

Participation Motives of Saudi Arabian School Children towards Physical Activities and Sports: A Comparative Study

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Abstract The objective of this study was to identify and compare the participation motives of school children towards engagement in physical activity. Two hundred and eighty students ($M_{age}=17.65\pm 0.95$ years) were selected from two different types of schools, namely government school ($N=134$) and private school ($N=146$), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The instrument used to collect the data was Motivation for Physical Activities Measure- Revised by (Ryan et al., 1997). Ranking order was applied to identify the 'most important reasons' and 'least important reasons' for participation, and t- test was applied to compare means between the groups. Government and private school children showed higher mean values on interest/enjoyment and competence. Significant difference was observed on interest/enjoyment and fitness factor among school children. No significant difference was observed on competence, appearance, and social factors. Government school children ranked three important reasons for participation in physical activities as 'because I wanted to be physically fit', 'because I wanted to look or maintain weight so I look better', and 'because I wanted to maintain my physical well-being'. Whereas private school children ranked best three reasons for engagement as, 'because I want to look or maintain weight so I look better', because I want to improve my appearance, because I wanted to be physically fit'. The least important reason for participation was social factors for both types of school children.

Keywords Participation Motivation, Physical Activity, Private High School, Government High School, Fitness

change according to the situations. Drawing on the excellent review of literature [2–10], the reason sports people give for participating and dropping out are multiple and diverse. Weiss and Petlickhoff [11], for example, categorized the major motives for participation into competence (e.g. to learn and improve skills), affiliation (e.g. to make friends be part of a team), fitness (e.g., to be physically active, get in shape), and fun. Some past research indicates that people have different achievement goals with regard to sports participation [12,13] and it is reasonable to suggest that their attainment is a constituent of enjoyment. Among the several reasons given for decreased interest and a subsequent withdrawal from sport was lack of fun, issues with the coach, the time commitment required, lack of playing time, overemphasis on winning, and greater interest in other activities [14].

Children of the modern society are aware of the benefits of engaging in physical activity and sports which aims at improving physical and mental health [15–17]. Several studies have demonstrated that the motives given for sports participation are not only the physical aspects, but a number of other factors, such as weight control and appearance, stress and mood management, competition and enjoyment, fun and excitement [18–22]. Additionally, motives are quite different from one to another for several factors, i.e., age and gender [22–24]. The Canada Fitness Survey [25] provides an insight into the motivations of Canadian youth to participate in physical activity and the results showed the main reasons for being active were fun, feeling better, weight control, flexibility and challenge. Motivations to engage in physical activity often relate to physical, mental health, weight management and fitness. Motives are important determinants of exercise participation.

Physical activity has both preventive and curative effects [26,27]. Sport participation has been proven to have great positive effect on the human body, and strong motivations also make people to participate in a particular sport continuously. But not all positive effects are strong enough to make people participate in the sports. Studies around the world have shown that young people are not as physically

1. Introduction

Motivation is a complex phenomenon that is impossible to simply subsume under a single model [1]. Understanding why individuals participate in sport is not a simple matter. One of the most important issues is that people have many reasons for getting involved, and some of their reasons

active as they need and should be to enjoy the health benefits of physical activity [19,28–34]. It is clear that more developmental research is called for to understand variations in reasons for participating in and withdrawing from sport and physical activity. However, different research studies across the world show some cultural differences in the psychological meaning of sport in different cultures [35].

It is a proven fact that physical activities help in promoting an individual's health and healthy living, especially in this very busy world. Definitely, participation in physical activities is considered as fulfilling a domain of the healthy lifestyles. When children are involved in sports and physical activities, it was noticed that motivation to participate and gain many physical, psychological and health benefits attained were maximum. It is the right time for us to motivate the children who were not involved in physical activities at least at school level. While looking at these reviews it was learned that no similar research studies has been published in the field participation motives of school children towards physical activities in Saudi Arabia. So this study was taken up to identify and compare the participation motives of school children of Saudi Arabia and it was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between government and private school children on the participation motives.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants and Procedure

The participants were 280 school children, boys aged between 15-19 years ($M_{age}=17.65$ years) selected from two different types of schools, namely government school ($N=134$) and private school ($N=146$), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for the session 2013 – 2014. We have randomly selected 3 government schools and 3 private schools from the list of top 10 schools of eastern province with regard to academics and facilities. Saudi Arabia has very harsh climatic conditions especially during summer. Though these selected schools have excellent indoor facilities for physical activities, we have collected the data during November 2013. After acquiring the permission to conduct the study, the students were informed the purpose of the study and were assured that participation in this study will be completely voluntary. No motivational techniques were used to collect the data. The questionnaire was distributed in the class room setting. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. All the participants completed a 30 item survey assessing their participation motives of physical activity and sports. The dependent variables were participation motive factors, namely enjoyment/interest, competence, appearance, fitness, and social. 24 questionnaires of government schools and 7 questionnaires from private schools were found incomplete, which were excluded from the study. Expat students were also excluded from this study. The main difference identified between government and private schools were: Only Saudi students studied in the government schools,

tuition fees was free for Saudis and not much of cultural variations were seen; whereas private schools comprised of many expat students, with a multi-cultural atmosphere and high tuition fees.

2.2. Instrument

Motivation for Physical Activities Measure- Revised [36] English version was administered to collect the data. The MPAM-R contains 30 items and its responses to each item were recorded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true for me) to 7 (very true for me). It contains five participation motive factors, namely, *competence–challenge motives* (e.g., “I like physical challenges”), *appearance motives* (e.g., “I want to improve my appearance”), *social motives* (e.g., “I want to meet new people”), *fitness–health motives* (e.g., “I want to maintain my physical strength”) and *enjoyment–interest motives* (e.g., “I enjoy this activity”). This instrument has demonstrated reliability for each factor with Cronbach's α ranging from .78 to .92 [36]. A demographic questionnaire obtained general individual information like (name, age, height, weight, BMI, class of study etc).

2.3. Statistical Analysis

Prior to the statistical analyses data screening was undertaken to check the missing values and ensure that the values were within the expected range. Descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation was calculated for government and private school children on five motivating factors. Ranking order was applied to investigate the ‘most important reasons’ and ‘least important reasons’ for participation motivation. The ranking of reasons was calculated on the basis of response to the highest score ‘7’ (very true for me). The t-ratio was employed to compare the significant difference of participation motivation between government and private school children. Data were analysed using SPSS software (version 17.0) and the criterion for statistical difference was set at 0.05 level of confidence.

3. Results

Table 1 explained the demographic information of school children, which showed private school children having more weight and higher body mass index (BMI). According the World Health Organization (WHO) BMI >24.99 is overweight; private school children are overweight and government school children are having just normal weight.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Schools Children

	Government School (N=134)	Private School (N=146)
Age (years)	17.7	18.08
Weight (kg)	70.6	74.67
Height (cm)	171	170
BMI (kg/m ²)	23.94	25.56

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Participation Motives of Government and Private School Children and the t-test (*p<0.05)

Participation Motives Factors	Government School (N=134)		Private School (N=146)		t- test	
	M	SD	M	SD	t- value	Sig.
Interest/ Enjoyment	36.31	6.67	33.96	6.31	4.37	0.030*
Competence	33.43	7.39	31.45	7.72	2.97	0.086
Appearance	27.46	7.68	26.51	7.25	0.71	0.399
Fitness	27.31	6.21	25.68	6.28	4.01	0.046*
Social	19.22	6.94	19.14	7.16	0.03	0.861

Table 2 shows that mean values of participation motives of school children wherein, government school children exhibited higher mean values in all five factors of motives than private school children. Further t-ratio revealed a significant difference between government and private schools on participation motives factor interest & enjoyment $t(278) = 4.37$; $p = 0.030 < 0.05$). This finding indicated that government school children are more motivated by interest/enjoyment reason than the private school children. Another significant difference was observed on fitness factor $t(278) = 4.01$; $p = 0.046 < 0.05$, where it was understood that government school children are actively motivated by the fitness reasons than private school children. However, no significant differences were observed in other factors of participation motives.

Table 3. Ranking Order of Reasons for Participation by Government and Private School Children

Statement:	Government School	Private School
I engage in sport/ physical activity-----		
Because I want to be physically fit.	1	3
Because I want to look or maintain weight so I look better.	2	1
Because I want to maintain my physical health and well-being	3	4
Because I want to maintain my physical strength to live a healthy life.	4	8
Because I like to do this activity.	5	13
Because it's fun.	6	5
Because I think it is interesting.	7	10
Because I want to improve my cardiovascular fitness.	8	14
Because I want to improve my appearance.	9	2
Because I want to improve my body shape.	10	6
Because I want to have more energy.	11	12
Because it makes me happy.	12	7
Because I enjoy this activity.	13	9
Because I find this activity stimulating.	14	19
Because I enjoy spending time with others doing this activity.	15	11
Because I want to get better at my activity.	16	16
Because I like engaging in activities which physically challenge me.	17	28
Because I want to improve existing skills.	18	17
Because I like the challenge.	19	15
Because I like activities which are physically challenging.	20	23
Because I want to obtain new skills.	21	21
Because I want to be with my friends.	22	22
Because I want to define my muscles so I look better.	23	25
Because I want to keep-up my current skill level.	24	18
Because I will feel physically unattractive if I don't.	25	24
Because I want to be attractive to others.	26	20
Because I like to be with others who are interested in this activity.	27	27
Because I like the excitement of participation.	28	26
Because I want to meet new people.	29	29
Because my friends want me to.	30	30

Table 3 demonstrates the rank order of reasons for participation towards physical activity and sports expressed by government and private school children, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The ranking of items was calculated on the basis of response to the highest score '7' (very true for me). The four topmost reasons for participation expressed by government school children were mainly fitness factors- 'because I want to be physically fit', 'because I want to look or maintain weight so I look better', 'because I want to maintain my physical health and well-being', 'because I want to maintain my physical strength to live a healthy life'; whereas, the private school children ranked their reasons mainly as appearance factors- 'because I want to look or maintain weight so I look better', 'because I want to improve my appearance', 'because I want to be physically fit', 'because I want to maintain my physical health and well-being'. The least important reason for participation towards physical activity and sports expressed by both school children were social factors- 'because my friends want me to', 'because I want to meet new people', because I like the excitement of participation', 'because I like to be with others who are interested in this activity'.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, our objective was to identify and compare the participation motives of government and private school children of Saudi Arabia. The results exhibited that important reasons for participation for both types of school children are mostly interest and enjoyment factor and most studies confirm that interest towards the activity and enjoyment derived from the activity are among the main reasons [18–22,37–39]. It was observed during the data collection that the children from private school were inactive in their PE classes and in general the population was looking overweight comparing with government school children. It may be due to the socio-economic class of parents and the private schools give lots of stress on studies. This observation corroborates results from previous studies in terms of the concern for and dissatisfaction with the body image felt by young adults with overweight and obesity [40,41].

The least important reason for participation motives were social factors for both types of school children. These findings are consistent with earlier studies [19,20,42,43]. A significant difference was seen between schools on interest/enjoyment and fitness factors. It was observed that government school children showed more interest/enjoyment and fitness than their counterpart private school children. Enjoyment is one of the main motivational factors and an important asset in driving the children towards involvement in sport. This factor is aligned with Weinberg and Gould [44] who stated the main motive in sport is physical fitness, enjoyment and friendship. This significant difference may be due to private schools giving more importance to academic performance than government

schools. Thus the formulated hypothesis was rejected.

In conclusion, the present study identified the important reasons for participation of government and private school children towards physical activities as interest and enjoyment motives followed by competence. The least important reason for participation was social factors for both types of school children. Furthermore, the study revealed a significant difference between the types of school children on interest/enjoyment and fitness factor. Results indicated that government school children were more motivated to do physical activity due to their interest/enjoyment and fitness factors.

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