The Effects of Team Sports on Adolescent’s Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Past research has found that participation in both sports and clubs are associated with greater social competence during middle childhood compared with children who do not participate in any outside of school activities (Howie, Lukacs, Pastor, Reuben, & Mendola, 2010). For this study, an independent T-test will be used to measure the impact that team sports has on adolescents’ self-esteem. It will be a quasi-experiment that will include two groups: adolescents that participate in team sports and adolescents that do not participate in any extracurricular activities. The sample will involve four schools, two in a middle-class society and two in an impoverished community. These 13 to 17 year olds will be given Rosenberg’s Self Esteem Scale to measure their self-esteem level after participation in team sports. The results of this study will have implications for adolescents and their feelings of self-worth.

The Effects of Team Sports on Adolescent’s Self-Esteem

Whether positive or negative, sports greatly impact individuals in all domains of development. Before enrolling a child in athletics, parents typically question the advantages and disadvantages of team sport participation. Team sports involve competition between teams or groups of participants. Although there are a variety of team sports, a commonality among all, is that they force individuals to work together towards a common goal. This forced coherence greatly influences a child’s self-esteem and can either result in a blissful experience for a child or one of chaos and frustration. Self-esteem is a feeling of having respect for yourself or your abilities (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). If sports can positively influence adolescents’ self-esteem, this may contribute to less drug-use, less violence, and better overall health (Howie, Lukacs, Pastor, Reuben, & Mendola, 2010). The purpose of this study is to identify the impact children’s participation in team sports has on their self-esteem in order to enhance their overall happiness. There are many factors that can influence a child’s self-esteem in relation to their experience with sports. Previous studies focus on factors that directly influence self-regard such as gender, availability, parental involvement, coaching type, and the child’s temperament. These factors are important to mention for this study because each can contribute to an individual’s overall feeling of self-worth. The variables in this study are team sports which may include, but are not limited to soccer, lacrosse, hockey, basketball, and baseball and overall self-esteem level including the child’s views about future success and current self-satisfaction.

Gender may greatly influence an adolescent’s experience in athletics. Previous research has been conducted regarding gender and team sports and their outcome for children in a variety of aspects. Eccles and Barber (as cited in Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2012) found that boys primarily involve themselves in sports activities while girls are more typically involved in clubs, academics, and arts. These findings can help explain why there is a stereotype that girls indulge in hands-on nurturing activities and boys in more aggressive alternatives. Boys may find more positive impacts when being aggressive in sports while girls may find achievement through technique and stamina. Boys also may be held at a higher standard than girls and their parents may have higher expectations for them (Berk, 2013). Both the genders may also engage in different types of team sports based on what they deem “acceptable” for a typical boy or girl. For example, a boy may choose to play football and a girl may choose to be a cheerleader because those sports are associated with stereotypic gender characteristics. In a separate study, researchers found that girls showed similar levels of athletic participation and interest as boys in many middle and upper-class communities. However, in disadvantaged communities, access to team sports is unavailable and young, urban girls in particular are being left behind (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). These findings suggest that in many impoverished communities, young girls do not have access to extracurricular activities.

This lack of opportunity may decrease female’s overall self-esteem while perhaps increasing the self-esteem of those whom are eligible to participate. Boys may feel superior to girls because they have the opportunity to be involved in sports. Girls may feel subordinate to boys and as a result have decreased self-worth because they are not provided the resources needed to participate. Adults can help young girls indulge in team sports by increasing the availability and sensitizing them to unfair biases that may accumulate during their athletic career. In summary, many children’s ability to benefit from sports depends on their socioeconomic status and opportunities available in their community.

It can be argued that involvement in any type of extracurricular activity, whether it be clubs, academia, or sports, can contribute to a healthy development. In order to test for the implications of extracurricular activities, researchers collected data using surveys on children aged 6-11 years. The frequency of participation as well as the type of activity the child was involved in was recorded. They then collected a parent’s report that measured their children’s problem behaviors and social skills. They found that participation in both sports and clubs are associated with greater social competence during middle childhood compared with children who do not participate in any after school activities (Howie, Lukacs, Pastor, Reuben, & Mendola, 2010). It is important to mention that these extracurricular activities were not limited to team sports, but also clubs and individual sports. While some problem behaviors were observed to diminish overtime, physical differences among children who participate in sports and children who don’t can appear as well.

Children who play sports are typically more physically active than children who do not play sports (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). With the childhood obesity epidemic occurring in the United States today, an active child may be physically fit and contain less body fat than a child who does not. While many children are concerned with physical appearance, these differences in body shape can greatly impact their self-esteem. According to Berk, it is not until puberty that extreme sex differences in physical size and muscle strength occur and affect their athletic ability (2013). Since puberty occurs in adolescence for many children, studying the effects of team sports and self-esteem can help researchers understand how adolescents feel regarding their physical appearance when active in a sporting environment. While physicality can be extremely important to an adolescent’s perceived success, adult guidance can also determine their behavior regarding sports.

The nature of parental involvement in organized sports can influence the degree of experience for the preadolescents (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001). If a parent is supportive during the child’s sporting career, it can positively impact a child. On the other hand, if a parent is very critical and has high expectations for their child, this may cause stress and unwanted competition. Along with parents, coaches of the child can either positively or negatively influence them. Some coaches are not aware of the developmental changes occurring in the children they are coaching. If a coach is unaware of the child’s abilities, they may frustrate the child and push them too far beyond their limit. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, when the demands of the sport exceed the development of the child, the child may develop feelings of resentment and failure (2001). If a coach emphasizes effort, teamwork, and skills rather than competition school-age children benefit socially and are likely to remain active in adolescence (Berk, 2013). A child’s temperament may also influence their reaction to adult’s advice.

Whether introverted or extroverted, a child may respond differently in sporting situations. According to Findlay and Coplan (as cited in Berk, 2013), participation in sports among shy children may provide a protective factor while also increasing confidence as well as a decrease in anxiety, perhaps due to a sense of belonging. These positive effects created for a child with a shy temperament may increase the chance that a child will continue to participate in team sports in their future adolescent years. For other child athletes, perhaps those with a more outgoing temperament, youth sports may overemphasize competition and adults may interfere with children learning the game’s rules themselves (Berk, 2013). This not only takes learning experience away from the child but can also create a negative environment.

There are many factors that can influence a child’s experience working with others towards a common goal. Although much research has been conducted regarding children in middle childhood and extracurricular activity participation, little research focuses on team sports in adolescence and its effect on overall self-esteem. Adolescence is a distinct period in which children experience extreme growth, hormone changes, and independence. Whether or not team sports affects their self-confidence in this ever-changing period is what this research is attempting to discover. The hypothesis for this study is adolescents who participate in team sports will have higher overall self-esteem compared to adolescents not involved in group activities.

**Method**

**Overview**

The purpose of this study is to examine how adolescent’s participation in team sports impacts their overall self-esteem. The research design is quasi-experimental because there will be two groups of children that will be studied. The control group will consist of children who do not participate in any extracurricular activities and the experimental group will consist of children who do participate in team sports. This is a quasi-experimental design because the variables cannot be manipulated and children cannot be forced to play or not to play sports if they so desire. The independent variable for this study is participation in team sports and the dependent variable is the child’s level of self-esteem. Team sports participation will be measured once a month for a total of six months in which the child will check “Yes I participate in team sports”, or “No I do not participate in team sports”. This will be a nominal level of measurement. They will then check the activity they are participating in and how many hours a week they participate in this activity. These questions will be ordinal in which the child selects the answer that best fits. Self-esteem, including current self-worth and optimism for the future, will be measured using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. This will be an ordinal level of measurement.

**Participants**

The sample will consist of children from the Pacific Northwestern United States. The sampling technique used will be probability sampling, specifically stratified random sampling. Adolescents from four different high schools will be divided between those that are involved in extracurricular activities and those that are not involved in extracurricular activities. They will then be divided into a male group and a female group. Within these groups, participants will be assigned numbers and then randomly chosen to participate in this study. This approach is necessary for this study because the results can be generalized to a wider population if the boys and girls are chosen with an equal chance. The total number of participants for this sample will be 400 adolescents. The ages of the children will range from 13-17. This study will include two schools with children in middle socioeconomic status and two schools in impoverished neighborhoods. There will be the same amount of males (200) as there are females (200). Ethnicities will vary since this study will be conducted using participants with various economic levels. Caucasian, Latino, African American, Indian, and Asian students are expected to participate. Income levels will vary from $10,000 dollars annually to about $150,000 dollars annually.

**Materials/Measures**

Participation in team sports will be measured by questionnaire. The child will fill out the questionnaire at the beginning of the study, once every month, and after the completion of the study at six months. The questionnaire will ask the child if they are involved in team sports at time (yes/no). If yes, the questionnaire will then ask the child what activity they are involved in and how many hours a day they are involved in this activity. It is important to measure the participation once a month during the study to ensure that the children are still involved in the activity and to measure the amount of time they are involved daily. This data will be quantitative and will consist of three fixed questions. The first question on this questionnaire is nominal because the child will either choose “yes” or “no”. The second and third question will be ordinal in which the child checks the activity they are involved in and the amount of time they participate in the activity each day.

Self-esteem is going to be measured using Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale. This will measure how children feel about themselves as well as their beliefs regarding their future success. The participants will complete this questionnaire at the beginning of the study as well as at the end of the six months. It is necessary to conduct this questionnaire twice so differences in children’s ratings can be observed and measured. This is a quantitative measure that consists of fixed answers. This questionnaire consists of ten statements in which the child rates themselves by choosing “Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.” An example of a statement from this measure is “I feel I do not have much to be proud of”. Each of these answers has a score.” Strongly Agree” has a score of 3, “Agree” has a score of 2, “Disagree” has a score of 1, and “Strongly Disagree” has a score of 0. These are the scores for items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7. Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 are reverse scored. Scores are then added together and those between 15-25 are within a normal range for child’s self-esteem. Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale has a criterion validity of .55, internal consistency ranging from .77-.88, and test-retest of .82-.85 (Rosenberg’s Self Esteem Scale, 2013).

**Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board at California State University, Chico approved the criteria for this study prior to beginning it. In order to recruit the samples necessary for this study, I will have to gain permission from the superintendent of each school district, the principals of each individual school, and the teachers of the randomly assigned classrooms. This study will involve classrooms full of children 13-14 years of age, 15-16 years of age, and 16-17 years of age. Some of the classrooms selected may also include children with age ranges more diverse than the ones listed above. The teachers of each classroom will receive informed consent slips that they will hand out to the students assigned in their class. The students will have one week to return the consent forms. The written slips will explain that there is a study being conducted regarding athletics and child’s performance but the hypothesis will remain private. The child and their parent or guardian must sign the slip showing that their child may or may not participate in this study. Teachers will be informed of the purpose of this study and will be given the questionnaires that measure activity performance so that the children may complete it each month. The results for this study will be locked in a filing cabinet in Modoc Hall on the California State University, Chico campus in order to maintain confidentiality. There will be debriefing after the study is completed so that the children understand why they had to fill out questionnaires. Also, the children are required to be quiet and keep their eyes on their own paper when filling out the self-esteem scales so that the data is not skewed and the children don’t feel like they’re in a stressful situation. No incentives will be given for this study.

**Statistical Analysis Plan**

Adolescents who participate in team sports have higher self-esteem compared to those not involved in group activities. This research will be quasi-experimental design because the groups are pre-determined. An independent t-test will be used to measure group participation and its effect on self-esteem. This type of test is necessary in order to see group differences between those who participate in sports and those that don’t. Alpha sets the standard for how extreme the data must be before we can reject the Null hypothesis. The critical value for this research is 1.645 for 398 degrees of freedom. The data will be statistically significant if the *p*-value is less than the Alpha (p < .05). The researcher will then reject the Null hypothesis.

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Appendix

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Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions honestly regarding your child. All information provided will remain confidential.

1. What is your child’s age? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your child’s gender? (Check your answer)

\_\_\_\_Male

\_\_\_\_Female

\_\_\_\_Other (if checked, please explain) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your child’s ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_Caucasian

\_\_\_\_African American

\_\_\_\_Asian

\_\_\_\_Indian

­ \_\_\_\_Native American

\_\_\_\_Other (if checked, please explain) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your annual income level? (Check your answer)

\_\_\_\_I have no annual income.

\_\_\_\_$5,000-$25,000

\_\_\_\_$26,000-$50,000

\_\_\_\_$51,000-$75,000

\_\_\_\_$76,000-$100,000

\_\_\_\_$101,000-$150,000

\_\_\_\_$151,000 or more

1. Does your child participate in extracurricular activities? If yes, please specify.

\_\_\_\_Yes, my child participates in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_No, my child is not involved in extracurricular activities.

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| Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale  Top of Form   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **STATEMENT** | | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | | 1. | I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. |  |  |  |  |  | | 2. | I feel that I have a number of good qualities. |  |  |  |  |  | | 3. | All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. |  |  |  |  |  | | 4. | I am able to do things as well as most other people. |  |  |  |  |  | | 5. | I feel I do not have much to be proud of. |  |  |  |  |  | | 6. | I take a positive attitude toward myself. |  |  |  |  |  | | 7. | On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. |  |  |  |  |  | | 8. | I wish I could have more respect for myself. |  |  |  |  |  | | 9. | I certainly feel useless at times. |  |  |  |  |  | | 10. | At times I think I am no good at all. |  |  |  |  |  | |   Bottom of Form |

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| Top of Form  Scores are calculated as follows:   * *For items 1, 2, 4, 6,* and *7:*  |  | | --- | | Strongly agree = 3 | | Agree = 2 | | Disagree = 1 | | Strongly disagree = 0 |  * *For items 3, 5, 8, 9,* and *10* (which are reversed in valence):  |  | | --- | | Strongly agree = 0 | | Agree = 1 | | Disagree = 2 | | Strongly disagree = 3 |   The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.  Bottom of Form |

Team Sports Activity Participation Survey

Please answer the following questions regarding your participation in sporting activities. All information will remain confidential.

1. Do you participate in team sports? Team sports are sports that involve working in a team or group. (Check your answer).

\_\_\_\_\_Yes, I participate in team sports.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not participate in team sports.

If you checked yes, please continue.

1. If you checked yes, what team sport do you participate in? (Check all that apply).

\_\_\_\_\_Soccer

\_\_\_\_\_Basketball

\_\_\_\_\_Lacrosse

\_\_\_\_\_ Football

\_\_\_\_\_Softball/Baseball

\_\_\_\_\_Hockey

\_\_\_\_\_Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. About how many hours do you participate in this activity/activities per week?

\_\_\_\_\_1-2 hours

\_\_\_\_\_3-4 hours

\_\_\_\_\_5-6 hours

\_\_\_\_\_7-8 hours

\_\_\_\_\_9 hours or more

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