**The Effects and Role of Organized Sports on the Youth into Adulthood**

Name

Institution

Date

**Abstract**

There are many types of sports actively played in the United States but organized sports leads in terms of popularity and participants. It is estimated that about 50 million youths and children are engaged in organized sports across the country. In addition, research also shows that about 75% of U.S. families whose children are in school have at least one of those children actively engaged in an organized sport. Just by generally looking into the American population one would conclude that the children are leading healthier and happier lives through their engagement in organized sports in their various sports clubs at school or at local sports clubs. Families may seem to be generally satisfied by the engagement of their children in organized sports. However, the facts on the ground are of a contrary perspective; statistics show the prevalence of obesity among school-going children and worse still, the epidemic is alarmingly increasing to a present tune of 1 out of every 3 children being. Most youths especially those in their teenage years have obesity issues and are leading sedentary lifestyles. On the other hand, hospitals across the country are recording increasing cases of emergency room visits due to sports-related injuries, recent research showing a total of 3 million visits a year, with most of the patients aged between 5 to 25 years. Studies have also indicated a high churn rate for participants once they reach the age of 15 years, challenges that adults face ranging from coaches, parents, medical teams and donors.

**Introduction**

There are spectra of effects of engaging in sports as children and young adults. Among the primary objectives of public health programs is the promotion of long and healthy lives for all. As a result, participation in sports for the youth is actively encouraged and a good chunk of funds invested in the same. Sport-participation has a long-term positive effect on the health of participants, not only during youth but into adulthood. Notably, the effects are diverse, with some types of sports posing a negative effect on the individual mainly by increasing their exposure to physical injuries that sometimes become permanent.

Digressing away from the effects of organized sports, this research will look into the role that the sport has on youth. The prevalent role of organized sports recognized in this research is the ability to develop a child’s non-cognitive skills such as emotions, behaviour and social and economic success during the early years. This research found out that about 70% of all children and youth around the world are engaged in organized sports (Marsh & Daigneault, 2000).

The relationship between organized sports and the development of the participants’ non-cognitive abilities has not been studied much and thus the area is constrained in terms of empirical evidence.

Therefore, this study is primarily based on the outcomes of participating in organized sports for the youth and the long-term health and other non-cognitive outcomes during adulthood. Sadly, there has been minimal scientific intervention in the framework for the provision of rules and regulations in youth sports and on top of that, some basic mechanisms for enhancing the safety of participants are barely implemented (Marsh et al, 2000). More importantly, over 90% of high school and junior league coaches lack formal training. The churn or attrition rate is about 35% across all age groups, with unpredictable chances of coming back to the sport. The rates are more pronounced during transition say, from childhood (5 to 11) into teenage (13 to 19) and further into young adulthood (20 to 25 years). By the age of 15 years, 75% of the youth are already out of sports (Dworkin, Larson & Hansen, 2003).

This research will use a mixed methodology approach to evaluate the role and effects of organized sports on youth into adulthood. More precisely, the research shall examine the pros and cons of organized youth sports in the United States with a focused discussion on the effects of the following areas: specialization at an early age, the difference between trained and non-trained coaches and facilitators, discovery of elite team players, rates of injury, the moral perspective of a player’s character and the national health concerns in adulthood.

Based on the results, a balance between sports, physical well-being, psychological health and a healthy adult life is the main takeout from this research. The data presented in this study represents the quantitative perspective of the study while the non-statistical factors such as non-cognitive skills and abilities represent the qualitative aspect of the impacts that organized team sports on youths into adulthood.

**Positive effects**

The benefits derived from the participation of children and youth in sports are limitless and varied, spanning across a number of realms including psychological, physical and socio-economic domains. To start with, participating in organized sports involves intense physical exercise and the use of physical energy. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the proportion of youths currently engaging in sports is 50% of their population (Dworkin, et al, 2003). This presents a platform for the community and schools to encourage participation so as to increase physical activity. Studies show that just 43% of children in elementary school are actively engaged in a physical activity; the figures are even worse for the youth with only 8% of them engaging in the recommended amount of physical activity in the U.S. Childhood obesity, which is a consequence of the lack of participation in any physical sport is a 90% effective predictor of obesity in adulthood (Dworkin, et al, 2003). Organized team sports are efficient in breaking this trend.

Through vigorous physical activity and a high rate of energy consumption, organized sports are capable of reducing inactivity and the prevalence of sedentary lifestyle currently high in the country. Organized sports participation will reduce the consumption of calories, whose uptake has increased by 31% in the last 10 years, fats which are currently consumed twice as much as they were a decade ago and reduce the intake of sugar, whose consumption has increased by 15% (Organized Youth Sports Today, 2018).

According to the “Let’s Move” initiative launched by Michelle Obama, meeting the recommended threshold of daily physical activities will enable the country to alienate child obesity (National Center for Sports Safety Sports, 2018). Organized sports are in line with the former First Lady’s program and really go far and beyond meeting the minimal requirements by not only encouraging physical motion but also a chance to learn and develop numerous motor skills at a young age.

Research shows that the development of motor skills during childhood increases the likelihood of the individual using them in a sport or another physical activity in adulthood. There is a positive correlation between engaging in organized physical activity and performance in academics. In addition, the participation of the youth in intense physical activities reduce their susceptibility to obesity, heart problems, diabetes and other forms of mental and physical dysfunctions (National Center for Sports Safety Sports, 2018). On the other hand, youth and children not active in organized sports risk a reduced quality of life, increase their susceptibility to long-term health problems, social segregation, stereotyping, loss of self-esteem and obesity which is most likely to transit into their adult life (Pate et al, 2000). In extreme cases, obesity has been linked with the alarming rate at which suicide ideation and cases are being reported among the American youth.

The contribution of organized team sports on health outcomes of the youth goes beyond the obvious outcomes to reduce the rate at which the participants engage in a health-risking behaviour. Research done in the early 2000s shows those teenagers who are involved in an organized sport recorded an improvement in health-related behaviours throughout their teens into adulthood. According to the study, most of the participants begin to increase the concentration of fruits and vegetables in their diets and minimize drug and alcohol use throughout their childhood into adulthood. Male teenagers involved in organized sports were found to utilize healthy diets and reduce the use of drugs and alcohol as compared to the non-athletic teenagers (Pate, Trost, Levin & Dowda, 2000). Possession of weapons and drugs is also less likely among young male adults actively involved in sports.

As much as organized athletics and sports do not reduce all health risking activities, teenagers and young adults in sports are less likely to carry out such activities relative to those not actively involved in organized team sports. However, the prevalence of engaging in such health risking activities varied with demographic factors especially race, socioeconomic situations and gender. A qualitative approach toward the likelihood of suicide ideation among the youth shows that the active involvement of teenagers in physical activities and sports reduces such ideations (Organized Youth Sports Today, 2018). Thoughts of committing suicide among the youth are usually a result of depression caused by a state of hopelessness for the victim (Pate et al, 2000).

Organized sports has proven an avenue for reducing suicidal activities by giving the youth a purpose in life and a sense of value for their wellbeing. Not only does organized sports contribute to physical health, it provides the participating children and teenagers with a sense of belonging and support through team membership, a sociological trait that goes a long way in reducing the frequency of stressful thoughts and hopelessness among the participants (National Center for Sports Safety Sports, 2018). These are the non-cognitive developmental capabilities that organized sports can impact the youth. There is a positive relationship between the involvement in organized sports and psychosocial traits of the participants and it was discovered that participants displayed sociological and psychological benefits relative to their counterparts whose extra-curricular activities were largely non-sport (Organized Youth Sports Today, 2018).

**Negative effects**

The most common and profound negative effect of participating in organized sports is the risk of temporary or sometimes permanent physical injuries as a result of intense physical activity (National Center for Sports Safety Sports, 2018). Young adults usually go through a phase of accelerated physical growth and with it come to an increase in the rate at which they want to participate in a physical activity. A positive relationship prevails between participating in organized sports and the sport-related injuries recorded in medical centres, with a record average of 3 million emergency room visits annually. Science has it that as the youth go through a stage of rapid growth of bones, muscles seem to follow suit developing tension on the growth plates and joints.

Young adults begin to experience a reduced level of flexibility and coordination which usually increases their susceptibility to physical injuries and not just that, their performance is affected and as more pressure to perform builds up, they find themselves in a situation of excess anxiety and depression. The pressure from society and team management may reflect negatively on the young athletes and in response, depression kicks in and paves way for more psychosocial problems including suicidal ideations.

In addition to injuries, a quick return to sports for an injured athlete may be detrimental as they risk suffering from chronic pain and a long-term physical or psychosocial dysfunction. Research shows that about 3.5 million kids receive medical care due to sport-related activities. Despite the fact that participation is being encouraged, organized sports are doing little to reduce the prevalence of injuries among the children and young adults. The failure is not entirely blamed on the coaches and facilitators, parents of children engaging in organized sports seem to do little to prevent injuries that their athletic children risk getting. Training sessions account for two-thirds of the injuries accrued during sports.

In addition to injury is the financial load that athletes place on their caregivers since organized sports especially those looking to nurture professional athletes requires a good amount of financial investment in the young athletes. The notion that sports are profitable and that the young athlete will help the parents recover the financial resources they invest in him in future once he/she becomes a professional athlete has seen parents sacrifice money meant for other important things in life like college education so as to cater for the dreams of their young star. However, the success rates among many of the young athletes are so low that the financial burden will most likely never get recovered; parents may end up drowning in debt they could not service.

**Conclusion**

A child is required to be at least six years of age to joined organized sports so as to allow room for sufficient physical, psychological and cognitive growth. A readiness assessment needs to be conducted on each child individually to evaluate their preparedness for the sport. A matching is then made between skill development and a child’s preparedness, where a mismatch could potentially lead to stress, anxiety and therefore increase the attrition rates (Marsh et al, 2000). As a goal for every sport, organized sports and team participation, in particular, induces fun, activeness and a chance to learn and master the fundamental skills whose application and relevance goes beyond sports into real life in childhood, youth and adulthood.

The motives for participating in organized team sports vary from childhood to adulthood. Most children participate in sports to have fun while their parents encourage their participation in sports for the win. The winning perspective among children varies with demographic characteristics of the participants: age and gender (Marsh et al, 2000). However, the study also found that a majority of youth are motivated to participate in sports by reasons whose scope goes beyond winning: fairness, growth and development of non-cognitive skills. This research has identified the presence of a disconnect in the perspective towards sports between children and adults, leading to a sense of stress and lack of joy for the children and youth. That said, participation in sports is something that this research really advocates forgiven the tragic nature of the alternative: child obesity for the young ones and the prevalence of long term chronic illnesses like diabetes, cancer, spine problems and musculoskeletal disabilities (Pate et al, 2000).

**References**

Dworkin, J. B., Larson, R., & Hansen, D. (2003). Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in

youth activities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

Marsh, J. S., & Daigneault, J. P. (2000). The young athlete. *Current Opinion in*

*Orthopaedics*, *11*(2), 145-149.

National Center for Sports Safety Sports Injury Facts Available from:

<http://www.sportssafety.org/sports-injury-facts/> Retrieved August 22, 2018

Organized Youth Sports Today Troubling signals from youth sports Available from:

<http://www.tnsoccer.org/Assets/organized+youth+sports+today.pdf> Retrieved August 22, 2018

Pate, R. R., Trost, S. G., Levin, S., & Dowda, M. (2000). Sports Participation and Health-Related

Behaviors Among US Youth. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, *154*(9), 904-911.