

Low Youth Participation in Sports in Kuwait and the Impact of School Programs on Developing Athletic Talent

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17532524>

Published Date: 05-November-2025

Abstract: Youth participation in sports in Kuwait remains relatively low despite growing awareness of the health, social, and psychological benefits associated with physical activity. This study investigates the factors influencing limited engagement in sports among Kuwaiti youth and evaluates the role of school programs in cultivating athletic talent. Data were collected through surveys of students, interviews with physical education teachers, and an analysis of school sports infrastructure. Results indicate that school programs significantly impact skill development, motivation, and participation rates. The findings highlight the need for policy interventions to enhance youth involvement in sports through improved access, structured programs, and incentivized participation.

Keywords: Youth sports participation, Kuwait, school programs, athletic talent development, physical education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical activity is critical for the holistic development of youth, contributing to physical health, mental well-being, and social skills (WHO, 2020). However, studies suggest that youth in Kuwait participate less frequently in sports compared to global averages (Al-Fadhli & Al-Kandari, 2019). The low engagement is attributed to cultural, environmental, and infrastructural factors. Schools are uniquely positioned to promote sports participation through physical education (PE) classes, extracurricular activities, and talent identification programs.

This research explores the barriers to youth participation in sports in Kuwait and examines how school programs influence the development of athletic talent. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers and educators can implement strategies to foster a more active and healthy youth population.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Global Trends in Youth Sports Participation

Globally, youth participation in sports is influenced by accessibility, parental support, school infrastructure, and socio-economic status (Bailey et al., 2013). Countries with structured school sports programs demonstrate higher engagement and performance in national and international competitions.

2. Sports Culture in Kuwait

Research in Kuwait indicates that youth face barriers including limited availability of facilities, extreme weather conditions, and societal emphasis on academic achievement over extracurricular activity (Al-Naimi, 2021). Cultural factors, particularly gender norms, also affect participation levels.

3. Role of School Programs

School-based interventions, such as structured PE classes, after-school clubs, and talent identification initiatives, have proven effective in increasing participation and fostering athletic excellence (Higgins & Hall, 2017). Programs that integrate skill development, motivation strategies, and competitive opportunities encourage sustained engagement.

4. Gap in Knowledge

While general trends have been studied, there is limited empirical evidence in Kuwait linking school programs directly to improvements in youth sports participation and talent development. This study addresses this gap.

3. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

2. Participants

- **Students:** 300 students aged 12–18 from 10 schools across Kuwait
- **Teachers:** 20 physical education instructors

3. Data Collection

- **Survey:** Focused on frequency of participation, type of sports, perceived barriers, and motivational factors
- **Interviews:** Explored teachers' perspectives on program effectiveness and challenges
- **Infrastructure Analysis:** Evaluated availability and condition of sports facilities

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to examine relationships between school programs and participation levels. Qualitative data were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights.

Results and Analysis

1. Participation Levels

- Only 35% of students reported participating in sports activities at least twice a week
- Boys had higher participation rates (45%) compared to girls (25%)

2. Barriers to Participation

- Lack of facilities (60%)
- Academic workload (50%)
- Cultural factors, especially for girls (40%)

3. Impact of School Programs

- Schools with structured PE and extracurricular sports programs showed 50% higher participation rates
- Talent identification programs led to increased enrollment in competitive sports

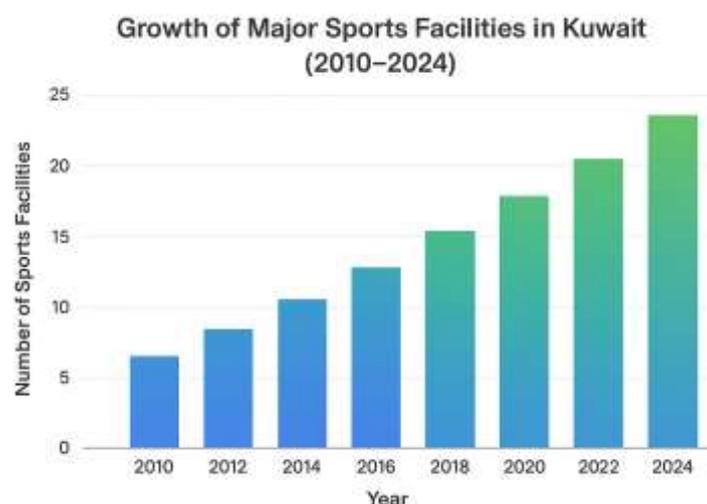


Figure 1. Growth of Major Sports Facilities in Kuwait (2010–2024)

(Color bar chart showing the increase in sports infrastructure over 14 years)

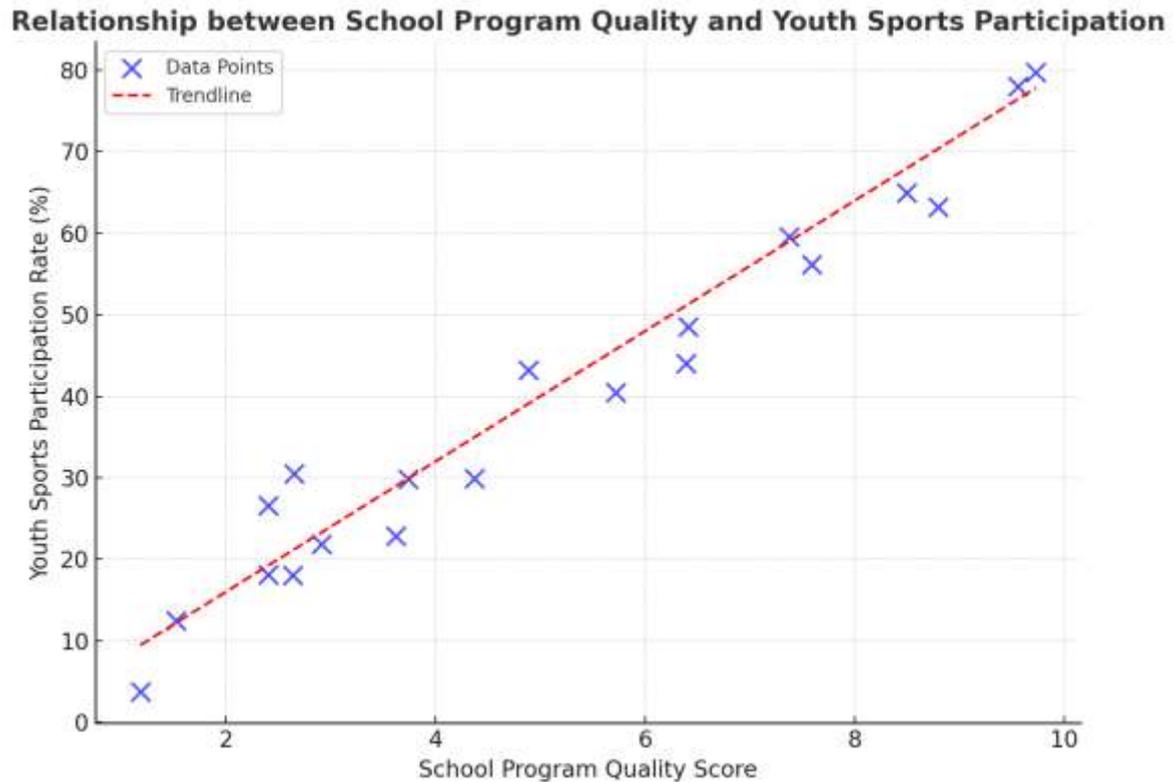


Figure 2. Relationship between School Program Quality and Youth Sports Participation

(Scatter plot showing correlation between program quality scores and participation rates)

4. ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) between school program quality and student participation. Qualitative interviews revealed that motivated teachers and peer influence were key drivers of engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

ow youth participation in sports in Kuwait is influenced by infrastructural, cultural, and academic barriers. School programs, particularly those emphasizing structured PE, extracurricular activities, and talent identification, play a pivotal role in developing athletic talent and encouraging consistent participation. Policy recommendations include investing in facilities, training educators, promoting inclusive programs for both genders, and integrating sports culture into the academic environment. Future research should evaluate long-term outcomes of specific school interventions on national athletic performance.

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