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## Elevating College Life: The Crucial Role of Physical Activity for Students

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### ABSTRACT

*In the vibrant landscape of college life, where academic pursuits often dominate, the significance of maintaining an active lifestyle can be overshadowed. This research explores the crucial role of physical activity in the holistic well-being of college students, emphasizing its impact on mental health, academic performance, and overall life satisfaction.*

*The transition to college represents a pivotal moment in a young adult's life, marked by newfound independence and the freedom to make choices that influence both academic and personal trajectories. Amidst academic demands and social pressures, neglecting physical activity during these formative years can lead to a host of adverse consequences.*

*This study investigates the physical activity levels of senior college students in Pune City, employing a survey method with a sample size of 120 students. The research instrument includes a structured questionnaire with sections covering demographics, physical activity habits, and academic performance. The Physical Activity Index (PAI) questionnaire is used to assess participants' physical activity levels.*

*The findings reveal that while sedentary activities like playing and watching television are prevalent, a substantial proportion of students prioritize physical activities such as exercising and engaging in high-intensity sports. However, there is also a significant group that does not engage in regular physical activity, potentially missing out on the benefits it offers.*

*This research underscores the importance of promoting physical activity on college campuses to enhance students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. It provides insights into the common barriers that college students face when trying to maintain an active lifestyle, offering practical solutions to foster a more active campus community.*

*In a world driven by technological advancements, encouraging students to prioritize physical activity is not only a necessity but also an investment in their growth, happiness, and future success.*

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**Keywords :** Leisure Time, Physical Activity Index, Sports Participation.

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## **Introduction**

In the bustling realm of college life, where academic pursuits often reign supreme, the significance of maintaining a physically active lifestyle can sometimes take a back seat. The journey through higher education is a transformative period marked by intellectual growth, personal exploration, and the forging of lifelong friendships. Amidst the whirlwind of lectures, assignments, and social engagements, the importance of physical activity can be easily overlooked. However, it's essential to recognize that engaging in regular exercise and embracing an active routine can profoundly impact a college student's holistic well-being and set the foundation for a healthier and more fulfilling life.

The transition to college represents a pivotal moment in a young adult's life, marked by newfound independence and the freedom to make choices that influence both academic and personal trajectories. Amid the excitement of pursuing higher education goals, the demands of coursework and the pressures of balancing a social life can contribute to elevated stress levels and a sedentary lifestyle. As a result, neglecting physical activity during these formative years can lead to a host of adverse consequences, ranging from diminished mental well-being to long-term health issues.

From strengthening mental health and cognitive function to fostering a sense of community and discipline, the advantages are both diverse and compelling. Moreover, we will explore strategies to overcome common barriers to physical activity in a college setting and discuss how educational institutions can play a pivotal role in promoting and facilitating active lifestyles.

In a world where technological advancements and virtual connectivity dominate, motivating college students to prioritize physical activity might seem like a frightening

task. However, the pull of enhanced vitality, improved focus, and a more balanced lifestyle presents an opportunity too valuable to ignore. As we embark on this exploration of physical activity's profound role in the realm of higher education, it becomes clear that encouraging students to tread the path of active living is an investment in their overall growth, happiness, and success. (CDC, 2023)

**Physical Activity and Mental Health :** In the pursuit of a fulfilling and balanced life, the intricate interplay between physical and mental well-being cannot be understated. In recent years, an increasing body of research has illuminated the profound connection between physical activity and mental health. Beyond its benefits for cardiovascular fitness and weight management, regular physical activity has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing psychological well-being, managing stress, and even alleviating symptoms of mental health disorders. This synthesis aims to explore the intricate relationship between physical activity and mental health, shedding light on the mechanisms at play and the practical implications for individuals seeking to cultivate holistic wellness.

**Impact of physical activity on Academic Performance :** The synthesis of physical activity and academic performance underscores the undeniable connection between body and mind. Recognizing the symbiotic relationship between physical activity and cognitive enhancement has the potential to reshape educational paradigms. Striking a harmonious balance between academic pursuits and physical engagement is not just a choice; it is a strategy that enriches both intellectual development and holistic well-being. As we endeavour to empower students with the tools for academic success, let us embrace the profound impact of physical activity as a catalyst for intellectual growth, resilience, and a future defined by both scholarly achievement and vibrant health. (Kwak et al., 2016)

Physical activity fosters an environment conducive to learning by enhancing mood and reducing stress. Students who participate in physical activity are more likely to approach their studies with a positive attitude and enthusiasm.

Academic pressure can lead to stress, negatively impacting learning and performance. Physical activity serves as a stress reliever, helping students manage stressors and maintain a balanced mental state.

**Barriers to Physical Activity in College :** The college experience is a time of transition, growth, and exploration, but it also brings with it a unique set of challenges that can impede students' ability to engage in regular physical activity. While the benefits of exercise are widely acknowledged, the demands of academics, social commitments, and various environmental factors often create barriers that

hinder students from maintaining an active lifestyle. This examination delves into the common barriers to physical activity faced by college students, offering insights into the underlying factors and proposing practical solutions to foster a more active campus community. (Malooly, 2021)

**Academic Pressures :** The heavy workload and academic pressures in college can leave students feeling time-strapped, leading them to prioritize studying over physical activity.

**Time Constraints :** Juggling coursework, part-time jobs, internships, and social commitments leaves little time for exercise.

**Sedentary Lifestyle :** Extended periods of sitting during lectures, study sessions, and screen time contribute to a sedentary lifestyle.

**Lack of Facilities :** Insufficient or inaccessible fitness facilities on campus can discourage students from engaging in physical activity.

### **Financial Constraints:**

Limited budgets can deter students from joining fitness classes, purchasing gym memberships, or accessing recreational activities.

**Lack of Motivation :** College life can be mentally taxing, leading to reduced motivation for physical activity.

**Stress and Mental Health :** Elevated stress levels and mental health concerns can make physical activity seem like an additional burden.

### **Unstructured Routine:**

Irregular schedules and unpredictable commitments can make it challenging to establish a consistent exercise routine

**Objective:** The General Objective of this research was to explore the physical activity levels of the students with the hope that both students and educational institutions alike recognize the pivotal role of physical activity in shaping a vibrant, productive, and balanced college experience.

### **Research Design:**

This research paper employs a survey method to investigate the relationship between physical activity and academic performance among senior college students in Pune

City. A questionnaire-based approach was utilized to gather data on students' physical activity levels using the Physical Activity Index.

### **Sampling:**

The target population for this study consisted of senior college students in Pune City. A random sampling technique was employed to select participants for the survey. The sample size comprised 120 students, chosen from various colleges in Pune City to ensure representation across different academic disciplines and backgrounds. (Best, 2010)

### **Data Collection Instrument:**

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire included sections on demographic information, physical activity habits, and academic performance. The Physical Activity Index (PAI) questionnaire was incorporated to assess participants' physical activity levels. The PAI questionnaire consists of a series of questions designed to gauge the frequency and intensity of physical activities performed by respondents.

### **Data Collection Procedure:**

To ensure ethical considerations, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. A written informed consent form was obtained from each participant before proceeding with the survey. The survey was administered electronically through an online survey platform to enhance accessibility and convenience. (Gay, 2000)

### **Data Analysis:**

The collected data were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to provide an overview of the participants' demographic characteristics, physical activity levels, and academic performance. (Vincent, 2005)

Q N	Students Prefer to do	Percentage	Graph
1	During leisure time	52%	Play
		15.8%	Watch Television
		15.8%	Plays Games on Gadzetz
		15.8%	Spend time on Social Media
2	During leisure time I Prefer	47.4%	Prefer to Exercise (Walk, Jog, Yoga etc.)
		31.6%	Be with friends and have fun
		21.1%	Sleep
3	How much time you spend for exercise per week	42.1%	5-7 days
		36.8%	3-5 days
		10.5%	Less Than 3 days
		10.5%	Never
4	What is your hobby (about Physical Activity)	63.2%	Playing a Sports
		10.5%	Trecking
		10.5%	Running
		5%	Cycling
		5%	Swimming
		5%	Yoga
5	In comparison with others of my own age I think my physical activity during leisure time is	42.1%	More than Others
		26.3%	Same as Others
		26.3%	Less than Others
		9%	Much Less than Others

6	During leisure time I sweat	42.1%	Sometimes
		26.3%	Always
		15.8%	Never
		10.5%	Often
		7%	Occasionally
7	What sport do you play most frequently	52.6%	High Intensity
		36.8%	Medium Intensity
		10.5%	Never Play
8	How many hours do you play a week?	78.9%	1 Hr to 2 Hr
		10.5	Less Than 30 Min
		10.5	Never Play

## Conclusions:

### Leisure Time Activities:

The most common leisure activities among respondents are playing (52%) and watching television (15.8%).

A significant portion of the participants (15.8%) spends their leisure time playing games on gadgets, while an equal percentage (15.8%) prefers spending time on social media.

It's clear that playing and digital entertainment are the predominant choices for leisure activities, with a preference for physical activities being less common (47.4%).

### Physical Activity Preferences:

Regarding physical activities during leisure time, the majority of respondents (31.6%) prefer exercising, such as walking, jogging, or yoga.

Socializing with friends and having fun is the second most preferred choice (21.1%).

A smaller percentage (15.8%) prefers to use their leisure time for sleeping.

### **Frequency of Exercise:**

More than two-fifths of the respondents (42.1%) exercise 5-7 days a week, indicating a commitment to physical fitness.

36.8% exercise 3-5 days a week, while 10.5% exercise less than 3 days a week.

A concerning 10.5% of participants reported never engaging in any exercise.

### **Favourite Physical Activities:**

Among physical activities, playing sports (63.2%) is the most favored hobby, demonstrating a strong interest in active pursuits.

Trekking and running are also popular choices, each selected by 10.5% of respondents.

Other activities like cycling, swimming, and yoga have smaller but notable followings.

### **Comparison of Physical Activity with Peers:**

A substantial portion of respondents (42.1%) believes they engage in more physical activity during leisure time compared to others their age.

An equal percentage (26.3%) considers their activity level to be the same as that of their peers.

26.3% feel they are less active than their peers, while a minority (9%) feel much less active than others.

### **Sweating during Leisure Time:**

A significant number of respondents (42.1%) reported sweating sometimes during leisure activities, indicating a moderate level of physical exertion.

26.3% stated that they always sweat, suggesting a consistent engagement in physical activities.

15.8% reported never sweating during leisure, while 10.5% sweat often and 7% occasionally.

### **Most Frequent Sport and Weekly Hours Played:**

High-intensity sports (52.6%) are the most frequently played among respondents, indicating a preference for physically demanding activities.

36.8% engage in medium-intensity sports, while 10.5% never play sports.

A significant majority (78.9%) plays sports for 1 to 2 hours per week, indicating a regular commitment to physical activity.

In conclusion, the data suggests that while a significant portion of respondents engage in physical activities during their leisure time, a substantial number also prefer sedentary activities like playing and watching television. Encouragingly, many respondents exercise frequently and have active hobbies, but there is also a notable group that does not engage in regular physical activity. Promoting a more active lifestyle and raising awareness about the benefits of exercise could be beneficial, especially among those who are less active or never engage in physical activities.

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