

INFLUENCE OF UNIVERSITY SPORTS PROGRAMMES ON UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY AND HER ENVIRONS

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the influence of sports programmes organized by the Sports Directorate of the University of Ilorin on staff, students and other members of the community and its environs. The descriptive research design of survey type was used in this study. A total 753 participants were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Data was analyzed with frequency counts and simple percentages. Inter- action and survey showed that many of the participants agreed to improved health (73%), reduced medical expenses (56%), promptness to work and reduced absenteeism (68%), improved social inter-action and integration (83%), reduced environmental tension (76%) and willingness to continue to participate (93%) among other benefits. Firstly, the health and general well-being of staff and students have been improved culminating into a smooth and regular academic sessions for at least the past 10 years. Again, participation in organized sports programmes at the University of Ilorin has brought social integration among members of the University community and her environs. Furthermore, the University of Ilorin has enjoyed increased student enrollment and also adjudged the leading University in Nigeria by the webometric and the National Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) rating (2015).

Key words: Sports, health, well-being, promptness, willingness

Introduction

Sports are the activities involving power and skills, competition, strategy, and (or) chance, and engaged in for the enjoyment, satisfaction and (or) personal gain (such as income) of the participant, and (or) others (e.g., spectators), including organised and recreational sports, as well as sports as entertainment (Öcal, 2006). Sports play very important roles in educational institutions in virtually all parts of the world, and the contribution of

sports to the educational process in institutions cannot be overemphasized (Ongong'a et al., 2010). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2015) Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport Article 2 emphasised importance of physical activity and sports for development of participants' physical literacy, wellbeing, health and capability by improving endurance, strength,, flexibility, coordination, balance and

control. The Charter further added that physical activity and sport and even physical education classes can improve mental health, psychological wellbeing and capability by enhancing body confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy as well as decreasing stress, anxiety and depression. This will lead to increase cognitive function including skills and attributes such as cooperation, communication, leadership, discipline, teamwork among others.

It is believed that involvement in organised sports activities allows young people to learn (in a presumed “safe” environment) many of life’s lessons and develop desired attributes within the mainstream society (Smoll & Smith, 2002). Engagement in school sports programmes is supposed to promote boys’ and girls’ moral functioning, self-discipline, ability to work with others, and capacity to compete and effectively cope with success as well as failure (Mahoney et al. 2005).

University of Ilorin Nigeria, founded in 1976, currently with staff and student population of over 35,000 (Students – 31,000, Academic Staff- 1131 and Non Academic Staff -2187), and 18 faculties is one of the leading Universities in Nigeria, judging from the International University webometric rating (2015) and the Nigeria National Universities Commission (NUC) – organization that accredits all Nigerian Universities.

The University has a Sports Directorate under the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and is mandated to administer

and organize all sporting activities for the University Community and her immediate environs. The Unit has the Director as the Administrative head, and other 25 supporting staff. The University of Ilorin has taken part in Nigeria University Games (NUGA), the West Africa Universities Games (WAUG) and Nigerian Universities Staff games. With its state of the art sporting facilities, (stadium complex, multipurpose gym/ indoor hall, two basketball courts, one handball court, three other soccer pitches, a standard fitness centre. A Squash building housing four squash courts fully airconditioned (to be added swimming pool) has hosted NUGA (1992), WAUG (2012) and National Youth Games for five years and other National Championships Including Basketball, Volleyball Karate among others. The Sports Unit, in collaboration with the Department of Human Kinetics, the University’s students’ Union and the Kwara State Sports Council has been able to bring sports near to the members of the University Community and her environs. With this collaboration, the Sports Unit organises the following sports programmes: the annual inter- faculty sports festival tagged “The Vice-Chancellor’s Cup” (both graduate and undergraduate students), the Inter- faculty students festival for undergraduate students only popularly called the SUG cup, the Inter- unit/faculty staff games also affectionately called the Registrar’s Cup, the Inter-department games (Dean’s Cup) , the Intra-department games (HOD’s cup) the Unilorin Marathon, the monthly

“Walk for Wellness and Prosperity, the daily fitness on radio programme, and the dinner and awards night has galvanised the whole University in a beneficial, enriching, collaborative sporting experience.

Smith and Westerbeek, (2004) stated that sports organisations have the potential to use sports as a tool to make contributions to communities and further contended that sports more than any other potential vehicle, contains qualities that make it a powerful force in effecting positive social contributions. To do this effectively, the organisers must think of the Corporate Social Responsibility (Elkington, 1997) and the Stakeholders’ concept which is seen as management’s duty to pursue an optimum balance between the range of needs demanded by interest groups and constituents which include: customers, employees, business partners, communities, investors and the environment (Schiebel & Pochtrager, 2003).

Becker’s (1964) model of labour and leisure choice assumed that agents derive satisfaction from consuming basic commodities such as sports participation which represents time out of work. The consumer choice model of sports participation indicates that people have to decide to participate and the amount of time spent in participation (Humpheys & Ruseski, 2009).

Davies (2002) made the case for more high-profile role for sports in tackling global and community challenges of health, peace, development and ethics.

Stewart et al. (2004) corroborated this by suggesting that socially responsible sport programmes encourage the involvement of parents, peers, coaches and teachers, focus on providing positive information rather than control over participants, promote social interaction amongst participants with White et al. (1998) adding that youth participation in sports results in the improvement of self-esteem, advancement of good citizenship, fostering the value of mastery and cooperation and the encouragement of physically active lifestyle. The quantification of physical activity in leisure time of University students in South-west of Nigeria also buttressed the need for inclusive and purposive participation in sports programmes by members of the university community (Ibraheem et al., 2018).

Sports is one of the key solutions to the common social problem of deteriorating health standards because it offers an ideal platform to encourage activity and health awareness that helps to promote psychological well-being, reduce stress, anxiety and depression, improve physical development, diminish risky behaviours, strengthen communities and decrease government health expenditure (AIHW 2000; Headley 2004; Sports and Recreation New Zealand 2002; WHO, 2003). Several News Media reported slumping and dying of university lecturers (Sahara Reports, 27th Sept, 2022; Premium Times, 16th Nov., 2023) and even students (Pulse Nigeria, 20th Oct., 2023) due to stress caused by academic and environmental stressors thereby

buttressing the need for encouraging participation in school sports programmes by both staff and students. The physiological and psychological traumas will be buffered, development of physical fitness and wellness and positively developing health to meet fatigue and emergencies within and outside the university community systems. Furthermore, the Sustainable development Goal 3 themed as “To ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages” attests to the need of taking advantage of sports for all for alleviating sedentariness (Dominic, 2021; Dominic, et al., 2018), curbing social menace and creating awareness for profitable ventures and employment (Dominic & Joel, 2021).

Sport offers a platform for encouraging social interaction in a functional way and though perhaps overstated and with notable exceptions, sporting rivalry can be a force for stability, democracy and peace (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Based on the earlier assertion by Smith and Westerbeek (2007), Case (2005) argued that for example, that places for children to play in Afghanistan mean more than just slides and swings; they are in fact a force and symbol for peace a view also propagated by the UN as well as several of the largest international sporting bodies in the world, including IOC and FIFA.

There are social issues which are exacerbated by sports not limited to performance enhancing drugs use, crowd violence, racial vilification, gender inequality, and sex and alcohol offences

and the opportunity that sport presents as a means toward improving some social problems. This study therefore aimed at determining the influence of sports programmes organised by the Sports Directorate of the University of Ilorin on staff, students and other members of the community and its environs including fair play (equality, access and diversity), community relations, and health.

Objective

The objective of the study is to determine the influence of the University organised sport programmes on members of the University community.

Research Questions

The following research questions were stated to guide the study.

1. What are the health benefits derived from participation in University organised sport programmes?
2. Does participation improve work ethics (Work attendance, absentism, promptness)?
3. Does participation promote reduce environmental tension (Cultic clashes, violence, vices)?
4. Does the university organised sport programme participation promote socially responsible integration?
5. Does participation promote willingness to continue in University organised sports?

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The target

population for the study (about 8,000) comprised all staff, students and people in the immediate environs of the University that use the University's facilities at the campus and the two residential quarters (for staff).

A total of 753 participants made up of 100 staff members, 500 students and 173 individuals within the University community were sampled for the study using stratified random sampling techniques. Researcher structured questionnaire validated and tested for

reliability (78r) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had two sections 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' elicited information on the demographic characteristics of the participants while section 'B' sought for data on the variables for the study. Informed consent was sought from the participants based on confidentiality, voluntary participation and ensuring ethical issues are addressed. Data gathered was sorted, coded, entered and analyzed with frequency counts and percentages.

Results

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Members by Age, Gender, Category of Participant and Type of Sports played by Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 years	358	47.5
20- 29 years	156	20.7
30- 39 years	154	20.5
40- 49 years	50	6.6
50- 59 years	24	3.2
60 years and above	11	1.5
Gender		
Male	602	79.9
Female	151	20.1
Category of Participant		
Staff	100	13.3
Student	500	66.4
Others	153	20.3
Type of Sports Played		
Track and Field	60	8.0

Hand Games	150	19.9
Football	470	62.4
Combat Sports	20	2.7
Racket Games	35	4.6
Technical Sports	18	2.4

Results from table 1 shows that 358 (47.5%) of the participants are below age 20, 384 (51.0%) are aged between 20 and 59 years while only 11 (1.5%) are aged 60 years and above. The table also

depicts that majority of the participants 602 (79.9%) males and 151 (20.1%) are female. Again, the result show participant categories of 100 (13.3%) staff, 500 (66.4%) students and 153 (20.3%) other members from the University environs respectively. Finally, results from table 1 indicates that majority of the participants 470 (62.4%) played football as their preferred sports.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Participants on the Variables of the Study

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Improved Health		
Agreed	550	73.0
Disagreed	203	27.0
Reduced Medical Expenses		
Agreed	422	56.0
Disagreed	331	44.0
Promptness to Work and Reduced Absenteeism		
Agreed	512	68.0
Disagreed	241	32.0
Improved Social Interaction and Integration		
Agreed	625	83.0
Disagreed	128	17.0
Reduced Environmental Tension		
Agreed	572	76.0
Disagreed	181	24.0
Willingness to Continue to Participate		
Agreed	700	93.0
Disagreed	53	7.0

Results from table 2 indicate that many of the participants agreed to improved health (73%), reduced medical expenses (56%), promptness to work and reduced absenteeism (68%), improved social inter-action and integration (83%), reduced environmental tension (76%) and willingness to continue to participate (93%) among other benefits.

Discussions

This study was carried out to determine the influence of sports programme organised by the Sports Directorate of the University of Ilorin on staff, students and other members of the University environs. Specific references were made to the analyses of the influence of sports participation on improved health, reduced medical expenses, promptness to work and reduced absenteeism, improved social interaction and integration, reduced

environmental tension and the willingness to continue to participate.

Results from table 2 indicated that majority of the participants agreed to improved health (73%), reduced medical expenses (56%), promptness to work and reduced absenteeism (68%), improved social inter-action and integration (83%), reduced environmental tension (76%) and willingness to continue to participate (93%) among other benefits. The results are in conformity with that of Davies (2000) who asserted that sports participation play the role of tackling global and community challenges of health, peace, development and ethics. This was corroborated by

Stewart et al. (2004) who suggested that socially responsible sports programmes encourage the involvement of parents, peers, coaches, and teachers, promote social interaction amongst

participants while White et al. (1998) added that youth participation in sports results in the improvement of self-esteem, advancement of good citizenship, fostering of the value of mastery and cooperation and the encouragement of physically active lifestyle.

The results also support (AIHW 2000; Headley 2004; Sports and Recreation New Zealand 2002; WHO 2003) aversion that sports is one of the key solutions to the common social problem of deteriorating health standards because it offers an ideal platform to encourage activity and health awareness that helps to promote psychological well-being, reduce stress, anxiety and depression, improve physical development, diminish risky behaviours, strengthen communities and decrease government health expenditure while confirming Case (2005) argument that places for children to play in Afghanistan mean more than just slides and swings; they are in fact a force and symbol for peace. Smith and Westerbeek, (2007) concluded that sport offers a platform for encouraging social interaction in a functional way and though perhaps overstated and with notable exceptions, sporting rivalry can be a force for stability, democracy and peace.

The target of SDG Goal 3 for ensuring improved health and wellbeing is to ensure the reduction of non-communicable disease which sports have been established to accomplish the alleviation of all primary causality of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, cardio-metabolic disorders and cancers.

Movement benefits through sports have all round benefits to reduce huge cost of these diseases as ascertained by the majority of the respondents. However, 27% of those who disagreed that sports could improve health and 44% of those who do not believe that sports reduce huge medical costs might need enlightenment to enjoy the all-round benefits of sports rather than the social benefits alone for participation. Dominic et al 2018's study on the ICT use implication for exercise participation and health in the university community discovered that quite a number of members of university community are at risks of hypokinetic diseases due to not meeting the recommended Physical Activity (PA) of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity PA and this calls for strategic interventions. Ignorance of the health and wellbeing benefits might also be the reason for non-participation by majority of the university populace. University as an academic community might need to continually organise sports for all with inclusive enlightenment advocacies to reduce risks of hypokinetic diseases among members of the community which are recently experienced as a result of slumping of academic staff members (Dominic, et al, 2018) . The social benefits (83%) and willingness to continue to participate by 93% of the respondents and the environmental and psychological influence (76%) attested to by the 76% of the participants is an indication that there is the need to improve the knowledge-based of sports for holistic

development among the university populace.

Conclusion

This study found that, health and well-being of all stakeholders have been improved as revealed by reduced hospital attendances at the University Clinic, promptness of staff and to work and lecture sessions respectively culminating into a smooth and regular academic sessions. Again, participation in university organised sports at the University has brought social interaction and integration among members of the University community and her environs. Furthermore, the University of Ilorin has enjoyed increased student enrollment and also adjudged the leading University in Nigeria by the webometric and the National Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) rating (2015), hence the need for inclusive participation. The social and psychological benefits are greatly attested to than the reduced cost medical bills calling for specialised intervention for creating awareness and exercise prescription for health effectiveness and promotion to achieve SDG 2030 goal 3 and goal 4 for Health and wellbeing and quality education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Tertiary Institutions should take advantage of the pivotal role sport plays in solving global and community problems by organising

sports for their staff, students and other members.

2. The sports programmes should be evolving to attract diverse individual's interest through inclusive sports activities such as minor games, games of low organised sports, traditional sports and table games as well as aerobic group exercise for different gender and age groups.
3. The sports programmes should target achieving SDG goals 3 and 4 which is health and wellbeing and quality education.

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