

Abstract

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THAI CHILDREN

Ladda Mo-suwan, Jiraporn Chompikul, and the Holistic Development of Thai Children Study Group

The ultimate goal of national child policy has been set at a "smart, good and happy" child. In order to achieve this goal, all aspects of child's development must be nurtured.

In 2001 the Holistic Development of Thai Children Study has conducted a nation-wide survey of Thai children aged 1-18 years old and their families enrolled by a three-stage stratified random sampling. Data collected included child's weight and height, developmental quotient (DQ) or intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional-social-moral behavior score (ESM), family data, and child rearing practice (CR).

Normal holistic development was defined as height-for-age (HA) equal to or above median - 2 SD, DQ or IQ equal to or above 90, and EMS score equal to or above 25th percentile for age. Delayed holistic development was defined as having any of the three components below the above cut-off points. Principal component analysis was used to combine the three components (HA, DQ or IQ, EMS score) and create a new holistic development score (HDS). Then this new variable was used in the Path Analysis to explore the effect of family determinants and CR on holistic development of Thai children.

Results: A total of 8,258 Thai children aged 2-18 years old¹ were eligible for this analysis. Prevalence of delayed holistic development increased with age from 47.4% in the under three to 67.3% in the 3-<6 y olds, 73.6% in the 6-<13 y olds, and 75.5% in the 13-18 y olds. The northeastern and the northern regions had the highest prevalence, while Bangkok region had the lowest. Using Path Analysis, the two most important factors influencing holistic development were CR score and family income. Effect of CR score on HDS was largest in the 2-<6 y olds, but ranked second in the 6-<13 y olds and the 13-18 y olds. Its effect size also decreased with age. On the contrary, family income

¹ Height data was not collected in the 1-<2 years old subjects, eligible cases for this analysis thus included subjects aged from 2 to 18 years old.

ranked first in the 6-<13 y olds and the 13-18 y olds but ranked second in the under 6 age group. Factors influencing the child rearing practice of the 2 - < 6 years olds were family income and number of children in the family. Those of the school age children and adolescents were parental education.

This is the first report of holistic child development and will be the milestone of research on development of the whole child. Our findings will be useful for a strategic formulation of an effective national child's development policy to achieve the desired goal. They will also serve as the baseline for future national surveys.