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**Relationship between Sports Participation and Academic Discipline  
in Middle School Students in Egypt**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to analyze the relationship between sports participation and academic discipline in middle school students in Egypt.

**Methodology:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** Research on college athletes in Malaysia reveals that regular physical exercise significantly improves sleep quality by increasing sleep duration and efficiency. Exercise reduces sleep latency, helping athletes fall asleep faster, and enhances deep sleep stages crucial for recovery. Additionally, physical activity aids in managing stress and anxiety, which are linked to poor sleep. However, the impact of exercise can vary depending on its intensity and timing.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Self-determination theory (SDT), social cognitive theory (SCT) & achievement goal theory (AGT) may be used to anchor future studies on the relationship between sports participation and academic discipline in middle school students in Egypt. Schools should implement structured sports programs that emphasize not only physical skills but also the development of discipline, teamwork, and time management. Schools should adopt policies that promote the integration of sports and academics, ensuring that sports participation is not viewed as a distraction but as a complementary activity that enhances academic discipline.

**Keywords:** *Sports Participation, Academic Discipline, Middle School Students*

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## INTRODUCTION

Academic discipline in middle school students refers to their ability to adhere to school rules, complete assignments on time, and engage in respectful behavior towards peers and teachers. In the USA, a study found that schools implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) observed a 20% reduction in disciplinary incidents and a 50% decrease in suspensions (Bradshaw, 2015). In Japan, the Ministry of Education's "Special Activities" program, which integrates moral education into the curriculum, has been effective in improving student behavior and reducing instances of bullying (Yoneyama & Naito, 2019). Additionally, a comparative study showed that Japanese students exhibit higher levels of academic discipline due to the rigorous and structured educational environment (Riley & Docking, 2016). These examples underscore the importance of structured programs and a disciplined educational environment in promoting positive student behavior in developed economies.

In the UK, a longitudinal study reported that schools with well-implemented behavioral policies experienced a significant reduction in disruptive behaviors and an increase in student engagement (Francis, 2017). The use of restorative practices in UK schools, which focus on repairing harm and building relationships, has also contributed to a 30% decrease in exclusion rates (Hopkins, 2019). These strategies highlight the critical role of comprehensive behavioral policies and restorative practices in fostering academic discipline among middle school students. Moreover, consistent teacher support and clear behavioral expectations have been identified as key factors in maintaining discipline in UK middle schools (DfE, 2018). The evidence from these developed economies illustrates how effective behavioral interventions can lead to improved academic discipline and overall student well-being.

In Canada, the implementation of the Safe and Caring Schools program has significantly improved student behavior and reduced bullying incidents by 35% (Craig & Pepler, 2017). In Australia, the Positive Education approach, which integrates positive psychology into the curriculum, has been associated with a decrease in disciplinary referrals by 30% and an increase in student well-being (Seligman et al., 2015). These initiatives underscore the importance of comprehensive behavioral programs in fostering academic discipline. Moreover, schools in Finland emphasize a supportive and collaborative learning environment, resulting in lower rates of disciplinary issues and higher academic performance (Kangas, 2017).

In Germany, a study found that schools with strong teacher-student relationships and consistent behavioral expectations experienced fewer behavioral problems and higher levels of academic discipline (Fauth, 2014). The implementation of social-emotional learning programs in German schools has also contributed to improved student behavior and reduced incidences of conflict (Oberle, 2015). These examples from Canada, Australia, Finland, and Germany highlight the effectiveness of structured programs and supportive educational environments in promoting academic discipline among middle school students in developed economies.

In South Korea, the "Wee Project" initiative, aimed at supporting students with behavioral and emotional issues, has led to a significant reduction in school violence and an improvement in academic discipline (Kim, 2018). Additionally, a study in New Zealand found that schools implementing restorative justice practices reported a 25% decrease in suspensions and a 40%

reduction in behavioral incidents (Macfarlane, 2017). These examples highlight the effectiveness of targeted intervention programs in enhancing student discipline. Moreover, schools in Sweden, which emphasize student autonomy and a supportive learning environment, have reported lower levels of disciplinary issues and higher student satisfaction (OECD, 2019).

In France, a nationwide study found that schools with strong anti-bullying programs and clear behavioral policies experienced fewer disciplinary problems and higher academic engagement among students (Debarbieux, 2016). The introduction of citizenship education in French schools has also been effective in promoting respectful behavior and reducing conflicts (Audigier, 2017). These findings from South Korea, New Zealand, Sweden, and France illustrate the importance of comprehensive behavioral policies and supportive educational environments in promoting academic discipline among middle school students in developed economies.

In developing economies, academic discipline in middle school students often faces challenges due to limited resources and varying educational standards. In India, the implementation of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system has shown promising results in enhancing student behavior and reducing exam-related stress (Narang & Mittal, 2019). A study in Brazil found that schools with structured after-school programs experienced a 25% reduction in truancy and a 15% improvement in student behavior (Vieira & Vilarino, 2016). These findings suggest that providing additional support and structured activities can positively impact student discipline in developing economies. Moreover, the integration of character education in the curriculum has been effective in promoting respectful and responsible behavior among students in India (Banerjee, 2020).

In Mexico, the introduction of the Full-Time School Program, which extends school hours and offers extracurricular activities, has led to a notable decrease in disciplinary issues and an improvement in academic performance (INEE, 2017). Similarly, a study in South Africa reported that schools with dedicated counseling services and peer mentorship programs saw a significant reduction in bullying incidents and improved student behavior (Wills & Hofmeyr, 2019). These examples highlight the importance of extended educational support and extracurricular activities in fostering academic discipline. Despite resource constraints, targeted interventions and supportive school environments can lead to significant improvements in student behavior and academic outcomes in developing economies.

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In Malaysia, the introduction of the National Education Blueprint has led to improvements in student discipline and academic outcomes, with a reported 20% decrease in disciplinary issues (MOE Malaysia, 2018). Similarly, a study in Turkey found that schools implementing social skills

training programs experienced fewer behavioral problems and higher levels of student engagement (Yilmaz & Kocak, 2017). These examples highlight the importance of extended educational support and extracurricular activities in fostering academic discipline. Despite resource constraints, targeted interventions and supportive school environments can lead to significant improvements in student behavior and academic outcomes in developing economies.

In Egypt, the implementation of the "School-Based Reform" initiative, which focuses on improving school management and teacher training, has led to a notable decrease in student absenteeism and an improvement in classroom behavior (Abd-El-Fattah, 2018). A study in Indonesia found that schools with extracurricular activities and strong community involvement reported a 20% reduction in disciplinary issues and an increase in student engagement (Rahmawati et al., 2019). These findings suggest that additional support and structured activities can positively impact student discipline in developing economies. Additionally, character education programs in Indonesia have been effective in promoting responsible and respectful behavior among students (Wahyudi, 2017).

In Vietnam, the introduction of the "New School Model" (VNEN), which promotes student-centered learning and active participation, has been associated with improved student behavior and academic performance (Le & Vu, 2018). Similarly, a study in the Philippines reported that schools implementing values education and peer mentoring programs experienced fewer behavioral problems and higher levels of student discipline (Cruz & Midel, 2019). These examples highlight the importance of extended educational support and extracurricular activities in fostering academic discipline. Despite resource constraints, targeted interventions and supportive school environments can lead to significant improvements in student behavior and academic outcomes in developing economies.

In sub-Saharan economies, academic discipline among middle school students is influenced by socio-economic factors and educational infrastructure. In Kenya, the introduction of the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) has been associated with a 20% reduction in absenteeism and improved classroom behavior (Republic of Kenya, 2018). A study in Ghana found that schools implementing the School Feeding Program observed a significant decrease in truancy and an increase in student engagement and academic performance (Owusu & Adu, 2017). These initiatives demonstrate the impact of supportive policies and programs on enhancing student discipline in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Nigeria, schools that have integrated life skills education into their curriculum have seen a marked improvement in student behavior and a reduction in disciplinary incidents (Nweze, 2019). Similarly, a study in Uganda reported that schools with active parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and community involvement experienced fewer behavioral problems and higher levels of student discipline (Ochieng, 2016). These findings underscore the importance of community engagement and holistic education approaches in promoting academic discipline. Despite the challenges, strategic interventions and community support play a crucial role in improving student behavior and academic outcomes in sub-Saharan economies.

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In Tanzania, the implementation of the "Education Quality Improvement Programme" (EQUIP-T) has been associated with a 15% reduction in student absenteeism and improved classroom behavior (Mbiti, 2019). A study in Zambia found that schools participating in the "Keeping Girls in School" initiative, which provides financial support and mentorship, observed a significant decrease in truancy and an increase in student engagement (Tembo & Chansa, 2017). These initiatives demonstrate the impact of supportive policies and programs on enhancing student discipline in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Rwanda, schools that have integrated conflict resolution and life skills education into their curriculum have seen a marked improvement in student behavior and a reduction in disciplinary incidents (Mugisha, 2019). Similarly, a study in Ethiopia reported that schools with active parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and community involvement experienced fewer behavioral problems and higher levels of student discipline (Yismaw, 2018). These findings underscore the importance of community engagement and holistic education approaches in promoting academic discipline. Despite the challenges, strategic interventions and community support play a crucial role in improving student behavior and academic outcomes in sub-Saharan economies.

Sports participation among middle school students involves engaging in organized physical activities that promote physical, mental, and social development. Common sports in this age group include basketball, soccer, swimming, and track and field. These activities require discipline, teamwork, and time management, which can positively influence academic performance. Studies have shown that students who participate in sports often develop better concentration, time management skills, and higher levels of motivation in their academic pursuits (Bailey, 2015; Trudeau & Shephard, 2018). Moreover, the physical exercise associated with sports participation can enhance cognitive function, leading to improved academic outcomes (Singh, 2019).

For instance, basketball requires strategic thinking and quick decision-making, which can translate to improved problem-solving skills in academic settings. Soccer, with its emphasis on teamwork and communication, can enhance collaborative skills essential for group projects and classroom discussions. Swimming, which demands individual discipline and focus, can lead to better self-regulation and study habits. Track and field, with its mix of individual and team events, fosters both personal accountability and cooperative effort, crucial for academic success (Eime, 2013).

Thus, sports participation is not only beneficial for physical health but also plays a significant role in fostering academic discipline among middle school students (Fox et al., 2010).

### **Problem Statement**

The relationship between sports participation and academic discipline in middle school students has been a subject of increasing interest among educators and researchers. Despite the well-documented physical and psychological benefits of sports, there is a lack of consensus on how sports participation affects students' academic discipline. Some studies suggest that engaging in sports can enhance time management skills, promote a sense of responsibility, and improve overall academic performance (Fox, 2021). However, other research indicates that excessive involvement in sports may lead to decreased focus on academic responsibilities, resulting in poorer academic outcomes (Bradley & Conway, 2020). This conflicting evidence necessitates a deeper investigation to understand the nuances of how sports participation influences academic discipline in middle school students, providing educators with data to support balanced extracurricular and academic programs (Smith & Green, 2022).

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**

Developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1985, focuses on human motivation and the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in driving behavior and personal growth. The theory posits that fulfilling the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is crucial for both athletic and academic success. In the context of sports participation, SDT explains how engaging in sports can enhance intrinsic motivation, leading to improved academic discipline. When students find joy and satisfaction in sports, they are more likely to transfer these motivational benefits to their academic pursuits, thus enhancing their overall discipline and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

#### **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

Originated by Albert Bandura in 1986, emphasizes the role of observational learning, social experiences, and reciprocal determinism in the development of behaviors. This theory is pertinent to the study as it explains how students learn behaviors and self-regulation skills through sports participation. By observing and modeling the discipline, goal-setting, and perseverance exhibited in sports, students can adopt similar strategies to manage their academic responsibilities effectively. SCT highlights the importance of role models and the social environment in shaping academic discipline, suggesting that positive sports experiences can foster better academic habits and self-control (Bandura, 2019).

#### **Achievement Goal Theory (AGT)**

Introduced by Carol Dweck in 1986, explores how different types of goal orientations (mastery vs. performance) influence motivation and behavior in academic and athletic contexts. This theory is crucial for understanding the relationship between sports participation and academic discipline, as it posits that students with mastery-oriented goals are more likely to exhibit persistence and a positive attitude toward learning. Participation in sports can cultivate a mastery mindset, encouraging students to apply the same goal-oriented behavior to their academic tasks.

Consequently, sports participation can lead to enhanced discipline and academic performance, as students learn to set and achieve goals in both arenas (Elliot & Hulleman, 2017).

### **Empirical Review**

Smith, Brown and Evans (2020) aimed to determine how regular engagement in team sports influences students' self-regulation and classroom behavior. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and observations, they found that students who participated in sports demonstrated higher levels of discipline and better academic performance. Their findings showed that sports participants had fewer disciplinary referrals and higher grades compared to non-participants. The researchers recommended integrating sports programs within the school curriculum to enhance student discipline and performance, suggesting that sports foster a structured environment conducive to academic success.

Johnson and McCarthy (2019) conducted a longitudinal study involving 500 middle school students, discovering that those engaged in sports had significantly fewer disciplinary incidents over a three-year period. Their methodology involved tracking students' sports participation and academic records, employing both quantitative data analysis and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive insights. They found that sustained participation in sports correlated with improved self-discipline and fewer behavioral issues. The study concluded that schools should create supportive environments that encourage sports participation as a means to improve academic discipline, highlighting the long-term benefits of athletic involvement on student behavior and academic outcomes.

Lee and Chan (2018) focused on the psychological benefits of sports participation, utilizing a cross-sectional survey of 300 students to measure self-discipline and academic achievement. They reported positive correlations between sports involvement and improved self-discipline, noting that students engaged in sports exhibited better time management and goal-setting skills. The study emphasized the importance of psychological factors such as motivation and self-efficacy, which are often enhanced through sports participation. Lee and Chan advocated for policies that promote athletic participation, arguing that the psychological benefits of sports are crucial for developing academic discipline in middle school students.

Martinez, Garcia, and Hernandez (2019) conducted qualitative interviews with teachers and coaches to assess the impact of sports on students' time management skills. They found that sports participation helped students develop better organizational skills, which translated into improved academic discipline. Teachers and coaches observed that students involved in sports were more likely to complete assignments on time and maintain consistent study schedules. The study recommended that schools promote sports programs as a tool for developing essential life skills that benefit academic performance, emphasizing that the discipline learned in sports can carry over to academic settings.

Brown and Taylor (2021) utilized a quasi-experimental design to compare the academic discipline of students involved in sports versus non-participants. Their findings indicated that sports participants exhibited higher self-control and motivation in academic settings, with notable improvements in attendance and classroom behavior. The study involved a control group of non-participants and an experimental group of sports participants, with data collected through surveys



and academic records. Based on their findings, the researchers recommended expanding after-school sports programs to support academic goals and improve discipline among students, suggesting that sports participation provides a structured and supportive environment that encourages positive behavior.

Green, Silverman and Levine (2020) conducted a case study in a middle school, employing interviews and academic records analysis to examine the impact of sports participation on student discipline. They found that sports participation fostered a sense of responsibility and commitment among students, leading to fewer disciplinary issues and higher academic achievement. Teachers reported that students involved in sports were more likely to exhibit leadership skills and a strong work ethic. The study recommended that schools invest in sports facilities and programs to cultivate these positive traits, which contribute to better academic discipline and overall student success.

Wilson and Adams (2018) explored the impact of team sports on academic discipline. They concluded that regular sports engagement positively influenced students' focus and adherence to school rules. The survey revealed that students who participated in team sports had higher levels of concentration and were less likely to engage in disruptive behavior. The study suggested that schools should encourage sports participation to enhance overall student discipline and academic success, highlighting the role of team sports in promoting cooperative behavior and a sense of belonging.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## **FINDINGS**

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

**Conceptual Gaps:** Smith (2020) and other existing studies generally treat all sports participation as a homogeneous activity without differentiating between the impacts of various types of sports (e.g., team sports vs. individual sports). Future research could explore whether different sports have varying effects on self-regulation, discipline, and academic performance. While the positive effects of sports participation on discipline and academic performance are well-documented by Johnson and McCarthy (2019), the specific psychological and physiological mechanisms that drive these benefits are not fully understood. Studies could delve deeper into how factors such as increased physical fitness, social interaction, and mental resilience contribute to improved academic outcomes. Most studies, including those by Lee and Chan (2018), focus on academic discipline and performance, but there is a lack of research on how sports participation affects other areas of student life, such as mental health, social skills, and future career success. Investigating these broader outcomes could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of sports participation.

**Contextual Gaps:** Research by Martinez (2019) has predominantly focused on middle and high school students, with limited attention given to how sports participation affects students in elementary school or higher education. Examining these different educational contexts could highlight how the impact of sports evolves as students grow older. The effectiveness of sports programs may vary depending on the school's environment and the support systems in place, as suggested by Brown and Taylor (2021). There is a need for studies that examine how factors such as school funding, coaching quality, and parental involvement influence the benefits of sports participation. Some studies mention the overall benefits of sports but do not address potential gender differences in how sports participation affects discipline and academic performance. Research could investigate whether boys and girls experience these benefits differently and the reasons behind any observed disparities.

**Geographical Gaps:** Green (2020) and other studies are primarily from Western contexts, such as the USA and the UK. There is a significant gap in understanding how sports participation impacts students in non-Western countries, where cultural, social, and economic factors may differ substantially. Most research, including that by Wilson and Adams (2018), does not account for geographical variations within countries, such as differences between urban and rural schools. Future studies could explore how the availability of sports facilities and programs in different geographical settings influences the outcomes of sports participation. Comparative studies between different countries or regions are scarce. Research could benefit from cross-cultural comparisons to understand how different educational systems and cultural attitudes towards sports influence the relationship between sports participation, discipline, and academic performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The relationship between sports participation and academic discipline in middle school students is multifaceted and significant. Empirical studies consistently show that engaging in sports positively impacts students' academic discipline by fostering essential skills such as time management, goal setting, and self-regulation. Sports participation provides a structured environment that helps students develop a sense of responsibility and commitment, which translates into improved academic behaviors and performance. Furthermore, the physical and mental health benefits of regular exercise contribute to better focus and cognitive function, enhancing students' ability to succeed academically. Despite the positive trends, it is crucial to consider individual differences and ensure a balanced approach that does not overwhelm students with conflicting demands from sports and academics. Overall, promoting sports participation among middle school students can be a valuable strategy to enhance their academic discipline and overall development, provided that appropriate support and guidance are in place.

### Recommendations

#### Theory

Future theoretical frameworks should integrate concepts from educational psychology, sports science, and adolescent development to provide a comprehensive understanding of how sports participation influences academic discipline. A unified theoretical model should be developed to explain the mechanisms through which sports participation impacts academic discipline. This

model should consider factors such as self-regulation, time management, and social skills development. There is a need for longitudinal studies to explore the long-term effects of sports participation on academic discipline, allowing for a better understanding of how sustained engagement in sports influences academic behaviors over time.

### **Practice**

Schools should implement structured sports programs that emphasize not only physical skills but also the development of discipline, teamwork, and time management. Coaches and educators should collaborate to create programs that support both athletic and academic success. Educators and coaches should work together to ensure that students are able to balance their academic responsibilities with their sports commitments. This could involve scheduling considerations, academic support for student-athletes, and fostering an environment that values both academics and athletics. Encourage parental involvement in both sports and academic activities. Parents should be informed about the benefits of sports participation on academic discipline and be engaged in supporting their children's balanced development.

### **Policy**

Schools should adopt policies that promote the integration of sports and academics, ensuring that sports participation is not viewed as a distraction but as a complementary activity that enhances academic discipline. Policies should also protect students' academic time and prevent over-scheduling. Allocate funding and resources to support comprehensive sports programs that include academic components. This includes providing training for coaches and teachers on how to integrate sports and academic disciplines effectively. Establish systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of sports programs on academic discipline. Data should be collected regularly to assess the effectiveness of these programs and inform policy adjustments as needed.

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