

# ANALYSIS OF POST-GRADUATE RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, KENYA.

BY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper analyses post-graduate studies conducted in the department of physical education of Kenyatta University with a view to establishing their contribution to sports growth and development in Kenya. A total of 19 research studies conducted in the department between 1990 and 2002 were subjected to content analysis. Findings indicated that majority 6 (31.57%) of the studies centred on match analysis, 7 (36.84%) of the studies had derived their subjects from sports clubs, and soccer is the most 3 (30%) researched aspect sport. Questionnaires were extensively used for data collection. It is recommended that the department needs to focus on performance-oriented research, diversify areas of research and increase the enrollment of post-graduate students and teaching staff.*

**KEY WORDS:** research, post-graduate, sport growth and development

## INTRODUCTION

Research plays a crucial role in determining the sustenance and improvement of sports in any given country. That is why it was observed that research studies are widely recognized as practical means of bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical acquisition of skills in attaining top levels of competitive sports performance (Toriola, 1995).

Most innovations in exercise science and sports performance often emerge from universities and sport institutions that are dedicated to vigorous and experimental tradition of basic and applied research (Shehu, 1996). Higher institutions of learning in nations noted for sports development are engaged in the integration of specialized sport discipline and linkage with sports institutes across other countries for purposes of free flow of information (Shehu, 1996). In the 21<sup>st</sup>

century two of the critical areas that physical education and sport programmes at universities should address are that of relevance through increased research activity.

According to Noakes (2002), the quality of physical education and sport science in the universities is determined by the quality of service provided and consequently the nature of its influence in society. The influence of a profession in the society determines the perception of the profession and its credibility.

It is clear that the growth of sport at world level as evidenced by the ever-popular Olympic Games, world cup in soccer, cricket, rugby and field hockey among others has presented remarkable opportunities for sport scientists. The big question however is whether physical education and sport scientists have effectively contributed to this massive growth of sport. A role that sports scientist should play is to provide a body of evidence-based research which clearly establishes that our profession is really able to enhance sport performance so that without their input, no coach, team or athletes can achieve an ultimate success (Noakes, 2002).

According to Bucher and Krottee (1993), relevant research in the social psychological and movement sciences as they relate to human movement and learning should guide physical education and sport science programme planning. The authors further argue that the decade of the 1990's provided researchers with an opportunity and challenge to meaningfully contribute to the improvement of sporting programmes. Of critical importance is the need to bridge the gap between research and practical application (Bucher & Krottee, 1993).

As the only institution that offers degrees (Bachelor of Education (B.ED), Master of Education (M.ED) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in physical



education and sport, Kenyatta University's contribution to the growth of sport and physical education comes into focus. The mission of the University is to teach, examine, research and offer outreach services to society (K.U. Calendar, 2001). The research component is basically undertaken via post-graduate programmes that require students to carry out research on areas of their choice in the relevant disciplines.

The Department of Physical Education at Kenyatta University launched its Master of Education and Ph.D programmes in 1988. However, the early scientific research in the department basically emphasized institutional physical education (Asembo, 1997). However, it is prudent to critically take stock of researches conducted in the department with a view to establishing their contribution to sports growth and development in Kenya. This will possibly show whether the research studies have made significant contribution to both progressive changes in the standard of sports phenomena in Kenya. This is worthy venture as Kenyatta University is the only University in Kenya which offers physical education and sport as an academic subject.

Thus this study addressed the following research questions

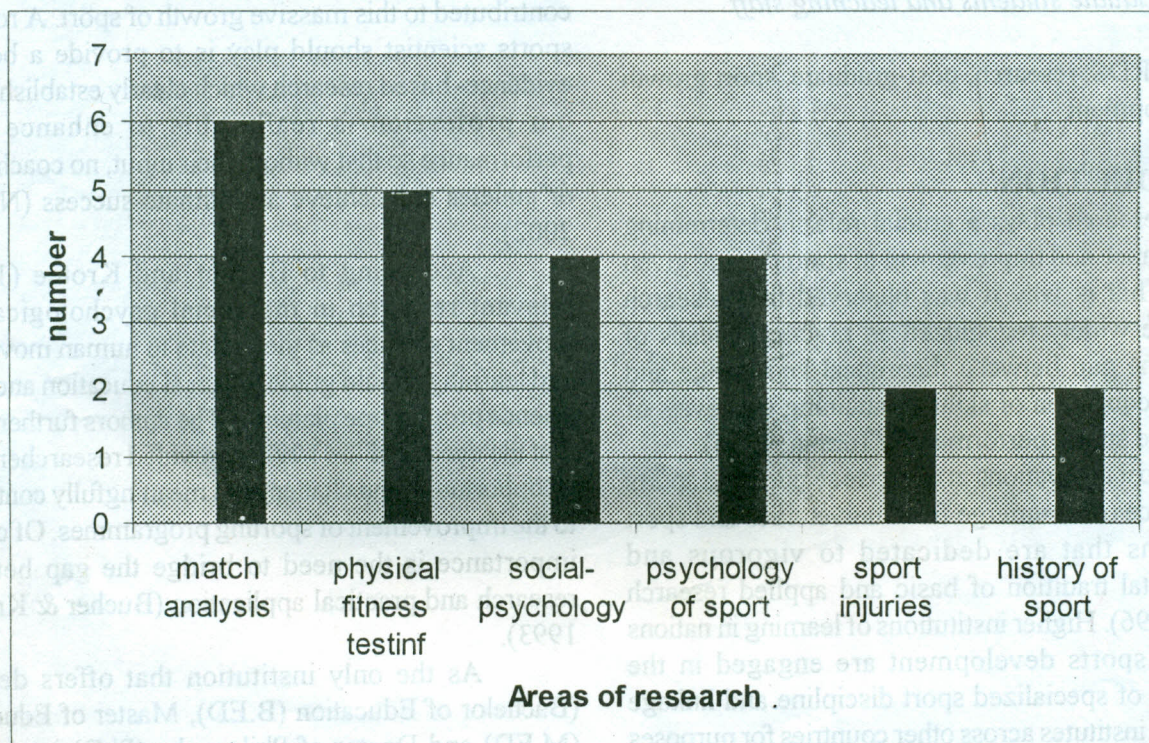
1. Which aspects of physical education and sport have been researched on?
2. Which research designs were employed in the studies?
3. What instruments for data collection were used?
4. At what level (s) of physical education and sport did the studies target?
5. How adequate were the sample sizes for the studies?

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

For the purposes of this study, all empirical research studies that were successfully completed between 1990 and 2002 at masters (N=17) and doctorate (N=2) levels were subjected to content analysis. The researchers independently reviewed the theses and dissertations with regard to the areas of study, the research design applied, data collection, instrumentation and level of physical education and sports at which the researches were conducted. Frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis.

## RESULTS

The areas of research conducted in the department of physical education is presented below



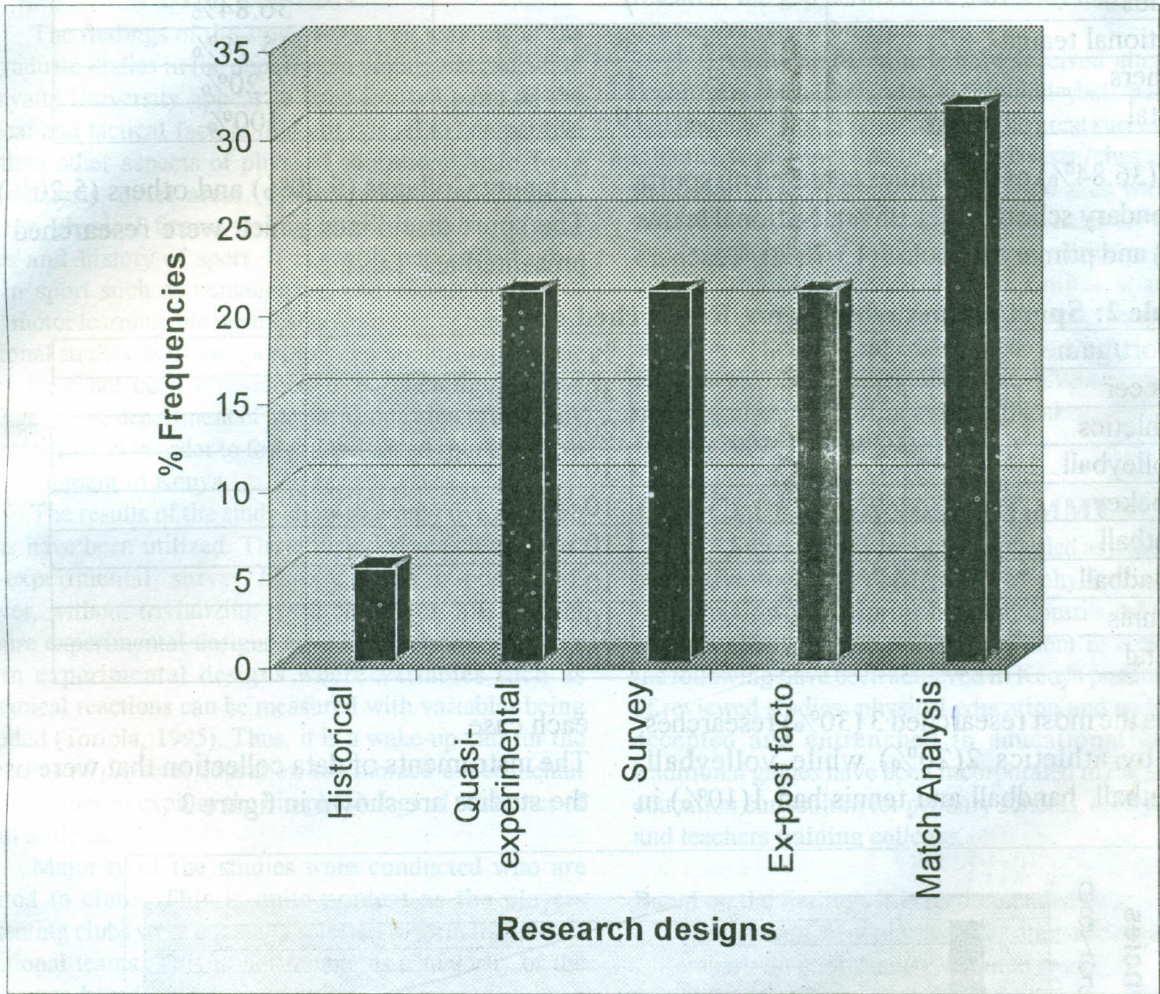


**Fig 1. Areas of Research Conducted in the Department of Physical Education of Kenyatta University**

Majority of the studies 6(31.57%) centred on match analysis followed by physical fitness testing,

(21.05%), history of sport, sport injuries and psychology of sport were the least (5.20%) studied.

Research designs employed in the studies in the physical education department is shown in figure 2:



**Figure 2: Research Designs Employed in the Studies**  
From figure 2, it is evident that 6(31.57%) of the studies utilized match analysis design, 4(21.05%) employed Quasi-experimental, 4(21.05%) ex-post facto and 4(21.05%) survey. Historical design

1(5.26%) was least utilized.

The levels at which the studies were conducted are presented in Table 1



**Table 1: Institutional Level at which Researches in Physical Education or Sport were Conducted.**

Level	N	%
Primary level	3	15.78%
Secondary level	4	21.05%
Teacher Training College	1	5.20%
Clubs	7	36.84%
National teams	3	15.78%
Others	1	5.20%
Total	19	100%

Majority 7(36.84%) of the studies centered on sports clubs, secondary schools 4(21.05%), National teams 3(15.78%) and primary schools 3(15.78%), Teachers

Training Colleges (5.20%) and others (5.20%).

The sport disciplines which were researched on is presented are Table 2:

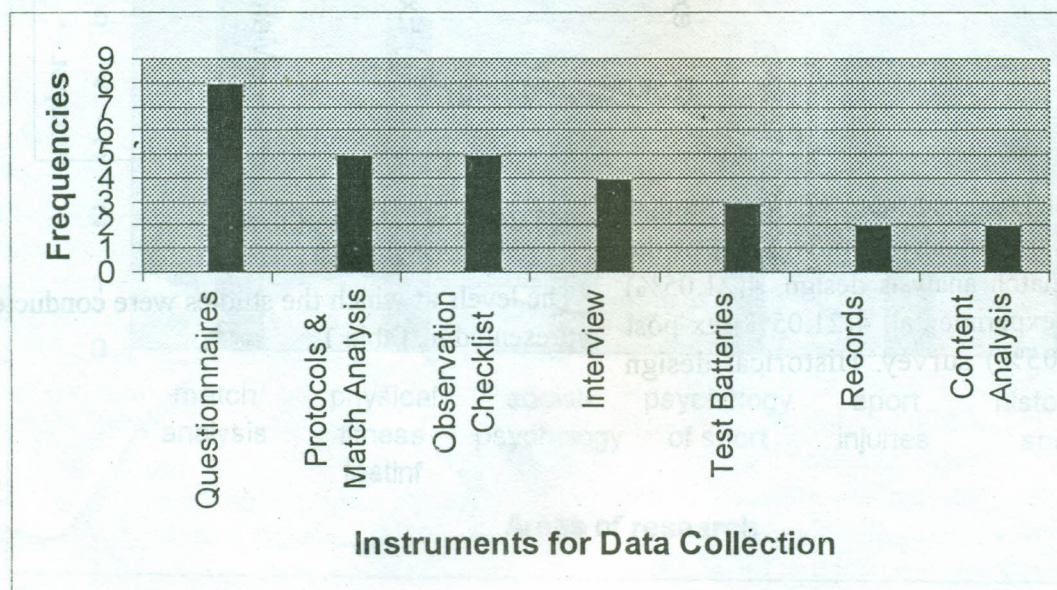
**Table 2: Sport/Games which were Researched on**

Sport/game	N	%
Soccer	3	30
Athletics	2	20
Volleyball	1	10
Hockey	1	10
Netball	1	10
Handball	1	10
Tennis	1	10
Total	10	100

Soccer was the most researched 3 (30%) researches, followed by athletics 2(20%) while volleyball, hockey, netball, handball and tennis had 1(10%) in

each case.

The instruments of data collection that were used in the studies are shown in figure 3





### **Figure 3: Instruments for Data Collection**

Questionnaires were utilized most 8(27.58%), followed by match analysis protocols 5(17.24%), while content analysis and examination of records were least utilized/employed 2(2.89%) respectively.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study show that majority of the post-graduate studies in the department of physical education at Kenyatta University appear to have focused more on the technical and tactical factors that are crucial to competitive sport than other aspects of physical education. Apart from match analysis, other areas, which were studied included pedagogy, physical fitness testing, social psychology, sport injuries and history of sport. It is worth noting that other areas in sport such as management and administration of sports, motor learning, biochemical investigations, physiology, nutritional studies, body composition and kinanthropometric studies have not been researched into. Therefore, it is a challenge for the department of physical education to diversify the research areas in order to foster accelerated sports growth and development in Kenya.

The results of the study show that only five research designs have been utilized. These included match analysis, quasi-experimental, survey, historical and ex-post facto. However, without trivializing research design, it is evident that pure experimental designs have not been utilized. It is only in experimental designs where variables such as biochemical reactions can be measured with variables being controlled (Toriola, 1995). Thus, it is a wake-up-call for the department of physical education to embrace experimental studies in order to explore the bio-physiological attributes of Kenyan athletes.

Majority of the studies were conducted who are affiliated to clubs. This is quite prudent as the players representing clubs were normally selected to form the bulk of the national teams. This is not remote as a majority of the studies were based on match analysis. Fewer studies have been conducted with subjects from the national team and athletes in different levels of education except universities and pre-primary schools. This is crucial because, for sport growth and development in Kenyan to be realized there is need for early identification and nurturing of talent. This can only be realized through concerted research studies at lower levels of education in order to come up with Kenyan based norms and standards for measurements of talents.

From the findings of the study, soccer is the game which has attracted most of the studies. This is expected as soccer is the most popular sport in Kenya, as it is in other countries (Njororai, 2000). However, the national soccer team (Harambee Stars) and the country's top soccer clubs have made

little success beyond East and Central African region. That is why Shehu (1996) observed that research can yield results with immediate and predictable practical uses only when findings are made available to sport trainers through journals, conferences, seminars, coaching clinics and personnel. In this regard, the link between researchers and practitioners in soccer is vital. It is therefore encouraging to note that through research, the gap between the university and the knowledge consumers can be bridged.

Other sports which have received attention at the department include athletics, tennis, volleyball, hockey, netball and handball. It was observed that the great success of Kenyan athletics team cannot be linked with researches conducted in the department. Regrettably, this is an area which requires empirical studies in order to provide a basis for maintaining and improving the achievements in athletics particularly middle and distance races. Many other sports such as basketball, rugby, water sports, board games, martial arts need attention of the physical education department post-graduate researchers. The potential for more involvement by researchers in the growth of sport is evident (Noakes, 2002; Bucher & Krotee, 2002; Kirk, 2002).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since sports research is regarded as a diagnostic and evaluative tool, the department of physical education of Kenyatta University has undoubtedly contributed significantly towards sports growth and development in Kenya. Indeed, the following have been achieved in Kenya possibly as a result of reviewed studies: physical education and sport have been accepted and entrenched in educational institutions, traditional games have been incorporated in the new physical education curriculum for primary schools, secondary schools and teachers training colleges.

Based on the findings it is recommended that: -

1. The department of physical education should embrace and embark on performance-oriented research.
2. There is need to diversify the areas in research with a greater focus on experimental studies, administration and management of sport, nutrition and health education, curriculum issues and historical studies.
3. There is need to expand the enrollment of graduate opportunities in the department in order to train more researchers.
4. There is need to expand teaching manpower in the department especially in areas such as physiology, nutrition, biochemistry and bio-mechanics of sports.
5. Need for close collaboration between the department of physical education, ministry of education and association/federations running sports in Kenya so that research findings can be disseminated.



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