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School-Based Sports Programs and Student Development: A Review of Literature on Physical, Academic, and Psychosocial Outcomes

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Abstract

Sports play a vital role in promoting the holistic development of learners by contributing to their physical, academic, and psychosocial growth. As educational institutions continue to integrate sports into their programs, there is a growing need to understand the extent of their impact on student development. This study reviewed and synthesized existing literature on school-based sports programs and their contributions to students' physical, academic, and psychosocial outcomes. A qualitative literature review design was employed, utilizing scholarly articles, peer-reviewed journals, government publications, and academic databases published between 2020 and 2026. The selected studies focused on sports participation, sports development programs, physical education, and student-athlete outcomes.

The findings revealed that school-based sports programs significantly contribute to students' physical development by enhancing physical fitness, athletic performance, health awareness, and overall well-being. In terms of academic outcomes, sports participation was found to support

academic resilience, discipline, time management, and goal-setting skills without negatively affecting academic achievement. Moreover, sports programs positively influenced psychosocial development by fostering leadership, teamwork, communication, responsibility, self-confidence, and social interaction. Despite these benefits, the review identified several implementation challenges, including inadequate facilities and equipment, limited funding, insufficient institutional support, and difficulties in balancing academic and athletic obligations. The literature further emphasized the importance of stakeholder collaboration, improved sports infrastructure, and sustainable support systems to maximize program effectiveness.

The study concludes that school-based sports programs are essential in fostering holistic student development and should be continuously strengthened through adequate resources, effective implementation, and supportive educational policies.

Keywords: Academic Resilience, Physical Fitness, Psychosocial Development, School-Based Sports Programs, Student Development

Introduction

Sports have been an important part of education since they contribute significantly towards the holistic development of students. Aside from the physical benefits that sports give, students can learn about discipline, team work, leadership, confidence, and perseverance through sports. It is recognized that sports and physical education play a very important role in helping learners develop healthy habits and achieve their total development. In the Philippines, the Department of Education continuously promotes sports programs since sports are critical in producing physically fit, competitive, and socially responsible individuals (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) [4].

The benefits of sports programs in the school setting have been proven over time by many researchers. According to Tumale (2026) [11], there is evidence that school sports development programs helped improve athlete training, coach training, and overall school support in public elementary schools. Another research by Pineda and Nabor (2025) [9] concluded that there was improvement in the physical fitness level, sports performance, and well-being of the student-athletes as a result of school sports coaching program. Also, according to Padua *et al.* (2026) [6], there was improvement in terms of physical fitness level and increased interest in physical activities due to the adoption of physical fitness tests.

Apart from physical advantages, sport has been proven to contribute to positive academic achievements. Previous studies revealed that athletes were able to manage their academic activities and participation in sport events efficiently. According to Billonid *et al.* (2020) ^[2], there was no significant difference between academic achievements of athletes and non-athletes. The result implies that sports did not impede academic achievements of students. Further, Pasno (2024) ^[8] revealed that enjoyment in sport significantly predicted academic resilience. It means that active participation in sport makes it easier for students to overcome possible academic difficulties. Thus, one can conclude that participating in sport activities develops useful skills like time management, perseverance, and goal setting that may be crucial for achieving success academically.

Another aspect where sports play an important role in the lives of students is psychosocial development. Engaging in sports enables the learners to establish interpersonal relations, foster self-respect, and learn essential skills needed for personal and social development. In this regard, Pasagui and Langcoy (2023) ^[7] pointed out that involvement in sports has a positive impact on the development of life skills in the learners, such as responsibility, teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. Similarly, according to the research of Nesperos and Magbanua (2025), engaging in sports in schools helps the learners develop collaboratively as part of the community.

In spite of the acknowledged advantages associated with engagement in sports, some researches have outlined the issues that influence the implementation of sports programs within schools. Among the typical obstacles there can be cited poor facility and equipment provision, budget restrictions, scheduling issues, and a lack of institutional support (Agot, 2019 ^[1]; Nesperos & Magbanua, 2025; Tumale, 2026 ^[11]). Moreover, according to the Philippine Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Adolescents, most of the Filipino kids do not achieve the required level of physical activity regardless of the presence of existing government policies and programs aimed at the promotion of such activity (Cagas *et al.*, 2022) ^[3]. Hence, the continuous improvement and evaluation of the quality of sports programs should remain an urgent task in educational institutions. Thus, this study will analyze the current state of studies concerning sports programs in educational institutions and their impact on learners' health, academic achievements, and psychological well-being.

Methodology

The methodology utilized for conducting the research was that of qualitative literature reviews, which helped to compile existing research articles concerning school sports programs and their influence on physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development of students. To identify relevant literature, peer-reviewed articles and journal entries were accessed via academic databases, such as Google Scholar, among others. Literature for the review was selected based on three criteria: (1) articles dated within 2020 to 2026; (2) those that focus specifically on topics such as school sports programs, participation in sports, physical education, student-athletes, and sports development; and (3) those articles discussing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, or psychological effects of participating in sports. Any irrelevant literature that did not address the topic of sports

programs in an educational context was excluded from the review process.

The literature reviewed was structured, analyzed, and interpreted using thematic analysis approach. The literature reviewed was analyzed for themes, patterns, and results that could be drawn out concerning the effects, problems, and impacts of sports programs run by schools. In particular, the literature review was conducted focusing on three main areas: physical development, academic development, and psychosocial development. Moreover, problems hindering the effective implementation of sports activities were assessed as well. The implications from the literature reviewed were then synthesized for a better understanding of how sports programs impact students' development.

Synthesis of Literature

The reviewed literature shows that sports programs organized within schools positively affect the physical and overall well-being of learners. According to Tumale (2026) ^[11], Pineda & Nabor (2025) ^[9], sports programs were proved to promote physical fitness, athletic skills, and development of individuals through systematic training, teaching, and coaching processes. At the same time, Padua *et al.* (2026) ^[6] showed that Physical Fitness Tests promoted regular physical exercises among students and increased awareness concerning healthy behavior. Despite similar approaches of the researchers regarding the positive role of sports participation in improving physical health of participants, the discussed studies vary by the focus of attention. For instance, while Tumale (2026) ^[11] discussed the role of sport programs in promoting healthy habits from the standpoint of teacher-coach and athlete, Padua *et al.* (2026) ^[6] focused on the motivational aspect of fitness testing among students.

In addition, the existing literature highlights the positive effect of sports activities on academic results. According to Pasno (2024) ^[8], there is a positive connection between sports enjoyment and academic resilience, meaning that students engaged in sports activities can deal with academic problems more easily. On the other hand, the study conducted by Billonid *et al.* (2020) ^[2] found that there were no significant differences between the academic performance of athletes and non-athletes, which implies that sports activities do not have a negative impact on academic success. While different conclusions were made due to various measures used to assess the effects of sports activities, both of the research papers confirm that sports activities positively influence academic outcomes.

Various studies have stressed the psychosocial implications of participating in sports. In their study, Pasagui & Langcoy (2023) ^[7], for instance, emphasized the significance of engaging in sports in order to develop life skills like team working, leadership, responsibility, and communication. On the other hand, according to Nesperos & Magbanua (2025), school sports facilitate cooperation, community participation, and total learning of learners. Gedoria *et al.* (2024) ^[12] also reported in their study that students view physical education sports positively although some students do not join due to cultural and religious issues. Although the aforementioned studies vary in their subjects and contexts, it is clear from the studies that engaging in sports facilitates important aspects of psychosocial development.

Although the positive impacts of sports programs are well-established through research findings, various barriers were

mentioned in the literature review in relation to the implementation of these programs. First, inadequate facilities, lack of financial support, and poor institutional support were highlighted by Tumale (2026) ^[11], Agot (2019) ^[1], and Nesperos and Magbanua (2025) as critical impediments in implementing sports programs. Further, Cagas *et al.* (2022) ^[3] found out that many Filipino children and adolescents did not reach the required physical activity even though there were policies encouraging sports among the youth population. To address the aforementioned issues, it is suggested that community partnerships, sports facilities development, coach education, and government/school support should be enhanced (Nesperos & Magbanua, 2025; Sarra *et al.*, 2025 ^[10]). Hence, the literature implies that although there are numerous benefits gained from school sports programs, their success largely relies on resource allocation, stakeholder involvement, and effective implementation.

Results and Discussion

From the literature review conducted, there is clear evidence that the establishment of sports programs in schools contributes significantly to the physical growth of learners. There was consistent evidence from various scholars showing that sports contribute immensely to physical fitness, athletic ability, and health consciousness. For example, Tumale (2026) ^[11] observed that the use of sports development programs was helpful in fostering good training of athletes, coaching, and provision of support in schools. In addition, Pineda and Nabor (2025) ^[9] observed the positive effects of coaching on student-athletes' physical fitness and health in their work. Padua *et al.* (2026) ^[6] observed that the application of physical fitness tests played an important role in making students physically active. Despite different approaches and subjects used in each study, it can be observed that there is clear evidence that sports programs act as useful tools for promoting good health practices among learners.

Moreover, sports were found to have a positive effect on academic performance. As stated by Billonid *et al.* (2020) ^[2], there were no differences in academic results among athletes and non-athletes. However, according to their research, it was established that participation in sports activities does not adversely impact academic success. On the other hand, according to Pasno (2024) ^[8], sports fun was found to be significantly correlated with academic resilience. Thus, student-athletes involved in sports activities are capable of coping better with academic struggles. From what can be concluded from the reviewed studies, sports promote self-discipline, persistence, goal setting, and proper time management.

Another prominent theme that can be drawn out of the literature review is the role of sports programs in promoting the psychosocial development of the learners. According to Pasagui and Langcoy (2023) ^[7], involvement in sports programs helps learners to acquire important life skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, responsibility, and discipline. Similarly, in another study conducted by Nesperos and Magbanua (2025), it was found that sports programs provided by schools promote collaborative behaviors among the learners and help them to grow holistically. As per the findings presented by Gedoria *et al.* (2024) ^[12], most of the students have positive impressions

regarding sports and physical education activities regardless of some cultural and religious constraints.

Although there have been a number of positive impacts discussed in the literature, certain problems persist when it comes to the implementation and efficiency of sports programs in schools. The challenges faced may include insufficient facility and equipment, lack of funds, limited institutional support, and difficulty in managing academics and sports. According to Agot (2019) ^[1], Nesperos & Magbanua (2025), and Tumale (2026) ^[11], these challenges include lack of proper facilities for sports activities in some cases. Additionally, Cagas *et al.* (2022) ^[3] observed that a number of Filipino children and youth fail to reach their required physical activity even with available government policies and sports programs in the country. To solve such issues, it is essential to strengthen community partnerships, increase investments in the sports industry, enhance training for athletes, and develop support systems for stakeholders.

Conclusion

According to the literature reviewed, the implementation of sports programs in schools is important in ensuring that the learners develop physically, academically, and socially. Indeed, the research shows that participating in sports improves the physical health of learners, academic performance and resilience, and fosters the development of key skills like leadership, communication, teamwork, and discipline. Despite their significance, sports programs are often hampered by various factors including lack of facilities, financial constraints, and institutional challenges. In general, the literature confirms that sports are a vital element in education and personal development.

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