



Journal

Of

**NIGERIA ASSOCIATION FOR
PHYSICAL, HEALTH EDUCATION,
RECREATION, SPORT AND DANCE**

JONAPHER. SD

Vol 2, No 1 May 2011

**ACADEMIC STRUCTURE IMPACT ON SPORTS
PARTICIPATION MOTIVATION AMONG STUDENT-
ATHLETES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN LAGOS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the impact of academic structure on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos state. The study adopted ex-post-facto research design. The instrument includes self-structured closed ended questionnaire and a standardized sports participation motivation questionnaire (SPMQ). Five research hypotheses were formulated. The instruments were validated by experts; measurement, evaluation and reliability coefficient was 0.81. Student-athletes from five tertiary institutions in Lagos state formed the population for the study. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient. The findings indicate that academic

structure, hostel accommodations and lack of counsellors have impacts on sports participation motivation, while lecture time-table and continuous assessment does not have impact. It was recommended that government, both at federal and state levels should evolve a situation that dissuades staff unions strike and the academic management board should make provision for hostel accommodations and plan the school time table in such a way that the student-athletes will have reasonable opportunity to practice among others.

Key words: Academic-Structure, Sports Participation Motivation, Student-Athletes, Tertiary Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Sport in educational institutions is one of the oldest traditions in higher education. To this day, most institutions of higher education have intercollegiate sport programmes which means that a large number of student-athletes exist on Nigerian campuses. Student-athletes like other special populations on campuses have unique needs that make them different from other students. Issues such as heavy practice and travel schedules are peculiar to the student-athletes (Michael & Nancy, 2004).

Academic advising has long been a function of professionals in higher education. In early colleges, faculty members served as both teachers-tutors, motivator and adviser. Over time, the role of faculty members shifted from tilling the affective domain of students to concentrating on their cognitive development (Thelin, 2004). The advising function was in large part, turned over to professional advisers and student affairs personnel.

Descriptive studies report on sport participation motivation in adolescents reveals several common themes. The fairly consistent set of motivational factors include competence (learn and improve skills, achieve goals), fitness (get in shape or get stronger), affiliation (be with friends or make new ones), team aspects (be part of a group or team), competition (win, be successful)

and fun (excitement, challenge, action). The majority of participation motivation studies have been conducted on youth populations in the United States of America. However, studies have also been conducted in various countries such as England, Canada, Australia and Israel (Fry, Clements and Sefton, 1988; Longhust & Spink, 1987; White & Coakley, 1986; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). It is expedient to note that the social context surrounding these different cultures is likely to have an impact on participation motives.

With personal observations, it has shown that the academic structure of Nigeria tertiary institutions has no plan or provision for the student-athletes as a special population. The student-athletes are saddled with so many obstacles including: variation in academic calendar among institutions, unstable lectures and tutorials clashing with practice or training period, test or examination anxiety while on training or competition tour, as well as the issue of hostel accommodation.

Benjamin (2009), reports that “balancing time with sports and academic commitments can be a burdensome task for the student-athletes.”

Asagba (2006) finds time wasting and lecturers victimization as banes of sports participation among undergraduate student-athletes in University of Ibadan. Mshelia (1990) contends that some welfare issues affect level of motivation of student-athletes while other serves as incentives for participation in sports and keep students away from school during national competitions. Mshelia (1990) observes that in several cases, nothing is done to compensate them from missed lectures. Talented student-athletes in West African Universities require incentives like money, scholarships, modern facilities and equipment and conducive learning atmosphere to keep them active in sports. Onifade (1992) remarks that athletes are preoccupied with distracting thoughts; they may not be able to train effectively and hence, may not reach their full potentials. Onifade (1992) also observes that inconsistent and unimplemented academic calendar by Universities in Nigerian Higher Institutions hinder the progress of sports performance. There are cases where Nigerian Universities are closed unexpectedly and indefinitely as a result of strikes embarked upon by academic and non-academic unions of universities and other institutions. These actions

do not only truncate academic programmes but also impede appropriate development of sports programmes in the tertiary institutions. Okunbor (1998) also corroborates this, that the issue of unexpected and indefinite closures of universities has created a myriad of obstacles in terms of preparing student-athletes for national and international competitions.

Purpose of Study

The pressure on the student-athletes as regards unscheduled lectures, impromptu continuous assessment, and variation in academic calendar, tests and examination anxiety while on training or competition tour as well as the issue of hostel accommodation influence his or her sport participation motivation.

Report reveals that the study of student-athlete sports participation motivation have been conducted in several countries such as England, Canada, Australia and Israel (Fry, Clements & Softon, 1988; Longhurst & Spink, 1987; White & Coakley, 1986; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985) while in Nigeria similar studies related to athletes sports participation had been carried out by several authors (Asagba, 2006; Okunbor, 1998; Onifade, 1990; Mshelia, 1990).

This study therefore, investigated the impact of the academic structure on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Methodology

The use of ex-post facto research design was adopted for this study. In this kind of study, the researcher is only interested in knowing the influence of the independent variables (academic calendar, hostel accommodation, lecture time-table, impromptu continuous assessment & lack of counsellors) on the dependent variable (sports participation motivation) without necessarily manipulating the independent variable. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used to select respondents for this study. Firstly, the simple random sampling technique was used to select six government owned tertiary institutions in Lagos State, then the stratified sampling technique

was also used to select twenty-two (22) student-athletes from each of these institutions; making a total of one hundred and thirty-two (n=132) student-athletes in all. The basis of stratification is by selecting four (4) student-athletes from four (4) different games such as volleyball, basketball, tennis, and handball, while 6 football student-athletes were also selected from each sampled tertiary institutions in Lagos State, because they are not equally populated. This technique ensures that every sub-group is adequately represented.

Results

Results of the study are presented in the table below.

Matrix of Correlation Coefficients on tested variables

Calendar, Hostel, Time Tables Continuous assessment, Calendar and Motivation

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Calendar | .530 (.008) [132] | .242 (.005) [132] | .09 (.304) [132] | .011 (.901) [132] | .530 (*008) [132] |
| Hostel accommodation | | .440 (.011) [132] | -.089 (.308) [132] | .272 (.002) [132] | .440 (*011) [132] |
| Time table | | | .104 (.236) [132] | .332 (0.0) [132] | .158 (.071) [132] |
| Continuous assessment | | | | .07 (.425) [132] | .112 (.202) [132] |
| Counseling | | | | | .631 (*002) [132] |

Key: Correlation (P-value=0.002) [Count]

The result in the table presents the matrix of correlation coefficients on tested variables. The table indicates that there are significant correlation between academic calendar [$r=-0.530$; $p=0.08$], hostel accommodation [$r=0.440$; $p=0.01$], and counseling [$r= 0.631$; $p= 0.002$] and student-athletes sports participation motivation. The study further shows that there were no significant relationships between lecture timetable [$r=0.16$, $p=0.07$] and continuous assessment [$r=0.11$, $p.20$], and student-athletes sports participation motivation.

Discussion of Findings

The coefficient in the table shows that there were significant relationship between academic calendar and sports participation motivation. The analysis indicates statistically significant linear relationship between academic calendar and sports participation motivation; $r(132) = 0.530$, $p = 0.008$ for these data, the Mean (SD) for academic calendar = $18.7652 + (1.9256)$, and the Mean (SD) for sports participation motivation = $37.6591 + (4.2026)$, hostel accommodation and sports participation motivation; $r(132) = 0.440$, $p = 0.01$ for these data, the Mean (SD) for hostel accommodation = $29.189 + (2.285)$, and the Mean (SD) for sports participation motivation = $37.6591 + (4.2026)$ as well as lack of counselors and sports participation motivation; $r(132) = 0.631$, $p = 0.002$ for these data, the Mean (SD) lack of counselors = $27.379 + (.439)$, and the Mean (SD) for sports participation motivation = $37.6591 + (4.2026)$. Therefore, the null hypotheses on these variables impact on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State were rejected. This implies that academic calendar, hostel accommodation and counseling have significant impact on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. This result then corroborates the study of Onifade (1992), who remarks that athletes are preoccupied with distracting thoughts; they may not be able to train effectively and hence, may not reach their full potentials. He went further that inconsistent and unimplemented academic calendar by Universities in Nigerian Higher Institutions hinder the progress of sports performance. There are cases where Nigerian Universities are closed unexpectedly and indefinitely as a result of strikes embarked upon by

academic and non-academic unions of universities and other institutions. These actions do not only truncate academic programmes but also impede appropriate development of sports programmes in the tertiary institutions. Okunbor (1998) also corroborates this, that the issue of unexpected and indefinite closures of universities has created a myriad of obstacles in terms of preparing student-athletes for national and international competitions.

The result of this study conformed to that of Mshelia (1990), who contends that talented student-athletes in West African Universities require incentives like money, scholarships, accommodations, modern facilities and equipment and conducive learning atmosphere to keep them active in sports. The study was also in conformity to the report of the National Academic Advisory Association (2008) which states that the academic structure in Virginia State University made provision for the National Academic Advisory Association (NAAA) which help student-athletes as a special population in balancing their academic with several services such as tutoring, studying assistance, computing technology; and academic and individual skill development programmes. They also integrate their services with those of University Community. Each academic Coordinator assists student-athletes in making appointments with appropriate offices such as their major academic advisors, the registrar office, office of the scholarships, financial aid, Dean Offices, Career Services, Counseling Centre for Academic enrichment and excellence.

The coefficient in the table further reveals that there is no significant relationship between lecture time table and sports participation motivation. The analysis reveals statistically significant linear relationship between lecture time-table and sports participation motivation; $r(132) = 0.158$, $p = 0.071$. For these data, the Mean (SD) lecture time-table = 8.720(1.709), and the Mean (SD) for sports participation motivation = 37.6591(4.2026) and continuous assessment and sports participation motivation; $r(132) = 0.112$, $p = 0.202$. For these data, the Mean (SD) continuous assessment = 9.144(1.778), and the Mean (SD) for sports participation motivation = 37.6591(4.2026). Therefore the hypotheses on lecture time-table and continuous assessment were accepted. This result connotes that lecture time-table have no significant impact on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. The

result of this study then contradicts the study of Mshelia (1990) who observes that some welfare issues affect level of motivation of student-athletes while other serves as incentives for participation in sports and keep students away from school during national competitions and in several cases, nothing is done to compensate them from missed lectures. Also, Asagba (2006) finds time wasting and lecturers victimization as banes of sports participation among undergraduate student-athletes in University of Ibadan. While Mshelia (1990) also contends that some welfare issues affect level of motivation of student-athletes while other serves as incentives for participation in sports and keep students away from school during national competitions.

This result also implies that continuous assessment have no significant impact on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, which means that despite participation in sports, the student-athletes can as well perform better in their continuous assessment. The result of this study then contradicts the study of Benjamin (2009) who reports that “balancing time with sports and academic commitments can be a burdensome task for the student-athletes in tertiary institutions. The study also contradicts that of University of Buffalo Athletics (2009), who reports that the academic structure of University of Buffalo made provision for student-athletes by establishing the office of student services which is committed to offering a variety of services focused on enhancing the quality and diversity of student-athlete experience at the University. The division of sports and office of student-athletes services are committed to assisting student-athletes reach their full potential academically, athletically and personally, while the champion life skill programme focused on five areas such as commitment to academic excellence, athletic excellence, personal development, career development and community service.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Academic structure, hostel accommodation and lack of counselors have impacts on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.
2. Lecture time-table and continuous assessment have no significant impact on sports participation motivation among student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having investigated the impact of academic structure on student-athletes sports participation motivation in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, the following recommendations are made to improve the rate of motivating student-athletes in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

1. Several educational bodies in charge of the tertiary institutions such as National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical and Business Education and National Council for Colleges of Education should plan their academic calendar in such a way that there will be an avenue for the student-athletes to have time for their sports participation.
2. Government, both at federal and state levels should meet up with demands of the academics and non-academic staff unions in order to avoid strike since this will disrupt academic calendar and affect intercollegiate competitions.
3. Student-athletes are special populations in the campus, the academic management/board should make provision for hostel accommodations where there are residential institutions and in case of non-residential institutions, the student-athletes should be motivated by providing subsidized accommodation close to the campus. This will enable the student-athletes easy access for training.
4. The academic board/management should plan the school time table in such a way that the student-athletes will have chance to practice on their own based on their

different sports. However, there should be a monitoring group by the management/board to ensure that the stipulated time for sports on specific days are used for sports and not for lectures.

5. Continuous assessment should be conducted for the students during the stipulated time for lectures and not when the student-athletes are engaged with their sports.
6. The academic board should employ counselors that will counsel student-athletes whenever they have one problem or the other. They will also help to identify their problems (personally, academically and financially) and proffer possible solutions.

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