

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Exploring Students' Perceptions of Sports and Cultural Activities at Pantnagar University

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ABSTRACT

Participation in sports and cultural activities is essential for personal development. Sports improve physical health, promote teamwork, and teach discipline, while cultural activities nurture creativity and emotional expression. Together, they build confidence, enhance social skills, and strengthen community bonds. These activities contribute to a balanced lifestyle that supports both mental and physical well-being and provide opportunities for individuals to discover and develop their talents. The purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions of cultural and sports activities. A total of 61 students from Pantnagar University participated in the survey. The findings show that 72.2% of respondents are aged between 19 and 21, with the majority (90.16%) from the College of Agriculture. While 62.3% have never attended society events, a notable number of students engage in sports (29.5%) and cultural activities (31.1%) outside the university. A large majority (86.8%) recognize the benefits of extracurricular activities, particularly in enhancing cultural awareness (90.16%) and overall well-being (86.8%). However, fewer students (58.01%) perceive career opportunities in cultural activities. Despite low participation in university-based events, students show a keen interest in extracurricular activities beyond campus. Overall, the study suggests that students have a positive attitude towards sports and cultural activities.

KEYWORDS

• Students • Sports • Cultural activities perception

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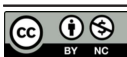
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INTRODUCTION

Sports and cultural activities are vital for personal growth and development. Sports promote physical fitness, teamwork, and discipline, while cultural activities foster creativity and emotional expression. Together, they help students build confidence, social skills, and a sense of community. These activities support a balanced lifestyle, enhancing both mental and physical well-being while offering opportunities for talent discovery and growth. Pantnagar University provides a dynamic blend of sports and cultural events, contributing to a well-rounded student experience. Historically, the integration of sports and education has not been emphasized enough in educational institutions (**Rathor and Basit, 2010**). This study examines students' perceptions of sports and cultural activities at the university, as well as their participation in these events. Education for free time aims to help young people choose activities that engage them fully, fostering personal development and making use of their strengths (**Mikanovic, 2010**). As the saying goes, "a sound mind is in a sound body," which highlights the importance of physical activities in promoting education (**Haider, 2008**). The extent to which young people engage in cultural activities during their free time is influenced by factors such as the cultural environment in which they are raised (**Brane and Slavojka, 2014**).

According to **Grandic (2020)**, free time refers to the period outside of professional, social, and family responsibilities, used for rest, recreation, and personal growth. It is the responsibility of families, schools, and communities to plan and provide quality activities that fill this time effectively (**Polic and Polic, 2009**). The decline in organized cultural and sports activities for children and youth has led to an increase in unstructured free time, emphasizing the school's role in providing developmentally appropriate activities (**Radic, 1988**). The availability of cultural and sports activities depends on individual interest, cultural education, economic conditions, training of personnel, and socio-economic policies (**Krivokapic, 2008**). Educational institutions, traditionally seen as the center for socialization, also play a key role in promoting sports at the grassroots level, offering students opportunities for communication and socialization through sport (**Khan et al., 2016**).

Sports and cultural activities are well recognized for their positive impact on college students' personal development, well-being, and academic success. Participation in these activities helps students develop teamwork, discipline, and physical fitness, while also enhancing creativity, emotional expression, and cultural awareness. These extracurricular pursuits contribute to the holistic development of students, supporting both mental and physical health, while providing opportunities to improve key skills like communication and leadership, which are essential for future career success. University life goes beyond academics, and extracurricular activities such as sports and cultural events play a crucial role in shaping the overall development of students. While the benefits of these activities are widely acknowledged, participation rates may vary due to factors like personal interest, institutional support, and external opportunities. This study aims to explore the demographics, participation levels, and perceptions of Pantnagar University students regarding sports and cultural activities. The objectives of this study include:

OBJECTIVES

1. To access the level of participation of students in sports and cultural activities
2. To identify factors influencing students towards sports and cultural activities.
3. To study the perception of students towards sports and cultural activities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the participation of Pantnagar University students in sports and cultural activities. A structured questionnaire was designed to gather information on demographics, participation levels, and students' perceptions of how extracurricular activities impact their personal growth, well-being, and career opportunities. The questionnaire was converted into a Google Form to facilitate easy distribution via the university's communication channels. A total of 61 students were selected to participate in the study. The collected responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentage distributions.

The study aimed to identify participation trends, explore variations in engagement based on demographic factors, and assess students' perceptions of the value of extracurricular activities. *Google Form*: This is a tool used to create online survey forms, allowing participants to complete the questionnaire through a shared link. *Data Analysis*: Once the data was collected, it was compiled and analyzed using basic descriptive statistics to provide a clear summary of key trends. The responses were organized into frequency distributions and percentage breakdowns for each question, which were then examined to identify common patterns and insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 1. Age Distribution:** The majority of students (72.2%) are in the 19-21 age group, indicating that this demographic is the most engaged in extracurricular activities. This is consistent with the common pattern observed in many universities, where students in this age group are typically more involved in campus activities as they navigate their academic and personal growth phases. A smaller proportion of students (22.9%) are below 19 years of age, possibly indicating a trend where younger students are still adjusting to university life. The least participation is seen in students above 21 years (4.8%), which may suggest that older students, possibly due to academic pressures or personal commitments, have fewer opportunities or less inclination to participate in extracurricular activities.
- 2. Gender Distribution:** The gender distribution of the respondents shows that a majority of the students are female (60.7%), while 39.3% are male, and no students identified as others. This reflects the overall gender balance at Pantnagar University, with a higher female student population. This finding is consistent with many educational institutions where females tend to participate more actively in cultural and extracurricular activities, which could be due to higher levels of social engagement or a cultural inclination towards involvement in such activities.
- 3. College Representation:** The highest percentage of respondents (90.16%) are from the College of Agriculture, which could be reflective of the fact that Pantnagar University is well-known for its agricultural programs, attracting students from agricultural backgrounds who may be more inclined to participate in extracurricular activities that complement their academic pursuits. The College of Community Science (6.5%) and the College of Fisheries (3.27%) have relatively fewer respondents, which might indicate either lower participation rates in extracurricular activities in these disciplines or a smaller student population in these colleges at Pantnagar.
- 4. Background Distribution:** A majority of students (59%) come from urban backgrounds, while 41% come from rural areas. The larger urban demographic could be attributed to greater access to resources, internet connectivity, and awareness about extracurricular activities, making it easier for urban students to participate in university events. Rural students, on the other hand, may face logistical challenges such as limited access to information or transportation, which could explain their lower participation in extracurricular activities, despite being an important part of the university's demographic.
- 5. Participation in Societies and Events:** When it comes to participation in events of different societies, the data shows that a significant portion of students (62.3%) have never participated in any extracurricular events. This may reflect a lack of interest, time constraints, or unawareness of available opportunities. Of those who have participated, 26.22% have attended only one event, while a smaller proportion (11.47%) have been involved in more than one event. This suggests that while there is some level of engagement, it is not consistent, and many students prefer limited involvement. The reasons for low participation could vary from academic pressures, lack of motivation, or possibly competing interests in other extracurricular activities such as internships or part-time jobs.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight several important factors influencing student participation in sports and cultural activities

at Pantnagar University. The age and gender distribution show a strong inclination towards younger female students being more actively engaged, which could be an indicator of the demographic's overall readiness to engage in campus life. The participation trends further indicate that although a majority of students recognize the benefits of extracurricular activities, the actual level of engagement is relatively low. The fact that a large number of students have never participated in society events (62.3%) could suggest a need for more active outreach and engagement from the university to ensure that students are aware of and feel encouraged to participate in these activities. Additionally, the findings suggest that even those who do participate tend to engage minimally, with 26.22% attending only one event. This could indicate that there is a lack of ongoing motivation or support for students to continue engaging with extracurriculars beyond a singular experience. The background distribution shows an interesting trend where urban students are more involved than their rural counterparts. This suggests that the university may need to explore ways to bridge the gap between urban and rural students by providing equal opportunities and resources for extracurricular participation, perhaps through outreach programs or increasing awareness in rural areas. In conclusion, while Pantnagar University offers opportunities for cultural and sports engagement, there is a need for a more structured approach to encourage greater student involvement. This could include better communication about the availability of activities, incentives for participation, and ensuring that these extracurricular activities align with the interests and needs of the diverse student body.

Table 1: General Information of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 19	14	22.9
19-21	44	72.2
Above 21	3	4.8
Gender		
Male	24	39.3
Female	37	60.7
Others	0	0

Category	Frequency	Percentage
College		
College of Agriculture	55	90.16
College of Community Science	4	6.5
College of Fisheries	2	3.27
Background		
Rural	25	41
Urban	36	59
Participation in events of the different societies		
Only 1	16	26.22
More than 1	7	11.47
Never	38	62.3

Active Members and participation in sports and cultural activities

The results of this study shed light on students' involvement in sports and cultural activities at Pantnagar University, both within the university and in external settings. The findings offer several insights into student participation patterns, interests, and potential barriers.

- 1. Low Participation in University Sports and Cultural Societies:** The data indicates that a significant majority of students (88.5% for sports and 90.2% for cultural societies) are not active members of the university's sports teams and cultural societies. This could be attributed to several factors. One possibility is a lack of awareness about the available opportunities or a preference for focusing on academics over extracurriculars. Additionally, students may not have enough time to dedicate to these activities, given the academic pressures they face. The low participation could also reflect a lack of institutional support or infrastructure, such as adequate facilities or resources for students to engage in sports or cultural activities.
- 2. Higher Participation in Activities outside the University:** While participation in university sports and cultural societies is low, there is a noticeable increase in engagement in external sports (29.5%) and cultural activities (31.1%). This suggests that students may be more inclined to

pursue these activities in a less structured, more informal environment outside the university. Factors like personal interest, social networks, and accessibility to local clubs or community events could explain this higher level of participation. It also implies that students see value in engaging in physical and cultural activities, albeit outside the university setting.

3. **Discrepancy between Participation and Perception:** Despite the limited participation, many students recognize the benefits of engaging in extracurricular activities, including improved physical health, mental well-being, and the development of social and leadership skills. This disconnect between recognizing the benefits and actively participating could indicate barriers to involvement, such as lack of time, competing academic commitments, or insufficient encouragement from the university.
4. **Implications for University Policy and Support:** The low levels of participation in university-level sports and cultural societies point to an opportunity for the university to re-evaluate its offerings and make changes to increase student engagement. Providing more visible and accessible opportunities, better marketing of these activities, and fostering a campus culture that values extracurricular involvement could encourage more students to participate. Moreover, integrating sports and cultural activities into the broader educational experience and emphasizing their importance for holistic development could help bridge the gap between awareness and actual involvement.
5. **Need for Increased Awareness and Accessibility:** The study also suggests that increasing awareness about the available extracurricular opportunities and making them more accessible, in terms of timing, resources, and support, could encourage more students to participate. Additionally, organizing events that cater to a wider range of interests or skill levels might attract students who are otherwise hesitant to engage in competitive sports or high-level cultural performances.

In conclusion, while the students at Pantnagar

University demonstrate an understanding of the value of sports and cultural activities, the study reveals that their actual participation is limited. This points to the need for universities to invest in better systems, programs, and initiatives that promote student involvement in extracurricular activities, ensuring that these activities become an integral part of the student experience.

Table 2: Active Members and participation in sports and cultural activities

Category	Yes		No	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Active Members of University Sports Team	7	11.5	54	88.5
Active Members of University Cultural Society	6	9.8	55	90.2
Actively participate in Sports Activities outside the University	18	29.5	43	70.5
Actively participate in Cultural Activities outside the University	19	31.1	42	68.9

Participation in Sports Activities

The data on students' participation in various sports activities at Pantnagar University reveals significant trends in preferences for both outdoor and indoor sports. These insights are crucial for understanding student interests and for tailoring sports programs to meet their needs.

Outdoor Sports Participation

The results indicate that cricket is the most popular outdoor sport, with **32.7%** of students participating, followed by volleyball (**27.8%**) and athletics (**22.9%**). Football (**11.4%**) and tennis (**4.91%**) have lower participation rates, while hockey saw no participation.

- **Cricket's popularity** aligns with national trends, as it is one of the most widely played and followed sports in India.
- **Volleyball and athletics** also show considerable engagement, highlighting student interest in team-based and individual competitive activities.
- The **low participation in hockey and tennis** could be attributed to limited exposure, lack of facilities, or personal preferences among students.

Indoor Sports Participation

Among indoor sports, badminton emerges as the most favored, with **31.14%** of students participating, followed by yoga (**19.6%**) and chess (**18.03%**). Participation in carrom (**14.75%**), basketball (**13.11%**), and table tennis (**3.27%**) is comparatively lower.

- **Badminton's high participation rate** could be due to its accessibility, ease of play, and suitability for indoor settings.
- **Yoga's inclusion** as a popular choice reflects an increasing awareness of its benefits for mental and physical well-being.
- The relatively lower engagement in sports like **table tennis and basketball** might suggest the need for better facilities, training, or promotion of these activities.

Implications for University Sports Programs

The variation in participation across different sports underscores the importance of catering to diverse student preferences. While certain sports like cricket and badminton have high engagement, others like hockey and table tennis could benefit from targeted initiatives to boost participation.

- **Enhanced Infrastructure and Resources:** Expanding and upgrading facilities for less popular sports could encourage more students to explore these activities.
- **Promotional Campaigns and Events:** Organizing tournaments, workshops, and promotional events for underrepresented sports can help generate interest and increase participation.
- **Balanced Focus on Team and Individual Sports:** Providing opportunities for both team-based and individual sports ensures that students with varying interests and skill sets can participate.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to sports development at Pantnagar University, focusing on popular activities while also encouraging broader participation in less engaged sports.

Table 3: Participation of students in Sports Activities

Sports	Frequency	Percentage
Outdoor Sports		
Volley Ball	17	27.8
Cricket	20	32.7

Hockey	0	0
Football	7	11.4
Tennis	3	4.91
Atheletics	14	22.9
Indoor Sports		
Chess	11	18.03
Carrom	9	14.75
Table Tennis	2	3.27
Basketball	8	13.11
Badminton	19	31.14
Yoga	12	19.6

Sports and cultural activities followed

The analysis of student engagement with sports and cultural activities at Pantnagar University highlights the role of communication channels and regular events in fostering participation. The following discussion focuses on the findings presented in Table 4, which outlines students' habits of following sports and cultural updates.

Engagement with University Notices:

A significant majority of students follow university notices related to sports (**77.04%**) and cultural activities (**73.77%**). This indicates a strong interest in staying updated about campus events, which could be attributed to the effective dissemination of information through official channels. However, the **22.9%** and **26.22%** of students not following these notices suggest the need for enhanced communication strategies, such as mobile app notifications or social media updates.

Consumption of Sports and Cultural News:

The survey reveals that **72.1%** of students regularly follow sports news through social media or television, while **59.01%** engage with cultural news. The relatively high consumption of sports news reflects the broader appeal of sports in mainstream and digital media. On the other hand, the **40.9%** who do not follow cultural news suggests a potential gap in interest or accessibility. This underscores the need for promoting cultural content through engaging formats like short videos or interactive posts.

Perception of University's Efforts: An overwhelming **86.8%** of students agree that the university organizes sports and cultural activities regularly. This highlights the institution's

commitment to offering diverse extracurricular opportunities. The **13.2%** who do not recognize this effort may indicate a lack of awareness or

insufficient promotion of these events within certain student groups.

Table 4: Sports and cultural activities

Statement	Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Follow the university notices related to sports	47	77.04	14	22.9
Follow the university notices related to cultural activities	45	73.77	16	26.22
Follow various sports news shown in social media or TV	44	72.1	17	27.8
Follow various cultural news shown in social media or TV	36	59.01	25	40.9
Your university organizes various sports and cultural activities on regular basis	53	86.8	8	13.2

Implications for University Policies

The findings emphasize the importance of maintaining robust communication channels and consistently organizing events to sustain student interest in extracurricular activities.

- **Improved Visibility of Notices:** The university could explore innovative ways to reach students who miss out on notices, such as targeted emails, in-app alerts, or collaborations with student representatives.
- **Enhanced Cultural Promotion:** To address the lower interest in cultural news, the university could collaborate with students to create and share more engaging cultural content.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Regular surveys or feedback forms post-events can help the university identify areas for improvement and tailor activities to student preferences.

In conclusion, while a majority of students actively engage with sports and cultural activities, there remains room for improvement in reaching all student demographics and fostering greater participation.

Importance and perception of students toward sports and cultural activities

The data reflects students' perspectives on the value of sports and cultural activities in personal and professional development. Each statement provides insights into how these activities impact knowledge, health, identity, and career prospects.

1. **Enhancing Knowledge about Culture:** A majority (**90.1%**) of students agree

that participation in sports and cultural activities enhances their understanding of both their own and different cultures. This highlights the role of these activities in fostering cultural awareness and inclusivity. The remaining **9.8%** hold a neutral stance, suggesting that while the benefits are recognized, the extent of their impact may vary.

2. **Promoting and Preventing Cultural Diversity:** Approximately **78.6%** of students agree that sports and cultural activities promote and prevent the erosion of cultural diversity. These activities serve as platforms for celebrating diverse traditions, which can bridge cultural gaps. The **21.3%** neutral respondents might reflect limited personal exposure to multicultural events.
3. **Improving Mental and Physical Health:** An overwhelming **86.8%** of students acknowledge the dual health benefits of these activities. This reinforces the widely accepted notion that extracurricular involvement supports holistic well-being. The **13.1%** neutral responses indicate an opportunity for the university to emphasize the mental health benefits of such engagements.
4. **Participation for Certificates and Rewards:** A substantial **55.7%** agree that students often participate for certificates and rewards, while **34.4%** remain neutral, and **9.8%** disagree. Certificates enhance resumes, but this finding suggests a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation driving student participation. The university

could explore ways to shift focus toward the experiential and developmental benefits of participation.

5. **Enhancing Local Identity:** Participation in these activities is seen as enhancing local identity by 73.7% of students. This suggests that sports and cultural events foster a sense of belonging and pride in regional heritage. The 1.6% who disagree may feel disconnected or believe these activities lack localized elements.
6. **Impact on CV and Biodata:** A notable 68.8% of students agree that certificates from these activities positively impact their CVs, while 27.8% are neutral. This underlines the professional value of extracurricular achievements, though 3.2% feel they have limited career relevance.
7. **Enhancing Leadership and Teamwork:** A significant 86.8% of respondents believe that these activities develop leadership and teamwork skills. This finding aligns with the core objectives of extracurricular programs, which aim to nurture key interpersonal competencies.
8. **Developing Communication Skills:** About 78.6% of students agree that participation improves communication

skills, while 21.3% are neutral. These activities often require collaboration, which naturally fosters effective communication, essential for both personal and professional growth.

9. **Career Opportunities in Sports:** Three-fourths (75.4%) of students believe sports can lead to career opportunities. This reflects growing awareness of sports as a viable profession, but 22.95% neutral responses suggest some uncertainty or lack of awareness of career pathways.
10. **Career Opportunities in Cultural Activities:** Fewer students (58%) agree that cultural activities offer career opportunities, with 36.06% neutral and 4.9% disagreeing. This highlights a perceived gap in awareness or actual opportunities in cultural fields. Universities could address this by offering career counseling focused on cultural professions.

The findings illustrate the multifaceted benefits of sports and cultural activities while revealing areas where student perceptions and participation can be further enhanced. Institutions can leverage this feedback to design more inclusive, impactful, and professionally oriented extracurricular programs.

Table 5: Importance and perception of students toward sports and cultural activities

Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Enhances knowledge about own culture as well as different cultures	55	90.1	6	9.8	0	0
Participation in sports and cultural activities helps in promoting and preventing cultural diversity	48	78.6	13	21.3	0	0
Participating in sports and cultural activities helps to improve mental as well as physical health	53	86.8	8	13.1	0	0
Students participate in sports and cultural activities for certificates and rewards	34	55.7	21	34.4	6	9.8
Participating in sports and cultural activities enhances local identity	45	73.7	15	24.5	1	1.6
Certificate gained by students from sports and cultural activities improve their C.V. and Biodata	42	68.8	17	27.8	2	3.2
Sports and cultural activities help to enhance leadership and teamwork	53	86.8	8	13.1	0	0
Sports and cultural activities help to develop communication skills	48	78.6	13	21.3	0	0
Sports activities can provide various career opportunities	46	75.4	14	22.95	1	1.6
Cultural activities can provide various career opportunities	36	58.0	22	36.06	3	4.9

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the critical role of sports and cultural activities in shaping the overall development of students at Pantnagar University. These activities not only promote

physical fitness and mental well-being but also enhance essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, and cultural awareness. The findings reveal that while formal participation in university-organized

sports teams and cultural societies remains limited, a significant number of students actively engage in similar activities outside the campus. This suggests that students recognize the importance of extracurricular pursuits for personal growth and well-being, even if they do not fully utilize institutional opportunities.

Moreover, students widely acknowledge the benefits of these activities in fostering diversity, enhancing local and cultural identity, and providing a balanced lifestyle. The study also highlights a crucial gap in perception regarding career prospects, with fewer students seeing cultural activities as viable career pathways compared to sports. This indicates the need for the university to adopt a more proactive approach in promoting cultural pursuits and highlighting their potential in career development.

To maximize the benefits of sports and cultural engagement, the university should focus on expanding access to and awareness of these activities, organizing more frequent and diverse events, and providing better infrastructure and mentorship. Additionally, integrating these pursuits more formally into the academic framework, such as through credit-based extracurricular programs or professional skill workshops, could encourage wider participation. By fostering an environment that values both sports and cultural activities equally, Pantnagar University can help students achieve a more well-rounded and enriching educational experience, equipping them with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in various aspects of life and career.

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