



The Effects of Youth Sports Participation on Emotional Intelligence in Middle School Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine participation in youth sports Influenced middle school student's level of emotional intelligence competencies. The study conducted to examine the relationship between youth sports participation and emotional Intelligence competency. To achieve this purpose of the study, nineteen students were selected as subjects from the various divisions in Q Medica international school at Sri Lanka. The selected subject's age ranged between 11 to 14 years. The students had an average age of thirteen. The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire was used to assess the individual's emotional intelligence and participants self-reported their previous youth sports participation. The test scores were averaged and cross-referenced with participant's questionnaire results. A t-test was used to test for significance To examine the relationship between youth sports participation and emotional intelligence competency. The study used an instrument, . In all the cases, 0.05 level of confidence was fixed to test the significance, which was considered as an appropriate. The most significant conclusion from the study was that middle school students that participated in youth sports had a higher emotional intelligence competency than those that did not participate in youth sports. This study was an excellent pilot for future studies in the area of youth sports participation and the development of emotional intelligence competency. Recommendations for future studies include increasing the sample size in both breadth and depth and utilizing a greater variety of youth sport opportunities as choices for male and female participants.

KEYWORDS

Youth, Sports, Intelligence, Students

INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence is "the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 198). Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced the "ability model" that includes four major themes of abilities included in emotional intelligence, namely (1) perceiving emotions, (2) using emotions, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions. It is hypothesized that the ability to decipher emotions, utilize them, detect mood changes, and regulate among them leads to more effective interaction and communication with other people. While Salovey and Mayer may have initiated the conceptual development of emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman (2001) is given credit for popularizing the theory of emotional intelligence. A majority of articles (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Goleman, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004) argued that there are two types of intelligence, cognitive and emotional. If a person better understands emotions and how they affect the social environment, that person can compensate for a lack of cognitive intelligence. To put it more simply street smarts, or emotional intelligence, can make up for a lack of book smarts, or cognitive intelligence. Some broad-based research has been done on the subject and studies (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Harms & Crede, 2010; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Warwick & Nettelbeck, 2004) do exist about the validity of the theory of emotional intelligence. The validity of the theory and how it could affect the future became more significant with additional studies. In the famous "marshmallow studies" at Stanford University, four year-old children were seated at a table with one marshmallow in front of them (Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). The child was instructed to wait until the experiment administrator returned before they could eat the marshmallow. If they were able to resist the temptation to eat the marshmallow, they would receive an additional marshmallow. Ten years later when the children were in high school, the study tested those same participants. The

study revealed that the children who were able to resist eating the marshmallow had an average SAT score 210 points higher than the children who could not wait (Shoda et al., 1990).

Youth sports

Children participated in sport well before organized leagues existed. Most games were played informally in parks or on the streets. Many adults remember those days when they played and competed for fun. While children were having fun, they also benefited from sports in two major ways, physically and psychologically. Alongside employers, parents believe that participating in youth sports is important to a child's development. According to Quinn (1999). Sports are a popular after-school activity and parents understand that keeping a youngster's mind busy in the afternoon is better for kids. A coach, quoted in a newspaper on the benefits of being on a competitive swim team all year round, stated, "It's a good thing for kids to make a commitment, work their hardest, and reap the benefits of positive self-esteem, accomplishments, sportsmanship, discipline, and time management too" (Middleton, 2006). This study demonstrated similar results. "Adolescents who participate in these activities have lower school absenteeism, are less likely to drop out, like school more, get better grades, and are more likely to attend college than adolescents who do not participate" (Simpkins, Ripke, Huston, & Eccles, 2005). Other comparable outcomes were found in a study by Harrison and Narayan (2003) that students involved in other activities, alone or in combination with sports, were less likely to be involved with alcohol consumption, marijuana use, and/or vandalism. In addition, this article made it clear that team sports are beneficial to children in other areas of life not just physical aspects. "The results indicated that for middle school boys and high school boys and girls, sports team participation was associated with a higher GPA" (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2009).

Methodology

SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

The Purpose of the study was to determine the youth sports

participation on emotional intelligence in middle school students. To achieve these Purpose nineteen (n-19) students participated in the study with eleven females and eight males completing all of the letter forms and questionnaires. The subjects had a mean age of thirteen years. Emotional intelligence was assisted from life Effectiveness Questionnaires (LEQ)

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES:

Prior to data collection, the Prime Time program administrator and the school principal at Pacific Beach Middle School were contacted by email. An in-person meeting with them was arranged, and permission was granted to distribute the LEQ and questionnaire in the Prime Time classroom. All participants took the LEQ and they responded to the entire questionnaire within approximately fifteen minutes. The majority of participants had no questions and finished under ten minutes. The researcher collected the LEQ and sport participation questionnaires after each student was finished.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were tabulated separately for the LEQ and the Sport Participation questionnaire. Responses were organized using Microsoft Excel. Each table was created to describe and clarify the results of the study. Many of the primary tables described the subjects of the study and whether or not they participated in youth sports.

RESULTS

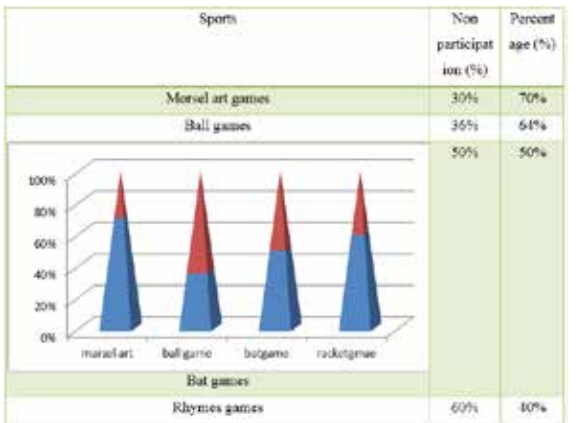
Table 1. Participant by LEQ Score

Type of Participant	Number	Mean of LEQ score
Participant of youth sports	10	143.8
Non-participant	9	126.0

t- Value =2.45, p-Value=0.033

The results showed that middle school students that participated in youth sports had an average score of 143.8 and those that did not participate had an average score of 126.0 Individuals that participated in youth sports had a higher mean score on the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire than those that did not participate in youth sports. A two-tailed t-test indicated that the mean value difference was significant at the .05 level and, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Those that participated in sports had an average score of 17.8 point's higher (see Table 1).

Table 2: type of sports and participation percentage



DISCUSSION

Daniel Goleman (2001) popularized the theory of emotional intelligence that served as a foundation for this study. Goleman defined emotional intelligence as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and action. The relationship between youth sport participation and the development of emotional intelligence as measured by the

Life Effectiveness Questionnaire was examined and, although some significant differences did exist, the small number of participants in this study limited the ability to draw any definitive conclusions about youth sport participation and the development of emotional intelligence.

While Salovey and Moyer (1990), Goleman (2001), and Sayeed and Shanker (2009), explained the benefits of a higher emotional intelligence claiming that it could even be a significant predictor of one’s future success, little research had been completed on how one develops emotional intelligence. This study hypothesized that participation in youth sport programs could play a role in E.I. development. The results of this study tended to demonstrate that individuals participating in these types of programs as youth had higher emotional intelligence scores as measured by the LEQ than individuals that did not participate. This appears to be consistent with how Laborde et al., (2011) described a high

Emotional competency leads to higher performance in sport. The benefits of participating in

Youth sport activities were identified with researchers (Middleton, 2006 ; Schewe, 2005;Seefeldt &Ewing1966).

Conclusion & Recommendation

Although this study was limited by its data set, both breadth and size, this researcher continues to believe that sport has a significant impact on youth development, particularly in the area of psychosocial development. The review of literature on the theory of emotional intelligence and the benefits of participation in youth sports demonstrated the importance of research of this type and nature. Unfortunately, this study, although well intentioned and solid in theoretical construct, contributed little to the foundation needed to substantiate the role sport participation plays in the development of emotional intelligence. This study would be considered a decent pilot to a bigger and more focused study of a similar nature. This study did establish that (1) children that participated in youth sports appeared to have benefited mentally from participation; (2) children that participated and who continued to participate in sport also continued to develop emotionally at a higher levels than nonparticipants; (3) males that participated in youth sports tended to possess greater emotional intelligence levels than females that participated in youth sports; and (4) children and youth that participated in a variety of sport experiences such as team and individual sports had greater emotional intelligence competencies than those that just chose individual sports or those that did not chose any sport in which to participate. This researcher believes that more vital learning takes place while participating in team sports than in a formal classroom setting. Whereas most individuals are required to interact, communicate, and demonstrate skills to colleagues at their workplace, team sports have the potential to develop these skills in a more significant manner than does formal educational training. The ability to clearly communicate and understand others emotions and interactions appear to be an essential element to success. The dedication of more resources to the study of the emotional component of individuals appears warranted at this time.

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