

Perceptions and Engagement of Mangalore University Postgraduate Students in Sports, Games

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the attitudes and participation levels of postgraduate students at Mangalore University toward sports and games. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 400 students (200 boys and 200 girls) across various departments through a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate a notable gender disparity, with boys showing higher participation and spending more time on physical activities compared to girls. Departmental analysis revealed that Arts students exhibited the highest participation, while research scholars, particularly female students, demonstrated the lowest engagement. Most respondents acknowledged the health benefits of sports, with 81% of boys and 73% of girls agreeing on its importance. However, academic pressures and cultural norms emerged as significant barriers, particularly for female students. Parental support was identified as a crucial factor, with boys receiving greater encouragement than girls. The study concludes that gender-inclusive initiatives, improved facilities, and supportive environments are essential to promoting sports participation and holistic development among students. Recommendations include organizing awareness campaigns, integrating sports into academic programs, and providing gender-sensitive coaching and infrastructure. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address gender disparities and create a balanced approach to sports and academics.

Keywords: Sports Participation, Attitudes Toward Sports, Gender Disparity, Physical Education, Postgraduate Students.

INTRODUCTION

Sports and physical education are integral to promoting comprehensive development, encompassing physical, mental, and social aspects of well-being. Research highlights that involvement in sports and games among university students fosters personal growth by cultivating teamwork, discipline, and stress relief (Bailey et al., 2009). For postgraduate students, who frequently encounter academic and personal pressures, participation in physical activities is particularly beneficial as it helps maintain balance, reduces stress, and enhances overall productivity (Edwards & Steyn, 2008).

Sports and physical education are widely acknowledged as essential components of a comprehensive education, promoting not only physical health but also cognitive and emotional development. Research indicates that consistent involvement in sports enhances critical life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and effective time management (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). These benefits are particularly pronounced for postgraduate students, who often face heightened academic and personal pressures.

The demanding nature of postgraduate studies can lead to elevated stress levels and a decline in both physical and mental well-being (Mahmoud et al., 2012). Participation in sports and games provides a productive outlet for managing stress and improving focus, allowing students to better cope with the challenges of their academic journey. Furthermore, physical education and recreational activities play a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging among students, enhancing their social interactions and overall campus life experience (Andersen & Durst, 2017).

Sports at Mangalore University: A Brief Overview

The Department of Postgraduate Studies in Physical Education, established in 1996, initially offered a two-year MPES degree. In 2001, it shifted to offering a one-year B.P.Ed and a two-year M.P.Ed degree. In 2009, a summer vacation course was introduced for in-service teachers. The department now offers B.P.Ed, M.P.Ed, and doctoral degrees, with a 100% placement record.

Campus Sports Activities

The university organizes outdoor games like volleyball, football, cricket, and basketball during the first semester and indoor games like shuttle badminton and chess in the second semester. Out of 2,500 students, 300 boys and 450 girls actively participate in these activities, fostering healthy competition and teamwork.

Mission

The department aims to develop skilled professionals who enhance societal fitness and health, promote sports excellence, and contribute to national pride. Sports are integral to shaping well-rounded individuals and fostering human resource development.

Facilities

The university provides extensive facilities, including an athletic track, indoor and outdoor stadiums, tennis courts, a fitness center, and specialized labs for psychology, physiology, and physiotherapy, ensuring holistic sports education and training.

Sports have become a vital part of modern society, evolving beyond recreational activities to hold significant influence across various aspects of life. Their growing popularity reflects a collective desire to utilize leisure time productively, focusing on physical, mental, social, and health fitness. Vigorous physical activities involving complex skills are classified as sports, with the context and conditions of participation being essential for classification. Sports also encompass a philosophical perspective, analyzing beliefs and values related to participation in physical education. Attitudes play a crucial role in sports, shaping individuals' responses to people, objects, and situations. These attitudes, whether rational or irrational, are acquired and not necessarily aligned with intelligence (Coakley, 1994).

Literature review

Nie (2024) conducted a study examining changes in university students' attitudes toward physical activity. The findings revealed that students who engaged in higher levels of exercise demonstrated more positive implicit and explicit attitudes toward physical activity compared to those with lower levels of engagement. The study also showed that interventions involving self-generated information had an immediate positive impact on students' exercise behavior. (*Frontiers in Sports and Active Living*).

Ohashi et al. (2023) investigated the factors influencing implicit attitudes toward sports and exercise, with a focus on desirability and enjoyment. The study found that male students and those with higher sports competence exhibited more positive implicit attitudes toward sports. Additionally, a strong interest in professional sports was linked to positive attitudes, highlighting the role of personal interests and past experiences in shaping perceptions of sports. (*Springer Link*).

Griffiths et al. (2022) explored university students' habits, behaviors, and barriers related to sports and physical activity. The research identified several obstacles to participation, such as time constraints, academic pressures, and lack of motivation. It also highlighted a trend of decreased sports engagement upon entering university, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to encourage participation. (*Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive*).

Koçak (2022) assessed university students' attitudes toward sports and their relationship with life satisfaction. Using the "Attitude Scale towards Sport for University Students," the study found a positive correlation between students' attitudes toward sports and their overall life satisfaction. This indicates that promoting positive attitudes toward sports can enhance the well-being and quality of life of university students. (*ERIC*).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive survey method to systematically analyze and evaluate the attitudes of postgraduate students at Mangalore University campus toward sports and games. The primary aim is to understand their perceptions and the role of sports and physical education in their academic and personal lives.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consists of postgraduate students from various departments of Mangalore University campus, Mysore. A representative sample of students, including both boys and girls, was selected for the survey.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire containing 20 questions specifically designed to assess attitudes toward sports and games. The survey was conducted during the academic years 2023-2024.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools such as percentages and ratings, which were presented in tabular formats. Additionally, visual tools like bar diagrams and pie charts were incorporated for better interpretation of results.

Results and Analysis

Table 1 Active Participation and Time Spent on Physical Activities

Responses	Boys (Frequency)	Boys (Percentage)	Girls (Frequency)	Girls (Percentage)
Actively Participating	140	70%	110	55%
Not Participating	60	30%	90	45%
Less than 1 hour/day	30	15%	20	10%
1 hour/day	60	30%	110	55%

More than 2 hours/day	90	45%	70	35%
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The majority of boys (**70%**) actively participate in sports compared to **55% of girls**. However, boys commit more time, with **45% playing over two hours daily**, while most girls (**55%**) play for only an hour during leisure time. This highlights a significant gender gap in both participation and time spent.

Table 2 Level of Participation in Sports by Department

Department	Boys (Frequency)	Boys (Percentage)	Girls (Frequency)	Girls (Percentage)
Arts	90	45%	65	32.5%
Science	60	30%	40	20%
Commerce	70	35%	50	25%
Research Scholars	50	25%	20	10%

Boys show higher participation across all departments, with **Arts leading at 45%**. Girls show lower participation, with **Research scholars having the least engagement at 10%**. This indicates a consistent gender disparity in departmental-level sports activities.

Table 3 Perceptions About Sports and Health

Responses	Boys (Frequency)	Boys (Percentage)	Girls (Frequency)	Girls (Percentage)
Agree	162	81%	146	73%
Disagree	38	19%	54	27%

The majority of students, **81% of boys** and **73% of girls**, agree that sports are essential for maintaining good health. However, a higher proportion of girls (**27%**) prioritize academics over sports compared to boys (**19%**).

Table 4 Reasons for Participation in Sports

Reason	Boys (Percentage)	Girls (Percentage)
Self-interest	47%	28%
Aiming to reach a higher level	10%	5%
Leisure activity	5%	37%
Improving physique and health	38%	30%

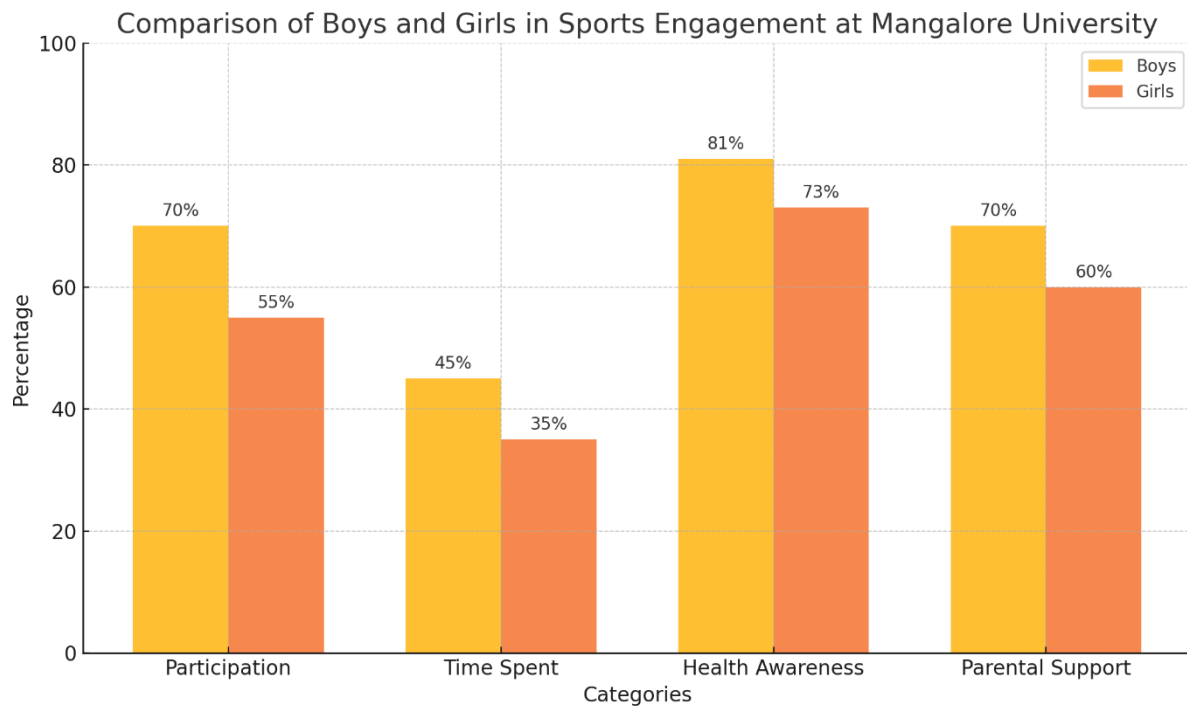
Self-interest is the primary motivator for boys (**47%**) and girls (**28%**). Girls are more likely to participate for leisure (**37%**) compared to boys (**5%**), while **38% of boys** and **30% of girls** engage in sports to improve physical health.

Table 5 Parental Role in Sports Participation

Responses	Boys (Percentage)	Girls (Percentage)
Significant role	70%	60%

Average role	20%	17%
Indifferent role	10%	22%

Parental encouragement is perceived as more significant by boys (70%) than girls (60%). A higher proportion of girls (22%) feel their parents are indifferent to sports participation compared to boys (10%), emphasizing the need for increased parental involvement for girls.



The chart illustrates the comparison between boys and girls in sports engagement at Mangalore University across four key categories: participation, time spent, health awareness, and parental support.

- **Participation:** Boys (70%) showed significantly higher participation in sports compared to girls (55%).
- **Time Spent:** Boys were more committed, with 45% dedicating over two hours daily, while girls (35%) spent less time, primarily for leisure.
- **Health Awareness:** Both genders recognized the importance of sports for health, with boys (81%) slightly ahead of girls (73%).
- **Parental Support:** Boys reported greater parental encouragement (70%) than girls (60%), indicating a gender disparity in familial support.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals a notable difference in sports participation and attitudes between male and female postgraduate students at Mangalore University. Male students showed greater involvement in sports, with 70% actively participating compared to 55% of female students. Additionally, a higher percentage of male students (45%) engaged in sports for more than two hours daily, while the majority of female students participated for approximately one hour, mainly as a leisure activity. This suggests that male students

perceive sports as an essential part of their routine, whereas female students tend to prioritize academics over physical activities.

Participation levels also differed across academic disciplines, with males outperforming females in all categories. Arts students showed the highest level of participation, with 45% of males and 32.5% of females actively involved, while research scholars recorded the lowest participation rates, particularly among females (10%). These findings highlight the need to address gender-based obstacles that limit female participation in sports, particularly in higher education.

A significant proportion of students recognized the value of sports in promoting health and well-being, with 81% of male and 73% of female students agreeing on its importance. However, a notable number of female students (27%) prioritized academic activities over sports, reflecting societal and cultural expectations that often place greater emphasis on academic success for women, potentially hindering their holistic development.

Parental support was identified as a key factor influencing sports participation. While 70% of male and 60% of female students reported significant parental encouragement, a higher percentage of females (22%) perceived indifference from their parents compared to males (10%). This suggests that gendered parental attitudes may negatively impact female students' engagement in sports, reinforcing the need for more supportive environments that encourage equal participation.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that boys are more actively involved in sports and dedicate more time to physical activities compared to girls. While both genders recognize the health benefits of sports, girls are more likely to deprioritize sports due to academic pressures. Participation in sports also varies across departments, with Arts students leading and Research scholars trailing.

Parental support plays a crucial role, but girls face greater challenges in receiving encouragement. Cultural norms and stereotypes may contribute to the observed gender disparities in sports participation, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities in sports for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct awareness campaigns to promote gender inclusivity in sports participation.
2. Integrate credit-based sports programs into the academic curriculum.
3. Organize workshops for parents to emphasize the importance of equal encouragement for sports.
4. Establish gender-sensitive sports facilities to create a supportive environment for all students.
5. Introduce flexible schedules that allow students to balance academics and sports effectively.
6. Enhance inter-departmental sports competitions to foster greater participation.
7. Implement wellness programs to educate students about the physical and mental health benefits of sports.
8. Develop mentorship initiatives featuring successful female athletes to inspire and motivate female students.
9. Provide specialized sports coaching tailored to the needs of female students.
10. Address cultural and societal biases through targeted awareness and engagement initiatives.

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