

# Factors Affecting Students' Participation in Extracurricular Sports Activities in Universities and Colleges in Can Tho

Nguyen Ba Vi<sup>1\*</sup>, Nguyen Huu Tri<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Can Tho College of Economics and Technology

<sup>2</sup>Can Tho University

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

Extracurricular sports activities (ESAs) play an important role in improving physical fitness, mental health, and social development for college and university students. However, participation levels are still suboptimal. This paper synthesizes findings from studies (2010–2025) to identify the determinants influencing ESA participation. This paper synthesizes and analyzes studies from 2010 to 2025 to identify key factors influencing student participation in ESA. The results show that the main groups of factors include: personal factors (motivation, attitude, gender, health); social factors - family and friends; institutional factors - training programs, schedules, school policies; environmental factors - facilities, costs, access; psychological factors - enjoyment, self-efficacy. Survey results at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University show that time constraints, inadequate facilities and low intrinsic motivation are the most common barriers. Recommendations include integrating the curriculum, investing in facilities, strengthening student clubs and promoting school support.

**Keywords:** extracurricular sports, students, influencing factors, sports activities, barriers to participation.

## INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular sports activities (ESA) are essential for the comprehensive development of higher education. They contribute to the physical, psychological and social development of students. Despite the proven benefits, participation remains uneven due to many complex factors. Understanding these determinants is important to design effective interventions.

In Vietnam, physical education (PE) in schools plays an important role in promoting and nurturing human factors, contributing to improving physical fitness, educating personality, ethics and a healthy lifestyle. Physical education is “a comprehensive form of education on ethics, physical fitness, intelligence, aesthetics, and labor techniques, in which physical education plays an important role in developing qualities and motor skills, teaching movement movements, and is a part of culture [National Assembly, Vietnam, 2018].

The Ministry of Education and Training issued Circular No. 25/2015/TT-BGDDT dated October 25, 2015, regulating the physical education subject program in university-level training programs with specific objectives: The Physical Education subject program aims to provide knowledge and basic movement skills, forming the habit of practicing physical exercise and sports to improve health, develop physical strength, stature, perfect personality, improve learning ability, social activity skills with a positive spirit and attitude, contributing to the implementation of comprehensive education goals [Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2015].

Ministry of Education and Training (2020). Circular 48/2020/TT-BGDDT dated December 31, 2020 Regulations on sports activities in schools: Establish and maintain regular training of gifted teams for each sport as the core for the school's sports activities.; Organize and maintain regular morning and mid-class physical exercises; effectively utilize the school's facilities and integrate and combine training with music to create a joyful and

exciting atmosphere, attracting students to actively participate; Organize at least one sports competition activity for students per year, the content and form of competition must be suitable to the psychological and physiological characteristics of the age of the learner and the physical conditions of the school; send students to participate in domestic and international sports competitions [Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2020].

One of The most important psychological characteristics of student age is the development of self-awareness. That is the awareness and self-assessment of students about their actions, the results of their impact, thoughts, feelings, moral style, interests, motivations of behavior, activities, is a comprehensive assessment of themselves and their position in life. Self-awareness includes self-observation, self-analysis, self-respect, self-assessment, self-checking of their activities and personality. Self-awareness is considered a special type of consciousness in personal life, with the function of self-regulating actions and attitudes towards oneself.

Research objectives

- Identify key factors influencing ESA participation.
- Analyze barriers and facilitators.
- Make recommendations for higher education institutions in Vietnam

METHODS

A comprehensive narrative review of studies published from 2013 to 2025. Databases: PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, BMC Public Health. Keywords include extracurricular sports, physical activity, determinants, barriers.

Analyze studies by authors in Vietnam published recently, with similar characteristics to the research object.

Synthesize and analyze factors influencing extracurricular sports activities of university students, identify barriers and facilitators, and propose appropriate interventions for schools.

Constructing a survey form, assessing the current status of factors affecting participation in extracurricular sports activities of students at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, about 926 subjects responded to the survey.

Analyzing and evaluating the factors affecting participation in extracurricular sports activities of students at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, thereby making appropriate recommendations for further studies.

RESULTS

The results of the survey on the current status of factors affecting participation in extracurricular sports activities of students at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University were analyzed and evaluated to give results similar to previous studies and with some differences, presented in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Student survey results on factors affecting extracurricular sports activities in schools

Descriptive Statistics						
Survey Content	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Personal Motivations and Interests	926	3,00	5,00	4,4363	,01883	,57303
Gender and Age	926	3,00	5,00	4,4125	,02023	,61549
Health and Fitness	926	3,00	5,00	4,4438	,01916	,58317
Perceived Benefits	926	3,00	5,00	4,4266	,01958	,59594
Friends and Social Networks	926	3,00	5,00	4,4168	,02013	,61257
Family and Social Expectations	926	1,00	5,00	3,4568	,03040	,92519
School Calendar, Curriculum Framework	926	1,00	5,00	3,5605	,03006	,91481

Student Sports Policy and Management	926	1,00	5,00	3,4330	,03149	,95824
Facilities	926	3,00	5,00	4,4363	,01877	,57114
Cost of Participation	926	3,00	5,00	4,4179	,01990	,60562
Self-Efficacy	926	1,00	5,00	3,7981	,02600	,79133
Perception of Risk and Safety	926	3,00	5,00	4,4201	,01991	,60590
Valid N (listwise)	926					

(Spss 20.0, 5-point likert scale) 4.1

### Personal factors

Personal motivation, enjoyment, health status, fitness and perceived benefits strongly influence participation.

Personal motivation and enjoyment: Students with intrinsic motivation (enjoyment, finding joy) and a sense of self-efficacy participate more often. Many studies show that enjoyment in activities and personal motivation are the premise for maintaining long-term participation.

Health status, fitness: Students with better health status or high awareness of health benefits are more likely to participate.

Perceived benefits strongly influence participation in ESA The results of Table 1 show that the average value of student personal factors (surveyed at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, Vietnam, 2025) is 4.43, showing that personal factors (personal motivation and interest; gender and age; health and physical condition; perceived benefits) greatly influence the level of student participation in ESA.

### Social and Cultural Factors

Peer influence is a strong motivator. Family expectations, especially in academically intensive cultures, can limit participation in sports.

Friends and social networks: Encouragement from friends, having a group to practice with is a big motivator - "having friends to practice with" reduces barriers to not participating.

Family and social expectations: Academic pressure from family sometimes reduces time for extracurricular activities, especially in cultures that value academic achievement.

The results of Table 1, the average value of social and cultural factors (survey at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, Vietnam, 2025) is 3.93, showing that social - family factors (Friends and social networks; Family and social expectations) influence the level of student participation in ESA.

### Institutional and related factors

Academic workload, scheduling conflicts, sports policy, resource allocation and club management affect participation.

Academic schedules, curriculum framework: Time conflicts between studies and activities are a major reason why students miss ESA; integrating physical activity into the curriculum or giving physical activity credit can increase participation.

Student sports policy and management: School support, sports funding, professional club management increase quality and attraction.

Results of Table 1, the average value of institutional and related factors (survey at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, Vietnam, 2025) is 3.50, showing that social - family factors (Schedule, curriculum framework; Policy and management of student sports activities) affect the level of student participation in ESA.

## Environmental factors and conditions of assurance

Quality of facilities, accessibility, safety and financial costs significantly affect participation.

Facilities: Lack of playgrounds, gyms, equipment are common barriers. Location of facilities far from campus also reduces accessibility.

Cost of participation: Membership fees, equipment, travel costs can be barriers for some students. The results of Table 1, the average value of environmental factors and guarantee conditions (survey at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, Vietnam, 2025) is 4.42, showing that environmental factors and guarantee conditions (Facilities; Participation costs) greatly affect the level of student participation in ESA.

## Psychological factors

Self-confidence, perceived enjoyment and fear of injury shape the level of participation.

Self-efficacy: Students who believe they can complete the activity will participate more. Initial capacity building programs (e.g. basic instruction classes) have a positive impact.

Perception of risk and safety: Fear of injury, unsafe environment reduces participation, especially in some sports.

The results of Table 1 show that the average value of psychological factors (surveyed at Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, Vietnam, in 2025) is 4.10, showing that psychological factors (Self-efficacy; Perception of risk and safety) greatly affect the level of student participation in ESA.

## DISCUSSION

ESA participation is the result of the interaction of many determinants. Motivation, interest, health status, personal awareness and time constraints, inadequate facilities and low motivation are the most common influences on student participation levels. Universities that apply a comprehensive approach often achieve higher levels of participation.

The results of this current situation study are similar to other studies recently published in Vietnam. Factors affecting physical education (PE) of students at the Trade Union University include: Facilities, teaching staff, content, organization and learning outcomes. The results show that PE of students at the Trade Union University still has many limitations. The current situation of intra-curricular PE of students at the Trade Union University shows that: Most of the PE lecturers have master's degrees and are young; The teaching method of physical education is monotonous; The content of the physical education program meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Training; The facilities for physical education work currently do not meet the requirements of teaching and learning; The learning results of students are mainly average. This proves that the internal physical education work of students at the Trade Union University has not met the set goals well [Dinh Van Khai 2021]. In addition, the current situation of factors affecting extracurricular sports activities of university students in the technical schools of Thai Nguyen City, Vietnam through the following aspects: Student awareness, facilities, teaching staff, extracurricular sports programs and difficulties when participating in extracurricular sports training. The majority of students are aware of the role and effects of extracurricular sports training, however, nearly 7% of students still have incorrect awareness of this issue; Facilities for extracurricular physical education and sports training are still lacking in both quantity and quality compared to training needs; the team of teachers and instructors guiding extracurricular physical education and sports training for students is still lacking in quantity; the extracurricular sports program has not been fully developed; The difficulties in participating in extracurricular physical education and sports training are due to subjective reasons such as lack of instructors, lack of spirit, unscientific training programs, lack of determination, planning... while objective reasons such as lack of playgrounds, training equipment and other reasons account for a much smaller proportion [Nguyen Truong Giang, 2018].

Similar to the above research results, Some factors affecting the quality of physical education at universities under the Ministry of Industry and Trade in the Hanoi area, Vietnam show that: The staff of the schools have not met the quantity and quality requirements; Students have not properly recognized the importance of physical education, so they are not proactive in intra- and extracurricular sports activities; The number of students participating in extracurricular sports activities is still low and spontaneous without proper organization. Student sports competitions organized by schools are still low and unstable. In particular, the University of Electricity does not have a stadium, so each year it can only organize 1 soccer tournament for students [Vu Hong Thanh<sup>1</sup>, Pham Viet Hung 2023]

Extracurricular sports activities of students (SV) of Vietnam University of Economics and Business Administration, research has pointed out a number of issues as follows: Students participating in extracurricular sports regularly are very few; of which the number of students who do not practice at all accounts for 30.4%. The main motivation of students when participating in extracurricular sports is determined mainly due to realizing the effects of physical training, accounting for 37.98% and interest, accounting for 35.35%. Among the factors affecting students' extracurricular sports activities, the factor of not having instructors accounts for 43.38%. The extracurricular problems of students after not taking physical education will be difficult to control because students are not bound by their grades. Therefore, there must be appropriate solutions to help students understand the role of physical training to voluntarily participate in training, thereby creating useful playgrounds for students [Nguyen Ngoc Binh, 2024] a complex interaction between individual, social, institutional and environmental factors. Findings repeated in many studies show that lack of suitable facilities and low intrinsic motivation are the three most common barriers. Universities that are successful in increasing participation rates often apply a multi-dimensional strategy: improving facilities, adjusting schedules/allowing credits for sports activities, providing financial support for clubs, and building a sports culture in the student community. Factors affecting students' participation in sports activities in schools can be diagrammed in diagram 1 as follows:

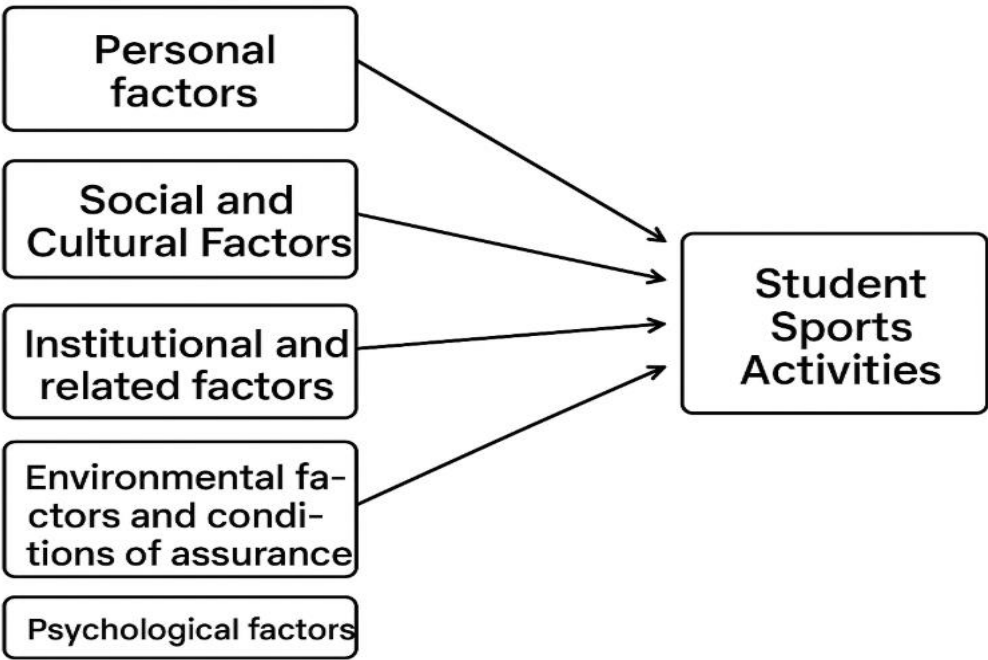


Diagram 1: Factors affecting students' participation in sports activities

RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrating sports into academic programs

Vietnamese colleges and universities should integrate physical education and sports activities into formal training programs to increase students' regular participation in healthy, positive behaviors. This could include strengthening credit-based physical education subject programs, interdisciplinary modules linking sports with health sciences or management, and flexible elective options that allow students to pursue appropriate



sports-related interests. This integration not only promotes lifelong physical activity habits but also reinforces the role of sports in the comprehensive development of students, creating high-quality human resources for the economy and society.

### **Investing in high-quality, accessible sports facilities**

Regular, sustained investment is needed to upgrade, expand and maintain modern, safe, diverse and accessible sports facilities for all Vietnamese college and university students. Institutions should ensure adequate indoor and outdoor spaces, professional-grade equipment, and digital systems for booking and monitoring facilities. Prioritising universal access – such as barrier-free design (free practice courts, free play, etc.) – will help maximise participation for all students.

### **Strengthening Student Sports Clubs and Organisations**

Student sports clubs should be supported as key drivers of student sports extracurricular activity. Vietnamese colleges and universities can facilitate this by providing stable funding, training for club leaders, professional supervision from lecturers or coaches, and opportunities for inter-collegiate competition. Strong student-led organizations foster community, skill development, and sports culture, thereby enhancing the university sports ecosystem.

### **Implement motivation and engagement programs**

To maintain high levels of participation, Vietnamese colleges and universities should design evidence-based motivation programs that combine behavioral incentives with educational messages. Examples include active student recognition systems, periodic challenges or tournaments, health promotion campaigns, and integration of digital platforms to track physical activity. Programs should be tailored to students' needs to ensure sustained motivation and positive behavioral change.

### **Promoting inclusive and gender-equal sports environments**

Vietnamese colleges and universities must proactively build inclusive sports environments that respect gender equality, cultural diversity and individual differences. This includes developing gender-sensitive policies, providing participation options for both men and women, ensuring equal access to facilities and training staff to recognize and address discriminatory behaviors. In addition, prioritizing space for natural sports activities (running, aerobics, fitness, etc.) and sports specific to the Mekong Delta region (sports related to water, ethnic minority sports, local traditional sports, etc.) to form and develop sustainably. Creating safe, friendly and culturally appropriate spaces will expand the participation of underrepresented groups.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This review is narrative; Future studies should include longitudinal and meta-analytic approaches, especially in the Southeast Asian region and Vietnam. The study only initially surveyed students from Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University, Vietnam, in 2025. Larger studies with more diverse subjects are needed to provide reliable, highly representative scientific information.

## **CONCLUSION**

Participation in ESAs is shaped by multidimensional factors. Increasing participation requires organizational commitment, improved facilities and a supportive social environment.

Factors that have a major influence on the level of participation of students from Can Tho College of Economics and Technology and Can Tho University in ESAs can be seen as: Personal motivation and interest; gender and age; health and fitness status; perceived benefits; friends and social networks; family and social expectations; facilities; participation costs; self-efficacy; risk and safety awareness. Of which, 03 factors have a great influence on the level of participation in ESA: student personal factors; social and cultural factors; environmental factors

and conditions. There is a need for studies with larger scale and more diverse subjects to provide reliable and scientific scientific information.

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