

# The Influence of Extracurricular Sports Activities on the Psychological Resilience of Middle School Students

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**Abstract.** The level of psychological resilience is an important aspect of measuring mental health. In recent years, many middle school students in China have psychological problems due to excessive learning pressure and weak anti-pressure ability. Extracurricular sports activities in physical exercise are an effective way to improve the level of psychological resilience of middle school students. Based on this, China continues to attach importance to extracurricular physical exercise, so as to alleviate students' psychological pressure and promote students' mental health. Based on the adolescent psychological resilience scale, this paper analyzes the influence of different types of extracurricular sports activities on the psychological resilience of middle school students in China. This study found that in the school extracurricular sports activities, sports associations, sports students, school sports teams mainly in interpersonal assistance, emotional control, goal focus on three aspects to improve the level of psychological resilience of middle school students. In off-campus sports activities, extracurricular sports training and spontaneous extracurricular sports activities mainly have a positive impact on students' psychological resilience level in family support and positive cognition. Secondly, this study puts forward three suggestions for the development of extracurricular sports activities in modern China: schools organize diversified extracurricular sports activities; parents improve the awareness of cultivating children's interest in physical exercise; the society provides public fitness and sports facilities for middle school students. The significance of this study is to improve the attention of the state, schools and parents to extracurricular sports activities, promote the further development of extracurricular sports activities, and improve the physical quality and psychological resilience of middle school students.

**Keywords:** Middle school students; extracurricular sports activities; psychological resilience.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the mental health of middle school students has been paid more and more attention by society. In the middle school stage, teenagers' thoughts gradually mature, their thinking gradually becomes rational, and they begin to have self-consciousness and self-evaluation ability. Their social awareness is enhanced, their social circle is expanded, and they are in contact with people of different personalities. In addition, their learning pressure is increased, they face more learning tasks and learning requirements, and their learning burden is significantly increased. Academic pressure and interpersonal communication make them prone to anxiety, depression, irritability and other strong emotions, which make their emotions fluctuate greatly. The mental health of middle school students is inseparable from the joint efforts of society, school and family. Many studies have shown that physical exercise has a positive effect on the health of middle school students. Therefore, in addition to the physical education prescribed by compulsory education, many schools have also opened many extracurricular sports activities such as sports associations. Many parents will also take their children to attend sports interest training classes on weekends to increase their children's skills while exercising their children's bodies and relieving psychological pressure. Extracurricular sports, as a supplement and extension of school physical education, is an important part of promoting the mental health of middle school students. In 2016, the General Office of the State Council issued the 'Opinions on Strengthening School Physical Education to Promote the All-round Development of Students' Physical and Mental Health', which clearly pointed out that it is necessary to comprehensively improve the students' institutional health level, promote the combination of

classroom teaching and extracurricular exercise, support and encourage students to participate in extracurricular physical exercise, and constantly improve students' sports interest and skills [1].

Resilience is an individual's ability or trait to cope with stress, frustration and trauma [2]. It is a positive personality trait and psychological ability. It can not only help individuals maintain a positive mentality when they are under pressure, difficulties and life changes, but also enhance individual perseverance, beliefs and self-control ability, and promote the overall development of middle school students [3]. Resilience is a positive personality trait and psychological ability. At present, some scholars in our country have put forward three definitions of psychological resilience: quality, process and result, which respectively indicate that individuals have stable psychological quality, the process of rapid recovery in the face of adversity, and individuals face adversity with a positive attitude. Students' psychological development in middle school is not yet mature, and their ability to resist pressure is weak, they need the help of schools, parents and other factors to improve their psychological resilience and ability to resist pressure [4]. Some scholars have shown that physical exercise can effectively help students understand their own characteristics, abilities, personalities and advantages, so that students are not blindly confident, but also can help students develop their own potential, and then help students increase their psychological resilience [5]. In the book of Exercise Psychology, it is pointed out that physical exercise can effectively improve cognitive function, improve attention, and regulate emotions [6]. In summary, all show the importance of physical exercise on the mental health of middle school students. At present, many studies in China have proved that physical exercise can effectively improve the level of psychological resilience of middle school students, but the research on the influence of extracurricular sports on the psychological resilience of middle school students is still blank.

This paper will focus on extracurricular sports and discuss the influence of different kinds of extracurricular sports on the psychological resilience of middle school students at different stages.

## **2. The Influence of Extracurricular Sports Activities on the Psychological Resilience of Middle School Students**

### **2.1. Sports Associations**

Sports associations are based on a certain sport as the main content, organize students who love similar sports in the school, and adopt the mode of student self-management and school supervision to carry out activities [7]. In recent years, more and more junior high schools and senior high schools in China have set up sports associations to enrich students' after-school life. Studies have shown that participating in sports associations can improve the psychological quality of middle school students [8]. First of all, students will know many like-minded new friends in the process of participation, help each other practice sports, encourage each other and make progress together in sports, which reflects that sports associations have a positive effect on the interpersonal assistance dimension in the psychological resilience scale. Secondly, students in the practice of sports are not necessarily smooth, may encounter a lot of setbacks and difficulties, and even some competition. In the face of these situations, students need to face with a stable and positive attitude, manage or control their emotions, do not give up when seeing the best, give yourself encouragement and confidence, do unremitting practice, in order to master a sports skill. At the same time, students will cultivate the concept of health in practice, realize the importance of physical exercise to physical health, and gradually form the habit of participating in sports activities. These reflect the positive influence of sports associations on the emotional control and positive cognitive dimensions in the psychological resilience scale. Finally, students' participation in sports associations is inseparable from the support of teachers and parents. In today's society, the academic pressure of middle school students in China is increasing. In this high-pressure environment, teachers and parents' support for children's extracurricular activities can effectively alleviate students' psychological pressure and let students get psychological comfort. In summary, sports associations can improve the psychological resilience of middle school students to a certain extent and promote the mental health of middle school students.

## **2.2. Sports Specialty Students Training**

The talented students are a special group mainly concentrated in the high school stage, which is a way for students to have the opportunity to receive higher education. The training cycle of sports specialty students is long, and the three years of high school are basically uninterrupted training; the training intensity is large, reaching the national second-level athlete level and above only has the opportunity to obtain the qualification of the university 's independent enrollment examination. When students receive high-intensity training, they will face huge tests both physically and psychologically. They will repeatedly suffer from soreness and injuries in the body, and constantly challenge themselves and overcome failures in the psychology. In the face of the decline or stagnation of training results, they must face them with positive and stable emotions, which has higher requirements for students ' willpower and emotional control. On the other hand, sports students have more pressure than ordinary students. Students will be under pressure from coaches and training results during training; in terms of academics, because training takes up a lot of time, students will feel physically and mentally exhausted after training. It is difficult for students to concentrate in class, and it is more difficult to improve their cultural achievements than ordinary students [9]. And if sports students want to be admitted to a good university, they need to meet the corresponding requirements in academic performance, which requires students to have better psychological endurance. Furthermore, compared with ordinary students, sports specialty students have a stronger sense of goal. High-intensity physical exercise will enhance their concentration, and students will motivate themselves to train and learn through the target university. Therefore, sports specialty students are superior to ordinary students to a certain extent in terms of target concentration. Finally, as an effective means to improve the enrollment rate, sports specialty students are strongly supported by teachers and parents, which also makes students more powerful and not afraid of setbacks and difficulties.

## **2.3. Sports Specialty Students Training**

The school sports team is a popular extracurricular sports activity in middle schools in recent years. It is widely incorporated into the campus because it improves the quality education of the school and can help students combine work and rest and relieve stress. The school sports team has three obvious characteristics: one is the competition, the other is the training law, and the training intensity is medium. First of all, the sports teams organized by the school, such as track and field team, football team, cheerleading team and so on, will participate in some competitions of different specifications, so as to enrich the honor of the school. The competition will give the collective a sense of common purpose, increase concentration during training, and at the same time bring some pressure to students and increase their psychological resilience. Secondly, in addition to their own interests, students participate in sports teams because of the support of parents and the expansion of the circle of friends. School sports teams belong to collective sports. Even if track and field are single-person events, students can make friends in this collective, and are encouraged and helped by friends during training, which has a positive impact on psychological resilience. On the other hand, the training time of the school sports team is very regular, which will not affect the daily learning of middle school students. Through moderate intensity exercise, students will be more dynamic and better mental state to face academic pressure. Chinese scholar Qiu Peng [10] studies have shown that students participate in the campus football team in the learning process in addition to exercise the physical quality, but also trained the psychological quality. Confrontation and cooperation on the field will help students vent negative emotions and gain positive mentality and self - confidence, the rapid changes on the pitch make students improve their ability to resist setbacks. In addition, training will improve students ' willpower and cultivate students ' tenacious will. To sum up, the school sports team has a positive effect on the psychological resilience of middle school students.

### **3. The Influence of Off-campus Sports Activities on the Psychological Resilience of Middle School Students**

#### **3.1. Extracurricular Sports Training**

In recent years, more and more parents in China have learned that exercise has a positive impact on the mental health of middle school students, and extracurricular sports training has been well developed. According to the theory of governance, market organizations often have more efficient execution than government organizations and social organizations [11], and in today 's society, parents invest more and more in their children 's education, and the number of middle school students participating in extracurricular sports training is only increasing. Therefore, middle school students participating in extracurricular sports training are undoubtedly supported by their families, which has a positive effect on enhancing psychological resilience. Foreign scholar Liudmyla [12]found that middle school students ' participation in boxing sports training can stimulate the pursuit of sports spirit, and transform the moderate burden of sports into the need to realize themselves. This shows that extracurricular sports training promotes the positive cognition of middle school students. In extracurricular sports training, students are most exposed to sports coaches. Different from school physical education, sports coaches are not only students ' teachers, but also students ' friends. Students will not feel pressure in the learning process, will relax their emotions to participate in exercise, feel the process of exercise, exercise their willpower in the encouragement of coaches, and gain a sense of achievement. This is the embodiment of the interpersonal assistance dimension in psychological resilience. Some foreign scholars have pointed out that the wide participation of adolescents in social sports training (extracurricular sports training) will reduce risk and criminal behavior and improve mental health ( reduce frustration, depression, etc. ), especially girls [13]. This shows that extracurricular sports training has a positive effect on the emotional control of middle school students. Therefore, in general, extracurricular sports training can increase the psychological resilience of middle school students to a certain extent.

#### **3.2. Spontaneous Physical Exercise**

Spontaneous physical exercise refers to students ' leisure physical exercise based on interest and entertainment in the off-campus time, which is not taught by teachers. The characteristic of spontaneous physical exercise is to help promote the development of students ' personality and cultivate a lively and cheerful character [14]. Students can choose their own time, place, venue and friends to exercise together, and can choose their own sports projects to participate in, can maximize the development of students ' personality, and students in the process of sports for reasons of interest, students will be more focused, thus affecting the level of psychological resilience. In terms of positive cognition, students ' spontaneous participation in physical exercise shows an optimistic attitude towards life. The significance of life is not only to learn step by step, but also to gain inner satisfaction. In terms of emotional control, exercise can divert the attention of middle school students and reduce the focus on learning stress, thus alleviating the emotional news [15]. In addition, exercise can improve the mental state by promoting physical relaxation and help students improve their self-regulation ability. In terms of interpersonal assistance, students and friends to participate in physical exercise will promote exchanges, increase the frequency of communication, do each other 's listeners and sharers, make the relationship closer, so as to promote interpersonal assistance. Finally, in terms of family support, students exercising with their parents will make them feel their parents ' companionship, care and support, make their hearts more confident and stronger, and have a positive impact on social adaptability and mental health.

## **4. Educational Suggestions on Extracurricular Sports Activities**

### **4.1. Schools Organize a variety of Sports Activities**

In addition to the existing extracurricular sports activities organized by schools, there are some forms of sports activities that schools can adopt to enrich students' extracurricular life while improving students' psychological resilience. The first is the school organization fun games. Interesting sports meeting is a branch of school sports meeting. It combines sports with games, so that students can exercise while feeling the fun of games. Fun games will improve students' enthusiasm for participation, and fun games are basically group projects, taking the class as a unit, which will increase students' sense of collective responsibility. In the usual physical education class, they practice with their classmates to participate in the game project, which virtually increases the frequency of students' movement, so as to achieve the effect of sports to improve students' psychological resilience. The second is to organize parent-child sports activities in schools. After entering the middle school stage, students will gradually mature and psychologically weaken their dependence on their parents. Studies have shown that parental companionship is an important part of parent-child communication and family education. Parental companionship can promote parent-child relationship and communication, enhance parent-child feelings, and reduce adolescent depression [16]. There are many parents who lack the companionship and care for their children because of their busy work. The school organizes parent-child sports activities to a certain extent to meet the tasks and requirements of parents. Parents must try their best to take time to participate, increase the opportunity to exercise with their children, understand their children better in sports, promote mutual communication, and let children feel the participation and support of their parents in the process of growth, so as to improve the level of psychological resilience. Finally, the school organizes outdoor sports activities. Outdoor sports can alleviate the psychological pressure of middle school students, so that students are no longer bound by the school, and after experiencing such challenging sports activities, students will devote themselves to learning and life with better mental state and stronger willpower [17]. Secondly, middle school students to participate in outdoor sports activities can enhance the ability of middle school students to bear the pressure, but also can improve the social adaptability of middle school students. Outdoor sports are very unfamiliar to middle school students who are now growing up under the protection of their homes and do not belong to their comfort zone. Therefore, students may face difficulties that they are difficult to solve in the process of participation, which will test their adaptability and adaptability in unfamiliar environments. Finally, outdoor sports activities will help students develop good qualities, such as : strong will, no fear of difficulties, unity and cooperation, etc., good quality will promote the development of students' mental health.

### **4.2. Provide Public Sports Facilities Support the Fitness of Middle School Students**

At present, there are still many deficiencies in the public system of social sports for young people in China, and the facilities are not perfect [18]. First of all, students cannot enter the school to use the sports facilities on the campus when the school enters the winter and summer holidays. On the other hand, the gym and sports training on the market are not affordable for some low-income parents. Finally, the public sports facilities in the community have aging equipment and are often occupied by the elderly. In response to these situations, the government can unite various departments to encourage schools to open playgrounds for students to do some physical exercise during the winter and summer holidays. Secondly, the government can build exclusive leisure and entertainment venues for young people, equipped with sports equipment, and open for free, taking care of families with different incomes. Finally, improve the community sports facilities, arrange the layout reasonably, and distinguish the use space of the elderly and students. In addition, the government should vigorously promote the positive effect of physical exercise on the physical and mental health of middle school students, allow parents to recognize their children's participation in sports activities, and increase the attention of parents to their children's physical exercise frequency.

### **4.3. Pay Attention to the Cultivation of Sports Interest in Family Education**

It is the most important part for parents to cultivate their children's interest in sports. This study talks a lot about the importance of physical exercise to the mental health of middle school students and the improvement of psychological resilience, and also analyzes some educational suggestions. However, if students have no interest in sports, the suggestions are useless. Family support is a dimension in the measurement of psychological resilience scale. Good parent-child relationship plays an important role in the mental health and self-development of middle school students. Therefore, if we want to improve the level of psychological resilience of middle school students, parents should make changes. First of all, some parents should change their ideas, abandon the most important concept of achievement, and let their children devote themselves to learning at weekends. They have no time for social entertainment. Parents should pay attention to the combination of work and rest and pay attention to their children's emotional and physical health. Second, parents should teach by precept and example, play a leading role, stimulate children's interest, can combine physical exercise with games, and encourage children to participate. The entertainment and competition of physical exercise will increase the communication and interaction between parents and children, and promote parent-child feelings [19]. This will also allow children to feel the company and care of their parents, thus promoting mental health. Third, parents should often explain sports knowledge for their children, such as football or basketball rules, or use online resources to let their children know more about different sports, and then observe whether their children are interested in one of the sports. Finally, parents with conditions can take their children to sports training, and increase their children's skills while exercising.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper analyzes the characteristics of the popular forms of extracurricular sports in China, combined with the five dimensions of the middle school students' psychological resilience scale, it is concluded that middle school students can improve the level of psychological resilience whether they participate in extracurricular sports activities on campus or off campus. In extracurricular sports activities, the main interpersonal assistance of sports associations improves the psychological resilience of middle school students; the training of sports specialty students is mainly aimed at high school students, which has a great impact on students' willpower and emotional control, so as to improve the level of psychological resilience; the school sports team is influenced by the collective competition, mainly to improve the level of students' psychological resilience in two aspects: goal focus and interpersonal communication. In extracurricular sports activities, extracurricular sports training mainly has a positive impact on students' psychological resilience level in family support and positive cognition; spontaneous extracurricular sports activities improve students' psychological resilience in three aspects: interpersonal assistance, positive cognition and emotional control. At present, many studies in China have confirmed that sports activities have a positive effect on the psychological resilience of middle school students, but the research on extracurricular sports activities is very limited, and there is no detailed classification of extracurricular sports activities in the limited research. Therefore, this study fills this gap. This will be conducive to the development of extracurricular sports activities in middle schools in China in the future, including different types to promote students' mental health, improve students' psychological resilience level, and have a certain impact on parents' education methods for children, improve parents' attention to physical exercise, and promote children's all-round development. The deficiency of this study is that there is no experimental data to verify the impact of extracurricular sports activities on the psychological resilience of middle school students. The research prospect of this study is to make an empirical study on the feasibility experiment in the future based on the current research, and to explain the influence of extracurricular sports activities on the psychological resilience of middle school students with experimental data.

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