

Is there a social and/or psychological benefit to adolescents who participate in organised sports?

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effects of adolescent participation in sport on five psychological variables; self-esteem, satisfaction with life, pro-social, victim and bully score. A correlational design was used to deliver a cross-sectional survey to measure sports participation, gender, school type and the five psychological variables. A total of 127 4th year students from three schools participated in the study. The surveys used were the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the Satisfaction with life scale-child and the Bullying prevalence questionnaire. The results indicated a positive significant relationship between sports participation and school type. A significant difference between sports and non-sports participation on both self-esteem and satisfaction with life was also found. Results indicate that participating in sports has some positive effects.

Introduction

Benefits of Physical Activity

A lack of physical activity has shown to have long-term effects for both physical health and psychological well-being (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2001). With such long-term effects, it is important to further understand if participation in physical activity such as sports has a positive benefit for adolescent development. There has been much research into the benefits of regular physical activity, and some research into the psychological and social benefits of participation in sports.

Gallegos-Carrillo, Flores, Denova-Gutiérrez, Méndez-Hernández, Dosamantes-Carrasco, Henao-Morán & Salmerón (2013) found that adults who had a high level of physical activity were less likely to develop depressive symptoms in comparison with those who were inactive or engaged in moderate levels of physical activity.

It is well documented that people are living longer due to improvement of sanitation and medical research over the past number of decades. But over the last two decades there has also been an increase in obesity (Department of Health and Children [DOHC], 2005); obesity is now a major health problem throughout Europe. In a report by the DOHC (2005), the decline of physical activity is partially to blame for the obesity epidemic. It is recommended that both adults and children should be involved in between 45-60 minutes moderate physical activity each day (DOHC, 2005). The DOHC (2005) also highlight the psychosocial effect that being obese has and the cost associated with the healthcare of such problems. The psychological effect of childhood obesity ranges from having more

behavioural and emotional problems, lower physical self-esteem and negative self-worth (Braet, Mervielde, & Vandereycken, 1997).

Participating in high levels of physical activity has beneficial effects on noncommunicable diseases such as obesity, CHD & type 2 diabetes (Reiner, Niermann, Jekauc, & Woll, 2013). Research shows that physical activity or exercise has many benefits across all ages. A meta-analysis on older adults without psychological disorders showed that exercise had a positive impact on their overall well-being, including a reduction in anxiety (Netz, Wu, Becker, & Tenenbaum, 2005). Preadolescents who participate in physical activity demonstrate higher mental health (Annesi, 2005; Lu, Dayalu, Diop, Harvey, Manning, & Uzogara, 2012) and self-esteem (Strauss, Rodzilsky, Burack, & Colin, 2001).

The Adolescent

Hall, (1904) explained adolescence as a turbulent time full of conflict; this could not be more true of modern day adolescence. With the addition of technology and social media, adolescents are faced with more and more options. In 2011 it was estimated that 81% of Irish households had a computer, with 78% having access to the internet (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2011) and nearly all Irish households now have a television. Statistics like these may have contributed to the decline of physical activity in Irish Adolescents since 1998 (National Heart Alliance, 2006).

Navigating through adolescence can be difficult; adolescents are faced with biological, cognitive and social transitions (Steinberg, 2002, p. 5-6). It is also a time when they are searching for their own identity, not only in a personal sense but also within society (Steinberg, 2002, p. 10). A part of this psychosocial development is a change in self-esteem.

Self-esteem fluctuates throughout adolescence; research has discovered that between the ages of 12-14, self-esteem is at its most volatile. The fluctuating of ones self-esteem in adolescence is most likely down to Barometric self-esteem, which is the daily fluctuating of ones self-esteem in response to different thoughts (Steinberg, 2002, p. 262).

Some studies have shown that there is little difference between effect sizes of gender on global self-esteem (Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999; Twenge & Campbell, 2001). But further studies have looked at the effect sizes of gender on domain-specific self-esteem and found significant differences. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to suffering from low self-esteem in comparison to their male counterparts (Kling et al, 1999). In physical appearance, athletic, personal self, self-satisfaction and self-esteem, males scored significantly higher than females (Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge, Wells, & Maitino, 2009). Females scored higher on behavioural conduct and moral–ethical self-esteem (Gentile et al, 2009). Low self-esteem in adolescents can lead to problems in adulthood such as mental health problems (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, & Caspi, 2006; Steiger, Allemand, Robins, & Fend, 2014), poorer physical health (Trzesniewski et al 2006), higher levels of criminal behaviour and aggression (Fergusson, & Horwood, 2002; Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Trzesniewski et al 2006). High self-esteem in comparison has been found to impede health and mental issues (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003), reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour and substance abuse (Scheier, Botvin, Griffin, & Diaz, 2000; Kavvas, 2009), promote coping mechanisms (Baumeister et al 2003) and increase happiness (Baumeister et al, 2003). Adolescents with high self-esteem are less likely to be a bullying victim or bully (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001).

Happiness is an important factor of well-being, when students from 42 countries were asked how they view happiness; they reported “that happiness and life satisfaction were very important” (as cited in Diener, 2000, p. 34). Satisfaction with life is a key indicator of mental

health and well-being, it is especially important in the development of early adolescents (as cited in Bendayan, Blanca, Fernández-Baena, Escobar, & Victoria Trianes, 2013). Life satisfaction is negatively correlated with anxiety, depression (Lewinsohn, Redner, & Seeley, 1991), aggression (Valois, Zullig, Huebner & Drane, 2001; Valois, Paxton, Zullig, & Huebner, 2006) and stress (Abolghasemi & Varaniyab, 2010). High levels of life satisfaction are associated with greater peer attachment, positive self-concept, participation in pro-social activities and lower drug/alcohol consumption (Huebner, 2004; Gilman, & Huebner, 2006).

Effects of Sports Participation in Adolescence

Physical activity has many social and psychological advantages to people of all ages, as discussed earlier; however, are there the same benefits from specific types of physical activity? There are many different types of sports available in Ireland now, with varying levels of fitness and skills required, it seems there is more choice than ever before. Whereas physical activity in Ireland is decreasing, sports participation is on the rise (Irish Sports Council, 2013). Sport is a type of physical activity usually played as part of a team or individually, it is organised and mostly competitive in nature (Eime, Harvey, Sawyer, Craike, Symons, Polman, & Payne, 2013). Sports participation is most popular amongst 11-13 years but drops in popularity thereafter (Kirshnit, Ham, & Richards, 1989; Zimmermann-Sloutskis, Wanner, Zimmermann, & Martin, 2010). Studies have also shown that sports participation in youth has an impact on physical activity in adulthood (Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills, & Järvelin, 2003).

Adolescents that experience high levels of life satisfaction will be more likely to experience optimal mental health and less likely to suffer from psychological, social and behavioural problems, in comparison to those with low levels of life satisfaction (Park &

Peterson, 2004). Life satisfaction is a key component of well-being, which in turn has been found to be positively correlated to adolescent sports participation (Steptoe & Butler, 1996; Donaldson, & Ronan, 2006). Too much sport practice can however have the opposite effect, as a recent study by Merglen, Flatz, Bélanger, Michaud, & Suris, (2014) showed. In the study Merglen et al (2014) found that compared to adolescents in the group that practised an 'average' weekly amount, those who were in the 'low' and 'very high' weekly practise groups had a higher risk of poor well-being. The fourth group, 'high weekly practise', were found to have the lowest risk of poor well-being, the average hours spent practising in this group is 14 hours per week, which is double the recommended 7 hours (Merglen et al, 2014).

Playing sports provides people with an experience unlike any other, whether working as part of a team or autonomously, there is a goal, the goal to win. Competing in a sport takes dedication, practise, skill and focus, it requires athletes to think and react quickly. So apart from the satisfaction of competing, are sports a useful base for other areas of life? There have been many studies that found a background in sports involvement has led to positive educational and occupational outcomes (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Two separate longitudinal studies, carried out in the US from 1972 has shown that men who participated in athletics in high school earn between 12%-31% more than their counterparts who did not participate in high school athletics (Barron, Ewing, & Waddell, 2000).

It appears obvious to state that playing in sports will have a positive effect on a person's social development, given the social nature of sports. Numerous studies have demonstrated the advantages of participating in sports such as reduced social isolation (Barber et al, 2001; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003), improved self-esteem, social interaction and fewer depressive symptoms (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity & Payne, 2013). Findlay & Coplan, (2008) found evidence of decreased anxiety in shy children who

participated in sports over a one year period, which demonstrates that children who find social interaction difficult can be aided through participation in sports activities. Shyness in children can lead to underdeveloped social skills later in life. The importance of being socially accepted and having good peer relations in adolescence is vital to their development. Adolescents with poor peer relationships are low achievers in school, have higher rates of anti-social behaviour, and suffer more emotional and mental health problems later in life (Steinberg, 2002, p. 191).

Not everyone is convinced of the advantages of sports. Kohn (1987) opposed any sort of competition, in his book “No Contest: The Case Against Competition”, he argued that competition was “inherently destructive”. Kohn (1987) highlighted much research that supported his theory that competition breeds hostility, violence and aggression, all very anti-social characteristics.

There is also evidence that supports sports participation as being disadvantageous. Barber et al (2001) found that adolescents participating in sports had increased levels of alcohol consumption. Further studies by Lisha, & Sussman (2010) and Pate, Trost, Levin, & Dowda, (2000), found that although sports participation increased the likelihood of alcohol consumption, it reduced the likelihood of cigarette smoking and illegal drug use. Other studies have also found that participation in team sports was linked to higher alcohol consumption (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Pate et al, 2000; Lisha, & Sussman, 2010). Another study by Fauth, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, (2007), found that adolescent’s involvement in sports had “higher average delinquency scores” and increased substance abuse.

The general public perception of sport is positive; if adolescents are playing a sport then they are less likely to be taking part in antisocial behaviour. To play organised sports means you must follow rules; there are out-of-play rules, off-side rules and fouls to name but

a few. So it would make sense for an adolescent who plays sport, to also be less likely to take part in anti-social behaviour. The evidence suggests otherwise, Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn (2011) found that non-violent delinquency was higher in boys participating in sports, compared to boys participating in a non-athletic activity. Gardner et al (2011) also found that violent delinquency however is not significant in boys who participate in sports.

Taliaferro, Rienzo, Miller Pigg, & Dodd, (2008) looked at sports participation as a protector against suicidality, which is a leading cause of death in youths aged between 10-24 in America (American Association of Suicidology, 2012). The results of the study showed that sports participation did act as a protector against suicidality and hopelessness in both males and females (Taliaferro et al 2008; Pate, 2000).

The APA (n.d) describes bullying as intentional aggressive behaviour toward another that causes injury or discomfort. Bullying is a serious problem for school students, new technologies means that the victim can be targeted outside of school, in their own homes. A study by the ISPPC (2011) found 26% of secondary school students had been themselves or knew someone who had been bullied. Victimization is the inverse of bullying. Both bullying and victimisation are related to a number of negative psychosocial outcomes (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). There is little empirical evidence to suggest sports participation predicts bullying or victimisation. One study identified the link between American football and bullying, but the relationship was only predicted if the player thought his male role model would approve of the behaviour (Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette & Steinfeldt, 2012). Although there are some disadvantages to sports participation in adolescence, many more studies have shown the psychological and physical advantages.

Gender differences in sports participation

Sports have traditionally been seen as a male dominated field, it is only the mid to late 20th century that female sports involvement has increased. In society there are a number of different roles that are deemed appropriate for various individuals. Within these roles there are expectations, but if these societal expectations do not match with individual expectations, then this can cause conflict (Desertrain, & Weiss, 1988). A study conducted by Sage and Loudermilk (1979) on 268 female college athletes, found that females competing in traditionally male sports were more likely to experience greater role conflict than those competing in socially approved female sports. Even though sports participation amongst females is on the rise, the evidence shows that there is still a significant difference between male and female sports participation (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Irish Sports Council, 2013). Gender stereotype is another reason put forward as to why females do not participate in sport as much as males. Evidence from Huston's study in 1983 showed that gender roles and stereotypes can influence a child's self-concept development (as cited in Eccles & Harold, 1991). These stereotypes can result in girls feeling that they are not as athletically capable as boys (Eccles & Harold, 1991). There has been mounting evidence to suggest that females are seen to be less capable than males in the area of sports, even though they are in fact just as capable (Eccles, Jacobs, Harold, Jayarante, & Yee, 1989; Eccles, Jacobs & Harold, 1990).

Knisel, Opitz, Wossmann, & Keteihuf (2009) have looked at the different motivations of students toward sports participation, they found that the biological development of boys means they perform better in motor tasks that require both speed and strength. There is further research needed into why females are less active than males, given the physical, psychological and social benefits that physical activity and sports participation presents.

Team vs. Individual – Is there a difference?

There are many obvious differences between team and individual sports, but are there any social or psychological differences beyond this? Eime et al (2013), found that there is more health benefits coming from team sport participation over individual sports participation, this is due to the more social side of playing as part of a team. Team sporting achievement involvement in early adolescents has been found to be positively associated with self-esteem in female adolescence (Pedersen & Seidman, 2004).

Participation on sports teams has shown to be a protector against dissatisfaction with life in both females (White) and males (Black and White) in comparison to just doing physical activity (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2004). For females (White) this is especially true of playing as part of a school sports team, this is thought to be because of social support, enhanced school connectedness and bonding (Valios et al, 2004). Team sport involvement was also found to be a protector against depressed mood resulting from weak performance in school for female adolescents only (Gore, Farrell, & Gordon, 2001).

Sports type, whether it is individual or on a team has shown to impact anti-social behaviour. In a study on “Predictors of Anti-social and Pro-social Behaviour”, Rutten, Schuengel, Dirks, Stams Biesta & Hoeksma (2011) found that individual athletes were less likely to behave anti-socially than their team participating counterparts. Involvement in contact sports, such as American football, has been positively associated with serious fighting in American males (Kreager, 2007).

Research Objectives

Low self-esteem and life satisfaction can have detrimental effects on a person's psychological health, as well as their development. People with low self-esteem are more prone to underachieving, developing a psychological problem, such as anxiety or depression and find it more difficult adapting in negative situations and building strong social relationships (Passer & Smith, 2007, p. 454). Whereas those with high self-esteem have fewer social problems, have higher life satisfaction, are less vulnerable to pressure and are higher achievers (Passer & Smith, 2007, p. 454). The importance of adolescent sports participation on self-esteem has been identified in numerous studies (Bowker, 2006; Babiss, & Gangwisch, 2009; Taylor, & Turek, 2010; Wen-Ing, Chen-Yueh, Yi-Hsiu, & Tien-Tze, 2012). Highly supportive sports coaches were found to also have a positive impact on youths with low-self-esteem over a sports season (Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993). These findings highlight the importance of playing sports in adolescents which in turn can increase self-esteem and be a protector against mental and emotional illness.

Adolescents experiencing low life satisfaction will experience similar problems to those with low self-esteem. Low life satisfaction can lead to poorer physical health, social functioning and peer victimisation experience (Suldo, & Huebner, 2004; Suldo, & Shaffer, 2008). Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, (1992) found sports participation and strenuous exercise to be positively correlated to life satisfaction in adolescents.

Adolescent anti-social behaviour such as underage drinking, drug use, bullying and delinquency is a prime focus for youth groups, schools and parents. Adolescent crime rises after school up until 6pm in the US (Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Christeson, 2000). It is between these times that there should be increased focus on activities for teenagers. There is mixed

findings on the effect that sports participation has adolescents anti/pro social behaviour, some studies found positive relationships (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; Rutten, Schuengel, Dirks, Stams, Biesta, & Hoeksma, 2011) and some found negative relationships (Gardner et al, 2011; Rutten et al, 2011).

The current study aims to contribute to the existing literature by investigating if adolescent participation in organised sports has positive psychological and social benefits. None of the studies mentioned have used school type as a variable to measure sports participation, this research will investigate if there is an association between these two variables. Given the increasing focus on adolescent's well-being and the positive evidence of participating in sports, this research may contribute to the further understanding of positive adolescent development.

Hypotheses

There will be a difference in sports participation between gender and school-type.

Adolescents who participate in sports have significantly higher self-esteem and satisfaction with life than adolescents who do not participate in sport.

It is hypothesised that there will be a significant difference between the bully, victim and pro-social scores of adolescents who participate in sport, compared to adolescents that don't participate in sport.

It is hypothesised that there will be a significant difference between sports participation type on self-esteem and satisfaction with life of adolescents.

It is hypothesised that there will be a significant difference between sports participation type on the bully, victim and pro-social scores of adolescents.

Methodology

Participants

A sample group of 127 participants were used in this study. All participants were 4th year secondary students. There was an even distribution of students from mixed, all-girls and all-boys schools. All 4th year students from the three schools participated in the study. Initial contact with the student participants was made by requesting approval by phone from the Principle, Vice-Principle and PE Teacher of the various schools. All schools contacted gave their permission for the research to be conducted using their 4th year students. There was further consent given by parents of the students by way of a note explaining the study being sent home to all participants. Of the 127 participants that agreed to take part in the study; 52 were female and 75 were male.

Design

This study is a quantitative, cross-sectional, mixed correlational design used to examine if there is a relationship between sports participation on self-esteem, satisfaction with life, pro-social, victim and bully scores. The predictor variable is gender, school type and sports participation, and the criterion variable being sports participation, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, pro-social, victim and bully scores. The correlational design will interpret the effects that gender and school type has on sports participation and yield a result concerning the research hypothesis. The correlational design will also interpret the effects that sport participation has on self-esteem, satisfaction with life, pro-social, victim and bully scores. Demographic variables also include age.

Materials

In the current study a survey questionnaire was compiled that measured all the variables. The full questionnaire and cover sheet are included in the Appendix. The material used were three self-administered, paper and pencil questionnaires, these were; the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (SES), (Rosenberg ,1965), the Satisfaction With Life Scale-Child (SWLS-C), (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and the Bullying Prevalence Questionnaire (BPQ), (Rigby, & Slee, 1993). Basic demographic information such as gender, age and type of school attending was also attained, along with two questions regarding sports participation.

The SES (Rosenberg ,1965) is a 10-item self-administered questionnaire used to measure self-esteem. Participants rated their answers on four-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (0) to 'Strong Agree' (3). Five items on the scale are measured normally and five items are measured in reverse, the scores are then added together to get a final score of self-esteem. The scale range is between 0-30, the normal range is between 15-25, scores below 15 indicate low self-esteem (Rosenberg ,1965). The SES has high reliability with a test-retest correlation ranging from 0.82 to 0.88 (Blascovich & Tomaka 1993).

The SWLS-C (Diener, 1985) is a five-item self-administered questionnaire used to measure satisfaction with life. Participants rated their answers on five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Disagree a lot' (1) to 'Agree a lot' (5). The answers are added together to get a total score of satisfaction with life. The scale range is between 5-25, the higher the score the higher the satisfaction with life. The SWLS-C shows strong test-retest reliability (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Gadermann, Schonert-Reichl, & Zumbo, 2010).

The BPG (Rigby, & Slee, 1993) is a 20-item questionnaire which measures three subscales, Bully, Victim and Pro-social prevalence. Participants rated their answers on four-point

Likert scale ranging from 'Never' (1) to 'Very Often' (4). Six items relate to the bully scale, which is added up to give a total. The total range for the bully scale is 6-24, the higher the total the more prevalence the bullying attitude. Five items relate to the victim scale, which is added up to give a total. The total range for the victim scale is 5-20, the higher the total the more prevalent the victim attitude. The final sub-scale is made up of four items and relates to the pro-social scale. The total range for the pro-social scale is 4-16, the higher the total the more prevalent the pro-social attitude.

There was four sections to the questionnaire, the first section contained demographics as well as sports participation questions. The second section contained the BPQ, the third section included the SWLS-C and the third contained the SES.

Procedure

Firstly a Statutory Declaration was signed in order for the study to take place, as the participants are under 18. The Principle, Vice-Principle and PE Teacher of the respective schools were contacted by phone in order to gain permission to conduct research within each school. A follow up email with the cover letter and questionnaire was then sent to the schools. Prior to the study taking place the students were given a note to bring home to notify their parents, explaining that they can withdraw their children by returning the slip. Finally the students themselves were given the chance to withdraw at any point during the study up until the questionnaire was handed back, as this was an anonymous study. All consent forms stated that this was a confidential study and that data collected would be held in line with the data protection act.

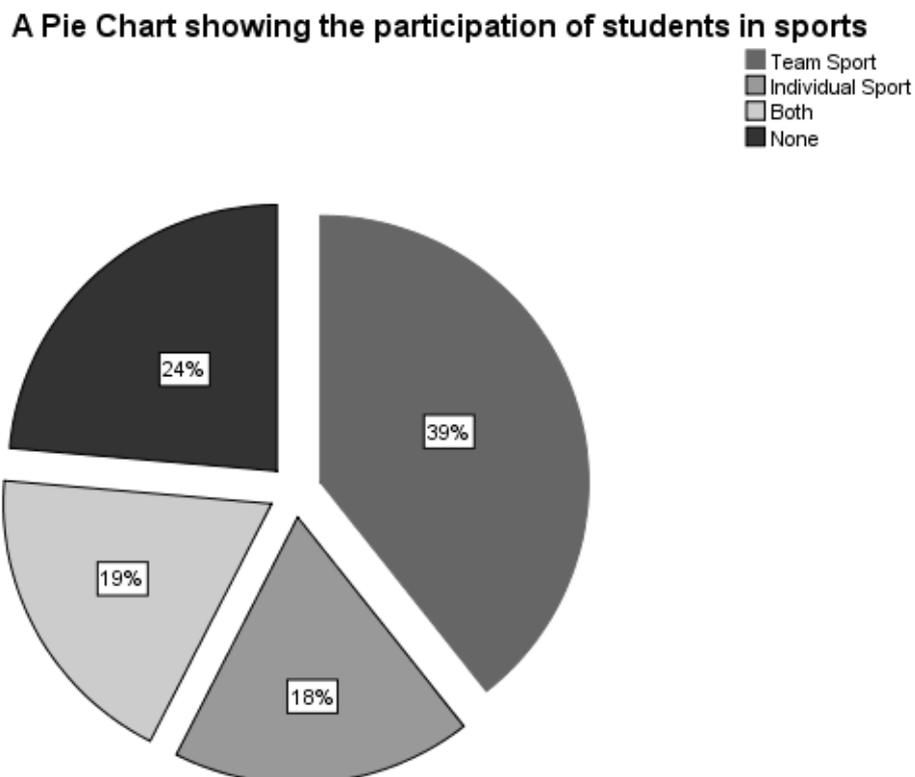
The study was conducted over three weeks, each school was visited once within this time. Within each school there were at least two classes to visit and carry out the research. The procedure was the same in each class. After an introduction from the teacher, students

were informed of the purpose of the study, which is the “social and psychological effects of sports participation in adolescents”. Students were informed that the study is voluntary and they did not have to take part, also that they could withdraw at any stage up to handing back the questionnaire. The students were asked to separate their desks to give them more privacy. The researcher gave some time to answering questions before distributing the questionnaire. Once all students were happy and had given their consent to be part of the study, the researcher handed out the questionnaires. The questionnaire took between 5-10 minutes to complete. Once complete the students raised their hand and the researcher collected the questionnaire from them and placed into a folder. When all the class had completed the questionnaire, the researcher thanked them for their time and left.

Results

IBM SPSS version 21 was used for all statistical analysis. A total of 131 students participated in the study. The sample was both male and female. After checking the questionnaires four were excluded, this was due to some sections or questions not being answered. A total of 127 fully completed the questionnaire. The sample was made up of 41% (n=52) females and 59% (n=75) males. Of these, 34% (n=43) were from the mixed school, 31% (n=40) were from the all-girls school, and 35% (n=44) were from the all-boys school. Sports participation amongst the sample was high, 76% reported participating in sports. Figure 1 shows the non/sport participation type participation.

Figure 1.



Gender / School Type – Sports Participation

Analysis on sports participation by gender was conducted, it found that 79% (n=41) of females reported sports participation, compared to 75% (n=56) of males. A Chi-square test for association found that there was no significant relationship between the variables sports participation and gender ($\chi^2 (1, N=127) = .297, p = .586$).

Participants from the all-girls school reported the most sports participation of all the schools with 93% (n=37) of students participating in sports. The all-boys school were next with 75% (n=33) of students reporting participation in sports, and the least amount of students participating in sports were from the mixed school with 62% (n=27). A Chi-square test for association found that there was a weak positive significant relationship between the variables sports participation and school type ($\chi^2 (1, N=127) = 10.209, p = .006$).

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Psychological Measures*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Esteem	19.94	4.45
Satisfaction with Life	17.88	3.91
Pro-social Score	11.97	2.04
Bully Score	7.09	1.76
Victim Score	6.72	2.04

Self-Esteem

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare self-esteem in students that participate in sports and students that do not participate in sports. Sports participants (mean = 20.41, SD = 4.52) were found to have higher self-esteem than non-sports participants (mean = 18.43, SD = 3.92). The 95% confidence limit shows that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between .16 and 3.79. An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference between self-esteem of sports and non-sports participants ($t(125) = 2.16, p = .033$).

When we examine the mean self-esteem score for each group, it can be seen that students who participated in both (team & individual) sports had higher self-esteem scores. A one-way analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference between the four groups in terms of self-esteem scores ($F(3,123) = 1.66, p = .18$). Table 1 illustrates mean and standard deviation for self-esteem.

Satisfaction with Life

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare satisfaction with life in students that participate in sports and students that do not participate in sports. Sports participants (mean = 18.28, SD = 3.92) were found to have higher satisfaction with life than non-sports participants (mean = 16.60, SD = 3.63). The 95% confidence limit shows that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between .08 and 3.27. An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference between satisfaction with life of sports and non-sports participants ($t(125) = 2.08, p = .039$).

When we examine the mean satisfaction with life score for each group, it can be seen that students who participated in team sports had higher satisfaction with life scores. A one-way analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference between the four groups in terms of satisfaction with life scores ($F(3,123) = 1.67, p = .18$). Table 1 illustrates mean and standard deviation for satisfaction with life.

Pro-Social

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare pro-social score in students that participate in sports and students that do not participate in sports. Non-sports participants (mean = 12.10, SD = 2.40) were found to have higher pro-social scores than sport participants (mean = 11.93, SD = 1.93). The 95% confidence limit shows that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -1.02 and .67. An independent samples t-test found that there was no statistically significant difference between pro-social score of sports and non-sports participants ($t(125) = -.40, p = .688$).

When we examine the mean pro-social score for each group, it can be seen that students who participated in both (team & individual) sports had higher pro-social scores. A one-way analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference between the four groups in terms of self-esteem scores ($F(3,123) = 1.05, p = .38$). Table 1 illustrates mean and standard deviation for pro-social scores.

Victim / Bully Scores

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference between victim scores in the sports participants and non-sports participants. The

non-sports participants had a mean rank of 69, compared to the mean rank of 62 for the sport participants. The Mann-Whitney revealed that the non-sports participants and sports participants did not differ significantly ($U = -.85, p = .396$).

A Kruskal-Wallis one-way Anova showed that students that participated in team sport, individual sport, both sports and no sports victim score did not differ significantly ($X^2(3) = 3.88, p = .275$). Table 1 illustrates mean and standard deviation for victim scores.

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference between bully scores in the sports participants and non-sports participants. The non-sports participants had a mean rank of 69, compared to the mean rank of 63 for the sport participants. The Mann-Whitney revealed that the non-sports participants and sports participants did not differ significantly ($U = -.85, p = .395$).

A Kruskal-Wallis one-way Anova showed that students that participated in team sport, individual sport, both sports and no sports bully score did not differ significantly ($X^2(3) = 2.83, p = .419$). Table 1 illustrates mean and standard deviation for bully scores.

Table 1

Spearman's rho for all Scale Variable Totals

		SWLS Total	RSES Total	Bully Scale	Victim Scale	Pro-Social Scale	
Spearman's rho	SWLS Total	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.301**	-.031	.096	.201*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001	.727	.284	.023
		N	127	127	127	127	127
	RSES Total	Correlation Coefficient	.301**	1.000	.015	-.327**	-.072
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.	.870	.000	.422
		N	127	127	127	127	127
	Bully Scale	Correlation Coefficient	-.031	.015	1.000	.122	-.109
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.727	.870	.	.172	.223
		N	127	127	127	127	127
	Victim Scale	Correlation Coefficient	.096	-.327**	.122	1.000	.258**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.284	.000	.172	.	.003
		N	127	127	127	127	127
Pro-Social Scale	Correlation Coefficient	.201*	-.072	-.109	.258**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.422	.223	.003	.	
	N	127	127	127	127	127	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Further analysis was done on the results. A Spearman's rho was run in place of a Pearson's r due to the non-parametric nature of some of the scale variables used. Table 1 shows the results of the Spearman's rho, the significant scores are reported below.

The mean scores for RSES 19.94 (SD = 4.45) and for Victim Scale was 6.72 (SD = 2.04). A Spearman's rho correlation found that there was a moderate negative significant relationship between RSES and Victim Scale ($r_s(125) = -.33, p < .001$).

The mean scores for SWLS 17.88 (SD = 3.91) and for RSES was 19.94 (SD = 4.45). A Spearman's rho correlation found that there was a weak positive significant relationship between SWLS and RSES ($r_s(125) = .29, p = .001$).

The mean scores for SWLS 17.88 (SD = 3.91) and for Pro-social Scale was 11.97 (SD = 2.04). A Spearman's rho correlation found that there was a weak positive significant relationship between SWLS and Pro-social Scale ($r_s(125) = .21, p = .020$).

The mean scores for Victim Scale 6.72 (SD = 2.04) and for Pro-social Scale was 11.97 (SD = 2.04). A Spearman's rho correlation found that there was a weak positive significant relationship between Victim Scale and Pro-social Scale ($r_s(125) = .19, p = .033$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate if sports participation had a significant effect on adolescent self-esteem, satisfaction with life, pro-social, victim and bully scores. It was hypothesised that the adolescent participation in sport would have a positive effect on all six dependent variables.

The research found a surprising number of students participating in sports. A Chi-square test found a positive significant relationship between school type and sports participation. Unexpectedly the all-girls school had 93% of students participating in sports; the mixed school had the least amount of sports participants of the three schools. As hypothesised sports participants scored higher on self-esteem and satisfaction with life, compared to non-sports participants. An independent sample t-test, found both these differences to be statistically significant. Contrary to the hypothesis there was no significant difference between sports participation and pro-social, victim and bully scores.

Additional analysis was run to test relationships between the psychological variables. A Spearman's rho found a negative significant relationship between self-esteem and victim score. There were also weak positive correlations found between satisfaction with life and both self-esteem and pro-social score. Interestingly as a victim score increased so did the participants pro-social score.

Effects of Sports Participation in Adolescents

This study has found that a substantial amount of students are taking part in some form of organised sport, which the evidence has shown to be beneficial to psychological

well-being. Research has highlighted the benefits of physical activity, and sports participation in particular, on an adolescent's satisfaction with life. Valois et al (2004) identified that there was a significant relationship between not playing on a sports team and dissatisfaction with life. Their (Valois et al, 2004) findings suggested that a substantial amount of high school students were dissatisfied with their lives and also not participating in physical activity. Contributing to adolescent life satisfaction, more than just physical activity, is participation on a sports team (Valois et al, 2004). This seems to protect against low life satisfaction more than exercising alone. An earlier study by Vilhjalmsson and Thorlindsson (1992) yielded similar results to Valois. The results of the current study has repeated these previous findings, the life satisfaction of the current sample that partake in sports is higher than those who do not. Similar to the Valois et al and Vilhjalmsson studies, the highest satisfaction with life mean score belonged to the team sport participant, closely followed by participants who played both team and individual sports. One reason why the current study findings echo previous findings might be because of the social nature of sports. Playing on a team with or against others, means there is a commonality between peers and will likely lead to social bonds being made. Steinberg (2002, p. 191-192) emphasises the importance of being apart of a peer group for the adolescents well-being. According to Csikszentmihalyi & Larson (as cited in Steinberg, 2002, p. 192) adolescents are happiest when with their peers, this would explain the similarities in the present and already existing results.

The results of our comparative t-test found that sports participation was positively correlated with self-esteem. These findings are consistent with some of the current literature. There has been many studies focusing on adolescent sports participation and how it affects self-esteem, the findings have been mixed. Some studies show a relationship between sports participation and high self-esteem (Jaffee & Manzer, 1992; Taylor, 1995; Bowker, 2006). Richman & Shaffer (2000) however report little effect of sports participation on self-esteem,

and even found that sports participation can undermine self-esteem at times. Another finding still, comes from a study by Daniels & Leaper (2006), who found peer relations as a mediator on the relationship between sports participation and self-esteem. This study supports some research, which might be due to peer relationships, like with the life satisfaction result. Sports achievement might be another explanation as to why this study has found higher self-esteem in adolescents who participate in sports (Pedersen & Seidman, 2004).

Kavussanu (as cited in Rutten et al, 2011) explains that sport provides the opportunity for both pro-social and anti-social behaviour. This study showed no significant relationship between pro-social scores and sports participation, likewise there was no relationship between pro-social scores and non-sports participation. There hasn't been a lot of evidence to prove or disprove the relationship between sports participation and pro-social behaviour. But Mahoney et al (2005) found that participation in sports can lead to reduced problem behaviour and better psychosocial adjustment. The current study is similar to the published research in that it did not demonstrate one way or the other. The context and individual are likely to play more of a part in pro-social behaviour than any sort of sport or activity participation. Characteristics of pro-social behaviour are empathy, moral values and personal responsibility (Kidron & Fleischman, 2006). The most important factor on these characteristics is relationships, and in particular parental relationships. Zhou, Eisenberg, Losoya, Fabes, Reiser, Guthrie, & Shepard, (2002), discovered that children with parents, who are most responsive to their needs, will develop more pro-social behaviours.

It can be argued that anti-social behaviour is the inverse of pro-social behaviour. The evidence for sports participation as a predictor anti-social behaviour is mixed. Vazsonyi, Pickering, Belliston, Hessing, & Junger, (2002) evidence supports that routine activity such as sports decrease the anti-social behaviour in adolescence. Whereas Garner et al (2011) found a correlation between sports participation and anti-social behaviour. Rutten et al (2011)

found that the type of sports people play is also an important factor on antisocial behaviour which will be discussed later. Kidron & Fleischman (2006) explained the importance of relationships in determining pro-social behaviour. Rutten et al (2011) support this theory with their research, they found that a supportive sports coach increases pro-social behaviour and decrease anti-social behaviour in adolescents.

There is sparse evidence that supports a relationship between sports participation and either bullying or victimisation. The findings of the current study reflect this. Although non-sports participants reported a higher mean on both the bullying and victim score, it was not significantly different. Sports participants have high self-esteem (Jaffee & Manzer, 1992; Taylor, 1995; Bowker, 2006), individuals that score higher on self-esteem are less likely to bully others or become a victim to bullying (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001).

Gender differences in sports participation

Contrary to existing research, the current study found more females to participate in sports compared to males. Although there was not a significant relationship found between gender and sports participation, the higher number of females than males involved in sports is surprising. All research in this field found that males participate in sports more than females, (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Pate, Trost, Levin, & Dowda, 2000) a recent study by the Irish Sports Council (2013), also found this to be the case in Ireland. For this study, three types of schools were used, namely, mixed, all-girls and all-boys. No other literature was found that used a similar sample, the school with the most sports participation was found to be the all-girls school also. Females in the mixed school showed less sport participation than those attending the all-girls school.

Team vs Individual – Is there a difference?

There was no significant difference between sport type participation and any of the psychological variables. The data in this study did support the evidence that team sport participants have higher satisfaction with life; the mean score for satisfaction with life in team sport participants was higher than the other participation. However self-esteem and pro-social scores were highest in participants that took part in both team and individual sports. Participating in both sport types proves to be more beneficial than partaking in just one, there is little other evidence to support or oppose these findings.

Further Analysis

Further analysis was done on correlations between variables, a significant negative relationship was found between self-esteem and victim score. So as the victim score goes up, self-esteem drops, this is consistent with most findings in this area (Overbeek, Zeevalkink, Vermulst & Scholte, 2010; Fredstrom, Adams, & Gilman, 2011). Similarities here might be due to the status of the individual within the school. Steinberg (2002) said that self-esteem is higher in adolescents that are within a popular peer group. Victims in previous studies and the current study, may not belong to one of these popular groups. Another argument as to why the scores are similar relates to the individuals low self-esteem as being the main reason why they are being victimised. O'Moore, & Kirkham, (2001), found that high self-esteem protects against being bullied and being a bully.

A Spearman's rho was run to find correlations between the remaining psychological variables, a number of positive significant relationships were reported. Satisfaction with life

is positively correlated with self-esteem; this is consistent with the existing literature. Satisfaction with life was found to be significantly correlated with pro-social behaviour. Pro-social individuals are better adjusted, have less problem behaviour and are more satisfied with life, according to Sun & Shek, (2010).

Limitations and strengths of the current study

There are limitations to the current study that are worth mentioning. The number of sports participants far outnumbered non-sport participants, a larger sample size might have resulted in a more even spread of participation. Rather than using three different school types, this study could have used two of each type of school to investigate if the results were typical of each school type. The sample group was made up of 4th year secondary school students. These students choose to do transition year, transition year is year for learning new things and taking part in new activities and work placement. By using students from just this year the research is omitting individuals with different traits and drives.

A second limitation is the study design, a mixed correlational, cross-sectional study only measures on one occasion. A repeated measure design would be more reliable as it would help control for variables such as mood. The actual nature of a correlational design means that people know you are looking for an effect. By taking part in the experiment the responses to the questions might change to favour what the participant thinks is expected of them. Conversely it might have the opposite effect, which Masling (as cited in Murphy, 1984) named the “screw you affect”.

The final limitation is around the sports participation, much research has identified differences between contact and non-contact sports. Adding this into the study may have yielded different results.

In spite of its limitations the current research contributes to the body of research that exists on the effects of sports participation in adolescents. A strength of the current study is that three different school types were used in the sample, this proved to be one of the more surprising and significant findings. The questionnaire was ideally suited to adolescents; it was short and easy to follow. This study measured the difference between playing team, individual and both sports and found that self-esteem and pro-social scores were higher in individual that played both, this is a unique strength not replicated in previous studies.

Implications for future research

Future research should include a larger sample taken from the all secondary school classes rather than just the 4th year students. Repeated measure design should be used to avoid inconsistencies in data. An interesting addition to future studies would be to measure the relationship that sports coaches have on the self-esteem, life satisfaction, pro-social, victim and bully scores. It would be useful to research if participation in non-sport activities have any influence on these variables. Future research should add peer groups as variable as much research has indicated that relationships with peers has an impact on an individual's self-esteem, life satisfaction, pro-social, victim and bully scores.

Conclusion

This study has measured the influence that sports and non-sports participation has on self-esteem, life satisfaction, pro-social, victim and bully scores. School type was found to

have a positive significant relationship with sport participation. Sports participants were found to have higher self-esteem and satisfaction with life than non-sports participants. There was no significant difference between playing team or individual sports, even though participants in both sports scored higher on self-esteem and pro-social scores. The results uncovered some important points not addressed in the current study. Firstly the positive influence that sports coaches have over participants in relation to pro-social, bully and victim scores. Secondly the effect of peer relationships within sports that effect self-esteem and life satisfaction. This study supports much of the existing research but more in depth future research is needed to verify these results.

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Appendices

Letter to School

Dear _____,

Firstly I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to conduct research at your school. As outlined previously, the study is around sports participation and its effect on the psychological and social development of adolescents.

I have chosen 4th year students as the sample as they are at a unique stage of adolescent development. The method for the study is a paper and pen questionnaire. I would like to be present when the questionnaire is handed out, so I can explain to the class the reason for the study and also to answer any questions that they might have. I have attached the questionnaire I will use, to this email.

All the questionnaires that I am using are standardised, valid and reliable, however, some students may be affected by an item(s) and therefore I will provide helplines on the cover page of the questionnaire.

A letter from my college outlining my attendance in the psychology degree course can be provided if you wish. I will explain to the students that their participation is voluntary and by filling out the questionnaire they are agreeing to participate. They can withdraw from the study at any time. However, as No names are written on the questionnaire, once the student has placed their paper into the box, it cannot be withdrawn.

Once the study is complete I will share the findings with you. I can also come back into _____ to share the results with the sample students I used or with other classes.

If you have any questions about my study, please don't hesitate to call me on 08X XXXXX or mail me at XXXXXX@mybds.ie.

Again I would like to thank you for helping me with my research.

Kind regards,

Cara Mc Quade.

Cover Sheet and Questionnaire to Participants

Dear student,

I would like to ask you to participate in my study. I am a undergraduate Psychology student in DBS College. I am conducting a survey on organised sports participation in adolescents for my final year project. The aim of this study is to further our knowledge on how participation or non-participation in organised sports effect teenagers.

For this study, organised sports are viewed as participation in any team or individual sports either inside or outside school, for example, football clubs, dance classes, athletic teams etc. For the purpose of this study, casual sports participation such as a game of football with friends is not classed as an organised sport.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time up until handing in the finished questionnaire. This is an anonymous study which means that you will not be identified from your questionnaire. No names should be written on the questionnaire, all questionnaires will be put into a box together so that they are unidentifiable. Also please note that all data given will be kept safe in line with the data protection act. Only I will have access to the finished questionnaires. The use of this information is for my thesis and presentation. There are no right or wrong answers!

If any of the subjects outlined in this study affect you, you can speak with your year head or guidance counsellor on _____.

Alternatively you can call;

- Childline 1800 66 66 66
- Headstrong 1890 303 302
- Samaritans 1850 60 90 90

Thank you for taking part in my study. I hope you find it interesting.

Kind regards,

Cara.

Sports Participation amongst Adolescents Questionnaire

For this study, organised sports are viewed as participation in any team or individual sports either inside or outside school, for example, football clubs, dance classes, athletic teams etc. For the purpose of this study, casual sports participation such as a game of football with friends is not classed as an organised sport.

Please circle or fill in

Section 1

1. What gender are you? Male Female
2. What age are you?
3. Do you participate in organised sports either in school or outside of school?
Yes No
4. If yes, is the sport that you are involved in;
A Team Sport Individual Sport Both

Section 2

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that describes you the best.

Please read each sentence carefully and answer honestly. Thank you.

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	1	2	3	4
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities	1	2	3	4
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	1	2	3	4
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

Section 3

For each of the following statements, please circle the number that describes you the best.

Please read each sentence carefully and answer honestly. Thank you.

	Statement	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Don't agree or disagree	Agree a little	Agree a lot
1.	In most ways my life is close to the way I would want it to be	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The things in my life are excellent	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am happy with my life	1	2	3	4	5
4.	So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	1	2	3	4	5
5.	If I could live my life over, I would have it the same way	1	2	3	4	5

Section 4

For each of the following statements, please tick one of the answers that is true to you.
Thank you.

	Statement	Never	Once in a while	Pretty Often	Very Often
1.	I like playing sport				
2.	I get good marks in class				
3.	I get called names by others				
4.	I give soft kids a hard time				
5.	I like to make friends				
6.	I play up in class				
7.	I feel I can't trust others				
8.	I get picked on by others				
9.	I am part of a group that goes round teasing people				
10.	I like to help people that are Being harassed				
11.	I like to make others scared of me				
12.	Others leave me out of things on Purpose				
13.	I get into fights at school				
14.	I like to show others that I'm the boss				
15.	I share things with others				
16.	I enjoy upsetting wimps, someone I can easily beat				
17.	I like to get into a fight with someone I can easily beat				
18.	Others make fun of me				
19.	I get hit and pushed around by others				
20.	I enjoy helping others				

Questionnaire Scoring

Rosenberg Self-esteem scale

- For items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7:

Strongly agree = 3

Agree = 2

Disagree = 1

Strongly disagree = 0

- For items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 (which are reversed in valence):

Strongly agree = 0

Agree = 1

Disagree = 2

Strongly disagree = 3

The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range; scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

Satisfaction With Life Scale-Child (SWLS-C)

SWLS-C items are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (“disagree a lot”) to 5 (“agree a lot”) then added together yielding a total score ranging from 5 to 25.

The Bullying Prevalence Questionnaire (Bpq)

Interpretation

This questionnaire contains 3 sub-scales and several filler items. The scoring of the scales is as follows:

Never = 1

Once in a while = 2

Pretty often = 3

Very often = 4

Items belonging to the Scales are these:

Bully Scale: 4, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17

Victim Scale: 3, 8, 12, 18, 19

Pro-Social Scale: 5, 10, 15, 20

For a shorter 12-item scale (without filler items) the items underlined should be used, as in the published article: Rigby, K. and Slee, P.T. (1993). Dimensions of interpersonal relating among Australian school children and their implications for psychological well-being. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 133(1), 33-42



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DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL / DBS SCHOOL OF ARTS
STATUTORY DECLARATION

I CARA McQUADE of [REDACTED]

aged 18 years and upwards do solemnly and sincerely, declare that:

1. I am not and have never been engaged in any conduct which could result in a conviction for any offence under the Child Pornography Act 1998. I understand that the offences under the Act comprise child trafficking, the taking of children for the purposes of sexual exploitation, allowing children to be used for the production of child pornography, the dissemination of child pornography, and the possession of child pornography.
2. I have never been convicted of any criminal offence for assault, battery, rape, murder, false imprisonment or unlawful carnal knowledge.
3. I have also never been convicted of any criminal offence relating to the trafficking or possession of drugs for supply.
4. I have never been excluded from working with children.
5. I have read and agree to abide by the code of ethical conduct set out by the Psychological Society of Ireland currently in force at the date of making this Declaration and I agree to abide by this code as subsequently amended from time to time.
6. I have read and agree to abide by the guidelines as set out in the DBS Ethics Policy.
7. I have been informed and understand that if I make a false declaration regarding any of these matters Dublin Business School will immediately terminate my research in the department and that any qualifications from the School will be negated.

I make this declaration for the satisfaction of Dublin Business School believing the same to be true and by virtue of the Statutory Declarations Act 1938.

Cara McQuade
Signature

DECLARED before me by the said Cara McQuade

Who is personally known to me
(or who is identified to me by.....)

Who is personally known to me) at... [REDACTED]

in the City of Dublin this 25 day of October 2015

[Signature]
Commissioner for Oaths / Practising Solicitor

C. Moore & Co.
Solicitors
The Georgian Business Centre
20 Baggot Street Lower
Dublin 2

Note sent out by schools to parents

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a former pupil of _____, and I am currently in the final year of my Psychology degree. As part of my final year, I have to complete a study, and submit my findings to the college. I have agreed with _____ to hand out questionnaires to 4th year students as part of my study, which looks at sports participation in adolescents.

The study is voluntary and if you do not wish for your child to take part, then please sign this slip and return to the school by _____.

Signature

Thank you for your help.

Cara Mc Quade

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am currently in the final year of my Psychology degree. As part of my final year, I have to complete a study, and submit my findings to the college. I have agreed with _____ to hand out questionnaires to 4th year students as part of my study, which looks at sports participation in adolescents.

The study is voluntary and if you do not wish for your child to take part, then please sign this slip and return to the school by _____.

Signature

Thank you for your help.

Cara Mc Quade

