

Prospects and Challenges Faced by Student-Athletes at University Level: A Study

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Abstract:

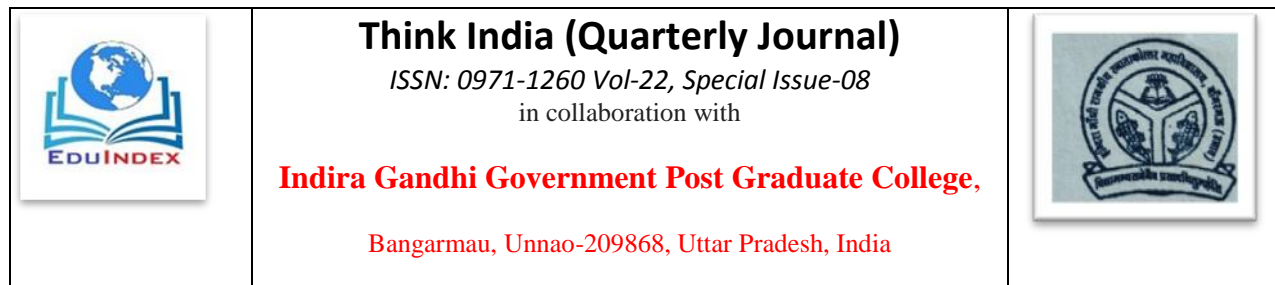
The purpose of this study was to identify and analyse the prospects and challenges of student-athletes at university level. The population of the study included all the student-athletes at university level and the sampling was non-probable and purposive. A questionnaire developed by the researcher was given to 30 student-athletes of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The responses given by the student-athletes were analysed using SPSS v.23 software. The result shows that the student-athletes find it difficult to maintain a balance between their sports participation and academics. Some of their major challenges, as reported by respondents were includes- difficulty in submitting assignments on time, difficulty in attending classes regularly because of sports practices and competitions, difficulty in writing the same tests and assignments which are given to non-athlete students, difficulty in participating in academics more as their sports practice suffer, difficulty in preparing for examinations and in focussing on classes. Whereas, some of the prospects and opportunities given to them include basic facilities needed by them, university providing them a platform to scale up in higher level tournaments in the country and admission through sports quota helping them to build career both in sports as well as academic fields.

Keywords: Prospects, challenges, student-athletes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Participation in sports can have some direct positive effects on educational productivity. Firstly, the better health status of athletes could increase productivity and lead to more investments in human capital. Secondly, sports does not only train functional skills like dexterity and balance but it also teaches soft skills like taking orders, leadership, teamwork, performing in a regulated system, and socialization. Thirdly, sports can help to form the character of young people because it teaches behavioural habits like motivation, discipline, tenacity, competitive spirit, responsibility, perseverance, confidence, and self-esteem, which cannot always be acquired in classroom. These behavioural aspects should lead to reduced truancy, increase the willingness to succeed in school, and encourage social interaction with other students, which are associated with higher efficiency of learning because time is used more productively (Corneliben& Pfeifer, 2007)

As described by the NCAA (2013), under their Principle of Amateurism, a student-athlete is an individual who is an amateur competing in an intercollegiate sport primarily due to their educational motivations as well as their expected physical, mental, and social benefits from participation. As stated above a student-athlete is primarily attending a university or college for the purpose of furthering their education and ultimately obtaining a degree.



Factors like positive classroom behaviour, self-esteem, self-image, school satisfaction and school connectedness have been postulated as determinants of academic achievement. The advantages that sport active students enjoy seem to be that they become too close to their teachers who happen to be their coaches in sport disciplines. More so, a sports student is always present at school. This makes the students attend most lessons as they fear to lose training sessions (Trudeau & Shephard, 2008).

According to Rees and Sabia (2010), the effect of participating in athletics as a youth on academic performance is theoretically ambiguous. Participation may reduce the time available for studying and learning. Conversely, it has been argued that sports participation increases students' motivation and teaches teamwork and self-discipline, resulting in positive academic spillovers.

Miller and Kerr (2002) found that student athletes have little time for their academic responsibilities because of the extensive requirements for their sport. These student athletes at times had to make some compromises with their academics because of the time devoted to their sport. Most often this occurs during a student athlete's season due to practice, games, and travel away from campus.

Being a sportsperson, the researcher found that participation in sports makes mind sharp but, at the same time the sportsperson have to face a number of challenges such as being fearful about the examinations and academic assignments etc. This made the researcher curious to find out and explore about the challenges faced by the student-athletes as well as their prospects. This curiosity encouraged the researcher to work on this topic to find out what is the actual impact of sports participation in the academic performance of the college students.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Population of the Study

The population for the study was includes all bonafidestudent-athletes of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi for the session 2018-2019.

2.2 Sampling Technique and Sample of the Study

A total of 30 student-athletes were recruited as the sample of the study. All these student-athletes were belongs to different faculties/centres of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The sampling technique to select the sample was non-probable and purposive.

2.3 Tools and Techniques Used for Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of the present study, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher to collect the data from student-athletes of Jamia Millia Islamia.

2.4 The Questionnaire and Procedure of its Development

The questionnaire consisted both open and closed ended questions. The construction of questionnaire was based on various related literatures and was prepared after discussion with experts in the field. The detailed procedure is as follows-

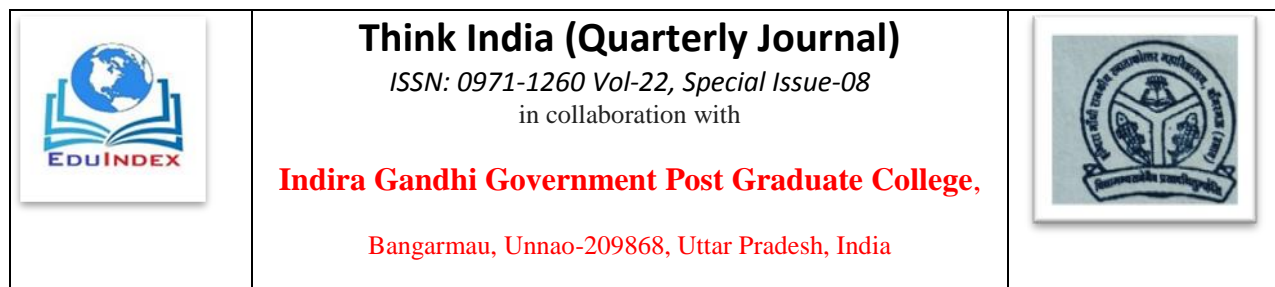
2.4.1 Format of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided in to 4 sections viz. (i) Demographic Profile of the student-athlete, ii) Sports profile of the student-athlete, iii), Academic profile of the student-athlete, and iv) Prospects and challenges of student-athlete.

Furthermore, the types of questions employed in the questionnaire were: Yes/No, Ticking the most appropriate options, Marking on the rank scale, and Open-ended questions.

A three point Likert's scale of measurement has been used for scoring the responses of some of the questions of the Questionnaire.

2.4.2 Validation of the Questionnaire



For validation of the questionnaire, 5 experts who are working on the related topic and having at least 10 years of teaching as well as research experience from various faculties of Jamia Millia Islamia were approached for validation.

2.6 Procedure of Data Collection

Keeping in view the nature of the study, the data was collected from the student-athletes of different faculties of Jamia Millia Islamia such as, Faculty of Social Science, Faculty of Natural Science, Faculty of Humanities, and Faculty of Education.

A covering letter was prepared to be attached with the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the study.

2.7 Administration of the Tool

The researcher contacted student-athletes of different departments of the university. They were asked to fill up the questionnaire after going through the instructions carefully. Instructions were given to tell them that they have to choose appropriate options out of the given choices.

2.8 Analysis and Interpretation of the Tool



In the present study, the data has been analysed qualitatively. The data was analysed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences v.23 (SPSS v.23). Frequency and Percentage were calculated and graphs were made according to the findings.

3. RESULTS



Student-athletes were asked questions related to the problems and challenges faced by them while maintaining a balance between sports participation and academics. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses of student-athletes about challenges faced by them



S.No.	Statement	Yes	To some extent	No
1	Faces difficulty in keeping your grades up for eligibility	18 (60%)	5 (16.7%)	7 (23.3%)
2	Faces difficulty in making up class assignments you miss due to your sport	18 (60%)	7 (23.3%)	5 (16.7%)
3	Faces difficulty in keeping pace with the academic track	21 (70%)	3 (10%)	6 (20%)
4	Faces difficulty in preparing for examinations	21 (70%)	3 (10%)	6 (20%)
5	Faces difficulty in focusing on classes	21 (70%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)
6	Sports injuries affect academics	16 (53.3%)	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)

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7	Faces difficulty in maintaining your health	9 (30%)	7 (23.3%)	14 (46.7%)
8	Feel disconnected from your classmates	12 (40%)	8 (26.7%)	10 (33.3%)
9	Dual pressure on the student athlete due to the stress caused by academics, on one hand, and sports on the other	22 (73.3%)	7 (23.3%)	1 (3.3%)
10	Labelled as a non-serious student by your teachers/professors?	16 (53.3%)	8 (26.7%)	6 (20%)
11	Afraid of failing the semester exams or sessionals	15 (50%)	6 (20%)	9 (30%)
12	Considered a failure by teachers/professors	6 (20%)	9 (30%)	15 (50%)
13	Professors/teachers appreciate for being a sports person	13 (43.3%)	12 (40%)	5 (16.7%)
14	Professors expect the same quality of assignments from you as those which are written by students who are purely into academics	15 (50%)	9 (30%)	6 (20%)
15	Classmates, who have good academic records, usually maintain distance from you	6 (20%)	4 (13.3%)	20 (66.7%)
16	Toppers of the class feel uncomfortable in befriending you	7 (23.3%)	3 (10%)	20 (66.7%)
17	Given the same assignments to write which are given to non-athlete students	26 (86.7%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
18	Write the same tests which are written by the non-athlete students	26 (86.7%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
19	Teachers give those assignments which can be done comfortably in the time you have after participating in sports	12 (40%)	8 (26.7%)	10 (33.3%)
20	Teacher/professors concerned about your schedule and want their work to be done anyhow	12 (40%)	12 (40%)	6 (20%)

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21	Teachers give you easy assignments which can be downloaded or copied easily from the internet	12 (40%)	6 (20%)	12 (40%)
22	When you try to participate more in academics, does your sports practice suffer?	26 (86.7%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
23	Coach want you to give your 100% to sports	21 (70%)	5 (16.7%)	4 (13.3%)
24	Coach want you to reach the ground on time, no matter what	22 (73.3%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)
25	Difficult for you to convince your fellow players that you want to give time to academics	13 (43.3%)	8 (26.7%)	9 (30%)
26	Want to give equal time to sports and academics?	7 (23.3%)	6 (20%)	17 (56.7%)
27	Pressure on related to academics, suffer sports performance	21 (70%)	5 (16.7%)	4 (13.3%)
28	Both the teachers and the coaches put the blame of poor performance on the student athletes	11 (36.7%)	8 (26.7%)	11 (36.7%)
29	There is lack of co-ordination between sports director/coordinator and Head of the Department	21 (70%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)
30	There should be different tests for student athletes according to their pace of learning	17 (56.7%)	5 (16.7%)	8 (26.7%)
31	University should prepare special time table for student-athletes which would provide them space to manage their sports and academics in a better way	21 (70%)	5 (16.7%)	4 (13.3%)
32	There should be special orientation of the university teachers and coaches to make them understand the problems of the student-athletes in a better way	29 (96.7%)	1 (3.3%)	0
33	Giving assignments to student-athletes according to their levels of learning in academics help them develop interest in academics	25 (83.3%)	3 (10%)	2 (6.7%)
34	Remedial classes especially for the student-athletes	20 (66.7%)	6 (20%)	4 (13.3%)

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	help them to participate more in academics			
35	University coaches prepare special time-table keeping in view the academic engagement of student-athletes	18 (60%)	6 (20%)	6 (20%)
36	University allocate more funds in order to find the special time table for the student-athletes	26 (86.7%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)
37	There a need that teachers should stop considering student-athletes as failures or poor students	21 (70%)	3 (10%)	6 (20%)



Findings of Table1 indicates that 96.7% student-athletes agree that there is a need of conducting special orientation of the university teachers and coaches in order to make them understand the problems of the student-athletes in a better way.

86.7% student-athletes reported that they are given the same assignments and same tests to write which are given to non-athlete students which is quite challenging for them, 86.7% reported that when they participate more in academics, their sports practice suffer whereas, 70% student-athletes indicated that they face difficulty in keeping pace with the academic track, in preparing for examinations and in focusing on classes.

Further, the student-athletes were asked questions related to their prospects. The responses of student-athletes are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Responses of student-athletes about their prospects and opportunities

S.No.	Statement	Yes	To some extent	No
1	Student-athletes excel in academics too if the university re-designs the curriculum for them	24 (80%)	6 (20%)	0
2	It is better to join a sports academy instead of studying a course in academic institute through sports quota	12 (40%)	10 (33.3%)	8 (26.7%)
3	Admission through sports quota helps the student-athletes to build career both in sports as well as academic fields	19 (63.3%)	6 (20%)	5 (16.7%)
4	Jamia Millia Islamia offer all the basic facilities	5	8 (26.7%)	17 (56.7%)

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	needed by a student-athlete	(16.7%)		
5	University provide a platform for the student-athletes to scale up in higher level tournaments in the country	16 (53.3%)	4 (13.3%)	10 (33.3%)

From Table 2, as perceived by the student-athletes, they can excel in academics too if the university re-designs the curriculum for them (80%). 63.3% reported that, admission through sports quota helps them to build career both in sports as well as academic fields. 40% student-athletes completely agreed that it is better to join a sports academy instead of studying a course in academic institute through sports quota whereas, 10% of them indicated that they agree with this statement to some extent. They were asked if their university offer all the basic facilities needed by a student-athlete. For this statement only 16.7% student-athletes indicated that they are being offered all the basic facilities needed by them and 26.7% of them reported that only to some extent the basic facilities are provided to them. 53.3% student-athletes indicated that university provides them a platform to scale up in higher level tournaments in the country.

4. DISCUSSION

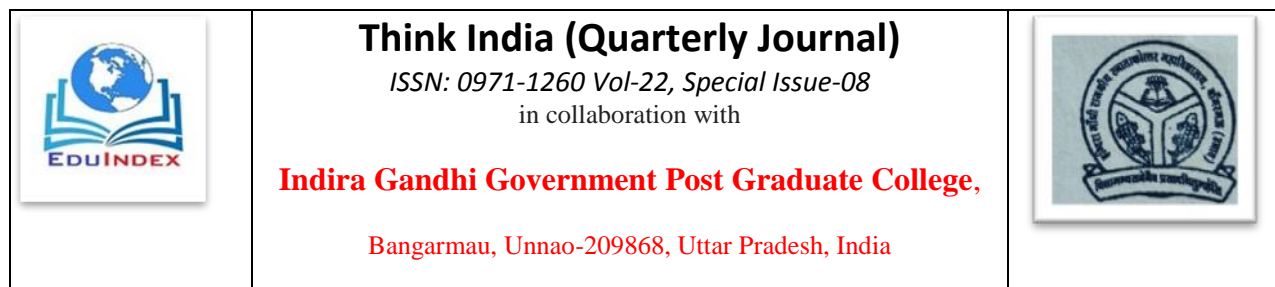
The findings of this study revealed that 80% of the student-athletes indicated that they participate actively in sports after taking admission in their course. Cricket (46.66%), Volleyball (16.66%) and Basketball (16.66%) are the sports mostly played by the student-athletes at university level. Whereas, Athletics (10%), Football (6.66%) and Shooting (3.33%) are less played sports as compared to others, it may be due to the fact that cricket, volleyball and basketball are team sports and required high number of athletes. 53.3% student-athletes reported that they have presented their team as a captain or vice-captain. Whereas, 46.7% indicated that they have never been a captain or vice-captain of the team ever. Majority of the student-athletes have represented their team as a captain (46.70%) or a vice-captain. Only a few of them (2%) have never attained these positions.

It was found that majority of the student-athletes have participated till National Level (36.70%). 26.70% student-athletes have played till North Zone Inter-University, 20% till District Level, 6.70% till State Level, 6.70% till All India Inter-University whereas, only 3.30% have participated at International Level.

46.67% student-athletes had scored above average, as indicated by them, in the previous semester or term end exam. 36.67% scored average i.e., between 50%-69% whereas, 16.67% student-athletes scored below average i.e., below 50%. 33.40% student-athletes reported that their attendance percentage of previous session was between 40%-59%. 33.40% student-athletes indicated that their attendance percentage was between 60-79%, 16.67% of them indicated that their attendance percentage was 20%-39%, 13.34% indicated that their attendance percentage was below 20% in the previous session whereas, only 3.34% student-athletes reported that their attendance percentage was above 80%

43.3% student-athletes usually find it difficult to submit their assignments on time. 43.3% of them indicated that only sometimes they face difficulty whereas, only 13.3% student-athletes face difficulty occasionally in submitting assignments within the given time.

60% student-athletes reported that sports practice and competition results in the delay of their assignments. 23.3% agree with this statement to some extent whereas, 16.7% student-athletes indicated that sport practice does not impact their assignments.



66.7% student-athletes reported that they start preparing from less than 1 week before the commencement of exams. 20% student-athletes indicated that they start preparation from less than 2 weeks before the commencement of exams. Whereas, only 13.3% student-athletes starts preparation from more than 2 weeks before the commencement of exams, as indicated by them.

73.3% student-athletes study 3 hours a week, as reported by them. 26.7% student-athletes indicated that they study 7 hours a week whereas, none of them indicated that they study less than 3 hours a week.

30% student-athletes participate in the co-curricular activities conducted by their department, other than sports. 23.3% reported that, to some extent they participate in co-curricular activities other than sports whereas, 46.7% of them indicated that they do not participate in any of the co-curricular activities conducted by their department other than sports.

The study also revealed that, 96.7% student-athletes agree that there is a need of conducting special orientation of the university teachers and coaches in order to make them understand the problems of the student-athletes in a better way.

86.7% student-athletes reported that they are given the same assignments and same tests to write which are given to non-athlete students which is quite challenging for them, 86.7% reported that when they participate more in academics, their sports practice suffer whereas, 70% student-athletes indicated that they face difficulty in keeping pace with the academic track, in preparing for examinations and in focusing on classes.

From the findings, as reported by the student-athletes, they can excel in academics too if the university re-designs the curriculum for them (80%). 63.3% reported that, admission through sports quota helps them to build career both in sports as well as academic fields.

40% student-athletes completely agreed that it is better to join a sports academy instead of studying a course in academic institute through sports quota whereas, 10% of them indicated that they agree with this statement to some extent. They were asked if their university offer all the basic facilities needed by a student-athlete. For this statement only 16.7% student-athletes indicated that they are being offered all the basic facilities needed by them and 26.7% of them reported that only to some extent the basic facilities are provided to them.

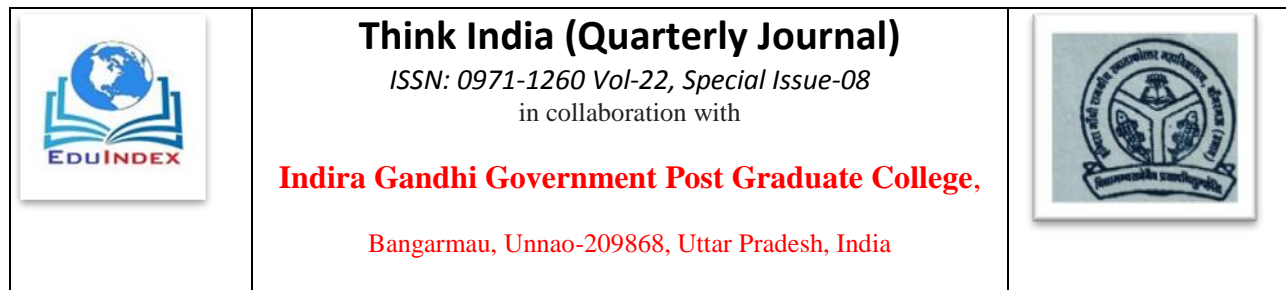
53.3% student-athletes indicated that university provides them a platform to scale up in higher level tournaments in the country.

Findings of this study is in line with the findings of Gomez, Bradley, and Conway, (2018), Beamon, (2008), and Hill, Burch-Ragan, and Yates, (2002).

5. CONCLUSION

The study highlighted the prospects and challenges of student-athletes at university level. It was found that majority of the student-athletes continue participating actively in sports even after taking admission in their course. Some of the mostly played sports include cricket, volleyball and basketball whereas, sports like athletics and shooting are among less played sports as compared to others. From the study it was revealed that number of student-athletes who have played till All India Inter-University level or at International Level is very less whereas, many of them had participated up to National Level.

The study revealed that student-athletes find it difficult to maintain a balance between their sports participation and academics. Some of their major challenges, as reported by them include, difficulty in submitting assignments on time, difficulty in attending classes regularly because of sports practices and competitions, difficulty in writing the same tests and assignments which are given to non-athlete students,



difficulty in participating in academics more as their sports practice suffer, difficulty in preparing for examinations and in focussing on classes.

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