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## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SPORT: ROLE OF SELF-DETERMINED MOTIVATION

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### Abstract

#### AIM OF THE STUDY

A growing body of literature has shown that sports-based youth development (SBYD) programs, or “out-of-school time programs that use a particular sport...to facilitate learning and skill development in youth” (Perkins & Noam, 2007, p. 27), are effective in producing developmental outcomes for children and adolescents (e.g., Olushola al, 2013; Weiss, 2008). The literature, however, has focused on the role of the relationships created among participants in evaluating program effects, failing to demonstrate whether sport participation itself contributes to youth developmental outcomes. Building on self-determination theory (SDT: Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (HMIEM: Vallerand, 1997), therefore, this study aims to demonstrate that the level of self-determined motivation toward sport participation would explain the extent to which participants of an SBYD program achieve intended developmental outcomes.

#### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

SDT explains that people likely exert great effort to achieve the desired level of performance for an activity (e.g., sport for SBYD programs) if they engage in the activity based on a self-determined, or autonomous, form of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research based on SDT has also found that the development of self-determined motivation toward sport related activities (e.g., physical education, exercise) leads to positive psychological outcomes, such as general self-esteem (e.g., Hein & Hagger, 2007; Standage & Gillison, 2007). These findings are further explained by the HMIEM (Vallerand, 1997), which suggests that one’s motivation at a general level can affect motivation at a more specific level, and vice versa. The former relations refer to top-down effects, and the latter relations refer to bottom-up effects. Of them, bottom-up effects explain the influence of self-determined motivation toward a specific

activity (e.g., sport) on general psychological outcomes, such as self-esteem (e.g., Hein & Hagger, 2007; Standage & Gillison, 2007). Furthermore, top-down effects explain that the development of self-determined motivation at the general level because of bottom-up effects subsequently allows a person to be self-determined for another activity (e.g., schoolwork) and thus achieve a high level of performance for that activity (Vallerand, 1997).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, we propose a positive relationship between self-determined motivation toward sport participation and the achievement of developmental outcomes in SBYD programs. Specifically, this study examines an after-school running program that uses running-related activities to help youth achieve developmental outcomes, including increased self-efficacy, academic performance, and engagement in a healthy lifestyle, and decreased engagement in violent behavior. Given this context, we hypothesize that youths' levels of self-determined motivation toward running would be positively associated with their self-efficacy, academic performance, and engagement in a healthy lifestyle, and negatively associated with their engagement in violent behavior at the completion of this program.

#### METHODOLOGY

The population of this study was 330 students who completed the after-school running program in 2012. Of them, 120 (36.4%) who answered a post-program survey without missing responses constituted the study sample. We measured four outcomes—self-efficacy, academic performance, attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle, and violent behavior—and self-determined motivation toward running using existing scales (e.g., Mullan et al., 1997; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). For main analysis, we performed four ANCOVA models to test the extent to which participants' self-determined motivation toward running would be associated with the four outcomes after controlling for participant characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race).

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ANCOVA results showed that self-determined motivation toward running significantly predicted self-efficacy ( $F = 19.07, p < .001$ ), attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle ( $F = 40.66, p < .001$ ), and violent behavior ( $F = 6.54, p = .01$ ), but failed to predict academic performance ( $F = .01, p = .92$ ). An examination of the parameter estimates of the significant coefficients revealed that self-determined motivation had a positive association with self-efficacy ( $b = .07, p < .001$ ) and attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle ( $b = .10, p < .001$ ), but had a negative association with violent behavior ( $b = -.07, p = .01$ ).

Overall, the findings of this study add to the growing body of the literature on SBYD by indicating that sport participation itself can play an important role in youth development if the development of self-determined

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motivation is emphasized and appropriate developmental outcomes are targeted. Our findings further contribute to both SDT and the HMIEM by extending their theoretical implications to the context of positive youth development through sport.

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