

**Evaluation on the Impact of a Soccer  
Training Program on the Moral  
Development of Teenage Participants**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the impact of a soccer training program on the moral development of 35 teenage participants. Twenty-one participants took part in the interview which aimed at finding out their attitude towards the program by understanding their intention of participation, perceived benefits, attitude towards winning and losing, and the reason of adherence. Assessment from parents and teachers were made by using the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997). Results suggested that the program participants adopted a positive attitude towards participation by demonstrating strong team cohesion. Feedback from parents and teachers also consolidated that program participants generally demonstrated a normal behavior towards society. Base on findings from the study, recommendations were made for the improvement of the program and suggested directions for further studies

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## **Introduction**

With an increase in adolescent problem behaviors and decaying family structure (increases in unsupervised child at home alone), the future of today's youth has been a growing concern in our society. According to the report from the Security Bureau, HKSAR, there were 4510 juveniles (age between 10 to 15) and 4974 young persons (age between 16 to 20) arrested for crime in the year 2006 (Security Bureau, 2006). Cheng, Lo, and Wong in a study (2004) through self-report investigating deviant behaviors found that negative behaviors of drinking alcohol (4.1%), smoking (8.6%), verbally attacking teachers (2.09%), taking drugs (1.15%), verbally attacking parents (11.4%) and physical destruction and bullying (5.5%) frequently occurred among the sample of 1,432 secondary school children in Hong Kong.

Youth sport programs have been extensively used to foster a positive social development for youth. Sport, which provides a vehicle for learning to cooperate with teammates, negotiate and give solutions to moral conflicts, develop self control, display courage, and learn virtues such as fairness, team loyalty, persistence and teamwork (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995), has always been considered as a "character builder".

The Youth Employment Training and Creativity Development Centre of Chinese Evangelical Zion Church, a youth social service group in Tze Wan Shan, Hong Kong, has launched a soccer training program started in 2004. The program aims at providing some meaningful organized physical activities for young people that can develop their physical capacities, and more importantly, foster their moral development. The program has been operating for almost four years and this study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the program. Similar programs have been offered by other sport organizations (e.g. South China Athletic Association) or district

communities; however, the effectiveness of such programs has seldom been examined. It was a common practice that feedbacks from participants were always collected at the end of the program to generalize into participants' attitudes towards the program, but the influence of the program on their behavior was seldom studied. Also, inputs from significant others (parents and teachers) were seldom sought. This study extended the investigation to evaluate the behavioral changes of participants after joining the program. Data were collected from the participants themselves as well as their parents and school teachers. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the program on whether it could bring positive behavioral developmental outcomes to participants. Findings from this study could also generate ideas for the improvements for the program.

### ***Positive youth experiences through sport***

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the effect of sport involvement on youth development. Studies (Bar-Or, 1983; Cote & Hay, 2002) reported positive findings that it facilitated the physical growth of children through the development of their cardiovascular fitness, improvement of muscular strength and endurance, and able to control their weight. Aaron and his colleagues (1995) also found that those adolescents involved in regular physical activities were less likely to smoke.

Positive findings were reported that sport and physical activity could foster psychological and emotional development. Gilman (2001) found that those actively participated in extracurricular activities reported higher life satisfaction among youth. Another study (Fraser-Thomas & Cote, 2005) found that those involved in organized sport activities experienced significantly more happiness in their daily living.

Studies also indicated that social development could be achieved through sport

participation. In testing the Sport Commitment Model, Scanlan and his associates (1993) concluded that youth demonstrated discipline and commitment in sport which could carry over into other domains of life. Larson (2000) also proposed that participation in structured activities such as sport could provide the “initiative” that was crucial to youths’ positive social development.

Numerous studies (Dwyer *et al.*, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999) have found the positive relationship between students’ involvement in physical activities and their academic performance. This positive relationship extended to other performances in schools such as attendance, dedication to school work and other educational aspirations. Similar findings were concluded in a local study in Hong Kong (Lindner, 1999).

### ***Negative youth experiences through sport***

Negative influences on physical development were also reported in some studies mostly related with sport injuries (Hollander *et al.*, 1995) and eating disorder (Anshel, 2004). The competitive nature of sport activities also hampered the emotional and psychological development of youth. The study by Wankel and Kreisel (1985) showed that the excessive pressure to win and pressure from other team members led youth to experience low self-confidence and low self-esteem. Negative social outcomes were witnessed by the increasing acts of violence and aggressive behavior in youth sport settings which, in many occasions, considered acceptable and legitimate within the sport environment (Gardner & Janelle, 2002).

### ***The soccer training program***

The soccer training program was organized by the Youth Employment Training and Creativity Development Centre of Chinese Evangelical Zion Church. The aim of

the program was to provide an opportunity for those junior soccer players a chance to take part in competitions even they were not qualified for higher level regular league competitions. Through these activities, participants were expected to develop their own ethical value and internalize a set of positive values towards society. The whole program was consisted of four items: skill training, competitions, discussion sessions and individual counseling.

A three-hour skill training session was held every Saturday morning in their district soccer pitch. Trainers were hired to conduct the session. Besides providing technical support, social workers were also present to maintain interaction with participants and, hence, players were more alert on their behavioral expression and exert more personal control. Through this learning process, participants could improve their personal soccer skill, team co-ordination, as well as their social skill towards their peers.

Regular matches or friendly matches were organized about once every month. During the game, social workers would observe the behavior of the participants and evaluate on their ability to adapt under stressful situations. Debriefing sessions would be held after each match and discussions would be centered on their skill and tactical performance, as well as on appropriate or inappropriate behaviors demonstrated.

Discussion sessions were held once every month after one of the training sessions on Saturday. In the one and a half hours discussion session, social workers would refer to some incidents or anecdotes about their soccer team and participants were encouraged to share their views. Through the sharing session, it was hoped that participants could be aware of different points of view, how to appreciate different cognitions of peers, and the way to communicate with other people. Hence, participants could nurture a matured set of value judgment and breed a positive pro-social behavior towards society.

Social workers maintained regular contacts with team members and were aware of their individual needs or problems. Individual counseling would be made when personal problems or needs were identified. The service was quite individualistic and aimed at giving support to individuals in adapting to the society and getting along with other people. Activities ranged from team building activities, referee training courses to learning of appropriate etiquette in soccer activities.

The program has been funded by the Centre and involved an annual expense of about HK\$9,000 to cover the general equipment and basic expenditure. Also, social workers of the Centre have to devote about 10 man-hours every week for the management of the team. The program started in 2004 and extended over a period of two years, at present is working with the second cohort. In the past, feedbacks from participants were collected at the end of the program to generalize into participants' attitudes towards the program, but the influence of the program on their behavior was seldom studied. To evaluate on the effectiveness of the program, behavioral changes of participants after joining the program should be examined.

### ***Statement of the problem***

The study aimed at finding out the attitude and opinion of the participants towards participation in the soccer training program organized by the Youth Employment Training and Creativity Development Centre of Chinese Evangelical Zion Church. Also their criticisms and suggestions on the Program would also be sought. Further, the impact of the program on the moral development of the participants as witnessed by the significant others, parents and teachers in this study, was also examined.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Two groups of participants who joined the soccer training program offered by the Social Service Group were invited to take part in the study. The first group ( $n_1 = 16$ ) joined the program for about 4 years and the second group ( $n_2 = 20$ ) joined the program for about 2 years. Most of them were secondary 5 students ( $n = 23$ ), age range from 14 to 18 (mean = 15.97 years). They came from nine different schools in the Wong Tai Sin District. Among this group of participants, 21 took part in the interview.

Upon the consent of respective school principals, a teacher of each participant was contacted and invited to take part in this study by evaluating the participant's behavioral performance by using a set of questionnaires. Contacts were made through the PE master/mistress and they would nominate a teacher who had a better understanding of the student to complete the questionnaires. Normally, either the PE teachers or the class teachers of respective participants would be nominated. In this study, 32 teachers were successfully contacted and completed the questionnaires.

After seeking consent from program participants, the parent of each program participant was also contacted to take part in this study by giving comments on their children's behavioral performance at home. In this study, 20 parents were successfully contacted.

### ***Instrument***

In this study, in-depth interviews with program participants were used. During the interviews, descriptive data in the participants' own words were gathered in order to develop insights on how they perceived the soccer training program. In order to secure the vividness of their recollection, participants were asked to quote practical

examples. The interview was unstructured but focused on particular topics investigating their intention of participation, their perceived benefits of participation, their attitude towards winning and losing, and their reason of adherence to the program. The general interview guide approach (Patton, 1980) was used which involved outlining a set of issues concerning the various aspects of investigation. The issues in the outline were not taken in any particular order or wording and simply served as a basic checklist during the interview in order to make sure that all relevant topics were covered (Appendix I).

Class teachers of respective schools were asked to complete a translated Chinese version of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997) (Appendix II). They were asked to rate their students' behavior over the last 6 months.

The parent of the program participants were contacted through telephone calls. They were asked to rate their children's behavioral changes over the last six months. Questions were based on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997).

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was developed by Goodman (1997) as a behavioral screening tool used by parents and teachers. The SDQ consisted of 25 questions, 10 of which are considered as strengths and 14 of which were difficulties, and one of which – “gets on better with adults than with other children” – was neutral. The 25 SDQ items were reduced into 5 scales of 5 items each; they were: hyperactivity scale, emotional symptoms scale, conduct problems scale, peer problems scale, and prosocial scale. Each item was marked as “not true”, “somewhat true” or “certainly true” with a corresponding score of 0 to 2, or 2 to 0 for reversed direction questions. Total difficulties score was obtained by summing up all the scores except the “prosocial score” which was conceptually different from the presence of psychological difficulties. The original version was in English and was translated by

the investigator into Chinese. Both the original English version and the translated Chinese version were administered to a group (N = 21) of university students who were proficient in both English and Chinese languages. The reliability of the translated Chinese version was established by correlating the scores of both the translated Chinese version and the original English version. Coefficients of correlation between the English and Chinese versions were significantly high ( $r > .50$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Internal consistency of the SDQ-Chinese was also examined by calculating the Cronbach alpha values of each subscale. The alpha values of hyperactivity scale (.75), emotional symptoms scale (.78), conduct problems scale (.74), peer problems scale (.70), and prosocial scale (.78) were above or equal to the recommended level of .70 as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Thus, the translated Chinese version of SDQ has established its reliability and could be used in this study.

### ***Procedure***

Interviews of program participants were done at the Youth Employment Training and Creativity Development Centre, Chinese Evangelical Zion Church before their normal training sessions on Saturday mornings. Each interview session lasted for about 30 minutes. In order to maintain a casual atmosphere, not any form of data recording was made at the interview; but immediately after the interview, comprehensive detail of what had been revealed in the interview were recorded from the interviewer's memory. Elaboration and interpretation of data was done afterwards by making sense out of what the participants had said.

The Chinese versions of SDQ were given to the PE master/mistress of respective schools. They passed them to the nominated teacher of each respective program participants. They were asked to rate their students' behavior in the past 6 months as best as they could. Questionnaires completed were collected through the PE

master/mistress.

At the consent of program participants, their parent were interviewed through a telephone conversation. The items in the SDQ were served as a guideline and investigator marked each item on the questionnaire.

### *Analysis*

Qualitative data obtained from the interview were generalized to examine the participants' intention of participation, their perceived benefits of participation, their attitude towards winning and losing, their reason of adherence to the program and their further expectation of improvement for the program. Quantitative data obtained from their teachers and guardians were examined under the subscales of emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, prosocial behavior and the total difficulties score. The scores were compared with the Provisional Banding of SDQ Scores (Goodman, 1997, p.586) suggested by the author.

## Results and Discussion

This study evaluated the impact of the soccer training program organized by the Youth Employment Training and Creativity Development Centre of Chinese Evangelical Zion Church on the social and psychological development of the participants. Findings from the interview and questionnaires are provided below.

### *Demographic data*

Thirty five participants took part in the study. The mean age was 15.91 years ( $SD = 1.22$ ). They came from 9 different schools with 6 of them in high banding EMI schools (e.g. Ho Lap School, Choi Hung Catholic Secondary School) and the rest 29 from low banding schools in the Wong Tai Sin District. Other information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographic Data of Participants in the Study*

Age	14	15	16	17	18
	8	1	14	10	2
Education	F.2	F.3	F.4	F.5	Others
	1	7	2	23	2
Year of Experience	1	2	3		
	10	16	9		

### *Findings from interview with program participants*

The interviews were made on several Saturday mornings before their practice sessions. In order to make them feel comfortable and able to express freely, they were asked to attend the interview in pairs. Each interview session lasted for about 30 minutes, and 21 program participants were interviewed. The interviews aimed at understanding the participants' intention and their perceived benefits of joining the program, their attitude towards winning and losing, their reasons of staying in the program, the reasons why somebody dropped out, and their expectations for further improvement. Findings were summarized as follow.

#### *Intention of participation*

Just two participants said that they were approached by social workers in the playground and asked them to join the training program. Most participants learned about the soccer training program from their schoolmates or friends. They joined the activity together because they liked to play soccer. By joining the program, they could have more chance to play soccer and they could also gain the identity as a member of a team. The program also offered them the prestige of having a permanent training ground and a fixed time schedule for playing soccer. Some participants also quoted that they joined the program because they wanted to be with their friends. Apparently, most participants joined the program were influenced by their friends, especially by their schoolmates. Very often, they were already teammates in their school teams and they felt more secured if they joined an external activity together. Hence, in order to give a sense of security and more confidence in joining an outside activity, it would be better to extend the recruitment of new members through the existing members or through the school network. Also, the image of a well-organized group with regular trainings would arouse the participants' intention of affiliating with the group.

### *Perceived benefits of participation*

Participants were able to quote a lot of benefits after joining the program. Among those benefits, social benefits (know more friends) were the most popular, other benefits included: having fun, skill improvement, health enhancement, and gaining social support.

They were able to quote a lot of examples to illustrate that they have known more friends. A participant was able to recall that he was once angry with a member of the opposing team during the game, but later became good friends at the end of the match. Another participant claimed that he became more out-spoken and improved his social skills after joining the program. Some participants were able to recall the 2 day 1 night summer training camp; they claimed that they got to know the true personality of teammates during the camp. Some participants claimed that they had better control on their temper after joining the program.

Fun was also quite frequently quoted as a benefit of joining the program. They were able to describe lots of positive experiences in the previous matches. A prominent example was participating in the Rhenish Church Cup matches; they were quite excited to describe how the competition proceeded.

They seldom quoted health enhancement as a benefit, but have taken it for granted. One of the participants claimed that he has quitted smoking after joining the program, and that, obviously improved his health condition. This is also in accordance with a previous study (Aaron et al., 1995) indicating the health benefit of participating in exercise program.

They were able to acknowledge the social support as a perceived benefit. Many of them claimed that their parents were quite supportive in their participation in this healthy sport activity. They also thought that under this organized sport activity, they were not likely be bullied by gangsters in the district.

To conclude, health benefit and the fulfillment of fun were the underlying perceived benefits of joining the program which were taken for granted by the participants. They had internalized these benefits and sometimes not even aware of their importance. They were most impressed by the social benefits of having more friends and support from family that seemed to them extra benefits that they were not aware of when they first joined the program.

#### *Attitude towards winning and losing*

They did not have too many competitions but they did recall some occasions that they played very well and won several matches. They often attributed their success to good teamwork, and they felt that there was more unity under winning conditions. They also recalled some unhappy moments when they lose several matches. Some participants revealed that they were particularly angry when there were not enough players turning up for the match. They recalled two matches of unhappy experiences, one was held in a very bad weather condition (played in Ping Shek) and the other one was in Aberdeen which took them a long time to travel to but the team was badly defeated. Sometimes, there would be disputes among team members after a bad defeat. Generally, they accept competition results and make evaluations with the coach after every match. It was also common for them to have dinner altogether no matter winning or losing.

The program was basically a leisure sport activity and the emphasis was not particularly on winning. Study (Petlichkoff, 1996) also pointed out that in youth sport, winning is frequently a low priority for participation. Yet, in this study, participants still valued winning as an important element. Under winning conditions, the team demonstrated good teamwork and shared support among each other. However, under adverse conditions, all kinds of problems would arise. It was common to attribute

defeat to external factors, such as lack of cooperation, over-dependent on individual players, or someone over-dominating the whole match. Sometimes this would end in disputes among players or led to isolation of individual players in the team. This reflected that more team counseling should be made after matches, especially under losing conditions.

#### *Reasons of adherence*

There was a unanimous response that being with friends was the major reason of staying in the team. They generally felt that they have the responsibility of maintaining the team together by actively participating in trainings and matches. They treasured the opportunity of staying together and sharing the same goals, especially, many of them were Form 5 students and would be taking the Hong Kong Certificate of Examination this year in a few months' time.

Some participants also reflected that they received effective coaching provided by the program that helped them to improve their skills. Several participants also claimed that their parents had positive impression towards the program and persuaded them to continue to join the team.

It was originally their interest in playing soccer that motivated them to enroll in the program. However, after staying in the team for 2 or 4 years, it was the sense of social belonging that made them stay in the program. Even some of them would be finishing their F.5 schools this summer; they still wished to stay and maintain the team together.

#### *Reasons of attrition*

Participants were asked why some of the participants left the team in the past years. They clarified that very few players left. For the few who have left, they

speculated that the reasons were mainly because of not getting along well with other members, or being challenged by other members of the team. The other reason was they had limited chance to play in matches. One participant speculated that some members did not like the harsh training of the team and gradually lost interest and left.

Since, those took part in the interview were those who stayed in the team, the reasons they gave to explain those who left were merely speculations or their own opinions. They did not truly represent the opinion of those who had left, but just take them as a kind of reference. It would be logical to conclude that those players who had left could not get along with other members, or lost interest because they had limited chance to compete, or the way the training sessions had been conducted. This area needs further investigation.

#### *Expectation for improvement*

Participants were quite eager to make suggestions for the improvement of the program. The interviewer was expecting that requests would be made on increasing materialistic support, however, there was only one request made on the improvement on the quality of football. Almost all participants made suggestions on the improvement of group cohesion. They requested stricter discipline control, especially on punctuality during practice sessions. Some hinted that, in some circumstances, undesirable behaviors were not properly dealt with. They expected that the management of the program should handle the team with fairness. Some suggested that more social activities, such as camping, social gatherings, should be held to promote better team spirit. Some felt that there were enough chances for competitions; they preferred more practice sessions rather than competitions. They had the feeling that competitions were quite stressful. One participant, around the age of 15, joked that it would be nice to have more girl supporters during the matches.

The feedback consolidated that the participants were intrinsically motivated in taking part in the program rather than attracted by extrinsic benefits which was in accordance with the Cognitive Evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Since they participated out of their innate desire and out of their own choice, they had a strong sense of belonging and shared the responsibility in building a good team. They expected a clear and strict team code of conduct that everybody were required to follow. They also expected strong support from the management and their peers. In light of these findings, management of the program can set a higher standard of group discipline and contribute more resources in building team cohesion.

#### ***Findings from teacher evaluation by SDQ***

The teachers of the program participants were contacted to evaluate on the behavior of their students by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997). Out of the 35 program participants, 32 of their teachers were successfully contacted and returned the questionnaires. Some of the teachers were class teachers of the participants, while some of them were PE teachers of the schools who had a good understanding of the participant.

The questionnaires were reduced into 6 scales: Total Difficulties Score (TDS), Emotional Symptoms Score (ESS), Conduct Problem Score (CPS), Hyperactivity Score (HS), Peer Problems Score (PPS), and Prosocial Behavior Score (PBS). The means and standard deviations for different subscales and comparison with the Provisional Banding of SDQ Scores suggested by Goodman (1997) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Teacher Evaluation on the Behavior of Participants by SDQ and Comparison with the Provisional Banding of SDQ Scores*

	Mean	SD	Normal Banding	Borderline Banding	Abnormal Banding
TDS	8.41	4.46	0 – 11	12 – 15	16 – 40
ESS	1.44	1.44	0 – 4	5	6 – 10
CPS	1.44	1.22	0 – 2	3	4 – 10
HS	3.19	1.91	0 – 5	6	7 – 10
PPS	2.34	1.47	0 – 3	4	5 – 10
PBS	6.50	2.02	6 - 10	5	0 - 4

The mean scores of all the subscales were within the normal banding suggested by Goodman (1997) which was developed by a number of surveys using the SDQ. By further observation, the mean scores of all difficulty indexes except ESS were on the upper end of the suggested normal banding; on the other hand, the strength index (PBS) was on the lower boundary of the suggested normal range. Using the Provisional Banding (Goodman, 1997) as a reference, the sample from this study was, thus, within the normal banding but might envisage occasional difficulties in adapting to society.

Most of the participants in this study were studying in band 3 schools (29 out of 35) in Wong Tai Sin District, which were always considered to have behavioral problems. However, the feedback from teachers revealed that this group of students had acceptable behavior in school. Although they did not demonstrate extraordinary prosocial behavior (PBS = 6.50), yet, they did not have too much difficulties in adapting to their school life (TDS = 8.41). In school, they might be quite active (HS = 3.19), sometimes had conduct problems (CPS = 1.44), might have problems with their friends (PPS = 2.34), but emotionally stable (ESS = 1.44). Although, comparison with

non-participants in this program was not possible due to the absence of data, yet, based on these preliminary descriptive findings, it was reasonable to conclude that participants in this program had demonstrated acceptable behavior in schools.

***Findings from parent evaluation by SDQ***

The parents of the program participants were contacted through telephone calls upon the consent of the participants. The items of the SDQ were served as the guideline of conversation. The parents were asked to comment on the behavior of their children at home in the recent 6 months. Their responses were marked according to the items on the SDQ. Twenty telephone calls were successfully made and questionnaires completed. Similarly, the completed questionnaires were reduced into 6 scales for interpretation. The means and standard deviations for different subscales and comparison with the Provisional Banding of SDQ Scores suggested by Goodman (1997) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Parent Evaluation on the Behavior of Participants by SDQ and Comparison with the Provisional Banding of SDQ Scores*

	Mean	SD	Normal Banding	Borderline Banding	Abnormal Banding
TDS	10.95	4.56	0 – 13	14 – 16	17 – 40
ESS	2.40	1.73	0 – 3	4	5 – 10
CPS	1.85	1.63	0 – 2	3	4 – 10
HS	3.55	2.16	0 – 5	6	7 – 10
PPS	3.15	1.18	0 – 2	3	4 – 10
PBS	6.35	1.69	6 - 10	5	0 - 4

The mean scores of five subscales were within the suggested normal banding with PPS in the borderline banding. The mean scores for difficulty indexes (TDS, ESS, CPS, HS) were again clustered at the upper end of the normal banding, or had exceeded into the borderline banding (PPS), also, the strength index (PBS) was on the lower end. The data from the parents of the participants reviewed that the sample of study were within the normal acceptance of the society but might have encountered problems in getting along with their peers.

The participants in this study were between the ages of 14 and 18 who were undergoing a critical period of adolescent development and faced a set of major life changes. They began to think about themselves and how they relate to others and the broader society (Durkin, 2001). Their parents, sometimes not aware of these changes would perceive that their children might have some difficulties in getting along with their friends or school life. Especially, when their children expanded their social sphere and had more friends, the parents would worry that their children might be affected by their peers. This discrepancy can explain the relatively high difficulty indexes evaluated by the parents. Yet, during the interview, most players felt that their parents were supportive of their participation in the program. Thus, more communication should be established with the parents so that they could realize the positive development of their children through participating in the program and earn their support.

To conclude, the qualitative data obtained from participants together with the teacher ratings and parental ratings supported the notion that the soccer training program has achieved, through participation in sport activities, the desired impact of developing the participants' own ethncal value and internalize a set of positive values towards society.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the findings of this investigation, the following recommendations can be made in regard to the promotion, management and development of the program.

Most of the participants took part in this program were under the influence of their friends. They preferred to take part in open activities with some companions so they would feel more secured. Thus, recruitment of new members can be more effective if it is made through the invitation of existing members. This will lessen the uncertainties of those who are not familiar with the organization.

Recruitment of new members can also be made through school PE teachers. In the contact with school PE teachers during the questionnaire collection, they were very supportive and had a positive attitude towards the soccer program. They generally felt that their students benefited from joining the program both in improving their technical skill, as well as in facilitating their moral development and improving their social skill. In fact, many of the program participants were team members in the soccer team of the same schools, their PE teachers were happy that the soccer program could offer their students opportunities to practice for their inter-school competitions.

There have been different reasons given by the program participants for staying with the program. Among them, fun, friends and identity were frequently mentioned. To maintain the attractiveness of the program, all these elements have to be taken into consideration. Several participants demanded that a stricter discipline should be observed, such as punctuality, attendance and obedience to coach. They will have a better identity when affiliating with a well-organized team. Hence, it is recommended that the team image should be improved. Clear and reasonable rules should be formulated under the consultation of all members, and should be strictly implemented. Positive team image can be fostered by wearing tidy team uniform and setting up of

unique team culture (e.g. the Brazilian drills) during trainings; especially when they are held in public ground with neighbors of the district around.

Many of the participants are currently F.5 students. They will be taking the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination this year. It is very likely that they will have a change in their schooling or their daily living. There is a great possibility that some members in the team will leave. During the interview, all participants revealed that they did not have the intention of leaving the team, but were not sure how they could stay, or what role they should play. In consideration of their experience and commitment, in fact, they are valuable assets to the program. They can be developed into youth soccer leaders that can assist in the operation of the program. With their enthusiasm and contribution, not only the work of the coach can be shared, they can further exert a positive influence among other young participants.

Relationship with participants' parents also needs to be established. Program participants are at the age of change that is related to biological, social, and organizational contexts. The shift from family to peers often leads to confrontation between the child and parents which was a result of lack of communication. From the interviews, information suggested that parents were basically supportive of their children participating in such activities, but had little information on the nature and purpose of the program apart from playing soccer. In recent years, many youth sport activities (e.g. junior age group athletics), always involve the participation of parents, either as spectators, supporters or caretakers. This will allow the parents to be informed of the development of their children and also enable them to have some kind of involvement and, thus, gaining their recognition.

This study suggested that youngsters through participation of the soccer training program were able to expand their social circle, and able to nurture a sense of recognition by affiliating with a group. These are important elements to facilitate

successful personal and social development of the individual. In consideration of the limited resources implication, the program has been found to be a valuable tool for reducing and preventing behavioral problems and promoting pro-social behavior in both the school as well as the family settings. Further expansion of the program with more resources support is justified.

## **Future Direction**

The current study examined the impact of a soccer training program organized by the Youth Employment Training and Creativity Development Centre of Chinese Evangelical Zion Church on the moral development of their teenage participants. Specific recommendations are made on the launching, administration and development of the program. This study also provides a basis for future investigations and directions.

This study is a cross sectional study and examined the status of the participants at the moment the study was conducted. As noted by Weiss and Petlichkoff (1989), longitudinal research would give us more information on the change of behavior across different phases of sport involvement. Petlichkoff (1996) further suggested that this kind of study can be achieved through the pre- and post-participation assessments of the specific program. It is suggested that further research will be useful if participants are assessed when joining the program and compare the results after staying with the program for several years.

According to information provided by participants during the interview that number of “dropouts” from the program was just a few. However, the reasons for discontinuing in the program have to be considered in order to make improvements to the program. In this study, the reasons of dropping out were only speculated by those staying in the program; the actual reasons have to be confirmed by the dropouts themselves. Further investigation would be required in this area.

This study is a preliminary study and involved a relatively small sample ( $N = 35$ ), further study with a larger sample, or across districts would be useful in evaluating the effectiveness of similar programs. The results from this study support the development of program such as this one and indicate the need for greater research in these areas.

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## APPENDIX I

### Interview Outline

#### Demographic Data

- age, school and level attending, years of joining the program

#### Intention of participation

- how you joined the program?
- Why you joined the program (interest/ prestige/ friends)?

#### Perceived benefits of participation

- Can you recall an important incidence?
- What can you get after joining the program (healthier/ better skill/ more prizes and trophies/ more friends/ praise from teachers or parents)?

#### Attitude towards winning and losing

- What was the result of competitions, more winning or losing?
- Did you remember how you celebrate after winning an important match? How did you feel?
- What did you do after a badly failure match? What happen to your teammates? What did you do immediately and afterwards?

#### Reason of adherence

- Some people left, but you are staying for quite a long time, why?
- Do you think you will stay longer? Why?

#### Expectation for improvement

- What can be done to make the program more interesting/ meaningful?
- Can you prioritize 3 suggestions for improvement?

APPENDIX II

體育活動對青少年成長及其個性影響之問卷調查

(Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)

請根據貴子弟/學生在過去半年或學年，在以下各項之表現作出評核。此評核純粹作為學術研究，探究體育活動對青少年成長及其個性之影響，不會利用作為個人用途。請於“不正確”、“部份正確”或“完全正確”之方格內加上“✓”。

貴子弟/學生姓名：\_\_\_\_\_ 出生日期：\_\_\_\_\_

	不正 確	部份 正確	完全 正確
做事會考慮他人的感受。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
極度活躍，不能長時間安靜。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
時常感到頭痛，胃痛或身體不適。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
經常願意與其他人分享自己的物品。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
時常發脾氣或脾氣暴躁。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
較孤獨，偏好獨自玩樂。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
尚算服從，能遵從長輩/成年人的吩咐。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
很多憂慮，時常擔心。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
如其他人受傷、不開心或不適，能加以協助。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
時常坐立不安。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
最少有一位好朋友。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
時常跟其他同輩打架或欺負他人。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
時常不開心，情緒低落。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
受同伴喜愛。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
容易分心，難集中注意力。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在陌生環境會緊張，缺乏安全感及容易失信心。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
能親切的對待年紀較輕之同伴。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
時常說謊及欺騙他人。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
受其他同伴指責或欺負。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
能主動幫助其他人 (父母、師長、其他同伴等)。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
做事前能思考清楚。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在家裏，學校或其他地方偷竊。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
跟長輩/成年人相處較同伴為融洽。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
很多恐懼，容易驚嚇。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
能全神貫注，貫徹始終地完成任務。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

簽署：\_\_\_\_\_日期：\_\_\_\_\_

\*家長 / 老師 / 其他(請註明：\_\_\_\_\_ ) \*請刪去不適用

~ 謝謝 ~