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Sports: A stress buster for children

Dr. Vishwas Manohar Deshpande

Abstract

Stress is experienced when an individual feels that they cannot cope with a situation with which they are presented. If an athlete is in a stressful situation then their athletic performance, whether this be in competition or in training, will be effected. The coach can limit the effect on performance of competitive anxiety by assisting the athlete to identify an appropriate coping strategy. Stress is an integral part of our lives. "It is a natural byproduct of all our activities". Life is a dynamic process and thus forever changing and stressful. Stress is a function of the demands placed on us and our ability to meet them. These demands often come from outside sources, such as family, jobs, friends, or school. But it also can come from within, often related to what we think we *should be* doing versus what we're actually able to do. So stress can affect anyone who feels overwhelmed — even kids. In preschoolers, separation from parents can cause anxiety. As kids get older, academic and social pressures (especially from trying to fit in) create stress. Many kids are too busy to have time to play creatively or relax after school. Kids who complain about all their activities or who refuse to go to them might be overscheduled. Kids' stress may be intensified by more than just what's happening in their own lives. Engaging in a sport can help increase feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy, which can significantly reduce your overall level of stress. If you've ever remained inactive for an extended period of time, you're familiar with that sluggish, apathetic feeling that can quickly turn to feelings of self-loathing or even depression, which can further exacerbate your stress levels. According to the American Council on Exercise, regular exercise can help increase your feeling of self-worth, which can be a powerful mechanism for alleviating stress.

Keywords: Stress, self-worth, Exercise, social pressures, anxiety, self-esteem.

Introduction

Actors, athletes and students all have something in common. They all perform their tasks with varying stress levels. What is this stress that we all talk about? Stress can be defined as a physical, mental or emotional demand, which tends to disturb the homeostasis of the body. Used rather loosely, the term may relate to any kind of pressure, be it due to one's job, schoolwork, marriage, illness or death of a loved one. The common denominator in all of these is change. Loss of familiarity breeds this anxiety with any change being viewed as a "threat". The issue of anxiety is an important aspect of performance. Whether it is during the tense moments of a championship game or amidst that dreaded school exam, anxiety affects our performance via changes in the body, which can be identified by certain indicators. One misconception though with performing under pressure is that stress always has a negative connotation. Many times, "the stress of competition may cause a negative anxiety in one performer but positive excitement in another". That is why one frequently hears how elite players' thrive under pressure, when most others would crumble. Our body responds to acute stress by a liberation of chemicals. This is known as the fight-or-flight response of the body, which is mediated by adrenaline and other stress hormones, and is comprised of such physiologic changes as increased heart rate and blood pressure, faster breathing, muscle tension, dilated pupils, dry mouth and increased blood sugar. In other words, stress is the state of increased arousal necessary for an organism to defend itself at a time of danger. Alterations of hormones in the body include not only adrenaline, but also substances like testosterone and human growth hormone. Up to a certain point stress is beneficial. We perform with greater energy and increased awareness with the influx of excitatory hormones that release immediate energy.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to find a solution to the growing problem of stress among the students through sports.

Objectives of the Study

To assist students to increase their awareness of stress.
To recognize the impact of stress on modern life.
To recognize that sports can be an effective medium to release stress.

Hypothesis

This paper focuses on to find whether sports can enhance self-esteem of children by helping them to manage different stresses that they undergo and lead a happy life. It can be hypothesized that sports has a positive impact on the adolescents emotional well-being.

Sample

250 students were analyzed to find their stress levels.

Method

Bisht Battery of Stress Scale (BBSS) was constructed and standardized by Dr. Abha Rani Bisht (Almora). The battery has been designed to find out the stress. The battery contained the different thirteen scales of the stress.

Pressure on Children

Now-a-days parents and school put a lot of pressure on children which ultimately results into more health issues, like anxiety and depression, than before. In the olden days school days were the best days of a person's life. Children then were not burdened with homework and the tension of scoring high marks. Parents didn't bother their children to study for long hours and to run from pillar to pillar attending coaching

Data Analysis

Table 1: Table Showing Comparison in Educational Adjustment between Children Playing Sports and Children Not Indulged In Sports

Level of Social Adjustment	Students Playing Sports		Students not Playing Sports		Z	P
	No. of Students	%	No. of Students	%		
Excellent	22	8.8	35	14	-1.8293	Ns
Good	64	25.6	153	61.2	-8.0307	< 0.05
Satisfactory	132	52.8	46	18.4	8.0324	< 0.05
Less Satisfactory	27	10.8	12	4.8	2.5015	< 5.05
Not Satisfactory	5	2	4	1.6	0.3364	Ns
Total	250	100	250	100		

From the above table it was observed that the educational adjustment in children playing sports (< 0.05) was better than the students who did not indulge into sports.

Discussion

From the above findings it is observed that the level of social adjustment in children playing sports is higher than children

classes to get admission into IIT's. Everything happened in a very smooth way. Parents forget that children ultimately succeed because of who they are, and not by attending renowned schools, clubs and tutorials. Parents restrict their children from outdoor activities as the child does not have time to play as study pressure increases. It has been observed that children, who start school at the age of 6 or 7, achieve better educational results. Today children do not have quality time to enjoy being them, no quality family time, no bedtime stories and the most important no play.

Importance of Sports for Children

Sports most important contribution for children is the enhancement of physical and mental development. Due to its vast popularity and positive values, a sport is one of the boons for children to break down all barriers and redevelops them both physically and mentally. They make new friends, improve their self-esteem. Kids form their character and morals through it. Sports bring people of different cultures, religion together. They learn to respect rules, colleagues and opponents.

Parental Support

Positive parent support is related to positive sport experience for children. When children get parental support, it facilitates their participation and performance. There is an increase in the level of enjoyment, self-worth, higher competence etc. On the other hand, when parents hold goals for their children, it interferes with their enjoyment and performance and also increases anxiety among them. It has been observed at times, parents become demanding. They permit their children to play sports at a young age but later on they want them to focus on studies and score more marks. They are reluctant to permit their children to participate in sports and focus on studies.

not playing sports. It was also observed that the playing children were healthier, focused and had a positive attitude. They were cheerful and active throughout the day. It is clear that children involved in sports have a quiet mind and level of stress was very less. It was observed that they are physically and mentally strong.

Table 2: Showing Mean, SD and 'T' Value On Stress Measure

Classified Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Level of Significance
Non players	50	132.86	14.04		
Players	50	117.38	16.12	5.05	Significant at 0.01 level

(t = 5.05, df = 98, p<0.01)

Discussion

On the basis of merely mean differences it would not be fair to arrive at conclusion. Therefore the data was further treated by 't' test of significance. The result obtained in this regard was

found to be highly significant ((t = 5.05, df = 98, p<0.01). It clearly suggests that the differences obtained between the groups of non-players and players are not by chance. In this case non players experience more stress as compared to

players. The reason is very vivid that now-a-days life has become very stressful. Non players have to face many

difficulties and problem which lead to stress. This result also supports to the assumption of the study.

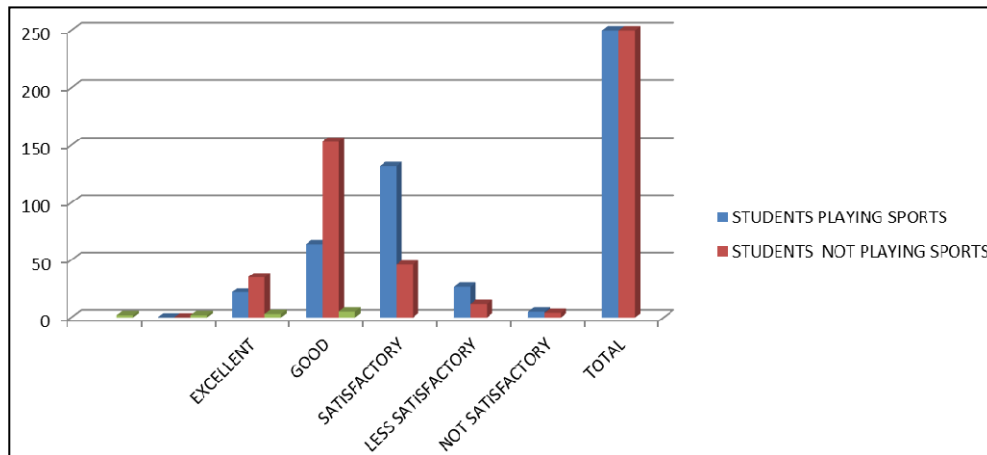


Table 1: Graphical Representation

Conclusion & Recommendations

From the above findings it can be concluded that sports play an important role in the overall development of the children. It relieves them from various stresses and tensions. It provides them the necessary relaxation and provides them with an opportunity to lead a stress free life. It is recommended that sports should be made an integral part of the curriculum. There must be a sports period. Every child must participate in sports activities. Parents and teachers should encourage children to play. Children inclined to sports can also make a career in it. The Government should also intervene and make necessary provisions. When children learn positive lessons of life through sports, there is no doubt that they will become honest good adults and responsible citizens of the country.

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