

A Field Investigation into Behavioral Barriers During Sports Class Hours: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

This 3-month field study investigated why undergraduate students disengage during mandatory physical education (PE) classes. Using a mixed-methods design, researchers tracked 50 college students (30 females, 20 males) over 12 weeks through field observations, surveys, and focus group interviews. The study found that 60% of students (30 out of 50) chose to remain passive, turning class-skipping into a fixed habit. Main barriers included intense academic pressure, fear of peer judgment, and exclusion by dominant student cliques. Furthermore, disengagement was highly gendered and driven by smartphone dependencies. Among females, 53.3% used sports hours for sideline socializing, while 13.3% focused on recording short-form social media videos. Conversely, 50% of the male cohort withdrew completely into sedentary mobile gaming, driven by low motivation and a fear of physical injury. The results show that digital distractions and social anxieties have turned the college sports ground into a space for screen-based isolation. To fix this sharp decline in activity, universities must introduce strict smartphone restrictions, offer low-impact inclusive games, and provide alternative administrative roles for non-sporty students.

Keywords: Collegiate Physical Education, Sedentary Behavior, Mixed-Methods Field Investigation, Digital Distraction, Socio-Psychological Barriers, Peer group exclusion, Mobile battle gaming

1. Introduction:

Collegiate physical education (PE) frameworks are vital for mitigating sedentary behaviors among undergraduate youth, yet a persistent gap remains between institutional scheduling and actual student engagement. This study presents a 3-month field investigation analyzing a localized sample (N=50, 30 Female, 20 Male) to evaluate the contemporary socio-digital barriers disrupting mandatory sports hours. Longitudinal tracking reveals a stark, gender-stratified divergence in classroom avoidance and sideline passivity. Among the female cohort (n=30), explicit resistance is common, with 53.3% opting for sedentary peer socialization and 13.3% purposing class time for smartphone-based short-form digital content creation. Conversely, disengaged male students (n=10) predominantly assume sedentary spectator roles or remain fully absorbed in mobile gaming applications on the playing field. Because active student participation has contracted to just 40% of the observed population, a systematic comparative evaluation is critical to understanding how modern screen-based dependencies displace physical training.

2. Methodology :

- A. Mixed-Methods Convergent Parallel Design
- B. Study Duration: Conducted continuously over a 3-month period (12 consecutive weeks) during active physical education hours.

C. Sample Population (N=50) (30 Female, 20 Male)

3. Source of Data

Primary Observational Data Source:

- A. Qualitative Field Tracking: Non-participant time-motion sampling was conducted during 60-minute PE periods for 3 months. Student positions (classroom vs. field sidelines) and digital device usage were logged at fixed 10-minute intervals using a structured behavioral checklist.
- B. Quantitative Descriptive Survey: At the conclusion of the observation period, a cross-sectional questionnaire was administered to all 50 participants to measure self-reported motivational barriers, screen-time metrics during College hours, and peer-evaluation anxiety.

4. Results and Data Presentation

Categorizing Student Disengagement Dynamics: Tracking students for 3 months shows that skipping sports class is a fixed habit. Out of 50 students, a large group of 30 students (60%) choose to stay passive. Field data highlights four main reasons for this behavior.

A: Loss of Interest with Age

Students lose interest in sports as they grow older. In primary school, they love playing games. By college, 60% of the students view sports hours as an avoidable chore. They prefer a sedentary lifestyle.

B: Academic Pressure

Many students skip sports to focus entirely on studies. They use class hours to write lecture notes or study for tests. They justify sitting out by saying they never played sports during childhood. They actively value grades over physical fitness.

C: Fear of Peer Judgment

Many students use a defense tactic called the "Spectator Shield." When asked to play, they refuse by saying, "□□□□ □□□□□□□□" ("We will just watch"). They fear peer judgment and embarrassment, known locally as "□□□□□□". This fear splits the passive students into two clear digital groups:

- 10 boys (50%) hide from attention by playing games on their smartphones.
- 16 girls (53.3%) stay in safe sideline groups to chat and avoid playing.

D: Peer Group Exclusion

Popular student groups control the sports equipment and fields. Sidelined students feel left out because they lack close friends, or "□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□". They state that dominant groups choose favorites: "□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□□□" ("they only pick their preferred people"). This social isolation creates two distinct female groups:

➤ 4 girls (13.3%) completely ignore the class and record Instagram Reels on the sidelines.

➤ 16 girls (53.3%) sit on the benches to talk because they feel excluded from the games.

5. Discussion: The Digital Frontier: Social Media versus Virtual Gaming

Smartphones have actively replaced physical exercise on the college sports ground. Students now value virtual screens over real-world movement. Field tracking shows that this digital distraction splits into two distinct, gendered habits.

5.1: Social Media Aesthetics replacing Active Play (Female Cohort)

Female undergraduates frequently change the purpose of the sports hour to focus on digital self-expression. Instead of playing games to improve fitness, they treat the open sports field as a visual background. 4 girls (13.3%) spend the class hour taking photos and recording video trends like Instagram Reels.

This group shows rigid resistance to physical movement, completely choosing online entertainment over real-world play.

5.2 Mobile Gaming and Injury Anxiety (Male Cohort)

Disengaged male students use a different method of withdrawal by locking their attention onto mobile screen games.

10 boys (50%) sit on the field edges or stay inside classrooms to play fast-paced multiplayer battle games.

They stay fully absorbed in high-dopamine apps like mobile games instead of exercising. Interviews with these passive male students highlighted clear psychological walls:

➤ Fear of Pain: They refuse high-impact sports because they worry about getting hurt, stating “□□□□□□□□□□ □□□ □□” (“fear of getting injured”).

➤ Family Pressure: They worry about trouble at home, noting “□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□” (“parents will scold us if we get hurt”).

➤ Low Motivation: Others simply show an absolute lack of interest, stating “□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□” (“no desire to play”).

6. Conclusion

This 3-month field study reveals that smartphone dependencies and socio-psychological fears have heavily displaced physical activity during undergraduate PE hours. Out of 50 students observed, a striking 60.0% (n=30) choose complete passivity over active gameplay.

Ultimately, the traditional sports ground has transformed from an athletic arena into a space for digital escape and passive socialization. To fix this sharp decline in youth health, higher education institutions must act immediately. Physical Education Directors need to enforce strict smartphone-lock policies during class hours,

introduce low-impact games to reduce injury fears, and create teacher-led team rotations to break up exclusive peer cliques.

7. Recommendation

1. **Inclusive Participation:** Encourage every student to join sports classes actively and use team games to build unity.
2. **Extended Sports Hours:** Increase the daily or weekly time dedicated to college sports activities to improve fitness.
3. **Mandatory Inter-Class Tournaments:** Organize monthly sports events between classes and make participation compulsory for all.
4. **Mental Health Support:** Provide regular counseling for male and female students to help them overcome social anxiety and inferiority complexes.
5. **Screen-Time Reduction:** Restrict smartphone and social media use during college hours to shift student focus toward physical sports.
6. **Academic-Administrative Integration via Leadership Rotations**
7. **Adaptive Urban Infrastructure:** If the college lacks a large playground, organize weekly mandatory indoor games and alternative outdoor activities.
8. **Faculty Collaboration:** Ensure teachers of all subjects cooperate to create an open environment where students can talk and collaborate freely.

References

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Appendix A

Quantitative Sample Stratification

Gender Group	Active Participation	Passive / Non-participation	Total sub-sample (n)	Relative Engagement Rate
Female (Girls)	10	20	30	33.3%
Male (Boys)	10	10	20	50.0%
Aggregate/Total	20	30	50	40.0%

Appendix B

Field Observation and Behavioral Tracking Visuals



Figure 1 : Ongoing physical education class line formation.



Figure 2 : Distribution of male and female students during active sports hours.



Figure 3 : Behavioral tracking of less active and sidelined students.



Figure 4 : Disengaged students simply sitting and utilizing mobile devices on the field perimeter.



Figure 5 : Active involvement and structural organization of students during inter-class sports events.

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