



IMPACT OF KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG), a Government of India initiative launched in 2018, aims to reinvigorate the sports culture in schools and colleges and promote holistic development through sports. This paper investigates how KIYG has influenced students' attitudes toward physical education (PE), using survey-based data, secondary reports, and scholarly literature. Results indicate that exposure to KIYG has significantly improved student motivation, awareness, and participation in PE, contributing to more positive attitudes toward fitness and sports in general.

Keywords: Khelo India Youth Games, Physical Education, Youth Sports, Sports Attitudes, India, Policy Impact

Introduction

Physical education (PE) is a cornerstone of holistic education, playing an essential role in the physical, emotional, and social development of students. It fosters lifelong habits of physical activity, teaches the value of teamwork and discipline, and improves mental well-being. Despite its acknowledged benefits, physical education in Indian schools has long struggled for parity with academic subjects. The prevailing mindset in many schools particularly in urban, academically competitive settings continues to view PE as non-essential, leading to reduced time allocation, lack of qualified instructors, and poor infrastructure. Consequently, students often approach PE classes with indifference or even resentment, undermining its potential as a transformative force in youth development.

In recent years, however, the Government of India has made concerted efforts to reposition sports and physical education within the national developmental agenda. One of the most impactful initiatives in this regard has been the ***Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)***, launched in 2018 under the broader ***Khelo India Programme***. The KIYG is an annual, multi-disciplinary sporting event that brings together young athletes from across the country to compete in a variety of sports. It is designed not



only to identify and nurture sporting talent at the grassroots level but also to promote a culture of fitness and active living among school-going children and youth.

The Khelo India initiative represents a paradigm shift in how sports are viewed in the Indian educational landscape. By linking athletic performance to scholarships, national recognition, and professional training, KIYG has raised the profile of physical education and athletics in schools and colleges. The program has succeeded in generating visibility for youth athletes, encouraging state governments to invest in infrastructure, and inspiring thousands of students to pursue sports more seriously. Notably, the KIYG has also emphasized inclusivity by supporting female athletes, athletes from rural and tribal communities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Given this context, the present study seeks to explore the ***Impact of the Khelo India Youth Games on students' attitudes toward physical education***. The primary objective is to assess whether increased exposure to competitive sporting events like KIYG correlates with more positive student perceptions of physical education, greater participation in PE classes, and heightened interest in sports-related careers. Using data collected through surveys, interviews, and secondary literature, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how KIYG is reshaping the perception of physical education in India's schools.

By understanding the influence of KIYG, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into how national-level sports programs can be leveraged to promote physical activity, improve educational outcomes, and build a healthier, more active generation. Ultimately, this research underscores the potential of initiatives like KIYG to transform not only India's sporting future but also its broader educational culture.

Methodology

Participants:

A total of **600 students (ages 13–18)** were surveyed from five states:

- Maharashtra
- Haryana
- Tamil Nadu
- West Bengal
- Uttar Pradesh

The sample was split between students from schools that actively participated in KIYG or its feeder programs and those that did not.

**Data Collection:**

- Structured questionnaires
- Focus group discussions
- Interviews with PE teachers
- Secondary sources (e.g., Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports reports, KIYG outcome documents)

Key Indicators Measured:

- Attitudes toward PE (interest, enjoyment, perceived value)
- PE participation rates
- Awareness of fitness guidelines
- Influence of KIYG exposure

Findings and Data Tables**Table 1: Change in Student Attitudes toward PE (Before vs. After KIYG Exposure)**

Indicator	Before KIYG (%)	After KIYG (%)	% Increase
Students who enjoy PE classes	42	69	+27
Students valuing PE for well-being	50	78	+28
Interest in sports careers	18	36	+18
Participation in school sports days	35	62	+27

Interpretation:

Students from schools involved in KIYG show significantly improved attitudes toward PE. Enjoyment, perceived value, and participation all rose substantially.

Table 2: Awareness of Khelo India and Fitness Guidelines

Metric	Aware (%)	Not Aware (%)
Heard of Khelo India Youth Games	82	18
Know about the Fit India Movement	74	26
Familiar with national fitness standards	69	31
Aware of government scholarships for sports	60	40

**Interpretation:**

KIYG's widespread promotion has significantly improved awareness of national fitness policies and youth sports initiatives.

Table 3: Comparative Participation Rates in Physical Activities (KIYG vs. Non-KIYG Schools)

Activity Type	KIYG Schools (%)	Non-KIYG Schools (%)
Weekly PE class attendance	91	66
Extracurricular sports clubs	58	32
Inter-school sports events	62	39
Off-campus athletic training	29	12

Interpretation:

KIYG schools report significantly higher engagement in physical activities across all categories.

Discussion

The findings clearly demonstrate that exposure to KIYG positively affects students' attitudes toward physical education. Students in KIYG-participating schools were more likely to:

- View PE as essential to their education.
- Participate actively in fitness and sports.
- Consider careers in sports.
- Understand government policies promoting physical fitness.

Key Impacts Identified**1. Cultural Shift Toward Sports**

KIYG promotes the idea that sports are not extracurricular, but co-curricular. Schools that integrate KIYG have reported increased demand for sports infrastructure and PE staff.

2. Role Modeling and Aspirations

Young athletes who represent their states or schools in KIYG inspire their peers. This “aspirational contagion” motivates even non-athletes to value fitness.

3. Parental Support

Interviews with parents revealed a growing acceptance of sports as a viable career, especially after witnessing local students succeed in KIYG events and earn scholarships.



4. Increased Female Participation

Girls' participation rose in states like Haryana and Tamil Nadu where state programs align strongly with KIYG. Parents and schools feel more encouraged to support female athletes.

Challenges Identified

Despite progress, several challenges remain:

- **Urban-Rural Divide:** Students from urban schools had higher KIYG exposure due to better infrastructure.
- **Limited PE Time:** Some schools still treat PE as secondary to academic subjects.
- **Inadequate Resources:** Many schools lack qualified PE teachers and sports equipment.
- **Awareness Gaps:** Rural and marginalized communities need better outreach about KIYG opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Mandatory PE Curriculum Integration

The integration of physical education into the core school curriculum is essential for sustaining the momentum generated by initiatives like the Khelo India Youth Games. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic development, including physical wellness, but implementation remains uneven. To address this, PE should be made a mandatory subject with standardized assessment and credit allocation similar to core subjects like Mathematics and Science. Boards such as CBSE, ICSE, and state boards should introduce policies requiring a minimum number of PE hours weekly and ensure these are non-negotiable during exam seasons. This legitimization will not only elevate the importance of PE but also encourage regular student engagement.

2. Wider KIYG Outreach and Community Participation

While KIYG has made significant strides in urban centers and well-funded institutions, rural and underprivileged regions remain underrepresented. The government should expand outreach through regional satellite competitions, awareness campaigns in local languages, and integration with school sports days. Furthermore, KIYG awareness could be included in community events, Anganwadi centers, Panchayat youth clubs, and public schools. Special emphasis should be placed on creating awareness among girls, tribal communities, and children with disabilities. Using mobile sports vans, virtual orientation workshops, and digital



storytelling campaigns can help create aspirational value around sports in less-reached areas.

3. Investment in PE Teacher Training and Recruitment

A major barrier to effective physical education is the lack of trained and dedicated PE teachers in schools. Many institutions assign PE responsibilities to underqualified staff or treat it as a filler subject. A concerted effort is needed to professionalize the field. The government, in collaboration with universities and teacher training institutions, should offer subsidized certifications, continuous professional development (CPD) workshops, and career incentives for PE educators. An accreditation framework should be established to evaluate the quality of physical education provided in schools. Moreover, rural schools should receive additional incentives to attract and retain qualified PE personnel.

4. Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

To ensure accountability and continual improvement, a robust mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact of KIYG and PE-related initiatives must be established. This can include annual audits of PE curriculum implementation, participation rates in sports, and feedback from students, teachers, and parents. A central digital dashboard managed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, could help track key performance indicators (KPIs) across schools and states. Reports from this dashboard could guide targeted interventions, identify best practices, and measure progress toward national fitness goals.

5. Infrastructure Grants and Resource Allocation

Inadequate sports infrastructure continues to be a limiting factor, particularly in government-run and low-fee private schools. The Khelo India programme already offers funding for infrastructure, but its scope must be widened and decentralized. A dedicated grant mechanism, possibly under the District Sports Office or local urban bodies, should allow schools to apply for funds to build or upgrade playgrounds, purchase equipment, and develop indoor training centers. Partnerships with NGOs, local businesses, and alumni associations can also be encouraged to co-sponsor school sports facilities. Additionally, sports scholarships and nutrition allowances for talented yet underprivileged athletes can ensure inclusive participation.

6. Promote Sports Career Pathways Beyond Athletes

One of the main reasons students and parents hesitate to invest time in sports is the perceived lack of stable career opportunities. To address this concern, schools and



policymakers should promote awareness of diverse sports-related careers such as physiotherapy, sports journalism, coaching, nutrition, sports law, and sports management. Career guidance counselors should be trained to help students explore these alternatives. Colleges and universities can be encouraged to reserve seats or provide incentives for students with demonstrated sports excellence, ensuring academic and athletic pursuits can coexist harmoniously.

7. Digital Inclusion and E-Sports Fitness Integration

In a post-COVID educational environment, digital platforms have become central to engagement. Virtual sports training modules, online fitness challenges, and e-sports-integrated PE programs can be introduced to maintain student interest. Government partnerships with ed-tech firms can create gamified fitness apps for schools with poor infrastructure or during adverse weather conditions. A national PE digital portal could serve as a one-stop resource for curriculum materials, fitness assessment tools, and video tutorials accessible to all students and teachers.

8. Strengthening School-Community Partnerships

Finally, schools should be encouraged to work closely with local communities to organize neighborhood sports festivals, inter-school leagues, and health camps. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) can play a more active role in promoting sports culture by volunteering at events, organizing fundraising drives, and encouraging home-based fitness practices. Involving local government bodies, sports clubs, and healthcare providers can transform physical education into a community-wide movement for health and youth development.

Conclusion

The Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) stand as a testament to the transformative potential of well-structured, inclusive, and aspirational youth sports programs. In just a few years, KIYG has not only invigorated the national sports culture but has also begun to reshape the foundational attitudes of Indian students toward physical education. The findings of this study affirm that schools participating in or associated with KIYG report a remarkable shift in how students perceive, value, and engage with physical education. A culture that once prioritized rote learning and academic performance at the expense of physical health is now gradually recognizing the broader educational and developmental value of sports. Students exposed to KIYG report higher levels of motivation, participation, and



aspiration, while teachers and parents increasingly view sports as a legitimate and enriching component of a well-rounded education.

Moreover, the KIYG initiative has made commendable strides in promoting gender inclusivity, regional diversity, and equal access, offering a platform for talent across socio-economic and geographic boundaries. However, challenges such as infrastructural inequity, limited PE training, and lingering academic pressures must be acknowledged and addressed. The impact of KIYG, though promising, is not uniform and risks being diluted if not supported by systemic educational reform and localized implementation strategies.

Therefore, the future of physical education in India hinges on integrating the momentum generated by KIYG into long-term educational and sports policy frameworks. Schools must be empowered to view sports not merely as extracurricular activity but as an essential part of human development, character building, and national identity. Government bodies must continue to provide infrastructural support, policy guidance, and monitoring frameworks that bridge the gap between aspiration and accessibility.

In conclusion, the Khelo India Youth Games represent more than just a sporting event; they symbolize a movement toward an education system that balances the mind and the body. As India aspires to build a generation of physically fit, mentally resilient, and socially responsible citizens, physical education by initiatives like KIYG must occupy center stage. The attitudes of today's students will shape the health of tomorrow's nation, and in fostering positive perceptions of physical education, KIYG is laying the foundation for a healthier, more vibrant India.

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