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DETERMINANTS OF SPORT MOTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the determinants of sport motivation among Malaysian university students, focusing on factors influencing sport enjoyment. Using the Revised Sport Motivation Scale (SMS-II) by Pelletier et al. (2013), constructs such as sport enjoyment, positive health outcomes, appearance motivation, social support, and personal investment were assessed. Responses from 150 male university students were collected and analyzed to identify trends and correlations. Findings revealed that intrinsic motivations, particularly "fun" and "happiness," were the most significant drivers of sport enjoyment, as reflected in the mean score of 3.52 for the "Sport Enjoyment" construct. Similarly, the "Appearance" construct scored a high mean of 3.70, indicating a strong emphasis on physical appearance as a motivator. The "Desire to Excel" construct, with the highest mean score of 3.71 and minimal variability (SD = 0.05), highlighted the participants' consistent focus on self-improvement and achievement in sports. Meanwhile, constructs like "Positive Health" (mean = 3.33, SD = 0.40) and "Social Support" (mean = 3.30, SD = 0.41) showed moderate influence, reflecting individual variability in how these factors motivate participation. Conversely, external pressures such as "Social Constraint" (mean = 3.38, SD = 0.45) exhibited weaker yet notable associations. The study underscores the importance of fostering intrinsic enjoyment and supportive environments to enhance sports participation among university students. These insights can inform the design of sports programs that effectively address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, promoting sustained engagement in physical activities.

KEYWORDS: *Sport Enjoyment ; Positive Health ;Appearance Motivation,; Social Support; Personal Investment*

INTRODUCTION

Sports and physical activities are integral components of a healthy lifestyle, offering a plethora of benefits ranging from improved physical health and mental well-being to enhanced social interactions and personal development (Cox et al., 2006; Bailey et al., 2013). In university settings, sports can serve as a critical outlet for stress relief and community building, which are essential in balancing academic pressures (Paluska & Schwenk, 2000). However, maintaining consistent participation in sports is a challenge that many university students face. One of the key determinants of continuous engagement in sports is the level of enjoyment experienced by participants (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986).

Enjoyment in sports is often driven by intrinsic motivations, such as personal satisfaction, the joy of participation, and the achievement of personal goals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These intrinsic factors play a pivotal role, particularly among university students who are at a critical juncture in terms of self-identity and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Prior research has consistently demonstrated that intrinsic motivation is linked to higher levels of self-esteem and well-being, thereby promoting sustained participation in sports (Standage et al., 2007; Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2007).

Additionally, social support and personal investment have been identified as substantial influencers of sport enjoyment (Vallerand, 2004). Social interactions not only provide emotional support but also create an inclusive environment that encourages continued participation (Smith et al., 2010). However, the extent to which these factors impact sport enjoyment can vary based on cultural and institutional contexts (Palmer, 2012). In Malaysia, university athletics may be subject to unique cultural and social dynamics, making it imperative to explore these influences in depth.

Despite the general understanding of these factors, research specifically addressing the determinants of sport enjoyment among Malaysian university students is limited. The current study aims to fill this gap by examining how intrinsic motivations, social support, and other personal factors contribute to sport enjoyment within this unique demographic. By highlighting these elements, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform the development of sports programs tailored to enhance engagement and enjoyment for university students in Malaysia. The findings are expected to contribute to existing literature by offering a culturally relevant perspective on sport motivation and enjoyment, ultimately aiding the design of more effective sports education and participation strategies.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Existing literature indicates that intrinsic motivation—characterized by personal satisfaction and enjoyment—is a pivotal determinant of sustained sports participation. Harbichová et al. (2019) emphasized the relevance of motivation sub-constructs such as "motivation to know,"

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"motivation to accomplish," and "motivation to experience stimulation." However, few studies have focused on the unique contexts of university students, particularly in Malaysia, where cultural and institutional dynamics might influence sports participation.

In Malaysia, cultural and societal expectations often play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward sports. The emphasis on academic achievement sometimes takes precedence over extracurricular activities, including sports, which can impact the level of engagement and enjoyment students experience (Nazli et al., 2013). A study by Kueh et al. (2019) found that Malaysian university students are influenced not only by intrinsic rewards but also by extrinsic factors such as academic schedule, family commitment, and societal expectations. These dynamics necessitate an exploration of how motivation in sports is understood and manifested differently in this context compared to the Western paradigm, as highlighted by Hashim et al. (2014).

Moreover, the environmental and institutional conditions in Malaysian universities can either facilitate or hinder sports participation. Research by Azli et al. (2012) indicated that the availability of facilities, support from university management, and peer encouragement are critical in shaping students' engagement in sports. In some cases, the lack of emphasis on physical education and sports within the university curriculum may deter students from participating actively, highlighting the need for institutional support as a motivating factor (Awang et al., 2014).

Previous research has identified external factors, such as social expectations and environmental conditions, as additional variables influencing motivation (Pelletier et al., 2013; Ntoumanis, 2001). The Malaysian context provides a unique setting where family expectations, academic priorities, and institutional support might significantly differ from those in Western contexts (Hashim et al., 2014). Addressing this gap, the current study examines how various motivational factors impact sport enjoyment among Malaysian university students. This research aims to provide insights into the specific motivational constructs that can enhance sport enjoyment and sustain participation. By doing so, it seeks to inform the development of targeted interventions and programs that recognize and leverage the unique cultural and institutional influences at play in Malaysia, ultimately fostering a more favourable environment for sports participation among university students.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study employed a structured survey distributed via Google Forms to 150 male university students from both private and public universities in Malaysia. A purposive sampling technique ensured that respondents actively participated in sports. The selection of participants was guided by their involvement in regular sports activities, ensuring data relevance to the study's objectives. The survey was developed based on validated instruments that measure sport-related constructs. Respondents rated their agreement with statements across five dimensions—sport enjoyment, positive health, appearance motivation, social support, and personal investment—on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Data analysis involved multiple statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic and response data, highlighting central tendencies and variability. Correlation analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between different motivational constructs, identifying significant associations. Furthermore, independent t-tests were utilized to examine potential group differences, such as those between participants from private versus public universities. This multi-method approach ensured robust insights into key trends and relationships within the dataset. The methodology aligns with recommendations for quantitative studies in sports psychology (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2007).

This data helps in understanding the multidimensional motivations behind sports participation, blending enjoyment, health, and personal goals while indicating varying social influences.

Based on the analysis of the survey constructs measured on a 5-point Likert scale, the findings provide insight into different motivational factors influencing sports participation among Malaysian university students. Figure 1 and 2 display the overall mean scores and standard deviations.

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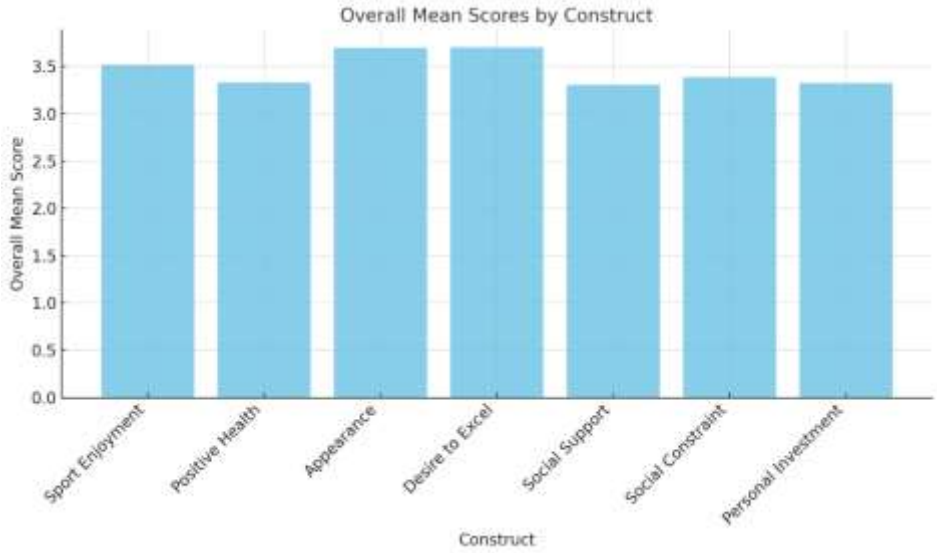


Figure 1: Mean scores by construct

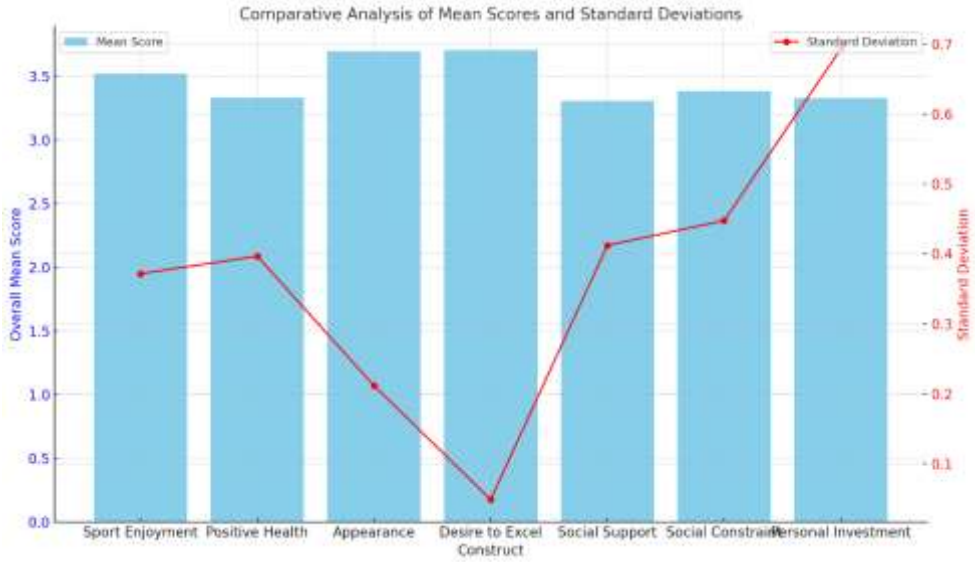


Figure 2: Comparative analysis of Mean and Standard Deviations

- **Sport Enjoyment**

The overall mean score for "Sport Enjoyment" is 3.52, suggesting that participants generally agree, albeit not strongly, with statements related to enjoyment in sports. This moderate level of enjoyment highlights that intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for sustained participation according to the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), is present but not predominant. The influence of intrinsic motivation aligns with earlier research by Standage et al. (2003), which suggests that enjoyment and related intrinsic factors are key drivers of engagement in physical activities.

- **Positive Health**

With a mean score of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.40, the "Positive Health" construct indicates moderate agreement that health-related reasons influence sports participation. This reflects findings similar to those by Chan et al. (2012), who identified health maintenance as a significant motivator for engagement in sporting activities. The variability suggests individual differences in how health concerns motivate participation.

- **Appearance**

The "Appearance" construct has a mean score of 3.70, demonstrating a relatively strong agreement among participants, with low variability (SD = 0.21), that they engage in sports for appearance-related reasons. This strong agreement might be explained by societal and cultural emphasis in Malaysia on physical appearance, as discussed in studies that explore the intersection between sport and appearance motivations (Frederick & Morrison, 1996).

- **Desire to Excel**

The high mean score of 3.71 with very low variability (SD = 0.05) for "Desire to Excel" suggests a consistent motivation among participants to improve and excel in their respective sports. This aligns with findings by Hodge et al. (2008), which highlight achievement goals as critical in sports settings, particularly among competitive environments like university sports.

- **Social Support**

A mean of 3.30 for "Social Support" indicates moderate agreement that participants receive encouragement and

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assistance from their peers, coaches, or family. Variability in responses (SD = 0.41) suggests differences in the perceived level of support, a factor vital for motivation as per the Social Support Theory (Smith et al., 2010). This aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of social contexts in enhancing sports motivation (Allen, 2003).

- **Social Constraint**

The "Social Constraint" construct yielded a mean score of 3.38 with a standard deviation of 0.45, reflecting moderate agreement and variability in views about external social pressures affecting participation. This suggests that while some students feel societal or familial expectations, others may not, contrasting with studies like those by Kim et al. (2011), where societal expectations played a more definitive role.

- **Personal Investment**

Lastly, "Personal Investment" showed a mean of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.69, highlighting moderate and varied perceptions of time and effort investment among students. High variability indicates diverse levels of personal commitment, resonating with Vallerand's (2007) model that views personal investment as a spectrum greatly influenced by individual preferences and life contexts.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that the motivation for sports participation among Malaysian university students is multifaceted, with a notable balance between intrinsic factors such as enjoyment and extrinsic factors like appearance and social influences. These findings contribute to a better understanding of sports motivation within cultural contexts and offer vital insights for tailoring sports programs that address a combination of these motivational elements. By aligning with existing literature, this analysis not only confirms prior research but also highlights unique cultural nuances in Malaysian university sports settings.

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