

The Influence of Afterschool Sports on American High School Students

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Abstract: In this article, we explore the factors associated with afterschool sports for American high school students. About 20 American high school students will attend an interview. The students are from the same school, with the same race and background but different afterschool sports. Findings from semi-structured interviews uncovered two themes that participants used in explaining their influence of afterschool sports. The work shows (1) Through sociocultural theory, it shows the important influence of afterschool sports in peer effects, sport-friend relationships and social networks and helps students to build a social network in the high school; (2) afterschool sports can influence students in their physical fitness and mental health. This paper will help American high school students choose their afterschool sports and show them the important influence of afterschool sports in their daily lives.

Keywords: Influence, Afterschool sports, high school students, sociocultural, United States

1. Introduction

In high schools across the United States, it is a common phenomenon for 9-12 grade students to engage in afterschool sports and programs, many of which are focused on offering various rigorous physical activities aimed at fostering a healthier youth and lifestyle. According to current examples of afterschool sports in the United States high school, these health-related fitness activities are mainly aimed at emphasizing the importance of health and well-being for high school students [1]. Many afterschool sports can be voluntarily chosen by American high school students. They can participate in various afterschool sports such as ice hockey, baseball and basketball etc., and many American students actively participate and find their own sports hobbies, persist in participating in school training teams, sport clubs or afterschool program competitions every day. Thankfully, American high school students have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of afterschool sports.

Participation in afterschool sports provides an excellent opportunity for students to be a part of a community and allows them to bond and engage in teamwork within a school environment and sports atmosphere. This has proven to foster positive peer effects while also strengthening the bonds among the student body.

In addition to a healthier lifestyle and peer effect, afterschool sports have proven to contribute to the development of students' learning capabilities such as critical reading and thinking skills [2]. What's more, it can emphasize the importance of individualization and enjoyment to the juveniles in

high school [3]. By combining these three main benefits, it is evident that afterschool sports offer a promising approach to enhancing the well-being and development of American 9-12th grade students.

Throughout history, cultural differences have influenced the way sports activities work and the roles they play in the types of schools, communities, and countries [4]. Sports have evolved continuously from the earliest of times to the status quo. During the progress of human civilization, sports are also constantly developing and evolving. In the earliest times when humans were in their most primitive state, life revolved around hunting and gathering, activities that served as a means for different tribes to establish connections through trade, and form friendships through engaging in activities dependent on survival. Sports activities were rooted in these fundamental pursuits. Fast forward thousands of years later, the focus of sports has shifted toward the health and entertainment value they offer. Moreover, a strong sociocultural atmosphere has been established, where communication between players play a significant role. Competitive sports and competitions further reinforce this idea. Engaging in sports may play a large part in enhancing physical strength, but it also teaches them the importance of influencing peers in a social environment, contributing to an improvement in grades and overall behavior. The sociocultural context of sports has continuously fostered an environment where students continue to learn, mature, and improve socially.

Across all approaches, afterschool sports rests on a set of common assumptions about how American high school students are influenced by sports in the health and social culture. These assumptions are rooted in sociocultural learning and psychology theory. From a sociocultural perspective in afterschool sports, our constructions of reality are always in a community or society such as American high school [5]. People will adjust, coordinate and balance relationships in the society and play different roles in society. People from different countries are all tied together by the unifying focus on the role of sign systems in human relationships with environmental skills [6]. When one begins from different assumptions about how afterschool sport affect students' social connection, the little utility of afterschool sports as an educational and social practice is questionable, and whether it really has any negative influence for American high school students is undetermined.

In the work, data for this paper came from qualitative interviews with individuals who participated in at least one afterschool sport for one semester in an American high school. These interview data are reliable that researcher collected information by attending school every day and 20 participants took part in a semi-structured interview with around 10 questions. By reading the paper, people can get information in the historical development of sports that it has continued to evolve, spanning hundreds, if not, thousands of years. Today, afterschool sports have become an indispensable part of childhood, serving more than just a means for improving health and well-being. These activities and programs have evolved into a powerful way to learn the importance of socializing and bringing people together to foster a sense of community. The influence of afterschool sports has reached far beyond the baseball field. It has become an integral part of American high school students and has provided each and every student a valuable memory and experiences. By recognizing the multifaceted benefits of afterschool sports, these programs should be encouraged and promoted for their role in shaping a student's holistic development, not only in terms of psychological well-being, but also in social skills that will benefit oneself and others around.

2. The Benefits of Afterschool Sports in Theory and in Practice

Sociocultural theory thinks learning is a social and communicative process whereby knowledge is shared and understandings are constructed in culturally formed social settings. Sociocultural theory view understands knowledge as being built through social interaction and knowledge is constructed by people, it doesn't exist outside of people in a separate objective reality. Knowledge construction happens on the social plane. In the case of afterschool sports, this practice is grounded in particular socio-culturalists. Sociocultural theory shows that afterschool sports can help high school students

build social connections and relationships with other students in the same school, which is also called 'peer effects'. Peer effects always happen through social networks, and interactions are structured through a social network skill [7]. The same sport will help you find more friends in the school or class, and also build some relationships on learning, so the development of social relationships will benefit students learning better in the school and have stable mental health and sunshine personalities. All in all, through sociocultural theory, we really know that afterschool sports can benefit high school students' learning, social connection, affection and communication with classmates in the school, it can also help high school students keep a healthy body and mind skills [8].

2.1. Practical Benefits of Sports

By the way, exercise also has many benefits for the human body such as physical fitness and mental health, which can promote blood circulation, enhance physical fitness, and accelerate metabolism. There are several specific manifestations: Firstly, exercise can prevent obesity or be beneficial for weight loss and control; Secondly, exercise can resist diseases, and physical exercise can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and make the blood smooth. Thirdly, exercise can bring good mood to people. Sports can stimulate the brain and release chemicals such as dopamine, making people feel happy, and relaxed, and thus enhancing self-confidence, making their personalities more outgoing and generous. Exercise and physical activity can be carried out through social activities, so that everyone can make sport friends with peers, enjoy time and relax together during sports. Fourthly, exercise can make people energetic. Daily exercise will increase muscle strength, giving people stronger endurance and willpower; Last but not least, exercise can improve sleep quality.

2.2. Research Question

While afterschool sport is commonly used in American high schools, surprisingly little is known about how students experience afterschool sports and how afterschool sport impacts in their mental health, physical fitness, and learning skill. In this study, the researcher will investigate the student experience of afterschool sports to better understand how the afterschool program influences students. By conducting a series of interviews with students who have taken at least one afterschool sport for at least one semester in their high school educational career, the researcher will examine their experiences of afterschool sports, probing particularly into how the experience did or did not influence their mental health, physical fitness and learning level. My research is grounded in the following three questions:

- How do American high school students describe the experience of taking afterschool sports?
- In what ways do American high school students report that playing sports influences their physical fitness and mental health?
- In what ways do American high school students report that playing sports influences their learning?

Before describing the research method, the researcher will use to investigate these questions, first describe how afterschool sports practices in 9-12 American high schools are grounded under sociocultural learning theories about how afterschool sports help high school students' social development. Next, the researcher will discuss how adopting different theoretical assumptions about the influence of afterschool sports may raise questions about whether afterschool sports are necessary approaches to help high school students. This work will focus on what behaviorist and constructivist perspectives effect afterschool sports. In the final sections of the research proposal, researcher will describe the methods and plan to use to conduct my investigation. Finally, the result will discuss why it is important for high school students to take afterschool sports, what the advantages and disadvantages of taking afterschool sports and, how to promote positive student behaviors in the

sports and why it is imperative that we understand the grounding assumptions about playing sports that undergird the practices that we employ in 9-12 high schools.

3. Method

3.1. Methodological Approach

In the work, qualitative research design has been chosen to delve into the subjective experiences and perceptions of American high school students concerning their afterschool sports experience. It must show what afterschool sports look like in American high schools, the students' influences through afterschool sports and the challenges for different students to take afterschool sports such as long periods of exercise can affect the time and quality of learning. Qualitative methods facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the participants' viewpoints, allowing for different understandings of the phenomenon from different high school students under investigation.

3.2. Sampling & Participants

A purposive sampling strategy will be employed to select participants who have experienced at least one afterschool sport for at least 1 semester in American high school. To be eligible for the study, participants will need to be currently enrolled in 9-12 grade American high school. This purposeful selection of participants will aim to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, sports, and playing sports time in the same school.

As an American high school student, conducting interviews and collecting data at our school would be more convenient and faster for me. A total of 20 students in my American high school will be recruited for the study. They must have the same races, similar family backgrounds and similar afterschool sports experience. The researcher will also aim for an even distribution of girls and boys across ages from 15 to 18 years old. Again, all participants will need to have undergone at least one afterschool sport for one semester. Participants will be recruited from the same high schools in America but different sport settings to capture a range of experiences.

3.3. Data Sources

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews conducted individually with each participant. I used a semi-structured interview in order to understand each participants' influences and experience after taking afterschool sports. Participants who were attending American high school were asked about their participate in a sport experience. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, enabling participants to express their experiences and feelings freely while ensuring the research questions are addressed consistently across all interviews.

3.4. Data Collection Processes

First of all, I will prepare a Word document, in which I will write down about 10 questions for each student. The questions will be from simple to complex, from shallow to in-depth investigation. Next, send this document to around 20 American school students respectively. After they fill it out, I will collect it and summarize it into data. The data will be cleaned and transcribed. All students' data will be used in my research proposal.

Here is the outline of my interview sample questions:

- *What is your grade?*
- *What is your gender?*
- *What is your race?*

- *What is your after-school sports?*
- *How long/what frequency?*
- *How do you feel after you taking the afterschool sport as a student?*
- *How do you think afterschool sports affect in your academic performance and health?*
- *Which do you think is more important for yourself -afterschool sport or study? Do you think they can coexist or are mutually exclusive?*

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

In this research proposal, I will outline the planned data analysis approach for a qualitative study aiming to investigate what American high school students feel and what are the influences through the experience of afterschool sports. The data to be analyzed will consist of interview transcripts gathered from students actively participating in afterschool sports. Once the data collection phase is completed, the interview recordings will be transcribed verbatim, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data.

Based on the existing literature on afterschool sports, we anticipate the emergence of the following expected themes, however, we remain open to the possibility that themes will emerge from the data that we cannot anticipate in advance:

- **Personal Interest and Passion:** high school students can find their passions and daily hobby during afterschool sports.
- **Supportive Learning Environment and Good Hypothesis in sports:** Collaborative peer is likely to play a significant role in boosting students' confidence in society.
- **Growth Body and Mindset:** afterschool sports can let high school students improve their mental health and physical fitness.

3.6. Limitations

My survey scope is only in one American school. The classmates I chose to interview are all the same race, so this research lacks of diversity. The number of participants in my research is small, while we know a lot about outcomes of afterschool sports from the research, we don't know a lot about students' actual experience of playing sports, and our school's sports categories are not complete and may differ from other American schools. It tends to be only in the US context. Very little is known about other country students' experiences of playing afterschool sports and the challenges that are posed them to do so. Due to differences in cultural background, educational environment, choice of sports events, and duration of participation in sports events, there will be many differences and unstable data. Last, there is also only one research method that cannot be comprehensively studied.

4. Conclusion

Through sociocultural theory, we know the important influence of afterschool sports on peer effects, sport-friend relationships, and social networks. Afterschool sports can also influence students in many other ways: it can influence students' physical fitness, mental health, and learning capability and help students build social networks in high school. Afterschool sports really benefit American high school students a lot in their daily lives. Besides, I can make a lot of enhancements for the research in the future to fill the limitations. I can improve the racial diversity of investigators, add other different survey methods, and expand the scope of the survey to include more respondents or globalize the survey. In the future, we can find many other ways to help high school students, but no matter how times change, I believe the importance of afterschool sports to human society will never change.

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