

A Policy Document Analysis on the Promotion of Physical Activity among Children and Adolescents in Iran

Somayeh Mostaghim¹, PhD Candidate;  Mehdi Jafari^{1*}, PhD;  Ahmad Ahmadi Teymurlouy¹, PhD

¹Department of Health Services Management, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

*Corresponding author: Mehdi Jafari, PhD; School of Health Management and Information Sciences, No. 6, Rashid Yasemi St. Vali -e Asr Ave, Postal code: 19956-14111, Tehran, Iran. Tel: +98-21-88794301; Fax: +98-21-88883334; Email: mjafari@iums.ac.ir

Received: April 17, 2025; Revised: June 07, 2025; Accepted: July 07, 2025

Abstract

Background: Given the alarming rise in physical inactivity among Iranian children and adolescents, the present study aimed to analyze policy documents focused on promoting physical activity in this age group.

Methods: This qualitative study employed a document analysis methodology. Policy documents concerning the promotion of physical activity among Iranian children and adolescents were analyzed using the four-stage READ framework. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes through systematic coding and categorization. The reviewed documents covered a period spanning from 1979 to 2024.

Results: The analysis of 36 documents revealed that current policies mainly focus on five key areas including school-based approaches, resources and infrastructure, intersectoral collaboration, education and public awareness, and monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusions: The findings indicated that despite their diversity, these policies often lack coherence, clearly defined implementation strategies, and effective evaluation systems. Additionally, institutional collaboration and the adoption of modern technologies have been limited. These results could serve as a foundation for improving future policymaking.

Keywords: Physical Activity, Adolescents, Child, Health Policy, Iran

How to Cite: Mostaghim S, Jafari M, Ahmadi Teymurlouy A. A Policy Document Analysis on the Promotion of Physical Activity among Children and Adolescents in Iran. Int. J. School. Health. 2026;13(1):1-11. doi: 10.30476/intjsh.2025.106727.1513.

1. Introduction

Childhood and adolescence, as the critical stages of life, are marked by rapid physical, neurological, and social development. During this period, behaviors and habits such as physical activity are established (1). This age range is often described as a “golden opportunity” for the prevention, control, and early detection of diseases through simple yet effective interventions (2). Physical activity plays a vital role in promoting lifelong health and fostering a healthy lifestyle, making it a key factor in ensuring long-term well-being (3).

Given its importance, policies aimed at promoting physical activity—which provide a framework for designing and implementing interventions—have gained the attention of policymakers (4, 5). The primary goal of these policies is to shift from individual-focused interventions to systemic changes that create supportive environments for the development of programs, infrastructure, and spaces that encourage physical activity (6, 7). When effectively implemented, such policies

can help individuals adopt and maintain healthy behaviors while reducing sedentary lifestyles. For instance, countries like the United Kingdom and China have successfully reduced the prevalence of insufficient physical activity among children and adolescents through targeted policy development and implementation (8, 9).

In Iran, several legal and policy documents have been developed to address physical activity among children and adolescents. However, research showed that most Iranian children and adolescents do not meet the physical activity levels recommended by the World Health Organization (10, 11). This suggests that current policies have been ineffective, and that strategies for promoting physical activity in this age group require improved design and implementation.

In Iran, physical activity among children and adolescents has been addressed in several legal and policy documents, including the Fundamental Transformation Document of Education, the Five-Year Development Plans, and the National Physical

Activity Program. However, research indicated that most Iranian children and adolescents do not meet the physical activity levels recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) (10, 11). For example, a national study conducted in 2018 found that approximately 26% of adolescents aged 10 to 12 were physically inactive (10). Furthermore, a systematic review and meta-analysis showed that only 29.5% of girls and 20.5% of boys achieved the WHO-recommended physical activity levels (11). This alarming situation suggests that existing planning efforts have been largely ineffective, and that policies and interventions aimed at promoting physical activity among children and adolescents have not been adequately designed or successfully implemented. Several studies identified weaknesses in policy and planning as significant barriers to increasing students' participation in physical activity (12-14). Moreover, the limited effectiveness of current programs has been attributed to challenges such as inadequate facilities, a shortage of trained physical education teachers, overloaded school curricula, and low levels of parental involvement (15-17).

Accordingly, the present study examined the policymaking landscape related to promoting physical activity among children and adolescents in Iran through a content analysis of policy documents. The present study aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current situation and offer practical recommendations to improve policymaking in this area.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

This study employed a qualitative document analysis approach. The analysis was guided by the four-stage READ framework developed by Dalglish and colleagues (18), consisting of document preparation, data extraction, data analysis, and presentation of findings.

2.2. Selection and Description of Documents

The documents analyzed in this study consisted of national laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines related to promoting physical activity among children and adolescents in Iran. Documents were identified through:

- Comprehensive searches of official governmental and organizational websites (Appendix 1).
- Consultations with subject-matter experts and correspondence with relevant institutions.
- Searches of domestic scientific databases including the Scientific Information Database (SID), Magiran, and IranDoc.
- Supplementary searches using Google to locate official documents not indexed in other databases.

The search was primarily conducted in Persian, the official language of the documents. A broad range of keywords was used, including: "sports," "physical activity," "student," "school-age," "children," "adolescents," "physical inactivity," "exercise," "physical education," "policy," "program," "guideline," "intervention," "regulation," "strategy," and "action plan."

Documents dated from 1979 to 2024 were included. References to scientific literature were limited to national sources. A total of 61 documents were initially identified, of which 36 met all inclusion criteria after evaluation.

2.3. Data Collection and Measurements

In the data extraction stage, information such as document title, type, publication year, and content was extracted using a researcher-developed checklist. All documents were assessed using Scott's four criteria—authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (19). Only documents obtained from reliable sources and free of errors or conflicts of interest were included. Those failing to meet the criteria were excluded. Microsoft Excel 2016 was used to organize, record, and manage extracted data.

2.4. Procedure

The qualitative document analysis followed the four steps of the READ framework:

1. Document preparation: Identification and collection of relevant documents through the search strategies described above

2. Data extraction: Extraction of key

information using the standardized checklist and evaluation using Scott's criteria

3. Analysis: Systematic thematic analysis of the included documents

4. Presentation of findings: Organization and reporting of themes using narrative descriptions, tables, and figures

To minimize individual bias, a team-based approach was applied. One researcher performed the initial search, coding, and preliminary analysis, while the other authors reviewed and validated the process through consensus meetings.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (20), which included familiarization with the data, generating codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining themes, and presenting the findings.

MAXQDA 10 software was used to support the coding and analysis process. Findings were reported narratively and visually to enhance clarity and comprehensiveness.

3. Results

This study analyzed documents related to promoting physical activity among Iranian children and adolescents. A total of 36 documents were included in the analysis, consisting of two international documents, 12 high-level (upstream) documents, 19 organizational documents, and three executive documents (Table 1). The majority of the documents (n=10) were issued by the Ministry of Health.

Following the document analysis, five key focus areas were identified: (1) school-based approaches, (2) resources and infrastructure, (3) intersectoral collaboration, (4) education and cultural promotion, and (5) monitoring and evaluation (Table 2).

Table 1: Policy document on physical activity promotion in Iran

Type of Document	Name of Document	Brief Description / Main Issues Covered
International Documents	International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015)	Global principles promoting physical education, equal access to sport, and lifelong physical activity rights
	Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030 (World Health Organization)	Strategic framework to increase physical activity worldwide, reduce inactivity-related diseases, and encourage multisectoral action
Higher-Level Documents	Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (The third principle)	Constitutional emphasis on public health, physical well-being, and citizens' right to education and development
	Vision Document of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the horizon of 1404 AH	Long-term national development goals integrating health, education, and cultural advancement including sport participation
	General Policies for Transforming the Education System 2013 (Supreme Leader)	Policies aiming to reform education with emphasis on physical education, health promotion, and student development
	General Policies for Combating Narcotics 2006 (Supreme Leader)	Policies indirectly promoting healthy lifestyles including physical activity to prevent addiction
	General Health Policies 2014 (Supreme Leader)	Broad health policies with components supporting physical activity as a preventive health measure
	National Document on the Rights of Children and Adolescents 2018 (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution)	Child and adolescent rights emphasizing access to education, health, and physical activity opportunities
	National Comprehensive Scientific Plan 2010 (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution)	Scientific and educational priorities including research and promotion of physical education and sport
	Fundamental Transformation Document for Education 2011 (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution)	Guidelines for education reform focusing on student health, physical education, and well-rounded development
	National Cultural Sports Charter 2016 (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution)	Charter to promote cultural and sports activities nationwide for health and social cohesion
	Charter of Sports Schools 2005 (Supreme Council for Education)	Policies for specialized sports schools aimed at talent development and physical education quality
	The First to Seventh Five-Year Plans for Economic, Social, and Cultural Development	Development plans incorporating health, physical education, and sport infrastructure objectives
	Direct Taxation Law (Tax Exemption for Sports)	Financial incentives to promote sport development through tax exemptions

Type of Document	Name of Document	Brief Description / Main Issues Covered
Intermediate-Level Documents (Organizational)	National Health Comprehensive Plan (Ministry of Health)	Comprehensive health strategies including promotion of physical activity and prevention of lifestyle diseases
	Transformation Plan of the Health System 2011 (Ministry of Health)	Health system reform emphasizing preventive care including physical activity promotion
	National Comprehensive Plan for the Health of Adolescents and Youth 2011 (Ministry of Health)	Health priorities for youth including physical activity promotion and risk factor reduction
	Comprehensive System for Development of Physical Education and Sports 2012 (Ministry of Sports)	National strategy to develop physical education and sport infrastructure and programs
	National Document for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and Related Risk Factors 2015-2026 (Ministry of Health)	Action plan targeting major non-communicable diseases with physical activity as a key preventive measure
	National Program for Physical Activity Promotion for Health 2015 (Ministry of Health)	Specific interventions and policies to increase physical activity across age groups for health improvement
	Charter of Amateur Sports Federations of the Islamic Republic of Iran 2021 (Cabinet Resolutions)	Governance and development framework for amateur sports organizations
	National Curriculum (Ministry of Education)	Educational curriculum guidelines incorporating physical education components
	Executive Regulations for Schools 2021 (Ministry of Education)	Operational rules for schools, including mandates for physical education
	Five-Year Cultural and Social Development Plans of Metropolitan Municipalities (City Councils)	Local plans that include sport and physical activity promotion as part of urban health and culture strategies
	Health Promoting Schools in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Ministry of Health)	Framework to integrate health promotion including physical activity into schools
	Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention and Control of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents (Ministry of Health)	Targeted strategies addressing childhood obesity through diet and increased physical activity
	Integrated Health Team Care for Providing Services to the Age Group of 5 to 18 Years (Non-Medical) (Ministry of Health)	Multi-disciplinary care including physical activity promotion for school-age children
	Expansion Program for Primary Health Care to Achieve Universal Health Coverage in Urban Areas (Ministry of Health)	Health service expansion including preventive programs promoting physical activity
	Strategic Document of the Education and Physical Education Deputy (Ministry of Education)	Strategic plans for improving physical education quality and access in schools
	National Self-Care Program (Ministry of Health)	Programs encouraging individual responsibility for health, including physical activity
Executive Documents	Executive Regulations for the Law on Reviving the Education and Physical Education Deputy (Ministry of Education)	Regulations to strengthen physical education governance and implementation
	Cooperation agreements between various ministries and organizations	Intersectoral collaborations to promote physical activity and sport.
	Executive Plan for Enhancing Physical Activity of Students (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education)	Operational plan focusing on increasing student physical activity through school-based interventions
	Routine Physical Education Lesson Plan for Schools (Ministry of Education)	Detailed curriculum and scheduling guidelines for physical education lessons
	Extracurricular Programs of the Physical Education and Health Deputy (Ministry of Education)	Supplementary programs promoting physical activity outside regular class time

3.1. School-Based Approach

Our results indicated that policymakers recognize schools as the primary setting for promoting physical activity. Nearly all upstream documents emphasized the important role of schools in encouraging physical activity among children and adolescents. Initiatives included programs by the Ministry of Health—such as the Student Health Ambassadors, Weight and Obesity

Control Program, and Classroom Stretching Exercises—and by the Ministry of Education, including regular physical education classes and extracurricular activities like morning exercises, the Dynamic School Program, family sports, sports clubs, and School Sports Olympiads. Furthermore, intra- and inter-school sports competitions were organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports to motivate and encourage student participation.

Table 2: Thematic analysis of physical activity policies

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Related Documents/Policies
School-Based Approach	-School Physical Education Curriculum -Programs for Enhancing Physical Activity Before, During, After School	-Fundamental Transformation Document for Education 2011 -National Curriculum (Ministry of Education) -Executive Regulations for Schools 2021 -Health Promoting Schools in Islamic Republic of Iran -Strategic Document of the Education and Physical Education Deputy (Ministry of Education) -Executive Plan for Enhancing Physical Activity of Students (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education) -Routine Physical Education Lesson Plan for Schools -Extracurricular Programs of the Physical Education and Health Deputy -Integrated Health Team Care for Providing Services to the Age Group of 5 to 18 Years (Non-Medical)
Resources and Infrastructure	- Financial and Human Resources - Facilities, Equipment, and Infrastructure	-First to Sixth Five-Year Law on Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programs -Direct Taxation Law (Tax Exemption for Sports)
Intersectoral Collaborations	- Active Transportation - Private Sector - Creation of Recreational and Sports Spaces	-Global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030 (WHO) -General Policies for Combating --Narcotics 2006 -General Health Policies 2014 -Cooperation agreements between various ministries and organizations -National Comprehensive Plan for the Health of Adolescents and Youth 2011 -National Document for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and Related Risk Factors 2015–2026 -National Program for Physical Activity Promotion for Health 2015 -Executive Plan for Enhancing Physical Activity of Students -Five-Year Cultural and Social Development Plans of Metropolitan Municipalities
Education and Cultural Promotion	-Sporting Events -Expansion of Awareness and Knowledge	-National Document for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and Related Risk Factors 2015-2026 (Ministry of Health) -National Program for Physical Activity Promotion for Health 2015 (Ministry of Health) -National Curriculum (Ministry of Education) -Executive Regulations for Schools 2021 (Ministry of Education) -Health Promoting Schools in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Ministry of Health) -Integrated Health Team Care for Providing Services to the Age Group of 5 to 18 Years (Non-Medical) (Ministry of Health) -Executive Plan for Enhancing Physical Activity of Students (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education) -Routine Physical Education Lesson Plan for Schools (Ministry of Education) -Extracurricular Programs of the Physical Education and Health Deputy (Ministry of Education) -Expansion Program for Primary Health Care to Achieve Universal Health Coverage in Urban Areas (Ministry of Health) -Strategic Document of the Education and Physical Education Deputy (Ministry of Education) -National Self-Care Program (Ministry of Health) -Executive Regulations for the Law on Reviving the Education and Physical Education Deputy (Ministry of Education)
Monitoring and Evaluation	-Process and Outcome Evaluation Indicators -Regular Evaluation and Reporting of Physical Activity Status	-National Document for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and Related Risk Factors 2015-2026 (Ministry of Health) -National Program for Physical Activity Promotion for Health 2015 (Ministry of Health) -National Curriculum (Ministry of Education) -Executive Regulations for Schools 2021 (Ministry of Education) -Health Promoting Schools in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Ministry of Health) -Integrated Health Team Care for Providing Services to the Age Group of 5 to 18 Years (Non-Medical) (Ministry of Health) -Executive Plan for Enhancing Physical Activity of Students (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education) -Routine Physical Education Lesson Plan for Schools (Ministry of Education) -Extracurricular Programs of the Physical Education and Health Deputy (Ministry of Education)

3.2. Resources and Infrastructure

Programs and interventions in this area aim to improve both the quantity and quality of physical activity initiatives in schools. Measures include pre-service and in-service training for teachers, hiring qualified physical education instructors, increasing the per capita space for school sports facilities, standardizing and renovating sports infrastructure within schools, raising the school sports budget, and allocating a portion of value-added tax and tobacco tax revenues to support these efforts.

3.3. Intersectoral Collaboration

This area focuses on establishing cooperation agreements between the Ministries of Health, Education, Roads and Urban Development, and Sports to strengthen cross-sector collaboration. These agreements aim to improve students' access to environments that encourage physical activity before, during, and after school hours.

3.4. Education and Cultural Promotion

Efforts to raise public awareness and foster a culture of physical activity include organizing sports events, competitions, and festivals in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and the National Broadcasting Organization. These initiatives are designed to motivate and educate the public about the importance and benefits of physical activity.

3.5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Ministries of Education and Health have developed programs and guidelines to assess the implementation of physical activity initiatives. Evaluation is carried out using tools and indicators specifically designed for this purpose. Examples include the creation of student health and physical activity profiles, the Child Fitness Monitoring Program, physical fitness testing, and data registration in the Integrated Health System (SIB).

4. Discussion

This study is among the first to identify and analyze the current state of policies and programs aimed at promoting physical activity among children and adolescents in Iran. A total of 36

relevant policy documents were reviewed. Analysis of these documents revealed five key focus areas: a school-based approach, provision of resources and infrastructure, intersectoral collaboration, education and awareness-raising, and monitoring and evaluation. The findings indicated that promoting physical activity among children and adolescents has received attention at the policy level, with several measures implemented to develop and execute related policies. However, to fully achieve the desired goals and improve the effectiveness of these policies, significant reforms across multiple areas are needed.

Our findings revealed that various programs—such as the “Dynamic School,” “Koocheh Plan,” “Neshat Plan,” and the “Intra-school Sports Olympiad”—have been designed and implemented to increase students' physical activity. However, these programs often lack systematic and coordinated connections with each other and tend to follow fragmented and short-term approaches. As supported by previous studies, this fragmentation can hinder comprehensive evaluation and the gradual improvement of programs, ultimately reducing student engagement and the overall effectiveness of interventions (21, 22).

Moreover, public policy theories emphasize the importance of developing coherent, long-term, and evidence-based strategies to achieve sustainable health outcomes (23). For example, the experiences of countries such as China and the United Kingdom have shown that sustainable school-based programs, supported by gradual reforms and long-term policymaking, have been successful in promoting physical activity among children and adolescents (8, 9). Accordingly, it is recommended that the development of a comprehensive and sustainable policy be prioritized, with the active involvement of relevant stakeholders.

In addition, given lifestyle changes and the increasing tendency of children and adolescents to engage with virtual environments, policies and programs are expected to place greater emphasis on using technological tools—such as physical activity-related mobile apps, digital movement-based games, and gamification strategies (24). Among the documents reviewed, only the National Program for the Promotion of Physical Activity briefly addressed this issue. Findings from several studies suggested that insufficient attention to this

potential could lead to decreased motivation and participation in physical activity among children and adolescents (17, 25).

Although some policy documents identify entities such as the government and philanthropic organizations as funding sources, the majority lack clear and detailed mechanisms for the allocation and provision of financial resources. For example, the Student Sports Olympiad Program was developed without specific financial estimates—a gap that, according to previous studies, has contributed to implementation challenges and threatened the program's sustainability (26). Other research also highlighted the uneven and inefficient distribution of financial resources as a major barrier to effective program implementation (22, 25, 26). Therefore, it is recommended that future policy development place particular emphasis on designing transparent, well-documented, and realistic financial mechanisms.

Another underemphasized area in the policy documents is the promotion of active commuting, such as walking and cycling, which research showed that it can be an effective strategy to increase physical activity among children and adolescents (27). However, the reviewed documents lack concrete operational measures for developing safe routes, motivational programs, and related educational initiatives. Khodanazari and co-workers reported that the rate of active commuting among students is low, at approximately 10% (28). Additionally, the experience of Scotland's "Cycling Action Plan" demonstrated that success in this area requires clear operational frameworks, dedicated budget allocations, and targeted intersectoral collaboration (29). Given the environmental and economic benefits of this strategy, it is recommended that future policy documents place greater emphasis on promoting active commuting.

Although many policy documents emphasize the importance of raising awareness and promoting a culture of physical activity among children and adolescents, they often lack clearly defined learning objectives, measurable key messages, and effective methods for content delivery. Previous studies identified low awareness of the benefits of physical activity as a major factor contributing to low student participation (22, 30). Additionally, a study conducted in Poland found

that simply disseminating information and holding workshops—without evaluating their quality and effectiveness—resulted in diminished impact of these interventions (31).

Another significant shortcoming is the underutilization of modern media tools and communication technologies in education and awareness-raising efforts, despite evidence suggesting that such tools can greatly enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives (32). Therefore, it is recommended that existing educational programs be revised and strengthened, with a focus on behavior-oriented, interactive, and technology-based approaches.

Furthermore, the monitoring and evaluation systems for these programs tend to focus on quantitative and surface-level indicators, such as the number of training sessions held, informational posters distributed, and participation rates. In contrast, qualitative indicators, such as audience satisfaction, actual changes in physical activity levels, and improvements in physical health, have received comparatively little attention. Domestic studies also reported the inefficiency of the evaluation system for physical education in schools (25, 33).

Furthermore, the reviewed documents reveal signs of duplicated efforts and a lack of effective coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health in designing and implementing monitoring systems—an issue that may undermine the efficiency and coherence of the evaluation process. Therefore, it is recommended that policymakers work toward developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system based on qualitative and process-oriented indicators, while leveraging digital technologies to enhance the accuracy, transparency, and effectiveness of this system.

Ultimately, although the reviewed policy documents emphasize the need for intersectoral collaboration, such collaboration is often discussed in general and non-operational terms. Responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and joint action plans are rarely detailed. In many cases, institutional roles are presented simply as lists, without clearly specifying which organization holds primary responsibility for implementation and accountability, an issue previously identified

as a major barrier to the success of multisectoral policies (34, 35).

In this regard, Khouzani and co-workers also highlighted the importance of addressing financial and infrastructural gaps through strengthened intersectoral collaboration (22). The development of a national framework for institutional role-sharing was identified in another study as a critical prerequisite for the successful implementation of school-based physical activity initiatives (36). Furthermore, international experience—for example, in Finland—shows that successful intersectoral policies require clearly defined shared objectives, an independent leadership structure, and a well-designed system for institutional coordination (37). Based on these insights, it is recommended that a comprehensive intersectoral action plan be developed, with clearly defined roles, mechanisms for joint monitoring and evaluation, and an independent leadership structure, as fundamental prerequisites for effective policymaking.

4.1. Limitations

This study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of national policies and programs that promote physical activity among children and adolescents in Iran, based on an in-depth document analysis. The findings can serve as a foundation for developing more effective strategies and identifying weaknesses in current policies. However, the study had some limitations that may affect the interpretation of the results. First, despite extensive efforts to access full-text documents, only summaries or secondary reports were available in some cases. Second, the study focused exclusively on national documents, and local or regional policies were not examined. Future research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of local policies and analyze the implementation and impact of strategies in various settings.

5. Conclusions

This study analyzed the content of 36 existing policy documents to identify and categorize the main themes related to promoting physical activity among children and adolescents in Iran. The findings indicated that these policies primarily focus on five key areas: a school-based approach,

provision of resources and infrastructure, intersectoral collaboration, education and awareness-raising, and monitoring and evaluation. However, the reviewed documents often lacked sufficient coherence, clearly defined operational strategies, and comprehensive evaluation frameworks. Moreover, limited attention was given to institutional coordination and the use of modern technologies. The results of this study provided an important foundation for understanding the current status of physical activity policies in Iran and might serve as a guide for future research and policymaking.

Acknowledgement

This research was extracted from the PhD dissertation of Ms. Somayeh Mostaghim in Health Policy at Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

Authors' Contributions

Somayeh Mostaghim: Contributed significantly to the conception and design of the study, data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation; drafted the manuscript and reviewed it critically for important intellectual content. Mehdi Jafari: Contributed to the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis; reviewed the manuscript critically for important intellectual content. Ahmad Ahmadi: Contributed to the acquisition and interpretation of data; drafted the manuscript and reviewed it critically for important intellectual content. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work, such as the questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

Funding: None.

Ethical Approval

The Ethics Committee of Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran, approved the present study with the code of IR.IUMS.REC.1401.009. As the study did not involve human participants and relied solely on publicly accessible documents, written informed consent was not required.

References

1. Pongiglione B, Kern ML, Carpentieri J, Schwartz HA, Gupta N, Goodman A. Do children's expectations about future physical activity predict their physical activity in adulthood? *Int J Epidemiol.* 2020;49(5):1749-1758. doi: 10.1093/ije/dyaa131. PubMed PMID: 33011758; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC7746399.
2. Baird J, Jacob C, Barker M, Fall CH, Hanson M, Harvey NC, et al. Developmental Origins of Health and Disease: A Lifecourse Approach to the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases. *Healthcare (Basel).* 2017;5(1):14. doi: 10.3390/healthcare5010014. PubMed PMID: 28282852; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC5371920.
3. Winpenny EM, Smith M, Penney T, Foubister C, Guagliano JM, Love R, et al. Changes in physical activity, diet, and body weight across the education and employment transitions of early adulthood: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Obes Rev.* 2020;21(4):e12962. doi: 10.1111/obr.12962. PubMed PMID: 31955496; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC7079102.
4. Gelius P, Messing S, Goodwin L, Schow D, Abu-Omar K. What are effective policies for promoting physical activity? A systematic review of reviews. *Prev Med Rep.* 2020;8:18:101095. doi: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2020.101095. PubMed PMID: 32346500; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC7182760.
5. Asadi Z, Teymurlouy AA, Aghaei A. School Health Policies in the World: A Scoping Review. *Health Scope.* 2023;12(2):e133708. doi: 10.5812/jhealthscope-133708.
6. Lakerveld J, Woods C, Hebestreit A, Brenner H, Flechtner-Mors M, Harrington JM, et al. Advancing the evidence base for public policies impacting on dietary behaviour, physical activity and sedentary behaviour in Europe: the Policy Evaluation Network promoting a multidisciplinary approach. *Food Policy.* 2020;96:101873. doi: 10.1016/j.foodpol.2020.101873.
7. Mostaghim S, Jafari M, Ahmadi Teymurlouy A. A Systematic Review of Policies Promoting Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents Worldwide. *Health Scope.* 2025;14(3):e159315. doi: 10.5812/healthscope-159315.
8. Chalkley A, Milton K. A critical review of national physical activity policies relating to children and young people in England. *J Sport Health Sci.* 2021;10(3):255-262. doi: 10.1016/j.jshs.2020.09.010. PubMed PMID: 33010524; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC8167315.
9. Chen S, Hong J, Milton K, Klepac B, Ma J, Pedisic Z. Analysis of national physical activity and sedentary behaviour policies in China. *BMC Public Health.* 2023;23(1):1024. doi: 10.1186/s12889-023-15865-8. PubMed PMID: 37254122; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC10230767.
10. Moradi G, Mostafavi F, Piroozi B, Zareie B, Mahboobi M, Rasouli MA. The prevalence of physical inactivity in Iranian adolescents and the impact of economic and social inequalities on it: results of a National Study in 2018. *BMC Public Health.* 2020;20(1):1499. doi: 10.1186/s12889-020-09618-0. PubMed PMID: 33008338; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC7532599.
11. Alizadeh A, Negarandeh R, Bagheri Amiri F, Yazdani Z. The study of Iranian children and adolescents' physical activity: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Int J Adolesc Med Health.* 2021;33(3):65-74. doi: 10.1515/ijamh-2020-0302. PubMed PMID: 33851798.
12. Shams F, Aroufzad S. Factors Accelerating Students' Participation in Physical Activities of Schools in Iran. *Journal of Strategic Sociological Studies in Sport.* 2023;3(2):226-238. doi: 10.30486/4s.2022.1955508.1036. Persian.
13. Ghenaat M, Talebpour M, Heydari R, Gol goli M. Identifying the factors affecting the development of physical education and student sports (Case Study: Khorasan Razavi Province). *Research on Educational Sport.* 2023;10(29):155-184. doi: 10.22089/res.2022.12029.2219. Persian.
14. Asadi Z, Teymurlouy AA, Hashjin AA, Pourasghari H. Factors affecting school health policies and ways to improve them: a qualitative study. *BMC Public Health.* 2025;25(1):3276. doi: 10.1186/s12889-025-24579-y. PubMed PMID: 41034797; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC12487270.
15. Shams F, Ehsani M, Saffari M, Aroufzad S. The driving, accelerating, and inhibiting factors of students participation in physical education extracurricular activities of schools. *Research on Educational Sport.* 2021;9(24):107-136. doi: 10.22089/res.2019.7695.1713. Persian.
16. Rabiei F, Afroogh F, Afroozeh MS. Analysis of school sports discourse in Iran. *Research on Educational Sport.* 2023;11(30):107-138. doi: 10.22089/res.2022.11947.2211. Persian.
17. Mohayya M, Ehsani M, Saffari M, Norouzi Seyed Hossini R. The Challenges of Educational Sport in Iran: A Review Study. *Ann Appl Sport Sci.* 2021;9(4):e966. doi: 10.52547/aassjournal.966.

18. Dalglish SL, Khalid H, McMahon SA. Document analysis in health policy research: the READ approach. *Health Policy Plan.* 2020;35(10):1424-1431. doi: 10.1093/heapol/czaa064. PubMed PMID: 33175972; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC7886435.
19. Scott J. *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research.* USA: John Wiley & Sons; 2014.
20. Braun V, Clarke V. Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and becoming a knowing researcher. *Int J Transgend Health.* 2023;24(1):1-6. doi: 10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597. PubMed PMID: 36713144; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9879167.
21. Beheshti R, Samiyi S, Heydari R, Kashtidar M. Designing and compiling the strategic plan of the Board of Rural Sports and Local Indigenous Games of Khorasan Razavi Province and presenting development strategies. *Quarterly Journal Applied Research of Sport Management.* 2022;11(1):75-105. doi: 10.30473/arism.2022.9206. Persian.
22. Khouzani MN, Aroufzad S, Nadi MA. Identifying the underlying factors affecting the development of participation of student sport in Iran. *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise.* 2020;15(2proc):S379-S392. doi: 10.14198/jhse.2020.15.Proc2.29.
23. Jann W, Wegrich K. Theories of the policy cycle. In Fischer F, Miller GJ, Sidney MS. *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods.* UK: Routledge; 2007. p. 69-88.
24. Goodyear VA, Skinner B, McKeever J, Griffiths M. The influence of online physical activity interventions on children and young people's engagement with physical activity: a systematic review. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy.* 2023;28(1):94-108. doi: 10.1080/17408989.2021.1953459.
25. Halabian S, Hosseininia SR, Alidoust Ghahfarokhi E. Determining the strategic position of the development of children's Physical activity in Iran. *Research in Sport Management and Marketing.* 2024;5(4):45-61. doi: 10.22098/rsmm.2024.14497.1318.
26. Sharifian E, Malekipour Horjandi E. Executive Barriers to the Sports Olympiad within Schools. *Educational and Scholastic Studies.* 2023;11(4):293-323. Persian.
27. Ganzar LA, Burford K, Zhang Y, Gressett A, Kohl HW, Hoelscher DM. Association of Walking and Biking to School Policies and Active Commuting to School in Children. *J Phys Act Health.* 2023;20(7):648-654. doi: 10.1123/jpah.2022-0376. PubMed PMID: 37142407.
28. Khodanazari H, Choupani AA, Aghayan I. The Contribution of Walking to School in Students' Physical Activity and Its Effect on Being Overweight. *Biomed Res Int.* 2022;2022:2633109. doi: 10.1155/2022/2633109. PubMed PMID: 35707388; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9192208.
29. Tomaz SA, Reilly JJ, Johnstone A, Hughes A, Robertson J, Craig LCA, et al. A systematic evaluation of physical activity and diet policies in Scotland: results from the 2021 Active Healthy Kids Report Card. *J Public Health (Oxf).* 2024;46(2):e240-e247. doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdae022. PubMed PMID: 38389318; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC11141590.
30. Alipour F, Hejazi A, Ramazani Khanvami M. A Comparative Study of Extracurricular Activities in Education Systems of Iran, Finland and Malaysia. *Iranian Journal of Comparative Education.* 2025;8(1):3358-3381. doi: 10.22034/ijce.2024.487930.1615.
31. Romanowska A, Morawiak A, Woods C, Kelly L, Volf K, Gelius P, et al. Health Enhancing Physical Activity Policies in Poland: Findings from the HEPA PAT Survey. *Int J Environ Res Public Health.* 2022;19(12):7284. doi: 10.3390/ijerph19127284. PubMed PMID: 35742530; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9223836.
32. Williamson C, Baker G, Mutrie N, Niven A, Kelly P. Get the message? A scoping review of physical activity messaging. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity.* 2020;17(1):51. doi: 10.1186/s12966-020-00954-3. PubMed PMID: 32295613; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC7160981.
33. Ershad Iranji T, Safania A, Farahani A, Nikbakhsh R. Pathology of Physical Education Assessment in the High Schools of Iran. *Research on Educational Sport.* 2022;10(27):185-212. doi: 10.22089/res.2021.10949.2127.
34. Van Hoya A, Vandoorne C, Absil G, Lecomte F, Fallon C, Lombraill P, et al. Health enhancing physical activity in all policies? Comparison of national public actors between France and Belgium. *Health Policy.* 2019;123(3):327-332. doi: 10.1016/j.healthpol.2019.01.008. PubMed PMID: 30712920.
35. Fathi B, Khodayari-Zarnaq R, Pourazavi S, Nadrian H, Kousha A. Agenda-setting Policy Analysis on Iranian Physical Activity Promotion Policies: An application of Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework. *J Health Sci Surveillance Sys.* 2024;12(4):389-401. doi: 10.30476/jhsss.2023.97848.1724.

36. Samei S, Tojari F, Nikaeen z. Analysing the trend of managerial changes in Iranian student physical education an sport (2018-1978). *Research on Educational Sport*. 2020;8(19):179-200. doi: 10.22089/res.2019.7232.1645. Persian.
37. Kämppi K, Asunta P, Tammelin T. Finland's Report Card 2022 on Physical Activity for Children and Youth. Finland: JAMK University of Applied Sciences; 2022. Available from: <https://www.activehealthykids.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Finland-report-card-long-form-2022.pdf>.

Appendix 1

Titles of Websites Reviewed

- The Expediency Discernment Council, <https://maslahat.ir/>
- The Office of the Supreme Leader, <https://www.leader.ir>
- The Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, <https://sccr.ir>
- The Supreme Council of Education, <https://sce.ir>
- The Ministry of Health and Medical Education, <https://ird.behdasht.gov.ir/>
- The Ministry of Education, <https://medu.gov.ir/fa>
- The Ministry of Sport and Youth, <https://www.msy.gov.ir/index.php>
- The General Department of Education of Tehran Province, <https://tehran.medu.gov.ir/>
- Tehran Municipality, <https://www.tehran.ir/>
- The Supreme Council for Health and Food Security, <https://salam.behdasht.gov.ir/>
- The State Welfare Organization, <https://www.behzisti.ir/>
- The National Institute for Health Research of Iran, <https://nihr.tums.ac.ir>
- The Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, <https://rc.majlis.ir>
- The Islamic Parliament of Iran, <https://www.majlis.ir>
- The Academy of Medical Sciences of Iran, <https://www.ams.ac.ir>
- The National Portal of Laws and Regulations, <https://www.dastour.ir>
- The Presidency's Information Portal, <https://president.ir>