



# ATTITUDES AND TENDENCIES OF MEDICAL FRESHMEN TOWARDS SPORTS ACTIVITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*Sporting has a profound effect on the physical, mental and social well-being of individuals. There is a strong scientific evidence that physical inactivity is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes cancers and coronary heart disease. University students are busy and tired with their heavy academic schedules. Therefore, it is good to promote healthy lifestyle choices among university students. The objective of the study was to assess the tendency and the attitude changes towards sports activities among the first year undergraduate students at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya. Furthermore, we sought to identify how these students' cognitive changes and their participation in sports affect their academic discipline. This study was based on a self-administrated questionnaire on 141 (59 male & 82 female) first year students at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya. The software program SPSS 21 was used to analyze the gathered data. Amongst the 141 students, 78 (55.3%) were not involved in sports before entering the medical faculty. The main reasons were not enough time (51.2%), fear of disturbances to studies (25.6%) and parental oppression (6.4%). There were 134 (95%) students who wished to participate in the sport during their undergraduate years. The main reasons for their opting to participate in sports during undergraduate years were to achieve a healthy and balanced life (34.9%), for mental relief (28%), to meet new friends and for feeling of win and victory. Most of the students preferred racket sports (37.7%) and general fitness programs (27.2%) whereas some preferred indoor (15.3%) and outdoor sports (12.5%). Only a few students opted for martial arts (6.9%). In conclusion, most of the students were not engaged in sports before entering the university. But after entering the faculty, many students have a fresh mind and a penchant for sports. We also identified the reasons that affected their negative and positive attitudes towards sports activities.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Medical Students, Medical Faculty, Sports Activity*

## INTRODUCTION

"Attitude like an emotion has both objective and subjective aspects." It is directed toward something and usually is affective in tone. Attitude usually involves liking or disliking something toward which it is directed (Schwarz & Bohner, 2001). Attitudes toward a subject may change over time, depending on the person's exposure and experience (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). It is clear from the work that leads to the GCE Advanced Level examinations that Sri Lankan school children suffer from overweight or stress. This ultimately leads to a physically inactive student population in the country. Unfortunately, this can adversely affect their health and end up with major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and breast cancer. First year medical students have recently successfully completed a very competitive secondary education in science stream and are still in their orientation program having little medical academic exposure. Interestingly, the orientation programme of the Faculty of Medicine has abundant

time slots for the extracurricular activities. There is no set age for someone to start a sport. They can relate to it whenever they realize its value. Therefore, the tendency to indulge in sports after entering university is a prevalent fact among university students. Hence, we undertook to identify medical students' attitude towards sports activities and whether there is any attitude change among these students prior to and after entering the Faculty of Medicine which was the main research question.

## OBJECTIVES

There are two objectives in this research.

1. To assess the tendency and the attitude changes towards sports activities among the first year undergraduate students at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya.
2. Identify how these students' cognitive changes and their participation in sports affect their academic discipline.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many psychologists have given different definitions for attitudes. An attitude is an evaluation of an object thought. Attitude objects consist of anything a can be remembered from the person things, people, groups and ideas are mundanely mundane (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). According to Alsharari and colleagues, 'attitudes are evaluative reactions to persons, objects, and event (Alsharari et al., 2017). He also added that attitude can guide our experiences and decide the effects of experience on our behaviors. People are frequently told to develop "the proper attitude" or to adopt "a better attitude". In 2008 Bettman and colleagues claimed that an important aspect of how people perceive others depends on the perception of the attitude they display (Bettman, Capon, & Lutz, 2008). The attitude toward something has three major components; belief about something, feelings about something and a tendency to behave in certain ways toward something.

It's a common belief that individuals at any stage of life, including students, gather numerous benefits from participating in sports activities. The Social Benefits of Sport states "participating in sport can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, promote social inclusion, improve health, counter anti-social behaviour, raise individual self-esteem and confidence, and widen horizons." (Coalter, 2005).

Participation in sports among nowadays youth has markedly reduced recently owing to increased interest and involvement in technology as described by Sport England 2014 August volume ("The challenge of growing youth participation in sport" 2014).

Another research has reported attitudes and attitude changes by using selective reviews published from 2005 to 2009 (Bohner & Dickel 2011). Their research shows that information processing, social memory, and behavior are the effecting factors for attitude changes (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). Bettman and colleges also found from their research that information can change a persons' attitude and behaviors (Bettman, Capon, & Lutz, 2008).

Milanovic and colleges in 2013 have described university students' preference and involvement of physical activity. The study showed that university students were very well informed about the importance of physical exercise and recreation. (Milanovic, et al., 2013). Nevertheless, when it came to their involvement, 57% of the university students did not generally spend their time

participating in any sports or recreational activities (M. Zoran, S.Goran, 2013)(M. Zoran, S.Goran, 2013)(M. Zoran, S.Goran, 2013).

With 2512 high school freshman students, Pidecio has investigated the high school freshman students' attitudes related to physical education lessons. Findings show that a positive attitude was exhibited by a majority of students towards physical education and according to results students' attitudes seemed to differ by gender (Pidecio, 2016).

A study was conducted to determine different variables with regard to sport attitude amongst the high school students throughout Turkey in "The analysis on sport attitudes of students at high school education in Turkey". They have concluded that medium income families and maternal education level influenced a positive attitude towards sports in these students (Atalay, 2016).

## METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted on 141 first year medical Student (59 male & 82 female) at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. Quantitative data were collected using an interviewer administered questionnaire after informed written consent. The software programme 'SPSS 21' (SPSS Inc., IL, US) was used to analyze the gathered data. Data presenting through table and charts.

## SAMPLING DESIGN

141 first year medical Student (59 male & 82 female) this includes all students entering the faculty of medicine, University of Kelaniya in year 2018.

## GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

## RESULTS

A total of 141 first year medical student participated in the present study (Age range= 20-22 year-old / Mean age=21). It was evidence that only 78 students (55.3%) were not involved in sports before entering the faculty. The reasons for that are mention in below table. They were not having enough time (40 students, 51.2%), fear of disturbance to study (20 students 25.6%), parental opposition (5 student, 6.4%), medical reasons (5 student, 6.4%) and others (16 student 20.5%).



**Table 1: Reasons to not involved in sports before entering the faculty**

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Not having enough time	40	51.2
Fear of disturbance to study	20	25.6
Parental opposition	5	6.4
Medical reasons	5	6.4
Others	16	20.5

Interestingly, 134 (95.0%) students who want to participate in sports during their undergraduate years. 72 (51.1%) students opted for recreational sports whereas 25 (17.7%) students preferred competitive sports and 37 (26.2%) students wanted to take part in both recreational and competitive sports. The main reasons for their opting to participate in sports during

undergraduate years mentioned in table 2. They were to achieve a healthy & balanced life 116 (34.9%), for mental relief (28%), to meet new friends (16.2%) and the other reasons for feeling of win and victory (9%), their friends playing sport (7.5%), and most people say good to do sports (4.2%).

**Table 2: The main reasons for participate in sports in the faculty**

Reason	Frequency	Percent
To achieve a healthy & balanced life	116	34.9
For mental relief	93	28
To meet new friends	54	16.2
For feeling of win and victory	30	9
Friends playing sport	25	7.5
Most people say good to do sports	14	4.2

When considering the sport category, most athletes would love to play racket sports. They are mentioned in table 3 and 108 (37.7%) students preferred to do racket sports followed by general

fitness (27.2%), indoor sports (15.3%), outdoor sports (12.5%), and martial arts (6.9%). Most students expected to engage in sports once a week (44.7%) and twice a week (34%).

**Table 3: Preferred sport category**

Sport category	Frequency	Percent
Racket sports	108	37.7
General fitness	78	27.2
Indoor sports	44	15.3
Outdoor sports	36	12.5
Martial arts	20	6.9

Only 6 out of 141 students didn't want to involve in sports during their undergraduate years. Reasons were disturbance to studies, wanting to follow other extracurricular activities other than sports, fear of being unwell after doing sports and due to poor knowledge of sports. These 6 students suggested having a balanced diet, adequate sleep, medications and having an unstressed life as means of achieving a healthy life.

mainly due to not having enough time. Sri Lankan education system as is such that school children are streamlined into a vicious cycle of school and classes that they end up not having any time to spend for mental and physical wellbeing. Fear of disturbances to studying and parental oppression of extracurricular activities also play a crucial role in poor involvement in sports.

First year medical students who involved in this research were still in their orientation program and were allocated a time for sports during this orientation period. This exposure to sports might have contributed to their new interest for participation in sports and therefore might have

## DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Most of the first year medical students have not done sports before entering the medical faculty



resulted in a positive attitude change towards involvement in sports.

Majority of the first year students wished to involve in sports activities during undergraduate years, and many of them opted for recreational sports. This wish to follow recreational sports as opposed to competitive sports among the students is probably for enjoyment and relaxation from the everyday stressful life. But there were a few student who opted to involve in competitive sports probably due to rewards and benefits earned and given by the University of Kelaniya more than other higher educational institutes. For an example, Kelaniya University offers a complimentary foreign tour to athletes who achieved a championship in the inter-university games. The main purpose of involving in sports was to achieve a healthy and a balanced life as reflected by 27.2% of students choosing general fitness programs. Other reasons for this were to achieve mental relief, using sports as an opportunity to meet new friends and some students were willing to involve in sports because of the common belief that it's good to do sports. Among the preferred sports lesser number of students opted for outdoor sports (as opposed to much preferred racquet and indoor sports) probably due to unfavorable weather conditions in Sri Lanka.

Only a very few students preferred to not to involve sports during undergraduate years mostly due to fear of disturbances to studies, wanting to follow other extracurricular activities other than sports, fear of being unwell after doing sports and due to poor knowledge of sports.

## CONCLUSION

We identified the reasons that affected their negative and positive attitudes towards sports activities. Most of the students were not engaged in sports before entering the university. But after entering the medical faculty most students have changed their attitudes towards sports and are willing to participate in sports activities due to its numerous benefits earned through sports. There is good tendency of doing sports among fresh under graduates in field of medicine. After starting the academic curriculum in the medical faculty there is a high probability of an attitude change among these students which highlights the need for further research on this matter in the future.

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