

Physical Fitness Degradation of the Elementary School Students: A Case on Gorontalo City, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT: The ongoing debates on physical literacy in the realm of public physical fitness (PF) in Indonesian literature has resulted in various surprising but exciting facts. However, most of the existing studies on PF have generally pivoted around the quantitative tradition. With this reality in mind, qualitatively empirical study scrutinizing the actual factors veiled within the current state of PF of the society, the primary school students, in particular, remains somewhat of a mystery, given far too little attention has been paid to the investigation of such an inquiry in the Indonesian context. The present study, therefore, was initiated to address this gap. As a manifestation of the past evaluative research on the physical literacy of Elementary School (ES) students in Gorontalo City, this qualitative case study specifically sought to determine the causal factors underlying the PF degradation in ES students in Gorontalo City. As many as 26 informants consisting of 20 ES physical education teachers and six school principals were selected as the research participants. The research data were collected using structured interviews and documents. The findings of this study revealed four main factors lying behind the PF degradation of ES students in Gorontalo City. These four causal factors are: 1) the disparity of the teaching and learning of physical education within the thematic system of the 2013 curriculum, 2) the loss of open spaces in the schools due to the misinterpretation of the school administrators about the *Adiwiyata* program launched by the government, 3) the booming presence of Smartphones amongst students, which somehow brings about a tendency for students to spend more time sitting without making any significant movements, and 4) the poor implementation of legal product pertaining to sports which include the National Sports Law No. 3 of 2005, 2 Presidential Instructions and 2 Regulations of the Minister of Youth and Sports as proclaimed by the government.

KEYWORDS: Sports, Physical Fitness, Degradation of Physical Fitness, Elementary School Students, Gorontalo City.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the programs proposed in the grand design of Indonesian sport is “*Menuju Indonesia Bugar 2045*” (Kementerian Pemuda dan Olahraga Republik Indonesia, 2020). In this program, it is clearly expressed that it targets children under 12 years old or elementary students (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2020). It by itself is in accordance with the purposes of national sports development, which are maintaining and improving health, fitness, achievement, humane qualities, cultivating moral values and noble character, sportsmanship, discipline, fostering and strengthening the national unity, strengthening national resilience, as well as raising the dignity and honor of the nation (UUSKN #3/2005 Chapter II Verse 4). In actuality, the formulated goals of the national sports development itself are in line with one of the President's vision and mission, in which sports are highly close to the support in building human resources (HR).

To prepare a healthy and fit human resource development, the implementation of human resource development support can be achieved by sport. That said, such fitness supports the national productivity in carrying out activities within a wide array of life. Yet, the most fundamental problem at hand is that educational sports did not optimally provide the basic foundation of movement in the development of the upcoming sport. Recent literature recorded empirical facts that educational sports could not provide a proper degree of fitness.

Said's (2019) findings in a study of physical literacy evaluation on elementary students in Gorontalo, for example, revealed surprising quantitative facts. The study unearthed that there were only 9.79% of the students (n=38) in a qualified category out of the 338 participants that were involved, whereas 2,36% of the students (n=8) were in the very poor category, 39,94% of the students (n=135) were in the poor category, and the remaining 49,11% of the students (n=166) were in the moderate category (Said, 2019). Similar trends were also revealed in a study by Hidayat (2019). Along the same line, Hidayat's (2019) study on the physical fitness of students aged between 10-12 years old in Gorontalo exposed that the students' physical fitness level was still in the poor category. From the data presented, it goes to clearly show that the physical fitness of elementary students in Gorontalo was far from good level.

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In reference to the glimpse of some research findings mentioned, it is safe to assume that there must be certain factors contributing to the issues of the decline in fitness level. In light of these conditions, an effort was needed to find covert factors of the decrease in the fitness level of elementary school students in the city of Gorontalo.

Speaking of the physical fitness issues of students, the studies discussing the issues in the Indonesian literature have widely been explored but chiefly pivoted around the quantitative paradigm in nature with various foci and interests (see Alamsyah et al., 2017; Hanafi et al., 2020; Hidayat, 2019; Said, 2019 among others). On the one hand, the investigations that discuss issues specifically on the fitness degradation of the students are rarely examined, and as such, it remains somewhat of a mystery. Considering such a fact, the study presented in this article is an embodiment of answers to the scientific gap in the issue of students' physical fitness.

In particular, the present study explores problems shrouding in the degradation of students' physical fitness. Nevertheless, it is of paramount importance to emphasize that the study raised in this article is based on the results of the previous studies discussed by the researcher (see Said, 2019), focusing on the causative factors of the physical fitness degradation of the elementary students in Gorontalo.

Further, the intriguing matter that has captured the attention of this research idea also lies in the existence of the 2013 curriculum applied in the Indonesian education system. The researcher observed that the presence of the 2013 curriculum applied in all schools across Indonesia that has added more study hours in comparison to previous curriculums has been, to some extent, ineffective in raising the fitness level of the elementary students in Gorontalo. This anomaly of the 2013 curriculum and the sparse studies that explore the causative factors of the decreased physical fitness encourage the researcher to conduct a further study about the factors falling behind the degradation of the physical fitness of elementary students in Gorontalo.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study was part of the past evaluative research on students' physical fitness (see said, 2019), aiming to identify the causative factors of the fitness degradation of the elementary students in Gorontalo. This study was a case study employing a qualitative paradigm design, which is in line with the research focus of revealing the deeper and more detailed meaning of the interest of the studied object (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to obtain detailed data, the source holds a crucial part in this study, which is none other than the informants, documents from the field, and interview results with the informant.

The informants were Physical Education (PE) teachers and state elementary school principals in Gorontalo. These informants were selected because they are deemed the most precise source in solving the veiled case in these degradation problems, as explained in this study. Precisely, 26 informants consisting of 20 physical education teachers and 6 ES principals were involved in this study by using the opportunistic sampling technique. As previously mentioned, the case study is a part of embodiment from past investigations by the researcher. In light of this explanation, opportunistic sampling was used because the informants involved were outsourced and selected from preliminary research initiated by the researcher (Patton, 2002). It is necessary to identify that every involved informant was requested a letter of consent for their involvement. In addition, the informants were informed in the recruitment process that their involvement would be purely voluntary and without coercion.

This study utilized interview and documentation, including documented photos and field observational notes. The interview was used for this study to obtain the main description of the studied matter, in which the interview becomes the primary source. The designed interview used a structured form. This type of interview was chosen for its question design, which was assigned as a predetermined question set and a high standard recording (Kothari, 2004). Following the guidelines of interview protocols, each informant was interviewed face to face with their consent. The interview was recorded with a voice recorder, and its results were copied verbatim into the written format for the analysis. Documentation of this study refers to the observed document in the school's possession. Citing the words of Yin (2018), using documents in qualitative research would help the researcher strengthen the data information obtained, in which the documentation is treated as a supporting item to the interview findings with the informants. The documentation contains results of observation records from the field and a set of teaching materials to guide the teachers in the classroom, which will be treated as the supporting source for the detailed interview results as well as supporting the analysis of interview results as the primary source of data.

In analyzing the data, this study settled on the model of qualitative analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages of simultaneous activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the data reduction activity is the process by which the researcher goes through the act of collection, concentration, simplification, abstraction, and copying of the raw data generated from records or written copies in the field. The reduction phase is the first step in data analysis since the collected data would be plenty and complex. In this phase, the researcher would conduct interview data codification. During the process, the data collection results were simplified by sorting essential data needed in the analysis process and discarding the unnecessary data, resulting in refined, organized/classified, and oriented data. The codification processes were all conducted manually. After the reduction, the next phase would be the data display. In this phase, the data in display contains information in a more visual and systematic format that can lead the researcher to the conclusion and take necessary actions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Along the way, the data trend would be coherently visualized in terms of reduction results from the interview. At the end phase of the data analysis is the conclusion withdrawal/verification. In this phase, the researcher sought to

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find meaning in every case that appears. During the research in the field, conclusions would be continuously drawn in order for the data to be valid and substantial in every conclusion withdrawal. In short, the researcher verified the data by reopening the recording results obtained from the field, synthesizing the recordings with the interview data copies and documentation, and finding the matching and robustness aspects of the data. Hence, every curve of the presented conclusions can be held accountable.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the interview and documentation findings, this study revealed four emerging causative factors that contributed to the fitness degradation of elementary students in Gorontalo, as disclosed in the previous evaluative investigation (see Said, 2019). These four factors are as follows (1) thematic curriculum, (2) *Adiwiyata* program, (3) the presence of smartphones, and (4) unoptimized implementation of laws concerning national sports. In what follows, these emerging findings are explained in detail.

A. Thematic curriculum

Before highlighting the findings and analysis of this first emerging issue, it is crucial to account for the meaning of thematic learning. Thematic learning for Majid (2014) is an integrated model that combines a concept from several fields of study to give the students better and more meaningful learning. Combining a concept from several topics or fields of study into a certain theme or topic would result in the integration among discipline, skills, and values that would then allow active students to discover a scientific concept and principle that are holistic, meaningful, and authentic.

Thematic learning emphasizes on the learning concept implementation by doing something (learning by doing), which is why the teachers need to repackage and redesign the learning experience that will affect the meaningfulness of learning. The learning experience that reveals the correlation of conceptual elements will make the learning process more effective, while the conceptual correlation between subjects will form the scheme in which students will obtain completeness and wholeness of the knowledge. This justification is in line with the 2013 curriculum, which states that physical, sports, and health education are included in group B subjects within the structure of the 2013 curriculum. The subjects of group B in the 2013 curriculum refer to subjects with contents developed by the central agents and are supplemented by local wisdom contents developed by the local government.

The documentation gathered in the research field showed that the physical, sports, and health education subjects in the curriculum structure are allocated with 3 hours of class per week, where the time allocation of every class is the minimum amount of additional-based in the students' necessity. The 2013 curriculum is specified for the physical, sports, and health education with contents that contributes to the development of motion competence and healthy lifestyle as well as providing colors to the national character education and healthy lifestyle adaptation, in order to stimulate growth and development of balanced physical and psychic qualities. However, in correlation with the thematic learning system, the interview findings revealed several correlations between learning concept and students' fitness degradation, in which the thematic concept is based on a learning model that combines sports with other topics. In this case, the students' activeness in following the specific lessons also applies to sports learning. This result is in line with the findings that found anomalies where the farming theme demanded the students to walk around the farm and partake in farming activities that were considered identical to sports. This justification is against the philosophy of sports as measured and directed activities, which means the equalizing concept between farming and sports surely was a misinterpretation that will be treated as a consideration to be attended.

B. *Adiwiyata* green school program

Adiwiyata Program is an environmental education program launched to realize an excellent and ideal school for obtaining knowledge. The provision of the *Adiwiyata* green school itself has already been in the Regulation by the Minister of Environment #5 2013 regarding the guidelines of the *Adiwiyata* Program implementation. *Adiwiyata* green school will be awarded to schools with environmental awareness and culture in which the program itself aimed to realize such conditions in school. This program is implemented under the educative, participative, and sustainable principles. *Adiwiyata* green school is also awarded to schools that are considered a good and ideal place to gain knowledge, norms, and etiquette for the students in order to manifest prosperity.

Suffice to say that the *Adiwiyata* program is noble in purpose. Nevertheless, according to the results of the present research documentation, many schools had abandoned other interests for its implementation, such as open spaces that function as the students' latitude during class breaks. A very concerning problem based on the findings revealed schools that dispensed sport facilities such as badminton and takraw ball game court for *Adiwiyata* zone. The negative impacts of the *Adiwiyata* program based on the observation are as follows: a) reduction of students' latitude, b) prohibition for students to recreate in the *Adiwiyata* zone, c) difficulties in sport activities such as soccer during school breaks, d) diseases from puddles formed in the tin-based flower pots, which leads to diseases such as dengue fever.

C. The presence of the smartphones

The field findings and documentation regarding this emerging issue showed that the presence of gadgets as one of the triggers to the habit diversion from sports to gaming has been in their degrading fitness. This finding is in line with Zainudin Amali in the Grand design of sports education (Kementrian Pemuda dan Olahraga Republik Indonesia, 2020 p. 6), pointing out several parameters that weaken the objective of sports education. These parameters consist of: a) increasing juvenile delinquency, including poor

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fitness; b) the failure of sports as a lifestyle due to technology (game, internet, etc); c) lack of sport facilities for physical and health education as well as sports extracurricular activities; d) students under 12 years old are intensely focused on sports specialization, although such ages are still in multilateral phase and the recent data shows the fitness degree obtained 0,14%. This condition is far from expectations for 2045 as the next golden age of Indonesian human resources (Kementrian Pemuda dan Olahraga Republik Indonesia, 2020).

Additionally, in light of smartphones, Iswidharmanjaya and Agency (2014) also maintained that the bad impact of the smartphone on children consists of enclosed personality, brain disorder, optic disorder, arm disorder, sleeping disorder, self-isolation, violent impulse, degrading creativities, radiation exposure, and cyberbullying threats. It can be argued then that gadgets are killing students' creativity that slowly turns them indolent, where the advantages and comforts of the smartphone enhance the habit of diversion from sports to gaming.

D. Unoptimized implementation of Laws concerning National Sports

The findings of this study revealed another element that weakens the fitness degree is the poor implementation of the laws for the national sports system (UU SKN #3/2005 Chapter II Verse 4). UU SKN #3 2005 and sports-related constitutions such as the Laws for Disabilities and the Laws for Cultural Progress are highly supportive. The problem lies in the poor implementation of the laws in the central government and worse in the local government, both province and regency/city. Not to mention the President's instruction #1 2017 on Improving Achievements of National Sports, President's instruction #3 2019 on Accelerating the Development of National Soccer, as well as the two following regulations: Ministry of Youth and Sports Regulation #0333 2009 on the standard competence of basic fitness instructors and Ministry of Youth and Sports Regulation #18 2017 on "Ayo Olahraga" movement.

Ironically, all these regulations were somehow unable to boost the society and government awareness in forming a fit young generation. This is not far from the coordination sparse between the environmental department and its *Adiwiyata* co-program with the educational department towards the laws for the national sports system. Schools are more interested in implementing the *Adiwiyata* program, which removes open spaces in schools for children to recreate aside from its aforementioned benefits, resulting in insufficient facilities and infrastructure for sports activities in schools.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, several conclusions can be withdrawn from the fitness degrading factors of elementary students in Gorontalo. The first was that there existed unequal demand from the government based on the regulations of demand towards the physical education teachers, which in this case is the government's expectations on the teachers that were inappropriate. It is due to the insufficiency of facilities and infrastructure for physical education subjects at schools, in which the teachers regularly equalize the perception of farming activities with sports in its practice. The second was that the *Adiwiyata* program, where it removes the students' latitude from the conversion of playing grounds to botanic gardens. The third was related to the booming presence of smartphones among students, which caused the tendency to spend more time sitting down without any significant physical activities. The last was the poor implementation of national sports regulations by the government.

The findings presented in this study can not only be treated as literature for future relevant studies but also be a reference in the decision-making process to determine the steps of improvement for the elementary student's fitness in Gorontalo.

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