

Extracurricular sport improves long-term chances of academic success in boys and girls



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BACKGROUND

- 🌱 As an important parental and community investment, extracurricular childhood sport intends to promote both physical and mental health.
- 🌱 It is postulated that if children grow up healthy mentally and physically, they will experience personal success and contribute to their community rather than drain its resources (Byskov, 2018)
- 🌱 **However, few longitudinal studies have tested whether extracurricular sport predicts later academic success.**



OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS

- 🌐 **The purpose of this investigation is to prospectively examine associations between extracurricular sport participation from kindergarten to fourth grade and subsequent academic outcomes through the end of high school.**
- 🌐 Specifically, we aimed to examine whether consistent participation in extracurricular sport between ages 6 through 10 years predicted indicators of academic achievement from ages 12 to 17 years in typically developing boys and girls
- 🌐 We expected that persistent engagement in organized sporting activities beyond typical physical activity (playing outside, going to park, shopping, neighborhood biking) would be associated with later academic achievement, above and beyond baseline individual and family factors.

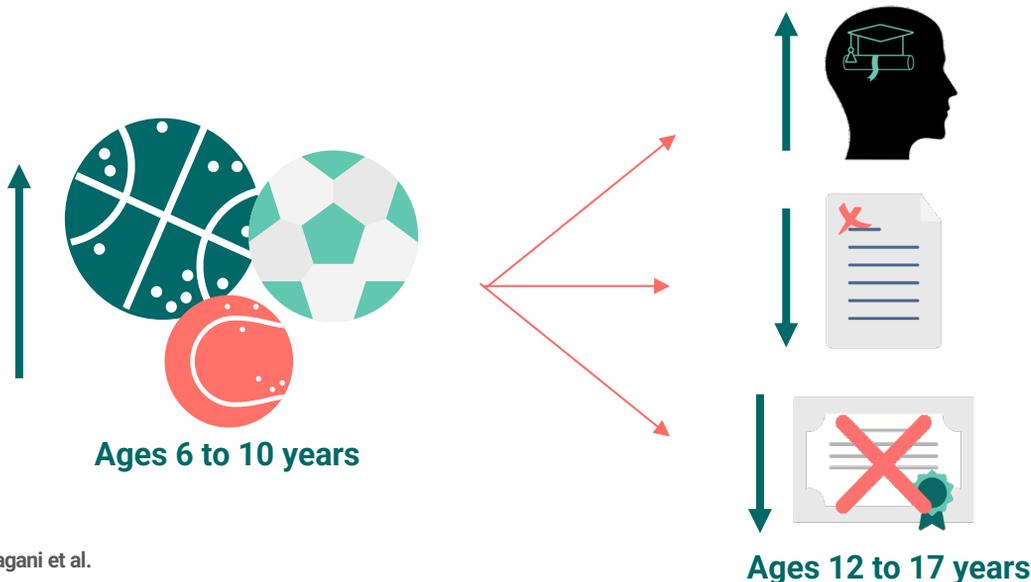


METHODS

- 🌐 Participants are from the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD) birth cohort, coordinated by the Institut de la Statistique du Québec. For this study, a subsample of 1 467 children (49% boys) who had established sport trajectories from ages 6 to 10 years was retained (Brière et al., 2020).
- 🌐 Predictor: Mothers reported on whether the child participated in sports or organized physical activities with a coach/instructor from ages 6 to 10 years.
- 🌐 Outcomes: Youth reported on academic indicators of success over the last 6 months from ages 12, 13, 15, and 17 years.
- 🌐 Indicators include: *Average grade in languages, Importance given to academic performance, Intrinsic motivation, Attachment to school, Academic aspiration, Grade retention, Drop-out risk, and Thought of dropping out*
- 🌐 **Academic indicators of success at ages 12 to 17 years were linearly regressed on trajectories of participation in organized sport from ages 6 to 10 years, while controlling for pre-existing and concurrent child and family confounds.**

RESULTS

- Consistent participation in organized sport significantly predicted improvements in prospects for academic success from middle school onward, especially showing an increase in academic aspirations and decrease in academic failure and dropout risk through to the senior year of high school for girls and boys.
- Results are different for boys and girls in some academic spheres.



CONCLUSION

- 🌐 Compared with low-inconsistent participation, high-consistent participation in organized sport in middle childhood forecasted improvements in achievement by the end of sixth grade for all.
- 🌐 Across both sexes, extracurricular sport in childhood persistently forecasted greater academic aspirations, less grade retention, and lower dropout risk toward the end of high school.
- 🌐 Early physical activity predicts adult lifestyle habits (Owen et al., 2020), which currently represent the best prevention and intervention strategy for mental and physical health (Firth et al., 2020).
- 🌐 **As a health strategy, supporting organized physical activity forecast improvements in population health prospects for boys and girls, potentially improving overall well-being throughout the life course.**



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