

## Interest and Attitude towards Involvement in Sports among Youth in Kerala

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### Abstract

Knowledge and awareness on the importance of physical activity in the overall development of an individual would contribute to a significant positive attitude towards sports. Hence it is important to educate the youth and the public on the benefits associated with physical activity, to improve their participation. The attitude towards sports and physical activity reflects how the people perceive sports at the outset, with respect to their own participation and others' participation in sports. The purpose of the study is to examine the interest and attitudes towards physical activity participation from students studying in arts and science colleges in Kerala. A sample of 1011 was drawn from the target population taking representations from three broader categories of departments namely languages (n=96), social sciences (n=423), and Sciences (n=492). Cross tab percentage analyses and chi-square analyses were employed in order to compare the differences in attitudes with respect to gender and department. Male students show a deeper inclination towards involvement in physical activity and sports, while female students find health & fitness equally important. Rapport from teachers, college/university administrators, and parents are significant in promoting youth involvement in sports.

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The development of sports and promotion of sports culture in a society is highly influenced by the attitude and interest towards physical activity participation of its stakeholders. The attitude towards sports and physical activity reflects how the people perceive sports at the outset, with respect to their own participation and others' participation in sports. Traditionally, societies in Kerala have not acknowledged the youth active into sporting life, and have always been a down-puller in academic institutions. Taking into consideration the alarming report of the world health organization on Kerala's health status and lifestyle related diseases, it's high time to empower the youth with the three-fold perspectives of youth sport namely campus sport, community sport, and competitive sport.

In spite of the meritorious achievements of women in sports in Kerala, women participation is often discouraged by parents and teachers, as they consider it to be immoral in certain contexts. The desperate reason behind this ill-treatment is attributed to their negative attitude towards sports and defective perception of sports participation.

Some of the teachers even go to an extent of threatening students involved in sports. Making it worse, many athletes are victimized in examinations because of their participation in sports (Amuchie, 1986). Adding to the observations made by Ekpeyong (1986) that many retrogressive academics believe that the students who take part in sports are not serious students, Joseph (2012) studied the attitude of university community towards sporting life of students in Nigeria. He employed this study in nine universities from the three geo-political zones in Southern Nigeria. The sample consisted of student captains of fifteen NUGA sports, directors of sports and their assistants and honorary coaches from thirty one universities in Southern Nigeria, adding to a total of 153 sports officials and 270 students. His findings reveal that that the attitude of the university community is not antithetical to sports performance among Nigerian university students.

A survey conducted by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) in USA on a representative sample of 1,021 adults (18 years of age and older, 50% male & 50% female) and 500 teens (ages 12-17), to examine their attitudes toward physical activity and physical education revealed interesting facts related to attitude towards physical activity. The results shows 77% parents feel that their attitudes towards physical education will in turn affect their child's attitude towards physical education; 84% adults have a positive perception about their child's physical education classes; and 73% of American adults believe that physical education will assist the development of learning capabilities of their children in other subject areas, such as math, reading, or science.

The need to establish a rich culture of participation in sports may be enriched by total community involvement in campuses and outside to bring about a change in the attitude of youth, parents and the general public. Knowledge and awareness on the importance of physical activity in the overall development of an individual would contribute to a significant positive attitude towards sports. Hence it is important to educate the youth and the public on the benefits associated with physical activity to improve their participation.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To examine the interest towards involvement in sports related activities among students studying in arts and science colleges in Kerala.
2. To examine the attitude towards college students' physical activity participation among the student support systems.
3. To examine the relative interests and attitudes towards youth participation in sports with respect to gender and teaching departments.

### **Methods**

A sample of 1011 was drawn from the target population of college going youth from four state universities of Kerala- Kannur University (n=340), University of Calicut (n=214), Mahatma Gandhi University (n=200), and Kerala University (n=257). The students represent three broader categories of departments namely languages (n=96), social sciences (n=423), and Sciences (n=492). The sample also ensured youth representations from rural and urban areas of Kerala.

The responses related to the attitude of participants towards involvement in various sports related endeavours were solicited through a self made questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of nine questions, of which five questions seek their responses related to their interest and attitude towards involvement in sporting related activities, and 4 questions seek their responses with respect to the attitude of parents, teachers, administrators, and fellow students.

The data collected were treated with cross tab analyses like percentage analyses and chi-square analyses to examine and compare the attitude towards participation in sports with respect to gender and department.

**Results**

Table.1 represents the distribution of total sample with respect to gender, which shows that the sample consists of 65% female participants and 35 % male participants. The differences in size indicate that the number of female students enrolled in the arts and science colleges in four universities in Kerala are significantly higher than their male counterparts.

**Table.1: Distribution of sample with respect to Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	352	34.8	34.8	34.8
	Female	659	65.2	65.2	100.0
	Total	1011	100.0	100.0	

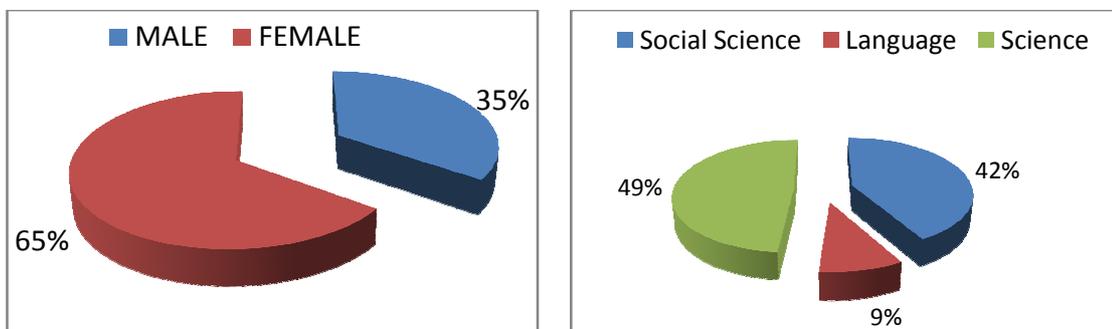


Fig.: Distribution of sample with respect to Gender and Department

The distribution of sample with respect to the department, as given in table 2 shows that 42% of participants belong to social science department, 9% of participants to language studies department, and 49% of participants belong to science department.

**Table.2: Distribution of sample with respect to Department**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social Science	423	41.8	41.8	41.8
	Language	96	9.5	9.5	51.3

Science	492	48.7	48.7	100.0
Total	1011	100.0	100.0	

The results from table 3 indicate that 60% males and 46% females are very concerned about their health and fitness add to a total of 51% and 36.6% males and 51% females were moderately concerned. The department wise concern over health and fitness shows a high concern of 53%, 47%, and 50%; and a moderate concern of 44%, 50% & 47 % between social science, language, and science departments respectively. The results of Chi-square tests shows that there exists a significant difference between male and female participants with respect to their concern about health and fitness ( $\chi^2=19.01$ ,  $p<.001$ ); and no significant difference observed between the departments ( $\chi^2=1.3$ ,  $p= 0.86$ ).

**Table.3. Concerned about Health and Fitness**

		GENDER			DEPARTMENT		Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
Very much	Frequency	212	305	224	45	248	517
	Percent	60.20%	46.40%	53.10%	47.40%	50.40%	51.20%
Some what	Frequency	129	335	187	47	230	464
	Percent	36.60%	51.00%	44.30%	49.50%	46.70%	46.00%
Not at all	Frequency	11	17	11	3	14	28
	Percent	3.10%	2.60%	2.60%	3.20%	2.80%	2.80%
Total	Frequency	352	657	422	95	492	1009

Table.4 indicates the results of cross tab analysis of participants' interest in sports/physical activity participation with respect to gender and department. It shows a percentage of 83, 16 & 1 among male participants, and 46, 48 & 6 percent among female participants respectively for high, moderate and no interest for participation in physical activity. However, all the departments show values similar to each other with only 4% showing no interest at all.

**Table.4. Interested in participating in Sports/ fitness activities**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
Very much	Frequency	287	301	243	63	282	588
	Percent	82.70%	46.00%	57.90%	65.60%	58.10%	58.70%
Somewhat	Frequency	56	314	159	29	182	370
	Percent	16.10%	48.00%	37.90%	30.20%	37.50%	37.00%
Not at all	Frequency	4	39	18	4	21	43
	Percent	1.20%	6.00%	4.30%	4.20%	4.30%	4.30%
Total	Frequency	347	654	420	96	485	1001

The chi-square analysis of the data indicate that the difference of interest between male and female participants for participation in physical activity/sport is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), where as there is no difference between the departments with respect to interest in participation in physical activity/sport.

The results from table.5 indicate that 60% males and 27% females are very interested in sports programs organised at college, and 32% males and 50% females were moderately interested. The department wise interest in college sports programmes shows a high interest of 36%, 35%, and 41%; and a moderate interest of 47%, 47% & 41 % between social science, language, and science departments respectively.

**Table.5. Interested in the sports programs organized at your college/department**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
Very much	Frequency	208	178	153	33	200	386
	Percent	59.6%	27.2%	36.3%	34.7%	41.1%	38.5%
Somewhat	Frequency	112	326	196	45	197	438
	Percent	32.1%	49.8%	46.6%	47.4%	40.5%	43.7%
Not at all	Frequency	29	150	72	17	90	179
	Percent	8.3%	22.9%	17.1%	17.9%	18.5%	17.8%
Total	Frequency	349	654	421	95	487	1003

The chi-square analysis of the data indicate that the differences of interest between male and female participants in sport programmes organized at college is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), where as there is no significant difference between the departments with respect to interest in participation in physical activity/sport organised in colleges.

The results of crosstab analysis (table.6) indicate that 98% male students and 94 % female students are keen to information pertaining to health and fitness. Whereas 96% of social science students, 91% of language students, and 97% science students are keen on information pertaining to health and students.

**Table.6. Keen on information pertaining to health and fitness**

		GENDER			DEPARTMENT			
		Male	Female	Total	Social Science	Language	Science	Total
YES	Frequency	340	613	953	399	86	468	953
	Percent	97.7%	94.3%	95.5%	95.5%	90.5%	96.5%	95.5%
NO	Frequency	8	37	45	19	9	17	45
	Percent	2.3%	5.7%	4.5%	4.5%	9.5%	3.5%	4.5%
Total	Frequency	348	650	998	418	95	485	998

The results of chi-square analysis of the data indicate that there exist significant difference between the participants' responses with respect to gender ( $\chi^2=6.06$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and department ( $\chi^2=6.56$ ,  $p<.05$ ) at 0.05 level of significance.

The results on table.7 indicate that 90% male students and 74 % female students like to be a part of a club organized for Health/Fitness/Sporting activities in the colleges. 79% of social science students, 76% of language students, and 79% science students responded in favour of the health/fitness/sports clubs.

**Table.7. Like to be a part of a club organized for Health/Fitness/Sporting activities**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
YES	Frequency	318	487	332	72	401	805
	Percent	90.3%	74.4%	78.7%	75.8%	81.8%	79.9%
NO	Frequency	34	168	90	23	89	202
	Percent	9.7%	25.6%	21.3%	24.2%	18.2%	20.1%
Total	Frequency	352	655	1007	422	95	490

The chi-square test shows significant difference between the responses of male and female students ( $\chi^2=36.51$ ,  $p<.001$ ), whereas there found no significant difference in responses between the students from different departments ( $\chi^2=2.54$ ,  $p>.05$ ).

Table.8 indicates the results of cross tab analysis of interest of college/department administration in promoting sports in campuses with respect to gender and department. The values of all categories with respect to gender and department shows similar responses with a total of 44% agree that the college administration highly promote sports, 38% agree to moderate promotion, and 18% responded the college administration not-at-all promote sports in campus. The values of chi-square analysis show no significant difference in the opinion of participants between the categories ( $p>.05$ ) at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table.8. College/department administration promote sports in the campus**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
Very much	Frequency	142	289	197	32	202	431
	Percent	41.00%	45.30%	46.90%	38.60%	42.0%	43.8%
Somewhat	Frequency	135	242	163	35	179	377
	Percent	39.00%	37.90%	38.80%	42.20%	37.20%	38.30 %
Not at all	Frequency	69	107	60	16	100	176
	Percent	19.90%	16.80%	14.30%	19.30%	20.80%	17.90 %
	Frequency	346	638	420	83	481	984

The cross tab analysis of subject teachers 'encouragement and appreciation to participation and performance in sports (table.9) indicate a similarity in responses between the male and female students. In department wise analysis 21%, 20% & 24% of students respectively from social science, language and science department indicate all the teachers appreciate their sports participation, where as 20%, 25% & 20% of students responded that other subject teacher don't appreciate their participation in sports. The chi-square tests show no significant difference in responses between the categories with respect to gender and department at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table.9. Subject teachers encourage/appreciate participation in sports**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
<b>All of them</b>	Frequency	82	137	86	17	116	219
	Percent	23.8%	21.4%	20.5%	19.5%	24.2%	22.2%
<b>Some of them</b>	Frequency	190	391	251	48	282	581
	Percent	55.1%	61.1%	59.9%	55.2%	58.9%	59.0%
<b>None</b>	Frequency	73	112	82	22	81	185
	Percent	21.2%	17.5%	19.6%	25.3%	16.9%	18.8%
<b>Total</b>	Frequency	345	640	419	87	479	985

The results from table.15 indicate that 50% of male students and 33% of female students responded that their parents highly support their participation in sports, where as 39% male students and 49% female students agreed for moderate support, and 11% male students and 19% female students for no support at all by their parents. The departmental categories marked 38%, 39% & 40% for high support, 47%, 49%, & 43% for moderate support, and 16%, 12%, & 17% respectively for social science, language, and science departments. The chi-square analysis indicate that there exist significant differences between the responses of male and female students with respect to their parental support/advice for sport participation ( $\chi^2=30.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ), however no significant difference was found between the responses of departmental categories ( $\chi^2=2.39$ ,  $p=.664$ ).

**Table.15. Parents support/ advice for participation in sports**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
<b>Very much</b>	Frequency	176	215	158	37	196	391
	Percent	50.1%	32.9%	37.5%	39.4%	40.1%	38.9%
<b>Somewhat</b>	Frequency	137	317	196	46	212	454
	Percent	39.0%	48.5%	46.6%	48.9%	43.4%	45.2%
<b>Not at all</b>	Frequency	38	121	67	11	81	159
	Percent	10.8%	18.5%	15.9%	11.7%	16.6%	15.8%
<b>Total</b>	Frequency	351	653	421	94	489	1004

The results of the cross-tab analysis of popularity of sportspersons in campuses (table.16) indicate that 27% male participants and 33% female participants consider them very popular, 52% males and 54% females consider them moderately popular, and 21% males and 13% females responded that the sportspersons are not popular at all in the campuses. The inter department scores suggests a high popularity of 37%, 30% & 26% respectively for social science, language, and science departments, where as 13%, 25% & 16% of social science, language, and science departments respectively suggests that the sportspersons are not popular at all in college campuses.

**Table.16. Popularity of sportspersons in campuses**

		GENDER		DEPARTMENT			Total
		Male	Female	Social Science	Language	Science	
<b>Very much</b>	Frequency	94	213	157	25	125	307
	Percent	27.4%	33.4%	37.3%	30.5%	26.2%	31.3%
<b>Somewhat</b>	Frequency	178	345	209	36	278	523
	Percent	51.9%	54.1%	49.6%	43.9%	58.2%	53.3%
<b>Not at all</b>	Frequency	71	80	55	21	75	151
	Percent	20.7%	12.5%	13.1%	25.6%	15.7%	15.4%
<b>Total</b>	Frequency	343	638	981	421	82	478

The chi-square analysis indicate that differences in the responses to popularity of sportspersons in campuses between male and female students ( $\chi^2=12.4$ ,  $p=.002$ ) are significant, and the differences with respect to department is statistically significant ( $\chi^2=20.50$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

### Discussion

The results indicate that the male population of the college going youth shows high interest with respect to their concern for health and fitness, interest in participation in sport/fitness activities, and interest in sports activities organized by the college with significantly higher values of 60%, 82% & 60% respectively, compared to their female counterparts with 46%, 46% & 27% respectively. However, the students' responses to the above three variables show no difference between the categories with respect to their departments. The values above represent the proactive nature of male students with regard to sports, while the female students in general retract from active involvement in sports related activities.

Similarly, a higher percent of male population are keen to information pertaining to health and fitness (98%), and like to be a part of clubs organised for health/fitness/sports (90%) compared to the female population with scores 94% and 74% respectively, though the interests of the females are also remarkable. The scores of the three departments are also significant with values ranging from 90%- 96% and 76%-82% respectively for keenness to information pertaining to health and fitness and their interest to be a part of clubs organised for the purpose. The female students (33%) and social

science department students (37%) rated high on the popularity of sportspersons in the campus as compared to male students (27%), and language students (31%) and science students (26%). This shows the attitude of fellow students towards the sports students.

The analysis of attitudes of students support system like college administration, other subject teachers and parents in promoting youth participation in physical activity indicate that a total of 44% & 23% of responses favoured the extreme support of college administration and other subject teachers respectively, 38% & 59% respectively support/appreciate sports participation moderately, where as 18% and 19% of administrators and teachers respectively doesn't support sports participation among students at all. The parental support indicates slightly higher value for male students (50%) compared to female students (33%), which may be the reflection of the general attitude existing in the society towards girls' participation in sports.

### **Conclusion**

While male students shows a deeper inclination towards involvement in physical activity and sports, female students find health & fitness equally important. The results of the study are substantiated by the study undertaken by Khan et al., (2012) on 'college students' attitudes towards physical activities', which indicate the overall attitudes of the students regarding the attitude towards physical activity were measured positive. Koca et al., (2005) indicated that students have positive attitudes toward PE because of their desire to be successful, and because they spend their time in PE lessons without pressure of academic success. Nelson, Benson & Jensen, (2010) reveals that the negative attitudes towards physical activities are attributed to their beliefs that exercise is unpleasant in some way like 'it is painful' or has negative consequences like 'it is too time-consuming'. Hence it is important to establish a positive environment for participation in sports equally attractive for male and female students through multiple prospects of youth sports programmes like community sports and college sports. Rapport from teachers, college/university administrators, and parents play a significant role in youth's involvement in sports. Enrichment of a culture of sports with an emphasis to 'Sports for All' would help instill a positive attitude towards sports across all sections of society.

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