

BULLYING IN SPORT: AN ASSESSMENT OF OSUN STATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS; UNIVERSITY OF ILESA AND OSUN STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ILA – ORANGUN

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Abstract

This study investigated the forms, causes and effects of sports bullying among Osun State Tertiary Institutions athletes of University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education, Ila – Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study were all athletes of both Osun State Tertiary Institutions University of Ilesa and Osun State College of education, Ila-Orangun. The total sample of this study comprised 200 Tertiary Institutions athletes sampled from ten sports using random sampling techniques. The selection was carried out during training session and the selected sports were classified according to ball, racket, stick, track and field events. The selected athletes have represented the University in Osun Inter - Collegiate Games and pre-Nigeria Colleges of Education Games (NACEGA) competition respectively in the last competitions. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed and validated questionnaire tagged “Effect of Sports Bullying on College Athletes Survey (ESBCAS)” with reliability co-efficient results $r.78$ was used to gather information from the respondents. Findings revealed that athletes have experienced one form or the other of bullying before, during and after tournament. Antibullying legislation should be legalized by the Tertiary Institutions sports council and offenders should be brought to book.

Keywords: *Aggression, Bullying, Sport, Classification, Sport Arena, Institutions*

Introduction

Bullying is rampant before, during and after competition among tertiary institutions athletes in the globe. In sports, there are many occurrences that resulted to bullying and its effect on athletes is underestimated. In fact, every tertiary institution athlete has the right to participate in an environment that is fun, safe, healthy, and to be treated with respect, dignity and fairness; but bullying denies them from their rights which could result in feeling of disgrace, embarrassment, shame and intimidation. Therefore, bullying is the act of intension aims at causing harms deliberately to physical or emotional status of the athletes (Charles, (2017). Bullying is when an athlete uses his/her strength or power to hurt weaker athlete(s) in an attempt to control him/her through verbal abuse of threats, harsh tones, teasing and so on. Bullying is the use of power by person who is more powerful, often due to age, physical strength, mental and emotional stable destabilize another person or group of people who are less powerful to condole the unusual circumstance in sports arena (Margaret, 2018). As stated by Aluede (2011), bullying is a form of aggression, particularly a kind of violence exhibited in the course of social interaction by a more dominant individual (bully) to a less dominant individual (victim) with the intention of causing distress to the victim. According to Owuamanam and Makinwa (2015), bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour manifested by use of force or coercion to affect others particularly when the

behaviour is habitual and involves imbalance of power. Fundamentally, it may result to low mood and loss of pleasure and enjoyment in usual activities.

However, colleges athletes are bullied which they often feel trapped in most cases and could take many different forms including physical threats or violence; name-calling and teasing; ostracism; and social attacks on someone's reputation. Bullying could be direct or indirect forms. Owuamanam and Makinwa (2015), expressed that direct bullying involves a great deal of physical aggression which includes shoving and poking, throwing things, slapping, choking, punching and kicking, beating, stabbing, pulling hair, scratching, biting, scraping and pinching; while indirect bullying is a social aggression attempting to socially isolate the athletes. This isolation is achieved through variety of techniques, including spreading gossip, refusing to socialize with other athletes. Charles (2017), affirmed that bullying could take the forms of physical abuse which causes physical harm such as hitting, kicking, biting, overworking to the point of physical damage and emotional abuse that leads to emotional distress. While social abuse deals with any act that creates isolation or exclusion from a group or social atmosphere of the victim(s). So, bullying had been noticed at the training session when one athlete performs better than others; in view of this, other athletes may rose against his/her performance which eventually lead to be bullied. United States Department of Education, (2013) stated that 28 percent of United States universities athletes have experienced bullying or have felt bullied. In comparison, one in three youth athletes were the victim of an act of bullying either by their fellow athletes or their coaches (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015). Meanwhile, 40 percent of the Canadian universities athletes had been targeted of bullying and experienced bullying and victimization during and after training sessions (Evans, Adler, MacDonald, and Cote 2016).

Apparently, Sterling and Kerr, (2016) stated that bullying of athletes has been categorized into relational and non-relational maltreatments. Therefore, relational bullying is a problem in sports which occur from coach to player, parent to player, player to player, or fan to player, either in person or via cyberbullying on social media platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook, or Twitter. Essentially, Beaumont Children's Hospital (2016), observed signs of sports bullying that often takes the form of making unreasonable performance; repeated threats to restrict or remove the target's privileges or opportunities and blaming the target for his/her mistakes. In their submission, Chantal, Margaret and Wanda (2014), stated the symptoms of bullying developed from bully athletes include excusing from training session such as feeling sick, has an injury, has too much work to do or talking about hating their sport wants to be driven to training or matches instead of walking; alienated from social or shared activities becomes uncharacteristically nervous, worried, shy or withdrawn; repeatedly loses money or possessions; and suddenly prone to lashing out at people either physically or verbally.

In the context of sports performance, specific behaviours are intended either to include or exclude one athlete from game or training session such as not passing the ball, gossiping about one athlete's performance, and yelling at him/her in front of others. Among Nigerian Tertiary Institutions of athletes, such behaviours were not unique to their team but were common in sports and happen all the time. At times, the behaviour of teammates may be mentally and emotionally harmful which are detrimental to accomplishing team goals or individual target. Moreover, bullying in

sports is done for selfish purposes; for instance, intimidating younger talented athletes hinder performance and allow more senior athletes to have regular positions. (Chantal, Margaret and Wanda2014). Bullying of this type fails from the outset because of its invidious purpose; and is often overt and extremely in nature because its purpose is to humiliate and intimidate other athletes (Kevin-Cave, 2017).

Many Tertiary Institutions athletes including Nigeria performed poorly while other teammates may quit the team if bullying persists. The consequence of bullying on team performance reduces self-confidence and love for the competition. In contrary, Kevin-Cave, (2017) noted that bullying in sports is often done for purposes of socializing team members to behave in ways that enhance team performance in at least three ways; first, sports require a certain level of mental toughness which athletes need to endure an atmosphere of bullying under mental readiness and enhance performance under pressure. Second, athletes must often consider the goals of the team above individual goals in order for the team to succeed; however, bullying in sports could strip an athlete of individuality and rebuild his/her identity based primarily on being a member of the team. Third, performance is enhanced when athletes know they have to support the teammates in accomplishing a common goal. Bullying here could expose those athletes who seek only individual accomplishment and are unwilling to make individual sacrifices for team improvement which in most cases those athletes faced with the choice of leaving the team or enduring while they are bullied.

Bullying can also affect an individual's athletic performance, level of enjoyment, work or school life, academic achievement and physical and mental health. Available evidences showed that bully could be arrogant, aggressive or impulsive; enjoy having power over others. In her finding, Margaret (2018), believed that some athletes deserve to be bullied as a result of their aggressive attitude either for training or other athletes. Kevin-cave (2017), noted that some athletes need to be bullied to correct their negative behaviour or means of paying-back their mistakes. Statistical data showed that 3 out of 5 college athletes have experienced bullying, with 23.7 percent having been bullied since they have started playing for their universities (Cyber Bullying Research Centre, 2016a). The impacts of bullying on health, self-esteem and performance are significant on colleges athletes as noted by Kevin-Cave, (20 17).Also, 27 percent of those who have been bullied said it made them feel depressed and lout of 4 turned to self-harm as a coping mechanism. Due to the aforementioned evidences, this calls for investigating the form, cause and effect of sports bullying among Tertiary Institutions athletes in Osun State Ilesa and Ila-Orangun.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying behaviours are commonly accepted as part of the sport culture due to inherent traditions and aggression of some sports. Recently, an increasing numbers of young athletes fighting for college jersey with uncertainty of securing the position faced alots of rejection. With this situation, Tertiary Institutions athletes may develop several emotional and behavioural health problems including depression if they failed to secure position in the team. Such athlete seeking placement in Tertiary Institutions team may experience several forms of bullying from various quarters including peers that have secured theirs, senior players or others. This, however, may be characterized as a symptomatic condition that may lead to low sports performance, hence, this study.

Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the forms, causes and effects of sports bullying among Tertiary Institutions athletes in University of Ilesa and Ila-Orangun College of Education, Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

- i. examine the forms of sports bullying experienced by Tertiary Institutions athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.
- ii. investigate the causes of sports bullying among Tertiary Institutions athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.
- iii. identify the effect of sports bullying among Tertiary Institutions athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.
- iv. examine how colleges athletes handle sports bullying in Tertiary Institutions in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated and formulated from the objectives of this study as thus:

- i. What are the forms of sports bullying experienced by athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.
- ii. What are the causes of bullying among athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.
- iii. How does bullying affect athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.
- iv. How does athletes handle bullying situation in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population comprised all college athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria. A sample size of 200 University and College athletes was sampled from ten sports using simple random sampling technique. From each sport, 20 athletes were selected using purposive random sampling technique. The selection was carried out during training session and the selected sports were classified according to ball, racket, stick, track and field. The selected athletes must have represented the Institution at the last Osun Inter Collegiate games and Pre-NASEGA competitions respectively. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed and validated questionnaire tagged "Effect of Sports Bullying on College Athletes Survey (ESBCAS)" with reliability coefficient results $r.78$ was used to gather information from the respondents. The instrument was divided into five sections. Section "A" dealt with demographic data of the respondents. Section "B", "C" and "D" centred on forms, causes, and effect of sports bullying among Tertiary Institution athletes; while section "E" focused on how Tertiary Institution athletes handle sports bullying. Collected data were analysed with percentage and graphical representation

Results

Research Question 1: What are the forms of bullying experienced by Tertiary Institution athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Percentage analysis on the forms of bullying among college athletes

S/No	Items	Yes F(N)	%	No F(N)	%
	In what ways Tertiary Institution athletes experienced forms of bullying?				
1	Physical Bullying such as hitting, kicking, slapping, tripping, pushing, punching etc	158	79%	42	21%
2	Verbal Bullying like name calling, banter, threatening, teasing, yelling, abuse and so on	116	58%	84	42%
3	Relational Bullying such like preventing one athlete joining the team or social activity	78	39%	122	61%
4	Cyber Bullying such as spreading of falseful lies, fake rumours via social media platforms	189	94.5%	11	5.5%
5	Direct Bulling such direct bullying are silent treatment and fake rumours	132	66%	68	34%
6	Extortion of money, training kits and other personal Belongings	61	80.5%	39	19.5%

Source: Field Work 2024

Results from table 1 showed that 158 (79%) of the respondents stated that college athletes have encountered various kinds of physical bullying while 42(21%) of the respondents said contrary opinion item 2 revealed that 116 (58%) of Tertiary Institution athletes have experienced different categories of verbal bullying while 84 (42%) of the respondents rejected the statement. Item 3 showed that 78 (39%) of the respondents expressed that they have been bullied through joining the school team, meanwhile 122 (61%) of the respondents disagreed. Item 4 categorically revealed 189 (94.5%) of the respondents have experienced cyber bullying, whereas 11 (5.5%) of the minority were against the idea. Item 5 showed that 132 (66%) of the respondents have encountered direct bullying, meanwhile 68 (34%) of the respondents rejected the idea Item 6 statistically revealed that 161 representing 80.5% of the respondents expressed that Tertiary Institution athletes have be extorted of money, training kits and other personal belongings at the training session, while 39 representing 19.5% of the respondents said contrary to the opinion. This was indicted that college athletes have being encountering various forms of sports bullying in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of bullying among athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

S/No	Items	Yes F(N)	%	No F(N)	%
	Which of these cause sports bullying among Tertiary Institution athletes”				
7	Intimidation by senior athletes	175	87/5%	25	12.5%
8	Ethnicity of the athletes	183	91.5%	17	8.5%
9	Physical conditions such as over and under-weight athletes	148	74%	52	26%

10	Athletes' disorder such like cognitive and using classes	72	36%	128	64%
11	Socially awkward or having few friends among school team	159	79.5%	41	20.5%

Source: Field Work 2024

Results from table 2 revealed that 175 (87.5%) of the respondents stated that intimidation by senior athletes was a root cause of sports bullying among Tertiary Institution athletes, whereas 25 (12.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the opinion. Item 8 showed that 183 representing 91.5% strongly affirmed that ethnicity of the athletes caused sports bullying, meanwhile 17 (8.5%) of the respondents rejected the statement, item 9 revealed that 148 of the respondents expressed that physical conditions of Tertiary Institution athletes has resulted to sports bullying, whereas 52 (26%) of the respondents opposed the opinion. Item 10 showed that 72 (36%) of the minority respondents stated that athletes' disorders caused sports bullying while 128 (64%) of the respondents strong affirmed with the statement. Item 11 revealed that 159 (79.5%) of the respondents expressed that socially awkward or few friends among school teams has caused sports bullying, meanwhile 41 (20.5%) of the respondents rejected the opinion. This was indicated that cause of sports bullying among Tertiary Institution athletes have not be addressed by the sports authority.

Research Question 3: How does bullying affect athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

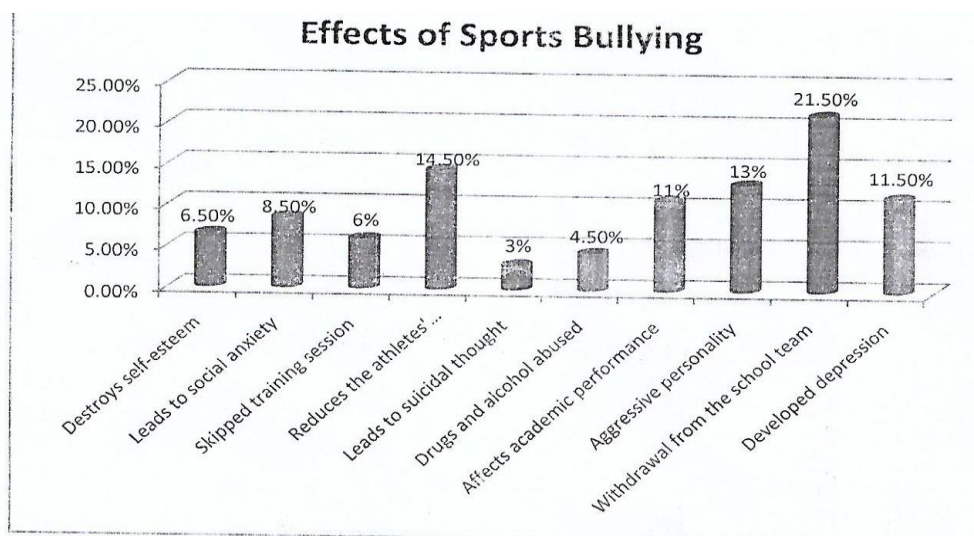


Fig. 1: Bar chart showing effects of sports bullying among athletes.

Results from figure 1 showed that withdrawal from the school team 43 *21.5%), reduces athletes' performance 29 (14.5%), aggressive personality 26 (13%), developed depression 23 (11.5%), impairs academic performance 22 (11%) and leads to social anxiety 17 (8.5%) were the major effects of sports bullying among athletes in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria. Meanwhile, the least effects are destroys self-esteem 13 (6.5%) skipped training session 12 (6%), drugs and alcohol abused 9 *4.5%) and leads to suicidal thought 6 (3%) among Tertiary Institution athletes. This was indicated that sports bullying affects Tertiary Institution athletes severely.

Research Question 4: How does athletes handle bullying situation in University of Ilesa and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Percentage analysis on how athletes handle sports bullying

S/No	Items	Yes F(N)	%	No F(N)	%
	How do athletes handle sports bullying situation?				
12	Reports bullying to organizer or management	75	37.5%	125	62.5%
13	Inform the coach/trainer/psychologist about bullying	183	91.5%	17	8.5%
14	Inform my friend or school captain	138	69%	62	31%
15	Reports to school authority/security	32	16%	158	84%
16	Inform my parents/family members about the bullying	129	64.5%	71	35.5%

Source: Field Work 2018

Item 12 from table 3 revealed that 75 representing 37.5% of the respondents reported bullying to sports organizer or management, while 125 representing 62.5% of the respondents had rejected the opinion. Item 13 showed that 83 (41.5%) of the respondents stated that athletes informed the coach/trainer/psychologist about bullying, whereas 117 (58.5%) of the respondents said no. Item 14 revealed that 138 (69%) of the respondents expressed that athletes informed their friends or school captain about bullying, meanwhile 62 (31%) of the respondents against the statement. Item 15 showed that 32 (16%) of the respondents stated that athletes reported bullying to school authority or security, while 168 (84%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Item 16 revealed that 129 (64.5%) of the respondents affirmed that athletes informed their parents/family members of bullying, whereas 71 (35.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the idea. This was indicated that most of the respondents experienced sports bullying failed to report the incidence to appropriate quarters.

Discussion

Cyber bullying such as spreading of falseful lies, fake rumours via social media platforms was one of the major forms of sports bullying among athletes. This was in line with the finding of Chantal, Margaret and Wanda (2014), that internet interaction was correlated with sports bullying among the university students in Canada. Physical bullying, extortion of money, training kits, direct bullying such as fake rumours and verbal bullying were major forms of sports bullying among university athletes. This was supported by the results of United States Department of Education, (2013) and Charles, (2017) that university athletes have experienced various kinds of bullying during and after competition.

Moreso, intimidation by senior athletes, ethnicity, physical conditions of athletes and few friends among school teams were the major causes of sports bullying among athletes. This was in line with the findings of Margaret, (2018) that ethnicity, physical conditions and social awkward are root causes of sports bullying among University athletes.

Results from figure 1 showed that sports bullying leads to the withdrawal of athletes from the school team was agreed by Charles, (2018). However, sports bullying reduces athletes' performance and impairs academic performance was in line with the findings of Cyber Bullying Research Center, (2016a) that sports bullying systematically reduced both sports performance and academic performance of the Tertiary Institution students. Therefore, sports bullying leads to aggressive personality, developed depression and social anxiety among athletes in University of Ilesha and Osun State College of Education Ila-Orangun, Osun State, Nigeria.

This was in line with the finding of United States Department of Education, (2013) that sports bullying exacerbates the aggression and emotional health of University students.

Results from table 3 indicated that majority of the respondents who experienced sports bullying failed to report to appropriate quarters. the rather report to their friends or parents not the sports council, coach, manager, trainer or psychologist. This was ascertained by Sterling and Kerr, (2016) that most of the University students who encountered sports bullying reports the incidence to their colleagues. In contrary to this finding, United States Department of Education, (2013) stated that university students reported the bullying occurrence to the University authority.

Conclusion

This study concluded that no matter the form of bullying experienced by athletes, the damage is the same and will only lead to more bullies. The study also concluded that athletes have experienced one form or the others of bullying before, during and after tournament which destabilizes their emotional status to focus on their primary goal; and eliminating bullying right from training session to the tournament could increase team performance by retaining skilled athletes and increasing their level of confidence and performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. Tertiary Institution athletes should seek supports from coach, psychologist or trainer in order to boost their performance during sports competition
2. Anti bullying legislation should be legalized by the college sports council and offenders should be severely punished.
3. There should be intensive campaign and seminars on the effect of sports bullying among Tertiary Institution athletes.
4. Sports organizers should be able to prevent sports bullying by giving equal opportunity to both the professional and Tertiary Institution athletes to explore their skills.
5. Tertiary Institution coach should not tolerate bullying in his/her training session and develop Codes of Conduct among athletes that would address bullying behaviours, such as discrimination, harassment and so on.

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