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Effect of Family Support on Children's Participation in Recreational Sports Activities of Torbat-e-Jam

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Abstract

Aim: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of parental support of their children's participation in recreational sports classes.

Methods: This study was a functional-descriptive survey in which a self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. It consisted of variables including psychological, cultural, social, emotional, economical and informational support. The face and content validities were evaluated by 10 professors specialized in sport education. Moreover, confirmatory factor analysis assessed the validity of questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach's alpha in the pilot study. The study population included all children participating in the recreational sports classes at summer 2016 out of whom a sample of 300 was selected randomly.

Findings: The results showed that all variables (Psychological, Cultural, Social, Emotional, Economical and Informational support) encouraged the participation of children in sports activities.

Conclusion: Generally, the results showed that parental support increased the children's participation in sport activities, which, in turn, improved the physical and mental health of young generation in the society.

Keywords: Parental support, Free time, Children's recreational sports class, Sports activities

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Introduction

Today, exercise is closely related to the health of individuals. It brings about delightful leisure time, education of the young generation, creation of healthy social relationships in the community, prevention of diseases and impediment of many social evils and moral deviations [1]. It is recognized as one of the ways of cultural development in societies, moderating antisocial behaviors, curbing crimes and fostering the rehabilitation of offenders to return to the society [2]. Physical activity has a positive and significant effect on the physical, psychological and social health of individuals in all life stages, and is considered as an effective means for improving the quality of life of people. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the physical activity and sports of youth and adolescents, considering their sensitive and crucial role in the cultural, social, economic, and infrastructural aspects of the country in the future [3]. There are multiple factors affecting the participation of young people and adolescents; the first of which is the family. Participation in exercises is learned through socialization processes, when people become aware of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their environment, and receive feedbacks on the degree of respect that others show for them [4].

These factors stimulate a sense of competence and lead to the determination of external goals, which motivate individuals to develop skills, attitudes, beliefs and values about the persistence of physical activity. As they grow up, they obtain information about the value of physical activity from the family, friends and other important and influential people [5]; therefore, sports participation and the support of important people are key factors influencing the continuity of physical activity and sports in individuals [6]. If families fail to provide the support they need to participate in sports, it would discourage physical activity in children, as has been documented in studies that examined the extent of sports participation. Studies suggest that many children and adolescents do not exercise as much as they are recommended [7]; this decline in physical activity is more pronounced in transition from childhood to adolescence [8]. In this sensitive age group, family environment has a huge bearing on the perception of children from the environment. This, in turn, leads to the development of certain beliefs in children, which are main factors influencing their behavior. In the realm of physical activity, a prominent family pattern is used to justify physical activity, suggesting that parent's belief in the physical activity of children lays the ground for understanding the impact of the family on the physical activity of children [9].

In this context, the first step that families can take for participation of their children in sports

activities is social support [2]. In fact, support represents the perception or experience that others care, love, respect and value an individual as part of a social network with contributions and commitments [10].

Nonetheless, it seems that in addition to the social support of the family, other factors are also associated with the role of families in participation of adolescents in sports. As such, a meticulous analysis of the dimensions and variables linked to the participation of children is essential to promote participation of the youth in sports activities, both in terms of promoting health and improving social health or building up culture and infrastructure in today's societies. It is crucial for families to identify and meet the requirements of the physical activity of adolescents and young people. By identifying factors contributing to the participation of adolescents and youth in sports, it is possible to raise awareness of families about these factors, and authorities can also educate families to improve these parameters. As a result, two large and effective institutions, family and community, can work together to enhance the quality of life of their children through exercise and physical activity. Studies on the impact of the support of various groups of society, including families, friends, peers, etc. suggest that despite the bulk of studies on the role of social factors and their support for the participation of individuals in sport activities, there is a paucity of research in relation to the support of parents in various dimensions.

Accordingly, one way to gain insight about the parents' attitudes of physical activity and exercise of their children as well as the factors affecting the participation of adolescents and youth is to study sports classes.

Objective

The interest and participation of children and adolescents in sport classes largely depends on the parents' emotional, psychological, sociocultural and financial attitudes, as well as their knowledge background [6]. Given the importance of this subject, this paper seeks to determine factors affecting the role of families in the participation of youth and adolescents in sports, and then analyze these factors with respect to the literature.

Materials and Methods

The present study is a descriptive research. The study population consisted of all participants of recreational sport classes in Torbat-e-Jam in summer of 2016. Since the statistical population consisted of about 2500 subjects, Morgan table was used to obtain a statistical sample. As such, 300 subjects were selected as the sample, and considering the probable loss of the samples due to such factors as incomplete questionnaires, 10 to 15% extra questionnaires were distributed. The targeted

and convenient random sampling method was utilized in this study.

Assessment instrument

To collect the required data, a questionnaire was used as follows:

A) Personal profile checklist, including personal information such as age, gender, parents' level of education, parental occupation, monthly income, type of sports, and degree of participation.

B) Questionnaire: In the first stage, research parameters were extracted from a review of the literature (including Persian and English articles, books, Internet resources, journals and reports). Then the researchers utilized the obtained results to design a questionnaire for gathering information. The necessary corrections were made based on the comments of the supervisor and advisor professors as well as the opinions of sports professionals to the questionnaire. Finally, the support level of parents was defined in five dimensions: emotional support, psychological support, sociocultural support, financial support, and information a support. The face and content validities of the questionnaire were verified by ten relevant professors and experts. The validity of the questionnaire was also confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). For this purpose, standard factor loading and the mean variance of all variables were calculated. The validity was confirmed as all extracted values exceeded 0.4. To determine the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used after a pilot study. As such, a reliability of 0.86 was obtained for the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha test.

Statistical analysis method

In this research, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, frequency, mean, and standard deviation) were used to describe the research data. The inferential statistics included Kolmogorov-Smirnov's and Bartlett's tests that examined the normality of data; one-sample t-test that evaluated the homogeneity of data, confirmatory factor analysis that determined construct validity; Cronbach's alpha for determining the reliability of data gathering instrument, and a structural model for analyzing and testing the assumptions. The data analysis was performed using Lisrel8 / 8, SPSS23 and EXCEL software.

Results

The participants were in the age range of 9 and 15 years, and they were taking part in a particular sport for one to more than 5 years. 26% of the participants had attended sport classes for leisure, but 74% intended to pursue

their sport. As for the level of education, 40.7% of the parents had high school diploma. With regard to the occupation, 40.3% of the participants' fathers had office job and 86.3% of their mothers were housewives. According to the results, the skewness and kurtosis of data were normally distributed. Bartlett's test was then used to ensure homogeneity of the samples. Given that the coverage level of Chi-square for Bartlett's test was less than 0.05 (0.001), this index was also confirmed. Also, according to the results of Bartlett's test, factor analysis can be used to data analysis. For factor analysis of the first stage of the questionnaire, each dimension was examined with respect to its items. In the standard model, the strength of relationship between construct and dimension as well as between dimension and index was investigated. If the value was higher than 0.3 or 0.4, the explanatory power of items was confirmed. The results revealed that item 15 of the socio-cultural variables and item 18 of the economic and financial variables had a factor loading less than 0.3. Thus, these questions were removed, and the remaining items were able to explain the intended dimension. In the goodness of fit test, the fitness of the data set was examined, and the ratio of Chi-square to degrees of freedom (4.12) and RMSEA (0.07) was computed. Also other indicators confirmed the fitness of the model; therefore, the research measurement model was suitable in terms of fitness indices. The results of CFA confirmed the validity of the questionnaire. Then, to determine the effect of each dimension of parental support on increasing the participation of children in sports activities, the second-order factor analysis was used. Goodness of fit of the model is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Values of goodness of fit of parental support questionnaire

Goodness of fit Index	RFI	NFI	CFI	PNFI	RMSEA	χ^2/DF
Values	0.91	0.91	0.94	0.73	0.07	**4.12**
Acceptable values	More than 0.90	More than 0.90	More than 0.90	More than 0.50	Less than 0.1	**Less than 5**
Explanation	fit	fit	fit	fit	fit	**fit**

According to Table 1, all of the goodness of fit values accepted the model, so assessing the model of this research was fit. Also the CFA showed that this questionnaire has a good validity. To investigate the relationship between 5 factors confirmed in the first-order factor analysis and the main research variable (i.e. participation in sport activities), the second-order factor confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. According to the

research measurement model, the path coefficient and the t-value of parental support dimensions were determined, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor loading and t-value in second-order factor analysis

	Parental support dimensions	Factor loading	t-value
1	Psychological support	0.94	13.55
2	Sociocultural support	0.87	9.05
3	Emotional support	0.84	9.83
4	Financial support	0.83	9.06
5	Information support	0.67	9.77

According to Table 2, the path coefficients of parental support dimensions based on priority are: psychological support (0.94), sociocultural support (0.87), emotional support (0.84), financial support (0.83) and informational support (0.67). Also t-value results suggest that the model parameters and their path are significant ($t \geq 1.96$). In the goodness of fit test, the fitness of the data set was examined, and the ratio of Chi-square to degree of freedom (4.09) and RMSEA (0.73) was achieved. Also the RMSEA value indicates that the model's fitness is desirable. Table 3 shows the research model's goodness of fit.

Table 3. Second order factor analysis of sports participation model

Conceptual Model Fitness Indicators	Values	explanation
RMSEA	0.073	**Good**
GFI	0.67	**Average**
AGFI	0.65	**Average**
NFI	0.91	**High**
NNFI	0.90	**High**
CFI	0.94	**High**
IFI	0.93	High

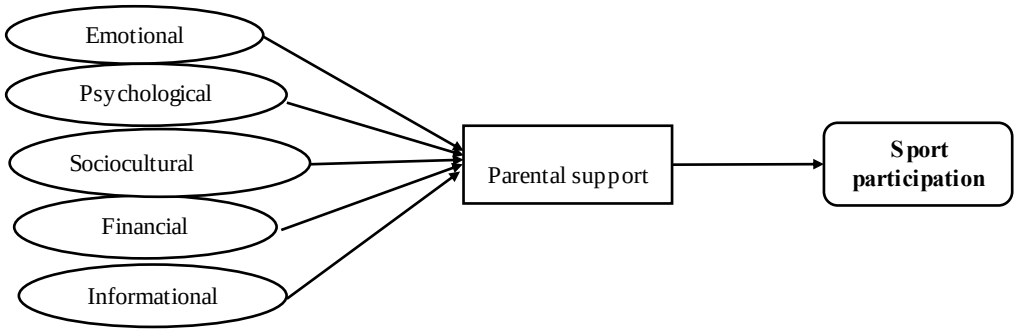

Fig. 1. Modeling the effect of parental support on increasing the participation of children in sports activities based on the results of the research

The goodness of fit values given in Table 3 confirm the research model. Thus, it can be concluded that parental support affects the participation of children in sports. Also according to Table 3, all of the above factors can be integrated into the model, and the model can be generalized to the community. Therefore, the model was designed as shown in Fig. 1.

Discussion

Based on the results of path coefficient, the dimensions of parental support, which in the view of children influenced their participation in sports, were psychological support (0.94), sociocultural support (0.87), emotional support (0.84), financial support (0.83) and informational support (0.67). In the following, we will discuss the findings of this research and other studies and explore their conclusions.

Psychological support variable

After analyzing the findings, the most important factor affecting the participation of children in sports was psychological support. This is consistent with the findings of Mirghafoori et al. (2009), Ramezani Nezhad et al. (2009), Azizi et al. (2010), Saeedi (2011), Funk and James (2001), Weiss and Ebbeck (1993) Council (2017), and Gyurcsik et al. (2006). It is to be noted, however, that not all of the above researches have addressed the factors influencing the participation in sports activities, as some of them dealt with obstacles and problems of physical activity and sports participation, arguing that this factor can contribute to the elimination of barriers to effective sports. Some studies have also focused entirely on the effect of motivational and psychological factors, as key factors, in motivating sports participation. Motivation comes from both internal and external sources, which are both the crucial in exercise and sports [11], and are often used to improve performance by sports psychologists. In people who are not goal-oriented or have low intrinsic motivation, external motivation must be utilized to encourage and stimulate intrinsic motives [12]. Some of the internal motivations that lead to physical activity include a need for physical activity, happiness, vitality, intrinsic pleasure and mental health [9]. It seems that individuals who have intrinsic motivation for physical activity are engaged in sports at an early age, and reveling in the vitality and delight of exercise at an early age is a strong motivating factor for continuing sports into adolescence [13]. These people are less likely to be affected by environmental factors, and issues such as lack of facilities and management problems can barely affect their physical activity; however, in people with less intrinsic motivation for physical activity or those who have not been engaged in specific sports during childhood and adolescence,

environmental motivational factors or external supports can hugely contribute to fostering their motivation and interest in sports.

Sociocultural support variable

The socio-cultural support was the second most influential factor in nurturing the participation of children in sports. This is in agreement with the findings of Ramezani Nejad et al. (2009), Mirghafouri et al. (2009), Shabani et al. (2011), Saeedi (2011), Weiss and Ebbeck (1993), Wang et al. (2014). Gyurcsik et al. (2007), Laakso et al. (2008), and William (2000). In the same line of research, Hosseini (2012) demonstrated that social factor had a positive effect on increasing participation in sports in male adolescents, but this factor had a negative effect on sports participation in female adolescents.

The first part is consistent with the findings of this research but the second part is not adaptable with our results. One of the factors for further participation of people in sports is the expansion of social relations and interactions. In this context, the justification of families to encourage and inspire children to participate in sports and physical activity can be highly important. Authorities et al. (2009) concluded that families had a great bearing on eradicating social barriers impeding the physical activity of their members [14]. In the event of support from families and friends, the healthy and dynamic lifestyle in the society would be promoted. As discussed in the motivation section, a culture of healthy life is a fundamental criterion that contributes to the development and spread of sports in all strata of the society [13, 15, 16]. In the context pf socio-cultural variables, respect for traditions and customs and revival of relevant ceremonies along with organization of festivals not only result in spread of sports activities, but also make people familiar with other customs, traditions and subcultures of Iran.

Emotional support variable

The third factor contributing to participation of children was the role of emotional support of parents. In fact, the perception or experience of love, care, appreciation and value by an individual and the fact that one is part of a social network are of paramount importance.

The family represents the first living environment for people, and it is basically a minor example of a wider social model that they will face in the future. If the child is treated with affection in the family and relies on love and kindness of the adults, s/he will continue to trust in factors that give him/her comfort and serenity. Therefore, the more children are exposed to support sources, especially the family support, as the first experience of a child's social support, the higher will be their ability to overcome and

tackle problems [1]. Some instances of emotional support of parents in sports include the presence of parents in training sessions of children, attention to exercises, and asking about the exercise sessions and practice of children [8, 11]. This is in keeping with the results of Manouchehrinejad et al. (2015), who investigated the relationship between the social capital of family and sport participation of adolescent students, concluding that intra-family relationships and intra-family support predicted 13% and 17% of sports participation in female adolescent students, respectively. Also the study of Bedakhsh (2013) on the relationship between parenting styles and the participation rate of children suggested that there was not any significant relationship between the high-control and low-warmth parenting styles and participation of girls in sports. However, there was a significant relationship between low control-high warmth, high control-low warmth and low control-low warmth parenting styles and the participation of female children in sports. Furthermore, there was not a significant relationship between high control-high warmth and low control-low warmth parenting styles and the participation of male children in sports. Nevertheless, low control-high warmth and high control-low warmth parenting styles was significantly correlated with the participation of male children [17].

Financial support variable

The economic support is the fourth factor affecting the participation of children in sports. This is consistent with the research of Tondnevis (1999), Mirghafouri et al. (2009), Shabani et al. (2011), Saeedi (2011) and Laakso et al. (2008). Gyurcsik et al. (2007) found that economic factor was one of the major obstacles hindering the expansion of physical activities. However, it is not in agreement with the findings of Timperio (2013), according to which, the economic factor did not influence the development of physical activities in students [18]. This disparity could be due to the diversity of geographic locations and differences in the statistical society and the sampling method.

Information at support variable

The last factor that had a bearing on participation of children in sports activities was informational support of parents, which consists of familiarity of parents with the type of sports in which their children are engaged, parent's familiarity with famous figures and athletes in their children's area of sports or, in general, the level of parent’s interest in sports, which has a huge impact on the participation of children in sports.

It seems that awareness of parents about the importance of exercise and the healthy and educational role of sports can provide a fertile

ground for the participation of children. This is consistent with the study of William (2011) on exploring the role of socialization factors in fostering participation in sports among young people aged 15-29 years, which showed that family compared to the variables of mass media, school and peers had the most powerful effect on youth's participation in sports [19].

It is also in line with the results of Timperio (2013) who studied the role of socialization factors in the participation of female adolescents in sports activities, which suggested that among the variables of socialization (family, relatives, teachers and trainers), four variables of encouragement of family members and relatives, accompaniment of family members and relatives, inspiration of teachers and sports coaches, and guidance of teachers and trainers in the first place, and the role of friends in the second place, had a huge effect on the participation of teenage girls in sports activities. In the same vein of research, Silva et al. (2014) investigated the impact of family and media on the participation of female students in sports activities, concluding that marital status, age, income, educational level and social-economic class were not related to the sports participation of female students, but there was a direct and significant relationship between the role of family and mass media and the participation of female students in sports activities [20].

Conclusion

With regard to the results of this study, according to which parental support had the greatest impact on children's participation in sports, it is recommended that families pay special attention to this factor, and authorities of sports organizations in collaboration with the mass media should raise public awareness about the role of family and parental support in the participation of children in sports as well as the educational role of sports. Moreover, organizations such as Ministry of Education should provide the ground for the students' participation in sport activities throughout the year by building and equipping sports facilities (organizing sports clubs in schools) to enhance participation of children and parents in sports events by providing sporting facilities for recreation and leisure of these groups.

Conflict of Interest

None stated.

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