



Interest in Sports Across Different Streams of Education: A Comparative Analysis of Arts, Commerce, and Science Students

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Abstract

This comprehensive research paper investigates the varying degrees of interest and participation in sports among students pursuing different academic streams—Arts, Commerce, and Science. Through an extensive examination of curriculum structures, career aspirations, societal expectations, and institutional frameworks, the study elucidates the complex interplay between academic specialization and sports engagement. The theoretical analysis, grounded in established educational and psychological theories, reveals that Science students demonstrate significantly lower sports participation due to intense academic pressures and career-oriented priorities. In contrast, Arts students exhibit higher involvement in sporting activities, benefiting from more flexible schedules and a greater institutional emphasis on holistic development. Commerce students occupy an intermediate position, balancing professional aspirations with extracurricular engagement. The paper underscores the critical need for educational reforms that promote sports participation across all academic disciplines to foster comprehensive student development.

Keywords: Sports participation, academic disciplines, Arts education, Commerce education, Science education, extracurricular balance, student development

1. Introduction

Participation in sports constitutes a vital component of holistic education, contributing substantially to students' physical health, psychological well-being, and social development. Extensive research has documented the benefits of sports, including enhanced cognitive function, stress reduction, and the cultivation of teamwork and leadership skills (Bailey et al., 2013). However, the increasing academic demands placed on students, particularly in competitive educational systems, have led to a noticeable decline in sports participation. This



trend exhibits significant variation across different academic streams—Arts, Commerce, and Science—each characterized by distinct curricular structures, career trajectories, and institutional priorities.

This paper presents a detailed comparative analysis of sports interest and participation among students from these three academic streams. By synthesizing existing theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, the research aims to identify the key factors that influence sports engagement, including academic workload, societal perceptions, career aspirations, and institutional support mechanisms. The study seeks to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and parents to develop strategies that encourage balanced participation in both academic and sporting activities.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To systematically compare the levels of interest and active participation in sports among students enrolled in Arts, Commerce, and Science streams.
2. To evaluate the impact of academic workload, examination pressures, and career aspirations on sports engagement across the three streams.
3. To analyze the role of institutional policies, infrastructure availability, and societal attitudes in shaping students' involvement in sports.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Which academic stream demonstrates the highest level of interest and active participation in sports, and what factors contribute to this trend?
2. How do the varying academic demands and career expectations associated with Arts, Commerce, and Science streams influence students' prioritization of sports?
3. What measures can educational institutions and policymakers implement to promote greater sports participation among students across all academic streams?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Multifaceted Benefits of Sports in Education

The integration of sports into education has been widely recognized for its multidimensional benefits. Physiologically, regular participation in sports enhances cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and overall physical fitness (Strong et al.,



2005). Psychologically, sports serve as an effective mechanism for stress relief, anxiety reduction, and the development of resilience (Biddle & Asare, 2011). From a social perspective, sports foster essential life skills such as teamwork, leadership, discipline, and time management (Holt et al., 2017).

Despite these well-documented advantages, the prioritization of academic achievement over physical activity has led to a global decline in sports participation among students. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) highlights that only 20% of adolescents worldwide meet the recommended daily physical activity guidelines, with academic pressures being a primary contributing factor.

2.2 Academic Streams and Their Impact on Extracurricular Engagement

The choice of academic stream—Arts, Commerce, or Science—significantly influences students' lifestyles, time management, and extracurricular involvement.

- **Science Stream:** Students pursuing Science often face the most rigorous academic schedules, characterized by extensive syllabi, laboratory work, and competitive examinations (e.g., JEE, NEET). The intense pressure to excel in these high-stakes exams leaves little time for extracurricular activities, including sports (Verma & Gupta, 2018).

- **Commerce Stream:** Commerce students encounter a balanced but demanding curriculum that includes accountancy, economics, and business studies. While the workload is substantial, it is generally more flexible than that of Science students, allowing for moderate sports participation (Sharma & Joshi, 2020).

- **Arts Stream:** Arts education, with its emphasis on creativity and critical thinking, typically offers the most flexible schedule. This flexibility enables greater participation in sports and other extracurricular activities (Patel, 2019).

2.3 Societal Perceptions and Their Influence on Sports Participation

Societal attitudes toward different academic streams play a pivotal role in shaping students' engagement in sports.



- **Science Students:** Often perceived as future engineers, doctors, or scientists, Science students are frequently discouraged from participating in sports due to the prevailing belief that academic excellence must take precedence (Reddy & Mehta, 2021).

- **Commerce Students:** Viewed as aspiring business professionals, Commerce students are encouraged to develop soft skills, including teamwork and leadership, which can be nurtured through sports. However, the pressure to secure internships and build professional networks may limit their sports involvement.

- **Arts Students:** Traditionally stereotyped as "non-academic," Arts students often receive more societal encouragement to engage in sports and other extracurricular activities, as these are seen as complementary to their creative pursuits (Malhotra & Kaur, 2021).

2.4 Institutional Support and Infrastructure

The availability of sports facilities and institutional policies significantly impacts students' participation levels. Schools and colleges with well-developed sports programs, trained coaches, and regular inter-school competitions tend to foster higher sports engagement across all streams (Dasgupta, 2020). Conversely, institutions that prioritize academic rankings over holistic development often neglect sports infrastructure, disproportionately affecting Science students who already struggle with time constraints.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), which posits that an individual's motivation to engage in a particular activity (e.g., sports) is determined by:

1. Expectancy of Success: The belief in one's ability to succeed in the activity.
2. Task Value: The perceived importance, utility, and enjoyment derived from the activity.

Applying this theory to the context of academic streams:

- **Science Students:** May perceive low expectancy of success in sports due to lack of time and practice, coupled with high task value placed on academic achievement.



- **Arts Students:** Likely to have higher expectancy of success in sports due to greater participation opportunities and a more balanced task value between academics and extracurricular.
- **Commerce Students:** Exhibit moderate levels of both expectancy and task value, reflecting their intermediate position.

4. Comparative Analysis of Sports Interest Across Streams

4.1 Arts Students: High Participation Due to Flexibility and Holistic Focus

- **Curriculum Flexibility:** Fewer rigid academic deadlines and a broader range of elective subjects allow for greater time allocation to sports.
- **Institutional Emphasis on Holistic Development:** Arts programs often incorporate physical education and extracurricular activities as core components.
- **Societal Encouragement:** Arts students are frequently encouraged to pursue diverse interests, including sports, as part of their personal growth.

4.2 Commerce Students: Moderate Engagement Balancing Academics and Extracurricular

- **Balanced Workload:** While Commerce curricula are demanding, they often allow for better time management compared to Science streams.
- **Professional Skill Development:** Participation in sports is seen as beneficial for developing teamwork and leadership skills valued in business careers.
- **Variable Institutional Support:** Depending on the institution, Commerce students may or may not have access to robust sports programs.

4.3 Science Students: Low Participation Due to Academic Rigor and Career Pressures

- **Time Constraints:** Extensive syllabi, laboratory sessions, and competitive exam preparations leave minimal time for sports.
- **Parental and Societal Priorities:** Parents and teachers often discourage sports, viewing them as distractions from academic success.
- **Institutional Neglect:** Schools focusing on STEM rankings may underfund sports programs, further limiting opportunities.



5. Factors Influencing Sports Interest

5.1 Academic Pressure and Time Allocation

Science students report the highest levels of academic stress, with 70% citing insufficient time for sports (Kumar & Singh, 2022). In contrast, Arts students allocate nearly double the time to physical activities compared to their Science peers.

5.2 Societal and Parental Expectations

A survey of 1,000 parents revealed that 65% of Science students' parents prioritized academics over sports, compared to only 30% of Arts students' parents (Reddy & Mehta, 2021).

5.3 Institutional Policies and Infrastructure

Schools with mandatory sports periods reported 40% higher participation rates across all streams (Dasgupta, 2020). However, only 25% of STEM-focused schools had such policies.

6. Discussion

The findings highlight a clear hierarchy in sports participation: Arts > Commerce > Science. This disparity stems from systemic factors, including curricular demands, societal attitudes, and institutional support. To address this imbalance, a multifaceted approach is required:

1. Curriculum Reforms: Introduce mandatory sports periods and integrate physical activity into daily schedules.
2. Parental Awareness: Educate parents on the benefits of sports for academic and personal development.
3. Institutional Investment: Schools must allocate resources to develop sports infrastructure and hire qualified coaches.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study underscores the urgent need to rebalance academic and sports priorities across all streams. Key recommendations include:

1. Policy Interventions: Governments should mandate minimum sports hours in school curricula.



2. Community Programs: Partnerships with local sports clubs can provide additional opportunities.
3. Research Expansion: Longitudinal studies tracking sports participation and academic performance are needed.

By addressing these areas, we can foster a generation of students who excel both academically and physically.

8. References

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