

## **Role of significant others in swimming participation**

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### **Abstract**

Initiating and sustaining participation in any activity is as a result of efforts and influences of significant others such as parents, who raise the child, siblings with whom *ode* grows up with, friends in the neighbourhood or in school and teachers or coaches encountered in school. Numerous studies have consistently shown the role of these significant others on participation in physical activities. Their influence has been shown to vary with age of participant and can either be positive or negative. The study set out to establish if there was a relationship between significant others (parents, peers, teachers or coaches) and participation in swimming in secondary schools. Further, the study sought to establish the influence of significant others across gender and type of school. The study targeted a population of Form three and two students. Purposive stratified and random sampling was used to select the sample, consisting of 24 secondary schools. Six hundred students responded to the questionnaires. T-test for equality of means, multiple regression and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. Teachers had the highest positive influence (91.3%) among the respondents followed by parents (30.7%) and peers (13.2%) in that order. Across gender, parental influence was higher among females (44.2%) compared to males (23%). Teachers' influence was higher among females (94%) compared to males (89.8%). Peer influence was higher among males (14.9%) compared to females (10.1%). Across type of school, teachers' influence was higher in mixed schools (92.6%) compared to single sex schools (90.9%). Parental influence was higher in single sex schools (32.3%) compared to mixed schools (25.7%). Peers influence was highest in mixed schools (16.9%) compared to single sex schools (11.9%). Only peers were found to significantly influence participation at  $p < 0.05$ . They had a negative influence ( $t = -3.45$ ) as they did not encourage participation in swimming. Specifically, this negative influence was significant at  $p < 0.05$  among males. From these findings the following recommendations were made. Kenya Swimming Federation

should improve its marketing strategies so as to attract sponsors, both private and public. This will increase the awards at stake, providing more tangible rewards like school fees payments, local educational scholarships thus attract more participants. This would also reduce or eliminate costs by parents, hence encourage their children to participate.

Key words- participation, significant others