

Development Of Interpersonal Communication Skills Through Sport Among University Student-Athletes; A Cross Sectional Survey

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Muhammad Aslam Khan , Development Of Interpersonal Communication Skills
Through Sport Among University Student-Athletes; A Cross Sectional Survey ,
PalArch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(12). ISSN 1567-214x.**

KeyWords; Interpersonal Communication, Life Skills, Sport, Student-athletes.

ABSTRACT:

Various researchers have acknowledged the role that sport has played in developing an important life skill among its participants. However, limited research has examined the role of sport in the development of life skills, especially among the university student-athletes of the homeland country Pakistan. Keeping this into consideration, the present study examined the life skills development through competitive sports among university' student-athletes. The required data were collected through a self-made structured questionnaire conducted with university' student-athletes (n=335) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Results indicated that: 1) sport has played an important role in developing an important life skill of interpersonal communication among university student-athletes ($p < 0.05$), 2) The analyzed data describe that there exist statistically significant differences between university male and female

student-athletes in Inter-personal communication skills (males=3.8517; females=3.5621), and 3) team sport-participants reported higher mean scores on interpersonal communication skills(team sport-participants=3.8528; individual sport-participants=3.5333). These findings may help in elucidating new ways in which sports can simultaneously facilitate the overall development of student-athletes by providing an opportunity for positive youth development in the Universities. Furthermore, a consideration on how life skills are developed through sports in light of the views of student-athletes offers a unique lens into the juncture of sport and life skills and academic development

INTRODUCTION:

Participation in various sports is believed as an important tool for personal development, a study indicates that sports might be conducted in such a way that should aid in the development of the trained youth so that they perform their routine tasks and live a healthy and happy life (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). Nowadays, the existence of scientific as well as societal interest among youth are the resultants of life skills development through sports participation. The main purpose of the study is to contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the role of sports in the development of important life skills among students.

Life skills are those important skills that are required in various domains of life including home, schools, and community (Danish, Forneris, & Wallace, 2005). The teaching of life skills is not only important for the improvement of a healthy child but helps the youth enabling to cope with diverse situations (Gould & Carson, 2008). Sports has its paramount vitality in teaching life skills. Activities in the sports program offer one of the opportunities for the development of life skills (Turnnidge, Côté, & Hancock, 2014). Therefore, it is the objective of the sports program to develop life skills in all participants to widen their interest (Petitpas, Cornelius, Raalte, & Jones, 2005). This will not only add in more enjoyment for the participants but at the same time, it will allow them for better adjustment to the group situation. Other benefits of life skills development include cutting down an energy expenditure, recognition, and contribute to the esthetic sense. When considering life skills development through sports, it is important to consider the balance between team sports and dual and individual sports.

Research in the area of life skills development through sports examining whether sports has developed the basic life skills among its participants are inconsistent. There exists limited evidence on how life skills are developed through sports, research has not so far been identified the clear picture that how individuals' life and wellbeing can be improved through sports, especially in the cultural context of Pakistan? More research is required on the subject that how life skills are developed through sports. This research study may provide evidence that could substantially contribute to knowledge regarding the role of sports in developing important life skills. The central point of the study is: to explore the role of competitive sport in the development of life skills among university's student-athletes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Competitive sports include all those games which are carried out under the supervision of qualified referees/umpires, following the due course of rules and regulation.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

Various sociologists have developed their theories that why people take part in various sports activities, and some of which have been summed up as follows: -

The “Surplus-Energy or Spencer-Schiller, Theory” indicated that the prime aim behind participation in sports is the wandering expenditure of boisterous energy. According to this theory, individuals have developed extra energy that cannot utilize at once. As a result, extra energy is amassed in the body and time are brought to a point at which the surplus energy is produced in the body. Sports program offers one of the constructive opportunities to utilize this surplus energy in a beneficial manner (Bakirtzoglou & Ioannou, 2012). Another sociologist, namely Guts Muths revealing his opinions concerning sports that the human body needs some sort of play as a means of revitalization. According to the physiological nature of an individual, one cannot work remained at work for a longer duration. Resultantly individual get tired and need relaxation. For that reason, recreational sports are considered as positive mediocre which offer nourishment to the tired body (Engström, 2008).

Stanley Hall established the “recapitulation theory”. According to this theory, sports have been transmitted from one generation to another generation from most primitive times. This theory states that various sports activities such as wrestling, horse riding, jumping, and throwing have endured an essential constituent of various cultures. The prevailing activities which we are seeing today are just the variation of those activities which have been played in primitive times (Cravens, 2006). Stemple (205) has established the “domination theory”. According to this theory, sports activities offer plenty of opportunities to satisfy human’s aggressive behavior of domination over the individual.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Every young child has the tendency to participate in any play. Children usually love to spend most of the time outside the home, get together with friends, and get themselves dirty. If one does not spend his energy in a proper way, then it finds for its own ways. Therefore, it is very much important to provide a chance of sports participation to every child of the society to avoid them from unsocial activities. Sports offer a variety of activities through which one can gain many positive experiences like physical skills, cognitive skills, and social skills. These skills are built and cultivated through sports, which ultimately reflected in the practical life of the participants.

Interpersonal communication is a face-to-face communication both individually and in groups in which the people exchange their feelings, information, and meaning either by verbal or non-verbal messages (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016). Interpersonal communication is an important skill which aims to understand and manage your own and others’ emotions. By the development of good interpersonal skills, the students achieve academics, personal and professional successes in their lives (Morreale Osborn, & Pearson, 2000).

Furthermore, the effective program of Participation in leisure activities at camp help children to understand the value of interpersonal communication skills as a means of achieving communion with a variety of activities and working towards a common goal (Yue, Pedlar, & Mannell, 2005). Upon this notion, some researchers have identified that properly coached sports help in developing traits like team cohesion, increased the motivational level and effective communication skills essential to a successful life (Bloom, Loughhead, & Newin, 2008; Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2011). Research study has supported the connection that team sports like baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and track are related to higher teamwork skills and increased level of participation in these sports are not related with differing levels of leadership skills (Extejt & Smith, 2009).

Sports have been considered a key factor in promoting prosocial attributes among youth (Gano-Overway et al., 2009). Prosocial attributes are those voluntary social behaviors that have positive impacts on youths’ development (Lam, 2012). Prosocial behaviors include cooperation, respect for the law, sharing views, and altruism (Raposa, Laws, & Ansell, 2016).

The program of sports is open to all, providing equal chances of participation to every member of society. Sports play a most pervasive role in developing social skills through interaction with others during the course of play. As a result, communication skills are developed among the participants and then reflected in their practical lives (Barber, Stone, Hunt, & Eccles, 2005).

Victory and defeat, shame and failure are the common happenings of sports. During sports, a player faces all these happenings with greater courage and determination. It is the distinction of sports that it helps in assisting the youth how to react to failure, how to celebrate a victory, and how to console teammates after losing in sports (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Setting:

The province of KP comprises 26 districts in which thirty-six (36) public and private sector universities are established. Amongst, these universities, the researcher selected eighteen those universities, whose teams are regularly taking part in Inter-Collegiate, Inter-Varsity, and all Pakistan Inter-Varsity sports events. We selected these sites to investigate the development of life skills among student-athletes of different ethnic groups, rather than among student-athletes of a single ethnic group. Given that an aspect of the university’s sport may be the well-organized manner for positive youth development, exploring the role of sports participation within this setting deemed appropriate.

Participants:

Data were collected from the university’s student-athletes (n=335; males, 265 and females, 70) of eighteen universities of KP. All participants were active sport-participants having sufficient sports experience. At all the selected universities, we contacted the Director Sports to identify students who did participate in competitive sports events such as Inter-Collegiate, Inter-Varsity, and all Pakistan Inter-Varsity sports. The participants were surveyed at classroom or sports ground at their respective universities and in consultation with the director sports.

Instrument:

We developed and used a structured questionnaire for collecting the requisite data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part (A) consisted of sport’s related information of the participants, Part (B) comprised of different life skills developed through sport.

Table. 1 : Items-wise breakup of the Questionnaire

Variables	Aspects	No. of items
Sport	Sports related information of the Participants	09

Statistical Analysis:

The responses collected were carefully arranged, tabulated and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical techniques including Linear regression, Pearson and Independent sample t-test.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES:

Ha 1 Participation in sport has developed the important life skill of inter-personal communication among university students.

Table. 2 : linear regression equation for sport’s participation and interpersonal communication skills

Model	Coefficients			T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	59.642	1.342	.703	24.305	.000
Sports Participants	.476	.031		8.039	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Inter-personal Communication Skills

Based on the above inferences, it can be interpreted that sport’s participation is statistically significant in predicting a change in inter-personal communication skills at $p < .005$, which means that sport has played an important role in developing an important life skill of interpersonal communication among university students.

Ha 2 There is difference in life skills development through sport by gender (males and females) of university students.

Table. 3 : T-test results on interpersonal communication skills development through sport by gender

Dependent Variable		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.	Mean	Std. Error
Interpersonal Communication Skills	Equal variances assumed	3.942	.048	3.688	333	.000	.28956	.07852
	Equal variances not assumed			3.323	95.950	.001	.28956	.08714

Significant at .05

Based on the results obtained from t-test, it can be interpreted that the t-test results reveal a statistical significant difference in the mean score of variable because the p-value of .001 for interpersonal communications skills is less than the set $\alpha = .05$. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis of significant difference between male and female students on various dimensions

of interpersonal communications skills development through sport is accepted without 1 out of 3 variables.

Ha 3 There is difference in interpersonal communication skills development through sport by format of sport (team sport and individual sport) among university students.

Table. 4 : T-test results on interpersonal communication skills development through sport by format of sport (team sport and individual sport)

Dependent Variable		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.	Mean	Std. Error
Interpersonal Communication Skills	Equal variances assumed	1.738	.188	3.070	333	.002	.21948	.07148
	Equal variances not assumed			3.910	152.976	.004	.21948	.07442

Significant at .05

Results of the table indicated that there are no statistical differences in respect to interpersonal communication skills because the p-value for inter-personal communication skills is higher than the set $\alpha = .05$. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis of a significant difference in life skills development through sport based on the format of sport (individual vs team) is rejected.

DISCUSSION:

The present study was carried out to explore the role that sports have played in the development of important life skills of interpersonal communication among the university’s student-athletes of KP. The results of the study indicated that sport did significantly develop an important life skill of interpersonal communication among university students (Table 2). It may be the outcome of university academic curriculum. Therefore, it is very much important to provide a chance of sports participation to every student of the educational institutions to develop life as well as academic skills.

Similarly, in the same data, male student-athletes reported a higher mean score on the interpersonal communication skills compared to their counterparts’ females (Table 3). However, the results of the table indicated no statistically significant differences in respect to interpersonal communication skills between those who did participate in team sports and individual sports. (Table 3). Research in the areas of life skills development through sports has supported the findings of the present study in this was that Sports including Volleyball, Basketball, Tennis, Shooting, Dance, Martial Arts, Swimming and Mountaineering on the development of problem-solving skills and academic performance of the students ((Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Lam, 2012).

When we analyze the responses of athletes pertaining to the four questions a) Participation in sports helped me to develop leadership skills, b) Involvement in sports helped me in developing to communicate with varsity of people, and c) I developed the quality of teamwork through participation in sports, all show that athletes acknowledged the role of sports in the development of these attributes. Same findings have been substantiated by various

researchers i.e, (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; (Lam, 2012) whose findings indicated that sports have been considered a key factor in promoting and developing various communications skills among. Interpersonal communication is a face-to-face communication both individually and in groups in which the people exchange their feelings, information, and meaning either by verbal or non-verbal messages (Burgoon, Guerrero, & Floyd, 2016).

The results might be interpreted with caution because the study was carried out by including students those who were studying at the university level. In a future study, the researcher is ambitious that including other levels of students such as schools and colleges would help in the credibility of future research in this area. Likewise, including a large sample size of the participants would produce better results that could substantiate the relation of the sport with the development and transfer of life skills among students.

CONCLUSION:

The study was conducted to assess the development and transfer of life skills through sports among university students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The results of the study indicated that both male and female university students have developed interpersonal communication skills through sports participation. In terms of gender differences, male university student-athletes reported higher development in life skills through sport than their counter-parts females and those consisted of interpersonal communication skills. However, no statistically significant difference was found in the development of interpersonal communication skills through sport between team sport-participants and individual sport-participants. These findings have the potential to lead to more in-depth study regarding gender as well as format of sport differences on various dimensions of life skill development and transfer of these life skills to other domains of life such as family, academic and community.

LIMITATION:

The researchers geographically confined the study to a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province of Pakistan. The researcher believes that extending data by adding another geographical and socio-economic areas of the country would provide better results that could help in statistically examine the role of sport in the development of life skills and later on the transfer of these skills to other domains of life.

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