SPORTS PARTICIPATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ADOLESCENTS PEER RELATIONSHIP IN SCHOOLS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the issue of sports participation and its influence on adolescents peer relationship in schools. Three hypotheses were tested in the study. Two hundred students were selected from ten secondary schools in Cross River State using stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire instrument was designed and used to obtain information from the respondents. Pearson product moment correlation; one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent t-test analysis were used in testing the three hypotheses. The result of the findings revealed that the level of sports performance of students can influence their level of peer relationship. The result also showed that the level of peer relationship differs among the three groups of students that were identified as high, average and non-performing athletes. Finally, it was also observed that the levels of sports performance of students who move in cliques are different from those who move in groups. Conclusions were drawn and some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Sports participation, Adolescents peer relationship, Sport performance, Sports facilities and equipment.

Introduction/Literature review

The coverage that sports receive in various mass media in Nigeria is wonderful. The money spent on sports and the interest shown by the society on the role of sports on character training of youths have shown the high position that sports is placed in the scheme of things. This has led to the increasing numbers of fans attracted to sports and games particularly soccer. The reward given to highly skilled athletes and the upsurge in lobbying for athletes by various clubs and institutions so as to win in sports
competition is clearly shown. Sports has therefore been so magnified that every state strives very hard to see that its athletes perform well in national and international sports competitions.

The emphasis placed on sports is very glaring in our secondary schools which are mandatory to organize inter-house or hostel sports competitions every year. Much emphasis is also given to sports in our Colleges and Universities both for character development and the production of national and international athletes. Akpan (2000), noted that the tone and success of some schools now is more often than none based on its sports achievements rather than the academic achievement of such schools. Evaluation and comparison of viability of athletic members of a school sports squad and their popularity against intellectual achievements are clear evidence to show where sports is placed in school and society as a whole.

Studies have also shown that athletic ability is extremely important to youths in school. Brown and Clasen (1990) indicated that participation in sports may encourage the development of favorable personality traits that may enhance popularity. Akpan (2000) pointed out that with boys, sports achievement is related to social status and prestige with peers. He also found out that with children particularly among the males, social success and prestige among peers may be largely based upon proficiency in physical skills while physical fitness and athletic ability are factors in the makeup of social popularity in pre-adolescents.

Adolescent has been defined as the period of transition from childhood to adulthood (Ambron, 1991). The beginning of adolescence is marked by biological changes in the body while the end is marked by social change. Important tasks are faced by every adolescent regardless of how the transition to adulthood takes place (Strouge, Cooper and Dehart 1996). It may involve establishing personal identify, a sense of integral, coherent and goal directed self; while another involves achieving a new level of closeness and trust with peers among others. Identity development is a complex process involving understanding of self, of ones relationship with others of one value and roles in society, (Erikson 1985). Generally, schools support adolescent development being exposed to peers from diverse backgrounds, as it occurs especially in public schools, encourage in perception of diverse opinions on variety of issues through class discussions. Schools may also have a negative influence on adolescents based on peer group influence; Entwisle (1990) found out that the peer culture at school rewards popularity and athletic performance far more than it does for scholastic achievement. For some students, peers encourage both academic achievements and sports. It has also been observed that schoolgrades decline during ones adolescent stage and was tied to friendship patterns.

Peer relationship changes during the adolescent years in a number of ways and their impacts on other areas of development or growth. The psychomotor advances of adolescents make possible a deeper and more understanding of self. The acquisition of the psychomotor potential for mutual exploration and discovery enhances deeper growth in friendship (Hartup and Laursen 1996). Involvement with peers is crucial to progress in self understanding during adolescence as they are able to discover their inner feelings mainly through close relationship with peers. Peer relationship also contributes to the development of personal identity.
It had been observed that the identity of an adolescent is defined through the group of friends he/she belongs. Eventually as new type of peer group emerge within this period, involved with same sex peers often pave the way for close relationship with members of the opposite sex. Not only does the nature of friendship change in adolescence but also the nature of peer groups. Two new group structures that emerge in adolescence are the clique and the crowd. A clique is a close-knit group of a few friends who are intimately involved with one another, going places and doing things together, having mutual exchange of ideas and accepting one another’s different personalities (Brown and Clasen, 1990).

A crowd is a mixed gender group which is larger, less exclusive and more loosely organized than a clique. Crowd tends to be identified by the interests, abilities, attitudes, style of dressing and other personal characteristics shared by their members. Further observation that adolescents’ concept of clique and crowd changes overtime as their psychomotor abilities become more sophisticated. They can readily describe and belong to various cliques in their schools, while crowds are labeled according to their general disposition of interests, (Ambron, 1991).

Adolescents sometimes belong to more than one crowd which becomes more differential during their adolescence period. They become identified with various co-curricular activities and sports performance. Generally, schools support adolescent development being exposed to peers from diverse backgrounds especially in public schools and encourage the perception of diverse opinions on variety of issues through sports competitions. Schools may also have some negative influences on adolescents based on peer group. In a study of peer group influence, Entwisle (1990), found out that the peer cultural school reward popularity and athletic performance far more than it does for scholastic achievement. For some students, peers even encourage academic failure than other activities (Cains, Perrin and Cains 1989).

**METHODOLOGY:**

The ex-post facto research design was employed for this study. The research area covers secondary schools in Cross River State.

Two hundred students were selected from ten secondary schools in the three Educational Zones of the state. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the subjects for the study. A questionnaire instrument was used to collect the data for the study. The instrument contained ten items on a four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Three hypotheses were postulated and tested in the study as follows;

1. There is no significant relationship between the level of sports performance of students and the level of their peer relationship.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of peer relationship between high, average and non-performing student athletes.
3. There is no significant difference in the level of sports participation of students who move in cliques and those who move in crowds.
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The responses of the subjects in the three sections of the questionnaire were coded, scored and summed up accordingly. Appropriate statistical tests were used for the hypotheses thus;

**Hypothesis one:**

The hypothesis posited that there is no significant between the level of sports performance of students and their peer relationship.

Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1.

**Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Peer Relationship and Students’ Sports Performance (N 200)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>∑x</th>
<th>∑x²</th>
<th>XY</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of peer relationship (X)</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>50320</td>
<td>552800</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of sports performance (Y)</td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>608360</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05; df=198; critical r=0.164

As presented in table 1, the result of the correlational analysis shows a significant positive influence between peer relationship and the respondents level of sports performance (r=0.85, p<0.05), the null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

**HYPOTHESIS TWO:**

This hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the level of peer relationship between high, average and non performing student athletes. One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data by comparing the mean scores of the three groups of students with regard to the level of their peer relationship. The result is presented in table 2.
Table 2

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Difference in the Level of Peer Relationship of High Average and Performing Athletes (N=200).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High performing student athletes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average performing student athletes</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>51.36</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-performing student athletes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>49.95</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between group</td>
<td>1557.032</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>778.52</td>
<td>93.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within group</td>
<td>164296</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3200</td>
<td>199</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<0.05; df2=197; r=3.00.

As shown in table 2 the obtained r value was found to be greater than the critical r-value (3.00). Hence, the result was significant; the hypothesis was then rejected, given the significant r-value.

Given the f-value, a post live analysis was done using fishers LSD multiple regression test to reveal the groups between which the significant different lies. The result showed that the significant difference lies among the three independent groups, but the highest difference lies between average and non performing students.

**Hypothesis 111**

The hypothesis posited that there is no significant difference in the level of athletic performanceof students who move in cliques and those who move in crowds. Independent t-test was used to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 3;

Independent T-Test Analysis of the Difference in the Level of Athletic Performance between Students who move in Cliques and those who move in Crowd (N=200).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of athletic performance of those students who move in cliques.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of athletic performance of students who move in crowd.</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>52.87</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>8.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<0.05; df2=197; r=3.00.
Examination of table 3 revealed a significant t-test value of 8.14, this hypothesis was rejected. This result means that there is a significant difference in the level of athletic performance between students who move in cliques and those who move in crowds.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the findings signified that the level of athletic performance of students can influence their level of peer relationship. This finding is consistent with the studies of Strouge, Cooper and Dehart (1996) who observed that peer relationship changes during the adolescent years and that their impact on other areas of development grows. Students have been known to establish close ties with other students they admire as well as those whose ways of life go in line with theirs. One can ascertain that a high performing athlete or student attracts friendship from other students.

The result of findings also portrays that the level of peer relationship differs among the three groups of students identified as high, average, and non-athletic performer. This agrees with the findings of Ertwistle (1990) who found out that the free culture at school rewards popularity and athletic performance far more than it does for scholastic achievements. Lastly it has been confirmed from the result of the findings that the level of athletic performance of students who move in cliques are different from those who move in crowd. Brown and Clasen (1990) had earlier on observed that adolescents concept of clique and crowd change over time as their psycho-motor abilities become more sophisticated. Going by this, those who move in cliques are bound to be more influenced by their peer relationship than those who more in crowd.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above findings, some conclusions were drawn.

1. The friendships of students whose athletic performance are high are often sought by other students who may aspire to be like them.
2. Individual cliques and crowds in schools have been identified through the activities they engage in.
3. Adolescent is a period in life where youngsters treasure their peers. Conformity to peer groups is therefore very crucial in adolescent development.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made.

1. Guidance and counseling services should be provided in schools so as to offer useful information that will help in curbing the excesses and negative influence of peer relationship.
2. Adolescent should be assisted by parents through proper child rearing techniques to cultivate good moral standard that will aid in offsetting the bad influences that come through peer relationship. This could lead to enhance athletic performance through cultivation of worthy characteristics or traits in the adolescent students.
3. Parents, guardians and teachers should be very careful on how they treat issues that pertain to peer relationships.
4. Adolescents should be encouraged to participate in sports by parent, schools and government by providing adequate sports facilities and equipment for them.
REFERENCES


