

COMPARING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF FOOTBALL AND CRICKET PLAYERS LIVING IN AND AROUND AGARTALA IN TRIPURA: A CASE STUDY

Awashes Subba

Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Visva-Bharati, West Bengal, India

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Abstract:

The aim of the study was to compare the socio-economic status of cricket and football players. Subjects of the study were 20 male cricket players and 20 male football players (16 to 24 years) selected from Agartala in Tripura. The data were collected using a socio-economic status assessment questionnaire. Using descriptive and independent t-tests as analytical tools, the study revealed that cricket players were in the high socio-economic status category, whereas football players were in the lower-middle socio-economic status category. Therefore, the study concludes that athletes who play Cricket tend to come from significantly higher socio-economic backgrounds than those who play Football in and around Agartala, Tripura.

Key Words: Socio-Economic Status, Cricket, Football, Agartala, Tripura

Introduction:

The phenomenon of sports participation is intrinsically linked to the socio-cultural, political, and economic fabric of society. While physical prowess, physiological attributes, and psychological resilience are foundational to athletic success, an athlete's trajectory is frequently predicated on external environmental factors, most notably their socio-economic status. Socio-economic status is a composite metric of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, typically measured through a combination of education, occupation, and income, along with variables such as wealth and area of residence.

In the realm of sports sociology, this metric is recognised not merely as a background variable but as a critical determinant of an individual's opportunities, choice of athletic activity, motivation, and ultimate success within the competitive sporting arena.

The northeast India, particularly Tripura, characterised by its vast demographic diversity and uneven economic development, presents a unique landscape for the sociological study of sports. Historically, sports participation in India has been stratified along class, gender, and geographic lines.

The commercialisation of sports has further transformed the Indian sporting arena, including that of Agartala in Tripura. The transition toward modern, codified sports was significantly catalysed by the state's royal patronage, which was widely regarded as the architect of modern Agartala and instrumental in introducing Western sports to the region.

Having acquired an affinity for cricket during his time in London, the Maharaja began organising matches on the palace grounds in the 1940s. This Royal taste of cricket established cricket's early association with royalty, affluence, and the state's socio-economic elite. This historical legacy imbues cricket with a distinct cultural capital, positioning it as an aspirational, resource-intensive pursuit. Conversely, football developed along a more democratic and grassroots trajectory. It permeated the socio-economic strata through a network of local clubs. Football, being a low-cost sport that requires minimal equipment and utilises open fields, made it immensely popular among the working-class and lower-middle-class populations of Agartala.

Cricket and football represent two profoundly distinct sociological phenomena, each requiring distinct capital configurations and appealing to distinct socio-economic demographics. Cricket occupies a hegemonic and unparalleled position in India, intertwined with national identity, mass media consumption, and immense corporate investment. From a structural perspective, cricket is inherently resource-intensive. It requires highly specialised and costly protective gear (including pads, gloves, helmets, and customised bats), meticulously maintained playing surfaces (turf pitches), and highly structured, technically rigorous coaching environments to master its complex biomechanical demands. Consequently, cricket has historically been patronised by affluent classes, and its contemporary participation remains heavily skewed toward the urban middle and upper-middle classes who possess the requisite economic capital to sustain long-term training and the social capital to navigate its highly competitive selection hierarchies.

Football, while immensely popular in specific regional pockets such as the Northeast, West Bengal, Goa, and Kerala, presents a contrasting socio-economic profile. Often romanticised as the "beautiful game," football is characterised by its inherent democratisation. The fundamental requirements of the

sport are minimal a ball and an open expanse of space making it highly accessible to marginalised, rural, and lower-income communities.

In states like Tripura, football is not merely a recreational pastime but a highly energetic pursuit deeply embedded in grassroots culture. It is frequently played across all socio-economic strata, but it is particularly embraced by those in the lower-middle and working classes. In Agartala, where the socio-economic backgrounds of players are highly heterogeneous, sports often serve dual sociological roles particularly cricket, as a representation of the affluent class and elite identity, and football as a vital, albeit challenging, pathway for socio-economic mobility. Therefore, assessing the socio-economic status of players across different sports is fundamentally an empirical inquiry into how class dynamics, historical legacies, and capital distribution manifest within the physical domain.

Objective of the Study:

The objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic status of registered football and cricket players of Agartala and to compare the socio-economic status of cricket and football players.

Methodology Used:

This study adopts a quantitative approach, as it is deemed appropriate for the objective measurement, numerical quantification, and statistical analysis of socio-economic variables, minimising researcher bias and facilitating generalizability within the defined population.

Subjects of the Study:

Subjects of the present study were 20 male cricket players and 20 male football players (16 to 24 years old), selected from Agartala, Tripura, India. The target population of this study comprises male players actively competing in organised football leagues within the city limits. The research is geographically delimited to Agartala, the capital city of Tripura.

Data Collection Procedure:

Before collecting the data, permission was taken from the administrative authorities and head coaches of the respective sports clubs and academies in Agartala. Participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that all the information will be kept confidential. After obtaining informed consent, the questionnaire was administered individually. The Socio-economic status assessment questionnaire, developed and modified by O.P. Agrawal et al. (2005), was used for data collection.

The Questionnaire Used:

Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by O.P. Aggarwal, et.al (2005) was used. This specific scale was chosen for its comprehensive nature and its proven validity in evaluating the socio-economic status of families of Indian society. This scale consists of 22 items encompassing a broad array of socio-economic indicators. These parameters include, but are not limited to, the education and occupation of family members, monthly per capita income combined from all available sources, the physical type and condition of the housing, dwelling area, and earning members within the family unit. By incorporating living conditions and physical assets, this scale effectively measures the tangible economic realities and accumulated capital of the players' family. In this scale, each of the 22 items has weightage, and individual scores typically ranging from 0 to 7. The summation of these individual item scores yields a maximum possible aggregate score of 100. Based on the total cumulative score obtained out of 100, the socio-economic status is formally categorised into one of six definitive strata. This categorisation provides an accurate reflection of their social and economic standing relative to the broader population.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Class Stratification

Total Score	Socio-Economic Class
≥ 76	Upper High (Class I)
61 - 75	High (Class II)
46 - 60	Upper Middle (Class III)
31 - 45	Lower Middle (Class IV)
16 - 30	Poor (Class V)
< 15	Very Poor (Class VI)

Source: Aggarwal et al., (2005)

Statistical Analysis Framework:

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the continuous total SES scores of both the football and cricket cohorts. To ascertain a statistically significant difference between the two independent groups (Cricket vs Football) in their mean SES scores, an independent t-test was employed. The independent t-test is widely recognised as the robust statistical procedure for comparing the means of two independent, unrelated groups.

Result of the Study:

The educational background shown in figures 1 and 2 below indicates that the football players were educationally backwards compared to cricket players. Football players were found having traditional educational degrees whereas cricket players were found having advance educational degrees and diplomas.

Figure 1: Educational background of Football players

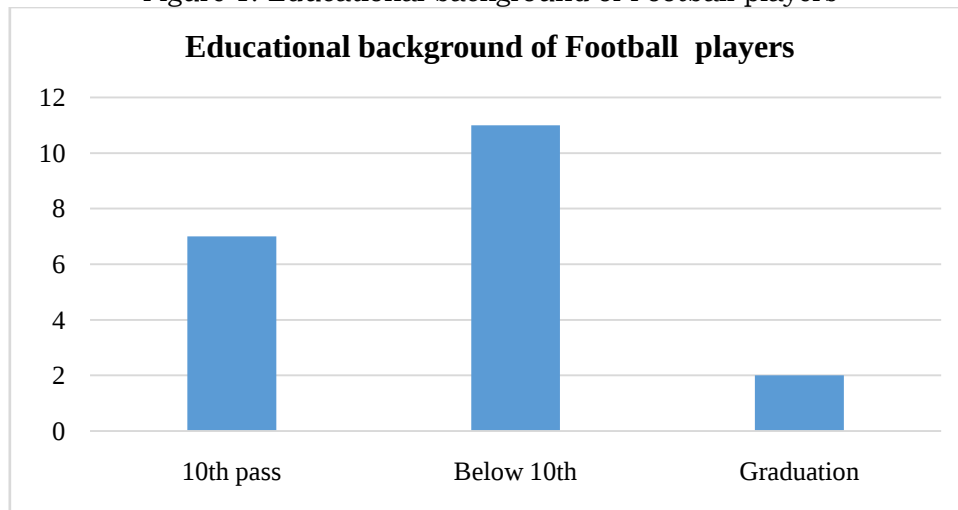


Figure 2: Educational background of Cricket players

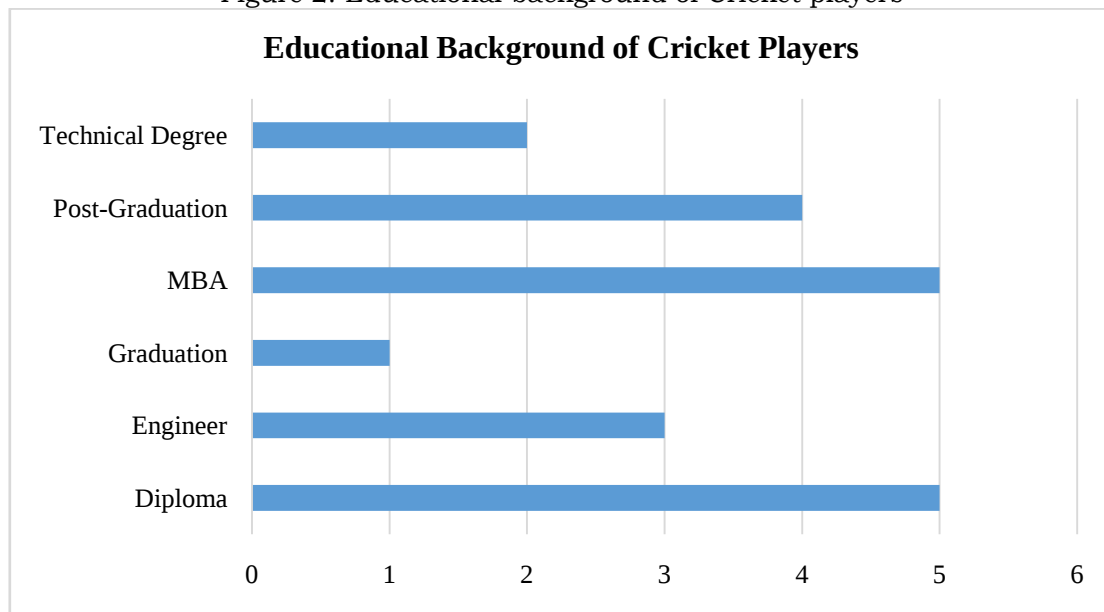


Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the groups on Socio-economic status

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cricket	20	65.6	7.08148	1.58347
Football	20	39.9	4.29075	0.95944

The above table-3 indicates that the Cricket players have a considerably higher mean socio-economic status score (65.60) compared to Football players (39.90), and the Cricket group also shows greater variability (SD = 7.08) than the Football group (SD = 4.29).

Table 3: F and t-table for testing the equality of variances and equality of means

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Score Equal variances assumed	2.98	.092	13.8	38	.000	25.70	1.85	21.9	29.4
Equal variances not assumed			13.8	31.2	.000	25.7	1.85	21.9	29.4

In the above table 4 the p-value is 0.092, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, and hence the null hypothesis of equal variances was not rejected. This indicates that the variances of the two groups are not significantly different. In other words, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is satisfied. This means the variances of the Cricket and Football groups on socio-economic status are

statistically homogeneous (equal). Therefore, it is appropriate to use the "equal variances assumed" row of the independent samples t-test.

Table 4: t-table for the data on Socio-economic status along with F-value

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Mean Difference	t-value	p-value	F-value	p-value
Cricket	20	65.6	7.08						
				25.7	1.85	13.88	0	2.98	0.092
Football	20	39.9	4.29		.				

There is a statistically significant difference in socio-economic status between Cricket players and Football players, with Cricket players belonging to significantly higher socio-economic status back grounds (M = 65.60) than Football players (M = 39.90). The large t-value $t(38) = 13.88$ and very small p-value ($p < 0.001$) indicate difference in mean socio-economic status scores between Cricket and Football players is statistically significant, as the p-value shown in the table-5 is less than 0.05, and that this difference is unlikely to be due to chance. Additionally, since the Levene's F-test was non-significant ($p = .092$), the equal-variances assumption underlying this t-test was satisfied, lending further confidence to the validity of this result.

In simple terms, athletes who play Cricket tend to come from significantly wealthier/higher socio-economic backgrounds than those who play Football, and this difference is both statistically robust and based on a valid (equal-variance) comparison.

Discussion of Findings:

The following interpretation of the present findings were drawn based on the review of related literature and the results of the study.

The result shown in table-1 &2, in terms of educational background indicated that the football players were educationally backward as compared to cricket. Football players were found having traditional degrees whereas cricket players were found having advance educational degrees and diplomas.

The mean, standard deviation and standard error of mean for cricket and football players are shown in the result section, Table 3, indicating that the mean value of cricket players in terms of Socio-economic status is higher than the mean value of football players. Since the mean value of cricket players is 65.60, and after comparing and evaluating this value with the given Socio-economic status scale modified by O.P Agrawal et.al. (2005), this value found in the category of 61-75, which further belongs to the category of High Socio-economic States of the family. However, the mean value of football players in terms of Socio-economic status is 39.90 which falls in the category of 31- 45 which further belongs to the category of Lower Middle Socio-economic State of the family.

The statistical result showed that there is a statistically significant difference in socio-economic status between Cricket players and Football players, with Cricket players belonging to a significantly higher socio-economic status background (M = 65.60) than Football players (M = 39.90), $t(38) = 13.88$, $p < .001$. The large t-value and very small p-value indicate that this difference is unlikely to be due to chance. Additionally, since Levene's F-test was non-significant ($p = .092$), the equal-variances assumption underlying this t-test was satisfied, lending further confidence to the validity of this result.

In other words, athletes who play Cricket tend to come from significantly wealthier/higher socio-economic backgrounds than those who play Football, and this difference is both statistically robust and based on a valid (equal-variance) comparison.

Although the present findings reveal a contrast difference between cricket and football on socio-economic background in the context of Agartala, Tripura, but to substantiate the present findings, there is a scarcity of past studies relevant to the present study. However, some other studies conducted in other geographical locations found supportive for the present findings. For example, a study conducted by Deshmukh (2013) on financial conditions amongst Kabaddi and Football Players in Intercollegiate Competition. His sample consisted of 30 Kabaddi players and 30 Football players, and selected from the Intercollegiate Competition. He found a significant difference in the financial status of Kabaddi and Football Players: 30 Kabaddi players and 30 Football players who participated in the Intercollegiate Competition of S.G. B. Amravati University, Amravati (Deshmukh, 2013).

Similarly, Urvashi Kodli (2016) investigated the socio-economic status effect on the physical fitness of sports persons of Bidar Taluka. By administering Bharadwaj's (1971) socioeconomic status scale on 100 sports persons aged between 18 and 25 years, their study indicated a positive effect of socio-economic status on the physical fitness of sports persons. The present finding is also in line with the findings revealed by kodli (2016).

In some other study, such as by Biswajit Pal et al. (2015), who studied the socioeconomic background of four different tribes of West Bengal, their case study found socio-economical difference among the four tribal sub-castes.

Although there are several studies that have used a quantitative approach using a questionnaire as the main tool for data collection and statistical analysis techniques, the findings of such studies are case-specific and, therefore, cannot be generalised to a larger population. This is true with the present findings.

Conclusion:

The purpose of the study was to compare the socio-economic status of football and cricket players. Only 20 cricket players and 20 football players (age 16-25) were recruited as subjects for the study from Tripura, Agartala, which was considered a limitation of the study.

Based on the results of the study and within the limitations of the case study, it may be concluded that individuals who play Cricket tend to come from significantly wealthier/higher socio-economic backgrounds than those who play Football, and this difference is both statistically robust and based on a valid (equal-variance) comparison. In addition, the study found that football players were more educationally backwards than cricket players, and football players had traditional degrees, whereas cricket players had advanced degrees and diplomas.

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