

MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE AND ENJOYMENT IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN ITALIAN HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS: DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine the differences in high school adolescents in motivational climate and enjoyment according to gender and if motivational climate influences enjoyment in physical activity. 207 high school adolescents (males: n=118, age: 16±0.7 yrs, h:172.3±5.4 cm, weight: 67.4±11.9 kg; females: n=89, age: 15.9±0.8 yrs, h: 159.5±5.9 cm, weight:59.2±10.2 kg) were asked to complete enjoyment and motivational climate self-reported questionnaires during physical education lessons. Anova one-way was performed to examine the effect of gender on motivational climate and on enjoyment. A multiple regression analysis was also performed to examine if there were any gender differences in the prediction of enjoyment in physical activity. Data were analyzed by SPSS ver.13 and significance was set at p<0.05. Significant differences were found in favor of boys in ego-involving climate (p<0.001) and in positive enjoyment (p<0.05), while significant differences were found in favor of females in task-involving climate (p<0.05). The regression analysis showed that task-involving climate ($\beta=0.24$, p<0.001) predicted a positive and significant positive enjoyment in physical activity only in boys, not in females. According to several research, the result of this study showed that males were more perceived an ego-involving climate and positive enjoyment than females, while females were more likely to perceive a task-involving climate than boys. Furthermore, task-involving climate predict positive enjoyment in physical activity only in boys. It's necessary to adopt task involving teaching methods to promote adolescent's physical activity enjoyment through secondary school years.

Keywords: motivational climate, enjoyment, young, gender

INTRODUCTION

Physical activity is an important life-style factor for health promotion. Physical activity engagement during childhood and adolescence has been underlined to be associated with physical activity levels in adulthood (Liukkonen et al., 2010). Although the benefits of regular physical activity participation are evident, a major health threat for young people in the 21st century is physical inactivity, in conjunction with the elevated prevalence of overweight and obesity (Blair, 2009). Motivation is an important factor underlying participation in physical activity and physical education plays an important role in the development of a physically active lifestyle. In this point of view, several authors have underlined the motivating role of physical education to students' involvement in physical activity (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, 2007). Motivational climate is considered to affect a person's interpretation of the criteria of success and failure in achievement environment and, on the basis of how people perceive the structure of the achievement environment, can be either task or ego involving (Ames, 1992). Ego-involving climate refers to situations that foster performance outcomes and social comparison between the students. This leads to increased external motivation, tension, anxiety and pressure. In contrast, task-involving climate refers to situations in which students relate their performances to their personal development, they are rewarded from involvement and effort, and they set their personal goal themselves (Ames, 1992). Furthermore, task involving motivational climate result in increased intrinsic motivation and willingness to participate in the physical activity in the future (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2011).

Enjoyment represents a key factor underlying the exercise motivation for children and adolescents to maintain positive engagement in both physical activity and physical education, because increased enjoyment in physical education determines higher levels of daily physical activity.

The aim of this study was to examine the differences in high-school Italian adolescents in motivational climate and enjoyment according to gender and if motivational climate influences enjoyment in physical activity.

METHODS

The sample was composed by 207 high-school adolescents aged 15 to 17 years (males:n=118 females:n=89). Adolescents were asked to complete enjoyment (PACES) (Carraro et al.,2008) and motivational climate (Bortoli et al.,2008) self-reported questionnaires during physical education lessons. For the statistical analysis, Anova one-way was performed to examine the effect of gender on motivational climate and on enjoyment. A multiple regression analysis was also performed to examine if there were any gender differences in the prediction of enjoyment in physical activity. Data were analyzed by SPSS ver.13 and significance was set at p<0.05.

RESULTS

Significant differences were found in favour of boys in ego-involving climate ($F=(1.205)=12.494$, p<0.001) and in positive enjoyment ($F=(1.205)=6.285$, p<0.05), while significant differences were found in favour of females in task-involving climate ($F=(1.205)=6.240$, p<0.05) (Fig. 1, 2). No differences according to gender were found in negative enjoyment. The regression analysis showed that task-involving climate ($\beta=0.24$, p<0.001) predicted a positive and significant positive enjoyment in physical activity only in boys, not in females (Table 1)

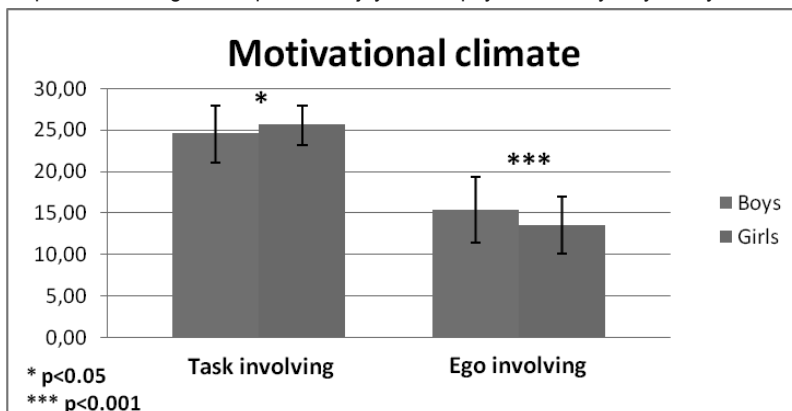


Fig.1
Differences in motivational climate according to gender

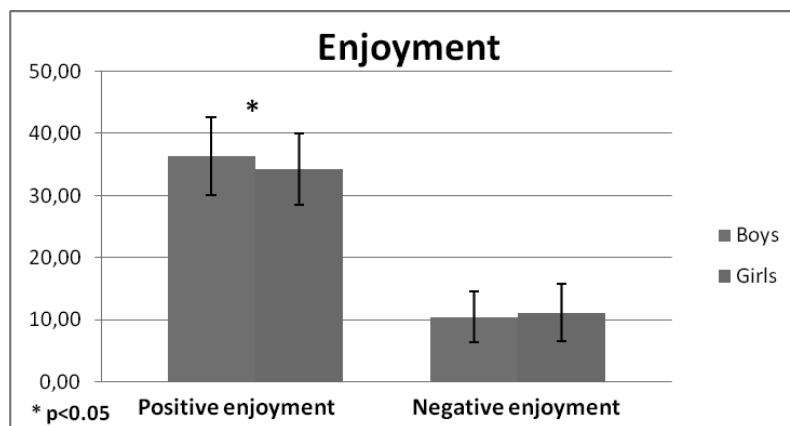


Fig.2
Differences in enjoyment according to gender

Table 1 Prediction of motivational climate on enjoyment in males

Variable	B	SE B	β
Positive enjoyment	0,19	0,05	0,36***
Negative enjoyment	-0,02	0,09	-0,30

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in motivational climate and enjoyment in physical activity in Italian high-school students during physical education lessons and if motivational climate influences enjoyment in physical activity. In several researches motivational climate and enjoyment have been examined (Grástén et al., 2012; Bakirtzoglou, Ioannou, 2011), but few studies have been analyzed the effect of this variables on high-school students, and, in particular in adolescents (Bakirtzoglou, Ioannou, 2011; Moreno-Murcia et al., 2008). In Italy, this is the first study that analyzed these aspects. In this study were found significant differences in favour of boys in ego-involving climate and in positive enjoyment, while significant differences were found in favour of females only in task-involving climate. These results are in line with several research that showed that males had a stronger ego-involving motivational climate (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2011, 2008; Bakirtzoglou, Ioannou, 2011). This result could be explained according to a gender's difference in perception of motivational climate. In fact, boys differed from females in ego-involving climate in reference to punishment of errors, unequal treatment and rivalry among peers (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2008). To the contrary, the females perceived more dominant task-involving climate because they emphasized greater cooperative learning and emphasis upon improvement and learning than did males (Bakirtzoglou, Ioannou, 2011; Moreno-Murcia et al., 2008). The finding of this study also revealed gender differences in physical activity enjoyment, with girls reporting lower enjoyment than boys. These results are consistent with the findings of previous researches (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2012; Carraro et al., 2008). Enjoyment has important effects on individuals' quality of life. Enhancing intrinsic motivation and perceive physical ability through enjoyment could lead to increased exercise adherence and promotion of the health benefits associated with it. In fact girls are less active than boys, tend to withdraw from physical activity at a young age, receive less positive feedback, and do not have the same chance to participate in physical education as boys, perceive themselves as less efficacious in physical activity (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2012). Furthermore, teachers encourage boys more strongly than girls and girls probably perceive this difference in treatment. The regression analysis showed that task-involving climate predicted a positive and significant positive enjoyment in physical activity only in boys, not in females. This result is in line with previous studies (Grástén et al., 2012). Several authors underlined how task-involving climate has positive effect on perceive physical competence and enjoyment in physical education (Grástén et al., 2012). The finding of this study are in line with several authors that showed that events that provide opportunities to satisfy an individual's need to perceive competence in dealing with the contextual motivational climate will maximize intrinsic motivation and enjoyment (Ferrer-Caja, Weiss, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Physical education plays an important role in the development of a physically active lifestyle. The results of this study showed differences according to gender in ego-involving climate and positive enjoyment in favour of boys and in task involving climate in favour of girls. Furthermore, task-involving climate predict positive enjoyment only in males. From this point of view, physical education could be most effective if based on task-involving motivational climate, in which the primary objective is increasing students' perceive physical ability, intrinsic motivation and enjoyment. In previous interventions, based on TARGET model, task-involving method has been shown to be valid to improve positive consequences in physical education (Braithwaite et al., 2011). Teachers can manipulate the six features of TARGET model to influence the motivational climate in their physical education classes. In this point of view, teacher is an important figure in determining motivational climate in physical education, but also the peers' influence can impact climate perceptions especially during adolescence. It's necessary to adopt the task involving teaching methods to promote adolescent's physical education enjoyment through secondary school years, in particular in girls.

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