

Impact of Sports Participation on Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State

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Abstract

Sports is an umbrella term that is used to depict a wide range of activities. These activities are both formal and informal as well as leisure time activities. Globally, sports influence can be felt in all spheres such world economy, social relationships and peace. It is against this backdrop that this study was conducted to examine the impact of sports participation on peace building and conflict resolution among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State. To achieve this, the descriptive research design was used to conduct this study. Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State formed the population for this study. 250 respondents were selected through the simple random sampling technique from three tertiary institutions in Lagos state (Lagos State University, Ojo, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin and Yaba College of Technology, Yaba). The study employed a self-developed structured questionnaire to collect data for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics of Chi-square (X^2) were used to present and analyse demographic data of respondents and the formulated research hypotheses. Findings from the study showed that sports participation significantly affect peace building and harmonious among students of Lagos state tertiary institutions. The findings also revealed that sports participation have significant effect on conflict resolution and prevention among students of Lagos state tertiary institutions. Therefore, it was recommended that motivational techniques should be used by government and school sport administrators to encourage sports participation among students. Sports facilities and equipment provision and accessibility should be prioritised and government policy on the compulsory inclusion of a course in sports should be introduced in all tertiary institutions in the state.

Keywords: *Sports Participation, Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, Students, Tertiary Institutions, Lagos State*

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Background to the Study

Sports is an umbrella term that is used to depict a wide range of activities. These activities are both formal and informal as well as leisure time activities. The concept of sports has received support from scholars and corporate organisations globally. The word “sports” has been used to denote wide range of activities. However, before the word 'sports' can be ascribed to any physical activities, it is critical to examine what constitute sports. According to Awoyinfa and Adebayo (2016), sports comprised of all casual and organised competitive physical activities which is aimed at improving or maintaining physical ability and skills while also providing participants and spectators with some entertainment. Hornby (2001) conceptualise sports as any outdoor or indoor games which is competitive, requiring physical skill or effort, and follows a set of rules.

Globally, sports influence can be felt in all spheres such world economy, social relationships and peace. It is against this backdrop that nations of the world have come to appreciate the need to invest on it. Engaging in sporting activities fosters communication, understanding and promote cooperation and peaceful co-existence among individuals from diverse background. It is due to this that sport is now seen as a potential tool for conflict resolution (Onwuama, Onyene, Adetuyi-Olu-Francis, Ajibola, Shanu & Nwajiaku, 2019). This assertion is corroborated by the principles of rules and regulations guiding sports participation. Thus, sports participants must compete while adhering to set rules and regulations. It is in this vein that Mars (2003) opined that sport has a greater influence on people's behaviours. Though the extent of this influence varies from between level of sports participation (national and international). Thus, this benefit of sports must be harnessed effectively. Harvey (2002) highlighted three dimensions where sports contributions is vital: citizenship, moral qualities and social cohesion. However, these contributions is only possible when everyone shares a common value and has a stake in sports.

The three core values of sports, namely excellence, friendship, and respect, have a significant impact on individuals and communities. Sports competitions provide players with an opportunity to showcase their best performance on the playground. Moreover, sports serve as a powerful platform for fostering mutual understanding, friendship, and respect among individuals. Athletes learn to respect others, abide by the rules and regulations of the games, as well as demonstrate respect for their country. Engaging in sports helps in character building and plays a vital role in creating a peaceful and safer society. It promotes social integration by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together. The International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2009) recognizes the role of sports in fostering these values and acknowledges its contribution to society. Sports have the potential to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities by promoting social inclusion, enhancing health, countering anti-social behaviour, boosting individual self-esteem and confidence, and broadening horizons (Sport Scotland, 2003). The Nigerian government has also acknowledged the social development attributes of sports. The national policy of sports in Nigeria includes objectives that aim to utilize sports as a means to minimize anti-social behaviour. This recognition further highlights the importance of sports in achieving broader social goals and promoting positive values within society.

In the past century, sports have assumed a significant role in society due to their perceived positive influence on the development of young individuals. Sports psychologists have argued that athletic skills and life skills can be taught in conjunction within the context of sports, leading to the incorporation of sports in various life skill programs (Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005). These programs have proven effective in fostering better goal-setting abilities, improved problem-solving skills, and positive thinking among children. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that engaging in sports, in general, is positively associated with school involvement (Marsh & Kleitman, 2003), self-esteem (Crews, Lochbaum, & Landers, 2004), and social competence (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004). Moreover, the catharsis theory posits that participation in sports helps release negative energy, such as aggression and other externalizing behaviours (Breuer & Freud, 1974). According to Lumpkin (2009), sports play a crucial role in the development of two fundamental types of character values: social character values and moral character values. Society highly values both social and moral character values due to their significance. Sports contribute to the cultivation of essential social character values such as devotion, dedication, good citizenship, teamwork, sacrifice, and loyalty. Additionally, sports aid in fostering important moral character values such as tolerance, sense of responsibility, fair play, honesty, fairness, and justice.

Research conducted by Theberge and Griffiths (2010) found that sports participation can create opportunities for intergroup contact, allowing individuals from different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds to interact and build relationships. This contact helps break down stereotypes, prejudices, and misunderstandings, fostering empathy and mutual respect among students. A study by Coakley and Donnelly (2009) demonstrated that sports engagement enhances conflict resolution skills among students. Through participation in team sports, individuals learn to manage conflicts in a constructive manner, negotiate differences, and find mutually beneficial solutions. These skills can be transferred to real-life situations, contributing to peaceful conflict resolution. Research by Coalter (2013) has shown that sports participation promotes social cohesion among students. By working towards common goals, sharing experiences, and developing a sense of belonging within a team or sports community, students are more likely to develop positive relationships and foster social integration. This sense of cohesion can contribute to reducing tensions and conflicts within a school or community setting.

A study by Spaaij, Schlenker, and Jeanes (2015) emphasized the role of sports in bridging divides and building trust among students. Engaging in sports activities can create a common ground for students from conflicting groups, facilitating dialogue, cooperation, and the development of mutual trust. This trust-building process is crucial for resolving conflicts peacefully. Research by Darnell, Hayhurst, and Black (2012) explored the transformative potential of sports participation in conflict settings. Through sports, students can challenge negative narratives and stereotypes, challenge power dynamics, and contribute to positive change within their communities. Sports become a platform for dialogue, understanding, and collective action, fostering long-term peacebuilding efforts.

There have been conflicting reports by researchers on whether sports influence social interactions in a positive or negative way and this points to the facts that there are probably some vacant spaces for positive social interactions with sports which may be filled by the intentions, planning and strategies reinforce by the environments (coaches, parents, participants, spectators, etc.) should work together to ensure that the positive character can be built (Doty, 2006). This study therefore investigates the impact of sports on peace building and conflict resolution among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Research Hypotheses

These research hypotheses were tested in this study

1. Sports participation will not have any significant effect on peace building and harmonious relationship among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State.
2. Sports participation will not have any significant effect on conflict resolution and prevention among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos state.

Research Method

Sports is an umbrella term that is used to depict a wide range of activities. These activities are both formal and informal as well as leisure time activities. Globally, sports influence can be felt in all spheres such world economy, social relationships and peace. it is against this backdrop that this study was conducted to examine the impact of sports participation on peace building and conflict resolution among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State. To achieve this, the descriptive research design was used to conduct this study. Students in tertiary institutions in Lagos State formed the population for this study. 250 respondents were selected through the simple random sampling technique from three tertiary institutions in Lagos state (Lagos State University, Ojo, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin and Yaba College of Technology, Yaba). The study employed a self-developed structured questionnaire to collect data for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics of Chi-square (X^2) were used to present and analyse demographic data of respondents and the formulated research hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-20 years	86	34.4%
21-25 years	132	52.8%
26-30 years	24	9.6%
31-45 years	8	3.2%
Total	250	100

Source: Authors field work, 2023

Table 1 showed that 34.4% (n = 86) of the respondents were within the age bracket 16-20 years and 52.8% (n = 132) of the respondents were within the age bracket 21-25 years, 9.6% (n = 24) of them were 26-30 years, while the remaining 3.2% (n = 8) were between 31-45 years old.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	164	65.6%
Female	86	34.4%
Total	250	100%

Source: Authors field work, 2023

Table 2 indicated that 65.6% (n = 164) of the respondents were male while 34.4% (n = 86) were female.

Hypotheses Testing

Research hypothesis one states that sports participation will not have any significant effect on peace building and harmonious relationship among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State. The inferential statistics of Chi-square (X^2) was used to testing this hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Impact of Sports Participation on Peace Building

Variable	N	df	L.S.	X^2_{cal}	$X^2_{critical}$	Remarks
Peace Building	250	27	0.05	120.197	40.113	Significant

Source: Authors field work, 2023

Result presented in Table 3 showed that sports participation exerts a statistically significant impact on peace building. The calculated chi-square value of 120.197 was greater than the critical chi-square value of 40.113 at degree of freedom 27 and 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that sports participation will have significant effect on peace building and harmonious relationship among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Research hypothesis two states that sports participation will not have any significant effect on conflict resolution and prevention among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos state. The inferential statistics of Chi-square (X^2) was used to testing this hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Impact of Sports Participation on Conflict Resolution and Prevention

Variable	N	df	L.S.	X^2_{cal}	$X^2_{critical}$	Remarks
Conflict Resolution and Prevention	250	27	0.05	128.80	40.11	Significant

Source: Authors field work, 2023

From Table 4, the calculated Chi-square value of 128.80 was higher than the critical chi-square value of 40.11 at degree of freedom 27 and 0.05 level of significance. This means that

the null hypothesis which stated that that sports participation will not have any significant effect on conflict resolution and prevention among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos state is hereby rejected. The implication of this is that sports participation will have significant effect on conflict resolution and prevention among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos state.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study is that sports participation will have significant effect on peace building and harmonious relationship among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State. This finding supports the study of Awoyinka and Adebayo (2016) whose study attest to the fact that sports activities are usually staged in atmosphere devoid of violence. Furthermore, sports as an organized institution projects justice and fair play. As indicated by Odunaiya, Ayedele & Oguntibeju (2010) and Donnelly (2011), sports promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence, teamwork and leadership. This position corroborates the United Nations (2003) submission that sports activities could be effectively repositioned as an avenue for social integration and peace culture in educational institutions.

Furthermore, findings from the study revealed a significant effect of sports participation on conflict resolution and prevention among Lagos State tertiary institutions students. Sports is a universal language that has the ability to bridge ethnic and social divide, making it a useful tool for promoting peace within communities and on a global level. When effectively harnessed, sports programmes foster tolerance and promote social integration which are core values for sustaining a lasting peace.

Conclusion

This study concluded that sports participation significantly affects peace building and harmonious relationship among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State and sports participation significantly affects conflict resolution and prevention among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Recommendations

This study recommends the followings:

- 1) Students of tertiary institutions should be encouraged to participate in sports by the schools' administration through the use of motivational techniques.
- 2) Government should invest heavily in sports through the provision of sports facilities and equipment and the rehabilitation of damaged ones.
- 3) Government policy on the compulsory inclusion of a course in sports should be effected in all tertiary institutions in the state.
- 4) Public and extensive awareness of the importance and roles of sports participation should be carried out in all tertiary institutions in the state so as to sensitize the students motivate them to take part in sports activities.

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