

# Importance of youth sports | essay



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Sports as an activity can be traced back to the earliest existence of human beings, for as long as they have been active and sportive. It is a great way for people to master the benefits of nature and their surrounding or environment for that matter. By studying the history of sports, we can learn about the social changes that man has gone through in the past as well as the transformations that sports in itself has undergone. These changes are mostly evidenced in the changes of the rules that govern the various sporting activities as well as in the manner in which they are played. It involves the development and exercise of natural human talents and skills as opposed to exercising them for their importance.

Sports has mainly been a preserve of those in their youth as that is the point at which one still has the strength, agility, mindset and the motivation to be actively involved in it. In most sporting activities, one is said to be at their prime in their youth. Sports can be broadly categorized as either team sports or individual sports. Team sports include soccer, basketball, netball, hockey, baseball, volleyball among others. Individual sports include games like badminton, tennis, squash, table tennis, darts, scrabble, and chess among others. The other classification of sporting activities can be physical or non-physical. The physical sports are those that require movement of the body muscles for which fitness is of the essence. Majority of sports fall in this category. Non-physical sports include board games like chess, draft, scrabble among others; these are mostly played in the mind but nevertheless are still sports.

All over the world, sporting activities have provided great entertainment for audiences. The 2006 FIFA football world cup in Germany alone had a

cumulative television audience of 26. 29 billion in-home and 2. 1 billion out - of-home viewers (fifa. com). Football is not in this category alone, sports like basketball, baseball and other mainstream sports have been known to have a lot of their tournaments declared sold out due to over subscription by fans intent on going to watch their favorite players thrash their opponents. The entertainment provided by these sporting activities ensures people spend their free time progressively instead of wasting it on activities that will in the end not add any value to their lives.

Sports among the youth is a key factor that has been noted to promote prosocial characteristic traits among individuals. According to Bar-Tal, (1976) and Bierhoff, (2002), prosocial are positive forms of social behavior that are not motivated by personal obligations, rather they are voluntary and they have positive results. These include; cooperation, sharing, respect, altruism and many others (Larrieu & Mussen, 1986). Sports among the youth is therefore a very important tool through which individuals, especially the antisocial ones can hone their social skills through interaction with their team mates as well as the opposing players. Through this interaction, one's communication skills are also enhanced and developed and these are acquisitions that will benefit the individual later on in life.

Obesity has reached worrying proportions and this is a particular concern to health experts especially since this is caused by an increased rate of inactivity among the youth (National Institute of Health, n. d.; World Health Organization, 2000). According to Storm & Jenkins, (2002), the childhood obesity rates which currently stand at approximately 15% are an increase of over 40% through the past 40 years. Childhood obesity is not only a cause of

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health problems at the present in the form of Type II diabetes but due to its relation to adult obesity, these individuals are likely to become struggling adults with obesity if they do not change their sedentary lifestyles. By engaging in sports activities especially for the purposes of having fun, these children will not only enjoy themselves but they will also have the added advantage of working their way to a better lifestyle that will improve their health.

Youths who engage in sporting activities are encouraged to learn good sportsmanship qualities and by learning these they also get to familiarize with the five C's of positive youth development. These five C's are; competence, confidence, connection, compassion & caring, and character. These are important life tools and skills that any growing and developing youth need in order to be able to relate with his juniors, peers as well as seniors well. They enable the individual to grow into a respectable adult capable of making wise decisions that will positively influence not only himself but also those around him. Through sports, one acquires the confidence to tackle the obstacles that life throws at him having become accustomed to challenges from various types of opponents.

Sports among the youth are a good way of passing free time. According to health organizations, there is a growing trend of moral decadence among the youth which is leading to very promising lives being wasted due to drugs. Most of these drug activities are carried out due to individuals having a lot of idle time in which they do not participate in any physical activities, as a result, they resort to destructive drug habits. Case studies have shown that most of the youth who engage in sporting activities have a much lower

likelihood to engage in drug activities as it interferes with their performance on the fields and at the same time, especially for those interested in pursuing sports as careers, it is likely to cut short their dreams. Sports therefore acts as a deterrent from drugs.

Careers have been developed through sports. In the early 90's, one of the most popular individuals all over the world was Michael Jordan, and it was not because of his ever shining bald head. Jordan possessed dribbling skills that made non-sports enthusiasts feel like they should get off their couches and go "shoot some hoops". Basketball was Michael Jordan's career, and he enjoyed it because later in an interview, he calmly stated that he was having fun since he was getting paid to do his hobby. Currently there are millions of athletes who have turned into millionaires simply by engaging in activities that they once considered hobbies. They are earning even more than some of the employees on Wall Street. Sports can therefore end up providing the youth with a way of funding for themselves in this world where white collar jobs have become scarce and the manual jobs are being constantly replaced by technology. Careers can therefore be created through sports.

Sports does not only create employment opportunities for the participants, off the field, there are team managers, tacticians, fitness experts, dietary advisors and a whole lot of other experts who benefit from the youth's involvement in sports. Jobs are created for grounds men who have to ensure football pitches have been watered to the required standards, the referees, umpires and other officials whose duty it is to ensure that the rules and regulations governing the various games are followed, and to ensure that order is maintained. Psychologists are also at hand to provide in depth

analysis of the reasons why various actions are taken by various individuals. Medical practitioners make killings by bringing in products, albeit illegal, that can help athletes to improve their performances in their various sports. These are just a few of the beneficiaries of youth engaging in sports, but it is therefore true to say youth and sports are employers to very many individuals all over the world.

Some individuals, especially the introverts have problems associating with people, they would rather stay within their shells and remain alone. When these people engage in sports, they may end up being so excellent in them and that would provide them with a sort of an identity which they can be proud of. These individuals will have a common ground with which they can socialize and that helps them open up to the rest. It is not unusual to find people for whom when they have problems, they run, not to their families first, but to their teammates. They get a sense of belonging there and that makes sports a big player in fostering relations and creating environments in which people can socialize. This is also true for people who may not have anything in common, except love for a particular team or sports and they form friendship since they meet at the venue of the game on regular basis. Many life long friendships have been formed in football stands.

Having the youth participate in sports provides them with the necessary experiences that they can apply to great benefit later in life. In sports, one comes face to face with the realities of life that includes success and victory, shame, failure and defeat. Disappointments are common and these are important things that one has to get used to. Life is not a one way street to success and these experiences provide one with the foundation on which to

base future decisions. One learns important lessons like how to react to failure and how to survive without giving up in the face of adversity, how to celebrate victories without making opponents feel like they are worthless, how to hang on and give your best to your team even though they may not be having a great day, and how to console teammates after losing an emotional game.

These and others make people bond together into a tight knit unit that appreciates every individual's strengths and weaknesses. Sports makes people to appreciate the fact that not all humans are perfect and people make errors, the important thing is how to put those errors in the past and move on without getting scarred for life, and those are lessons learnt from sports. Sports therefore touch the lives of people, spectators and players alike and create bonds among them that are impenetrable even in difficult times. It is common to see players cry when a teammate gets injured or is no longer going to continue playing with them, the outside world may know the players strengths on the field, but it is the teammates who train daily with him who know his contribution both on and off the field.

Playing in sports involves taking risks and being able to live with the consequences. One will have to make certain decisions without knowing how the opponent will react, but he shall go forward nevertheless with the decision and hope the opponent swallows his bait. This makes individuals better prepared for the situations that they will be involved in later on in life that may require them to make decisions without being aware of the consequences. Athletes are also usually under the advice of their coaches and managers who have a say in the decisions they make. Sports therefore

makes individuals obey authority and this moulds them into responsible adults who have fear and respect to authority. This makes the society a better place to live in as people are surrounded by individuals who are not self serving, but care how the outcome of their actions will impact on the society around them.

When engaging in sports that are physical in nature, an individual has to be in shape and physical fitness will be a quality that will determine winners and losers. The fitness expectations will make an individual to live a healthy lifestyle, eating healthy foods, doing physical activities that will better make them able to compete well. Sports therefore encourages healthy lifestyles among the youth and leads to the development of a better society of healthy people. Games also need individuals to analyze their opponents and develop tactics with which to beat them having discovered their weaknesses. At the same time one will know how to use their strength to their advantage and how to use it to cover their weaknesses. Therefore individuals will learn how to strategize and overpower opponents, skills that are necessary for survival not only in the competition but in the world as well.

Sports is a great way of bringing people together and spreading the messages of goodwill. The world is currently faced with a situation where no single race is social or dominant in a given sport, many other individuals are coming up to challenge the status quo and this may not go right with certain individuals who are of the opinion that their races are superior. Therefore sports is increasingly being used as a way of encouraging people to live and associate together in harmony and to shun evils such as racism. Sports is also being used to pass messages of peace among humans. These make it



important among the youth as it makes them understand the issues that are unfolding before them in a language they can relate to.

Among the youth, sports is also being used as a tool for reaching out to the less fortunate. It is very common to hear of tournaments organized to raise funds towards certain causes like helping victims of hurricane disasters, tsunamis among others. Sports therefore acts as a way in which the youth can use what they have in the form of their talents to give back to the society that has helped mould them into who they are. Very many children are growing up and are in need of role models to give them something to look forward to. Outstanding sports personalities are usually great role models for such children in that from most of them come stories of winning a struggle. Most successful athletes either came from very humble backgrounds or had to struggle in the face of adversity in order to make it to where they are.

There are also others who may not have had it so rough in the beginning, but still had to go through experiences in their lives which would have made them give up their dreams. Instead they took the bull by the horn and confronted their fears and are today great in whatever they do, providing an inspiration to the billions in need of it in the world. Sports thus provide the role models to give the motivation for others to pursue their dreams and ambitions.

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