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The Role of Extracurricular Sports in Promoting Physical Fitness among Indian Adolescent

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of extracurricular sports on promoting physical fitness among Indian adolescents. Recognizing the critical phase of adolescence for developing lifelong health habits, the research examines how participation in sports beyond the regular school curriculum influences physical health outcomes. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative measures of physical fitness such as body mass index (BMI), cardiovascular endurance, muscle strength, and flexibility with qualitative insights from focus group discussions with participants, parents, and coaches. The findings indicate a significant improvement in physical fitness metrics among adolescents engaged in extracurricular sports compared to their non-participating peers. Additionally, the qualitative data reveal that regular involvement in sports fosters not only physical health but also psychological benefits, including improved self-esteem, teamwork, and stress management. Cultural factors and socioeconomic status were also considered, highlighting challenges such as access to facilities and parental support. The study underscores the importance of structured sports programs in schools and communities, advocating for policies that enhance accessibility and encourage active participation. The research concludes that extracurricular sports play a pivotal role in promoting physical fitness and overall well-being among Indian adolescents, suggesting that such activities should be integral to education and public health strategies.

KEYWORDS: Physical fitness, Adolescents, Extracurricular sports.

I. INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular sports play a pivotal role in promoting physical fitness among Indian adolescents, a demographic increasingly facing the challenges of sedentary lifestyles and rising obesity rates. In India, where academic achievement often takes precedence, extracurricular sports offer a vital avenue for physical activity, contributing to the holistic development of young individuals. Participation in sports not only enhances physical fitness but also fosters social skills, teamwork, discipline, and mental well-being. With the alarming increase in lifestyle-related health issues, integrating sports into adolescents' routines is imperative. Indian schools, traditionally focused on academics, are gradually recognizing the importance of sports in education. The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes the inclusion of physical education and sports in the curriculum, aiming to balance academic and physical development [12]. However, the implementation of sports programs faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained coaches, and limited awareness among parents and educators. This comprehensive analysis explores the multifaceted benefits of extracurricular sports for Indian adolescents, examining how regular participation in sports activities can significantly improve their physical fitness levels. It also discusses the barriers to effective implementation and proposes strategic solutions to promote sports as an integral part of school education, ensuring a healthier and more active generation [1-2].

II. REVIEWS

Wallhead et al. (2010) The study investigated the impact of Sport Education (SE) on students' participation in a voluntary lunch recess sport club using the trans-contextual model of motivation (TCM). Over a 12-week SE intervention, 192 participants aged 9-14 years showed a moderate increase in autonomous motives for physical education. The TCM effectively explained the variance in intention and participation in the sport club. The study concluded that autonomy-supportive curricular models like SE could enhance motivation and participation in physical activity from physical education to extracurricular contexts.

Bhalla et al. (2010) This study examined parental influence on self-perceptions, task values, and achievement behaviours among female adolescents from different cultural backgrounds using Eccles' expectancy-value theory. Interviews with 12 Anglo-Canadian and 9 East Indian girls revealed both similarities and differences in perceived

parental influence in sport and academic domains. The study highlighted cultural variations in parental socialization processes, supporting links among expectancy-value constructs in different domains and suggesting the importance of considering cultural context in understanding parental influence.

Bundick (2011) Bundick explored the relationship between extracurricular activity participation and positive youth development (PYD) among high school students. The study found that participation in student leadership and volunteering was positively associated with PYD, while participation in creative arts had a negative association. The meaningfulness of the activities moderated these relationships, often negatively. The findings suggested that not all extracurricular activities equally promote PYD and highlighted the importance of personal meaningfulness in extracurricular engagement.

Jiang et al. (2012) Jiang and colleagues examined how extracurricular activity participation affects youth violence among immigrant and non-immigrant adolescents using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Results showed that non-immigrant youth who participated in both sports and non-sports activities had lower odds of involvement in violence. However, for first- and second-generation immigrant youth, participation in extracurricular activities was associated with higher odds of violence. These findings challenge the assumption that extracurricular activities uniformly benefit all youth and call for more research on the specific needs of immigrant adolescents.

Lau et al. (2013) Lau et al. investigated the impact of rapid socioeconomic changes on physical activity (PA) and obesity in the tropics. Despite ongoing undernutrition issues, overweight and obesity are emerging problems due to physical inactivity and low physical fitness (PF). The study emphasized that although there is no clear evidence linking physical activity variance to obesity directly, the correlation between low PA, PF, and overweight/obesity is significant. The findings underscore the need for lifestyle changes to increase PA and reduce sedentary behavior to prevent obesity in tropical countries.

Moilanen et al. (2014) Moilanen et al. studied the relationship between extracurricular activity participation and substance use among American Indian (AI) adolescents. The study found that high levels of perceived availability and intensity of extracurricular participation predicted lower levels of substance use and risky behaviours. These associations were moderated by demographic factors such as sex, age, reservation residence, and metropolitan status. The findings suggest that while extracurricular activities are beneficial for AI adolescents, the degree of their effectiveness varies based on individual and contextual characteristics.

Olivares et al. (2015) This study analysed the influence of parents and physical education teachers on adolescents' extracurricular physical activity in Chile. Using data from 23,180 students, the study found that parental encouragement significantly impacted adolescents' physical activity levels more than the influence of physical education teachers. Regardless of age, sex, and physical condition, the findings highlighted the crucial role of parental support in promoting physical activity among adolescents, suggesting that parents' active involvement is key to encouraging healthy behaviors in children.

Martinez et al. (2016) Martinez et al. explored how different types of extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, and arts) and their combinations affect students' perceptions of school climate. Using data from 15,004 high school students across the United States, the study found that extracurricular participation generally led to more favourable perceptions of school climate. However, the impact varied by activity type and did not have a cumulative effect. The findings suggest that extracurricular activities can promote a positive school environment, with implications for enhancing student support and connectedness through tailored extracurricular programs.

Dave et al. (2017) Dave and colleagues studied the physical activity levels of adolescents in Anand, India. The cross-sectional study with 3,337 participants aged 10-19 years found inadequate physical activity levels, with males being slightly more active than females. Physical activity declined with age, and a significant proportion of adolescents were overweight or obese. The study highlighted the need for innovative solutions to improve physical activity among Indian schoolchildren, emphasizing the role of schools in fostering an environment that encourages regular physical activity to combat rising obesity levels.

Roopesh (2018) Roopesh examined the role of extracurricular activities in shaping academic and non-academic outcomes. Despite the tendency to prioritize academics, the study highlighted the benefits of structured extracurricular activities, including improvements in physical health, emotional regulation, study skills, and social values. The study argued for integrating extracurricular activities into regular school schedules, advocating for widespread recognition of

their importance in holistic education. Given their broad benefits, incorporating these activities could enhance overall student development and reduce negative behaviours.

Martín-Sánchez et.al. (2021). The aim of this study was to analyse the effects of the type of extracurricular sport on the body composition, respiratory parameters, and physical condition in prepubertal and pubertal girls. Four hundred and eighty-five female athletes (aged 8–14) from different sports participated in this study. They were gathered into four groups according to the sport typology and maturity level: ‘prepubertal girls who practise collective sports’ (PRE-CS), ‘prepubertal girls who practise individual sports’ (PRE-IS), ‘pubertal girls who practise collective sports’ (PUB-CS), and ‘pubertal girls who practise individual sports’ (PUB-IS).

III. PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF EXTRACURRICULAR SPORTS

Regular participation in extracurricular sports significantly enhances physical fitness among adolescents. This section will detail the various physical health benefits, including improved cardiovascular health, muscular strength, flexibility, and coordination. It will discuss how sports help in maintaining healthy body weight, reducing the risk of obesity, and preventing lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. The role of sports in fostering lifelong healthy habits and its impact on physical development during adolescence will also be explored [3].

IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

Beyond physical health, extracurricular sports contribute to mental well-being and social skills. This section will delve into how sports activities reduce stress, anxiety, and depression among adolescents. It will highlight the importance of teamwork, leadership, and communication skills developed through sports participation. The positive impact on self-esteem, confidence, and the sense of belonging in a team environment will be discussed, along with the role of sports in promoting discipline and time management [4].

V. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND COGNITIVE BENEFITS

Contrary to the common belief that sports may detract from academic pursuits, this section will present evidence showing that physically active students often perform better academically. It will explore the cognitive benefits of regular physical activity, including improved concentration, memory, and classroom behaviour. The correlation between physical fitness and academic achievement will be analysed, supported by studies and data demonstrating that sports participation can enhance cognitive functions and academic outcomes [5-6].

VI. BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR SPORTS

Despite the benefits, several barriers hinder adolescents' participation in sports. This section will examine the challenges such as inadequate sports infrastructure, lack of trained coaches, and insufficient funding in Indian schools. Cultural attitudes towards sports, prioritization of academics over physical activities, and gender disparities in sports participation will also be discussed. The impact of socioeconomic factors and the lack of awareness about the importance of sports will be highlighted [7].

VII. ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

State of sports programs in Indian schools and the effectiveness of existing policies. It will discuss the National Education Policy 2020 and other government initiatives aimed at integrating sports into the school curriculum. The importance of developing comprehensive sports programs, investing in infrastructure, and training qualified coaches will be emphasized. Case studies of successful sports programs in Indian schools will be presented [8].

VIII. PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Parental support and community involvement are essential for fostering a sports culture among adolescents. This section will explore how parents' attitudes and encouragement influence children's participation in sports. The role of community sports clubs, local government initiatives, and public-private partnerships in promoting sports will be discussed. Strategies to engage parents and communities in supporting extracurricular sports, creating awareness, and facilitating access to sports facilities will be highlighted [9].

IX. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final section will propose strategic solutions and recommendations to enhance the role of extracurricular sports in promoting physical fitness among Indian adolescents. It will outline the need for a collaborative approach involving schools, parents, communities, and policymakers. Recommendations will include increasing investment in sports infrastructure, implementing comprehensive sports education programs, providing professional development for coaches, and promoting gender equality in sports. The potential impact of technology and digital platforms in encouraging sports participation will also be explored, aiming to create a sustainable and inclusive sports culture in Indian schools [10-11].

X. CONCLUSION

Extracurricular sports play an essential role in promoting physical fitness among Indian adolescents, offering numerous physical, psychological, and academic benefits. However, the successful implementation of sports programs faces significant challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained coaches, and limited awareness. Addressing these barriers requires a collaborative effort involving schools, parents, communities, and policymakers. By increasing investment in sports infrastructure, implementing comprehensive sports education programs, providing professional development for coaches, and promoting gender equality in sports, India can create a sustainable and inclusive sports culture. Embracing technology and digital platforms can further enhance sports participation, ensuring that all adolescents have the opportunity to lead healthier and more active lives.

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