

## Factors Associated with Involvement in Physical Activity among Children (Aged 6-18 Years) Training at Excel Soccer Academy in Uganda

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**Abstract :** Physical inactivity is a growing global epidemic, also recognised as a major public health challenge. Globally, there are alarming rates of children reported with cardiovascular disease and obesity with limited interventions. In Sub Saharan Africa, there is limited information about involvement in physical activity especially among children aged 6 to 18 years. The aim of this study was to explore factors associated with involvement in physical activity among children in Uganda. **Methods:** We included all parents with children aged 6 to 18 years training with Excel Soccer Academy between January 2017 and June 2018. Physical activity definition was time spent participating in routine soccer training at the academy for more than 30 days. Each child's attendance was recorded, and parents provided demographic and social economic data. Data on predictors of physical activity involvement were collected using a standardized questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and frequency were used. Binary logistic regression was used at the multi variable level adjusting for education, residence, transport means and access to information technology. **Results:** Overall 356 parents were interviewed; Boys 318 (89.3%) engaged more in physical activity than girls. The median age for children was 13 years (IQR:6-18) and 42 years (IQR:37-49) among parents. The median time spent at the Excel soccer academy was 13.4 months (IQR: 4.6-35.7) Majority of the children attended formal education,  $p < 0.001$ ). Factors associated with involvement in physical activity included: owning a permanent house compared to a rented house (odds ratio [OR] :2.84: 95% CI: 2.09-3.86,  $p < 0.0001$ ), owning a car compared to using public transport (OR: 5.64 CI: 4.80-6.63,  $p < 0.0001$ ), a parent having received formal education compared to non-formal education (OR: 2.93 CI: 2.47-3.46,  $p < 0.0001$ ) and daily access to information technology (OR:0.40 CI:0.25-0.66,  $p < 0.001$ ). Parent's age and gender were not associated to involvement in physical activity. **Conclusions:** Socioeconomic factors were positively associated with involvement in physical activity with boys participating more than girls in soccer activities. More interventions are required geared towards increasing girl's participation in physical activity and those targeting children from less privilege homes.

**Keywords :** physical activity, Sub-Saharan Africa, social economic factors, children

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