

## Health behaviour, decision making and perceived parenting: Are male and female learners significantly different?

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### Abstract

The study aimed to establish the perceived parenting styles, decision making styles and engagement in healthy lifestyle behaviours of male and female learners in secondary schools in the Western Cape, South Africa. A cross-sectional comparative design was implemented. The sample consisted of 457 Grade 9 learners from the Overberg Educational District. The mean age for the sample was 16 years (SD= 1.45), made up of more female (53.8%) than male (46.2%) participants. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used. When testing for differences between male and female learners using MANOVA, no significant main effects were found. The findings, therefore, suggest that authoritative parenting, vigilant decision making and frequent engagement in healthy lifestyle behaviours were the most prevalent behaviours amongst male and female learners.

### Introduction

Lack of growth in global health funding and initiatives over the past decade has been accounted for by the global economic crisis, and the economic BRICS (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) alliance is one of the only economies that has seen growth regardless of the economic crisis (Harmer, Xiao, Missoni & Tediosi, 2013). These emerging economies have been recognised as playing an important part in global health (Harmer *et al.*, 2013). Considering the role of emerging economies, research has focused largely on economic growth and development, and less focus has been paid to the potential to improve global health (Acharya, Barber, Lopez-Acuna, Menabde, Migliorini, Molina, Schwartländer & Zurn, 2014), particularly as the BRICS economies sustained growth in global health initiatives as alluded to by Harmer and colleagues (2013). Health related problems in emerging economies (BRICS), has seen an increase in non-communicable diseases that are associated with lifestyle-related behaviour (Acharya *et al.*, 2014). These economies could face dire consequences if left unattended, and could cripple their economic growth and development. However, one of the strategies of emerging economies framed in Institutional Theory is the important role of accessing agencies and institutions for the betterment of the economy (Hoskisson, Eden, Lau & Wright, 2000). The growing health concerns for an emerging economy like South Africa sought alliances with institutions (governmental departments, organisations, and schools) that are integral in social and organisational behaviour with the overall aim of reducing



































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