

Evaluation of PSD's Online Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic: *April to July 2020*



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Pro Sport Development (PSD) is an award winning social enterprise that is dedicated to utilising sport to aid in the holistic development of children and youth. Since its inception in 2013, PSD has gained extensive experience in designing, evaluating and implementing different sports-based development programs, having worked in 15 states across India. PSD has implemented programs directly for 10,590 children and youth and conducted training workshops for 799 grassroots coaches and community trainers.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has kept a hold of the world for over six months and is likely to continue to do so. As the virus spread around the globe, increasing in intensity and lethality, countries introduced various plans to flatten the curve. Whether these measures related to (partial and/or regional) lockdowns, curfews, mandatory social distancing, bans on mass mobility and (inter)national travel, border closures, and/or the mandatory wearing of face masks, they all resulted in the following: the routine of people's everyday life and structures broken and people's freedom limited in order to save lives. In most countries, this meant that people were confined to their personal homes and unable to socially interact with anyone outside their walls. These drastic changes and insecurities as a result of COVID-19 have affected the mental health of many and fear, stress and worry has become a commonality.¹

One way to improve people's mental health is through sports.² However, as most sport complexes, gyms, stadiums, pools, parks, schools, playgrounds and so on are closed or inaccessible during the pandemic, it has been difficult for people to continue sport or exercise outside of their home, especially for people with a lower socio-economic status.³ For Sport for Development (S4D) organizations such as Pro Sport Development (PSD), who already provide an important role for the social development and mental health of its participants during non-COVID-19 times, it has been crucial to quickly adapt to the current situation. Fortunately, there are ways to do so in times when public facilities are closed, and gatherings forbidden. As Marc Probst from The Swiss Academy for Development rightfully states, "a central characteristic is not necessarily the type of sport or game or the physical closeness, but the attitude and method with which sport and play is applied".⁴ Thus, while physical interaction is a key characteristic of sport, it is not a prerequisite since sport and/or physical exercise could also be done socially distant from others while maintaining the same benefits. Thus, it is important for S4D organizations to continue to exist and/or create new programs, albeit catered to the current COVID-19 situation.

PSD has been quick to adapt to the new circumstances brought about by COVID-19.⁵ When the Indian central government announced a national lockdown on the 24th of March 2020, the Community Sports Program of PSD, which aims to support the holistic development of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Bhubaneswar (Eastern Indian state of Odisha), came to an abrupt halt. Determined to continue to help the children in Bhubaneswar, PSD quickly came up with series of online [fitness](#), [yoga](#) and [fun games](#) videos to motivate and engage its participants to stay safe, (mentally) healthy and fit at home. This report evaluates this period by analysing almost 300 responses to a survey, which was handed out to children from Bhubaneswar who used these videos. While PSD prefers to work interactively with its participants in Bhubaneswar, the organization recognizes that this online and distant setting might remain the status quo in the future. Therefore, PSD sees the importance to evaluate the COVID-19 activities during the period between April to July 2020 in order to adapt even better to the current situation as well as to learn important lessons for future, non-COVID-19 activities.

¹World Health Organization. [Mental Health & COVID-19](#).

² Rochelle Eime et al. A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for children and adolescents: <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1479-5868-10-98>

³ UNDESA. [The Impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effect on social development](#).

⁴ Marc Probst. [What the coronavirus and resilience have in common](#). Swiss Academy for Development.

⁵ Akshara Bhargava. [Engaging and providing support to children in need during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Survey

The survey, as a google form, was distributed to 413 children via WhatsApp and mostly to the phone numbers of the parents, considering most of the children do not own a mobile phone. As social media and online communication have become essential tools for maintaining social relationships and continuing development work during COVID-19, the choice to use a social media platform like WhatsApp seems obvious. However, it should be noted that this requires the respondents to have access to the internet and emphasizes the need for digital inclusion. While PSD acknowledges that limited access to internet might be a limitation to the data collection method, the rate of response is still set at 72% (see Figure 1). Out of the 298 respondents, 142 were male (48%) and 156 were female (52%) (see Figure 2). This corresponds to the male-female ratio seen during non-COVID-19 activities in the past.

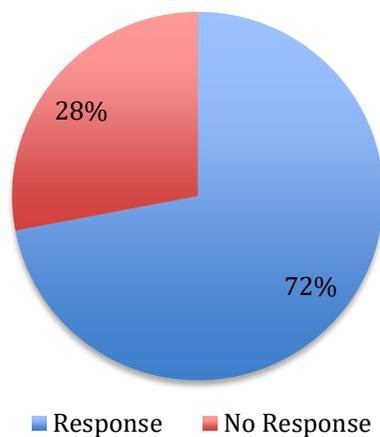


Figure 1: Response Rate

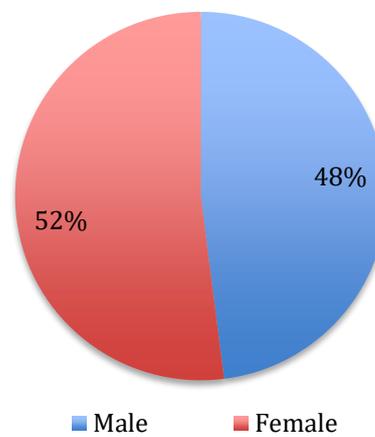


Figure 2: Male-female Ratio

The target audience of the survey was children between 10 and 15 years, however the bulk of respondents were from ages 12 to 15 years. This can also be retrieved from Figure 3, which depicts the age distribution among the respondents. The reason that there are some respondents from the age 16 category is that respondents were asked to share the survey with their siblings if they had also watched and attempted the videos. There were no respondents recorded younger than 10 or older than 16.

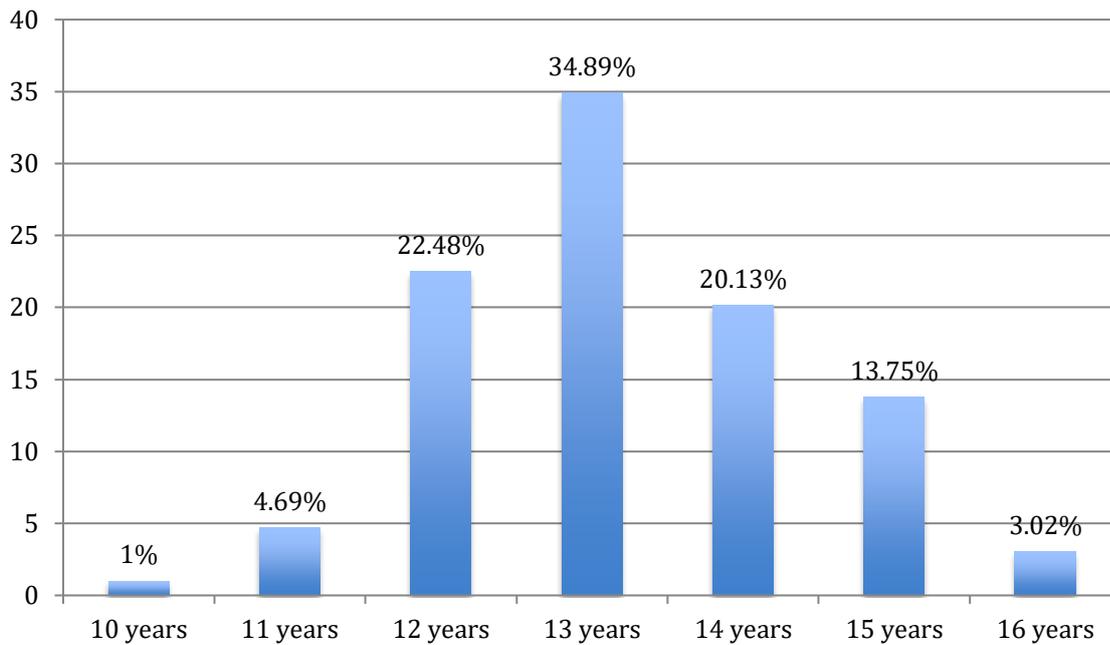


Figure 3: Age distribution of respondents

The survey consisted of six questions, which are listed below in Table 1. For four of these questions, respondents could only tick one answer. For the remaining two questions, respondents could tick more than one answer. The next section will investigate the answers to these questions extensively. It is to be noted that the survey was translated into the local language of Oriya before being sent via google forms to the children.

Table 1: Survey Questions

1	<p>How much did you enjoy doing these activities in the videos? (Choose only one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all • A little • Quite a lot • Very much
2	<p>How many days a week did you do the activities in the videos? (Choose only one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Day • 2 Days • 3 Days • 4+ Days
3	<p>How did the activity in the videos help you? (Choose as many as apply to you)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They helped me get fit • They made me happy • They helped me relax • They helped improve my concentration
4	<p>Which type of video did you like the most? (Choose only one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical fitness • Fun games • Yoga • Stretching

5	Did you share these videos or activities with others? (Choose as many as apply to you) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends • Parents • Neighbours • Family
6	When would you like to continue these activities online in the future? (Choose only one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along with regular school sessions • During summer holidays • During winter holidays • All of the above

Data Analysis

This section analyses the answers of the 298 respondents to the survey. Each survey question will be analysed independently. These results will be the foundation for the discussion in the following section, in which they are linked to the broader questions part of the sport and development discourse in times of COVID-19.

1. How much did you enjoy doing these activities?

Most children reported that they enjoyed the activities laid out in the videos, with 92% of the respondents stating that they liked the activities in the videos ‘quite a lot’ (40%) or ‘very much’ (52%) (see Figure 4). There was one respondent (0.0033%) who selected ‘not at all’ and 23 (8%) who liked them ‘a little’. There was no significant difference between the answers of male and female respondents or between the answers of different age groups.

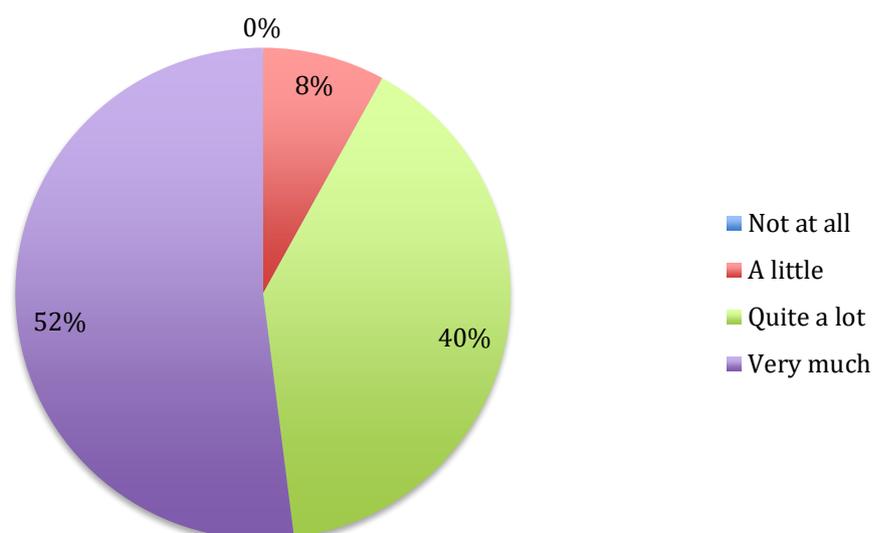


Figure 4: Participants' enjoyment of the videos

2. How many weeks a day did you do the activities in the videos?

Most of the respondents did the activities in the videos for 2, 3, or 4+ times a week, with 68% claiming that they did the exercises at least 3 times a week (see Figure 5). This means that the activities in the videos contributed significantly to the recommended daily activity for children by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is set at 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity.⁶

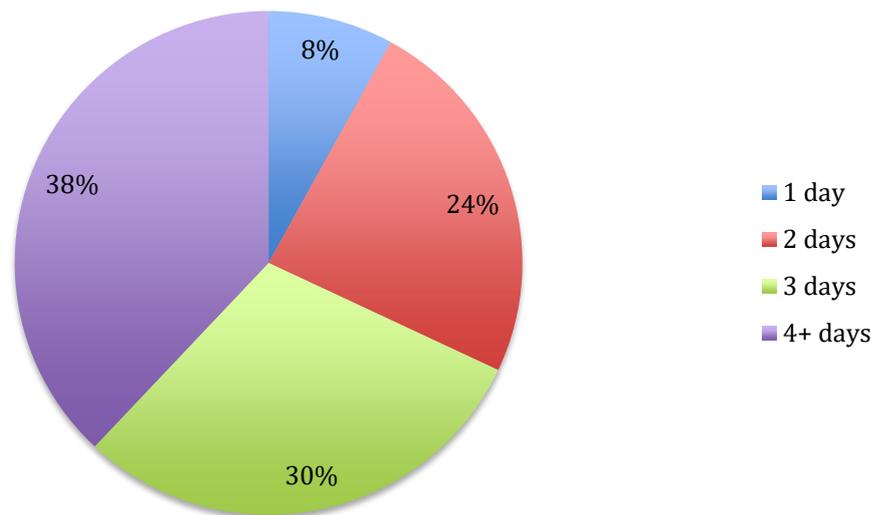


Figure 5: Number of days doing the activities

As indicated in Figure 6 and 7, there is not much difference between female and male participants and between age groups in the number of days spent on the exercises in these videos. However, it seems important to note that in the two highest categories (3 days & 4+ days) there were more females than males (see Figure 6). In addition, participants that were 15 or 16 years old at the time of the survey seem on average to have done the activities more times per week, having mainly scores in the 3 days or 4+ days categories (see Figure 7).

⁶ World Health Organization. [Physical activity and young people](#).

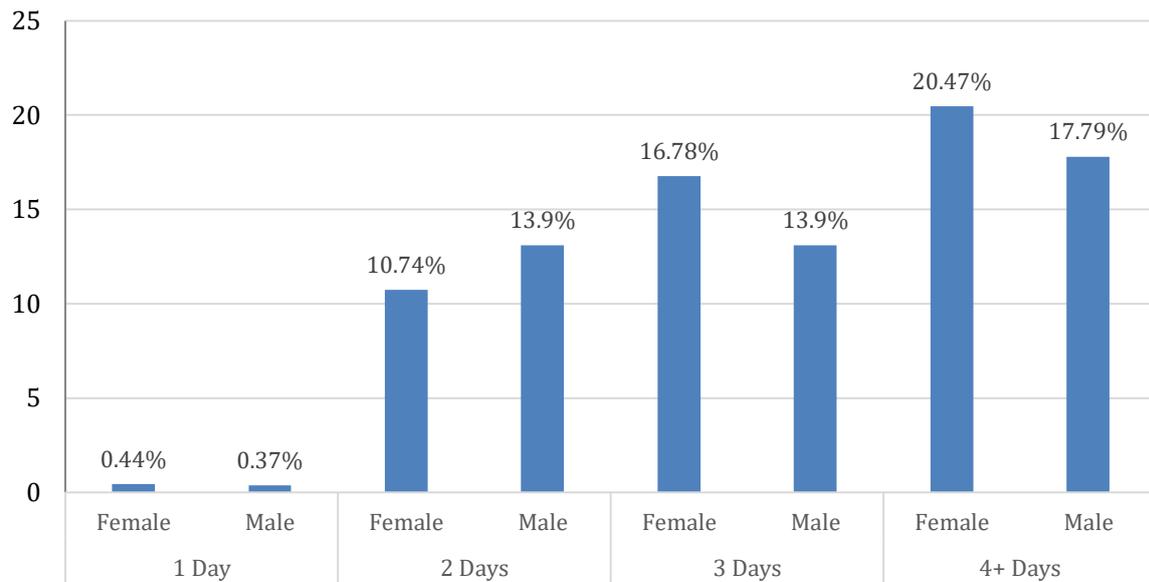


Figure 6: Number of days doing the activities, disaggregated by gender

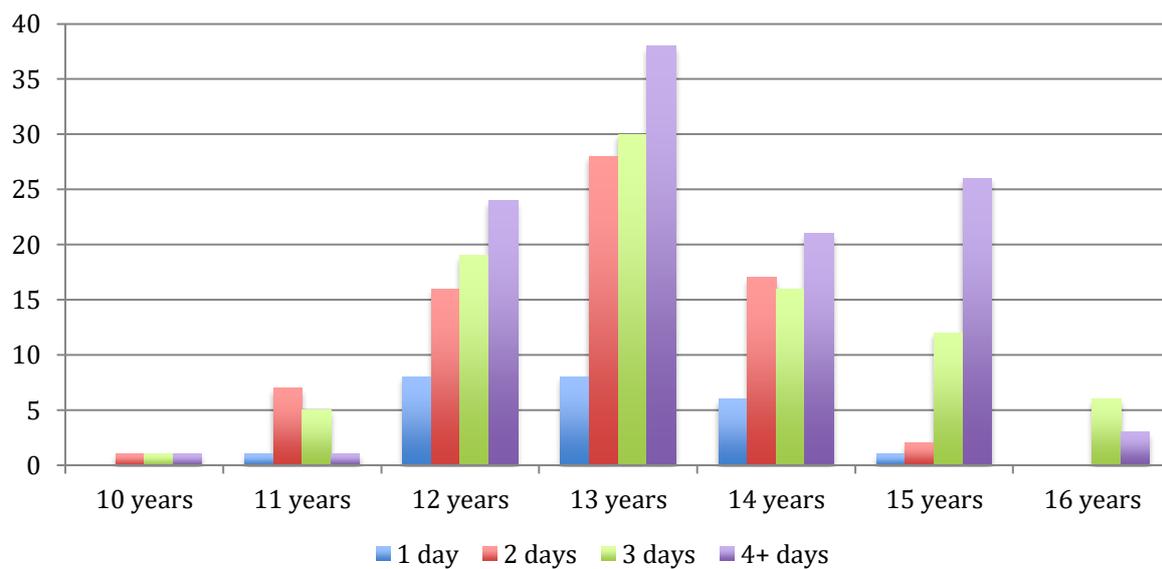


Figure 7: Number of days doing the activities, disaggregated by age

3. How did the activity in the videos help you?

The activities in the videos were mainly appreciated among the respondents for its ability to improve their fitness (58%), which was the main purpose of these videos as well. There were also many respondents who experienced an improvement in their concentration (21%) due to the activity in the videos. Fewer respondents stated that the activity made them happy (14%) or helped them to relax (9%). This is summarized in Figure 8. Please note that respondents could select multiple answers, and thus the total responses exceed 298.

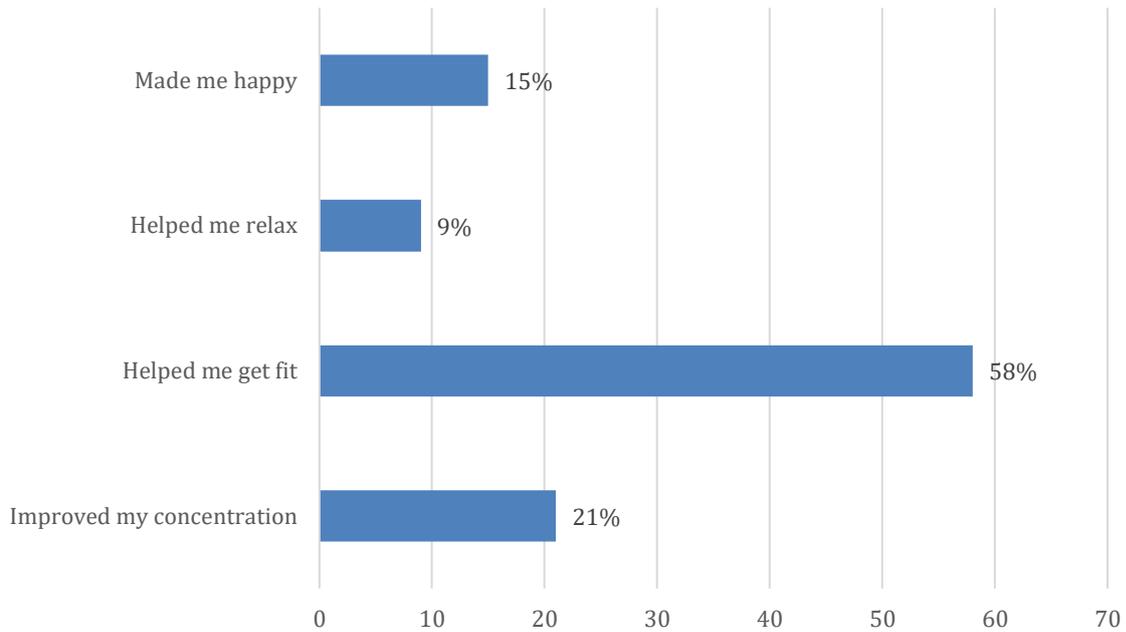


Figure 8: Perceived effects of the activity in the videos

While no difference could be found in the answers to this question between the different age groups, there is a slight difference between male and female respondents. While the number of participants answering that the activities in the videos helped them to ‘get fit’, ‘relax’ and ‘be happy’ were very similar between boys and girls, there were more girls than boys who reported that the activity in the videos helped them improve their concentration (see Figure 9).

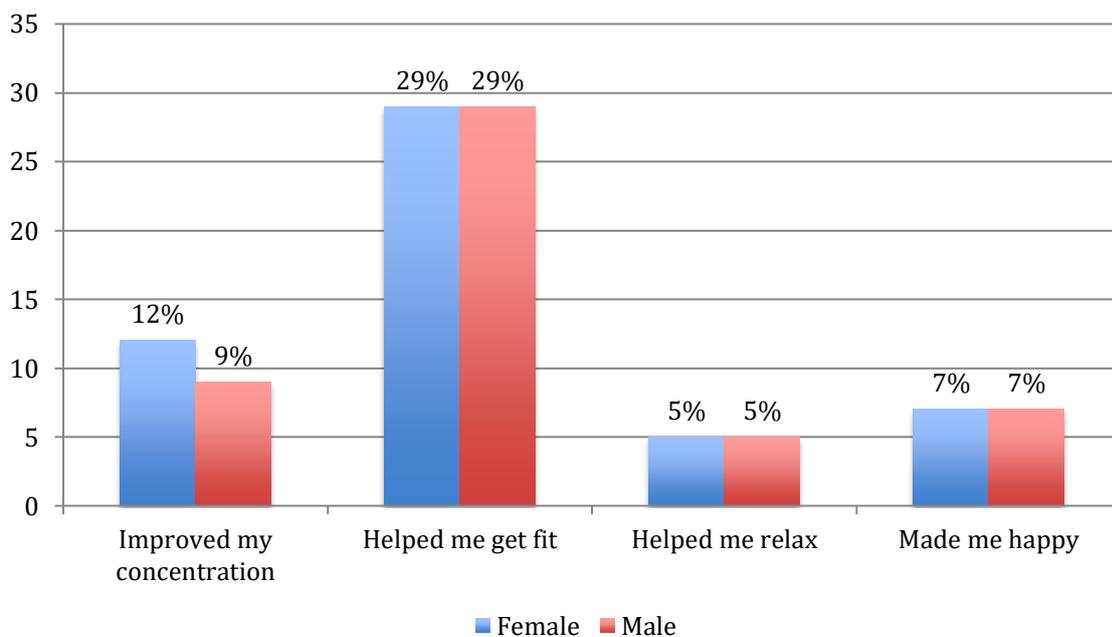


Figure 9: Perceived effects of the activity in the videos, disaggregated by gender

4. Which type of video did you like the most?

The fun game videos (36%) and physical fitness videos (36%) were most liked by the respondents, with yoga videos being a close second (25%). The stretching videos were least liked by the respondents (3%). In these responses, there was no significant difference between male and female respondents as well as between age categories.

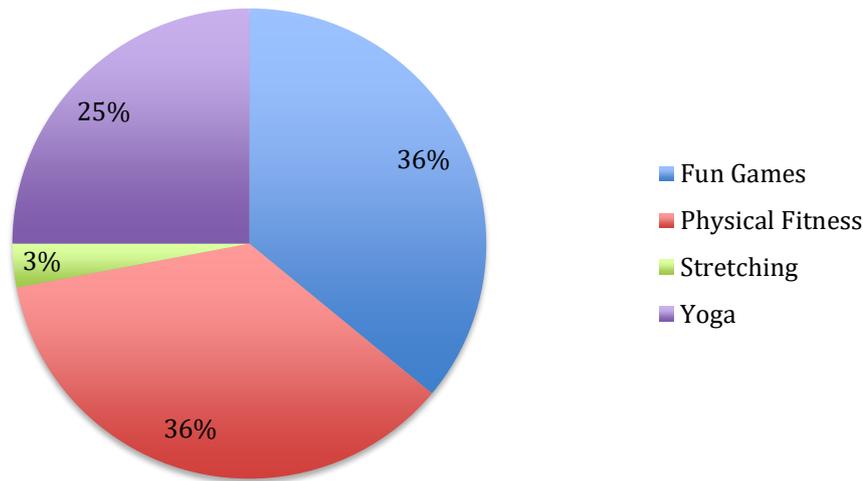


Figure 10: Preference of activity

5. Did you share these videos and activities with others?

Figure 11 depicts with whom the respondents mostly shared these videos and activities. It should be noted that 'parents' and 'family' were two distinct categories in the survey, in which 'parents' refers to family within the household and 'family' refers to extended family living elsewhere. In this light, Figure 12 has been added, in which 'parents' and 'family' are taken together as one category: 'family'. What becomes clear from both figures is that respondents shared the videos and activities mostly with family (either parents, extended family or both) and friends, however very little with neighbours. It is no surprise that most respondents listed family members as people they have shared the activities and videos with, as the COVID-19 situation confined them to their homes while living closely together with family members. Please note that as respondents were allowed to select multiple answers, the total responses exceeds 298.

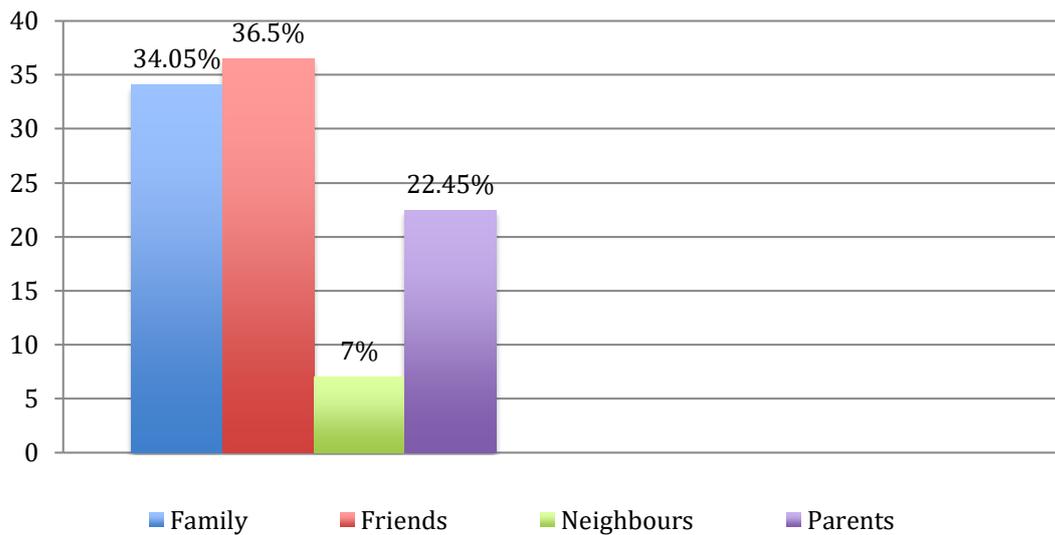


Figure 11: Sharing of the activities/videos

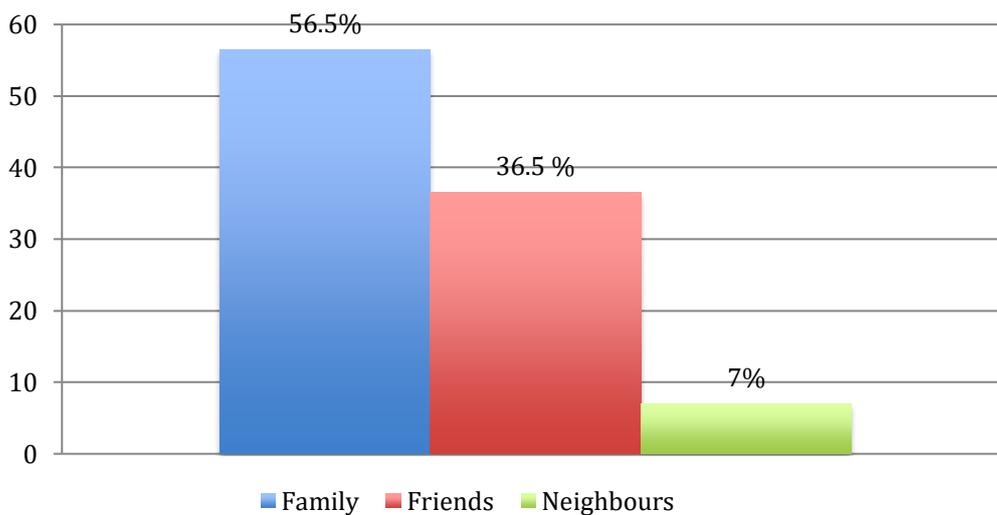


Figure 12: Sharing of the activities/videos (parents and family as one category)

When disaggregated by gender, the data shows that female respondents shared the videos and activities more with family and parents (Figure 13) and family (Figure 14) while male respondents shared it more with friends, although these differences are not very large.

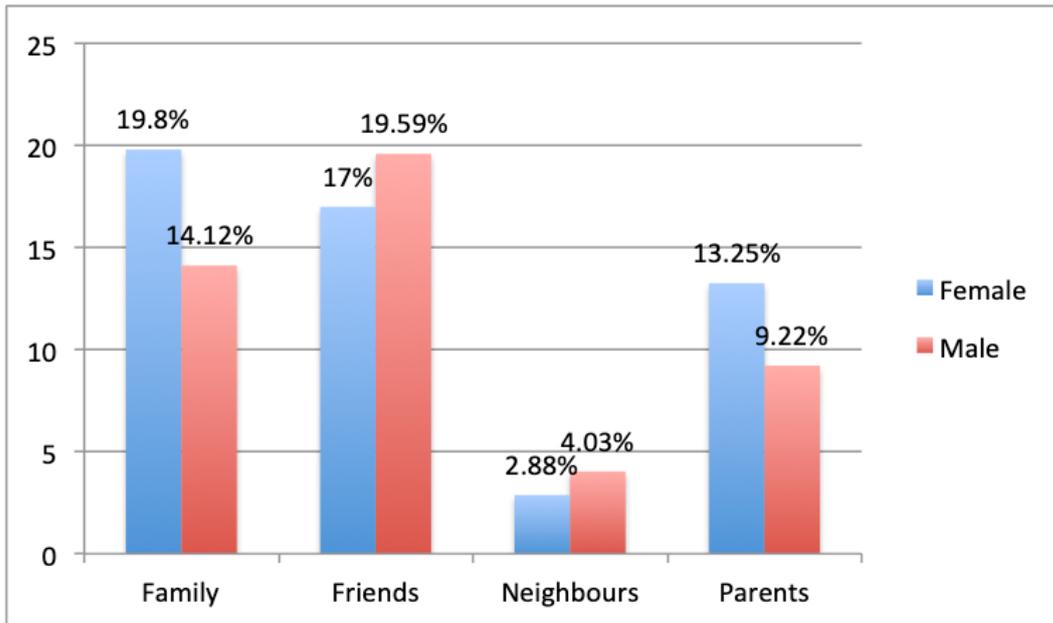


Figure 13: Sharing of the activities/videos, disaggregated by gender

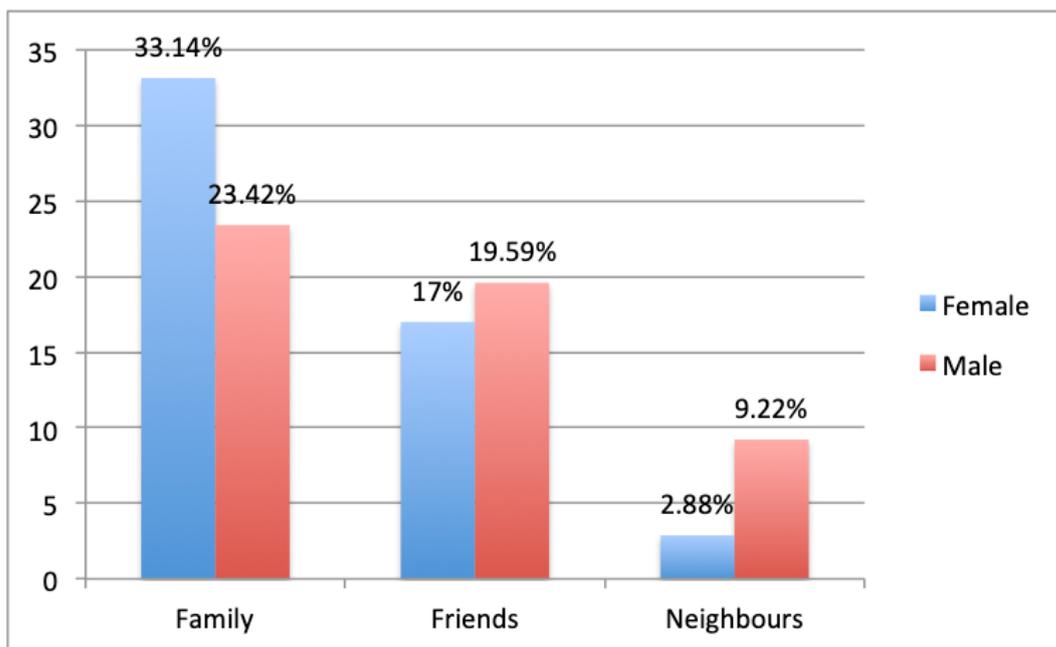


Figure 14: Sharing of the activities/videos, disaggregated by gender (parents and family as one category)

When zooming in on the age categories for this question, there is one difference that needs to be addressed. For both Figures 15 and 16, it can be seen that the older the respondent, the

more the videos and activities are shared with friends and the younger the respondent the more the videos and activities are shared with family and/or parents.

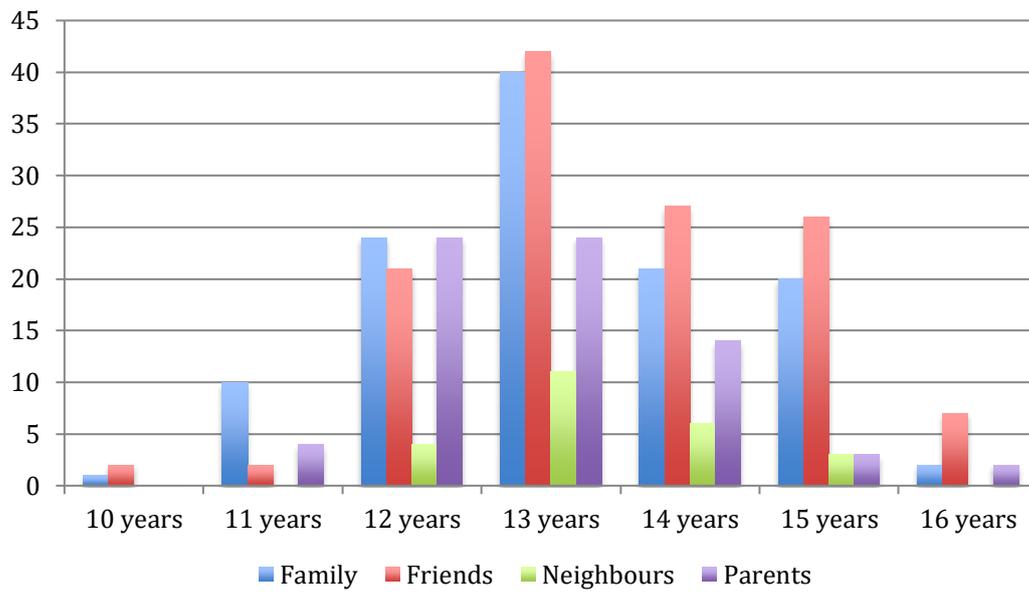


Figure 15: Sharing of the activities/videos, disaggregated by age

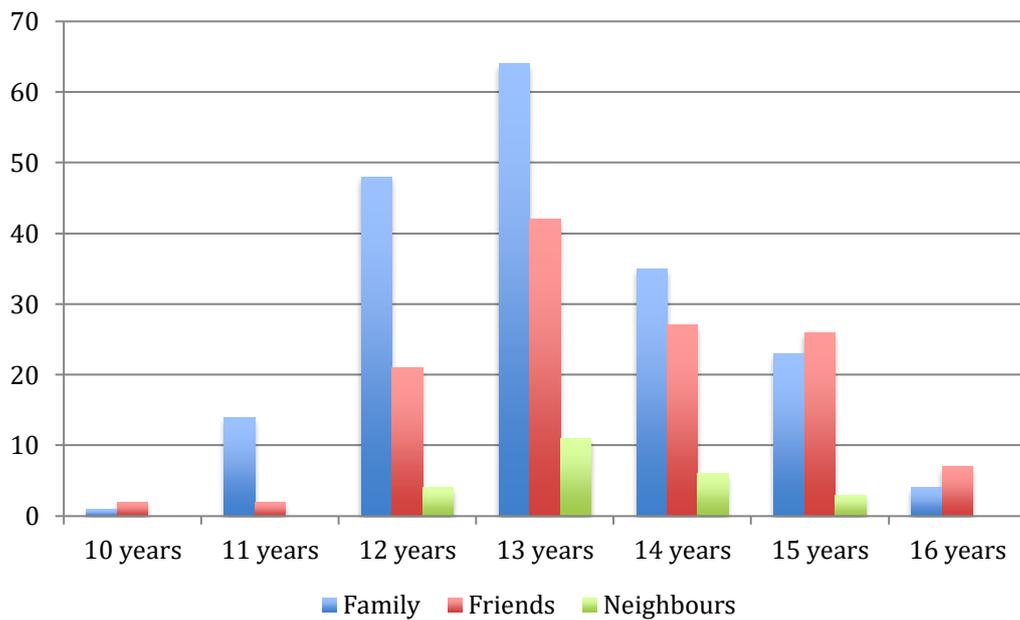


Figure 16: Sharing of the activities/videos, disaggregated by age (parents and family as one category)

6. When would you like to continue these activities in the videos in the future?

The main conclusion derived from Figure 17 is that all respondents would like to continue the activities in the videos, albeit with varying opinions on how it should be continued. More than half opt to continue throughout the entire year ('all of the above') while the other half is split between the other three options.

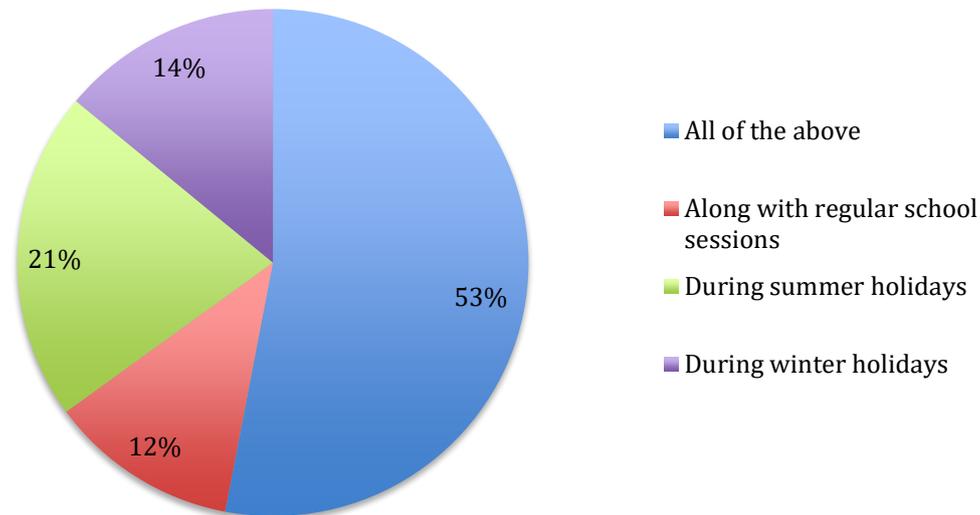


Figure 17: Future continuation of the videos/activities

The distribution of the answers given by male and female respondents was very similar and therefore needs no further explanation. For the age categories, however, there is one minor aspect worth mentioning. Respondents in the age category of 15 seem to favour a continuation along with regular school sessions comparatively more than any other age group (see Figure 18). While 11-year-olds have a relatively high score for continuation during the summer holidays, this could be disregarded as the total number of respondents from this age category is very low.

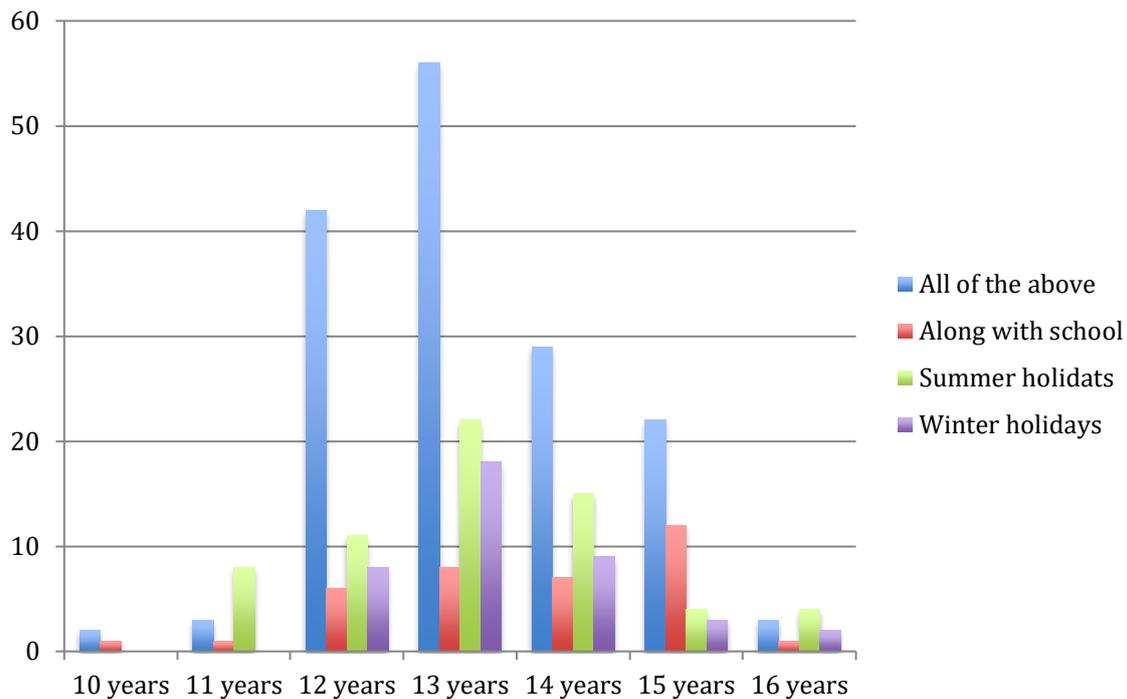


Figure 18: Future continuation of the videos/activities, disaggregated by age

Conclusion

The activities of PSD in the period between April to July 2020 seem to have been successful and should be continued. 92% of the respondents have indicated to enjoy the activities in the videos with 52% saying they liked it very much and 40% saying they liked it quite a lot. On average, the activities in the videos were done 3-4 times a week, with especially female and older respondents (age category 15 and 16) scoring high. The activities in the videos served its main purpose as more than half of the respondents (56%) stated it improved their fitness. As a side effect, the activities also stimulated concentration and made respondents happy, relating to the mental health aspect of sports. Moreover, PSD should continue with the videos involving fun games, physical fitness and yoga and focus less on stretching videos. The activities and/or videos were mostly shared with family (including parents) and friends, which is in line with our expectation as these are the people one is mostly in (in)direct contact with during COVID-19. Lastly, all respondents stated they want to continue on a regular basis with these activities not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also afterwards. The need for future online activities seems to be mostly during summer and winter holidays, when respondents have a lot of spare time.

Discussion

While the interpretation of the answers to the survey questions helps PSD to ameliorate its online projects in times of COVID-19 and adapt them better to the needs of its participants, they also tap into two larger debates that commenced simultaneously with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and have increased in importance in the past few months.

The first debate is about the consequence of the pandemic for the structure and working of development organisations. In most cases, international staff are currently working remotely, clearing the way for national and local actors on the ground.⁷ As a result, projects are now not only designed **for** local communities, but also informed **by** local communities, a shift that is ascribing more agency to local actors in peace and development work. For organisations working in the S4D sector, COVID-19 has also provided an opportunity to ascribe more agency to local actors. As ChildFund Pass it Back stated: “the trusted networks that sport builds are community resources that can be drawn upon during challenging times”.⁸ With the help of local actors, a possibility occurs to redesign community sport and to consider which projects and activities are best equipped to meet the needs of its local participants and are in line with their way of life.⁹ At PSD, the inclusion of local actors has always been one of the main pillars of its work. This is confirmed by the high rate of success of the COVID-19 activities as seen in the results section. In addition, by means of this evaluation, PSD aims to incorporate the opinion of local actors and beneficiaries even more into the design and the structure of its programmes in the future. What becomes clear from the data interpretation in the previous section is that the local community PSD works with – youth from Bhubaneswar, Odisha – wishes to be included in program design, considering the high response rate (72%) and their input for future activities of PSD (question 5). While PSD acknowledges this and will adapt its programmes to their needs, it also provides a compelling argument for other S4D organisations to ask their local participants for their opinion, especially in times of COVID-19.

The second debate evolves around the insecurity that COVID-19 brings to the sport and development sector and, notably, the following question: ‘are the changes due to COVID-19 only temporarily, necessary for a longer period of time or maybe even indefinite?’¹⁰ What is certain, however, is that the landscape of S4D will never return to what it was before. While the aforementioned question is impossible to answer at this moment, it is important that sport and physical activities are provided regardless of the answer. As IouBergholz from Edgework rightfully points out, ‘this is sport’s moment to heal’, especially because it provides an alternative way to (mental) health than clinical care, which might not be available to everyone.¹¹ Moreover, when designed and executed with utmost care, sport is considered as a tool for tackling problems related to trauma, stress and worry.¹² For example, respondents to

⁷ Cedric de Coning. [COVID-19 and peacebuilding: disruption, adaptation and transformation.](#)

⁸ Quote retrieved from: Nicola Love. [Stepping up to the plate.](#)

⁹ Ruth Jeanes, Dawn Penney, Justen O’Connor & Ramón Spaaij. [Community sport and COVID-19: An opportunity to make sport more inclusive?](#)

¹⁰ Cedric de Coning. [COVID-19 and peacebuilding: disruption, adaptation and transformation.](#)

¹¹ IouBergholz. [This is sport’s moment to heal.](#)

¹² The sportanddev.org Operating Team. [The future of sport and development: Using sport to tackle mental health problems and trauma.](#)

the PSD survey stated that the activities in the videos helped them to concentrate, relax and be happy, albeit secondary to improving their fitness. What becomes important then is that the activities of S4D organisations should be catered to the needs of its participants. Adapting to a new context requires the continuous review of projects and working methods, not only internally but also with the help of participants. For this reason, this evaluation of PSD activities during COVID-19 is of crucial importance as it could provide insights for the larger picture. The fact that almost all respondents said they enjoy the activities a lot highlights the need among respondents for the continuation of the online activities and projects during this pandemic. Moreover, question 5 provided useful insights for future programs and activities by asking how respondents would like to continue with these online activities. This helps PSD in their efforts to be prepared for different scenarios regarding COVID-19.

While the interpretation of this survey is by no means conclusive, it does provide interesting food for thought for both PSD and other S4D organisations. As the insecurities related to the COVID-19 pandemic are of concern to all of us, it is also our collective responsibility to work on adaptive solutions. PSD hopes that this short evaluation report could play a role in finding such solutions and calls up on other, similar organisations to join this ambition of keeping sport relevant in times of distress.