



Perceived Effects of Religious and Cultural Belief on Students' Participation in Sports among Universities in the Geo-Political Zones, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated effects of religions and cultural belief as correlate of students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The descriptive survey design method was used in this study. The population of this study comprised of all 302 students-athletes and sports Administrators of selected South-South, universities. The simple random sampling procedure was used to arrive at the sample size. A self-structured instrument was used for data collection. Faced and content validities were ensured by experts from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education and Sociology department of the University of Port Harcourt. The inferential statistics of simple linear regression was used to test the two hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels. The study found that religion and cultural belief significantly influenced on students' participation in sports among universities in the South-South, Nigeria ($p > 0.05$). It was concluded that religion and culture belief among university students encourage their involvement in sports. The study recommended that the shared beliefs of Christianity and Muslims or traditionists should be incorporated in developing the curriculum of the university in order to increase on their inter-personal relationship through sports participation.

Keywords: Religion, Cultural Belief, Sports Participation, Correlate and University.

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INTRODUCTION

Sports is a form of competitive physical activities usually governed by a set of rules made by professional body with the aim to maintain physical fitness, provide entertainment to both the audience and participants with available records kept and updated at the highest levels, while failure and accomplishments are widely announced in news bulletin (Deemua, 2014). Sports is most often played just to stay in good physical condition.

Sport have been increasingly organized and regulated from the time of ancients Olympics up to the present century. Industrialization has brought increased leisure time to the citizens of developed and developing countries leading to more time for citizens to attend and follow spectators' sports, greater participation in athletics activities, and increased accessibility. These trends continued with the advent of mass media and global communication, and the internet-all while enjoying the exercise and competition associated with amateur participation in sports.

Sports and religion are two of the oldest social institutions in history. They have been forever linked since the times of the ancient Greeks to the contemporary athletes, thanking God for victory.

Armstrong in Deemua (2014:13) observed:

The mixing of sport and religion has been in place at least since the Greeks athletes offered rituals sacrifices to the gods in the hope of enhancing their performance in events. In my Catholic childhood making the sign of the cross before a free throw was fairly common practice. Today, the presence diety in sporting events seems, dare we say, Ominiprsent.

John, Barry and Gerold in Deemua (2014), disclosed that sport traditionally was under the jurisdiction of church of state. The researchers stated that leisure activities, sports and games were under church control because of their concern for body and soul. Consistent with this, goal, sport competition was often organized only on holidays in conjunction with the celebration of religious rites of festivals.

In a related research about religions' influence on students' participation, Awosika in Deemua (2014), pointed out that religious affiliations have difference influence on students' participations in the two-third generation universities. It was pointed out that religions doctrines observance would be different between the two-third generation universities. Thus, this dissimilarities in the influence on students' participation in recreation showed that if more Christians were found participating in one university, it would be different in other university, resulting to more Moslems or traditionalists.

Fadoju (1999) observed that religion is another strong factor that provides an avenue for children, youths and adults alike to socialize. Even though some types of religion forbid people, particularly women, from wearing some types of dresses, yet children and youths improve on their interpersonal relationships through sporting programs organized by religious organizations.

In contrast to the influence of religion to students' participation in sport, cultural beliefs also influence students' participation in sports. Sports participations is a matter of interest, born out of the value attached to it. The belief evolved around sports participation determines students' attitude to sports.

Many have been tempted to hold erroneous belief that sports is for few intelligent students and as long this stigma persists in sports, less number of students may show interest

in sports. Supporters of interscholastic programmes believe that athletic participations have beneficial impact on academic achievements. Camp in Babatunde (2001) showed that academic achievement could be enhanced by students' participation in extracurricular activities as measured by grades.

The belief that sports has adverse effects on the academic performances is accepted as one of the major reasons why few students participate in school or college sports. Most literature show that students do run away from sports not because they do not have the necessary potentials for it but because of general misconception of what sports participation is, and other such emotive utterances that those who take part in sports among students' are regarded as never to do well students, the low academic achievers.

Statement of the Problem

The government has been making some efforts at improving students' participation in sports in the south-south state universities. These include recruiting kinetics sports personnel and coaches to organize and administer sports programmes, providing sports facilities and equipment awarding scholarship and given awards to the participating students among others. Unfortunately, the performance of students' participation in sports is not improving, suggesting that dissimilarities among the religious group have affected their interest and performance in sports.

The researcher, therefore, bothered about students still performing poorly in sports could it be that some types of religion still forbid people to participate in sport? And some people being tempted to have erroneous belief that those who take part in sports are regarded as never to do well students, to low academic achievers? This leads to the problem of this study which is perceived effects of religion and belief evolved around students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

- Find out how religion affects on students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria.
- To what extent belief evolved around sports affects students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- Will religion influence students' participation in sports among universities in the Geopolities zones, Nigeria?
- Does belief evolving around sports influence students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at alpha level of 0.05 confidence:

- There is no significant difference between religion and students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria

- There is no significant difference between belief evolved around sports and students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study consisted of 330 students athletes and sports administrators in universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 302 students-athletes and sports administrators spread across 6 universities in the Geo-political zone, Nigeria.

The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select six (6) universities, out of the existing state and federal universities, the respondent were also selected using the sample random sampling techniques. A self-designed instrument titled "Administrative and Socio-cultural correlates Questionnaire (ASCCQ) was used for data collection. Face and content validity of ASCCQ were ensured by experts in the areas of Human Kinetics and Health Education and Sociology in the University of Port Harcourt. The mean statistics was used to answer the various research questions whereas the simple linear regression statistics at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS

The results of this study are as follows:

Research Question 1: Does religion correlate with students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria?

Table 1: Religion as Correlate of Students' Participation in Sports among Universities in the Geo-Political Zones, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Sample Size	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1	Students with Christian background	302	3.32	.65	Correlate
2	Religious affiliation of students has nothing to do with students' achievement in sports.	302	3.44	.61	Correlate
3	I participate in sports because it considered the values and share beliefs of my religion.	302	3.24	.66	Correlate
Grand Mean			3.30	0.64	Correlate

Table 1 shows that students with Christian background are more involved in sports participations ($\bar{x} = 3.23$, $SD = .65$), religious affiliation and students' academic achievement in sports ($\bar{x} = 3.44$; $SD = .61$), sports considers the values and shared beliefs of my religion ($\bar{x} = 3.24$; $SD = .66$) positively influence students' participation in sports. With grand mean of 3.30, religion encourages athletics participation in sports among universities in Geo-political zones, Nigeria.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant correlation between religion and students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria

Table 2: Summary of Relationship between Religious Affiliation and Sports Participation

Variable	r	r ²	Df	Alpha level	f-cal	f-cri	p-value	Decision
Religious Affiliation	.547	.229	300	.05	127.787	3.84	.000	Rejected

Table 2 above shows the simple linear regression of respondents' view of religious affiliation as a factor of sports participation among student athletes in universities in Geo-political zones, Nigeria. The table depicts that a test of calculated R-value (.547) at alpha level of 0.05 with three hundred degrees of freedom implies that there is a positive moderate relationship between religions and level of sports participation. The f-cal value (127.787) is greater than the f-critical value (3.84) at alpha level of 0.05 with three hundred degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between religion and level of participation. The value of regression co-efficient of determination (r^2)(.299) reveal that there is 29.9% variation in the level of participation which could be counted for by religion and sports participation.

Table 3: Summary of Relationship between Belief Evolved around Sports and Sports Participation

Variable	r	r ²	df	Alpha level	f-cal	f-cri	p-value	Decision
Belief	.331	.109	300	.05	36.799	3.84	.000	Rejected

The data in table 3 reveals that the R-value for belief evolved around sports is .331 which shows a positive low relationship between belief about sports and level of sports participation. The f-cal (36.799) is greater than the f-critical value (3.84) at df. of 1 and 300 at 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between belief evolved around sports and level of sports participation.

The value of regression co-efficient by determination (R^2)(.109) reveal that there is 10.9 percent variation in level of participation which could be counted for by the belief evolved around sports. With the result, the null hypothesis that belief evolved around sports will not significantly be a correlate of sports participation among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria is rejected.

Research Question 2: How does belief evolved around sports correlate with students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria?

Table 4: Belief evolved around Sports as Correlate of sports participation among Universities in the Geo-Political zones, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Sample Size	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1	The belief that sports is important in any other areas of academic pursuit	302	3.24	.64	Correlate
2	The view that sports improves academic performance of athletes	302	3.26	.61	Correlate
3	The misconception that sports for less intelligent students affects participation in sports	302	3.33	.63	Correlate
Grand Mean			3.22	0.63	Correlate

Table 4 shows that the respondents agree that sports is as important as any other area of academic pursuits ($\bar{x} = 3.24$; $SD = .64$), that sports improves academic performance of athletes ($\bar{x} = 3.26$; $SD = .61$), the misconception that sports is for less intelligent students ($\bar{x} = 3.33$; $SD = .63$) encourage students to participate in sports. With the grand mean of 3.22, belief evolved around sports influence sports participation among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Religious Affiliation and Intercollegiate Sport Participation

The findings disclosed that religious affiliations correlate significantly with level of sports participation among male and female athletes in the South-South state universities of Nigeria. As can be seen from the statistical testing of hypothesis one, this implies that there are different opinions about religion and sports. Many are of the view that there are many values and practices in religion which are parallel to those found in sports. Moreso, old and contemporary studies show greater connectivity between sports and religion.

Thomas (2012), indicated a close relationship between sports and religion in that both stress discipline repetition and the development of character. Fadoju (1999) also pointed out the relationship between sports and religion is that sport has been used by religious bodies to attract people and also sports as a religion has attracted the attention of the social scientists. This link between sports and religion corresponding with Thomas (2010) and Deemua (2014); both of whom posited that prayers, ritual sacrifices and spiritual incantations surround events before during and after recreational and competitive sports.

The findings of the study on the impact of religion on sports participation is in line with Babatunde (2001), that religion affect sports participation. This is consistent with Awosika (1992), who pointed out that religious affiliation has different influence on students' participation in recreation in the two-third generation universities. The dissimilarities of the influence of religion on students' participation according to Awosika (1992) showed that if more Christians were found participating in one university, it would be different in other universities resulting into more Muslim or traditionalists. Muslim religion according to Ilama (1997), is not in any form in conflict with its follower, be it men or women to participate in sporting activities, all they used to do is to observe of the ethics of the religion.

In time past, sports was used by the missionaries to attract people and youths into the Christian folds. Sports as a kind of religion, if properly planned and administered, can be a good instrument for peace, togetherness and social integration.

Based on the evidence so far, Sports and religions are interrelated and both can be used to achieve desirable values in human society instead of being antagonistic to each other. It can be deduced that if Muslim and Christian men and women are given value orientations about sports and encouraged to take leadership position in sport development and careers within the Human Kinetics field, then some leaders can be made in meeting the needs of young Muslims and Christians in sports. The findings of this studies reveal that when sports is organized in such a way that it considers the values of various religious beliefs, more students from different religious sector will participate in sports irrespective of their shared beliefs and the ethics of their religion.

Belief Evolved Around Sped Participation.

The research Findings of this study reveal that the belief evolved around sports participation determines students attitude to sports, many have been tempted to hold erroneous belief that sports are for few intelligent students and as long as Ibis stigma persists in sports, less students may show interest in sports. If the age long misconception built around sports is removed the attitude of students is likely to be affected, positively thereby enhancing the number of students who will be attracted to it. Supporters of intercollegiate sports programmes believe that athletic participation have beneficial impact on academic achievement. Camp in Babatunde (2001) showed that academic achievement could be enhanced by students' participation in extracurricular activities as measured by grades.

The belief that sports have adverse effect on the academic performances is accepted as one of the major reasons why few students participate in school or college sports. Most literature show that students do run away from sports not because they do not have the necessary potentials for it but because of general misconception of what sports participation is, and such other emotive utterances that those who take part in sports among students are regarded as never do well students, the low academic achievers. Deemua (2014) debunked this proposition by saying that a positive relationship existed between sports and academic achievement.

Therefore, when the old belief held about sports is changed and sports occupy its deserved place in the university programmes then students will develop strong attitude for sports. To achieve this, university authorities should re-define sports education and incorporate into their curriculum of studies for universities to run throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this study, the researcher concluded that religious affiliation and belief evolved around sports positively influenced students' participation in sports among universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria despite her dissimilarities among the various religious group. And in contrast, academic achievement could be enhanced by the students' participation in extracurricular activities as measured by grades.

Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusion arising from this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- The shared beliefs and values of other religious background should influence the way sporting activities are structured and accessed in order to increase on their inter-personal relationship through sporting programmes organized by the universities in the Geo-political zones, Nigeria.
- Public and enlightenment campaign is desirable in stressing the values and importance of sports for a change of societal attitude towards students' participation in sports.
- Adequate and stimulating sports facilities should be made available to stimulate their interest and involvement in recreational sports.

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