



International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health

P-ISSN: 2394-1685
E-ISSN: 2394-1693
Impact Factor (R,JIF): 5.38
IJPESH 2024; 11(4): 160-162
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www.kheljournal.com
Received: 06-05-2024
Accepted: 05-06-2024

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The importance of government policies in prioritizing grassroots sports programs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the necessity for government policies to prioritize the development of grassroots sports programs. The study sample included 41 athletes, both male and female, from various Khelo India centers in the Kashmir division, aged 14 to 20 years. These athletes had participated at different competitive levels, including All India, North Zone National, and various state-level championships. Data were collected via a questionnaire and analyzed, revealing a strong consensus that government policies should indeed prioritize grassroots sports program development.

Keywords: Grassroots sports programs, government policies, youth sports development, athlete perceptions

Introduction

Grassroots sports programs have long been recognized as powerful mediums for promoting sports at the grassroots level. These programs are essential for engaging school-level students and young individuals, fostering an understanding and appreciation for sports among diverse communities. By bringing together individuals from various backgrounds, grassroots sports programs can bridge societal gaps and promote skill development and mutual respect among participants. This study investigates the perceptions of athletes regarding the prioritization of grassroots sports by government policies, highlighting the potential benefits for youth engagement and community cohesion.

Methodology

Participants

The study sample consisted of 41 students from various Khelo India centers in the Kashmir division, aged 14 to 20 years. All participants were athletes who had competed at national, All India, and state championships.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Participants were given clear instructions before completing the questionnaire, and the environment was controlled to ensure accurate and honest responses.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively, with the mean score calculated to interpret the results. The mean score was used to determine the overall agreement among participants regarding the prioritization of grassroots sports programs by government policies.

Results

The questionnaire responses were as follows:

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Table 1: Show Response, Frequency (f) and Weight (x)

Response	Frequency (f)	Weight (x)	Total (fx)
Strongly Agree	27	5	135
Agree	3	4	12
Partially Agree	11	3	33
Disagree	0	2	0
Strongly Disagree	0	1	0
Total	41		180

The mean score (\bar{x}) was calculated as:

$$\text{Mean}(\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum fx}{N} = \frac{180}{41} = 4.39$$

This high mean score (4.39 out of 5) indicates a strong overall agreement among the participants regarding the importance of prioritizing grassroots sports programs through government policies.

Discussion

Analysis of results

The results of the study show overwhelming support among the participants for the prioritization of grassroots sports programs. With 27 out of 41 respondents strongly agreeing and an additional 3 agreeing, the data suggest a near-unanimous recognition of the benefits of these programs. Even the 11 respondents who partially agreed indicate a positive inclination, albeit with some reservations or conditions.

The lack of any negative responses (disagree or strongly disagree) further underscores the consensus on this issue. This unanimity could be attributed to the direct benefits experienced by the athletes themselves, who have likely witnessed the positive impact of grassroots programs on their own sports careers and communities.

Implications

The findings have significant implications for policymakers and stakeholders involved in sports development. The strong support for grassroots sports programs suggests that these initiatives are perceived as crucial for the development of young athletes and for fostering a sports culture at the community level.

Benefits of grassroots sports programs

- Early Skill Development:** Grassroots programs provide young athletes with the opportunity to develop fundamental sports skills from an early age. This early exposure can be critical in identifying and nurturing talent.
- Increased Participation:** These programs make sports accessible to a broader audience, encouraging participation from individuals who might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in organized sports.
- Community Cohesion:** Grassroots sports programs bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds, promoting social integration and community cohesion.
- Health and Well-being:** Regular participation in sports and physical activities can significantly improve the health and well-being of young people, reducing the risk of lifestyle-related diseases.
- Pathway to Professional Sports:** Grassroots programs can serve as a feeder system for higher levels of competition, providing a structured pathway for young athletes to progress to elite levels of sports.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness and reach of grassroots sports programs:

- Policy Development:** Governments should formulate policies that specifically target the expansion and support of grassroots sports programs. These policies should include clear objectives, strategies, and funding mechanisms.
- Increased Funding:** Adequate financial resources should be allocated to ensure the sustainability of grassroots sports programs. This funding should cover infrastructure, equipment, coaching, and other essential aspects.
- Community Involvement:** Engaging local communities in the planning and implementation of grassroots sports programs is crucial. This can be achieved through partnerships with schools, local clubs, and community organizations.
- Access and Inclusion:** Efforts should be made to ensure that grassroots sports programs are inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender or disability. This includes providing scholarships, subsidies, and facilities that cater to diverse needs.
- Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing a robust framework for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of grassroots sports programs will help in making necessary adjustments and improvements. Feedback from participants and stakeholders should be actively sought and incorporated.
- Public Awareness Campaigns:** Raising awareness about the benefits of grassroots sports programs through public campaigns can encourage greater participation and support from the community.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role that grassroots sports programs play in the development of young athletes and the broader community. The strong consensus among participants underscores the need for government policies to prioritize these programs. By investing in grassroots sports, governments can create opportunities for young people to engage in physical activities, develop their skills, and foster a lifelong appreciation for sports. Ultimately, such investments will contribute to healthier, more active communities and a more vibrant sports culture.

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