

**SPORTS PARTICIPATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
ATHLETES AND NON-ATHLETES OF FEDERAL COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION SPECIAL, OYO, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to compare and ascertain whether participation or not participation in sports has any influence on the academic performance of Federal College of Education Special Oyo students. The design for the study is causal comparative. The researchers compared sports participation on academic performance of two groups: student- athletes and non-student athletes to establish cause and- effect relationships between sports participation and academic performance. 150 participants were used for the study using multi-stage procedure. The study adopted causal comparative research design with independent t- test as the statistical technique at a significant level of 0.05. Students mean cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) score was used as the proxy. The findings revealed that there was slight difference in the CGPA of student athletes compared with non-student athletes resulting in student athletes performing slightly better than non-student athletes recommendation is therefore made that college authorities organize the college curriculum in such a way that it will give sports the required place and time thereby encouraging all students to participate in sports.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Cumulative Grade Point Average, Non student Athletes, Sports Participation, Student Athletes.*

Introduction

Sport is any activity that you do for pleasure and competition that needs physical effort or skill, usually done in a special area and according to fixed rules (Broh, 2002). Sports mean athletic activities involving physical exertion and skill of the athlete in its performance within the context of formal rules of behaviour (Hammond, 2013). The term academic performance however refers to the act or process of performing the task of academic activities. It is the way and means through which students and teachers carry out their academic activities. Participation in sports activities in general, is associated with an improved, higher educational aspiration, increased college attendance, and reduced absenteeism.

Participation in sports is always associated with health and wealth. Sani, & Danlami, (2019) stated that men and women who participate in sports are rewarded in kind or in cash all over the world. African Cup of Nations, held in South Africa 2024 is an example which is still very fresh in the memories of everybody all over the world. Sports participation among students and its implications on academic performance is important for several reasons. Thus, Woods, & Butler, (2020) noted that sports has permeated nearly every aspect of life and therefore should merit an intensive study particularly as it affects human behaviours and institutions.

The greatest Greek philosophers of all time, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, all recognized physical exercise as means to preserve mental health. Convincing evidence from long-term human studies have shown that physical fitness apparently protects the memory centres of the brain and people who exercise are healthier (Powers, 2011). The author was of the view that children and adolescents who pursue sports activities have been shown to exhibit more active brain function, better concentration levels and classroom behaviour and higher self-esteem than their less-active counterparts. Understandably, all of these factors seem to support better academic performance. In 2002, the California Department of Education examined whether any correlation existed between standardized test scores and results from a state-mandated physical fitness exam. In its analysis of data from over 954,000 fifth, seventh and ninth grade students, the study found that students with higher levels of fitness performed better in school. Students who met three or more physical fitness standards experienced the greatest academic gains.

Regular physical exercise helps enhance our mental state by increasing blood circulation, bringing oxygen and endorphins – hormones released after exercise that have benefits on mood and memory – to the brain tissues, helping promote growth of brain cells and is clearly associated with better performance on several cognitive measures, long term brain health and last but not least, general mental well-being. Neeser, (2005) opined that, exercise makes you smarter. Exercise not only strengthens your body; it can also strengthen your mind. All headmasters and teachers, parents as well as the students are bound to co-operate for the smooth running of the intramural and extramural sport programmes. Unfortunately, there have been diverse opinions from the public, parents, family members, friends and even participation of their wards in sporting activities at the expense of their academic work Perez (2015).

Playing sport at the college level as a student is a right according to UNESCO charter, Article 1.1 (1978) “Every human being has a fundamental right of access to physical education and sport which are essential for the full development of his

personality”. Sporting activities at the tertiary level underpin the total development of the student in terms of economic gains, intellectual advancement as well as refreshing to the mind and body. Federal College of Education (Special) is only college of education for people with special needs in sub-Sahara region in Africa with tertiary status which has more than 10000 students till date. The vision of the College is that it shall create excellent teaching and learning environment and opportunities for training quality basic school teachers with emphasis on knowledge, skills and values for quality education, recognizing that education is the key to the human resources development of Nigeria (SPECIAL NEEDS). The college has since the inception been participating in collegiate sports since sporting activities are part of the college of education curriculum. Sporting activities such as athletics, handball, volleyball, netball, football, cross country, and table tennis are the disciplines that are included in the college games.

According to Hammond (2013), student- athletes find their own ways to make up for loss of contact hours and quizzes as a result of participation in college games. It is a fact that some of the time lost can be made up for but majority are completely lost putting the student in a tight corner. It is also possible and important to indicate that during camping and training periods most athletes shift their attention to sports rather than their academic work. Such situation if not curbed properly may impede the academic performance of the student athletes in the college. On the contrary, college students are normally given break during the one week that is used for the Nigeria Colleges of Education games (NICEGA), students are given break in order not for student- athletes to lose in terms of academic work. Also, their training periods during camping are scheduled in such a way that they can easily attend lectures after training. Mostly trainings are conducted in the mornings and evenings. In spite of that, sports participation is dwindling gradually in the college. Few of the student athletes participate up to the National level. For instance, of the one hundred and twenty (120) athletes who were selected from the colleges to represent the zone at Colleges of Education Sports Association (NACEGA) games at Abuja 2012, thirty-five (35) were from FCES Oyo.

In educational institutions, particularly in teacher training colleges like the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, there is a growing concern about balancing academic pursuits with extracurricular activities such as sports. Participation in sports is often associated with several benefits, including physical fitness, teamwork, and discipline, yet its impact on academic performance remains a subject of debate. While some argue that sports participation enhances cognitive functioning and academic engagement, others contend that it may detract from study time and academic focus. For athletes in specialized institutions like FCE (Special), where academic rigor and specialized training coexist, it is crucial to determine whether involvement in sports hinders or supports their educational goals. Similarly, understanding how the academic performance of non-athletes compares with that of athletes can help educators and policymakers make informed decisions about resource allocation, program development, and student support services. Despite the relevance of this issue, limited research has been conducted to investigate the relationship between sports participation and academic performance in the Nigerian context, especially in institutions catering to diverse student needs. This gap in knowledge necessitates a study to explore whether athletes differ significantly from non-athletes in terms of academic outcomes and what factors contribute to any observed differences. Addressing this problem is essential for

fostering an environment that supports both academic excellence and holistic student development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to compare and ascertain the influence of sports participation on performance of athlete and non-athletes of FCES OYO students.

Research Objective: The specific objective is to;

Assess of sports participation on performance of athlete and non-athletes of FCES OYO students.

Research Question

What is the academic performance of student- athletes and Non-student athletes of FCES OYO.

Methodology

The design for the study is causal comparative. The researchers compared sports participation on academic performance of two groups: student- athletes and non-student athletes to establish cause and- effect relationships between sports participation and academic performance. This method does not deal with controlling and manipulating variables. It rather deals with finding out what abilities, capacities and experiences which the subject has and then the effects of these on his/ her present and future performances. Causal-comparative studies involve comparison in contrast to correlation research which looks at relationship. This research design was found suitable because the researchers did not investigate the cause of academic performance differences between athletes and non- athletes. However, the focus was to compare the academic performance of these two groups of students in FCE OYO.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this research consists of all regular students (Athletes and Non-student athletes) of Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The target student- athlete population is the student- athletes who trained and competed NICEGA while Non-student- athlete population is any student who did not participate in any organized sport competition at the college. Records at the college indicated that there were 10,921 students in FEDERAL College of Education SPECIAL OYO. The component of the team size for the various disciplines that represented FCES OYO at NACEGA games at ABUJA, 2012 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Table 1

SPORT	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Hockey	17	14	31
Volleyball	1	18	30
Soccer	18	18	36
Tennis	10	12	22
Athletics	14	17	31
TOTAL	71	79	150

Source: Field Data (2012).

A sample of 40 student- athletes was purposively selected from among the college student athlete population of 150 from the Federal college of education special Oyo team. Purposive sampling was used because the researcher has experience or

knowledge about all participant and also participants share similar characteristics example the same course and level. Stratified random sampling was then used to select 110 non-student- athletes from 975 non-student- athletes in the college. Stratified random sampling technique was used for non-student- athletes, also to obtain a sample representation of both male and female. The sample from the student- athletes and non-student- athletes was merged into one to constitute the sample for the research work. In all 150 participants were used for the study.

Table 2: Students Level (Class)

LEVEL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE
100	65	43.4
200	55	36.7
300	30	19.9
	150	100

Instrumentation

The academic records of students of Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo for the first and second semester 2018/2019 academic year was used as the main source of data collection for the study. This was obtained from the College's Assessment Officer. The researchers wrote an introductory letter from the Physical Education Unit to the Provost of the College and copied the assessment officer to enable easy access to the student results and also to have access to work with the students. The information gathered on the participants was grade point average (GPA) of students, gender of student and level of student. The data was interval scale therefore researchers used inferential statistical testing technique called an independent t- test to determine whether: The two sample means (mean cumulative GPA scores of students- athletes and non-student- athletes) differ reliably from each other

Table 3 GRADING SYSTEM

PERCENTAGE	GRADE	REMARK
70 -100	A	DISTINCTION
60 – 69	B	CREDIT
50 – 59	C	MERIT
45 – 49	D	PASS
40 - 44	E	LOWER PASS
0 - 39	F	FAIL

Source: Certificate from Federal College of Education Special Oyo

Statistical Presentation of Research Questions The statistics of the academic performance of selected student- athletes and non-student athletes for the study are presented in Table 4 below. The table revealed students' academic grades, the range of cumulative GPA scores obtained by the student- athletes and non-student athletes, together with the standard deviation units and mean of cumulative GPA scores.

SAMPLE	GENDER	GRADE	NO OF STUDENTS	MEAN CGPA	SD OF CGPA
ATHLETES	MALE	A	1	3.62	-
		B	3	3.18	-
		C	3	2.72	0.12
		D	9	2.22	0.14
		E	4	1.65	0.13
		F	0	-	0.23
			20	2.39	0.57
	FEMALE	A	0	-	-
		B	1	2.10	-
		C	2	2.88	0.04
		D	10	2.20	0.17
		E	7	1.55	0.28
		F	0	-	-
			20	2.08	0.51
NON ATHLETES	MALE	A	0	-	-
		B	5	1.68	0.09
		C	13	1.33	0.06
		D	20	1.11	0.15
		E	12	1.26	-
		F	0	0.38	-
			50	1.13	0.28
	FEMALE	A	0	-	-
		B	1	3.05	-
		C	8	2.63	0.10
		D	22	2.16	0.14
		E	27	1.62	0.28
		F	2	0.75	-
			60	1.95	0.49

KEY: The higher the mean CGPA the better the results and the lower the S.D. the better the results.

A glance at figure 1 above showed significant variations on the data of academic performance of the selected sample. In table 4, the mean cumulative GPA scores of the student- athletes were mostly higher than that of non-student- athletes and even its only one student- athlete who had distinction for the male category of students with a cumulative GPA score of 3.62. The table indicates, ten (10) student- athletes out of forty (40) had distinction to merit which are high grades. Thirty (30) of them had pass and eleven (11) had low pass which are low grades. None of the student athletes failed. in the case of the non-student- athletes, none of them had distinction, six (6) and twenty one (21) had credit and merit respectively which are high grades, forty two (42) had pass and thirty seven (37) had low pass which are low grades and two (2) of them failed generally, a second look at table 4 and fig. 1 suggest that, the academic performance of student who participate in sports whether male or female as the case may be performs slightly better than those who do not participate in sports at FCES OYO. Secondly, there were some few individual academic performances which were outstanding and therefore contributed to the spread of the performances of the student- athletes sampled for this study

Discussions of Findings and Results

Research Question: what is the academic performance of student- athletes compared with non-student athletes at FCES OYO in terms of their GPA score? the mean cumulative GPA scores of student athletes and non-student athletes, an independent group t- test was used. Jackson (2006) recommended an independent group t- test as the most appropriate parametric statistical test for this purpose because it compares the means of two different samples of respondents from a single population.

Table 5:

T-test on the academic performance of the student- athletes and non-student athletes

Student Number	Range of CGPA	Mean of CGPA	S.D
Student- athletes 40	1.15 - 3.62	2.27	0.56
Non-student- athletes 160	0.75 - 2.15	2.15	0.55

It can be observed from table 5 that, the range of CGPA of student- athletes was 1.15- 3.62 with a mean of 2.27 and standard deviation of 0.56 (M= 2.15, S.D= 0.55). Also the range of CGPA of non-student- athletes is 0.75- 2.15 with a mean CGPA of 2.15 and S.D of 0.55 (M=2.15, S.D= 0.55). Therefore, the mean differences between the two samples are 0.12. The results of this analysis shows that at p value of 0.05, there was a slight difference in the mean CGPA of student- athletes and Non-student Athletes resulting in student- athletes performing slightly better than Non-student Athletes.

Conclusion

The impact that sports exert on academic performance has been debated over the years, some say the impact is positive, while others say it is negative. Early analysis of the effect of participation in sports on academic performance produced inconsistent evidence (Broh, 2002). Even today, there is inconsistent evidence but most research tends to lean towards the idea that participation in sports does, in fact improve academic performance. The results of this particular study indicated that sports participation does influence the academic performance of student-athletes compared to Non-student Athletes of FEDERAL College of Education SPECAIL OYO. From this study, it can be concluded that, student- athletes performed slightly better than Non-student Athletes and also students have good perception about students' sports participation at the college. Student- athletes do not see sports as a factor that could affect their academic performance. This could be because students still perform well academically so they do not see sports participation as having negative effects on them. Implication Researches identify the importance of sports and acknowledge that participation in sports or physical activities contribute to human development physically, socially, emotionally, economically and intellectually. It will help student athletes manage and balance their time for sports and academic activities.

Recommendations

The fact that the student-athletes sampled for this study had slighter better mean cumulative GPA than the Non-student Athletes appears safe to conclude that sports participation at Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo does not negatively influence the academic performance of student athletes. However,

1. There should be specific initiatives focusing on the individual student Athletes challenges both personal and environmental that may impact student-athletes dual role in the college.
2. Some of the specific programmes should be recommended which include academic monitoring, personal counselling, career guidance, assignment and

compatible academic advisors, inculcation of skills, establishment of student-athletes tutoring, sessions among others.

3. The College authorities, staff and parents should encourage and motivate students to actively participate in sport since this research has proven that student-athletes perform slightly better than Non-student Athletes.
4. Student-athletes should also learn how to apportion their time properly for both sports, and academic work.

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