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Role of Sports in Promoting Holistic Development of Students and Community Engagement in Educational Institutions of Punjab

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Abstract

This study examines the role of sports in promoting holistic development and community engagement among students in Punjab's educational institutions, emphasizing physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual growth. Using a sample of 130 college student-athletes selected through simple random sampling, data collected via an online survey and analyzed with SPSS (v.26) revealed that sports participation enhances academic performance, leadership, resilience, emotional regulation, teamwork, and communication, while fostering civic responsibility, belonging, and positive social ties. The findings underscore the importance of institutional support—such as facilities, coaches, and recognition—in maximizing these benefits, concluding that integrating sports into education not only aids recreation but also cultivates well-rounded, responsible, and resilient citizens equipped with essential life skills.

Key Words: Holistic Development, Community Engagement, Sports and Educational Institutions

Introduction:

Holistic development is a concept that consists of various life dimensions like physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing which emphasizes how crucial is their interconnectedness is for overall wellbeing (Kang et al., 2024). For students who face different academic pressures, personal development challenges and concerns regarding their future



careers, holistic development is an essential instrument for having a healthy and meaningful life. It extensively includes physical health, mental health, social connections, emotional resilience, and spiritual health which emphasizing a holistic approach to student development (Ward et al., 2022).

Maintaining physical health like all organic systems of body by exercise, diet, and preventative measures is the focus of physical wellbeing. Maintaining self-esteem and managing stress effectively are key components of emotional wellness, Critical thinking and continuous learning are made possible by mental wellbeing. Creating a sense of community and meaningful interactions with society are the primary objectives of social wellness. Spiritual wellness promotes self-reflection and the search for purpose. These elements provide a comprehensive strategy to living a balanced and fulfilling life (Strout et al., 2012).

Sports are physical activities in which athletes work together to achieve shared objectives and accomplish common goals in a team setting and also individual participation in sports are crucial in developing communication, conflict resolution skills, and problem-solving within a trustworthy environment. School and college students benefit from sports like basketball, Football, Cricket and volleyball as these activities enhance their leadership, academic, and social skills. Participating in these activities promotes mental and physical well-being, which is essential to future collaboration in professional settings (Snedden et al., 2018). In addition to promoting physical activity, sports provide dynamic platform for social integration, intellectual stimulation, emotional support, and more. Recent research found that participation in sports is associated with improved physical health outcomes, such as increased cardiovascular fitness, reduced obesity rates and extra fat burning which highlighting the direct benefits of physical activity on health. Furthermore, sports have been shown to enhance emotional well-being by providing a sense of community and belonging, which effectively lowers stress and anxiety levels. (Passarello et al., 2022).

The intellectual requirements of team sports, including strategic planning and fast decision-making, have also been linked to improved academic performance and cognitive function, underscoring the intellectual benefits of these activities (Donnelly et al., 2016).

As regard of social development, sports help people acquire essential life skills like leadership and communication, which strengthens social networks and improves interpersonal skills (Malete et al., 2022). Participating in sports enhances spiritual wellness by giving individuals a deep sense of purpose and development of strong connections with a broader community. This engagement enhances spiritual health through a strengthened sense of unity, belonging, and commitment towards common objectives which improves spiritual health and improves their spiritual lives (Barghi Moghaddam et al., 2018). These skills are key in academic and future professional settings, providing participants with a competitive advantage and a flexible skill set highly valued in world of today (McEwan et al., 2014). Integrating sports into educational

curricula will enable educational institutions to get these multidimensional benefits which are supporting holistic student development. This approach facilitates well-being across all aspects of lives of students and supports academic proficiency, physical health, mental health, emotional resilience, social adeptness and spiritual fulfillment (Kang et al., 2024).

Sports can also foster a sense of social responsibility and community involvement among youth. Programs that include community service components or encourage public involvement have been shown to increase social responsibility (Gould & Voelker., 2019). So, Youth involved in sports often take on leadership roles that extend beyond the sports field contributing to their communities in meaningful ways (Khan, 2022).

Methods and Materials

Selecting a suitable number of individuals who can provide valid information regarding the solution of specific problem is an initial step in conducting any research study in order to achieve the desired goals (Denscombe., 2021). So specific procedure adopts to reach finding and conclusion of any study. So due to these demands of research study researcher adopt the specific procedure to reach findings and conclusion of this study. Basically the study is concerned with to analyze the role of sports in promoting holistic development of students and community engagement in educational institutions of Punjab.

The population of this particular study comprised of all college students actively participating in sports belonging to Punjab Province of Pakistan. A simple random sampling method used to select suitable samples. The sample size consisted of 130 student players from colleges (n- 130) who actively participating in sports. An adapted survey questionnaire utilized to measure the role of sports in promoting holistic development of students and community engagement in educational institutions of Punjab. Key constructs included as under:

- Sports and Student Holistic Development
- Sports and Social/Community Engagement
- Institutional Support and Effectiveness

The survey questionnaire administered in online form to accommodate diverse access needs. The researchers contacted with administrative body of the educational institutions personally prior to data collection. A comprehensive dialog was communicated with the administration of these key institutions about the purposes of this research. It was fully assured that the confidentiality and ethics would never be compromised at any cost during and after the data collection. Therefore, the involvement of student players in filling the online questionnaires was voluntarily. With the willingness and help of the administration of these educational institutions, the online survey questionnaire distributed among the student players online. The researchers with the help of college administration guided the players during filling the questionnaire if they found any difficulty in the understanding of the questionnaire. At the completion of the questionnaires, the researchers paid thanks to participants through administrative staff.

After the data collection, statistical software such as Statistical package of Social Sciences (SPSS version-26) used for data editing of filled questionnaires and data was analyzed by using the appropriate descriptive statistical tools (mean and standard deviation).

Results

The findings of the present research were analyzed through various statistical techniques.

Descriptive Statistics

Table No.1: Sports and Student Holistic Development

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1: Participation in sports enhances my academic performance by improving focus and time management.	130	1.477	.6496
2: Sports activities help in developing leadership skills among students.	130	1.338	.5913
3: Regular involvement in sports contributes to better emotional regulation and stress management.	130	1.331	.5759
4: Team sports teach valuable life skills such as cooperation and conflict resolution.	130	1.315	.5711
5: Sports participation improves my self-esteem and confidence.	130	1.292	.5899
6: Sports help in building resilience and the ability to cope with failure.	130	1.346	.6435
7: My physical health has improved due to regular engagement in sports activities.	130	1.269	.4788
8: Sports provide a platform for students to express themselves beyond academics.	130	1.308	.4798

9: The discipline learned through sports positively influences other areas of my life.	130	1.354	.6332
10: Sports play a crucial role in shaping a well-rounded personality.	130	1.331	.5192
Valid N (listwise)	130		

The above table indicates the opinion of respondents regarding sports and student's holistic development and data were expressed in mean and standard deviation. Total Number of respondents was 130, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (1: Participation in sports enhances my academic performance by improving focus and time management) was $1.477 \pm .6496$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (2: Sports activities help in developing leadership skills among students) was $1.338 \pm .5913$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (3: Regular involvement in sports contributes to better emotional regulation and stress management) was $1.331 \pm .5759$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (4: Team sports teach valuable life skills such as cooperation and conflict resolution) was $1.315 \pm .5711$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (5: Sports participation improves my self-esteem and confidence) was $1.292 \pm .5899$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (6: Sports help in building resilience and the ability to cope with failure) was $1.346 \pm .6435$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (7: My physical health has improved due to regular engagement in sports activities) was $1.269 \pm .4788$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (8: Sports provide a platform for students to express themselves beyond academics) was $1.308 \pm .4798$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (9: The discipline learned through sports positively influences other areas of my life) was $1.354 \pm .6332$, Mean and standard deviation about the statement (10: Sports play a crucial role in shaping a well-rounded personality) was $1.331 \pm .5192$

Descriptive Statistics

Table No.2: Sports and Social/Community Engagement

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
11: Sports events in my institution encourage a sense of community engagement among students.	130	1.446	.6827
12: Inter-school and inter-college sports competitions promote positive social interactions.	130	1.346	.5528
13: Sports activities help bridge cultural, ethnic, and social differences among students.	130	1.415	.6795
14: Through sports, I have developed a stronger sense of belonging to my educational institution.	130	1.446	.6940
15: Sports serve as a tool for engaging with local communities through tournaments and outreach.	130	1.446	.5714
16: Spectator involvement in sports events strengthens Colleges–community relations.	130	1.438	.5972

17: Volunteering or organizing sports events promotes civic responsibility and teamwork.	130	1.415	.6199
18: Sports create opportunities for collaboration between students and faculty members.	130	1.400	.5919
Valid N (listwise)	130		

The above table indicates the opinion of respondents regarding Sports and Social/Community Engagement and data were expressed in mean and standard deviation, total Number of respondents was 130, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (11: Sports events in my institution encourage a sense of community engagement among students) was $1.446 \pm .6827$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (11: Sports events in my institution encourage a sense of community engagement among students) was $1.446 \pm .6827$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (12: Inter-school and inter-college sports competitions promote positive social interactions) was $1.346 \pm .5528$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement(13: Sports activities help bridge cultural, ethnic, and social differences among students) was $1.415 \pm .6795$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (14: Through sports, I have developed a stronger sense of belonging to my educational institution) was $1.446 \pm .6940$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement(15: Sports serve as a tool for engaging with local communities through tournaments and outreach) was $1.446 \pm .5714$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (16: Spectator involvement in sports events strengthens Colleges and community relations) was $1.438 \pm .5972$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (17: Volunteering or organizing sports events promotes civic responsibility and teamwork) was $1.415 \pm .6199$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (18: Sports create opportunities for collaboration between students and faculty members) was $1.400 \pm .5919$.

Descriptive Statistics

Table No.3: Institutional Support and Effectiveness in sports promotion

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
19: My institution provides adequate facilities and resources for sports activities.	130	1.631	.8817
20: The sports curriculum is integrated effectively into the overall educational framework.	130	1.608	.8490
21: Coaches and trainers in my institution support both athletic and personal development.	130	1.485	.8466
22: There is institutional recognition and reward for student achievement in sports.	130	1.477	.7067
23: My institution considers sports an essential element for student and community development, not just recreation.	130	1.500	.7393
24: Educational institutions use sports as a tool for community outreach and development.	130	1.438	.6933

25: Sports programs help strengthen the connection between the educational institution and the community	130	1.392	.6163
Valid N (listwise)	130		

The above table indicates the opinion of respondents regarding Institutional Support and Effectiveness in promotion of sports and data were expressed in mean and standard deviation, total number of respondents was 130, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (19: My institution provides adequate facilities and resources for sports activities) was $1.631 \pm .8817$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (20: The sports curriculum is integrated effectively into the overall educational framework) was $1.608 \pm .8490$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (21: Coaches and trainers in my institution support both athletic and personal development) was $1.485 \pm .8466$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (22: There is institutional recognition and reward for student achievement in sports) was $1.477 \pm .7067$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (23: My institution considers sports an essential element for student and community development, not just recreation) was $1.500 \pm .7393$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (24: Educational institutions use sports as a tool for community outreach and development) was $1.438 \pm .6933$, the mean and standard deviation about the statement (25: Sports programs help strengthen the connection between the educational institution and the community) was $1.392 \pm .6163$.

Discussion and Findings

Majority of respondents opined that sports play significant role in holistic development of students and following study by Xiaolei Kang et al, (2024) supported this concept by findings of this study which was Student wellness is greatly improved by participating in sports in a number of areas, such as career readiness, social skills, intellectual development, emotional stability, physical health, and spiritual well-being. These types of activities foster social connection, teamwork, and physical health, all of which support students' overall growth and achievement. In another study conducted by [AA Syaukani](#) et al, (2023) suggested that physical activity and sports in educational institutions can be a powerful tool to improve the development of the whole child that includes physical, cognitive and socio-emotional aspect. As regard of other main area of our study which is Sports and Social/Community Engagement majority of respondents opined that sports play vital role in student engagement with society and community and also sports have significant role in community engagement with educational institutions this concept is supported by a previous study by Malete et al, (2022) which suggested that Participating in sports helps people acquire essential life skills like leadership and communication, which strengthens social

networks and improves interpersonal abilities. Another research study by Murray et al, (2021) suggested that Team sports also serve as an essential platform for young people to discover and affirm their social identities, learning valuable community engagement, services and contribution lessons.

As regard of another main area of our study which is Institutional Support and Effectiveness in promotion of Sports, majority of respondents opined that our institution support and do effective work in the promotions of sports which play effective role in the holistic development of students this concept is supported by a previous study by Kovács et al, (2020) found that substantial financial resources, adequate infrastructural conditions, facilities, and a positive attitude of the leaders of the educational institution are very important in promotion of sports in education institute and they concluded that competitive sport is used effectively to attract students to the educational institutions.

Conclusion:

The present study concludes that sports have played an essential part in fostering students overall development in Punjab educational institutions. Studies shows that playing sports has a major positive impact on a number of aspects of students well-being such as their physical and mental health, emotional stability, social adaptation, and spiritual development. Students reported gains in their academic performance, leadership capacity, discipline, confidence and ability to handle stress and failure which is showing the many advantages of participating in sports. Beyond personal growth, the results clearly support how important sports are for enhancing social and community engagement. sports acts as a catalyst for students and community integration because it promotes cooperation, intercultural understanding, social responsibility, and a better sense of belonging with institutions. Institutional support such as adequate facilities, professional coaching, is also very important to ensure proper sports development to get maximum benefits from this. The study also emphasis that when educational institutions will take sports as an essential part of educational process rather than only a recreational activity, they will be able to unlock its full potential in fostering both student development and community engagement. In light of these findings, the present study emphasizes that the educational institutions in Punjab should prioritize the provision of resources, structured programs, and institutional recognition for sports. By implanting sports more efficiently into the educational system, institutions can produce not only academically competent individuals but also well rounded individuals equipped with good physical health, resilience, leadership, social responsibility, and a commitment to community development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for future practice, policy, and research.

- Educational institutions should provide better sports facilities, qualified coaches, and frequent training sessions to increase student involvement.
- It is necessary to provide recognition and incentives to appreciate student achievements in sports which motivate them for continued involvement.
- Sports should be incorporated into the curriculum as an essential component of curriculum rather than being treated as an extracurricular activity.
- The provincial government and education authorities should design policies which consider sports programs as compulsory element in all educational institutions.
- Future research studies should adopt longitudinal designs to assess the long term impact of sports participation on academic success, career readiness, and social integration.

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