

ASSESSMENT OF HEALTH AND FITNESS BENEFITS OF SPORT

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the health and fitness benefits of sport. Positive effects from sports are achieved primarily through physical activity, but secondary effects can bring health benefits. Because physical activity is increasingly conducted in an organised manner, sport's role in society has become increasingly important over the years, not only for the individual but also for public health. The study discovered that sports have an immense impact on a person's daily life and health. People who participate in regular physical activity are at much less risk of suffering a major coronary event such as a heart attack. Being fit not only means physical health but emotional and mental health, too. Fitness includes five essential components: flexibility, cardio-respiratory fitness, muscular endurance, muscular strength, and body composition. Fitness is vitally important to health and wellness as well as to the ability to engage in normal activities of daily living. Finally, it was concluded in the study that participation in sports, with or without competition, promotes healthy behaviour and a better quality of life. One of the recommendations made in the study was that it is important to prevent sports-related injuries and health problems, as a number of these problems are likely to remain long into adulthood, sometimes for life.

KEYWORDS: Sport, Health benefits and Fitness benefits

Introduction

Sport generates health benefits in two primary ways — through direct participation in sport itself, and through the use of participatory and spectator sports as a platform for communication, education, and social mobilization. Well-designed sports for health initiatives often work on both levels. Physical activity and sports support strategies to improve dieting and discourage the use of tobacco,

alcohol, and drugs. As well, physical activity and sports help reduce violence, enhance functional capacity, and promote social interaction and integration. According to the WHO (2004), experience and scientific evidence show that regular participation in appropriate physical activity and sport provides people of both sexes and all ages and conditions, including people with disabilities, with a wide range of physical, social, and mental health benefits. Physical activity, in combination with calcium and vitamin D, helps build bone mass. Physical activity increases the force on bones, and bones respond by increasing their mass so that the force is spread over a larger area. Physical activity has a positive effect on bone health across the age spectrum, but this effect is greatest in previously inactive individuals. Weight-bearing exercise, particularly resistance exercise, is the most effective form of physical activity for achieving this effect. Even small incremental increases in physical fitness can reduce an individual's risk of cardiovascular-related death (Warburton et al., 2006).

People who participate in regular physical activity are at much less risk of suffering a major coronary event such as a heart attack. Similarly, people with established cardiovascular disease can reduce their risk of negative outcomes by over 60% by participating in regular physical activity. However, sport alone can not prevent or treat disease. Instead, sport is a highly effective tool in a broader kit of development practices. Only when it is applied in a holistic and integrated manner can sport achieve developmental results. Physical activity is, therefore, increasingly viewed as the least expensive and most effective preventive medicine for combating the increasing worldwide problem of obesity and, with physical fitness, may represent the most effective strategy to prevent chronic disease (Chiarelli et al. (2006). In addition to enhancing overall physical fitness, regular physical activity, active play, and sports can have a positive impact on other major health risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, tobacco use, and stress (Nieman, 2010).

Conceptual Review

Concept of Health

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. This is a level of functional or metabolic efficiency of a person in mind, body, and spirit; being free from illness, injury, or pain (as in "good health" or "healthy"). According to Wikipedia (2020), human health is the ability of individuals or communities to adapt and self-manage when facing physical, mental, or social challenges. Brinkel, Khan, and Kraemer (2009) noted that human health is defined not only by the

physical state of individuals, but rather it is a state of complete physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. The most widely accepted definition of good health is that of the World Health Organization Constitution. It states that health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization, 1946). Huber et al. (2011) proposed a new definition of health as the ability to adapt and to self-manage, which includes the ability of people to adapt to their situation as key to health. It also acknowledges the subjective element of health; what health and wellbeing mean will differ from one person to the next, depending on the context and their needs.

An understanding of health is the basis of all health care. Health is not perceived the same way by all the members of a community, including various professional groups (like biomedical scientists, social scientists, health administrators, and ecologists), giving rise to confusion about the concept of health. Health has evolved over the centuries from the concept of individual concern to a worldwide social goal. The various changing concepts of health are as follows: biomedical, ecological, psychological, and holistic concepts. A biomedical concept, traditionally, is a health system that has been considered as an absence of diseases, and if someone was free from disease, then that person was considered healthy. This concept is known as a "biomedical concept," and it is based on the germ theory of disease.

Concept of Fitness

Physical fitness is a state of health and well-being and, more specifically, the ability to perform aspects of sports, occupations, and daily activities. According to Tremblay et al. (2010); De Groot and Fagerström (2011); and Malina (2010), physical fitness is generally achieved through proper nutrition, moderate-vigorous physical exercise, and sufficient rest, along with a formal recovery plan. Before the Industrial Revolution, fitness was defined as the capacity to carry out the day's activities without undue fatigue or lethargy. However, with automation and changes in lifestyles, physical fitness is now considered a measure of the body's ability to function efficiently and effectively in work and leisure activities, to be healthy, to resist hypokinetic diseases, improve the immune system, and to meet emergency situations. Fitness is defined as the quality or state of being fit and healthy. The modern definition of fitness describes either a person or machine's ability to perform a specific function or a holistic definition of human adaptability to cope with various situations.

Fitness is a broad term that means something different to each person, but it refers to your own optimal health and overall well-being. Being fit not only means physical health but emotional and mental health, too. It defines every aspect of your health. Smart eating and active living are fundamental to fitness. Fitness includes five essential components: flexibility, cardio-respiratory fitness, muscular endurance, muscular strength, and body composition. Fitness is vitally important to health and wellness as well as to the ability to engage in normal activities of daily living (ADLs) without excessive fatigue (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2022).

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (2022), when one is fit, he/she have:

- Energy to do what's important to you and to be more productive
- Stamina and a positive outlook to handle the mental challenges and emotional ups and downs of everyday life and to deal with stress
- Reduced risk for many health problems, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis
- The chance to look and feel your best
- Physical strength and endurance to accomplish physical challenges
- A better chance for a higher quality of life and perhaps a longer life, too

Concept of Sport

Sport pertains to any form of competitive physical activity or game that aims to use, maintain, or improve physical ability and skills while providing enjoyment to participants and, in some cases, entertainment to spectators. Le Sport Au (2003) stressed that it is noted that the term "sport" covers all forms of physical activity that promote good physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interaction. It includes games, entertainment, recreational or competitive sporting events, as well as sports and traditional games. Sport is usually defined as an organised, competitive, and skillful physical activity that asks for devotion and fair play. All of this is regulated by rules or customs. Matveev (2005), revealing the nature of contemporary sport, offers two of its definitions: in the narrow sense and in the broadest sense. In his opinion, sport in the narrow sense is legitimate to call only the actual competition activity, and in the broad sense, the concept of sport covers the actual competitive activity, the process of preparation for and achievements in it, as well as specific interspecific relations and behavioural norms arising on the basis of this activity. Physical activity includes the movement of people and/or different objects, such as sports equipment.

At the same time, sport includes noncompetitive activities like jogging, running, exercising, and swimming, which are usually classified as recreation. It means using time designed as a physical, mental, and emotional refreshment of the human body. Key principles of sport include that the result should not be predetermined and that both sides should have an equal opportunity to win. An understanding of how sport functions as a social good depends on how sport activities are experienced. To study experiences in sport, one should take account of the fact that the field of sport consists of an increasingly diverse set of activities and that a process of individualization probably results in more diverse experiences in sport. Moreover, incorporated into the definition of sport are all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being, and social interaction. These include: play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sports; and indigenous sports or games.

Effects of Sport on Health and Fitness

Sports have an immense impact on a person's daily life and health. They do not just give you an interesting routine, but also a healthy body. Engaging in physical activities like sports improves your heart function, reduces your risk of diabetes, controls your blood sugar, and lowers tension and stress levels. It also brings positive energy, discipline, and other commendable qualities to your life. Playing sports strengthens your body and also improves your muscle memory and muscle coordination. Sport also brings health benefits, such as psychosocial development of both young and old, personal development, later onset, and less consumption of alcohol (Eime et al., 2013). According to Khan et al. (2012), those who play sports have a higher level of physical activity later in life, and through sports, knowledge of nutrition, exercise, and health can be developed.

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Participation in sports, with or without competition, promotes healthy behaviour and a better quality of life (Baker, 2010). Holt et al. (2017) reported that sport's main purposes are to promote physical activity and improve motor skills for health and performance and psychosocial development. Participants also gain a chance to be part of a community, develop new social circles, and create social norms and attitudes. In healthy individuals and patients with mental illness, sports participation has been shown to provide individuals with a sense of meaning, identity, and belonging (Soundy et al., 2015; Hassmen et al., 2010). Adults who stop participating in sports reduce their physical activity and have health risks equal to those of people who have neither done sports nor been physically active (Blair et al., 2009; Paffenbarger et al., 2014). Sports can make children and young people develop both physically and mentally and contribute to health benefits if

planned and executed exercise/training considers the person's own capacities, social situation, and biological as well as psychological maturation. In children and adolescents, it is especially important to prevent sports-related injuries and health problems, as a number of these problems are likely to remain well into adulthood, sometimes for life.

Conclusion

Sports have an immense impact on a person's daily life and health. People who participate in regular physical activity are at much less risk of suffering a major coronary event such as a heart attack. Being fit not only means physical health but emotional and mental health, too. Fitness includes five essential components: flexibility, cardio-respiratory fitness, muscular endurance, muscular strength, and body composition. Fitness is vitally important to health and wellness as well as to the ability to engage in normal activities of daily living. Finally, it can be concluded that participation in sports, with or without competition, promotes healthy behavior and a better quality of life.

Recommendations

1. It is important to prevent sports-related injuries and health problems, as a number of these problems are likely to remain long into adulthood, sometimes for life.
2. Physical activity and exercise training programs should be designed with the intent of improving each of the key components of health-related physical fitness in addition to preventing chronic disease e.g. heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis etc.

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