



## ACEDMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY SPORTS STUDENTS

(CLASS 6<sup>TH</sup> TO 12<sup>TH</sup>)

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### *Abstract*

*Student-athletes in classes 6 to 12 face unique academic challenges due to the demands of balancing sports commitments with academic responsibilities. This study aims to explore the academic difficulties encountered by these students, focusing on time management, academic performance, and the level of institutional and peer support available to them. Data were collected from 40 parents of student-athletes through structured Google Forms, including both quantitative and qualitative questions. The findings reveal that the most common challenges include reduced study time, difficulty completing homework, frequent absenteeism, and increased academic stress. Sports schedules were shown to significantly impact academic engagement, with many students missing classes and having limited time for self-study. Institutional support was found to be inadequate, with a lack of flexibility from teachers and insufficient school-provided tutoring and counselling. Parent suggestions emphasized the need for flexible scheduling, better coordination between teachers and coaches, and enhanced mental health support. This study highlights the need for educational institutions to improve support systems to help student-athletes balance their dual roles effectively, ensuring their success in both academics and sports.*

**Keywords:** *Student-athletes, academic challenges, time management, academic performance, sports schedules, institutional support, peer support, flexible scheduling, mental health support.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the importance of sports and physical education has gained considerable momentum in the Indian education system. With the government's push through initiatives like Khelo India and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the emphasis on holistic development—including physical fitness—has elevated the role of sports in schools. As a result, students actively participating in sports from an early age are being encouraged and facilitated in multiple ways. However, this support has not been without challenges. The dual responsibility of excelling in both academics and sports can impose significant stress on young sportspersons, particularly those in classes 6th to 12th. These students often find themselves grappling with time management issues, frequent absences from school due to training or competitions, and limited academic support systems tailored to their unique schedules. Despite the clear cognitive and social benefits associated with physical activity—such as improved concentration, discipline, and leadership—many student-athletes continue to struggle academically. The lack of tailored educational policies, flexible curriculums, and institutional support often leaves them at a disadvantage compared to their peers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Rothschild-Checroune et al. (2012)**

This study investigated psychological stressors among student-athletes managing dual roles in academics and sports. Through longitudinal observations, the research found that during peak sports seasons, athletes experience heightened stress due to class absenteeism, missed assessments, and a lack of academic support. These factors collectively lead to reduced academic self-esteem and cumulative performance deficits.

### **Cosh and Tully (2014)**

Based on semi-structured interviews with adolescent athletes, this qualitative research uncovered that time management was a significant barrier to academic success. Training commitments and frequent travel led to delayed assignments and insufficient study time, pushing student-athletes to prioritize one domain over the other, often at the cost of their academic consistency.



### **Singh and Gaur (2013)**

This Indian context study revealed that school-level athletes in public institutions face systemic neglect. Teachers rarely provide compensatory teaching, and exams are not rescheduled for absentees. The lack of flexibility discourages many talented athletes from pursuing sports seriously, fearing academic decline.

### **Wylleman and Lavallee (2004)**

The authors introduced a “dual-career” developmental framework for student-athletes. Their model emphasizes structured transitions across athletic and academic phases and advocates for synchronized efforts between educators, coaches, and families to enable well-rounded development in both domains.

### **Naik and Bhatnagar (2021)**

In their investigation of rural athletes in Maharashtra, the researchers noted significant academic obstacles rooted in digital illiteracy, poor access to online learning tools, and a lack of flexible teaching practices. The situation worsened post-COVID-19 as most rural athletes couldn't adapt to virtual education due to technological constraints.

### **Patel (2019)**

This critique of the Indian education system highlighted a major policy gap: the absence of sports-academic coordinators. Without these roles, student-athletes face conflicting demands from both domains, leading to emotional exhaustion and compromised academic results.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1.Aim**

This study aims to explore academic challenges faced by student-athletes (classes 6–12), focusing on time management, academic performance, and institutional/peer support. It also seeks student recommendations to inform policy improvements.

### **3.2.Objectives**

- Identify common academic difficulties among student-athletes.
- Assess the impact of sports schedules on academics.
- Examine levels of institutional and peer support.



- Gather student suggestions for better academic-athletic balance.

### 3.3.Tools Used

Data were collected via structured Google Forms:

- One for student-athletes
- One for their parents

Both forms included closed-ended (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions. Microsoft Excel was used for data organization, frequency analysis, and visual representation.

### 3.4.Analysis Methods

- **Bar and pie charts:** Visualize response patterns (e.g., time spent on sports vs. academic stress).
- **Tabular analysis:** Present demographic data.
- **Thematic grouping:** Categorize open-ended responses into key themes (e.g., flexible schedules, academic support).

### 3.5.Sampling Technique

A **purposive sampling** approach was used to target students actively involved in sports at various levels. This ensured data relevance and alignment with research goals.

### 3.6.Sample Size

The study included:

- 0 student-athlete respondents (due to non-participation)
- 40 parent respondents
- Parent feedback offered contextual insights in the absence of student responses.

### 3.7.Analysis Tools

Excel was used for:

- Frequency counts
- Chart generation

- Manual coding of qualitative responses into thematic categories

This mixed-methods design provided both numerical data and narrative insights into the academic challenges and support needs of student-athletes.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

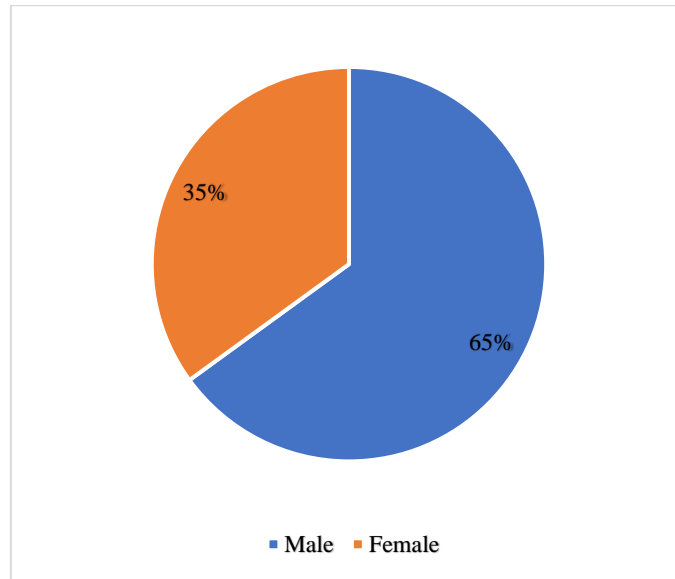
The data analysis aims to present insights derived from responses collected from 40 parents of student-athletes in classes 6th to 12th. Although student data was not available, parental input offered valuable secondary insights into the challenges faced by student-athletes in balancing academics with sports commitments. The analysis focuses on demographic patterns, perceived academic challenges, the impact of sports schedules on education, institutional and peer support, and suggestions for improvement. Both quantitative and qualitative responses were analyzed using Microsoft Excel through frequency counts, charts, and thematic coding.

##### 4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

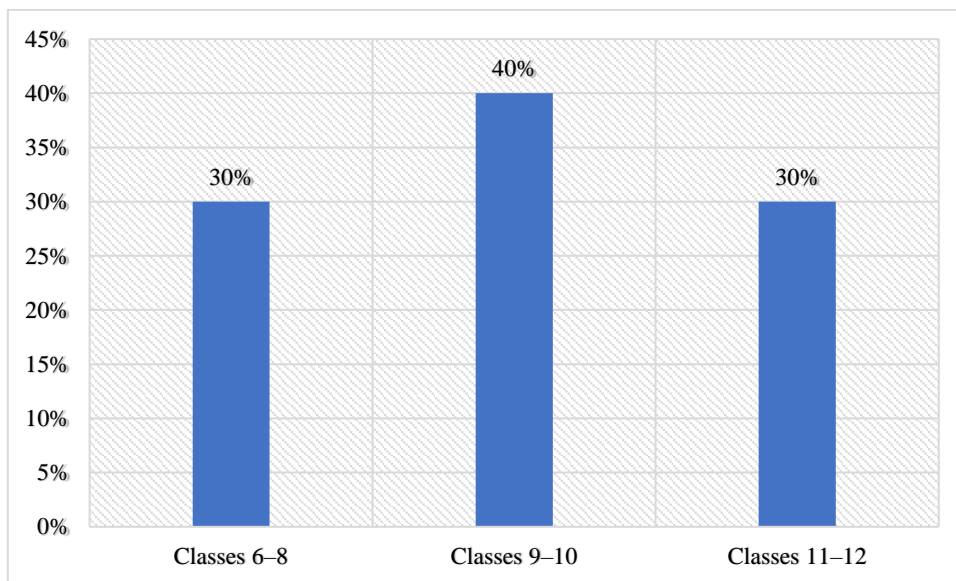
The demographic distribution of the parent respondents is outlined below:

**Table 1:** Demographic Profile of Respondents

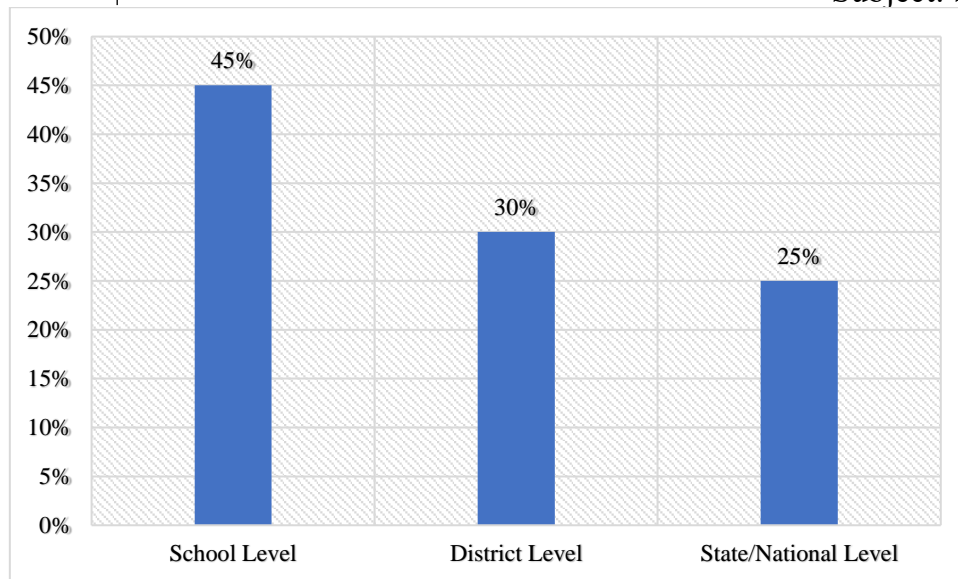
Category	Count (n=40)	Percentage (%)
Gender (Parents)		
- Male	26	65%
- Female	14	35%
Class Level of Student		
- Classes 6–8	12	30%
- Classes 9–10	16	40%
- Classes 11–12	12	30%
Level of Sports		
- School Level	18	45%
- District Level	12	30%
- State/National Level	10	25%



**Figure 1: Gender**



**Figure 2: Class level of Students**



**Figure 3:** Level of Sports

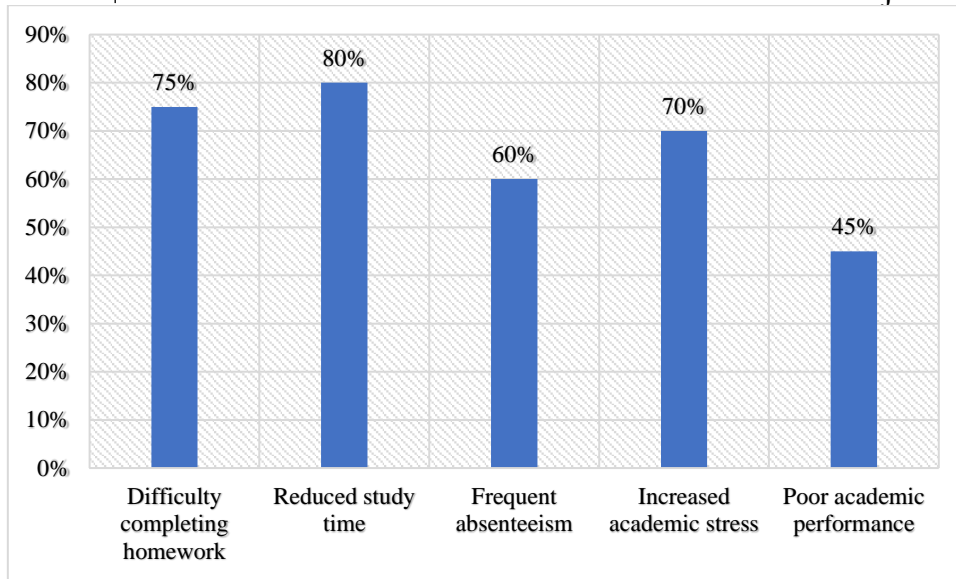
The majority of respondents (65%) were male parents, with a fairly balanced distribution of students across different class levels (30% in classes 6-8, 40% in classes 9-10, and 30% in classes 11-12). In terms of sports involvement, 45% of the students participated at the school level, 30% at the district level, and 25% at the state or national level, indicating a wide range of athletic involvement among the student-athletes.

#### 4.2.Perceived Academic Challenges

Parents reported multiple challenges their children face due to sports commitments:

**Table 2:** Perceived Academic Challenges

Academic Challenge	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Difficulty completing homework	30	75%
Reduced study time	32	80%
Frequent absenteeism	24	60%
Increased academic stress	28	70%
Poor academic performance	18	45%



**Figure 4:** Visual Representation of Perceived Academic Challenges

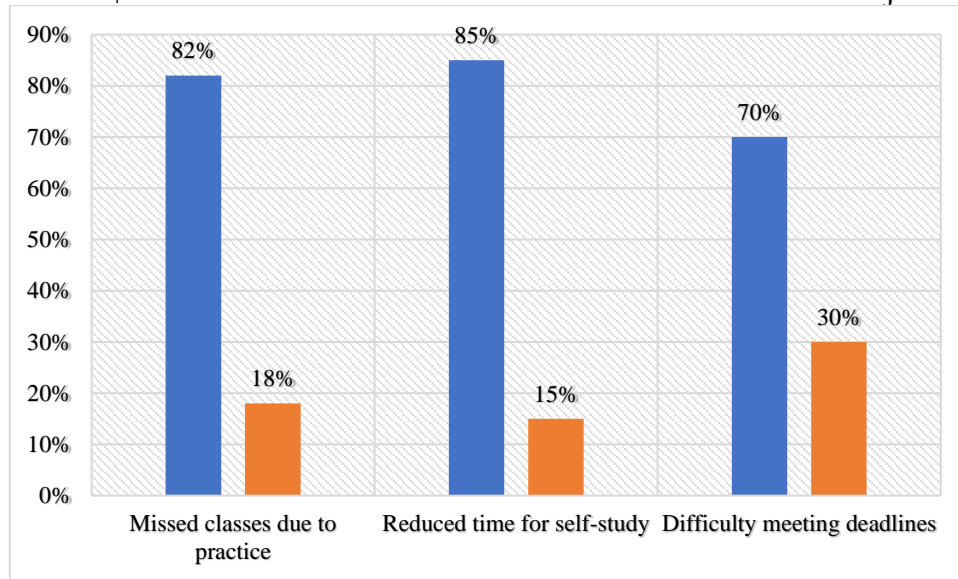
The most common academic challenges reported by parents include reduced study time (80%) and difficulty completing homework (75%). These findings suggest that time constraints due to sports commitments significantly affect students' ability to focus on their academic work. Additionally, 70% of parents noted increased academic stress, while 60% reported frequent absenteeism, both of which can have long-term impacts on students' academic performance. The least reported challenge was poor academic performance (45%), suggesting that while students face difficulties, most are still managing to maintain acceptable academic results.

### 4.3. Impact of Sports Schedules on Academics

Parents indicated how sports schedules influenced their child's academic engagement:

**Table 3:** Impact of Sports Schedules on Academics

Impact Area	Yes (%)	No (%)
Missed classes due to practice	82%	18%
Reduced time for self-study	85%	15%
Difficulty meeting deadlines	70%	30%



**Figure 5:** Visual Representation of Impact of Sports Schedules on Academics

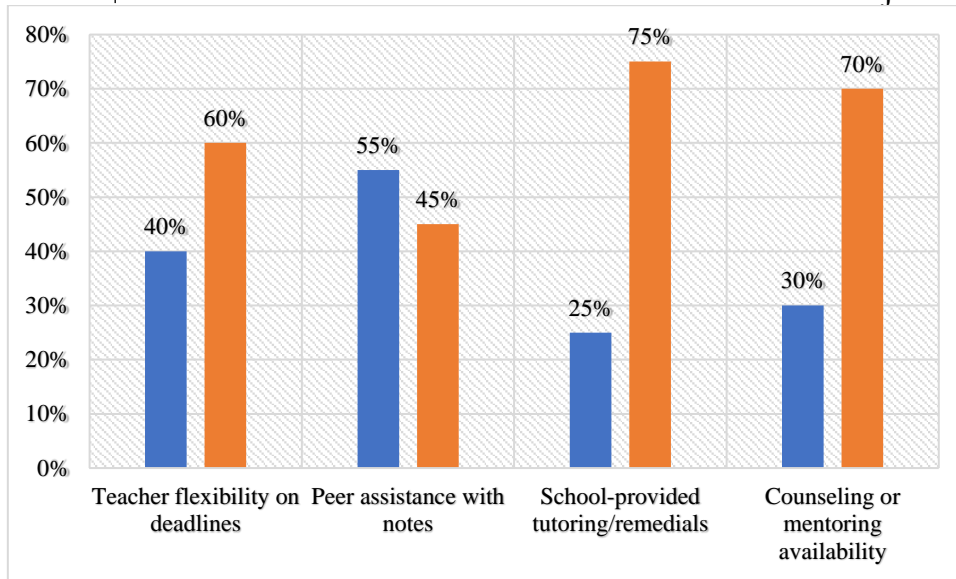
The results indicate a significant impact of sports schedules on academic engagement. A large majority of parents (82%) reported that their children missed classes due to sports practice, while 85% noted that their children had reduced time for self-study. This emphasizes how sports commitments take precedence over academic activities. Additionally, 70% of parents stated that meeting academic deadlines was difficult for their children, highlighting the struggle to balance both domains effectively.

#### 4.4. Institutional and Peer Support

The support systems available for student-athletes were also evaluated:

**Table 4:** Institutional and Peer Support

Support Type	Adequate (%)	Inadequate (%)
Teacher flexibility on deadlines	40%	60%
Peer assistance with notes	55%	45%
School-provided tutoring/remedials	25%	75%
Counseling or mentoring availability	30%	70%



**Figure 6:** Visual Representation of Institutional and Peer Support

The data suggests a substantial gap in institutional support for student-athletes. Only 40% of parents reported adequate teacher flexibility with deadlines, while 60% felt that this support was insufficient. Peer assistance with notes was slightly more favorable, with 55% of parents acknowledging its adequacy. However, support such as school-provided tutoring and counselling or mentoring was viewed as inadequate by the majority of parents (75% and 70%, respectively). This highlights a critical area for improvement, with a need for better institutional support systems for student-athletes.

#### 4.5. Thematic Analysis of Parent Suggestions

Open-ended responses from parents were manually coded into common themes. The following table summarizes the recurring suggestions:

**Table 5:** Thematic Analysis of Parent Suggestions

Theme	Representative Comments
Flexible academic scheduling	"Allow more study time during off-season"
Academic support programs	"Provide subject-wise tutoring after sports hours"
Improved communication with coaches	"Ensure coaches and teachers coordinate schedules"
Mental health and counselling support	"Offer guidance counsellors for student-athletes"



The thematic analysis of open-ended responses revealed several key suggestions from parents. A common theme was the need for flexible academic scheduling, with many parents recommending additional study time during off-seasons. There was also strong support for more academic assistance, such as subject-wise tutoring after sports hours. Additionally, improving communication between coaches and teachers, as well as offering mental health and counselling support, were emphasized. These suggestions reflect the need for structural changes to better accommodate the dual roles of student-athletes.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the academic challenges faced by student-athletes in classes 6 to 12, highlighting the significant impact of sports commitments on their academic performance. The findings underscore that time management remains a critical challenge, with many students struggling to balance homework, study time, and school attendance due to rigorous sports schedules. Despite these challenges, a majority of students maintain acceptable academic performance, suggesting that they are managing to cope with the pressures of both academics and athletics. However, the study also reveals significant gaps in institutional and peer support, with inadequate teacher flexibility, limited access to tutoring, and insufficient counselling services. Parents highlighted the need for more structured academic support, such as subject-wise tutoring after sports hours and better coordination between coaches and teachers. The study concludes that educational institutions must improve their support systems to better accommodate the needs of student-athletes. Implementing flexible scheduling, enhancing communication between academic and sports staff, and providing mental health resources are crucial steps toward ensuring that student-athletes can thrive in both their academic and athletic pursuits.

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