

# Recreational Sports Participation: Malaysians' Motives for Participation in Recreational Sports

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## Abstract

**Background.** *One of the most important issues confronting sports psychologists is the motive people assign for participating in sports (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009b; Duda, 1989). The present research continued this trend by investigating the motives Malaysians' assign for participation in recreational sports.*

**Aims.** *The aims of the current research were two-fold: (a) to examine the motives Malaysians assign for taking part in recreational sports; and (b) to investigate the influence of demographic variables on the motives Malaysians' provide for participation.*

**Method.** *A modified version of Duda's (1989) Purpose of Sport Questionnaire was used as the research instrument, and was administered to 602 randomly selected Malaysians (resident in the Selangor State of Malaysia).*

**Results.** *The data collected was collated and statistically analysed using SPSS. Principal component analysis of the data revealed 6 motives for taking part in recreational sport. They were: (a) competitiveness and social status; (b) physically active lifestyle; (c) self-esteem; (d) good citizens; (e) high status careers; and (f) teaching tools. Overall, the results also showed the influence of demographic variables of occupation, income and race on motives for taking part in recreational sports.*

**Conclusion.** *The implications of the findings as they relate to the devising of strategies to encourage Malaysians to participate in recreational sports are discussed, and suggestions offered for future research.*

**Keywords:** *Participation, recreational sports, motives, demographic variables*

## **Introduction**

Participation in recreational sport (also synonymously referred to throughout this paper as participation) has numerous health benefits that include the strengthening of the cardiovascular system, and the prevention of cardiac disease, which has been identified as the greatest killer disease (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009a; b; Siti Sa'aidah, 1997). With this in mind, most developed and even developing countries, including Malaysia, are embracing participation as a means of improving the health of their citizens and concomitantly help reduce their healthcare costs (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009a; Siti Sa'aidah, 1997). However, the number of Malaysians' actively engaged in recreational sport, as an exercise tool is limited (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009a; Siti Sa'aidah, 1997). This was concurred by a seminal study of exercise among adults aged 18 years and above in Malaysia, Siti Sa'aidah (1997), that found that only about 37.6% of the respondents exercised with nearly 62.4% of the respondents not participating in exercise. This trend continues to persist in Malaysia in regard to participation rates (Ampofo-Boateng, Mustafa & Vincent, 2003). This makes a study of the motives Malaysians' provide for participation essential (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009b) as a means of finding methods to encourage participation. Moreover, this situation requires improvement as the health benefits of participation are recognized worldwide, in both developed (Gill, 2000) and developing countries, including Malaysia (Ampofo-Boateng, et al., 2003; Siti Sa'aidah, 1997). Indeed, participation can prevent cancer and stroke, and improve overall health (Gill, 2000). This makes research into the motives people assign for participation very important (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009b).

Gill (2000: 87) defined the concept of **participation motivation** as "the basic motivational issue of why people participate in sports and exercise." The motives for participation, is particularly important in Malaysia, where as already explained in the foregoing, research has indicated that 70 percent Malaysians do not take part in sports (Ampofo-Boateng et al. 2003; Siti Sa'aidah, 1997).

## **Participation Motives in Malaysia**

Overall, there is a dearth of research on participation motives in Malaysia. Notable exceptions are participation motives for sports in general (Rahim, 1995; Sim, 1994; Vincent, 2002). For example, Salman (1997) found that the major motives given by student-athletes for participation in sports were health, interest, sense of achievement, to partake in school or university activities, to socialize, reduce weight, competition and improvement of the shape of the body. In a separate research at the University Putra Malaysia students, Sim Poh Chuen

(1994) found 6 major motives of achievement, body shape, physical fitness, teamwork, learning new skills and challenges, while Rahim Harun (1985) found 6 motives of availability of adequate facilities, socialization, personal interest, the structure of the sports programme, health and academic reasons for participation in sports. Overall, investigations into motives for participation in Malaysia have either used students or student-athletes. The present research extended the motives for participation research, previously limited to only students or student-athletes to all Malaysians. Understanding the motives Malaysians give for participation can help in the devise of fun and fitness activities for Malaysian recreational sports participants to encourage participation (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009b; Mull, Bayless, Ross & Jamieson, 1997).

## **Aims of the Study**

The present research addressed the following research questions.

1. What are the main motives given by Malaysians for taking part in recreational sports?
2. What is the influence of specific demographic variables of age, gender, marital status, educational background, occupation, income and ethnicity on Malaysians' motives for participation in recreational sports?

## **Methods**

### **Sample and Sampling**

The sample consisted of 602 participants, selected from among residents of the Selangor State of Malaysia, living in 2 urban areas of Shah Alam and Petaling Jaya that are among the most populous areas in the state and in Malaysia. At both locations, 10 streets were randomly chosen (Alexandris and Carroll, 1997a, b), and every fifth house or flat in the streets, was visited by one of a team of 5 researchers (Veal, 1992). All occupants in the houses/flats visited, aged 18 years and above, were invited to participate in the survey and none refused participation. The demographic details of the sample are shown in Table 1.

### **Instrument and Data Collection**

A questionnaire, that was a modified version of one developed by Duda (1989) for investigating motives for taking part in sports was used for the research. Respondents were instructed to rate 46 items representing motives for participation on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from; 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (% of the total sample)

Gender groups		Age groups (years)		Marital status	
Male	61.3%	18 – 25	41.7%	Single	57.8%
Female	38.7%	26 – 35	32.2%	Married	40.4%
		36 – 45	15.1%	Divorced / Separated	1.2%
		46 and above	10.8%	Others	0.7%
		Did not answer	0.2%		
Education Level		Occupation		Income	
Primary	6.6%	Government	13.8%	RM1000 and below	22.4%
Secondary	31.8%	Private	51.2%	RM1001 – RM2000	31.1%
Tertiary	61.3%	Self-employed	8.6%	RM2001 – RM3000	23.4%
		Unemployed	7.1%	RM3001 and above	9.6%
		Student	18.4%	Did not answer	13.5%
		Did not answer	0.8%		
Race					
		Malay	52.5%		
		Chinese	30.2%		
		Indian	15.6%		
		Others	1.3%		
		Did not answer	0.3%		

## Results

### Data Analysis

The data collected was subsequently collated and analysed using SPSS.

### Principal Component Analysis

A principal component analysis, a statistical technique applied to a single set of variables, to discover whether specific variables within a set of factors form coherent subsets of factors that are relatively independent of one another was performed on the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). To achieve this, only those components with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 were retained and rotated (Thomas & Nelson, 2001) with orthogonal (varimax) and oblique rotations (Devellis, 1991). The 6 factors that emerged, and were: Factor 1 – competitiveness/social status; Factor 2 – physically active lifestyle; Factor 3 – enhanced self-esteem; Factor 4 – good citizen; Factor 5 – high status career; and Factor 6 – teaching tools (see Table 2) all had acceptable internal consistency reliabilities (see Table 2). The 6 factors are described as below.

**Competitiveness/social status** (12 items) (Factor 1) reflected those items indicating that participation should make a person competitive, enhance his or her popularity and help him or her to move up the social ladder (see Table 2 for the

items that defined this factor). **Physically active lifestyle** (7 items) (Factor 2) comprised of items indicating that participation should help people to be active and fit for life. The 7 items identified under this factor are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Principal Component Analysis of the Motives for Recreational Sports Participation

Factors/factor descriptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Give us a chance to be professional athletes	0.93					
Help us to be popular among our friends	0.93					
Give us status among our peers	0.79					
Give us the chance to be friends with popular adults	0.78					
Give us a chance to feel like a champion	0.71					
Help us to improve our skills so that we can be the best	0.59					
Learn what is meant by teamwork	0.55					
Give us the chance to be rich and famous	0.55					
Prepare us for life win which "winning is everything"	0.51		0.43			
Make us feel important	0.50					
Teach us how to be aggressive	0.49					
Teach us the "killer instinct"	0.41					
Teach us how to keep our body healthy		0.86				
Keep people fit		0.86				
Teach us how to respect our bodies		0.74				
Give us self-confidence		0.65				
Show us how we can be physically active all our lives		0.64				
Make us mentally tough		0.64				
Teach us how to exercise		0.63				
Prepare us to reach the top in our jobs			0.66			
Show us to be better than most people			0.56			
Prepare us for jobs that will allow us to help others			0.52			
Help us to keep working in spite of obstacles			0.51			
Teach us to have high standards for our own work			0.49			
Prepare us to do things that we have to even if we don't want to			0.43			
Teach us to respect the authority				0.79		
Teach us to follow rules				0.74		
Teach us to sacrifice pleasure and work to do the right thing				0.67		
Teach us to work cooperatively with others				0.49		
Make us loyal				0.46		
Make us responsible, law-abiding citizens				0.41		
Weed out those who don't have what it takes					0.76	
Help us to get into the best university					0.61	
Help us move into a job that pays good money					0.47	

(continued)

(Continued Table 2)

Factors/factor descriptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teach us to compete with others						0.72
Teach us to be satisfied when we tried our best						0.65
Give us the chance to get a university education					0.41	0.49
Teach us how to bend the rules when necessary						0.44
Initial eigenvalues	13.07	3.66	2.13	1.68	1.53	1.21
% of variance	28.40	7.96	4.64	3.65	3.32	2.63
Cumulative % of variance	28.40	36.36	41.00	44.65	47.97	50.60
Alpha	0.89	0.73	0.77	0.70	0.48	0.29

**Enhanced self-esteem** (6 items) (Factor 3) was made up of items that showed that participation enhances one’s self-esteem (see Table 2). **Good citizen** (6 items) (Factor 4) captured those attributes that were intended to help people become good citizens through participation (see Table 2). **High status career** (3 items) (Factor 5) comprised of items suggesting that participation will help an individual to obtain a high status career (see Table 2). **Teaching tools** (4 items) (Factor 6) consisted of items suggesting that participation also worked as a teaching tool for participants (see Table 2). The internal consistency of each of the 6 factors was determined. The Cronbach alpha coefficients were found to be high ranging from 0.70 to 0.89, except for Factor 5 (High Status Career, 0.48) and Factor 6 (Teaching Tools, 0.29) (see Table 2), with alpha coefficients for the other factors being, competitiveness/social status (0.89), physically active lifestyle (0.73), enhanced self-esteem (0.77) and good citizen (0.70). The correlations among the 6 factors are reported in Table 3, with moderately high positive correlations of approximately ( $r = 0.50, p < 0.01$ ) observed between the competitiveness/social status, enhanced self-esteem and good citizen dimensions. The correlations were: competitiveness/social status and enhanced self-esteem ( $r = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ); and competitiveness/social status and good citizen ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ) as seen in Table 3.

In addition, the belief that sport enhances a physically active lifestyle was related to the notion that participating functions as a teaching tool ( $r = 0.50, p < 0.01$ ). Also, enhanced self-esteem was positively related to the view that participation teaches us to be good citizens ( $r = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ), (see Table 3).

Table 3: Correlations Among the Motives for Recreational Sports Participation Factors

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Factor 1 – Competitiveness/social status	–					
Factor 2 – Physically active lifestyle	0.31	–				
Factor 3 – Enhanced self-esteem	0.55	0.32	–			
Factor 4 – Good citizen	0.52	0.38	0.52	–		
Factor 5 – High status career	0.19	0.05	0.34	0.24	–	
Factor 6 – Teaching tools	0.41	0.50	0.34	0.39	0.15	–

## The Influence of Demographic Variables on Motives for Participation in Recreational Sports

A series of one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were calculated on the influence of demographic variables of age, gender, marital status, educational background, occupation, income and ethnicity on Malaysians' motives for participation in recreational sports.

### Occupation and Motives for Participation in Recreational Sports

The results for the one-way MANOVA on occupation and motives for participation are shown in Table 4. Self-employed respondents perceived competitiveness/social status ( $F(4,556) = 4.36, p < 0.01$ ), physically active lifestyle ( $F(4,565) = 3.29, p < 0.025$ ), enhanced self-esteem ( $F(4,563) = 2.67, p < 0.05$ ) and high status career ( $F(4,564) = 3.33, p < 0.01$ ) to be important motives for their participation, than the other occupational groups, with Scheffe follow-up test of  $p < 0.05$  for all comparisons, except for the comparison between the self-employed and students on the competitiveness/social status motive and between the self-employed and government employees on the physically active lifestyle motive for participation which were not significant.

Table 4: Observed Means and Standard Deviations (In Parentheses) by Occupation for the Motives for Participating in Recreational Sports

Occupational Groups	Govt.	Private	Self-employed	Unemployed	Student
<b>FACTORS</b>					
Factor 1 – Competitiveness/ social status $F(4,556) = 4.36, p < 0.01$	3.38 (1.10)	3.17 (1.03)	3.56 (0.99)	3.09 (1.07)	3.51 (0.98)
Factor 2 – Physically active lifestyle $F(4,565) = 3.29, p < 0.025$	4.34 (0.71)	4.07 (0.79)	4.38 (1.26)	4.10 (0.80)	4.06 (0.78)
Factor 3 – Enhanced self-esteem $F(4,563) = 2.67, p < 0.05$	3.55 (0.99)	3.45 (1.01)	3.77 (0.87)	3.50 (0.90)	3.66 (0.86)
Factor 4 – Good citizen $F(4,563) = 1.47, n.s.$	3.52 (0.97)	3.51 (1.00)	3.76 (0.86)	3.54 (0.84)	3.53 (0.90)
Factor 5 – High status career $F(4,564) = 3.33, p < 0.01$	3.31 (1.07)	3.07 (0.93)	3.59 (2.68)	2.86 (0.91)	3.05 (1.07)
Factor 6 – Teaching tools $F(4,552) = 1.36, n.s.$	3.74 (2.14)	3.48 (0.81)	3.59 (0.96)	3.50 (0.82)	3.73 (1.90)

## Income and Motives for Participation in Recreational Sports

The results for the one-way MANOVA on income and motives for participation are presented in Table 5. Respondents' in the lowest income bracket (RM1000 and below, a month) perceived competitiveness/social status ( $F(3,489) = 2.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), enhanced self-esteem ( $F(3,494) = 4.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), good citizen ( $F(3,493) = 2.97$ ,  $p < 0.025$ ), and teaching tools ( $F(3,485) = 3.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) to be their motives for participation, than the other income groups, and was confirmed by Scheffe test ( $p < 0.05$  for all comparisons). Those who earned between RM1001 to RM2000 perceived high status career ( $F(3,495) = 3.26$ ,  $p < 0.025$ ) to be the most important motive for their participation, and it was confirmed by Scheffe test ( $p < 0.05$ , for all comparisons between them and the other income groups on the high status factor).

Table 5: Observed Means and Standard Deviations (In Parentheses) by Income for Motives for Participation in Recreational Sports

Income groups	RM1000 and below	RM1001 – RM2000	RM2001 – RM3000	RM3001 and above
Factors				
Factor 1 – Competitiveness/ social status $F(3,489) = 2.62$ , $p < 0.05$	3.44 (1.01)	3.25 (1.05)	3.25 (1.05)	3.17 (1.94)
Factor 2 – Physically active lifestyle $F(3,495) = 2.59$ , ns	4.20 (0.74)	4.20 (0.97)	4.09 (0.81)	3.91 (0.88)
Factor 3 – Enhanced self-esteem $F(3,494) = 4.58$ , $p < 0.01$	3.70 (0.82)	3.55 (1.10)	3.48 (0.87)	3.20 (0.93)
Factor 4 – Good citizen $F(3,493) = 2.97$ , $p < 0.05$	3.66 (0.85)	3.54 (1.05)	3.54 (0.89)	3.29 (0.98)
Factor 5 – High status career $F(3,495) = 3.26$ , $p < 0.025$	3.18 (1.06)	3.27 (1.63)	3.15 (1.01)	2.78 (1.06)
Factor 6 – Teaching tools $F(3,485) = 3.78$ , $p < 0.01$	3.80 (1.77)	3.58 (0.81)	3.55 (1.74)	3.24 (0.93)

## Race and Motives for Participation in Recreational Sports

The results of the one-way MANOVA on race and motives for participation are shown in Table 6. Malay respondents' perceived the motives of physically active lifestyle ( $F(3,569) = 7.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), enhanced self-esteem ( $F(3,567) = 4.07$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), good citizen ( $F(3,567) = 8.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and teaching tools ( $F(3,556) = 3.79$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) to be their main purpose for participation than the other races, and was confirmed by follow-up *Scheffe* test of  $p < 0.05$ , for all

comparisons, except for the comparison with Indians on the good citizen factor. Indians perceived competitiveness/social status ( $F(3,561) = 10.63, p < 0.001$ ) and high status career ( $F(3,568) = 4.22, p < 0.01$ ) to be their motives for participation and was confirmed by *Scheffe* follow-up test with ( $p < 0.05$  for all the comparisons) except the comparison with Malays.

Table 6: Observed Means and Standard Deviations (In Parentheses) by Race for the Motives for Participating in Recreational Sports

	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others
Factor 1 – Competitiveness/ social status $F(3,561) = 10.63, p < 0.001$	3.43 (1.09)	2.94 (1.01)	3.45 (0.10)	3.34 (1.20)
Factor 2 – Physically active lifestyle $F(3,569) = 7.38, p < 0.001$	4.26 (0.73)	4.06 (1.01)	3.85 (0.85)	4.13 (0.91)
Factor 3 – Enhanced self-Esteem $F(3,567) = 4.07, p < 0.01$	3.64 (0.88)	3.36 (1.09)	3.52 (0.84)	3.38 (0.91)
Factor 4 – Good Citizen $F(3,567) = 8.50, p < 0.001$	3.63 (0.84)	3.35 (1.11)	3.61 (0.86)	3.23 (1.10)
Factor 5 – High Status Career $F(3,568) = 4.22, p < 0.01$	3.23 (1.52)	2.89 (0.88)	3.28 (1.01)	2.58 (1.02)
Factor 6 – Teaching Tools $F(3,556) = 3.79, p < 0.01$	3.62 (0.88)	3.48 (1.62)	3.60 (1.95)	3.53 (0.88)

Malays and Indians also chose teaching tools as their motive for participation, than the Chinese ( $F(3,556) = 3.79, p < 0.01$ ), with post hoc *Scheffe* analyses confirming this with ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the comparison between Malays, Indians and Chinese. The comparison between Indians and Malays on the teaching tools was not significant. The demographic variables of gender, age, marital status and educational level did not influence participation motives, and consequently the results relating to them were not reported.

## Discussion and Recommendations Principal Component Analysis Results of the Main Motives for Participation

The results of the principal component analysis indicated 6 main motives that influenced participation, and were competitiveness/social status, physically active lifestyle; enhanced self-esteem; good citizen; high status career; and teaching tools. It is recommended that any future strategy to increase the rate of participation among Malaysians should take these core motives for participation into account.

## **The Influence of the Demographic Variables on Motives for Participation**

Despite the observed differences in frequency of participation as influenced by gender, age, marital status and level of education (Corde & Ibrahim, 1999; Torkildsen, 2000), these demographic variables were not significant motives Malaysian's assigned for participation under the present research. The demographic variables of occupation, income and race are identified as affecting onset and frequency of participation (Alexandris, 1999; Cordes & Ibrahim, 1999; Torkildsen, 2000), and they also had significant influence on Malaysians' motives for participation.

**Occupation:** Regarding occupation, the self-employed motives for taking part in recreational sport included: competitiveness/social status; physically active lifestyle; enhanced self-esteem and high-status career; students' scored significantly higher on the competitiveness/social status motive for participation; and government employees selected the physically active lifestyle as their motive for participation. Any future programmes aimed at encouraging the self-employed, students and government employees to take part in recreational sport, should prominently feature their motives for participation.

**Income:** The lowest income group of RM1000 and below, major motives for participating in recreational sport included: competitiveness/social status; enhanced self-esteem; good citizen; and teaching tools, and should be emphasised in campaigns for participation aimed at them. While, data was not collected on age and characteristics of respondents in the RM1000 and below income bracket, it is speculated that it must have included a large number of young people who had entered the job-market early instead of furthering their education, and perceived participation as a means of helping them to negotiate through life. Those within the RM2001-RM3000, income group selected high status career, as their major motive for participation, than the remainder of the income brackets studied. In the absence of specific information on the participants within this income group, it is once again being conjectured that this income group included a sizeable number of fresh university and college graduates, at early stages of their career and perceived participation as helping them to attain a high status career in their chosen professions.

**Race:** Malays' principal motives for taking part in recreational sport, included: physically active lifestyle; enhanced self-esteem; teaching tools; and good citizen. Apart from the good citizen motive, which registered no significant difference between Malays and Indians, Malays chose the motives above, more than the two other races (Indians and Chinese) assessed under the present research. The reason behind Malays' choice of these motives for participation might be imbued in their rich religious and cultural traditions (Mohd. Sofian, 2001).

**Conclusions and recommendations:** A future research, could delve into the specific nature and intricacies between culture and the motives the different races in Malaysian give for participation. Indians, main motives for participation were competitiveness/social status and high status career. Once again, the extent to which cultural mores influenced Indians' choice of these motives for participation is difficult to determine under the present research. All we can suggest is that future research should examine the relationship, if any, between culture and motives for participation as different races or cultures might have different perceptions and understanding of sport participation (Coakley, 2001).

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