The Hong Kong Recreation Management Association
香港康樂管理協會

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Outdoor Adventure Camps for Young Adults and Adults with Mental Illness

Sue Cotton
The University of Melbourne

Felicity Butselaar
Orygen Youth Health Research Centre

Introduction

Advances in psychopharmacology improve symptom outcomes for individuals with mental illness; however, functioning and social participation can still remain impaired. Social isolation is also common in individuals with mental illness, and can be associated with poorer mental and physical health in the longer term (1).

Alternative models such as outdoor adventure and camping programs, which encourage social and practical engagement and increase functioning, provide promise as adjunct to traditional therapeutic processes (2). Adventure therapy has been used as a therapeutic medium in treating clients with mental illness since the early 1900’s (3); it has been used for individuals with a range of mental health issues including addiction (4), youth delinquency (5), anxiety (6), depression (6-7), schizophrenia (8), bipolar disorder (8), and those with chronic psychiatric illness (9-10).

Adventure therapy comprises a therapeutic process that promotes positive change. “Adventure therapy is any intentional, facilitated use of adventure tools and techniques to guide personal change towards desired therapeutic goals” (p.87) (11). Camping programs are one type of adventure therapy. The philosophy behind camping programs is “learning by doing” (12). Camp participants are provided with multiple challenging opportunities that may facilitate therapeutic growth (12). Intervention elements include social engagement, building trust, goal setting, providing consistent feedback and support, and designing challenging situations (13). A diverse range of camping activities may be provided such as ropes courses, surfing, mountain bike riding, and personal growth activities.

Adventure therapy uses the group modality as the primary arena for change. The adventure component allows clients to engage in appropriate risk taking behaviours: whilst the group context more closely approximates social situations that may be encountered outside the program – underlying the premise that skills learned in this way may be generalized beyond the program setting (14).

The efficacy of adventure therapy, particularly with regard to young people, is evident both empirically and anecdotally. In a meta-analysis of 43 studies, it was concluded that “adolescents who participate in adventure therapy are better off than 62% who do not participate” (p. 40) (2). In addition, adventure therapy programs significantly increase participants’ self-esteem, self-confidence, and a shift towards an internal locus of control (15-17). Adventure therapy may be most effective for participants who are withdrawn and have difficulty being close to others (3). Being within a group setting can be particularly useful for facilitating social skills and broadening social networks (17). Importantly also, improvements in psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety and depression have also been reported after participation in such programs (10). Such factors are likely to have positive influences on rehabilitation outcomes (18).

There are a number of methodological issues associated with the evaluation of adventure therapy programs including the variance in the camp programs themselves, small sample sizes, the lack of control groups and absence of standardised assessment tools. Further, it is difficult to find existing studies evaluating the effectiveness of adventure therapy programs delivered in a camping format for individuals with mental illness.

Following a 2002 review, Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) acknowledged the need to address the access inequities experienced by people with mental illness to community run camping and outdoor recreation opportunities. Working with YMCA Victoria, SRV initiated and funded the development of the Mental Health Access & Participation and Industry Mentoring Project, now re-titled ‘Journey to Strength’ (19). YMCA Victoria, government representatives, local mental health agencies and community providers were involved with the planning and development of a four-day camping program with the aim of enabling participants to develop a positive identity, improve their social competencies & broaden supportive relationships. Camp activities were selected to provide positive, challenging, supportive and meaningful experiences for participants.

The aim of this report was to summarise the results of the evaluation of the camping program. It was hypothesized that over the course of the camp and at 4-week follow-up, participation in the program would improve result in: (i) higher self-esteem and mastery; (ii) improved social and
occupational functioning; (iii) reduced social withdrawal/isolation by encouraging peer support, self-esteem and confidence; and (iv) enhanced quality of life (QoL).

Material and Methods

Participants

Clients from nine mental health services across the state of Victoria, Australia, participated in a total of 12 camps. These camps were run between December 2007 and January 2011. Five of these camps were for young people and adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age, known as the “STEPS” camps. Seven of the twelve camps were run for adults with mental illness aged from 26 years onwards. These later camps were known as the “HORIZONS” camps. Whilst the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” camps were essentially targeting different age groups; the planning and implementation process, however, was very similar for each (19).

Inclusion criteria for participation in the camps included a stable mental state, and no individual risk of harm to self or to others. The participant was also required to be motivated to participate in the camping program.

Measures

The Centre of Youth Mental Health and Orygen Youth Health Research Centre (OYHRC) were commissioned by YMCA Victoria and SRV to conduct an evaluation of the planned camping program. The evaluation had two goals: (i) to determine the impact of participation in the camps on self-esteem, mastery, social competence, and QoL of young people with mental illness; and (ii) to capture camp participants’ experiences of the program.

For the first part of the evaluation, a questionnaire battery was administered at baseline (2 weeks prior to the camp), last day of the camp, and at approximately 4-weeks post camp. For the second part of the evaluation, a Camp Evaluation Questionnaire was administered on the last day of the camp.

In the questionnaire battery, demographic information (i.e., age, gender, marital status, accommodation and living arrangements, and meaningful activities) were obtained from participants.

Also included in the questionnaire battery were the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (20), the Pearlin Mastery Scale (21), the Social Connectedness Scale Revised (SCS-R) (22), the Social Anxiety and Distress Scale (SADS) (23), and the World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale (WHOQoL-Bref) (24).

The RSES (20) comprises 10 items which measure varying aspects of self-esteem (see Appendix III). Each item is rated on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). A total score is derived (after taking into consideration reversed scored items), with larger scores indicating higher self-esteem. It has demonstrated usefulness in both adolescent and psychiatric populations (25).

The Pearlin Mastery Scale (21) comprises seven items which assesses “the extent to which one regards one’s life-chances as being under one’s own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled” (see Appendix IV). The seven items are scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree), with a lower total score being indicative of having perceived control or mastery over one’s own life.
The SCS-R (22) is a measure of how an individual perceives his/her interpersonal closeness with the social world (see Appendix V). It comprises 20 items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The higher the SCS-R total score, then the greater the sense of social connectedness.

Anxiety, anguish and fear in social situations will be assessed through the SADS (see Appendix VI). This scale contains 20 items that focus on social situations in which anxiety may occur. Respondents provide a true/false response to statements such as “I am usually nervous with people unless I know them well” or “Being introduced to people makes me tense and nervous”. A total score is derived, again accounting for reversed scored items, with higher scores indicating increased social anxiety.

The WHOQoL-Bref (24) was used as a global measure of QoL, as well as providing indices of physical health, psychological health, social relationships and environment (see Appendix VII). It comprises 26 items that are rated on a 5-point scale. Scores are standardised to a scale with a range of 0-100 with higher scores indicating better life satisfaction. The WHOQoL-Bref was only administered at baseline and at 4-weeks post-camp follow-up.

The Camp Evaluation Questionnaire required evaluation of the camp activities, the infrastructure (staffing, venue, food, duration of camp, cost of camp), and the consumers’ experience of the program (things learnt through participating, highlights and lowlights, suggestions for improvements) as well as what advice participants would give to future campers (see Appendix IX).

**The Camping Model**

The camping model has been manualised (19). Philosophies underpinning the camping program included partnerships, ‘Challenge by Choice’, social connections, and physical health.

Strong partnerships were important for the successful planning and delivery of the camping programs (19). The partnerships between mental health and recreational sectors allowed individuals with mental health issues to experience the camps, promoted social inclusion, and assisted with reducing stigma through the training and education of volunteers and campground staff (19).

‘Challenge by Choice’ respects the right of individuals to make decisions and to voluntarily participate in activities. Overall the goal of ‘Challenge by Choice’ is to impact on individual growth and development (26). It is based on three principles: (i) individuals set their own goals; (ii) individuals choose how much of the activity that they are willing to experience; and (iii) participation in activities is an informed decision (27).

Social inclusion was an important target of the camping program. Individuals with mental illness are more likely to encounter stigma, social isolation and exclusion (1). Through the group work offered in the camping program, participants encountered team building and trust activities that promoted their sense of connectedness (17, 19).

Individuals with mental illness have poorer physical health and are at greater risk for cardiovascular disease (28). This is often due to lifestyle factors such as sedentary behaviours, inadequate diets, and substance use (28). The camping program engages individuals with all levels of fitness, shapes, and sizes (19). By providing a safe and supportive environment, participants can challenge their physical abilities.

A range of structured activities were included in the camps: giant swing, low and high rope courses, giant swing, mountain biking, water activities, trust and fellowship activities, etc. The activities slightly differed according to the facilities offered at each of the YMCA campsites and the time of year of the camp. Activities were developed and sequenced with the intent of facilitating and maximizing the positive identity of individuals; social competencies, and providing support (see Table 1 for example content of a camp).

In most cases, the camps were offered and delivered to clients from a single specific mental health service.

**Table 1**

An example of structured and unstructured activities contained in a four-day camp.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Introduction and orientation to the camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Footprints – everyone in the group gets to choose colours that represent how they are feeling. Everyone paints their feet with their chosen colour and imprint on their canvas. This activity is delivered again at the end and the participants can compare their initial impressions to what they feel at the end of the camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open camp fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Mountain bike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fuzzy bags – camp participants can provide positive feedback to one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low ropes course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story of hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Raft building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutrition session and making lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giant swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire of friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Physical activity games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High ropes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Keeping a journal – for reflection of camp activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My time - free recreational time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedures**

Staff from the mental health services worked closely with YMCA Victoria staff to aid with the recruitment of participants and to organise the camping program.
The mental health service staff identified individuals who satisfied the inclusion criteria, as well as ascertained individuals’ interest in participating in a camp. Staff from the mental health services also assisted participants with filling out information referral forms. They also ensured that participants were fully informed about the nature of the camping program.

There were a number of pre-camp sessions typically scheduled for 2 months prior to camp, 1 month prior to camp and two to one weeks prior the camp. The aim of the pre-camp sessions was threefold: (i) for individuals to meet other camp participants and to become familiarised with the leadership team; (ii) the final camping program was discussed; and (iii) there was an initial social and/or recreational activity such as bowling, horse riding, or a lunch. At the pre-camp session, one-two weeks prior to the camp, a member from OYHRC attended and provided a brief presentation on the aims of the evaluation project and what was involved with participation. Participant Information and Consent Forms (PICF) and the questionnaire battery were distributed to camp participants. Assistance with the completion of the forms was provided by OYHRC and YMCA volunteers on an as needs basis. The questionnaire took an average of 30 minutes to complete.

Camps were run at the YMCA managed campsites across Victoria. A leadership team consisting of YMCA volunteers, mental health service staff and campsite staff facilitated the camping program. A staff member from OYHRC attended the last day of the camp and administered the questionnaire battery and the Camp Evaluation Questionnaire, both of which took a total of 45 minutes to complete on average.

At approximately four weeks post camp, a social and/or recreational activity was scheduled; providing the camp participants the opportunity to reunite, reminisce, and share experiences. A staff member from OYHRC attended this session and administered the questionnaire battery, again taking approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Data analysis**

Data were analysed using the IBM®SPSS® Version 19. Descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, frequencies and counts) are reported for the total cohort as well as separately for the participants in the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” camping programs. Although the differences between “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” camps were minimal in terms of content and format, we have presented data separately because of the different age ranges of the two cohorts. One would anticipate that demographics, developmental issues, illness factors may differ between these cohorts. To determine whether there were significant changes in self-esteem, mastery, and social functioning, from baseline to four-week follow-up, a series of mixed models repeated measures (MMRM) analysis of variance were employed.

Cohen’s $d$ was also reported to depict the size of the difference between baseline and end of camp, and baseline and four-week follow-up. The standard deviation at baseline was used in the computation. Cohen’s ‘rule of thumb’ was used for interpreting the resultant standardised effect sizes (small effect $d=0.20$, medium effect $d=0.50$, large effect $d=0.80$) (29).

The data from the Camp Evaluation Questionnaire were evaluated descriptively.

**Results**

**Sample characteristics**

A total of 120 individuals (males=77, females=43) participated in the camps, and 90.0% ($n=108$) of those individuals partook in the camp evaluation. Reasons for not consenting in the evaluation included: not interested in the evaluation; psychiatric symptoms such as paranoia; literacy issues; or not attending the pre-camp session.

Thirty-six young people and adults (males=25, females=11) with mental illness participated in the five “STEPS” camps. Although the age range of 18-25 years was targeted, the actual age range of participants on the “STEPS” camps ranged from 17.7 to 33.6 years ($M=23.8, SD=2.8$). This discrepancy in ages was a result of convenience sampling through the mental health services. The number of participants in each of these five camps ranged from 5 to 12.

Seven of the twelve camps were run for 72 adults (males=47, females=25) ranging in age from 18.3 to 72.0 years of age ($M=41.2, SD=11.6$). Again, although the age range of 26+ years was targeted, participants’ ages depended on the clients available at the particular mental health services. The number of participants in each of the “HORIZONS” camps ranged from 8 to 14.

Table 2 details the demographic characteristics of the total cohort, as well as separately for the participants of the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” camps. The majority of participants were male, never married, were residing in private residences, were living alone, had commenced but not completed secondary education, and were on a government pension.
### Table 2

Demographic characteristics of the total cohort, as well as separately for the participants of the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” camps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>STEPS</th>
<th>HORIZONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=108)</td>
<td>(n=36)</td>
<td>(n=72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender %Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>66.7 (72)</td>
<td>69.4 (25)</td>
<td>65.3 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age M (SD)</td>
<td>35.5 (12.6)</td>
<td>23.9 (3.2)</td>
<td>41.2 (11.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married % (n)</td>
<td>72.1 (75)</td>
<td>100.0 (33)</td>
<td>59.2 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/ide facto % (n)</td>
<td>8.7 (9)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>12.7 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other % (n)</td>
<td>19.2 (20)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>28.2 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless % (n)</td>
<td>1.0 (1)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>1.4 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private flat/house % (n)</td>
<td>60.4 (64)</td>
<td>30.6 (11)</td>
<td>75.7 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential support/group home/boarding house % (n)</td>
<td>32.1 (34)</td>
<td>69.4 (25)</td>
<td>12.9 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other % (n)</td>
<td>6.6 (7)</td>
<td>0.0 (0)</td>
<td>10.0 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live with?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone % (n)</td>
<td>40.0 (42)</td>
<td>22.9 (8)</td>
<td>48.6 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/partner % (n)</td>
<td>33.3 (35)</td>
<td>22.9 (8)</td>
<td>38.6 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others % (n)</td>
<td>26.7 (28)</td>
<td>54.3 (19)</td>
<td>12.9 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home duties % (n)</td>
<td>6.7 (7)</td>
<td>5.7 (2)</td>
<td>7.1 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed % (n)</td>
<td>10.5 (11)</td>
<td>14.3 (5)</td>
<td>8.6 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student % (n)</td>
<td>3.8 (4)</td>
<td>5.7 (2)</td>
<td>2.9 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioner % (n)</td>
<td>55.2 (58)</td>
<td>37.1 (13)</td>
<td>64.3 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed % (n)</td>
<td>23.8 (25)</td>
<td>37.1 (13)</td>
<td>17.1 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education completed % (n)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary not completed</td>
<td>52.0 (52)</td>
<td>61.8 (21)</td>
<td>47.0 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary completed</td>
<td>22.0 (22)</td>
<td>20.6 (7)</td>
<td>22.7 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma, trade certificate, Apprenticeship % (n)</td>
<td>17.0 (17)</td>
<td>11.8 (4)</td>
<td>19.7 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary % (n)</td>
<td>9.0 (9)</td>
<td>5.9 (2)</td>
<td>10.6 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Flow**

For the overall cohort, the participation rates at the end of camp and four weeks follow up were 85.2% (n=92) and 71.3% (n=77), respectively.

**Outcomes**

Descriptive statistics for the psychological, social and QoL measures are depicted in Table 3. For the overall cohort, there was significant change over time in terms of mastery, F(2, 142.1)=5.32, p=.006; there was significant improvement in mastery from baseline to end of camp, p=.001. This also corresponded to improvements in self-esteem, F(2, 144.1)=6.39, p=.002, with significant improvements seen from baseline to end of camp, p=.001. Social connectedness changed significantly over time, F(2, 131.2)=8.33, p<.001, with significant improvements observed between baseline and end of camp, p<.001. No such changes were observed for social anxiety/distress and QoL measures.
### Table 3

Mean (and standard error) derived from mixed model repeated measures analysis of variance depicting changes over time in terms of mastery-self-esteem, social connectedness, social anxiety, and quality of life, for the overall cohort as well as separately for the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” cohorts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall cohort</th>
<th>STEPS</th>
<th>HORIZONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>End of camp</td>
<td>4-weeks post camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale</td>
<td>27.3 (0.6)</td>
<td>29.0 (0.6)</td>
<td>28.0 (0.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearlin Mastery Scale</td>
<td>16.1 (0.3)</td>
<td>15.1 (0.4)</td>
<td>15.6 (0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connectedness Scale</td>
<td>74.6 (1.7)</td>
<td>79.1 (1.8)</td>
<td>76.8 (1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Anxiety and Distress Scale</td>
<td>14.4 (0.8)</td>
<td>13.4 (0.8)</td>
<td>13.7 (0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHOQoL-Bref</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>59.3 (1.6)</td>
<td>59.4 (1.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>53.9 (2.1)</td>
<td>53.0 (2.2)</td>
<td>52.1 (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>56.9 (2.2)</td>
<td>55.2 (2.4)</td>
<td>54.9 (3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>62.0 (1.7)</td>
<td>61.2 (1.8)</td>
<td>60.1 (3.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Scores range from 10-40, with higher self-esteem associated with higher scores.
* Scores range from 20-120, with higher scores indicating more social connectedness.
* Scores range from 0-100, with higher scores indicating better QoL.
* Scores range from 4-28, with lower scores being associated with better self-esteem.
* Scores range from 0-20, with higher scores indicating more social anxiety.

These analyses were conducted separately for participants in the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” camps. For the participants in the “STEPS” camps there were no overall difference between the three time points for all of the measures; however, for social connectedness, F(2, 42.2)=2.55, p=.090, and social anxiety, F(2, 33.0)=3.27, p=.051, test statistics were approaching significance. Pairwise comparisons indicated that there were significant improvements seen from baseline and end of camp for social connectedness, p =.035, and for social anxiety, p =.015.

-examined effect sizes, support the results of the MMRM. Small moderate effects sizes were observed for baseline to end of camp for self-esteem, mastery, social connectedness. The effect sizes for social anxiety were greater for the “STEPS” cohort versus the “HORIZONS” cohort. Generally the effect sizes were lower for baseline versus four-week follow-up. For the “HORIZONS” camps, there were significant improvements seen in mastery, F(2, 90.0)=4.44, p=.015, self-esteem, F(2, 94.3)=5.06, p=.008, and social connectedness, F(2, 88.27)=5.67, p=.005. Pairwise comparisons again supported that view that the main differences were between baseline and end of camp for mastery, p =.004; self-esteem, p =.008; and social connectedness, p =.001.\}
Table 4
Cohen’s d values indicating effect sizes for changes between baseline and end of camp, and baseline to four weeks follow-up, for the total cohort as well as for the “STEPS” and “HORIZONS” cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall cohort</th>
<th>STEPS</th>
<th>HORIZONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baseline - end of camp</td>
<td>Baseline - 4 weeks post camp</td>
<td>Baseline - end of camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearlin Mastery Scale</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connectedness Scale</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Anxiety and Distress Scale</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHOQoL-Bref</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative
Quantitative and qualitative information was also derived from the Camp Evaluation Questionnaire. All activities were rated favourably, with more challenging activities such as low and high ropes courses and the giant swing were rated highly. Camp leaders, venue, food and logistics of the camp were all well received. Individuals reported on things that they had learnt about themselves through participation in the camp program. General themes included: (i) better mental and physical health; (ii) overall wellbeing; (iii) improved self-esteem; (iv) confidence; (v) teamwork and trusting people; (vi) communication and interactions with others.

Discussion
This study highlights the collaborative work across the sectors of state Government, mental health and community recreational services; a relationship that is relatively novel in Australia. Data was collected on a large number of individuals with various backgrounds, disorders, and life stage. Across the total cohort, participation in the camping program resulted in significant improvements in mastery, self-esteem, social connectedness, with these changes observed between baseline (2 weeks prior to the camp) and the end of the camp. The changes were not, however, sustained to a month post-camp.

Camping interventions can have an immediate impact on participants by instilling a greater sense of wellbeing (15, 30). The ‘Challenge by Choice’ philosophy is integral to the camping intervention (25). Through the challenging activities and extending participants’ boundaries, a greater sense of mastery and self-esteem ensues. Several participants’ comments support the impact of the camping on the sense of self, including: “I learned new skills-conquered fear of heights” (“HORIZONS” camp participant); “I can overcome challenging obstacles” (“STEPS” camp participant), and “I can do everything as well as everyone else, regardless of my size and mental illness” (“STEPS” camp participant). Participating in the group activities within the camping programs also instilled a greater sense of social connectedness in participants. Team building and trust activities were particularly useful for promoting this sense of connectedness (17, 19). Social connectedness is characterised by “an attribute of the self that reflects cognitions of enduring interpersonal closeness with the social world in toto (31)”. One “HORIZONS” camp participant stated what he had learnt from participating in the camp was that: “I can fit in with others” and “I am well liked by others”. Another “HORIZONS” camp participant stated “I learned to enjoy the company of others”.

With the group environment, there was not only the formation of friendships and increased social connectedness, but an opportunity to further develop social skills such as learning to cooperate and work with others, building trust, and communication skills.

Social anxiety also reduced significantly from baseline to end of camp in the “STEPS” camp participants. Psychosocial impairment is common in adolescents and young adults who are first experiencing mental illness such as depression (32). Indeed mental illness can impact on important developmental tasks include socializing with friends, attending school, and/or pursuing vocational goals (33). By providing a nurturing and supportive environment, and supporting social skill development, social anxiety may be reduced. In a sense, the camping environment fostered social inclusion. Promoting social inclusion is important, particularly as individuals with mental illness are more likely to have experienced stigma, social isolation and exclusion (1). Meaningful social engagements and enhancing social networks can also positively influence self-esteem, coping effectiveness, and promote psychological and physical wellbeing (1, 34).

Adventure therapy programs can also have positive effects on physical health (35). Although, not formally assessed, participants provided comments that indicated a realisation of the benefits of physical activity; “I like physical activity and things to do” and “fresh air, good exercise is good for me”. There were also comments regarding the need to address physical health issues: “need to lose weight”, “a lack of fitness”, “I should do more
exercise”, and “I smoke too much”. Thus, the camping program can increase participants’ awareness of lifestyle factors such as sedentary behaviours and inadequate diets that can negatively affect physical health (28). Examining ways to support these individuals in making changes in health-related behaviours, may reduce the risk of later cardiovascular or metabolic disorder.

Limitations

A conservative approach to the evaluation of the camping program was adopted given the limited duration of the intervention (i.e., the camp is only 3-4 days in length). We carefully selected a battery of standardised instruments that would tap into self-esteem, mastery, social connectedness, rather than focusing on issues such as diagnoses or symptomatology.

The length of the camping program may be too short to sustain outcomes; a problem that has been previously reported (30). There is a need to consider other ways in which to maintain the positive outcomes. One-way would be to have regular ongoing activities or support groups that are offered post-camp. Anecdotally, many of the participants reported that they enjoyed reuniting one month post camp to share their experiences and participate in a new activity. Linking participants into other YMCA activities and community-based services could also be beneficial.

Variations to the format in which the adventure therapy is delivered could also be considered. For example, at Orygen Youth Health, a yearly 10-week outdoor adventure therapy program is run in conjunction with Outdoors Inc, a non-profit state wide recreational provider. Similar to the outcomes reported here, participants in the 10-week program experience a greater sense of self-esteem, accomplishment, and mastery (33) Participants also reported significant changes in terms of self-improvement, being able to socialise with others, social skills development, being able to manage symptoms, and to manage time more effectively (33).

Other limitations associated with the study are small sample sizes and a lack of control group. Small sample size was a specific problem for the “STEPS” camps, with only 36 participants recruited. This reduced the chances or power of detecting overall effects; however, pairwise comparisons supported improvements in social connectedness and social anxiety from baseline to end of camp. A control group would have strengthened the findings of current study, but finding an appropriate control group was difficult. Logistical and resource issues also restricted our ability to either run more “STEPS” camps and/or to recruit a control group.

Implications

This project highlights the work of multiple sectors towards promoting social inclusion of youth and adults with mental illness. It is evident from the current findings that the positive personal and social mastery and connecting experience of the camping process creates a window of opportunity for the involved community mental health services. There is a need to capitalise upon participants’ improved/heightened sense of self and social situation. Offering ‘follow-up’ programs for these individuals may sustain those positive changes brought about by the camping experience over a longer period of time. One participant offered this advice to others that may wish to participate in the camping program: “Have a go and really challenge yourself! Why? Because you will be amazed by how much you can really do!”
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Foundational Understanding of Sports Agent

(a) Definition of sports agent

Sports agents are the dealmakers of professional sports (Greenwald, 2010). They are responsible for marketing athletes, financial management of athletes’ portfolios, counseling athletes in times of trouble, dealing with disputes, administering or drafting athletes’ wills or trust funds, handling any off-the-field legal issues, as well as negotiating contracts with professional teams or organizations (Wong, 2010). Agents’ clients are members of professional teams and individual sport athletes and can also include coaches and team executives (Greenwald, 2010).

However, due to the differences among social systems, traditional culture and developing levels of economics, across countries definition of the sports agent vary (Ma, 1999). The definition of agent is ‘a person authorized by another to act for him, one intrusted with another’s business’ (Garner, 2009). Therefore according to this definition, a sports agent can be considered as a person who provides services to athletes or sports organizations, performing legally authorized functions, and engaging in business transactions on behalf of the athletes or sports organizations (Staudohar, 2006).

Most western related research limits the definition of sports agent to player agent or athlete agent (Heitner, 2010). The term “sports agent” is linked to a wide range of dealings with a players and athletes. To illustrate, a player agent can provide a variety of services to a player, ranging from moral support to complex contractual, negotiation, investment and legal services. Therefore, a sports agent can be defined as a person, who, for a fee, regularly introduces a player to clubs with a view to employment, or introduces clubs to one another with a view to concluding transfer contracts, in compliance with the provisions mentioned below (FIBA, 2010; FIFA, 2008).

(b) Classifications of sports agent

Table 1 shows sports agent classifications. In this table, sports agent is divided into various categories and defined in terms of type of organization, client attribute, activity type and professional characteristic (Fan, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Client Attribute</th>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Occupational Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Sports Agent</td>
<td>Player/Athlete Agent</td>
<td>Intermediary Agent</td>
<td>Professional Sports Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Sports Agent</td>
<td>Sports Organization Agent</td>
<td>Representation Agent</td>
<td>Part-time Sports Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Agency Company</td>
<td>Event Agent</td>
<td>Trustee Agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Client Attribute is the most commonly addressed classification within the literature. Player Agents represent one or more professional players in different types of business dealings (Yehling, 2010). An emerging field, Sport Organization Agents are responsible for clubs, professional teams or sports organizations (Fan, 2008). Event Agents are those agents who arrange sports events or matches between teams belonging to different confederations (FIFA, 2008).

(c) Functions of sports agent

First and foremost, sports agents act as intermediaries between players and sport clubs and organizers of sport events with a view to employing a player. Interested parties are brought together to reach agreements focusing on the practice of sport as a remunerated activity (European Commission, 2009).

Overall, the services that a sports agent should perform include: 1) contract negotiation and mediation, such as employment contracts, television rights, sponsoring agreements; 2) management and services in matters like housing, taxes, financial planning, legal advice, permits and licenses, career development; 3) organization of sports activities and events, sports promotion and press conference; 4) mediation,
arbitration and dealing with conflicts (Hendrickx, 2008).

From the macro aspect, sport agents promote the reciprocal relationship of sports production and consumption of, accelerates, transfers from sports value to commercial value and from amateur to professional sports, boosting the whole sports market industry. From the micro aspect, sport agents provide various services for athletes, sports organizations and sports sponsors by means of professional coordination, organization and management. This showcases athletes’ sporting potential helping them to earn considerable incomes, promotes sports and relevant activities for sports organizations, as well as raise sufficient funds for sports sponsors. Meanwhile, sports agent focuses on the continuous transformations of sports culture with a keen market insight and skills, to satisfy the demands of sports consumers (Xu & Chen, 2004).

Specifically, sport agents play the unique intermediary role of facilitating the development of the sports industry through the following features:

Firstly, sports agent promotes the marketization and socialization of the sports industry. During the change from an old sports system to a new one, the agent should conduct activities on the basis of market operation, which may impact upon the old economic system and closed industries, facilitating the process of marketization and socialization (Ren & Ma, 2003).

Secondly, sport agents accelerate the process of professional sports. Professional athletes’ competitive abilities are mostly reflected within their sport performance. Meanwhile, professional sports continually require more games, transfers and cooperation with business, all of which the sports agent is responsible for. Therefore, the sports agent also plays a role in accelerating the process of professional sports (Kenneth & Timothy, 2008).

Thirdly, to some extent sport agents enhance the communication of information among athletes, sports organizations and sports sponsors on the basis of market demands, and promote reasonable allocation of sport resources. This helps to allocate sport resources to establish suitable connections between sports and business in order to make full use of sport resources (Staudohar, 2006).

Fourthly, due to the assistance of the agent, athletes are able to receive better training and participate in more and better competitions. Sport agents help athletes deal with daily affairs, and as a result athletes’ time is better managed allowing them to concentrate on training and competition (Peng & Lv, 2005). Sport agents help athletes to develop their image. Besides the excellent performance during the training and games, athletes themselves are potential assets. The development of their commercial value may produce great economic benefits and improve athletes’ reputation. Sports agents who have professional knowledge and awareness of relative information will be very useful to athletes’ social standing (Xu & Chen, 2004).

Finally, sports agents also play an important role in facilitating the development of sport as a whole. Sports agents take many famous athletes and sports events to various countries, which may improve public awareness of sport and stimulate interest in participating in sport (Heitner, 2010).

**Marketing Environment of the Sports Agent**

The need for the sports agent to understand and analyze the potential impacts and opportunities of the sports marketing environment is vital and should be carried out in a systematic and logical process (Kitchin, 2007). According to this analysis of the marketing environment, STEP (or PEST) model (socio-cultural, technological, economic, political) is often used to analyze the macro-environment of the sports market in order to find out the most significant opportunities and threats facing the sport organization, and therefore need to be taken account of in developing marketing plans (Kriemadis & Terzoudis, 2007). In addition, PESTEL model (political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental, legal) (Kitchin, 2007) and SLEP model (socio-cultural, legal, economic, political) (Jin, 2005) are adopted for study on the macro-environment of the sports market.

In contrasted with the six factors of the micro-environment analysis, research on the micro-environment of the sports market can also be carried out from six factors: players, who represent the suppliers; sponsors, which means the shareholders, creditors and parent company; media, which plays the role of distributors; customers; competitors (Jin, 2007) and sports departments and organizations, which act as the employees and unions.

**Figure 1**

*Factors Affecting the Marketing Environment of Sports Agent*
Shank (2008) analyzed the sports marketing environment by using the model “contingency framework for strategic sports marketing” and divided all influences into external contingencies, which include competition, legal or political, demographics, technology, culture, physical environment as well as economy; and internal contingencies, which consist of organization’s vision, mission, strategy, culture, objectives and marketing goals. Fullerton and Merz (2008) identified four domains (theme-based strategies, product-based strategies, alignment-based strategies, and sports-based strategies) that comprise the sports marketing environment. Kriemadis and Terzoudis (2007) examined the sports marketing environment from both external and internal perspectives. They pointed out that the external environment comprised three elements: environmental factors where STEP model was used, the market and the competition. The analysis of the internal environment was conducted from the marketing, finance, manufacturing as well as organizational perspectives.

**Organizational System of the Sports Agent**

Staudohar (1996) designed a model to illustrate the organization system environment of sports agents in the sports industry. The model presented in Figure 2, shows relationships among sports agents, labor, management, government and other main elements in the sports industry. Labor relations in sport are formalized under a system of union representation and collective bargaining between owners and players. The role of government is mainly to serve as a regulator of labor and management. Agents are shown in the figure as representatives of players in dealing with management (Staudohar, 2006).

**Figure 2**

*Model of Labor Relations in the Sports Industry*

At present, the normal organization system of sports agent across the world is divided into four levels: international sports federations, national and local administrative institutions; national sports federations or sports associations as well as sports agent associations. Each level has its corresponding management measures: 1) the management of international sports federations is represented as the sports agent management within its various sports federations; 2) national and local administrative institutions operate sports agents according to macro management of laws and regulations, and rely on the market mechanisms and legal means to regulate sports agents; 3) national sports federations or sports associations create the sports agent management systems which are suitable for national conditions, and operate in accordance with international sports federation rules to regulate native sports agent activities; 4) sports agent associations, as flexible self-disciplined organizations, are mainly responsible for the protection of the agents’ self-interest and constraint of agent activities (Jin et al., 2011).

**Emerging Background of Sports Agents**

Sports agent activities began in Ancient Rome. Such intermediary activities, which mainly focused on providing introductions to players to join club games, were the beginning of sports agent activities (Fan, 2008).

Sports agent activities, with realistic significance, originated from the West first emerging in Britain in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Britain, as the representative of major capitalist countries, had implemented the process of industrialization at that time. Social focus came to be transferred from the development of economics to the construction of culture and human beings. Thus, occupational sports received more attention and became players’ means of subsistence. Along with the development of occupational sports and commercialization, sports organizations such as occupation alliances and working men’s clubs rapidly expanded, improving the treatment and incomes of players considerably (Staudohar, 2006). At the same time, an increasing number of commercial opportunities were provided for sports organizations and players. Therefore, institutions and individuals that specialized in offering consultations, contacting players’, arranging transfers and planning games, as well as charging commissions for their intermediary activities, emerged through the demand and the role of the sports agent was created (Jin, 2005).

**Global Developmental Situation of the Sports Agent**

Since the mid-1970s, with the rapid increase of media value in sports, the chances for sports organizations, players and coaches to develop their commercial values has also increased. Therefore, the business scope of the sports agent has expanded consistently (Kenneth & Timothy, 2008).

Commercialization facilitates the development of the sports industry. Nowadays, the system of global sports markets has improved, and the trading content has been enriched. As a component of sports markets, sports agent markets, including consulting and appraisal institutions, players’ agency, sports marketing and promotion as well as sponsorship, play a positive role in the communication with various stakeholders of markets, promoting the combination of resources, and ensuring fair bargaining and maintaining the market order (Mason & Duquette, 2008). At present, the developmental situations of the global sports agent are as follows:
Sports markets are active and sports resources have become increasingly sufficient. Rich sports resources and prosperous sports markets provide favorable opportunities for the development of the sports agent. At the same time, social awareness and support of the sports agent has improved (Xu & Chen, 2004). These are reflected through the following aspects:

Firstly, types of sports have increased and the scales have expanded. Various sports receive attention from multimedia and penetrate into people’s daily life, resulting in various related services and demands, which holds opportunities for the development of the sports agent. As well as the expansion of games’ scales, there are an increasing number of factors that require coordination. The complexity of situations increases the demands for quantity and quality of professional sports practitioners (Greenwald, 2010).

Secondly, in recent decades, players’ incomes have improved as along with their social popularity, due to increase in the sport promotion. Therefore, sports agencies that provide players with work, contract agents, financial advisors, and market agents receive more commission through players’ incomes, additionally their range of services has expanded (Kenneth & Timothy, 2008).

Thirdly, increased enterprise sponsorship benefits sport. Sponsorship provides a mutually beneficial situation for both sports and enterprise. Enterprise receives a high return from sports sponsorship, and an increasing amount of capital investment is devoted to sport. In addition, sport related advertisements have become increasingly common with many sports stars being invited to perform in commercials (Shank, 2008).

Finally, the legal environment of the agent market has improved. Many governments and sports organizations have their own rules and standards related to sports agents in order to regulate business development activities. As a result, sports agents’ operation activities have become standardized (Hendricks, 2008).

New technology has made a profound effect on the sports agent market. With the rapid advancements in science and technology, the sports agent market has developed further. The traditional business of the sports agent is under threat and some has already been replaced by new business. However, new technology provides room for the development of the sports agent (Xu & Chen, 2004). This phenomenon is mainly manifested in the following aspects:

Firstly, sources of information have been transferred from the television to mobile communication and internet. Along with the arrival of the internet, people are no longer satisfied with passive information from the television, so that some traditional sports intermediaries have lost their main business. However, nowadays increasing numbers of people prefer to search for sports resources using mobile communication and internet. The extensive application of new technology has generated enormous profits, which also offers considerable room for the sports agent market to expand as well as the development of new products (Jin, 2005).

Secondly, sophisticated technology has been widely used in sport. Various sports have become stages to display the accomplishments of such technology, which attracts increasing amount of new business to take part in the sports sponsorship. Fierce competition raises the price of sponsorship and advanced technologies improve the quality and quantity of sponsors. All these provide additional sponsorship and marketing business opportunities for sports agents (Xu & Chen, 2004).

Development of the Sports Agent in Representative Countries and Regions

Due to varying levels of global occupation and commercialization, the development of the sports agent varies among different countries and regions (Fan, 2008). In America and some developed European countries, the sports agent has become a critical role in facilitating the development of the whole sports industry and even the national economy. Most developed countries have established specific sports agent management systems, which play a part in regulating sports agents’ activities under the law (Ma, 1999).

The sports industry is only emerging in some developing countries, and together with the improvement of competitive sports and extensive development of occupational leagues, the sports agent is an emerging career. However, because of the immature market environment, sports agent development is still restricted (Greenwald, 2010).

Europe and America are two regions from which the sports agent emerged. The activities of these two regions are also the most developed. On the other hand, in China, the largest developing country in the world, the sports industry began later and relevant sports agent systems are still being established (Mao, 2011).
(a) Developmental situation of the sport agent in Europe

In Europe, there are over 32 competitive sports in which sports agents participate in, 25 of which are Olympic sports. Countries with well-developed sport agent businesses include Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Britain and Sweden (Guo, 2010). The characteristics of sports agent development in Europe are as follows:

Firstly, a highly developed football industry has enhanced the emergence and development of sports agents in Europe. Football is one of the highest level occupations in European sport. Nowadays, most European nations have established football leagues that rely on this large market, along with a large number of players provide extensive room for football agents to engage in agency activities (Hendrickx, 2008).

In addition to well-developed football leagues in Europe, player transfer systems have also been further developed and the market has opened up. In order to keep attracting excellent players, football clubs have relaxed policies and provided players with additional bargaining rights and favorable conditions. This also serves to expand the scope and service of European sports agents. It has gradually become common phenomenon that sports agents conduct a variety of duties on behalf of the players, such as negotiating players' employment contracts and transfers, and are totally responsible for players' daily life, which also further extend the players' function and roles as well (Fan, 2008).

Secondly, along with the occupation of athletes and the commercialization of sports, the sports agent's business has expanded to other sports and become further developed in Europe. Other sports such as tennis, track and field, golf and baseball have developed rapidly in recent decades, and related sports agents have emerged as a result. However, due to the lower number of high-level players, bonuses only available from participation in international competitions, the development of agents in these sports are not on a par with football.

Thus, due to the limitations in these sports, agents have begun to explore new avenues, such as participating in the organization of commercial games, where they draw on their experiences (European Commission, 2009). Full use is also made of media sponsorship business opportunities. Besides benefiting from enormous commercial profits, these agents activities contribute to the internationalization and socialization of European sports and the cultivation of sporting talent (Hendrickx, 2008).

(b) Developmental situation of the sport agent in America

Sports agent activities are common in American where the development of occupation sports and the sports industry is world class. During the 1960s, four occupation leagues in America implemented a system in which players were permitted to transfer freely and negotiate for salaries independently. Therefore, sports agent activity expanded and an increasing number of agents are engaged in agency activities on behalf of players (Qian, 2008).

Since the 1980s, the sports agents business was developed in other sports, such as boxing, track and field, figure skating. As such a complete sports agent management system has evolved. The service provided by sports agent not only protects the athletes' interest, but also improves the development of sport and improves the conditions of professional sport in America (Staudohar, 2008).

Nowadays, there are more than 700 companies in America engaged in sports agent activities. These companies provide professional services related to sports agency, management and marketing for nearly 3000 sport events every year (Huang, 1999). From the macro aspect, these companies facilitate the production and consumption of sport, accelerates the conversion from sports value to commercial value, as well as the development trend from amateur to professional sport. From the micro aspect, these companies offer comprehensive services for players, sports organizations and event promoters, which help athletes to earn a considerable income. These companies also help sports organizations to make full use of their assets and assist event promoters in acquiring sufficient funds. Thus, meeting the demands of sports participants and spectators (Zhang, 2007).

Generally, the developmental characteristics of the sports agent's in America are as follows:

Firstly, along with competitive American sports' industrialization, socialization, and commercialization and the modern business market development, sports agents in America have become increasingly diversified in order to adapt to new market demands. Various services are provided, including negotiation, consultation, research, television, sponsorship and promotion for athletes, sports organizations, sports sponsors, enterprises, business companies and private individuals and groups. Their organization structures
are also varied from individual and partnership, to company and group structures.

Secondly, American sport agents focus not only on the local sports market, but they also expand their business to other regions and countries. From individual sport agents to large sport agent companies, they expand their overseas business through signing contracts with excellent foreign athletes, sports organizations, sport sponsors and some famous enterprises, which sees them occupying a dominant position in the global sport agent activities.

Thirdly, because the sports agent emerged earlier in America and the legal system in America is well-established, the management and supervision system of sport agent activities are well-regulated (Xu & Chen, 2004). America, as one of the most developed countries of sports agent, has a comparatively well-established sports agent organization system (Qian, 2008). The American system is divided into government and social organization management (Huang, 1999). With regards to government management, several state governments have enacted rules and corresponding registered management institutions (Labor Union, Industry Management Department, State Government Secretariat as well as Law Office of Legislative Committee) to legally regulate sports agents’ activities (Qian, 2008). Social organization management refers to the management of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and players associations (Song, 2006). NCAA is a semi-voluntary association of 1,281 institutions, conferences, organizations and individuals that organize the athletic programs of many colleges and universities in the United States and Canada (Wikipedia, 2012). The sports agent is an important element in the NCAA’s ongoing regulatory process (Shropshire & Davis, 2008). Sports associations are the main organizations of professional sports unions in America and are responsible for the relationships between players and their agents (Zhang, 2007). Nowadays sports associations mainly exist in four major team sports of America, the NFL, MLB, NHL and NBA (Shropshire & Davis, 2008 & Zhang, 2007).

However, due to the expansive development and an excessive pursuit of commercial interests, corruption is also increasingly common. Certain unscrupulous agents have been known to manipulate the games (match fixing) and athletes under the guise of normal agent activities, this seriously disrupts the order of the market and damages the image of the sport agent (Fan, 2008).

(c) Developmental situation of the sports agent in China

Along with the establishment of the market economy institution in China, several sports have become part of the market. An emerging occupation, the sport agents, began to operate from the 1990’s when the systems and operations mechanism were comprehensively reformed. This reform in China had its breakthrough in football has pushed other sports to the market and promoted the emergence of professional sports. Meanwhile, the allocation of resources for sport has been transferred from a governmental plan to market. Therefore, various sport organizations, individuals and enterprises are beginning to make demands of sport agents, and as such opportunities are provided for the development of the sport agent in China (Jin, 2007).

However, compared with other countries where the sport agent industry is well developed, China started late and is still at the developmental stage. Certain problems exist which are limiting its further development:

Firstly, the current sports system in China is under the National Sports System, most athletes and events are controlled by national sports organizations and administrative institutions. Therefore, sports agents’ business is limited as they have no right to be directly involved, thus limiting sport agent opportunities (Song, 2006).

Secondly, the management system of the sports agent is unreliable. There is no integrated organization system with relevant rules regulating sport agent activities. Thus, management rights cannot be clearly and professionally defined (Liu, 2009).
The organization system is divided into government management organizations (State Physical Cultural Administration, State Administration of Industry and Commerce, sports federations, local sports bureaus, and industrial and commercial bureaus) and society management organizations (sports associations, agent associations, and sports agent associations). Figure 4 shows the organization system of sports agents in China as a branch of the management system. In this system, State Physical Cultural Administration and State Administration of Industry and Commerce are responsible for nationwide macro management of sports agents; local sports bureaus, and industrial and commercial bureaus, are in charge of the management of local sports agents; the duty of the sports federations or sports associations is to operate various sports agent projects; agent associations which play a supporting role and sports agent associations preside over the disciplinary management of the sports agent.
Developmental Situation of the Sport Agent in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the public recognition of the sport agent is low and related research on the development of this occupation in Hong Kong is scarce. The sports agent has not yet emerged as an industry in Hong Kong. In recent decades, although specialized planning and public relations companies have appeared in sport, such as the Hong Kong Elite Sport Planning Company, Hong Kong Youth Sports Association Limited, and Hong Kong Sports Management Limited, most of their business is restricted to the planning and organization of small-scale local events and activities, such as sports games between various districts in Hong Kong, inter-school sports leagues, intra-school sports activities, and sports training courses. These companies usually regard themselves as sport promoters engaged in the public promotion, and as such the concept of the sport agent does not really exist in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, most sport agent activities are operated by government institutions and sports associations. They are mostly responsible for the planning and organization of various sports events and activities, as well as the management of athletes’ affairs. Whilst holding certain large events or activities, certain local or international advertising companies, public
relations companies and service companies with large
influence are invited to assist them with related coordination
and promotion work.

Considering the developmental stage in Hong Kong, the
number and type and scale of sports events held in Hong Kong
has increased, especially after the Equestrian Events of 2008
Olympic Games. Various sports leagues also operate well in
Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong has always focused on the
cultivation of elite athletes, with an increasing number of Hong
Kong elite athletes performing well at various events and who
are now well known to the public. An increasing number of big
business is seeking to capitalize on this by sponsoring sport
events. As a result, excellent event, athlete and sponsor
resources are available for the development of the sports agent
in Hong Kong.

However, it is apparent that this emerging industry in Hong
Kong faces a series of barriers as well as the impact of
competition from well-developed foreign agents, it makes the
progress in Hong Kong more complicated.

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A Brief Review of Fitness Clubs, Personal Trainers and Fitness Education Providers in Hong Kong

HO Man Kit, Indy
Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong

Introduction

A variety of physical activities for all adults including healthy individuals, deconditioned people or people with chronic diseases have been recommended by American College of Sports Medicine (American College of Sports Medicine [ACSM], 2010). A recent review conducted by Hui (2004) demonstrated the poor participation in physical activities for people in Hong Kong. Specifically, 40.2% of Hong Kong population were only somewhat active and 36.1% were not active at all (Hui, 2004).

To achieve an active lifestyle, apart from taking part in sport activities such as soccer, basketball, badminton, tennis and swimming, physical conditioning in large scale franchised fitness centers, or in small scale fitness room in residential clubs or fitness studios are alternatives for Hong Kong people. However, in Hong Kong, there are limited published information regarding the growth of the fitness industry such as the number of fitness clubs, club exercise facilities, staff distribution, the percentage of fitness club providing personal fitness training service as well as the education background of personal trainers, unlike in United States (US) that comprehensive profiles of the fitness industry is published by International Health, Racquet & Sportclub Association (IHRSA) every year.

The aim of the present paper was to summarize the information of fitness clubs, personal trainers and relevant education providers in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the situation of Hong Kong was compared with that of Beijing and Shanghai. To better address on the scope of fitness, the ‘fitness club’ in the present paper refers to ‘an organization that benefits from providing fitness services to the public. It should provide a good environment, professional facilities and trainers who are able to provide scientifically-based instructions to enhance a client’s physical health through sports and fitness.’ (Asian Academy for Sports & Fitness Professionals [AASFP], 2008).

Fitness Clubs in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai

The comparison of the total numbers and growth rates of fitness clubs of Hong Kong with other countries was demonstrated in Table 1 (AASFP, 2009; 2010; 2011; IHRSA, 2009; 2010; 2011). Both United States and United Kingdom had a steady growth of fitness industry while different Asia-Pacific regions still showed a positive and continuous growth in the recent years. This indicated a large room of potential development in fitness industry in the Asia-Pacific region especially China. To further compare the situation of Hong Kong with other cities in China, Beijing and Shanghai were selected.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of fitness clubs</th>
<th>Growth rate from 2009 to 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2959</td>
<td>3245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>6396</td>
<td>6396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>30022</td>
<td>29750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>5755</td>
<td>5795</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hong Kong was ranked number one in terms of the number of fitness clubs from 2008 to 2011 in over 60 cities in China (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011) while Beijing and Shanghai ranked second and third, respectively. Both Beijing and Shanghai have demonstrated a positive but unsteady growth from 2008 to 2011 and these two cities have demonstrated a considerable amount of potentials in developing the fitness industry as the number of fitness clubs were still low in comparing to Hong Kong such a small city in China (Figure 1 and Table 2).
The number of franchised fitness clubs in Hong Kong was far lesser than Beijing and Shanghai even though steady positive growth in this area was demonstrated (Figure 2 and Table 2) (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011). The land availability and the rental fees contributing to the major part of costing in running a fitness business may account for such huge differences. Based on the observation of such differences, investors may therefore consider establishing large scale franchised fitness clubs in other cities in China to minimize the running costs and the risk for their long-term investments.

Both Hong Kong and Shanghai demonstrated a small number and only slight growth in independent fitness clubs while high popularity in this area was reflected in Beijing (Figure 3 and Table 2) (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011). In Hong Kong, it is not uncommon that personal fitness trainers may run their own fitness studios after working in large scale franchised clubs for certain years but the high rental fees and costing are always the major concerns in running small scale independent fitness clubs in Hong Kong. Other possibilities to provide personal or fitness training services such as on-site personal training, and small groups indoor or outdoor fitness training with wide ranging versatile training equipment in the urban areas may be getting popular in the coming years.
It was clear that hotel fitness club (residential clubs included) was the major focus in fitness industry in Hong Kong (Figure 4 and Table 2). As newly built residential areas may have their own clubhouses which provide fitness training related services, it is expected that a considerable number of fitness professionals will be employed and advance careers in this kind of fitness centers.

More than 50% of the fitness clubs were contributed by hotel clubs while both franchised and independent clubs only accounted for less than 15%, respectively (Figure 5 and Table 3). The high and increasing rental fees and other operational costs may explain such low contribution in both franchised and independent fitness clubs.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franchised</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Figure 5 - Comparison of fitness clubs in different categories in Hong Kong from 2008 to 2011.

**Note.** Franchised: commercial clubs which operate under a franchising operation structure. Independent: commercial clubs which operate independently and have the freedom to run and market the club in their own way. Community: gyms providing fitness services within an area that improve people’s living standard at their leisure time (fitness centers run by the government are in also involved). Hotel: fitness club run within the premises of hotels. Others: all other clubs that do not fit the above four categories and these include clubs run by the government, schools, and self-financed enterprises. (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011).
Memberships

Membership is one of the most important aspects in determining the growth of the fitness industry in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has accounted for the largest portion of revenue in the fitness industry (Fitness Australia, 2012). The penetration rate in the fitness clubs mentioned before reflects the maturity and rooms for potential development in the coming years of the fitness industry. IHRSA (2009) reported that the penetration rate could reach over 20% in certain well developed cities such as Connecticut, Maryland, Georgia and North Carolina or over 16% in terms of country such as Canada and United States and therefore, both Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai still have rooms for further growth in terms of membership penetration and the market of fitness industry is positive in the coming years.

![Figure 6 - The number of fitness club members in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai from 2008 to 2011.](image)

![Figure 7 - The comparison of fitness club membership penetration rate (%) in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai from 2008 to 2011 (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011).](image)

### Personal Trainers in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai

The personal trainer is another key area in the fitness industry since apart from the membership, the sector in personal fitness training services contributed considerable amount of revenue in this industry (Fitness Australia, 2012). From 2008 to 2011, the number of personal fitness trainers increased from 1269 to 2031 which reflected a huge positive growth, and regarding the number of personal fitness trainer per fitness clubs, a persistent increase from 2.4 to 3.4 was also observed (Table 5) (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011). This indicated an increasing demand on personal trainers to meet the growth of fitness clubs and membership penetration.

Apart from the number, the education background that whether the personal trainers possessed a bachelor degree or above was also investigated and this could be an important index to indicate professional knowledge and quality of personal trainers in different places. In Hong Kong, only 5% to 7% of the personal trainers held a bachelor degree or above but this was far below as in Beijing and Shanghai over 50% of personal trainers held a bachelor degree (Table 5) (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011). The factors leading to these huge differences are not well understood. Meanwhile, increasing the number of personal trainers with relevant bachelor degree in Hong Kong should be one of the highly addressed topics in the coming futures.

### Table 4

The growth rate of the number of memberships in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai from 2008 to 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>+35.4%</td>
<td>+8.4%</td>
<td>+6.0%</td>
<td>+55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>+12.2%</td>
<td>+1.9%</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>-31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>+20.2%</td>
<td>-2.1%</td>
<td>+14.3%</td>
<td>+34.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Personal Trainers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>1259</td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>1826</td>
<td>2031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>2124</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>2121</td>
<td>2113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>1037</td>
<td>1268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Personal Trainers per Fitness Club</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Trainers with University Degree or Above</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fitness Education Providers and Registration System

When reviewing the quality of personal trainers in a certain city or country, the importance of the quality of fitness education providers and a well-established registration system to monitor the practice of personal trainers is apparent. In Australia, the government has stipulated that obtaining certificate III and IV in fitness is the minimum entrance requirement before the personal trainer is being employed (Fitness Australia, 2013). In United States, IHRSA and National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) are responsible for monitoring the standard and recognizing the qualification of personal trainers’ certification (IHRSA, 2010a; Institute for Credentialing Excellence, 2012). Although there is no registration body in China to provide practicing license, a similar function is provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security P.R.C. and General Administration of Sport of China that gym instructors including the personal trainers must possess a national and vocational certificate in this area before being employed (國家體育總局, 2012).

However, in Hong Kong there is no registration system or related ordinance from the government to oversee the quality assurance and monitor the professional practice, ethics and conduct of personal trainers or fitness professionals. Only the employers may stipulate the personal trainer possessing the valid and recognized personal training and first aid certificates before employment. Unlike the systems in United States and some other countries, obtaining personal trainer insurance before acquiring the certificate and being employed is also not necessary in Hong Kong. Therefore the quality of personal trainers and the risk of clients or club members in getting injury due to negligence and poor personal training skills caused by personal trainers is entirely depend on the quality of fitness education providers and employers. Whether a registration or licensing system is required for personal trainers in Hong Kong should be determined.

Several local fitness education providers in Hong Kong can be searched through internet which include (by alphabetical order) Asian Academy for Sports and Fitness Professionals (AASF), Australian Training for Fitness Professionals (ATFP), Hong Kong China Bodybuilding And Fitness Association (HKCBBB), International Health & Fitness Institute (IHFI), International Personal Trainers & Fitness Academy (IPTFA), International Personal Trainer Academy (IPTA), Physical Fitness Association of Hong Kong, China (PFA). Among these academies, only HKCBBB and PFA are the two non-profit making and voluntary organizations (HKCBBB, 2011; Physical Fitness Association of Hong Kong, China, 2011). It is also believed that only these two non-profit fitness academies are recognized by the fitness centers in the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) of the government because only their professional certificate holders are allowed to use the gym facilities without further assessments (LCSD, 2012).

Although there is no registration system for personal trainers or fitness professionals in Hong Kong, the government has launched the Qualification Framework (QF) in 2008 to help Hong Kong people set clear goals and directions for continuous learning to obtain quality-assured qualifications (Education Bureau, 2008). However, none of the personal trainer certification program offered by the aforementioned academies has benchmarked to any level of the QF in Hong Kong. Only one relevant certificate program co-organized by the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) and IPTFA about nutrition, physical fitness and weight management has been benchmarked to QF level 3 (The Open University of Hong Kong, 2012). Meanwhile AASF provides another gate for local personal trainers to become the Registered Exercise Professional (REP), which allows personal trainers to provide fitness training in any countries under the Confederation, including New Zealand, United Kingdom and Australia, without further assessments (AASF, 2007). Another Australian government recognized program which is equivalent to the certificate III in Australia is organized by ATFP (Australian Training for Fitness Professionals, 2010). However the level of recognition for REP offered by AASF and certificate III offered by Australia from employers as well as the value of them to personal trainers for working in Hong Kong are questioned and not well understood. Fitness professionals looking for the American recognized qualification may consider overseas fitness academies or institutions which do also provide training or hold examination through different channels in Hong Kong including the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) and The National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). These are among the several accredited certifications recognized by IHRSA in US and are usually welcomed in the local franchised and independent fitness clubs. For personal trainers or fitness professionals pursuing a bachelor or even master degree study, apart from the universities and higher education institutions in Hong Kong,
NASM also provides certain affiliated online degree programs co-organized with other universities in US (National Academy of Sports Medicine, 2012).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Research on fitness industry related aspects such as fitness clubs, memberships, personal training programs, personal trainers’ qualification, registration system and the association of the fitness industry with physical activity participation in Hong Kong have not been initiated currently. Only the commercial organization such as AASFP has conducted the survey. However, the methodologies employed for conducting these surveys was not mentioned and the actual definition of personal trainers were not clearly stated in these reports. The hotel clubs mentioned in these surveys have dominated in terms of the number of fitness clubs but indeed only 123 hotels were listed in the Hong Kong Hotels Association (Hong Kong Hotels Association, 2013) and whether the reported hotel clubs have included other type of fitness clubs such as residential clubhouse require further clarification. Therefore, the government or non-profit making organizations should take the initiatives to regularly conduct a systematic survey with well-defined methodologies, concerning the fitness clubs, memberships, fitness professionals as well as popular fitness equipment and programs adopted, and to publish the data for public reference.

The maturity and growth of fitness industry in terms of the number of clubs and memberships penetration rate in Hong Kong are still leading as compared with all other cities in China. However, the developments of franchised and independent fitness clubs were limited in Hong Kong. Personal trainers are recommended to explore the potential markets and possibilities in delivering both indoor and outdoor personal or small group fitness training services in the urban areas.

In Hong Kong, most personal fitness trainers did not hold a bachelor degree. Furthermore, a registration or licensing system for quality assurance and scrutinizing the professional practices of personal trainers or any kind of fitness professionals is lacking currently. Therefore, it is recommended to establish a fitness professionals or personal trainers' registration system in Hong Kong to monitor and control the quality. Moreover, holding regular international conferences or symposiums about fitness training to keep up the quality of the fitness training services in Hong Kong are also recommended. The universities and higher education institutions may also consider organizing certain part-time bachelor degree program to accommodate the needs of working in personal fitness industry.

Finally, if the benchmark to a certain level specified in the QF system introduced by the Hong Kong government is the only way to best recognize the quality of personal trainer related certification programs without the adoption of registration or licensing system by recognized body like other countries, all fitness education providers are recommended to obtain the QF recognition for the personal trainer certification programs to make sure the professional standard of any employed personal trainer is warranted and consistent in Hong Kong.

**Conflict of Interest**

The author worked at AASFP from 2004 to 2011 as the master trainer and senior program officer, and currently being the honorary advisor of AASFP without getting involved in paid administrative or teaching duties directly.

**Acknowledgment**

The author thanks AASFP for providing 2008-2011 AASFP China Fitness Club Industry Report, and Dr. Del P. Wong for giving direction, framework, and technical advices for the writing of this article.
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Introduction

Contemporary local sport policy began in Hong Kong in 1967, when colonial authority diverted public attention away from political concern and attempted to bring more stability and harmony to Hong Kong. Yet, there was no political support offered to sporting development. This government apathy towards sports resulted in the neglect of sport and athletic development. According to the Legislators like Audrey Yu (2010), there is only cultural and recreational policy but no sports policy. The authorities have focused on providing leisure facilities, but have long neglected fundamental sport development. The government grants resources only to elite athletes, and shows reluctant support to junior athletes, unless they show promise in big events.

In the past decade, the public are becoming more fascinated with sport especially after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, and the Guangzhou Asian Games in 2010. In 2010, the Hong Kong government has proposed to host the Asian Games 2023. This proposal has stimulated public debate regarding hosting mega events and facilitated public discussion on local youth sport development in the long term.

After Hong Kong’s handover from the UK to China in 1997, there has been increasing concern regarding local sport development. In 2002, the government launched a Sport Policy Review, demanding that local sport development should revolve around three major themes, namely, sport popularization, sport professionalization, and mega sport events. In 2004, the Home Affairs Department (HAB) dissolved the Sports Development Board (SDB), and set up the Sports Commission (SC), underpinned by the Community Sports Committee (CSC), the Elite Sports Committee (ESC) and the Major Sports Events Committee (MSEC), thus underlining the focus on development in the coming decade.

This paper is divided into the following sections: First, a survey is held which relate to youth sport preference. With reference to the survey result, related issues are discussed. Finally, the paper will try to highlight sustainable policies that are sustainable for further development.

Survey

The search was conducted in English publications and containing the following keywords: local sports, sport development, adolescent and youth, physical education, athletic training, and mega events. The search included a review of relevant reports, consultation documents, books and sport-related journals. Professional electronic databases (such as Pubmed, Medline, Eric and Sport Discus) were searched and other internet search engines (Yahoo and Google) were also conducted.

The questionnaire is set to measure students’ opinions and preferences regarding existing sport development in three areas, namely, leisure and recreational activity, physical education, and athletic training. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Sample and Data Collection

In order to guarantee the response rate and increase the sample size, the researcher distributed questionnaires as adolescents arrived at public facilities. Adolescents were asked to complete the questionnaire immediately, and were collected after their playing session. The survey was successfully completed by over 174 anonymous students from different schools, age groups and school grades (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>School Grade</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>F1 - F3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>F4 - F5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>F1 - F3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>F4 - F7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>U1 - U3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Age Group and School Grade of Participants*
Issues of Youth Sport Development

Weak Culture of Leisure and Recreational Sports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What sports have you played most?</th>
<th>What sports you like playing the most?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming, Diving, Water Polo</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking, Orienteering, Outdoor bound</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Tennis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinghy Sailing, Windsurfing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat Rowing, Canoeing, Kayaking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handball</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judo, Karate, Tae Kwon Do</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Climbing, Sport Climbing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wing-chun, Tai-chi, Shaolin Boxing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rope Skipping</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Sports participation during leisure time

According to table 2, sports most frequently preferred are: basketball, swimming, diving, water polo, badminton, cycling, football, volleyball, hiking and outward bound. On the contrary, participants were relatively apathetic towards sports that they have played less often. This may be due to lack of facilities and equipment, or partners. Unpopular sports are: dinghy sailing, windsurfing, rowing, kayaking, table tennis, tennis, ruby, track and field, running, handball, squash, softball, rock climbing, sport climbing, Judo, Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Wing-chun, Tai-chi, Shaolin boxing, rope skipping and dancing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports you have most frequently played?</th>
<th>Sports you would most like to join?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once two week</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once three week</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once two months</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Frequency of participation of leisure time sport

Table 3 further supports the notion that people like to play sports in which they can easily participate, in terms of frequency. The more they participate, the more they may enjoy and therefore continue to participate. In terms of sports most frequently played, they will generally do so once a week (34.5%) to twice a week (44.8%). Regarding the sports they prefer, participation ranged from once a week (33.3%) to twice a week (46%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports you have most frequently played?</th>
<th>Sports you would most like to join?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hours or Above</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 Hours</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 Hours</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5-1 Hours</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Hours or Below</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Duration of participation each time

Table 4 demonstrates that the longer they play, they enjoy more and subsequently continue to play. Regarding the sports they played most, they generally spend 1-2 hours (48.3%), 3-6 hours (28.7%). In terms of sports they most enjoy, they spend 1-2 hours (41.4%) and 3-6 hours (33.3%) each time. Similar results between the most participated sports and most welcomed sports, reflects that certain time slots may be suitable for certain sports.
Problems | Quantity | Percent
--- | --- | ---
The playing lacks coaching | 84 | 48.3 %
The facilities are too few | 76 | 43.7 %
The booking is too tedious | 74 | 42.5 %
The duration is too short | 36 | 20.7 %
The fee is too high | 34 | 19.5 %
N/A | 4 | 2.2 %

Table 5: Problems encountered during activities

Table 5 shows common problems and limitations that participants usually encountered. Apart from the lack of coaching (48.3 %), insufficient facilities (43.7 %), tedious booking procedure (42.5 %), short duration session (20.7 %) and high booking fee (19.5 %), all concerns can be grouped into one issue, that is, lack of facilities, equipment, and training grounds.

Discriminated Status of Physical Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>What facilities have your school provided?</th>
<th>What facilities do you wish your school would provide?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Court</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>96.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volley Court</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>77.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton Court</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>72.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Tennis Table</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>44.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness and Exercise Room</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Field (Hard land)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming and Diving Pool</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Field (Grassland)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field Ground</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Court</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash Room</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Climbing Wall</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing and Paracde Ground</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand ball Court</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing Room</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archery Field</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-country Arena</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics Room</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Facilities provided in school (Can choose multiple answers)

Table 6 shows a discrepancy between the facilities that schools have provided and facilities that students wish to obtain. According to these results, schools struggle to provide certain mainstream facilities, including basketball court (96.6 %), volley court (77 %), badminton court (72.4 %), table tennis table (44.8 %), fitness and Exercise Room (36.8 %), football field (Hard land) (34.5 %), swimming and diving pool (24.1 %), football field (grassland) (20.7 %), track and field ground (20.7 %), tennis Court (16 %), squash room (13.8 %). On the contrary, the students express different preferences to their current facilities: swimming and diving pool (62 %), sport climbing wall (40.2 %), fitness and exercise room (42.5 %), Football Field (Grassland) (33.5 %), tennis court (27.6 %), football field (hard land) (14.9 %), track and field ground (17.2 %), volley court (11.5 %), table tennis table (11.4 %) and cross-country arena (10.3 %).

According to table 7, the majority of participants (49.4 %) attend 2 physical education (PE) lessons per week (3 lessons: 11.5 %). It is notable that a significant portion of students do not have PE lessons (0 lesson: 25.3 %; 1 lesson: 4.6 %). Despite this, the weekly PE duration should also be recognized. Interestingly, 31 % students who do enjoy 150 minutes or above (150-180 Min: 9.2 %; 180-210 Min: 11 %; 210 Min or above: 20.7 %), are mostly students in international schools. A quarter of participants receive below 90 minutes (30-60 Min: 10.3 %; 60-90 Min: 14.9 %), and only 13.8 % students receive 90-150 minutes PE per week (90-120 Min: 6.9 %; 120-150 Min: 6.9 %).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field: Hurdles, Running, Relay</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>85.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>62.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>59.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>52.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field: High Jump, Long Jump</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>46.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field: Shot Putt, Throwing of</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discus or Javelin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rope Skipping</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Tennis</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: THREE major sports usually included in PE

Table 8 shows that in sport lessons, adolescents seem to prefer hurdles and running (85.1 %), badminton (62.1 %), basketball (59.8 %), volleyball (52.9 %), high jump and long jump (46.0 %), football (36.8 %). Comparatively, there is less participation in swimming (19.5 %), shot putting, discus throwing or javelin (16.1 %), rope skipping (11.5 %), table tennis (6.9 %) and tennis (4.6 %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Mark</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Level of likeness to attend PE lesson (Very Likely: 10, Not Very Likely: 1)

Table 9 demonstrates the popularity of PE lessons. Generally speaking, PE lessons could be said to be popular among students. In particular, almost half of participants (44.8 %) show interest in sport lesson (Grade 8: 11.5 %; Grade 9: 11.5 %; Grade 10: 21.8 %). 35.6 % of them willingly attend lessons (Grade 5: 9.2 %; Grade 6: 14.9 %; Grade 7: 11.5 %). However, 13.7 % students dislike PE lessons (Grade 1: 2.3 %; Grade 2: 2.3 %; Grade 3: 1.1 %; Grade 4: 8 %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of acceptance to PE</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared interest with classmates</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>59.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities and fields are Available</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>37.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-playing is allowed and granted</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>54.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic and professional teacher</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School's sport culture and tradition</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong personal interest on sports</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcomed disciplinary healthy exercise</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reason to evade academic class</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.6 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Reasons to like / dislike PE lesson

Table 10 illustrates the most common reasons for attendance and absence of PE lesson. Common interest (59.8 %), the inclusion of free-playing (54 %); availability of facilities and fields (37.9 %) and charismatic and professional teachers (18.4 %) are popular reasons for students’ enjoyment of PE lessons. However, reasons to ‘dislike’ are: no availability of facilities (41.4 %); no professional teachers (36.8 %); no free-play (25.3 %); no culture and tradition (25.3 %); and no common interest (20.7 %).

Clearly, one of the major problems is the lack of varieties of sport facilities and equipment. Students reported that they like to play sports that are highly accessible. Unfortunately, apart from certain international private schools, many government schools are subsidized and lack diverse facilities, such as
tennis courts, squash rooms, sport climbing walls, archery fields, cross-country arenas, hand ball courts, dancing and gymnastic rooms. Although PE is regarded as an integral part of formal education, the reality is that many schools overlook student’s sport examinations and health assessments. During PE lessons, there are either basic exercises or free-play sessions. Many students do not engage in the lessons, and many try to avoid PE lessons.

Policy of Youth Sport Development

Sport Generalization and Popularization

Hong Kong government should endeavor to raise the status of physical education, and set a compulsory fitness benchmark for students. In many European countries, children are required to select at least one sport. The Education Bureau could adopt a similar policy and increase the PE lessons from twice to three times a week, and conduct regular examinations of their progress. In addition, the government should focus on improving the quality of PE teachers and coaches. In particular, funding could be provided to enable schools to recruit retired athletes and sport professionals to take advantage of their expertise. Scholarship could be awarded to students for further sport studies. Additional opportunities could be offered to overseas exchange to stimulate student’s growth and interest in sport.

Apart from school education, the government needs to allow for the building of additional recreational facilities for leisure and recreational sports.

Early childhood development in sport

With regards to the sustainable and persistent development of youth sports, the government must put greater emphasis on youth training from early childhood. In fact, all high performing, talented athletes are merely the result of intense and persistent training. Such athletes have been given many opportunities by parents or schools during their childhood, and were required to undergo countless hours and consecutive years of professional and systematic training, so as to reach their peak. The success of international star players relies heavily on opportunities that are afforded to them during their childhood. This is why the authority needs to pay attention to the opportunities the offer Hong Kong school children through physical education and sport training. The government should consider investing in professional stadiums, sport centers, training grounds and facilities. In fact, many school facilities could potentially be rearranged into sport training grounds. Reservation and registration procedures need to more user-friendly, and set a higher no-show penalty so as to guarantee facility and resource efficiency.

In terms of the social status and social prejudice of athletes, the authority needs to consider awarding an allowance to those youth elite athletes. The government may request the university to give extra credit to sport-talented students, or regularly reserve a certain quota for youth elite athletes. Additionally, the government could sponsor youth elite athletes daily life expenses, and improve the rewards of elite athlete status, especially the medal winners.

Many youth athletes find it difficult to maintain a livelihood after retirement. In order to improve their occupational prospects and provide career paths for youth athletes, the government could offer pre-occupational training and further academic education opportunities during their athletic years. And arrange them to work in government or related enterprises so as to relieve them of worry and fear about their future. In 2005, the government made good progress in this direction by launching the Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Program (HKACEP), which serves to allow athletes to focus on elite training and competition performance, and thereby equipping them with the knowledge and skill sets necessary for their integration into mainstream society.

Besides this resource input for elite athletes, there should also be professional back-up manpower. In particular, the authority should not only employ famous foreign coaches and sport scientists, but introduce the most updated and professional curriculum of sport coaching and instruction, sport science, sport medicine and sport psychology to develop local sport professionals.
On one hand, the authority could import talented foreigners. In the Sports Policy Document 2004, the government has proposed to import talented foreigners. In the Sports Policy Document 2004, the government has proposed to import 100 athletic talented children and youngsters from Mainland China, so as to rapidly upgrade local athletic level and achieve a level of international achievement within 5 years. Additionally, sport scholarships should be extended and set up more, to encourage and sponsor those talented athletes who would otherwise go overseas for professional training.

Conclusion

To begin with, the government should take the lead for sport promotion, and attract entrepreneurial sponsorship. Besides this, the government may provide policy allowances and financial subsidies to businesses who are willing to invest in youth sport. Apart from direct governmental support, there are other means to finance youth sport development. In particular, sport and physical education funds, or sport lotteries which could subsidize local sports development.

To summarize, the building and consolidation of sport atmosphere for local youth, requires initiation from Education Bureau, coordination from Home Affairs Bureau, execution from Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and technical support from sport associations. Encouragingly, since the abolition of HKSDS in 2004, the Sports Commission has improved its budgeting and financial management, especially with regards to administration and cost control of sport training investment. Not only should the authority preserve and increase operational efficiency and transparency, but also in all other government departments and sport agencies, so as to promote local youth sport in a sustainable way.

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