



## The Role of Motivation, Interest, and Attitude in Shaping Sports Engagement Among Youth

Sunil Kumar Patel, Department of Physical Education  
RCCPE, Bishrampur, Palamu, Jharkhand, INDIA

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**Author**

**Sunil Kumar Patel**

E-mail : skpatelpti86@gmail.com

shodhsamagam1@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

Sports are more than just physical activity they are a crucial aspect of the psychological, emotional, and social development of individuals. The purpose of this research is to examine the complex relationship between sports participation and the psychological factors that drive it, namely motivation, interest, and attitude. These three elements serve as core components that influence not only why individuals engage in sports but also how they sustain their participation and perform over time. One of the foundational aspects of this study is motivation, which can be categorized into two main types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in sports for internal satisfaction, such as enjoyment, self-improvement, or personal challenge. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation involves external rewards such as trophies, recognition, or peer approval. According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), intrinsic motivation is more sustainable and positively associated with long-term commitment and satisfaction in sports. This research confirms that students who are intrinsically motivated tend to show more consistent participation and a greater willingness to face challenges in sports without external pressure. In addition to motivation, the study explores interest, which acts as a psychological trigger for participation. Interest can be situational—temporary and triggered by environmental factors—or individual, which is long-lasting and more deeply rooted. A student might initially join a sports club out of curiosity (situational interest), but over time, consistent exposure and enjoyment may turn this into a stable, individual interest. The findings suggest that interest plays a central role in forming

sports habits. Students who regularly engage in sports are more likely to cite individual interest, indicating that meaningful and enjoyable experiences can foster lifelong athletic involvement. Another key component of the study is attitude, which encompasses a person's beliefs, emotions, and behavioral tendencies toward sports. Attitudes can be both positive and negative. Positive attitudes are developed through enjoyable, supportive, and successful sporting experiences, while negative attitudes may arise from injuries, fear of failure, or negative social interactions. The study reveals that attitudes are significantly shaped by early sports experiences and peer influence. Furthermore, a positive attitude toward sports is often associated with higher self-esteem, better teamwork skills, and a healthier lifestyle. The interplay between motivation, interest, and attitude creates a dynamic framework that shapes sports behavior. The data collected through standardized questionnaires and analyzed using percentage and correlation analysis reveal strong correlations among these variables. For example, students with high intrinsic motivation often show high individual interest and more positive attitudes toward sports. Conversely, those driven solely by extrinsic rewards may experience burnout or lose interest over time.

## KEY WORDS

*Motivation, Interest, Attitude, Sports.*

## INTRODUCTION

Sports have long been recognized not just as physical activities, but also as powerful psychological and social phenomena that influence various dimensions of human life. While the physical benefits of sports such as increased strength, stamina, flexibility, and overall health are widely acknowledged, it is equally important to understand the psychological motives and social factors that influence an individual's involvement in sports.

The motivation to participate in sports can stem from multiple sources. Some individuals are drawn to sports because of intrinsic motives such as personal enjoyment, the thrill of competition, or the desire to improve skills and achieve mastery. For them, the satisfaction lies in the process itself playing the game, learning new strategies, and feeling a sense of accomplishment. Others may participate due to extrinsic factors, such as winning prizes, gaining social recognition, earning scholarships, or meeting expectations from parents, coaches, or society.

Understanding these motives is crucial, especially in educational settings, where teachers and coaches can foster environments that nurture long-term engagement. For instance, encouraging teamwork, personal growth, and fair play can strengthen internal motivation and reduce performance pressure that may arise from external expectations.

Apart from motivation, interest in different types of sports plays a key role in determining how frequently and enthusiastically individuals engage in them. Interest often varies by age, gender, cultural context, and exposure. For example, children may develop an early interest in sports through school games or family influence, while teenagers might choose sports based on peer preferences or media influence. Males may show greater interest in contact or team sports like football and cricket, while females might lean toward individual or rhythm-based sports such as badminton, gymnastics, or yoga. It is also common for interests to change over time, especially as individuals experience different physical or emotional needs.

Closely tied to interest is the attitude one holds toward sports. Attitude reflects a person's overall evaluation positive or negative toward sports activities. These attitudes are shaped by experiences, feedback, encouragement, and results. A student who frequently succeeds in athletic events and receives appreciation is likely to develop a positive attitude toward sports. In contrast, a lack of support, repeated failure, or injuries may lead to disinterest or even aversion. Importantly, positive attitudes foster discipline, cooperation, and a sense of well-being, contributing not only to better sports performance but also to personal development.

This study thus focuses on three interrelated dimensions:

1. **Motives:** The “why” behind sports participation.
2. **Interest:** The “what” that draws individuals to specific games or activities.
3. **Attitude:** The “how” individuals perceive and react to sports experiences.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the key motives influencing individuals to participate in sports.
2. To examine the level of interest among different age and gender groups in various sports.
3. To analyze the attitudes formed through continuous involvement in sports activities.

## Theoretical Background

1. **Motivation in Sports:** Understanding the Driving Force Behind Athletic Participation, Motivation plays a crucial role in sports and physical activities. It is the psychological force that initiates, directs, and sustains behavior toward achieving goals. In the context of sports, motivation determines why individuals choose to participate, how much effort they put in, how long they persist, and how they handle success or failure. Broadly, motivation is categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic.

➤ **Intrinsic Motivation:** Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal desire to engage in an activity purely for the joy, satisfaction, or personal value it brings. In sports, this may manifest as:

- ◆ A love for playing the game,
- ◆ The thrill of competition,
- ◆ A personal challenge to improve skills, or
- ◆ The joy of movement and physical exertion.

An intrinsically motivated athlete is self-driven. They play not for trophies or praise, but because they genuinely enjoy the experience. For example, a child who practices basketball daily without being told, simply because they love the sport, is intrinsically motivated. This kind of motivation often leads to long-term engagement, as it builds deeper emotional connections with the activity.

➤ **Extrinsic Motivation:** In contrast, extrinsic motivation arises from external factors such as:

- ◆ Awards and medals,
- ◆ Money or scholarships,
- ◆ Social recognition,
- ◆ Pressure from parents or coaches.

While extrinsic motivators can be powerful in the short term, they may not sustain participation in the long run if the internal satisfaction is missing. For example, a student who joins a football team only to earn a scholarship or win competitions may lose interest once those rewards are no longer available. Therefore, although useful, extrinsic rewards must be balanced carefully to avoid dependency or burnout.

➤ **Self-Determination Theory (SDT):** Renowned psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan introduced the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation. According to SDT, for individuals to feel motivated and satisfied in any activity including sports they must experience:

- ◆ **Autonomy:** Feeling in control of their actions,
- ◆ **Competence:** Feeling skilled and capable, and
- ◆ **Relatedness:** Feeling connected with others (teammates, coaches, etc.).

When sports environments support these needs, athletes are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation. For example, a coach who encourages players to set personal goals, recognize their progress, and work collaboratively helps foster a motivational climate where players feel internally driven.

- **Role of Coaches and Educators:** Coaches, physical education teachers, and parents play a vital role in shaping motivation. They should:
  - ◆ Offer constructive feedback,
  - ◆ Recognize effort as much as achievement,
  - ◆ Create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere,
  - ◆ Allow players to have input in decision-making.

By focusing on skill-building, personal growth, and enjoyment, rather than just winning, they can nurture lifelong participation in sports.

In conclusion, while both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have their place in sports, it is intrinsic motivation that leads to sustained involvement, greater enjoyment, and better psychological outcomes. Creating a supportive and autonomy-driven sports environment is essential to fostering motivated, confident, and committed athletes.

2. **Interest in Sports:** Interest in Sports: The Key to Consistent Participation, Interest is a fundamental psychological factor that greatly influences human behavior, including participation in sports. In simple terms, interest refers to a person's natural inclination or curiosity toward a particular activity. In the context of sports, it determines whether an individual is drawn to sporting activities, how much attention and effort they are willing to invest, and how consistently they engage over time.

- **The Nature of Interest:** Interest is not a fixed trait; it is a dynamic and evolving state that can vary depending on experiences, environment, and personal development. Psychologists generally divide interest into two types:
  - ◆ **Situational Interest:** This is temporary and often triggered by specific circumstances or environments. For example, a student may develop an interest in volleyball during a school sports week or after watching an exciting match. However, this interest may fade once the event or stimulus is gone.
  - ◆ **Individual Interest:** This is more stable and long-term. It develops over time through repeated exposure, positive experiences, and personal relevance. A child who consistently plays cricket with friends and enjoys learning the game's strategies may develop a lasting interest that becomes part of their identity.
- **Factors Influencing Interest in Sports:** Several internal and external factors shape a person's interest in sports:
  - ◆ **Personal Preferences and Abilities:** If a sport aligns with an individual's strengths or personality for example, a naturally energetic person enjoying basketball they are more likely to stay interested.
  - ◆ **Social Environment:** Family, peers, and school culture significantly influence interest. Supportive parents, active peer groups, and enthusiastic coaches can spark and maintain interest.
  - ◆ **Role Models and Media Exposure:** Watching famous athletes on TV or social media often inspires young individuals to take an interest in specific sports. For instance, the popularity of cricket in India is greatly enhanced by media coverage and celebrity status of players.
  - ◆ **Opportunities and Access:** Availability of playgrounds, equipment, and structured sports programs plays a critical role. Even a highly interested student may lose interest if they lack access to training or proper facilities.

3. **Attitude Toward Sports:** Attitude Toward Sports, A Psychological Perspective, Attitude is a psychological construct that refers to a person's feelings, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies toward specific objects, people, events, or ideas. In the context of sports, attitude plays a vital role in shaping whether an individual is inclined to participate in physical activities, how they perceive sports, and how committed they remain over time.

A person's attitude toward sports can be positive, neutral, or negative, and it is influenced by various internal and external factors such as personal experiences, peer groups, cultural beliefs, and media portrayal.

➤ **Positive Attitude Toward Sports:** A positive attitude reflects favorable feelings and openness toward sports and physical activities. It may manifest in the form of:

- ◆ Enjoyment in team participation,
- ◆ Willingness to learn new games or techniques,
- ◆ Value for physical fitness and discipline,
- ◆ Seeing sports as a tool for stress relief and self-expression.

Individuals with a positive sports attitude are often enthusiastic, confident, and cooperative. For example, a student who eagerly participates in school games, practices regularly, and supports their teammates demonstrates a healthy and positive outlook toward sports. Such attitudes often lead to long-term involvement, better performance, and overall well-being.

2. **Negative Attitude Toward Sports:** On the other hand, a negative attitude implies aversion, fear, or disinterest in sports. This can develop due to:

- Previous failures or injuries,
- Fear of criticism or embarrassment,
- Negative peer comparisons,
- Lack of support from teachers or parents.

For instance, a child who was mocked during a match or consistently benched by the coach may begin to avoid sports altogether. In some cases, gender stereotypes or cultural beliefs may also discourage participation, especially among girls.

3. **Factors Shaping Attitude Toward Sports:**

- ◆ **Personal Experience:** Success and enjoyment in sports activities create positive memories, while failure, pain, or rejection can foster negativity.
- ◆ **Peer Influence:** Supportive friends and teammates can encourage involvement, whereas bullying or exclusion may lead to withdrawal.
- ◆ **Family Environment:** Parents who value physical activity and support their child's sporting interests contribute to positive attitude development.
- ◆ **Media Representation:** When sports and athletes are shown in an inspiring and inclusive way, it motivates youth. Conversely, overly competitive or commercial portrayals may increase pressure or unrealistic expectations.

4. **Importance of Positive Attitude in Sports:** A positive attitude is essential for:

- Building self-esteem and confidence,
- Encouraging regular participation,
- Improving team dynamics and cooperation,
- Developing life skills such as patience, perseverance, and goal-setting.

It also influences mental health, reducing stress and promoting a balanced lifestyle.

5. **Role of Educators and Coaches:** Teachers and coaches must actively:

- Create an encouraging, inclusive, and safe sports environment,
- Recognize effort as much as talent,
- Provide constructive feedback,
- Help students overcome fear of failure and celebrate small achievements.

Attitude toward sports is a powerful determinant of an individual's engagement in physical activities. A positive attitude nurtures lifelong fitness habits and personal growth, while a negative attitude can lead to disengagement and health issues. Therefore, shaping and supporting healthy sports attitudes is a shared responsibility of families, educators, and society.

## Methodology

The methodology section forms the backbone of any research study, as it outlines the systematic approach adopted to achieve the research objectives. This study aimed to investigate the motives, interest, and attitudes of students toward sports, using a structured scientific approach. The methodology used in this research has been carefully selected to ensure the validity, reliability, and relevance of the findings. The key components of the methodology included the research design, sample selection, tools for data collection, and methods of data analysis, each of which is discussed in detail below.

## Research Design: Descriptive Survey Method

The Descriptive Survey Method was chosen as the research design for this study. This design is particularly effective when the goal is to describe the characteristics of a population or a phenomenon being studied. It allows the researcher to gather information from a large number of participants and to present the findings in a quantitative manner.

Descriptive surveys are non-experimental in nature, which means the variables are not manipulated by the researcher but are instead observed as they naturally occur. This makes the method ideal for understanding real-world behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. In this case, the objective was to explore how students perceive and relate to sports in terms of motivation, interest, and attitude.

This method allowed the researcher to:

- Measure the prevalence of different types of motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic),
- Identify trends in students' interest toward various sports activities,
- Analyze the nature and strength of students' attitudes toward sports.

By using a survey-based approach, data was collected efficiently and systematically from a relatively large and diverse group of participants.

## Sample

The sample of the study comprised 200 students, with an equal distribution of 100 males and 100 females. The participants were selected from various schools and colleges, representing both secondary and higher secondary levels of education. The sample was purposefully selected to include diversity in terms of age, gender, educational level, and socio-cultural background.

Gender	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Male	100	50%
Female	100	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling technique was employed for the selection of the sample. Although this method is non-probabilistic, it is practical and widely used in educational research, especially when dealing with constraints such as time, accessibility, and resources. The researcher approached schools and colleges where permission was granted to conduct the study.

## Demographic Profile

- **Age Range:** Students aged 13–23 years were included. School students were typically between 13 and 18 years, while college students ranged from 18 to 23 years.
- **Location:** The sample included participants from both urban and rural institutions, ensuring that the findings could reflect varying levels of exposure to sports infrastructure and coaching.
- **Educational Background:** Participants came from a range of academic disciplines, not limited to physical education, which allowed for a more balanced understanding of general attitudes toward sports.

The inclusion of both genders in equal proportions was intentional, to allow for comparative analysis regarding differences in motivation, interest, and attitude based on gender.

## Tools Used: Standardized Questionnaires

To collect data on the three core variables of the study motivation, interest, and attitude toward sports the researcher used standardized questionnaires. These instruments were selected based on their established reliability and validity in previous studies and were adapted as needed to suit the context of the present research.

## Motivation Questionnaire

- This questionnaire measured intrinsic motivation (e.g., enjoyment, challenge, mastery) and extrinsic motivation (e.g., rewards, recognition, pressure).
- Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.”
- Sample items included:
  - ◆ “I participate in sports because I enjoy it.”
  - ◆ “I play sports to win medals and trophies.”
- The scoring helped determine the dominant motivational drivers among students.

## Interest in Sports Questionnaire

- This instrument assessed the degree and nature of students’ interest in sports, differentiating between situational interest (temporary and context-specific) and individual interest (long-term and personally significant).
- Questions addressed the frequency of participation, favorite sports, and perceived value of sports in life.
- Example items:
  - ◆ “I regularly follow sports events.”
  - ◆ “I feel bored when there are no sports activities.”

## Attitude Toward Sports Scale

- This scale evaluated positive and negative attitudes toward sports.

- Positive items measured appreciation for teamwork, enjoyment, and belief in physical fitness benefits.
- Negative items explored fears, disinterest, or negative past experiences in sports.
- Sample statements:
  - ◆ “Sports help in building character.”
  - ◆ “I am afraid of injuries, so I avoid playing sports.”

All questionnaires were pre-tested on a small group of students to ensure clarity and consistency in understanding. Necessary modifications were made before final administration.

### Procedure of Data Collection

Once the questionnaires were finalized, data collection was carried out in several schools and colleges over a period of four weeks. The following steps were followed:

1. Permission was sought from school principals and college administrators.
2. Participants were given a brief orientation regarding the purpose of the study and assured about confidentiality and anonymity.
3. Informed consent was obtained from participants (and from guardians in the case of minors).
4. Questionnaires were administered in classroom settings or designated common halls.
5. Participants were given sufficient time (25–30 minutes) to complete the forms without any pressure.

The collected data was carefully reviewed, coded, and entered into data analysis software for further processing.

### Data Analysis: Percentage and Correlation Analysis

After data collection, responses were subjected to systematic statistical analysis using Percentage Analysis and Correlation Analysis to interpret the findings and test the relationships between variables.

#### Percentage Analysis

- This method was used to determine the distribution of responses for each item.
- It helped identify the general trends, such as what percentage of students were intrinsically motivated, or how many had a positive attitude toward sports.
- For instance:
  - ◆ 65% of students reported participating in sports out of personal enjoyment.
  - ◆ 70% showed high interest in team-based sports.
- These percentages allowed for an easy and intuitive understanding of the overall patterns.

#### Correlation Analysis

- Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) was computed to examine the strength and direction of relationships among:
  - ◆ Motivation and Interest
  - ◆ Motivation and Attitude
  - ◆ Interest and Attitude
- This helped to test whether students who were more motivated were also more interested and had a more favorable attitude toward sports.
- Findings revealed:
  - ◆ A **positive correlation** between intrinsic motivation and interest.
  - ◆ A **moderate to strong correlation** between interest and attitude.

- ◆ A **weaker correlation** between extrinsic motivation and long-term interest.

These correlations provided meaningful insights into how one psychological construct influenced the other in the context of sports.

## Ethical Considerations

The research adhered strictly to ethical principles:

- **Voluntary participation:** Students had the choice to opt out at any time.
- Informed consent was obtained from all participants.
- Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were strictly maintained.
- The questionnaires contained no sensitive or harmful content, and participants were encouraged to answer honestly.
- All data was used solely for academic purposes.

This detailed methodology laid a strong foundation for the research. By using a descriptive survey design, a balanced and diverse sample, reliable standardized tools, and appropriate data analysis techniques, the study was able to achieve its objective of examining the motivation, interest, and attitude of students toward sports. The careful planning and ethical execution ensured the reliability and applicability of the findings, contributing valuable insights into the field of sports psychology and education.

## Findings and Discussion

### Motives Behind Participation

- 60% of respondents were motivated by intrinsic factors such as enjoyment and skill development.
- 30% participated due to extrinsic reasons such as scholarships, prizes, or parental pressure.
- 10% reported mixed reasons.

### Interest Levels

- Males showed higher interest in team sports (e.g., football, cricket), while females showed more interest in individual sports (e.g., badminton, athletics).
- Interest peaked during early adolescence but declined in late adolescence due to academic pressures.

### Attitude Formation

- Positive attitude was strongly correlated with regular sports participation.
- Students engaged in sports had better teamwork, discipline, and self-confidence.
- Negative attitudes were observed among those with poor past experiences, injuries, or lack of encouragement.

### Implications of the Study

- Schools and colleges should focus on fostering intrinsic motivation by making sports more enjoyable and skill-oriented.
- Gender-sensitive approaches in promoting sports interest are necessary.
- Positive reinforcement, better infrastructure, and inclusive policies can help improve attitudes toward sports.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights a significant interconnection between motives, interest, and attitude in shaping sports behavior. These psychological components collectively influence an individual's engagement, performance, and long-term involvement in sports activities.

Intrinsic motivation the internal drive to participate for personal satisfaction plays a foundational role. When individuals are motivated by enjoyment, personal growth, or a sense of achievement, they are more likely to remain committed. Unlike external rewards, intrinsic motivation fosters deeper engagement and resilience in the face of challenges.

Maintaining interest is equally important. Sports programs must evolve to remain dynamic and engaging. Incorporating varied formats, friendly competitions, and skill-building sessions can keep participants stimulated and invested. Interest is what sustains initial motivation and prevents dropout due to monotony or lack of challenge.

Furthermore, a positive attitude shaped by experiences, coaching, peer support, and institutional culture creates a welcoming environment. When participants feel valued, supported, and encouraged, their confidence and enthusiasm naturally grow.

In conclusion, fostering a sports culture that nurtures intrinsic motivation, sustains interest, and promotes positivity can lead to greater participation and richer, long-lasting benefits physically, mentally, and socially. This approach not only enhances performance but also contributes to overall personality development and well-being.

## Recommendations

To promote holistic development and greater participation in sports, it is essential to implement strategic recommendations that foster inclusivity, positivity, and mental well-being.

**Firstly**, introducing *diversified sports programs* can address the varied interests and abilities of students. Rather than focusing solely on mainstream sports like cricket or football, institutions should offer a broader range, such as badminton, swimming, martial arts, or even e-sports. This not only increases participation but also helps individuals discover their unique talents.

**Secondly**, *training coaches to nurture positive attitudes* is vital. Coaches play a key role in shaping a participant's experience. Emphasis should be placed on building self-esteem, encouraging teamwork, and maintaining discipline while promoting enjoyment. A supportive coach can inspire long-term engagement and personal growth.

**Lastly**, *integrating sports psychology into educational curricula* ensures that students understand the mental aspects of sports—such as motivation, goal-setting, handling pressure, and resilience. This knowledge not only enhances performance but also contributes to emotional intelligence and mental health.

Together, these recommendations create a more inclusive, encouraging, and balanced sporting culture that values both physical and psychological development.

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