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**Mary Grace G Garcia**  
Coach of Table Tennis and  
Faculty Member, Music, Arts,  
Physical Education and Health  
(MAPEH) Department, Palayan  
City National High School,  
Philippines

**Gener S Subia**  
Coach of Chess Team and  
Faculty Member, Nueva Ecija  
University of Science and  
Technology (NEUST),  
Philippines

**Correspondence**  
**Gener S Subia**  
Coach of Chess Team and  
Faculty Member, Nueva Ecija  
University of Science and  
Technology (NEUST),  
Philippines

## High school athletes: Their motivation, study habits, self-discipline and academic performance

Mary Grace G Garcia and Gener S Subia

### Abstract

This study was conducted to describe the motivation, study habits, self-discipline and academic performance among 83 high school student-athletes of Palayan City District, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Results of the study show that as to motivation, the respondents were driven to prepare, train hard and make personal sacrifices to achieve excellence and to get in the winner's circle. However, they need improvement in identifying life skills and determining a career direction. In terms of the study habits, the athletes gave their best effort on exams and quizzes, participating in class activities and discussions and in submitting all academic requirements that they've missed right after the competition. Nonetheless, they need to improve on completing assignments on time and in working independently on assignments and other school projects. As to self-discipline, they strongly agreed that their participation in school athletics helps them develop better time management skills and they became prepared thoroughly, show discipline and stay focus with the plan. Nevertheless, they need to become more responsive to their academic works. Lastly, their academic performance was found to have a significant relationship with participation in school athletics. This means that the higher the academic performance, the higher was the participation of the respondent in school athletics.

**Keywords:** Academic performance, athletes, motivation, self-discipline, study habits, sport

### Introduction

It is a well-known concept that physical activity could have lots of benefits specified in terms of health. According to Basch (2010) [2], "the idea that healthy children learn better is empirically supported and well accepted and multiple studies have confirmed that health benefits are associated with physical activity, including cardiovascular and muscular fitness, bone health, psychosocial outcomes, and cognitive and brain health."

For these reasons, sports programs have been included in the Department of Education curriculum in almost all part of the world since it always aimed to develop healthy living among students. These programs also promote the development of one's behavior and discipline which is very important to the growth of students. As stated by National Federation of State High School Associations (2002), "participation in school athletics promotes citizenship, sportsmanship, lifelong lessons, teamwork, self-discipline and can facilitate the emotional aspect of the youth."

Participating in any sports activities not only enhance the physical aspect of an individual but have other significant effects on students' lives especially on their academic performance.

Terry-McElrath and O'Malley (2011) [16] mentioned that "participation in organized sports experiences has the unintended benefit of improving academic-related outcomes." "It is also believed by most educators that athletic participation reduces the probability of school drop-out. These activities can maintain, enhance and strengthen the student-school connection" (Holloway, 2002) [6].

According to Schley (2002) [13] "there have been several studies and surveys that provide evidence that participation in school athletics not only enhances academic achievement but can have positive effects in other areas. Previous research has shown that athletics can increase self-esteem, social status, and future success in education. At-risk students and students with academic problems have also been shown to perform better when involved in athletics."

However, Fenton (2015) [4] "contradicts the findings of the studies mentioned above and stated that sometimes being a talented athlete can seem to inherently contradict academic success.

The closer an individual get to college, the greater the pressure he/she face to play at very best, which can mean a schedule packed full of practices and training. With so much time and effort spent on athletics, academic rigor can feel like an unnecessary extra stressor to student-athletes. The pressures of winning the game preserve self-discipline in sports also conflict with scheduled time of studies and motivation to achieve a high grade.”

Based on the contradicting findings of studies and literature reviewed, the researchers were motivated to conduct related research regarding participation in school athletics of the high school students. This also aimed to contribute to the dearth of existing knowledge (Subia, 2018) [14] regarding the field of sports focused on the significance of involvement in school athletics to the students' motivation, self-discipline, study habits, and their academic performance.

**Materials and methods**

The researcher utilized the descriptive research design using questionnaire technique to gather the necessary information. According to Dr. Y.P. Aggarwal (2008) as cited by Salaria (2012) [12] “descriptive research is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation. This type of research design is not simply amassing and tabulating facts but includes proper analyses, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships.”

This research was conducted in the District of Palayan,

Department of Education, Division of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The District is composed of three respondent high schools namely Palayan City National High School, Maligaya National High School, and Fort Magsaysay National High School.

The respondents of this study were the eighty-three (83) high school students who were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling techniques involve selecting certain units or cases “based on a specific purpose rather than randomly” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) [15]. The criteria for selecting the respondents were as follows: a. the student must be an athlete; b. participated in the last divisional athletics competition, and they are enrolled in public high schools in Palayan City district.

The researchers-made questionnaire was the instrument utilized in this study. The questionnaire was conceptualized and constructed based on the readings of the literature and studies conducted. The questionnaire was face and content validated by experts in the field while its reliability was done using the test-retest method and was found reliable with a reliability coefficient of 0.946.

The statistical tools used in this study were frequency, percentage, weighted mean and Pearson's r.

**Results & Discussion**

**Level of Academic Performance of the Respondents**

Table 1 presents the level of academic performance of the respondents in terms of their Grade Point Average (GPA).

**Table 1:** Level of Students' Academic Performance

| GPA       | Frequency | Percentage | Descriptors                           |
|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| 95 to 100 | 2         | 2.4        | Advanced(Outstanding)                 |
| 90 to 94  | 11        | 13.3       | Proficient(Very Satisfactory)         |
| 85 to 89  | 20        | 24.1       | Approaching Proficiency(Satisfactory) |
| 80 to 84  | 44        | 53.0       | Developing(Fairly Satisfactory)       |
| 75 to 79  | 6         | 7.2        | Beginning(Did Not Meet Expectations)  |
| Total     | 83        | 100.0      |                                       |
| Mean      | 84        |            | Developing(Fairly Satisfactory)       |

It can be noted on the table that on the average the respondents performed in the fairly satisfactory level or they are in the developing level. This shows that the respondents need improvement in their academic performance.

There are several factors and methods in which the respondents will perform better in academic and one of these is the finding of Comeaux (2007) [3]. “He found that when student-athletes receive a lot of input from advisers and when they study in a supportive environment, their academic achievement will be high”. He recommends “a wide range of forms of faculty communication and mentoring that are responsive to the needs of student-athletes of different abilities”. Mentoring of student-athletes by faculty has also been found to be helpful especially in their physical education subjects. “Physical Education in school plays an important role in educating and developing students' attitudes and

awareness towards sports, as the student learn and practice sports in school or in pastime will enable him to practice it in his daily life outside school” according to Al-Shinawi (2006) as quoted by Pardeshi, et.al. (2019) [10].

**Description of the benefits of participation in school athletics in their**

**Motivation**

Table 2 shows that the respondents strongly agreed (WM = 4.33) that there are good effects of participation in school athletics as to their motivation.

Specifically, they strongly agreed that they are motivated to prepare, train hard and make personal sacrifices to achieve excellence (WM =4.45) and became inspired because they enjoy competing and want to get in the winner's circle (WM = 4.46).

**Table 2:** Benefits of Participation in School Athletics in the Motivation of the Respondents

| Motivation  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Description |
|---|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. I am motivated to prepare, train hard and make personal sacrifices to achieve excellence.                          | 4.45          | Strongly Agree     |
| 2. I believe that participation in school athletics is irreplaceable and there are good benefits for its involvement. | 4.29          | Strongly Agree     |
| 3. I became inspired because I enjoy competing and want to get in the winner's circle.                                | 4.46          | Strongly Agree     |
| 4. It is beneficial in identifying life skills and determining my career direction.                                   | 4.19          | Agree              |
| 5. It stimulated me because it develops my skills and cognitive abilities.  | 4.37          | Strongly Agree     |
| 6. Athletic participation helps me to become physically and mentally active that is why I like                        | 4.39          | Strongly Agree     |

|  |      |                |
|--|------|----------------|
| it.  |      |                |
| 7. Participation in school athletics is very important for my future career.               | 4.24 | Strongly Agree |
| 8. It enhances my whole personality that is why my desire to be a student-athlete is high. | 4.22 | Strongly Agree |
| Overall Weighted Mean  | 4.33 | Strongly Agree |

Legend: 1.00 to 1.79 Strongly Disagree; 1.80 to 2.59 Disagree; 2.60 to 3.39 Moderately Agree; 3.40 to 4.19 Agree; 4.20 to 5.00 Strongly Agree

The least in rank is item number 4 where it stated that it is beneficial in identifying life skills and determining my career direction (WM = 4.19).

“Sports continue to motivate some students because being on a team provides them with a sense of belonging, while others simply use sports to provide perks or peak experiences that counteract the fear of not being able to survive in life outside of sports (Parish & Williams, 2007) <sup>[11]</sup>”. This and other studies continue the stream of research which shows sports as a buffer zone against other ills in adolescent life.

### Study habits

Table 3 exhibits that the respondents agreed (WM = 4.06) that there are benefits of participation in school athletics as to their study habits.

Specifically, the effects they mentioned are in the athletes gave their best effort on exams and quizzes (WM = 4.19), participating in class activities and discussions (WM = 4.18) and in submitting all academic requirements that they've missed right after the competition (WM = 4.18).

The least in rank are item numbers 1 and 2. These are “I complete my assignments on time (WM = 3.86)” and “I work independently on my assignments and other school projects (WM = 3.88)”.

**Table 3:** Benefits of Participation in School Athletics in the Study Habits of the Respondents

| Study Habits  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Description |
|---|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. I complete my assignments and work on time.                                      | 3.86          | Agree              |
| 2. I work independently on my assignments and other school projects.                | 3.88          | Agree              |
| 3. I remain attentive in class.   | 4.02          | Agree              |
| 4. I am on-time with my school tasks and use my time productively.                  | 4.04          | Agree              |
| 5. I participate in class activities and discussions.                               | 4.18          | Agree              |
| 6. I give the best effort on exams and quizzes.                                     | 4.19          | Agree              |
| 7. I set priorities and goals to manage my learning and my development.             | 4.13          | Agree              |
| 8. I submit all academic requirements that I've missed right after the competition. | 4.18          | Agree              |
| Overall Weighted Mean   | 4.06          | Agree              |

Legend: 1.00 to 1.79 Strongly Disagree; 1.80 to 2.59 Disagree; 2.60 to 3.39 Moderately Agree; 3.40 to 4.19 Agree; 4.20 to 5.00 Strongly Agree

The finding clearly reveals that students need to improve on the submission on their assignments on time and they need someone who can help them do their assignments and other school projects.

One approach to solidifying the link between athletics and academic achievement involves looking at both as part of the development of the talent of a student. In this way, the literature finds that supportive experiences can serve as a catalyst to make the connection. According to Csikszentmihalyi as cited by Olszewski & Kublius (2004) <sup>[9]</sup>, “what it takes to assist in the development of a student-athlete

is to make sure that the class is immediately enjoyable to him or her and develop in the long-term goals.”

### Self-discipline

Table 4 presents that the respondents strongly agreed (WM = 4.24) that there are benefits of participation in school athletics as to their self-discipline.

Specifically, they strongly agreed that their participation in school athletics helps them develop better time management skills (WM = 4.33) and they became prepared thoroughly, show discipline and stay focus with the plan (WM = 4.28).

**Table 4:** Benefits of Participation in School Athletics in the Self-Discipline of the Respondents

| Self-Discipline  | Weighted Mean | Verbal Description |
|--|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. It helps me develop better time management skills.                    | 4.33          | Strongly Agree     |
| 2. I became prepared thoroughly, show discipline and stay with my plan.  | 4.28          | Strongly Agree     |
| 3. I attend classes and training regularly.                              | 4.25          | Strongly Agree     |
| 4. I became punctual in all games, practices, and classes.               | 4.19          | Agree              |
| 5. I always follow the sports training program.                          | 4.27          | Strongly Agree     |
| 6. I became dedicated to any sports-related activities.                  | 4.22          | Strongly Agree     |
| 7. I possess strong principles, behave ethically and show sportsmanship. | 4.22          | Strongly Agree     |
| 8. I became more responsible for my academic work.                       | 4.18          | Agree              |
| Overall Weighted Mean  | 4.24          | Strongly Agree     |

Legend: 1.00 to 1.79 Strongly Disagree; 1.80 to 2.59 Disagree; 2.60 to 3.39 Moderately Agree; 3.40 to 4.19 Agree; 4.20 to 5.00 Strongly Agree

After school programs including sports have long been known to promote self-discipline and counteract the tendency for adolescents to engage in high-risk behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, and even criminal behavior (NHSAW, 2004) <sup>[8]</sup>. Students who are not engaged in extracurricular activities such as sports are “57% more likely to have dropped out of school by the time they would have been seniors” and are “27% more likely to have been arrested than those who spend

one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities”. Almost all high school principals (over 95%) believe that extracurricular activities teach valuable lessons to students and promote citizenship behavior.

In a study conducted by the Alberta Schools Athletic Association, it was found that student-athletes are “less likely to smoke” and “are less likely to report drinking more than once a week in comparison to non-athletic students”. The

results of the study were interpreted to mean that "students who participate in school-based sports programs are good school citizens and maybe even better school citizens than their non-sport peers". It is also found out that sports at the high school levels "introduce young people to skills such as teamwork, self-discipline, sportsmanship, leadership, and socialization". Still, another finding is that, in addition to having better GPAs than non-athletes, student-athletes also had fewer discipline referrals and a much lower dropout rate than non-athletic students (NHSAW, 2004) [8].

The least in rank is item number 8 stating that "I became more responsible to my academic work (WM = 4.18)".

### **The relationship between academic performance and participation in school athletics**

Academic performance was found to have significant relationship with participation in school athletics ( $r = .381^{**}$ ,  $p$ -value  $< 0.01$ ).

This means that the higher the academic performance, the higher was the participation of the respondents in school athletics.

With regards to the benefits and effects of participation in school athletics and sports involvement and academic performance, number of studies over the years have gone beyond the advantages of participation in sports and argued that there is a direct correlation between participation in high school sports and student's academic success (Aries & McCarthy, *et al.*, 2004; Ferris & Finster, *et al.*, 2004; Olszewski-Rublious, 2004; Comeaux, 2007) [1, 5, 3, 9]. Their findings coincide with the result of this current study.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study the following was concluded that: the level of academic performance of the respondents is in the fairly satisfactory level. They are motivated to prepare, train hard, make personal sacrifices to achieve excellence, became inspired because they enjoy competing and want to get in the winner's circle. In addition, they gave their best effort on exams and quizzes, participating in class activities and discussions and in submitting all academic requirements that they've missed right after the competition. Likewise, they agreed that their participation in school athletics helps them develop better time management skills, they became prepared thoroughly, show discipline and stay focus with the plan. However, they need improvement in identifying life skills and determining career direction, in completing assignments on time and in working independently on assignments and other school projects. Also, they need to become more responsible for their academic works.

Lastly, their academic performance was found to have a significant relationship with participation in school athletics. This means that the higher the academic performance, the higher was the participation of the respondent in school athletics.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher offered the following recommendations: a). The school should set a tracking record of their students to monitor their progress in both academics and athletics; b). The institution should provide an environment for learning with the following: b.1. Academic counselors can provide assistance with scheduling concerns. b. 2. Progress in both academics and sports of athletes should be checked regularly by their teacher advisers and their coaches. b. 3. There should be a special program for student-athletes such as tutorial

classes and career counseling programs; c). Physical Education supervisors and school principals should raise faculty awareness regarding the conditions of student-athletes to help improve the confidence of the students in the system, while enrichment programs can be implemented to develop a rapport between the faculty and student-athletes; d). Student-athletes should know their responsibility in both academics and athletics. They should treat their responsibilities like a full-time job. Time management is necessary to fulfill their priorities, and communication is the best key to cope up with their studies and games. They should be open to the people who can help, such as professors, academic counselors, coaches, and parents since they are the motivators that mold and influence the decision-making of the students; and e). Student-athletes should always be ready and prepared. They should always have alternatives because the reality is that there is only a low percentage of students who end up competing professionally in the long-term. As a student-athlete, they should strive to be goal oriented, organized and disciplined at all times.

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