

Physical Activity and Motor Skills: Keys to Holistic Development Among Orang Asli Children

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Physical activity plays a crucial role not only in maintaining physical health but also in supporting the overall development of children physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. Studies by Gallahue & Ozmun (2006) and Logan et al. (2018) highlight that strong motor skills in early childhood form the foundation for active lifestyles and lifelong health.

Children with well-developed motor skills are more likely to participate in physical activities. In contrast, those with poor motor abilities often struggle with low self-confidence, which may reduce their engagement in physical activity and negatively impact both physical and emotional health (Stodden et al., 2008).

In Malaysia, research shows that Orang Asli children lag behind their mainstream peers in motor skill development (Mohamed Sulaiman et al., 2019). Contributing factors include limited access to facilities, unsuitable teaching approaches, and socio-economic disparities. This gap reduces their opportunities to participate in sports and adopt a healthy, active lifestyle.

Moreover, self-perception plays a significant role in motivating children to engage in physical activity. A positive perception of one's physical ability boosts confidence and encourages participation (Robinson et al., 2015). Therefore, strengthening motor skills is essential not only for physical health but also for psychosocial development.

However, Physical Education (PE) in Orang Asli schools often faces numerous challenges, including a lack of trained teachers and inadequate equipment and facilities (Othman et al., 2020). This highlights the urgent need to develop a culturally appropriate physical activity training module, grounded in contemporary motor learning principles and tailored to the local environment.

Such a module could help enhance both motor skills and self-perception among Orang Asli children. Its effectiveness can be assessed using validated instruments such as the *Test of Gross Motor Development-2 (TGMD-2)* and the *Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children (PSPCSA)*, widely used in child development studies.

Ultimately, this initiative aims to bridge the development gap and promote the long-term well-being of Orang Asli children through a more inclusive and effective educational approach.