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Influence of Involvement in Sports on Students' Involvement in Academic Activities at Ndejje University

J. Bagaya [1], B. Sekabembe [1,*]

[1] East African School of Higher Education Studies and Development (Makerere University)
[*Corresponding author. E-mail: sekkabembe@yahoo.com]

Abstract. This study was carried out to establish whether students' involvement in sports activities affected their involvement in academic activities. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and analysed using percentages and means. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses that guided the study. The findings showed that there is no significant relationship between students' involvement in outdoor sports activities and their involvement in academic activities. However, there was a significant negative relationship between students' involvement in indoor sports activities and their involvement in academic activities.

Keywords: Extra-curricular activities; Sports management; Ndejje University

1 Introduction

Several authors point out that extra-curricular or co-curricular activities such as sports, games, theatre, debates, poetry and Music are extremely important. For example, Mulera (2004, March 29) observes that extra-curricular activities, the "very things which society consider a waste of valuable time and money are the foundation which buttresses academic learning. Namutebi (2009, July 31) asserts that "through sports, a child will learn teamwork; through debates, he/ she will learn the art of public speaking". According to Sendegeya (2005, January 31):

> Music programmes in schools play several significant roles…. A student of Music constantly adjusts decisions on tempo, tone, style, rhythm, phrasing and feeling training the brain to become incredibly good at organising and conducting several activities at once…. Music education is a primary means

> by which an education institution can transmit to students the cultural heritage of society….

Of all extra-curricular activities, this paper is interested in "sports". The term "sport" is rooted in the old French word "*desport*" meaning leisure. Kagere (2009) defined sports as organised, competitive and skilful physical activity that is governed by a set of rules or customs. In this study, sports meant both indoor and outdoor sports. Indoor sport is a type of sport where games are played indoors, normally within a building. Examples of these games are Chess, Draughts (Checkers), Scrabble, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Table Tennis, Pool and *Mweso* (local chess). These games normally involve a few players, mostly two but not more than four. Outdoor sports, on the other hand, are those games played outside buildings normally in fields or across villages. Outdoor sports normally attract crowds of people and usually involve many players. Such games include athletics (e.g. running, jumping and throwing), ball games (e.g. football, netball, volleyball and basketball), swimming, racing and others.

Ndejje University, the first private university in Uganda, was started in 1992, under a different name as Ndejje Christian University. It was started in the premises of the former Primary Teachers' College named Lady Irene College. In 1995, the University was acquired by the Anglican Diocese (Church of Uganda) of Luweero and was renamed Ndejje University. By 2002, the University ownership had expanded to include all the six dioceses of the Anglican Church in the Central Region also known as Buganda Region. By that time, Ndejje University was operating with a certificate, and had to improve its facilities to fulfil the demands of the National Council of Higher Education. The University was chartered in 2009, and offers both undergraduate and post graduates programmes. By the time the Charter was given, the University had expanded and is currently located on three campuses, one at Mengo Hill in Kampala and two separate campuses both at Ndejje in Luweero District.

According to Senyimba (2009), sports activities at the University started in 1993, when a few students were encouraged to practice football and athletics using the fields of neighbouring institutions like Ndejje Secondary School and Nalinya Lwantale Primary School. Senyimba adds that sports activities intensified when the University teams started to participate in local and national competitions as student enrolment increased. The University's Annual Report of 1999 (Ndejje University, 1999), indicated that both indoor and outdoor sports were included on the university extra curriculum because sports were believed to contribute to the students wellbeing through character formation, healthy body, mental alertness, and discipline among others. The above attributes were believed to enhance academic performance of students at Ndejje University. Currently, that is 2012, Ndejje University features among the best sports performers in the East and Central African Region. Given this high level

of performance in sports, the University Management has invested heavily in sports by putting in place various sports facilities like an athletics track, football fields, basketball, volley courts and a swimming pool.

According to university officials, some students most especially those who come for upgrading, join with qualifications in sports science at certificate and diploma level which is an added advantage for university admission requirements. In addition, the University offers scholarships to students who excel in sports, for example, those who participate in inter-university games get a reduction on fees by 15%, 10% and 5% for every gold, silver and bronze medal won respectively. This means that if a student won four gold and four silver medals would have got 100% fees reduction. Therefore, students are involved in several competitions where talents in sports disciplines are displayed as they compete in inter-hall, inter-campus and inter-university competitions organised by the National University Sports Federation in Uganda (NUSFU). This has yielded positive results such as winning university trophies and sports scholarships to various universities mostly in the United States of America. Above all, Ndejje University has produced sports men and women who represent Uganda at international sports events such as Olympics and Common wealth games.

2 Statement of the Problem

Sports activities were introduced at Ndejje University to contribute towards the students' wellbeing through character formation, healthy body, mental alertness, and discipline among others which attributes were believed to enhance academic performance of students. The main question for this study was whether involvement in sports had any effect on students' involvement in academic activities. The purpose of this study therefore was to find out whether students' involvement in sports had an effect on their involvement in academic activities. Specific objectives of the study were:

1. To establish whether involvement in outdoor sports affected students' involvement in academic activities.
2. To establish whether involvement in indoor sports affected students' involvement in academic activities.

3 Related Literature Review

3.1 Outdoor Sports and Students' Involvement Academic Activities.

Kagere (2009) observed that participating in outdoor sports helps students to improve on their attendance and grades. Outdoor sports instil values that are

essential in one's life like discipline, responsibility, sacrifice and acceptability. Kagere adds that apart from self confidence and physical fitness, sports helps students to acquire teamwork spirit as well as promoting bonding and encouragement besides considering the monetary rewards that come as a result of joining a club as a professional player. Both Kagere (2009) and Senyimba (2009) agree that outdoor sports expose students to competitions where they win sports scholarships in and outside Uganda. For example, the public universities' policy in Uganda awards four points to excelling sports men and women to pursue courses that they qualify for. This has created competition among the students in secondary schools.

Senyimba (2009) also emphasises that outdoor sports is a tool of characters formation because it inculcates a sense of discipline among students since no one can succeed in sports unless he/ she is disciplined, say in time management, proper dressing, feeding, among others. Outdoor sports involve working in teams and obeying rules. Sports men and women learn how to handle success and defeat because in sports, there are no enemies. All these are prerequisites for effective learning and hence good academic performance. Aligawesa (2003) asserts that outdoor sports have become a significant component of human culture in the modern world. Consequently nations worldwide have embraced its development and what is becoming increasingly known today is that, outdoor sports are not just important at the individual level but also at national and international levels.

Sports activities offer knowledge (such as how to play a game effectively), self-expression (when relating with team members of sports leaders) and fulfilment, personal achievements, skill acquisition and demonstration of abilities, social interaction, employment, good health and well being. With the increasing cost of health care around the world, the contribution of sports to good health could bring about significant savings to individuals and the nation at large as well as increasing concentration for academic work. Sports facilitate positive social interaction, integration and friendship among people of diverse social economic and ethnic groups hence students improving their academic performance.

Past studies relating involvement in outdoor games and involvement academic activities can be found. For example, Nick (2007), in his study on the relationship between sports participation and academic performance of students in Florida (USA), examined the average daily attendance of varsity athletes and non-athletes and final cumulative grade point average. The results of the overall analyses showed a positive and significant relationship between athletic participation and academic performance. On average, athletes were absent fewer days from school per year than non-athletes and athletes earned a significantly higher cumulative grade point average than their non-athlete peers. Although cause and effect cannot be inferred from this study, the findings do

indicate the potentially beneficial value of sports programmes in education institutions. Dwyer (2001) conducted an extensive study on fitness test for measurement of physical activity/ fitness to depict academic performance of four students in an Austrian High School. The results revealed enhanced brain function, energy levels; body builds, self-esteem, and above all, improved academic performance.

3.2 Indoor Sports and Students' Involvement in Academic Activities

Indoor sports activities in schools may not be taken as serious as outdoor activities because they are looked at as games of low organisation hence having insignificant influence on students' academic performance. However, a positive relationship of indoor sports and academic performance has been explored through several studies conducted in the USA by the California Department of Education; Dwyer, Sallis, Blizzard, Lazarus and Dean (2001); Dwyer et al. (1983); Shephard (1997); and Tremblay et al. (2000). These studies support one another in suggesting that when a substantial amount of school time is dedicated to indoor sports, academic performance improves and may even exceed that of a student who is not involved in indoor sports (Shephard, 1997). Mitchell (1999) asserted that children's involvement in indoor sports is positively related to children's overall school achievement, especially mathematics and reading achievement. On the other hand, Kagere (2009) observed the need to balance sports activities and academic work. This implies a programme that balances outdoor sports, indoor sports and academic activities.

3.3 Hypotheses

1. Outdoor sports positively affect students' involvement in academic activities.
2. Indoor sports positively affect students' involvement in academic activities.

4 Methodology

Using a quantitative approach, and corelational design, data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire with constructs on the independent variables, namely involvement in outdoor sports (four items) and indoor sports (eight items). The questionnaire had constructs on the dependent variable, namely involvement in academic activities (five items). Using the questionnaire, data were collected from a sample of 90 randomly selected students equally distributed to the three campuses, namely Ndejje Main and

Lady Irene, both in Luweero and Kampala Campus in Kampala. Data analysis was based on percents and means at descriptive level, while Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to test hypotheses.

5 Findings

5.1 Background of Respondents

Other details about the 90 respondents are given in Table 1, which illustrates that the typical respondent was a male (51%), aged below 25 years of age (73%), studying for a Bachelors degree (55%), being a Ugandan (60%), with no qualification in sports (78%) and preferring outdoor sports (91%).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Respondents' Background

Characteristic	Category	Number (%)
Sex	Female	44 (48)
	Male	46 (51)
Age	Below 25 years	66 (73)
	Over 25 years	24 (27)
Level of Study	Undergraduate Diploma	32 (36)
	Bachelors Degree	50 (55)
	Postgraduate	8 (09)
National of Uganda?	Yes	64 (60)
	No	36 (40)
Holder of Qualification is Sports?	Yes	20 (22)
	No	70 (78)
Preferred Category of Sports	Outdoor	82 (91)
	Indoor	8 (09)

5.2 Involvement in Sports Activities

5.2.1 Involvement in Outdoor Sports Activities

In this study, outdoor sports (the type of sport where games are played outside a building) were conceptualised as athletics (e.g. running, jumping and throwing), ball games (e.g. football, netball, volleyball and basketball), swimming, and racing. Four question items were used to obtain data, all of which were scaled as follows: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = strongly agree. Table 2 gives pertinent percents and means:

Table 2: Students' Self-Rating of Involvement in Outdoor Sports

Indicator		Strongly disagree	Agree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Remark
I am involved in:	Athletics	4.4 %	17.8%	37.8%	26.7%	13.3%	3.27	Fair
	Ball games	0%	4.4%	4.4%	26.7%	64.5%	4.51	Very Good
	Swimming	22.2%	22.2%	26.7%	13.3%	15.6%	2.78	Fair
	Racing	75.6%	4.4%	15.6%	0%	4.4%	1.53	Poor

The means in Table 2 suggest that students were most involved in ball games (e.g. football, netball, volleyball and basketball) with a mean = 4.51, while their involvements in athletics (e.g. running, jumping and throwing) and swimming with means = 3.27 and 2.78 respectively. Involvement in racing (mean = 1.53) was poor. The average index for students' involvement in outdoor sports had a mean = 3.0, which suggested that overall students' involvement in outdoor sports was only fair.

5.2.2 Involvement in Indoor Sports Activities

In this study, indoor sports, the type of sport where games are played in a building were conceptualised as chess, scrabble, draughts (checkers), *mweso*, ludo, snakes and ladders, and table tennis. Eight question items were used to obtain data, all of which were scaled as follows: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = strongly agree. Table 3 gives pertinent percents and means.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on students' self-rating on their involvement in indoor sports

Indicator		Strongly disagree	Agree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Remark
I am involved in playing:	Scrabble	62.20%	24.40%	8.90%	4.40%	0%	1.6	Poor
	Draughts	64.40%	17.80%	8.90%	4.40%	4.40%	1.67	Poor
	Mweso	46.70%	31.10%	13.30%	8.90%	0%	1.84	Poor
	Ludo	26.70%	20.00%	4.40%	26.70%	22.20%	2.98	Fair
	Snakes & Ladders	13.30%	15.60%	26.70%	35.60%	8.90%	3.11	Fair
	Table tennis	26.70%	6.70%	17.80%	26.70%	22.10%	3.11	Fair

Table 3 suggests that indoor sports are not popular among respondents. For example, none of the eight games scored "good" as far as involvement was concerned. The last three in Table 3 scored "best" which was only "fair", while

the rest scored "poor". The average index for students' involvement in indoor sports had a mean = 2.4, which suggested that overall students' involvement in indoor sports was poor.

5.3 Students' Involvement in Academic Activities

In this study, the dependent variable was students' academic performance which was conceptualised as students' goodness in terms of class attendance, completion of class assignments in time, sitting for end of semester examinations as scheduled, completion of programmes on time, and quality of grades obtained at the end of their programmes. Five question items were used to obtain data all of which were scaled as follows: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = strongly agree. Table 4 gives pertinent percents and means:

Table 4: Students' Self-rating on Involvement in Academic Activities

Indicator		Strongly disagree	Agree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Remark
I am good at:	Class attendance	0%	4.4%	13.3%	26.6%	55.6%	4.33	Good
	Completion of class assignments	0%	17.8%	4.4%	22.2%	55.6%	4.15	Good
	Sitting of examinations	0%	4.4%	0%	22.2%	73.4%		
	Timely completion of programs	0%	4.4%	31.1%	33.3%	31.2%	3.91	Good
	Good CGPA	8.9%	0%	44.4%	26.7%	20.0%	3.49	Fair

Table 4 suggests that except for the last item where they rated themselves as only fair, respondents rated themselves "good" on all other items, especially "class attendance" with mean = 4.33. Indeed the average index for students' involvement in academic activities scored a mean = 4.1, which corresponded to "good" overall involvement in academic activities.

5.4 Test of the Hypotheses

5.4.1 Hypothesis One

To test the first hypothesis, namely that involvement in outdoor sports positively affected students' involvement in academic activities, the method of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used. The average index for

students' involvement in outdoor sports (Table 2) was correlated with the average index for students' involvement in academic activities (Table 4), yielding $r = -0.052$, $p = 0.627$. That suggested that there was a negative ($r < 0$) but insignificant ($p > 0.05$) correlation between students' involvement in outdoor sports and their involvement in academic activities.

5.4.2 Hypothesis Two

To test the second hypothesis, namely that involvement in indoor sports positively affected students' involvement in academic activities, the method of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used. The average index for students' involvement in indoor sports (Table 3) was correlated with the average index for students' involvement in academic activities (Table 4), yielding $r = -0.227$, $p = 0.031$. That suggested that there was a negative ($r < 0$) and significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation between students' involvement in indoor sports and their involvement in academic activities.

6 Discussion

6.1 Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis was that involvement in outdoor sports positively affected students' involvement in academic activities, and the method of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient revealed that there was a negative but insignificant correlation between students' involvement in outdoor sports and their involvement in academic activities. This means that students' involvement in outdoor sports (most especially the ball games e.g. football, netball, volleyball and basketball and athletics e.g. running, jumping and throwing, and to a much reduced extent, swimming and racing) did not affect the student's involvement in academic affairs, operationalised in terms of class attendance, assignment completion, sitting for end of semester examinations as scheduled, completion of programmes on time, and quality of grades obtained at the end of their programmes.

These findings were in disagreement with Kagere (2009), who asserted that participating in outdoor sports helps students to improve on their attendance and grades. They were at variance with Senyimba (2009) who emphasised that outdoor sports is a tool of character formation because it inculcates a sense of discipline among students, which is a prerequisite to good academic performance. The findings put into question Wavamunno (2011)'s submission that students do not excel in only sports and games but also in academics since

involvement in sports creates a health mind which is a fertile ground for concentration in academic work.

The findings did not support findings such as those of Nick (2007) who, in his study on the relationship between sports participation and academic performance of students in Florida (USA) showed a significant positive relationship between athletic participation (involvement in outdoor sports) and academic performance. What could have led to the anomalous findings? Could it have been conceptual? May be the way the major variables in the study as per Tables 2 and 4 were inadequate? Or they were not the same as those used by earlier researchers such as Nick (2007)? This is food for thought for future related studies.

6.2 Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis was that involvement in indoor sports positively affected students' involvement in academic activities, but Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient instead revealed a significantly negative correlation between students' involvement in indoor sports and their involvement in academic activities. This means that students' involvement in indoor (e.g. chess, scrabble, draughts or checkers, *mweso*, ludo snakes and ladders, and table tennis) did negatively affect the student's involvement in academic affairs, operationalised in terms of class attendance, assignment completion, sitting for end of semester examinations as scheduled, completion of programmes on time, and quality of grades obtained at the end of their programmes.

The finding perhaps was due to the fact that since these games are played indoors, they suit any weather conditions which compromise students' time for academic work. This observation is in line with Kagere (2009), who observed that there is need to balance sports activities and academic work which requires a programme that balances indoor sports and academic activities if negative effects of involvement in sports on students' academic performance are to be avoided. This finding put into question the position by Shepherd (1997) to the effect that when a substantial amount of school time is dedicated to indoor sports, academic performance improves and may even exceed that of a student who is not involved in indoor sports. The findings tends to dismiss Mitchell (1999) who asserted that children's involvement in indoor sports is positively related to children's overall school achievement, as well as mathematics and reading achievement.

7 Conclusions

From the discussion of the findings, there was no significant relationship between students' involvement in outdoor sports and their involvement in academic activities, implying that students already engaged should be

encouraged to continue with outdoor sports while those students yet to be engaged in outdoor sports should be encouraged to do so at once. However, the findings showed that there was a significant negative relationship between students' involvement in indoor sports and their involvement in academic activities, implying that students already engaged and those yet to do so, should be encouraged to balance their time for indoor games with time for academic activities which brought them to the University in the first place.

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