Can Mass Sports Participation Foster the Moral Development? A Theoretical Analysis Based on Sports and Moral Psychology

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Abstract: It is noteworthy that sports participation can improve moral development through implementing appropriate intervention programmes during PE classes, which has been proved in the empirical research of sports science. Now the question is how can we create a social-moral climate for the purpose to foster the moral development of the people outside the school through social sports participation. The role of mass participation sports events in encouraging regular physical activity is under researched. This study explored the public health potential of parkrun, a wide network of free weekly timed 5km runs in Guangzhou Tianhe park. A total of 730 adult participants of parkrun self reported demographic characteristics, current physical activity and the perceived impact of involvement. Objective data on attendance and 5km performance were available from the central parkrun database. The result show that the mass sports participation parkrun can foster the moral development.

1. Presentation proposal

The implicit achievement motive is a stable, enduring motivational disposition to do things well, which is based on affects and operates largely outside of a person's awareness. It is aroused by task-inherent achievement incentives promising rewarding emotions, such as enjoyment and pride upon mastering a challenging task. People high in implicit achievement motive seek out an achievement task because they enjoy performing the task which includes activity incentives such as feeling proud and experience the progress [1].

During the progress of parkrun, a wide network of free weekly timed 5-km runs in Guangzhou Tianhe park, all the participants are not conscious to accomplish an achievement goal to initiate the goal oriented behavior. Elements of the accessibility sub-theme were mentioned by almost all participants and included the simple free set-up, convenient time and location, and the ongoing opportunity to turn up when desired, without overt commitment or pressure to attend or perform(can be seen from the interview of the participants about Accessibility), which result in the participants in park run have high implicit achievement motive.

However, the motives does not affect behavior; they only drive behavior if they are aroused by incentives (McClelland, 1980) [2]. The activity incentives in park run such as equality, freedom, membership, from which the role taking opportunities (Can be seen from the interview of the participants about Inclusivity) as an important factor to foster the development of moral competence can be achieved [3].

2. Accessibility

For me, pretty much nine o’clock on a Saturday morning is free time which means I can go, unlikesix thirty on a weekday where I knew I could quite possibly still be working or travelling, and the fact that it is a structured time makes me more motivated to go.

[Interview 33: 40-year-old male; initial occasional runner; 13 months attendance]

It’s free, it’s all inclusive, it’s easy, I can get there five minutes before I have to start running and I can leave immediately after, so it doesn’t take up a lot of time.

[Interview 43: 33-year-old female; initial non-runner; 4 months attendance]

It’s very easy to go along and I think part of the appeal is the fact that you’re not committed every
week. You know, it’s not like you’re paying for the event and you think “Oh, I must attend”.
[Interview 12: 45-year-old male; initial non-runner; 12 months attendance]
It’s free: that is a massive thing and it’s always there on a Saturday morning, you know, and you’re not obliged to go. You’re not letting anybody down if you don’t go and you can just turn up again.
[Interview 11: 41-year-old female; initial non-runner; 12 months attendance]
It’s very easy in that you just print off a bar code, there’s no fee, it’s absolutely free. There’s no commitment if you turn up and you don’t feel like running you haven’t lost anything.
[Interview 23: 67-year-old female; initial regular runner; 25 months attendance]
It’s the fact that almost, you know, it’s not organized in a sense to do you good, or because anyone thinks you should do it, that is part of its appeal I think.
[Interview 2: 53-year-old male; initial non-runner; 59 months attendance]

3. Inclusivity
The youngest to the oldest must have been about 60 years. I think any event that can pull people in of all ages, backgrounds and fitness levels has to be a great idea.
[Interview 40: 47-year-old male; initial occasional runner; 33 months attendance]
I think because so many different types of people can do it. So you’ve got the very quick people at the start, but it’s mainly the way it encourages people that haven’t done exercise before to go out and give it a go.
[Interview 5: 43-year-old female; initial non-runner; 33 months attendance]
It isn’t just fit, sporty running obsessed people who do it, there is a whole range of people who do park run which I think is great and it’s very inclusive.
[Interview 43: 33-year-old female; initial non-runner; 4 months attendance]
It does not allow me to use the barrier “Oh I’m not going to be good enough” because it’s so inclusive by involving everyone, and I know there are people who are slower that finish last every week, but still go and try.
[Interview 47: 30-year-old female; initial non-runner; 34 months attendance]
We go running with the dog and jog along with him. Other people do exactly the same. There are those that run with their kids in prams and everything else. You would never get that in any other kind of run.
[Interview 7: 61-year-old male; initial occasional runner; 26 months attendance]
According to the structural–developmental theory and the social learning theory the development of moral behavior is connected to social interaction (Bandura, 1977; Kohlberg, 1984; Telama, 1999). Hence, the reciprocal contribution could serves as the means of real interaction between the faster and slower runner (Can be seen from interview of the participants about Gaining and Giving), from which the guided reflection as an important factor to foster the development of moral competence can be achieved. (Georg Lind, The Importance of Role-Taking Opportunities for Self-Sustaining Moral Development).

4. Gaining
I found out I had diabetes so I needed to do exercise… so park run’s really fitted in very well with that… it’s really helped motivate me to manage my diabetes, so I’m really pleased about that.
[Interview 16: 46-year-old female; initial non-runner; 6 months attendance]
Park run has definitely contributed to my weight loss which makes me feel great. I look back at where I was 18 months ago in terms of my size and athleticism, and every day I look back at the photos and am proud of what I have achieved.
[Interview 35: 31-year-old male; initial non-runner; 12 months attendance]
Socially, I think it’s been great. I’ve met so many new friendly people which really motivates me to go. I feel I have a more social element to my life.
[Interview 45: 39-year-old female; initial regular runner; 5 months attendance]
It is really nice because running around the lake you notice all the wildlife and often I see little
ducklings and for some strange reason it encourages me to keep going.

[Interview 44: 35-year-old female; initial non-runner; 12 months attendance]
Once I’d finished and I realized that I’d actually run all the way and that was my first 5k, I felt really happy afterwards, and it sort of motivated me to go again the following week, and then to keep ongoing.

[Interview 5: 43-year-old female; initial non-runner; 33 months attendance]
If you can get 50 runs you get a red T-shirt. I know all these things are quite small in their way, but people are quite proud of them too because it is quite an achievement to have run fifty 5k runs.

[Interview 14: 52-year-old male; initial non-runner; 8 months attendance]

5. Giving

I was obviously struggling and she kind of, you know, supported me through the last lap, which was really nice. I mean I didn’t know her and people do that all the time, you know, encourage people, complete strangers, but everybody’s kind of there and there is a spirit to encourage people.

[Interview 4: 27-year-old female; initial non-runner; 27 months attendance]
Even if I’m not volunteering and not running I tend to go down just to support the others. Anyway, there are a lot of other people that do it as well.

[Interview 13: 48-year-old female; initial non-runner; 8 months attendance]
I mean she was obviously struggling, but she never stopped once throughout it and she just ploughed on and got through it, you know, and it was really motivating for me to see somebody doing that.

[Interview 10: 39-year-old male; initial non-runner; 17 months attendance]
I’ve seen how fast the first person went round - absolutely bombed it! That was quite good to watch them as well and I was like “One day I’ll do that!”

[Interview 8: 44-year-old female; initial non-runner; 17 months attendance]
I get a lot more involved in the volunteering side of things and just the fact that it’s become a lot more important to me because it’s become more of a commitment to my friends and others who attend park run and not just about myself.

[Interview 47: 30-year-old female; initial non-runner; 34 months attendance]
I did buy a gazebo too for park run, cos it often rains, and I thought it was cheap enough and a good investment, as I’m so pleased with park run.

[Interview 30: 77-year-old male; initial regular runner; 92 months attendance]

6. Conclusion

Based on above, my hypotheses is that mass sports participation like parkrun can foster the moral development.

References

