

Original Article

Standard sports facilities as predictor for elite sports performance by Nigerian university students

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Abstract

The study examined standard sports facilities as predictors for elite sports performance by Nigerian university students. Participants made up of 153 sports officials and 270 students were drawn from nine universities in Southern Nigeria. A validated self-structured 15-item questionnaire with a test-retest reliability co-efficient of 0.09 was the instrument used for data collection. Frequency counts, simple percentages and chi-square (X^2) were the descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyze the data obtained at 0.05 level of significance. The computed chi-square value of 30.68 is more than the table value of 7.82 suggesting that availability of standard sport facilities would play a dominant role in elite sports performance by Nigerian university students. It was recommended among others that new generation federal and state-owned universities be encouraged to host NUGA games so as to benefit from facility development opportunities that NUGA games offer host institutions.

Keywords: Elite Performance, Interplay, Physical Infrastructure, Tax Moratorium.

Introduction

Universities as centres of excellence are supposed to provide leadership in all fields of human endeavour, sports inclusive. Though, Nigerian universities are known to have produced experts in the fields of literature, drama, economics, politics, science and technology, as well as engineering they are yet to produce elite and champion athletes the nation can be proud of. This situation has become worrisome to well-meaning Nigerian sports lovers considering the fact that majority of undergraduate athletes who don the national colours in World Universities Games (F.I.S.U) are foreign based. It has become necessary to ask why Nigerian universities have not blazed the trail in an important endeavour such as sports as obtains in Europe and the United States of America (Jeroh, 2003).

In spite of many years of Nigeria Universities Games Association (NUGA) competitions existence, Nigerians are yet to feel the impact of universities in the sports scene. Sanya (2003) averred that at the national level, there is the need to draw benefits from the products of university games for utilization at national and international sporting events in order to have an enhanced national sporting image.

Success in any human endeavour depends on the interplay of many variables. To excel in sports, Nigerian universities must have adequate sports facilities and equipment readily available. Facilities and equipment as used here include all playing avenues such as fields, courts, indoor halls, all implements such as rackets, hockey sticks, balls, boots, javelins, nets etc (Jeroh, 2005). Bucher (2003) opined that facilities are paramount structures which make participation in physical activities possible and easy while Awoyinfa and Adeyeye (2007) asserted that sports facilities are the laboratories and production centers for athletes and as such their provision and maintenance should not be treated with levity.

Jeroh (2005) posited that sportsmen and women must have a conducive environment in which to train and compete; conducive in terms of adequate and well prepared, well kept facilities, equipment and supplies, good coaching and medical care. Without these essentials, the enthusiasm, dedication and the will to win characteristic of the seasoned athletes will not be there. Adequate provision of facilities and equipment will not only ensure happy environment but also minimize hazards to health and safety (Ojeme, 1999). According to Chukwu (2001), adequate physical infrastructures are necessary for effective sports performance and encouragement. To him, physical stimuli such as the sports arena or the facilities and equipment themselves can influence the athletes.

In many of Nigerian universities, there is the absence of standard sports facilities. The lack of basic sports facilities and equipment hinders sports development in many universities (Mshelia, 2003). Mgbor and Obiyemi (2001) observed that most of the universities have little or no sports facilities befitting the status of a university. In Europe and the United States, international sports fiestas such as the Olympics have been hosted by universities because of availability of facilities. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics took place in a university facility.

Corroborating the substandard nature of sports facilities in Nigerian universities Ogundare (2003), affirmed that the few universities where facilities exist benefited from facility development opportunities that the hosting of NUGA games offered. Such universities include the universities of Benin, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Ahmadu Bello, and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He agreed that most of the universities have available field spaces for ball games, such as football, handball, volleyball, hockey which are mostly utilized for multi ball games with moveable goal posts. Facilities for squash racket, swimming pool, standard track and field events are lacking. He also contended that in institutions with gymnasium / sports halls, they are minimally equipped and could suffice for badminton, table tennis and basketball tournaments. He concluded that Nigerian universities lack ultra modern sports facilities.

The author believes that it will not be a worthwhile goal to expect that undergraduate athletes should excel in sports if there are little or no facilities to motivate them to train and excel in sports. Igboanugo (1986) opined that we cannot demand excellence from our athletes if we have not provided them with external prerequisites. It is important that proper and adequate facilities be provided to prevent injuries and enhance performance (Klaffs and Amheim, 1981; Igboanugo, 1986).

The purpose of this study was to ascertain if the availability of standard facilities would be a predictor for elite sports performance by Nigerian university students with a view to helping create awareness on the need for the development of sports facilities in our various universities to enable them produce the much needed sportsmen and women to boost the sporting image of Nigeria globally. More specifically, the objective was to ascertain if the availability of standard sports facilities in the ivory towers would be a predictor for elite sports performance by Nigerian undergraduates.

Hypothesis

Availability of standard sports facilities in the universities would not significantly predict elite sports performance by Nigerian university undergraduates.

Methods and Materials

The study employed the ex – post facto study design and was carried out in nine universities selected from the three geo – political zones in Southern Nigeria namely: South – east, South – south and South – west. At least, one federal university and a state – owned university was selected through balloting.

The participants were made up of 153 sports officials (coaches and directors of sports) and 270 students, i.e. male and female captains of 15 sports in the Nigerian Universities Games Association (NUGA) competition.

Instrumentation

The study adopted a self – structured 15 – item questionnaire rated on a 4 – point Likert type scale for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, “A” and “B”. Section A sought information on the demographic data of respondents which included name of institution, sport participated in and status of respondents. Section B sought information on the independent variable (availability of standard sports facilities) of the study. The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in physical education. The test – retest method was used to establish the reliability using 30 students and 4 staff of Delta State University, Abraka who were not part of the study. The correlation of the score yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.09 which was considered high enough for the study.

Procedure

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire with assistance from the directors of sports of the universities used and retrieved them resulting in a 100% return rate.

Statistical Analysis

Fifteen items were used to test the null hypothesis. The responses for each of “strongly agree” and “agree” and those for “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were added for the two categories of respondents (athletes and officials) after which simple statistical tools of frequencies and percentages were used. The non – parametric tool of chi – square (X^2) was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The data analysis is based on the hypothesis formulated to guide the study. The hypothesis was tested based on the responses of both athletes and sports officials.

Ho: Availability of standard sports facilities in the universities would not significantly predict elite sports performance by Nigerian university undergraduates.

Table 2: Frequency and Chi-square (X^2) Analysis of Standard Sports Facilities as Predictor for Elite Sports Performance by Nigerian University Undergraduates.

Respondents	SA	A	% SA+A	D	SD	% D+SD	TOTAL	%
Officials	75 (51.36)	36 (54.26)	72.5	25 (22.79)	17 (24.60)	27.5	153	100
Athletes	67 (90.64)	114 (95.74)	67.0	38 (40.21)	51 (43.40)	33.0	270	100
Total	142	150	69.0	63	68	31.0	423	100

Source: Field work

NB: Expected frequencies are in parenthesis
 Calculated X^2 value = 30.68
 Degree of freedom (df) = 3
 Level of Significance = 0.05
 Critical value = 7.82
 Decision = Hypothesis Rejected

Table 1 shows the frequency, percentages and chi – square computation of responses on availability of standard sports facilities as predictor for elite sports performance by Nigerian universities undergraduates. The combined percentage responses for “strongly agree” and “agree” for officials was 72.5% while that of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” was 27.5%. For the athletes the combined percentage for “strongly disagree” and “disagree” was 33%. Combining both categories, “strongly agree” and “agree” amounted to 69% while “disagree” and “strongly disagree” was 31%.

To test the null hypothesis, the calculated chi – square value of 30.68 was matched against the critical value of 7.82. Since the calculated chi – square value is more than the table value, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The study was embarked upon to ascertain if the availability of standard sports facilities in the universities would be predictor for elite sports performance by Nigerian universities undergraduates. From the finding obtained in the table, the study has shown that availability of standard sports facilities in the universities would significantly predict elite sports performance by Nigerian universities undergraduates. A possible explanation for this finding is that equipment and facilities are important motivators in sports. When facilities appear to be inadequate or non – existent, participation will not be unlikely but also non – existent. This finding supports Okuneye and Onifade (1999) assertion that inadequacy of facilities is one of the serious problems militating against sports participation and performance at all levels of education. Standard Sports facilities can influence athletes performance (Chukwu, 2001). This finding supports many authorities in sports administration and teaching in Nigeria. Igboanugo (1986) averred that we cannot demand excellence from our athletes if we have not provided them with external prerequisites. It is important that proper and adequate facilities be provided to prevent injuries and enhance performance.

The researcher is of the view that inadequate provision of sports facilities could lead to ill preparation resulting in poor performance. Oshevire (1996) asserted that to aspire to leadership position in world sports a nation must first and foremost have adequate sporting facilities.

Conclusion

Based on the finding, the conclusion emanating from this study is that the availability of standard sports facilities in our universities would significantly predict elite sports performance by Nigerian universities undergraduate. This would be very good for the universities and the country as the universities can now be seen as producers of the materials so much needed to enhance Nigeria’s sporting image in the comity of nations.

Recommendations

After a careful review of the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made and it is the researcher’s belief and conviction that if they are religiously and properly implemented, the universities will become the hot beds of elite athletes who will make the nation proud in national and international sports competitions.

There should be in place a deliberate policy by government for the provision of sports infrastructural facilities in the universities. Multi – national companies and philanthropic individuals should be encouraged to build and donate facilities which should be named after them. There should also be tax moratorium for such donors.

New generation federal and state - owned universities should be encouraged to host NUGA games so that they can benefit from facilities development opportunities that NUGA games offer host institutions.

With facilities in place, universities could use them to host different games and events and collect gate – takings. The revenue so yielded could be ploughed back into the development of sports in the universities.

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