

## FAMILY INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF CHILDREN'S MOTIVATION FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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### ABSTRACT

**The aim:** To study the family influence on the formation of children's motivation for a healthy lifestyle.

**Materials and methods:** The medical and sociological study among parents was conducted to assess their children's adherence to the principles of a healthy lifestyle and the influence of the family on the formation of children's motivation for a healthy lifestyle. The survey was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire using Google Forms. The design of the questionnaire was typical and contained the following structural components: addressing the respondent, obtaining informed consent to participate in the survey, and blocks with targeted questions (25 questions in total). The research involved 150 parents (including 54.7 % (82 people) of women and 45.3 % (68 people) of men).

**Methods:** bibliosemantic, system-oriented analysis and logical generalization, medical and sociological (questionnaire), statistical data processing.

**Results:** It has been found that positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle prevail in the families of the respondents (44.0 %), 42.0 % of parents indicated that their family members regularly adhere to a healthy lifestyle. Herewith, 48.0 % are interested in teaching their children about a healthy lifestyle. The main motives that most parents form in their children regarding a healthy lifestyle are maintaining and promoting health (38.0 %), improving physical condition (16.0 %), and creating a healthy family (10.0 %). However, almost a third of parents do not instill responsibility for their children's life and health due to a lack of time and knowledge about a healthy lifestyle.

**Conclusions:** To foster a positive attitude toward a healthy lifestyle in children, parents should set their example, create favorable conditions for a healthy lifestyle, and follow traditions related to active recreation, sensible nutrition, and the absence of bad habits. Children's motivation for a healthy lifestyle is the main responsibility of the family.

**KEY WORDS:** health, healthy lifestyle, motivation, family, parents, children

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## INTRODUCTION

Health is the highest value of every individual and society as a whole. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines "health" as a state of adequate physical, spiritual, and social well-being and not merely as the absence of disease or infirmity. The achievement of this state of well-being depends not only on the influence of factors that directly determine it (heredity, quality of medical care, environmental conditions, etc.) but also on the understanding by the population of different age groups, including children, of the value of their health and the conscious adherence to the principles of a healthy lifestyle [1, 2].

Childhood is the most favorable age for learning certain norms and patterns of behavior, accumulating

the necessary knowledge and skills, understanding needs and motives, and identifying key life priorities. Establishing motivation for a healthy lifestyle involves directing parents' work to form children's conscious positive attitudes toward personal hygiene, morning exercises and motor activity, sensible and balanced nutrition, responsible attitude to their health, etc. [3, 4].

Today, a significant portion of the world's population does not adhere to the principles of a healthy lifestyle, resulting in an increasing percentage of children and youth with bad habits, obesity, physical inactivity, dysfunction, and diseases of organs and body systems. Negative lifestyle patterns are becoming a model for the younger generation, which jeopardizes not only their

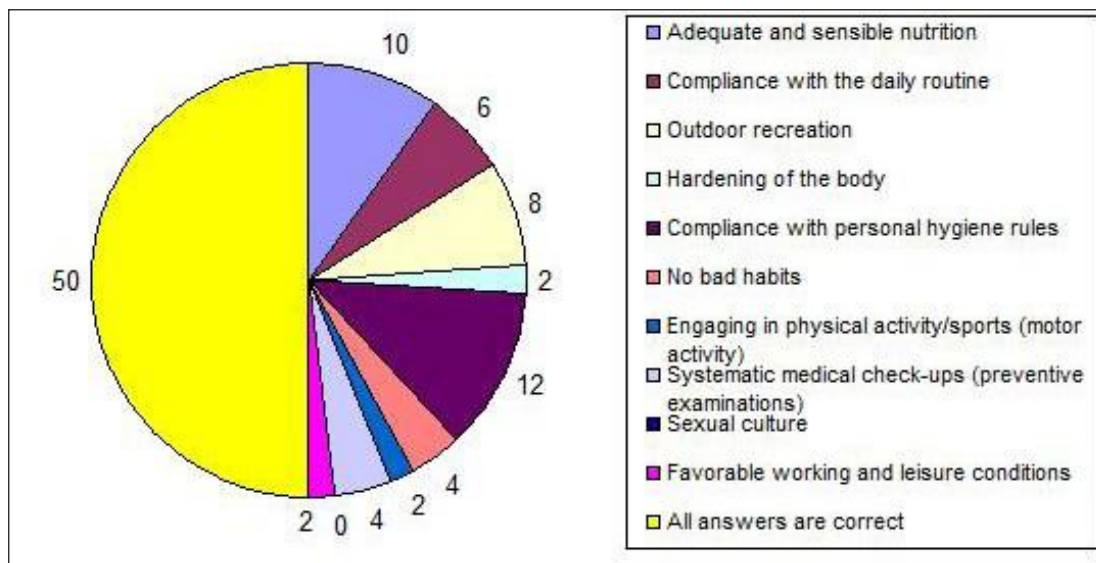


Fig. 1. Distribution of parents' answers about their understanding of the essence and principles of a healthy lifestyle

health but also the health of the world's population as a whole. With this in mind, the role of parents in motivating children to adopt a healthy lifestyle is growing.

### THE AIM

The aim is to study the family influence on the formation of children's motivation for a healthy lifestyle.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted in 2020-2022 at Zhytomyr Medical Institute of Zhytomyr Regional Council and Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University. Methods: bibliosemantic, which included an analytical review of sources of scientific information on the research topic (12 sources from the scientometric databases Index Copernicus, Scopus, PubMed, and others were investigated); system-oriented analysis and logical generalization - to formulate conclusions based on the results of the research; medical and sociological - for questioning parents; statistical processing method - for processing the experimental data obtained in the course of the research.

The research involved 150 parents (including 54.7% (82 people) of women and 45.3% (68 people) of men). The medical and sociological study among parents was conducted to assess their children's adherence to the principles of a healthy lifestyle and the influence of the family on the formation of children's motivation for a healthy lifestyle. The survey was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire using Google Forms. The design of the questionnaire was typical and contained the following structural components: addressing the respondent, obtaining informed consent to participate in the survey, and blocks with targeted questions (25

questions in total). The questionnaire was anonymous without any references to the authors of the article in the answers. The results were used for scientific purposes only. Questionnaire was assessed by the experts in this field (2 professors and 4 associate professors) and was approved by the Academic Council of Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University (Protocol No. 14 dated 26.08.2020). Consent to voluntary participation in the survey was obtained from all the respondents involved in the study. This research followed the regulations of the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki - ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects.

### RESULTS

Motivation is an incentive to act, a dynamic process of physiological and psychological plan that governs human behavior and determines its organized nature, activity, and stability, the ability of a person to actively meet his or her needs [5]. Scientists [6, 7] identify the following motivational components of a healthy lifestyle and health promotion in children: *at the level of physical health* (striving for physical perfection, attitude to one's own health as the highest social value, physical development, general physical working capacity, body hardening, observance of a rational daily routine, fulfillment of personal hygiene requirements, sensible and balanced nutrition); *at the level of mental health* (development of mental processes, presence of self-regulation, adequate self-esteem, absence of character accentuations and bad habits); *at the level of spiritual health* (coherence of universal and national moral and spiritual values, presence of a positive ideal, diligence, sense of beauty in life, nature, art); *at the level of social well-being* (formed civic responsibility for

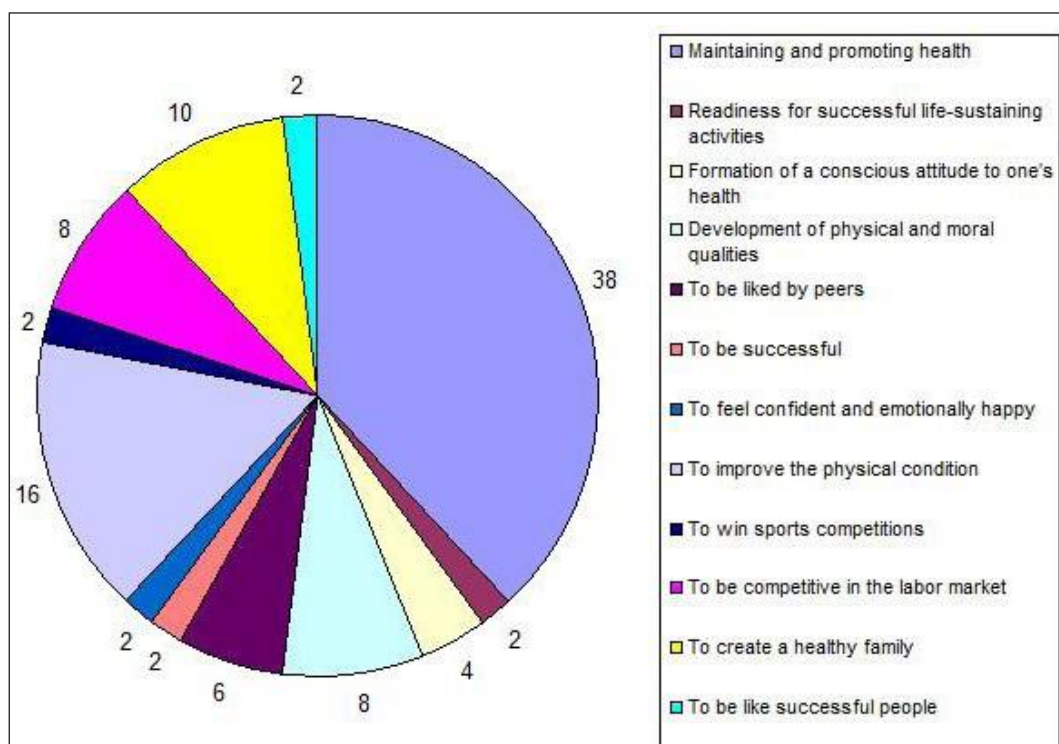


Fig. 2. A healthy lifestyle motives that parents form in their children

the consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle, positively directed communication skills, kindness in attitude to people, ability to self-actualization, self-regulation, and self-education).

The survey revealed that young respondents (25-44 years old) prevailed among the parents surveyed - 76.0 % (114 people); middle-aged parents (44-60 years old) - 24.0 % (36 people); more than half of the respondents (61.4 %) have higher education. The results of parents' answers to the questionnaire about their knowledge and understanding of the essence and principles of a healthy lifestyle are presented in Fig 1.

These results show that most parents understand the essence of a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, it was found that only 44.0 % of respondents have a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle in the family, 36.0 % found it difficult to answer, 14.0 % were neutral, and 6.0 % were negative. Moreover, only 20.0 % of respondents provided an affirmative answer regarding the importance and necessity of adhering to the principles of a healthy lifestyle in the family, the remaining 28.0 % do not see the need for this, 22.0 % say that this issue does not concern them, and 30.0 % said that they found it difficult to provide a specific answer. The majority of respondents (58.7 %) believe that their children need knowledge about a healthy lifestyle. However, only 42.0 % of parents confirmed that they and other family members regularly lead a healthy lifestyle, 40.0 % sometimes lead a healthy lifestyle, and 18.0 % do not follow a healthy lifestyle at all.

When parents were asked what motivates them to follow the principles of a healthy lifestyle, the answers were distributed as follows: 30.0 % of parents believe that a healthy lifestyle helps prevent and eliminate bad habits, 28.0 % want to be a role model for their children, 24.0 % want to maintain and improve their health, 10.0 % want to alleviate existing diseases, and 6.0 % want to prevent diseases. And only 2.0 % of parents said that the main motivation for a healthy lifestyle is their responsibility for their health. Among the motives that parents form in their children to ensure their commitment to a healthy lifestyle, the main ones are maintaining and promoting health - 38.0 %, improving physical condition - 16.0 %, creating a healthy family - 10.0 % and others (Fig 2).

The analysis of parents' responses to the most effective methods for teaching children to maintain a healthy lifestyle showed that the most effective method is the parents' example. Among the main elements of their behavior that, according to the respondents, are a model for children's perception of a healthy lifestyle, are the following: adherence to the rules of balanced and regular nutrition - 42.0 %; systematic exercise - 12.0 %; giving up bad habits - 8.0 %; outdoor recreation - 2.0 % (3 people). Only 10.0 % of parents talk to their children but do not follow the principles of a healthy lifestyle. It is worth noting that 26.0 % do nothing to help their children take responsibility for their health. Based on this, we believe that parents, as role models for their children, should not only be aware of health issues but also directly demonstrate a healthy lifestyle in practice.

It was also found that more than half (52.0 %) of the surveyed parents systematically pay enough attention to promoting their children's health, one-third of the respondents, namely 30.0 %, sometimes take an interest in their children's general condition, and 18.0 % do not devote the necessary time, arguing that they have no time for their children. The results of the survey on the measures parents use to promote their children's health show that the main measures, in their opinion, are: proper nutrition - 36.0 %, outdoor walks - 22.0 %, sports (attending sports clubs, etc.) - 16.0 %. Some respondents prefer to harden children by going to the pool, rubbing, etc. (12.0 %), conducting systematic medical examinations (10.0 %), and using massages as a means of promoting children's health (4.0 %).

It was found that only one-third of respondents (32.0 %) said they regularly do morning exercises with their children, while the other part of respondents said they sometimes or not at all do morning exercises (34.0 % each). The vast majority of respondents (46.0 %) believe that their children need 6-8 hours of sleep for a good night's rest; 42.0 % say 9 hours or more; 12.0 % say less than 6 hours. According to expert recommendations, children aged 6 to 12 should sleep 9 to 12 hours, and adolescents (13-18 years old) should sleep 8 to 10 hours. Therefore, based on these results, we conclude that not all parents are sufficiently informed about the specifics of the recommended sleep duration. It was found that 50.0 % of parents partially adhere to the balance and regularity of nutrition in the family; 20.0 % do not adhere to these principles and only 30.0 % claim to adhere to good nutritional behavior. At the same time, 57.3 % of respondents emphasized that there are no overweight or obesogenic relatives in their families; 42.7 % said that there are overweight and obese people in their families.

It is known that the types of activities children do in their free time also have a certain impact on their health. Thus, it was found that 30.0 % of children spend most of their free time playing games on their phones or computers, 22.0 % communicate on social media, 28.0 % go in for sports, 10.0 % relax outdoors, 6.0 % watch movies, and 4.0 % read books. Thus, most children spend their free time without benefit to their health.

It was found that 52.0 % of respondents' families have no bad habits. However, 36.0 % reported smoking in the family, and 12.0 % reported drinking alcohol. There must be no cases of drug use in the families of the surveyed respondents. At the same time, only 20.0 % of respondents would like to get rid of bad habits, 4.0 % did not express such a desire, 24.0 % said they were indifferent, and 52.0 % repeatedly confirmed the absence of bad habits in their families.

Among the reasons for parents' lack of attention to their children's health, the main reason is lack of time due to high professional workload (48.0 %). Other reasons include lack of knowledge and skills (22.0 %). Only one-third (30.0 %) of parents surveyed said they spend enough time on their children's health. It is worth noting that none of the parents surveyed indicated that they were not interested in their children's health.

## DISCUSSION

The analytical review of scientific sources [8, 9] shows that health as a multidimensional phenomenon integrates various aspects - physical, mental, spiritual, and social. Scientists believe that a healthy lifestyle integrates the relationship between lifestyle and human health, and combines all the conditions that ensure the normal functioning of a person in professional, social, and domestic spheres. A healthy lifestyle expresses a person's attitude and guidelines for the development and improvement of individual and public health.

According to scientists [10, 11], among all periods, childhood is the most favorable for the formation of healthy lifestyle principles, because it is at this age that a child becomes aware of his or her "Ego". The task of parents is not to overload the child with a stream of ready-made information but to provide an opportunity to reflect and listen to their bodies. Only under such conditions can the acquired knowledge about a healthy lifestyle be used by children in various unexpected situations and transformed into their skills in real life. In middle preschool age, children form an idea of health as "not a disease" (they show a negative attitude to illness based on their experience). Nevertheless, children do not realize what it means to be healthy and feel healthy. As a result, an attitude towards health is formed as something abstract. In children's understanding, being healthy means not getting sick. That is, in middle preschool age, children begin to realize threats to their health from the external environment, as well as in their actions [12].

According to studies of the age dynamics of the importance of health and a healthy lifestyle, their priority role is most often noted among representatives of the older generation. The hierarchy of children's values is dominated by games and communication with peers, i. e. children's understanding of the role of physical, mental, and social health and the appropriate lifestyle is still in its infancy [3].

Fostering the need for a healthy lifestyle in children should be accompanied by the acquisition of a set of necessary skills and habits of caring for themselves, their bodies, and caring for others, in a special inter-



nal state associated with a sense of satisfaction and comfort. Experts recommend that parents make a list of healthy lifestyle skills that they are guaranteed to be able to instill in their children. At the same time, it is necessary to analyze existing habits, both good and bad, and help eliminate them. It is necessary to take into account the best family experience in the process of developing healthy lifestyle skills in children. The family should have a “fashion” for health among parents and all family members. When forming a child’s motivation for a healthy lifestyle, the family should be guided by the algorithm referred to as “from habit to need, from the need to a healthy lifestyle”.

## CONCLUSIONS

Adherence to a healthy lifestyle is a pressing issue today. The quality of health directly depends on many factors, including a person’s healthy lifestyle and motivation. Motivating children to adopt a healthy lifestyle and making them responsible for their health is the main obligation of the family.

As a result of a sociological study among parents, we found that even though 50.0 % of respondents understand the essence of a healthy lifestyle, only 20.0 % of respondents consider it necessary to form the motivation for it. For the most part, positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle prevail in the families of the respondents (44.0 %), 42.0 % of parents indicated that their family members regularly adhere to a healthy lifestyle. Herewith, 48.0 % are interested in teaching children about a healthy lifestyle. However, in our opinion, these figures are insufficient and indicate that a

healthy lifestyle in a family is secondary to other factors that affect health.

It is worth noting that parents, in addition to the motives for a healthy lifestyle, such as preventing or getting rid of bad habits, and maintaining and promoting their health, said that they intend to be role models for their children. Based on the latter statement, the main motives that most parents form in their children regarding a healthy lifestyle are maintaining and promoting health (38.0 %), improving physical condition (16.0 %), and creating a healthy family (10.0 %). However, almost a third of parents do not instill responsibility for their children’s life and health. The lack of time and insufficient attention to children’s health, according to parents, is caused by professional workload and lack of knowledge about a healthy lifestyle. These factors confirm that parents are interested in the health of their children, but for the reasons mentioned above, they cannot devote sufficient time to it. We believe that parents are role models for their children, and therefore they should not only be aware of health issues but also directly adhere to a healthy lifestyle.

Thus, fostering children’s motivation for a healthy lifestyle requires considerable effort and willingness on the part of parents. To foster a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle in children, parents should set their example, create receptive conditions for a healthy lifestyle, follow traditions related to active recreation, exercise, practicing a healthy diet, avoiding bad habits, and involving all family members in a healthy lifestyle.

Prospects for further research are aimed at studying the motivation of children and adolescents to follow healthy lifestyle rules.

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**Conflict of interest:**

*The Authors declare no conflict of interest.*

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