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Statistical Analysis of Sports' Role in Achievement, Self-Discipline, Volunteering Emirati Students

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Abstract: This study focused on the involvement of sports and physical activities in promoting academic achievement, self-discipline, and volunteerism amongst third-cycle students in schools within Al Ain city in UAE. A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting (416) students from public and private schools to participate in the study. Data were collected using a validated online questionnaire. It was found that the extent of engagement in sports and physical activities and its importance in relation to academic achievement was high, whereas the involvement and significance of such physical activities in relation to self-discipline and volunteering was found to be very high. No significant difference was found between participants' responses due to gender factor ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). Nevertheless, a statistically significant difference ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) was found when considering students' academic achievement level, with students having excellent performance scoring significantly higher than others.

Keywords: Sports and Physical Activities; Academic Achievement; Self-Discipline; Volunteering; Third-Cycle Students; Emirati Schools.

1. Introduction

The link between physical activities and holistic development of students has received great academic interest over the last ten years. Technological developments and extensive use of electronic gadgets have resulted in sedentary behavior and increased screen time leading to less physical activity and negative consequences for physical and psychological well-being (Warburton & Bredin, 2017). In the educational context, the pressure that students experience is growing, hence the need to encourage physical activities as a means of developing life skills, emotion control, and improving cognitive functions.

On an international platform, the UN has pointed out the numerous benefits of physical activities not only to physical but also social well-being. In addition to physical benefits, it can help individuals adopt a healthy lifestyle, prevent non-communicable diseases and build social competence (United Nations, 2022). Similarly, WHO stated that physical activities improve mental well-being as well as contribute to the development of cognitive and personal skills. Several studies indicated the existence of the positive effect of exercising on such parameters as self-confidence, self-esteem, and mental health especially for depressed and anxious people (World Health Organization, 2020; Lemke, 2015).

As far as the nation is concerned, the United Arab Emirates has been facing many public health concerns regarding lack of physical activities. According to the national survey conducted in 2018, around 27.8% of adults were considered obese, whereas 17.35% of children and teenagers in the age bracket 5–17 years had fallen under the obesity category (Bayoumi, 2023). It is predicted that the figures will be even more after the COVID-19 pandemic as precautionary measures included distance learning and restricted mobility leading to even less physical activity in terms of going outside of the house.

According to the statistics shared by the Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi, about 62.7% of the participants had not followed the WHO recommendations for physical exercises. The medical community has always claimed that physical exercise helps in reducing blood pressure, regulating blood glucose and cholesterol levels, relieving stress and maintaining body weight (Bayoumi, 2023).

These findings collectively point to a critical need for structured, school-based physical activity initiatives, particularly within the third-cycle educational stage, where habits and behavioral patterns are consolidating and where the influence of physical activity on academic and civic engagement may be most consequential.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the extent to which sports and physical activities contribute to academic achievement, self-discipline, and volunteering among third-cycle students in Al Ain city schools, with the aim of informing evidence-based educational and health policy in the UAE context.

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2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Concept of Sports and Physical Activities

Sports and physical activities represent a set of coordinated kinetic activities that are designed within a certain frame that aims to achieve a comprehensive development physically, psychologically, socially and mentally. The role of these activities isn't limited to developing physical fitness, but includes supporting learners' emotional, behavioral and cognitive domains. Recent studies revealed that regular exercising was closely related to improving cognitive functions and academic achievement (De Greeff et al., 2018; Meijer et al., 2020).

Sports activities are characterized by several features, including the diversity of activities in accordance with the various age groups and ability levels, focusing on collective participation and team-spirit development, linking between physical and educational objectives, and enhancing positive behaviors among students. Indeed, these activities represent an applied educational environment that contributes to shaping a balanced personality.

2.2 Life and Social Skills

Life skills refer to a set of social and personal abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively with daily life requirements and challenges. A study by (Malete et al., 2022) suggested that sports programs based on developing positive youth contributed to enhancing life skills and promoting the mentality of entrepreneurship among the youth which, in turn, reflected the developmental dimension related to sports activities outside the traditional physical domain.

Furthermore, communication skills are amongst the most prominent skills, since they lay the foundation for developing effective human relationships. In their study, (Opstoel et al., 2020) suggested that participation in team sports enhanced verbal and nonverbal communication skills through interaction, coordination and cooperation between team members. Also, sports activities contributed to enhancing societal affiliation, where they provided a supporting social context that enhanced feelings of affiliation to school community and the larger community. In this vein, (Zhang et al., 2025) revealed that there was a significant correlation between participation in sports activities and improvement in the indices of social participation and integration.

Self-discipline refers to the individual's ability to control his behavior, and take his responsibility. (Claver et al., 2020) revealed that there was a positive relationship between motivation and self-discipline in physical education lessons and the level of academic achievement, confirming that the impact of sports goes beyond physical domains to include the domains of self-regulation and academic achievement.

2.3 Academic Achievement and Sports Activities

Modern literature reveals that there is a positive relationship between exercising and academic achievement. In their experimental study, (Lim et al., 2020) revealed that sports interventions within physical education programs contributed to improving students' academic performance.

The Umbrella review conducted by (Barbosa et al., 2020) revealed strong evidence advocating the positive effect of physical activities on students' academic achievement. The results showed that the targeted effect was achieved through several mechanisms, including improving blood flow to brain which, in turn, enhanced cognitive functions, increased attention, reduced stress and anxiety, and developed the skills of time-management and self-regulation.

Similarly, (Pan et al., 2025) suggested that there was a positive relationship between physical activity and academic achievement, as self-concept was enhanced and there had been more improvement in mental and physical health.

2.4 Volunteering and Sports Activities

Sports activities have a prominent role in instilling volunteering culture among students (Al-Tkhayneh et al., 2025), where such activities allow them more opportunities to take part in organizing sports events, train junior teams, and engage in societal campaigns and initiatives. These practices contribute to enhancing the spirit of responsibility, initiative, and societal participation. (Rodríguez-Bravo et al., 2020) suggested that recreational physical activities were positively related to psychological wellbeing among the youth which, in turn, enhanced their readiness to societal participation and volunteering.

3. Previous Studies

Many studies addressed the role of sports activities in developing academic achievement (e.g. Lasaad, 2023; Al-Tantawi, 2022; El-Sayed, 2020; Al-Rumaiyan, 2021; Belabbassi and Heloul, 2017). In those studies, the study sample was selected from students in the various academic stages, such as university and high school students. Some previous studies focused on the role of sports activities in developing self-discipline among students (e.g. Sabeq, 2020; Brahimi, Dilmi, and Salhawi, 2019). Some studies focused on the role of sports activities in developing volunteering (e.g. Ben Al-Rim, 2021; Murad and

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Al-Shaib, 2021; Al-Luhaidan and Al-Bazaie, 2018; Al-Anzi, 2018; Al-Saadi, 2017).

By reviewing the previous studies, we can see a general agreement concerning the positive relationship between practicing sports activities and improving life skills as well as enhancing academic achievement. It can also be noticed that most studies used quantitative approaches, experimental approaches, or systematic reviews. Furthermore, studies varied in terms of the targeted age groups, types of sports activities (individual, team, or mixed), and the geographical-cultural contexts in which they were conducted.

This study is distinctive by the comprehensive investigation to the various dimensions of life and social skills, its integration between new foreign and Arabic literature, and its focus on the Arab educational environment which, in turn, gives it a distinctive contextual and applied dimension.

4. Study Questions

• What is the extent of practicing sports and physical activities among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?

• What is the role of sports and physical activities in improving academic achievement among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?

• What is the role of sports and physical activities in improving self-discipline among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?

• What is the role of sports and physical activities in improving volunteering among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?

5. Study Hypotheses

• There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the sample individuals about practicing sports and physical activities and their role in developing academic achievement, self-discipline and volunteering among the third cycle students in Al Ain city attributed to the variable of gender.

• There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the sample individuals about practicing sports and physical activities and their role in developing academic achievement, self-discipline and volunteering among the third cycle students in Al Ain city attributed to the variable of educational qualification.

6. Study Methodology

The authors used the descriptive analytical approach, as this approach investigates a phenomenon from all its domains and levels as existing in reality, analyzes it and links it to other phenomena (Majdoub, 2021: p.8). The authors used the information resources based on reports issued by the ministry of education and official newspaper in the state, in addition to the data collected from questionnaires.

6.1 Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all the third cycle students in all the teaching stages in public, private and charter schools in Al Ain city. The sample was selected by using snowball sampling, where (419) electronic questionnaires were distributed, and (3) of them were excluded as they were invalid. Accordingly, the study sample consisted of (416) respondents.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample Individuals

Variable	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	164	39.4
	Female	252	60.6
	Total	416	100
Educational level	Excellent	164	39.4
	Very good	136	32.7
	Good	104	25.0
	Average	8	1.9

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	Low	4	1.0
	Total	416	100
Nationality	Emirati	276	66.3
	Non-Emirati	140	33.7
	Total	416	100
School type	Public	172	41.3
	Private	164	39.4
	Charter	80	19.2
	Total	416	100
Practicing sports	Yes, I practice sports	172	41.3
	No, I don't practice sports	72	17.3
	Sometimes, I practice sports	172	41.3
	Total	416	100

6.2 Study Instrument

The electronic questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire included five domains: (1) respondents' personal data, (2) the extent of practicing sports and physical activities, (3) the role of sports in developing academic achievement, (4) the role of sports in developing self-discipline, and (5) the role of sports in developing volunteering.

Table 2: Distribution of the Questionnaire Items According to its Domains

	Domain	**Number of Items**
1	Personal data	5
2	The extent of practicing sports	9
3	Developing academic achievement	8
4	Developing self-discipline	9
5	Developing volunteering	9
Total		40

6.3 Instrument Reliability

Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to verify the instrument's reliability, where the total reliability was (0.892), indicating a high reliability that is suitable for the study purposes, as illustrated in Table (3).

Table 3: Values of Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

	Domain	**No. of Items**	**Cronbach α**
1	The extent of practicing sports	9	0.797
2	Developing academic achievement	8	0.927
3	Developing self-discipline	9	0.917
4	Developing volunteering	9	0.925

7. Results

In order to analyze and explain the study questions, means, standard deviations and percentages were used for each item and the total degree, and Likert 5-point scale was used as follows:

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Table 4: Means for the Responses of the Sample Individuals

Value	Order	Mean	Degree
Strongly disagree	1	1–1.79	Very low
Disagree	2	1.80–2.59	Low
Neutral	3	2.61–3.38	Medium
Agree	4	3.41–4.18	High
Strongly agree	5	4.21–5	Very high

Prepared by the researchers using (Excel 2016)

7.1 Results of the First Question

The first question: "What is the extent of practicing sports and physical activities among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?"

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviation for the Responses about the Extent of Practicing Sports and Physical Activities

	Item	Mean	SD	Degree	Order
1	I regularly practice sports outside school	3.44	1.127	High	6
2	I have sufficient time to exercise and participate in physical activities outside school	3.07	1.217	Medium	7
3	I have a sports program that I practice regularly	2.64	1.303	Medium	9
4	I have a membership in a fitness club (gym)	2.96	1.242	Medium	8
5	There are specific areas for practicing sports and physical activities outside school	3.80	1.171	High	3
6	Weather conditions contribute to practicing outdoor-sports activities	3.53	1.178	High	5
7	I think the physical education classes at school are insufficient for me	3.78	1.135	High	4
8	I think that the large number of school tasks and assignments hinders practicing sports outside school	4.11	0.995	High	1
9	My family members encourage me when I practice sports and physical activities	4.02	0.987	High	2
	Total average	3.54	0.899	High	

Prepared by the researchers using (SPSS)

The results in table (5) reveal that the mean values for the extent of practicing sports among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools' range between (2.64–4.11), and the average mean is (3.54) with a high degree. Items (8 and 9) have the highest importance level with (4.11) and (4.02), respectively. However, item (3) stating "I have a sports program that I practice regularly" has the lowest mean with (2.64), followed by item (4) "I have a membership in a fitness club" with a mean of (2.96).

7.2 Results of the Second Question

The second question: "What is the role of sports and physical activities in improving academic achievement among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?"

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviation for the Responses about the Role of Sports in Improving Academic Achievement

	Item	Mean	SD	Degree	Order
1	Sports contributes to enhancing memory and data retrieval	4.21	0.897	Very high	2
2	I feel active after practicing sports and physical activities	4.28	0.924	Very high	1
3	I think that sports and physical activities reduce academic stressors	4.09	1.099	High	4
4	Sports and physical activities contribute to enhancing critical thinking inside classrooms	3.97	1.116	High	6

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5	I think that sports and physical activities enhance focus and attention in classroom	3.99	1.081	High	5
6	I think that sports and physical activities have a role in academic achievement	4.12	1.037	High	3
7	Sports contributes to enhancing self-confidence inside classrooms	3.80	1.171	High	8
8	Sports contributes to enhancing participation inside classrooms	3.87	1.073	High	7
	Total average	4.15	0.950	High	

Prepared by the researchers using (SPSS)

The results in table (6) reveal that the mean values range between (3.78–4.28), and the average mean is (4.15) with a high degree. Item (2) "I feel active after practicing sports" and item (1) "Sports contributes to enhancing memory" have the highest importance levels with (4.28) and (4.21), respectively.

7.3 Results of the Third Question

The third question: "What is the role of sports and physical activities in developing self-discipline among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?"

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviation for the Responses about the Role of Sports in Improving Self-Discipline

	Item	**Mean**	**SD**	**Degree**	**Order**
1	Sports improves the ability to determine and achieve objectives	4.00	1.035	High	8
2	Sports enhances the ability to control emotions and deal with stressors	4.08	0.974	High	5
3	Practicing sports contributes to developing management and commitment among students	4.08	0.902	High	4
4	Sports contributes to enhancing patience and tolerance	4.05	0.961	High	6
5	Sports develops controlling reaction to stressful situations	4.04	0.936	High	7
6	Sports and physical activities enhance discipline in organizing daily activities	4.12	0.929	High	2
7	Team sports improves the skills of leadership and responsibility	4.11	0.871	High	3
8	Sports contributes to enhancing self-feeling and increasing self-confidence	4.24	0.851	Very high	1
9	Sports enhances ethics and values	3.90	0.967	High	9
	Total average	4.24	0.792	Very high	

Prepared by the researchers using (SPSS)

The results in table (7) show that the mean scores ranged between (3.90–4.24), where the total average is (4.24) with a very high degree. Item (8) "Sports contributes to enhancing self-feeling and increasing self-confidence" has the highest mean (4.24), followed by item (6) with a mean of (4.12).

7.4 Results of the Fourth Question

The fourth question: "What is the role of sports and physical activities in developing volunteering among the third cycle students in the Emirati schools?"

Table 8: Means and Standard Deviation for the Responses about the Role of Sports in Improving Volunteering

	Item	**Mean**	**SD**	**Degree**	**Order**
1	Sports develops positive attitudes towards volunteering	3.96	0.972	High	5
2	Sports enhances team work among students to help the needy	4.00	0.911	High	3
3	Sports enhances self-initiative among students to help helpless and needy people	3.81	1.019	High	8
4	Sports enhances awareness of the importance of social cooperation between community members	3.92	0.939	High	6

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5	Physical education lessons encourage students to maintain a clean environment	3.78	1.091	High	9
6	Sports and physical activities encourage cooperation with others	4.07	0.918	High	2
7	Sports enhances constructive competition spirit between students to serve community	4.11	0.860	High	1
8	Sports develops societal responsibility among students	3.98	0.932	High	4
9	Sports and physical activities enhance the importance of students' role towards their country	3.90	1.026	High	7
	Total average	4.08	0.869	High	

Prepared by the researchers using (SPSS)

The results in table (8) show that the mean scores ranged between (3.78–4.11), with a total average of (4.08) and a high degree. Item (7) "Sports enhances constructive competition spirit" and item (6) "Sports encourage cooperation" have the highest importance levels with (4.11) and (4.07), respectively.

8. Study Hypotheses Results

8.1 First Hypothesis Results

Table 9: Results of Testing Differences by Gender

Gender	**Mean**	**SD**	**T value**	**Probability value**	**Significance level**
Male	4.12	0.866	0.473	0.584	Not statistically significant
Female	4.06	0.874			

The results in table (9) show that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean scores of the sample individuals about practicing sports and its role in developing academic achievement, self-discipline and volunteering attributed to gender (T=0.473, p=0.584).

8.2 Second Hypothesis Results

Table 10: Results of Testing Differences by Educational Qualification

Educational qualification	**Mean**	**SD**	**F value**	**Probability value**	**Significance level**
Excellent	4.41	0.830	7.436	0.000	Statistically significant
Very good	4.23	0.848			
Good	4.19	0.687			
Pass	3.00	0.000			
Weak	2.00	0.000			

The results in table (10) show statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) attributed to educational qualification in favor of the excellent category (F=7.436, p=0.000).

Table 11: Results of Multiple Comparisons (Scheffé)

Comparison	**Mean differences**	**Probability value**	**Significance level**
Very good — Excellent	0.179	0.755	Non-significant
Good — Excellent	0.222	0.647	Non-significant
Pass — Excellent	1.415*	0.019	Significant
Weak — Excellent	2.415	0.002	Significant
Good — Very good	0.043	0.999	Non-significant
Pass — Very good	1.235	0.062	Non-significant
Weak — Very good	2.235*	0.005	Significant
Pass — Good	1.192	0.083	Non-significant

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Weak — Good	2.192*	0.007	Non-significant
Weak — Pass	1.000	0.715	Non-significant

9. Discussion of Results and Recommendations

9.1 First Question

The total average for the extent of practicing sports and physical activities among the third cycle students in Al Ain city was (3.54) with a high degree. The authors attributed that to the students' realization for the importance of physical activities in improving general health and increasing energy, where exercising contributes to enhancing muscular power and health in general. Also, practicing sports is effective in reducing stress and anxiety. Furthermore, physical activities may provide more opportunities for social interaction between students, where team sports may contribute to building friendships and enhancing team spirit.

9.2 Second Question

The total average for the role of practicing sports in developing academic achievement among the third cycle students in Al Ain city was (4.15) with a high degree. This finding agrees with (Lasaad, 2023), which revealed that the majority of the sample individuals often feel more able to focus after practicing sports, and (Al-Tantawi, 2022) which suggested that exercising contributed to building friendships and social relationships, in addition to its role in enhancing academic achievement and developing personality. This finding also agrees with (Al-Rumaiyan, 2021) which suggested that there was a positive relationship between practicing the sport of horse-riding and improving academic achievement.

9.3 Third Question

The total average for the role of practicing sports in developing self-discipline among the third cycle students in Al Ain city was (4.24) with a very high degree. This finding agrees with (Sabeq, 2022), which revealed that there was a positive role for practicing sports in enhancing students' vitality, and (Brahimi, Dilmi and Salhawi, 2019) which confirmed that sports programs provided more opportunities to utilizing free time in performing useful activities that contributed to controlling students' academic and social behavior.

9.4 Fourth Question

The total average for the role of practicing sports in developing volunteering among the third cycle students in Al Ain city was (4.08) with a high degree. This finding agrees with (Murad and Al-Shaib, 2021) which confirmed the high levels of cultural awareness and affiliation among those practicing sports activities, whereas it contradicts with (Al-Anzi, 2018) and (Al-Luhaidan and Al-Bazaie, 2018).

9.5 First Hypothesis

The value of t-test was (0.473) with a probability of (0.584), which is more than (0.05); therefore, there were no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) attributed to gender. The authors attributed that to the case that the possible benefits of practicing sports are similar regardless of gender.

9.6 Second Hypothesis

The value of f-test was (7.436) with a probability of (0.000), which is less than (0.05); therefore, there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) attributed to academic achievement in favor of the excellent category. The students who described their study level as excellent had positive individual experiences with sports that led to better understanding to its positive effects.

10. Conclusion

The results showed that the level of practicing sports and physical activities among the third cycle students in Al Ain city was high, with a mean of (3.54), indicating the students' awareness concerning the importance of physical activity in enhancing general health, reducing psychological stressors and building positive social friendships. The results also revealed that sports had a significant role in developing academic achievement, with a mean of (4.15), as it contributed to improving students' focus, enhancing their motivation, and promoting their school affiliation.

The results also showed that practicing sports had a significant role in developing self-discipline, with a mean of (4.24), as it contributed to enhancing students' commitment to rules, responsibility-taking, and team-spirit work. The results revealed that sports had a significant role in developing volunteering, with a mean of (4.08), as it contributed to enhancing initiatives, societal belonging, cooperation, and social responsibility.

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As for the statistical differences, the results showed that there were no statistically significant differences attributed to gender. However, there were statistically significant differences attributed to educational qualification in favor of (excellent), which reflected a positive relationship between academic achievement and awareness of the positive effect of sports on developing social, behavioral and cognitive domains.

11. Recommendations

Practicing sports can be enhanced among students by adopting a complete set of initiatives that include providing low-cost membership in fitness clubs in cooperation with health institutions, setting specialized training programs to satisfy the students' needs, and organizing regular sports events, such as school marathons to enhance the spirit of competition and affiliation. Also, developing the sports infrastructure and assigning qualified coaches contribute to enhancing the level of participation. Additionally, educational programs should be developed concerning the importance of physical fitness, where students' level can be monitored regularly, and families can be engaged in sports activities. Technology and innovation can be employed in motivating students and providing them with more opportunities to represent their school in team sports which, in turn, enhances motivation, pride and affiliation.

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