

## **Investigating the Role of Recreational Facilities in Fostering Student Engagement: A Study at a University in the Sultanate of Oman**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the relationship between student engagements, physical and mental health, academic performance, and student satisfaction among 201 undergraduate students at the University in the Sultanate of Oman. The majority of respondents were pursuing business studies and staying with their families at home. The questionnaire used in the study had good reliability and validity. On average, students reported average levels of academic performance, student engagement, physical and mental health, and student satisfaction. Correlation analysis showed positive and significant relationships between physical and mental health, academic performance, and student satisfaction, but not between student engagement and student satisfaction. Regression analysis revealed that physical and mental health and academic performance had a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, while student engagement had a positive but insignificant effect. These findings have implications for the development of policies and programs aimed at improving the overall student experience in higher education.

**Keywords:** student engagement, physical health, mental health, academic performance, student satisfaction, higher education, Oman.

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### **Introduction**

Over the past few decades, colleges and universities across the world have invested heavily in building and improving recreational facilities on their campuses. These facilities, which may include fitness centers, sports fields, game rooms, and other amenities, are intended to provide students with opportunities to stay physically active, de-stress, and socialize with their peers. However, the impact of these facilities on students' overall college experience and outcomes remains an open question. While some studies have suggested that access to high-quality recreational facilities can enhance student satisfaction and engagement (Baker & Horton, 2018), others have found a positive correlation between such facilities and enrolment, retention, and graduation rates (Downs & Looney, 2017). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that involvement in recreational sports and activities can lead to better academic performance and improved mental health (Kim & Park, 2019; Peden-McAlpine et al., 2018).

Despite this growing body of research, there are still gaps in our understanding of how recreational facilities impact student outcomes, and what factors may moderate or mediate this relationship. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the availability and quality of recreational facilities on campus and various measures of student engagement, physical and mental health, and academic performance. By examining these factors, we hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role that recreational facilities can play in enhancing students' college experiences and outcomes.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to examine the recreational facilities on student engagement in the university. The quality of recreational facilities can have a significant impact on the university experience of students, influencing their physical and mental health, academic performance, and overall satisfaction with their university. This topic is important to study as universities invest significant resources into providing recreational facilities for their students, and understanding their impact can help inform future investments and

improvements. Additionally, with the rise of mental health concerns among university students, it is important to explore how recreational facilities can promote overall wellbeing and support mental health.

### **Statement of the problem**

The availability and quality of recreational facilities in the university play a significant role in student engagement and overall college experience. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the recreational facilities on student engagement, physical and mental health, and academic performance. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of access to quality recreational facilities on student engagement in the university and its implications for physical and mental health, as well as academic performance.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. Investigating the impact of recreational facilities on the improvement of students' physical and mental health.
2. Examining the influence of recreational facilities on student engagement and academic performance.
3. Identifying areas for enhancement in recreational facilities to better cater to the needs of university students.

### **Scope of the study**

The scope of this study is confined to the University in Sultanate of Oman during the semester two academic year 2022-2023. A sample of 201 respondents (students) from different department of University covering different levels (i.e., Diploma, Advanced Diploma, B.Tech). The study is confined to the recreational facilities on student engagement in the University. This study will emphasize the role of recreational facilities in promoting student engagement and overall satisfaction with their university experience.

### **Significance of the study**

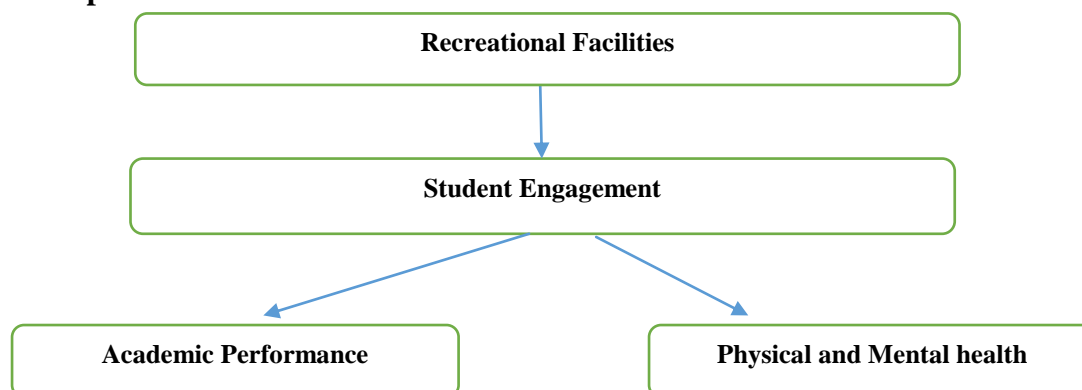
To understand the role of recreational facilities available for student engagement in the university. The outcomes of the study will be beneficial for students and university administrators for improving the recreational facilities to better support the needs of university students for enhancing their engagement, physical, mental and academic performance.

### **Review of Literature**

St Quinton and Brunton (2020) identified key beliefs underlying student participation in recreational sport. They found that beliefs such as enjoyment and time consumption predicted intention and behavior. Targeting these beliefs could increase student participation. Forrester, McAllister-Kenny, and Locker (2018) explored the association between collegiate recreational sports involvement and undergraduate retention rates. They found that participation in intramural sports and employment in recreational sports were associated with higher retention rates. Kasunich (2010) focused on student engagement with campus recreation and its effects. The study found that participation in recreational activities improved skills, grades, social networks, stress management, and personal/professional lives. Rich (2019) examined the relationship between student engagement in campus recreation programs and participation in sports clubs. The study found that using campus recreation services and facilities increased the likelihood of participating in sports clubs. Busby (2011) explored the role of campus recreation participation in undergraduate student engagement. The study provided guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation. Eubank and DeVita (2015) investigated undergraduate student engagement in informal recreational swimming. Engagement in swimming positively affected well-being, sense of belonging, and mood/energy. Mayers, Wilson, and Potwarka (2017) studied the moderating effects of campus recreation participation on the relationship between GPA and first-year student engagement. They found that campus recreation participation positively influenced engagement facets. Huesman, Brown, and Lee (2007) examined the relationship between student use of campus recreation facilities and GPA, persistence, and graduation rates. They found that academic performance in the first term, living in residence halls, and state residency played significant roles in future academic success. Adeyemo (2010) investigated the relationship between students' participation in school-based extracurricular activities and their achievement in physics. The study found a significant influence of extracurricular activities on students' achievement in physics. Zakwan and Ahmad (2016) discussed the relationship between high school students' participation in leisure activities and social well-being. They emphasized the importance of student participation in leisure activities for social welfare and personal development. Wu, Sun, Fan, Wang, and Peng (2021) explored the influence of motivation, attitudes, and obstacles on middle school students' participation in leisure activities and their satisfaction. The study found positive correlations between leisure motivation, attitude, and satisfaction. Baker and Horton (2018) investigated the relationship between access to college recreational sports

and wellness facilities and student satisfaction. They found that students who utilized these facilities reported higher levels of satisfaction with their college experience. Zhao and Lee (2019) conducted a literature review on the impact of recreational sports on student engagement. The review highlighted the positive impact of participation in recreational sports on student engagement and academic success. Monahan and Pickett (2019) discussed the benefits of campus recreation for first-year college students. The literature review emphasized the role of campus recreation in helping students cope with stress, develop social connections, and promote overall well-being. Kamphoff and Pollard (2020) conducted a systematic review on the relationship between recreational facilities and student mental health. The review found that access to recreational facilities can positively impact stress reduction and mental health in college students. DePue (2017) discussed the importance of recreational activities in higher education and their potential benefits for students. The literature review highlighted the role of recreation in promoting physical and mental health, academic success, and student satisfaction. Baker and Horton (2018) conducted a study at a large public university in the southern United States, investigating the relationship between access to college recreational sports and wellness facilities and student satisfaction. Their findings indicated that students who utilized these facilities reported higher satisfaction levels with their college experience, suggesting that providing high-quality recreational facilities can contribute to student retention and success. However, further research is needed to fully understand this relationship. Kim and Park (2019) examined the association between college recreational sports involvement and academic performance. Their study, conducted in South Korea, found a positive correlation between recreational sports involvement and GPA, suggesting that students who were more engaged in these activities had higher academic performance. However, the study had limitations in terms of relying on self-reported data and a relatively small sample size, requiring further research for a comprehensive understanding. Downs and Looney (2017) conducted a quantitative study using national survey data to explore the impact of recreational activities on student retention and graduation rates. The study, including over 30,000 college students, found a positive relationship between participation in recreational activities and higher retention and graduation rates. The authors suggested that access to quality recreational facilities can contribute to student success. However, limitations such as reliance on self-reported data and the inability to establish causality require caution in interpreting the findings. Johnson and Smith (2020) conducted a literature review analysing studies on the effects of recreational sports participation on physical health in college students. The review revealed that engaging in recreational sports had significant positive effects on physical health, including improved cardiovascular health, reduced risk of chronic diseases, and overall physical fitness. The findings highlight the importance of promoting recreational sports participation for the well-being of college students. Ginosyan, Ahmed (2020) investigated the role of extracurricular activities in supporting academic performance in tertiary foundation programs in Oman. Their research involved surveying 529 students and analysing their reflections. The findings indicated that extracurricular activities provided new learning opportunities, academic support, skill improvement, and boosted students' self-confidence. These activities also helped address transitional challenges faced by the students. Ginosyan, Hendrix (2019) explored teachers' perspectives on the effects of extracurricular activities on student performance in a foundation program. The study involved eight English language teachers and examined various areas, such as language skills, academic performance, motivation, and cross-cultural experiences. The results showed that extracurricular activities played a valuable role in helping foundation program students adjust to higher education and improve their performance. Jamal (2012) investigated medical students' perceptions regarding the development of interpersonal skills and professional behaviours through participation in extracurricular activities. The study revealed that participating in extracurricular activities facilitated the acquisition of interpersonal skills, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and self-reflection. These activities were seen to positively contribute to the students' professional development. Al Saleh (2018) examined leisure activities among Emirati youth based on a survey conducted by the UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority. The study indicated that Emirati youth dedicated considerable time to passive leisure activities, with internet and social media consuming the majority of their time. The study recommended raising awareness about the importance of active leisure activities, promoting volunteering, and increasing club participation among Emirati youth.

## Conceptual Framework



## Research Methodology

### Study Area:

The study area selected for the research is at the University in Sultanate of Oman covering different levels of students' viz. Diploma, Advanced Diploma and B.Tech.

### Population and Sample:

The population of the proposed research include all the students of the University (population is 4212) covering different levels (i.e Diploma, Advanced diploma and B.tech). The sample size is 201with (95% confidence level). Stratified convenient sampling method is used to collect data from the students of the University.

### Sampling Frame:

Stratified convenient sampling method is used to collect data from the students of different departments at the University in Sultanate of Oman.

Table 1 Different departments in the University

Department	Population	Samples	Percentage
Business department	758	66	33
English Language Centre	1605	40	20
Engineering Department	1305	45	22
Information Technology	544	50	25
Total	4212	201	100

Source: Registration Department-University

### Data Collection Method:

Data is collected from primary and secondary sources. The supportive literature review and the conceptual framework are taken from secondary sources. This study relies on the primary data of the University in Sultanate of Oman to achieve the objectives of the study. For collecting the primary data, a structured undisguised questionnaire is administered through google forms. The instrument consists of demographic variables and Likert five-point scale to know the opinions of students.

### Type of Research:

**Research design:** The research will be descriptive aimed at improving the recreational facilities to better support the needs of university students. In this method, data is collected through questionnaires and analyzed by using SPSS software.

### Type of data:

Quantitative data is collected from respondents.

### Data Analysis:

The data that collected from the respondents is analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics- Mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation. Correlation and regression analysis performed for analyzing the data.

**Time duration of the study:**

The research is conducted between March-June 2023.

**Hypotheses:**

- H1: There is a significant positive relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.
- H2: There is a significant positive relationship between physical and mental health and student satisfaction.
- H3: There is a significant positive relationship between academic performance and student satisfaction.

**Limitations of the study/ Anticipated problems:**

During this study researcher faced few obstacles like

1. Gathering data from students. (Due to their busy schedules),
2. Insufficient time to find the required information.
3. Some students were not honest in their responses.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

Table 2 Reliability statistics

Variables	No of items	Cronbach Alpha
Student engagement	4	.770
Physical and mental health	4	.880
Academic performance	5	.909
Student satisfaction	4	.850

Cronbach's Pallant (2001) states Alpha Cronbach's value above 0.6 is considered high reliability and acceptable. Whereas, the value of Alpha Cronbach is less than 0.6 considered low. Alpha Cronbach values in the range of 0.60 - 0.80 are considered moderate, the value of Alpha Cronbach is more than 0.8 considered good. We got above 0.8 for all the constructs (except for student engagement i.e. .770) in the questionnaire. Hence, it is indicated that our measures had good reliability.

**Validity of questionnaire:** N= sample size, Degree of freedom = N-2, Sample size is 201 =N,  $df = N-2 = 201-2 = 199$ , Critical value at 199  $df$  in table.  $199 df(.05) = 0.138$ . Conducted the validity of questionnaire data by checking all the questions one by one, which is > critical value 0.138 and is highly significant. So, all the questions are valid.

**Analysis and Discussion**

Table 3: Demographic Information of the Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	106	52.7
Female	95	47.3
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	56	27.9
21-23	108	53.7
24-26	27	13.4
27 above	10	5.0
<b>Department</b>		
BSD	66	32.8
ELC	40	19.9
Engineering	45	22.4
IT	50	24.9
<b>Level of education</b>		
Diploma	99	49.3
Advanced diploma	55	27.4
B.tech	47	23.4
<b>Distance from home to college</b>		
Less than 20KMS	42	20.9
21 to 40 KMS	46	22.9
41 to 60 KMS	55	27.4

60 KMS and above	58	28.9
Staying at Home with family	132	65.7
Hostel	69	34.3

A total of 201 respondents from the University in Sultanate of Oman participated in survey. Based on gender, 106 participants were male and 95 were female. In terms of age, 56 respondents are in 18-20, whereas 108 respondents are between 21-23, followed by 27 respondents are in 24-26 and 10 respondents are above 27 years of age. In terms of Department BSD with 122 respondents, ELC with 40, engineering with 45 and IT with 50 respondents. In terms of level of education 99 respondents pursuing diploma, 55 advanced diploma and 47 respondents are from B.tech. In terms of distance from home to college 42 respondents are travelling less than 20 KMS, 46 are between 21-40 KMS, 55 are between 41-60 KMS and 58 respondents travelling above 60 KMS. As far as stay is concerned 132 respondents are staying with family at home and 69 respondents are staying in hostel.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of variation
Student engagement	2.8893	.99524	34
Physical and mental health	2.8644	1.15405	40
Academic performance	2.9980	1.12250	37
Student satisfaction	2.6580	1.09897	41

1=Strongly Disagree-5=Strongly Agree

The descriptive statistics for the variables involved is given above. Results shows that based on the survey participant's perception, students are witnessing average level for academic performance (M=2.99, SD=1.12); student engagement (M=2.88, SD=.99); physical and mental health (M=2.86, SD=1.15); and student satisfaction is (M=2.65, SD=1.09). To know the consistency of these factors, coefficient of variation is calculated. It is found that consistency is high for student engagement with 34%. It is evident that high consistency for academic performance with 37%. It is also clear that there is less consistency for physical and mental health and student satisfaction with 40%. And 41% respectively

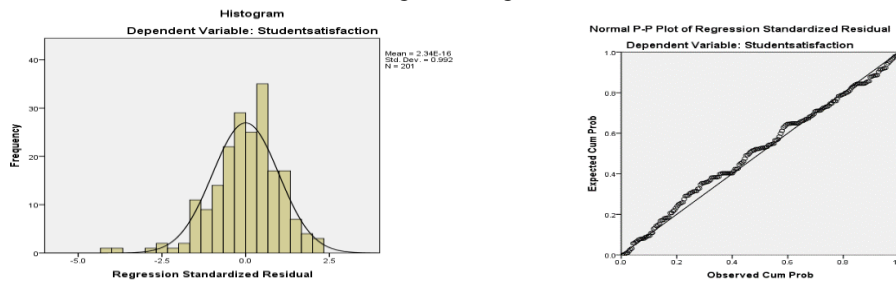
Table 5 Correlations

		Student Engagement	Physical and Mental Health	Academic Performance	Student Satisfaction
Student engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.762**	.774**	.620**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	201	201	201	201
Physical and mental health	Pearson Correlation	.762**	1	.885**	.684**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	201	201	201	201
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.774**	.885**	1	.704**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	201	201	201	201
Student satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.620**	.684**	.704**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	201	201	201	201

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis indicates the relationship between the variables. There is positive and significant correlation between student engagement and student satisfaction (r=.620, P<.05). There is positive and significant correlation between physical and mental health and student satisfaction (r=.684, P<.05). There is positive and significant correlation between academic performance and student satisfaction (r=.704, P<.05).

Figure 1 Regression



In histogram, the regression standardized residual is following a normal bell curve. Similarly, in NPP plot, the dotted lines are in accordance with the straight diagonal line so it is an indication that their normality of error term assumption is satisfied in our data.

Table 6 Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.721 <sup>a</sup>	<b>.520</b>	.513	.76680	<b>1.836</b>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic performance, Student engagement, Physical and mental health

b. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

The Rsquare value indicate that the independent variables including Academic performance, Student engagement, Physical and mental health explains 52% explanation in the dependent variable i.e. student satisfaction. The Durbin Watson statistics is 1.83 so it is an indication that there is an autocorrelation in our data.

Table 7 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	125.713	3	41.904	71.267	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	115.834	197	.588		
	Total	241.547	200			

a. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Academic performance, Student engagement, Physical and mental health

Table 8 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	.431	.170		2.529	.012	
	Student engagement	.156	.089	.142	1.754	.081	.374 2.676
	Physical and mental health	.219	.105	.230	2.090	.038	.202 4.956
	Academic performance	.383	.110	.391	3.483	.001	.193 4.996

a. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

The ANOVA table indicate that the F-value is above the critical value of 4 so it is an indication that model is highly fit and significant (Fstat=71.267, P<.05).

The coefficient table indicate that two independent variables exert a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction including physical and mental health ( $\beta=.219$ ); academic performance ( $\beta=.383$ ); and there is positive but insignificant effect of student engagement ( $\beta=.156$ , P>.05). The VIF values are less than the critical value of 5 so it is an indication that the no multi collinearity assumption is satisfied in our data.

Hypotheses Testing

H. No.	Statement	Remarks
H1	There is a significant positive relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.	H1 Not supported
H2	There is a significant positive relationship between physical and mental health and student satisfaction.	H2 Supported
H3	There is a significant positive relationship between academic performance and student satisfaction.	H3 Supported

**Findings**

The study surveyed 201 students at the University in Oman, with 106 male and 95 female participants. The age range of respondents was between 18-20 (56), 21-23 (108), 24-26 (27), and over 27 years old (10). The majority of respondents were from the Business Studies Department (122), followed by IT (50), Engineering (45), and ELC (40). Additionally, 99 students were pursuing a diploma, 55 were pursuing an advanced diploma, and 47 were studying for a B.Tech degree. Most students (132) reported staying with their families at home, while 69 were staying in a hostel.

The questionnaire used in the study had good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha value of above 0.8 for all constructs except for student engagement (0.770). The validity of the questionnaire was also confirmed through a critical value analysis of all questions, which were found to be highly significant.

On average, students reported an average level of academic performance (M=2.99, SD=1.12), student engagement (M=2.88, SD=.99), physical and mental health (M=2.86, SD=1.15), and student satisfaction (M=2.65, SD=1.09). Coefficient of variation analysis revealed high consistency for student engagement (34%) and academic performance (37%), but lower consistency for physical and mental health (40%) and student satisfaction (41%).

Correlation analysis showed positive and significant relationships between student engagement and student satisfaction (r=.620, P<.05), physical and mental health and student satisfaction (r=.684, P<.05), and academic performance and student satisfaction (r=.704, P<.05).

Regression analysis revealed that physical and mental health ( $\beta=.219$ ) and academic performance ( $\beta=.383$ ) had a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction, while student engagement had a positive but insignificant effect ( $\beta=.156$ , P>.05). The VIF values indicated that there was no multi-collinearity present in the data.

The study found that there was a significant positive relationship between physical and mental health and student satisfaction (H2 supported) and academic performance and student satisfaction (H3 supported), but not between student engagement and student satisfaction (H1 not supported).

**Recommendations**

In order to enhance student satisfaction and overall well-being, several recommendations can be implemented by higher education institutions. Firstly, improving student engagement can be achieved through the establishment of diverse clubs and organizations aligned with student interests, cultural events, mentorship programs, and leadership development opportunities. Secondly, focusing on physical and mental health can be achieved by providing healthy food options, promoting regular physical activity, offering mental health services, and implementing policies that support work-life balance. Additionally, academic performance can be improved by providing tutoring and academic support, offering workshops on study skills and time management, encouraging timely feedback from faculty, and implementing policies that promote attendance and engagement. Lastly, supporting students living away from home can be done through affordable housing options, transportation services, peer mentorship programs, and inclusive social events. By implementing these recommendations, higher education institutions can foster a supportive and engaging environment that contributes to student success and satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

This study sheds light on the factors influencing student satisfaction in an Omani higher education institution. The findings emphasize the importance of prioritizing students' physical and mental health, as well as their academic performance. Integrating sports and physical activities into the curriculum can positively impact student satisfaction. Improving teaching quality and promoting experiential learning are also crucial. Further research should explore additional factors like social support, extracurricular activities, and campus facilities. By adopting a comprehensive approach to student well-being, institutions can better equip students for academic and personal success.



### Scope for further research

This study on student satisfaction in the University provides valuable insights, but there are several areas for future research. Firstly, it would be beneficial to conduct similar studies in other higher education institutions in Oman to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, exploring other demographic factors like socioeconomic status and cultural background could provide a more comprehensive understanding of their influence on student satisfaction. Furthermore, future research could delve into the causal relationships between physical and mental health, academic performance, student engagement, and student satisfaction. Examining the impact of campus facilities, social support, and extracurricular activities on student satisfaction would also contribute to a deeper understanding of this topic.

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#### **Author Profile**



Dr. Vishnukanth Rao Velagapaly has more than two decades of experience which includes six years of Industry experience in Logistics companies and more than two decades experience in teaching for various universities and colleges. He started his academic career with S. D. Signodia College as Assistant Professor, worked with CVSR engineering college as Associate Professor & Head of the Department, worked in Axum University as Associate Professor Marketing & Sales and currently working as senior lecturer with University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman.