.

The identified barriers time constraints, financial limitations, academic pressure, transportation, and weather are consistent with existing literature on barriers to children's physical activity (Duffey et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2022; Salar et al., 2024). However, what distinguishes this study is the documentation of adaptive strategies developed by parents to overcome these barriers. Flexibility in scheduling, reframing the relationship between physical activity and academic performance, utilization of indoor facilities, and gradual commitment approaches all reflect effective problem-focused coping strategies (Martínez-Andrés et al., 2020).

The reframing strategy where parents emphasize how physical activity improves academic performance is particularly interesting because it transforms perceptions about trade-offs between sports and academics into a complementary relationship. This strategy is supported by substantial empirical evidence from neuroscience and education research showing that physical activity has positive effects on cognitive function, attention, and academic achievement (Berrios Aguayo et al., 2022; Komarudin et al., 2023).

9. Theoretical Implications and Contributions to Literature

This study found that parental and peer support operate as synergistic rather than independent systems. Parents who actively modeled physical activity behaviors, provided consistent emotional support, and invested substantially in resources (monthly expenditures ranging from Rp300,000 to Rp1,000,000) created foundational conditions enabling children's initial engagement. This engagement subsequently opened opportunities for peer interactions that amplified motivation through shared identity formation, healthy competition,

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and social reinforcement. Notably, this synergistic pattern persisted across different socioeconomic levels despite significant variations in forms of instrumental support.

These findings extend existing theoretical frameworks in important ways. The observed synergistic effects advance the Youth Physical Activity Promotion Model Welk et al. (2023) by demonstrating that parental and peer influences operate multiplicatively rather than additively, with parental support creating enabling conditions that allow peer influences to enhance perceived social value. While Social Cognitive Theory Bandura (2018) establishes parental modeling as important, our findings reveal modeling operates through family cultures that normalize physical activity evidenced by family rituals around weekend sports participation and collective viewing of sports events rather than isolated observational episodes, extending Bandura's framework beyond individual behavior observation to embedded family value systems.

Critically, this study reveals contextual nuances challenging universalist assumptions. In the Islamic school context, most parents initially showed hesitation regarding girls' futsal participation due to cultural concerns about gender role appropriateness and religious modesty requirements, yet almost all parents eventually provided full support after witnessing tangible benefits including enhanced self-confidence, improved health, and positive peer relationships. This transformation demonstrates that experiential evidence can shift culturally-influenced attitudes more effectively than didactic approaches, contributing novel insights to Gender Schema Theory Starr and Zurbriggen (2017) by showing gender schemas are more malleable than previously understood when positive experiences contradict existing schemas. This cultural-contextual dimension remains underexplored in predominantly Western physical activity research.

Furthermore, sustained emotional commitment across all socioeconomic levels, despite variations in instrumental support capacity, offers important equity insights. While the Family Investment Model Hosokawa et al. (2023) emphasizes material resource impacts, our findings suggest emotional and motivational dimensions may partially compensate for instrumental limitations in physical activity support. This highlights intervention pathways not solely dependent on economic resources a theoretically important distinction for developing scalable, equity-oriented programs.

The necessity of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives (Social Cognitive Theory, Self-Determination Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Social Identity Theory) emerged clearly, as no single framework adequately captured participation complexity. This integrative approach represents an important methodological contribution, demonstrating that physical activity participation

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requires multilevel theoretical frameworks accounting for individual, familial, peer, and cultural-contextual interactions.

10. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite providing rich insights through qualitative approaches, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the relatively small sample size (20 parents) limits generalizability of findings. Future research with larger and more diverse samples is needed to validate these findings.

Second, the cross-sectional design of this study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal studies tracking parental support and children's participation over time would provide stronger understanding of cause-effect relationships and developmental trajectories.

Third, this research focused on parental perspectives. Inclusion of children's, coaches', and teachers' perspectives would provide stronger data triangulation and more comprehensive understanding of the ecosystem supporting children's physical activity participation.

Fourth, this research did not objectively measure physical activity outcomes (e.g., through accelerometry) or assess long-term impacts on children's health and development. Future research integrating qualitative data with objective physical activity measurements and health outcomes would enrich our understanding.

Promising future research directions include: (1) intervention studies testing the effectiveness of programs that enhance parental support, (2) investigation of mediation and moderation mechanisms in the relationship between parental support and children's participation, (3) exploration of how parental support needs to adapt as children develop from childhood to adolescence, and (4) cross-cultural comparative research to understand universality and cultural specificity of effective support patterns.

CONCLUSION

This study provides comprehensive evidence that parental and peer support operate synergistically to shape children's physical activity participation. Through behavioral modeling, emotional encouragement, instrumental resource provision, and peer interaction facilitation, parents create supportive ecosystems that enable and sustain children's engagement. The synergistic effects between parental and peer influences establish optimal conditions for developing intrinsic motivation and long-term commitment to active lifestyles.

The findings carry significant implications for practice and policy. Effective physical activity promotion requires family-centered approaches that strengthen parental roles while fostering positive peer influence. This necessitates not only facility and program provision but also parental education, family engagement

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support, and creation of social interaction opportunities around physical activity. Given the cultural-contextual variations observed, interventions must be culturally sensitive, particularly regarding gender considerations in religious educational settings.

Future research should address current limitations through longitudinal designs examining causal relationships and developmental trajectories of support patterns as children transition from childhood to adolescence. Integration of children's perspectives alongside parental views would provide triangulated understanding of support mechanisms. Objective physical activity measurements (e.g., accelerometry) combined with qualitative data would strengthen evidence regarding support effectiveness. Cross-cultural comparative studies are essential to determine universality versus cultural specificity of effective support patterns. Additionally, intervention studies testing family-based programs that simultaneously enhance parental support and peer networks would advance translational research. Particular attention should be given to developing and evaluating low-cost interventions that maintain effectiveness across socioeconomic levels, addressing equity concerns in physical activity access.

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