

Personal Attributes as Determinants of Sport Participation among Undergraduates in Selected Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This study focuses on personal attributes of undergraduates as determinants of sport participation in selected Nigerian universities which include age, gender and marital status. The instrument for the study is a self-developed, validated questionnaire. The subjects of the study are undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities. Analysis is the use of percentages and inferential statistics of chi square X^2 at 0.05 level of significance. The results derived from the study reveal that students' personal attributes significantly determine their sport participation. Among other recommendations made is that it is highly imperative for university authorities to make frantic efforts to develop modalities capable of encouraging students' sport participation since most of them have sport potentials as evident in their post-primary school sport records. This will enable our universities groom healthy and academically sound graduates.

Key Words: sports participation, personal attributes, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Effective performance in any human capacity depends largely upon the personal attributes of the individuals. Excellent performance particularly in sport is a by-product of many personal attributes such as age, gender and marital status (Babatunde, 2001).

Universities throughout the world are centres of sporting activities. Many of those who win medals at international sporting events are either students or fresh graduates. It is understandable that students in universities are mainly youths, an ideal age for developing interest in sport. Sporting activities contribute in maintaining good health among both the young and the old. Several factors contribute to students' attitude towards sport such as age, gender and marital status. These factors form an important aspect of personal attributes which either enforce or inhibit the extent to which individuals can participate in sporting activities.

The unique role of age in sport participation is incontestable. It is a known fact that there is a certain age noted for excellent sport performance particularly competitive sport. Competitive sport by its very nature requires a lot of energy, power and agility. This is the more reason why competitive sports have always been identified with youths. It is expected that undergraduates would be more involved in sport as most of them are at their youthful age with varied sport potentialities and skills which if well motivated could produce excellent sport results. Sport by nature, be it recreational or competitive, involves physical and mental coordination prowess. According to Ikulayo (1986), age has a strong influence on physical performance. The fact that universities admit a large number of youths into various courses at undergraduate level yearly makes the nation's expectation about sport development in Nigerian universities genuine most especially when considering the age of the students and sport potential as evidenced by their post-primary school sport records.

Igbanugo (1986) indicates that most undergraduates are between the age group of 22 – 25. This group is noted for its ability to engage in physical exercises for prolonged period of time. This explains the physiological basis why youths are more engaged in varied physical activities like sport and do excel. Gender, according to Fadoju (1999), refers to the social roles and expectations that are associated with being male or female which largely influence their lives. Though there are physiological differences between men and women, research shows that the two sexes are more similar than they are different.

However, the roles of men and women are undergoing significant changes both at work, play and in the family. Adeyanju (1999), in support of this view, maintains that despite the fact that many discriminatory practices exist against women involvement in sport, there are those who dare the consequences. They participate, sponsor, encourage and reward sport women. This means, if all cultural barriers hindering the participation of women in sport are removed, it is likely that women will be freed from this deprivation and discrimination. However, Babatunde (2001) is of the view that gender is a strong determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in first generation Nigerian universities. It is further discovered that male students involve more in sport than their female student counterparts.

2. Method and Procedure

The descriptive survey research design is utilized in the study. Male and female undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities are used for the study. These are University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ahmadu Bello University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and University of Benin.

The instrument of the study is a self-developed, validated questionnaire based on Likert scaling design of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with the use of available sampling technique. Three thousand questionnaire forms are administered to undergraduates. Out of this, only 2,610 forms are correctly filled, returned and coded for analysis. The test-retest method is used to establish the reliability of the measuring instrument of the study. With the use of correlation coefficient, a value of 0.85 is obtained.

The coded questionnaire forms are analyzed with the use of percentages and chi-square (X^2) to reject or to accept the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

Age would not be perceived as a significant determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities.

Table 1. Age distribution of the students

| Respondents | SA | A | D | SD | Total Freq. | % A | % D | Total % | X^2 | Remark |
|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------|--------|
| 15-20 yrs | 300 | 380 | | 20 | 700 | 26.8 | 0.77 | 27.54 | 125.05 | |
| 21-25 yrs | 600 | 200 | 100 | | 900 | 30.65 | 3.83 | 34.46 | | |
| 26-30 above | 500 | 300 | 120 | 90 | 1010 | 30.65 | 8.05 | 33.00 | | |
| Total | 1400 | 880 | 220 | 110 | 2610 | 87.35 | 12.65 | 100 | | |

The findings clearly show that age is an important variable which determines the participatory pattern of students in sport. This is in line with Anyanwu's (1999) assertion that age is a major factor in sport participation because advancement in age decreases one's ability to endure environmental stress, working capacity, physical fitness, strength, endurance and oxygen up-take. In related study, Babatunde (2001) also finds that there is a strong connection between the age of students and their desire to take part in school sport as it is evident that most athletes in Nigerian universities are often between 21 – 25 years.

Hypothesis 2

Gender would not be a significant determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities.

Table 2. Gender distribution of the students

| Respondents | SA | A | D | SD | Total | X ² | Remark |
|-------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|----------------|--------|
| Male | 1,000 | 200 | -- | 410 | 1600 | 225.45 | |
| Female | 800 | 100 | 100 | -- | 1000 | | |
| Total | 1,800 | 300 | 100 | 410 | 2,600 | | |

The above table provides empirical information concerning issue of gender and sport participation in selected Nigerian universities. Going through the table, it is observed that the calculated X² value of 225.45 at df 3 and 0.05 level of significance is greater than the X² table value of 7.815. This had made the researchers to reject the hypothesis that gender would not be a significant determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities.

The findings which show that gender significantly determines sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities corroborates the findings of Honeybourne, Hill and Moors (1996), Akinsanmi (1997), Orunanoka (1997), and Babatunde (2001) that gender has a significant bearing with sport participation as against Adeyanju’s (1999) postulation that despite the fact that many discriminatory practices exist against women involvement in sport, there are those who dare the consequences.

Hypothesis 3

Marital status would not be a significant determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities.

Table 3. Marital Status distribution of the students

| Responses | Frequency | % | X ² | Agreement/Disagreement | Remark |
|--------------|-----------|------|----------------|------------------------|--------|
| SA | 305 | 11.7 | 416.1 | 84.2 | 5 |
| A | 1519 | 58.2 | | 15.8 | |
| D | 678 | 26.0 | | | |
| SD | 107 | 4.1 | | | |
| Total | 2610 | 100 | | 100 | |

From the table above, the chi-square X² is 416.6 as against X² table value of 7.815, 3df at 0.05 level of significance allows the researchers to reject the hypothesis that marital status would not be a significant determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities.

Babatunde (2001) finds that marital status significantly dictates the zest of the students participating in sport. Most of the students, if not all, who get involved in the school sport, particularly competitive sport, are predominantly unmarried.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made:

1. Age is identified as a significant variable determining students' sport involvement in selected Nigerian universities.
2. Gender is found to significantly determine sport participation among undergraduates in selected Nigerian universities as more male students than female students get involved in sport at tertiary institutions.
3. Marital status is also perceived by the students as a significant determinant of sport participation among undergraduates in selected universities in Nigeria.

According to the findings and conclusions of the research, recommendations should be listed as the following:

1. There is urgent need for more empirical research on marital status and sport participation in order to establish the reasons why married individuals shun sport. This will afford university sport administrators to develop therapies to such constraints preventing them from sport.
2. More research is also imperative to educate athletes on how to manage themselves so as to prevent rapid ageing resulting from careless lifestyle and its attendant effects. This will keep them long in active sporting activities, without undue sudden "wear out" that may lead to poor performance.
3. Age-long taboos forbidding female students from participating in sport should be de-emphasized to encourage better female participation in sport by making them realize that sport participation by women has no adverse implication on their femininity and body chemistry.
4. For a successful development of sport among undergraduates, the efforts of the university authorities should be directed at strategies capable of motivating the students towards sport participation such as provision of accommodation for students on campus, provision of necessary equipment, facilities and its proper maintenance. Availability of these will provide the needed incentive that will motivate students to participate more in sporting activities.

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