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Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 7(C) (2010) 588–591

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**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

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International Conference on Learner Diversity 2010

## Social Support Mechanism and Input Factors on Catharsis Predictors in Sport

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### Abstract

This study was designed to determine the relationship between input factors and social support mechanism toward catharsis predictors among student athletes. The sample comprised student athletes of hard touching sports, namely football, hockey and rugby (N=311) from two national sports schools (NSS). The main result shows that social support from family, friends and coach are able to control the teenage behaviors in sports. Besides, a continuous relationship induced between social support and input factors could influence teenagers' psychological development and social ability.

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*Keyword: Social support; Input factors; Catharsis predictors; Aggressive behaviors; Sport schools; Malaysia*

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### 1. Introduction

In the world of sports, the philosophy of “pain than pleasure” has been used as a hall-mark of aggressive physical activity. Unfortunately, this philosophy has often led to unscrupulous and violent behaviors, impacting negatively and destructively on the development and well being of young athletes and of society at large (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005). Previous studies (e.g., Arms, Russell, & Sandilands, 1979; Chow, Murray, & Feltz, 2009; DuRant, Champion, & Wolfson, 2006) have attempted to answer whether a sport provides a positive vent for an instinctive drive of aggression or whether sport teaches and reinforces aggression through the highly competitive nature of the sport itself.

Nevertheless, aggressiveness has become one of the most important concerns in sports (Mintah, Huddleston, & Doody 1999; Ryan, Williams, & Wimer 1990; Silva 1983; Stephens 2001). Aggression and sport have gone together as long as sports have been around, be it the players, the parents, the coaches, or the spectators – they just seem to be an inseparable part of each other. Athletes may have to be aggressive to a point, so that the team can form a strategy to win. However, there is also a limit to aggression when it turns into violence.

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The general perception among the public is that sport players are responsible for encouraging aggressive behaviors. There are also those who believe that to be successful in sports, athletes need to play aggressively. Different types of sports may require different level of aggressiveness. Thus, the notion of aggressive behaviors in sports need to be studied further.

In contrast, socialization can take place through participation in sports since sports provide a microcosm for living and society (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005). Sports also provide learning environments where participants have the opportunity to learn competition, cooperation, role-playing and discipline regarding rules, regulations, and goals (Bloom & Smith, 1996). In this sense, sports can be seen as a laboratory of human experience (Nucci & Young-Shim, 2005). The structure of social relations in sport influences the participants' development of social skills. Under this structure, youth will learn the values and social behaviors based on social relations with mainly friends and family members (Antonucci 1990; Marques et al., 2001). Hughes and Coakley (1991) argued that the concept of socialization among athletes has created a new norm known as “positive deviance”. Values such as sacrifice for the team and continue to play despite the “pain” are associated with *esprit de corps* in sports. Indirectly, this norm creates a situation where the athletes will practice aggressive behaviors. Thus, the purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between input factors and social support mechanism toward catharsis predictors among student athletes in Malaysia.

## 2. Purpose and Methodology the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between social support and catharsis release among Sport school students. This study utilized an *ex-post facto* design. According Ciciarella (1997), the design of *ex-post facto* is similar to *pre-experimental static group*. According to Majid Konting (2000), the design of *ex-post facto* is suitable to study the attributes of variables. Variable attributes are variables that already exist in a social unit before the study was conducted. Variable attributes in this study are the input factors of student athletes in sports. Based on the design, the researchers attempted to examine the extent to which input factors and social support become catharsis predictor among the student athletes from sport schools. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002), *ex-post facto* studies allow researchers to study the “causal” relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The sample comprised student athletes of hard touching sports, namely football, hockey and rugby (n=311) from two national sport schools (NSS). Data from the respondents were gathered using a set of questionnaires (4-point Likert scale) that was constructed and adapted from several previous research instruments. The set of questionnaires was pilot-tested and has shown relatively high validity and reliability (Alpha Cronbach = 0.75). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic data whereas inferential statistics (e.g., one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation and multiple regression) were used to test the null hypotheses.

## 3. Results

Table 1 shows social support mainly came from family followed by friends and coaches. Male respondents tend to rate social supports higher than female respondents. The results of t-test show that there was a significant difference between male and female respondents regarding their perception on social supports from family and coaches. Table 2 illustrates a significant moderate correlation between social support and catharsis in one of the games.

Table 1 Social Support

Social support	t-value	Sig.	means	
			male	female
Family	3.124	.002*	2.60	2.44
Friends	1.597	.111	2.52	2.44
Coaches	4.698	.000*	2.42	2.18

\*Significance at  $\alpha=.05$

Table 2 Correlation between social support and catharsis in football

	1	2
1. Social support	1.000	
2. Catharsis	.338**	1.000

\*\* Significance at  $\alpha = 0.01$

Other results show that social support from family, friends and coaches can reduce the stress level among the student athletes. And the social support is also closely related to the athlete's self-esteem. Gender factor is found to influence the catharsis and aggressive levels. The findings also show that social support from the family and the coaches is significant in projecting instrumental and aggressive behaviors (hostile) in the game of football. But in other games, social support acts as an agent that reduces aggressive behaviors among the respondents. Thus, in general, social support from family and coaches is a rejuvenating factor on the student athlete behaviors. The findings also indicate the social support from friends could reduce athlete's aggressive behaviors in sport.

However, the data show that social support from family for football game tends to increase the catharsis which forms the hostile aggressive behaviors. With the male hockey game, the social support significantly decreased the hostile aggressive catharsis behaviors. Support from the coach was significant for reducing instrumental aggressive behaviors. Based on the standard linear regression analysis carried out, it can be concluded that gender was the best predictor to hostile aggressive and assertive behaviors. The main implication of the study is that social support from family, friends and coach are able to influence teenage behavior in sports. Besides, a continuous relationship induced between social support and input factors could influence teenage psychological development and social ability.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the psycho-social context of sports, social support could affect the athletes. Every support will provide the emotional response that could influence the behaviors of the athletes. Although the supporting factors are the values that have been socialized, but the athletes are believed to play an active role to shape and define their moral values and conduct. Overall, the effect of social support and input factors could influence the behaviors of the student athletes and drive the student athletes to control and reduce aggressive behaviors, especially in sports. Human beings cannot live a fulfilling life in isolation, and can have more effective and healthy lives through association with others. This means that human beings must somehow learn how to live together. The structure of social relations in organized sports can give participants experience in various roles and group interaction, and contribute to the development of social characteristics that integrate them into existing larger social structures. The impact of significant others such as parents, peers and coaches on young athletes' aggression is profound.

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