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Impact of Sports on Academic Performance

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of sports participation on the academic performance of students. Education and physical activity are essential components of holistic development. While academics develop cognitive abilities, sports contribute to physical health, emotional well-being, and social skills. The study is based on a sample of 30 respondents and uses survey and academic performance data to analyse the relationship between sports involvement and academic achievement. The findings reveal that regular participation in sports positively influences concentration, time management, discipline, and academic results.

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Introduction

Education and physical activity are two fundamental pillars of holistic human development. For decades, education systems across the world have focused primarily on academic achievement, often underestimating the value of physical education and sports in shaping intellectual, emotional, and social growth. In recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition that sports and academic learning are not competing domains but complementary forces that together contribute to the balanced development of students. The impact of sports on academic performance has therefore emerged as an important area of educational research, attracting the attention of policymakers, educators, parents, and researchers.

Sports are not merely recreational activities; they are structured forms of physical exercise that involve discipline, strategy, teamwork, and sustained effort. Participation in sports helps in the development of physical health by improving cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, flexibility, and coordination. At the same time, sports play a significant role in psychological development by reducing stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression. These physical and mental health benefits directly influence students' capacity to learn, concentrate, and perform well academically. A healthy body and mind create a strong foundation for effective learning and cognitive development.

Academic performance, on the other hand, is generally measured through grades, test scores, and overall classroom achievement. Traditionally, high academic performance has been associated with long hours of study, private tutoring, and a strong focus on examinations. In many societies, including India, academic success is viewed as the primary pathway to social mobility and economic security. This has often resulted in the marginalisation of sports and physical education within the school curriculum. Time allocated for physical activity is frequently reduced to make room for additional academic instruction, based on the misconception that sports may distract students from their studies.

Contrary to this belief, a growing body of scientific evidence suggests that regular physical activity has a positive effect on brain function and academic outcomes. Physical exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promotes the growth of new neural connections, and enhances the release of neurotransmitters associated with learning and memory. These biological processes improve attention span, information processing speed, and problem-solving abilities. Students who regularly engage in sports often demonstrate better classroom behaviour, higher levels of self-discipline, and improved time management skills, all of which are critical for academic success.

The relationship between sports and academics is also deeply connected to the development of life skills. Through

participation in sports, students learn important values such as teamwork, leadership, perseverance, respect for rules, and the ability to cope with success and failure. These qualities extend beyond the playing field and positively influence academic behaviour. A student who learns discipline and goal-setting through sports is more likely to apply the same principles to academic tasks such as completing assignments, preparing for examinations, and engaging in classroom discussions. Sports also provide a positive outlet for energy and emotions, reducing behavioural problems and improving overall school engagement.

Despite these potential benefits, access to sports and physical education opportunities is not uniform across different socio-economic groups. Many schools, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, lack adequate sports infrastructure, trained physical education teachers, and safe play spaces. Gender disparities also persist in sports participation, with girls in certain regions receiving fewer opportunities and less encouragement to engage in physical activities. Additionally, the increasing use of digital devices and the rise of sedentary lifestyles have significantly reduced the time students spend in outdoor activities, further intensifying concerns about the decline of physical fitness and its implications for academic performance.

In the Indian context, the importance of sports in education has been increasingly acknowledged through policy initiatives and national programmes. Campaigns such as “Khelo India” and the integration of physical education into the school curriculum reflect a gradual shift towards recognising sports as an essential component of student development. However, the practical implementation of these initiatives often faces challenges such as limited funding, lack of awareness, and entrenched academic pressures. As a result, the actual integration of sports into daily school life remains inconsistent and uneven.

The present study seeks to examine the impact of sports participation on the academic performance of students, using a sample of 30 respondents. By analysing patterns of sports involvement, academic achievement, and student perceptions, this research aims to provide empirical insights into the relationship between physical activity and learning outcomes. The study is significant because it contributes to the growing debate on holistic education and offers practical implications for educators and policymakers. Understanding the positive role of sports in academic performance can help schools design balanced curricula that nurture both intellectual and physical development, ultimately leading to healthier, more capable, and more well-rounded individuals.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- To analyse the relationship between sports participation and academic performance
- To assess the impact of regular sports activity on concentration and study habits
- To identify students' perceptions about sports and academics

Research Methodology

Sample Size

The study was conducted on a sample of 30 students selected through random sampling.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire included questions about frequency of sports participation, type of sports played, and academic performance (measured through recent examination scores and self-reported concentration levels).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using simple percentage and comparative analysis methods.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Frequency of Sports Participation

Frequency of Participation	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Daily	8	26.7
3–4 times a week	10	33.3
Once a week	7	23.3
Rarely/Never	5	16.7
Total	30	100

Interpretation

A majority of students (60%) participate in sports regularly (daily or 3–4 times a week), indicating a good level of interest in physical activities.

Table 2: Academic Performance of Students

Academic Performance Level	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Excellent (75% and above)	12	40.0
Good (60–74%)	10	33.3
Average (50–59%)	6	20.0
Poor (Below 50%)	2	6.7
Total	30	100

Interpretation

Most students (73.3%) fall into the excellent and good performance categories.

Table 3: Sports Participation vs Academic Performance

Sports Involvement	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Total
Regular (Daily/3–4 times a week)	10	6	2	0	18
Moderate (Once a week)	2	3	2	0	7
Rare/Never	0	1	2	2	5
Total	12	10	6	2	30

Interpretation

Students who participate in sports regularly show better academic performance compared to those who rarely or never participate.

Table 4: Impact of Sports on Concentration (Student Responses)

Response	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	14	46.7
Agree	10	33.3
Neutral	4	13.3
Disagree	2	6.7
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Total	30	100

Interpretation

A high percentage of students (80%) believe that sports improve their concentration and focus on studies.

Findings

The study reveals that students who actively participate in

sports tend to have better academic performance. Regular physical activity helps improve concentration, memory, and time management skills. Sports also reduce stress and anxiety, which positively affects academic outcomes.

Students who rarely participate in sports show lower academic achievement and higher levels of stress and fatigue. The findings support the idea that sports and academics are complementary rather than contradictory.

Suggestions

- Schools should allocate sufficient time for sports and physical education in the daily timetable.
- Parents should encourage children to balance academics and sports.
- Educational institutions should improve sports infrastructure and coaching facilities.

Conclusion

The study concludes that sports have a positive and significant impact on academic performance. Participation in regular physical activities enhances students' concentration, discipline, and overall mental well-being, which contributes to better academic results. Educational institutions should promote sports as an integral part of the curriculum to ensure the holistic development of students.

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