

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF SPORTS PARTICIPATION ON THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 7-14 YEAR OLD STUDENTS ON THE VIEWS OF PARENTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of sports participation on the social development of students aged 7-14 on the basis of parents' opinions and to reveal in the light of qualitative data in which social skill areas these effects are concentrated. In the study, phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research models, was used. The sample of the study consists of a total of 20 volunteer participants selected by purposive sampling method among the parents of 7-14 year old students who regularly receive sports education in the basketball branch in the 2024-2025 academic year. The qualitative data obtained within the scope of the research were systematically analyzed by content analysis method; the data were first coded, similar expressions were categorized and themes were formed from these categories and interpreted. According to the results of the study, it was determined that the majority of the participants mentioned the positive effects of sports on children. The participants expressed positive opinions that sports strengthened communication with peers, socialized children, improved their self-confidence and made them more harmonious through group work. It was also stated by the participants that children started to exhibit positive behaviors such as being more patient, perceiving being a team and moving away from the harmful effects of technology.

Key words: Sports participation, Social development, Parents, Sports education, Student

INTRODUCTION

Childhood and adolescence is one of the most intense phases of an individual's physical, mental and especially social development. This period is a time when individuals begin to recognize their social roles, establish friendships and experience their first serious encounters with social norms. Especially between the ages of 7-14 is considered to be a critical developmental period in which the foundations of children's social skills are laid along with their personality development. Supporting the social development of individuals in this age group is an important step that will enable them to participate in society as healthy individuals in their future lives.

In this respect, sport is not only a physical activity but also an important development tool that facilitates children's participation in social life and socializes them. Physical activity is a natural desire of every human being and is very important for the healthy development of children. Through movement, children can best perceive and describe their environment and themselves. In addition to exploring temporal and spatial environments, they can actually experience their own experiences by communicating with other people. By recognizing their limits and strengths through movement, they can learn how to handle the connection between mind and body. A big part of this topic is psychopathy; it is about the harmony and combination of bodily-motor and mental-spiritual processes. Movement, and therefore sport, is one of the basic conditions for human development. Cognitive, emotional and spiritual effects, which are among the characteristics of physical activity, make important contributions to the development of individuals (Çelik 2010).

Within the scope of social cognitive theory, it is known that children learn through observation, reinforcement and modeling through their interactions with their environment (Bandura, 1986). In this context, children shape their social behaviors by modeling both their trainers and their peers in the sports environment. Situations such as cooperation, conflict resolution and taking responsibility during training allow children to develop social problem solving skills (Weiss & Smith, 2002). For this reason, children should be directed to sports as early as possible and it should be ensured that they make sports a habit. The basis for this can be realized primarily in the family environment. However, many parents, especially those who do not engage in any physical activity or sport due to workload and lack of time, cannot take care of their children's sporting activities, and when they have to, they are overwhelmed with such tasks. Children, however, do not know when they should play sports in the first place and which sports are suitable for a busy life (Rohkohl, 2017)

On the other hand, since sport supports social development, it also reduces the risk of social exclusion by increasing the child's self-esteem and social acceptance (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). Children who take part in a group while playing sports have an important opportunity to develop their social skills, as well as their ability to follow rules, empathize, self-confidence, and problem-solving skills (as cited in Özyürek, Özkan,

Begde, & Yavuz, 2015). It has been determined that children who regularly participate in team sports develop a higher level of group cohesion and perception of social support compared to their peers engaged in individual sports (Eime et al., 2013). This makes it easier for children to establish healthier ties with society and develop a positive social identity. Therefore, sport education is considered a critical tool not only for physical health but also for children's social cohesion and psychosocial well-being.

Through sports, children learn social skills such as teamwork, respect and sharing (Sever, 2009). Various studies have shown that children who participate in regular sports activities communicate more effectively with their peers, are more self-confident in social environments and show more advanced development in terms of social skills (Güngör & Biçer, 2020). In addition, participation in sports reduces the risk of social isolation, strengthens children's sense of belonging and enables them to interact with society in a healthy way (Bailey, 2006).

The first unit that enables children to see the world of physical education and sports is the family. This effect of the family on socialization determines whether the child will participate in physical education and sports activities, and if so, in what way. The approach of families on this issue is almost the most decisive factor in whether their children participate in these activities or not (Erdemli, 1991). The fact that families are interested in sports is a positive factor in the participation of children in sports, and even in the practice of sports by the majority of the society. The positive valuation of sports by families increases the interest in sports among generations. Furthermore, children may be more interested in and participate in sports if their parents are involved in sports or have been involved in sports in the past, if they continue to play sports or regularly watch sports programs on television, if they encourage their children and if sport is a general topic in the family (McPherson et al., 1986). However, it should be kept in mind that if parents and the social environment persistently continue their wrong attitudes and behaviors, children may perceive this as a part of life and exhibit such negative behaviors themselves (Orhan, 2019). Therefore, encouraging children to participate in sports activities is critical not only for their physical health but also for their social development.

Based on this point, this study aims to reveal what kind of contributions the regular and age-appropriate sports training of children between the ages of 7-14 makes to the development of their social skills (gaining self-confidence, strengthening empathy and communication skills, etc.) in line with the opinions of their parents.

METHOD

Research Model

In the study, a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research models, was used. Qualitative research can be defined as a research in which various qualitative data

collection tools such as interviews, observations and document analysis are used to reveal people's perceptions and experiences in their natural environments in a realistic and holistic way. In other words, it can also be defined as the process of developing explanations or theories by examining the meanings created by individuals themselves (Ersoy, 2017; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). The phenomenological design is used to explore the meaning, composition and essence of the lived experience of a particular phenomenon (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

Study Group

The study group of this research consists of the parents of students between the ages of 7-14 who receive education in a basketball sports school. Purposive sampling was used to determine the study group. The purpose of purposive sampling is to select situations that contain rich information that will clarify the problems studied in the research. In this sense, purposive sampling methods are useful in discovering and explaining phenomena and events in many situations (Tarhan, 2015). The purpose of determining the study group was that the parents' children started basketball school on the same date and received the same education in the same period of time. The study group consisted of 20 parents of students who met these inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Distribution of the Study Group According to Demographic Characteristics

Variables		f	%
Income Status	17.000 – 25.000	3	15
	25.001 – 35.000	3	15
	35.001 – 45.000	7	35
	45.000 and above	7	35
Age	25 – 35	1	5
	36 – 45	12	60
	46 – 55	6	30
	55 and above	1	5
Education Level	High School	1	5
	License	18	90
	Master's and PHD	1	5
Total		20	100

Data Collection Tool and Collection of Data

In the study, a semi-structured interview form was used to evaluate the effect of children's participation in sports on social development between the ages of 7/14. The first part of the interview form includes demographic information including the characteristics of the participants, and the second part includes questions to evaluate the effect of children's participation in sports on social development.

The research data were collected from the parents of students who regularly attended basketball trainings in the 2023 - 2024 basketball season. While collecting the research data, voice recordings were taken after obtaining consent from the participants. Each interview lasted an average of 25-30 minutes. The voice recordings received from the participants were then digitally transferred to a Word file.

Data Analysis

In this study, the qualitative data collected from the participants were analyzed using the content analysis method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In the content analysis process, the data were first coded, similar codes were categorized and themes were created. This systematic approach facilitated the interpretation and interpretation of the data.

Validity in qualitative research is a set of strategies used to ensure that credible results are obtained in accordance with the purpose of the research. In this study, multiple data sources were used to ensure validity (triangulation), thus enriching the results by including different types of data and perspectives (Creswell, 2013). In addition, the information conveyed by the participants was reviewed and the accuracy of the comments was confirmed with the member checking method, which means the verification of the data by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reliability, on the other hand, is related to the consistency of the research, that is, the same method yielding similar results under similar conditions. To ensure reliability in this study, the analysis process was documented in detail, intercoder reliability was ensured during the coding phase, and common criteria for consistent coding were determined (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). In addition, all data and coding processes used in the analysis were transparently recorded so that the content of the study was open to external scrutiny.

FINDINGS

In this section of the study, the research questions are presented in the form of headings and the research data are presented. In the research, the participants were asked the question "What changes do you observe in your child's communication with children in his/her age group since he/she started sports?". Participant views are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Changes in children's communication

Theme	Code
Changes in children's communication	Strengthening communication
	Socialization
	Being self-confident
	No change observed
	Becoming compatible with group work

The majority of the participants mentioned the positive effects of sports on children. Only two of the participants stated that they did not observe any change. They expressed their opinions about the effects of sports on children in terms of strengthening communication with their peers, socializing, being self-confident and becoming harmonious in group work. One-to-one quotations of the participants are given below.

"Sports helped both of my sons to become more self-confident, more open to communication and more competent individuals in terms of healthy communication in their social life. My son, who was bullied by peers before sports and did not make a sound and was pushed around, has now become a leader in his group, outgoing and social. This makes us happy." K8

"After starting sports, we observe positive changes in his communication with his peers. In terms of socialization, I think that especially doing team sports contributes to him." K1

"We clearly observed the socialization and self-confidence enhancing aspect of sports. Socialization and self-confidence increased with sports and communication with children in his age group improved positively." K13

"I did not observe a different change." K17

"Since the sport that my child does is in a group work, he/she has become more harmonious in group and team work in social life." K4

In the research, the participants were asked the question "What kind of differentiation do you see in phenomena such as cooperation and cooperation with your child starting sports?". Participant views are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Changes in children's cooperation and collaboration

Theme	Code
Changes in childrens's cooperation and cooperation	Becoming patient
	Perception of being a team
	Reducing the impact of technology
	Acting in a we-centered manner
	Being selective

In the study, it was stated that children exhibited positive behaviors when they started sports. Various behaviors such as the child becoming more patient, perceiving being a team and reducing the effects of technology have emerged. One-to-one quotations of the participants are given below.

"He started to find solutions in cooperation with patience in a friendly environment. Since he was not the only one on the team, he learned to be patient with his other friends." K5

"My son is more inclined towards basketball and soccer. Since these sports are team sports, cooperation and collaboration are very important. He used to think that if I am very good I will win, but now he realized that being a team is very different." K7

"With sports, feelings of cooperation and solidarity are activated. Unless we produce medicines and remedies against computer games, cell phones and messaging applications, which destroy all the positive benefits of sports like pests in agriculture and destroy children's gains from sports, sports are excellent benefits of sports. Therefore, sports and teamwork are very important to reduce the effects of technology, to make them take responsibility and to contribute to cooperation." K14

"Starting sports made him feel the presence of emotions such as team spirit, cooperation, and being able to rejoice together." K8

"Before sports, he didn't choose people to cooperate and help. Now he wants to cooperate with people who are beneficial to both the other person and himself. In terms of helping, he helps if he is close and ignores if he is not." K9

In the research, the participants were asked the question "What kind of behavioral changes have sports caused in your child's attitudes towards close family and school friends?". Participant views are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Changes in children's behavior towards their immediate environment

Theme	Code
Changes in children's behavior towards their immediate environment	Reduction in anger behaviors
	Increased self-confidence
	Leadership development
	Developing a sense of help
	Increased love and respect

In the study, all of the participants stated that there were positive changes in their children's behavior with their close and school friends. It was concluded that their children's anger behaviors decreased, they were calmer, their self-confidence increased and their leadership qualities improved. One-to-one quotations from the opinions of the participants are given below.

"My child was an extremely angry child. After participating in sports, his anger behaviors decreased. He has become a calmer individual." K18

"After he started sports, he started to behave more calmly, more moderately. He started to be more understanding towards his siblings and friends. He started to give up his previous negative attitudes, although not completely." K15

"We have seen an increase in his behavioral self-confidence towards his family and schoolmates. With sports, he became an outgoing, social and communicative child." K12

"I think that doing sports has a positive effect on our children's more mature behavior towards their family and schoolmates, taking responsibility when appropriate and especially developing their leadership." K1

"After my child started team sports, his/her feelings such as helping at home and at school and helping those in need have developed. I attribute this to the fact that he learned that he would not achieve results if he did not act as a team." P20

"I can better see that my child's respect and love for us and his/her environment has increased. I'm glad he/she goes to sports." K19

In the study, the participants were asked the question "What are the changes in your child's empathy and patience behaviors after starting sports?". Participant views are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Changes in children's empathy and patience behaviors

Theme	Code
Changes in children's empathy and patience behavior	More understanding
	Contribution
	Developing a sense of empathy
	Developing a sense of patience

In the study, all of the participants stated that their child's sense of empathy improved, was more patient or developed a sense of patience after starting sports. One-to-one quotations from the participant opinions are given below.

"Since his sport requires group work, it can be said that he is more patient in situations where he needs to be patient or wait at home and at school, and more understanding when waiting for his turn." K4

"We observed that we cannot develop empathy and patience through short-term sports or education, but long-term sports and education can contribute." K13

"I think that by putting yourself in the shoes of an athlete while doing sports, you learn how this is a job and lifestyle that requires patience." K1

"I think we have made an improvement now, especially in terms of patience. In the past, he used to want whatever he was doing to happen immediately. I can say he is more patient now. He learns to wait and be patient." K7

In the study, the participants were asked the question "What changes have been observed in your child's feelings of fair play after starting sports?". Participant views are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Changes in children's fair play behaviors

Theme	Code
Changes in children's fair play behavior	Positive behavior
	Fair play development
	The emergence of a sense of selfishness
	Decreased selfishness

In the study, although the majority of the participants stated that the sense of fair play developed in their children, very few of them stated that the sense of selfishness emerged. Excerpts from some of the participants' opinions are given below.

"After he started sports, he started to exhibit very positive behaviors towards his environment and friends due to his team spirit." K12

"I observed that my child started to use fair play emotions more actively after starting sports." K10

"The honest answer is that we have sensed a sense of selfishness in children. In other words, both fair play and selfish feelings show themselves from time to time. When he plays with his own friends, he exhibits gentlemanly behavior, but when he is an opponent, his sense of selfishness occasionally emerges." K15

"We observe both fair play and selfish feelings in children. But I would say that there is a shift of selfish feelings from more frontline to more backline." K20

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effect of sports participation on the social development of children between the ages of 7/14 in line with the views of their parents. When the data of this research were analyzed, it was determined that the majority of the participants mentioned the positive effects of sports on children. Positive opinions were expressed by the participants that sports strengthened communication with peers, socialized children, improved their self-confidence and made them more harmonious with group work. It was also stated by the participants that children started to exhibit positive behaviors such as being more patient, perceiving teamwork and moving away from the harmful effects of technology. In order to improve the psychological health and social relations of children in the developmental period, it is recommended that their participation in sports should be supported by their environment, and emotional and social support should be given to children participating in individual sports, especially by showing sensitivity (Pehlevan & Bal, 2018). Therefore, it can be said that physical education and sports are an effective and good socialization tool in changing an individual's behaviors positively.

In the study, all of the participants stated that there were positive changes in their children's behavior with their close and school friends, their anger behaviors decreased, they were

calmer, their self-confidence increased and their leadership qualities improved. It was also found that the participants stated that their children's sense of empathy and sense of fair play developed after starting sports.

When the studies conducted in this context are examined, it is observed that the results are in the same direction with the research. In their study, Yıldız and Çetin (2018) stated that individuals will have the opportunity to meet different people and share the social environment, and thus they will have the opportunity to gain skills such as interpersonal communication, being included in the group, self-recognition and realizing their limitations, self-expression, and gaining self-confidence through these environments. Şahin and Şahin (2020) in their study on the effects of participation in sports in early childhood on social development; They pointed out that it is very important for children to participate in activities that support children's social skill development in this period, since children with low social development level will have social adaptation problems in later ages. They also stated that participation in sports activities has an important place in supporting the social development of children in this period. Again, similar to the result of the study, Dal and Baikoğlu (2019) in their study on the relationship between the social skill levels of primary school students and their sports participation status; They found that students who do sports have higher social skill levels than students who do not do sports. In addition to these, in many studies, it is stated that sports is one of the important factors that contribute to changing students' behaviors positively and contributing to their socialization as well as other gains (Karataş et al., 2021; Yıldırım & Bayrak, 2019; Ulukan et al., 2021).

One of the most valuable assets that athletes have is self-confidence. Similar to the research data, Uluç (2023) pointed out in his study that self-confidence has a critical importance for athletes, allowing them to perform sports more effectively, increase their potential, while at the same time allowing them to get one step closer to success.

Kuter and Kuter (2012) stated that while children have fun through sports, they develop strong bonds with their friends, team spirit, group interaction, acting together, cooperation, being organized within certain rules, tolerance and striving to succeed.

Advances in technology lead individuals to prefer a lifestyle that involves less movement over time. Children are the most affected by this lifestyle. Coşkuntürk et al. (2023), in their study on the Effects of Technological Advances on Sedentary Living and Psycho-Motor Development in Children, stated that technological devices reduce children's time to engage in physical activities such as sports and games in their free time, which may lead to the emergence of health problems such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal problems. They stated that sports involving physical activity contribute to the psycho-motor development of children. In the same direction, Yıldız and Bektaş (2020) also stated that excessive use of technological devices increases aggression in children,

reduces the quality of meeting physiological needs, reduces socialization and physical movement, and leads to posture disorders, regression in imagination and language development, and decrease in cooperation and sharing skills. In the same direction with our study, Yıldız and Bektaş (2020) stated that physical activities develop the understanding of fair play in children, teach sportsmanship and acting in competition, respect, support empathy skills, contribute to healthy personality development, reduce aggression, and provide human values such as gender equality. Demirçelik et al (2017) drew attention to the positive effects of physical activities on children's leadership skills. They stated that when the leadership skills of students who participated in extracurricular activities were compared with students who did not participate, they encountered a result in favor of the participants.

The results obtained show that regular participation in sports plays a constructive and supportive role in children's social development. It can be said that these social skills gained especially at an early age make important contributions to children's school life and interactions with their social environment. Based on these results, the following suggestions can be made:

Considering the positive effects of sports on children's social development, more children should be introduced to sports at an early age at the primary education level; the accessibility of sports activities in schools and local governments should be increased.

Parents should be made aware of the importance of directing their children to sports activities in order to support their social development; it should be emphasized that sports are important not only for physical but also for social and emotional development.

Sports clubs and trainers should make plans to develop not only the technical skills of children but also their social skills; they should offer supportive educational content on topics such as teamwork, leadership, empathy.

In future studies, different sports branches and age groups can be addressed comparatively; more in-depth analyses can be made by including children's own opinions.

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