

EVEN WHEN BULLIED, STUDENTS FIND JOY IN SPORTS

ANCHE QUANDO SONO BULLIZZATI, GLI STUDENTI TROVANO GIOIA NEL PRATICARE SPORT

Stefano Scarpa
University of Foggia
stefano.scarpa@unifg.it

Damiano Bezze
University of Padua
damiano.bezze@unipd.it

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ABSTRACT

A replication study is presented here with a more solid sample and after eleven years, also marked by a pandemic event (see Scarpa et al. 2012). So, this study examined the relations between peer-victimization during sport practice and physical activity enjoyment. 634 students (311 boys, 323 girls) from a middle school, ages 12 to 13 years ($M = 12.2$; $SD = .56$), were surveyed. Most of the correlations between peer-victimization during sport practice and physical activity enjoyment variables did not reach statistical significance. Linear regression analysis was also conducted on significant correlation, highlighting an almost non-existent influence of peer-victimization during practice of sports on enjoyment of physical activity. At the end of the study we believe it is possible to argue that peer-victimization during practice of sports does not influence in any way enjoyment during physical activity.

Viene qui presentato uno studio di replicazione con un campione più solido e dopo undici anni segnati anche da un evento pandemico (cfr. Scarpa et al. 2012). Questo studio ha quindi esaminato, come in quello originario, le relazioni tra la vittimizzazione dei coetanei durante la pratica sportiva e il piacere dell'attività fisica. Sono stati intervistati 634 studenti (311 ragazzi, 323 ragazze) frequentanti la scuola secondaria di I grado, di età compresa tra i 12 e i 13 anni ($M = 12,2$; $SD = .56$). La maggior parte delle correlazioni tra la vittimizzazione dei coetanei durante la pratica sportiva e le variabili relative al piacere dell'attività fisica non ha raggiunto la significatività statistica. L'analisi della regressione lineare è stata condotta sulle correlazioni significative, evidenziando un'influenza quasi inesistente della vittimizzazione tra pari durante la pratica sportiva sul piacere di praticare attività motoria. Alla fine dello studio crediamo sia possibile sostenere che la vittimizzazione tra pari, durante la pratica sportiva, sembra non influenzare in alcun modo il piacere di praticare attività sportiva.

KEYWORDS

Peer-victimization; Enjoyment, Physical education; Sports
Vittimizzazione tra pari; Enjoyment; Educazione motoria; Sport

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Introduction¹

In sport and physical activity, enjoyment can be described as a positive affective response to the experience which gives pleasure, liking, and fun (Scanlan & Simons, 1992). Enjoyment of physical activity can also be important in promoting active lifestyles and regular physical activity among youths, with positive consequences for health and well-being (Molt, Dishman, Saunders, Dowda, Felton, & Pate, 2001).

Peer victimization is a common phenomenon during school years and reaches a peak during middle school. The consequences of peer victimization are detrimental to psychological well-being (Young & Sweeting, 2004; Pottinger & Stair, 2009; Felix, Sharkey, Green, Furlong, & Tanigawa, 2011; Diaz Herraiz & Gutierrez, 2010). Children who fall victim to bullying can not only develop serious troubles in their academic, social, and psychological adaptation when they are subjected to abuse (Rossman & Rosenberg, 1998; Kepenekci & Cinkir, 2006; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012), but they also risk subsequent psychosocial maladjustment (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Given the importance of teamwork, social interactions, and also competition in physical activity classes, it is possible that Physical Education class may be a particularly problematic situation with regard to peer bullying.

Some researchers have noted that children ages 10-11 years who have been bullied at school also show little enjoyment of school (e.g., Beran, Hughes, & Lupart, 2008). It is unclear whether peer victimization during physical activity might negatively influence enjoyment of physical activity (cfr. Lee, Shin & Smith 2019). Experience of peer victimization during sport practice was expected to be associated with loss of pleasure in sports. It was decided to cover this topic again because it has aroused the interest of the scientific community in past years, as evidenced by the numerous citations received from the original work (Blair *et al.* 2016; Jiménez-Barbero. & Jimenez-Loaisa 2020;).

¹ Both authors Stefano Scarpa & Damiano Bezze contributed exactly equally to the conduct of the study and the writing of the research report

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants were 634 pupils (311 boys; 323 girls) from middle school (Grade 7), ages 12 to 13 years ($M = 12.2$; $SD = .56$). Participants were volunteers drawn from different schools selected from all over Italy. Eight school districts (35 classes) were randomly selected using a random number table.

2.2. Measures

Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale – The scale was developed by Kendzierski and De Carlo (1991) to measure enjoyment of physical activity. In the present study an Italian version was used (Carraro, Young, & Robazza, 2008). There are 16 bipolar statements (e.g., “I enjoy it”, “I find it pleasurable”, “I feel bored”, “It frustrates me”) each of which is rated on a five-point scale with anchors of 1: Disagree a lot and 5: Agree a lot. The score was the sum of ratings on three estimates of enjoyment: Positive, Negative, and Total. In factor analysis by the original authors, the fit indices (GFI, AGFI, and CFI) were equal to or larger than .90, and RMSEA < .10. Reliability (i.e., internal consistency) of the positive and negative scales was also good, with Cronbach alpha values ranging from .78 to .89 (performed for subsamples of girls and boys with different age ranges). For the whole sample, Pearson product-moment correlation between the Positive and Negative scales was $r = -.67$.

Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale – This scale, developed and validated by Mynard and Joseph (2000), assesses four factors of peer-victimization: physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, and attacks on property. The questionnaire of 16 items (4 items for each factor) requires ratings on a 3-point Likert-type scale, 1: Not at all, 2: Once, and 3: More than once. Item scores are summed for a total score (from 0 to 32). The Italian version, given in this

study, was validated by Carraro, Scarpa, Paggiaro and Ventura (2011) with the following confirmatory factor analysis fit statistics: GFI = .94; AGFI = .92; RMSEA = .052; Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .70 to .80.

2.3. Procedure

This work was proposed to the school institutions as an exploratory study on bullying. The sample was engaged in physical education. Having a randomized sample selection allows the data to be generalized to the entire target population. The two questionnaires were group-administered in classrooms. The order in which scales were administered was firstly *Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale* and then the *Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale*. The Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale was completed only with reference to victimization during physical activity and sport practice at school. All respondents and their parents signed their informed consent and were assured of the confidentiality of individuals' data. This study was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Foggia.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

All data were processed using SPSS Version 21.0. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess internal consistency. Pearson correlations were estimates of association among variables. Linear regression analysis was conducted on the significant associations. Peer-victimization variables were entered as independent variables while enjoyment of physical activity variables was entered as dependent variables.

3. Results and Discussion

For the sample in the current study Cronbach's alphas were as follows:
Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale: .84 for physical victimization, .86 for verbal victimization, .79 for social manipulation, and .91 for attacks on property;
Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale: .92 for Positive enjoyment, .91 for Negative

enjoyment, .89 for Total enjoyment. Descriptive statistics for the Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale and Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Descriptive statistics on MPVS and PACES For the Sample of Physical Education Students

Variables	Whole sample		Girls		Boys	
	<i>N</i> = 634		<i>n</i> = 323		<i>n</i> = 311	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
MPVS						
Physical victimization	.34	.42	.17	.33	.37	.59
Verbal victimization	.45	.63	.53	.52	.66	.39
Social manipulation	.38	.54	.28	.41	.29	.38
Attacks on property	.27	.32	.19	.39	.25	.43
Total victimization	5.61	5.14	4.92	5.24	5.50	5.66
PACES						
Positive enjoyment	4.06	.68	3.82	.64	4.20	.65
Negative enjoyment	1.64	.69	1.61	.76	1.58	.51
Total enjoyment	68.55	9.98	67.42	10.48	69.55	8.34

Pearson correlations for scores on Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale and Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scale are presented in Table 2, and linear regression analysis is presented in Table 3.

Some negative associations between peer victimization during sport practice with enjoyment of physical activity were noted. In particular, verbal victimization (such as being teased during physical education) and total victimization scores are weakly related to all the enjoyment scales.

TABLE 2

Pearson correlation coefficients between MPVS and PACES

MPVS	PACES		
	Positive	Negative	Total
Physical victimization	-.06	.03	-.05
Verbal victimization	-.16*	.15*	-.13*
Social manipulation	-.04	.02	-.03
Attacks on property	.01	.02	.03
Total victimization	-.15*	.13*	-.11*

* $p < .05$.

Peer victimization during sport practice as measured here was a poor predictor of enjoyment levels during physical activity. Intrinsic factors of physical activity itself may be more important to physical activity enjoyment. Probably there are other important extrinsic determinants of physical activity enjoyment such as actual and perceived sport competence (Lyu & Gil 2011), self-efficacy in sports (Barr-Anderson, *et al.* 2008), and characteristics of the physical education teacher (Wininger 2002) which represent a key motivations of physical activity behaviors. This consideration has important implications when one considers the fact that enjoyment has been considered as a determinant of physical activity among youth, having a proximal influence of behavior and providing an immediate reinforcement for being physically active (Motl, *et al.* 2001). Physical activity in turn promotes well-being and is associated with numerous positive health outcomes (Strong, *et al.* 2005).). We point out the important implications related to the fact that when one considers the fact that enjoyment has been considered

as a determinant of physical activity among youth (Motl et al. 2001), and physical activity is in turn involved in promoting their well-being and health (Strong *et al.* 2005).

TABLE 3

linear regression analysis: Verbal and Total Victimization

Variables	Non-standardized Coefficient		Standard Error	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i> _{1,634}	<i>p</i>
	<i>B</i>	95% <i>CI</i>					
Verbal victimization							
Positive enjoyment	-.148	-.24,-.04	.684	-2.76	.018	7.75	.61
Negative enjoyment	.103	.002,.205	.653	2.01	.013	4.22	.45
Total enjoyment	-.124	-3.5,-.57	.765	-2.73	.016	7.53	.32
Total victimization							
Positive enjoyment	-.130	-.03,.011	.685	-2.09	.012	4.64	.37
Negative enjoyment	.141	.008,.0230	.654	2.19	.011	4.72	.29
Total enjoyment	-.181	-.32,-.04	.071	-2.38	.016	5.81	.18

Note. Multidimensional Peer-Victimization Scales predicted from Positive, Negative, and Total Physical Activity Enjoyment.

In 2012 the researchers argued that further studies were required to better understand the possible negative influence of peer-victimization during sport

practice on enjoyment of physical activity in a larger and more representative sample. Here it is shown that the replicated study, in which peer-victimization during practice of sports seemed to be a poor predictor of low enjoyment of physical activity. Probably because the pleasure of playing sport is not an exogenous variable, but something intrinsic to the sport itself (see Lee, Shin & Smith 2019). More studies need to be conducted in the future to understand whether and what exogenous variables influence enjoyment during sports practice (such as teacher, coach, family, etc.; cfr. Guan *et al.* 2023).

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