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**Students' Perceptions of The Role of Games and Sports in Promoting  
Mental and Physical Health: A Study of Government Graduate Colleges  
Students in Faisalabad**



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**Abstract**

This research explored the perception of students about the role of games and sports in promoting mental and physical health among college students in District Faisalabad. The main aim of the study was to examine how participation in games and sports contributed to students' overall well-being, fitness, stress management and psychological health using a quantitative research design. The data were collected from 200 respondents selected through simple random sampling from four graduate colleges in Faisalabad using structured questionnaire which was administered through face-to-face interviews. Data were analyzed on SPSS. The findings reflected that majority of students perceived sports and games as important factors which played vital role in improving physical fitness, reducing stress and anxiety, enhancing self-confidence and promoting a healthy lifestyle. It was also concluded that regular participation in sports activities positively influences both mental and physical health among students. The recommendations were made that educational institutions encourage greater involvement in games and sports by providing adequate facilities and opportunities for participation.

**Keywords:** Games and Sports, Mental Health, Physical Health, Students' Perceptions, College Students, Faisalabad, Quantitative Research.

**INTRODUCTION**

Games and sports are and important components of the educational environment and contribute significantly to the physical and mental well-being of students. In present era, much attention has been given to the role of physical activity in reducing stress, anxiety and depression while enhancing cognitive functioning and emotional stability among young individuals as regular participation in sports activities is associated with improved physical fitness, stronger immunity, and healthier lifestyle habits, which collectively support overall health outcomes (Donnelly et al., 2024; Eather et al., 2023). Moreover, games and sports provide opportunity for social interaction, teamwork and leadership development which are important for psychological development during the college years (Roccliffe et al., 2023).

Research evidences reflect that physical activity positively influences mental health by reducing psychological distress and improving mood regulation among students (Wols et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024). Research also showed that active participation in sports can enhance self-esteem and reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation which are common among college students (Jiménez-Díaz et al., 2023; Pankowiak et al., 2023). In academic setting, those students who participate in regular physical activities demonstrate better concentration, academic performance, and emotional resilience as compared to non-participants (Adamaki et al., 2023; O'Keeffe et al., 2024).

Furthermore, contemporary studies reflect that even moderate levels of physical activity, including recreational games and informal sports can produce significant mental health benefits (Wade et al., 2023; Granic et al., 2024). Sports also play a vital role in stress management particularly among college students who often face academic pressure, financial challenges and social adjustment issues (Penny et al.,

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2024; Khan et al., 2023). In addition, sports foster a sense of belonging and peer support which contributes to emotional well-being and reduces depressive symptoms (Lichtwarck-Aschoff et al., 2024; Saeed et al., 2024).

However, despite benefits, many students remain inactive owing to lack of facilities, time constraints, academic workload, or lack of awareness regarding the importance of physical activity (WHO, 2024; Biddle & Lubans, 2023). In developing countries like Pakistan, cultural factors and limited institutional support further limit student participation in sports activities (Ahmad et al., 2023; Rehman & Ali, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand students' perceptions regarding the role of games and sports in promoting mental and physical health.

This study is particularly vital as it examines students' perceptions in four graduate colleges of Faisalabad, providing empirical evidence from a local context and understanding these perceptions will help policymakers, educational institutions, and health promoters develop effective strategies to encourage sports participation among students for improved mental and physical well-being (Smith et al., 2023; WHO, 2024).

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In present era, the mental and physical health of college students is a growing concern due to increasing academic pressure, sedentary lifestyles and reduced participation in physical activities. Although games and sports are considered important for improving physical fitness, reducing stress, and enhancing psychological well-being, many students do not actively participate in such activities. Moreover, in Pakistan, particularly in college settings, limited awareness, lack of facilities, academic workload, and changing lifestyle patterns may impact students' engagement in sports. However, little empirical evidences are available regarding how students themselves perceive the role of games and sports in promoting their mental and physical health in the context of Faisalabad. Therefore, this research investigates students' perceptions of the role of games and sports in enhancing mental and physical health among college students in Faisalabad.

## **OBJECTIVES**

To know about students' perceptions regarding the role of games and sports in improving physical health.

To examine students' perceptions regarding the role of games and sports in enhancing mental health.

To assess the perceived benefits of games and sports on stress reduction and emotional well-being among students.

To find out differences in students' perceptions based on demographic variables such as gender and level of participation in sports.

## **HYPOTHESES**

There is a significant relationship between participation in games and sports and students' perceived physical health.

There is a significant relationship between participation in games and sports and students' perceived mental health.

Students who regularly participate in games and sports have more positive perceptions of mental health benefits compared to non-participants.

# **Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review**

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There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of the role of games and sports based on gender.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Games and sports are universally acknowledged as essential components of student life that contribute to both physical and mental well-being as the previous research has consistently shown that regular participation in physical activities improves cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, and overall physical health among students (Kljajević et al., 2020; WHO, 2024). Physical activities are also linked with reduced risk of obesity and lifestyle-related diseases, particularly among young adults who often adopt sedentary habits during academic life (Habib et al., 2021).

In addition to physical benefits, various studies reflect the positive impact of sports participation on mental health. Studies point out that students who engage in regular physical activities face lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression as compared to those who are inactive (Biddle & Lubans, 2023; Eather et al., 2023). Games and sports promotes the release of endorphins, which helps improve mood and emotional stability, thereby enhancing psychological well-being (Donnelly et al., 2024). Furthermore, physical activity has been associated with improved self-esteem and greater life satisfaction among college students (Zhao et al., 2024).

Research also stresses the social benefits of sports participation. Team sports promote cooperation, communication, leadership skills and a sense of belonging among students (Tahira, 2023). These social interactions are important in reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation which are common issues in college environments (Lichtwarck-Aschoff et al., 2024). Moreover, sports participation encourages peer relationships and contributes to the development of discipline, teamwork, and time management skills (Rehman & Ali, 2024).

Studies conducted in developing countries, including Pakistan, highlight similar patterns. Physical inactivity among students has been examined as a growing concern due to academic pressure, lack of facilities and limited awareness of health benefits (Habib et al., 2021). However, research also highlights that students who actively participate in sports report better mental health outcomes and higher academic motivation (Khan et al., 2023). In the Pakistani context, cultural and institutional factors also affect students' engagement in sports activities, making it an important area of study (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Recent systematic reviews further determine that even moderate levels of physical activity can significantly better mental health outcomes in university students including reduced stress and enhanced emotional resilience (Li et al., 2025; Husain et al., 2024), however, some studies suggest that the benefits depend on the type, intensity and enjoyment of physical activity pointing out that not all sports activities produce the same psychological effects (Wade et al., 2023).

## **METHODOLOGY:**

This study used quantitative research design to explore the perception of students regarding the role of games and sports in promoting mental and physical health. The study was conducted in four graduate colleges of Faisalabad i.e. Government Graduate College Samanabad, Govt. Graduate College of Science, Government Municipal Graduate College and Government Graduate College Satiana Road Faisalabad. The target population was college students enrolled in these institutions. A

# Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review

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Online ISSN: 3006-5895

sample of 200 respondents was chosen using simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation and reduce sampling bias and data were gathered through questionnaire administered via face-to-face interaction which included close-ended items based on a Likert scale to measure students' perceptions about the impact of games and sports on physical health, mental health, stress reduction, and overall well-being. Data were analyzed on SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean scores were applied to summarize the data. Inferential statistics were used where necessary to examine relationships and differences among variables. The results were interpreted in line with the objectives of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	108	54%
Female	92	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data highlights a slightly higher proportion of male respondents (54%) compared to female respondents (46%), depicting balanced representation of both genders in the study.

**Table 2: Participation in Games and Sports**

Participation Level	Frequency	Percentage
Regular Participants	85	42.5%
Occasional Participants	70	35%
Non-Participants	45	22.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The result depicts that a significant number of students (42.5%) regularly participate in sports, while 22.5% do not participate at all, highlighting moderate engagement in physical activities.

## Perception of Physical Health Benefits

**Table 3: Sports Improve Physical Health**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	95	47.5%
Agree	78	39%
Neutral	15	7.5%
Disagree	8	4%
Strongly Disagree	4	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

Majority (86.5%) of respondents agreed that games and sports played vital role to improve physical health. This confirms that students strongly perceive sports as beneficial for physical fitness.

**Table 4: Sports Reduce Stress and Improve Mental Health**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	88	44%
Agree	82	41%

Neutral	18	9%
Disagree	7	3.5%
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings highlight that 85% of students believe that sports reduce stress and improve mental health, supporting the psychological benefits of physical activity.

**Stress Reduction and Emotional Well-being**

**Table 5: Sports Help in Stress Management**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	90	45%
Agree	80	40%
Neutral	17	8.5%
Disagree	8	4%
Strongly Disagree	5	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority (85%) of respondents agreed that sports help in managing stress, reflecting a strong positive perception regarding emotional well-being.

**H1: Table 6: Chi-Square Test for Participation and Physical Health Perception**

Test	Value	df	p-value
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	18.742	2	0.000

The result of the Chi-square test highlights that there is a significant relationship between participation in games and sports and students' perceived physical health ( $\chi^2 = 18.742, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) which indicates that students who actively participate in sports have more positive perceptions regarding physical health benefits compared to non-participants so H1 is accepted.

**H2: There is a significant relationship between participation in games and sports and students' perceived mental health.**

**Table 7: Chi-Square Test for Participation and Mental Health Perception**

Test	Value	df	p-value
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	21.356	2	0.000

The Chi-square result reflects a significant relationship between sports participation and students' perceived mental health ( $\chi^2 = 21.356, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Students who participate in games and sports reported stronger agreement that sports improve mental health, reduce stress, and enhance emotional well-being so H2 is accepted.

**H3: Students who regularly participate in games and sports have more positive perceptions of mental health benefits than non-participants.**

**Table 8: Independent Sample t-Test (Participants vs Non-Participants)**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Participants	155	4.21	0.62	4.892	0.000
Non-Participants	45	3.58	0.71		

The t-test indicates a significant difference between participants and non-participants regarding mental health perception ( $t = 4.892, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) as participants reported higher mean scores, indicating stronger belief in the mental health benefits of

sports so H3 is accepted.

**H4: Significant difference in students' perceptions of games and sports based on gender.**

**Table 9: Independent Sample t-Test (Gender Differences)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Male	108	4.18	0.65	2.743	0.007
Female	92	3.92	0.68		

The results highlight a significant difference in perceptions between male and female students ( $t = 2.743$ ,  $p = 0.007 < 0.05$ ). Male students demonstrated slightly more positive perceptions regarding the role of sports in mental and physical health compared to female students. Thus, H4 is accepted.

**CONCLUSION**

This research was conducted to know the perceptions of students about the role of games and sports in promoting mental and physical health among college students in Faisalabad. The findings clearly depict that students hold a strongly positive perception of sports and physical activities as essential components of a healthy lifestyle and majority of the students agreed that participation in games and sports significantly improves physical fitness, enhances mental well-being, reduces stress and contributes to emotional stability. The statistical analysis reflected that there is a significant relationship between sports participation and students' perceived physical and mental health as those students who regularly participate in sports activities reported more positive perceptions compared to non-participants.

It is concluded that games and sports play a vital role in improving both mental and physical health among college students. However, the level of participation is still moderate, and a notable proportion of students remain inactive. This reflects the need for educational institutions to promote sports culture more effectively by improving facilities, encouraging participation and raising awareness about the health benefits of physical activities. The study stresses that strengthening sports programs in colleges can contribute not only to better physical fitness but also to improved psychological well-being and academic performance among students.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following recommendations were formulated on the basis of the study:

**The Sports Facilities should be improved:**

College administrations should improve, upgrade and maintain adequate sports facilities such as playgrounds, equipment and indoor sports areas to encourage greater student participation.

**Encouragement of Regular Participation:**

Students should be encouraged and motivated to take part in daily or weekly sports activities through organized sports programs, competitions and extracurricular events.

**Awareness Campaigns should be launched:**

Awareness seminars, workshops and health campaigns should be launched to educate students about the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of games and sports.

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## **Sports should be integrated in Academic Schedule:**

Colleges should allocate specific time slots for sports and physical activities within the academic timetable to ensure regular participation.

## **Gender Inclusive Opportunities:**

There should be equal opportunities for both male and female students to participate in sports activities without discrimination or cultural barriers.

## **Sports Scholarships and Incentives should be given:**

Educational institutions may introduce scholarships, awards, and recognition programs to encourage talented and active students in sports.

## **Qualified Sports Instructors should be deputed:**

Hiring trained physical education teachers and sports coaches can help guide students properly and improve their performance and interest in sports.

## **Community and Institutional Support:**

There should be collaboration between colleges, local sports authorities and government institutions to promote sports culture at the grassroots level.

## **Focus on Mental Health Awareness:**

The counseling units should work alongside sports departments to promote physical activity as a stress management tool.

## **Further Research:**

Future research should find out larger samples and include universities and other educational institutions to gain broader insights into the relationship between sports and student health.

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