

Program Evaluation and Interests of Somali Adolescent Girls and Women

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PURPOSE & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Confederation of Somalis in Minnesota's all-female basketball program, as well as explore future programmatic possibilities. Specifically, the study aimed to assess the participants' enjoyment with the program, perception of how well the program meets their three basic human needs, likes and suggestions for improvement of the program, as well as interests for additional physical activity programming. This information may in turn be used to increase awareness and generate culturally relevant physical activity opportunities to increase the physical activity of this population.

The following five research questions guided this study:

- Q1: How well are participants enjoying the basketball program?
- Q2: How well are participants' three needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy being met in the basketball program?
- Q3: What are the participants' likes about the basketball program?
- Q4: What are participants' suggestions for improving the basketball program?
- Q5: In addition to basketball what additional activities interest participants?

METHODOLOGY

Population of the Study: Participants were 17 Somali female adolescents and young adults, ranging in age from 13 to 22 ($M = 18.01$, $SD = 3.11$ years), who participated at least once in the all female basketball program. The sample size of 17 participants includes the majority of adolescents and young adults who attend the program, as there are approximately 15-30 girls in attendance at a given basketball session.

Procedure: After obtaining IRB approval, a basketball program survey was created based on valid and reliable questionnaires from the sport and exercise psychology literature. The survey included quantitative questions regarding participants' enjoyment with the program and perceptions of how well the program is meeting their three needs. Qualitative, open-ended questions exploring participants' likes and suggestions for improvement of the program, as well as additional physical activity interests were also asked. Participants from the basketball program were recruited during the basketball sessions and word of mouth to take the survey.

Data Analysis: The design of the research was a survey design, which included both quantitative and qualitative questions. The quantitative data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and the qualitative data was typed into a word document for analysis. The range, mean scores, and standard deviation were calculated for the enjoyment and each of the three needs scales using excel functions. A table was also created to depict the primary additional physical activities the participants noted. For the qualitative data analysis, myself and one of my McNair advisors independently coded similar likes and suggestions quotes into common lower order themes. We then reached consensus on the codes, and together combined similar lower order themes into the higher order themes.



RESULTS

Table 1. Enjoyment and Three Basic Needs Data

Quantitative Variables	M	SD	Range
Enjoyment	6.902	.196	6.333 to 7
Perceived Competence	5.847	1.124	4 to 7
Autonomy	6.627	.576	5 to 7
Relatedness	6.282	.7683	4 to 7

*Scale ranged from 1 to 7; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Table 2. Participants' Programmatic Likes

Likes	Frequency of Theme	Quotes from Participants
Relationship-Building	9	
Connection	4	"The connection we have together"
Meeting/interacting	3	"I like it because it gives me the opportunity, to interact with other girls"
Friendship	2	"Friends coming together"
Comfortable & Positive Environment	8	
Female-only	4	"Playing without boys"
Have fun	4	"Knowing that everyone is there to have fun"
Sports-Related Aspects	6	
Competing	3	"Like competing with my friends"
Teams	2	"I like playing when there are teams involved"
Learn rules & policy	1	"Like learning about the rule and policies of playing the sport"

Table 3. Participants' Perceptions of Programmatic Areas of Improvement

Areas of Improvement	Frequency of Theme	Quotes from Participants
Lack of Sportsmanship	5	
Physical contact	2	"The thing I like least about basketball is the physical contact"
Verbal outbursts	2	"Some of the girls just yell around"
Breaking rules	1	"When the girls are not following the rules"
Inconsistency	3	"The inconsistency and lack of coach" "The place might be occupied"
Inconvenience	2	"Sometimes the gym gets crowded and I feel uncomfortable" "The space is not convenient"

The results of the quantitative data suggest that participants are enjoying ($M = 6.902$, $SD = .196$) the basketball program, and that the program is meeting the participants' three needs of relatedness ($M = 6.282$, $SD = .768$), competence ($M = 5.847$, $SD = 1.124$), and autonomy ($M = 6.627$, $SD = .576$).

The qualitative results indicate that participants liked the relationship-building, comfortable and positive environment, and sport-related aspects of the program. The participants also noted the aspects of the program they would improve, including sportsmanship, consistency, and convenience of the program.

The qualitative data suggests that the physical activity the participants are most interested in participating in future programming is basketball. Clearly, the participants love basketball! Other activities the participants indicated include volleyball, soccer, swimming, badminton, and football—mostly team sports.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study showed the girls are strongly enjoying the basketball program, and the program is meeting the three basic human needs of participants. According to Vallerand (2001), the intrinsic motives of fun and enjoyment are vital reasons for females' continued physical activity participation. The likelihood of sustained participation is enhanced when participants' three human needs are met. Fulfillment of those needs is linked to increase intrinsic motivation, which links to sustained participation in optimally challenging activities (Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2000). Such participation is necessary for the participants to reap the physical and psychosocial benefits of physical activity.

The results of the present study also support the importance of deriving culturally relevant elements in programs to increase physical activity for Somali adolescent girls and women. For most of the participants the sport was not what they liked best, rather, the environment of female-only, relationship-building in which they played the sport. Furthermore, the girls preferred team sports over individual sports or recreational activities. This is a unique finding from Thul and LaVoi (2008) who found the opposite. Perhaps it was due to the fact that all of these participants were participating in the basketball program, a sport program. Such a finding should be explored in future studies.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS & APPLICATION

Basketball Program Recommendations:

- Program should continue offering the female-only basketball program. What is going on is working, but it must be enhanced.
- Program coordinators should consider offering additional physical activity team sports options, as many of the participants have shown interest in such activities.
- Program coordinators should work to provide more consistency. Securing a coach could help to make the program more stable.
- A deeper program evaluation is needed. Specifically, assessing if the program keeps people coming back and if it leads to positive health is warranted.

General Physical Activity Recommendations:

- Community centers and institutions of health professionals must find ways to listen to the girls and women's voices in studies such as this in order to promote involvement in physical activity (e.g., basketball camps, health information fairs, community based information sessions about the ill effects of physical inactivity).

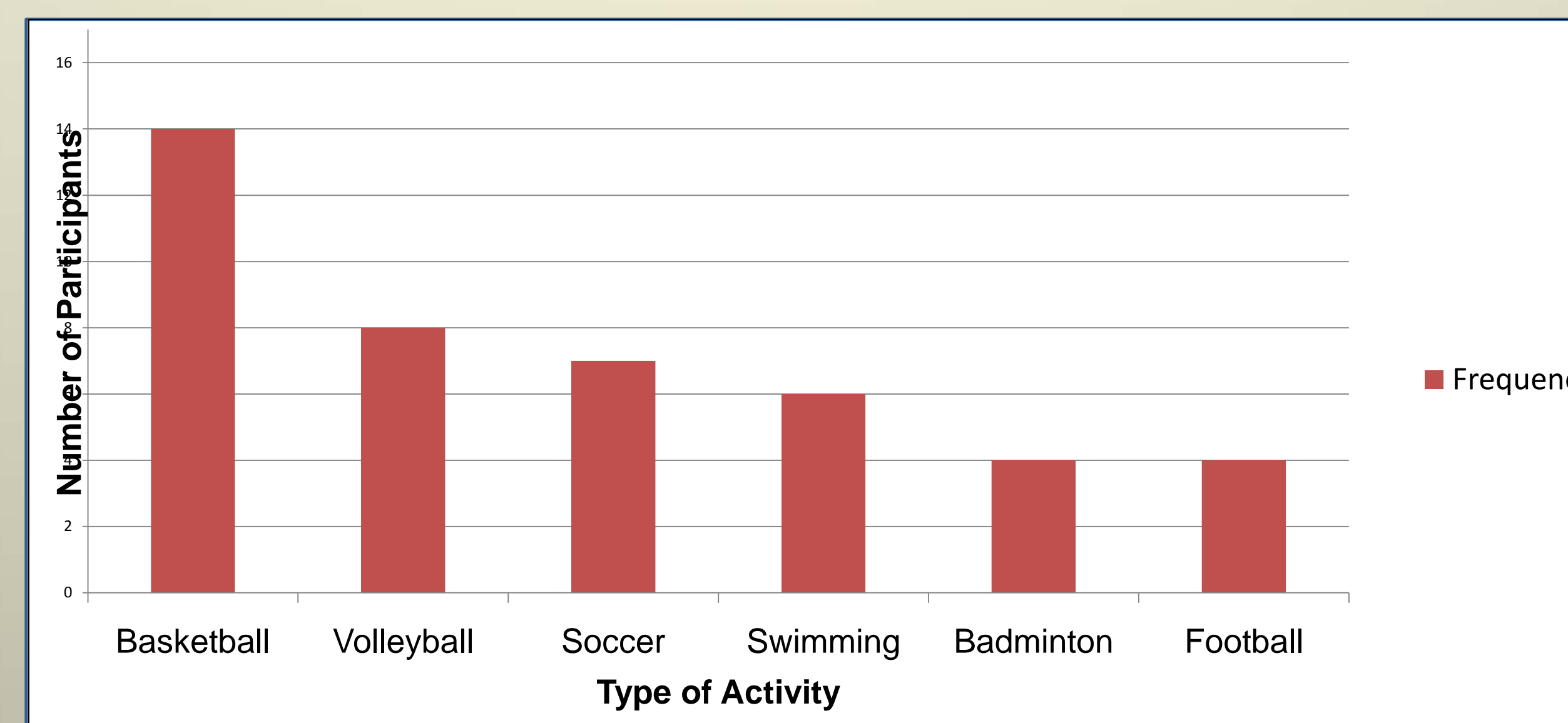


Figure 1. Future Physical Activity Programming Interests