

Peer and family support as determinants of female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya

Juliana Andisi¹
Peter W. Bukhala²
Roselyne Odiango³

¹juleanandisi@gmail.com

²pbukhala@mmust.ac.ke

³rodiango@mmust.ac.ke

^{1,2,3}Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The under-representation of women in sports in Kenya is a significant issue, with lower levels of participation evident in various studies. Despite this, there is limited research specifically addressing the role of peer support in sports participation and evaluate the role of family support in female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya. The main objective of the study was to assess the role of peer and family support in female sports participation among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya. The study was based on the Socio-ecological Theory. The study targeted 1 private and 19 public Teachers Training Colleges in Kenya. These colleges were organized into regions: the Rift Valley, Nyanza, Coast, Eastern, Western, Central and Nairobi. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted to conduct the research. The study target population was 672 female participants, whereas the sample size which was calculated using the sample determination table by Adam (2020) was 279. Structured questionnaires were administered to the respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants. Data was analyzed descriptively. Results demonstrated that (42.5%) of the respondents agreed there was meaningful support from their families and peers with a mean (3.9) and S.D. (1.22). The study established that social support from family and peers S.D. (1.15) were associated with female participation in sports. It was further concluded that strong social support systems, especially from family and peers (56.0%), are essential for sustaining female participation in sports, both recreationally and professionally. The study recommended that colleges improve their support systems by inculcating stronger involvement of families in their children's sport participation.

Keywords: Determinants, Female Trainees, KTCSA, Social Support, Sport Participation

I. INTRODUCTION

Peer and family social support in female participation in sports is the support that comes from peer groups and family in the society, the female sports person comes from environment that affects her participation in sports (Stull, 2013). A study by Lee et al. (2021) on the analysis of personal and social environmental factors showed that female participants require various forms of support to continue participating in sport. Sports participation improves physical fitness and health of those involved and also, develops and improves their personality by bringing a number of positive changes in their behavioral conduct (Kendall et al., 2020).

Social support is viewed as an important resource for sports participants which involves the exchange of resources between people in a sporting context such coaches, parents and peers to improve the well-being of athletes (Mossman et al., 2021). Family and coach support is cited as an important factor in assisting young athletes in developing competencies that will be required in their trajectories (Lee & Hung, 2024). Research on young golfers, managing golf players' transition from junior to professional level, showed that athletes developed their mastery only after having opportunities to fall in love with sports, with coaches and family playing important roles in supporting and stimulating this passion (Roos et al., 2022). According to Visscher et al. (2009), the role of family members in providing significant support is critical in the athletes' development.

Sociological studies show that women athletes need the support and encouragement of significant others for their athletic ability to translate into sustained sports participation (Santiago, 2023). Athletes face various challenges, such as lack of finances, insufficient training equipment and inadequate coaching and mentorship. Encouragement and support from significant others can help overcome these challenges, fostering good participation in sports. Support from peer and family can boost sports participants morale and reinforce social identity belonging. This sociological boost may translate into improved participation as sports participants feel more empowered. In team sports, the support and encouragement of teammates are crucial for building a positive team culture. Peer and family social support helps female

sports participants cope with several challenges that come during competitions. This support can be helpful in making sports participants overcome obstacles (Covasssin et al., 2013).

Lack of social support, for example, has been identified as a barrier to talented athletes' aspirations in golf. Kharitonova (2022) identified disorganized coaches who did not care about psychosocial skills and only did the bare minimum to keep their positions as a possible explanation for the program's inability to promote athletes' transition to higher professional levels while analyzing a golf development program that was not producing good results.

We still have low numbers of female participants in sports and previous researches by Gitonga et al., (2011) did not address the role of peer and family support in female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya. This study therefore investigated peer and social support as determinants of female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya. The researcher chose Teacher Training Colleges because they are middle level colleges that attract both female and male students. Further the choice of the female gender is based on the fact that they face many gender related challenges in sports. The study hopes to guide policies to create a more equitable sports culture across the nation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The representation of women in sports continues to be of great interest. Very few studies have been conducted in Africa to address female participation in sports in colleges. In Kenya, the under-representation of women is evident in many studies including women's participation in sports activities. Existing research has primarily focused on gender representation in sports with very few studies focusing on the peer and family social support that contributes to female participation in sports in colleges. The study assessed the peer and family support that affect female participation in sports in Teachers Training Colleges in Kenya. Under-representation of women in sports is seen in a study by Otieno et al. (2020) which reflect lower women participation in sports. The Kenya Constitution 2010, Sports Act 2013, and the Kenya Vision 2030 outlines policies and guidelines to achieve gender equality within sports as prescribed in Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Title IX but despite all this being in place we still have low numbers of female participants in sports. Also, gender stereotypes, and cultural expectations continue to discourage female engagement in sports (Primanata, 2024).

Various studies Naseer et al., (2020), Jular and Tari Kasnakoglu (2017) has shown that peer and family social support play an important role in determining female participation in sports. However, in Kenya Teacher Training Colleges there's limited research on the determinants of female participation in sports. By understanding the peer and family social support that influence female participation in sports, strategies can be developed to empower them to become role models and leaders in sports; inspiring others to follow suit. This study therefore investigated the peer and family social support of female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya. Kenya is one of the countries which support sporting activities up to the international sports like the Olympics.

1.2. Research Objective

The main objective of the study was to assess the role of peer and family support in female sports participation among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Social- Ecological Theory

In order to analyze the peer and family support as determinants of female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya, the study variables were underpinned by Social-ecological Theory informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1979). At the individual level, female students in teacher training colleges in Kenya experience direct interactions with their immediate environment. The determinants at this level could include peer and family social support in sports participation which could shape a female student's decision to engage in sports. Cultural norms within the family may affect whether a girl is encouraged to play sports. Female students' participation in sports can also be influenced by peer group dynamics. Encouragement from friends and instructors or the lack thereof can have a direct impact on their participation. Individual factors, developed within the microsystem, are crucial in determining the willingness to engage in sports. The relationship between family and school plays a role. If the family encourages sports, a female student is more likely to participate, if peer support at school is strong, girls are more likely to participate in sports. External factors indirectly affect female participation. Educational policies and teacher training college regulations regarding gender equality in education and sports can either promote or restrict female participation in physical activities. The availability of resources for female sports teams, competition opportunities, and the presence of female sports role models can significantly impact their participation.

Socio-ecological theory of sports participation argues that, social and physical environmental are important determinants of sports participation. Figure 1 shows a three-layered version of a socio-ecological model, the individual factors, social factors, and physical environmental factors, as displayed, based on the work of Stokols (1996).

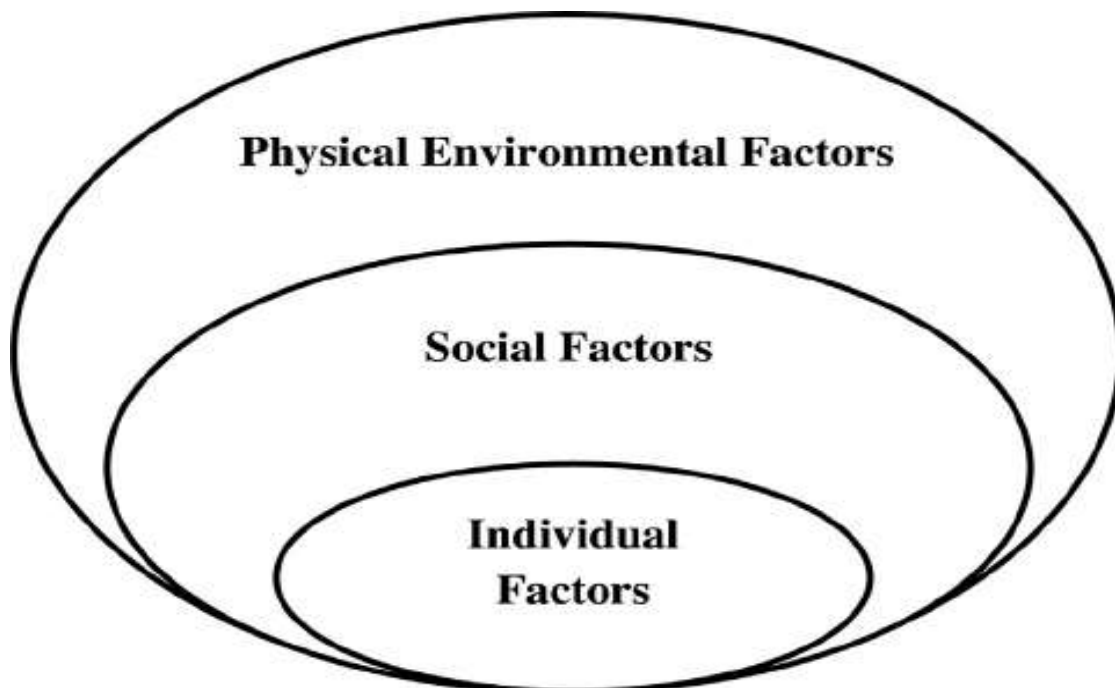


Figure 1
Socio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Socio-ecological components are used to explore factors that influence changes in participation. Sport is a key form of social interaction. Given these potential applications in sports, it seems logical to advocate the use of socio-ecological models to explore sport participation, across a range of domains involving sports activities, in order to better understand participation. The model acknowledges that it takes a combination of individual, social and physical factors to achieve good sports participation. Social-ecological Theory was used to analyze the peer and family support as determinants of female participation in sports among trainees in teacher training colleges in Kenya (Javed et al., 2020).

The Social-Ecological Theory was selected for this study due to its comprehensive approach to understanding the multifaceted influences on sports participation. This model integrates individual, social, and environmental factors, making it particularly suitable for examining the diverse determinants affecting female trainees' involvement in sports. This approach not only guides the exploration of various variables but also helps in identifying potential outcomes, ensuring that the study captures the complexity of the issue and provides actionable insights for promoting female participation in sports (Stull, 2013).

2.2 Empirical Review

Coates and Howe (2023) on parental experiences of facilitating their child's engagement in competitive disability sport. The results showed, the role of parenting in mainstream sporting environments is well developed but little attention has been focused upon parents of young athletes with disabilities. Parents are often a silent workforce in enabling the engagement of young people in competitive sport. In the case of young athletes with para sport aspirations, parenting bring with it added complexity, both practically and psychologically. Thus, it is necessary to understand the experiences of these parents so appropriate support mechanisms can be developed. As a result, this research asked, "What are parents' experiences of supporting their disabled child through their parasport journeys?" Using in-depth reflexive thematic analysis underpinned by phenomenology, interviews with eleven parents of elite youth para-athletes who were based in the United Kingdom were carried out. Sport was seen as a route toward supporting social inclusion but engaging in youth sport as a parent of a disabled child brought challenges and benefits. Coates and Howe (2023) study was on parenting support among the young sportsmen living with disability compared to the current study which examined the effect of social support on participation of female trainees in the various sports in the teacher training colleges in Kenya.

Kramers et al. (2023) explored parents' interpretations of their roles and experiences of supporting young athletes' psycho-social development in this context. Six focus groups were conducted with 30 parents (17 fathers, 13 mothers; Mage = 44.8) who had a child in the foundation (8–11 years) or youth development phase (12–16 years). The

transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Parental strategies employed to support their child's 5Cs within and beyond the academy included providing encouragement and tailoring feedback, establishing and sharing expectations with their child, creating an autonomy-supportive environment, encouraging participation in activities outside of the academy, and understanding football and the nature of the academy. Barriers perceived as hindering parents' support reflected the salience of coach-parent communication at the academy. Kramers et al. (2023) study was also among the young athletes compared to the current study, which examined the effect of social support on participation of female trainees in the various sports in the teacher training colleges in Kenya.

Otieno et al. (2020) investigated the influence of parents on talent identification for players in rugby clubs in Kenya. The study was guided by the hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in the mean rugby talent identification index when the parental influence of the rugby players is classified as high or low" The factors that were investigated included the parents' socio-economic status and the parents' level of education. Data were collected using Questionnaires and interviews from rugby players ($n=125$) and coaches ($n=15$) during the 2017/2018 Kenya Rugby Union league competition. Data were analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics of Chi-square test of independent measures. Results showed that parental influence on talent identification in Kenya is not significant despite the majority (53.77%) of the coaches indicating that the socio-economic status and the level of education of the parents had an influence on talent identification. Subsequently, future studies need to be conducted to unearth the role of the entire family environment at all stages of the players' athletic development due to the complexity of the family phenomenon. Otieno et al. (2020) study was on parental influence on talent identification compared to the current study, which examined the peer and family support on participation of female trainees in the various sports in the teacher training colleges in Kenya.

Gathwe et al. (2022) sought to establish the relationship between sport involvement of parents and children's involvement in swimming. The study was descriptive and exploratory in nature. Former ($N=148$) and active swimmers ($N=394$) responded to the questions as to whether their parents were involved in any sport, and whether their parents supported their participation in competition. More parents of active swimmers (86.3%, $N=340$) participated in sports, compared to 64.9 % ($N=96$) among former swimmers. Specifically, more fathers (75.1%, $N=296$) of active swimmers were involved in sports compared to mothers (45.9%, $N=181$). Among former swimmers, there was minimal difference between fathers ($N=66$) who participated in sports compared to mothers ($N=64$). Previous parental sporting involvement had significant influence on active swimmers at $p=0.001$. Parents act as role models and pass on their beliefs, supporting their children in endeavors that they value. Gathwe et al. (2022) study was on parental involvement in swimming compared to the current study, which established the peer and family social support on sports participation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Machakos Teacher Training College. The colleges that participated qualified for Kenya Teachers Colleges Sports Association National Competitions. The colleges were drawn from seven regions which include the Rift Valley, Nyanza, Coast, central, Eastern, Western and Nairobi. The study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design, the cross-sectional study is an observational study that was embraced to answer questions concerning the current status of the research subjects in the study by looking across the entire number of Public and private Teachers Training Colleges in Kenya. It was quick and captured multiple variables at once. The study targeted 672 female participants who participated in the Kenya Teachers Colleges sports Association (KTCSA) National competition by 20 (19 public and 1 private) Teacher Training Colleges. The table below shows the Target population frame.

The study's target population were female teacher trainees who had been selected to represent their colleges. The study dependent variable was peer and family social support and the independent variable was sport participation and demographic characteristics of study participants. The population of the study was first categorized into the regions namely: Nyanza, Western, Central, Eastern, Coast, Nairobi, and Rift Valley. Subsequently, the study adopted stratified random sampling technique to draw proportionate respondents from each stratum/college by drawing respondents in a random way so that each member of the stratum had an equal chance of being selected. Colleges were represented according to their proportioned in the population. The researcher obtained the required sampling size using sample determination table by Adam (2020) from the target population of 672 female participants who participated in the Kenya Teachers Colleges sports Association (KTCSA) National competition in 2024. From the Sample Determination Table, the sample size for the study was 279. The researcher used a simple random sampling technique on the 279 female representatives in Kenya Teacher Colleges Sports Association national competition. The researcher applied simple random technique to select a sample from each college (See Table). The table below shows the sample determination table by Adam (2020).

Table 1*Sample Determination Table by Adam (2020)*

Population	Sample Size
10	10
15	15
20	20
25	24
30	29
35	33
40	37
50	46
60	54
70	61
80	69
90	76
100	83
110	89
120	96
130	102
140	108
150	114
160	119
170	125
180	130
190	135
200	140
220	150
250	163
300	182
350	200
400	215
450	229
500	241
600	262
700	279
800	293
900	306
1000	317
1200	334

The table below represents the sample population frame reached upon after getting the sample population size from the sample determination table by Adam (2020).

Table 2*Sample Frame*

College	Population	Sample Size
Nyanza	109	45
Coast	74	31
Eastern	92	38
R Valley	93	39
Nairobi	101	42
Central	101	42
Western	102	42
Total	672	279

The data collection process entailed obtaining an introduction letter from the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Institutional Scientific and Ethics review Committee (ISERC). This letter was used to apply for license from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). This enabled the researcher to carry out the study among public and private teacher training colleges in Kenya. The researcher administered the questionnaire to participants after obtaining permission from the Ministry of Education and KTCSA. The structured questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument for the study. Questionnaires were appropriate to administer and allowed respondents to score on a 5-point Likert Scale, (Korkut Altuna & Arslan, 2016). The questionnaires were administered to respondents to fill out based on guidance from research assistants. The field questionnaires were collected by the researcher and research assistants who were coaches of female teams and handed over to the researcher for coding and analysis. The questionnaires physically administered to a total of 279 respondents and collected immediately. The female Kenyan Teacher Trainees who compete in National College Sports in Kenya were the unit of observation. Pre-testing of Research Instruments and Training of Research Assistants; five research assistants who were coaches of female teams were recruited and trained by the researcher for a period of two days. The research assistants gained insights during the pretesting among 30 female participants at Kaimosi Teachers Training College, which was 10% of the sample population. The pre-test results were not part of the main study as they did not qualify to represent the college in KTCSA national competitions. During the pretest, test-retest method was used and results analyzed statistically and Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the test instruments. The coefficients of the Cronbach's alpha were above 0.7, suggesting that the tool had high internal consistency. Descriptive analysis such as frequencies, means, median, mode and standard deviation were used to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the peer and family social support available for female trainee in Teacher Training Colleges in Kenya. The principle of beneficence was adhered to by ensuring that the research aimed to contribute positively to the community. Although the participants did not accrue any direct benefits, the data generated from the study aimed to empower female trainees by developing strategies that promote leadership and role modeling in sports.

1V. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

This section entails analysis of the study's findings in line with the study objective namely: peer and family support as determinants of female participation in sports in teachers training colleges in Kenya. Key: 1-Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Undecided/Moderate; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly Agree

Table 3

Peer and Family Support Available for Sports Participation

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	M	S.D.
I feel encouraged by my family to pursue sports as a recreational activity or a career	4.7%	15.1%	20.3%	19.0%	40.9%	3.8	1.26
My family and peers actively participate in or attend my sports events or competitions	4.3%	11.2%	19.4%	22.0%	43.1%	3.9	1.21
My family play a role in introducing you to sports or a specific sport	0.0%	29.7%	12.5%	28.0%	29.7%	3.6	1.20
My family's and peers' interest in sports influenced my own involvement in sports	1.3%	7.8%	22.8%	12.1%	56.0%	4.1	1.10
My family's expectations or preferences influenced my choice of sports and level of involvement	4.7%	1.3%	10.3%	37.9%	45.7%	4.2	1.00
My family values are highly aligned with my sports goals and aspirations	2.2%	12.5%	17.2%	28.4%	39.7%	3.9	1.12
Average	2.9%	12.9%	17.1%	24.6%	42.5%	3.9	1.15

Table 3 probed the extent to which social support was available to female trainees who had participated in the 2024 Teacher Training colleges' competition. Evidently, most (59.9%) of the respondents agreed that they felt encouraged by their families to pursue sports as a recreational activity or a career, followed 20.3% and 19.8% who indicated a moderate and disagreed respectively. A mean of 3.8 affirms that female trainees were encouraged by their families to take up sport as a recreational activity and/or a future career. Similarly, a majority (65.1%) of the respondents agreed that their families and peers actively participated in or attended their sports events or competitions, followed by 19.4% who agreed moderately and 15.5% who disagreed. A mean of 3.9 supports the idea that female trainees' family and peers is a crucial support system for their participation in sports. A majority (57.7%) of the respondents agreed that

the interest in sport from their families and peers was an influential factor for the participation of the female trainees in sport, followed by 29.7% who disagreed whereas 12.5% indicated moderate.

More than half (68.1%) of the respondents agreed that their families and peers' interest in sport led to their involvement in sports, followed by 22.8% who moderately agreed, whereas 9.1% disagreed. A mean of 4.1 strongly demonstrates that interest of the family and/or peers in a crucial enabler and/or predictor of female trainees' participation in sports. Equally, many (83.6%) of the respondents agreed that the expectations and preferences of their families influenced their choice of sport and the level of involvement, followed by 10.3% who agreed moderately, whereas 6.0% disagreed. A mean of 4.2 affirms that choice of type of sport and the associated level of involvement is predicted by the expectations and influence of family. Similarly, most (68.1%) of the respondents agreed that values of their families aligned with female trainees' sport aspirations and goals, followed by 17.2% who indicated moderate, while 14.7% disagreed. A mean of 3.9 affirms that the value of families cannot be overemphasized in determining sport goals and aspirations. Computed averages indicate that most (67.1%) of the respondents agreed that there was meaningful support from their families and peers (mean=3.9).

Table 4

Female Participation in Sports among Trainees in Teacher Training Colleges in Kenya

Statemet	1	2	3	4	5	M	S.D.
I want to improve my skills	1.7%	13.8%	17.7%	35.3%	31.5%	3.8	1.08
I want to be with my friends	3.9%	7.8%	13.4%	31.5%	43.5%	4.0	1.11
I like to win	1.3%	13.4%	22.0%	22.8%	40.5%	4.1	3.54
I want to get rid of energy	1.3%	22.4%	11.6%	25.0%	39.7%	3.8	1.22
I like to travel	0.0%	13.8%	21.1%	32.8%	32.3%	3.8	1.03
I want to stay in shape	3.4%	10.3%	20.3%	25.4%	40.5%	3.9	1.15
I like the excitement	1.3%	11.2%	21.1%	38.4%	28.0%	3.8	1.01
I like the teamwork	0.0%	19.8%	23.7%	28.0%	28.4%	3.7	1.09
Average	1.6%	14.1%	18.9%	29.9%	35.6%	3.9	1.40

Key: 1-Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Undecided/Moderate; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly Agree

The table probed the reasons that made female trainees to engage in sports in Teachers Training Colleges in Kenya; whether to improve skills, to be with friends, to win, to get rid of energy, to travel, to stay in shape among others. As illustrated in Table 4, it is evident that most (66.8%) of the respondents agreed that they wanted to improve their skills, followed by 17.7% and 15.5% who agreed moderately and disagreed. A mean of 3.8 affirms overall agreement that respondents wanted to improve their skills. More than half (75.0%) of the respondents agreed that they wanted to be with their friends, followed by 13.4% who agreed moderately and 11.7% who disagreed. In terms of winning mentality, a majority (63.3%) of the respondents agreed that they wanted to win, with only 22.0% and 14.7% of them agreeing moderately and disagreeing.

A majority (64.7%) of the respondents agreed that they wanted to get rid of energy in their participation, followed by 23.7% who disagreed, and 11.6% who indicated moderate. More than half (65.1%) of the respondents agreed that they liked to travel, whereas 13.8% were moderate and the same percentage disagreed. In terms of keeping in shape, most (65.9%) agreed that they sought to stay in shape, where this was likewise illuminated by a mean of 3.9. A majority (66.4%) of the respondents agreed that they liked the excitement as result of their participation in sports (mean=3.8). More than half (56.4%) of the respondents agreed that they liked teamwork (mean=3.7). Overall, results affirm that respondents agreed that they participated in sport as measured by various dimensions probed above.

4.2 Discussion

The results reveal an important role of peer and family support in shaping female trainees' participation in sports. A considerable number of respondents agreed that their families encouraged them to pursue sports either recreationally or as a potential career path. Early & Corcoran (2013) study research indicated that family support can be a powerful motivator for individuals to engage in physical activity. For instance, Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that social support from family and peers positively influenced individuals' willingness to participate in physical activities, even across different cultural contexts. The strong affirmation that families and peers actively attend sports events or competitions reinforces the idea that visible social support enhances engagement. The role of peers, alongside family, is critical, as it fosters a sense of belonging and shared commitment, thus encouraging continuous participation in sports. The results show that the interest, expectations, and values of the family significantly impact female trainees' choices of sports and levels of involvement. Renfree (2023) also underscored the influence of societal and familial expectations on women's sports participation, thus noting that alignment between personal goals and social support systems is likely

to upscale retention in sports activities. The study also indicates that family values align closely with trainees' sports goals, with many respondents highlighting how these values shaped their aspirations. The notion of aligning family expectations with sports goals is crucial, especially in environments where traditional gender roles might conflict with sports participation. Stockman, (2010) similarly highlighted that external support systems, including family, play a fundamental role in ensuring the inclusion and sustained participation of women in competitive sports, however, a study by Tan and Ceylan (2023), argued that family doesn't play key role in ensuring women participate in competitive sports hence the need for more investigations on this contrast interventionist to get positional a stand.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

From the results, it can be summarized that peer and family social support is key in female trainees' sports participation. Encouragement from peer groups and family is so important in enhancing female participation in sports. The study also concluded that female trainees engaged in sports because they enjoyed being with friends, enjoyed the trips that come with sports participation during competitions, and also participated to stay in shape

5.2 Recommendations

The study revealed that social support plays a crucial role in encouraging female trainees' sports participation. It is recommended that colleges should improve their support systems by inculcating stronger involvement of families and peers. This could be achieved through organized family and community engagement events, with oversight from the college's student affairs department and sports clubs.

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