



## FROM HIGH PERFORMERS TO NON-PERFORMERS: WHY ARE INDIANS IN MALAYSIA NOT PERFORMING IN SPORTS ANYMORE?

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### Abstract

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*This report was commissioned to examine on why Indians in Malaysia are not performing in sports anymore. Currently, the involvement and participation in sports are decreasing among Indian youths. The research was a mixture of quantitative and qualitative method, using two questionnaires and one set of interview questions. Six hundred (600) respondents answered the Questionnaire and 60 (10%) respondents gave their feedbacks through interview. There are many factors contributing to this phenomenon. Most of the Indian youths will be active in sport while schooling. After their secondary education, they never bothered to develop their talent and achievement in sports. Sedentary lifestyle, lack of motivation, no proper guidance and recognition are some of the main reasons which influence their involvement and participation. Participating in sport is an individual factor. Motivation plays a major role among youths to achieve their goals and continuously play the game they are interested.*

**Keywords:** Motivation, high performers and non-performers

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to discover attitudes and motivations towards participation in sports and identify motivational differences across gender among Indian youths because according to Fortier and her colleagues (1995), male athletes reported lower levels of intrinsic motivation to accomplish things but higher levels of extrinsic motivation than females. More generally, some research has provided data suggesting that male athletes exhibited a less self-determined motivation than female athletes. Hollembeak & Amorose's (2005) study showed that compared to males, females reported higher scores on autonomy, relatedness, and intrinsic motivation and connected to each other, than male athletes. There are many unempirical perceptions among Indians that the lack of government support is the main reason for Indian youngsters to shy away from active participation in sport especially at state and national level. They fail to progress actively after their school days as they have no avenue to show their talent in order to be identified by state selection committee. Some Indian youths shun away due to economic, family and

financial problem as the fees and equipment for certain sports are very expensive. Parental refusal to let their children to participate in sports activities and transportation problems have been said by many of the students for failing to participate in sports activities. The results of the study are sure to help the relevant organizations (especially Indian based sports organizations) to charter plans and programs to overcome the deteriorating performance of Indian youths in sports, in the country.

## 2. Objectives

The objective of this research is to identify the factors that degenerate the participation in sport among Indian youths. More specifically, this study aimed at seeking the answers through the following research questions:

- Which behavior, competitive orientated, winning orientated or objective orientated is influencing more on the participation of Indian youths in sports?
- Which motivational factor, intrinsic or extrinsic, is influencing more the participation of Indian youths in sports?
- Is there any significant motivational difference across gender among Indian youths' participation in sports?
- What are the factors contributing to the deterioration of participation in sports activities among Indian youths?

## 3. Methodology

This research was developed to investigate the participation motive and motivation level among Indian youths. The research was a mixture of quantitative and qualitative method, using two questionnaires and one set of interview questions. Six hundred (600) respondents answered the Questionnaire and 60 (10%) respondents gave their feedbacks through interview.

### 3.1. Selection of sample

The researchers used the purposive sampling method and the respondents were selected based on their involvement in sports activities, as the questionnaire was constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose and targeting a specific group. The researchers randomly selected respondents to be interviewed from the 600 respondents who answered the Questionnaire. The sample for this study was selected from 3 major regions in the country, namely, Northern, Central and Southern. The sample of this study comprised of 600 youths from schools, colleges and universities. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 25 years old.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondent (Questionnaire)

	Male	Female	Total
Secondary school students	100	100	200
College students	100	100	200
University students	100	100	200
Total	300	300	600

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondent (Interview)

	Male	Female	Total
Secondary school students	10	10	20
College students	10	10	20
University students	10	10	20
Total	30	30	60

Anyhow out of the 600 questionnaires distributed and collected, only 443 questionnaires came back to the researcher. Some questionnaires were rejected for validity reasons as the respondents fail to provide accurate information.

### 3.2. Procedures

The study was conducted during the period of March-2017 to March-2018. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents and a brief introduction was given prior to answering the questionnaire. The duration to complete the questionnaire was approximately 30 minutes. The second part of the data collection was conducted by the researchers, via interviews. Each region was represented by 10 respondents for the interview. The researchers sought permission and approval from the relevant schools, colleges and university authorities. With the help of school, physical and health education teachers and lecturers, the researchers distributed and explained the objectives of the research and the use of the instrument. The questionnaires were bilingual, namely in Bahasa Malaysia and English. The items in the questionnaire (which is in English) were also translated to Bahasa Malaysia (Malay Language) as majority of the respondents were expected to be more proficient in the Malay language. Anyhow, participants could choose to read the questionnaire either in English or Malay. The instrument for this study consists of two questionnaires and one set of interview questions. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. Demography, Sports Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ) and Participation Motivation Inventory (PMI).

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Respondents' Characteristics

There were questions related to respondents' background; gender, institution attached to, games that they represented for school and types of event they participated. Close to three quarters of the respondents were female students (329/443, 74.3%) (Figure 4.1). Most students were studying in university at the time of data collection (182/443, 41.1%) followed by 30.7% in colleges (136/443). About a quarter of them were school students (125/443, 28.2%) (Figure 4.2).

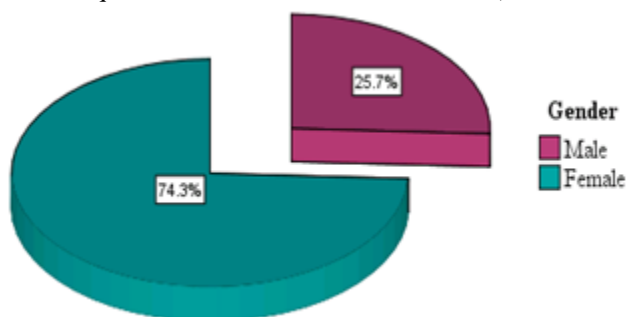


Figure 4.1: Gender distribution among respondent

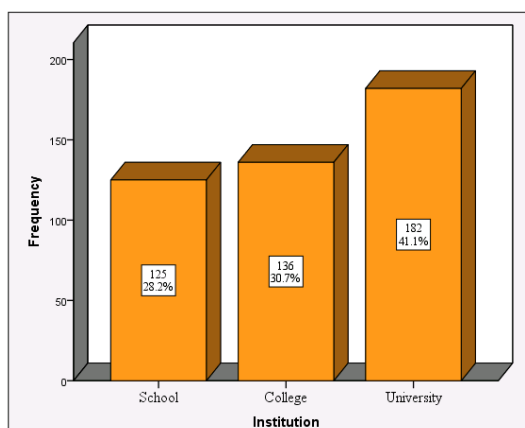


Figure 4.2: Respondent's educational institution

Participation in games at school level and the types of sports events are given in Figure 4.3 and Table 4.1 respectively. Among male students, football and badminton were the most prominent game type, 28.1% (32/114) and 27.2% (31/114) respectively. Closer to one-fifth of them also have participated in athletic games (22/114, 19.3%). On the other hand, for female participants, netball, badminton and athletic were the prominent games in descending order of participation; 33.4% (110/329), 27.4% (90/329) and 21.9% (72/329). Closer to one quarter of female students and about one-third of male students also played other games.

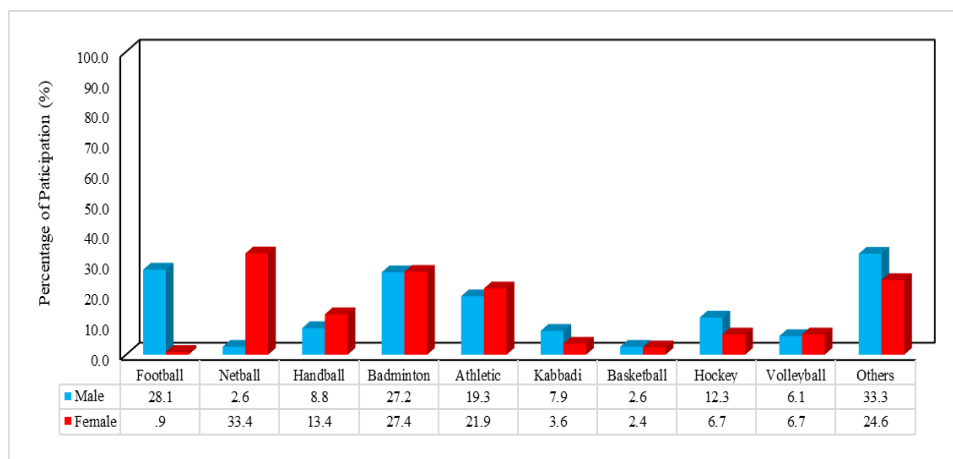


Figure-4.3: Participation in games in school

As illustrated in Figure 4.4, about one-quarter (114/443, 25.7%) of the students did not participate in any games during their school life and most students participated in about one to two games at school level (65.2%). Overall, 74.3% students participated in at least one game at school while 25.7% (114/443) did not participate in any. Across gender, 28.1% male (32/114) and 24.9% (82/329) did not participate in any game at school level.

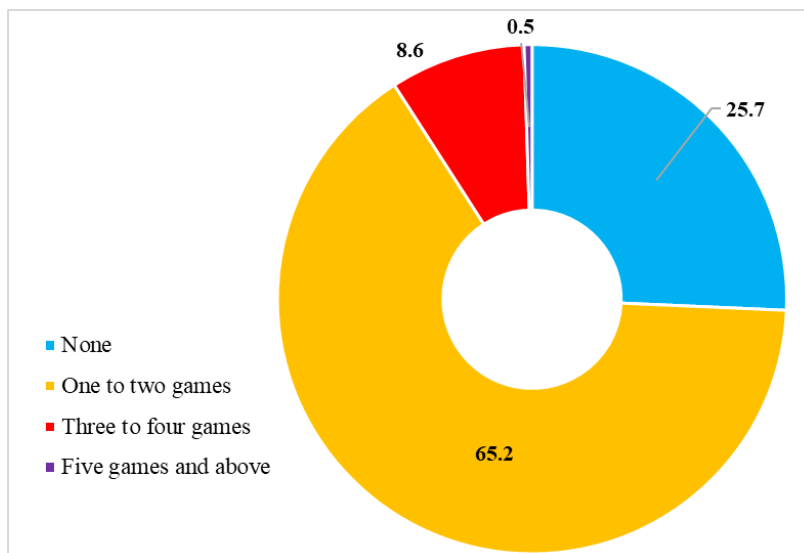


Figure-4.4: Total number of games participated by respondents in school

For involvement in types of sports event, the respondents were requested to choose one of the four types of event listed. Table 4.1 shows that majority (264/443, 59.6%) participants

joined team events such as football and netball. This was followed by playing in an individual event (153/443, 34.5%) such as badminton and athletic and those played in both individuals and doubles (60/443, 13.5%) such as badminton.

Table 4.1: Participation in different types of sports events

Types of Sport Events	n (%)	
	Yes	No
Individual	153 (34.5)	290 (65.5)
Doubles	39 (8.8)	404 (91.2)
Individuals & Doubles	60 (13.5)	383 (86.5)
Team Event	264 (59.6)	179 (40.4)

#### 4.2. Perception about Responsible Parties

The respondents were enquired about their perception on parties responsible for their participation or involvement in games at school level. Table 4.2 shows that close to half of them held themselves responsible (206/443, 46.5%) for their involvement in sports. The mean values also showed self-responsibility to be more vital over school, government and NGO's responsibilities.

Table 4.2: Parties responsible for student's involvement in sports

	Mean±SD	N (%)				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Self	4.1±0.9	4 (0.9)	18 (4.1)	70 (15.8)	206 (46.5)	145 (32.7)
School	2.4±1.0	74 (16.7)	189 (42.7)	110 (24.8)	61 (13.8)	9 (2.0)
Government	2.5±1.0	74 (16.7)	165 (37.2)	139 (31.4)	53 (12.0)	12 (2.7)
NGOs	2.7±1.0	60 (13.5)	113 (25.5)	190 (42.9)	62 (14.0)	18 (4.1)

NGO = Non-governmental Organization

#### 4.3. Which behavior; competitive orientated, winning orientated or objective orientated is influencing more on the participation of Indian youths in sports?

The respondents were enquired on questions related to their behavior. There were three types of behavior included; competitive, winning and objective orientated. The possible responses were ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) which were later recoded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to calculate scores. The responses of these behaviors were tabulated.

A total of 13 questions enquired for competitive oriented behavior, majority respondents (51.0%, 226/443) strongly agreed that they tried their hardest to win (mean±SD=4.4±0.8). Following this, they also thrive on competition (4.0±0.8) for which more than half agreed (53.0%) and more than a quarter strongly agreed (28.7%). Also, most respondents look forward to the opportunity to test their skills in competition (4.0±0.8), perform the best when competing against an opponent (4.0±0.8) and want to be the best every time they compete (4.0±0.8), with 27.8%, 26.0% and 29.8% respectively strongly agreed. When assessed across gender, majority male respondents (55.3%) strongly agreed that they try their hardest to win (4.5±0.7) while 42.1% strongly agreed that they look forward to the opportunity to test skills in competition (4.0±0.8). Similar to male, majority female respondents (49.5%) also tried their hardest to win (3.9±0.9) besides looking forward to competing; more than their male counterparts (4.4±0.8 versus 4.0±1.0).

On the responses for winning oriented behavior, of the six questions enquired, close to half of the respondents (43.1%, 191/443) strongly agreed that they have the most fun when they win (4.3±0.8). This is also true when the behavior was assessed across gender. Almost half (48.2%, 4.4±0.8) of male respondents and slightly lesser than that (41.3%, 4.2±0.8) of female respondents have the most fun when they win a competition, with a mean inclining towards male respondents. Close to one-third of the overall respondents (29.6%, 131/443) also feel that winning is important

(3.8±1.1). Across gender, male respondents strongly agree that more than winning, scoring more points than opponent is very important (37.7%, 3.9±1.1).

Finally, the responses for objective oriented behavior among the respondents. Of six questions enquired, 40.9% (181/443) respondents strongly agreed that they try hardest in competition when they have a specific goal (4.3±0.7). Likewise, across gender, 45.6% of male respondents and 39.2% female respondents strongly agreed that they try hardest in competition when they have a specific goal (4.3±0.8 and 4.3±0.7 respectively). Unlike the previous two types of behavior, most respondents agreed for all the statements under objective oriented behavior (mean>4.0). This signifies that objective oriented behavior was more prominent among the respondents compared to competitive and winning oriented.

To assess the influence of all three types of behavior on the whole towards participation in sports, average score was computed and compared between those who have never participated and those who have participated in at least one game. The outcome of the assessment is tabulated in Table 4.3. The total scores vary in descending order from objective oriented (83.4±11.1), competitive oriented (77.5±11.6) to winning oriented (72.8±15.3). Independent sample t-tests showed that, respondents who participated in any one sport event had significantly higher competitive oriented behavior (79.0±11.3) and objective oriented behavior (84.7±10.3),  $p < 0.001$  compared to those who did not ever participated in sports during school days. Winning oriented behavior was similar between the groups. Mean values evidenced objective oriented behavior to prevail than competitive and winning oriented behavior.

Table 4.3: Behavior influencing on the participation of Indian youths in sports

	Averaged Score (Mean±SD)			t	p-value
	Total (n=443)	Participate (n=114)	Never Participate (n=329)		
Competitive Oriented	77.5±11.6	79.0±11.3	73.1±11.6	4.755	<0.001**
Winning Oriented	72.8±15.3	73.5±15.2	70.9±15.6	1.547	0.123
Objective Oriented	83.4±11.1	84.7±10.3	79.8±12.3	4.150	<0.001**

\* Significant at p-value = 0.05; \*\* Significant at p-value = 0.001

#### 4.4. Which motivational factor, intrinsic or extrinsic, is influencing more the participation of Indian youths in sports?

The respondents were enquired on questions related to motivational factors that influence their participation in sports. There were two types of motivational factors included; intrinsic and extrinsic. The possible responses were from 1 (agree) and 2 (disagree). The latter was recorded as 0 (disagree) to calculate scores.

Based on the data collected, the maximum number of respondents (99.5%, 441/443) agreed that they want to improve their skills (1.0±0.7). Following this, most respondents like to have fun during sport activities (98.6%), like the excitement of playing (98.0%), like to do something they are good at (97.3%), want to learn new skills (96.6%) as well as want to be physically fit (96.4%). The factors least influencing wanted to be with friends as almost a one-quarter of the respondents disagreed (23.0%). These lists of prominent and unimportant responses were also similar across gender despite variation in the percentage and score of response.

Based on the data obtained, of 15 factors enquired, the maximum number of respondents (94.1%, 417/443) agreed that they like the team spirit (0.9±0.2). Following this, most respondents also like to win (91.2%), want to get rid of energy (91.0%) and like to travel (90.1%). On the other hand, the least important factors wanted to be popular (48.5% disagreed), gain status and recognition (34.1% disagreed) and likes getting out of the house (32.3%) as well as fond of coaches (30.9% disagreed). Across gender, the least important factors among male were to gain popularity (40.4% disagreed) while that among female was to gain status or recognition (36.5% disagreed) as well as to get out of the house (33.1% disagreed) to assess the influence of both the motivational factors on the whole towards participation in sports, the average score was computed to percentage and compared between those who have never participated and those who have participated in at least

one game. Outcome of the assessment is tabulated in Table 4.4. The total scores varied in descending order from intrinsic factors ( $90.9 \pm 11.7$ ) to extrinsic factors ( $79.7 \pm 15.9$ ). Independent sample t-tests showed that, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors significantly influenced the participation of Indian students in sports ( $p < 0.001$ ), with a mean of  $92.5 \pm 9.9$  and  $81.7 \pm 14.4$  respectively compared to  $86.4 \pm 14.9$  and  $74.1 \pm 18.7$  respectively among non-participating students.

Table 4.4: Motivational factor influencing on the participation of Indian youths in sports

	Averaged Score (Mean $\pm$ SD)			t	p-value
	Total	Participate	Never Participate		
Intrinsic	$90.9 \pm 11.7$	$92.5 \pm 9.9$	$86.4 \pm 14.9$	4.895	<0.001
Extrinsic	$79.7 \pm 15.9$	$81.7 \pm 14.4$	$74.1 \pm 18.7$	4.482	<0.001

\* Significant at  $p$ -value = 0.05; \*\* Significant at  $p$ -value = 0.001

#### 4.5. Is there any significant motivational difference across gender among Indian youths' participation in sports?

The scores of various behavioral and motivation domains were compared across gender. The results are tabulated in Table 4.5. The scores of all three behavioral domains were higher among male respondents. However, independent sample t-test showed that only competitive oriented behavior was significantly higher among male respondents ( $80.7 \pm 11.6$  versus  $76.4 \pm 11.4$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Scores of both the motivational domains were higher among males too; both significantly prevailing among males than their female counterparts. The means showed that intrinsic factors were more prominent ( $93.3 \pm 12.1$  versus  $90.1 \pm 11.5$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) as compared to extrinsic factors ( $82.6 \pm 15.6$  versus  $78.7 \pm 16.0$ ,  $p = 0.027$ ).

Table 4.5: Behavioral and Motivational Differences across Gender of Respondents

Factors	Average Scores		Statistics	
	Male	Female	t	p-value
Behaviour				
Competitive Orientated	$80.7 \pm 11.6$	$76.4 \pm 11.4$	3.434	0.001*
Winning Orientated	$74.5 \pm 15.7$	$72.2 \pm 15.2$	1.368	0.172
Objective Orientated	$84.7 \pm 11.0$	$83.0 \pm 11.1$	1.423	0.156
Motivational Factors				
Intrinsic	$93.3 \pm 12.1$	$90.1 \pm 11.5$	2.486	0.013*
Extrinsic	$82.6 \pm 15.6$	$78.7 \pm 16.0$	2.225	0.027*

\* Significant at  $p$ -value = 0.05

#### 4.6. What are the factors contributing to the deterioration of participation in sports activities among Indian youths?

The factors contributing to the deterioration of participation in sports activities among Indian youths were identified through simple and multiple logistic regressions. A total of 65 variables from socio-demographic characteristics (institution and gender), perception about responsible parties (self, school, government and NGOs), items of competitive orientated, winning orientated or objective orientated behaviors, as well as items of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, were included. Responses to behaviors; competitive orientated, winning orientated or objective orientated, were recorded to agree (agree and strongly agree), not sure and disagree (disagree and strongly disagree). All the variables were tested with simple logistic regression. Variables with a significant  $p$ -value for at least one category were selected as input for multiple logistic regressions.

A total of 33 variables with at least one significant category from simple logistic regression were identified. These variables were subjected to multiple logistic regression with forward likelihood ratio and backward likelihood ratio method to select the maximum number of significant variables ( $p < 0.05$ ). The former identified seven significant variables whereas the latter identified 10 significant variables. The 10 variables from backward likelihood ratio method were

re-analyzed using enter method which finally derived seven most significant factors that influence students' participation in sports.

From the table, it is evident that currently schooling Indian students are two times less likely to participate in sports, as compared to the older students who are currently in colleges or universities (AOR = 2.38). For students' behavior factor, those who are not competitive, don't give importance to scoring and do not thrive were 10% to 40% less likely to play games. On the other hand, two motivation factors, less fond of teamwork and exercise will incline the students to avoid games. Lastly, students who had government support, had a higher opportunity for participation and therefore 50% less likely for non-participating (AOR = 0.498). These variables correctly classify 77.7% of the cases and explained 25% variability in Indian students' non-participation in sports during school.

## **5. Perception about responsible parties**

The research clearly indicated that students themselves are responsible for their participation in sports (206/443, 46.5%). Meanwhile, another 40% agreed that schools, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are responsible to involve them in sports. Although there is a certain level of motivation, they feel that more and more opportunities should come from outside the school system. Therefore non- governmental organizations should play a pivotal role in identifying and grooming talents from the schools.

Firstly, the attitude of the students for sports was wasting their valuable (as what they claim) time. Many have the assumption that studying is more important than any other activities.

*"I have to spend so much of my time studying otherwise I find it so difficult to excel in my studies. Last time students can go back after 1.00PM but nowadays we have so many activities in schools and most of the days we go back after 3.00PM. Therefore we do not have much time to rest and involve ourselves in sports activities. We can't afford to waste time with sports activities"; stated by a secondary school student in Klang Valley*

Some other students interviewed in this study agreed that lack of equipment and insufficient fund to buy the equipment were the main reasons on why they were not interested in taking part in sports.

*"A good racquet costs about RM300 and I don't have the money to buy one"* (Stated by a student from Penang).

It was suggested that schools and non-governmental organizations should play a pivotal role in emphasizing the importance of sports in schools. Some students in the study also said that the facilities offered in the schools were insufficient.

According to a senior national coach, schools should be the main place to groom our sportsmen and women, but most Indian students at the school level are lost and undecided. This is followed by poor parental and teacher guidance. There is no link between the parents and teachers of the school; therefore there is very little communication between Indian parents and school coaches. Teachers too are not motivated to coach as they assume that only Sports schools are responsible for the development of sports among school children. And most of our Indian students are not interested in enrolling in national sports schools. Therefore we can see clearly that in a few years time more and more Indian students will lose out. The number of Indian sportswomen in Malaysia will deteriorate further in years to come as they are not interested in joining national sports schools. He also said that our Indian students are not motivated to take part in athletics anymore as they find it very difficult to cope with training and academic.

## **6. Teenagers and young women**

*"I exercise just to keep fit and look good, I do not have time to exercise regularly as I have to help my mother with housework and after that, I have lots of school homework to complete"; stated by a young school girl in Kajang, Selangor*

Concerns about body shape and weight management were the main reasons for the participation of young Indian girls in urban areas. Support and counseling from non -governmental organizations are needed to guide our young Indian girls to participate in sports. The enjoyment



and social networks offered by sports and physical activity were clearly another reason for Indian youngsters to involve themselves in sports. Therefore they do not show serious commitment in the sports activities they are involved.

*"Sometimes I just take part in sports activities to meet more friends";* stated by a college boy from Kedah.  
*"Competitive sports are meant more for the boys...";* stated by a few female college students from Perak

Shaw & Hoeber's (2003) discourse study of three English sports governing bodies reinforced the negative impact of macho culture in sport. Their study found that discourses of masculinity were predominant at all levels of the organization from coaching to senior management. The use of gendered language was shown to actively discourage women from advancing in these organizations. Discourses of femininity (characterized by loyalty, organizational, communicative and human resource skills) were associated with middle and lower management positions compared with masculine discourses (centered on elite coaching, competition and the imperative to win), which were associated with senior organizational roles. There is an urgent need for non-governmental organizations to engage female students at secondary schools to get involved in sports activities.

## **7. Barriers to participation in sport and physical activity**

On a simple level, barriers to participation in physical activity include high costs, poor access to facilities and unsafe environments. Other more complex issues relating to identity and shifting social networks also have a great influence. There were no studies reporting on the barriers to participation in sport and physical activity facing Indian youngsters in Malaysia. The data collected in this study is pivotal for future research.

Bad experiences during school days, especially during physical education classes were another factor that discourages participation in sports among Indian youngsters. Many young university students find that impressing their friends as more important than involving in sports activities. Teenagers did not wish to be associated with activities which they described as 'childish' and instead chose activities that were independent and conferred a more adult identity upon them.

## **8. Motivational factors**

Based on the findings, the maximum number of respondents (99.5%, 441/443) agreed that they want to improve their skills. Most of the respondents too like to have fun during sports activities. This is probably due to overcoming their anxiety. Anxiety and lack of confidence about entering unfamiliar settings such as a new football team were the main barriers to participation.

*"I do not like to join the college team as I feel most of the other members in the team are far better than me,"* by a college girl in Johor

Apart from providing space and financial help, non-governmental organizations should also conduct classes on sports psychology confidence building classes for our youngsters. Some teenagers are not sure about the right amount of time needed for physical activity, especially for competitive sports. They have a preconceived perception that only the selected ones can become national sportsmen and women. Exercise prescriptions were perceived as targeted at selected people and not relevant to everyone. Additionally, teachers need to take a more active role in ensuring that students are involved and enjoying PE classes.

## **9. Recommendations**

It is evident from the data collected that the current Indian students in schools are two times less likely to participate in sports, as compared to the older students who are currently in colleges or universities (AOR = 2.38). For students' behavior factor, those who are not competitive, do not give importance to scoring and do not thrive were 10% to 40% less likely to play games. On the other hand, two motivation factors, less fond of teamwork and exercise will incline the students to avoid games. Lastly, students who had government support, had a higher opportunity for participation and therefore 50% less likely for non-participating (AOR = 0.498). These

variables correctly classify 77.7% of the cases and explained 25% variability in Indian students' non-participation in sports during school.

The scores also show that in terms of behavior and competitiveness, females are far behind males. Therefore more exposure and participation of female Indians is extremely necessary. As shown by the t-Test in the research, the reason for this decline is because the respondents are more aligned to intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic factors.

Non-governmental organizations should strive to tackle barriers such as high cost to participate, poor access to facilities and unsafe environment in order to have better participation among Indian youths in the country. According to the data collected, some suggested games to be included in their programs are football (M), netball (F) and badminton (M&F)

Another alarming fact is almost 25% of the respondents did not participate in any form of sports. Therefore in years to come, non- governmental organizations should invest more on secondary school children to help them to participate actively in sports activities. Otherwise, the involvement of Indian youngsters in sports is expected to deteriorate.

## 10. Conclusion

The research has successfully identified the reasons for the lack of interest shown by our Indian youths. Apart from the government's effort to help the Indians in Malaysia to take part in sports activities, change of behavior among the youngsters and non-governmental organizations' support are the two domains that should be seriously looked into by the stakeholders.

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