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A study on the college students' attitudes towards and participation in competitive physical activity

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Abstract

This study focuses on evaluating the viewpoints and active engagement of college students in competitive physical activities. The research delves into their attitudes, drivers, and challenges encountered when participating in such sports. The survey encompasses both the college students' perspectives and their practical involvement in competitive sports. The study involved a random selection of one hundred diverse college students. These individuals completed a comprehensive questionnaire that delved into competitive physical activities, encompassing their perceived value, level of enjoyment, and anticipated advantages. Moreover, the questionnaire explored the participants' prior experiences, motivating factors, and identified obstacles. The findings of the study highlight a widespread positive sentiment towards competitive sports among college students. Preliminary statistics indicate that these students regard such physical activities as crucial for maintaining physical well-being, fostering personal growth, and enabling social interactions. The survey underscores that a significant proportion of participants express a keen interest in enhancing their skills, engaging in physical pursuits, and participating in competitive contexts. Nonetheless, the report underscores various factors that impede their participation, including academic commitments, limited awareness of opportunities, and apprehensions concerning skill levels and competition. Financial limitations and inadequate facilities in easily accessible locations also emerged as notable barriers to participation. Furthermore, the study examines the dynamic between attitudes and participation levels. Initial findings suggest a direct relationship between a positive attitude towards competitive physical activities and the actual degree of involvement. Participants who demonstrated higher levels of enjoyment, perceived rewards, and a sense of significance exhibited a greater propensity to engage in competitive sports.

Keywords: Attitudes, participation, competitive physical activity, motivations and barriers

Introduction

Incorporating regular physical activity into a healthy lifestyle is imperative due to its multifaceted positive impact on physical well-being, mental health, and interpersonal relationships. Engaging in various forms of physical activities, including competitive sports, offers individuals unparalleled opportunities to test their skills, experience the exhilaration of competition, and nurture personal growth. Notably, studying college students becomes pivotal in comprehending attitudes toward competitive physical exercise and the extent of engagement in such pursuits. This phase of young adulthood, spent in college, is crucial as it exposes them to novel encounters while presenting distinct challenges encompassing academics, social adjustments, and self-development. Within this context, participation in competitive physical activities can significantly contribute to their overall well-being, promote healthy habits, and enhance personal aptitude.

Comprehending the perspectives of college students concerning competitive physical activities and gauging their participation levels assumes paramount importance in shaping effective strategies to encourage and bolster their involvement. Earlier research has investigated the benefits of physical activity and sports engagement for college students, predominantly focusing on general physical activity levels or non-competitive forms of exercise. However, there remains a dearth of exploration into college students' perceptions specifically about competitive physical exercise and their active involvement in such endeavours. By delving into the factors influencing attitudes, motivations, and barriers within this context, valuable insights can be gleaned to foster a more dynamic and competitive campus environment.

This study aims to bridge this gap by conducting a survey among college students to uncover their perspectives and participation patterns in competitive physical exercise. By gaining a deeper understanding of their viewpoints, driving forces, and challenges, we can formulate targeted approaches to heighten their engagement in competitive sports. Armed with this knowledge, tailored programs, initiatives, and support systems can be devised to cater to the distinctive needs of this demographic.

Competitive Anxiety

Competitive anxiety emerges when an individual anticipates a forthcoming threat to their standing. Mellaliéu, Hanton, and Fletcher's investigation in 2015 revealed that individuals who interpret their situation as competitive tend to encounter heightened social anxiety. Concerns regarding competition intensify when a less confident athlete encounters challenges and becomes aware of the demands at hand in pointed four key indicators of competitive anxiety within their research.

- Cognitive manifestations of anxiety encompass an inability to concentrate, fixation on insignificant particulars, and the emergence of disruptive, distressing thoughts.
- The emotional aspect involves the experience of anxious feelings themselves, including feelings of powerlessness, indifference, and self-criticism, among other sensations.
- Physical manifestations encompass instances such as rapid heartbeat, frequent need to urinate, intense sensations of cold or heat, and, in more severe instances, insomnia.
- Anxiety frequently materializes in a physical manner, evident through trembling, furrowed brows, a sense of heaviness in the feet, a muddled mind, or tense muscles.

Components of Anxiety

The significance of mental preparedness for achieving success in athletic competitions has been a long-standing understanding. This paves the way for a more in-depth exploration of how anxiety impairs athletic performance. The multidimensional theory suggests that the cognitive and physical elements of competitive anxiety contribute to its enduring impact on performance. The first facet is cognitive anxiety, often referred to as the "mental dimension of anxiety," which becomes evident through negative anticipations and self-critique while engaged in the game. A direct and linear relationship between cognitive distress and overall performance might not exist. Cognitive anxiety encompasses factors like concerns about others' opinions, dread of failure, and diminished self-esteem (Martens *et al.*,

2020). This pertains to the psychological aspect, manifesting in aspects such as pessimistic perspectives, uncertain self-dialogues, preoccupations with performance, analogies of inadequacy, compromised cognitive focus, and disrupted concentration. Cognitive anxiety takes on two forms: state anxiety and trait anxiety.

- State anxiety describes how a person is feeling at a given time. This strain of anxiety is characterized by its subjectivity.
- Due to the stereotype associating athletes with apprehension, they might encounter the unappealing sensation of trait anxiety.

The second category, somatic anxiety, materializes within the body through manifestations such as racing thoughts, sweaty palms, and rapid, shallow breathing. A relationship that follows an inverted U-shaped curve between somatic anxiety and overall performance is postulated (Jarvis, 2016; Martens *et al.*, 2020), suggesting that low or high levels of somatic anxiety predict favourable or unfavourable performance outcomes, respectively. An independent collection of research underscores symptoms like heart palpitations, shallow respiration, and tense muscles as indicators of somatic anxiety. Athletes experience these physiological responses before competing due to apprehensions regarding their performance.

Research Methodology

In this study, a quantitative research approach was utilized to explore the perspectives of college students regarding competitive physical activity and their extent of engagement. The research framework encompassed a cross-sectional survey that employed a self-administered questionnaire. The subsequent sections delineate the sampling methodology, sample size determination, process of data collection, and the analytical techniques applied in this research.

1. Sampling Technique: Participants in this study were randomly selected, encompassing college students from a diverse array of academic disciplines. To ensure the dependability of the findings, a sampling framework was developed using a database containing enrolled students from various courses. A hundred individuals were then randomly chosen from this group.

2. Sample Size: A sample size of one hundred university students was deemed suitable for this research endeavour. While a larger sample size could have enhanced statistical robustness, the chosen number was practical within the confines of the available resources and time constraints. This size was considered sufficient for uncovering noteworthy insights into students' viewpoints and levels of engagement on campus.

3. Data Collection Procedure: Data for this study were gathered using a standardized questionnaire designed to assess participants' perspectives on competitive physical exercise. The survey encompassed a combination of multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions. Prior to the actual data collection, a small subset of students was selected to pilot-test the questionnaire, ensuring its clarity and validity. Engaging participants personally, we provided a comprehensive overview of the study's objectives and significance. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Every participant willingly took part, having given their informed consent. Questionnaires were distributed, and participants were

allotted ample time for completion.

To bolster the response rate, reminders were dispatched, and a centralized location was established to facilitate the submission of completed surveys.

4. Data Analysis: Upon collecting the requisite data, a statistical examination ensued. Participant responses were succinctly summarized using descriptive statistics, encompassing frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Additionally, inferential statistical techniques, such as correlation analysis, were employed to discern potential relationships between variables like attitudes and activity levels. Precise and consistent analysis was ensured through the utilization of statistical software.

Drawing from the outcomes of the analysis, interpretations and inferences were drawn. These conclusions laid the foundation for a comprehensive and well-structured report outlining the research results.

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations in this study. The utilization of a self-report questionnaire might introduce response biases and social desirability influences. Furthermore, the applicability of the findings could be confined to the specific sample and environment of the study. Nevertheless, these findings cast light on the sentiments and engagement of college students in relation to competitive physical activity.

Result Analysis

Attitudes towards competitive physical activity

Displayed in Table 1 is the breakdown of participants' attitudes regarding competitive physical activity. Respondents were tasked with assessing their agreement using a Likert scale spanning from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The table delineates the occurrence and proportion of responses within each attitude classification.

Table 1: Attitudes towards competitive physical activity

Attitude Category	Frequency	Percentage
Competitive physical activity is important for physical fitness.	60	60%
Competitive physical activity provides opportunities for personal development.	75	75%
Competitive physical activity enhances social interaction.	55	55%
Competitive physical activity is enjoyable.	85	85%

The data indicates that a significant proportion of higher education students hold positive viewpoints regarding athletic competition. A substantial 60 percent of respondents expressed the belief that engagement in competitive physical activity plays a pivotal role in maintaining physical fitness. Furthermore, a noteworthy 75 percent of those surveyed acknowledged the advantages of participating in competitive sports for their personal growth and development.

Additionally, 55 percent of participants concurred that competitive physical activity yields social benefits, underscoring the importance of interpersonal connections and team dynamics within sports. Moreover, an impressive 85 percent of respondents reported deriving enjoyment from taking part in competitive physical exercises.

2. Participation in competitive physical activity

Table 2 displays the extent of college students' engagement in competitive sports. Each participant was prompted to indicate their current participation in competitive sports activities.

Table 2: Participation in Competitive Physical Activity

Participation Status	Frequency	Percentage
Actively participating	40	40%
Occasionally participating	30	30%
Not currently participating	30	30%

The findings reveal that a significant proportion of college students, approximately 40%, engage in competitive physical exercise, and this pattern is anticipated to persist. Conversely, 30% of participants indicated their involvement as occasional, implying intermittent or seasonal participation. Another 30% of respondents conveyed non-participation in any form of competitive physical activity presently, suggesting potential challenges faced by this particular demographic of students.

3. Relationship between attitudes and participation

To explore the relationship between individuals' levels of engagement in competitive physical activity and their corresponding beliefs about the sport, a correlation analysis was conducted. The interconnection between attitudes and participation is prominently demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between attitudes and participation

Attitude	Participation
Importance for physical fitness	0.47
Opportunities for personal development	0.36
Enhancement of social interaction	0.28
Enjoyment	0.53

The results indicate that positive perspectives toward competitive physical exercise correlate with heightened rates of actual participation. Notably, the perceived importance of competitive physical exercise for fitness exhibited a moderately positive association with tangible engagement ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$). Similar encouraging associations were observed between attitudes regarding personal growth opportunities ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.05$) and enjoyment ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.05$). A slightly more modest yet still favourable correlation emerged between positive attitudes and increased social interaction and involvement ($r = 0.28$).

The findings suggest that students who hold favourable views about competitive physical activity and recognize its benefits for fitness, personal development, and overall well-being are more inclined to partake in such activities themselves. This insight is supported by the coefficients of determination, indicating that involvement in competitive physical activity is most strongly linked to perceptions of enjoyment and perceived benefits.

4. Perceived Barriers to Participation:

Table 4 outlines the challenges reported by individuals that hinder their participation in competitive physical exercise.

Using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not a barrier at all) to 5 (very large barrier), respondents were tasked with assessing the significance of various factors as impediments. The table provides the average ratings for each category of obstacle.

Table 4: Perceived Barriers to Participation

Barrier Category	Mean Score
Lack of time due to academic commitments	3.8
Limited awareness of available opportunities	2.9
Concerns about skill level and competitiveness	3.2
Financial constraints	3.4
Availability of suitable facilities	3.1

The results indicate that college students perceive several obstacles that deter them from participating in competitive physical activity. Leading the list with a mean score of 3.8, time limitations arising from academic commitments emerged as the most frequently mentioned challenge. This underscores the substantial influence of scholastic demands and time restrictions on students' capacity to engage in competitive sports.

Additionally, notable barriers include the accessibility of suitable facilities (mean score = 3.1), financial constraints (mean score = 3.4), and knowledge of available options (mean score = 2.9).

Findings

The outcomes of this study yield significant insights into the motivations and barriers that influence college students' engagement in competitive physical exercise. The favorable perceptions students hold regarding competitive sports underscore the potential to foster increased physical activity and constructive competition within campus environments. Nevertheless, the findings also underscore the presence of obstacles, with time constraints and academic commitments standing out prominently.

Enhancing participation could be facilitated by addressing these impediments through the implementation of flexible scheduling options and improved time management strategies. Educational institutions could play a pivotal role in promoting student involvement in competitive sports by offering financial support, skill enhancement initiatives, and enhanced access to suitable facilities. Encouraging a heightened interest in competitive physical exercise entails a shift in mindset, as evidenced by the observed positive correlation between attitudes and participation.

To bolster engagement in competitive sports among students, accentuating the positive aspects of such activities can prove advantageous. Overall, this study's results not only shed light on college students' sentiments and participation in competitive physical exercise but also provide valuable guidance for educational institutions and governing bodies in devising policies and programs that foster healthier, more active, and more competitive lifestyles among students on campus.

Conclusion

This study aimed to delve into the attitudes and engagement of college students in the realm of athletic competition. Through a meticulously designed survey and a statistically significant sample of 100 college students, we gleaned valuable insights into the factors that influence their participation and perspectives. The findings underscore that the majority of students recognize the advantages in terms of

health, personal development, and enjoyment associated with engaging in competitive physical activity.

This optimistic outlook suggests the potential for elevated campus activities and enhanced competition. However, the study also unveiled barriers to involvement. Academic commitments and time constraints emerged as significant hindrances, impeding students' ability to partake in competitive sports, with time limitations being the most frequently cited challenge. Accessibility issues, resource limitations, concerns about skills and market competition, as well as the scarcity of resources, were also noted.

The positive connection between outlook and activity levels underscores the importance of cultivating healthy mindsets and motivations for competitive physical exercise. Promoting the benefits of engaging in competitive sports can serve as a means to attract more participants. Valuable lessons can be drawn from these results for universities and government bodies alike. Initiatives must be taken to help students overcome the identified barriers. Providing financial support and exploring flexible scheduling options could alleviate time and resource constraints.

Enhancing students' access to appropriate facilities and opportunities for skill enhancement could foster confidence and diminish apprehensions about competition. Moreover, introducing youngsters to the diverse array of sporting options available to them is crucial. By creating a safe and enjoyable sporting environment, universities can inspire students to embrace healthier and more active lifestyles.

It's important to acknowledge that this study carries certain limitations. Due to its relatively small sample size (n = 100), the findings may not be broadly applicable to the larger population. Future studies with larger and more representative samples could yield more reliable outcomes. In summary, the findings of this study enrich our comprehension of college students' attitudes and involvement in competitive physical activity. To nurture a physically active and competitive campus culture, educational institutions can play a role by dismantling obstacles and fostering positive perspectives. A comprehensive approach is vital to encouraging students to embrace physical exercise for their well-being and personal growth, achieved through the creation of conducive environments and the dissemination of pertinent information.

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