香港社會科學學報

HONG KONG JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

最新第64期 (2024年秋/冬季) Vol. 64 Autumn/Winter 2024

Available online at www.hkjoss.com

Research article https://doi.org/10.55463/hkjss.issn.1021-3619.64.25

Perception of Sports and Sports University among Urban Residents in Nepal

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the need for sports education and sports universities among urban residents in Nepal by analyzing the perceptions of students, parents, and interested stakeholders. This study applied a convergent parallel mixed method to acquire and analyze quantitative and qualitative data. An online survey on the feasibility of the university in Nepal was administered from February 15 to March 26, 2022, among various urban centers. A total of 256 responses were obtained. To substantiate the quantitative data, 13 interviews were conducted with kinesiologists and policymakers. Using a binary logistic regression model and coding of interviews, this paper found that demand for sports universities among students, parents, and concerned stakeholders is high, who also believe that Nepal can be an

Keywords:

Physical Education,
Sports Education,
Sports Infrastructure,
Sports University,
Nepal

Article History:

Received: October 14, 2024
Revised: November 19, 2024
Accepted: November 29, 2024

ideal destination for sports education for international students and athletes given its climatic and geo-political standings. Sports infrastructure supply, including sports universities, by the Nepalese Government is constrained by financial, human, and technical resource limitations. The overall implications of this finding are that a public-private partnership model is most appropriate for initiating sports universities to meet the demand for sports infrastructure for urban leisure sports in Nepal. The partnership would ease resource constraints and maintain institutional professionalism by promoting health and well-being among urban residents

Published: December 30, 2024

尼泊尔城市居民对体育和体育大学的认知

摘要：

本研究旨在通过分析学生、家长和相关利益相关者的看法，研究尼泊尔城市居民对体育教育和体育大学的需求。本研究采用收敛平行混合方法来获取和分析定量和定性数据。2022 年 2 月 15 日至 3 月 26 日，在尼泊尔各个城市中心进行了一项关于大学可行性的在线调查。共收到 256 份回复。为了证实定量数据，对运动机能学家和政策制定者进行了 13 次访谈。本文使用二元逻辑回归模型和访谈编码，发现学生、家长和相关利益相关者对体育大学的需求很高，他们还认为，鉴于尼泊尔的气候和地缘政治地位，尼泊尔可以成为国际学生和运动员接受体育教育的理想目的地。尼泊尔政府对体育基础设施（包括体育大学）的供应受到财政、人力和技术资源的限制。这一发现的总体含义是，公私合作模式最适合创办体育大学，以满足尼泊尔城市休闲体育对体育基础设施的需求。这种伙伴关系将缓解资源限制，并通过促进城市居民的健康和福祉来保持机构的专业性.

关键词：体育教育、体育教育、体育基础设施、体育大学、尼泊尔

1. Introduction

Growing urbanization has both opportunities and challenges for human beings. On the one hand, it demands new services and deepens relative changes in individuals' health behavior; on the other hand, it poses risk and vulnerability across production, consumption, health, and ecology (Bera, 2023). Among the various interventions for sustainable urban living, the sports sector has been growing as a new economic growth point in new cities and has proved to be a sector representing huge development value (United Nations, 2018). In addition to growth and development, sporting culture is one of the various behavioral transformations observed recently among urban residents (Kruszynska & Poczta, 2020). This is because sports positively contribute to public health (Bhan et al., 2020) and have positive effects on individual behavior, such as alcoholism and drug addiction (Malm et al., 2019). Sports are human-centric phenomena that connect people's choices of being social, surviving, empowering, and free (Seippel, 2006).

Beyond individual levels, sports are significant for a country's overall socioeconomic development. The sports sector generates employment and contributes to economic output by triggering business activities (European Commission, 2012). The United Nations (2021) stated that sport is necessary to meet the goals of all 17 sustainable development goals. Sports facilities significantly contribute to social and economic benefits, including enhancing the quality of life, promoting physical activity, and attracting tourism and investment (Barghchi & Omar, 2015). The catalytic role of sporting events in local development has been widely acknowledged (Clark & Misener, 2015). Studies have revealed that the construction of sports facilities contributes to the renewal of the local environment, offering additional relaxation and entertainment opportunities (Kozma et al., 2022). There are both widening scope as well as limitations of sports for overall economic growth and development (Luiz & Fadal, 2011). Sports also have potential significance to the economic development of developing countries such as Nepal (Dangal & Pokhrel, 2023).

Despite sports' significance for individual and socioeconomic development, its applicability is constrained by people's sports literacy and public supply of facilities, including sports infrastructures (Liu et al. 2022). This is particularly observed among concerned people in developing countries, where sports receive low priority over other public sectors (Andreff, 2006).

The under-priority of sports sectors in developing countries raises questions: what factors are associated with low rate of sports literacy and supply of sports infrastructure in developing countries. The objective of this paper is to examine urban residents' perceptions of sports education and sports infrastructures in their cities in Nepal. By analyzing public views of sports and sports facilities, this article examines the feasibility of separate sports universities in Nepal.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sports Facilities and People's Sports Participation

A number of past studies have revealed a significant relationship between a person's participation in sports and the supply of sports infrastructure (Hallmann, 2012; Humphreys & Ruseski, 2007; Kruszynska & Poczta, 2020; Wicker, Breuer & Paulauski, 2009). However, these studies follow a narrow definition of sports infrastructure, considering it as only various sports facilities available in a community, including sports halls, sports fields, fitness centers, swimming pools, parks, and tennis courts. A comparatively broad definition of "nassr" and "al-Neaimi (2021). From this perspective, sports infrastructure consists of the material and organizational bases necessary to facilitate sporting activities. It co-exists with the urban fabric and has a great social and economic impact on cities.

Studies have revealed that people's sporting interests and behaviors depend on sports infrastructure. Hallmann (2012) asserted that sports infrastructure facilitates people's desire to participate in sports and physical activities. Xiong (2007) argued that government sports policies, especially infrastructure policies, trigger public sports interest and increase participation. In the urban context, sports infrastructure is complementary to basic infrastructure (Nasser & Al-Neaimi, 2021) and serves as an aspect of public good (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Peterson, 1987). Liu, Tylor, and Shibli (2009) highlighted that infrastructure quality determines people's attitudes toward participating in sports. Nagy and Tobak (2015) concluded that infrastructure development, investments, and public information about sports infrastructure are necessary to deliver sports facilities to concerned stakeholders. Wicker et al. (2009) found that the availability of sports infrastructure was significantly related to the sports activity patterns of different age groups.

Some other studies have addressed how and why residents in a particular region are willing to participate in sports. Cao and Ngo (2022) explored the relationship between urban residents' sports know-how and participation behavior. In their case study of Xi'an City in Western China, the authors concluded that urban residents are disconnected from leisure sports. Furthermore, insufficient infrastructure supply is the main restriction affecting urban residents' sports participation. Despite the development of sports facilities in the city, they were still far from meeting the needs of urban residents. Cerin and Leslie (2008) discussed the interrelationship between participation in general sporting activities and sports infrastructure. The authors examined socioeconomic factors such as income, geography, and profession and found that these factors were significantly related to interest in sports activities. Humphrey and Ruseski (2007) and Klein (1993) found that sport participation varied according to gender. The authors found that males were more interested in outdoor and team sports, whereas females preferred walking and household activities. Ifedi (2008) found that males' sports choices were ice hockey, golf, basketball, baseball, and soccer, whereas females' choices were swimming, golf, soccer, volleyball, and skiing. Adhikari (2020) and Mwambwa (2022) found that female students were positively motivated to participate in physical education and sporting activities. Some studies have focused on whether educational opportunities are significant in people's decision to participate in sports (Humphreys & Ruseski, 2007). The authors found that an individual's long-term exposure to physical education imparts higher expertise, which expands opportunities to participate in sports despite socioeconomic constraints.

2.2. Sports Education Infrastructures in Developing Countries

While the history of sports dates to ancient Greek gymnastic centers, sports education was initiated in the 16th century during the European renaissance (Demirhan & Bulea, 2012). Primary school curricula in Italy, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark also introduced sports education during the 16th century. Activities aimed at attracting youth, training them, and recruiting them into the national army (Seippal, 2006). Studies have mentioned that sports and related infrastructure are historically associated with education. Among the three aspects of education, morality, intelligence, and physical education, sports are the third (Wang & Liao, 2021). Physical education is a broad representation of what sports education implies. Recently, it has become an integral part of American and European schools and colleges. In developing countries, sports education at the policy level has received importance since 1990.

China is one of the fastest-growing countries in sports development in higher education. Lucetta and Jhou (2016) stated that sporting culture in China developed after modernizing its educational curriculums, particularly when the 'Education First' policy was implemented in 1999. The formal introduction of sports curricula in higher education began in 1912 at Tsinghua University. China currently has seven sports universities. In India, modern sporting games, such as cricket, hockey, polo, and billiards, began during the

British colonial period. Contemporary schools have incorporated sports curricula. At present, India is the only country in South Asia to have sports universities. It also has several sports training centers that host students from Nepal, Bangladesh, and other neighboring countries (Sahu & Panghal, 2020). In Africa, sports have received a notable priority in higher education, where universities offer various courses on sports science, sports management, and sports medicine (Amusa & Toriola, 2013). However, sports infrastructure in the continent is disproportionately distributed among different countries. Studies have revealed that sports development in Africa is constrained by few trained teachers and qualified coaches and low finance (Stroebel, Hay & Bloemhoff, 2016).

Thus, past studies have focused on people's perceptions of leisure sports and their role in individual health and social integration. These studies also focus on sports, sports education, and sports facilities in urban areas and their role in growth and economic development. The significance of infrastructure supply and sporting attitudes is also discussed. However, further studies are necessary that broaden the definition of sports infrastructure and examine urban residents' perceptions of the significance of sports education and sports infrastructures, including sports universities, in the rapidly urbanizing developing country of Nepal. The present study defines sports infrastructure as any institutional and physical entity designed to serve public needs related to awareness, education, training, and professional sports, such as a sports university. This study assumes that a sports university could function as a leisure sports hub and a sports education and research center to influence sports awareness, sports innovations, urban health, and the country's overall economic development.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Approach

This study applied a convergent parallel mixed method (Creswell, 2014) to examine students, parents, and policymakers' perceptions of sports education and sports infrastructure and analyze these perceptions to assess whether sports universities are feasible in Nepal. Quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaires, and qualitative information was obtained through interviews. The study was analyzed to examine research participants' perceptions of sports education and sports infrastructure, including sports universities in Nepal. Participants' responses obtained through the survey were quantitatively measured, while their perceptions and experiences were qualitatively examined.

To acquire data to answer the objectives of this study, a survey was conducted from February 15 to March 26, 2022, among the residents of various cities and towns, including university students, parents, athletes, and concerned stakeholders. A total of 256 responses were obtained.

3.2. Population and Sample

This study included students, parents, athletes, government officials, and local political representatives. Participants were from various provinces of Nepal. As this study analyzed people's views of sports education and sports infrastructure, including sports universities in Nepal, only university students were included. The inclusion of parents was open with respect to gender and education. Government officials were selected from among those who served in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, municipalities, and the National Sports Council (NSC). Another cohort of participants included athletes engaged in Nepal Army Clubs, the Nepal Police Club, the Armed Police Force Club, and various professional sports clubs.

A snowball sampling method (Creswell, 2014) was used to recruit participants. Operationalizing this method, the potential participants were grouped into five cohorts, e.g., students, government officials, National Sports Council officials, government clubs (Nepal Army Club, Nepal Police Club, and Armed Police Force Club), and professional clubs. From each cohort, one first subject was approached and asked for further distribution of the online survey form to fellow participants. The respondents were accessed through various online platforms such as social media, the professional networks of the authors, and emails. The respondents were asked to identify themselves into three clusters: parents of students, university students and concerned stakeholders, who are mainly individuals with experience or concern with sports in the country. The survey form was obtained from 523 participants from across the country. Among them, 256 had a 90% completion rate of the questionnaire and were treated as the final sample of this study. Nevertheless, responses from this sample were triangulated with 13 interviews conducted with policymakers, federal and provincial parliamentarians, municipal officials, sports journalists, and sports managers in various professional clubs. During data collection, the research ethics and human subject protection protocol of the Nepalese Government and Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University (TU), was duly followed.

3.3. Instrument Design

Surveys and interviews were primary data collection instruments. The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section included questions about respondents' interests in sports education, the state of sports infrastructure in the schools/colleges they studied in their communities, the importance and need of sports universities, and potential advantages and constraints

were asked in the next section. The major question related to sports universities was, '*Do you think a separate sports university is necessary in Nepal?'* The responses were dichotomous. If the response was "yes," participants were further asked to provide their response on the operational modality of the university using multiple choices. Previous studies have revealed that individuals' leisure sports preferences and interest in physical education are impacted by either their past experiences or exposure to sports and sports education (Cao and Ngo, 2022). In this study, a question related to this was, "*Did you have an interest in joining sports as your major in high school*?" Another question linked to participants' experience and exposure to sports was, "*How was the condition of the sports infrastructure and facilities in your high school*?" The second section of the survey collected the respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, residence location, educational level, and degree specialization. An open-ended question was asked in the third section, focusing on respondents' views on the state of leisure sports, sporting activities, and sports education in Nepal. The survey was pre-tested with 11 students in physical education at Tribhuvan University and five professional athletes in Kathmandu. The survey was revised and finalized after addressing the reviewers' comments.

The 13 interviews were conducted among sports policymakers, federal and provincial parliamentarians, municipal officials, sports journalists, and sports managers in various professional clubs, focusing on some of the public-choice principles in the sports sector. Four were females and nine were males. Each interview lasted 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. The selection of participants was purposive. Out of the 13 participants, seven underwent face-to-face interviews, and six were contacted over the phone or online meeting platforms. In addition to their introduction and experience with sports, the major agenda for the interview was the challenges and opportunities of sports universities in Nepal.

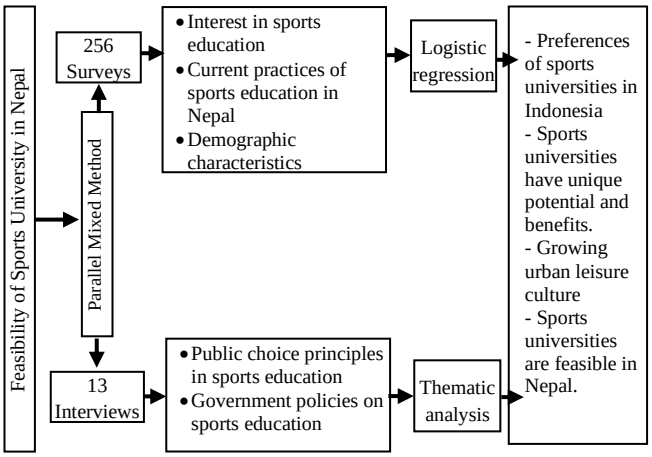

Figure 1. Research process flow chart (developed by the authors)

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics and logistic regression. Most questions were closed-ended with binary choices. The dependent variable was the participants' opinions of the feasibility of a sports university in Nepal. The independent variables were the participants' age, gender, profession, residence location, and sports infrastructure supply. The regression model explores the relationship between binary dependent and independent variables (Allison, 2012; Ghimire et al., 2022). The model is as follows:

$$\text{logit}\{\Pr(Y = 1|x)\} = \log\{\Pr(Y = 1|x)\ 1 - \Pr(Y = 1|x)\} = \beta 0 + x\ '\beta$$

Where,

Y denotes the need for a separate sports university in Nepal, denoted by 1 and 0, and x is the vector of explanatory variables.

β0 is an intercept;

β is the slope parameter vector of the explanatory variables.

Qualitative data obtained from interviews and published documents were analyzed thematically. A Five-Phase Process of qualitative data analysis (Bingham, 2023) was followed, including organizing, sorting, understanding, interpreting, and explaining the data. The qualitative data were juxtaposed and triangulated with the quantitative results.

4. Result and Findings

4.1. Survey Findings

4.1.1. Demographic Information about the Respondents

Among the survey respondents, 143 (56%) were male, and 112 (44%) were female. More than 84% of the respondents were from urban areas and 16% were from rural areas. Among them, 128 (50%) were aged between 16 and 25 years, followed by 94 (37%) and 25 (10%) between 26 and 35 years and 36 and 45 years, respectively.

Students, parents, and stakeholders were 114 (45%), 110 (43%), and 32 (12%), respectively. Similarly, 170 (66%) respondents were from public colleges/schools, and 71 (28%) were from private colleges/schools. The respondents who had school education (12 grade or below) were 100 (39%), followed by 68 (27%) and 45 (18%) who had bachelor's and master's degrees, respectively. The demographic characteristics of the survey respondents are presented in Table 1.

In the study, 132 (52%) respondents said that the condition of sports education in Nepal was normal, followed by 33 (13%) and 31 (12%) mentioning that sports education in the country was good and very good, respectively, and 23% of respondents stated that the condition of sports education was bad. Most (more than

80%) of all three categories live in urban areas. Among respondents highly interested in studying sports science, 87% were from urban areas and 13% were from rural areas. Sports science is popular among urban residents. Among respondents interested in studying sports science, 83% were from urban areas, and 17% were from rural areas. Among the respondents who said that the sports infrastructure in their college was not good, 84% lived in urban areas, and 16% lived in rural areas. Further details on respondents' perceptions of sports universities are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N=256) (compiled by the authors)

Gender	**Urban area**		**Rural area**		**Total**
	Count	**Percentage**	**Count**	**Percentage**	
Male	122	84	21	16	143
Female	101	90	11	10	112
Age Group					
16 to 25	115	90	13	10	128
26–35	79	84	15	16	94
36 to 45	21	84	4	16	25
46 to 55	7	88	1	13	8
Self-Identification					
Students	104	91	10	9	114
Concerned Stakeholders	92	84	18	16	110
Parents	27	84	5	16	32
Type of Educational Institution					
Public College/Schools	143	84	27	16	170
Private College/Schools	67	94	4	6	71
Community College/Schools	13	87	2	13	15
Level of Education					
Under SLC/SEE	27	77	8	23	35
Up to +2 Level (11 and 12 grades)	89	89	11	11	100
Bachelor's	58	85	10	15	68
Master's	43	96	2	4	45
Above Master's	6	75	2	25	8
Faculty of Education					
Social Sciences	77	91	8	9	85
Management	46	81	11	19	57
Education	33	85	6	15	39
Science, Technology, and Engineering	31	94	2	6	33
Law	7	100	-		7
Other	29	83	6	17	35

Note: 1 respondent was aged above 55 years.

Table 2. Perception of sports and sports university (N=256) (compiled by the authors)

Condition of sports education	**Urban**		**Rural**		**Total**
	Count	**Percentage**	**Count**	**Percentage**	
Excellent	24	77	7	23	31
Good	30	91	3	9	33
Normal	114	86	18	14	132
Bad	55	92	5	8	60
Interest in sports science					
Highly interested	164	87	24	13	188
Interested	39	83	8	17	47
Disinterested	17	94	1	6	18
Highly disinterested	3	100	0	100	3
Sports infrastructure in colleges and schools					
Adequate	7	100	-	-	7
Good	37	100	-	-	37
Normal	103	85	18	15	121
Not good	76	84	15	16	91
Need for a sports university					
Need for a sports university	160	87	24	13	184
Sports education can be taught in existing universities.	57	88	8	12	65
Sports education is not necessary at the college level.	6	86	1	14	7

Table 3. Regression model results on the need for separate universities to offer sports in Nepal (compiled by the authors)

Parameter	**DF**	**Estimate**	**Standard Error**	**Wald Chi-Square**	**Point Estimates**	**Pr > ChiSq**
Intercept	1	-4.0431	0.3547	129.9187		**<.0001**
High interest in sports education	1	2.1479	0.4777	20.2186	8.567	**<.0001**

Employment as an impediment to studying sports	1	0.9947	0.4076	5.9548	2.704	**0.0147**
Enough sports infrastructure in the school	1	0.8719	0.426	4.1882	2.391	**0.0407**
Female	1	0.9807	0.3103	9.991	2.666	**0.0016**
Students	1	1.1631	0.4353	7.1395	3.200	**0.0075**
Interested individuals in sports	1	1.4524	0.4666	9.6901	4.273	**0.0019**
Private college students	1	1.0487	0.3288	10.1765	2.854	**0.0014**
College- or university-level education	1	0.7538	0.321	5.5132	2.125	**0.0189**
Education discipline	1	-0.4852	0.4437	1.1962	0.616	0.2741

The need for sports universities in Nepal was assessed using a logistic regression model in which the dependent variable was the need for separate universities in Nepal. Mixed results from the model are presented in Table 3.

The regression model (Table 3) shows that respondents who showed interest in sports education were 8.57 times more likely to claim that there is a need for separate universities to offer sports education in Nepal. Working professionals have also shown a positive interest in separate universities for sports education, even though they believe their employment impedes sports education. They are 2.70 times more likely to report the need for separate sports universities in the country. Individuals interested in sports are also 4.27 more likely to ask for separate universities to enroll in sports. Female participants in private colleges and student respondents were 2.66 and 3.20 times more likely to believe that separate universities exist for sports in Nepal. The relationship between interest in separate universities and demographic characteristics, such as age, residence location, household head, and education level, was not significant in the model.

4.2. Interview Results

Four broad themes emerged from the thirteen interviews. The promotion of sporting culture, accessibility, the unique geographic and ethnic diversity of the country, geopolitical feasibility and human resource production for sports.

4.2.1. Promoting Sports Culture

Respondents who believed that separate sports universities were feasible in Nepal stated that sports universities are a "promoter of sports education" and "creator of awareness of sports benefits." They argued that a sports university should develop a sports culture in the country. In this regard, a female parliamentarian said:

Once the university operates, some parents send their children to the college. Although children earn degrees, their parents also know the importance of sports for health and fitness. Parents also visit universities to attend informal meetings where they know why sport is necessary for people of all ages. In this way, a university can develop the sporting and exercise culture in a society.

Participants argued that in the university, "not only students will enroll, but their parents will participate in the informal training, fitness, and coaching schedules" that the university would design.

4.2.2. Access to Sports Education and Research Promotion

Interviewees claimed that the sports university would increase people's access to sports education and promote sports research, which is crucial for developing the sports sector. At present, sports education is not accessible to interested students and parents. Respondents also believed that formal sports education and research findings are significant for athletes seeking to "*better know about the sport and achieve medals in domestic and international tournaments."* One policymaker at the Ministry of Youth and Sports stated:

Nepal's athletes' performances at national and international tournaments are negatively affected by the lack of degree in sports education. They do not know the vocabulary, jargon, and technical terms used in particular sports. But those who know very well also perform very well.

Respondents believed that Nepal's sports sector lacks trained coaches and managers that a sports university can fulfill. A former national cricket team captain argued that "*a manager educated through sports science could better plan and manage sports administration, clubs and tournaments*." Former secretary of the Ministry of Youths and Sports asserted that the *"underdevelopment of Nepal's sports sector is due to lack of planning and management experts which the sports university will fulfill."*

4.2.3. Geographic and Ethnic Niches

Interviewees believed that "Nepal's unique geography," "ethnic diversity," and "climate" supported the establishment of a sports university. While explaining these niche opportunities, one participant stated:

Nepal has a vivid climate. The temperature ranges from 45 C to -20 C. So sports of all seasons can be organized here. The organization of sport tournaments in different seasons will also promote tourism. Similarly, this country is ethnically and culturally diverse. Moreover, each ethnic group has its own expertise in sports activities. For example, Tharu girls of the hot temperate region of Tarai can be encouraged to play volleyball, while youths of Mongolian race seem to fit better in the Karante game.

Respondents also mentioned that Nepal's geo-political location could attract investors and promote mega sports events. It can organize and attract players from India and Pakistan. It can also attract students from both countries and abroad. A respondent said:

Nepal differs from other countries in the South Asia region because these countries are generally hostile to each other. Therefore, Nepal can host regional and international tournaments in which countries can participate without any reluctance or hostility. This is not the case if India and Pakistan are considered. Indian players do not visit Pakistan, and vice versa. …Sports university would also be a common destination for students from nearby countries and Southeast Asia.

5. Discussion

This study found that many people (72% of respondents) in Nepal believe that separate sports universities are necessary in the country. The new sports infrastructure will help promote sports education and culture in the country. Respondents stated that they would have earned a sports degree if the university were located in an accessible location. As found in past studies that awareness of the importance of sports training to sports education (Cao & Ngo, 2022), this study found that those who thought that the situation of sports education in the country was good and that sports infrastructure was adequate in their school/colleges were highly motivated toward sports university.

Participants stated that a sports degree would help them "develop a career" in sports. The logistic model showed that the general public required sports education to keep them 'physically' and 'mentally' fit and so resist increasing environmental and social risks in urban areas. This finding is consistent with previous studies that showed sporting culture and public health are proportionate to each other (Collins, 2018).

The statistical model found that female students preferred physical education and sports better. This finding is similar to Adhikari (2020), who revealed that female students in colleges in Kathmandu were positively motivated toward physical education. In this study, an additional finding is that girls studying in private colleges were more interested in sports and physical education. The thematic analysis showed that girls' access to sports would make them "not only physically strong" but also "enhance their access to multiple socioeconomic and political opportunities."

In addition to students, job holders who could not join sports due to employment are also highly motivated toward sports and establishing a separate sports university in Nepal. Interviewees said that in a sports club, they only learned "how to do physical exercise." However, in a college, there will be "multiple chances of learning sports scientifically." They could "meet national and international amateurs and sports professors and researchers." This implies that a sports university can attract employed urban residents as students or participate in various training and coaching modules.

Studies have revealed that geography and geographical environments are closely related to sports and sports culture (Song & Zhang, 2018). Schneider and Muke (2021) examined that climatic factors affect sports development and athletes' performance. Individual athletes, sports organizations, and local clubs are affected by factors such as temperature, precipitation, humidity, floods, and heat waves. The thematic analysis of the interview data supported these findings. The analysis also shows that Nepal's ethnic diversity is a way to develop a multi-sporting culture. Therefore, Nepal can organize tournaments across different seasons and in different places.

The geo-political location of the country will also be a boon for South Asian countries to organize international tournaments without fear or furor. Studies have demonstrated that sports events have the power to 'bring hostile nations together,' 'bridge tensions in international relations,' and 'compel hostile nations to come closer and initiate a new relationship' (Heekin-Canedy, 2020). Studies have shown that sports education contributes to national economic development (Dangal & Pokhrel, 2023). Survey participants and interviewees believed that a sports university would contribute to national economic development by promoting a sporting business, admitting students from foreign countries, helping athletes win medals, and conducting research and development activities. Similar to previous findings (Jones et al., 2020), the participants argued that sports universities can produce sporting goods and thus promote entrepreneurial businesses. Besides, the university can "design short-term training" and "fitness modules open to urban residents." This will also be the university's source of finance. The thematic analysis revealed that policymakers could collaborate with the business community to invest in sports universities in Nepal. This involvement of the private sector in sports and physical education is in line with the Nepalese government's policy commitments (Government of Nepal, 2022).

In hindsight, this study revealed some constraints on the promising feasibility of a sports university in Nepal. Aligning with previous studies (e.g., Andreff, 2006), the interviewees mentioned sports finance as the major impediment in this direction. Currently, the Government of Nepal has extremely low financing for overall sports development (Dangal & Pokhrel, 2023). At the same time, contrary to previous findings, this study found an opportunity for the private sector to be engaged and motivated to finance sports infrastructure, including the establishment of sports universities. The lack of human resources, e.g., teachers, coaches, and trained/educated managers, is another challenge, as indicated by this study. Currently, a handful of teachers in the country

study sports science. Coaches and managers in sports-related public and private institutions are also few. At the same time, they lack training in modern sports. Sports-related human resource development is also a low priority for national policy (Government of Nepal, 2023).

5.1 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study was conducted to determine public interest in opening new sports universities in Nepal. Analyzing the data, this study found that people are interested in attending sports education and that sports have business potential, resulting in the strong feasibility of sports universities in Nepal. Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations. First, this feasibility study sought students, parents, and policymakers' opinions on sports, sports education, and sports universities and ultimately derived the finding that a sports university is feasible in Nepal. This perception-based study sheds light on the social and political feasibility of sports universities. The study did not examine the technical aspects of sports universities, such as organizational structures, degree courses, faculties, and financing. These are important aspects of opening a new university. In future research, this may be considered. Second, unlike previous studies that discussed sports clubs, wellness, and corporate fitness facilities as urban sports centers, this study assumed the university as a center of education and infrastructure for urban leisure culture. This assumption was based on the public choice theory and the Nepal government's policy to engage business sectors in sports and sports education. This study does not explore the choices, interests and obligations of the private sector in engaging in sports universities, which could be potential directions for future research. Third, considering the mixed-method design, this study included a limited number of purposively and conveniently selected samples during survey administration. The sample respondents self-categorized themselves as students, parents, and concerned stakeholders. Therefore, the findings of this study are not specific to a particular group, class, or the category of Nepali society.

6. Conclusion

This study argued that sports universities are centers for sports education and infrastructure for urban leisure. Applying a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the study concluded that most Nepali university students, their parents, and concerned stakeholders preferred to see a proliferation of sports universities in the country. The statistical model showed that respondents already exposed to sports, females, job holders, and students were highly interested in university sports establishments. The interview participants' views were harmonious with the test results that a sports university in Nepal would spur economic development through sports promotion. Nepal's diverse climate, ethnicity, and geo-political location would support sports education and promote sporting activities. Given Nepal's uniqueness, a sports university would attract athletes from neighboring countries. Thus, this study concludes that a sports university is feasible in Nepal.

This study also considered the changing demographic dimension of the country. Rural-to-urban migration has altered the urban population and increased the demand on municipal governments to plan leisure sports in addition to other services. At the same time, studies have shown that urban residents' leisure sports culture is increasing because of their hectic schedules and environmental and health risks. In this context, a sports university can serve as a center for education and leisure sports to promote individual health. The study also highlights the challenges a sports university may face, including limitations in investment, human resources, and sports infrastructure.

The implications of this study are that to address these issues, government policy commitments should be directed at inviting the private sector to invest. Private agencies would have the motive to run a university smoothly while generating as much profit from their investments. This could be achieved by introducing formal curriculum-based higher education in the university as well as extension programs designed to invite urban residents and non-traditional students to join fitness clubs and sports facilities of the university. The extension program could be designed in the form of a physical fitness center and short-term specialized training modules. This would also harmonize university–community relationships and help the sustainable operation of the university. In this way, particularly in urban settings, a sports university can address the challenges facing the sports sector in Nepal.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, R.N.; research design, R.N., and J.G.; resources, A.S.; field work and data collection, R.N., and A.S.; validation, J.G.; writing—original draft preparation, all authors contributed equally; writing—review and editing, R.N., and J.G.; project supervision: A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on

request from the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Nepal Government for providing funding for this study. We also acknowledge the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University (TU), and its Executive Director Dr. Mrigendra Bahadur Karki for his continuous support, guidance, and advisory role during the study.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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