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The Impact of Intercollegiate Sports Competitions on the Overall Educational Achievement of Participants in Some Selected Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

Intercollegiate sports and its effect on undergraduates has been of global concern to scholars. This study however seeks to have a clearer picture of the concept of intercollegiate sports competition and whether it has any significant impact on the overall academic achievement of participants in some selected Universities in Nigeria. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents from some selected Universities in South-South geo-political zone in Nigeria made up the sample for this study. A validated self structured questionnaire was the instrument used. Frequency counts, simple percentages and the chi-square (χ^2) were the descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyze the data obtained at a 0.05 level of significance. The results indicate amongst others that participating in intercollegiate sports competition has significant positive impact on the overall academic achievements of participants. In light of this, this study recommends amongst others that coaches in Nigerian Universities must ensure that they monitor the performances of their athletes to see that they do not suffer academically. Emphasis must be placed on the management of time efficiently by athletes.

Keywords: Sports Competition, Participants, Academic Achievement, Classroom, Lectures, Athletes, Performance

Introduction

Sport is believed to be a social institution that is capable of teaching and reinforcing esteemed societal values, thus contributing to socializing athletes into major cultural, social, educational and behavioural patterns of the society in which they live. In line with this, Eitzen and Sage (1997) opined that sport contributes to the development, stability and future progress of the particular society. Against this background, intercollegiate sport competition which was an initiative of students has over the years been taken over by school administrators. This was partly due to perceived problems that could arise if left in the hands of students alone, as well as the perceived contribution it could have on the overall education of participants.

Intercollegiate sports competition exists between institutions of higher learning. In Nigeria, Alla and Ajibua (2012) noted that apart from the sporting activities that are being organized on individual College or University basis, there are the inter-collegiate sports such as Nigeria University Games Association (NUGA), Nigeria Polytechnic Games Association (NIPOGA) and Nigeria Colleges of Education Games Association (NACEGA). These intercollegiate sports mentioned above have their respective governing bodies. Alla and Ajibua (2012) further noted that Universities host inter-collegiate sporting activities in rotation and they are financed by subvention from member Universities and grants from the government through the Committee of Vice Chancellors (CVC).

Intercollegiate sports competition, according to Jeroh and Akpomedaye (2007) have educational values ranging from intellectual development to physical, social, moral, emotional and cultural development of the participants. In fact the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (2005) opined that there are three primary rationales for intercollegiate athletics which include:

- 1) **for the athlete:** the discipline and values of sports can contribute to personal development reinforcing academic excellence;
- 2) **for the campus:** the ceremonies and competition of intercollegiate sports can contribute to community and institutional loyalty;
- 3) **for the college and university community:** college sports can broaden positive interest in and public support for higher education.

Having the above in mind, this study was however designed to find out whether:

- a) Participation in intercollegiate sports competition has a significant effect on the overall educational achievement of participants.
- b) Participants have any regrets in their involvement in intercollegiate sports competition.

Review of related literature

The role sport participation by students play in the educational process has been a topical issue for decades. Critics have observed that sport activities deflect time away from the classroom (Melnick, Sabo and Vanfossen, 1992). Supporters of school or college sport programmes argue that sport participation improves students' achievement motivation (Casey, 1989; Parker and Johnson, 1981), improves students' grades, keeps them in school, and raises their educational aspirations (Melnick, Sabo and Vanfossen, 1992). Whether school sport programmes benefit or negatively impact the academic achievement of student participants remains controversial (Din, 2006).

Skeptics have more often than not branded athletes "all brawn but no brains" (Jeroh and Akpomedaye, 2007). This is also the position of Coleman (1965) who asserted that participation in sports is counterproductive in the educational enterprise. Sage (1967) opined that non-athletes achieved better grades and were more occupationally oriented at college than athletes.

A synthesis of the above findings points to the fact that participation in school sports takes much of the study time of participating students. This, according to Ogundari (1990) affects the quality of their educational attainment and eventually delays graduation.

Coleman's assertion that athletes detract from scholastics has been contradicted by recent studies. Over the years, many studies have been conducted in the United States and Europe to establish the relationship between athletics and academic performance. For example, some studies have revealed the academic superiority of athletes to non-athletes (Eidsmore, 1963; Spardy, 1970; Burhramman and Jarvis, 1971; Schafer and Armer, 1975).

Here in Nigeria, Amuchie (1986) concluded that there was no significant difference in the mean grade point average of athletes and non-athletes. He,

however, observed that the Grade Point Average (GPA) of male athletes was significantly higher than that of male non-athletes. Odulaye (1981) observed that in the examination results of 1969/70 session of the University of Ibadan, forty three sportsmen/women were among the candidates who sat for their various degrees. Results showed forty two passes and one failure. There were five second class upper division and eight in the pass division. This is a glaring example or evidence that sportsmen/women are intellectually good, as well as being physically able.

Names like Late Majors E.A. Ifeajuna and Taiwo Ogunjobi, Alhaji A.K. Amu, Dr. George Ogan, Dr. Bruce Ijirigho, etc who moved into world class athletics threshold, Chief Rex Akpofure who won international caps in cricket, “Chief Justice” Adokiye Amasiemeka, and “Mathematical” Segun Odegbami in football are all graduates and professionals in their callings. On the international scene, Socrates, the famous Brazilian soccer star is a medical doctor (Jeroh and Akpomedaye, 2007).

The above studies on the relationship of sport participation of students to academic achievement seemed to suggest that in the past, sport participation either contributed positively in a small way to students’ achievements in academics or did not impact on students’ academic achievement. The purpose of this study however, was to investigate whether in recent times, participation in intercollegiate sports competition have had any impact on the educational achievement of participants in some selected Nigerian Universities.

Research Questions

- a) Does participation in intercollegiate sports competition significantly affect the overall educational achievement of participants in selected Nigerian Universities?
- b) Do participants have all it takes to perform brilliantly in their academics?

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- H_{01} : Participation in intercollegiate sports competition will not have any significant positive effect on the overall educational achievement of participants in selected Nigerian Universities.

H₀₂: Participants do not have all it takes to perform brilliantly in their academics.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research approach to find out if participation in intercollegiate sports competition will affect the overall education achievement of participants. The population of this study comprised undergraduates drawn from six Universities in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The sample of this study was randomly selected from the population stated above. A total of 120 respondents took part in the study. A 15 item self-prepared questionnaire was administered to the respondents who participated in this study. The data obtained was analyzed with the use of frequency counts, simple percentages and the chi-square (χ^2) at a 0.05 level of significance.

The limitation of the methodology used is that the author relied mainly on primary data for the study. It is believed that records on students academic standing from the departments and faculties and/or exams and records units of the selected institutions, if obtained and analyzed may give this research a better direction. Unfortunately however, the procedures to get such records were so cumbersome and more worrisome was the attitude of the officers in charge, who were not willing to release the records for such detailed appraisal and analysis. Thus, the author resorted to the use of only primary data.

Results and discussion of findings

In this section, the author presents the analyses, results and findings of the data obtained. As indicated in Table 1 (See Appendix A), majority of the respondents (102, representing 85%) were of the view that participation in intercollegiate sports competition positively affected the overall educational achievement of participants while 18 (15%) had a contrary opinion. In addition to the above, it is the view of majority of the respondents (108, representing 90%) that participants in such competitions have all it takes to perform brilliantly in their academics. On whether excelling academically demands concentration, proper utilization of time and involvement in lectures etc, 90 (75%) of the respondents noted that excelling academically demands concentration, proper utilization of time, involvement in lectures, seminars, research and faculty assignments etc while 30 (5%) noted that time, involvement in lectures, seminars, research and faculty assignments does not really guarantee academic success. The respondents further noted that the

time spent in training, travelling as well as in the competition proper if properly utilized in the area of reading and studying may have yielded better results as regards their performance in school. On whether participation in intercollegiate sports competition if taken for granted can lead to delay in the expected time of graduation of athletes, 96 (80%) of the respondents indicated that participation in intercollegiate sports competition can lead to delay in the expected time of graduation of athletes if taken for granted, while 24 (representing 20%) had a contrary opinion.

In addition to the above, this study also found from Table 2 (See Appendix B) that majority of the respondents (114, representing 95%) have at one time or the other missed lectures, class tests or other academic activities as a result of their involvement in training or competition proper, while only 6 (5%) had a contrary opinion. This study also found that participants believed that there is the possibility of them performing better in their academics, if they had not been involved in intercollegiate sports competitions. This is also reflected in the response shown in Table 2. It is however quite interesting to note that despite the above revelation, Table 2 also indicates that majority of the respondents 96 (80%) are of the opinion that they have no regrets in participating in intercollegiate sports competition, while 24 respondents (representing 20%) had a contrary opinion. In addition to the above, the responses to item 4 of Table 2 indicate that participation in intercollegiate sports competition has significant effect on the overall educational achievement of participants.

In order to test the hypotheses earlier formulated for this study, the data obtained from this study was analyzed with the chi-square (χ^2) test. In using the chi-square (χ^2) to test hypotheses in a research study, Asika (2004) and Izedonmi (2005) noted that at 0.95 level, the difference is significant if χ^2 with 1 degree of freedom is above 3.84. However, the computed value of χ^2 in relation to the data obtained to test hypothesis 1 of this study was 58.80 (See Appendix C). This value is higher than the critical value, or falls on the rejection region. Thus we reject the hypothesis 1 of this study which says that participation in intercollegiate sports competition will not have significant positive effect on the overall educational achievement of participants. The conclusion is that participation in intercollegiate sports competition has a significant positive effect on the overall educational achievement of participants.

In order to test hypothesis 2 of this study, responses in relation to item 2 of the questionnaire (See Appendix A) were analyzed with the chi-square (χ^2) test. From the results in contingency table 2 (See Appendix C) the computed value of χ^2 is 76.80. This value is greater than the critical value of 3.84, a suggestion that the value falls on the rejection region. Thus we reject the hypothesis 2 which states that participants do not have all it takes to perform brilliantly in their academics. Thus the conclusion is that participants have all it takes to perform brilliantly in their academics.

Conclusion

This study was designed to examine whether participating in intercollegiate sports competition will have a significant impact on the overall educational achievement of participants drawn from some selected Universities in South – South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The results from this study showed that though participants had at one time or the other missed class test, lectures, seminars amidst other academic activities, the fact that the participating students organized their time better and used time more efficiently (with or without help from their coaches and colleagues) during training period and in-season time, made it possible for them to see reasons why they need not regret ever participating in intercollegiate sports competitions. This however culminated in the participants to believing that their participation in intercollegiate sports competition had significant positive impact on their overall academic achievement.

Policy recommendations

This study was designed to examine whether participating in intercollegiate sports competition significantly affects the overall educational achievement of participants. The results from this study suggest that participation in intercollegiate sports competition had significant positive impact on the overall academic achievements of participants. Thus, participants have noted on a general note that they have no regrets whatsoever in being a part of such competition. This as noted in this study could be as a result of the fact that participants may have properly organized and managed their time efficiently (with or without help from coaches and colleagues) during training period and in-season time. There is also the possibility that schools may have a minimum academic standing which students must attain for them to remain or be a member of a sport team. Where this is in place, students might be motivated to work hard to remain in, or join a team. In this regard therefore, coaches in Nigerian

Universities must ensure that they monitor the performances of their athletes to see that they do not suffer academically. Coaches must also ensure that athletes do manage their time efficiently such that apart from excelling in their various sports, such students would still appear “tops” in their academics.

Recall that participants noted that at one point in time or the other, they had to miss lectures or seminars etc as a result of training or competition. This is not a good development. There is need for coaches to educate their students that training time must be carefully planned such that it does not coincide with lectures and seminars. Also, policies should be put in place to see that where students had to miss lectures or seminars due to their participation in competitions; so long as they have not represented themselves alone, but their respective institutions, make-up test, lectures/tutorials and seminars may be conducted for these special students where the need arises. This will serve as a motivator and will to an extent contribute not only to the students’ academic performance, but also to the students’ performance in such competitions.

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Table 1: Relationship between Participation in Intercollegiate Sports Competition and the Overall Educational Achievement of Participants

Questionnaire Items	Responses		
	Yes	No	Total
Is there a positive relationship between participation in intercollegiate sports competition and the overall educational achievements of participants?	102	18	120
Do you think that participants in intercollegiate sports competition have all it takes to perform brilliantly in their academics?	108	12	120
Do you think that excelling academically demands concentration, proper utilization of time, involvement in lectures, seminars, research and faculty assignments?	90	30	120
Would involvement in intercollegiate sports competition lead to delay in the expected time of graduation of participants if taken for granted?	96	24	120

Source: Authors' Field work

Table 2: Effect of Participation in Intercollegiate Sports Competition on the Overall Educational Achievement of Participants

Questionnaire Items	Responses		
	Yes	No	Total
Have you at anytime missed lectures, test or any other academic activity as a result of your involvement in training or competition?	114	6	120
Is there the possibility of you performing better in your academics if you had not involved yourself in intercollegiate sports competition?	102	18	120
Do you have any regrets on participating in intercollegiate sports competition due to its impact on your academic standing?	96	24	120
Would you say that participation in intercollegiate sports competition does not significantly affect the overall academic achievement of participants?	12	108	120

Source: Authors' Field work

The Contingency Table 1

Responses	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
YES	102	60	42	1764	29.4
NO	18	60	-42	1764	29.4
TOTAL	120	120	0		X²=58.80

Level of significance = 0.05

Degree of Freedom = n - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1

The Contingency Table 2

Responses	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
YES	108	60	48	2304	38.40
NO	12	60	-48	2304	38.40
TOTAL	120	120	0		X²=76.80

Level of significance = 0.05

Degree of Freedom = n - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1