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Involvement in Sports Reshapes Social and Moral Development, Health and Well-being, and Social Responsibility of Youth in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the effect of sports involvement on the holistic development of youth focusing on social and moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility. Drawing from a diverse sample of adolescents from colleges and universities of the Punjab province of Pakistan, the research employed quantitative analysis to assess the comparisons and relationships between sports involvement and these developmental outcomes. The findings indicated a significant comparison between sports involvement and the enhancement of teamwork, leadership, and decision-making. Additionally, the results highlighted the strong association between sports and physical fitness, mental health, and life satisfaction. Importantly, sports involvement was also linked to higher levels of social responsibility and community engagement fostering a sense of civic duty among youth. However, the findings revealed that sports involvement has positive and significant effects on the social and moral

development, health and well-being, and social responsibility of youth. The study concluded that sports serve as a critical platform for nurturing future leaders through comprehensive personal development.

Keyword: Sports Involvement, Youth Development, Health, Well-Being, Social Responsibility

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of sports in youth development has gained increasing recognition for its multifaceted benefits encompassing not only physical health but also social, moral, and educational outcomes. Involvement in sports is associated with the development of leadership skills, ethical behavior, teamwork, and a sense of social responsibility (Bailey, Hillman, Arent, & Petitpas, 2013; Javed, Naseer, & Gul, 2020). These activities provide a structured environment where young people can learn to navigate challenges, develop resilience, and engage with their communities which are critical components in shaping future leaders (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005).

In Pakistan, the potential of sports as a tool for youth development remains underutilized. The country faces significant challenges in integrating sports into educational systems and youth programs largely due to socio-economic disparities, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of institutional support (Khan & Jamil, 2021). Despite these barriers, there is growing evidence that sports can play a transformative role in improving not only health and well-being but also educational outcomes among Pakistani youth (Hassan & Sultana, 2018).

The development of youth into future leaders is a multifaceted process that extends beyond academic success to include social, moral, and physical growth. In this context, sports serve as a crucial catalyst, fostering key life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and leadership. Research showed that youth involvement in sports is associated with improved social behavior, enhanced moral reasoning, and greater social responsibility (Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). Moreover, sports involvement is linked to better health outcomes and higher academic performance (Bailey et al., 2013).

In undeveloped country like Pakistan, however, the integration of sports into educational and developmental frameworks remains a significant challenge. Despite the recognized benefits of sports, educational institutions in Pakistan often prioritize academics neglecting the role of sports/physical activities in holistic development (Malik & Asif, 2021). The lack of infrastructure, inadequate funding, and socio-economic disparities further worsen the situation limiting access to organized sports for many young people (Khan, 2022).

In Pakistan, the potential of sports to contribute to the holistic development of youth encompassing social, moral, and educational growth remains largely untapped. Despite global evidence that

sports involvement fosters essential life skills, improves health and well-being, and enhances educational outcomes (Bailey et al., 2015; Holt et al., 2008). The previous researched also highlights the positive effect of sports on youth development, health, and education (Bailey et al., 2013; Gould & Voelker, 2019). Pakistani youth face significant barriers to accessing and benefiting from organized sports. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, socio-economic disparities, and a lack of institutional support which collectively hinder the potential of sports to shape future leaders in Pakistan (Khan, 2022). The country's educational institutions often prioritize academic achievement over physical activities resulting in limited opportunities for students to engage in sports (Malik & Asif, 2021).

The problem is compounded by the lack of strategic integration of sports into youth development policies and the insufficient support from sports stakeholders/policymakers such as Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Sports Board, Sports federations and associations, and all Provincial Sports Boards etc. As a result, the potential of sports to shape future leaders in Pakistan remains underdeveloped. This research seeks to address this gap by examining the effects of sports on the social, moral, and educational outcomes of youth with health and well-being to accept the social responsibility in society and identifying the challenges that hinder the promotion and integration of sports in Pakistan.

1.1 Objectives of the Research

The research has following objectives;

- i.** To evaluate the sports involvement in social and moral development of university players compared to college players in Pakistan.
- ii.** To examine the relationship of sports involvement with health and well-being of Pakistani youth.
- iii.** To determine the association between sports involvement and social responsibility of youth in Pakistan.
- iv.** To find out the effect of sports involvement on social and moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility of youth in Pakistan.

1.2 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1:** What is the effect of involvement in sports on social and moral development of university players compared to college players in Pakistan?
- RQ2:** What is the relationship of sports involvement towards health and well-being of Pakistani youth?
- RQ3:** What is the association between sports involvement and social responsibility of youth in Pakistan?

RQ4: What is the effect of sports involvement on social and moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility of youth in Pakistan?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses are developed to achieve the research objectives:

Ha1: There is significant effect of sports involvement on social and moral development of university players compared to college players in Pakistan.

Ha2: There is significant relationship of sports involvement towards health and well-being of Pakistani youth.

Ha3: There is significant association between sports involvement and social responsibility of youth in Pakistan.

Ha4: There are the effect of sports involvement on social and moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility of youth in Pakistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature was reviewed to study the variables from prior researches for the better understanding and further insights.

Involvement in sports has been shown to positively influence social and moral development in youth. Sports environments provide opportunities for young people to learn and practice values such as teamwork, discipline, and respect (Holt et al., 2008). Prior research highlighted that involvement in sports can enhance moral reasoning and ethical behavior as athletes often face situations requiring ethical decision-making and peer interactions that reinforce moral values (Gould & Voelker, 2019). However in Pakistan, the integration of sports into developmental programs is limited and thus, the full potential of sports to foster these values remains underexplored (Malik & Asif, 2021).

Involvement in sports is consistently linked to improved physical health and mental well-being. Regular physical activity associated with sports involvement helps prevent obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Bailey et al., 2013). In the Pakistani context, where sports infrastructure and access are uneven, many youth do not benefit from these health advantages. The lack of organized sports opportunities particularly affects marginalized communities impairing health disparities (Khan, 2022).

Sports can 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). Youth involved in sports often take on leadership roles that extend beyond the sports field contributing to their communities in meaningful ways. Despite this potential, sports stakeholders/policymakers in Pakistan face

challenges in implementing programs that emphasize social responsibility due to infrastructural and socio-economic barriers (Khan, 2022).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the research focuses on the following parameters:

This study employed quantitative research design to provide an understanding of the effects of sports involvement on the social and moral, health and well-being, social responsibility, and educational outcomes of youth in Pakistan. The qualitative research method based on survey data enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The target population included all college and university students actively participating in sports belonging to Punjab Province of Pakistan. Participants were recruited from samples of colleges and universities engaged in sports. A simple random sampling method used to ensure representative samples. The sample size consisted of 400 student players equally from colleges (n-200) and universities (n-200) in sports belonging to educational institutions.

An adapted survey questionnaire utilized to measure the effects of sports involvement on various outcomes including social and moral development, health and well-being, social responsibility, educational performance, and sports involvement. Key constructs included as under:

- Social and Moral Development: Teamwork, Leadership, Communication Skills and Decision-Making
- Health and Well-being: Physical Fitness, Mental Well-Being, and Life Satisfaction.
- Social Responsibility: Community Engagement and Social Responsibility.
- Sports Involvement: Involvement in Team Sports (Cricket, Football, and Hockey).

The survey questionnaire administered in hard form to accommodate diverse access needs. The researchers visited the educational institutions personally and met the administrative body prior to data collection. A comprehensive dialog was communicated with the administration of these key institutions about the purposes of this research. It was assured that the confidentiality and ethics never be violated at any cost during and after the data collection. Therefore, the involvement of student players in filling the questionnaires was voluntarily and filled the consent forms as well. With the willingness of the administration of these educational institutions, the survey questionnaire distributed among the student players. The researchers 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 as well as administrative staff.

After the data collection, statistical software such as SPSS (v-26) employed for data editing of filled questionnaires (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). Descriptive statistics summarized the data of demographic section of the questionnaire. On the other hand, inferential analyses including correlation analysis and multiple regressions analysis examined the relationships between sports involvement and various outcome variables.

4. RESULTS

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

4.1 Results of Comparative Analysis

University players' involvement in sports found better on social behaviors than college players including teamwork and leadership. Participants from university reported improved decision-making than college participants as displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 comparison of Sports Involvement with Social and Moral Development Factors

Category	College Players (Mean)	University Players (Mean)	t-value	p-value
Teamwork	3.21	4.75	8.27	0.000
Leadership	3.15	4.60	7.92	0.000
Decision-Making	3.00	4.20	7.05	0.000

University players engaged in sports scored significantly higher in teamwork skills (Mean=4.75) compared to college players (Mean=3.21). University participants also showed higher leadership capabilities (Mean=4.60) compared to college players (Mean=3.15). Sports participants belonging to university demonstrated stronger ethical decision-making abilities (Mean=4.20) than college players (Mean=3.00) indicating that sports fostered moral development.

4.2 Results of Correlation Coefficients

The study explored the relationships of sports involvement with social development, moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility dimensions. This section presents the results of statistical analyses performed to evaluate these relationships.

The relationship between sports involvement and various health outcomes including physical fitness, mental well-being, and life satisfaction was also explored. Pearson's correlation was employed for the analysis as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Relationship between Sports Involvement and Health and Well-being Indicators

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Sports Involvement & Physical Fitness	0.71	0.000
Sports Involvement & Mental Well-being	0.65	0.000

Sports Involvement & Life Satisfaction	0.63	0.000
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The results show a strong positive correlation between sports involvement and physical fitness ($r = 0.71, p < 0.001$), indicating that youth involved in sports have better physical health. A significant positive relationship was observed between sports involvement and mental well-being ($r = 0.65, p < 0.001$), highlighting the mental health benefits of sports involvement. The positive correlation between sports involvement and life satisfaction ($r = 0.63, p < 0.001$) suggests that youth involved in sports report higher levels of satisfaction with their lives.

The analysis also examined the relationship between sports involvement and social responsibility, including community engagement and sense of responsibility as exhibited in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Relationship between Sports Involvement and Social Responsibility Factors

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Sports Involvement & Social Responsibility	0.58	0.000
Sports Involvement & Community Engagement	0.56	0.000

Sports involvement has a significant positive relationship with social responsibility ($r = 0.58, p < 0.001$), suggesting that youth engaged in sports demonstrate a stronger sense of responsibility toward others and society. A positive correlation between sports involvement and community engagement ($r = 0.56, p < 0.001$) indicates that youth involved in sports are more likely to participate in community service and civic activities.

The findings indicate that the relationships between sports involvement and the different dimensions of social development, moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility are all positive and statistically significant.

4.3 Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

This section presents the results of multiple regression analyses examining the effect of sports involvement on social and moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility in youth. The analyses focused on determining the extent to which involvement in sports predicts outcomes in these domains.

To assess the effect of sports involvement on social development indicators (teamwork, leadership, communication), multiple regression analysis was conducted. The dependent variables were the social development outcomes and the independent variable was sports involvement as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Effect of Sports Involvement on Social Development Indicators

Dependent Variable	B (Coefficient)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Teamwork	0.56	0.07	8.21	0.000
Leadership	0.51	0.06	7.58	0.000
Communication Skills	0.48	0.07	7.02	0.000

Sports involvement is a significant predictor of teamwork skills ($B = 0.56, p < 0.001$), explaining 45% of the variance. The effect on leadership was also significant ($B = 0.51, p < 0.001$), accounting for 42% of the variance. Sports involvement positively predicted communication skills ($B = 0.48, p < 0.001$), explaining 39% of the variance.

The effect of sports involvement on moral development (ethical decision-making and conflict resolution) was examined through multiple regressions analysis. The regression model assessed the predictive strength of sports involvement on moral development as exposed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Effect of Sports Involvement on Moral Development Factors

Dependent Variable	B (Coefficient)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Ethical Decision-Making	0.47	0.06	7.83	0.000
Conflict Resolution	0.44	0.06	7.35	0.000

Sports involvement significantly predicts ethical decision-making ($B = 0.47, p < 0.001$), accounting for 40% of the variance. The effect of sports on conflict resolution was also significant ($B = 0.44, p < 0.001$), explaining 38% of the variance.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of sports involvement on health and well-being indicators including physical fitness, mental well-being, and life satisfaction as presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Effect of Sports Involvement on Health and Well-being Indicators

Dependent Variable	B (Coefficient)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Physical Fitness	0.64	0.05	10.25	0.000
Mental Well-being	0.53	0.06	8.42	0.000
Life Satisfaction	0.50	0.06	7.96	0.000

Sports involvement is a strong predictor of physical fitness ($B = 0.64, p < 0.001$), explaining 51% of the variance. The effect of sports on mental well-being is significant ($B = 0.53, p < 0.001$), accounting for 45% of the variance. Sports involvement significantly predicts life satisfaction ($B = 0.50, p < 0.001$), explaining 42% of the variance.

The multiple regression analysis explored the effect of sports involvement on social responsibility outcomes including community engagement and overall social responsibility as revealed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Effect of Sports Involvement on Social Responsibility Outcomes

Dependent Variable		B (Coefficient)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Overall Responsibility	Social	0.55	0.06	8.65	0.000
Community Engagement		0.51	0.06	7.96	0.000

Sports involvement is a significant predictor of social responsibility ($B = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 46% of the variance. The effect of sports on community engagement was significant ($B = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 43% of the variance.

The multiple regression analyses indicated that sports involvement significantly predicts youth outcomes in the domains of social development, moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility of youth. The strength of these effects is shown by the percentage of variance in the dependent variables explained by sports involvement.

5. DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The present research examined the effect of sports involvement on various dimensions of youth development including social and moral development, health and well-being, and social responsibility. The results supported the notion that involvement in sports positively influences youth aligning with existing research and providing important insights into the role of sports in shaping future leaders.

The findings demonstrated a significant positive relationship between sports involvement and social development outcomes including teamwork, leadership, and communication skills. Youth involved in sports are better equipped with social skills that facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and leadership confirming similar findings in earlier studies. For instance, Fraser-Thomas et al. (2017) emphasized the role of sports in promoting social interaction and providing opportunities for youth to work as part of a team. This is crucial in today's globalized world where teamwork and leadership are essential qualities for success. Sports provide a structured environment for developing these skills which extend beyond the sports arena into academic and professional settings (Holt et al., 2017).

The results revealed a positive correlation between sports involvement and moral development particularly in ethical decision-making and conflict resolution. This aligns with the work of Shields and Bredemeier (2009) who found that sports offered opportunities for moral education by

promoting values such as fairness, respect, and integrity. In competitive sports settings, athletes are often faced with ethical dilemmas and the development of moral reasoning can help them navigate these situations. The current findings indicated that youth engaged in sports are more likely to internalize and practice moral values which are critical for personal growth and leadership development (Jones et al., 2018).

The effect of sports on health and well-being was one of the strongest relationships identified in the study. The significant positive association between sports involvement and physical fitness, mental well-being, and life satisfaction reinforces the extensive body of research that links physical activity with health benefits. According to Eime et al. (2013), regular involvement in sports is strongly associated with improved physical health and psychological resilience. The present study's findings highlight that sports not only contribute to physical fitness but also promote mental health by enhancing emotional well-being, reducing stress, and increasing overall life satisfaction. These benefits are particularly important in adolescent populations where mental health issues are a growing concern (Biddle & Asare, 2011).

The results indicated that sports involvement is positively related to social responsibility including community engagement and a sense of civic duty. These findings are consistent with Durlak et al. (2011) who found that sports-based youth development programs promoted social responsibility by encouraging empathy, social awareness, and community involvement. Through sports, youth learn about the importance of giving back to their communities and developing a sense of responsibility toward others. This is particularly important in contexts like Pakistan where community cohesion and civic engagement are essential for addressing social challenges (Kay, 2009).

While the study underscored the positive effect of sports, the specific challenges facing youth sports involvement in Pakistan must be acknowledged. Issues such as limited access to sports facilities, gender inequality, and socio-economic barriers can impede the ability of youth to engage in sports and consequently benefit from its developmental effects. According to Khan et al. (2017), the lack of infrastructure and institutional support for sports in Pakistan poses a significant obstacle particularly for disadvantaged communities. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that the benefits of sports involvement are accessible to all segments of the population particularly girls and youth from marginalized backgrounds.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings provided robust evidence that sports involvement significantly contributes to the social, moral, and physical development of youth. The positive correlations observed between sports and key developmental outcomes suggest that sports can be a powerful tool for fostering future leaders who are socially responsible, physically fit, and morally grounded. However, for

sports to reach their full potential in reshaping youth development, the challenges of accessibility and equity in sports involvement in Pakistan must be addressed. By investing in sports infrastructure and promoting inclusive sports programs, Pakistan can leverage the transformative power of sports to shape the next generation of responsible and well-rounded leaders.

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