

1 Attitude of University Community towards Sporting Life of 2 Students in Nigeria

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5

6 **Abstract**

7 Purpose : This research ascertained the attitude of University Communities towards the
8 sporting lives of students in Nigeria. Methods Materials: Participants included sports officials
9 (153) and students (270) from nine universities. A validated self-structured questionnaire with
10 a test- retest reliability coefficient of 0.90 was the instrument used. Frequency counts, simple
11 percentages and chi-square (χ^2) were the descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyse
12 the data obtained at 0.05 level of significance. Results: The computed chi-square value (5.59)
13 is less than the table value (7.82) suggesting that the attitude of a University community does
14 not play any significant role in student sports life. Conclusion Applications: There is need for
15 cooperation between the academic staff and Sports Council staff as their functions
16 complement each other.

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18 **Index terms**— Elite athletes, Motivation, Mercenaries Beneficiaries, Antithetical
19 n recent years, Nigerian universities have been blamed for failing Nigeria in producing elite athletes for
20 international sports competitions This recrimination stems from the fact that most successful sporting nations of
21 the world like the United States, Russia, and Germany recruit most of their athletes from among the universities.
22 Since Nigeria's appearance and participation at the World University Games (F.I.S.U), it was only in 1975 that
23 a home-based athlete in the person of Late Major Taiwo Ogunjobi won a bronze medal in 400 metres hurdles in
24 Rome. Subsequent medals in 1983 and 1985 were won by foreign-based athletes (Andah, 1986; ??bajinmi, 1996;
25 ??kiga, 2002). Where athletes are produced from the universities, evidence abounds that such nations invest a lot
26 of money in providing standard facilities and equipment and athletic scholarships and other forms of motivation
27 are at the disposal of the student athletes ??Amuchie, 1984). In Nigeria the story is quite different generally.
28 Most star athletes who have basic qualifications for university admissions are frustrated by the Joint Admissions
29 Matriculation Board (JAMB). The alternative at their disposal is to seek greener pastures overseas where they not
30 only perform well academically but in addition have their athletic abilities developed for national and international
31 sports competitions. Only very few Nigerian universities give recognition to the athletic performance of their
32 students. Very few Nigerian universities possess adequate standard sporting facilities and equipment that can
33 be used in producing Olympic materials. There seems to be a little or no relationship between the State
34 Sports Councils coaches, Ministry of Sports officials and the university efforts to produce star athletes. Yet
35 the universities are expected to perform miracles at international sports meets with all these glaring examples
36 of shortfalls. Serious motivation strategies are either absent or not properly utilized by university coaches and
37 sports administrators (Jeroh, 2005). One major problem facing sports development in Nigerian universities today
38 is the uncompromising attitude of the universities to sport. Attitude as used here refers to the lack of sports and
39 admission policies as well as negative disposition of many academic staff towards sports (Jeroh, 2005).

40 The lack of functional sports policy, according to Mshelia (2002) also affects the development of sports in
41 the universities and thus affects the performance of the students. Ojeme (1998) asserted that there is no well
42 thought out and documented policy for university sports. As a result, he concluded that sports development
43 is not seen as a statutory duty of the universities. Mgbor and Obiyemi (2001) criticized the present status of
44 sports in Nigerian universities as being grossly under funded, lacking adequate facilities and equipment, lacking
45 adequate and competent staff, improper training programmes for athletes and lack of incentives to athletes and
46 coaches. Sport according to them, is regarded as an area for the never-do-well in our tertiary institutions.

47 Quoting from Williams Committee Report of 1983 on the attitude of universities to sports. Egborge (1986)
48 said as follows:

49 -On the whole it can be said with a great measure of truth that at the moment, the universities of our land
50 have not evolved any policies, and have not been able to evolve any policies to meet the problems (p. 160) On
51 the attitude of the university students, the report says:

52 -There have been occasions when university students who have been called to camp refused to show up.
53 Usually, the reason for such refusal is connected with lectures and examinations (p. 160)?

54 The pressure on the universities to the expectations of producing the nation's sportsmen and women has
55 been on the increase. The universities have consistently come under sharper criticism for failing in this regard.
56 The accusations have centred mainly on over concentration on academics with little or no cognizance for physical
57 development through sports (Ikulayo, 1986). In a speech at the University of Benin Sports Dinner in 1984, Group
58 Captain Emeka Omeruah, the then Federal Minister of Information, Social Development, Youth, Sports and
59 Culture chastised Nigerian universities for not fulfilling the role expected of them on national sports development
60 effort. Lamenting the position. Ekpeyong (1986) posited that our academics do not allocate any period for sports
61 in their curricula. He argued that in other countries, university undergraduates are made to register for a certain
62 number of courses in one form of sports or another. Though some Nigerian Universities Senates have decided
63 to allocate some afternoons as lecture-free to enable students participate and excel in sports, such decisions are
64 never implemented. These are all pointers to the fact that the universities have no articulated policy for sports
65 development. In all these, the undergraduate athlete's effort at improving himself/herself sports wise is stultified.

66 Another great criticism against the universities is on the attitude of lecturers and other university staff towards
67 sports. Many lecturers have been known to discourage sportsmen and women from participating in sporting
68 activities. Ekpeyong (1986) said that -in Nigeria, there are many retrogressive academics who believe that those
69 students who take part in sports are not serious students. Some of these teachers go an extra length of threatening
70 students involved in sports?. Evidence abounds that many athletes are occasionally victimized in examinations
71 because of their participation in sports (Amuchie, 1986).

72 A contemptuous issue that arises is the rivalry that exists between academics in the Departments of
73 Physical Education or Human Kinetics and their professional colleagues in the University Sports Council. This
74 attitude, according to Salau (1996) has contributed greatly to the poor results recorded by Nigerian university
75 undergraduates. Lamenting her ordeal. Miss Saidat Onanuga of the University of Ilorin, and an international
76 400 metres hurdler was quoted as saying -I missed my examinations because I went for a competition and nobody
77 could assist me?. How then can the students be interested in sports participation? Many university athletes
78 have not been able to put in their best because they are torn between two loves academics and sports. Though
79 sports are of the moment, their educational qualification is a lasting effort which they won't forgo. recruitment
80 of athletes with a view to training them to produce star and winning teams that can bring prestige and honour
81 to the nation. Nigerian universities, according to Kamiyole 1986), have rigid rules on admission that make many
82 university sports administrators helpless. As a result of this handicap, many universities nowadays result to the
83 use of -mercenaries? and athletes that do not make admission requirements in an attempt to win medals ??Adio,
84 1996).

85 Universities in the United States are famous for recruiting sporting talents from all over the world with their
86 admission policies relaxed. Both admission and visa requirements are eased by the institution seeking to admit the
87 athlete. Ijirigho, Porbeni, Obasogie. Egbumike. etc. are Nigerian beneficiaries of this gesture. We are all aware of
88 the performances of these illustrious sons in international sports competitions donning Nigerian colours. Nigerian
89 universities have not fully embraced this practice which has seen the cream of Nigerian. athletes migrating to the
90 United States from where they have come to represent the country in major international sports competitions.

91 There are many cases where a Nigerian has been considered academically unfit for admission into a Nigerian
92 university only for him to get admission abroad, get a higher degree, and then come home and be employed as
93 a lecturer in the same university which had rejected him (Egborge, 1986). What an irony? Nigerian universities
94 must find ways and means of encouraging athletes with their admission policies.

95 In a goodwill message to the 13th NUGA games in Calabar in 1990, Air Commodore Anthony Ikhazoboh
96 appealed to university authorities to help design a curriculum and programme to enable them admit potential
97 sportsmen and women who could combine their academic work with their sports training programme. This,
98 according to him, is the position in the United States among others from where NUGA has had to -borrow?
99 Nigerian students for FISU (World University Games). Unless this is embarked upon, there will be little or no
100 progress in the nation's march to sports excellence.

101 While supporting a relaxation in the admission policy in favour of talented athletes, Ikulayo (1986) cautioned
102 on the inherent danger of waiving admission requirements for athletes. She said that one of such dangers is that
103 of' harassment by their counterparts within the same university. The comment such as -if not for sports you
104 would not have been here? could be demoralizing for a sportsman or woman. So long as athletes and some
105 lecturers perceive sports as antithetical to academics so long will the best sportsmen and women withdraw from
106 active sports participation and competition (Amuchie, 1986).

107 This study was therefore embarked upon to examine if the attitude of the community has any effect in sports
108 performance among Nigerian university students.

109 The study employed the ex-post facto study design.

110 1 a) Participants

111 The balloting technique was used to select nine universities from the three geo-political zones in Southern Nigeria.
112 The sample consisted of student captains (male and female) of fifteen NUGA sports, directors of sports and their
113 assistants full time and honorary coaches who are full time staff of the universities (three from each zone) that
114 were selected from thirty one universities in Southern Nigeria. There were 153 sports officials and 270 students.

115 2 b) Instrumentation

116 A self-developed structured questionnaire with a modified four-point Likert scale was used for data collection.
117 The questionnaire consisted of two sections, -A? and -B?. Section A sought information on demographic data
118 of respondents which included name of institution, sport participated in and the status of respondents Section
119 B sought information on the independent variable (attitude of the university community) of the study. The
120 instrument was validated by colleagues and the test-retest method was used to study. The correlation of the
121 scores yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.90 which was considered high enough for the study.

122 3 c) Procedure

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

125 4 d) Statistical Analysis

126 Five items were used to test the null hypothesis. The responses for each of -strongly agree? and -agree? and
127 those for -strongly disagree? and -disagree? were added for the two categories of respondents (athletes and
128 officials) after which simple statistical tools of frequencies and percentages were used. The nonparametric tool of
129 chi-square (X²) was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

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

132 Ho : There is no significant role played by the attitude of the university community in sports performance
133 among Nigerian university students. The table above shows the frequency, percentages and chi-square
134 computation of responses on the role played by the attitude of university community in sports performance
135 among Nigerian disagree? was 57.5%. The combined percentage of -strongly agree? and -agree? for athletes was
136 31.5% while that for -disagree? and -strongly disagree? 68.5%. A combination of both categories of respondents
137 resulted in 37% for -strongly agree? and -agree? whereas, -disagree? and -strongly disagree? amounted to 63%.

138 The data presented in Table 1 returned a verdict significance on the role played by the attitude of the
139 university community in sports performance among Nigerian university students. This position is disturbing when
140 experience has shown that students who participate in sports have been victimized and scorned by lecturers. The
141 fear of lecturers has led many athletes in the university to shun sports. The threat of victimization by lecturers in
142 the Nigerian scene has been widely reported in the literature. (Amuchie 1986; Ekpeyong, 1986; Kamiyole, 1986;
143 ??dio. 1996: Salau. 1996).

144 The admission policies in the universities have made many of our talented athletes to go to the United
145 States of America and Europe where conditions are better. Universities abroad are known to recruit talented
146 athletes into their institutions through the offer of scholarships and other incentives. Sportsmen there are
147 well catered for and extra lectures/tutorials are organized for athletes who miss lectures while representing
148 their institutions. All these opportunities are non-existent in Nigerian universities, Athletes who were denied
149 admission in Nigerian universities on the basis of their basic qualifications went abroad, qualified and came back
150 to lecture in the universities that denied them admission (Egborge, 1986; ??jirigho, 1986). From the foregoing,
151 one can conveniently conclude that Nigerian academics do not encourage and support student athletes. The
152 researcher strongly feels that our academics should treat university athletes as their wards if not as their children
153 by counseling and encouraging them instead of deriding them.

154 Based on the finding, the conclusion is that the attitude of the university community is not antithetical to
155 sports performance among Nigerian university students.

156 From the study, the following recommendations are made. It is the ardent belief' of the researcher that if' they
157 are properly and meticulously implemented, Nigerian universities would wake up from their lethargy to produce
158 star athletes for the nation. 1. There should be a co-operative deal between the academic staff and staff of the
159 Universities Sports Councils as their functions complement each other in the overall development of the students.
160 University ego and pride are boosted by sports and all hands must be on deck to encourage those who bring such
161 honour. 2. Extra lectures/tutorials should be organized for athletes who miss lectures as result of competitions.

162 There is need for attitudinal change by lecturers who must encourage rather than discourage athletes who they
163 should regard as their children/wards. 3. Special consideration should be given for the admission of talented
164 athletes as done in the United States and Europe. While not supporting the admission of recluse in the name
165 of sports, it will be sufficient if the prospective student who is good in sports has relevant credits in his area
166 of interest rather than demanding compulsory credits in English Language and Mathematics. 4. University
167 management should enforce the lecture free afternoons to enable athletes have the good opportunity to train in
168 their respective sports. Engagement in sports could lead to the eradication/elimination of anti-social behaviour

4 D) STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

169 on campus. 5. Physical Education and Sports should be made compulsory in our universities and domiciled in
 170 the General Studies (GST) or General Education Studies (GES) Department. This provision will also serve the
 171 purpose of talent hunt, discovery and grooming. 6. There should be a policy that clearly defines the position
 172 of sports in the universities. The situation as it exists now where Universities sports are left to the whims
 173 and caprices of each university should be discontinued. A directive where each university is requested to make
 174 appropriate budgetary allocation to sports should emanate from the National Universities Commission (NUC)
 175 to the Vice Chancellors. 7. Sports in the universities should be run by a Committee/Council under the Vice
 176 Chancellor's office with membership drawn from the various Faculties/Colleges. This will bring the much desired
 co-operation between the sports office and lecturers as well as students.

1

Respondents	Among Nigerian University Students.						SD	%		
	SA	A	%	D						
				SA	+ A					
Officials	39	26	42.5	41		47	57.5	1		
	(31.47)	(22.79)		(48.17)		(50.64)				
Athletes	48	37	31.5	92		93	68.5	2		
	(55.53)	(40.21)		(84.89)		(89.36)				
Total	87	63	35.5	133		140	64.5	4		

Source : Field work.

NB: Expected frequencies are in parentheses

Calculated X² value = 5.59

Degree of freedom (df) = 3

Level of significance = 0.05

Critical Value = 7.82

Decision = Hypothesis Accepted.

Figure 1: Table 1 :

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