



Enhancing the Performance of Nigerian Athletes at the Olympics through Institutional Sports

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Abstract The study was on enhancing better performance at the Olympics through, quality institutional sports. Descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted for the study. The population consisted of all undergraduates in Universities in South-West Nigeria. The University athletes were purposively selected through simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques, from five Federal and six State Universities in South-West, Nigeria. Self-designed questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection, which was validated by experts in physical education, and test and measurement for face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was done through test retest method and the data collected was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Data were collected through the help of research assistants, who were athletes and coaches in the various Universities, and the data collected were analysed using frequency counts mean score and percentages set at 0.05 alpha level. The result revealed that many Universities in Nigeria lack sporting facilities that could produce world class athletes that could compete and win laurels at the Olympics. It was also concluded that institutional athletes are not motivated enough to work towards attaining Olympics standards. It was therefore recommended that institutions of learning should make adequate provisions for world-class facilities that could encourage University athletes. It was also suggested that government should work towards implementing the national policy on sports as it relates to institutional sports.

Keywords facilities, equipment, spectators, sedentary living, motivation

Introduction

Sport as a social agent is an avenue that brings people of different ages and religious background together as either players or spectators (producers and consumers). Sport is also a stabilizing factor that keeps participants against dangers of modern civilization which are now prevalent in different societies. Lawal (2014) [1] stated that sport can achieve what it takes peace talk, diplomatic treaties and conferences a longer period to achieve. He stated further that it is only sport that could, in short time, bring warring nations together for example the Jews and the Arabs, England and Argentina, Ghana and Togo to list a few. For healthy living, physical activity, and by extension sport is a means of achieving physical fitness to prolong life. It is an important means for promoting healthy living. Regular exercises remain an important behaviour for promoting health, postponing or preventing prevalent neuromuscular disorders such as, mechanical low back pain, neck and coronary heart diseases, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity and colon cancer [2-4] posited that physical activities occur naturally in both male and female and this is owing to the demands of everyday living in terms of occupation as well as to keep the soul and body together. They stressed further that the biological and social nature of human beings make it mandatory for mankind to engage in one form of physical activity or the other from birth to death.



Akindutire and Oyeniya (2010) [5] observed that participation in physical activity is an antidote to promoting and prolonging individuals' life. For an individual to maintain high level of fitness there is the need for constant involvement in physical activity which is the best investment in health as opposed to sedentary living. Highlighting the importance of physical activities in the life of an individual, Society of Health and Physical Educators (2013) [6] stated that there is need for relaxation in order to regain the lost energy hence every human being has to himself the right to some private hours after the day's work. Institutional sports are sporting programmes planned and organized for students in institutions of learning. School sports programme are planned and organized for either recreation or competition. Those for competitions may include inter-house athletic competitions, inter-school, inter-collegiate and inter-universities that are used to select athletes for national and international competitions. Many institutions of learning fail to participate in various competitions because they lack facilities and equipment to prepare athletes for the competitions. In Nigeria, many primary and secondary schools in the urban areas do not have open spaces for recreation let alone sport centres for competitions. In most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, the facilities available are only meant for recreation purpose and not adequate for competitions when compared with those available in the advanced countries. Hence, many of these institutions cannot host competitions meant for their different categories like Nigeria Colleges of Education Games, Nigeria Polytechnic Games and the Nigeria University Games. According to Alla and Ajibua (2012) [7] most of the universities in Nigeria have little or no sport facilities befitting the status of universities. They further described the present status of sports in Nigeria Universities as being grossly underfunded, lacking adequate facilities and equipment, inadequate competent staff, improper training programmes for athletes and lack of incentives to athletes and coaches. Unlike Nigeria, many sports structures in the advanced countries are institutional based, which provide opportunity for young athletes to develop their skills and talents.

Orunaboka and Emeka, (2012) [3] also stated that many student athletes leave Nigeria for USA and Europe and become super stars within a year because of the facilities available there. Those individuals are later invited as foreign based athletes to represent Nigeria at international competitions. Jeroh, (2012) [4] clarified that it is not an exaggeration that in most Universities in Nigeria, the Senate hardly discusses the issue of Universities sports or make separate budgetary allocations for it. This has made it difficult for Universities to provide facilities and equipment which hinders sport development in most universities. Colabianchi, Johnston and O'Malley (2012) [8] all observed that for a nation to aspire to a leadership position in the world of sports, there must be adequate facility that can prevent injuries and enhance performance. Also Alla and Ajibua (2012) [7] and Orunaboka and Ihekweze (2011) [9] opined that in Europe and the United States, international competitions like the Olympics have been hosted by universities because of the availability of facilities and equipment for sports. They concluded that in Nigeria only two or three institutions of learning can boast of having standard facilities that can host Olympic competitions.

Non availability of funds also affects the provision of incentives for athletes to motivate them. Provision of incentives in terms of fiscal cash or creation of enabling environment like allowing special concession for athletes during admission. Jeroh (2012) [4] observed that motivation as the dynamic force setting a person into action that produce direct, and maintain effort expended in behaviour. In Nigeria it has been observed that most funds meant for sports training and camping are not always released on time thereby hampering provision of incentives and payment of allowances to athletes. According to Edenedo, Akarah and Tayire (2014) [10] it was discovered that most sports training were dependent on availability of funds for camping, and this is not often forthcoming until few weeks to competitions. According to Aluko (2012) [11] the problem of poor incentives to university athletes is compounded by lack of Nigeria University admission policy for athletes, poor performance incentives, and awards, as well as poor application of technology. Against this background, this study examined enhancing the performance of Nigerian athletes at the Olympics through institutional sports.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested.

- 1) Institutional sporting facilities are not significantly of national and Olympic standards.
- 2) Institutional athletes are not significantly motivated to perform to Olympic standards.



Methodology

Descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all undergraduates in Universities in South-West Nigeria. The sample for the study consisted of 220 University athletes purposively selected through stratified sampling and simple random techniques, from five federal and six state universities in south-west Nigeria.

The instrument for data collection was self-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by experts in physical education and test and measurement for face and content validity. The reliability was done through test retest method. The administered questionnaire was administered twice within an interval of two weeks on athletes of Ekiti State University who were not part of the athletes used for the main study. The collated data from the two visits was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation and an r of 0.78 was obtained which shows high reliability value.

The validated research instrument was used in collecting data from the athletes of Federal and State Universities through the help of research assistants who were athletes and coaches in the various Universities. The data collected were analysed through frequency counts, mean score, percentages and chi-square statistics set at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of data analysis on the basis of hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 1: Facility and Motivation as a Means of Enhancing Performance

S/N	PROVISION OF FACILITIES	YES	%	NO	%	χ^2
1	My institution has standard sport facility	128	58.18	92	41.82	0.30
2	Sport facility in my institution is of national standard	120	54.18	100	45.45	
3	Sport facility in my institution is of Olympic standard.	66	30	154	70	
4	With my experience sport facilities in institution in Nigeria can produce Olympic athletes.	63	28.64	157	71.36	
5	Available sport facilities are old and dilapidated.	107	48.64	113	51.36	
6	Athletes of Olympic competitions can only be trained in USA and Europe	152	69.10	68	30.91	
	\bar{X}	106	48.18	114	51.82	
	MOTIVATION					
7	Athletes are motivated to participate in institutional sport.	121	55	99	45	0.9
8	Institutional athletes are specially considered when exams are missed.	142	64.55	78	34.45	
9	Special practical hours are granted athletes representing the institution and country.	7	3.18	213	96.82	
10	Athletes are given scholarship.	120	54.55	100	45.45	
11	Special allowances (money) are given to university athletes.	108	49.10	112	50.9	
12	Athletes are honoured at the end of each academic year.	204	92.73	16	7.27	
	\bar{X}	117	53.18	103	46.82	

From the table, the mean score for provision of facilities showed that agreed had 106 (48.18%) while disagreed had 114 (51.82%). The calculated chi-square gave a value of 0.30 which is less than the table value of 3.84. The hypothesis is not rejected.

On motivation, the mean score showed that agreed had 117 (53.18%) while disagreed had 103 (46.82%). The calculated chi-square gave a value of 0.90 at 0.05 alpha level at 1 degree of freedom. The result showed that the calculated chi-square of 0.90 is less than the table value of 3.84. Therefore, the hypothesis is not rejected.



Discussion

The result revealed that institutional sporting facilities in Nigeria are not significantly of national and Olympic standards. A thorough observation of sporting facilities in many Universities in Nigeria shows that facilities are inadequate and not of Olympic standards. This is in consonant with findings of Alla and Ajibua (2012) [7] that discovered that most of the universities in Nigeria have little or no sport facilities befitting the status of University. In comparing sports facilities in Nigerian universities with what obtains in Europe and America. Orunaboka and Ihekweke (2011) opined that in Europe and the United States, institutional sport like the Olympic have been hosted by Universities because of the availability of facilities and equipment. They observed further that in the advanced nations the importance of facility and equipment to sport development had been recognized. They finally concluded that in Nigeria only two or three institutions of higher learning can boast of having standard facility that can host Olympic competition.

The result also showed that institutional athletes are not significantly motivated to attain Olympic standards. The result corroborates the findings of Alla and Ajibua (2012) [7] who described the present status of sports in Nigeria Universities as being grossly underfunded, lacking adequate facilities and equipment, inadequate competent staff, improper training programmes for athletes and lack of incentives for athletes and coaches. The same fact was attested to by Jeroh (2012) [4] who opined that it is no exaggeration that in most Universities in Nigeria; the senate hardly discusses the issue of university sport or makes any special budgetary allocation for it. Also Aluko (2012) [11] observed that the poor incentives to University athletics is compounded by lack of University admission policy for athletics, poor performance incentives and awards, as well as poor application of technology.

Conclusion

The study was able to conclude that most Universities in Nigeria lack sporting facilities that could help in producing world class athletes that could compete and win laurels at the Olympics. It was also discovered that institutional athletes are not motivated enough to work towards attaining Olympic standards which implies that it may be a difficult task for Nigeria to win medals at the Olympics through institutional athletes in Nigeria as it obtains in Europe and the United States where Olympics athletes are gotten from institutions of learning.

Recommendations

Judging from the findings of the study it was recommended that:

- Institutions of learning should make adequate provisions for world-class facilities that could encourage University athletes and students of other institutions into working towards achieving Olympic standards.
- Government should work towards implementing the national policy on sports as it relates to institutional sports.
- Government and institutions should provide incentives to university athletes in order to encourage others that have sporting talents.
- Institutions should always organize sport award nights for athletes representing the institution at both national and international competitions in order to encourage other hidden talents.

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