

## **“LANGIT, LUPA, CELLPHONE MUNA: UNDERSTANDING THE ALARMING DECLINE OF TEEN ACTIVITY”**

*by:*

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Remember when we were in kindergarten, a simpler, happier, and more innocent time in our lives where we learn how to read letters, how to count, and learn the very foundation of education; the most basic and essential life skills that we will need for years to come. Well my favorite part is when, for a few minutes a day, we get out of the classroom and play to our hearts content. Children running left and right, playing “patintero”, “tayaan”, and “langit lupa”. These games (laro ng lahi) are what kept us from being bored, but even more than that it kept us healthy. In high school and college, we had sports to keep us moving in our downtime. I still remember my classmates playing basketball in their uniforms. It was fun, and exciting but most of all it was exercise disguised as a game.

Fast forward to today, I still carry within me the excitement to see my students be active on and off the P.E. class. There is a certain expectation that I have whenever I hear the school bell ring to signify the breaktime, but lo and behold when I look outside all I see were empty fields, desolate courts, and heard no balls bouncing. And as I sat in my classroom, I wondered why that is. Why students nowadays would rather stay seated on their phones during break than play or move. This was a wake-up call that caused me to write this article, I knew right there and then that we as educators needed to explore the causes of teen inactivity and offer realistic, and attainable school-based solutions.

According to the 2019 FNRI ENNS, 84.5% of Filipino adolescents were doing less than 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day deeming them inactive. Moreover, a study involving 408 students from two public high schools located in Metro

Manila reported only 33.6% (137) are said to participate in afterschool sports whether organized or recreational. Meaning that 66.4% of the students do not engage at all in sports activity. Despite the numerous efforts made by the government to implement sports and physical activity throughout the country through policies, teenage inactivity still plagues our nation to this day, and this has remained the same for the last 22 years due to several reasons.

One of the most frequent reasons is the teenage craze over smartphones. Phone addiction runs rampant among teenagers today. If you check their screen times on their devices right now, I can assure you that it would be significantly longer than that of their exercise time. We should know, because we as adults probably have more screen time than work out time as well. Due to the convenience of the smartphone most of us can't live without it, while some utilize to help with their overall quality of life, others suffer from excessive or overuse of mobile phones. This can cause feelings of insecurity, staying up late at night, impaired parent-child relationship, impaired school relationships, and many others (Sahu, 2019), all of which affects the overall inclination towards physical activity.

Physical and sports activities matter, especially to our children. The health benefits that it offers are greatly beneficial, it prevents obesity, helps us to sleep better, and forms a stronger immune system and in times where new viruses seem to come out of nowhere this is crucially more important today. And if we as educators and adults alike, hope to have a fighting chance against this epidemic we should do whatever we can to be a better example for our children and students. Great habits start from home and continue at school. We should unite against this common problem and incorporate physical activities into our lives as well. Schools should revitalize P.E. classes, offer entertaining ways to teach about sports and keep student-focused classes to help promote student interest in sports. Communities should create sports clubs and recreational leagues to give a chance to after school sports activity. But most of all we as adults should participate in these

efforts more and show better support for the sake of our children's health. If we want our teens to move, we need to move with them, run with them, and make them see that a little exercise never hurts anyone.

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