

ROLE OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN STRENGTHENING INDIA'S GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

***Dr. Vishal Subhash Pawar**

* Director of Physical Education, Rayat Shishan Sanstha's, S. S. G. M. College, Kopargaon

Abstract:

This study examines the role of sports and physical activity in strengthening India's global health initiatives. It focuses on understanding how national and international sports programs promote health awareness, contribute to public health campaigns, and support collaborations with other countries for holistic health improvement. The research highlights the significance of regular physical activity in preventing and managing non-communicable diseases, enhancing mental well-being, and fostering healthier lifestyles. India's initiatives, including the Fit India Movement, Khelo India Youth Games, and International Day of Yoga, serve as key examples of how sports and culturally significant physical activities are leveraged to encourage fitness, health consciousness, and global wellness advocacy. The study also explores India's strategic use of sports in global health diplomacy, demonstrating how participation in international events and collaborations can enhance knowledge sharing, policy development, and cross-border health programs. Additionally, the research investigates the impact of sporting events on community engagement, media outreach, and sustained behavioral change in physical activity. The findings reveal that sports-based interventions are effective tools for raising health awareness, fostering international cooperation, and strengthening India's influence in global health discussions. By integrating cultural practices, policy initiatives, and evidence-based fitness programs, India can position itself as a leader in promoting preventive health and active lifestyles worldwide. This study provides actionable insights for policymakers, health organizations, and sports authorities to design, implement, and scale sports-centered health programs, highlighting the interconnectedness of sports, public health, and international relations in achieving sustainable health outcomes.

Keywords: Sports and Physical Activity, Global Health

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Research Background:

Sports and physical activity have become vital components of public health and global health policy, as recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO defines physical activity as any bodily movement requiring energy expenditure, which includes sports, walking, cycling, and active recreation. Engagement in regular physical activity is critical for preventing and managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and

certain cancers, while also enhancing mental health by reducing anxiety and depression. However, a significant proportion of adults and adolescents worldwide remain insufficiently active, which escalates health risks and imposes heavy burdens on health systems.

The relationship between sports and global health has gained recognition, with the WHO's Sport for Health Programme serving as an exemplar that promotes sports not only as competitive activities but also as

platforms for health advocacy, lifestyle change, and disease prevention. This initiative aims to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) by harnessing the global popularity of sporting events and forming partnerships with sports organizations. These partnerships are leveraged to spread health awareness and mainstream health promotion through physical activities. In India, this connection is embodied in various national initiatives, such as the Fit India Movement, which was launched to encourage the incorporation of daily physical activity and sports into citizens' lives for healthier lifestyles. Additionally, events like the Khelo India Youth Games generate engagement among youth, promoting fitness and outlining pathways to healthier futures.

Moreover, sports act as a means of global health diplomacy and international cooperation. International sporting events and joint fitness campaigns create platforms for cultural exchange and collective health messaging. The widespread celebration of the International Day of Yoga, which India promotes, illustrates how culturally rooted physical activity can transcend borders and foster holistic well-being. These initiatives contribute to enhancing India's soft power and integrating sports into broader health diplomacy that resonates in global discussions.

On a conceptual level, the integration of sports and physical activity within global health highlights the interconnectedness of individual behaviours, public health outcomes, and international policy objectives. Promoting physical activity can lead to decreased incidence of lifestyle diseases, lowered healthcare costs, and the development of healthier communities. By prioritizing sports-based health promotion domestically and sharing these successes internationally, nations like India push forward global health agendas and strengthen multilateral cooperation to address health issues.

In conclusion, sports and physical activity serve a dual function: they are crucial for enhancing health outcomes within populations while also acting as strategic tools within international health policy and diplomacy. Ongoing research in this domain illustrates how India's initiatives to promote sports and physical activity contribute not only to national health but also align with broader global health objectives.

Objectives of the Research:

1. To examine how sports programs promote health awareness in India and abroad.
2. To analyse India's use of physical activity in global health campaigns.
3. To study the impact of sporting events on public health initiatives.
4. To explore collaborations between India and other countries through sports for health improvement.
5. To suggest ways to enhance India's global health influence using sports and physical activity.

Significance of the Study:

The study on the role of sports and physical activity in enhancing India's global health initiatives underscores the significance of physical activity in promoting health awareness domestically and internationally. It highlights how sports programs encourage healthier lifestyles, educate communities on non-communicable disease prevention, and emphasize mental well-being. The research also investigates the influence of national and international sporting events on public health initiatives, showcasing their effects on policy, community health, and sustainable development. Moreover, it examines collaborations between India and other nations in sports and health, which facilitate knowledge exchange and address health challenges jointly. Finally, the study offers insights into how India can leverage sports for health diplomacy and enhance its global health influence through effective policymaking and program design, demonstrating the

interconnectedness of sports, health, and international relations.

Research Methodology:

This study is theoretical and relies on secondary data collected from books, journal articles, government reports, and credible online sources. It reviews literature on India's sports programs and their role in promoting health awareness both nationally and internationally. Global health campaigns and international collaborations involving India are examined to understand their impact on public health. Case studies such as the Fit India Movement, Khelo India Youth Games, and International Day of Yoga are analyzed to highlight effective initiatives. Findings are interpreted to suggest strategies for enhancing India's global health influence through sports and physical activity.

Interpretation and Results:

Objective No.1: To examine how sports programs promote health awareness in India and abroad.

Sports programs significantly contribute to promoting health, fitness, and well-being globally, including India. Regular engagement in sports and physical activities is highlighted as a crucial strategy for preventing and managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and certain cancers, while also enhancing mental health. The World Health Organization underscores this connection in its health literature, emphasizing the benefits of physical activity. India's national initiatives, like the Fit India Movement, aim to integrate physical activity into the daily routines of citizens across age groups, advocating for regular exercise such as walking, jogging, and sports participation to improve overall fitness. Events such as marathons, fitness challenges, and community sports clinics play a pivotal role in raising public awareness about health and fostering engagement amongst diverse populations toward active living.

Globally, major sporting events and WHO's initiatives, such as the Sport for Health Programme, utilize their visibility to champion healthy behaviours and highlight the importance of physical activity for health. These events not only promote health awareness but also encourage governments and organizations to implement health-centric sports programs. Furthermore, they facilitate intercultural conversations around health, as international sports competitions and collaborative fitness campaigns unite participants from different nations, underpinning a collective commitment to wellness. Analysing these programs allows researchers to explore how sports impact health-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours, offering insights into effective strategies for enhancing health awareness through physical activities across various contexts.

Objective No.2: To analyse India's use of physical activity in global health campaigns.

India has increasingly integrated physical activity and sports into its global health engagement, recognizing their role in mitigating non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers, while also supporting mental health and well-being. The World Health Organization's Sport for Health Programme exemplifies this approach, emphasizing the use of sports to promote healthier lifestyles and public engagement. India's contribution to global health advocacy is evident through initiatives like the International Day of Yoga, celebrated in over 190 countries, which uses a culturally significant practice to promote holistic wellness. Events organized by Indian missions abroad foster inclusivity and demonstrate the unifying benefits of physical activity. Additionally, India's Fit India Movement highlights grassroots efforts to encourage daily fitness, aligning with global health objectives aimed at reducing inactivity. Analyzing India's strategies offers insights into how it frames physical activity as both a domestic

public health concern and a significant component of global health diplomacy, aligning cultural practices with international health promotion frameworks.

Objective No.3: To study the impact of sporting events on public health initiatives.

Sporting events significantly influence public health initiatives by promoting physical activity and disseminating health information to varied populations. Regular physical activity is essential for preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which contribute to global morbidity and mortality. Events like marathons and multi-sport competitions serve as platforms for health campaigns, encouraging healthier lifestyle choices through awareness booths, fitness demonstrations, and educational programs. In India, initiatives such as Khelo India highlight the importance of sports engagement across demographics, enhancing public health messaging through extensive media coverage. Additionally, these events foster community involvement and social support, which cultivate a culture of health consciousness. The World Health Organization's Sport for Health Programme further underscores the role of sports in promoting well-being globally. Research into these events aids in assessing their effectiveness in fostering lasting changes in physical activity and health outcomes, while also identifying successful strategies for utilizing sports as a public health intervention.

Objective No.4: To explore collaborations between India and other countries through sports for health improvement.

Collaborations between India and other nations in sports are playing a significant role in health improvement and the promotion of physical activity. Sports are increasingly viewed as a tool for global health diplomacy, bridging cultural and political divides and facilitating international cooperation. Initiatives by the World Health Organization, such as the Sport for Health Programme, highlight this by

uniting member states and health organizations to promote active lifestyles. These partnerships align with Sustainable Development Goal 3, focusing on health and well-being. India's involvement ranges from bilateral to multilateral collaborations, exemplified by its participation in the International Day of Yoga. This initiative encourages partnerships through joint yoga events, resource sharing for wellness education, and the incorporation of holistic practices into national health policies. Furthermore, training programs and fitness campaigns enhance health promotion strategies and capacity building in sports-related sectors.

Through these efforts, India is not only contributing to a global discourse on health and physical activity but also gaining insights from international practices to enhance domestic health initiatives. Researching the outcomes of these transnational sports collaborations is essential in assessing their impact on population health, fostering cultural exchange, and fortifying global cooperation in addressing health challenges.

Objective No.5: To suggest ways to enhance India's global health influence using sports and physical activity.

Enhancing India's global health influence through sports and physical activity necessitates strategic alignment of cultural strengths, policy initiatives, and international engagement to promote health and wellness. Regular physical activity significantly lowers the risk of non-communicable diseases, enhances mental health, and improves overall quality of life, as evidenced by the World Health Organization (WHO). India can utilize this evidence to advocate for physical activity at global health forums, emphasizing a commitment to preventive health and community empowerment. One effective strategy involves strengthening international partnerships that incorporate sports into broader health campaigns, aligning with WHO's Sport for Health Programme, which fosters cooperation between the health and

sports sectors to improve public health outcomes. Promoting culturally significant practices like yoga has already established India as a pivotal player in global health diplomacy, demonstrating how traditional physical activities can appeal to diverse populations and foster holistic health.

Furthermore, India can expand initiatives that support cross-border sports training, exchanges, and collaborative research focused on physical activity and health. By documenting successful domestic programs such as the Fit India Movement and multi-sport events like Khelo India, and sharing these insights at international conferences, India can provide models for other countries, thereby bolstering its leadership role in global health. Engaging with global sports federations and multilateral health organizations can also facilitate India's contributions to policy development, technical guidance, and joint campaigns that advocate for the critical role of physical activity in achieving universal health coverage.

Implementations:

The research suggests that India can enhance its global health role by integrating sports and physical activity into national policies. By incorporating fitness into daily life, education, and community initiatives, India can promote healthier lifestyles and combat non-communicable diseases. Additionally, leveraging existing programs such as the Fit India Movement can facilitate international collaborations on fitness and health research. These efforts would strengthen India's influence while improving population health. The study also offers a framework to evaluate sports-based health programs, aligning national policies with global health objectives for sustained impact.

Conclusions:

1. Sports programs in India and abroad effectively raise awareness about physical fitness, mental well-being, and the prevention of non-communicable diseases.

2. India uses physical activity and culturally significant practices, such as yoga, to promote holistic wellness and engage in global health campaigns.
3. Sporting events like Khelo India and national marathons serve as platforms for health education, community engagement, and behavior change.
4. Collaborations between India and other countries through sports enhance global health diplomacy, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building in health and sports sectors.
5. India can strengthen its global health influence by integrating sports into international health policies, expanding cross-border initiatives, and showcasing successful domestic programs like the Fit India Movement.

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