

## Youth Development, Life Satisfaction and Psychological Problems among Sport Persons and Non-Sport Persons

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The present study is an attempt to examine the role of sports in youth development, life satisfaction and psychological problems. 100 schoolchildren aged 13-19 years, consisting of two groups viz., sports group (n=50) and non-sports group (n=50) participated in the study. They were assessed on youth development, life satisfaction and psychological problems self-reported measures. Results showed a significant difference between sports and non-sports groups on the youth development, life satisfaction and psychological problems. The findings suggested that sport participation promotes positive youth development, enhances life satisfaction, and reduces psychological problems.

**Keywords:** Positive youth development, life satisfaction, psychological problems, sports participation

Sports may be described as a human activity that focuses primarily on physical effort and skill, with aspects of competition or social interaction, and where the rules and behavioural patterns controlling the activity are formally established through organisations (Eime & Harvey, 2020). Sports can be played for enjoyment and recreational purposes as well as for competitive purposes. In addition to promoting healthy physical and mental health, sports also serve to mold a person's personality and contribute to their overall growth. Sports in school are now a required component of the curriculum as a result. Participating in sports is linked to a variety of good habits, including consuming more fruits and vegetables and trying to reduce weight in a healthy way (Pate, Trost, Levin, & Dowda, 2000; Rainey, McKeown, Sargent, & Valios, 1996).

Participating in sports helps people to gain self-confidence and self-esteem. Sports provide athletes the chance to enhance their leadership qualities as well as their playing abilities by giving them the ability to coach and organise their team's activities. Sports educate participants how to effectively collaborate and set aside personal differences of opinion and ideas for the sake of the team. To achieve in sports,

a person must be persistent and disciplined. However, sports help people learn that both winning and losing are inherent in games. If the loser gets up, tackles their challenges head-on, and perseveres, losing can be seen as another steppingstone.

Sports activities teach discipline, which is vital in overcoming life's problems. A person who has a spirit of sportsmanship can handle each of the challenges of life more gracefully. Sports players are less prone to fall victim to societal evils since they are required to play by predetermined rules and restrictions. The youth get moral and ethical awareness through sports. Sports is thought of as a method to remain active and healthy. Students that participate in sports benefit from the activities overall (Sabo, Miller, Farrell, Melnick, & Barnes, 1999). Children can prepare for life's obstacles through school athletics. It can assist students to attain their life objectives by improving their physical and mental capabilities.

### **Positive Youth Development and Youth Experience**

Adolescence was considered as a time of stress and turmoil where unstable emotions served as a necessary precursor to adulthood.

Adolescents are 'at risk' by nature for acting out in troublesome ways; they are either hurt or need guidance. A shift in this frame of reference was noticed in the early 1990s, though, as several studies examined adolescence through a lens of psychological theories that view development throughout life because of interactions between people and their environment (Lerner, et. al., 2005). Adolescents are considered as the trajectories of development as dynamic, flexible, and not fixed. They can be significantly influenced by factors in their homes, schools, and communities. Therefore, integrating the theoretical ideas about elasticity of adolescent development and findings about different paths children take through adolescence led to the concept of Positive Youth Development, which views adolescents as people to be developed and not problems that need to be managed (Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner, et. al., 2005).

The emergence of new and fresh approach to Positive Youth Development (PYD) is based on the ideals of engaging the youth of the society in productive activities. It considers a child or adolescent as a full partner in the development of society or nation (Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner, et. al., 2005). Positive youth development has also emerged because of emergence of positive psychology as well, advocating positivity and capacities of adolescents to get a high functioning mind. Positive youth development is an intentional pro-social approach to let youth engage within their communities and related organizations in a more productive manner leading to positive outcomes for adolescents by providing them positive opportunities which have the potential for fostering positive relationships.

The 5Cs Model of positive youth development (Lerner, et. al., 2005) identifies three fundamental characteristics of effective PYD programs and named it "Big three characteristics". These are (i) positive and sustained adult-youth relations, (ii) life skill building activities (iii) opportunities for participation and leadership in family, school, and community activities. This major vehicle for development of positive youth development came against the traditional approach of youth development, hence, it is holistic in nature and

coincides with achieving societal goals and development along with individual development.

### ***Life Satisfaction***

The extent to which a person has favourable overall life evaluations is referred to as life satisfaction. According to Diener (1989), psychological wealth includes life satisfaction, the conviction that one's life is meaningful, and the experience of engaging in interesting activities, the pursuit of significant goals, the enjoyment of positive emotional experiences, and a sense of spirituality that ties one to forces greater than oneself. According to Gilman and Huebner (2003), life satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that includes contentment with one's family, education, work, and relationships with peers. Work, romantic connections, interpersonal interactions, personal growth, health and wellbeing, and emotional states are just a few of the numerous aspects that affect life satisfaction from a variety of perspectives. People have varied demands, desires, and needs; thus, each person's definition of life happiness vary depending on how these aspects are considered. Better physical and mental health are highly connected with life satisfaction (Beutell, 2006).

### ***Psychological Problems***

Stress is described by Selye as "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made on it" (Huffman, Vernoy & Vernoy, 1997, p. 352). According to Huffman et al. (1997), the stressor or stimulus that causes this response might be either internal (cognitive) or external (environmental). The views of the person regarding stress are crucial in deciding how they will react to it. When stress is seen as a danger, it may cause feelings of anxiety, fear, and tightness in the muscles (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). It has an impact on a person's actions, thinking, and somatic equilibrium. Stress and worry may resemble one or more health conditions when they manifest as somatic dysfunction, including dizziness, gastrointestinal issues, high blood pressure, and an increased heart rate that can be misinterpreted for heart disease.

Stress and anxiety have a negative impact on cognitive functions such as attention,

decision-making, motor planning, and impaired interpersonal connections. Stress and anxiety can arise due to many reasons, but degrading or negative environment or experiences and lack of social support could be among the major factors for stress. However, positive life experiences, and proper nurture of a child or adolescent reduce the chance of getting indulged in psychological problems and mingle with stress. Positive life experiences also build resilience and incorporate healthy coping skills and life skills in general among individuals. Healthy life activities involving motor, cognitive, and social inclusion give youth a sense of belongingness into community and among peer members. Sports can be one such healthy activity which fulfill all the above mentioned criteria.

### ***Youth Development, Life Satisfaction, Psychological Problems and Sports***

A sport as mentioned above has numerous benefits from physical to psychological. A youngster must have a comprehensive awareness of every element of life for healthy youth development, including how to act around people, how to engage with their surroundings, how to socialize, and how to understand both overt and covert cultural norms. In certain ways, playing sports assists in accomplishing these goals. Through the development of perception or judgment skills, self-worth, and confidence, sports enhance personality. One can have a sense of fulfillment through athletics through learning sports-related abilities, competing, and succeeding.

Although losing games and having difficulty learning new abilities can be upsetting and cause unhappiness. Through sense of accomplishment, teamwork, and solidarity, sports also offer the prospect of stress alleviation. Therefore, all the traits may promote healthy growth, character development, life satisfaction, and a decrease in psychological problems, or they may intensify issues that interfere with development. Thus, the study is designed to examine the role of sports in the youth development, life satisfaction and psychological problems among sport persons and non-sport persons.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

A sample of 100 participants aged 13-19 years was purposively selected for the study. The children were further divided into sports group and non-sports group. The sports group included individuals that were sports players, practiced their sports daily for minimum three hours and participated in sports events/matches. 50 individuals were placed in sports group. 50 individuals in non-sports group (control group) did not play any sports.

To avoid any kind of gender bias, 25 male and 25 female participants were present in the sports group. Non-sports group had 30 female and 20 male participants. Data were collected with sports persons from schools and university sports ground while players practicing live, and data were collected with non-sports persons in schools' classrooms during leisure time. Before collecting data, permission was taken from school principals, concerned teachers as well as consent from the participants.

### **Tools**

All the questionnaires were adapted and translated for better accuracy and adaptability using translation and back translation procedures.

*Positive Youth Development Scale (Phelp's, et al. 2009)*: It was based on Lerner's 5C Model, (2005) i.e., Character, Caring, Connection, Competence, and Confidence. A total of 26 items were selected from Phelps et al.'s (2009) 78-item measure of PYD for inclusion in the Positive Youth Development. The participants rated on a five-point scale where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Disagree. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.75.

*Life Satisfaction Scale (Berry, 2005; Mishra, Bano & Tripathi, 2017)*: Measurement of life satisfaction was done through the Life Satisfaction Scale. It contains 10 items. The participants rated on a five-point scale where 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Disagree. It had 5 items that were scored in reverse order. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.81.

*Psychological Problems Scale (Berry, 2005; Mishra, Bano & Tripathi, 2017)*: To assess psychological problems of participants, this scale was used. It consists of 15 items related to the challenges of life. The participants chose the options on a five-point scale, which was, Never= 5, Rarely= 4, Sometimes= 3, Many times= 4, Always=5. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.77.

### Results

Data were analyzed using descriptive, t-tests for assessing the significance of the difference between the sports group and non-sports group on the measures of positive youth development, life satisfaction and psychological problems.

On the measure of youth development (Table 1), the means of both groups (sports and non-sports) were not statistically significant (t-value = 1.04, p-value = .30). However, the mean score of the sports group (mean= 106.04, SD = 15.30) was higher than the mean score of the non-sports group (mean = 103.02, SD = 13.61). Thus, engaging in sports has a positive effect on youth development. The components of PYD, which include caring, competence, character, connection, and confidence, may be enhanced by participating in sports activities.

Table 2 shows that significant difference was evident (t-value = 3.22, p-value = .002) on the measure of life satisfaction. Hence, results indicated that playing sports and engaging in sports activities enhanced life satisfaction among sports persons (mean = 35.64, SD = 5.24) as compared to non-sports group (mean = 32.66, SD = 3.22).

**Table 2. Life Satisfaction**

S. No.	Variable	Sports Group		Non-Sports Group		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Life Satisfaction	35.64	5.24	32.66	3.91	3.22**

\*\*p<.01

Results (table 3) revealed that a significant difference between groups (t-value = .58, p-value = .55) was not evident; however, the mean of the sports group was higher (mean = 58.08, SD = 11.06) in comparison to the non-sports group (mean = 56.88, SD = 9.34). The higher score indicates lesser psychological problems, thus suggesting sports might have a role in reducing psychological problems among participants who played sports as compared to those who did not.

**Table 1. Positive Youth Development**

S. No.	Variable	Sports Group		Non-Sports Group		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Positive Youth Development	106.04	15.30	103.02	13.61	1.04
	Caring	20.54	3.93	20.34	3.87	.25
	Competence	23.90	3.94	23.02	3.51	1.17
	Character	20.60	3.48	20.18	3.23	.62
	Connection	21.28	3.12	20.00	3.50	1.92
	Confidence	19.72	3.48	19.48	3.25	.35

**Table 3. Psychological problems**

S. No.	Variable	Sports Group		Non-Sports Group		t-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	*Psychological Problems	58.08	11.06	56.88	9.34	0.58

(\*Higher the score, lower the psychological problems)

### **Discussion**

Sports is one activity in which all the developmentally essential abilities may be learnt through physical activity, teamwork, the acquisition of physical and mental skills or tactics, and adherence to the laws and regulations specific to the sport. Sports may be used to develop all life skills, including social, motor, and learning abilities as well as social and interpersonal skills.

With respect to positive youth development, difference between sports and non-sports groups was not significant, however it was observed that the mean scores of sports group was higher than the mean scores of non-sports group. It points out that sports participation may have some positive role in youth development. It may strengthen all the domains present in positive youth development i.e., character development, competency, building confidence, or connection. The mean score on the domain of connection was higher in sports group rather than non-sports group indicating role of sports engagement in strengthening a sense of connection among sportspersons. It was observed that similar results were seen with regards to examining the role of sports in the context of military children. Loss of parental figure and its trauma, separation, frequent transfers, all these create a sense of alienation from society, disconnection from peers and related group, and incompetence among those children. It was concluded that sports made military children feel that they matter. Through participation in sports, they felt they have social support and connected better with their peers and made friends. Sports gave them a sense of belongingness; thus, their development was positive with evident improvement in almost all the domains of positive youth development model including making connection (interpersonal and social bonding), increase in confidence, a sense of competence, and improvement in performance and moral character (Ettekal, 2016).

The result of the study made it clear that

sports does have a positive effect on life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive (Buetell, 2006). It is about satisfaction with one's performance in different domains of life, skills, goal orientation, a sense of belongingness, and happiness. A study (Varca, Shaffer & Saundars, 1984) observed that men who participated in sports reported highest level of satisfaction during their freshman year of college and later again after five years of graduation. The positive impact of outdoor sports was found on life satisfaction. It was also reported that students studying in sports universities as well as studying physical education had scored significantly higher on life satisfaction measure (Ardahan, 2012; Sabo, Miller, Farrell, Melnick, & Barnes, 1999).

As people become older and have more responsibilities, psychological problems are more likely to affect everyone. Given that adolescence is a time of numerous physical and psychological transformations, youth might also experience anxiety, stress, psychosomatic symptoms, and depressive symptoms. In many studies, reports have been found participating in sports activities significantly reduces stress, develops better-coping strategies, and enhances good physical health. One study (Perlini & Harvelson, 2006) reported that in comparison to control, players scored above the population average on stress management. Another study (Diener, et. al., 1999) with baseball players indicated pitching players had better coping skills than hitting players and average individuals. In the present study, significant difference between sports and non-sports groups was not evident on the measure of psychological problems. Although, the sports persons faced less psychological problems compared to the non-sports persons, which hints that sports may somewhat have a healing effect on psychological problems being faced by athletes. Sports participation might lessen symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, or psychosomatic illness

because, throughout history, sports served to relax and distract attention from the stress and pressures of everyday life. Sports provide the individuals an opportunity to engage in fun and connect with people.

### Implications

Results revealed that sports participation facilitates positive youth development, increases life satisfaction, and reduces psychological problems. Research regarding sports and positive youth development is still new to India. It could provide a better insight regarding the important role of sport participation in positive youth development. It suggests implications of sports activities in schools and colleges that benefit students in their overall positive development.

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**Acknowledgements:** The study reported here was funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), File no. 02-136/Gn/2021-22/ICSSR/RP/MJ, New Delhi, India.

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