

Personal, Social and Environmental Correlates of Sports Participation among Varsity Student-Athletes in Insurgency Ridden Areas of Northern Nigeria.

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Abstract

Purpose: An understanding of the personal, social and environmental factors as correlates of sports participation among varsity athletes in insurgency ridden areas in Nigeria will allow for the optimizing of student-athletes participation and minimize morbidity. The purpose of this study was to discuss the personal, social and environmental factors that affect varsity student-athletes in northern Nigeria, an area ridden with insurgency for the past six years. Personal factors in this study include the demographic attributes of the student-athletes such as cognition, motives and interests. Social factors include parents, teammates, course mates, lecturers, coaches, media, policy, security and legislature. Environmental factors identified include weather, air quality, playing surfaces, proximity to safe facilities. There are evidence in research that demonstrates that sports programmes provides many positive benefits for students especially when sound educational policies and quality leadership are in place. There has been copious literature that supports the use of sports in improving personal, social and environmental factors of sport participants. Some of these include; improvement in motor skills, enhancement of normal physical, social growth and maturation, improvement of socialization, self-esteem, self-perception and psychological wellbeing.

Method: Student-athletes (N= 637; male= 386 and females = 251). The mean ages of the student-athletes were (24 ± 1.2). These student-athletes were selected from the five (5) universities domiciled in the three states that are ridden with insurgency in the northern Nigeria. The student-athletes were sampled using the simple random sampling technique. Coaches in the respective universities served as research assistants and assisted in the collection of data for the study. The respondents were served a 57-item questionnaire that elicited information on personal, social and environmental factors as correlates of sports participation. Instrument's reliability index for personal factors ($r= 0.92$), social factors ($r= 0.95$) and environmental factors ($r= 0.87$) were ascertained using the Cronbach's alpha. A factor analysis using the principal component method of extraction with varimax rotation was performed on the student-athletes' rating of different subscales.

Results: Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) with Correlation Matrix at 0.05 level of significance. Significant relationships were examined between personal factors and sports participation ($r= .451$, $p < 0.05$); social factors and sports participation ($r=.372$) and no significant relationship between environmental factor and sports participation ($r=.028$). Furthermore, Multiple Regression was run on the three independent variables. The overall regression model was significant. Meaning there is significant relationship between personal, social and environmental factors in sports participation among student-athletes in Northern Nigeria Insurgency ridden areas. Sports participation by students is drastically affected by fear of attack by unknown persons on sport arena.

Key words: Personal, Social, Environmental, Sport participation, Varsity student-athletes, Insurgency.

Introduction

Based on Government policy direction in promoting sporting activities in tertiary institutions in line with the United Nations' declaration of 2005 as an International year for Sport, Nigerian Universities were directed to set aside a lecture free-day for sport, Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2006). It was also directed in the same circular (ADF.160/S.862/VOL.10218) that sport shall be compulsory for all students in the first two years of students enrolment. Though this policy was partly implemented, certain factors have remained the clog in the wheel of progress for sport in Nigeria. In line with the theme of this year's conference, "The Impact of University Sports on the Global community, the researchers have based their study on the personal, social and environmental factors as correlates of sports participation among varsity athletes in insurgency ridden areas in Nigeria.

This is coming at the heal of the unprecedented threat sport is facing in some parts of Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to discuss the personal, social and environmental factors that affect varsity student-athletes in northern Nigeria, an area ridden with insurgency for the past six years. Personal factors in this study include the demographic attributes of the

student-athletes such as cognition, motives and interests. Social factors include parents, teammates, course mates, lecturers, coaches, media, policy, security and legislature. Environmental factors identified include weather, air quality, playing surfaces, proximity to safe facilities. There is evidence in research that demonstrates that sport programmes provide many positive benefits for students especially when sound educational policies and quality leadership are in place (Booth, Owen, Bauman, Clavisi, Leslie 1999). There has been copious literature that supports the use of sports in improving personal, social and environmental factors of sport participants (Timperio, Salmon, & Corti, 2007; Allenda, & Cowburn, & Foster, 2006). Some of these endearing skills include; improvement in motor skills, enhancement of normal physical, social growth and maturation, improvement of socialization, self-esteem, self-perception and psychological wellbeing.

Research relating to the personal, social, and environmental factors associated with sport participation abound (Trost, Owen, Bauman, Sallis, Brown, & Wendy, 2002; Wu Sk 2002; Humpel, Owen, & Leslie, 2002) for instance, Physical environment factors have consistent associations with physical activity behavior. In the same guise, accessibility, opportunities, and aesthetic attributes had significant associations with physical activity. Weather and safety showed less-strong relationships. Where studies pooled different categories to create composite variables, the associations were less likely to be statistically significant (Humpel, Owen, & Leslie, 2002).

Studies have supported personal factors as significant correlates of sport participation by students in colleges and universities. Some studies categorized these personal factors into determinants and motives (Bottenburg, 2015). Determinants are self-efficacy, perceived pleasure and perceived barriers whereas motives include fun, belonging to group, learning new skills and techniques, experience success, getting fit and healthy, getting good body and relaxation. Studies have identified predictors of physical activity in older populations, showing social support, facility access, and neighbourhood safety as significant predictors of sport participation (Booth, Owen, Bauman, Clavisi & Leslie, 2000). In addition, the use of Multilevel modelling (Ball, Timperio, Salmon, Giles-Corti, Roberts, Crawford, 2007) in examining the personal, social and environmental factors of sport participation yielded significant association with walking for leisure and walking for transport among women.

Research evidence have shown that sport contributes to psychosocial health, functional ability and general quality of life (Hamafyelto & Badejo, 2002) and has tremendously reduce the risk of coronary heart disease (ACSM, 2014) and some cancers. In this study sport refers to all forms of human movement which aim to improve or improve physical fitness or mental wellbeing, create or improve social and cultural or obtain results in competition (Malcolm, 2012).

Personal factors and sport participation

People are motivated for various reasons to participate in sport. These reasons could be personal, social and psychological. Whatever the reason for ones participation in sport (drive force) (Tseng, 2006), the ultimate end is for one to have satisfaction.

Commenting on the epidemiology of physical activity in the United States Dishman, Heath and Lee (2013) demonstrated that racial and ethnic minorities, people who have less formal education or low-income jobs, and people who live in rural areas are least physically active during their leisure time. It was generally noted by these authors that the highest prevalence of physical inactivity is found in the southeastern region of the United States, which is heavily rural. Although moderate –intensity participation was noted along gender, however, females were found to show lower vigorous physical activity. Indeed several studies on female sport participation in schools in Nigeria have continued to show that female students indicate low interest in sport (Hamafyelto & Badejo, 2002;). In most of these studies, cultural barriers were implicated more frequently (Bottenburg (2015; Sadeghzadeh & Maghami, 2012).

Social factors and sport participation

There has been a quantum lip in the drive for sport facilities in Nigerian Universities in recent years. This is aimed at providing sport activities for students and staff on campuses. While this is being done in many universities, students do sometimes face certain social challenges that have to do with their participation in sport on campus. Lee, Lee and Haeng (2004) investigated the differences in social factors and constraints of sport participation among youths participating in sport activities after school. In their study, social factors were shown to be very important predictors of sport participation. However, in their study, time factor was found to be a crucial constraint to sport participation.

Explaining the social constraints of sport participation, Northern Ireland Assembly, Research and Library services (2010) outlined and examined three main barriers to sport participation (socio-cultural, practical and knowledge barriers). Although the barriers focused on women and disabled population, notable similarities exist with students population in view of the fact that cultural affinity irrespective of educational attainment have great influence on sport participation in this part of the country where the study was conducted (Hamafyelto & Likki, 2006; Hamafyelto & Badejo, 2002). Reeves (2010) examined the impact of social stratification, gender and sport participation. Four dimensions of sporting practice formed the basis of the study (Gender and correspondents; age, internal and external orientation; men internally oriented and class, education and social status). Interestingly, Reeves found that gender, age, education and social status are correlates of sport participation. Apart from socio-cultural affinity, studies have shown how sport has sometimes deviated from institution mission. In this regard, students were reported to have indulged in social vices that are inimical to total aim of sport (Butts, 2006; Fields, Collins, & Comstock, 2007). Many that view sport from this perspective among students may indeed not participate in sport. However, studies have also proved that sport is character builder, moral developer and distiller of emotions (Ajayi & Hamafyelto, 2002).

Environmental factors and sport participation

Environment encompasses the physical structures of sport facilities, weather, security and safety, distance from sport facility and so on. Previous studies on physical environment (Humpel, Owen, & Leslie, 2002) have argued that studies on physical environment were relatively new as such paucity of empirical data. However, anecdotal research on environmental attributes though least understood is known to have influence on physical activity. Several self-reported studies (Booth, Owen, Bauman, & Clavisi, 2000; Sallis & Owen, 1997) implied that physical environment such as convenience facilities or lack of facilities has significant influence on sport participation. For instance, access to a park and perceiving footpaths as safe for walking were significantly associated with being sufficiently physically active for health benefits (Booth et al, 2000). Sport England Research (2006) though found that environmental factors are not very important in influencing participation levels, recent findings have remained consistent that environmental attributes are important and key to sport participation. Location of school and area of living for example plays an important role in students' opportunities to participate in physical activities. Students who lived close to sport facilities observed that proximity to sport facilities facilitate their sport participation (Dagkas, & Stathi, 2009).

Insurgency/terrorism as barrier to sport participation

Terrorism or insurgency is not a new phenomenon with the events of Munich in 1972 and indeed the most recent one in Boston marathon held in 2013. Insurgents' violence just like terrorists' is designed to spread fear and intimidation among the civil populations (Krahe, 2013). Considering the violent atmosphere that constitutes and dominates so many higher institutions in some parts of northern Nigeria, sport participation in terms of hosting of mega sport competition has suffered. For example, on April 20th 2012, Bayero University Kano came under heavy attack by the insurgents, killing no fewer than twenty (20) people in a church service. In the same guise, Adamawa state University, Mubi in the Northeastern Nigeria was subdued by the insurgents, hosting their flag on the campus and killing several others. This University remained closed for long period of time (Vanguard newspaper, 2012, daily trust newspaper, 2014). The Garissa University, Kenya attack where over 149 students were murdered is another case in point (BBC news, 3, April, 2015). Similar threats were feared in the 2012 London Olympics when the Guardian newspaper of February 12, 2012 reported security threats by extremists. Also the Sochi summer Olympics of 2014 (CBS news, 2014)

With hide spade of violent attacks ravaging Universities where the younger athletes of any nation are supposed to emerge, there leaves much to be desired for sport administrators and institution management to allow for gathering of students in large number for fear of violent attacks. Apparently, students in Universities that do not experience these attacks on their campuses may be continuously apprehensive of potential attacks. This can then remain a barrier for large proportion of sport participation to comply with mass participation being advocated by the government.

Method: Student-athletes (N= 637; male= 386 and females = 251). The mean ages of the student-athletes were (24 ± 1.02). These student-athletes were selected from the five (5) universities domiciled in the three states that are ridden with insurgency in the northern Nigeria. The student-athletes were sampled using the simple random sampling technique. Coaches in the respective universities served as research assistants and assisted in the collection of data for the study. The

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics for respondents

Age Group	n	mean	sd
18- 20	83	19.08	.20
21-23	117	22.41	.23
24-26	119	24.33	.22
27-29	135	26.07	.13
30+	183	29.11	.24

Table 1. is the frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation for the different age groups in the study. The age mean and standard deviation stands at (24 ± 1.02) .

Table 2

Mean and standard deviation score

Group	factor			
	Participation	personal	social	environmental
Male				
Mean	10.19	7.82	19.68	12.13
Sd.	2.71	2.46	6.97	4.08
Female				
Mean	10.35	7.55	20.28	12.71
Sd	2.26	2.51	6.15	4.14

Table 2 describes the variables of the study terms of the mean and standard deviation. It appeared that the female athletes (10.35 ± 2.26) in this study showed more involvement in sport than their male (10.19 ± 2.71) counterparts. However reasons for this variation were not ascertained. The personal factors of male students (7.82 ± 2.46) was higher than their female counterparts (7.55 ± 2.51) whereas the female showed more social reasons for participation (20.28 ± 6.15) as against the male students (19.68 ± 6.97), whereas they showed similar environmental factor for participation in sport (male 12.13 ± 4.08 ; female 12.71 ± 4.14).

Table 3

Number of times individuals participated in sport in a semester

Group	participation status		
	(Active participation)	Moderate participation)	(no participation)
Male	19 (4.9%)	175 (45.3%)	192 (49.7%)
Female	3 (1.2%)	110(43.8%)	138 (55.0%)

Table 2 is a table of weekly participation in sport by students in universities in the northeastern states where insurgency has been predominant. Data showed that only 4.9% male and 1.2% female student-athletes actively participated in sport in the semester. Whereas 45.3% male and 43.8% female student-athletes moderately participated in sport while in 49.7% male and 55.0% females indicated that they did not participate in sport at all. This demonstrates the fear and apprehension students have about their sport environment.

Table 4

Correlation coefficient on personal, social and environmental factors and sport participation

Variables	1	2	3	4	
Participation	Pearson	1	.451	.372	.662
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Personal	Pearson	.559	1	-.179	-.158
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Social	Pearson	.453	.433	1	-.272
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
Environmental	Pearson	.662	.151	-.272	1
	Sign. (2-tailed)	.000	.003	.000	

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis on personal, social, and environmental factors as predictors of sport participation

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1					
Regression	143.336	3	47.779	7.625	.000
Residual	3966.476	633	6.266		
Total	4109.812	636			

- a. Dependent variable
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Personal, social, environmental factors

Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were conducted to examine the relationship between personal, social and environmental factors and sport participation in insurgency ridden area of the northeast states of Nigeria. As can be seen in the table each of the predictors is positively correlated with participation in sport, indicating that participation in sport is predicated on these three factors.

The Multiple Regression model with all the three predictors produced $R^2 = .035$; $F(3, 633) = 7.625$, $p < 0.05$. This implied a statistical significant relationship between the predictors and sport participation in the insurgency ridden areas.

Exploring data in this study the researchers found very disheartening that sport participation has drastically reduced in the Northeastern Nigeria due to the incessant attacks on schools and communities. With the seemingly high security presence in most communities there is still apprehension of unlikely attacks on innocent people in schools and community (BBC, 2015). This may be explained by the high correlation observed between environmental factors and sport participation in the result of this study. The case of Garissa University in Kenya, for example, where over four hundred students were massacred in a single attack could send such fears for parents and students to avoid the university premises for whatever reason including sport participation. Apart from the destruction meted on the Adamawa State University, Mubi in the Northeastern Nigeria, several students have been reported missing and their whereabouts still remain a matter of concern (Daily Trust, 2014).

It may be noted that in most states without national or State Stadia, the bulk of sport facilities are domiciled in Institutions of higher learning. Greater patronages of these facilities come from students and graduate students. The introduction of curfews in most of these states has added the challenge of low participation in sport (Humpel, Owen, & Leslie, 2002; Sport England Research, 2006). Sochi summer Olympics 2014 suffered the same threat (CBS news, 2014). One's security is as important as one's health. As a security measure institutions always have their gates closed at the beginning of the curfew following repeated threats by the insurgents to attack institutions of higher learning. The insurgents disdain for western education and prohibition of people to acquire it precludes the zeal of citizens to pursue their sport goals with determination and enthusiasm.

Conclusion: It is concluded in this study that due to insurgency in parts of the North eastern states of Nigeria, student-athletes involvement in sports, both intramural and extramural has been affected. This indeed is due to the apprehension students have on frequent attacks members of the insurgency carry out on innocent members of the communities at different times. Given the fact that the major slogan of the insurgency is that “Western Education is prohibited by Islam” makes sport participation in the affected Universities crucial. It is therefore recommended that adequate security measures need to be taken to forestall attacks on institutions and community. Government must raise up to the occasion of stamping out activities of the insurgents in order to allow people to carry on with their usual daily activity.

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