



PERCIEVED CORRELATES OF ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES ATHLETES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

It is a truism that the participation of athletes in athletics could exert some influence in their academic achievements but a careful balancing of their involvement in the two important activities could reveal some associations. The study determined the relationship between university athletes' participation in athletics and their academic achievement in south-south, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design and was targeted at 156 athletes that were all involved in the study. The instruments for data collection were a 15-item structured questionnaire constructed on a four-point scale and 20-item academic achievement test in Human Kinetics and Health Education. The instruments were validated by three experts. Two in Human Kinetics and health Education and one from Test and Measurement unit of the department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method and a coefficient of 0.77 was obtained. Data collected was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) at 0.05 level of significance. It was found out that a significant relationship exists between coach's role, team mates' influence and parental support and academic achievement of athletes in the study area. It was recommended among others that coaches should continue to mentor athletes and encourage them to study hard for greater academic achievement.

KEYWORDS: Academic achievement, Athletic participation and University Athlete.

INTRODUCTION

Academic achievement is an important factor capable of influencing one's achievement in life. In fact, no one in his or her right sense would desire to perform poorly in an academic setting because it would in itself defeat their purpose of being enrolled into the institution. Steinmayr, Meißner, Weidinger and Wirthwein (2015) defined academic achievement as the various performance outcomes that connote the degree to which a student has accomplished specific instructional goals that were the focus of activities within a school, college, and university.

Zheng and Mustapha (2022) averred that although academic achievement has been an issue of significant concern to scholars - educationists and psychologists alike, its definition has been subject to controversial underpinning over the years. In this regard, they adduced that the concept can be divided into two, - a broad (liberalism) and narrow (conservative) definitions, in which academic achievement in a broad sense refers to the improvement of students' overall quality, encompassing the cognitive aspect to include both the psychomotor and behavioural aspect of learning during their school years.

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Whereas, in a narrow sense, it often refers to the instructional outcome of students as presented in their performances in various teaching and learning assessments such as; tests, quiz or examinations. In this line, Brookhart, et al. (2016) opined that some scholars hold onto the view that achievement in an academic setting is often equivalent to grades, and it is solely on this basis that the different understandings of academic achievement by scholars have differed.

Nevertheless, academic achievement is a valid metric that can be used to indicate as well as evaluate the effectiveness of teaching because it is direct manifestation of learning effectiveness (Zheng & Mustapha, 2022). A considerable number of researchers in most empirical studies on academic achievement tend to, in the strict sense, associate academic achievement with students' examination results. However, Billonid, Cabailo, Dagle, Godilano, Kibanoff and Tasic (2020) adduced that although learning is the primary focus of educational institutions, extracurricular activities play a vital role in molding students into well-rounded individuals. This tallied with the position of White (2021) who noted that participation in extracurricular activities is beneficial to students learning. This is as a result of the fact that different types of activities offer different experiences that may be responsible for different effects on students (White, 2021). Extracurricular activities are often out-of-classroom activities such as clubs, games, sports and cultural activities whereby students learn basic sets of knowledge, skills and values in a non-formal and more relaxed manner. Moreover, the interaction of students within an extracurricular setting can be impactful in ensuring a holistic development of the individual (Im, Hughes, Cao & Kwok, 2016). Ahmad, Rahman, Ali, Rahman and Al-Azad, (2019) in their study on the relationship between students' participation in extracurricular activity within college campuses and their academic achievement disclosed that extracurricular activities in general were beneficial for students in terms of earning higher standardized test scores, higher results on their professional examinations, higher self-concept, and educational attainment as well as the development of vital skills like teamwork and leadership and a decreased likelihood of problematic behavior. On the contrary, despite consenting to the positive influence of extracurricular activities on academic achievement in general, Balaguer, Benítez, Albertos and Lara (2020) specifically revealed that sports-related activities were often found to relate with lower academic achievement than other types of extracurricular activities.

Sporting activities is an essential factor for promoting healthy lifestyles among students which result to positive educational outcomes (Choi, Johnson & Kim, 2014). However, there seem to be conflicting views with regards to its effect on academic achievement and performance. Some studies (Nelson & Gordon-Larsen, 2006;

Tompsonowski, Davis, Miller, & Naglieri, 2008; Trudeau, & Shephard, 2008; DeMeulenaere, 2010) found a positive relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement of students while others (Tremblay, Inman & Williams, 2000; Hartman, 2008; Davis & Cooper, 2011) showed a negative correlation. Although various factors tend to affect academic achievement of students, this article categorically focuses on how various indices of athletic participation such as coach influence, teammates and parental support tend to affect the academic achievement of university athletes by reviewing the relevant literature related to the study.

The coach according to Dixon & Sagas, (2017) is to build a successful team sports programme that would help the student-athletes develop and acquire knowledge which supposes their personal athletic achievements. Carter and Bloom (2019) stated that coaches are model of mentors to student-athletes, as they create opportunities for their personal development. They further stated that most of the coaches provided several illustrations of how the model the way for their athletes for instance; according to them, "leading by example". And that mentorship that comes from coaches has a large impact and could influence the student-athletes personal development. Danylchuk & Maclean (2021) suggested that coaches have the ability to build relationships with their athletes as a vehicle of influence for athletes' personal development. That building relationship with athletes would help them to overcome barriers and also building trust. Chelladurai & Danylchuk (2020) also cited reflection as a medium through which coaches could influence students-athletes academic achievement. That spending a lot of time in reflection, both with and without the athletes, taking time to sit down one-on-one in discussion about academic activities would facilitate reflection and learning from the experience. The time spent on reflection as a coach with your student-athletes is the most valuable time, because you will consider the area they need to grow in and put them through. Coaches could influence the academic achievement of his student-athletes both positive and negative ways because they have the ability to do so.

One of the components in the university athletes' culture is the influence which they receive indirectly from the coach and teammates (Allen, 2017). According to Allen's research, university athletes are more likely to be influenced by the behaviour of their coach and teammates. For example, a male student athlete has the perception if lower academic achievement is acceptable and will still be allowed to play in team as it is acceptable by the coach. The act of giving permission to these students to represent the team despite their non-satisfactory grade, send a signal to these students from the coach that academic achievement is not important and not a concern for them to continue playing for the team. However, female university

athletes have different influence from their coach. Adler & Adler (2015) stress that the coach of the female team has created an environment that stress on the importance of academic achievement among female university athletes.

Adler & Adler (2015) suggest many university athletes are not ready and not interested in academic especially when with teammate. They enrolled in a university or college to develop their career in sports. They obtain lower "CGPA", have higher dropout rate and lower chances of completing their college education. The authors conclude that the involvement of teammate in sports had brought about negative influences which impacted their academic achievement. According to Sack (2018), the teammate subculture was one of the factors that influenced the academic achievement of university athletes apart from factors such as the behaviour of parents and academic faculty members. Allen (2017) also suggested that the subculture of a teammate and this has an effect on academic achievement throughout their university education, university athletes will be exposed to various cultures and lifestyle in the campus that could affect their academic achievements. The culture will develop as they socialize with their peers, coaches, lecturers, university staff and faculty members as well as academic counselors and with others in the university community from the first year until they graduated from the university. Student athletes (males and females) are often expected to meet the physical, mental and time requirements of their chosen sport. A study by Insler and Karam (2019) on the influence of intercollegiate athletic participation on the grades of student athletes of the U.S. Naval Academy reported that sports participation had modestly negative effect on the student athletes' grades. This was in unison with Balaguer et al. (2020) who presented that students who participated in sports-related extracurricular activities were more likely to have lower academic achievement than those who participated in artistic activities. Likewise, Schultz (2017) adduced that student athletes had lower Grade Point Average (GPAs) when they actively participated in athletics. Undoubtedly, parents' influence on a child's involvement in sports and physical activity is significant. As the demand of students' sport participation have become more complex and competitive, so has the role of a parent become more difficult. Sack, (2018) stated that, the combination of academic and sport career, referred to as "dual career", of athletes has been considered as one of the priorities in European sports' strategy and policy. Allen, (2017), revealed that empirical research highlights that parental view, goals, aspirations, styles, involvement, and monitoring of the educational pathway of the children are robust predictors of their academic achievements. He further said that, few studies have collected information from parents themselves

on their experience and perspective as dual career supporters of athletes as students.

Aries et al (2015) stressed the fact that parenting dual career athletes is a long-term process, often requiring more than a decade of involvement, spanning from the identification of a talented athlete to his/her developmental years and eventual elite sport stage as well as academic requirements at high school and university level. Thus, dual career stages and transitions are characterized by significant variations in typology, volume intensity, organization and planning of training and study demands, all which have an impact on the psychological, social and financial development of the athlete. Miller (2020) noted that, parents' attitudes, involvement and support in dual career could contribute to avoiding drop out when athletes are faced with the challenges of trying to balance a sporting and an academic career. Carter & Bloom (2019) highlighted that the parental role provides the athlete with emotional, logistic and financial support, with parents perceiving themselves as not always prepared enough to understand, interpret, and play their role when interacting with athlete and his/her sport and academic entourages. In light of the complexity of parenting dual career athletes, Pine (2010) reacted that the need for specific education to enable positive parenting roles and fruitful relationships with athletes and other key stakeholders of the athlete's sports and educational achievements has emerged.

Chuan, Yusof and Shah (2013) in their study on sports involvement and academic achievement of Malaysian university athletes reported that factors such as parental influence, support systems, socialization, academic assistance, team mates, learning environment, financial aid, coach's behaviour and stress level had an influence on academic achievement of university athletes. The study adduced that coaches and team mates' perception about academics was an indication of how student athletes perceive academics. Although the study concluded that sports participation could negatively affect academic achievement, it surmised that learning environment is critical to the academic achievement of university athletes because if a student athlete rapport well, studies with, and have discussions on relevant academic matters with non-athlete it can positively improve their academic achievement. Undoubtedly, parents' influence on a child's involvement in sports and physical activity is significant. As the demand of students' sport participation have become more complex and competitive, so has the role of a parent become more difficult. Sack, (2018) stated that, the combination of academic and sport career, referred to as "dual career", of athletes has been considered as one of the priorities in European sports' strategy and policy. Allen, (2017), revealed that empirical research highlights that parental view, goals, aspirations, styles, involvement, and monitoring of the educational pathway of the children are robust predictors of their academic

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to investigate the relationship between athletic participation correlates and academic achievement of university athletes. Specifically, the study focused on:

1. Coach's role and academic achievement of university athletes
2. Team mates influence and academic achievement of university athletes
3. Parental support and academic achievement of university athletes

Research questions

1. How does coach's role relate with academic achievement among male and female University athletes in South-South Nigeria?
2. How do team mates' influence relate with academic achievement among male and female University athletes in South-South Nigeria?
3. How does parental support relate with academic achievement among male and female University athletes in South-South Nigeria?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between coach's role and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria

2. Team mates' influence does not significantly influence academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria

3. Parental support does not significantly relate with academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design. The survey design was adopted because of the nature of the study which sought to collect data from a distribution without controlling or manipulating the data since the situation already exists or has taken place. According to Isangedighi (2012), a survey design is most suitable for such study. The population of the study comprised of all four hundred level University students' athletes within the South-South geopolitical zone, Nigeria. Using convenience sampling, respondents were chosen from among five Universities in South-South Nigeria that are involved in athletics (track and field) and football. The sample consists of 156 University athletes from University of Calabar (UNICAL), University of Uyo (UNIUYO), University of Port-Harcourt (UNIPORT), Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH), and Akwa-Ibom State University.

Two instruments were used for data collection; a 15-item structured questionnaire titled "Perceived Athletic Participation Correlates Questionnaire" (PAPCQ) constructed on a four-point scale. It contained fifteen items that measured the independent variables of the study. Items 1-5 measured coaches' role, 6-10 measured teammates' influence, while items 11-15 measured parental support. The second instrument was a twenty (20) item achievement test in Human Kinetics and Health Education for year one to three undergraduate students.

The instruments were validated by three experts. Two in Human Kinetics and Health Education and one from Test and Measurement unit of the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method and a coefficient of 0.77 to 0.79 was obtained. The researchers applied for permission to conduct the research from each of the Director of Sports of the various institutions used in the study. Upon approval, an appointment was booked with the Director of Sports or the coach in the respective universities. The respondents (student athletes) were briefed by the researchers on the purpose of the study which was to investigate the perceived correlates of athletic participation and academic achievement. There were assured that their responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality and will only be used for research purpose. The researchers then, accompanied with two research assistants distributed the questionnaire to the respondents (athletes). This was to prevent respondents from feeling intimidated by the presence of their coach or colleagues,

thereby ensuring the validity and reliability of their responses. The completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

RESULTS

The result in this study was based on the hypotheses that were formulated to guide the study. Three null hypotheses were formulated

based on the variables used to guide the study. Below is the description of results.

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between coach's role and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria. The independent variable in this hypothesis is coach's role while the dependent variable is students' academic achievement, Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between coach's role and academic achievement of university athletes in south-south Nigeria

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	r-cal	P.value
Coaches' role	14.64	2.77	0.82	0.000
Academic achievement	13.6	2.29		

P<0.05; df = 154

Table 1 presents a calculated r-value of 0.82 which was greater than the p.value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance and 154 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, a significant relationship exists between coach's role and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis two

Team mates' influence does not significantly influence academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria. The independent variable in this hypothesis is teammates' influence while the dependent variable is students' academic achievement. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented on Table 2.

TABLE 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between team mates' influence and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria

Variables	X	SD	r-cal	P.value
Teammates' influence	14.64	2.82	0.79	0.000
Academic achievement	13.6	2.29		

P<0.05; df = 154

Table 2 presents a calculated r-value of 0.79 which was greater than the P.value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance with 154 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, a significant relationship exists between team mates' influence and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis three

Parental support does not significantly relate with academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria. The independent variable in this hypothesis is parental support while the dependent variable is students' academic achievement. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between parental support and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria

Variables	X	SD	r-cal	P.value
Parental support	14.48	2.87	0.768	0.000
Academic achievement	13.6	2.29		

P<0.05; df = 154

Table 3 presents a calculated r -value of 0.68 which was greater than the p -value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance with 154 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, a significant relationship exists between parental support and academic achievement of university athletes in South-South Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The discussion of findings in this study was based on the objectives that guided the study. The result of the test of the first hypothesis revealed that a significant relationship exists between coach's role and academic achievement of university athletes in south-south Nigeria. This implied that coaches while performing their professional task of mentoring the athletes, they also encourage them to pursue their academic activities seriously. If they were not encouraging the athletes, they would have neglected their studies hence, record low achievements. Likewise, Chelladurai & Danylchuk (2020) and Dixon & Sagas, (2017) submitted that coaches should build a successful team sports programme that would help the student-athletes develop and acquire knowledge which supports their personal athletic achievements. Also, Danylchuk & Maclean (2021) stated that coaches are charged with the ability to build relationships with their athletes as a vehicle of influence for athletes' personal development.

The result of the test of hypothesis two shows a significant relationship between team mates' influence and academic achievement of the university athletes in south-south Nigeria. The implication of this result is that team mates do not converge for athletics events or programme only, they also manage their time efficiently in their academics. The team spirit exhibited by them in the field of athletics is also extended to academic activities hence, greater academic achievement. The finding agrees with Alahmed et al. (2016) who submitted that higher academic achievement of student athletes was associated with their participation in university sports' teams. Chuan, Yusof and Shah (2013) also reported that factors such as parental influence, support systems, socialization, academic assistance, team mates, learning environment, financial aids, coach's behaviour and stress level had an influence on academic achievement of university athletes.

The result of the test of hypothesis three indicated that a significant relationship exists between parental support and academic achievement of university athletes in south-south Nigeria. Parents are the back bone of these athletes and their involvement by way of supporting their children in whatsoever athlete they are involved in motivates them for greater academic achievement. The result of the study is in agreement with Allen, (2017), who revealed that empirical research highlights that parental view, goals, aspirations, styles, involvement, and monitoring of the educational pathway of the

children are robust predictors of their academic achievements.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of students in athletics and sustaining their academic dream at the same time has become a recurring issue in the sports world. The relationship between student athletes in the perspectives of coach's role, team mates' influence and parental support and their academic achievement formed the crux of this study. From the findings, it was concluded that relationships exist between coach's role, team mates' influence and parental support and academic achievement in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Coaches should continue to mentor their athletes in the field as well as encouraged them to study for good grades in school for better academic achievement.
2. Students' athletes should cooperatively participate in sports and also form good study groups to enhance their achievements.
3. Parents should sustain their usual role of caring for their children involved in athletes and encouraging them in their studies.

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