

Effects of the WTA championships on youth tennis in Istanbul

Year one

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Aims of abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of a women's professional sport event on youth sport participation. The TEB BNP Paribas Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Championships took place 25-30 October 2011 in Istanbul as the grand finale of the WTA season. The top eight singles players and top four doubles teams were invited to compete based on results throughout the 2011 season. Prize money for the WTA Championships totaled US\$4.55 million. A total of 70,824 fans filled the Sinan Erdem Dome across the six days of the tournament; average daily attendance was 11,804, peaking at 13,676 on finals day (Sunday). The event will be held in Istanbul in 2012 and 2013.

Theoretical background

Anecdotal evidence suggests that elite sport events can drive interest in youth sport participation but little empirical research supports this conclusion. Coaches have reported increases in enrollment for gymnastics, swimming and diving, and snowboarding following Olympic competitions (Konecky, 1998). In 1998, the US women's ice hockey team won the gold medal in Nagano, Japan. According to USA Hockey, the number of girls' and women's ice hockey teams grew from 149 in 1990-91 to 1,071 by the end of 1998. Still, little is known about the effects of women's professional sport events on youth sport participation particularly in emerging countries.

Methodology

Surveys of Turkish youth four weeks before and after the WTA event were administered in eight high schools and two universities in Istanbul. A total of 2 200 surveys were collected. The questionnaire used for data collection was modeled after the sport participation survey developed by Kao et al (2010). Survey data were coded, entered and

analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study will be replicated in 2012 and 2013.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

For the pre-tournament survey, 53% of subjects were male, 47% were female; the average age was 16 years. Females and males were equally interested in learning to play tennis (37%). Conversely, 28.8% of females had no interest in playing tennis; 37% of males had no interest. Boys were slightly more aware of the 2011 WTA Championships in Istanbul than girls (62% to 53%). Most subjects (57.7%) indicated that they would not attend the WTA in 2011, or were not sure if they would attend (31.4%). Post-tournament survey results revealed that approximately 11% percent of boys and 6.1% of girls attended the 2011 WTA Championships. Approximately 13.5% of males played tennis regularly compared to 11.7% of females. Thirty-eight percent of females would like to learn to play tennis compared to 33% of males. More Turkish girls had relatives or friends who played tennis than Turkish boys (68.7%; n=334 to 55.8%; n=329). Among the most prevalent constraints to tennis participation for youth in Istanbul were lack of instruction and lack of equipment to play. Lack of time to play was more frequently noted as a constraint for girls than boys (31.5% to 23.5%). As the data were reported in frequencies, Chi square analyses were performed to test the observed and expected responses to constraints to tennis participation by gender. The statistical null hypothesis was that the proportions of constraints to tennis participation for youth would be equal by gender. The difference in proportions is significant (Pearson chi-square=29.375, 13 df, P=0.009, N=1110). Additionally, gender and levels of tennis participation were examined; it was concluded from the chi-square statistic (chi-square=20.921, 9 df, P=0.005, N=1110) that an association exists between gender and youth tennis participation.

References

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