TACSM Abstract

Parental Physical Activity and Resilience During Pandemic-Related Schooling at Home

LAURA S. KABIRI¹, ANNIE CHEN¹, BRIAN D. RAY².

¹Kabiri Research Group; Department of Kinesiology; Rice University; Houston, TX
²Home Education Research Institute; Salem, OR

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education for millions of families, forcing an instantaneous overlap in parental responsibilities and a resulting decline in personal mental health. Psychological resilience is an important contributor to handling prolonged stress. As physical activity (PA) is known to improve mental health, it is possible that PA during the COVID-19 education disruption could result in a significant difference in parental resilience. PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to determine if PA levels during the COVID-19 educational disruption resulted in statistically significant differences in perceived resilience among parents of school-aged youth. METHODS: Fifty-six parents/guardians of youth aged 10-18 years completed a survey in fall of 2020. In addition to demographic questions, participants completed the recreational and sedentary portions of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Global Physical Activity Questionnaire and the Adult Resilience Measure, resulting in overall resilience as well as personal (e.g., individual thoughts, behaviors) and relational (e.g., mutually empowering connections) resilience subscale scores. Parents were classified as meeting or not meeting WHO recommended PA levels. T-tests examined differences in resilience scores between groups. RESULTS: Overall, personal, and relational mean resilience scores for parents who did (n = 36) versus did not (n = 20) meet WHO recommended PA levels were 73.39 ± 8.66 versus 67.95 ± 9.30, 41.78 ± 5.25 versus 39.70 ± 4.78, and 31.61 ± 4.45 versus 28.25 ± 5.54 respectively. T-tests revealed a significant difference in total (t(54) = 2.19, p = .033, d = .61) and relational subscale scores (t(54) = 22.48, p = .016, d = .67), but no difference between personal subscale scores (t(54) = 1.46, p = .149, d = .41). CONCLUSION: Parents of school-aged youth who did not meet WHO recommended PA levels had significantly lower overall perceived resilience than those who met recommended levels. The significantly lower relational, but not personal, resilience scores seen in parents who did not meet WHO recommendations also suggests the importance of meaningful connections during PA. In short, meeting PA recommendations resulted in significantly higher perceived parental resilience during the COVID-19 educational disruption.