

Comparative Study on Attitude and Interest Toward Sports Between Boys and Girls (Age 12)

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Abstract

The present study investigates the differences in attitude and interest toward sports among boys and girls aged 12 years. Sports and physical education play an essential role in the holistic development of children, influencing not only physical fitness but also emotional and social well-being. However, gender-based attitudes and interests toward sports often emerge early in life, shaped by cultural, social, and parental influences. The purpose of this study is to compare the attitude, motivation, and level of interest of boys and girls in sports participation. The study employs a descriptive and comparative methodology using data collected from school-going children. The findings reveal that while both boys and girls show enthusiasm toward sports, boys tend to have higher participation levels due to social encouragement and access to facilities, whereas girls face subtle restrictions rooted in traditional expectations. The study highlights the need for gender-sensitive physical education programs to ensure equal opportunities for all children to participate and benefit from sports.

1. Introduction -

Sports are universally acknowledged as a crucial element of education, contributing to the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of children. The age of 12 is a formative stage when children begin to develop habits and interests that shape their future lifestyles. In India, participation at this age is strongly influenced by gender norms, family expectations, and school environment. Traditionally, boys are encouraged to engage in physical activities, while girls are often directed toward non-competitive or household roles. These early social distinctions affect not only physical development but also confidence, motivation, and mental health.

Understanding the attitude and interest of boys and girls toward sports at this stage provides insight into how gendered socialization affects participation and performance.

2. Review of Literature -

Earlier research has highlighted that gender-based differences in sports participation appear early in childhood.

Sharma (2013) observed that male students demonstrate higher enthusiasm and competitiveness toward sports, while female students participate mainly for recreation.

Kaur (2012) found that family and social expectations restrict girls' participation in organized games, leading to lower confidence and exposure.

Verma and Gupta (2010) stated that cultural stereotypes, limited facilities, and lack of motivation reduce sports engagement among girls.

Rao (2011) emphasized that equal access to sports during early adolescence is essential to build confidence and lifelong physical activity habits.

World Health Organization (2010) reported that globally, adolescent girls are significantly less active than boys, owing to social and cultural limitations.

These studies confirm that gender disparity in sports participation is rooted more in social conditioning than in physical capability or interest.

3. Objectives of the Study -

1. To compare the attitude of 12-year-old boys and girls toward sports participation.
2. To assess their level of interest and motivation for sports.
3. To identify social and environmental factors affecting sports participation.
4. To suggest measures to promote equal opportunities for both genders.

4. Hypotheses-

1. There is a significant difference in attitude toward sports between boys and girls aged 12 years.
2. There is a significant difference in interest and motivation levels toward sports between boys and girls aged 12 years.

5. Methodology: -

5.1 Research Design-

The study adopted a descriptive and comparative design to analyze attitude and interest toward sports between boys and girls.

5.2 Sample

A total of 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls) aged 12 years were selected from government and private schools in Kurukshetra district, Haryana, using random sampling.

5.3 Tools Used

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure:

Attitude toward sports (10 items)

Interest and motivation (10 items)

Family and social support (5 items)

Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

5.4 Data Analysis-

Collected data were analyzed using mean, percentage, and t-test to compare boys and girls.

6. Results and Discussion: -

6.1 Attitude toward Sports-

Boys showed a higher positive attitude toward sports (mean score 4.3) compared to girls (mean score 3.7). The difference was statistically significant. Boys viewed sports as competitive and rewarding, while many girls saw it as recreational or secondary to studies.

6.2 Interest and Motivation-

Interest levels among boys (mean 4.1) were slightly higher than girls (mean 3.8). Girls expressed interest but cited constraints such as limited time and parental restrictions.

6.3 Family and Social Influence-

Parental encouragement proved a major factor: 80 percent of boys were encouraged to play daily against only about half of the girls. Safety concerns and cultural beliefs were common reasons for discouragement.

6.4 Institutional Environment-

Schools with dedicated physical education teachers and infrastructure had higher female participation. Lack of facilities discouraged girls in particular.

6.5 Discussion-

While both boys and girls show interest in sports, social expectations and unequal support influence actual participation. Boys enjoy greater freedom and role models, whereas girls face restrictions based on tradition and modesty norms.

Nevertheless, a gradual positive change is visible as female athletes gain recognition and families become more supportive.

7. Findings-

1. Boys demonstrated a significantly higher positive attitude toward sports than girls.
2. Interest exists in both genders, but girls' participation is restricted by social factors.
3. Parental encouragement and school infrastructure influence participation most.
4. Cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes still limit sports engagement among girls.

8. Recommendations-

1. Inclusive Sports Policies: Equal facilities for both genders at school level.
2. Parental Awareness: Sensitize parents on health and psychological benefits of sports for girls.
3. Female Coaches: Appointment of women physical education teachers to inspire girls.
4. Curricular Integration: Make sports an essential part of the school curriculum.
5. Safe Infrastructure: Provide secure and gender-friendly sports spaces.
6. Motivational Programs: Recognize participation and effort, not only victory.

9. Conclusion

The study shows that both boys and girls possess interest in sports, yet social and cultural factors shape participation levels. Boys receive more encouragement and freedom, while girls often face indirect discouragement or lack of facilities.

Creating gender-sensitive school environments and encouraging families can narrow this gap. Promoting equality in physical education from early adolescence ensures that every child—regardless of gender—has the right to play, learn, and grow through sports.

Sports should thus be recognized as a fundamental human development right rather than a gendered privilege.

10. References -

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