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Effects of Immediate Family Presence on Sport Performance

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Background

Currently, there is a lack of research concerning the presence of immediate family at sporting events and how it impacts athletes' perceptions, but parental social support (SS) has been looked at with high school students. Parental SS has been studied to significantly influence an individual's enjoyment and self-efficacy in moderate to vigorous physical activity (Silva et al., 2014).

Family presence in athletes' lives is important. This study looks at the presence of immediate family on athletes' perception of performance when their family attends their sporting event.

Research Questions

- 1) Exploratory analysis of athletes' perception
- 2) Examine differences in enjoyment of the game when family is present and when family is not present
 - 1) We predicted when an athlete's family is present at a sporting event they would experience greater enjoyment of sport.
- 3) Examine gender differences and differences based on distance their immediate family lived away from the university on athletes' motivation to play
 - 1) We hypothesized females would be more motivated to play than males when their immediate family was in attendance of their sporting event.
 - 2) We hypothesized the farther they lived from the university the more motivated the athletes would be to play.
- 4) Examine gender differences in the importance of family attendance at games
 - 1) We hypothesized it would be more important to females to have their family in attendance at their games than it would for males.

Method

Participants

104 Total Student-Athletes : Female (n = 27) and male (n = 77). Ages ranged between 18 to 22 years old. Athletes were from 19 different states, and 64.4% were from Iowa. We surveyed athletes from football (n = 77), soccer (n = 16), and volleyball (n = 11).

Instrumentation

The Immediate Family Presence on Sport Performance survey was created and used to assess athletes' perception of performance based on the presence of their immediate family.

Procedures

After receiving IRB approval and permission from the various coaching staff, the researchers administered the written surveys during a scheduled team meeting. Athletes completed the survey during the meeting, and the responses were provided anonymously.

The survey was designed to analyze participants' demographics, motivation, enjoyment, and immediate family's sporting event attendance. Responses from the survey were entered into the computer, and data analysis was accomplished by using SPSS.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

- Used frequencies of important variables.

Research Questions 2, 3, 4

- Means and standard deviations of important variables were conducted.

- T-tests were utilized to test differences between groups.

The data was entered and analyzed using SPSS.

Results

Research Question 1

- Athletes' families who lived 1-3 hours away, regularly attended their sporting events (65.4%).
- Athletes reported their immediate family members often attended their sporting events ($M = 3.0$ on scale of 1-4).
- Immediate family often attended their home games (83.7%) and sometimes attended their away games (50%).
- Both male and female athletes prefer their immediate family to be in attendance of their games (95.2%).
- Many of the athletes (87.3%) answered they are more motivated to play when their immediate family is present.
- Athletes reported that immediate family members accessed social media if they were unable to attend the game (97.1%).
- Athletes claimed their immediate family members were unable to attend their games was because of distance they had to travel (45.2%) and because they had to work (40.4%).

Research Question 2

On a scale of 1 (being not fun) to 8 (being fun), results showed that athletes rated their enjoyment higher when their immediate family was present ($m = 7.03$; $sd = 1.16$) as to when they are not present ($m = 5.95$; $sd = 1.57$), paired samples t-test [$t(104) = 7.89$, $p < .001$].

Research Question 3

- On a scale of 1 (doesn't motivate) to 8 (motivate), males reported greater motivation when their immediate family was present at an event ($m = 5.82$; $sd = 2.04$) than females ($m = 4.56$; $sd = 2.19$), [$t(102) = 2.71$, $p < .05$].
- No differences were found in athletes' motivation to play based on distance their family lived, [$t(87) = -1.12$, $p = .265$].

Research Question 4

During the survey, the athletes were asked how important it is for their immediate family to attend their performances or events on a scale of 1 (not important) to 8 (very important), both men ($m = 5.56$, $sd = 1.72$) and women ($m = 5.93$, $sd = 1.10$) reported that it was important for their family to attend their events, [$t(102) = -1.03$, $p = .303$].

Discussion

Research Question 1

- When unable to attend events, immediate family often follows social media. This suggests the importance of media programs and marketing teams to utilize social media effectively to keep statistics and information as up-to-date as possible.

Research Question 2

- Athletes have more enjoyment of sport when their immediate family is present. This enjoyment may be due to the desire to demonstrate their competence of sport for the people who have always supported them.

Research Question 3

- Regardless of distance, the commitment immediate family showed by attending was motivating to athletes.
- Males were more motivated by the presence of immediate family than females, but this could be due to the difference in sample size of men and women.

Research Question 4

- Value of family needs to be emphasized because it was important to all athletes that their family attended their events. Their presence ultimately led athletes to enjoy sport more. Programs should make accommodations for family to attend.