

Sports for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at investigating “Sports for gender equality and women empowerment” as perceived by students of the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Calabar, Cross River State. To achieve this purpose, two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of three hundred and forty two (342) students from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Calabar. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of (120) one hundred and twenty students. A structured questionnaire titled “Sports for gender equality and women empowerment” (SGWEQ) was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in test and measurement unit in the University of Calabar, Cross River State. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance with 118 degree of freedom. The results of the analysis revealed that there exist a relationship between the variables under study and women empowerment. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that there should be mass enlightenment regarding gender discriminating sports participation, that there should no cultural consideration when it concerns females participation in sports. And that Government and NGO’s Non Government Organizations should endeavour to sponsor female athletes so that they can be encouraged to always participate in sports.

Keywords: Sports, gender equality, women, empowerment, cultural belief, inadequate sponsorship

Introduction

Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. In recent years, there has been a significant shift from advocating for gender equity in sport towards using sports for gender equity and personal development (Okonkwo, 2010). Sport is defined as any activity that uses physical exertion or skills competitively under a set of rules and regulations. For a long time women have been expected to live up to traditional gender roles that are held by both men and women in mainstream society, these gender roles often resulted in women being dissuaded from involvement in sectors of society, including participating and competing in sports. Since the Olympic games in Paris in 1990 where 22 women out of 997 athletes participated in 5 sports, the involvement of women in the Olympic moment at all levels changed gradually.

Kenneth (2014) observed that Changes in gender roles in response to changing economic, social and political circumstances also had an influence on sports especially in relation to participation. The scholar further opined that the decisions making level progress has been less impressive and there were no women members of the International Olympic Committee between 1896 and 1981. Obaro (2015) stated that gender inequality in sport is primarily the responsibility of national and local stakeholders and efforts should be made at all levels to address the roles of women and men in the governing bodies of sports. This includes access to clubs improved access to clubs improved access to coaching courses, changing stereotypes and safety and security arrangements.

Culture is the way of life of a certain group of people. Kunle (2012) stated that the culture of an individual is mostly determined by the attitude, beliefs, and way of life of the person. The scholar further explained that cultural belief influences the spirit of sportsmanship and motivational aspect to participate in sport. Ejike (2014) opined that, the culture of the white which mostly preach equality and empowerment of women has gradually found its way to various countries through sports. Ejike explained that the coming of sport as a competitive and from activity, the culture of inequality is gradually been reduced in areas willing to accept it. Similarly, Mesner (2009) submitted that sports has somehow been a male hegemonic activity, men who does not participate in sports end up being referred to as women and are tagged lazy. The scholar added that despite all the concentration given to the male, women has little or no place in sport because of culture. However, ever since globalization started, women started getting educated, exposed to the real world to showcase their abilities and potentials, the female genders started giving sports a trial through competitive female sports organized alongsides with the males, this was to educate people on the equality of sports participation.

Balsamo (2011) stated that female participation in sports has been a provocative issue all over the world and Nigeria is not an exception. Participation in sports makes athletes and others fit for such activities that they might engage in. Females who participate in sports, recreation and physical activities are generally healthier more confident and feel better than those who do not take part in sports. According to Promise (2010) sports can also be a powerful health information and education platform, connecting, females (women) with the information, skills and strategies they need to reduce health risks in their lives particularly in connection with their sexual and reproductive health. Sport can help increase self-esteem by giving females the opportunities to learn new skills, engage in positive relationships, engage in volunteer service and receive public recognition.

The International Working Group on Sport for Development and Peace (SWIWD) (2008) recommended that women leaders, decision makers, role models and gender sensitive boards, female coaches and women empowerment should be given equal opportunities for women and girls. The body thus suggested that, there should be provision for female sports role models, recruitment females as soccer players, coaches referees and other officials as these will help in the development of a talented pool of female leaders, women empowerment which is an urgent need in most countries because sports women found occupying these places are few the greater number either as players, coaches, or administrators. Inspite of Nigeria's developmental changes and all the transformations

female sports have enjoyed, specific changes are yet to be noticed in sports participation among female/women generally as a result of culture, inadequate sponsorship, religious factors among others. Therefore, this study is an effort to investigate the relationship between sports for gender equality and women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between sports for gender equality and women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State. This study specifically seeks to:

- 1) Find out the relationship between cultural belief and women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.
- 2) Determine the relationship between inadequate sponsorship and women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.

Research questions

These research questions guided the study;

- 1) What is the relationship between cultural belief and women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.
- 2) How does inadequate sponsorship relate with women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between cultural belief on women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.
- 2) Inadequate sponsorship does not significantly relate with women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State.

Methodology

The study employed survey research design. This design was adopted because it typically seeks to obtain information from a sample drawn from a predetermined population at a point in time. The study was carried out in University of Calabar, Cross River State. The population of the study is made up of all the (342) three hundred and forty two undergraduate students of human kinetics and health education students in University of Calabar, Cross River State. From the population, a sample of (120) one hundred and

twenty students was drawn using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a 12 items questionnaire titled “Sports for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Questionnaire” (SGENEQ). The questionnaire was constructed on a four point scale options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by expert in test and measurement units of University of Calabar, and the reliability was established using split-half method and Pr which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.78. The statistical tool employed for the analysis of the data was Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis at .05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the analysis are presented in tables 1 & 2.

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between cultural beliefs and women empowerment as perceived by students in human kinetics and health education in University of Calabar.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between cultural beliefs and women empowerment (N = 120).

Variables	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r-Cal
	Σy	Σy^2		
Cultural beliefs	3166	6242	74012	0.58
Women empowerment	3002	5668		

*Significance .05, critical $r = .138$, $df = 118$.

The result of the statistical analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.58 is greater than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 118 degree of freedom. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between cultural beliefs and women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education department students in University of Calabar.

Hypothesis two

Inadequate sponsorship does not significantly relate with women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education department in University of Calabar, Cross River State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between inadequate sponsorship and women empowerment (N = 120).

Variables	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r-Cal
	Σy	Σy^2		
Inadequate sponsorship	3212	5124		
			76428	0.62
Women empowerment	3116	5018		

*Significance .05, critical $r = .138$, $df = 118$.

The result of the statistical analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.62 is greater than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 118 degree of freedom. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between inadequate sponsorship for women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education department students in University of Calabar.

Discussion

The result of the hypothesis one revealed that cultural beliefs relates with women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education department students in University of Calabar, Cross River State. The findings is in agreement with the view of Ejike (2014) who opined that the culture of the white which mostly preach equality and empowerment of women has gradually found its way to various country through sports. Ejike explained that coming of sports as a competitive and fun activity, the culture of inequality is gradually been reduced in cultures willing to accept.

The finding agrees with the view of Balsamo (2011) who also reported female participation in sports has been a provocative issues all over the world and Nigeria is not an exception. Participation in sports makes athletes and others fit for such activities that they might engage in. Females who participate in sports, recreation and physical activities are generally healthier, more confident and feel better than those who do not take part in sports. The findings is also in line with the view of Promise (2010), who he stated that sports can also be a powerful health information and education platform that connects females (women) with the information, skills and strategies. They need to reduce health risks in their lives particularly in connection with their sexual and reproductive health. Sports can help increase self-esteem by giving females the opportunities to learn new skills to engage in positive relationships, engage in volunteer service and receive public recognition.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between inadequate sponsorship of women empowerment as perceived by human kinetics and health education students of University of Calabar, Cross River State. The findings of the study tally with the idea of Ojeme (2014) who opined that the most important thing is to note that sports and sports athletes needs money, kits and all other basic sports gears in order for them to perform better and this cost so much to administer effectively. Again, the author further explained that the basic element in achieving a successful and effective

organization of male sport is the same as the female. But in recent times, it is discovered that little or no attention is paid to sport sponsorship of the female sex.

This finding is in consonance with that of Capezza (2010) who observed that female sports has increased drastically in number and in participation, but have an inferior status in terms of sponsorship has grown in recent years. These sponsorship level increase a little when it was discovered that the females have started to have a stage in the sport world and have also made names for themselves that most brand would like to acknowledged with.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings in this study, it was concluded that cultural beliefs and inadequate sponsorship have significant relationship with women empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) Parents should educate and encourage their female students on the relevance of participating in sport activities and that they should drop the cultural beliefs that do not support female sports participation.
- 2) The society should change their perception about female sports participation, that is when they take part in sports it makes them masculine and that they are better and mine useful in the kitchen.
- 3) That the Government and Non Governmental Organization (NGO) should endeavour to sponsor female participation in sports so as to encourage them to be more involved.
- 4) Government as well as cooperate bodies should organize seminars, workshops and symposium on the need to allow the females (women) to participate in sports and be empowered to provide basic needs for themselves.

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