

Received: 20 July 2024, Accepted: 28 August 2024

**GENERAL PERCEPTION OF MALE STUDENTS OF ISLAMIC INSTITUTE
REGARDING AWARENESS, SPORTS PARTICIPATION, AND SPORTS
FACILITIES IN THE PROVINCE OF PUNJAB**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the general perception, awareness, sports participation, and availability of sports facilities among male students enrolled in Islamic institutes (madaris) in Punjab, Pakistan. While sports are widely recognized for their contribution to holistic development, enhancing physical health, mental well-being, and social skills, their integration within religious educational institutions remains limited. Rooted in a curriculum that prioritizes spiritual and intellectual instruction, many Islamic institutes often overlook physical education, despite Islamic teachings that historically encourage physical fitness and sportsmanship. A quantitative research design was employed, using a self-administered questionnaire distributed to 1,000 students enrolled in various levels of the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum across 10 divisions of Punjab. The questionnaire assessed students' general perception of sports, awareness of its benefits, participation levels, and access to facilities. Data analysis using SPSS Version 25 revealed significant but weak correlations among general perception, awareness, sports participation, and sports facilities. Demographic factors such as age, locality, and educational level were found to significantly influence students' perceptions and participation. Findings showed that students generally hold positive views toward sports, with 62.1% strongly

agreeing that sports improve health and 80.8% reporting regular physical activity. However, actual participation is hindered by limited institutional support, lack of scheduled sports breaks, inadequate facilities, and absence of professional guidance or sports scholarships. The study concludes that while Islamic teachings support the importance of physical activity, cultural norms, institutional neglect, and infrastructural limitations suppress student participation. It recommends the integration of structured physical education into madrassa curricula, the development of sports infrastructure, regular sports events, and awareness campaigns to align physical fitness with Islamic values. These measures can bridge the gap between awareness and action, fostering balanced development among male madrassa students.

Keywords: Islamic institutes, sports participation, student awareness, Dars-e-Nizami, physical education, Punjab, Pakistan

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Sports participation is widely recognized for its role in the holistic development of students, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions (Bailey et al., 2009). Sports enhance teamwork, discipline, leadership, and resilience, contributing to overall personal growth (Eime et al., 2013). Despite these advantages, integration of sports into educational systems remains uneven, especially in culturally and religiously grounded institutions (Mahmood, 2010). In Pakistan, Islamic institutes (madaris) primarily focus on religious instruction, often overlooking physical education due to limited resources, infrastructure, and interpretations of Islamic teachings (Rehman & Baig, 2020).

However, Islamic tradition emphasizes physical well-being. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ encouraged physical activities such as archery, wrestling, swimming, and horseback riding (Nasr, 2002). Despite these teachings, many Islamic institutes still do not prioritize sports. This study addresses this gap, particularly in Punjab, a province known for its rich sports culture (Rafique,

2015), yet where students in Islamic institutes are often excluded from organized sports. The study aims to investigate the level of awareness, participation, and perceptions of male students in these institutes regarding sports.

ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

The term "madrassa" denotes a center for Islamic learning and is often associated with mosques or stand-alone institutions (Zaman, 2002). While its core mission is religious education, covering subjects like the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh (jurisprudence), and Sharia, madrassas are diverse in form and curriculum. In Pakistan, madrassas serve a large Muslim population that upholds Islam as the foundation of culture and values (ICG, 2002).

Historically, madrassas offered advanced religious education distinct from maktabas, which focused solely on Quranic reading (Hussain, 2007). Today, they remain unique within Pakistan's educational structure due to their religious curriculum. Terminological variations such as madrasa, madrasah, and madaris are used across different sociopolitical contexts (Fair, 2008). In Pakistan, madrassas focus on moral and spiritual development, promoting Islamic values and identity (Qadir, 2015). Depending on size and level, they may be referred to as maktabas, dar-ul-ulooms, or jami'ahs, and students graduate as Huffaz, Qaris, or Ulema (Bano, 2012).

EDUCATION: THE ROADMAP

In Pakistan, formal education spans 16 years (excluding two pre-primary years). The structure includes five years of primary school (starting at age 5), three years of middle school, two years of high school (ending with SSC exams), followed by two years in college (HSSC), and a four-year bachelor's degree (BS), which replaced the older 2+2 BA/MA system (MoE, 2009). Master's programs (MS) now span 1–3 years.

This educational roadmap provides the context in which madrassas operate. Although religious institutions follow a different model, their educational

progression parallels the national structure to some extent (Andrabi et al., 2006). Understanding this is essential for situating madrassas within Pakistan's broader education landscape.

THE CURRICULUM OF MADRASSAS

Most Pakistani madrassas adhere to the **Dars-e-Nizami** curriculum, an 8-year course established in the Mughal era by Mullah Nizam Uddin (Rahman, 2004). The curriculum includes a wide range of religious and classical subjects such as Arabic grammar, logic, rhetoric, jurisprudence, theology, Quranic interpretation, and Hadith (Metcalf, 1982). Though designed centuries ago, it still dominates madrasa education today.

DARS-E-NIZAMI STRUCTURE

Students can enter Dars-e-Nizami after completing Grade 8. The course comprises eight levels (darajāt), starting from Oulah (first) to Dora Hadith (eighth). These levels correspond to public school grades: two years of Aamah (equivalent to SSC), Khaasah (HSSC), Aaliah (BA), and Aalamiah (MA). The religious curriculum is intensive and recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC, 2019), though its focus remains distinctly spiritual and intellectual rather than physical.

IMPORTANCE OF SPORTS PARTICIPATION FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Sports offer multidimensional benefits: they improve cardiovascular health, muscular strength, endurance, and support mental health by reducing stress and enhancing self-esteem (Strong et al., 2005; Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010). Moreover, they build social skills such as communication, leadership, and cooperation (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Academic performance can also improve through regular physical activity (Singh et al., 2012).

Islam supports physical fitness as part of spiritual life. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ promoted various forms of physical activity, underscoring that Islam values both physical and spiritual excellence (Kamali, 2010). Yet, despite these

endorsements, Islamic institutes often lack sports programs. Encouraging sports within these settings would enhance the well-rounded development of students, aligning religious and physical education (Ali & Khan, 2021).

FOCUS ON MALE STUDENTS IN ISLAMIC INSTITUTES IN PUNJAB

This study focuses on male students in Islamic institutes in Punjab, where sports like cricket, wrestling, football, and hockey are culturally significant (Rafique, 2015). Despite this, students in Islamic institutes face limited access to such activities. Cultural norms and a strict focus on religious learning often render physical activities secondary (Usmani, 2018). Previous studies indicate students are generally interested in sports but lack opportunities due to poor infrastructure and support (Khan et al., 2020).

Understanding the perceptions and participation levels of these students can help inform policies to promote balanced education. Addressing misconceptions about the incompatibility of sports with Islamic values is also essential (Javed & Iqbal, 2017).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary goal is to assess awareness and frequency of sports participation among male students in Islamic institutes in Punjab. Specific objectives include: Analyzing the relationships among students' general perceptions, awareness, participation, and sports facilities. Investigating differences in perceptions based on demographics. Exploring awareness of sports benefits across different demographics. Comparing sports participation levels based on demographics. Examining views on the availability and quality of sports facilities.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

To test the study's objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- There is no significant relationship between students' general perceptions, awareness, sports participation, and the availability of sports facilities.

- There is no significant difference in students' general perceptions of sports participation based on demographic characteristics.
- There is no significant difference in students' awareness of the benefits of sports participation based on demographic characteristics.
- There is no significant difference in the actual sports participation of students based on their demographic profiles.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The central issue is the low rate of sports participation among male students in Islamic institutes in Punjab, despite widespread awareness of its benefits (Ahmed et al., 2021). Unlike mainstream schools, these institutes seldom incorporate physical education into their curriculum. Contributing factors include infrastructural deficits, cultural norms, and misconceptions about sports' alignment with Islamic values (Rehman & Baig, 2020).

The study seeks to understand how these elements influence students' behaviors and beliefs regarding sports, aiming to bridge the gap between religious and physical education.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has broad implications for educators, religious leaders, and policymakers. It offers insights into how Islamic institutes can incorporate sports into their curricula without compromising religious values (Iqbal & Sheikh, 2019). The findings may help reshape policies that support the physical well-being of students alongside their spiritual and academic development.

By emphasizing the compatibility between Islam and physical education, the research promotes a more inclusive and balanced approach to education in Pakistan (Ali & Khan, 2021). It may also inform national health and education strategies that prioritize holistic student development (Naseem & Arif, 2022).

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

This study aimed to investigate the awareness and frequency of sports participation among male students in Islamic institutes in Punjab, Pakistan. A

quantitative research design was adopted, and SPSS Version 25 was used for data analysis. The research employed descriptive and inferential statistics, including Spearman's correlation, Mann-Whitney U test, and Kruskal-Wallis test, due to the non-parametric nature of the data as confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk test.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population comprised male students enrolled in various stages of the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum (Aammaa to Aalmiaa). Using a convenient sampling technique, data were collected from 1,000 male students across 10 divisions of Punjab, with 100 students from each division.

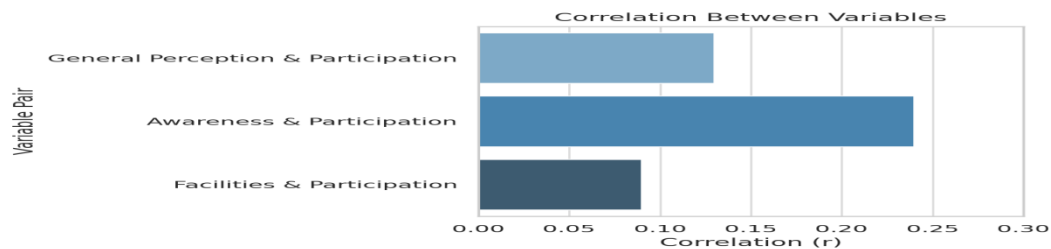
Instrument A55-item self-administered questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale was used. The questionnaire measured: General perception about sports, Awareness of sports benefits, Sports participation, and Availability of sports facilities. Reliability Analysis Cronbach's alpha values indicated: General perception ($\alpha = .70$): Acceptable, Awareness ($\alpha = .95$), and Sports facilities ($\alpha = .91$): Excellent, Sports participation ($\alpha = .54$): Moderate.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AGE DISTRIBUTION:

Study Results Summary

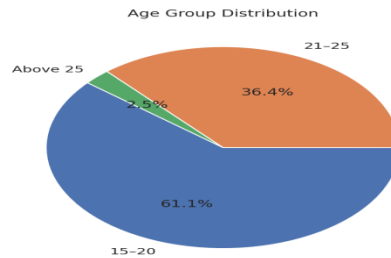
1. Correlation between Variables

This bar chart shows the strength of correlations between various factors and participation in physical activity. Awareness shows the strongest positive correlation.



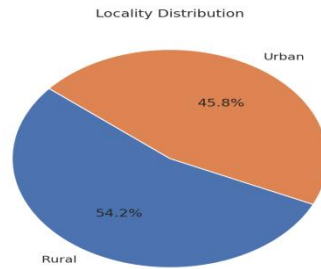
2. Age Group Distribution

This pie chart shows that the majority of participants are aged between 15 and 25.



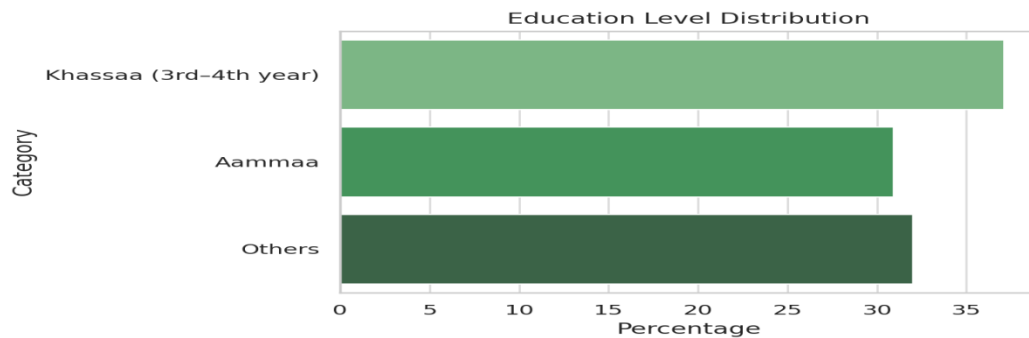
3. Locality Distribution

Participants are fairly evenly split between rural and urban localities, with a slight rural majority.



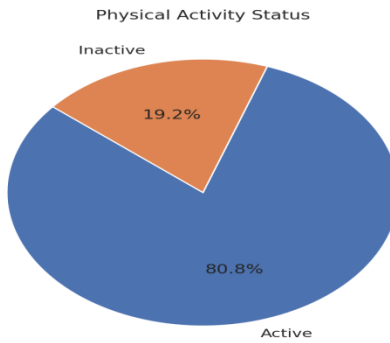
4. Education Level Distribution

This bar chart presents the education levels of participants, showing a diverse educational background.



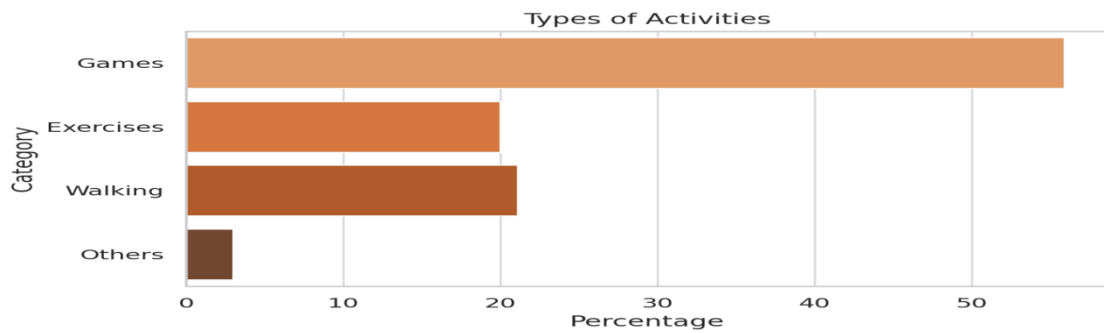
5. Physical Activity Status

The majority of participants are physically active, as shown in this pie chart.



6. Types of Activities

This bar chart shows that games are the most popular type of physical activity among participants.



Demographic Breakdown

These statistics give insight into who the participants are.

Age Group

Age Group	Percentage
15–20	61.1%
21–25	36.4%
Above 25	2.5%

- Most participants (nearly 98%) are **under 25**, suggesting a **youth-dominated sample**.

Locality

Locality	Percentage
Rural	54.2%
Urban	45.8%

- Slightly more participants are from **rural areas**, which may influence access to facilities and awareness levels.

Education Level

Level	Percentage
Khassaa (3rd–4th year)	37.1%
Aammaa (General)	30.9%
Others	32.0%

- Participants have **mixed education backgrounds**, with a sizable proportion in **higher education**.

Physical Activity Status

Status	Percentage
Active	80.8%
Inactive	19.2%

- A strong majority report being **physically active**, which is important context for interpreting the correlations.

Type of Activity

Type	Percentage
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Type	Percentage
Games (e.g., sports)	55.9%
Exercises (e.g., gym)	20.0%
Walking	21.1%
Others	3.0%

- **Games** are the most common activity type, followed by **walking and exercise**.

Interpretation and Implications

- Awareness campaigns might be the most effective in increasing participation, given the stronger correlation.
- Facilities matter less in this sample, perhaps due to lack of access or prioritization.
- Interventions should target **youth**, especially in **rural areas**, who already show a high activity rate.
- Activity programs focused on **games and walking** may appeal most broadly.

The findings demonstrate that while Islamic teachings do not inherently discourage sports, institutional and cultural limitations hinder full participation. Students showed high awareness and positive attitudes toward sports but lacked institutional support and facilities. Demographic factors such as age, locality, and academic level significantly influenced awareness, perception, and participation. These insights offer valuable direction for policy reforms, suggesting that sports infrastructure, curriculum integration, and awareness campaigns within Islamic institutes could enhance students' physical and social development.

This study investigates the awareness, attitudes, and frequency of sports participation among male students in Islamic institutes (madaris) in Punjab, Pakistan. Islamic teachings historically support physical fitness, yet most madaris prioritize religious education, often neglecting physical education. In a cultural context where sports like cricket, football, and wrestling are popular, students in Islamic institutes face barriers such as a lack of facilities, time constraints, and institutional indifference. The study aimed to examine the

general perception, level of awareness, actual participation, and perceived facilities related to sports among these students.

RESULTS SUMMARY

1. General Perception of Sports

- 62.1% strongly agreed that sports promote health 80% agreed that sports provide recreation. 65% wished to play but cited a lack of time. 50.2% disagreed that sports are unsafe or discouraged by religion
- 2. Awareness of Sports Benefits: 78% believed that improving eating and sleeping habits supports physical and mental health.
- 76.2% were aware of the social benefits of sports (teamwork, friendship). 70.5% had prior sports experience before joining Madaris. 68.9% viewed sports as essential for overall well-being.
- 3. Sports Participation: 81% were physically active. Only 29.3% said they have access to attend sports events. 45.5% strongly disagreed about the presence of professional coaches. Cultural and religious barriers were minimal; 65.2% strongly disagreed that Islam discourages sports.
- 4. Sports Facilities: 8.1% were satisfied with madrasa facilities. 56.9% reported that no annual sports tours were organized. 35.9% said there is no dedicated break for sports in the daily schedule.
- 45% believed faculty were supportive, but 47.5% said no scholarships were offered.
- 5. Inferential Findings: Significant relationships were found among general perception, awareness, sports participation, and sports facilities ($p < .05$). Demographics (age, locality, education level, division) significantly influenced all measured variables.
- Rural and older students demonstrated more positive perceptions and higher awareness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrate Physical Education in the Curriculum

Islamic institutes should include structured physical education periods, especially for younger students.

Infrastructure: Allocate space and resources for playgrounds, walking tracks, and basic equipment.

Train Religious Leaders and Teachers, Encourage Ustads to support sports by highlighting their importance in Islamic tradition.

Organize Regular Sports Events: Introduce annual sports tournaments and inter-madrassa competitions to increase engagement.

Policy-Level Interventions: The government and private sectors should fund sports development programs in religious institutions.

Awareness Programs Launch campaigns linking health, Islam, and fitness to counter any lingering misconceptions.

Sports Scholarships and Recognition: Establish scholarship programs to motivate talented athletes within madaris.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals a strong awareness and positive attitude toward sports among male students in Islamic institutes of Punjab. Despite this, actual participation is hampered by a lack of time, facilities, and institutional support. Most students do not see sports as conflicting with religious values; rather, they view them as beneficial for their physical, mental, and social development.

To bridge the gap between awareness and participation, Islamic institutes must take concrete steps by improving infrastructure, revising their academic routines, and embracing the holistic spirit of Islam, which promotes both physical and spiritual well-being. With proper policy reforms and supportive leadership, sports can become a vital part of madrassa education, contributing significantly to student development and community health.

Acknowledgment

This study is a component of my Ph.D. dissertation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor for her invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this research. Her expertise and mentorship have been instrumental in the successful completion of this work.

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