

## Influencing Factors of College Students' Sports Participation

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### Abstract

Regular participation in exercise can prevent diseases and maintain health. However, adolescents around the world are not physically active enough. This study aims to sort out the factors influencing college students' participation in sports, to promote college students to participate in more sports, and maintain physical and mental health. After sorting out the factors that affect college students' sports participation, it was found that personal attributes, sports facilities, role models, peers, social culture, smartphones, health management, and academic performance may all be factors that affect college students' sports participation. School administrators can start from these factors to create an environment more conducive to college students' sports participation, eliminate the adverse effects of these factors, and allow these factors to play a positive role in encouraging more college students to participate in sports.

**Keywords:** Sports Participation, Physical Activity, Youth Sports, College Sports Activities, Extracurricular Sports Participation.

### Introduction

Numerous studies have proven that regular participation in sports brings many benefits to people, both for physical and mental health. Regular physical activity can improve people's health, prevent some diseases, control obesity, and even extend life (Nxumalo & Edwards, 2017; Forrester, 2015; Kotarska *et al.*, 2021). Exercise can enhance people's cardiopulmonary function and muscle capacity, be beneficial to people's mental health, eliminate depression, and improve people's life satisfaction (Li, 2020; Snedden *et al.*, 2019). Although an active lifestyle has many obvious benefits, many college students choose unhealthy lifestyles that lack exercise (Kim *et al.*, 2021). From a global perspective, there is a problem of insufficient exercise among teenagers and lack of exercise. remains a serious problem for college students (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2023).

Regular physical exercise is crucial to maintaining physical and mental health, but many college students do not exercise enough and lead unhealthy lifestyles. Understanding the

factors that influence sports participation among college students is critical to promoting a physically active lifestyle and can lead to the development of effective strategies to promote sports participation among college students. This study reviews the factors that influence college students' participation in sports, including personal attributes, social culture, role models, sports facilities, academics, peers, health and smart devices, etc., which will all impact college students' sports participation behavior. To promote college students' sports participation, we can consider starting from these factors to create an environment more conducive to sports participation and a positive life culture to cultivate students' active and healthy exercise habits.

### **Personal Attributes**

Personal attributes will limit students' sports participation behavior, such as age, marital status, etc. College students are mainly young people and are at an ideal age to cultivate an interest in sports. Age plays an indisputable and unique role in sports participation, especially competitive sports. Age, gender, and marital status were significantly associated with students' sports participation. Age is a major factor in sports participation, as increasing age reduces a person's stress tolerance, fitness, strength, endurance, and oxygen uptake. Marital status also determines students' enthusiasm for participating in sports. Most students who participate in sports (especially competitive sports) are unmarried. Physical education is associated with various cognitive abilities and other personal characteristics (Awosika & Olusola, 2014). Research on the relationship between soft skills (adaptability, curiosity, initiative, leadership, perseverance, and social awareness) and personal attributes. Age was shown to be positively related to initiative, leadership, and perseverance. Exercise not only requires physical activity but is also related to personal cognitive abilities and personal soft skills (Feraco & Meneghetti, 2022). Therefore, there is a link between personal attributes and exercise.

### **Sports Facilities**

Sports facilities are an essential element for students to participate in sports activities. The lack of sports facilities will seriously affect students' sports participation behavior. Schools should provide sports facilities and programs suitable for students. The availability of sports facilities and projects has a great impact on college students' sports participation (Sayyd *et al.*, 2021). The sports facilities provided by the school can actively encourage students to use these facilities and participate in sports activities. College students' satisfaction with school sports facilities is significantly related to their sports behavior (Cheng, 2019). The lack of sports facilities seriously affects students' sports behaviors (Nxumalo & Edwards, 2017). Public universities and private universities have different effects on students' sports participation. Private universities have better sports facilities and more opportunities for sports participation. Therefore, private universities have more opportunities for students to participate in sports. Similarly, Due to abundant sports facilities, big cities have more sports participation opportunities than small cities (Laar *et al.*, 2019).

Due to some socio-cultural requirements of gender segregation, women can only use certain sports facilities or at certain times. These regulations result in a lack of available sports facilities for female college students (Al-Tawel & AlJa'afreh, 2017). Some students do not exercise due to a mismatch between the availability of sports facilities and their spare time (Issah *et al.*, 2015).

**Role Models**

Most learning begins with observation, so learning relies heavily on role modeling (Bandura, 1997). The scope of role models is very wide, and the role models that young people get come from various fields. Parents, teachers, athletes, and celebrities may all be regarded as role models, and role models will change in life. Role models can have a strong influence on sports participation, which is not always positive (Payne *et al.*, 2003). Parents' sports behavior has an impact on college students' sports participation, and college students' sports participation is consistent with that of their parents. The time and frequency of parents' participation in sports are significantly positively related to college students (Zhang & Wang, 2019). The influence of parents on students' sports participation is a common social aspect, and parental support and role models can have a significant impact on students' sports participation. Most athletes' interest in participating in sports is sparked by their parents. In the past, some parents discouraged women from engaging in physical exercise. Now they encourage their children to do it because they know sports are a potential source of income (Aminat, 2016).

**Peer Effect**

Several studies have proposed a positive relationship between college students' sports participation and the sports behaviors of their friends. Physical exercise partners are the main influencing factors of female college students' sports participation behavior (Vignery *et al.*, 2020). Sports clubs also play a role in college students' sports participation. Students who have participated in school sports clubs participate in sports activities more frequently. Students who participate in sports clubs exercise more frequently than students who do not participate in sports clubs. Participating in sports clubs has a significant impact on students' physical health (Qiu & Ye, 2021).

Women can participate in sports activities for social interaction. Girls prefer friendship, health, and social interaction compared to boys. For girls to participate more actively in sports activities, they must experience the fun of sports and make friends in college sports activities (Soares *et al.*, 2013). Social interaction factors are an important reason for female college students to participate in sports. Ability mastery, Social Communication, and intelligence are the main purposes for female college students to participate in sports (Smith, 2020). Many college students participate in campus activities because they are influenced by others, and they may seek social factors in sports activities (Chen & Stotlar, 2012).

**Social Culture**

Social culture has a significant impact on the sports participation of college students, especially women. The low participation rate of women in sports is not due to their lack of interest in sports but to the long-standing direct and indirect forms of discrimination and many other issues that women have to face (positional changes in sports) (Joshua *et al.*, 2013; Issah *et al.*, 2015). Women have always demanded that they be given equal status as men. While social changes have gradually given women greater opportunities to participate in life that they were previously denied, the fight for equal opportunities with men continues. Culture, family background, religion, peers, and gender have significant effects on female college students' sports participation. Some cultures believe that women who participate in sports will be like men and not as attractive or feminine as God created them to be (Aminat, 2016).

Some religions encourage people to participate in sports, they believe exercise improves physical and mental health. Women were allowed to participate in sports as long as

it did not interfere with their religious obligations. However, their dress codes prevent women from participating in certain sports. Some religious teachings require women not to expose any sensitive parts of the body, which may be unavoidable in sports competitions, and prohibit women from competing in sports. Social and cultural factors such as customs, traditions, and religion influence the sports participation of females (Issah *et al.*, 2015).

Customs, traditions, and religion influence college women's participation in sports. To encourage women's sports participation behavior, society should show a positive attitude towards women's participation in sports and eliminate these socio-cultural barriers (Aminat, 2016). The biggest obstacle for female students to participate in sports activities is the lack of sports facilities suitable for girls. Some religion's Cultural demands for gender segregation in sports further contribute to the shortage of sports facilities for women (Adnan *et al.*, 2017).

### **Smartphones and Apps**

With the advent of the mobile Internet era, smartphones have gradually become a part of people's lives. The reasonable use of smartphones is also an extrinsic motivating factor for students to participate in sports activities. There was a significant positive relationship between motivation to use apps and sports participation. Smartphone applications effectively promote students' participation in low-intensity sports, and the combination of applications and sports environments can influence the sports behavior of college students (Luo & He, 2021). There is a significant positive correlation between the motivation to use apps and sports participation (Yang *et al.*, 2019)). The design style and content of current sports apps are more adaptable to the physical and mental characteristics of college students. Most of these apps are simple to operate, easy to use, and suitable for different students' exercise needs (Zhao, 2019).

However, mobile phone addiction seriously affects college students' sports participation. Like other addictions, cell phone addiction is becoming a barrier to sports participation among college students. College students with more severe mobile phone addiction have lower physical activity, and male college students are slightly higher than female college students (Han *et al.*, 2023).

### **Health Management**

Contemporary body standards lead to lower body satisfaction among people especially women, and therefore women engage in physical activity to achieve a better body shape Kilpatrick *et al* (2023), Factors such as weight management and appearance are factors that influence their participation in physical exercise. Things like weight management and appearance not only affect women, but men also participate in sports for these purposes (Galan-Lopez & Ries, 2019).

Some research suggests that college women who participate in sports may experience damaging health consequences. Female college students have a higher rate of sports injuries caused by inappropriate sports participation. Some female college students do not exercise because they are afraid of injury (Memon, *et al.*, 2018). Female college students do not have a high opinion of the health benefits of exercise and are reluctant to exercise due to fear of injury (Nxumalo & Edwards, 2017).

### **Academic Achievements**

Some female college students are reluctant to exercise because they are afraid that exercise will affect their academic performance. These female students believe that participating in

physical activities may harm their academic performance and they prefer to focus on their studies (Al-Tawel & AlJa'afreh, 2017). However, some studies have found a possible relationship between students' physical activity and educational outcomes, there is a positive correlation. Girls who participate in organized sports activities have higher average grades. School pride is positively correlated with girls' GPA, but the impact on boys is not significant. Strengthening participation in sports activities can enable students to achieve better GPA and Other educational outcomes (Zeng *et al.*, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

Personal attributes such as age and marital status can influence students' willingness to participate in sports. Younger age is generally associated with higher sports participation, while marital status, especially being single, tends to be positively associated with sports participation. Sociocultural, including cultural norms, family background, and religion, may serve as barriers or facilitators to sports participation, especially for female students. The presence of role models has a significant impact on students' sports participation. Positive role models can inspire and motivate students to participate in sports, while negative role models or the lack of role models can hinder their participation.

The availability and quality of athletic facilities are critical to promoting participation in collegiate athletics. Inadequate sports facilities can act as a barrier and limit students' ability to participate in physical activities. Taking advantage of well-maintained sports facilities and programs is critical to creating an environment conducive to sports participation. Additionally, the rise of smartphones and sports apps has created new possibilities for promoting college sports participation. Smartphones and sports apps can provide easy access to exercise information, tracking tools, and social support, and when used wisely can play a good role in promoting sports participation. However, excessive smartphone use and mobile phone addiction can harm sports participation.

Taken together, understanding these factors can guide the development of effective strategies to promote sports participation among college students. Further research is needed to explore interventions and policies that can effectively address these factors and create a supportive environment for athletic participation on college campuses.

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