



FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN SPORTS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The researcher investigated the Factors Responsible for Gender Discrimination in Sports in Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The researcher used a self-developed instrument titled “Factors Responsible for Gender Discrimination in Sports in Rivers State (FRFGDSRS)” as the instrument for data collection. The instruments were administered to 570 undergraduates in the department of Human Kinetics at the University of Port Harcourt and the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education all in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The population of the study was 12,241 students in Rivers State. The researcher employed the correlational research design for the study. The reliability coefficient yielded 0.80 using a test-retest method which shows that the instrument is reliable. Based on the findings the researcher revealed that cultural beliefs, parents and religion are the socio-cultural factors responsible for gender discrimination in sports in Rivers State. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the government at all levels should create enabling environment for unfettered participation of women in sports and its management. The private organisations and individuals in the society should support the government at all levels to provide and improve sports facilities and equipment in schools so as to enable more participation in sports by both sexes.*

KEYWORDS: Gender Discrimination, Sports, Women in Sports, Nigeria



INTRODUCTION

From the time an infant is conceived and delivered, gender is differentiated and most times, it decides to a large extent, how the infant is nurtured. If the baby is a boy, then one of the first toys they will give to him is some type of ball or something related to sports. In the event that the baby is a girl, then the reverse will be the case. A girl child ordinarily gets dolls, Barbie dolls, or something of that nature. Childhood activities add to the child's development of various skills, inclinations, and capacities, which thusly can in the long run impact their professional decision (Giulianotti, 2004). There is proof that supports that these activities get ready children for various jobs in their adulthood. While male activities will in general be progressively competitive, forceful, and frequently in huge groups, female activities will in general be in smaller groups and spotlight more on collaboration and nurture (Lever, 2013). Switch (2013) found these kinds of activities for guys to promote business or professional careers, though the female activities advance family professions. So it is nothing unexpected there may not be as much female enthusiasm for a business rotating around sports.

Sports have been considered a social construct for males where physical competency is demonstrated. Consequent to the sudden shift in the ideology of the society concerning gender equality as well as the wide adoption of the Brighton Declaration (1968) on Women and Sport, the sport settings has witnessed dramatic changes globally. As a result of this, the number of females in sports has increased considerably and yet most of the executive positions, especially in sports organisations are still usually held by men. Women have been more or less ignored and this shortcoming has become more evident, especially in sports (Adeyanju, 2011).

Unfortunately, inequalities in career advancement for females have continued to date, especially in the area of sport. Senne (2016) suggests that sports organisations have identified the need for manliness, not only on the playing field but also in coaching and administrative positions. These social attitudes that equate masculinity with athletic competence provide men with a preferred status. This standard has become the norm in Nigeria (Senne, 2016).

Senne (2016) proposes that initially, young girls experience gender inequality as athletes because sport is culturally considered as being masculine. This is due to established gender norms that masculinity and femininity are two different concepts. He highlights that sport is essentially masculinized, through sexism, homophobia, and heteronormativity of sport and that women are constantly perceived as being less capable than men in athletics and not taken as seriously as athletes (Senne, 2016). Females are not initially taken seriously as athletes and are faced with many more challenges than males when wanting to participate in sports. Senne (2016) acknowledges that while most female athletes want to be perceived as capable as male athletes, some do not want to be perceived as masculine or not following the out-of-date tradition and guidelines as to what a female should look and act like. If young girls are more discouraged than boys when it comes to participation in sports, then opportunities for coaching become less appealing. Therefore male dominance in leadership positions in sports is a mutually sustaining social attitude. Women that desire to become coaches, athletic directors, or move further up the ladder in sports administration could face continued gender bias.



Statement of the Problem

Human beings live in a world where inequality reigns. This inequality manifests itself in various spheres in Nigeria and it affects the womenfolk greatly. Inequality exists in political, social, education and sports spheres; where women are being discriminated against based on their gender. Adeyanju (2011) observed that the low involvement of women in sports is not due to the lack of interest in sports by women. It is due to the long history of direct, and indirect forms of discrimination and stereotyping as well as many other problems that women have to contend with. Women's participation in sports in Nigeria has for a long time been relatively low compared with men due to differential treatment attached to socio-cultural factors such as religion, culture, gender, peer group, mass media etc. it is at this backdrop that the researcher wishes to investigate the factors that are responsible for gender discrimination in sport in Nigeria.

Research Question

1. What is the relationship between cultural belief and female participation in sports?
2. What is the relationship between religion and female participation in sports?
3. What is the relationship between parental influence and female participation in sports?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between cultural beliefs and female participation in sports.
2. There is no significant relationship between religion and female participation in sports.
3. There is no significant relationship between parental influence and female participation in sports.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study is correlational. The study was carried out in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State in Nigeria while the population comprised all the students in the department of Human Kinetics of the three Universities in the State. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting two schools out of the three schools in the Local Government Areas. 570 students formed the sample size. The instrument for data collection is a modified four-point Likert-type questionnaire, which was validated by measurement and Evaluation expectations. The questionnaire contains 28 items which are scaled as Strongly Agree(SA) - 4, Agree (A) — 3, Disagree (D) — 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) — 1, for positively cued items and vice versa for negatively cued items. There are three subscales in the questionnaire. The research questions and hypothesis were answered using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient.



RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the relationship between cultural belief and female participation in sports?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between cultural belief and female participation in sports.

Table 1: correlational analysis of the relationship between cultural belief and female participation in sports.

N	Mean	SD	r	Df	p-value
150	12.3	4.0	.71	148	0.00

**₁. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1: shows a correlation coefficient of 0.61. This coefficient is a positive and moderately high correlation. On account of the results, the researcher, therefore, concludes that there is a relationship between cultural beliefs and female participation in sports.

Research question 2: What is the relationship between religion and female participation in sports?

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between religion and female participation in sports.

Table 2: correlational analysis of the relationship between religion and female participation in sports.

N	Mean	SD	r	Df	p-value
150	9.4	2.6	.58	148	0.00

**₁. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: shows a correlation coefficient of 0.58. This coefficient is a positive and moderately high correlation. On account of the results, the researcher, therefore, concludes that there is a relationship between religion and female participation in sports.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between parental influence and female participation in sports?

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between parental influence and female participation in sports.



Table 3: correlational analysis of the relationship between parental influence and female participation in sports.

N	Mean	SD	r	Df	p-value
150	14.6	4.9	.63	148	0.00

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: shows a correlation coefficient of 0.63. This coefficient is a positive and moderately high correlation. On account of the results, the researcher, therefore, concludes that there is a relationship between parental influence and female participation in sports.

DISCUSSION

The results of the findings revealed that cultural belief had a correlational coefficient of 0.71. This means that majority of the respondents agreed that the cultural beliefs of respondents had a significant relationship with female participation in sports. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Adeyanju (2011) who pointed out that, physiological myths are strong, in which many people still believe that physical exercise by women has a detrimental effect on their reproductive organs and that women lose their femininity through active participation in sports. Ikhioya (2009) also showed that, in most communities in Nigeria, particularly in the rural areas, cultural beliefs and attitudes had strong influences on the low participation of women in sports. The findings of the study also revealed that parental influence had a significant impact on female participation in sports. This was in agreement with Adler (2008) who indicated that parents' reactions and expectations towards their children create the message or concepts of children's sex role stereotypes in physical activity. This notion can affect the sports experiences of women. Hums (2008) also reported that parents respond more negatively to females than males' participation in sports. This shows that while parents tend to permit males, they object to female participation in sports for sex stereotypic reasons. Similarly, males are more encouraged to participate in active pursuits of sports outside the home while females are reinforced for engaging in activities within the confines of the home. The findings of this study show that religion had significant influence on female participation in sports. This is corroboration to the finding of Money (2002) who pointed out that, in France and many other countries, the Catholic and Protestant Churches opposed women's participation in sports. Similarly, it is a common belief among Nigerians that Islam discouraged adherents of the Islamic religion from sports participation because of the specific types of dress that are prescribed for the participants.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this study has identified some of the socio-cultural factors that influence female participation in sports i.e. culture, parents and religion. The results have laid credence to Adeyanju (2011) who submitted that the low involvement of women in sports is not due to the lack of interest in sports by women. It is due to the long history of direct, and indirect forms of discrimination and stereotyping as well as many other problems that women have to contend with. Arising from the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

- The government at all levels should create enabling environment for unfettered participation of women in sports and its management.
- Government should encourage female participation in sports by providing scholarships and other incentives to female athletes who excel in any sporting competition.
- Mass media should organise an enlightenment programme that will eliminate all socio-cultural biases against female participation in sporting activities.
- The private organisations and individuals in the society should support the government at all levels to provide and improve sports facilities and equipment in schools so as to enable more participation in sports by both sexes.

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