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NEWSLETTER

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## **The Impact of Physical Exercise on Adolescent Academic Performance: An Empirical Analysis Based on the China Education Panel Survey 2014-2015**

By Li, C.

Correspondence to: Chunguang Li, Beijing Youth Politics College, China. E-mail: [editorial-office@bonoi.org](mailto:editorial-office@bonoi.org)

**D**UE to the traditional idea of “academic development outweighing physical activity” and the public misunderstanding of the effect of physical exercise on student academic performance, physical exercise is typically given the lowest priority in Chinese educational system. This has substantially restricted the time allotted to physical activity in teenagers, posing a negative impact on adolescent physical and mental health. This article is a systematic analysis of the influence of physical exercise on teenager academic achievement and the potential influence mechanism, based on data from the China Education Panel Survey 2014-2015.

The study finds that:

- i. Both standardized test scores and parental evaluation results show that the number of times of physical exercise per week is positively correlated with adolescent academic performance, indicating that physical activity is not only beneficial for their physical fitness but also for their cognitive attainment.
- ii. Socio-psychological factors such as psychological state, education expectations, confidence in the future, and academic resilience act as a robust mediator for the relation between physical exercise and academic performance among adolescents. Physical fitness may play a mediating role, though not a stable one. Physical stamina does not play a mediating role, likely because Chinese basic education overly emphasizes student cognitive ability and is intensely competitive.

Therefore, in the Chinese context, physical exercise helps improve adolescents’ academic performance through its impact on their socio-psychological state rather than their physical stamina and fitness. Strengthened academic resilience, alleviated stressful emotions, and improved mental health are the direct results brought on by physical exercise. Educational authorities, schools, and families should foster a more balanced view of “aca-

demic development and physical activity” and place more importance on adolescent physical exercise while conducting investment and resource distribution in education which is traditionally centered around student academic achievement.

*Source: Education Research Monthly, 2023; 2023(06):67-74.*