

Short Report

# Research into the Number of Elementary Schools in Shikoku that Conduct Classes in Swimming with Clothes On

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## Abstract

Some classes are held at elementary schools in Shikoku to teach children how to swim with clothes on. However, conducting the classes is done independently at each school. We administered a questionnaire survey to find out how many schools actually conducted these classes. 49.9% carried out the classes, 39.8% didn't offer the classes and 10.5% stopped the classes in the past. In order to increase the number of schools offering the classes, the teachers will need to learn about the proper way of swimming with clothes on to teach those classes at schools, ensuring the safety of all the students.

## 1. Introduction

Water affects many of the situations in which children live. Swimming pools, ponds, lakes and even the puddles are fun and adventurous for children. However, water can be dangerous. According to a report from the National Police Agency in 2011, the places where aquatic accidents of children under 15 years of age most frequently occur are the river (37.3%), the sea (28.8%). There are few aquatic accidents at the swimming pool (5.1%) [1, 2]. Also, when the aquatic accidents occurred, they would most likely have had their clothes and shoes on. It is difficult for them to swim with clothes on even if they are good swimmers in a swimming pool. At schools, the swimming class is based on Government Course Guidelines. It says that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students learn how to play in water, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students learn how to float and swim rudimentary with a kickboard or floating device, and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students learn the crawl or swim using the breaststroke for long distances continually without any kickboard or other device. Swimming classes with clothes on are conducted independently each at school [3, 4]. Even though swimming with clothes on (Chakui-ei) is reported to be an effective method for avoiding aquatic accidents, it is not a required course at elementary schools. The purpose of this study was to investigate the actual situation of swimming classes with clothes on at elementary schools in Kagawa, Ehime, Tokushima, and Kochi prefectures that make up Shikoku Island. (Area: 187.9ha)

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## 2. Methods

In the summer of 2012, we randomly selected elementary schools (n=509) in four prefectures in Shikoku, and requested either the principal or the teachers to provide the answers to our questions about swimming classes with clothes on. The written informed consents were obtained from all principals at those elementary schools. The survey consisted of the following: 1) if they have a swimming class conducted with clothes on 2) the main goal of the class 3) the teaching contents of the class 4) grade, place and learning situation of the class 5) who teaches the class 6) if classes aren't offered, why?

## 3. Results and discussion

In this study, the percentage of respondents to the questionnaire was 49.9% (n=256).

1) In this study, we found that only 49.6% (n=127) of the elementary schools carried out swimming classes with clothes on even though 99.0% (n=255) of them have regular swimming classes. Also, 93.4% (n=239) of the elementary schools have swimming pools on their sites. 39.8% (n=102) of elementary schools didn't offer swimming classes with clothes on. However, 10.5% (n=27) of elementary schools stopped conducting the classes at some point in the past. Comparing the percentage of those offering the classes in four prefectures, there was no significant difference statistically. In a previous study, the investigation at 400 elementary schools in the Kanto area in 2000, the percentage of classes held was higher (73.5%) than this study [5]. In another study, the investigation of 176 teachers at elementary and junior high schools in Hyogo prefecture in 2001, the percentage was lower than this study (18.0%) [6]. This suggests that the percentage of classes held depends greatly upon the area being researched.

2) The main goal of the swimming class with clothes on was "protect one's own life" (98.4%), "learn how to rescue" (28.3%), "get used to the water" (15.7%) and "appreciate nature" (10.2%) (Table1). The investigation of at 400 elementary schools in the Kanto region in 2000 had similar results; "save one's own life" (98.8%). But there were no answers for others [5].

3) The teaching contents of the class were "just float with clothes on" (96.1%), "just float" (88.2%) and "swim with clothes on" (86.6%) (Table2). "just float" were plastic bottles, plastic bag, clothes, bags, balls, rescue devices, cooler boxes, bags of snacks, shoes, and sandals. The most important point was "floating". As Nozawa mentioned in his paper "5 ways to protect one's own life", it is important to keep your clothes and shoes on in case you fall in the water since it is hard to take off anything in the water and hold on to the floating items and wait for help, floating like a sea otter [7]. "Floating" has also been included for more than 100 years in level-1 of the rescue curriculums of the Australian and British swimming associations [8].

Table 1 The main goal for swimming with clothes on (multiple answers)

Goal content	Percentage
protect one's own life	98.4
learn how to rescue	28.3
get used to the water	15.7
appreciate nature	10.2
promote strength with swimming	1.6
others	2.4

Table 2 The teaching contents of swimming with clothes on (multiple answers)

Content	Percentage
float with clothes on	96.1
just float with items	88.2
swim with clothes on	86.6
rescue someone	29.1
take off clothes in water	19.7
use a floating device	11.0
learn from DVDs or textbooks	0.8
others	3.1

4) The percentages by grade of swimming classes conducted with clothes on were 48.0%, 47.2%, 55.1%, 59.8%, 78.7% and 87.4% from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade respectively (Table3). The places for classes were swimming pools (99.2%) (n=122) and rivers (0.8%) (n=1). The higher the grade goes up, the more implementation percentage increased. This was similar to the previous study [5]. And also 75.0% of the schools answered that swimming classes with clothes on was appropriate for the students in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades [6]. However, aquatic accidents can happen to any child unexpectedly, so it is necessary to develop swimming skills with safety programs even for children in lower grades.

5) The instructors of the swimming classes with clothes on were “school teachers” (58.3%), “firemen” (16.5%), “maritime safety staff” (6.3%), and “swimming coaches” from other facilities (2.4%). Though it wasn’t shown in the results, the percentage of the teachers who have learned how to swim with clothes on was 46.5%, and more than half of the total number of teachers had not learned how to swim with clothes on. To increase the percentage of swimming with clothes on at elementary schools, it will be necessary for the teachers to have more opportunities to learn and to be trained on regular basis.

6) 50.3% of the schools answered that their conditions didn’t permit them having swimming classes with clothes on. The reasons are as follows: “not enough time” (56.6%), “shortage of instructors” (7.0%) and “difficult to keep the pool sanitized” (4.7%) (Table4). These results were similar to the previous studies in 2000 and 2001, which had a list of reasons such as “it is difficult to keep the safety of the students”, “it is hard to keep the pool water clean” and “the teachers didn’t have enough knowledge or skill to do this practice” [5, 6].

Table 3 The percentage by grade, of swimming classes conducted with clothes on

Grade	Percentage
1	48.0
2	47.2
3	55.1
4	59.8
5	78.7
6	87.4

Table 4 The reason for not carrying out the swimming classes with clothes on

Reason	Percentage
not enough time	56.6
shortage of instructors	7.0
difficult to keep the pool sanitized	4.7
not necessary	3.9
others	14.7
no answer	7.0

#### 4. Conclusion

In summary, we investigated the actual situation of swimming classes with clothes on at elementary schools in Shikoku. The percentage of the elementary schools that carried out swimming classes with clothes on was only 49.6%. In order to increase the number of schools offering these classes, it will be necessary for the teachers to be given more opportunities by the authorities, in which they can learn about the proper way of swimming with clothes on and will be trained to teach those classes at schools, ensuring the safety of all the students.

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