

## POSTER OF DISTINCTION

**Debate, R., Pettee, K., Zwald, M., Huberty, J., Zhang, Y.** Changes in psychosocial factors and physical activity frequency among 3rd to 8th grade girls who participated in a developmentally focused youth sport program

### ABSTRACT

Background: Despite the numerous physiological, psychological, and academic benefits of physical activity, declines in physical activity levels among girls have been observed over the last decade. The purpose of this study was to assess the short-term impact of Girls on the Run and Girls on Track developmentally focused youth sport programs (DYS) on global self-esteem, body image, commitment to physical activity, and physical activity frequency. Methods: A non-experimental pre- and post-intervention study design using a 29-item paper-pencil assessment tool was employed to examine intervention effects (n=1034). Results: Paired sample t-tests from pre- to post-intervention revealed statistically significant increases in self-esteem ( $p<.001$ ), body size satisfaction ( $p<.001$ ), and vigorous physical activity frequency ( $p<.001$ ). Stratification by the number of times participating in the intervention observed the greatest mean difference from pre- to post-intervention among first time participants, followed with continued improvements in self-esteem ( $p=.013$ ) and body size satisfaction ( $p<.001$ ) for those participating a second time. When stratifying by age categories (8-10 vs. 11-15 years) older girls were observed with significant improvements in commitment to physical activity ( $p=.003$ ) when compared with younger girls. Conclusions: Findings suggest the DYS program designed exclusively for girls in 3rd-8th grades may produce beneficial changes in self-esteem, body size satisfaction, physical activity commitment and frequency. Thereby, providing the necessary structure and function for initiating and sustaining physical activity among girls across the lifespan.