Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Child and Adolescent Mental Health

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Daria Sosna
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Thesis Committee: Nicole Bolter, PhD (Chair); David Walsh, PhD; Kate Hamel, PhD.
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Abstract

Mental illness has reached epidemic levels in children and adolescents, with an estimated 10-20% of youth experiencing mental health issues. Thus, it is imperative to understand what factors are influential in reducing mental illness in this population. One factor that improves mental health and reduces mental illness is physical activity. Within sport specifically, coaches are significant in dictating an individual's experience. This research study aimed to understand the impact of coaching behaviors and language on the mental health of children and adolescents. Research took place during a 6-week summer sports program called Gator Camp. Three groups of participants shared their perspectives on coaches' behaviors: 3 coaches, 9 parents who had children participating in the camp, and 25 Kinesiology (KIN) 696 students completing their community-based internship. Using a qualitative design, data was collected via open-ended questionnaires and analyzed through thematic analysis. The analysis yielded 5 high order themes: Supported a Positive Mental Health Progression, Balanced Use of Positive Reinforcement and Punishment Language, Coach and Counselor Energy Influences Kids’ Energy, Development of Community, and Coach and Camp Negative Events. Results suggest coaches can positively benefit the mental health of children and adolescents through community development and usage of positive language.
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Introduction

The incidence of mental illness among children and adolescents is continually on the rise, it is estimated that approximately 10-20% of children, as well as adolescents, present with mental health issues (Lok et al., 2017). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) issued a statement declaring that there is a National State of Emergency in the mental health of children and adolescents. In this statement, it is emphasized that although these problems are widespread, they are even more disproportionally affecting children of color (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021). Although a proportion of the increases in the diagnosis of mental illnesses among adolescents may be due in part to the increased awareness and reduction of stigma associated with mental illnesses, the numbers are concerning, nonetheless. In addition to the normal stressors experienced by children and adolescents, they have also been exposed to additional stressors due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A systematic review of the research regarding the impact of COVID-19 on child and adolescent mental health conducted by Panchal et al. (2021) delves deeper into the issue, determining that an overarching theme is the worsening of overall mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents. Mental illness is a complex topic that impacts many aspects of an individual’s life. Whether they are officially diagnosed or simply presenting with symptoms of mental illness, this can have devastating consequences on their quality of life and personal wellbeing. Negative effects can be seen in the form of reduced academic achievement, conflict in social relationships, and an increased risk for substance abuse, all of which have long-term impacts (Murphy & Fonagy,
Mental illness also has a significant global burden (Baaranne & Falissard, 2018). According to the CDC, the cost of mental illness among children and adolescents is approximately $10.9 billion each year in the United States. With these widespread impacts of mental illness in adolescents, there is an increased focus on the factors that may affect an individual’s mental health.

Mental health can be defined broadly by encompassing our “emotional, psychological, and social well-being” (MentalHealth.gov, 2022). The predictors of mental health and the development of symptoms of mental illness can be analyzed through the utilization of Engel’s (1978) Biopsychosocial Model. This model assesses mental health through a framework with three major influencing factors: biological, social, and psychological factors. Biological factors include genetics, disease, exercise, substance intake, and stress (Delphis, 2019). Social factors such as peer relationships, family relationships, as well as other social influences, can affect an individual’s mental health. Finally, this model considers psychological factors such as emotions, behaviors, and coping skills (Delphis, 2019). A factor of interest when understanding mental health through the biopsychosocial model is physical activity. Physical activity has been seen in numerous studies to positively impact an individual’s mental illness (Rosenbaum et al., 2014). However, more specific mechanisms that explain why and how physical activity influences mental health require further inquiry. For example, the impact that coaches or physical activity instructors of adolescents may have on their mental health and mental illness is important to understand. Horn et al. (2008) established that a coach can impact an athlete’s self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and performance. This proposed research study aims to close that gap by assessing the impact that coaches have on the mental health of youth in late childhood.
and early adolescence, specifically during a 6-week recreational sports summer camp referred to as Gator Camp.

Factors Influencing Mental Health in Children and Adolescents

A recent publication describes that child and adolescent mental health disorders have reached epidemic levels (Shim et al., 2022). The rates of mental health disorders were already on the rise prior to the onset of the global pandemic, and this trajectory has only grown since then (Shim., et al 2022). The statistics surrounding child and adolescent health are rather troubling and it is estimated that approximately 10-20% of children and adolescents present with mental health issues (Lok et al., 2017). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the most common mental health disorders are emotional disorders. The most well-known and frequently discussed emotional disorders are anxiety disorders as well as depression.

Anxiety is characterized by an excessive amount of worrying that is not reasonable based on the perceived threat (Evans et al., 2005). Anxiety is seen at relatively high rates in children as well as adolescents. According to data gathered from the National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH), in children and adolescents ages 3-17, 9.4% have had an anxiety diagnosis at any point throughout their lives, and 7.8% had a current anxiety diagnosis (Bitsko et al., 2022). Furthermore, there appears to be a gradual increase in anxiety symptoms as an individual ages and enters late adolescence, with the rate of anxiety problems increasing by 11.7% from ages 3 to 17, from 2% of individuals ages 3-5 having anxiety, to 13.7% in individuals aged 12-17 (Bitsko et al., 2022).

Depression is another emotional disorder seen in children and adolescents. According to the American Psychiatric Association (Torres., 2020), depression is characterized by symptoms
that include feelings of sadness, loss of interest in regular activities, and changes to daily functioning such as diet, sleep, and energy levels. Individuals with depression may also express suicidal ideation or tendencies. To be diagnosed with depression, these types of symptoms often last for over 2 weeks and must be different from an individual's usual functioning, based on DSM-5 criteria. Bitsko et al. (2022) also provides an in-depth understanding of the statistics of depression in children and adolescents according to NSCH data, wherein approximately 4.4% of individuals aged 3-17 had a depression diagnosis at some point in their lives and 3.4% currently were diagnosed with depression.

In addition to anxiety and depression, other types of mental health disorders are also impactful in the lives of children and adolescents. These can include behavioral disorders, eating disorders, or even disorders with psychotic symptoms (World Health Organization, 2021). Behavioral disorders can consist of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorder, among others. Behavioral disorders are disruptive to the individual’s life, at school, at home, as well as in other social settings (MentalHealth.gov, 2022). Eating disorders include anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa and influence an individuals’ perception of themselves and their physical body and cause alterations in their eating behaviors (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Disorders with psychotic symptoms include disorders such as schizophrenia; individuals with these disorders experience hallucinations as well as delusions that impact their functioning and make participation in daily life challenging (National Alliance on Mental illness, n.d.). Furthermore, falling under the umbrella of mental health issues is the intense risk of suicide for older adolescents. According to WHO, “suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in older adolescents (15-19 years)” (World Health Organization., 2021).
Biopsychosocial Model

A variety of factors can contribute to the development of mental illness and an overall disturbance to the mental well-being of children and adolescents. Engel’s (1978) Biopsychosocial model provides a well-rounded framework for the understanding of what is influential in overall health and disease and can also be a useful tool for understanding mental health and wellbeing. The first aspect of this model relevant to mental health is the biological component. Biological factors refer to changes that occur strictly in terms of physiological factors. The biological mechanisms underlying the development of mental illness are complex and continue to evolve in the literature as more developments occur in this area. On a more basic level, biological factors such as sex can alter an individual’s risk for developing mental illness. According to the information presented by Bitsko et al. (2022) based on the information they gathered from sources such as the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) as well as the National Survey of Children’s Health, boys are at an increased risk for disorders such as ADHD, ASD, behavioral problems, Tourette’s as well as suicide. On the other hand, girls demonstrate disorders such as depression as well as suicidal ideation at higher rates than boys. Although there is evidence that these symptoms have associations with an individual’s sex, the differences occurring may also be due to factors related to gender as a social construct, rather than biological sex. Depending on the gender identity that an individual presents as social environments may influence their behaviors, thus leading to the development of symptoms appearing to be associated with sex. It can be complex to separate the two factors, thus in the discussion of biological sex, gender as a social construct needs to be considered. There is limited information in the literature regarding the rates of mental illnesses in individuals who are transgender or non-
binary (Scandurra et al., 2019), however, this is slowly changing, and thus far, it appears that these individuals experience greater rates of mental illness (Kuper et al., 2019; Moyer et al., 2019; Olson et al., 2015; Strauss et al., 2020; Reisner et al., 2015).

Alongside sex, another biological factor frequently referenced as being influential is genetics, in terms of a genetic predisposition that is passed on from parents. Frequently having a parent with a diagnosed mental illness will lead to an increased risk of their children developing a mental illness (Dean et al., 2010; Rasic et al., 2010; Reedtz et al., 2018; Reupert et al., 2013). Another biological factor that is significant in the development and subsequent diagnosis of mental illnesses is physiological changes. These can be in terms of neurological factors such as dopaminergic pathways, which are hypothesized to be influential in the development of depression, schizophrenia as well as bipolar disorder (Dailly et al., 2004; Hartwell et al., 2009; Rolstad et al., 2015; Srivastava et al., 2006). Additionally, physiological shifts in hormones can lead to a greater risk of developing mental illness, as there is some literature regarding thyroid hormones and depression (Kirkegaard et al., 1998). Along with this, there is some evidence that sex hormones may be involved in higher rates of anxiety disorders in women (Li et al., 2017; Maeng et al., 2015). Finally, there are lifestyle factors that can alter the individual’s physiology, as well as more specifically their neurological structures. Some of these lifestyle factors include physical activity, diet as well as substance use (Zaman et al., 2019).

The next component of the biopsychosocial model that needs to be discussed is the psychological component, which encompasses factors such as thoughts, emotions as well as behaviors (Vögele, 2015). When breaking down the psychological influences on mental health, an important component to discuss is an individual’s self-concept. Self-concept can be defined as
“the sum of an individual’s beliefs and knowledge about his/her personal attributes and qualities” (Mann et al., 2004, p. 357). Mann et al. (2004) emphasize that having more positive self-perceptions, and in particular positive self-esteem, overall leads to many positive individual outcomes such as positive mental wellbeing and mood, as well as increasing the likelihood of higher social interaction, career, and academic success. However, reductions in self-perception and self-esteem can lead to an increased risk of developing mental illnesses such as depression as well as anxiety, and overall having more negative life outcomes. Another aspect of psychological factors that are influential in the development of mental illness and reductions in mental health is exposure to traumatic or negative life events. Park et al. (2014) discusses that both Western, as well as Eastern cultures, experience a significant increase in risk for developing mental illness after experiencing at least one traumatic event in life such as experiencing physical or sexual violence or the death of a parent.

Finally, the last component of the biopsychosocial model is the social aspect, which can be broken into two categories. The first is the more personal and individual-level social interactions that a person experiences throughout the life course. These types of social relationships begin initially with the parent-child relationship and then branch into larger categories of people as we age. Kawachi and Berkman (2001) emphasize the complexity of social interaction on the mental health of an individual while considering two different models: the main effect model of social ties and mental health and the stress-buffering model of social ties and mental health. The main effect model states that despite the stress level of an individual, social relationships lead to positive outcomes in mental health. On the other hand, the stress-buffering model believes that the correlation between social relationships and mental wellbeing
only exists when an individual is in a stressful state. In support of these models, it has been relatively well established in the literature that social interactions among individuals are impactful on their overall mental wellbeing (Umberson & Karas Montez, 2010). Overall, increased levels of social connectedness can be effective in reducing the incidence of mental illnesses, such as depression (Cruwys et al., 2014). These meaningful connections occur in relationships with a wide range of individuals and can include parents, teachers, friends, and coaches among others. The second category of social interactions that can affect one’s mental health is social determinants. Social determinants consider a larger societal social structure that can be influential on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, as well as potentially put them at an increased risk for developing mental illness (Alegria et al., 2018; Compton et al., 2015). Social determinants assess the broad life experiences that can alter mental health; this can include factors such as food insecurity, lower levels of education, unemployment, or job insecurity among others (Compton et al., 2015). These are due to an unequal distribution of resources, as well as an unequal distribution of opportunity (Compton et al., 2015). Furthermore, being part of a group that experiences discrimination further exacerbates this issue, this can include discrimination due to a variety of factors, however some of the most notable are race and ethnicity, immigrant status, sexual orientation, as well as occupational status (Alegria et al., 2018). These are frequently associated with an increase in mental illness, or symptoms of mental illnesses (Alegria et al., 2018).

All three aspects of Engel’s biopsychosocial model are quite relevant to the current studies focusing on mental health and physical activity. When utilizing this model to assess the impact of physical activity on mental health, all three of the components of this model play a
role. The biological component can be seen in terms of physiological changes that occur when an individual engages in physical activity, such as the positive feelings associated with the release of endorphins when engaging physical activity (Harbor & Sutton, 1984). The psychological component comes from the reduction in negative symptoms when participating in physical activity, as well as the increased experience of positive feelings, such as positive perceptions of self. Finally, the social component considers the impact that others involved in the physical activity process may have on the individual’s mental health, whether that is a sports coach or friends who are also participating in the sport, the social component can serve as an influential aspect of an individual's mental health-related to their involvement in physical activity.

*Physical Activity and Mental Health*

Overall, there appears to be a positive relationship in the literature regarding mental health and physical activity; the more physically active an individual is the more likely it is to have a positive impact on their mental well-being (Bell et al., 2019; Giandonato et al., 2021; Ohrnberger et al., 2017). The positive correlation between physical activity and mental health is more established within less severe mental illnesses, and especially in emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression, however, it can also be seen in more severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia (McNamee et al., 2018). Due to some of the complications of researching populations with severe mental illness, along with the high dropout rates within research studies, there is not a large quantity of research on severe mental disorders. Furthermore, although there is a positive association between physical activity and mental health, the mechanism behind this is not well understood (Annesi, 2005; Parfitt, Pavey, & Rowlands, 2009). Camero et al. (2012) describe that multiple hypotheses are aiming to understand the mechanism of this relationship in
greater depth. In terms of psychological hypotheses, there are three main ones described within Monteiro Peluso & Guerra de Andrade. (2005) hypotheses include the distraction hypothesis, the self-efficacy hypothesis as well as the social interaction hypothesis. The distraction hypothesis states that being distracted from negative stimuli aids in the reduction of negative emotions and improves an individual’s mood (Monteiro Peluso & Guerra de Andrade, 2005). The social interaction hypothesis focuses on the way social relationships serve as a moderator between physical activity and mental health (Monteiro Peluso & Guerra de Andrade, 2005). Finally, in the self-efficacy hypothesis engaging in physical activity aids in the development of an individual’s self-efficacy, or their belief in their abilities to execute the tasks they wish to, this further helps an individual in building self-confidence and additionally their mood (Monteiro Peluso & Guerra de Andrade, 2005).

The positive impacts that physical activity has on mental health have been studied in various populations, including children and adolescents. A review of reviews performed by Biddle et al. (2019) provides a detailed summary of the literature regarding physical activity and mental health in children and adolescents with a specific focus on depression, anxiety, and cognitive functioning. Biddle et al. (2019) found that there is a relationship between these variables and physical activity. Furthermore, the literature has shown greater evidence in support of there being a positive relationship between cognitive functioning and physical activity. According to Bidzan-Bluma and Lipowska (2018) regardless of age category, within children and adolescents’, positive changes are occurring in terms of cognition when individuals engage in physical activity, this can be seen in improvements in memory and cognitive flexibility as well as improvements in verbal performance.
There is also support for an inverse relationship between depression and physical activity in children and adolescents (Biddle et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2013). Participating in physical activity appears to reduce the incidence of depression and can serve as a treatment or preventative mechanism (Brown et al., 2013). There is some speculation from Brown et al. (2013) regarding the mechanism explaining this relationship, wherein reductions in depression with physical activity could be due to neurobiological reasons such as neurotransmitters released during physical activity, however, this is purely speculative. Furthermore, the research available mainly focuses on an adolescent population of individuals over age 13, as there are very few studies that assess individuals below that age (Brown et al., 2013).

There is currently not enough support for the relationship between anxiety and physical activity due to a lack of research in this area according to Biddle et al. (2019). Despite this, a study conducted by Li et al. (2020) discusses the positive impact of physical activity on anxiety symptoms in children and early adolescents ages 7-12. They describe that a psychological mechanism for this may be resilience serving as a mediator and altering the way that the individuals are perceiving anxiety. A biological mechanism is also proposed, wherein there is a reduction of inflammation with increased levels of physical fitness. Another systematic review performed by Eime et al. (2013) found similar results across the literature, particularly in terms of seeing improvement in both psychological as well as social factors with the participation in sports and recreational programs that contained physical activity. Overall, a positive association has been established between physical activity and the development of a more positive mental health and a reduction in mental illness in both children as well as adolescents.

*The Sport Setting and Mental Health*
The consideration of the setting within which children and adolescents participate in sport and physical activity adds another layer to the relationship between physical activity and mental health. Participation in physical activity may consist of them engaging in extracurricular participation on a sports team, participation in sports within a school setting, and these settings may be recreational or competitive. The sporting setting adds an important social component coming from multiple areas: the other children participating in the sport, the coaches or instructors, and the parents are all influential in the sporting experience for the individual (Eppright et al., 1997). These social aspects of sports participation will be impactful on psychological factors of the individual, influencing their self-perceptions and furthering their self-esteem and self-confidence (Shapiro et al., 2014). Sports settings can be extremely positive for individuals, creating a sense of community with other athletes as well as coaches, especially in athletes who perform well in their sport (Eppright et al., 1997). Sport can also be a setting for learning valuable life skills, as has been demonstrated by models such as Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) (Hellison, 2011) along with Sport Based Youth Development in general (Weiss et al, 2012). Sport can be utilized as a tool that can have a variety of positive impacts on the mental as well as the physical well-being of children and adolescents. However, despite the many positive outcomes a sporting environment may have, it can also have a negative impact on the individual. Extreme stress due to competitive environments and engaging in intense measures to improve performance, as well as social pressures coming from teammates, coaches as well as parents, can lead to sport being an environment that causes great discomfort for individuals (Merkel., 2013). Some coaching and teaching practices, such as doing fitness testing as well as weigh-ins, can have extremely negative influences on the mental health of
children and adolescents and may lead to the development of eating disorders or other mental illnesses (Smith et al., 2020).

The potential positive impact as well as the possible negative impacts that participating in youth sports for children as well as adolescents may have, made this topic particularly important when discussing child and adolescent mental health. The understanding of what will create positive lasting impacts is important in the development of programming and ensuring that positive psychosocial development occurs through the sporting context (Petitpas et al., 2005). Obtaining a greater understanding of the factors that may be influential is important in the aim of improving youth mental health overall.

Coach Impact on Mental Wellbeing

One of the most influential persons within a sporting environment is the coach or instructor leading the physical activity program who can play a key role in the mental health of young participants. The coach or instructor holds a position of power and can influence the nature of interactions between themselves and their athletes, as well as their athletes with one another, through the creation of different coaching environments. A model that considers this relationship is Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) (Roberts, 2012). According to AGT, a coach or instructor can create different motivational climates that will encourage varying behaviors in their athletes. If more of a task-oriented environment is created and emphasized by the coach, then athletes will be more likely to focus more on skill building and improving themselves, rather than on competition and winning (Roberts, 2012). This mastery motivational environment can also lead to an increase in team cohesion, as demonstrated by Horn et al. (2012). On the other hand, if a more ego-oriented environment is emphasized, there will be an increasingly
competitive nature to the athletes, and the focus will be more on winning rather than skill building (Roberts, 2012). AGT is only one of many examples in which a coach can be influential in the athlete’s behavior in the sporting environment. Smith et al. (2007) saw a decrease in anxiety symptoms with the utilization of a mastery-initiating motivational climate in youth sport. Similarly, O’Rourke et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of motivational climate on anxiety, self-esteem as well as motivation, not only in coaches but also in the parents of the athletes.

Through positive language and being compassionate, coaches can have a positive impact on their athlete’s mental health and wellbeing, as well as reduce the incidence of shame as well as other negative emotions (Oliveira et al., 2021). In addition to this, according to Smith et al. (1995), when comparing coaches that participated in social support and stress-reduction training versus coaches who did not, the athletes of the coaches who participated in the training saw athletes have greater levels of enjoyment and reductions in anxiety as well as an increased comfort level with the coach. Overall, coaches can have a very positive impact on their athletes, particularly if they are trained on proper approaches to improving athletes' mental health.

Alternatively, when coaches are displaying behaviors perceived by the athlete as negative, this may lead to the athlete’s loss of interest in the sport and eventual dropping out (Merkel., 2013). A report created by Organized Youth Sports Today mentioned that a large proportion of athletes deal with abusive behaviors from coaches. Approximately 45% of athletes experienced verbally abusive behaviors such as being called names, yelled at, or insulted by coaches, while 17.5% experienced physical abuse in the form of being hit, kicked, or slapped by their coaches. These behaviors, as well as other forms of coach bullying, will increase an athlete’s risk for mental illness as well as suicidal tendencies (Chang et al., 2020). In less extreme cases, coaches can lead
to an increase in stress and anxiety in athletes, particularly related to performance and competition (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1984). Many coaches may not be aware of the impact that their behaviors can have on their athletes, as mental health is not a frequently discussed topic in team sports. This lack of awareness may lead to coaches inadvertently engaging in behaviors that are harmful that may increase athletes' dropout or negatively impact their mental health. These types of coaching behaviors reduce the mental health benefits received through engaging in a sporting activity and can instead make sport a stressor for the individual.

Horn (2008) provides a working model of coach behavior and the impact it has on an athlete. Overall, the model explains that the coach is influenced by multiple factors that are then influential in their actions and perceptions of their athletes. The coach’s behavior is then guided by factors such as sociocultural context, organizational climate as well as perceptions and expectations. These behaviors will then be influential on the athlete, in terms of both their performance as well as the way they interpret and internalize the behaviors of the coach. This process also then leads to changes in the athletes’ behaviors as well as their level of motivation. Using this model, it can be understood that the coaches’ behaviors towards the athlete will be dictated by their circumstances and the way the coach behaves will have an impact on the athlete. With this consideration in mind, the actions of the coach can serve as a positive or negative influence on the athlete. If the coach is frequently engaging in behaviors the athlete perceives as negative, they will have a negative impact on the athlete, potentially by influencing a factor such as self-confidence in their abilities. This same model can be applied to the relationship between engaging in a sporting environment and an athlete’s mental health. Depending on the coaching behaviors, and the athletes’ perceptions of these behaviors, there
may be a positive or negative impact on the athlete. Along with this, the language, as well as the
tone of the coach, can also serve as an influencing factor in an athlete’s mental health. Erickson
et al. (2016) assessed the way a coach’s tone impacts an athlete’s development across a program
and found that depending on the type of tone utilized with athletes, it could influence their
performance. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Oliveira et al. (2021), utilizing supportive and
compassionate language with athletes helps them experience more positive mental health.

Recreational sport is another area of sport that has received little research regarding the
impact it may have on the mental health of children and adolescents. Recreational sport proposes
a unique environment where individuals are able to receive the benefits of engaging in physical
activity along with the social interactions from teammates as well as coaches that are part of the
development of improved mental health as well as a reduction in mental illness. Furthermore,
recreational sport does not necessarily have the competitive pressures that occur in a competitive
sports setting. Despite this, there is no literature regarding the mental health impacts that
specifically recreational sport has, as the literature appears to be centered specifically around
competitive sports.

Although there is some research on coach impact on the mental health of athletes, there is
very little information on this topic, particularly in the recreational setting, despite the correlation
between coach behavior and athlete mental health and wellbeing. The literature on coach impacts
on child and adolescent mental health in sport is in the domain of motivation, and how
motivational climates may be instrumental in reductions in anxiety (O’Rourke et al., 2014, Smith
et al., 2007). A research study conducted by Smith et al. (1995) assessed the effectiveness of a
Coach Effectiveness training program that aimed to educate the coaches and inform them of
tactics to aid in their abilities to reduce levels of anxiety as well as helping the coaches relate better to their athletes. This intervention was extremely successful at reducing anxiety in the athletes and identified the positive impact coaches could have on their athletes.

Conclusion

With the ever-growing incidence of mental illness in children and adolescents, it is important to understand how environmental factors influence mental health and may be adjusted. One of these factors is physical activity, particularly in a sports setting. As coaches can have such a powerful influence on the individuals who are participating in their sport, it is necessary to have a greater understanding of the behaviors and language coaches engage in. This inquiry will better ensure the development of positive mental health and well-being among the children and adolescents under coaches’ guidance and close the gap in the literature regarding this topic.

The purpose of this research was to provide more information regarding the impact of coach behavior and language on the mental health of children and adolescents. Furthermore, this research aimed to address a gap in the literature regarding the impact of recreational physical activity programs on child and adolescent mental health. The specific research questions this research aims to answer is: How does coach behavior and language influence the mental health of children and adolescents during Gator Camp?
Method

Design

This research study was a qualitative design that utilized questionnaires assessing the perspectives of coaches, KIN 696 students, and parents regarding the coaches’ impact on participants’ mental health during Gator Camp as the method of data collection. The data was collected throughout a recreational summer physical activity program referred to as Gator Camp. Gator Camp is a 6-week summer sports program for children and adolescents aged 7-14 that aims to “enhance self-esteem and confidence through physical activity and sports instruction” (San Francisco State University, n.d.). Youth involved in this program participated in four types of sport: a team sport, swimming, martial arts, and tennis. Data was collected from 3 populations. The first was parents of children and adolescents attending the camp. The second was KIN 696 Students, who served as supportive counselors helping the coaches with the children, and third were the coaches guiding the instruction for Gator Camp. The purpose of this data collection was to assess the impact that coach behavior and language could have on the mental health of the children and adolescents participating in Gator Camp.

Participants

For this study, there were three separate groups of participants to gather a well-rounded set of data to assess the impact coaches have on the mental health of the children and adolescents attending Gator Camp. The first group of participants consisted of students who enrolled in San Francisco State’s KIN 696 course, which is a summer-long community-based internship. In this course, students assisted the coaches throughout Gator Camp as well as observed the coaches'
behavior and completed assigned course work. This group included 28 students, all above the age of 18, who were upper-division KIN majors. The second group was the coaches that taught at Gator Camp. There were four coaches employed at the camp: a team sport coach, a tennis coach, a swimming coach, and a martial arts coach. Three out of the four coaches agreed to participate, while one coach (martial arts) declined due to personal reasons. Two of the coaches, namely the team sports and swimming coaches, were recent graduates of SFSU’s KIN program, and this was their first experience being a coach or instructor. The tennis coach has been coaching for 7 years and runs their own tennis camp. The third group was the nine parents of kids who participated in Gator Camp for a minimum of 4 weeks up to the full 6 weeks of Gator Camp. This minimum of four weeks of participation was set to ensure that the individuals participating in the research study had participated in a sufficient amount of Gator Camp. This was an important criterion as many individuals only participate in one or two weeks of Gator Camp, and they may not be able to provide enough information given their limited participation. The kids participated in an average of 5.43 weeks of Gator Camp, with the range being between 4 and 6 weeks.

**Materials**

The tools utilized for this research study were online questionnaires administered via Qualtrics, which is a software program used by researchers to collect questionnaire and survey data. The parents as well as coaches completed their questionnaires using this platform. For the KIN 696 students, they completed questionnaires in the form of assignments that they did throughout the duration of their course, which were then submitted to iLearn, the platform used for course management at San Francisco State University. The prompts in these assignments
asked about their assessment of the coach’s behavior and the potential impact this had on the
children and adolescents that were participating in the program that week (See Appendix A). The
coaches were emailed a weekly questionnaire that included questions such as “What are some
things you did this week that could have helped improve the mental health of the athletes?” to
fill out that aided them in a self-reflection on their behaviors for that week, and the impact this
may have had on the youth participating in the program (See Appendix B). The parents were also
emailed a weekly questionnaire that included questions such as “Have you seen any changes to
your child's behavior whether positive or negative since starting gator camp?” (See Appendix C).
This questionnaire assessed their interpretations of the coaches’ impact on their child’s behavior
and asked them to use any information that the children may have relayed to them regarding the
coach’s language and behavior. Along with this, the child’s interpretation of the coach’s
behavior on their mental health and wellbeing was also assessed through the parents.

Procedures

IRB approval was initially received for this research, within the exempt category. For
recruitment, I initially reached out to potential participants through email prior to the start of
Gator Camp to receive consent from each of the participant populations. Contact information for
parents whose children were participating in at least 4 weeks of Gator Camp was obtained from
the individual who ran Gator Camp. The class list for the KIN 696 students was obtained from
the course instructor and iLearn access was granted to the researcher to access student email
addresses as well as to provide them with the questionnaires they filled out for the study. The
coach information was also obtained from the program leader. Initially, consent forms (See
Appendix E) were emailed to the coaches, then the coaches were approached in person at the
camp and were consented into the study if they were interested. In terms of the parents' consent, the parents were sent an initial more general email with information about the study as well as consent forms (See Appendix F), a few parents responded to this initial email and agreed to be part of the study, a second email was sent and the rest of the parents who agreed to participate in the study emailed back their consent. Once the coaches and parents provided consent to participate in the research study, they were sent a weekly email that contained an online questionnaire that was described in the materials section. A follow up reminder email was also sent a few days after the initial weekly email. Once the KIN 696 students provided consent, they completed their assignments and submitted them on iLearn and the researcher accessed the assignments after the completion of Gator Camp. The research participants filled out the questionnaires in their own time at home and submitted them to the researcher through the Qualtrics system. The questionnaires took the parents and coaches approximately 5-10 minutes a week to complete, totaling approximately 60 minutes for the full 6 weeks, the questionnaire time was unknown for the KIN 696 students as they did not provide this information, however, it was estimated to take approximately 15-30 minutes per week to complete, totaling approximately 90-180 minutes total to complete. As an additional note, one of the coaches was asked to leave the camp during the 5th week of Gator Camp, and their data collection ended at that point.

Data analysis

Data was collected in the form of parents’ responses from open-ended questionnaires, coach responses from open-ended questionnaires, and KIN 696 students' responses to class assignment prompts open-ended questionnaires, as well as assignment questions, which allowed for more detailed information from the participants as well as the utilization of a qualitative
analysis (Braun et al., 2016). The process utilized to analyze this data set was first to engage in an initial read through of the populations weekly data individually and perform a within-subjects analysis of each of the three populations: the parents, the KIN 696 students, and Gator Camp coaches. Themes were first found within each of the participants groups. Once the initial within-subjects analysis was completed, a between subjects’ analysis of the participant populations was completed to assess if there were similarities or differences across the three participant groups. Upon the completion of the initial analysis, I met with my research advisor to determine the effectiveness of these themes to describe the dataset. Once this meeting was completed, and the themes were more solidified and discussed, a second analysis was completed to assess if the initial analysis was accurate. This second analysis brought forth an additional theme within the KIN 696 student population that was not previously established. After the second analysis was completed, I went back into the data and pulled relevant quotes for each of the participant populations and created a written summary of each of these themes. I then met again with my research advisor to discuss the validity of these themes as well as the quotes that were found within the data set. When the final analysis was completed, there were both higher and lower order themes found.

This approach to data analysis utilized data triangulation to improve the validity as well as the trustworthiness of the data that was collected (Fenech Adami & Kiger, 2005). As data was collected from three separate populations to address the same question, I was able to see a more well-rounded picture of the experience of the individuals who participated in Gator Camp. To improve the data quality as well as understanding of the perspectives of the participants, data triangulation was utilized on the three participant groups and themes were established.
individually as well as across the three groups. Furthermore, as the analysis was assessed by a well-practiced qualitative researcher, the data could be considered more trustworthy and accurate to the perspectives of the participant groups. As personal bias and worldviews can be impactful on qualitative research, this was addressed with these methods, along with the fact that I created themes based on the frequency as well as the importance stated by the participants themselves of certain points.
The goal of this research study was to better understand how coach behavior and language influence the mental health of children and adolescents during Gator Camp. This was done through the collection of questionnaire data from three different groups of individuals: the Gator Camp coaches, the KIN 696 students who were supporting the coaches, and the parents of the children and adolescents attending Gator Camp. Following the collection of data, the approach that was taken was initially performing a within group thematic analysis, and then doing a between group thematic analysis. This led to several themes being established in the data set, some of which were specific to only one group, while others could be seen within multiple groups. As seen within Table 1, five higher-order themes were created, along with seven subthemes. The higher-order themes that were established within the data were: Supported a Positive Mental Health Progression, Balanced Use of Positive Reinforcement and Punishment Language, Coach and Counselor Energy Influences Kids’ Energy, Development of Community, and lastly Coach and Camp Negative Events. Two of the higher order themes were broken down into subthemes, Balanced Use of Positive Reinforcement and Punishment Language was broken down into three subthemes, Coaches Consistent Use of Positive Reinforcement, Coaches Reduced Use of Negative Punishment, and Coaches Use of “Don’t say Can’t”. Development of Community is also broken down into three subthemes that are specific to different groups, namely with Counselors, with Other Kids and with Coaches.
### Table 1: Themes Associated with each Participant Group

| Higher order themes | Subthemes                      | Coaches | Parents | KIN 696
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------
| Supported a Positive Mental Health  |                                | X       | X       | X       |
| Balanced Use of Positive Reinforcement and Punishment | Coaches Consistent Use of Positive Reinforcement | X       | X       | X       |
| Language            | Coaches Reduced Use of Negative Punishment | X       | X       |         |
|                     | Coach Use of “Don’t Say Can’t” | X       | X       |         |
|                      | Coach and Counselor Energy Influences Kids’ Energy |               |         | X       |
Development Of Community

- With Counselors: X
- With Other Kids: X
- With Coaches: X

Coach And Camp: X

Negative Events

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**Supported a Positive Mental Health Progression**

This theme was seen within all three groups and suggested that children and adolescents participating in Gator Camp go through a positive progression of their mental health throughout the duration of Gator camp as noted by the counselors as well as the parents. Responses pointed to an overall reduction in shyness and more engagement with other kids as well as other individuals involved with Gator Camp, such as the coaches and the counselors. Furthermore, responses suggested the children had an increased level of comfort with all members as well and appear to be excited to be there. One KIN 696 student mentioned, “I would say the instructor's behavior and language made them feel more secure and less anxious. All the instructors encourage kids to step out of their comfort zone making new friends. They were shy and nervous in the first couple of days, but they just became more comfortable talking to each other, to us, and the instructors.”. Overall, this is emphasized by multiple KIN 696 students, the concept of initially the children being shy and nervous to talk to one another as well as other individuals involved in the camp, and as the camp went along, due to the work of both the KIN 696 students and the coaches the kids became more comfortable and opening up. Another KIN 696 student
noted, “Overall from this week I think the instructors' behaviors and language have engaged more students to get involved, the first week you could see hesitant kids to get involved but now most are involved and are visibly happy to enjoy the activities when at first it was obvious that they were scared.” A similar idea was also reiterated by the parents. One parent mentioned that “they are more energized and excited to go to camp” in relation to their child. Another parent mentioned, “They start sharing their days once they come home. They seem very excited.” There was an overall positive experience with Gator Camp seen in the children, and despite initial shyness and being more isolated, the children appeared excited and wanted to connect more with other kids as well as the KIN 696 students and the coaches. The coaches talked about the individuals at the start who displayed that initial shyness and one discussed, “Getting more of them involved, there was definitely a handful in each group that was a little more closed off.”

Another coach talked about how they aimed to encourage the kids to socialize and put in effort to ensure the everyone felt included and to be with the general group “include more of the kids who tend to go off by themselves to get them to socialize.”

**Balanced Use of Positive Reinforcement and Punishment Language**

Positive reinforcement, encouragement, and support was consistently mentioned from all three groups in relation to the coaches and their approach, while fewer examples were noted regarding negative language or punishment. The first theme, *Coaches Consistent Use of Positive Reinforcement*, referred to how coaches were reported to use a lot of positive and encouraging language. This reinforcement was done through more general statements like “good job”, as well as specific positive feedback on performance in activities. For the second subtheme, *Coaches Reduced Use of Negative Punishment*, the used of punishment language and punishment in
general appears to be mainly for misbehaving and is done on a limited basis. The final, and most notable subtheme within this subset was **Coaches Use of “Don't say Can't”**. This statement was mentioned extremely frequently within the KIN 696 students, as well as within the parents.

“Don’t say Can't” was a statement made by one of the coaches, whenever an individual within the class said can't, the whole class would have to do 20 push-ups. This statement seemed to be one of the most memorable throughout the camp, as well as the most controversial.

Within the first subtheme **Coaches Consistent Use of Positive Reinforcement** there are frequent examples within the KIN 696 students. One student mentioned, “I think it affected them in a positive way. The kids received a lot of positive reinforcement. Whenever the kids were doing something that was out of their comfort zone the instructors made sure they congratulated the kids and praised them. It made them feel good and encourage them to participate more.” This type of positive reinforcement can be seen in a more general sense with the instructors using language such as “good job!” or asking for high fives, as stated by the KIN 696 students. There was also more specific feedback, as one student noted, “Yes, the instructor used positive reinforcing language. The instructor said Great job on the kick placement you just did.” Another example is with the swimming instructor stating “Yes “Great job kicking!” “Good job with alternating strokes!””. Along with utilizing positive language, there were also examples brought up by the KIN 696 students that discussed the way the coaches would cheer for the kids and would maintain a positive attitude, which aided in the positive experience for the children and adolescents. One of the students mentioned, “The (...) instructor establishes an energetic environment that has a positive impact on the kids.”. Another example of this was mentioned by another student who said “(...) is an amazing instructor. He gives off such a high energy and
positive atmosphere. Each kid loves his class and always leave super happy. They are very engaged in each class. (…) coach interacts very well with the kids and knows how to connect with them.” Another said, “Yes, the instructor would tell them how good they were doing and continue to encourage them by cheering.”.

For the second subtheme, Coaches Reduced Use of Negative Punishment, although there was punishment used, it was often in the form of the coach raising their voice or utilizing disciplinary matters if the children were being disrespectful to one another, the counselors, or the coaches. One KIN 696 student stated, “(…) coach had to show disciplinary behavior to the Tigers on Friday due to some kids being disrespectful to camp counselors. Some kids might have not enjoyed it because it was only a couple kids, but (…) coach explained how they are a team which resulted in everyone doing push-ups.”. The statement “I do not think any of the instructors use negative punishment language with the kids this week” was reiterated numerous times by many of the KIN 696 students. There were some mentions from parents regarding one of the instructors regarding them being stricter and using more punishments. A parent mentioned, “(…) coach be gentle on the punishments.”

For the final subtheme, Coaches Use of “Don't say Can't”, was an especially interesting theme. Within this theme, it was a punishment utilized by one of the coaches in which any time an individual said the word can't, the whole class would have to do 20 push-ups. This strategy had prominent impacts on the kids, according to one of the KIN 696 students. They wrote, “Yes, like mentioned previously when anyone in the gym says can’t the gym was required to do 20 push-ups. Definitely an effective way to delete that word for vocabulary which has a positive impact while they are young.” On the other hand, the kids did not appear to enjoy this method, as
many KIN 696 students stated. One wrote, “A negative example of the kid’s mental health this week is when they have to do push-ups when someone says “I can’t” in (…) coach’s class. This is a negative example because sometimes the kids find out who said it and then they are quick to blame that person for the push-ups. (…) coach tries his best in making sure no one knows who said it, but the kids sometimes hear it. This can negatively affect the person because they can feel bad about everyone doing push-ups due to something they said.” Another student said, “Only thing the kids don’t enjoy from this session is doing 20 push-ups when someone says “can’t”.” One parent mentioned that the idea behind “Don’t say Can’t” was “Don't believe that you "can't" do something” another parent reiterated this idea and stated “"You can't say can't " (meaning like you can't give up)”. Which appeared to be impactful to their children. This theme contains elements from both Coaches Consistent use of Positive Reinforcement as well as Coaches Reduced Use of Negative Punishment, however, it appeared unique in that it was mentioned as more than just a standard punishment, it was brought up in positive ways by both the KIN 696 students and the parents,

*Coach and Counselor Energy Influences Kids’ Energy*

This theme was seen specifically within the KIN 696 students and not in the other two groups. The KIN 696 students brought up that that they noticed the energy or engagement coming from the coaches would impact the way the kids would behave. Wherein when the coaches were excited and enthusiastic the kids would respond in a similar fashion and be very excited regarding the activities One KIN 696 student stated “I would definitely say the energy from the instructors is what helps the kids the most, because if they make it exciting then the kids will be excited to be able to try something new. The way each instructor is able to control the
group as well if very beneficial for the kids, so they can learn new, valuable information.”

Another student mentioned, “I noticed that if the instructors as well the counselors are excited about the activity, then the kids get excited too. So, the kids can match the energy in the room and it’s up to us to make sure we are encouraging.” This sentiment was also reflected in another KIN 696 students' response “A couple of classes he [the coach] seemed upset, and the kids were rubbing off from that energy and were a bit more rebellious. They would not listen.” The impact that the coach's energy had on the children was said to go further than just affecting their current mood, as some KIN 696 students mentioned that there were impacts to the children's mental health as well. One student mentioned “I think the instructor’s overall behavior and language affect the kids, more specifically their mental health because the kids react and feed off the instructor’s behavior and language. I noticed when the instructors are having a good time, then the kids overall mental health is positive and good. If the instructors are using positive behavior and language like praise and encouragement then the kid’s mental health and overall environment is safe, good, and positive. This environment lets the kids thrive and have fun in each sport boosting their self-esteem and confidence.” The KIN 696 students stated that their own energy levels as well as enthusiasm would be influential in the behaviours of the kids. However, when they were tired or not in a positive mood, the kids would also reflect that. One of the KIN 696 students stated “I would say towards the end of the day, my energy tends to get lower and lower. So, I would say that they can sense this, and want to bring their energy down as well.”, another student similarly stated “I sometimes feel tired or unmotivated during tennis or martial arts, and I think that my low energy has not had a positive impact on the mental health of the kids. Kids tend to feed off the energy of the counselors so if I am acting low energy, they
may feel low energy as well.” Although the coach energy was prominently impactful on the overall mood and energy of the participating kids, the affect that the KIN 696 students appeared to have on mood and potential mental health cannot be understated as demonstrated by some of the quotes seen from the KIN 696 students.

Development of Community

For the next subtheme, there was a development of a sense of community and comfort among the kids. They became friends with one another and became excited to see one another at camp, as well as built relationships with camp counselors (KIN 696 students) and coaches. There were three subthemes within the community creation theme, including community created with coaches, community created with the KIN 696 students, and lastly community creation with each other.

Within the first theme Development of Community with Counselors, although the KIN 696 students, also referred to as the Counselors do not fall directly into the impacts of the coaches, the positive effects of the KIN 696 students on the children were brought up by both the KIN 696 students as well as the parents of the kids and appeared to have a great level of significance. One of the parents mentioned that “My son likes (…) KIN 696 student because they share similar interests like anime” as well as “Generally positive due to just being active and engaged all day and being cared for by people closer to their age than their typical teachers during the school year.” In terms of KIN 696 students, one student mentioned that “One example from this week was the kids warming up to each other and us counselors after day three. They were a lot more talkative and comfortable with each other.” Another mentioned, “One of my very active kids was injured, and he felt very sad he couldn’t participate for one of the activities.”
I made sure I kept him company and conversed with him. We shared lots of laughs and jokes and this made him take off the fact that he couldn't fully participate in one of his favorite activities. He felt good and he didn’t feel left out either.” Another KIN 696 student pointed out that “Kids were sharing with the counselors and other kids the type of activities they were doing during crafts. They even brought some strings for us so we can make bracelets. It made them feel good knowing that others were interested in what they had to offer.” Lastly, another student stated, “This past week, (...) child made me a little bracelet. (...) both made me a daisy chain out of real daisies from the grass and I thought it was adorable. A lot of the kids are super comfortable with me now, so they tell me everything about their day and feel comfortable enough to tell me things that even bother them.” All these quotes demonstrate a comfort of the kids with the KIN 696 students that they were working with throughout the camp.

For the second subtheme, Development of Community with Other Kids, there were multiple instances where parents expressed that their children found greater enjoyment in the camp when their friends were there. One wrote, “My kids seem to enjoy the camp more when their friends also show up” as well as another parent saying, “Yes. My oldest is admitting he likes it more and has fun with the group of kids he has befriended. My middle is always happy and my youngest likes the socialization and martial arts”. A similar sentiment was represented within the KIN 696 students. One wrote, “The kids are not as shy and cliquey anymore; they all interact with each other and try to be friends.” Another KIN 696 student stated, “because I think they really enjoyed every class. They may not like the activity itself, but they all talked and interact with each other.” Another example was noted by a KIN 696 student, “I think that for the overall group it has given them the chance to better interact with each other. The kids have been
really great in including kids they don’t know and even if they are skilled in a sport, they still include those who aren’t. The instructors have facilitated this type of inclusion with everyone. The kids have started to feel more confident in even making friends.”

For the third subtheme, *Development of Community with Coaches*, the parents and KIN 696 students found that the coaches were imperative in aiding in the development of the community and bringing the kids as well as the KIN 696 students together. “(...) coach is always the main conversation at home. After a very brief rough start in week 1, they now appreciate him a lot, practice the drills at home, etc.”, another parent mentioned that “The (...) coach has their attention, he has found a way to connect.” A KIN 696 student stated “The instructor imposed a feeling of comradery. The instructor made it so that the actions of one affected all of the others and thereby they would think of their actions and repercussions before acting.” Another student mentioned that “I would say the instructor's behavior and language definitely made them feel more secure and less anxious. All the instructors encourage kids to step out of their comfort zone making new friends. They were shy and nervous in the first couple of days, but they just became more comfortable talking to each other, to us, and the instructors.” Another student mentioned that the instructors were encouraging in their language and actions, and this led to the kids demonstrating positive behaviors towards one another “The behavior of the (...) instructor that stood out to me were words of encouragement towards the kids. This encouraging energy rubbed off the kids and made them encourage their peers to participate and have fun during the castle game. Another behavior that stood out was emphasizing teamwork. When the coach explained what teamwork means, all the kids and even counselors played with their teams and had fun.”. Overall, the approach of the coaches was mentioned to have a positive impact on the children
one KIN 696 students stated that “I think camp has had a positive effect on all of the kid’s mental health. The instructors have given them a fun and safe place during their summer off. The kids enjoy having instructors that are there for them and listen to them.”

**Coach and Camp Negative Events**

There were certain random negative events that occurred between the coaches and kids as well as with KIN 696 students; certain interactions were not necessarily seen as a common theme but were important enough to mention. Some of these included the kids acting out more throughout certain weeks and overall, this subtheme covers there generally being some negative events occurring throughout the camp alongside the overall positive experience. One of the coaches mentioned “There were some age groups that were acting out a lot more and not following instructions towards the end of the week.” This perspective was echoed by the KIN 696 students “The kids are talking back more so that shows that they are comfortable. They also think they don’t need to listen like earlier in the week, a little boy kept talking back when I would ask him to move to the side away from the cars. He would not listen and told me I could not tell him what to do so I had to talk to the parents.” Another student mentioned “But this past week, especially on Friday, the kids behaved horribly. We have to give them a talk during Team Sports and tell them we were disappointed in their behaviors. Also, after swim we had brought snacks but we as counselors chose not to give it them because of their behavior and we told them that as of right now, snacks are off the table, and we will only consider doing them again if their behavior improves.”. Regarding the commentary related to one of the coaches who was dismissed after 5 weeks, some of the KIN 696 students stated, “Tennis instructor – we were getting complaints that he would physically adjust them and made them feel uncomfortable but
Friday there was nothing said”. There were also occasions where certain facilities such as the pool were closed, which led to the kids not being thrilled and quite disappointed with the situation, one KIN 696 student stated, “This week, was especially a weird week given that the tennis instructor is no longer a part of the program, and the pool was closed most of the week. Kids were bummed out on the swimming portion, but not as much of the tennis instructor being missed because we normally ran the session anyways.” As well as “An example of negative mental health this week is when many kids expressed sadness and frustration when they learned that Swimming had been cancelled multiple days out of the week. Many kids look forward to swimming so when it was cancelled their mental health turned negative, but Camp Counselors encouraged them to stay positive and played other activities with them. This resulted in the kids playing a game of kickball with Camp Counselors and having fun.”
Discussion

Overall, the goal of this research was to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact that coaches may have on the mental health of children and adolescents. This information was assessed through questionnaires evaluating the coach’s language and behaviour towards the kids. The setting for this research was unique, as it did not focus on a competitive sport, but rather a 6-week recreational summer program. Within this program, the kids were interacting with the coaches as well as the KIN 696 students almost daily for the full 6 weeks. Participation in physical activity on its own has a variety of positive benefits, including improved cardiovascular health, improved mood as well as higher levels of energy, among numerous other benefits (Warburton, et al., 2006). When coupled with a supportive environment and a great community, these benefits can be even more widespread and can aid in greater positive development for the kids. Despite the incidence of some negative interactions, as well as punishment language seen from the coaches seen in this study, the positive impacts on the mental health of the kids did not appear to be diminished.

The coaches were described to be very encouraging and kind towards the children and adolescents and aided in the development of the community. Based on the qualitative data collected from the three participant groups, it can be inferred that the consistent use of positive language coming from the coaches, as well as the community created amongst all members of the camp was the catalyst for the first theme of a positive mental health progression to occur. With the efforts coming from the coaches as well as the KIN 696 students the children and adolescents were able to gain more confidence, develop friendships and enjoy their time at camp.
Parents also noticed an overall improvement in mood wherein their kids displayed higher energy levels, were more talkative and appeared excited to go back to camp. Overall, it appeared as though Gator Camp had a positive impact on the mental health of the children and adolescents that participated, as reported by their parents as well as the KIN 696 students that they worked closely with. This was seen within the positive development of their psychological as well as social mental health. The supportive and safe environment established within Gator Camp encouraged the children and adolescents to create friendships and develop a greater level of comfort with all the members of the camp. This aided in creating a space where even the shy kids were brought out of their shells and got involved, this allowed a vast percentage of children and adolescents involved with Gator Camp to experience the full positive benefits that can be obtained from participation in a sports program.

Similar results can be seen within the literature. For example, Smith et al.’s (1995) intervention aimed at reducing performance anxiety for youth in sport focussed on encouraging behaviors from the coaches, which included reinforcement, mistake-contingent encouragement, corrective instruction, and technical instruction. They also aimed to reduce nonreinforcement, punishment, punitive instruction, which they described as instruction that is provided in a way that is not kind or is sarcastic in its approach and lastly regimenting behaviors aimed at keeping control. This intervention was greatly successful, and the behaviors of the coaches of Gator Camp mirror many of the techniques of the intervention, followed by positive mental health outcomes.

When addressing the findings of this research project through Engel’s (1978) Biopsychosocial model, the results align very well. Gator Camp encompasses all three areas of
the biopsychosocial model and created positive impacts in terms of all three factors. The biological impacts can be seen through the physical activity component, as the literature describes the numerous benefits physical activity has on mental health and wellbeing, as well as reducing mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety and improving cognition (Biddle et al, 2019; Brown et al, 2013, Li et al, 2020). The coaches are impactful through both the psychological as well as the social components. The second theme seen in the analysis

*Balance of Positive Reinforcement and Punishment Language* can be tied into the psychological component of the Biopsychosocial model. The psychological aspect is built around ideas of an individual's self-concept as well as their self-esteem, which can be influenced by a myriad of factors. As the coaches within this study are described as consistently encouraging and providing positive commentary towards the youth, this could influence kids’ perceptions of themselves. In the literature, the development of a positive self-perception can create a better self-image and self-esteem, which may serve as a protective mechanism in terms of mental health (Mann et al., 2004).

Furthermore, social supports are significant in the development of a positive self-esteem, and individuals who perceive themselves to be accepted, loved, and respected have a greater self-esteem (Mann et al., 2004). This concept was seen in Gator Camp, as the coaches were said to be encouraging, and consistently used positive language towards the youth involved in the program, which may have aided in the creation of a more positive sense of self and self-esteem and led to improvements in mood and confidence. Another theme, “Don’t say Can’t” can be tied into this as well. This controversial theme aimed to change the language that the children and adolescents used towards themselves during the activities they participated in, so that they would never say
they couldn’t do something, rather that they could try even if they failed. The coaches also had substantial impacts on the social component of the biopsychosocial model. Social connection has great importance in both physical and mental health, and a socially supportive environment can have great physical and mental benefits (Umberson & Karas Montez, 2010). Thus, the establishment of community within all three groups found at Gator Camp could be seen as positively impacting the mental health of the children and adolescents involved. The development of friendships with peers and positive relationships with both the coaches as well as the KIN 696 students was imperative in fostering an environment where everyone was able to feel socially supportive and derive benefits from their social environment.

An interesting concept that emerged within this research study was the subtheme “Don't say Can't”. This particular subtheme diverged from the literature we typically see regarding communal punishment. The coach that utilized this technique would require all kids to do 20 push-ups when someone said can’t; they did not enjoy this punishment and would complain about having to do it. However, it was also noted that the kids would become more conscious of their language and were at least in part internalizing some of these messages, that they could do these tasks. It was stated by parents that the kids talked mainly about the coach that used these tactics, who was considered the strictest out of the group of coaches, as they appeared to like this coach the most and connected with them in a meaningful way. When considering AGT, this could be explained by the general behavior of this particular coach. Despite the utilization of push-ups as punishment, this coach was noted to use frequent positive language, and created a mastery environment through the use of encouragement and focusing on the development of the children's skills rather than encouraging competition.
Practical Applications

This research adds to the literature that understands the impacts that coaches can have on child and adolescent mental health. Along with this, it assesses the approaches that they can take to ensure that the impact that they have is positive. Most notably being conscious of their language and approaches to the children, as well as creation of a safe community where they feel comfortable enjoying themselves in their sporting activity. The results of this research will be shared with Gator Camp management to emphasize the successes of the program as well as provide feedback on how to improve future years to ensure consistent positive improvement. Furthermore, this research can be utilized to build other recreational programs in a way that is optimal for fostering positive mental health in children and adolescents.

As some of the main findings relate to specific types of behaviours and language that were displayed by the coaches, this information could be utilized for other programs. As there appears to be positive mental health progressions related to the use of consistent positive reinforcement as well as reductions in negative feedback, this type of approach should be utilized by coaches within similar recreational settings. Along with this, in more competitive as well as school settings, this type of approach could also prove to be beneficial, as it aids in the development of positive perceptions of self and an individual's self-esteem.

Furthermore, this research could be used to inform practices that are aimed at building community connections in sport and physical activity endeavors, as the responses from this study appeared to emphasize that the community that was created was directly tied to their enjoyment and interest in further participation. Community could be developed by coaches through consistent encouragement and establishing genuine connections between the kids themselves as
well as the coaches. Another interesting perspective that could be influential on future programming is the use of individuals similar to the KIN 696 students. Although not directly falling under the umbrella of the coaches, having the KIN 696 students appeared to create a bridge between the kids and the coaches and helped establish more positive experiences for the youth, as they connected with the KIN 696 students as well. Further programming in recreation could aim to utilize volunteers or other resources to replicate a similar environment.

Another finding from this research is the importance of the length of the program, as one of the pieces of the development of positive mental health outcomes for the kids was the establishment of community and the development of relationships with all members of Gator Camp. Since the coaches, the KIN 696 students, as well as the other kids in the program led to increased comfort and to more positive experiences in the camp, it could be important to give kids a longer length of program to facilitate the creation of these bonds.

In terms of dissemination of findings to Gator Camp specifically, a more simplified document will be created that covers the main points that were obtained from the interviews, this will include simple visuals and information that is easy to understand. These documents will be sent along to the management team for the further improvement of Gator Camp, as well as any parents who may be interested in the information that was collected and what it could mean for the future of their child's participation in Gator Camp, as well as other recreational sporting endeavors.

**Limitations**

Although this research provides some valuable insights into the impacts coaches have on mental health of children and adolescents, there were also limitations. One of which is the
questionnaire data for the coaches. The coaches’ data were very inconsistent and there was frequent missing data. For example, one of the coaches left part way through Gator Camp and data was not collected for the full 6 weeks for this coach. Due to these inconsistencies, the data may not have been as reflective of the general coach insights throughout Gator Camp, as not all of the information was able to be documented and analyzed. The coaches may have had greater insight into their own behavior and its impact on the kids, but this was not able to be gathered and would lead to a less thorough understanding of coach perspectives.

Another limitation is that parent as well as coach data began at week two, as recruitment was not effective until the second week of Gator Camp, and some initial impressions may have been lost from these groups. Another limitation is the fairly small sample of parents that data was collected from. Due to this some valuable perspectives from the parents and their children may have not been considered. Parents who were more involved with and found their kids had more positive experiences with Gator Camp may have been more inclined to participate with this research. This may have led to us missing input from parents and children who had more negative feedback regarding the camp as well as their experiences with their coaches. Along with this, parents who may communicate less frequently and openly with their children may have not felt equipped to participate in this research, and thus did not show interest. This would also result in the loss of any feedback and interpretations that may have provided a more in depth understanding of this topic matter.

Lastly, another limitation of this research was that although questions were asked more generally about the child's behavior changes seen by their parents, we did not assess mental health or mental illness specifically in the children and adolescents that participated in this
program. Although mental health is on a spectrum, from diagnosis to basic symptoms, an assessment of the mental health of the youth involved in the program would have provided a more accurate assessment of their current state, as well as their baseline mental health levels. The parents described behaviours and attitudes they noticed in their children, but this may have not represented the true mental state of the kids, particularly if they were hiding their feelings and experiences, both in general and related to their experiences throughout the duration of the camp. Future research could aim to address some of these limitations and provide a greater understanding into the relationships between coach behavior and language on child and adolescent mental health.

*Future Research Directions*

In terms of future directions for research, as this was an exploratory study, the results are relatively preliminary and could be investigated further and in greater detail. One of the factors that could be investigated further is the impact of having the KIN 696 students working closely with the kids, as this appeared to be enjoyed by the youth involved in this program. Further, the differences between competitive sport and coach impact on mental health should also be investigated to achieve a greater understanding into what coaches can do to ensure they are establishing an environment where their athletes can have a positive experience and have good mental health.

Another future research direction is doing a deeper dive into the coach who utilized “Don’t say Can’t” as one of their tactics for communicating with the kids. This particular coach utilized collective punishment as well as push-ups, both of which are not usually considered a positive approach in encouraging physical activity in children. Despite this, the results appeared
overall to be positive. Assessing what other factors were impactful in this coach's approach would be important for future research and understanding.

Along with this, future research can aim to deal with some of the aforementioned limitations. The first of which is to obtain better coach and parent data to ensure that the perspectives of both groups are further developed and to ensure that the most accurate data is collected. Furthermore, the utilization of mental health questionnaires would be valuable to better see the progression of the children in a more formal way, as the mental health progression was measured in a more informal way in this research study.
Conclusion

This exploratory qualitative research study assessed the impact of coach behavior and language on child and adolescent mental health doing Gator Camp. Overall, it appears that the coaches were part of creating a positive environment that encouraged all aspects of the biopsychosocial model. The children and adolescents underwent a positive development of their mental health, as seen by both the KIN 696 students, as well as their parents. Future research should aim to assess this relationship in greater detail and understand the impacts of coach behavior in a competitive versus recreational environment, and the impacts that the KIN 696 students may have had. This research adds to the literature regarding the mental health benefits of recreational sport.
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Appendix A: KIN 696 Student Questionnaires

Mental health definition: Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

Coaching behavior:
1. What behaviors of the instructor stood out to you.
   a. Team Sport instructor
   b. Tennis instructor
   c. Swimming instructor
   d. Martial arts instructor
2. Please describe a behavior of the instructor that had a positive impact on the kids
   a. Team Sport instructor
   b. Tennis instructor
   c. Swimming instructor
   d. Martial arts instructor
3. Please describe a behavior of the instructor that the kids may not have enjoyed.
   a. Team Sport instructor
   b. Tennis instructor
   c. Swimming instructor
   d. Martial arts instructor

Coaching language
1. Did the instructor use positive reinforcing language with the kids? If yes, can you provide an example?
   a. Team Sport instructor
   b. Tennis instructor
   c. Swimming instructor
   d. Martial arts instructor
2. Did the instructor use negative punishment language with the kids? If yes, can you provide an example?
   a. Team Sport instructor
   b. Tennis instructor
   c. Swimming instructor
   d. Martial arts instructor

Impact on athlete
1. Based on what you observed this week, overall, how do you think the instructor's behavior and language affected the athletes, more specifically their mental health?

Athlete mental health
1. Overall, how would you describe the mental health of the kids this week?
   a. Provide an example of positive mental health
b. Provide an example of negative mental health

Self-reflection:
1. What behaviors of yours this week had a positive impact on the mental health of the kids?
2. What behaviors of yours this week may have not had a positive impact on the mental health of the kids?
Appendix B: Coach Questionnaires

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey! We are going to ask you to reflect on your coaching and answer some questions regarding your behavior and language this week during Gator Camp. This survey should take you no longer than 15-20 minutes to complete (it may even be shorter!) Please complete this survey by Monday! If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me at dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu.

1. First I am going to ask you to tell me a bit more about yourself!
2. What do you teach at Gator Camp?
   a. Tennis
   b. Swimming
   c. Martial Arts
   d. Team Sports
3. Next, I'm going to ask some questions about your coaching behavior this week!
4. How do you think coaching went this week?
5. Do you think you effectively delivered the program this week?
   a. Yes
   b. No
6. What are some things you did well?
7. What are some things you could have done better?
8. Next, I'm going to ask some questions about the language you used while coaching this week.
9. Can you provide examples of positive or reinforcing language you used this week?
10. Can you provide examples of punishment language you used this week?
11. Finally, I am going to ask about the mental health of the children you coach during Gator Camp. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.
12. What are things you did this week that could have helped improve the mental health of the kids?
13. What are things you did that may have negatively impacted the mental health of the kids?
14. What are things you could do to help improve the mental health of the kids next week?

Thank you for participating in this survey. We appreciate you sharing your perspective!
Appendix C: Parent Questionnaires

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey! We are going to ask you some questions about your child's experience with Gator Camp so far. This survey should take you no longer than 15-20 minutes to complete (it may even be shorter!) Please complete this survey by Monday July 11th, 2022. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu.

1. Please enter your first and last name

Some of the questions in this section you may have answered last week already, if you have feel free to skip them!

2. How many children do you have enrolled in Gator Camp?
3. How many weeks of Gator Camp is your child (or children) enrolled in?
4. Tell us some reasons why you enrolled your child (or children) into Gator Camp this summer
5. Has your child (or children) enjoyed Gator Camp this week? Why or why not?
6. Have you seen any changes to your child's (or children's) behavior (whether positive or negative) since starting Gator Camp? Can you describe what these are?

Now we want to know a little bit about the coaches your child had this week. These would include their team sport coach, their tennis coach, their swimming coach, and their martial arts coach.

7. What did your child (or children) mention that they liked about their coaches teaching? If you can please specify the instructor(s)
8. What did your child (or children) mention that they disliked about their coaches teaching? If you can please specify the instructor(s)
9. Now we would like to know a bit more about your child's mental health and wellbeing!
10. We’ll also ask about more questions about the behaviors of your child’s coaches. It can be helpful to think about the different types of things a coach can do that would be supportive of your child’s mental health, along with things that may be not as supportive.
11. This can look like using supportive language like "well done, great play, etc" or on the opposite end, having kids do push-ups for other behaviors for not listening, etc.
12. Overall, how would you describe the mental health of your child? (or children) (e.g., happy, sad, stressed)
13. Have you seen an overall improvement in the mental health of your child since starting Gator Camp? If yes, can you provide an example of what that looks like? If no, what do you think could help improve their mental health?
14. What coach behaviors do you think have had a positive effect on your child's (or children's) mental health this week?
15. What coach behaviors do you think could be improved to positively impact the mental health of your child (or children) this week?
16. What words or phrases has your child (or children) mentioned that were impactful to them that the coach used this week?

Thank you for participating in this survey. We appreciate you sharing your perspective!
Appendix D: Kinesiology 696 Student Consent Form

San Francisco State University
Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Mental Health of Individuals Enrolled in Gator Camp

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND
The purpose of this research is to learn more about the relationship between the way a coach behaves and the impact that has on the children and adolescents participating in Gator camp.
The researcher, Daria Sosna, is a graduate student at San Francisco State University conducting research for a master’s degree in the Department of Kinesiology. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a student enrolled in Kin 696 who will be helping with Gator camp this summer.

B. PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this research, the following will occur:
• You will submit your weekly 696 assessments through the ILearn portal that will then be assessed by the researcher.
• The weekly assessments will take you approximately 30 minutes to complete

C. RISKS
There is a risk of loss of privacy. However, no names or identities will be used in any published reports of the research. Only the researcher will have access to the research data.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY
The research data will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. All research data will be stored in an encrypted document on a password protected computer.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefits to the participant.

F. COSTS
There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

G. COMPENSATION
There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

H. ALTERNATIVES
The alternative is not to participate in the research.

I. **QUESTIONS**
You have spoken with Daria Sosna about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu or you may contact the researcher’s advisor, Professor Walsh at dwalsh@sfsu.edu.

Questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to the Human and Animal Protections at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

J. **CONSENT**
You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.** You are free to decline to participate in this research, or to withdraw your participation at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at San Francisco State University.

Signature _____________________________ Date: _________
Research Participant

Signature _____________________________ Date: _________
Researcher
Appendix E: Coach Consent Form

San Francisco State University
Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Mental Health of Individuals Enrolled in Gator Camp

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND
The purpose of this research is to learn more about the relationship between the way a coach behaves and the impact that has on the children and adolescents participating in Gator camp.
The researcher, Daria Sosna, is a graduate student at San Francisco State University conducting research for a master’s degree in the Department of Kinesiology. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a Gator camp coach this summer.

B. PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this research, the following will occur:
• You will be emailed a weekly electronic questionnaire to complete that asks you to reflect on your behaviors over the past week.
• This weekly questionnaire will take you 15-30 minutes to complete.

C. RISKS
There is a risk of loss of privacy. However, no names or identities will be used in any published reports of the research. Only the researcher will have access to the research data.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY
The research data will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. All research data will be stored in an encrypted document on a password protected computer.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefits to the participant.

F. COSTS
There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

G. COMPENSATION
There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

H. ALTERNATIVES
The alternative is not to participate in the research.
I. **QUESTIONS**
You have spoken with Daria Sosna about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu or you may contact the researcher’s advisor, Professor Walsh at dwalsh@sfsu.edu.

Questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to the Human and Animal Protections at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

J. **CONSENT**
You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to participate in this research, or to withdraw your participation at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at San Francisco State University.**

Signature _____________________________           Date: _________
Research Participant

Signature _____________________________           Date: _________
Researcher
Appendix F: Parent Consent Form

San Francisco State University
Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Mental Health of Individuals Enrolled in Gator Camp

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND
The purpose of this research is to learn more about the relationship between the way a coach behaves and the impact that has on the children and adolescents participating in Gator camp.

The researcher, Daria Sosna, is a graduate student at San Francisco State University conducting research for a master’s degree in the Department of Kinesiology. You are being asked to participate in this study because your child is participating in Gator camp for a minimum of 4 weeks this summer.

B. PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this research, the following will occur:

- You will be emailed a weekly electronic questionnaire to complete that asks you to answer some questions about your and your child’s experiences during Gator camp.
- This weekly questionnaire will take you 15-30 minutes to complete.

C. RISKS
There is a risk of loss of privacy. However, no names or identities will be used in any published reports of the research. Only the researcher will have access to the research data.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY
The research data will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. All research data will be stored in an encrypted document on a password protected computer.

E. DIRECT BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefits to the participant.

F. COSTS
There will be no cost to you for participating in this research.

G. COMPENSATION
There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

H. ALTERNATIVES
The alternative is not to participate in the research.

I. **QUESTIONS**
You have spoken with Daria Sosna about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu or you may contact the researcher’s advisor, Professor Walsh at dwalsh@sfsu.edu.

Questions about your rights as a study participant, or comments or complaints about the study, may also be addressed to the Human and Animal Protections at 415: 338-1093 or protocol@sfsu.edu.

J. **CONSENT**
You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to participate in this research, or to withdraw your participation at any point, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will have no influence on your present or future status at San Francisco State University.**

Signature _____________________________ Date: _________
Research Participant

Signature _____________________________ Date: _________
Researcher
Appendix G: Recruitment Materials

Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Mental Health of Individuals Enrolled in Gator Camp

Parents

Hello, my name is Daria Sosna, and I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University in the Kinesiology Department. I am conducting research on how coaches can impact the mental health of children and adolescents during Gator Camp. As your child is participating in 4 or more weeks of gator camp, you are eligible for this study, and your participation is completely voluntary!

Participation in this research includes doing a weekly electronic questionnaire that asks you to answer some questions about your and your child’s experiences during Gator Camp. This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes per week to complete. Your total time commitment will be approximately 90 minutes for this research study if you participate for the full 6 weeks.

The goal of this research is to better understand how the behavior and language of coaches can have a positive or negative effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents. The aim is to use this knowledge to improve Gator Camp for your child, as well as other recreational sports programs.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at (628) 259 4337 by phone and dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu by email.

Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Mental Health of Individuals Enrolled in Gator Camp

Kin 696

Hello, my name is Daria Sosna, and I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University in the Kinesiology Department. I am conducting research on how coaches can impact the mental health of children and adolescents during Gator Camp. As you are enrolled in Kinesiology 696, you are eligible for this study, participation is completely voluntary!

Participation in this research includes completing the assignments for Kinesiology 696, these will be the same as your other classmates, however your assignments will be analyzed by the researcher. This task will take approximately 30 minutes a week to complete. Your total time commitment will be approximately 180 minutes for this research study.

The goal of this research is to better understand how the behavior and language of coaches can have a positive or negative effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents. The aim is to use this knowledge to improve the way coaches and instructors approach their teaching to ensure they are having a positive impact on the kids they teach.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at (628) 259 4337 by phone and dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu by email.
Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Mental Health of Individuals Enrolled in Gator Camp

Coaches

Hello, my name is Daria Sosna, and I am a graduate student at San Francisco State University in the Kinesiology Department. I am conducting research on how coaches can impact the mental health of children and adolescents during gator camp. As you are one of the coaching instructors for Gator Camp, you are eligible for this study, however participation is completely voluntary!

Participation in this research includes doing a weekly electronic questionnaire that asks you to answer some questions that help you reflect on your teaching every week; this questionnaire will take approximately 15-30 minutes per week to complete. Your total time commitment will be approximately 180 minutes for this research study.

The goal of this research is to better understand how the behavior and language of coaches can have a positive or negative effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents. The aim is to use this knowledge to improve the way coaches and instructors approach their teaching to ensure they are having a positive impact on the kids they teach.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at (628) 259 4337 by phone and dsosna@mail.sfsu.edu by email.