



School-based sports: X-raying the benefits, constraints and the future impacts of sports activities on Students academic achievements in schools

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Abstract

It has been acclaimed that sports brings physical wellbeing, mental fitness, a healthy mind and sound body for regular participants. Consequently, for decades, there have been deferring views (tripartite view) on the relationship between sports and education. Many scholars are of the opinion that the inclusion of sports in the curriculum is of no consequence, while others give more marginal position to sports within the education sector. Many parents and guardians also view sports activities as inimical to academic achievements of students in school; hence, debarring their children and wards from participating in sports activities and make them focus purely on their academic careers. Furthermore, other scholars are of the view that active participation in sports neither enhance nor reduce academic achievements of students in school. However, of recent, these deferring views have started being blurred, as several studies now show lots of benefits derivable from sports in physical, mental, and academic areas. Consequently, this paper examines from literature these tripartite views expressed by individuals on the effects of sports on academic attainments. Additionally, it examines the overall benefits of sports in our lives, and the constraints posed, specifically on academic achievements of students in school. It further focuses on future hope of sports on education of our children.

Keywords: Sports education, Learner, Physical activity, Physical education, educational achievements Education

Introduction

Sports or sport as interchangeably used in British and American English respectively has generated lots of debates from time past on its impact on the academic attainments of students in school. Sports can be indoor or outdoor. Irrespective of where sport takes place, the first set of scholars had the same opinion that active or regular involvement of students in sports activities enhances their academic achievements in school. They assert that students, who regularly participate in sports activities perform better academically than their counterparts who minimally or do not participate in sports activities at all. The proponents of this view have documented several research works that proved that active involvement of students in sports activities enhances their academic achievements in schools. The second group of scholars and parents alike opined that students that participate in sports are a complete waste of time and instead, students should engage their meaningful time in their academic careers. In line with this view, physical education in schools is frequently given low status and limited curriculum time in school syllabus.

However, the third group of scholars has emerged, which sees no difference between students that actively participate in sports and those that minimally or do not participate in sports activities as it concerns academic achievements in school. Consequently, these scholars are of the view that active participation in sports will neither enhance nor reduce academic achievements of students in school. These scholars (Hanks & Eckland, 1976; Stuart, 1985) ^[17, 35] found no difference in the mean grade among university athletes and non-athletes.

But on the contrary, there exist prevalence research

evidence documented over the years that show positive correlation between students' athletic involvement and academic success in schools. Commonly, scholars assert that sports activities and/or competition in school generally enhances physical wellbeing, mental fitness, a healthy mind, sound body, social networks, sense of social connection, skills, and a high level of quality of life for regular participants and equally positively contributes to academic attainments of students in school (Bloom, Grant, and Watt, 2005, and Ganaden, Barrientos, and Anaud, 2017) ^[14]. In the main, it has been proven that active participation in sports brings lots of happiness or joy, while lack of exercise can lead to feelings of depression and fatigue.

This paper wholly focuses on the deferring views on the role of physical activity, physical education, and school sports as oftentimes referred to generally play on the holistic development of the students' academic performance in school. While examining the tripartite views, this paper does not in any way intend to examine the various ways in which sporting activities relate with certain social group or groups, or different categories of school setting.

Firstly, let's examine the concept of "Sports or Sports" or "school sports" and how it affects academic attainment of students in school.

Concept of Sport/Sports

In this write-up, sport or sports may be referred to as physical education or physical activity. Education is not only about reading and writing. There is an axiom/maxim which states that "Work no play, makes Jack a dull boy." Sport is one of the extra-curricular activities in school. It is an important component of any serious academic work. Its

athletes work as a term to win. It is of note that behind every athlete's mind is the philosophy of "The harder you work, the better you perform" (Chen, 2018) ^[10]. Since athletes discover that by never giving up, they are more likely to achieve their goals. This attitude is also translated to academic work, which invariably gives a better academic result. On this note, the scholar rightly put it thus, "These life lessons benefit students long after the high school years..." Remember, that there is an adage which states that "Two good heads are better than one."

As well, Taras (2005) ^[37] investigated the relationship of physical activity and academic outcomes among school-aged children and discovered that physical activity can help improve mental health of students. Other researchers have affirmed that vigorous physical activity leads to long-term improvement on academic performance of students. Berman (2017) ^[5] revealed that every participant goal is to win; hence, this spirit can spread around the classrooms quickly. General Benefits of Sports to Students/Individuals

It is a well-known fact that innumerable number of youths spends most of their leisure time in playing sports, such as basketball, football, tennis, Judo, etc. Generally, in spite of academic accomplishments derivable from active participation in sporting activities, other forms of rewards have been identified as stated hereunder: -

Fitness: Chen (2018) ^[10] opined that fitness level of athletes cannot be underestimated as a 2006 study on female athletes by National Federation of State High School Associations revealed that female students that were given more opportunity to participate in athletics in high school experienced improved weight and body mass. Playing sports not only offer positive outcomes to health, such as fitness of the body, instant energy boost, increase metabolism, and power to concentrate, but also instill values of confidence, co-ordination, endurance, teamwork, and leadership qualities in students.

As Berman (2017) ^[5] rightly put it, "It offers students the opportunity to build confidence and leadership skills." Moreover, Schools promote sports as extracurricular activities on regular basis and sets background to quench thirst of passionate students and opportunity to uplift their proficiency. Psychologists have established that one who actively participates in sports activity entails brain sharpness and enhanced intellectual capacity. Consequently, playing games is not only working out for the body, but also exercise for the brain which boosts academic activities in school.

Psychosocial effects: Students active participation in sports improves better self-esteem or self-image (Nelson and Gordon-Larsen, 2006; Kirkcaldy, Shephard and Siefen, 2002) ^[26]. Libbey (2004) ^[24] as well reported that both school connectedness and school satisfaction are factors that prevent school drop-outs.

Diseases: Active participation in sports removes unnecessary diseases, such as,

1. Arthritis
2. Obesity ("Sports provide a way for kids to get the exercise needed to stay in shape" (Berman, 2017) ^[5])
3. Heart problems
4. Freedom from stress or worries
5. Reduces the high incidence of hypertension

Socially: Chen (2018) ^[10] revealed that students who participate in sports often forge close friendships with others

on the team. These relationships, the author affirmed are essential for mental, emotional and physical health throughout the high school years. The scholar further argued that the time students spend together at practice and games builds tight bonds that often last long during and after school.

Sports provide opportunity for social interaction through which our children can develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their full participation, not only in school, but in civil society. Socially, the following could be achieved through active participation in sporting activities as outlined below: -

1. Sport makes children feel bold in life
2. Star players (sportsmen/women) are given the status of heroes, often admired for their status, achievements, and sometimes for their inspiring journey to success
3. Sportsmen and women are seen as models and cherished within and outside their immediate society
4. Sports can expose individuals nationally and internationally. For instance, Mary Onyeali, Kanu Nwankwo, Jay-jay Okocha (Nigerians) are celebrated worldwide. In the same development, Mohammed Ali, Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, etc. are products of sports activities that are internationally celebrated. The names of these sportsmen are held in high esteem today.

Economically: Sports has become a multi-million-dollar career for prospective athletes worldwide.

Sports can give sportsmen and women money and fame (e.g., Sprinters, Boxers, and Footballers, etc., earn millions of Naira/Dollars in modern times).

Politically: We can see a vivid example of this in Liberia, whereby the international football star, George Weah, has become the country's president. This man wouldn't have achieved this if he had remained inactive in shorts activities. **Victory /Success Mindset:** Sports men and women are all instilled with success mindset, which transcends to the rest of their life's activities. These success mindsets include,

- Time management skills
- Creativity in finding ways to improve
- Strong focus and concentration development
- Internal skills for handling pressure
- Learning when to take risks
- Taking responsibility for individual performance (Chen, 2018) ^[10].

Negativity of Sports Activities on Students Academic Achievements in School Undeniably, there are lots of pros and cons for students who engage in sports activities in school. Sport is often regarded as a double edge sword that does both good and undesirable effects. On one hand, it provides incredible benefits to health; on the other side, it causes permanent or irreparable damage to health to active participants. It has been proven that a number of students spend most of their time leisure participating in sports activities which played detrimental role to their chosen academic career.

Most parents and wards oftentimes nag that their children waste most of their time in school participating in sports activities, thereby focuses less on academic necessities such as class assignments which results to low level educational attainments (Govards, 2018) ^[16]. Berman (2017) ^[5] affirmed that school sports can become negative when it detracts

from the academic experience that schools provide. The scholar further stated thus: "Extracurriculars', including sports, takes time that otherwise might be devoted to studies." (Berman, 2017) ^[5]. In support of this, Chen (2018) ^[10] opined thus, "Practice and games take up plenty of a student's time, leaving much less for school work and other activities."

It is on records that most students have left school and even lost their lives due to sports related injuries sustained during practices or competitions. Footballers are more susceptible to this as they oftentimes sustain muscle injuries, dislocations and fractures that result to surgical operations. Sometimes, this may result to deaths. For instance, on 12 August, 1989, a 25-year-old Sam Akwaraji, a famous Nigerian football legend, died of congestive heart failure in the 77th minute of a world cup qualification match between Nigeria and Angola at Lagos National Stadium, Surulere, and Lagos. Another 25-year-old Nigerian football star, Endurance Idahor, who played for a Sudanese club (Al-Mereikh) also fainted on the field on 6 March, 2010 and died on his way to the hospital.

Similarly, on 13 June, 2015, David Faramola Oniya, a Nigerian footballer who played for a Malaysia Premier League club, T-Team died after he collapsed on the football pitch on a friendly match with Kelantan football team. In the same development, Abdul Haruna died on 6 December, 2015 while playing in a friendly match between Kano Professionals and a selected amateur team in Kano. Other Nigerian players who died in similar situations are: - Chinonso I. Henry (5 August, 2012); Bobsam Elejiko (13/11/2011); Victor Omegebehin (18/8/2010); Emmanuel Ogoli (10/12/2010); Orobosan Adun (26/5/2009). This detrimental effect of sports on individuals is neither limited to any particular sports nor country.

Adler (1985) ^[1] and Sack (1987-88) have argued that professionalization of sports among university athletes has give rise to poor academic performances among students because they are preoccupied with sports activities in order to develop their career in sports. Adler & Adler (1985) ^[1] and (Allen, 1997) ^[3] opined that most universities' purpose is to actually train students with good academic backgrounds, but regretted that the competitive nature of intercollegiate sports has resulted in an 'anti-intellectual' subculture, which the scholars claim lower academic achievement of students involved in athletes. Adler & Adler (1985) ^[1] further stressed that many university students' athletes are oftentimes not ready and not interested in academics. They obtained lower Cumulative Grade Points Average (CGPA), have higher dropout rates and lower chances of completing their college education. The authors concluded that the involvement of students in sports activities in schools had brought about negative influences, which is inimical to their ac poor performance for a school team can spread around the classrooms quickly, endemic accomplishment.

Constraints to Sports Practice in Schools

Students' participation in sports activities have met with lots of oppositions as observed by scholars in the field. Ellis and Radmacher (1986) as cited by Ahmad (2015) ^[2], defined constraints as "Negative factors that inhibit consumption of an event, product or service. Constraints are factors which preclude or limit an individual's frequency, intensity, duration or quality of participation in recreational

activities." However, several reasons might be behind these hurdles for sports activities in school, with parents taking the lead. Parents have been accused of creating some of these problems that make students not able to gain the benefits of sports. Some parents and wards place restrictions on their children and wards from participating in sports activities, and this adversely affects the children (Bibi, Khan and Khan, 2016) ^[6].

Additionally, experts have discovered that parents do this due to some factors, such as, low level of parents' education, lack of parents' knowledge about the value of sports in students academic and other aspects of live, lack of parents' interest or misconception about sports, low financial status of some parents, etc. (Rintaugu, Mwangi, and Bailasha, 2013; Suleman, Singh and Zeeshan, 2014) ^[29, 36]. It has been on record that highly learned parents allow their children to participate in sports activities as compared to low educated parents (Ifedi, 2008) ^[21]. Some scholars have revealed that home tasks form part of the constraints to sports participation. Majority of the people have no knowledge about the benefits or value of sports activities in general, while others consider sports as wastage of time (Orunaboka and Nwachukwu, 2012) ^[27]. In the same development, some parents believe that sports effect their children's academic performance in school (ISSP, 1992) cited in Sarwar, Hussain, Mehmood, and Awan (2010) ^[31].

Hussain, Khodayari, and Mohammadi (2010) have observed that lack of funds, space, facilities coupled with no interest of physical education teachers are some of the limitation factors in sports participation in school. Jenkinson and Benson (2010) further revealed that access to suitable teaching space, time tabling, and support from other staff and proper subject funding were the identified barriers in students participation in sports activities. In addition, knowledge about the existing programs and family resources can as well play a key role in a child's ability to participate in physical activities and sports (Canadian Council on Social Development (2011).

Charlton, and Potter *et al* (2010) also pointed out that improper time allocation for the implementation of sports and physical activities and the way sports are promoted at school level were some of the main constraints in the development of physical education and sports in school. Ganaden, Barrientos, and Anaud (2017) ^[14] identified numerous other factors, which include parental attitudes and beliefs, peer influence, pupil's motivation and school's orientation and resources. In a research conducted by Ganaden, Barrientos, and Anaud (2017) ^[14] which investigated and analyzed the constraints and barriers to sports participation among pupils of Cabangan Central Elementary School, Cabangan District, Zambales, Philippines revealed that the social traits like relationship, support and encouragement from friends, mentors and family were considered by both athletes and non-athletes as some of the probable constraints to sports participation at school. The scholars' further findings revealed that oftentimes some coaching and training programmes of the school are less sensitive to pupils' needs, interests, level of skills, and behaviors and feelings. In addition, fears of sustaining injuries are all factors that can seriously affect students from participating in sporting activities. These constraints prevent students from active participation in sports in schools.

Ahmad (2015) ^[2] has identified Physiological, Physical

Constraints, Psychological, Social, Religious, and Economic constraints as major factors affecting effective sports participation, especially the female folk. Included are cultural and gender discrimination that is prevalent in some societies, principally in India before independence (Ahmad, 2015) ^[2]. Students or parental economic status are considered most significant factors hindering active sports participation in school. This may be due to insufficient economic status or lack of sponsorship, which may result to non-participation or termination from sports participation. Again, lack of, or insufficient school infrastructure, for instance, sports equipment or gadgets may pose great constraints. However, by infrastructure facilities, Ahmad (2015) ^[2] refers to it as the non-availability of area for training, such as, halls, indoor stadiums or constructed play environment to undergo training. For this reason, lack of these facilities could deter, frustrate or deny students the opportunity to participate in sports in school.

Still, lack of expert trainers may pose some problems for sports enthusiasts, a situation where there is non-availability of professional/skilled trainers, coaches or instructors to engage the students in mastery or better performance of any of the chosen sports activities. Lack of these skilled personnel may as well cause sports injuries and subsequent lead to death of novice students.

Physical fitness of students is yet another factor constraining students' participation in sports in school. Ahmad (2015) ^[2] refers to it as morphological feature adaptations to particular sports. This essentially refers to the qualities of the sports person, such as the physical fitness parameters, and which failure in any of these required parameters, such as heavy musculature of limbs, heavy abdomen musculature, heavy pelvic musculature, obsessive structure, improper posture/postural deformity, and flat foot among others results in the reduction of sports performance.

Prospects of Sports Activities in School

Experts in sports arena have observed some drops in active sports participation. For instance, in Pakistan, scholars observed that the extent of facilities and the level of participation in sports among school age children are considerably low (Zia-ul-Islam, Hussain, Abbas, & Akhtar, 2013; Bibi, Khan, Khan, & Abbas, 2016) ^[40, 36]. However, despite the fact that some students drop from active participation in sporting activities due to both short and long-term health concerns, and fame coaches, who publically announced that they would discourage their own kids from sports related activities (<https://www.nfhs.org/ParticipationStatics/ParticipationStatics.aspx/>), there has also been a steady increase in sporting activities in school in view of the fact that it brings fame or glory, especially financial benefits to the participants.

As observed by this website, modern equipment can make a big difference in the way that a team performs and plays, and installing new equipment, such as electronic scoreboards and upgrading other equipment and facilities can help boost team spirit in both the players and the fans (<https://www.electro-mech.com/team-sports/schools-colleges-states/prospects-of-high-school-and-college-team-sports-in-north-carolina/>). It has been acknowledged that these improvements will draw in more sports fans and visitors, which invariably will motivate students to take

more part in sports. As well, present governments have started recognizing the totality of the importance of sports, which not only generate money for the government, but brings fame or glory.

Summary/Conclusion

Based on the reviewed literature, sports experts, educational researchers, and other disciplines have critically looked at the deferring views on sports and education and affirmed that sports can actually make valuable contribution to individual wellbeing and particularly for academic career of students in schools. There is no doubt that the merits of sports outweigh its drawbacks, as a consequence, it is better in terms of physical wellbeing and exercise for the brain (<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-disadvantages-of-sports-activity>). In addition, physical activity can be added to the school's curriculum by taking a little time from other subjects without the risk of hindering student's academic achievements. Again, students need to be sure that athletic success isn't emphasized more than academic accomplishments, and athletes must be conversant with time management skills if they must as well be successful in their academic endeavours in school. With recent concerns and improvements in sporting activities by governments at all levels, there is a very high future for our students, participation in sporting activities in school.

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