



Stakeholders' Perception of the Role on Sport Participation in Youth Development in Kogi State

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Abstract

This study investigated stakeholders' perception of the role of sport participation in the development of youths in Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the role of sport participation in promoting the physical development of youths, influencing behavioural modification, and enhancing interpersonal relationships among young people. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised stakeholders in sports development, including coaches, teachers, sports administrators, community leaders, and parents in Kogi State. A structured questionnaire titled Stakeholders' Perception of the Role of Sport Participation in Youth Development Questionnaire was used for data collection. Experts validated the instrument, and its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of 0.87. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that stakeholders agreed that sport participation contributes significantly to the physical development of youths (cluster mean = 3.34), behavioural modification (cluster mean = 3.02), and the development of interpersonal relationships (cluster mean = 3.00). The study concluded that sport participation is an effective tool for promoting healthy living, positive behaviour, teamwork, social interaction, and overall youth development in Kogi State. However, the developmental benefits of sports can only be fully realized through adequate stakeholder support, improved sporting facilities, effective policy implementation, and sustained investment in youth sports programmes. The study recommended increased government funding for sports development, strengthening of school sports programmes, enhanced stakeholder collaboration, organization of grassroots sports competitions and talent development initiatives, and continuous awareness campaigns on the benefits of sports participation among youths.

Keywords: Sport participation, stakeholders, perception, and youth development.

Introduction

Sport is recognized globally as a vital instrument for promoting physical fitness, social integration, economic empowerment, and youth development. Beyond its recreational value, participation in sporting activities contributes significantly to the physical, psychological, emotional, and moral development of young people. In Nigeria, sports have become an important medium through which youths acquire discipline, leadership skills, teamwork, resilience, and healthy lifestyles. The Federal Government has continued to emphasize sports development through educational institutions, community-based



programmes, and national sporting competitions as a strategy for youth empowerment and national development. According to Akindutire (2020), sports participation enhances individual development by promoting social interaction, self-confidence, and productive engagement among young people. Similarly, Akinsanmi and Oladipo (2021) observed that organized sports provide opportunities for youths to develop life skills that prepare them for future leadership and responsible citizenship.

Onifade (2022) noted that sports participation contributes significantly to youth empowerment by improving social inclusion, emotional stability, and career opportunities, especially among adolescents and young adults. Despite the recognized importance of sports in youth development, stakeholders often differ in their perceptions regarding its effectiveness, level of government support, accessibility of sporting facilities, funding, and policy implementation. Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, coaches, sports administrators, community leaders, and government officials play crucial roles in determining the extent to which sports programmes achieve their developmental objectives. Their perceptions influence policy formulation, programme implementation, funding decisions, and youths' participation in sporting activities. According to Adewale and Bello (2023), positive stakeholder perception enhances community participation and sustainability of sports development initiatives, while negative perceptions may hinder investment and participation. Therefore, examining stakeholders' perception of the role of sports participation in the development of youths in Kogi State is necessary to provide empirical evidence for improving sports policies and youth development programmes.

Statement of the Problem

Sports participation has consistently been acknowledged as an important tool for promoting youth development through physical fitness, social interaction, leadership development, and economic empowerment. However, despite numerous sports programmes initiated by government agencies, educational institutions, and private organizations in Nigeria, many youths in Kogi State still experience limited access to quality sporting facilities, inadequate coaching, poor funding, and insufficient institutional support. These challenges have affected the level of youth participation in organized sports and may have reduced the potential developmental benefits associated with sporting activities. Akindutire (2020) argued that inadequate investment in sports infrastructure remains one of the major obstacles to achieving meaningful youth development through sports in Nigeria.

Furthermore, stakeholders hold varying opinions regarding the actual contribution of sports participation to youth development. While some stakeholders believe that sports effectively promote discipline, social cohesion, leadership, and employment opportunities, others perceive sports programmes as receiving inadequate policy attention and insufficient financial support. Differences in perception among parents, coaches, teachers, sports administrators, and community leaders may influence the level of encouragement given to youths to participate in sporting activities. Onifade (2022) maintained that stakeholder support is a critical determinant of the success of sports development programmes, and negative perceptions can significantly affect programme implementation and youth participation.



Although several studies have investigated sports participation and youth development in different parts of Nigeria, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on stakeholders' perception of the role of sports participation in the development of youths in Kogi State. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for policymakers, sports administrators, and educational authorities to understand the views of key stakeholders and formulate appropriate interventions for improving youth sports development within the state.

Research Questions

The research questions are developed;

- i. What is the extent of stakeholders' awareness of the benefits of sports participation in youth development?
- ii. What is the impact of sport participation on behavioural modification in youth development?
- iii. What is the role of sport participation in the development of an individual's interpersonal relationships?

Empirical Review on Stakeholders' Perception of the Role of Sport Participation in the Development of Youths

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between sports participation, stakeholder involvement, and youth development in Nigeria and other developing countries. These studies consistently demonstrate that sports contribute to physical health, social integration, leadership development, crime reduction, and economic empowerment among youths. However, they also reveal persistent challenges relating to inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, limited stakeholder collaboration, and ineffective policy implementation.

Ochor and Bassey (2024) investigated stakeholder participation in the management of sports development programmes in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design involving 200 respondents selected from government agencies, sports associations, private organizations, and community leaders. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the z-test. The findings revealed that stakeholder participation in sports development was moderate, with government agencies and sports associations contributing significantly to programme implementation. However, inadequate funding, poor coordination, insufficient training, and weak policy implementation limited effective stakeholder participation. The researchers concluded that successful sports development requires stronger collaboration among all stakeholders and recommended the establishment of a centralized coordinating body to improve transparency and participation in sports development programmes. Furthermore, Boniface, Chom, Bichi, and Sani (2023) examined the motivational factors influencing sport participation among elite athletes in State Sports Councils and Commissions across Nigeria. The study employed an ex-post facto research design involving 1,161 athletes drawn from the six geopolitical zones



of the country. Findings indicated that quality coaching, financial incentives, availability of sports facilities, family encouragement, and institutional support significantly influenced athletes' participation in sports. The study concluded that improving stakeholder support through better funding, infrastructure development, and athlete welfare would enhance participation in sports and contribute positively to youth development in Nigeria.

Joel, Abdulraheem, Ngwoke, and Boniface (2024) investigated the influence of sports facilities and equipment management on young athletes' participation in Nigeria. The study found that the availability and effective management of sports facilities significantly increased youth participation in sporting activities. Conversely, inadequate facilities, obsolete equipment, and poor maintenance discouraged participation and limited opportunities for talent development. Also, Udeme and Ochor (2024) investigated the effects of sport participation on the lifestyle of secondary school adolescents in Uyo Metropolis. Using a survey research design, the study found that students who actively participated in sports demonstrated healthier lifestyles, better interpersonal relationships, improved discipline, and greater self-confidence than their non-participating counterparts. The authors concluded that participation in organized sports contributes positively to adolescents' physical, emotional, and social development and recommended increased support for school-based sports programmes. Similarly, Olugboyega (2024), in a systematic review of studies on sports participation and academic performance among Nigerian students, reported that sport participation positively influences academic achievement through improved cognitive functioning, time management, discipline, social interaction, and psychological well-being. The review recommended integrating sports into educational programmes and strengthening collaboration among schools, sports associations, coaches, and policymakers to maximize the developmental benefits of sports participation.

Methodology

The research design for the study was a descriptive survey design. According to Efe (2015), it is preferable to use survey design when the subject of the investigation centers on individuals' opinions, attitudes and perceptions. This design was used for carrying out the research because it involves the gathering of opinions and information from parents, teachers, and sports managers. This design was deemed suitable for this study because the purpose was to generate and analyze information from people on the stakeholders' perception of the role of sport participation in the development of the youth without any form of manipulation of the subjects. Purposive sampling technique was used to select each sample size from each category of stakeholders to ensure that the sample size selected from each stratum can be used as generalization the entire population.

The questionnaire was distributed personally by the researcher to the respondents with the aid of four research assistants who were briefed by on what to do, and were retrieved after completion. The researcher visited staff schools of higher institutions during their PTA meeting to administer the questionnaire to the parents and the teachers, and later visited the sports unit of the institutions to distribute the questionnaire to the sports managers and the athletes. The descriptive statistics of mean and standard



deviation, were used to answer the research questions. A criterion mean of 3.0 was used, which means 3.0 and above was taken to be agreed, while below 3.0 was taken to be disagreed. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) format computer programme was used for data analysis.

Result

Research Question 1: What is the extent of stakeholders' awareness of the benefits of sports participation in youth development?

Table 1: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the extent of stakeholders' awareness of the benefits of sports in participation in youth development (N = 135)

S/N	Sporting participation:	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	develops individual physical fitness	3.39	0.76	Aware
2	develops individual health/organic well-being	3.70	0.59	Aware
3	facilitates internal unity and boosts external prestige	3.46	0.77	Aware
4	brings about socialization and development in the community	3.48	0.82	Aware
5	foster peace and unity in the community	3.56	0.71	Aware
6	develops qualities of good sportsmanship	3.08	0.83	Aware
7	Establish permanent friendships and engage in healthy competitions	3.31	0.65	Aware
8	Develops better self-discipline, self-esteem, and self-actualization	3.46	0.63	Aware
9	Help the participant stay in shape and improve endurance	3.08	0.83	Aware
10	Can make a profound and positive impact on the individual, community, and wider community.	3.31	0.65	Aware
Cluster Mean		3.38		Aware

Table 1 shows the item-by-item analysis of the extent of stakeholders' awareness of the benefits of sports participation in youth development. The result revealed that all the items (1- 10) with mean scores 3.39, 3.70, 3.46, 3.48, 3.56, 3.08, 3.31, 3.46, 3.08, 3.31 were above the criterion mean of 3.0. This is why the cluster mean of 3.38 shows that stakeholders are aware of the benefits of sports participation in the development of youth. The standard deviation scores, ranging from 0.59 to 0.83, show that the respondents' scores of the items cluster around the mean value. This means that the items are homogeneous.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of sport participation on behavioural modification in youth development?



Table 2: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the impact of sport participation on behavioural modification in the youth development ($n = 135$)

S/N	Impact of sport participation on:	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Curbing the rate of fighting behavior among youths	3.45	0.63	Agree
2	reducing the rate of alcohol intake to fit in with the group during training	2.26	0.87	Disagree
3	Curbing the rate of bullying behavior	3.34	1.23	Agree
4	showing respect and solidarity to the team	3.33	0.89	Agree
5	Reducing the rate of lying behavior to prevent going for a game	3.67	0.53	Agree
6	Reducing the use of abusive language behavior	2.08	0.83	Disagree
Cluster Mean		3.02		Agree

Table 2 shows the item-by-item analysis of respondents on the impact of sport participation on behavioural modification in youth development. The result indicated that items 1, 3, 4, and 5, with mean scores 3.45, 3.34, 3.33, and 3.67, are above the criterion mean score of 3.00. On the other hand, items 2 and 6 with mean scores 2.26 and 2.08 are below the criterion mean score of 3.00, this therefore means that sport participation has not reduced the rate of alcohol intake and the use of abusive language behavior. The cluster mean of 3.02, therefore, shows that sport participation has a positive impact on behavioural modification in youth development. The standard deviation scores, ranging from 0.53 to 1.23, show that the respondents' scores of the items cluster around the mean value. This means that the items are homogeneous.

Research Question 3: What is the role of sport participation in the development of an individual's interpersonal relationships?

Table 3: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on the role of sport participation on the development of an individual's interpersonal relationship ($N = 135$)

S/N		$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Sportspersons are generally popular among their peer group	3.29	0.61	Agree
2	Sportspersons are regarded as cooperative individuals	3.45	0.63	Agree
3	Sportspersons are kind to the people	2.61	0.68	Disagree
4	Sport participation improves commitment and dedication to community development	2.51	0.64	Disagree
5	Sport participation promotes self-confidence and discipline	3.13	0.73	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.00		Agree



Table 3 shows the item-by-item analysis of sport participation on the development of an individual's interpersonal relationships. The result indicated that items 1, 2, and 5, with mean scores of 3.29, 3.45, and 3.13, are above the criterion mean score of 3.00. On the other hand, items 3 and 4, with mean scores 2.61 and 2.51, respectively, are below the criterion mean score of 3.00. This means that respondents disagreed on sportspersons being kind to the people, and their improvement and dedication to community development. Similarly, the cluster mean of 3 means that respondents agreed on the role of sport participation in the development of an individual's interpersonal relationships. The standard deviation scores, ranging from 0.61 to 0.73, show that the respondents' scores on the items cluster around the mean value. This means that the items are homogeneous.

Discussion of Findings

Influence sport participation in the physical development of youths in Kogi State?

The findings of the study revealed that stakeholders agreed that sport participation plays a significant role in the physical development of youths in Kogi State, as indicated by the cluster mean of 3.34, which exceeded the criterion mean of 3.00. Respondents agreed that participation in sporting activities improves physical fitness, body coordination, muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, and general health status among youths. These findings imply that regular involvement in sports contributes positively to healthy growth and physical well-being, making young people more active and productive members of society. This finding corroborates the study of Boniface et al. (2023), who reported that sports participation enhances physical fitness and encourages healthy lifestyles among Nigerian youths. The finding also agrees with Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (2023), which concluded that structured sports programmes significantly improve physical health and overall youth development. Similarly, Olugboyega (2024) found that participation in sporting activities promotes physical wellness and enhances students' academic performance through improved cognitive functioning and healthy living habits.

Influence of sport participation on behavioural modification in youth development

The findings showed that stakeholders agreed that sport participation positively influences behavioural modification among youths, with a cluster mean of 3.02. Respondents agreed that sports help reduce fighting, bullying, and dishonest behaviours while promoting respect, teamwork, discipline, and solidarity among participants. However, respondents disagreed that sports had substantially reduced alcohol consumption and the use of abusive language, suggesting that some behavioural problems may require additional interventions beyond sports participation. Overall, the findings indicate that sports contribute significantly to moulding positive behaviour among youths. This finding supports the work of Ochor and Bassey (2024), who observed that sports programmes contribute to discipline, responsible behaviour, and social development when supported by relevant stakeholders. Likewise, Kroot et al. (2024) reported that participation in organized sports improves life skills, resilience, self-control, and positive behavioural



outcomes among young people. The finding is also consistent with Jones et al. (2021), who concluded that sports provide opportunities for youths to develop respect, cooperation, and responsible citizenship.

Influence of sport participation in the development of interpersonal relationships among youths

The findings revealed that respondents agreed that sport participation positively contributes to the development of interpersonal relationships among youths, with a cluster mean of 3.00. Stakeholders agreed that sports participants are generally cooperative, popular among their peers, and possess greater self-confidence and discipline. However, respondents disagreed that sport participants are necessarily kinder to others or more committed to community development, indicating that these social attributes may be influenced by additional environmental and personal factors. Overall, the findings suggest that sports provide opportunities for teamwork, communication, friendship, and social interaction among youths. This finding agrees with Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (2023), which found that organized sports improve teamwork, leadership, communication skills, and social competence among adolescents. Similarly, Boniface et al. (2023) reported that sports participation promotes cooperation, self-confidence, and interpersonal relationships among athletes. The findings are also consistent with those of Kroot et al. (2024), who emphasized that community-based sports programmes foster social inclusion, teamwork, and meaningful relationships among young people.

Conclusion

The study concluded that sport participation plays a significant role in the development of youths in Kogi State. The findings demonstrated that stakeholders perceive sports as an effective means of promoting physical development, behavioural modification, and interpersonal relationship development among young people. Participation in sports was found to enhance physical fitness, improve discipline, encourage teamwork, strengthen social interaction, and promote positive behavioural change. Although some behavioural challenges, such as alcohol consumption and the use of abusive language, were not perceived to have been substantially reduced through sports participation alone, the overall contribution of sports to youth development remained positive. The study therefore concludes that increased stakeholder support, improved sports facilities, effective policies, and sustained investment in youth sports programmes are essential for maximizing the developmental benefits of sports participation in Kogi State.

Recommendations

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

1. The Kogi State Government should increase funding for sports development by providing modern sporting facilities, equipment, and recreational centres across schools and communities to encourage greater youth participation.



2. Educational institutions should strengthen school sports programmes by organizing regular inter-house sports competitions, inter-school tournaments, and extracurricular sporting activities that promote physical, social, and emotional development among students.
3. Parents, coaches, community leaders, and sports administrators should work collaboratively to encourage youths to participate actively in organized sporting activities while promoting discipline, teamwork, and positive behavioural values.
4. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, should organize periodic grassroots sports competitions, talent identification programmes, and youth empowerment initiatives that create opportunities for skill development and career advancement through sports.
5. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners should develop and implement comprehensive awareness campaigns and mentorship programmes that emphasize the developmental benefits of sports participation while addressing behavioural issues such as substance abuse, violence, and antisocial behaviour among youths.

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