Korean Adolescent Leisure, Health and Happines

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Abstract
This paper addresses how sport and leisure can contribute to Korean adolescent health and happiness. We first review adolescent development, and then discuss the health risk behaviors of Korean adolescents. Next we look at leisure, health and wellbeing from an adolescent development perspective. We discuss issues of adolescent autonomy, competence, relationship-building, and motivation. It is clear that across various types of surveys, Korean adolescents report lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction than counterparts in other parts of the world. They also report high levels of risk behavior, including substance misuse, internet addiction, lack of physical activity, and mental health issues. There is less information regarding Korean adolescent leisure. We conclude that from an education perspective, it appears that Korean youth would benefit from a focus on leisure education and prevention. Leisure education seems particularly important to Korean youth given the high rates of passive leisure and low rates of active leisure.

요약
본 연구는 어떻게 스포츠와 여가가 한국청소년의 건강과 행복에 기여하는지 알아보기 위해 수행되었다. 따라서 첫 번째로 청소년 발달에 대해 살펴본 후, 한국청소년의 건강위해행동에 대해 논의하였다. 두 번째로, 청소년발달 관련에서 여가, 건강, 그리고 행복을 알아보았다. 세 번째, 청소년의 자율성, 능숙함, 관계성, 동기에 관련된 쟁점에 대해 논의하였다. 다양한 형식의 조사를 통해, 한국청소년들이 다른 국가의 청소년들에 비해 낮은 행복수준과 삶의 만족감을 나타낸다고 알려졌다. 그들은 또한 약물 오용, 인터넷 중독, 신체활동 부족, 그리고 정신건강 쟁점을 포함한 위험행동에 있어서 높은 수준을 보였다. 한국청소년들의 여가와 관련한 자료는 많지 않다. 결론적으로 교육적 시각에서 보면, 한국청소년은 여가교육과 예방을 통해 행복을 얻을 것으로 보인다. 특히 여가교육은 높은 비율의 수동적 여가와 낮은 비율의 능동적 여가를 나타내는 한국청소년들에게 주요하게 작용할 것으로 판단된다.

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In this paper we focus specifically on the age group of adolescence, or those young people between the ages of 13 and 20. For years in North America, this was an overlooked age group. Then, when attention was paid to them, they were seen as problems to be fixed. That is, many researchers and policy makers focused on adolescents’ problem behaviors such as vandalism, violence, substance abuse (such as cigarettes, marijuana, and other drugs), and risky sexual behavior. Thus the previous approach was that there was something wrong with the individual adolescent that someone needed to fix. Today the preferred approach is what is called “positive youth development.” This approach suggests that all youth have potential and that with the appropriate adult supports and resources, they can flourish into happy, healthy productive adults. This approach also aims to help promote health and well-being and prevent risky behavior.

It is from this positive youth development framework that we would like to address adolescent leisure and its relation to health and happiness. First we will provide a brief overview of what adolescence is. Next we will address some health-related issues of Korean adolescents from a descriptive perspective. This will be followed by a discussion of adolescent leisure in Korea. We will close by making some observations about potential research and policy implications about adolescent leisure, health and happiness.

Adolescent Development

In order to understand adolescent leisure, health and happiness, one must first understand what adolescents go through as they transition between being children and being adults. These issues seem to be fairly robust across cultures, although the issue of autonomy and independence/dependence is naturally driven by cultural context.

Developmental Issues

- One of the most important tasks of adolescence is to develop a sense of “who I am” as an individual. Answering this question helps youth understand how they fit into the world. It involves coming to terms with how they see themselves and how they think others see them.
- Establishing autonomy involves learning how to be self-directed and independent, while at the same time being interdependent and negotiating within social worlds (including parents, peers, and other adults). Learning to be independent yet interdependent is a most important task in collectivist cultures.
- Adolescents have a strong need to perceive themselves as competent and need to develop skills in order to develop feelings of competence. Thus opportunities for skill building and support and feedback are extremely important.
- Adolescents develop an understanding of social and cultural traditions and norms, and a sense of right and wrong during this period. As adolescents get older, they go through a process of rule and limit testing and experimentation. They also develop a better capacity for abstract thought, and become comfortable with one’s sexuality. Adolescents have a strong need to feel that they belong to a group and are valued for who they are. Peer groups are especially important sources of belonging. Maintaining close relationships and intimacy are learned initially through interactions with same sex friends. Through these interactions, adolescents learn how to communicate honestly, build trust, and be caring friends. These skills are later learned in