

Analysis of Prospective Students' Interest and Motivation for the Sports Study Program

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Abstract

Higher education plays an important role in producing superior human resources, including in the field of sports. In the midst of increasing public awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the need for sports professionals, interest in sports study programs is important to study. This study aims to analyse the level of interest, motivation, and factors that influence prospective students in choosing a sports study program. The method used was a quantitative descriptive survey with 200 respondents from various provinces in Indonesia. The results showed that 66% of respondents stated that they were very interested and 34% were interested in this study program. The main reasons behind this interest include the desire to become a professional sports teacher or coach (31.34%), personal interest in sports (23.88%), and the need for sports teachers in the region (20.40%). These findings are supported by Maslow, Holland, and Expectancy-Value theories which explain that academic choices are strongly influenced by internal motivations, social values, and perceptions of future success. This study recommends that higher education institutions strengthen their promotion strategies, curriculum development, and provision of broad career prospect information to attract more potential prospective students.

Keywords: interest, sports study program, motivation, prospective students, higher education

Introduction

Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality and competitiveness of human resources, particularly in the realm of sports. Amidst the growing public recognition of the significance of a healthy lifestyle and national sporting accomplishments, the sports studies program emerges as an educational platform that seamlessly integrates scientific principles, practical skills, and sportsmanship values. Nevertheless, the level of attractiveness experienced by prospective students towards sports studies programs remains suboptimal, necessitating further exploration of the underlying factors influencing this phenomenon. Interest, as defined by Slameto

(2013), refers to the inclination of individuals to exhibit attention and interest in a specific object or activity without any external influences. Within the context of education, students' interest in a particular field of study significantly impacts their motivation to learn, academic achievement, and long-term success in the educational journey. Consequently, assessing the interest of prospective students in sports studies programs holds paramount importance not only for the benefit of higher education institutions but also for the overall development of the nation in the sports sector.

Sports studies programs typically encompass disciplines such as physical education, sports coaching, sports health, recreation, and sports management. Graduates from these programs are anticipated to contribute as professional educators, coaches, fitness instructors, consultants, and other professionals in the sports industry. In Indonesia, the demand for skilled sports personnel continues to rise, encompassing both the educational sector, the sports industry, and public policy (Purnomo & Nurhasan, 2020). Regrettably, sports studies programs in many universities are still perceived as an alternative option rather than a primary choice for most prospective students. Numerous previous studies have elucidated that interest in sports studies programs is influenced by various factors, including: public perception of graduates' job prospects, parental and teacher influence, the program's reputation, personal experiences in sports activities, and media-based information (Winarno & Hastanto, 2018; Fitriani et al., 2022). Frequently, these courses are associated with the misconception that they are exclusively suitable for individuals possessing exceptional physical or athletic abilities, resulting in a limited understanding of sports as an academic discipline. In reality, the sports approach encompasses a diverse range of pedagogical, psychological, physiological, and managerial aspects.

The advancement of information technology has significantly reshaped the information search patterns and decision-making processes of prospective students. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become primary sources of information for the younger generation in selecting study programs and choosing destination campuses (Yuliana & Pratama, 2021). Consequently, sports study programs must implement compelling digital-based promotional strategies and provide educational information about the potential and career prospects of graduates.

To address these challenges, sports study programs can conduct surveys or studies that map the interests of prospective students to gain insights into their perceptions of the field of sports. This research aims to address these challenges by collecting data from prospective students through questionnaire instruments. The study seeks to determine the extent of their interest in sports study programs, identify their motivations and expectations, and assess their information acquisition methods related to this study program. Additionally, the study explores the respondents' aspirations for future careers after completing the sports study program.

The findings of this research are anticipated to contribute to universities, particularly sports study program managers, in designing promotional strategies, curricula, and learning approaches that are more aligned with the needs of the younger generation and the job market. Furthermore, the research results can serve as a reference for higher education policymakers in developing affirmative policies that enhance the standing of sports study programs in a dynamic society.

Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey method. This approach was chosen because it is able to provide a comprehensive picture of the interest, motivation, and expectations of prospective students in the sports study program based on numerical data that can be analysed statistically (Sugiyono, 2016). The population in this study is prospective students from various regions in Indonesia who are studying at the final level of high school/vocational/equivalent or graduates who have not continued their studies. The sample was taken by *non-probability sampling* with the *purposive sampling* technique, which is only respondents who stated that they had an interest in the sports field included in the analysis. The number of respondents who managed to fill out the questionnaire completely was 200 people.

The instrument used is in the form of an online questionnaire which is arranged in the form of nominal and ordinal scales. The questionnaire consists of several parts, namely: Respondent Identity (gender, age, school origin, province of origin), Interest in sports study program, Reason for choosing a sports study program, Source of information about the study program, Expectations after graduating from college, desired job. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability through a limited trial of 20 respondents before the main deployment was carried out. The results of the test showed that the items in the questionnaire were valid and had good reliability (α Cronbach > 0.70). Data is collected through Google Forms which are shared with high school/vocational students and the sports community through social media and personal networks. The deployment will be carried out for two weeks in April 2025.

The collected data was analysed descriptively quantitatively using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Analysis includes: Frequency and percentage distribution, Data visualization in the form of a bar chart or pie chart, Crosstab tabulation between variables such as gender with dream job or province of origin with information source. This descriptive analysis aims to describe the profile of respondents and the pattern of interest in the sports study program in a clear and structured manner.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

A survey conducted among 200 respondents revealed that the majority of respondents held a high school education or equivalent, aligning with the primary target audience for the sports study program. In terms of gender, male respondents represented a significant majority (61%), while female respondents accounted for 39%. Regarding age, respondents spanned the range of 16 to 35 years, with the highest concentration observed within the 17-25 age bracket. This suggests that interest in sports studies typically emerges during the transition period from late adolescence to early adulthood, a period characterized by individuals making more serious career and educational decisions. Geographically, respondents were distributed across various regions in Indonesia, with East Java Province contributing the highest percentage (32%), followed by Southeast Sulawesi (26%). This distribution indicates that interest in sports extends beyond urban areas such as Jakarta or West Java, encompassing areas with robust sports traditions and active youth cultures, including East Java and Eastern Indonesia.

These findings hold significant importance as they highlight two key aspects. Firstly, the sports study program exhibits a substantial geographical appeal, suggesting the potential for the establishment of promotional networks and regional collaborations. Secondly, the predominance of male respondents underscores the continued perception of sports as a predominantly “masculine” domain. This aligns with a study conducted by Fitriani et al. (2022), which revealed that female students exhibit diminished interest in pursuing sports majors due to gender stereotypes, limited role models, and societal pressures. Nevertheless, the female participation rate of 39% is noteworthy and indicates a gradual shift in perception, wherein women increasingly perceive sports as an academic and professional arena that can be accessed equitably. This presents a strategic opportunity for sports study programs to implement gender-inclusive curricula and foster inclusive spaces for women in the sports industry, including female coaches, female PJOK teachers, and community-based sports event managers. Furthermore, the diverse age range (up to 35 years) suggests that sports are not exclusively sought after by recent high school graduates but also by individuals seeking career transitions or personal development after work. This presents opportunities for campuses to design non-traditional educational pathways, such as evening classes, Recognition of Past Learning (RPL), or sports profession diploma programs. The presented data is visualized in figure 1.

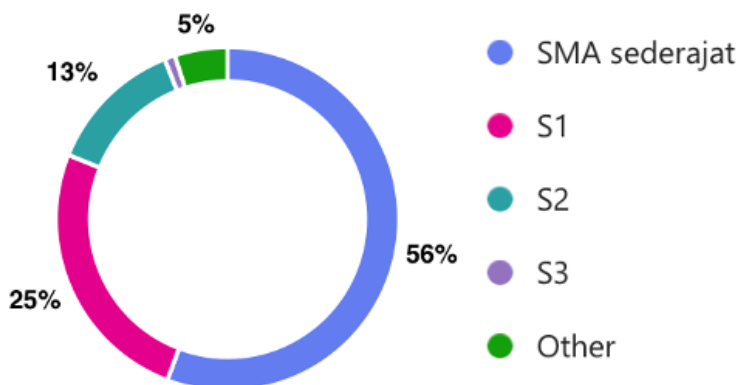


Figure 1. Percentage based on education

Consequently, the characteristics of the respondents in this survey not only furnish statistical data but also serve as an initial map of prospective student segmentation. This segmentation can be utilized as a foundation for developing academic strategies, promotions, and curriculum development that align with the actual needs of the field.

Interest in the Sports Study Program

The survey results indicated that 66% of respondents expressed strong interest in pursuing the sports study program, while 34% expressed interest but still harbored some reservations. This suggests that sports continue to be a highly sought-after field of study, particularly among the younger demographic. The findings are presented in Figure 2.

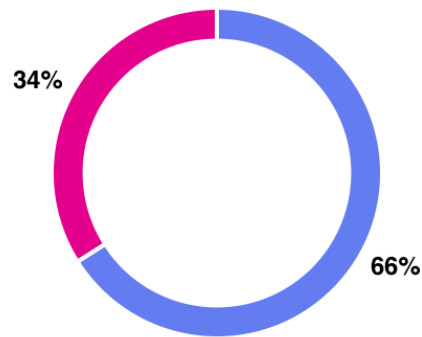


Figure 2. Percentage of interest in sports study programs

In the higher education literature, academic interest in study programs is greatly influenced by the complexity of internal and external factors. Yunita & Nuryadin (2021) stated that students' interest in sports study programs usually arises due to positive experiences with sports during school, involvement in extracurricular activities, and encouragement from the social environment such as teachers, peers, or family. Respondents who are very interested (66%) are most likely to have a strong intrinsic motivation, namely an inner drive to develop potential and passion in the field of sports. This is in line with the theory of self-determination by Deci & Ryan (2017), which states that a person is more committed to a field when his or her psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and social connectedness are met. Meanwhile, 34% of respondents who said they were "interested but hesitant" gave several important reasons, such as: Interest in other fields, such as health, general education, or technology. Concerns about the job prospects of sports graduates, especially if they are not professional athletes or coaches. Lack of experience or sports background, which creates a lack of confidence to pursue this study. This kind of concern is in line with the findings of Suhartini & Astuti (2020) which shows that some high school students have a narrow perception of the world of work of sports graduates, only limited to PJOK teachers or coaches, even though the spectrum of professions is much wider, such as sports therapists, sports event organizers, and fitness entrepreneurs. In addition, according to Putra & Hidayat (2019), the choice of study program by prospective students is greatly influenced by the perception of career stability and career sustainability. Therefore, sports study programs need to carry out stronger communication and branding strategies to show the various career paths available to their graduates.

In this context, it is important for higher education institutions to Provide comprehensive information regarding the job prospects of graduates of sports study programs, Display profiles of successful alumni from various professional backgrounds, Develop adaptive curricula that integrate sports with technology, entrepreneurship, and health. With this approach, this high interest can be converted into a more robust application decision, as well as answering the doubts of some prospective students who are still considering other alternatives.

Reasons to Choose a Sports Study Program

Respondents who are interested in the sports study program conveyed several main reasons as follows:

Tabel 1. Respondents' reasons for choosing a sports study program

No	Theme	Example of Reasons from Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Personal interests and sports hobbies	"Because I love sports", "My interest is indeed in sports"	48	23,88%
2	Want to become a professional teacher/coach	"I want to be a sports teacher", "So I can become a professional coach"	63	31,34%
3	Needs and shortages of human resources for sports teachers in the regions	"In my area there is still a shortage of sports teachers"	41	20,40%
4	The importance of exercise for health and fitness	"For health", "Exercise maintains fitness and immunity"	25	12,44%
5	Broad job and career prospects	"Wide job opportunities", "Can be civil servants, trainers, teachers"	13	6,47%
6	The desire to increase scientific knowledge about sports	"Curious about sports physiology", "Learn about technique and nutrition"	10	5,47%
Total			200	100%

The results of the analysis of 200 respondents showed that there were various motives behind the interest in choosing a sports study program. These reasons can be categorized into six main themes, namely: (1) the desire to become a professional teacher/coach, (2) personal interests and hobbies, (3) the lack of sports human resources in the region, (4) the importance of sports for health, (5) broad career prospects, and (6) the drive to increase scientific knowledge about sports. This finding is in line with Maslow's theory of needs (Maslow, 1943) which states that human motivation consists of a hierarchy of needs, ranging from physiological needs, security, love and belonging, appreciation, to self-actualization. Many respondents indicated that the need for self-actualization (becoming a teacher, coach, or figure who contributes to society through sports) and social reward (being recognized as a professional in their field) were the main motivations for them to choose this program. Furthermore, according to Holland's theory of career choice (Holland, 1997), individuals tend to choose fields of study or careers that suit their personality,

interests, and values. The *realistic* and *social* categories in Holland's theory are very much in line with the characteristics of individuals who choose sports: they enjoy physical activity, work in teams, teach, and help others to be healthier and fitter. This is evidenced in responses such as: "*I want to teach healthy lifestyles to children,*" or "*I want to be a professional coach.*" From an educational point of view, the respondents' interests can also be explained through the expectancy-value theory from Eccles and Wigfield (2002), which explains that academic choices are influenced by two main things: *expectancy* and perceived value for the activity. Many respondents believe that taking a sports study program will bring tangible results (job opportunities, becoming a teacher/coach, etc.), and they also assess that sports education has high social, health, and economic value.

In addition, in the context of regional needs, respondents stated that the lack of human resources for sports teachers is an important factor. This can be attributed to the theory of social needs and regional development according to Todaro & Smith (2011), that the development of human resources through higher education must consider local needs and equitable access. Statements such as "*In my area there are no linear sports teachers*" or "*This program is urgently needed in our district*" show the direct relevance between the opening of study programs and the equitable distribution of quality education throughout the region. Overall, the data show that the selection of sports study programs is not only driven by interests and hobbies, but also by awareness of the importance of the role of sports professionals in society, public health, and regional development. Therefore, this result strengthens the urgency of opening or developing sports study programs in various regions of Indonesia.

Conclusion

Based on the results of a study involving 200 respondents from various regions in Indonesia, it can be concluded that interest in sports study programs is relatively high, with 66% of respondents stating that they are very interested and 34% are interested. The main motivations that drive this interest include the desire to become a professional teacher or coach, personal interest in sports, and the need for competent sports personnel. In addition, factors such as job prospects, the importance of sports for health, and the desire to explore sports science scientifically are also significant drivers. These findings reinforce the relevance of Maslow's theory of the need for self-actualization, Holland's theory of personality suitability with career choices, and the Expectancy-Value theory which emphasizes the importance of expectations and values to a field of study. Sports study programs have great potential to contribute to human resource development, especially in the fields of education and public health. Therefore, further efforts are needed from higher education institutions to develop digital-based promotion strategies, adaptive and inclusive curricula, and mapping the needs of sports personnel in the regions. This is important to answer the challenge of low public perception and expand access to sports education that is oriented to future needs and national development.

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