

# **The Moderating Role of Sport Type between Sport Involvement and Quality of Life**

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## **Aim**

The researchers have been interested in the social, psychological, environmental, and individual factors that affect the relationship between sports and quality of life (QoL). While different sport types can provide different levels of benefits to different individuals (e.g., team sport: social skills; individual sport: cognitive benefits), the benefits can have different effects on QoL. In addition, psychological involvement in sports with behavioral involvement may directly affect QoL (Sato, Jordan, & Funk, 2014). Despite the importance of sport type and sport involvement for QoL, less attention has been paid to considering these factors together vis-à-vis QoL. This study seeks to explore how sport involvement (e.g., psychological and behavioral) affects QoL, with sport type playing a moderating role.

## **Literature Review**

Sport engagement can directly contribute to QoL (Downward & Rasciute, 2011). Previous studies have shown benefits gained through sports participation, such as physical or mental health and QoL (Hamer, Stamatakis, & Steptoe, 2009). The literature on that topic has proposed two pathways for sports' contribution to QoL (Inoue, Sato, Filo, Du, & Funk, 2017). First, people can improve their own subjective well-being by psychologically engaging in sports (Inoue, Wann, Yoshida, & Nakazawa, 2015). Second, by behaviorally engaging in sports, people can strengthen their own subjective well-being (Pawlowski, Downward, & Rasciute, 2014). Moreover, differences in terms of behaviorally and psychologically engaging in sports can change according to sport type because of the characteristics of each sport (Sciamanna et al., 2017). For example, team sports can further improve social skills and social interaction, while individual sports can boost self-esteem and have cognitive benefits (Taylor, Davies, Wells, Gilbertson, & Tayleur, 2015). Based on the discussion above, we developed the following hypothesis: Sport type will have an important moderating role in the relationship between sport involvement and QoL.

## **Methodology and Data Analysis**

Data were collected using a commercial online market research company (www.surveymonkey.com) from 301 residents of six of South Korea's main cities. Sport type was investigated using open-ended questions asking subjects in which sport they most frequently participated in a given week. Based on previous studies (Zhou, Heim, & O'Brien, 2015), we categorized team sports as those that generally have at least three players on each team during play. Individual sports were categorized as sports that had the option of having two players on each team but could be played by one individual competing solo against another individual (e.g., table tennis). According to this procedure, 105 individuals were classified as team-sport participants (seven types of sports), and 196 individuals were classified as individual-sport participants (10 types of sports). More than half of the team sport participants played baseball (35%) or soccer (26%), and the two most common individual sports were swimming (17%) and marathons (15%). The survey featured six items on behavioral involvement (Funk, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2011), nine items on psychological involvement (Beaton, Funk, Ridinger, & Jordan, 2011), and three items on QoL (Kaplanidou

et al., 2013). Demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, residence, income, marital status) were used as covariate variables of QoL.

## Results

The reliability and validity of the measures were tested by considering Cronbach's alpha coefficients, AVEs, factor loadings, correlations, and CFA model fit (Hair et al., 2010). The CFA results indicated the model fit the data well ( $\chi^2/df = 44.309/24 = 1.83$ ,  $p < .05$ , RMSEA = .05, CFI = .97, SRMR = .02). All the measures of Cronbach's alpha coefficients and AVEs indicated good reliability and convergent validity. The unconstrained model was significantly better than the constrained model (i.e., correlation between a pair of latent factors constrained as 1) in all comparisons ( $\Delta S-B \chi^2$  was 8.93,  $p < .05$ ). The goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that the structural model showed a good fit ( $\chi^2/df = 52.97/26 = 2.03$ ,  $p < .05$ , RMSEA = .05, CFI = .98, SRMR = .03). Behavioral involvement in sport activity significantly and positively influenced QoL (team sport,  $\beta = .71$ ; individual sport,  $\beta = .60$ ). Psychological involvement only positively influenced QoL in the team sport activity ( $\beta = .23$ ). Hence, the hypothesis was supported.

## Discussion

We found that sport type can have an important moderating role within the relationship between sport involvement and QoL. The lack of influence individual sports has on QoL from psychological involvement can be attributed to the heterogeneity among individuals' motives and goals for sport participation. In team sports, an individual's recognized sense of belonging to a team is related to psychosocial health. Therefore, future studies on the relationship between sports involvement and QoL need to consider the sport type. Moreover, the most popular professional sports in Korea are baseball and soccer, and most of this study's participants also appear to participate in either baseball or soccer. Future studies should consider the unique cultural characteristics of each sport and the sports culture of each country.

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