Results from Qatar's 2018 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

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Introduction

The high prevalence of physical inactivity in Qatar, along with other factors such as unhealthy diet, has contributed to the rise in childhood obesity.¹⁻⁴ The 2018 Qatar Active Healthy Kids (QAHK) Report Card represents an updated comprehensive assessment of available evidence on physical activity (PA) among children and youth (Figure 1). It provides an evaluation of the current status and progress of behaviours and influencing factors. This Report Card has created novel surveillance opportunities to understand PA trends over time and serve as a recommendations platform for future improvement of PA levels among children and youth in Qatar.

Methods

The 2018 QAHK Report Card was developed according to the *Canadian Report Card Model*.⁵ It is an updated version from the first QAHK Report Card which was developed in 2016.⁶ The Report Card Leadership (RCL) Team was established at Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sport Medicine Hospital, in collaboration with Stakeholder Group (SG) including members from well-established governmental and academic institutions in Qatar: Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Qatar University. The RCL team conducted a comprehensive review of literature (including recently peer-reviewed published data and national surveys), developed content, and organized meetings with stakeholders to discuss the collected information. Lastly, the RCL team and SG met periodically to review final content. Using the pre-developed search strategy, the most recent published and unpublished data on 10 common indicators (*Overall PA, Organized sport participation, Active play, Active transportation, Sedentary behaviors, Physical fitness, Family and peers, School, Community and environment, and Government*) were identified. Grades were assigned based on the percentage of children and youth who met national guidelines for PA and sedentary behavior⁷ as well as the internationally standardized grading scheme.

Results and Discussion

Grades and rationales for the 2018 QAHK Report Card are represented in Table 1. The 2018 QAHK Report Card showed higher grades assigned to both the *Government* (B+) and *School* (C) indicators, as there have been continuous collaborative efforts

to promote children's PA in schools. The *Sedentary behaviors* indicator was assigned a "D+" grade due to the progressive improvement, as many initiatives were implemented to reduce screen time according to the national guidelines.⁷ Similarly, progressive improvement was observed for the *Organized sport participation* indicator (D+), which included Olympic competitions, sports training at federation clubs, and National Sports Day activities. Moreover, the *Overall PA* indicator was assigned "D" based on the objectively-measured data from Qatar National School Survey 2015-2016.^{8,9} As for the *Active play, Physical fitness, Family and peers, Community and environment* indicators,

Figure 1 — Qatar's 2018 Report Card cover.

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Table 1 Grades and Rationales for Qatar's 2018 Report Card

Indicator	Grade	Rationale
1. Overall Physical Activity	D	25% of children accumulated at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) daily. ⁴ 35-39% of youth accumulated a total of at least 60 minutes of MVPA for more than 3 days per week. ^{8,9} 39% of children engaged in 30 minutes or more school-based MVPA per day ⁹ (based on objective measurements).
2. Organized Sport Participation	D+	48% of youth participated in organized sport and/or physical activity (PA) programs. 58% boys and 42% girls are registered to sport clubs. ⁸
3. Active Play	INC	Although of the participation in sports and outdoor play among children and youth has been increasing, no national data is available to assign a grade for this indicator.
4. Active Transportation	N/A	This indicator is not applicable in Qatar due to unsafe roads and the hot climate during most times of the year.
5. Sedentary Behaviors	D+	35% of children and 45% of youth spent less than 2 hours of screen time per day. ^{4,8}
6. Physical Fitness	INC	There are some unpublished data on physical fitness. Other data are not addressing specific benchmarks associated with the physical fitness indicator.
7. Family and Peers	INC	Data is not adequate to grade this indicator. The only information obtained is the proportion of parents who meet the PA guidelines, which may not give a direct indication of parental influence on children PA.
8. School	C	67% of youth participated in school physical education classes. ⁸ 61% of schools support PA programs, such as Qatar Active Schools and Health Promoting Schools.
9. Community and Environment	INC	Sports facilities exist in most residential areas across the country; however, there is no adequate data on accessibility, utilization and evaluation.
10. Government	B+	The State of Qatar allocated funds and resources for promoting PA. All government sectors are committed to the National Health Strategy 2018-2022 ¹⁰ and the Development of the National PA Guidelines for Qatar. ⁷

an “INC” grade was assigned due to the lack of nationally representative, published data. On the other hand, the *Active transportation* indicator was excluded from the current Report Card as it is not relevant to the context of Qatar (e.g. unequipped road, hot climate in most times of the year).

The lack of evidence-based published data that can reflect Qatar's current situation pertaining to PA and influencing factors remains as a limitation. Regardless, the main strength of the 2018 QAHK Report Card lies within proactive governmental policies and schools that promote PA among children and youth in Qatar. This can be an important foundation for further improvement in other indicators.

Conclusion

Considerable improvement in behavioral indicators was observed; however, unavailability of evidence-based information on PA and associated factors makes it difficult to evaluate all indicators. More research is required to understand children and youth's PA in Qatar by obtaining valid and reliable data for future Report Cards.

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