

Encouraged or Overwhelmed: The Fine Line in Student Involvement

A Mixed Method Reasoning Correlational Study

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Abstract

The present study investigated the correlation between student involvement in extracurricular activities and self esteem. Societal focus on self esteem has increased significantly as mental health has been prioritized, and due to this necessity of self esteem within young people, the focus of this paper is on the self esteem of involved high school student athletes. This paper analyzes if there is a correlation between extracurricular activities and the self esteem levels of high school students. To search for one, the researcher used a mixed method correlational study in which 22 student athletes answered an assortment of questions of varying question types. From there, a Self Esteem Index was constructed, an expert advisor was contacted, and the correlation coefficient was calculated from the data the participants granted. There was found to be a moderate to high negative correlation between self esteem and the number of extracurricular activities. This conclusion was confirmed through triangulation of self esteem levels through two different indexes (Self Esteem Index, and Self Determined Self Esteem), a correlation coefficient, and experience from an expert advisor, which all came to a consensus of a negative correlation.

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Introduction

In today's society, confidence is everything. Self esteem is becoming increasingly valued, yet increasingly difficult to build up in one's mentality. Specifically in high school students, self esteem is shown to be lower than previous years as mental health issues impact confidence levels. Many studies continue to highlight the importance of self esteem, on productivity, relationships, and general achievement and success. However, this research is lacking in increasing self esteem, specifically in the younger generation who seems to need it the most: high school students. Meanwhile, high schools and college admissions offices express the importance of maintaining a high grade point average while staying involved in school activities and extracurriculars. The full plate that high school students continue to juggle is causing one of the causes of the increased stress and burnout, according to high school students. This adding even more to the student's plates is time-intensive extracurricular activities, specifically sport teams. Sport teams at the coastal suburban high school mentioned within this study can spend upwards to 20 hours per week in practices and competitions, while in season. The large burden that is added through time-intensive activities ensures these student-athletes are reaping the benefits of school involvement, despite the time commitment. The struggle comes in measuring additional involvement in relation to self esteem. Humans, in general, not only desire self esteem, but we crave it, because it contributes to overall well being and productivity. As the demographic most in need of these benefits is facing an epidemic of low self esteem, a solution needs to be created as soon as possible, and the answer might lie within school involvement.

Literature Review

Self Esteem in Adult Life

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Prior to synthesizing self esteem in high school students, an analysis of self esteem in everyday, adult life must occur. Charles Allen points out that adults with jobs have far higher self esteem than those without. It is evident that, “when you have a job, you feel like you are a contributing member of society. Although, that feeling is mostly sub-conscious” (Allen, 2018, para. 5). Jennifer Campbell expands on workplace self esteem and discusses the impact of self esteem on leadership roles within the workplace. Specifically, “high self-esteem makes people more willing to speak up in groups and to criticize the group's approach. Leadership does not stem directly from self-esteem, but self-esteem may have indirect effects” (Campbell, 2003, para. 3). While this is pertinent information to have for many young adults who are heading into the workplace, studies like these do not help the demographic who seems to lack high self esteem the most: today’s high school students.

The Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

Upon entering almost any high school in the United States, high school students are encouraged to join clubs and extracurriculars in order to build their resume for college applications. However, there seems to be many additional benefits of extracurricular activities that have not been noted. In most people, the environment has a direct correlation to many aspects of life. Whether it be an impact on mood, productivity, or accomplishment, the surrounding setting and environment can have a great influence. The same applies to a working environment in high school students. College Board points out that being a part of a team and, “working hard and mastering new skills in a fun, relaxed – and sometimes competitive – setting allows you to be successful without the pressure of getting a good grade. Plus, once your confidence improves, you’ll be more open to taking risks in all aspects of your life” (2020, para. 3). Russel Cassel expands on this by showing that extracurriculars show a correlation between

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lack of, and legal issues. He studies that, “repeated records of high school students across the United States have shown that those students who become heavily involved in extracurricular activities tend to be model students and seldom get involved in delinquency and crime. They are the role models early in high school and community showing that the bridge between home and the workplace or college is much more sturdy and complete than for other students not so involved” (Cassel 2000, para. 7). Cassel expands upon Charles Allen’s perspective of the future implications that extracurricular activities can have on the community around students and the impact they have on other students. Both Allen’s and Cassel’s previous conversation connect to form a bigger picture that emphasizes the role extracurricular activities play in community.

The Downfall of Extracurriculars

Suzanne Le Menestrel and Daniel F. Pebnmrkins expand on the benefits of teams, especially the physical aspect of sport teams. There are “physical, socioemotional, and cognitive benefits of sports participation. These include health benefits (for example, a reduction in heart disease and diabetes) as well as socioemotional benefits, among them the coping skills of being able to bounce back from problems” (Menestrel & Perkins, 2007, para. 4). The Center of Disease Control (CDC) expands upon this and discusses that in order for true benefits to be reaped, “Social isolation significantly increased a person’s risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity” (CDC, 2020, para. 2). The CDC is one of few to compare social isolation to smoking and obesity, long known health risks. This claim by such an established source shows not only the benefit to extracurricular activities, but rather the need for them, in order to avoid health risks that are similar to those that can kill.

Extracurriculars are needed for students, both in regards to physical health and college admissions, right? It is not quite as simple as it seems. Joining a team in the real world is

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extremely crucial to boost self esteem. Upon joining a team, school or workplace, “it is predicted that this relationship will be moderated by threats to social identity and efforts to cope with the threats.” (Wann, 2016, para. 1). Jason Kaufman argues that extracurricular activities don’t fully matter in the college acceptance process. It seems that “at the general college level, hands-on training in the arts appears to improve students’ odds of going to college by bolstering their human capital but not their cultural capital. Direct exposure to the arts does not appear to improve students’ chances of going to an “elite” college, though having parents interested in the arts does” (Kaufman, 2004, para. 3). Essentially, test scores seem to outrank volunteering or extracurriculars in almost every college acceptance process across the United States. Taking a different approach to show the downsides of extracurricular activities, Jawad Fares expands on that concept as he showcases that burnout can occur when students are too involved. In fact, “bivariate and multivariate regression analyses revealed that being a female or a 1st year medical student correlated with higher stress and burnout. Music-related activities were correlated with lower burnout. Social activities or living with parents were associated with lower academic efficacy. The high stress and burnout levels call for action” (Fares, et. al, 2015, para 2). This immediate action that Fares calls for is a direct alignment with the health risks that are associated with an unhealthy balance of extracurriculars. While previous studies done in the field of extracurricular activities benefits closely align with that of the CDC’s perspective, the study done by Fares notes that involvement is not all positive.

Within Varsity Athletes: Confident or Arrogant

Even more compelling is the possibility of distinction between athletes and the average involved student. Varsity athletes in many high schools, while in season, dedicate time to extracurriculars and many are involved additionally in clubs and other honor societies. As a

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result, student-athletes at a coastal suburban high school are the perfect candidates to study how extracurriculars impact the self esteem of already involved students. Furthermore studying this specific population's self esteem directly aligns with the current research trends occurring in this field. In fact, with the rise of knowledge on mental issues, many organizations have been established in order to bring light to the mental issues faced by student athletes, such as *The Hidden Opponent*. Organizations like these, "will bring light to the many issues and struggles that student-athletes face, raising awareness to break the stigma of mental health in athletic culture" (Garrick, 2021, para. 2). Organizations like The Hidden Opponent show the emphasis that is beginning to be placed on self esteem within student athletes, noting the increased importance of self esteem that society is noticing. The Hidden Opponent is the one of the few organizations to note this, however, and because their goals can not be put into conversation with other organizations that align closely with their ideals, there is a gap on the self esteem of athletes.

Self Esteem Gaps

Perhaps one of the most significant topics centered around society is the studies revolving around self esteem. Most people crave high self esteem, not only because it makes us feel good, but also because it seemingly links to better performance. The benefits of self esteem are clear, but unclear are the causes and what allows for higher self esteem, especially in age groups with traditionally low self esteem, such as high school student-athletes.

With this apparent gap, I plan to address the question of: What is the correlation between self esteem and extracurricular activities for High School Fall Varsity athletes at a Coastal Suburban High School. Through answering this question, I predict that student athletes with higher self esteem will be involved, while remaining cautious of the dangers that

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overinvolvement poses. There likely will be a fine line between being a part of a team and being overwhelmed. And while studying self esteem in high school students, I plan to study how fine that line is.

Method

A Sampled Reasoning Mixed Method Study

Due to the complex nature of “self esteem”, previous solely statistical studies done about the subject do not fully capture the self esteem levels in people. Thus, I decided to use a mixed method study that I have deemed a reasoning mixed method correlational study. Each of the components of this method work to better observe the correlation between self esteem and extracurricular activities. Reasoning refers to the short answer questions that I incorporated in my survey in order to establish the reasoning behind their ranking for self esteem. Meanwhile, mixed method refers to the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Correlational refers to the study of a correlation between self esteem and extracurricular activities, with a correlation coefficient.

Avoiding Inertia

The students in this study were chosen based on their status as athletes. A large percentage of the high school I studied lacked involvement in any extracurricular activities or school events, thus, athletes were chosen in order to ensure that the students surveyed were involved to some degree. To discourage any debate of what constitutes a sport, only the sports listed on the school’s athletics website were included as sports in this experiment. I gathered the entire roster of: American Football, Volleyball, Cross Country, Swim, Cheer, Basketball, Tennis, Wrestling, Golf, and Soccer, which includes a mixture of male and female athletes, having slightly more males, due to the majority of males in the Football team. Based on these rosters, I

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sent all athletes (200) an email asking for voluntary participants, in order to increase participation and encourage my results to be the most representative of the populations. Students who volunteered, and returned a consent/assent form, were able to participate in the study. I received 22 total participants for my study of varying grade levels and skill levels.

To collect participants for my survey, I first sent out an email to varsity athletes with a fall season sport in order to eliminate any bias that occurs as a result of being in-season. This did not generate a viable number of participants and I did not feel that it would accurately represent student athletes. As a result, I sent emails to all student-athletes, who participated in all seasons of sports listed on the school's website, in order to avoid any debate circulating around what was considered a sport. I utilized the school district's email system that provides the correct email address upon entering the student's name, in order to reach all students. I asked for volunteers from the athletes, in order to increase participation and gain a more accurate sample of those who truly are involved in extracurricular activities, wanting to be an active member of the school community. I collected consent and assent forms that were previously approved by the school's Institutional Review Board and after collecting those forms, I gave participants the survey. Throughout the study I emailed and texted participants, with reminders to turn in consent and assent forms, and complete the survey, which massively helped my sample size become more accurate.

Measuring Complexity

To collect data for a sampled reasoning mixed method study, a series of questions with varying question types were implemented. I used Likert Scale questions and multiple choice to collect quantitative data, while also using short answer questions in order to collect qualitative data. All questions were self created, in order to remove any boundaries and have the ability to

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ask a multitude of questions, to provide specified data, targeted to address the goal of this research study.

Subsections of the survey given were each chosen for specific purposes, and they are divided into the same categories in Figure 1 as they appear on the survey given to participants. Demographic questions were asked in order to determine if there are trends with certain ages or grade levels, or to determine if there was a difference in self esteem based on the remote status of students. Likert scale questions were asked on a scale of five, with the extreme perspectives stated in each question.

Questions	Format/ Reasoning
<p>Background Information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Email 2. Age 3. Grade 4. This 2020 School Year, are you in person, or virtual? 	<p>These short answer questions were asked to see if there was an alignment or skewed data due to grade levels, age, or current school format.</p>
<p>Athletic Participation and Ability:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What sport do you participate in? 2. Do you participate in other sports that are listed on the school's athletics website? 3. Are you a captain of your sport? 4. What position do you play in your sport (if not applicable, please state your sport below)? 5. Are you varsity or junior Varsity in Your Sport? 6. How would you rank your skill on your sport team (scale of 1-10)? 7. Please provide reasoning on why you chose the above choice.(Example: I am a 2 because I finish last on my 	<p>Athletic Participation and Ability was an allocated theme within the survey in order to determine the distribution of athletes and to gauge athletic ability and to determine if the leadership role or ability within a sport disproportionately impacted self esteem.</p> <p>Questions 1, 2, 4, were all short answer questions to allow for simple fill in the blank. Meanwhile, 3 and 5 were given options due to the similarity of answer choices.</p> <p>Throughout the survey, while most scaled questions are based on a 5 point Likert Scale, the one expectation to this scaling, was</p>

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<p>races and meets. OR I am a 10 because I am quarterback and the region champion)</p>	<p>question six, which asked “How would you rank your skill on your sport team?”, placed on a Likert scale of ten. This exception was made in order to accommodate for the vast range of athletic ability.</p> <p>Meanwhile, question 7 was a long paragraph to assess the reasoning that participants had for choosing the above answer. This was done to gauge self esteem based on written tone and a more open explanation of their athletic ability.</p>
<p>Workload and Time</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I lack the time needed to commit to my sport 2. I use the time I have to better my performance in my sport. 3. How much time per week do you spend on your sport DURING season. 4. How much time per week do you spend on your sport IN THE OFF SEASON 5. How much time do you spend on schoolwork per week? 6. Does your sport prohibit the time you spend on schoolwork? Why or why not? 7. Have you ever contemplated seriously quitting your team? 8. If you said “Once or Twice” or “I contemplate this everyday”, why? 9. Check the following extracurriculars you are involved in at your high school. 10. How many sports are you involved in? 11. How many clubs are you involved in? (If none, please indicate 0) 12. How many national honor societies are you involved in? (If none, please 	<p>This series of questions were to measure the time that participants have, and if their sport or other extracurriculars interfered with their general time management.</p> <p>This was to understand the fine line that many students balance with regards to their time management and to determine if burnout plays a factor within general self esteem.</p> <p>Questions 1 and 2 were used on a Likert Scale (1- 5 increments) due to both questions pending on levels of agreement for a given statement.</p> <p>Questions 9-12 were designed to determine if type of extracurricular dictated self esteem. However, due to the similarity of answers and involvement amongst participants, these questions did not contribute to significant results.</p> <p>Question 9 options were taken from the high school’s website on extracurricular activities of school-sponsored extracurricular. This was done to avoid debate as to what extracurriculars consisted of.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sports Clubs</p>

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<p>indicate 0)</p>	<p>National Honor Societies (AP Academy, Beta Club, NHS, Mu Alpha Theta) Newspaper/Yearbook/Student Council Fine Arts (Band, Art, Chorus) Volunteering/Tutoring Programs</p>
<p>Involvement and Time Distribution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When I am involved, it is simply for my resume. 2. I feel like I am a part of a family at Wando. 3. I feel a sense of belonging at Wando. 4. How many extracurricular activities are you involved in total? Please list them. 5. In your opinion, what are the benefits of extracurricular activities? 6. What do you gain from the extracurricular you are involved in? 7. What is the average time you spend on your extracurricular activities? 8. Is this more or less time than you spend per week on your sport? 9. How much is the time difference? 10. Why would you say your time favors the certain extracurricular or sport you spend more time on? 	<p>Questions 1-3 were based on the same 1-5 increment Likert Scale while questions 5, 6, and 10 were all reasoning to assess the</p> <p>Later, I measured the frequency of questions 5, 6, and 10 with key words to come to a consensus of perceived benefits within these student athletes.</p>
<p>Self Esteem and Confidence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I feel very confident in my actions. 2. I feel like others are judging me 3. I seek the validation of others in order to justify my choices. 4. Do you fall victim to other people's actions? 5. If yes, or sometimes, how often? 6. I think highly of myself 7. I feel confident in my body 8. I attribute the confidence in myself to 	<p>These questions were used to determine the self esteem in participants. Through these questions, two common themes to this field of research were emphasized: Perception of Peer Popularity Scale and the Perception of Familiar Acceptance Scale.</p> <p>These questions were all on a Likert scale of 1-5 to align closely with other research within.</p> <p>In Figure 2, each of the questions used to generate my self esteem index (SEI) are</p>

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<p>the people I surround myself with.</p> <p>9. What does confidence feel like to you? What does your body feel like? What are you saying to yourself?</p> <p>10. I would say my self-esteem is high.</p> <p>11. Without my sport, my self esteem is low.</p> <p>12. Do you feel like your answers would be different if you were in season?</p> <p>13. Please explain why or why not?</p> <p>14. The sport I am involved in contributes to my general self-esteem.</p> <p>15. My sport impacts my self-esteem.... (MOST OF THE TIME)</p>	<p>indicated as the score each response given earned in relation to the score received on the Self Esteem Index.</p>
<p>Burnout and Sport Feelings</p> <p>1. Please explain your answer to the above question?</p> <p>2. I feel burnout due to my sport.</p> <p>3. Please explain your answer to the above question.</p> <p>4. Why are you involved?</p> <p>5. Do you think there is correlation between your self-esteem and your sport?</p> <p>6. On most days, the sport I am involved in makes me feel...</p> <p>7. Please explain your answer to the above question.</p>	<p>These questions were to determine if there was burnout in regards to the athletes. One of my initial hypotheses, I expected an association with burnout and self esteem so I included this theme in order to address that and see if there was a given association.</p>

Figure 1 (above) in the left column shows the themes desired to cover when designing my survey and the questions that fell within each theme. On the right column, there is a clarification of each question's format and the results hoped and expected to gain from each theme.

Self Esteem Index

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Throughout the survey, participants were asked a variety of questions that attempted at measuring their self esteem. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to rank their self determined self esteem (SDSE) on a Likert Scale with increments of five. Yet, there was a problem with just relying on self determined self esteem because it would not be as accurate and is subject to participant opinion on one question. Due to this, I made a Self Esteem Index (SEI). This was inspired by a similar index at the Psychology Resource Centre at York University where they utilized a scaled, incremented index of four. I adapted the increments to five and adopted two of their scales. While the researchers at York University studied the Perception of Familial Acceptance Scale, the Perception of Academic Competence Scale, the Perception of Peer Popularity Scale, and the Perception of Personal Security Scale. Meanwhile, I adopted the Perception of Peer Popularity Scale and the Perception of Familiar Acceptance Scale. In order to determine the SEI of participants, I divided the self esteem portion of my survey into positive and negative questions, with questions that had agreement levels aligning with high self esteem deemed as positive questions. I then allocated points according to their answers. For a positive question, I gave participants 5 points for strongly agree, 4 points for selecting agree, 3 points for neutral, and so forth. For negative questions, I did the opposite. I wanted a higher ranking on the index to mean higher self esteem so I sought to give points for high self esteem answers. I then added up all the points allocated to each question and divided by the total possible points, 35, to get a finalized score on the index. The SEI was 1-10, with ideally, 5 being average. The goal was to create an objective, measurable index that accurately determined self esteem.

Questions SEI Utilized	Value Dedicated to It
16. I feel very confident in my actions.	Positive Values

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17. I think highly of myself 18. I feel confident in my body 19. I would say my self-esteem is high.	Strongly Disagree: 1 Disagree: 2 Neutral: 3 Agree: 4 Strongly Agree: 5
20. I feel like others are judging me 21. I seek the validation of others in order to justify my choices. 22. If yes, or sometimes, how often?	Negative Strongly Disagree: 5 Disagree: 4 Neutral: 3 Agree: 2 Strongly Agree: 1
Add up all Scores and Divide by 35 (the total possible points). I then moved the decimal over one point to create a whole number on a scale of 1-10, to mimic other self esteem indexes.	The closer to 10, indicates the higher the self esteem.

Reasoning Portion

Short answer questions were also implemented into the survey in order to fully gauge why students felt a certain way. The short answer response, “Please explain your reasoning for the above question.”, was used in some variety multiple times, especially after the Likert scale questions in the confidence section of the study. Additionally, I counted the frequency of key words to show the perception of extracurricular benefits for the participants. The combination of all of these questions allowed a comprehensive overview of the school involvement and self esteem for these student athletes.

Correlation Coefficient

Additionally, I wanted to further the correlation between the two by finding the correlation between the two. I used a programmed correlation coefficient equation within a TI-84 calculator in order to examine the correlation between self esteem and extracurricular activities. After

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plotting both of my indexes on graphs, I found the correlation coefficient of r , which examines the correlation between two individual traits with the closer to -1 , or 1 , being To ensure that my correlation coefficient was most accurate, I examined the correlation coefficient in both the SDSE and the SEI. I used Boston College's scale (PH717 Module 9) of correlation to determine the level of correlation between both indexes within my study.

Expert Advisor

To further search for a correlation within my study, I utilized an expert advisor to determine if, through experience, there was a noticeable correlation between the involvement of student athletes and their self esteem. To find an expert advisor, I visited the websites of three large schools within South Carolina: University of South Carolina, University of Clemson, and the College of Charleston, in order to obtain experience within the same community that would relate to student athletes. I reached out to one individual, within each college who worked in collegiate academic support services. Through the initial communication efforts, one expert advisor was the most reliable communicator and had the most years of experience: Kate Tiller. Tiller's position at the College of Charleston is Assistant Athletic Director of Student Athlete Academic Services, and she has had 13 years of experience working with student athletes, making her the best academic advisor for this particular study.

Findings

Both qualitative and quantitative data was found for the results. For the likert scale questions, a mean and mode were determined, with any results above a 3 being above-average. Due to the wide variance of participants in their answer choices, most of the means determined were at average.

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Question	Mean	Mode
When I am involved, it is simply for my resume.	2.95	3
I feel like I am a part of a family at my high school.	3.86	4
I feel a sense of belonging at my high school.	3.95	4
I feel very confident in my actions.	3.54	4
I feel like others are judging me.	3.5	4
I seek the validation of others in order to justify my choices.	2.9	4
I think highly of myself.	3.04	4
I feel confident in my body.	3	2
I attribute the confidence in myself to the people I surround myself with.	3.5	4, 5
I would say my self esteem is high.	3.27	3
Without my sport, my self esteem is low.	2.86	2
The sport I am involved in contributes to my general self esteem.	3.95	4
I feel burnt out due to my sport.	3.18	2

Students in my study ranked above average in a few notable questions, such as: “I feel like I am a part of a family at my high school” and “I feel a sense of belonging at my high school”. The significantly above average means that my students allude to the fact that my participants feel a sense of belonging at the school.

Meanwhile, I graphed the correlation between self esteem and the number of extracurriculars, in Self Determined Self Esteem first. This presented a negative correlation, where less extracurricular activities resulted in more self esteem.

Self Ranked Self Esteem v. Extracurricular Activities

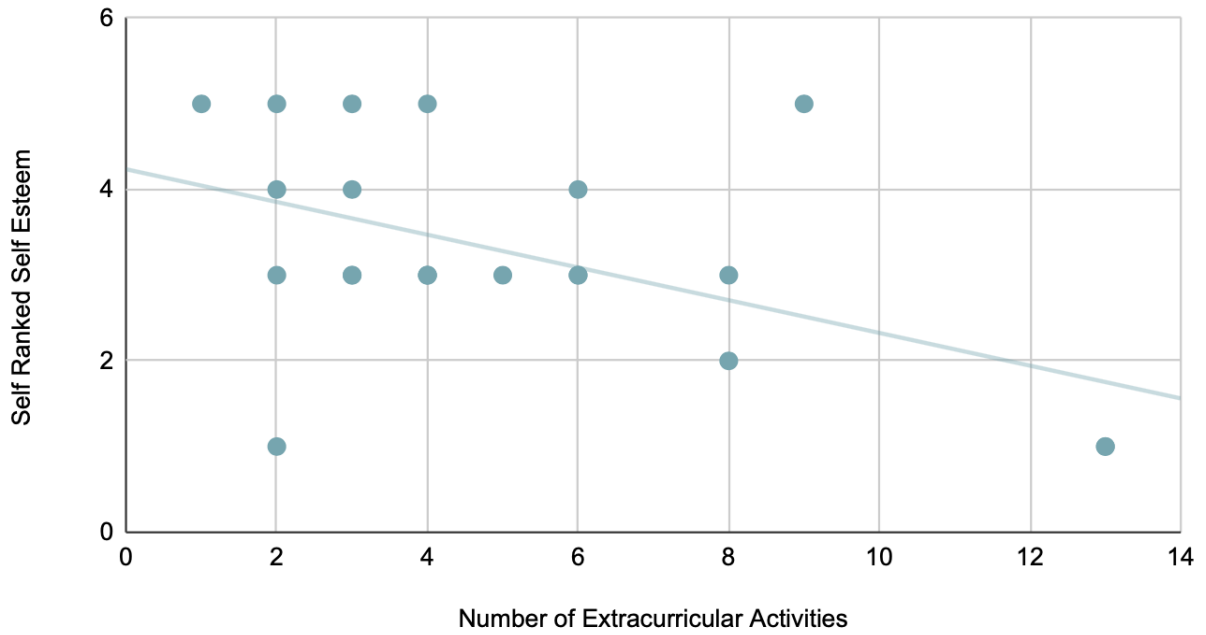


Figure 3 shows the graphical correlation between self ranked self esteem and extracurricular activities. However, to also re-emphasize this correlation, I used my Self Esteem Index to get a more measurable, objective conclusion with the correlation.

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SEI v. Number of Extracurricular Activities

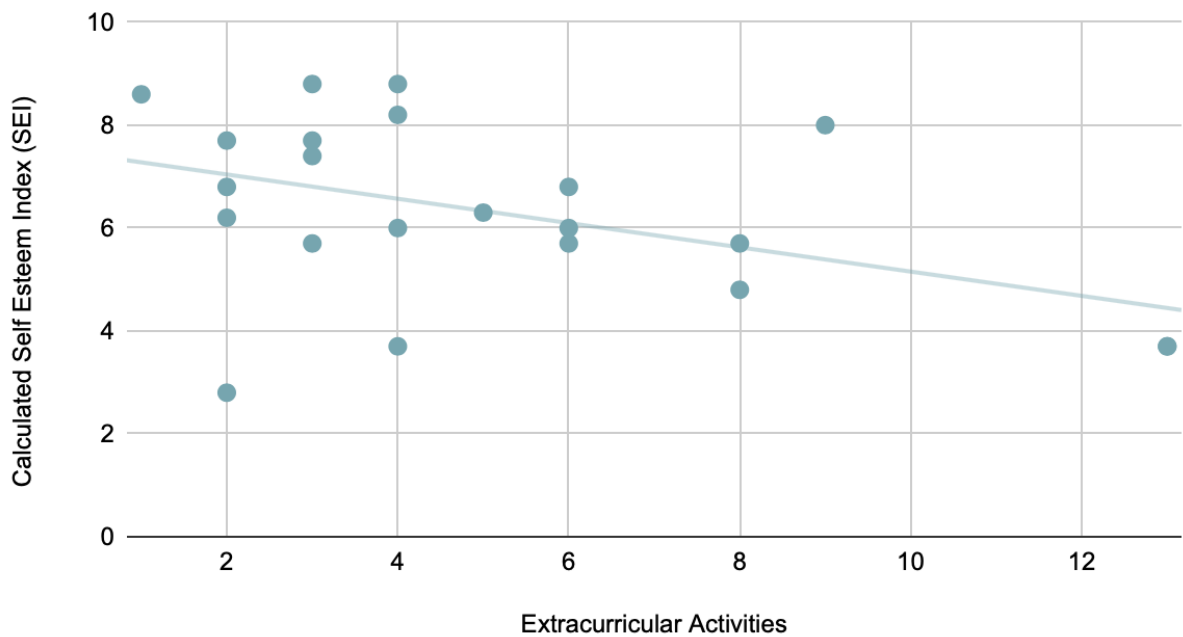
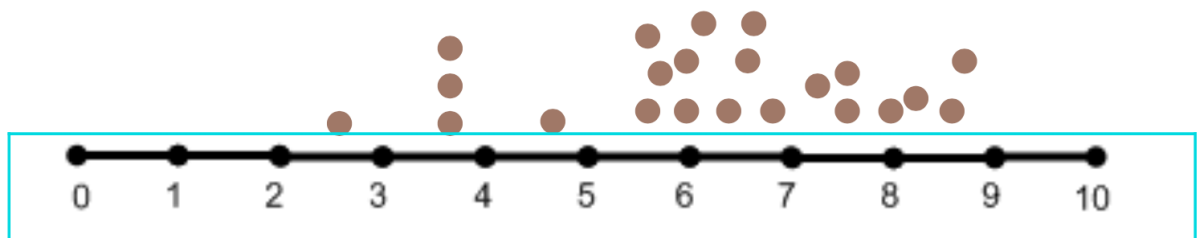


Figure 4 shows the correlation between number of extracurricular activities and the calculated SEI that was found through the process outlined in Figure 2.

SELF ESTEEM INDEX MEAN: 6.3

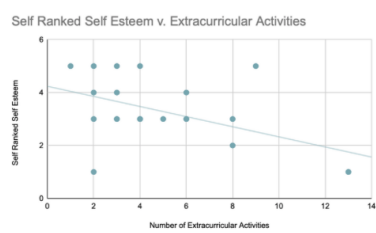


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Figure 5 shows the general distribution of the self esteem index by all participants, with the mean being 6.3. The closer to 10 that participants' score is, indicates the higher self esteem.

CORRELATIONAL COEFFICIENT

Self Determined
 $r = -.5017$
moderate to high
negative association



Self Esteem Index
 $r = -.4473$
moderate negative
association

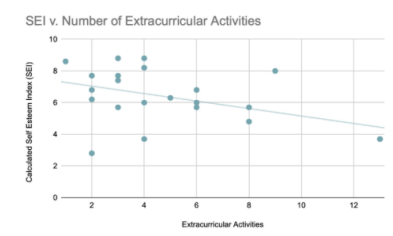


Figure 6 shows the correlation coefficient of the SDSE and the SEI. I then used the correlation, based on Boston College's formula of a correlation coefficient. I used all data points of both self esteem indexes to fully ensure that the correlation was most accurate and representative of the data.

Discussion

Data from the survey was able to shed light on the self esteem of athletes in relation to their extracurricular activities. These student-athletes revealed that the number of extracurricular activities and type of extracurricular activities impacted the overall self esteem of these student athletes. There is a "sweet spot" of the number of extracurricular activities that students participate in, resulting in higher self esteem.

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Self Esteem Levels

The self-esteem levels within the athletes surveyed were at average, or slightly above-average on the 1-5 Likert scale. Although there was not a control group of participants outside of student-athletes to assess their self-esteem, there is a slightly higher self-esteem than the neutral or average category in the Likert scale. However, this could be simply ascribed to the group of participants who volunteered, not necessarily true of all student-athletes within the high school. When asked what confidence felt like to each of the athletes, many athletes noted a physical component such as body image, strength, or appearances, while others noted “feeling good about themselves” was confidence enough.

The Impact of Extracurriculars Have

Extracurricular Activities seemed to have an impact on the student athletes, which is something the student athletes mostly expected and observed. However, the impact was concentrated in the sport each athlete played. The qualitative, short answer questions reflected this and 41% of participants discussed that when they are playing below their standard of performance, it negatively affects their self esteem. Meanwhile, 23% attribute a positive sense of self esteem to the team camaraderie they experienced in their sport. Additionally, the Likert Scale Questionnaire revealed that 73% of athletes strongly agree or agree with the statement “The Sport I am Involved in Contributes to my self esteem”, further emphasizing that athletes notice a correlation between their sport and their self esteem.

The number of extracurricular activities also played a large role in the self esteem of these student athletes. As my hypothesis predicted, there was a “sweet spot” of extracurricular activities, with the highest self esteem being in those who had 3-5 extracurricular activities, including their sport. The participants, with the most involvement in, 10 extracurricular

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activities, ranked themselves as having the lowest self esteem. This alludes to a possible correlation between too many extracurricular activities, and being overwhelmed, which contributes to lower self esteem. More is not always better, as the participants with the most involvement still felt as though they had lower self esteem than their peers.

Time Spent

Athletes not only spend more time in their sports, due to external influences, such as coaches and parents, but because they put a focus on their athletic abilities. Qualitative data showcases that students not only favor their sport over the extracurricular activities, but they can notice their confidence increasing as they participate in the sport they desire, especially their confidence in their bodies. There was a common trend of feeling more strength when they invested more time in their sport. Additionally, athletes discussed that they spent additional time working on their sport outside of season as well as during their season because they feel a stronger connection to the athletics department of the high school. In fact, the average sense of belonging among surveyed student-athletes was a mean of 4. This means that these student-athletes feel like they belong at their high school and have a team to rely on.

Many student-athletes included that they believe they lack the time needed to commit to their sport. However, the majority of the athletes said that the time they have is solely used to better their performance in their sport. This means that not only are these athletes lacking the adequate amount of time to commit to their sport, but they are using the time that they do have 2 better than their performance in their sport, not focusing as much on school work.

The Role Burnout Plays

Additionally, extracurricular activities, especially the sports played have an impact on the burnout levels of students. Particularly, the rank of the student athletes is correlated with the

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burnout levels students face as a result of their sports. Out of the 22 participants, 5 of these participants are captains on their sport teams. All 5 of these captains have below average burnout levels as a result of their sport. However, contrastingly, the number of extracurricular activities did not play a significant role in the burnout levels of student athletes.

Part of a Family

As previously discussed, student-athletes within my study feel a strong sense of belonging at their high school and feel as though they are part of a family. Their qualitative data supports this information. When asked to describe the benefits of extracurriculars, every single athlete included a sense of community or bonding, or a way to make new friends as a benefit of extracurricular activities. Not only are these athletes feeling a sense of connection and Community to their high school peers, but they are tapping into the extracurriculars offered at their High School in order to further that community outlet.

Triangulation

Though data found via my participants presented a new perspective in this field of study, I wanted to further emphasize the correlation between self esteem and extracurricular activities through experience in this field. To do this, I held a formal interview with an expert advisor, Kate Tiller. She noted that, through her experience with division one athletes, those who prioritized involvement in their high school careers had a significantly easier time adjusting to the pressures of collegiate athletics. Tiller also anecdotally noted that those who were involved in a balanced amount of extracurricular activities, in her experience, 1-2 additional ones than their sport, were more confident and self-assured throughout their athletic careers than those who were involved solely in their sport. This directly supports the data found in the participants and the information they presented. Additionally, Tiller noted that those who tried to take classes, or become too

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involved beyond their ability also struggled in their college athletics and academics. This directly summarizes the same data found through my outliers in both the SDSE and SEI in being hyper-involved leading to low self esteem.

Other Trends

There seems to be several trends occurring among the athletes in my study. Firstly, there seems to be an emphasis on others, especially peers and the impression that these student athletes leave on their peers. Secondly, there seems to be an emphasis on the bodily confidence of the student athletes. This actually makes sense logically, that the median score for body confidence would be lower. As athletes, there is an emphasis on physical strength and ability, which could cause many to be overly aware of their body and their performance as a result. However, despite the bodily image of athletes being slightly lower, that particular component of confidence levels did not impact the overall self-esteem levels of the students.

Limitations

There are a number of factors that would limit my results, one of the main ones being the lack of participation. I had a goal to have at least 75 students participate, but few students volunteered and as a result, only 22 people completed my survey. The lack of participation likely impaired my results and I would have been able to make more accurate conclusions with more participants. Additionally, my participants were not evenly distributed between sports and grades. I had the most participation from Girls Cross Country and Seniors. I also did not have any freshman complete the survey. However, I ascribe this to the lack of desire to participate amongst these groups, because they were all given the same opportunities to participate as their peers.

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Additionally, another limiting factor would be the amount of time that athletes have to spend on their extracurricular activities. The athletes who participated spend anywhere from 6 to 20 hours per week on their sport alone, which could interfere with their school involvement in other extracurricular activities. As a result, the number of extracurricular activities that resulted in the highest self esteem might vary between athletes and other groups within the high school.

Inaccuracies of the data might be a result of the outliers of the group, which could have impaired generalizations. There was one outlier, who did not fit within the average range, and thus that students' data might have impaired the overall results and led to inaccuracy with the conclusions.

Further Studies

Further studies could not only measure student athletes, but other populations as well, within the same school. Future research could even compare the various groups of students within a high school, comparing self esteem and establishing if certain extracurricular activities naturally grant higher self esteem than others. Furthermore, future research could address the population of students who are less involved in the school dynamic and study their self esteem. Smaller alterations could be made through a differing of survey questions or a different measurement set to measure students by, other than the Likert Scale.

Conclusion

There is an absolute fine line between being too involved and not being involved in enough to reap the benefits of extracurricular activities. Students who were involved in a lot of activities, on top of their sport, faced heavy burnout and were not able to reap the benefits of any of their extracurricular activities, even their sport. However, the students who were involved in a few extracurriculars, in addition to their sport, faced the peak self esteem, and continued to feel

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more of a sense of belonging at their high school. The newly discovered benefits of extracurricular activities further support the perceived benefits, noted in such studies like that of the CDC and other perspectives like Cassel and Cambell. Additionally, the risks that perspectives line Wann noted were discovered within this study as well, seen through the low self esteem of people who were excessively involved and those who were not at all. To further establish the validity of these results, I triangulated two different self esteem indexes, the use of a correlation coefficient, and experience from an expert advisor, to all come to a consensus that extracurricular activities directly, negatively correlates with self esteem. Being too involved contributes to low self esteem while not being involved enough also leads to low self esteem. Those with the highest self esteem were found to be involved in 2-3 additional activities within their sports. This fine line is essential to study because it provides meaningful insight into solving this epidemic of low self esteem amongst the most vulnerable population: teenagers. Not only is high self esteem amongst teenagers benefitting their mental health, but by continuing to assist younger populations with building their self esteem, through school involvement, the next generation of workers will be far more successful and productive. School involvement shouldn't just be for the purpose of a college application or to build a resume. School involvement instead should serve a critical purpose of encouraging teenagers, creating a welcoming home within the school, and increasing self esteem. With this new understanding of self esteem, teenagers continue to benefit, and thus we build a better and brighter, and more self-assured future.

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