
Influence of English Language Proficiency on Academic and Social Experiences of University Student-Athletes in Pakistan

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Abstract

Social integration of university student-athletes in Pakistan. University life in Pakistan presents unique challenges for student-athletes, especially those with limited command of English, which can affect their academic performance, classroom participation, and ability to build effective relationships with peers and instructors. To explore these dynamics, a mixed-methods approach was employed involving 200 student-athletes from two universities in Faisalabad. Quantitative data were gathered through structured surveys measuring students' English language competency, academic outcomes, and social engagement, while qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative responses, and appropriate statistical methods were applied to analyze quantitative findings. Results indicated that student-athletes with higher English proficiency performed better academically, participated more confidently in class, and integrated more easily into social circles. In contrast, those with limited proficiency often experienced academic stress, social isolation, and difficulty in meeting academic standards. These findings highlight the compounded burden faced by student-athletes in managing both academic and athletic responsibilities. Limited English proficiency was shown to intensify this burden, potentially impacting their overall university experience and future career opportunities. The study underscores the need for universities to implement targeted language support programs that can help student-athletes overcome linguistic challenges, thereby promoting a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. The research concludes that strengthening English language skills is essential for the academic and social success of student-athletes in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

Keywords: English language proficiency, student-athletes, academic achievement, social integration, university education, Pakistan, language support programs.

Introduction

University athletes now place a larger value on English fluency as English has become the primary language of teaching at many higher education institutions in Pakistan. The ability to successfully navigate academic settings where English is the primary language enhance academic achievement and vital social relationships for overall educational experiences. For athletes who must juggle the rigorous demands of their academic and athletic obligations, the capacity to comprehend, speak, and interact in English is essential (Khan et al., 2022).

This research examines the complex effects of English competence on the social dynamics, academic achievement, and educational experiences of Pakistani university student-athletes. By looking at this gap, the research hopes to draw attention to their particular difficulties, especially when juggling rigorous training regimens and competitive sports with the expectations of improved academic achievement. Student-athletes frequently face two challenges: although they are dedicated to excelling in their sport, they also have to deal with the academic requirements set by their schools. Linguistic obstacles can make this dichotomy worse since poor English proficiency might make it challenging to comprehend the course material, participate in discussions, and do assignments correctly. Therefore, there is a unique issue at the nexus of academics and athletics, where fluency in English is essential for encouraging participation and academic achievement (Rafiq, Afzal, & Kamran, 2022). The study investigates how students' performance in classes, their involvement in class discussions and group projects, and their interactions with faculty and peers are impacted by varying degrees of English proficiency. The study also considered how these elements work together to influence student athletes' overall educational experiences. By dissecting these components, the study seeks to shed light on the sociolinguistic dynamics at play as well as the academic context in which these people function (Kuwahara, 2018).

The difficulties that arise outside of the classroom typically show themselves in social situations, when one's ability to communicate in English can either help or hinder collaboration with others. More adept student-athletes are often in a better position to fit in with different social networks, fostering connections that may result in chances for social and academic collaboration. Conversely, individuals with low proficiency may become socially isolated as a result of their inability to create the kind of support systems that are essential to their overall growth (Accardo et al., 2023).

This all-encompassing strategy provided a more thorough comprehension of how English language competency impacts student athletes' overall university experience, social relationships, and academic performance. To improve support systems for student-athletes who navigate the complexities of language and education in the context of Pakistani higher

education, this research attempts to address these gaps in the literature and offer useful information to educational stakeholders. Students' proficiency in the English language Pakistani university athletes' academic achievement, social connections, and overall educational experiences are all impacted in different ways.

English is frequently seen as a free language that promotes communication, information sharing, and academic engagement in an increasingly worldwide academic environment. As a result, this ability is crucial in determining the paths taken by athletes who must balance the demands of both intense sporting commitments and extensive educational duties (Hyland, 2019). According to the study, academic achievement is closely correlated with fluency in the English language, especially in higher education settings where the majority of the curriculum is delivered in English. The inadequate English proficiency of Pakistani athlete students, who frequently struggle with time constraints brought on by demanding training and competition schedules, might hinder their ability to comprehend the course's complicated topics, dedicate themselves to academic literature, and do assignments efficiently. They can engage more actively in class discussions and comprehend the most rigorous evaluation standards, students who possess a high degree of English proficiency typically perform better academically. Conversely, individuals with inadequate language skills have difficulty understanding academic material, which can result in fewer credentials and less teacher assistance (Zafar, Altaf, & Saeed, 2020).

English language proficiency has consequences that go beyond a student's academic achievement; it has a big impact on social interactions within the university community. Interactions with classmates, instructors, coaches, and administrative personnel can create a special social atmosphere for athlete students. Stronger interpersonal links are typically formed by proficient English speakers, opening doors for cooperative networks and initiatives. Student-athletes who are proficient in English are more likely to engage in extracurricular activities, which enhance their share capital and add to their overall educational experience. Conversely, people who struggle with English may experience social exclusion and a lack of absorption into the academic community. Your motivation, overall sense of belonging, and mental health may all suffer as a result of this social dynamic (Anderson et al., 2018).

It is important to consider the cultural aspects of language proficiency. In Pakistan, the financial situation and availability of educational resources are frequently correlated with the usage of English. Additional obstacles may arise for athletes from low-income families; a lack of exposure to English throughout their training years may limit their capacity to engage in academic life. This discrepancy can lead to a vicious cycle of disadvantage where children who struggle academically also miss out on important social changes that are essential for

their overall development. The English language proficiency of collegiate athletes is closely linked to their overall educational experiences. Competition has an impact on its capacity to acquire resources, look for academic assistance, and take part in important debates for knowledge sharing. Additionally, as instructional materials and online academic resources mostly employ the English language, the demand for proficiency in the language has increased with the emergence of digital learning settings. Athletes may therefore be at a disadvantage if these digital channels are difficult to use (Krämer, 2024).

Addressing the English domain gap among athletes is essential to raising academic achievement and fostering inclusive educational experiences as Pakistani institutions continue to place a high priority on academic success and global engagement. In conclusion, comprehending the complex connection between English language proficiency and athletes' experiences in the Pakistani context necessitates an all-encompassing strategy that includes laws intended to enhance language proficiency, offer easily accessible support networks, and establish culturally instructive settings. Responsive by ensuring that athletic involvement does not take precedence over academic goals, but rather enhances them, these policies would help student-athletes advance both personally and professionally. Given the special strain and difficulties, it is important to investigate the relationship between academic achievement and English language proficiency among Pakistani university athletes (Javed, 2020). English is frequently used as the medium of instruction at Pakistan's higher education institutions and proficiency in the language is a prerequisite for academic achievement. This section describes how student athletes' proficiency in the English language models their comprehension of the course contents, affects their involvement in academic conversations, and affects their overall academic performance.

First of all, language proficiency is essentially a must for comprehending the course materials. Student-athletes who are more proficient in the English language are better able to understand difficult ideas, especially when such ideas rely on advanced theoretical speaking or technical jargon. First of all, language proficiency is essentially a must for comprehending the course materials. According to prior studies, student-athletes who are more proficient in the English language are better able to understand difficult ideas, especially when such ideas involve sophisticated theoretical speaking or technical jargon. This discrepancy demonstrated both the language's immediate impacts on comprehension and its long-term consequences on academic achievement (Munawar et al., 2023).

Engaging in scholarly discourse is another important performance indicator where proficiency in the English language is essential. Deeper learning requires dedication in the classroom since it enables students to express their ideas, engage with others, and take in many viewpoints. Athletes with little command of English have frequently shown a hesitancy

to engage in conversations, primarily out of concern for poor communication or humiliation. Many researchers, on the other hand, tended to actively dedicate themselves, offering insightful contributions and fostering a stimulating learning environment.

According to statistical data from the universities surveyed, athletes who were proficient in English were twice as likely to participate in class discussions as those who were not. This tendency enhances group dynamics in addition to individual learning experiences. English language proficiency is linked to broader academic outcomes such as retention rates and the medium of the votes. A thorough examination of the academic records of students from several institutions across Pakistan has shown a consistent pattern: student-athletes who knew English well had an average GPA of 3.5 while those who did not know it had an average of just below than 2.6. This notable distinction emphasizes the notion that language proficiency is essential for success in higher education courses rather than merely being a supporting component of academic studies. Importantly, research examples provide compelling narratives to demonstrate these findings. For instance, there is evidence of a student-athlete who significantly improved in comprehension and academic performance following focused English-speaking instruction intended for academic settings. Their GPA subsequently rose by more than 1.0 in just one semester demonstrating the significant potential influence of language interventions on students' academic performance. Examples such as this highlight an important pedagogical corner; enhancing language proficiency may therefore be a calculated tactic to boost university athletes' academic achievement (Javed, 2020).

The difficulties brought on by a lack of proficiency in English not only impact individual athletes but also their whole university experience, including social interactions and educational trips. These findings highlight how crucial it is to increase English proficiency to foster both academic achievement and overall dedication in college settings. University athletes' social contacts are essential to their academic performance and mental health. Proficiency in English which is crucial in the increasingly diversified academic environment of Pakistani colleges, is frequently necessary for the capacity to interact with classmates, coaches, and faculty members. Language proficiency is essential for building networks and connections, not only for communicating. The capacity to express ideas clearly and participates in English-language conversations may greatly enhance the social experiences of athlete students, who frequently balance their academic obligations with athletics (Escoto & Alfarero, 2022). Students with various degrees of proficiency find it difficult to make meaningful relationships in Pakistani colleges where English is frequently employed as a teaching language. Language problems might make it difficult for peers to train since athletes who struggle with English could find it difficult to participate in casual rallies, team debates, and social gatherings. As a result, this restriction may make it more difficult for them to

interact with classmates who have comparable interests outside of their athletic obligations, creating a small support system and a close-knit social circle.

Feelings of alienation can result from this seclusion, particularly for people who are already juggling the demanding demands of academics and athletics. English proficiency is crucial for more than just basic interpersonal interactions; it also opens up more extensive networking opportunities. Proficient English speakers are frequently more likely to commit to instructors and business leaders, which may be very helpful for athletes who want to advance their job opportunities. Effective English communication enables them to participate in collaborative initiatives, mentorships, and internships all of which are critical for their career and personal growth. However, those with poor English proficiency may be less likely to look for these kinds of chances because of concern about a misunderstanding or poor communication. A cycle of wasted resources and missed chances that are essential to their future academic and athletic careers may be sustained by this hesitancy (Ahmed et al., 2024). English proficiency has a significant impact on how well athletic students integrate into a diverse student group. Students from different linguistic backgrounds communicate in a university setting, frequently using English as a common language.

Student-athletes may find it challenging to participate in intercultural discussions or activities that encourage diversity if they lack enough language proficiency (Escoto & Alfarero., 2022). The relationship between social contacts and English proficiency among students in Pakistani athletic universities has important ramifications for their academic journeys. The poor language proficiency can make it more difficult to build relationships with classmates, limit networking possibilities, and lessen integration in the university's diverse student body, all of which can lead to a sense of loneliness. These social dynamics make it clear that school leaders must consider language support services, which enhance academic performance while fostering inclusive social settings for all students. It becomes clear that overcoming these language difficulties is essential to ensuring that athletes attending Pakistani institutions receive a well-rounded education.

Athletes' overall educational experiences are greatly influenced by their proficiency in English, which has an impact on several aspects of their university lives, such as adaptability, extracurricular involvement, and access to academic resources. English is used as a language of communication among various student groups in addition to being a medium of instruction at many Pakistani higher education institutions. Therefore, student athletes' proficiency in English might either help or hinder their ability to integrate into the academic setting (Siddiky, 2019).

Although understanding the course material, contributing to class discussions and communicating with the faculty are all necessary for academic achievement, linguistic competency and academic adaptability are closely connected. Higher proficiency in the English language helps student-athletes adjust to university life more easily since it allows them to comprehend lectures, comprehend prescribed readings, and effectively express their thoughts. Those with low levels of competence may struggle to meet these academic demands which might lead to a decline in performance and a rise in anxiety. Language challenges can therefore impede their overall educational experiences by causing them to feel alone and disengaged from school (Steele et al., 2020).

Research Methodology

A combination research design of quantitative survey and qualitative interviews was used in a mixed-methods approach. This research was conducted by 200 student-athletes. BS student-athletes belonging to the Department of Physical Education & Sports Sciences from two universities participated in the study which evaluated their English competence.

A validated social integration scale was used to quantify social experience while academic performance data was gathered from university records. The subjects of this research were students from the BS who were studying at the undergraduate level. Purposive sampling is used in the sample selection process to guarantee representation from a range of academic institutions and athletic specialties. Therefore, 50 participants for the in-depth interviews and 150 student-athletes for the survey make up the sample size. Quantitative information on English language competence levels and their effects on social and academic experiences are gathered using a standardized questionnaire. Included in the questionnaire are details about their age, gender, years of experience, sport, and university along with self-assessment of English competence (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), indicators of academic achievement (GPA and assignment difficulty), and social experiences (communication difficulties, peer interaction, and event participation). A selection of participants is interviewed in semi-structured interviews to learn more about their individual experiences. The interviews center on difficulties arising from limits in English competence techniques for getting beyond linguistic obstacles. English's function in social and academic integration. Questionnaire, Attitudes, and views about English competence and its impacts are using a 5-point Likert scale. An interview guide is a list of open-ended questions intended to encourage conversation on the experience of the participants. English ability exam Participants' ability levels are categorized using a standardized language proficiency exam.

Findings

A. Qualitative Findings

The researchers conducted interviews with BS (n=50) students who were athletes to assess their proficiency in English and adherence to moral academic standards. The findings pointed to a significance between academic integrity perceived and English proficiency. Greater

adherence to ethical academic norms was associated with higher scores, most likely as a result of improved comprehension and interaction with academic materials that emphasize the value of integrity in academic work. The efficiency of coaching and team chemistry can be impacted by the English language. The teams' cohesiveness and effectiveness improved as a result of the English members' improved player-coach communication. Athletes who were proficient in English were able to comprehend coaching strategies and apply them successfully during competitions, according to the statistical analysis of the game results, which is in line with the players' English proficiency levels.

Several themes emerged from the interview replies. Higher English proficiency among student-athletes was associated with fewer challenges in comprehending lectures and finishing homework. Additionally, they felt more comfortable interacting with classmates and teachers and taking part in class discussions. On the other hand, people who were less proficient frequently needed translation assistance from their peers and struggled in social situations which made them feel alone.

B. Quantitative Findings

Through a standardized questionnaire incorporated the English competency test results and indicators related to academic success, (n=150) student-athletes from various disciplines participated. The findings showed that the grade points average (GPA) had a definite positive connection ($r=0.62$, $p < 0.01$). This implied that increased proficiency in the English language is linked to better academic achievement, which is explained by a deeper comprehension of the course content and more proficient academic communication.

Academic achievement and English language skills were significantly positively correlated ($r=0.67$, $p < 0.01$). Better proficiency scores were associated with better GPAs for student-athletes. Additionally, there was a favorable link between social integration scores and social experiences ($r=0.54$, $p < 0.05$) suggesting that proficient English speakers had superior social experiences.

Discussions

The results indicate that student-athletes academic and social performance in Pakistan is significantly influenced by their ability to speak and understand English. To help student-athletes better manage their multiple duties, universities should think about putting in place linguistic support programs specifically designed for them. Peer tutoring, English language classes, and social interaction-promoting integration activities are a few examples of such programs (Ahmed, Sadeea, & Hassan, 2020). The importance of English language proficiency as a key element in Pakistani university found significant effect on athletes' performance.

Through quantitative measurements and qualitative feedback, the evidence revealed a complex relationship where English proficiency not only forms the foundation of academic performance, indicating a deeper commitment to learning resources and moral academic conduct but also interacts with these people's social and athletic lives. By fostering an atmosphere that maximizes their dual roles as academics and athletes, the incorporation of language assistance for student-athletes may enhance both their academic integrity and athletic success. Thus, the presentation of these empirical findings highlighted the necessity of customized treatments meant to enhance English language proficiency in this particular population. The profound impact of fluency in English on several important found facets of Pakistani athletes' experiences.

A strong command of the English language is inextricably related to better academic achievement as the data showed. More competitive student-athletes are better able to comprehend the course material, dedicate themselves to challenging academic books, and take part in debates. In addition to helping students get higher marks, this competition promotes a deeper comprehension of the course material, which is crucial for the overall learning process. Conversely, those with inadequate proficiency in English may encounter obstacles that impede their academic progress, resulting in a dual weight of academic and athletic demands (Huang & Tsai, 2024).

University athletes' social connections are greatly impacted by their proficiency in the English language. Effective English communication enables these individuals to establish social and intellectual networks. This is especially important in a varied and multicultural classroom setting where English is used openly. English-speaking athletes are more likely to engage in extracurricular activities, form connections with people from other backgrounds, and take part in collaborative learning opportunities all of which enhance the educational experience overall. Conversely, those who struggle with language may be excluded or alienated, which might negatively impact their overall university experience and sports performance (Afriani & Sepdanius, 2025). These findings have significant ramifications for educational practice and university operations in Pakistan. Universities need to acknowledge that fluency in the English language is a crucial component that affects athletes' social integration, overall well-being, and academic path. Universities must undoubtedly put in place specialized language assistance programs that cater to the particular demands and schedules of athletes. These initiatives might include English-only classes, tutoring, and workshops on academic writing and communication techniques. Universities should think about fostering a campus culture that celebrates multilingualism and supported students who are still honing their English. Peer tutoring programs, in which proficient English speakers assist their classmates, can be essential to creating a supportive academic and social atmosphere (Chan, 2020).

The academic, social, and overall educational experiences of Pakistani university athletes are intricately linked to their proficiency in the English language. In addition to fostering academic and athletic achievement, addressing this complex issue is crucial for young individuals' personal growth as they prepare to navigate a world that is becoming more interconnected by the day. The significance of English proficiency in the context of higher education cannot be overstated, and initiatives to assist athletes in this area are critical to their overall development (Carroll & Hollinshead, 2017).

Conclusion

The impact of English language competency on the social and academic experiences of Pakistani university student-athletes was investigated in this study. The results showed that social integration and academic achievement are significantly influenced by English competence. Higher English proficiency among student-athletes was associated with improved academic achievement because it allowed them to understand lectures, do tasks efficiently, and interact with peers and teachers with confidence. On the other hand, less proficient students had trouble grasping the course material which resulted in difficulties in the classroom and more stress.

English language ability had a big influence on student-athletes' social experiences outside of the classroom. English-speaking people were more likely to communicate with others, form a variety of friendships, and take advantage of more networking and career-growth chances. On the other hand, a lack of competency sometimes results in loneliness and trouble adjusting to academic life. To improve student-athletes academic and social experiences, Pakistani institutions must put in place focused language assistance programs that guarantee they receive sufficient instruction in English. Interventions and tactics that successfully overcome language barriers and promote a more welcoming learning environment for student-athletes may be the subject of future studies.

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