

# Parental Role and Influence in the Teaching-Learning of Physical Education: Perceptions of Physical Education Students in Kenya's Universities

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**Abstract** Parental role and influence can contribute immensely towards the adoption and promotion of teaching of PE for their children in educational institutions in various countries of the world. The involvement of parental support in the teaching-learning of PE is particularly relevant to the Kenyan situation where the subject seems to be given relatively low status as it is considered non-academic, and as such, it is not examinable. This study therefore, targeted 103 PE students-teachers in Kenya's universities for information on their perception of their parents' role and influence in the teaching and learning of PE. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data. Majority of the respondents (87.05%) indicated that PE was their most favourite subject. A larger proportion of them (65.0%) were encouraged by their female parents to pursue the subject than those who received such encouragement from their male parents (27.7%). In terms of material support, majority of the students (64.7%) indicated that their parents provided their personal requirements for their PE studies and facilitated their participation in out-of-class PE-related physical activities (74.5%). Minority of the students (28.2%) were of the view that they did not learn how to be physically fit from their parents because they (parents) were physically inactive. A higher proportion of (48.0%) of them indicated that their parents monitor, minimize and discourage inactive lifestyles, while highest proportion (85.3%) indicated that their parents' role of encouraging healthy habits. Therefore it is recommended that parents need to be enlisted by universities in Kenya in influencing and supporting their children to pursue PE as an academic subject in university.

**Keywords** Parent, Physical Education, University, Social Economic Status (SES)

## 1. Introduction

Career and academic aspirations are influenced by multiple and systematic factors[1]. Individual factors related to student aspirations include level of interpersonal skills, self-reliance, self-control, self-concept and level of maturity/responsibility[1,2]. In order to enhance the quality of learning and teaching of Physical Education (PE) in schools, it is important to identify and thoroughly examine the role and influence of those "significant others" with whom the learners interact in their learning and living environments. It is widely recognized and acknowledged that parents are important agents within the wider community that can be relied upon to influence the teaching and learning of PE for their children by serving as role models and by encouraging and supporting them[3-5]. Parents have vital influence on the activity patterns of children. Parents have a major impact on their children attraction to participate in Physical Activity

(PA) in general and PE in particular[6-9]. On the other hand, parents can also serve as inhibitors of Physical Activity (PA) and PE[10-15]. Parents may exert significant social influence on their children PA and PE through a variety of mechanisms which include parental encouragement, beliefs and attitudes towards PE and PA, role modeling, involvement and facilitation such as through transport and fee paying and attendance to selected activities such as sport days, PE exhibitions etc[16]. Indeed, it is their responsibility to facilitate their children's active participation in physical activity, and PE related activities discourage inactive lifestyles and encourage healthy eating habits[17]. Such parental influence and role can contribute immensely towards the adoption and promotion of the teaching of PE and health education in educational institutions. The involvement of parental support in the teaching and learning of PE is particularly significant and relevant to the situation in Kenya where the discipline receives lukewarm attention.

Systematic variables related to academic and career aspirations include SES, familial level of engagement in their children education, ethnicity or race, familial aspirations and parental level of education[18:19]. Njororai [20], pointed out social class affects occupational choices by

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providing resources (money, transportation, higher quality schools etc) as well as the values and expectations of that social strata on their children career choices

Research findings typically reveal positive correlations between Parental Social Economic Status (SES) and educational and occupational aspirations. Individuals from higher SES backgrounds aspire to, expect and attain more education and more prestigious occupation than individuals from lower SES[23: 24]. Parents education, place of residence, parents economic situation are factors forming the environment in which a young person grows up and his/her need for PA is developed[24]. This has subsequent implications on whether young people will like or dislike of PE.

The teaching of PE as a non-examinable subject in primary and secondary schools, as well as teachers training colleges in Kenya was made mandatory following a presidential directive in the year 1980. It is however, important to note that although PE is a compulsory subject in the schools, several studies have highlighted less attention given to its implementation[25:26]. At university level, PE is an optional discipline that is open to those students who voluntarily enroll for it after attaining university minimum entry qualification. The subject is an academic discipline that is offered at degree level in only two public universities in Kenya. Given the little emphasis put on the subject, it attracts fairly low enrollment of students. It is against this background that this study was carried to assess the perceptions of the PE students in Kenya's universities in relation to the role and influence of their parents in their pursuit of PE studies. Secondly, most of the studies have focused on PA among children and adolescents. The objectives of the study were:

a) To determine if PE was the most favorite academic discipline for the PE students in Kenya's universities.

b) To find out the perception of the PE students' of the role and influence of their parents relating to their moral support and encouragement, provision of necessary materials (such as sportswear and equipment), facilitation of their participation in out-of-class PE-related physical activities, serving as role models in terms of being physically active, monitoring, minimizing and discouraging inactive lifestyles and encouraging healthy eating habits.

## 2. Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The target population included 103 PE undergraduate students in the two public universities in Kenya that offer PE as an academic discipline at degree level.

A validated self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data after approval to conduct the study had been granted by the ethics board from the two respective universities. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A sought the participants' demographic information of age, gender and year of study while section B elicited information on the Parents Social Economic Status (PSES). PSES was captured from the parents' highest level of education and current occupation. Section C had items which sought the students perceptions on their parent's role and influence on their continued participation in PE. Items in this section were weighted on a 3 point scale of Agree, Not sure and Disagree. Some of the items read like *whether the parents are role models on matters of PA and PE, whether parents provide encouragement to pursue PE, whether they provide PE materials* etc. Piloting was done with twenty students who were pursuing a degree in sport science in one of the universities. The questionnaire returned a substantial reliability correlation of stability of 0.80 after utilization of Split-Half method which was considered adequate for the study. The instrument was administered to the participants after they had signed informed consent to be part of the study. All the participants agreed to take part in the study. It was difficult for the participants not to take part in the study as the researchers were their subject lecturers. After questionnaire administration the resulting data was analyzed for frequencies and percentages using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Out of the total of 103 PE students who were respondents in the study, 49 (47.6%) were female and 55 (52.4%) were male. The number of subjects across their levels (years) of study were: 25 (24.3%) first year, 29 (28.2%) second year, 30 (29.1%) third year and 19 (18.4%) fourth year. The categories of the level of education of their male parents were: illiterate (2, 2.2%), primary school level (6, 6.5%), secondary school level (18, 19.4%), middle college level (42, 45.2%) and university level (25, 26.9%). On the other hand, the categories of the level of education of their female parents were: Illiterate (2, 2.0%), primary school level (8, 8.2%), secondary school level (28, 28.6%), middle college level (44, 44.9%) and university level (16, 16.3%).

### 3.2. Participants' Responses on Parental Roles in PA

The students' response on selected parental attributes in regard to PA is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participants' Responses on Parental Reactions on Selected PA Issues

ITEM	Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Role Modeling	50	53.76	17	18.27	26	27.95	93	99.98*
Facilitation in out of class activities	16	17.20	7	7.52	70	75.26	93	99.98*
Provision of Materials	26	27.95	7	7.52	60	64.51	93	99.98*
Encouragement of pursue P.E.	53	56.98	10	10.75	30	32.25	93	99.98*
Encouragement of healthy eating habit	6	6.45	7	7.52	80	86.02	93	99.99*
Discouraging inactive lifestyles	34	36.55	14	15.05	45	48.38	93	99.98*
Preference of P.E. as a subject	6	6.45	7	7.52	80	86.02	93	99.99*
Rating of P.E. against other object	20	21.50	21	22.58	52	55.91	93	99.99*

\*rounding off error

**Table 2.** Participants Responses on Parents as Role Models in PA on the Basis of Parental Education

Level of Education	Parent	Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
No. formal education	Father	2	100					2	100
	Mother	2	100					2	100
Primary	Father	4	66.7	0		2	33.3	6	100
	Mother	5	62.5	1	12.5	2	25	8	100
Secondary	Father	10	55.6	4	22.2	4	22.2	18	100
	Mother	17	60.7	5	17.9	6	21.4	28	100
College	Father	20	47.6	8	19	14	33.3	42	99.9*
	Mother	22	50	8	18.2	14	31.8	44	100
University	Father	14	56	4	16	7	28	25	100
	Mother	7	43.8	4	25	5	31.25	16	100.05

\*rounding off error

The data in Table 1 reveal that the largest proportion of the undergraduate PE students in Kenya's universities (86.02%) viewed PE as their most favourite academic discipline, majority of the PE students (64.51%) were supported by their parents in terms of provision of required learning materials. A higher proportion of the PE students (55.91%) were of the view that their parents accorded PE equal status to other academic disciplines. The largest number of the PE students (75.26%) received facilitation from their parents to enable them participate in out-of-class/PE-related physical activities such as outdoor recreation, intramural and extramural sports. Role-modeling is an important factor that shapes children's behavior and habits and a high proportion of parents of the PE students in Kenya's universities (53.76%) did not serve as role models to their children in terms of being physically active. Majority of the PE students (86.02%) noted the role played by their parents in encouraging healthy eating habits. higher proportion of 48.38% of the PE students indicated that their parents monitored, minimized and discouraged physically inactive lifestyle. The students responses on their parents role modeling based on parental education is presented in Table 2.

The data in Table 2 show that (60%) of the PE students did not receive encouragement from their male parents to pursue PE as an academic discipline, slightly more than half of them (53%) did not get encouragement from their female parents to study PE at university level. Table 2 also shows that the largest proportion of the male parents who did not serve as role models in leading physically active lifestyle were those

who lacked formal education (100%), followed by those with primary school level of education. The responses that show the proportions of male parents who served as role models in this respect were all lower than those who did not set the example of being emulated. The results in Table 2, also show that the highest proportion of female parents who were physically inactive and were therefore, not emulated by their children (PE students) were those who lacked formal education (2, 100%), followed by those with primary school level education (5, 62.7%).

## 4. Discussion

Generally, the results of this study show that parents make contributions to decisions made by their children in their pursuit of PE studies at universities in Kenya. Their view and attachment to PE as an academic discipline, to a large extent, influenced their children's choice of the subject as one of their areas of study. This is supported in previous studies which have reported that teacher-trainees are recruited into PE due to sport training and achievement, teaching affinity, better opportunities of getting a job and encouragement from significant others [27-29]. A large number of authors have concluded that the beliefs, values and success criteria of significant others such as parents can influence athletes participation and motivation in sport [7:28]. It is worth noting that in Kenya just like in other countries the boundary between PE and sport is very thin. Consequently, those children who are active in sport are normally active in PE

lesson where they are offered. However, Richardson and Watt[30] reported lack of encouragement by significant others (Parents, teachers and friends) on the youngsters to pursue PE. This could be attributed to the marginalized status attributed with the subject in the curriculum. Secondly, this could be attributable to the fact that due to their advanced age and experience in life, parents are not looked upon for guidance by the youth. Additionally, since majority of the parents had undergone formal education, they were well-placed to advise their children on the importance of PE, the benefits of the physical activity and healthy eating habits. SES plays a major role in influencing PA of young people. One can simply assume that parents who are working naturally spend less time with their children compared to those who are not working. Equally, Yang *et al*[31], reported that lower status of Finnish father offer less encouragement and support to their daughters' participation in sport. Other studies that as education increases so does the likelihood of participating or encouraging ventures into sport[31: 32]. Njororai[20] was more equivocal that social class or SES of the parents influences sport involvement of the child as it determines such choices as residence hence neighbourhood, leisure activities engaged in the playing apparatus and even the kind of peers one gets.. Madsen, McCulloh and Crawford[33] have confirmed that parents education and race have been shown to affect parents own inclination to exercise which is then translated to their children participation in PA. A family environment which is positive towards exercise tends to influence many members of that family. Indeed, educated parents not only provide the enriched home learning environment required to raise educational trajectories but they are more likely to be actively involved in their children education[34].

It is however, important to note that the results of this study have shown that, majority of the PE students in Kenya's universities viewed their parents as being physically inactive, and as such, did not serve as role models for them in terms of their physical activity pursuits. Their inactivity can be explained in terms of lack of interest, limitations arising from ageing process or preoccupation with work routines. Those parents who participate in sport or those who have a positive attitude and belief in a physically active lifestyle are more likely to prove a catalyst for their sons and daughters to engage in PA.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions arising from the results of the study is that most of the PE students were encouraged more by their female parents than the male to study PE at the university level. Given that women in African culture spend most of their time (due to their humble educational background) in their homes to take care of domestic chores, they spend much of this time with their children than their male counterparts. This accords women the advantage of discussing academic affairs with their children. However Synder and Spreitzer

[35] indicated that there is a tendency for like-sex parents to have greater influence on sport involvement of their children than opposite sex parents. The implication of these results that institutions that offer PE should work closely with parents so as to enhance the teaching and learning of the subject.

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