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SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING MUSLIM UNIVERSITY STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS IN KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

There is a strong theological background supporting sports in Islam (Qur’an, 16:8). However, this is on condition that it is lawful and does not hamper other religious obligations (Qur’an 2: 219, 5: 91-92). Studies validate significant benefits of participating in physical activities. For instance exercise has been used in prevention and management of Coronary heart disease, Hypertension, Blood lipids and lipoprotein profile, Cardiac function, Bone mineral status, Smoking risks, Body composition and weight control, Blood glucose regulation, Musculoskeletal disorders and Stress management and mental health among others. Despite this, there is still a gap between the theory and practice regarding participation in sports among Muslim students in Kenyan universities. The purpose of this study was to find out what causes the low Muslim students’ participation in sports and in which ways Islam influences their participation in sports. The study adopted a survey design. This enabled the researcher to cover a wide area and acquire as much information as possible. This also enabled the researcher get the information about the situation as it is. Factors under investigation were gender as an independent variable while participation and level of performance were the dependent variables. The target population was 920 from the six public universities in Kenya. Under the guidance of the supervisors, a questionnaire was constructed on a five - point likert scale and then used to acquire information. Random sampling was used to select 252 out of the target population of 920. Descriptive statistics were used to describe students’ participation levels in sport. ANOVA was used to determine gender differences. Results showed. Three out of five structural factors affecting Muslim student’s participation in sports showed significance difference (.047, .000, and .010); two out of seven of socio-economic factors tested showed significance difference (.001, .000)). Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are suggested to guide in policy formulation and further research. Games teachers and coaches should be designed to fit various participants without infringement on their faith i.e. programmes that do not segregate on basis of faith. Department in charge of sports and games in institutions like the universities and teacher colleges should expand awareness of benefits of participating in physical activities among the Muslim society to change the generalized misconceptions held about participation in Physical activities. Institutions need to expand sports facilities to help attract and encourage both male and female students to participate in physical activities. Broader studies should be conducted to identify other factors affecting Muslim (and other denominations) students participation in sports at other levels of learning in Kenyan institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Many studies conclusively validate the benefits of participating in physical activities. Studies have also indicted that when cardiovascular heart disease (CHD) does develop in physically active individuals; it occurs at a later age and tends to be less severe (Haskell et al., 1992). People who perform regular, exercise have more blood high density lipoproteins (HDLs) compared to sedentary counterparts (Haskell, 1984). This has been particularly associated with lowering the risk of CHD (Wood, 1987). A number of processes closely linked to the efficiency of the cardio respiratory system change with physical activity. Often a reduction in resting heart rate can be attributable to aerobic exercise. The heart’s stroke volume increases at rest and during exercise as an adaptation to endurance training (Mc Ardle and Katch, 1991). Participation in activities such as walking and jogging, increases the mechanical stress on the skeletal system and may reduce or reverse bone mineral loss in aging women (Smithk & Gillian, 1987)

According to Paffenbarger (1987) people that are physically active are less likely to smoke than their sedentary counterparts and those who are physically active run a lower risk of developing CHD than sedentary people in the same category. Recent investigations seem to agree that one of the major benefits of exercise, as it relates to weight loss, is the positive impact exercise has on maintaining lean body mass while encouraging the...
loss of fat body weight (Hawk, 1989; Work, 1990)

Regular physical activity can be beneficial in managing diabetes particularly type II, the non-insulin dependent or adult-onset diabetes (Hawk, 1989; Work, 1990). Physical activity can reduce the potential for various musculoskeletal disorders such as osteoarthritis, bone disorders such as osteoarthritis, bone fracture, connective tissue tears and low-back syndrome. Regular exercise that challenges the musculoskeletal system can increase bone mineral content (Smith & Gilligan, 1987). Studies have also shown that exercise brings about both short and long term psychological enhancement and mental well being (Morgan & Goldston, 1987).

This underscores the reason why Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged people to engage in such sports as riding, swimming and archery; these had particular use for military preparedness. He is said to have proposed that children of both sexes be taught swimming and archery (Karen et al., 2001) Swimming, shooting, archery, wrestling, horse racing, riding sports, foot racing and dancing with spears have been mentioned by names in the Qur’an and hadith. For example Qur’an, 16:8 says, “And he created horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and adornment”.

It is reported that Prophet Muhammad said, “Practice archery and horse back riding,” reported by Muslim. In separate hadith transmitted by Bukhari and Muslim it is reported that Umar said, “Teach your children swimming and archery and tell them to jump on horses.” In a separate hadith transmitted by Bukhari and Muslim an occasion is reported where the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) himself raced with his wife Aishah. She narrates, “I raced with the Prophet (SAW) and beat him in the race. Later, when I had put on some weight, we raced and he won. In a hadith transmitted by Ahmad and Ibn Dawud, it is also reported that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once wrestled with a man called Rukanah who was known for his strength and beat him. In a separate incidence, it is reported by Al Ash’ari that the Prophet of Allah said that a person, who comes to the mosque to offer prayers from a long distance gets highest reward (Abdulati, 1999). However Islam has cautioned against excessiveness and sports that involve any form of gambling (Qur’an 2: 219, 5: 91-92).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

Out of six institutions sampled, Kenyatta University had the highest number of respondents (40.4%), out of which 23.8% were males and 17.6% females. Maseno had the least number of males (5.6%) while Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology had the least number of females (1.4%).first years comprised of 35.3% of the total number of respondents the in the six public universities. This was followed by third years (25.7%), the second years ranked third (23.8% respondents) and fourth year had the least number of respondents (15%). See figure 1.

![Figure 1: Distribution of the subjects in the respective years of study](image)

STRUCTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION

General factors affecting Muslim students’ participation in sports were identified. They are general in the sense that they could apply to any other student regardless of the faith orientation. They included: lack of information about existing facilities, inconvenient facility location, lack of time due to pressure from academic work, lack of skills and or friends with skills in the sport and lack of transport to and from the facility. Gender response to the above items is shown in table 4.3.1. 33.4 (17.9% of the males and 15.5% of the females) of the respondents agreed that they lacked information about existing facilities while 56.7% (37.6% of the males and 19.0%...
Some respondents felt that the facility location was inconvenient. The responses are shown in table 4.3.3. 39.6% of the respondents (19.8% of the males and 19.8% of the females) agreed that it was inconvenient, 42.1% of the respondents (31.3 of the males 10.87% of the females) disagreed while 18.3% of the respondents (9.5% of the males and 8.8% of the females) were undecided. With p level set at 0.05 the null hypothesis (Facility location/venue is inconvenient) was rejected because analysis of variance showed significant difference (.000). Among Muslim students of Birzeit University in Palestine, inconvenient locations and operating hours affected more females (1.76) than males (2.18) due to safety concerns (Kamal, 2003). These findings were reaffirmed by Crawford and Godfrey, (1987).

Pressure from academic work was one of the factors affecting Muslim students’ participation in sports. The responses are shown in table 4.3.5. 32.9% of the respondents (20.6% males and 12.3% females) agreed that they lacked time to participate in sports, 60.7% (36.1% of the males and 24.6% of the females) disagreed while 6.4% (4.0% of the males and 2.4% of the females) were undecided. Analysis of variance showed no significant difference (.628). The null hypothesis (I lack time due to pressure from academic work) was accepted in favour of the alternative at p level set at 0.05. In most institutions this was attributed to clashes between academic timetable and games timetables where some students who would otherwise be in the field are usually in class. This is common to those who have classes between five and seven o’clock. This can be explained as a perceptive problem where participation is viewed as purely free time business as opposed to necessity especially to those with medical conditions that can be rehabilitated through exercise.

Responses about transport to and from the facility showed 25.1% of the respondents (16.3% of the males and 8.8% of the females) were in agreement that lack transport to and from sports facility was a contributing factor to their non-participation given that some facilities are inconveniently located. 65.5% (41.3% of the males and 24.2% of the females) differed in opinion over the same and 9.4% (3.1% of the males and 6.3% of the females) were undecided. Analysis of variance showed no significant difference (.873). The null hypothesis (I lack transport to and from the facility) was accepted in favour of the alternative at p level set at 0.05. The Kenyan situation was the same as observed by Muslim students in Malaysian college (Aminuddin and Omar-Fauzee, 2003). Differences between males (2.41) and females (2.39) might have been due to differences in terms of access to resources, and freedom to use them. Females were less likely to participate in sport activities involving travel. Safety concerns could have prevented them born participating in activities held at night or late evenings.

Lack of skills and or friends with skills contributed to some students’ non-participation in sports as shown in table 4.3.8. Out of the total number of the respondents 24.6% (10.7% of the males and 13.9% the females) agreed that this was true. 67.1% (43.3% of the males and 23.8% of the females) disagreed while 8.3% (6.7% of the males and 1.6% of the females) were undecided. ANOVA showed significant difference (.010) hence null hypothesis (I lack skills/friends in the sport) was rejected at p level set at 0.05. However this favoured males (2.53) than females (2.25). The general factors affecting Muslim student’ participation in sports closely ranked according to their percentages is shown in figure 4 below.

Socio-economic reasons affecting Muslim student participation in sports.

The socio-economic reasons for non-participation ranged from social aspects like feeling embarrassed or shyness to economic reasons like lacking money for paying for membership in clubs and buying even basic equipment to use. The responses varied across gender. Out of 252 respondents 18.7% (12.4% of the males and 6.3% of the females) agreed that they feel shy to participate in sports. 74.6% (45.6% of the males and 29.0% of the females) disagreed. 6.7% (2.7% of the males and 4.0% of the females) were undecided. This case was also observed among Muslim students of Birzeit University in Palestine.
Shyness as a factor of participation showed no significant difference (.793). The null hypothesis (I feel shy to participate in the sport) was accepted in favour of the alternative at p level set at 0.05. Fewer males (2.54) were affected by shyness than females (2.57). The findings are reaffirmed by Kamal (2003).

Some respondents did not participate in sports because they are for opposite gender (see table 4.5.3). 42.8% (31.3% of the males and 11.5% of the females) disagreed, 46.5% (23.9% of the males and 22.6% of the females were in agreement while 10.7% (5.5% of the males and 5.2% of the females) were undecided about the issue. Analysis of variance showed significant difference (.001). The null hypothesis (some sports are not my gender) was rejected at p level set at 0.05. The mean difference between the males (2.12) and the females (1.71) was attributed to perceptions and gender stereotypes about sports.

Lack of money influenced membership in various sports facilities. 32.9% (22.6% of the males and 10.3% of the females) agreed that they lacked money to pay for membership in sports facilities, 52.8% (33.7% of the males and 19.1% of the females) disagreed. 14.3% (4.4% of the males and 9.9% of the females) were undecided. Analysis of variance showed no significant difference (.777) at p level set at 0.05. More females (2.22) were however affected compared to the males (2.18). This was also observed among Muslim students of Birzeit University in Palestine (Kamal, 2003).

57.6% (34.1% of the males and 23.5% of the females) of the participants did not participate in sports due to lack of equipment required, 33.4% (20.3% of the males and 13.1% of the females disagreed, while 9.0% (6.3% of the males and 2.7% of the females) were undecided. Analysis of variance showed no significant difference (.777) hence null hypothesis (I lack sporting equipment required) rejected at p level set at 0.05. Fewer female (1.73) were however affected compared to the males (1.77).

Peer influence (friends and family members) minimally affected participation patterns in sporting activities. 9.4% (6.7% of the males and 2.7% of the females) of the respondents agreed that they did not participate in sports because friends and family members disapproved. 80.3% (50.4% of the males and 29.9% of the females) disagreed, .103% (3.6% of the males and 6.7% of the females) were undecided. Analysis of variance showed no significant difference (.280) at p level set at 0.05. The null hypothesis (Friends and family disapprove participating in sports) was accepted in favour of the alternative. Family and peer influence was more on males (2.71) than females (2.68). Out of the total sample population, 50.4% (35.7% of the males and 14.7% of the females) feared to participate in sports because they would develop muscles, 36.1% (17.1% of the males and 19.0% of the females) disagreed. 13.5% (7.9% of the males and 5.6% of the females) were undecided. Analysis of variance showed significant difference (.000). The null hypothesis (Physical activities will make me develop muscles) was rejected at p > 0.05. More females (2.68) than were males (2.71) were afraid of exercise because of the myth that they would develop muscles.

Some students did not participate in sports because they believed they would lose too much weight as well as body shape when they participate in sports. This constituted 18.6% of the respondents (10.7% of the males and 7.9% of the females). 49.6% of the respondents (44.0% of the males and 56.6% of the females) disagreed, while 31.7% (6.0% of the males and 25.8% of the females) were undecided. Null hypothesis (I will lose too much weight and shape when I participate in sports) was accepted in favour of the alternative since there was no significant difference (.355) at p > 0.05. This reflects attitudes of both males (2.54) and females (2.45) towards physical activities. Similar findings were observed by (Aminuddin and Omar-Fauzee, 2003).

Games tutors and Sports coaches need to expand the awareness about the benefits (physical, health, social and psychological) engaging in sports. This will separate myths from facts about engaging in physical activities. This will help to change generalized misconceptions held by Muslim student about participation in physical activities. A comparison of socio-economic factors affecting Muslim student participation in sports is shown in figure 5. The comparison was based on their mean ranking.

![Socio-economic factors affecting Muslim student participation in sports](image)

**Figure 6:** Socio-economic factors affecting Muslim student participation in sports

To overcome many stereotypes myths and misconceptions about sports various ways could be used to communicate such information to students. They include, Internet through university and sport units’ web pages, display media, such as bulletin boards, exhibits, posters, and signs, Print media, such as campus and student newsletters, brochures and flyers, Information concerning specific programs or activities to groups of students.
CONCLUSION

Structural and Socio-economic factors affected varyingly Muslim students participated in sporting activities as spectators, for recreation and competitively although some did not participate due to lack of interest. Lack of interest could as result of the attitude held by the participants about sports or past negative socialization.

Some students did not participate in sports due to lack of information or communication with respect to activities and facilities available on campus. Social traditions, family members and peer influence played a big role in determining Muslim student participation in sports. Due to safety concerns there are more restrictions on females than male counterparts especially when location of the facility and or operating hours is inconvenient. This is further complicated if the availability of transport services to and from the facility is not readily available.

Pressure from academic work affected participation levels though not significantly but a conflict was observed between academic and games scheduling. This limited participation of some students who had interest but had to be in class during games time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the study results, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Coaches in Institutions should expand awareness and education of the benefits (physical, health, social and psychological) engaging in sports. This will separate myths from facts about engaging in physical activities. This will help to change generalized misconceptions (by Muslim students) about participation in physical activities. Various tools could be used to promote, publicize and communicate such information to students including (1) internet through university and sport units web pages; (2) display media such as bulletin boards, exhibits, posters, and signs; (3) print media, such as campus and student newsletters, brochures, and fliers; and (4) information concerning specific programs or activities to groups of students.

2. Institutions need to expand sports facilities and programmes to help reduce overcrowding in the available facilities. Expanded facilities and programmes will make scheduling easy hence attract and encourage both males and females to participate in physical activities especially those opposed to free mixing of gender. Such expansions should be based on need assessment to enhance utility and relevance.

3. Because some students feel activities available are for men and prefer a coach of the same gender, the universities can put mechanisms in place to ensure gender equity. This could be increase activities for female students, increase funding for female activities and hiring female trainers, instructors, managers and coaches.

4. Broader studies need to be conducted to determine how other factors like ethnicity and career and they affect Muslim student participation in sports at other levels of learning in Kenyan institutions.

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