Changes in the Physical Fitness of Taiwanese School Children in Japan: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Objective: The purpose of this study was to compare the physical fitness level of Taiwanese elementary and junior high school students in Japan with that of Japanese students.

Method: The subjects were Taiwanese school children (T, n = 100); specifically, 10 to 14-year-old boys and girls. The evaluation consisted of height, weight, seated height, grip strength, 30-seconds of sit-ups, sit and reach, side steps, a 50 meter dash, standing long jump, softball or handball throw, and a 20 m shuttle run. These data are compared with a research report of physical fitness of children of Kanagawa Prefecture in 2013 (J).

Results: T was higher than J in sit-ups (10, 11, 14 years) in boys (p < 0.05). T was lower than J in the 50 meter dash (12 years), and the 20 m shuttle run (11, 12, 14 years) in boys (p < 0.05), but the total fitness composite score did not significantly differ between the T and J populations. T was higher than J in sit-ups (10 years) and side steps (10 years) in girls (p < 0.05). T was lower than J in the 50 meter dash (14 years), standing long jump (14 years), handball throw (13, 14 years), and the 20 m shuttle run (13, 14 years) in girls (p < 0.05). Furthermore, the total fitness composite score was significantly different between the T and J populations (14 years, p < 0.05).

Conclusion: The physical fitness level of Taiwanese elementary school children is similar to that of Japanese boys and girls, but the physical fitness level of female Taiwanese junior high school students is lower than that of their Japanese counterparts.

Key words: overseas Chinese schools in Japan, elementary school, 20 m shuttle run