

Psychological Variables of Sport Participation and Involvement among Student-Athletes of Tertiary Institutions in South-West, Nigeria

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Abstract—This study was conducted to investigate the psychological variables motivating sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west Nigeria. One thousand three hundred and fifty (N-1350) student-athletes were randomly selected in all sports from nine tertiary institutions in south-west Nigeria. These tertiary institutions include University of Lagos, Lagos State University, Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun State University, University of Ibadan, University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Federal University of Technology Akungba, University of Ilorin, and Kwara State University. The descriptive survey research method was adopted while a self developed validated Likert type questionnaire named Sport Participation Scale (SPS) was used to elicit opinion from respondents. The test-retest reliability value obtained for the instrument, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was 0.96. Out of the one thousand three hundred and fifty (N-1350) questionnaire administered, only one thousand two hundred and five (N-1286) were correctly filled, coded and analysed using inferential statistics of Chi-Square (X^2) while all the tested hypotheses were set at .05 alpha level. Based on the findings of this study, the result revealed that several psychological factors influence student athletes to continue participation in sport one which includes love for the game, famous athletes as role model and family support. However, the analysis further revealed that the stipends the student-athletes get from their universities have no influence on their participation and involvement in sport.

Keywords—Family support, peer, role model, sport participation, student-athletes.

I. INTRODUCTION

ALL over the world, the age range of persons that participate in competitive sport falls within the age of high school or university students before graduating to professional cadre. The history of student-athletes participation in organised competitive sport in Nigeria is dated back to post-colonial era when competitions were organised among secondary schools and later the birth of Nigeria University Games Association (NUGA) which was formed in 1965 with the first sport festival held at University of Ibadan in 1966 to promote healthy competitive rivalry among university athletes across the country.

The rewards in terms of tangible and intangible that followed participation in such competitions encouraged more

athletes to indicate their willingness to participate and involve themselves in their schools' sport. Although for an athlete to show interest in school's sport and be selected as an elite athlete, he or she must possess the task skills. However, beyond these basic skills, are fundamental motivating psychological variables that encourage these athletes to show commitment in participating and involving in organised tertiary competitive sports. Beyond representing their various institutions, there are various benefits participating and involvement in sport brings to participants. According to reference [3], [4], [22] these general benefits may include:

1. Improving health and exerting student's surplus energies
2. Obeying the competition or societal rules and constraining delinquent behaviours (such as cheating, acting, violently, consuming illegal substances and drinking excessive alcohol etc.)
3. Promoting societal values, integrity and building characters
4. Enhancing confidence, motivation, sense of empowerment, and self esteem
5. Offering opportunities for education and career and career in sports
6. Expanding life experience and making more friends
7. Knowing how to deal with failure and difficult situation and developing life-skills

Although many authors [3], [5], [7], [12], [18], [25], [26] may have the erroneous belief that collegiate student-athletes may not engage in serious academic work like their non-elite counterpart, evidence abounds that student-athletes were often more engaged in academic and campus activities than their non-athletes peers [21], [23], [24].

Many authors have also reported some negative consequences and psychosocial problems associated with participation and involvement among student-athletes, some of which include;

1. Violence on and off the court [8], [13].
2. Eating disorder [10].
3. Poor academic performance and low graduation rates among major revenue-generating sport [7], [16].
4. Depression and burnout [5], [14].
5. Alcohol and performance enhancement substance abuse [2].

Despite these notable negative consequences and psychosocial problems, many Nigerian student-athletes still show commitment and enthusiasm in sport participation and

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involvement in their various universities. The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate these psychological variables of sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in South-West Nigeria.

One of the many reasons students go to school is to develop the three domains of education which are cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive has to do with the development of knowledge which gives students the ability to reason through comprehension and synthesis that may be applied in addressing critical life issues. The affective involves smooth shaping of the behavioural process of the students. The psychomotor involves the development of specific to discreet physical functions, reflex actions, and interpretive movements. Learning cannot be completed without these three aforementioned areas which could be imparted in the students in different forms and environment. The latter is mostly applied during extra-curricular activities.

Reference [6] defined Student-athletes as participants in an organised competitive sport sponsored by the educational institution in which he or she is enrolled. In the same vein, [17] viewed it as a group of young people who as a function of their shared athletic experience encounter atypical demands and pressure that often challenge the course of their physical development and wellbeing. The student-athletes are young people in transition who must confront the formidable challenges of modern-day life in their distinctive ways. However, the difference between the student-athletes and their non-athletes counterparts is that they must function in an environment that presents a unique, complex set of demands. Reference [9] identified the following unique challenges student-athletes face:

- Formidable academic tasks that all students must master e.g. attending classes and labs, doing required studying, and passing exams.
- Balancing athletic success and failure with emotional stability and schooling
- Balancing social activities with athletic responsibilities
- Balancing physical health and injury with the need to continue competing
- Balancing the demands of relationships with such as coaches, teammates, parents and friends
- Addressing the termination of college career

For student-athletes, however, completion of regular class work demands time that they often have little of because of their extensive formal and informal athletic commitments. Unfortunately, failure to succeed in the classroom could create great personal distress and consequently threaten their current levels of functioning and psychological wellbeing. The researcher therefore noted that in spite of all these challenges faced by the student-athletes, they still display high level of commitment and interest when the need for competition arises. This study therefore seeks to find out the psychological variables beneath sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west Nigeria.

II. METHODOLOGY

The sample size involved one thousand three hundred and fifty (N-1350) student-athletes were randomly selected in all sports from nine tertiary institutions in south-west Nigeria. These tertiary institutions were basically the citadel where highest level of education is being acquired in Nigeria i.e. the university. The randomly selected universities included both state and federal Universities. Specifically, the universities included University of Lagos, Akoka Lagos; Lagos State University, Ojo; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; Osun State University, Osogbo; University of Ibadan, Ibadan; University of Agriculture, Abeokuta; Federal University of Technology, Akungba Akoko; University of Ilorin, Ilorin; and Kwara State University, Malete. The descriptive survey research method was adopted while a self developed validated likert type questionnaire named Sport Participation Scale-1 (SPS-1) was used to elicit opinion from respondents. This was intended to rate the students' opinion on the psychological factors that are responsible for their involvement in sport based on the variables under consideration on a four point Likert scale of Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree respectively. The test-retest reliability value obtained for the instrument using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMC) following a pilot study conducted using student-athletes from five private universities who were not part of the study stood at .79 for love of the game, .76 for role model of famous athletes, .89 for family support and .69 for peer respectively. Out of the one thousand three hundred and fifty (N-1350) questionnaire administered, only one thousand two hundred and five (N-1286) were correctly filled, coded and analysed using inferential statistics of Chi-Square (X^2) while all the tested hypotheses were set at .05 alpha level.

III. DATA ANALYSES AND RESULT

A. Demographic Data of Respondents

Fig. 1 and Table I showed the distribution of respondents by age indicating that one hundred and fifty (n-151, 11.74%) of the total respondents were between 15-20 years, seven hundred and fifty (n-749, 58.24%) of the total respondents were between 21-25 years, one hundred and eighty-five (n-185, 14.39%) of the total respondents were between 26-30 years, one hundred and twenty-one (n-121, 9.41%) of the total respondents were between 31-35 years, while forty-five (n-45, 3.50%) of the total respondents were between 36-40 years, and thirty-five (n-35, 2.72%) of the total respondents were between 41 years and above respectively. This implies that the highest numbers of student-athletes were within the ages of 21-25 years (58.24%) followed by 26-30 years (14.39%), 15-20 years (11.74%), 31-35 years (9.41%), 36-40 years (3.50%) and 41+ (2.72%) respectively.

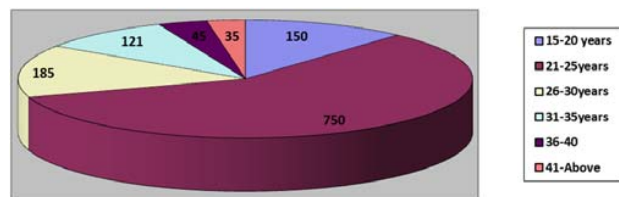


Fig. 1 Age of Respondents

TABLE I
AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
15-20 Years	121	11.74
21-25 Years	749	58.24
26-30 Years	185	14.39
31-35 Years	121	9.41
36-40 Years	45	3.50
41+	35	2.72
Total	1286	100

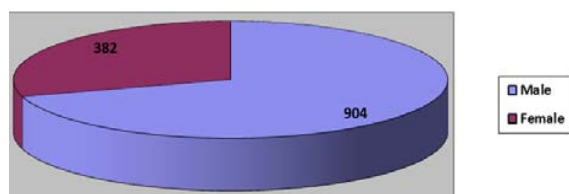


Fig. 2 Gender of Respondents

TABLE II
GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	904	70.30
Female	382	29.70
Total	1286	100

Fig. 2 and Table II showed the distribution of respondents by gender indicating that nine hundred and four (n-904, 70.30%) of the total respondents were between male while three hundred and eighty-two (n-382, 29.70%) were females respectively. This implies that the highest numbers of student-athletes were females (n-904, 70.30%).

Fig. 3 and Table III showed the sports of respondents indicating that two hundred and seventy-six (n-276, 21.46%) of the total respondents were soccer players, one hundred and sixty-nine (n-169, 13.14%) played volleyball, one hundred and fifty-six (156, 12.13%) involved in athletics, two hundred and seven (n-207, 16.10%) played handball, eighty-two (n-82, 6.38%) played squash, one hundred and six (n-110, 8.24%) played tennis, one hundred and ten (n-110, 8.55%) played cricket, while one hundred and eighty (n-180, 14.00%) played hockey respectively. This implies that the majority of the respondents played soccer (n-276, 21.46%), followed by handball (n-207, 16.10%), hockey (n-180, 14.00%), volleyball (n-169, 13.14%), athletics (156, 12.13%), cricket (n-110, 8.55%), tennis (n-110, 8.24%), and squash (n-82, 6.38%) respectively.

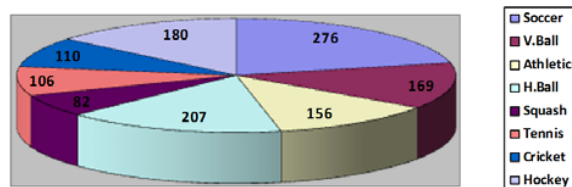


Fig. 3 Sports of Respondents

TABLE III
SPORTS OF RESPONDENTS

Sports	Frequency	Percentage %
Soccer	276	21.46
Volleyball	169	13.14
Athletics	156	12.13
Handball	207	16.10
Squash	82	6.38
Tennis	106	8.24
Cricket	110	8.55
Hockey	180	14.00
Total	286	100

B. Hypotheses Testing

H₀1: Love for the game will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

TABLE IV
CHI-SQUARE RESULT OF LOVE FOR THE GAME AND SPORT PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETES OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Variable	N	Df	Calculated X ²	Critical X ²	Remark
Love of the Game	15	1285	38.21	12.03	H ₀ Rejected

X² Cal. Val= 38.21>Crit. X² value =12.03,df 15 p<0.05

Table IV above showed that the calculated value of 38.21 was greater than the critical value of 12.03 at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that love for the game will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that love for the game significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

H₀2: Famous athletes as role model will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria 0.05.

TABLE V
CHI-SQUARE RESULT OF FAMOUS ATHLETES AS ROLE MODEL AND SPORT PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETES OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Variable	N	Df	Calculated X ²	Critical X ²	Remark
Famous Athletes as Role Model as Role Model	1,286	15	22.01	12.60	H ₀ Rejected

X² Cal. Val= 22.01>Crit. X² value=12.60,df 15 p<

Table V above showed that the calculated value of 22. 01 was greater than the critical value of 12.60 at 0.05 level of

significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that role model of famous athletes will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that role model of famous athletes significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

H₀₃: Athletes' family support will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

TABLE VI
CHI-SQUARE RESULT OF ATHLETES' FAMILY SUPPORT AND SPORT PARTICIPATION & INVOLVEMENT AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETES OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Variable	N	Df	Calculated X ²	Critical X ²	Remark
Athletes' Family Support	1,286	15	32.11	11.02	H ₀ Rejected

X² Cal. Val= 32.11 > Crit. X² value=11.02, df 15 p<0.05

Table VI above showed that the calculated value of 32.11 was greater than the critical value of 11.02 at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that athletes' family support will not significantly influence sport participation & involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that athletes' family support significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

TABLE VII
CHI-SQUARE RESULT OF STIPENDS AND SPORT PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT AMONG STUDENT-ATHLETES OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Variable	N	Df	Calculated X ²	Critical X ²	Remark
Stipends	1,286	15	12.19	22.13	H ₀ Accepted

X² Cal. Val= 12.19 < Crit. X² value=22.13, df 15 p<0.05

H₀₄: Stipends will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

Table VII showed that the calculated value of 12.19 was lower than the critical value of 22.13 at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that stipends will not significantly influence sport participation & involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was retained. This implies that stipends given to student-athletes have no any significant influence on sport participation & involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the role of psychological variables motivating student-athletes of Nigeria tertiary institutions to participate and involve in sport. Several researches have been conducted in the area of student-athletes in Nigeria but little has been carried out in the area of

psychological variables underlying their involvement and participation. However, four hypotheses were raised for this study and three of the four hypotheses were accepted while one was rejected.

Hypothesis one which states that love for the game will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that love for the game significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria. This study was in-line with the work of [19] who conducted a research on the reasons athletes of Lagos state Nigeria represent the state in one sport or the other. Reference [19] conducted her study using three hundred Lagos state athletes and part of the variables she put to check was love for the state. However, she reported that most of the respondent participate in sport or represent the state simply because of the love they have for the state. In the same vein, [1] also corroborated the findings of this study when they conducted a study on why student involved in sport at secondary school level, the students also reported to have an unquantifiable love for the state which make them to involve in sport.

Hypothesis two which states that famous athletes as role model will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that famous athletes as role model significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

This was supported by the work of [20] who conducted a study on the inspirational function of role models for sport participation and development. The study which aimed at finding out if role models had an influence on the motives of elite athletes to start with their sport, stay on their sport, increased commitment to training and competition and become elite athletes. Reference [20] reported that majority of the athletes considered elite and famous athletes a role model that influences their sports participation and involvement.

Hypothesis three which states that athletes' family will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was rejected. This implies that athletes' family significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria. This was supported by evidences from renowned famous elite athletes like Tiger Woods in golf, Wayne Gretzky and Eric Lindros in ice hockey, Mary Pierce and Steffi Graf in tennis, and David Robinson in basketball. This is also supported by the work of [11], [15].

Hypothesis four which states that stipends given to student-athletes will not significantly influence sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria was retained. This implies that stipends given to student-athletes have no significant influence on sport participation and involvement among student-athletes of tertiary institutions in south-west, Nigeria.

IV. CONCLUSION

In line with the finding of this study, the following conclusions are made.

1. Student-athletes in Nigeria universities participate and involved in sport because of the love they have for the game.
2. Role of model of famous athletes who succeeds in their sports motivates university student-athletes to participate and involve in sport
3. Family support is also a contributory factor to student-athletes' participation and involvement in sport
4. The stipends the universities give out to the student-athletes do not have any influence on their desire to participate and involve in sport for their university

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that

1. Coaches should always refer to famous athletes who have succeeded in their sport when engaging in an informal sporting activities with their athletes
2. Families of athletes should be involved in counselling athletes whenever the athletes are about dropping-out of sport.
3. The university authority should adopt more tangible and intangible measures of motivating athletes as opposed to giving them stipends which is a temporary with a view to sustaining athletes' participation and involvement in competitive sport.

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