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## The Impact of Sports Participation on the Self-Confidence of School-Aged Children

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores how engaging in sports can help boost self-confidence among school-going children. Along with physical health, sports activities also support emotional balance, better coping skills, and stronger social connections. A descriptive correlational method was used, and input was gathered from 100 teachers working in four different schools in Lahore. The analysis showed a clear and strong link between taking part in sports and feeling confident ( $r = 0.807$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). It was also found that sports participation could strongly predict confidence levels ( $R^2 = 0.652$ ). These results highlight the importance of making sports a regular part of school life. Encouraging students through organized sports programs can play a big role in developing their emotional strength and self-belief. The study also stresses that a friendly and inclusive environment is key to getting the most out of such activities.

**Keywords:** Children, School-aged, Self-confidence, Sports, Sports participation

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1Background of the study

Background studies on child development emphasize the importance of physical activity in early education. Numerous international and local studies support the notion that structured sports activities help children build resilience, discipline, and confidence. However, there is limited local evidence exploring the specific link between sports participation and self-confidence in Pakistani school-aged children. This study aims to fill that gap.

Participation in sports significantly contributes to a child's physical and emotional development. It plays a key role in shaping their self-confidence, helping them handle challenges in school, social settings, and personal life. Sports encourage discipline, cooperation, leadership, and decision-making, all of which strengthen a child's self-belief and potential (Equinet et al., 2025).

Beyond physical fitness, regular involvement in sports supports emotional health by reducing anxiety, improving mood, and promoting a positive attitude (Myśliwiec et al., 2025). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many university students turned to recreational sports as a way to manage stress, showing the strong link between physical activity and emotional stability (Merzougui et al., 2025).

Positive support from parents and coaches—especially when it focuses on effort and progress rather than winning—further boosts a child's confidence (Latif et al., 2025; Suardika& Adelina, 2024). Gender dynamics also influence how children experience confidence in sports; boys are often encouraged more than girls, but targeted programs have helped bridge this gap (Oral et al., 2024).

In short, sports provide a strong base for children's personal growth. With the right support systems and inclusive efforts, these benefits can be extended to children from all backgrounds.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

This study holds significance as it highlights the critical role sports participation plays in shaping students' self-confidence. Understanding this relationship can help educators and policy makers design inclusive and structured sports programs within schools, leading to holistic student development. It also contributes to the growing body of knowledge in sports psychology, especially within the local context.

## **1.3statement of the research problem**

Self-confidence is a crucial component of a child's emotional and social development, influencing their academic performance, peer relationships, and overall well-being. In recent years, growing attention has been directed toward understanding how extracurricular activities, particularly sports, contribute to the development of self-confidence in school-aged children. While various studies suggest that participation in sports may enhance self-esteem and confidence levels, the extent and nature of this impact remain inconsistent across different age groups, genders, and school settings. Despite the recognized importance of this issue, limited research has been conducted within school environments to systematically examine how engagement in sports affects children's selfconfidence. This gap highlights the need for a focused investigation into the relationship between sports participation and self-confidence among school-aged children to provide evidence-based insights for educators, parents, and policymakers.

## **1.4 Objectives of the research study**

1. To investigate the impact of sports participation on self-confidence in school-aged children.
2. To explore the relationship between sports participation and self-confidence in schoolaged children.

### **1.5Hypothesis of the study**

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is a significant impact of sports participation on self-confidence in school-aged children.

**H<sub>2</sub>**There is a significant relationship between sports participation and self-confidence in school-aged children.

### **1.6Limitations of the study**

- The study was limited to students studying inthe following private school: Beacon house School, Canal Side Girls Campus, The Trust School, WAPADA Town Campus, The Trust School Thokar Niaz Baig Campus, Pak-Turk Maarif International School.
- Only full-time teachers with a minimum of one year of teaching experience were included in the sample.

### **1.7Delimitation of the study**

Part-time and visiting teachers were excluded from the study due to their limited and noncontinuous interaction with students. Furthermore, teachers who were not directly involved in or responsible for supervising sports activities were also excluded, as their perspectives may not accurately reflect the impact of sports participation on students' self-confidence.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction to Athletic Performance and Confidence**

Athletic performance is influenced by a combination of mental and physical elements. Factors such as confidence, anxiety, and overall mental health significantly affect how athletes perform. Research conducted on athletes indicates that improved mental well-being enhances both selfconfidence and performance, particularly among male athletes (Alisti et al., 2025). Precompetition anxiety, if not managed effectively, can impair performance; stress management strategies have been found to work better for males in these settings.

## **2.2 Psychological Factors Influencing Athletic Performance**

Psychological techniques like mental imagery have also shown a positive effect on athletic outcomes. For example, younger swimmers who engaged in mental visualization prior to their races exhibited quicker starts and stronger performance overall (Çakır et al., 2025). Recreational sports participation has similarly helped students reduce stress and build confidence, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Merzougui et al., 2025).

## **2.3 Psychological Techniques to Enhance Performance**

Physical conditioning particularly cardiovascular fitness—also plays a vital role in performance. Swimming, for instance, is known to enhance heart and lung health in children, highlighting how early engagement in physical activity contributes to long-term physical development (Lesmawan et al., 2025). For athletes with disabilities, customized training programs that address both physical and psychological needs are essential. These programs promote inclusion and help prevent injury (Liu et al., 2025).

## **2.4 Physical Conditioning and Long-Term Athletic Development**

Researchers have employed various methodologies, including experimental designs, surveys, and literature reviews, to study sports performance. However, many of these studies tend to focus either on short-term results or isolate mental and physical factors rather than examining their combined effects. Future research should address these gaps by exploring integrated training models and assessing long-term outcomes across different sports and genders.

## **2.5 Methodological Approaches in Sports Psychology Research**

Support from parents and coaches also plays a crucial role in nurturing confidence in young athletes. Positive reinforcement, encouragement, and a supportive coaching environment foster motivation and the willingness to take risks (Latif et al., 2025; Suardika& Adelina, 2024).

Participation in team sports has been shown to enhance social skills and boost self-esteem, while individual sports contribute to self-reliance and discipline.

## **2.6 Role of Social Support in Athlete Confidence**

Physical activity not only improves mood but also supports emotional regulation, both of which are linked to higher self-confidence in everyday life (Myśliwiec et al., 2025). Gender disparities in confidence often stem from cultural norms; however, well-designed intervention programs can support and encourage girls in sports participation (Oral et al., 2024).

## **2.7 Emotional and Gender Dimensions of Sports Participation**

Sports engagement has also been associated with academic improvements through the development of focus, discipline, and goal-setting skills (Xiao & Tang, 2025). Learning through failure cultivates resilience, while consistent encouragement and recognition of effort lead to lasting confidence (Durrani et al., 2024). Inclusive sports programs have proven effective in enhancing self-esteem and teaching life skills to children with disabilities and those from economically challenged backgrounds (Budimlić et al., 2025).

Although research in this field continues to grow, further studies are needed—particularly in areas like digital training environments and the long-term development of confidence into adulthood.

## **Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate the impact of sports participation on self-confidence among school-aged children (5 to 12 years). A correlational approach was used to determine the relationship between sports involvement and levels of self-confidence. Since children within this age bracket may not be reliable respondents, data was collected

secondarily through teachers. Teachers shared insights based on their regular observations of students' behavior, sports engagement, and confidence levels.

### **3.2 Population**

Population of the study consisted of 100 teachers from the following private schools; Beaconhouse

School Canal Side Girls Campus, The Trust School Green Town Campus, The Trust School Khayaban-e-Jinnah Campus, and The Trust School Thokar Niaz Baig Campus.

### **3.3 Sample Size**

The research was carried out in four private schools situated around Thokar Niaz Baig, Lahore. Each school had a staff strength of approximately 50 teachers. A total of 100 teachers were selected for the sample, which constituted 25 teachers from each of the four schools. This sampling ensured diversity and fair representation of the overall teaching faculty. The schools included.

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various schools. The population was divided into strata based on schools, and then teachers were randomly selected from each group to maintain balance and fairness in data representation.

### **3.5 Research Instrument**

A self-constructed questionnaire was designed to gather data from teachers regarding their observations about students' sports involvement and their self-confidence. The questionnaire was built using insights from relevant literature and refined through expert feedback to ensure its validity and alignment with the research objectives.

### **3.6 Reliability**

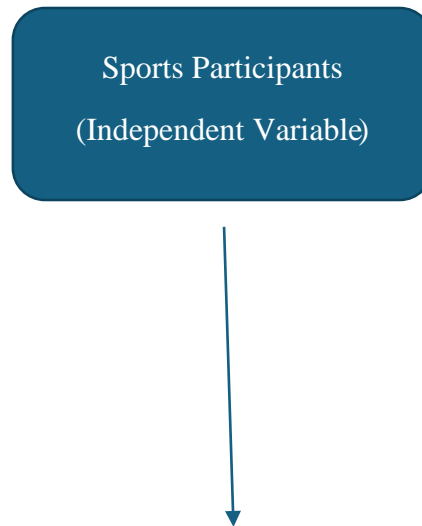
Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scales. The Self-Confidence Scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.921, indicating high internal consistency. The Sports Participation Scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.892, also reflecting strong reliability.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedure**

Data for the study on the impact of sports participation on the self-confidence of school-aged children were collected through a structured questionnaire. After obtaining permission from the administrations of the selected schools Beaconhouse School, Canal Side Girls Campus, The Trust School Green Town Campus, The Trust School Khayaban-e-Jinnah Campus, and The Trust School Thokar Niaz Baig Campus. The researcher coordinated with school staff to distribute the questionnaires at appropriate times to avoid disrupting academic activities. The questionnaires were given to full-time teachers who were directly involved in or supervised sports activities, as their observations were considered relevant to the study's focus. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The completed questionnaires were then collected and organized for analysis to explore the relationship between sports participation and students' self-confidence.

### **3.8 Variables Model**





### **3.9 Statistical Analysis**

Reliability of both the sports participation and self-confidence scales was assessed. Normality testing was performed for both variables. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for categorical data. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize both variables. Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between sports participation and self-confidence. Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the predictive effect of sports participation on self-confidence

### **3.10 Frequency**

Frequency distribution of the responses showed that most participants agreed that sports participation helps enhance students' self-confidence, teamwork, leadership, and personal growth.

### 3.10 Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scales. A commonly used interpretation table for Cronbach's Alpha values is below:

Cronbach's Alpha Value	Reliability
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent (High reliability)
$0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good (Reliable)
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$	Good and Acceptable
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

### 3.11 Reliability Statistics for the Self-Confidence Questionnaire

Measure	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	.921
Cronbach's Alpha (Standardized Items)	.923
Number of Items	10

### 3.12 Reliability Statistics for the Self-Confidence Questionnaire

Measure	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	.892
Cronbach's Alpha (Standardized Items)	.897
Number of Items	10

Table 4.11, 4.12 shows the Self-Confidence Scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.921, indicating high internal consistency. The Sports Participation Scale showed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.892, also reflecting strong reliability.

4.13 Ethical consideration

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, ensuring the study adhered to institutional research guidelines. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, and their voluntary participation and anonymity were guaranteed. Informed consent was obtained, and all data were kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

Data Analysis

Table No 4.1:Gender

	N	%
Male	63	63.0%
Female	37	37.0%
Total	100	100%

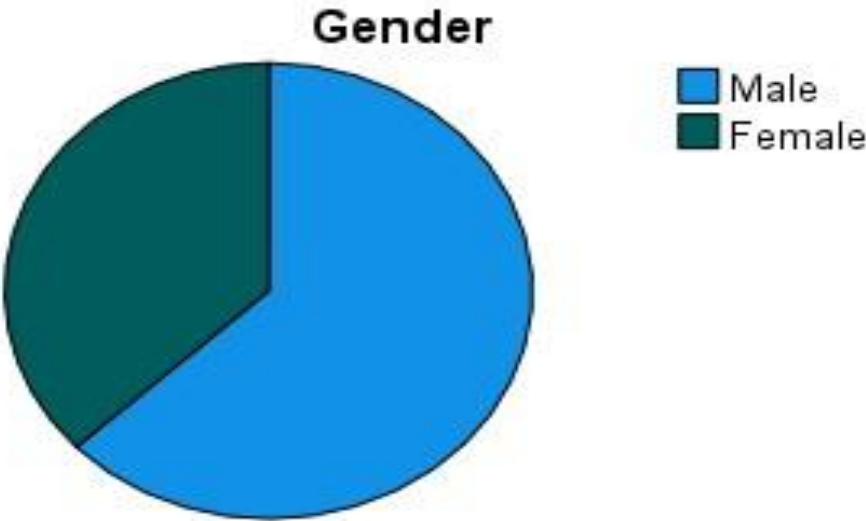


Table 4.1 presents that 63.0% of the participants were male, while 37.0% were female. This distribution shows a higher representation of male participants in the study sample.

Table No 4.2:Age

	N	%
5-8 Age	50	50.0%

9 to 12                      50                      50.0%

Table 4.2 presents that 50.0% of the participants were aged between 5 to 8 years, while 50.0% were under 9 to 12 years of age.

#### 4.3 Students at this school generally enjoy participating in sports activities.

	N	%	Mean	Std. D
SA	1	1.0%		
A	0	0.0%		
UD	8	8.0%		
DA	27	27.0%		
SDA	64	64.0%		
Total	100	100%	4.53	.73

Students at this school generally enjoy participating in sports activities.

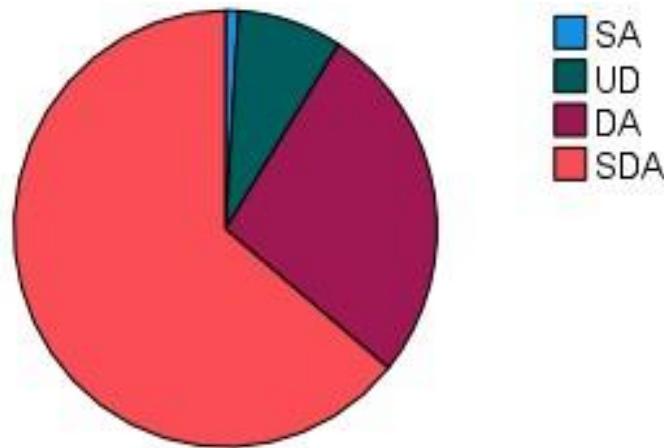


Table 4.3 presents that 27.0% of the participants disagreed, and a majority of 64.0% strongly disagreed with the statement, while only 8.0% were undecided. A very small proportion, 1.0%, strongly agreed, and none agreed. The Mean Score (M=4.53) indicates a negative perception regarding the statement among the participants, with a relatively low Standard Deviation (S.D=0.73) suggesting that the responses were relatively consistent.

**Table No 4.4Most students participate actively in sports events at school.**

	N	%	Mean	Std. D
SA	3	3.0%		
A	0	0.0%		
UD	9	9.0%		
DA	32	32.0%		
Most students participate actively in sports events at school				
SDA	56	56.0%		
Total	100	100%	4.38	.89

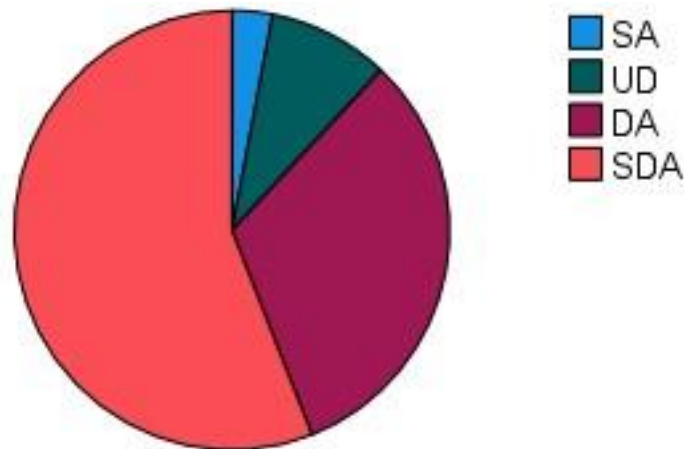


Table 4.4 presents that 32.0% of the participants disagreed, and 56.0% strongly disagreed with the statement, while 9.0% were undecided. A small proportion, 3.0%, strongly agreed, and none agreed with the statement. The Mean Score (M=4.38) indicates a generally negative response to the statement among the participants, with a relatively low Standard Deviation (S. D=0.89) suggesting that the responses were relatively consistent.

**Table No 4.5Students are more focused and attentive in class after participating in sports.**

	N	%	Mean	Std. D
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Students are more focused and attentive in class after participating in sports..	SA	6	6.0%	4.36	1.07
	A	0	0.0%		
	UD	9	9.0%		
	DA	22	22.0%		
	SDA	63	63.0%		
	Total	100	100%		

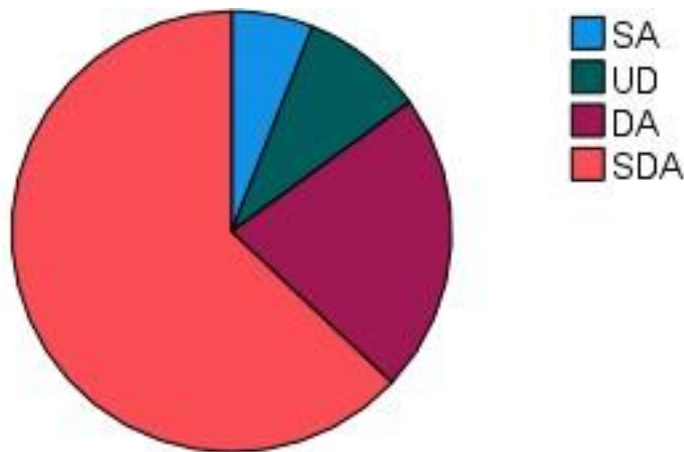


Table 4.5 presents that 22.0% of the participants disagreed, and a majority of 63.0% strongly disagreed with the statement, while 9.0% were undecided. Only 6.0% of the participants strongly agreed, and none agreed. The Mean Score (M=4.36) indicates a generally negative response to the statement among the participants, with a moderate Standard Deviation (S. D=1.07) suggesting some variability in responses.

**Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics for Sports Participation and Self-Confidence**

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Sports Participation	1.45	0.74
Self-Confidence	1.57	0.77

#### 4.7 Normality Testing

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p-value)	Shapiro-Wilk (p-value)	Normality Assumption
Sports Participation	< 0.05	< 0.05	Not Normally Distributed
Self-Confidence	< 0.05	< 0.05	Not Normally Distributed

Table 4.7 shows the normality of data that was assessed through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Both tests indicated that the data for sports participation and self-confidence were not normally distributed ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, given the sample size of 100, parametric tests were deemed acceptable.

#### 4.8 Pearson Correlation between Sports Participation and Self-Confidence

Variables	r	p-value	Significance
Sports Participation & Self-Confidence	0.807	< .001	Strong positive correlation, statistically significant

Table 4.8 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient between sports participation and selfconfidence was found to be  $r = 0.807$ , with a p-value less than 0.001. This demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables.

#### 4.9 Regression Analysis

Model Summary	Value
R Square	0.652
Standardized Beta ( $\beta$ )	0.807

Significance (p-value) < .001

Table 4.9 Simple linear regression revealed that sports participation significantly predicted selfconfidence. The R-square value was 0.652, showing that 65.2% of the variation in self-confidence could be explained by sports participation.

**Table 4.10 ANOVA Summary for the Regression Model**

Source	df	F	p-value
Regression	1	183.364	< .001
Residual	98	—	—
Total	99	—	—

Table 4.10 ANOVA results indicated model significance,  $F(1,98) = 183.364$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The standardized beta coefficient was 0.807, again confirming the significance of the predictor.

## FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Findings

The findings support the hypothesis that sports participation plays a vital role in building selfconfidence in students. A high correlation value ( $r = 0.807$ ) and an R-square of 65.2% confirm the positive effect of sports engagement. The results emphasize the need for including structured sports programs in school settings to support students' psychological and personal development. Future studies can explore broader psychological dimensions and longer-term effects of sports involvement on self-esteem and confidence.

### 5.2 Discussion

The findings of this study clearly show that regular sports participation is strongly connected to improved self-confidence among students. The high correlation ( $r = 0.807$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) suggests that students who are actively involved in sports tend to display more confidence in their academic and social lives. This supports earlier research that links sports involvement to personal development, stronger leadership abilities, and emotional strength. The reliability scores for the



tools used (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.921 for self-confidence and 0.892 for sports participation) confirm that the questionnaire was consistent and trustworthy. Regression results also reinforce the strength of the relationship sports participation explained 65.2% of the variation in selfconfidence. This aligns with well-known sports psychology theories which say that engaging in sports helps build not just physical strength but also motivation, social bonding, and belief in one's own abilities. Team sports especially play a key role. Through teamwork, decision-making, and leading others, students gradually develop a confident and resilient personality. These results are in line with existing literature that shows how sports help reduce anxiety, improve mental wellbeing, and increase self-worth. Starting physical activity from an early age has long-term benefits for both the mind and body, as supported by recent studies. Although the data did not follow a normal distribution, the sample size ( $N = 100$ ) was large enough to apply standard statistical methods. This strengthens the credibility of the outcomes.

The results highlight the urgent need for more focus on physical activity in schools. Sports should be considered essential for student growth, not just optional. Schools can design structured programs and awareness campaigns to encourage students to take part regularly. These efforts will not only boost confidence but also improve mental health, teamwork, and emotional regulation. However, some limitations must be noted. The study was limited to a specific sample of teachers from four schools in one region, so the results may not fully represent all students. Future research should include more diverse groups from different backgrounds. Also, although this study found a strong connection, it does not prove cause and effect. Future studies especially experimental or long-term are needed to fully understand how sports shape confidence over time. Other important factors, like family support, coaching methods, and economic background, should also be studied. In conclusion, this research proves that sports participation plays a powerful role in boosting students' confidence. Schools should give sports the same importance as academic learning to support well-rounded development in children.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study clearly shows that students who regularly participate in sports tend to be more confident in themselves. Through sports, they learn important life skills like leadership, decision-making, and how to handle challenges. These experiences not only shape their personality but also support their overall mental and emotional health.

When schools include proper sports programs as part of their regular schedule, it gives students a chance to grow beyond academics. Coaches and teachers can play a key role by encouraging teamwork, focusing on skill development, and keeping students motivated.

Although this research found a strong link between sports and confidence, more detailed studies are needed to fully understand the long-term impact especially how sports might affect emotional control, academic success, or social development over time.

To sum up, involving students in sports from an early age can help them become more confident, independent, and better prepared to face real-life challenges. It's not just about physical fitness it's a complete tool for personal growth.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that schools integrate structured sports programs into the regular curriculum. Teachers and coaches should focus on inclusive practices to encourage all students to participate

1. Schools should integrate structured sports programs into the regular academic curriculum to promote self-confidence and overall student development.
2. Teachers and coaches should adopt inclusive practices that encourage participation from all students, regardless of ability, gender, or background.
3. Schools should organize regular inter-class and inter-school sports events to boost students' confidence through participation and achievement.

4. Sports activities should be made accessible to children with physical or learning disabilities to ensure equal development opportunities.
5. Training programs should be offered to physical education teachers to help them understand how to support students' emotional and psychological growth through sports.
6. Parents should be encouraged to motivate their children to take part in school sports, as home support strengthens confidence development.
7. Schools should maintain a balance between competitive and recreational sports to cater to different student interests and comfort levels.
8. Confidence-building exercises, such as team-building games and leadership roles in sports teams, should be integrated into physical education sessions.
9. Future research should explore the long-term (longitudinal) effects of sports participation on emotional well-being and academic performance.
10. Studies should also consider the influence of parental support, gender-related differences, and socio-economic status on students' engagement and outcomes in sports.

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