

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS INFLUENCE ON SOCIALIZATION INTO SPORT OF KENYA SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of significant others in socialization into sports of secondary school athletes in Kenya. Data were collected through questionnaire from 636(320 males and 316 females) purposely selected from forty (40) secondary schools in Kenya. Data were analysed through chi-square test of independent measures and student t-test findings revealed that 500(78.61%) of the athletes took part in sport while in primary school as opposed to 136(21.4%) who did not take part with no gender differences. It was apparent that there were significant differences ($p < .05$) between male and female athletes on their initial entry into sport. Findings also revealed that a majority of 546(85.80%) of the athletes had their family members participate in sport while 90(14.20%) of the athletes family members did not participate in sport with no gender differences ($p < .05$). the influence of significant others in socialization into sport is mostly by the coach, followed by friends, P.E. teachers, brothers, father, sisters and the mother with significant differences ($p < .05$) between male and female athletes. It was recommended that parents needed to encourage their siblings to participate in sport and P.E. teachers and coaches needed to refocus on their roles in sport socialization into sport of secondary school athletes in Kenya.

KEY WORDS: *significant others, socialization, Kenya*

Introduction

Participation in competitive sport is an avenue for big time business in the contemporary society. Consequently, interest has focused on those who make it in sport and those with untapped potentials of climbing towards sport excellence. In this regard, interest among sport sociologists is to identify the general factors that influence individual's involvement in sport or athletic activities (Cann, 1991).

Research studies have recognized that athletic ability alone is not likely to predict participation in sport, indeed, it has been contended that personal attributes, significant others and socialization situations are associated with becoming involved in physical activity and sport (Kenya & McPherson, 1981). The result of the combination of these influences appear to be a situation in which participation in physical

activity is determined by the attitudes, values and beliefs and those most closely associated with the socialization of the individual (Synder & Spreizer, 1990). Those include family, friends, physical education teachers and coaches who are significant others in socialization into sport of athletes.

Short Review of Literature

Lewko and Ewing (1980) surveyed sport participation of three hundred and seventy children aged nine to eleven years. The children were classified into two categories of highly involved in sport, the father was the most important source of influences and encouragement for both boys and girls. However, the data revealed sex difference in that the fathers' influence was by far greater for boys than mothers, brother and sisters influence whereas the father's

influence was only slightly greater for girls than was the mother's influence.

On the other hand, Rintaugu (2003) compared the socialization into sport of secondary school athletes defined by gender, geographical location of their school and influence of family members. Findings revealed that fathers and brothers were the most significant agents of socialization into sport at family level; male athletes started getting involved in sport slightly earlier than girls and mothers and sisters are rarely engaged in sporting activities. Male athletes were oriented into sport by older brothers while female athletes had their initial entry into sport centering on the father. In light of importance of sport socialization and its relevance to contemporary sport, Ipinmoroti and Ajayi (2003) investigated the effects of motivation of significant others in sport involvement of athletes in Nigeria tertiary institutions. A descriptive research survey was used with two hundred and ten randomly selected athletes were significantly motivated by their fathers, friends of both the same and opposite genders and physical education teachers to become involved in sport.

Similarly, Mbaabu (1997) investigated the psychosocial factors affecting Kenya women's performance in international track events. The study involved sixty elite female (60) track athletes and twenty (20) coaches in athletics. It was found that although most of the female athletes studied had parental support, a minority showed that lacked of parental support and encouragement in their athletes efforts especially during the formative years. However, the elite female athletes viewed their peer group as both role models and inspiration.

In summary and in pursuance of socialization into sport within the tenets of social learning paradigm, it was apt to investigate the influence of significant others on socialization into sport of secondary school athletes in Kenya. This was prudent as Kenya is highly respected and regarded for her prowess in sport particularly in middle and long distance races. However, Kenya has not made any successes in other games. Could it then appear that athletes in ball games receive a low deal from the significant others as they get socialized into sport?

Research hypotheses

In line with the above purpose of the study, the following hypothesis were formulated to guide the study:

1. gender did not influence participation in sport of the athletes while in primary school
2. Initial entry into sport does not differ between male and female athletes in Kenya secondary schools.
3. Individual family member's participation in sport does not differ significantly between male and female athletes in Kenya secondary schools.
4. Influence of significant others in socialization into sport of secondary school athletes does not differ significantly between male and female athletes.

Method and procedures

Sample

The study was conducted in four province which were randomly selected from the seven province of Kenya. Kenya is administratively divided into eight province but north eastern province was omitted from the study due to inaccessibility, has few secondary schools and its secondary schools do not consequently take part in inter-provincial secondary schools games competitions.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select 40 secondary schools from the sampled provinces. The schools selected had one or more of its teams represent the province during the 2007 edition of interprovincial secondary school ball games championship. From each school, all the athletes who had represented the school in a given discipline in interprovincial ball games championship took part in the study. Consequently, a total of six hundred and thirty-six athletes (636) took part in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A direct contact questionnaire with open-ended and closed items was used to collect data from the athletes. This questionnaire was adopted from previous studies of Greendorfer & Lewko (1987) and Synder & Spreitzer (1983). The questionnaire was divided into three sections

namely, demographic information, participation in sport of the athlete/family members and the influence of significant others. The items on the influence of significant others in socialization into sport parameters such as attitudes, encouragement, involvement, importance of guidance, interest, physical and emotional support, reinforcement and role models. Items in this section were weighted on 3-point Likert scale of Very much, sometimes and Not much. These were scored as 3,2, and 1 respectively. A test-retest method was utilized to establish reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of 8.0 after test-retest was considered high enough for this study.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and entered into the computer. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) windows 2000' version 10.0 programme for data processing was used. Data was subjected to chi-square

test of independence and student *t*-test. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information

The athletes who took part in the study had their age range, mean age and standard deviation of 15-22 years, 17.37 +- 2.37 years respectively. This shows that the athletes had participated in sports at the inter-provincial level. The athletes birth ranks showed that 152 (23.9%) were first born, 138(21.7%) were last born while 346(54.4%) were middle born. Since majority of the athletes were middle born, then it is possible that they were influenced in sport by their older brothers or sisters. 79(12.4%) had sisters only in their families. Therefore, it is alluded that these athletes are influenced in their participation in sport by both brothers and sisters. The distribution of athlete's participation in specific sport at secondary and gender is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of athletes participation in sport and gender

GAME/SPORT	GENDER				Total N %	
	MALE		FEMALE			
	N	%	N	%		
Hockey	66	10.37	70	11.00	136	21.38
Football	65	10.22	67	10.53	132	20.75
Handball	48	7.54	49	7.70	97	15.25
Volleyball	43	6.76	46	7.23	89	13.99
Basketball	27	4.24	43	6.76	70	11.00
Rugby	71	11.16	-	-	71	11.16
Netball	-	-	41	6.44	41	6.44
Total	320	50.31	316	49.68	636	100

From the table 1, it is evident that a total number of 636 athletes took part in the study with 320 (50.31%) of the athletes being males and 316(49.68%) females. The smaller number of females is attributed to the fact that more numbers are expected in rugby for the boys in comparison to the smaller number of girls who form a netball team. Hockey had the majority players, 136 (21.38%) followed by soccer 132(20.75%), handball 97 (15.25%), volleyball 89 (13.99%), basketball 70 (11.00%), rugby for

boys 71 (11.16%) and netball for girls 41 (6.44%) had the lowest number of players. This trend is not remote as the requisite number of players in hockey and soccer is normally eighteen in comparison to other games such as handball, volleyball, netball and basketball which have twelve players. There was need to establish whether these athletes did participate in sport while in primary school. This is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Participation in sport of the athletes while in primary school by gender

PARTICIPATION IN SPORT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL	GENDER				Total		x ²
	MALE		FEMALE		N	%	
	N	%	N	%			
Yes	240	37.7	260	40.88	500	78.61	1.15
No	80	12.57	56	8.8	136	21.37	4.22*
Total	320	50.34	316	49.68	636	99.98**	5.38*

**Rounding of error

*p>.05

From table 2, it is evident that majority 500 (78.61%) of the athletes took part in sport while in primary school as opposed to 136 (21.37%) who did not take part in sport while in primary school. Consequently, the calculated x² of 1.15 was highly significant (p<.05) indicating significant differences between male and female athletes non-participation in sport while in primary school. However, the calculated x² of 4.22 was highly significant (p<.05) indicating significant differences between male and female athletes non-participation in sport while in primary school. This is because a bigger percentage (12.57%) of the males did not participate in sport while in primary school when compared to the female athletes (8.8%). In

concomitant with these findings then the hypothesis that gender did not influence participation in sport of secondary school athletes while in primary school is rejected. This finding contradicts Rintaugu (2003) findings that there were no significant differences in participation in sport of male and female athletes while in primary school. Therefore it is asserted that socialization into sport of these athletes begin in childhood. These findings concur with observations of Ipinmoroti and Ajayi (2003), Clarke (1980), Synder & Spreitzer (1976) that athletes in their studies started participating in sport at tender ages. As these athletes were participating in sport in primary school then it was prudent to establish how they were initiated into sport.

Table 3: Initiating into sport of the athletes by significant others

INITIATION INTO SPORT	GENDER				Total		X ²
	MALE		FEMALE		N	%	
	N	%	N	%			
Father	53	8.33	57	8.96	110	17.29	0.14
Mother	17	2.67	28	4.40	45	7.07	2.68
Brother	38	5.97	32	5.03	70	11.00	0.51
Sister	5	0.78	10	1.57	15	2.35	1.66
Friend	81	12.73	45	7.07	126	19.81	10.28*
P.E. Teacher	16	2.51	22	3.45	38	5.97	2.31
Coach	92	14.46	112	17.61	204	32.07	1.96
Neighborhood	18	2.83	10	1.57	28	4.40	2.28
Total	320		316		636	99.96	

P<.05

Data in table 3, show that majority of the athletes 204(32.07%) were initiated into their current sport by the coach, followed by friends 126 (19.81%), father 110 (17.29%), brothers 70 (11.00%), mother 45 (7.07%), P.E. teacher 38(5.97%), neighborhood 28 (4.40%) and sisters 15 (2.35%). For the male athletes, the initiation into sport decreased from the coach

92(14.46%), followed by friends 81(2.83%), father 53(8.33%), brothers 38(5.97%), neighborhood 18(2.83%), mother 27(2.67%), P.E. teachers 16(2.51%) and sisters 5(0.78%). On the other hand, the initiation into sport of female athletes was from the coach 112(17.61%), followed by father 57(8.96%), friends 45(12.73%), brothers 32(5.03%), mother 28(4.4%), P.E.

teachers 22(3.45%), sisters and neighbourhood 10(1.57%) respectively.

The calculated χ^2 of 10.28 revealed significant differences ($p < .05$) differences between male and female athletes initial entry into current sport through friends. However, this is because more male athletes were initiated into sport by friends. The differences between male and female athletes initiation into sport by father, mother, brothers, sisters, P.E. teachers, coach and neighbourhood was not significant ($p < .05$). Thus the hypothesis that initial entry into the current sport does not differ between male and female athletes in Kenya secondary schools is accepted. This

is in agreement with Synder and Spreitzer (1976) assertion that introduction to sport is most likely to occur in the family if the child had parent or older siblings who participate and/or are interested in sport activities. Findings of this study are similar to that of Rintaugu (2003) where no significant differences were found between male and female athletes on who provided the initial impetus to take part in sport. Finding of the study have indicated that the coach is instrumental in initiating athletes into their current sport. The athlete's individual family members' participation in sport by gender is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Athletes' individual family members participation in sport by gender

FAMILY MEMBER	PARTICIPATION/ NON-PARTICIPATION	GENDER				Total		χ^2
		MALE		FEMALE		N	%	
		N	%	N	%			
Father	YES	210	33.01	207	32.54	417	65.66	0.01
	NO	110	17.29	109	17.13	219	34.43	
Mother	YES	141	22.16	185	29.08	326	51.25	12.61*
	NO	179	28.14	131	20.59	310	48.74	
Brother	YES	205	32.23	237	37.26	442	69.49	11.36*
	NO	115	18.08	79	2.42	194	30.5	
Sister	YES	147	23.11	205	32.23	352	55.34	23.25*
	NO	173	27.20	111	17.45	284	44.65	

*($p < .05$)

From table 4, it is evident that the fathers of majority of the athletes 417(65.5%) took part in sport while 219(34.43%) did not take part in sport. For the male athletes 210 (33.01%) of their fathers took part in sport while 110(17.29%) did not take part in sport. On the other hand, 207(32.54%) of the females athletes fathers took part in sport. However, the calculated χ^2 of 0.01 was not significant ($p > .05$) indicating no significant differences between male and female' fathers' participation in sport. This corroborates the findings of previous studies of Lewko and Ewing (1980) that athletes are likely to come from families where the father is involved in sport.

Most of the athlete's mothers 32(51.25%) were involved in sport while 310(48.74%) of the mothers athletes did not participate in sport. As for the male athletes 185(29.08%) of their mothers were involved in sport while 131(37.26%) were calculated χ^2 13.61 revealed significant ($p < .05$) differences between the male and female

athletes mothers participation in sport. Therefore, it is evident that female athletes had mothers who were participating in sport in comparison to the male athletes.

Result (table4) also shows 442(69.49%) of the athletes brothers are involved in sport while only 194(30.5%) did not participate in sport. For the male athletes 205(32.23%) of their brothers were taking part in sport while 115(18.08%) did not take part in sport. On the other hand, 23(37.26%) of female athletes' brothers took part in sport while 12.42%) did not take part in sport. The calculated χ^2 of 11.36 revealed significant differences ($p < .05$) between male and female athletes' brothers participation in sport. This is because a bigger percentage of the female athletes' brothers were taking part in sport as opposed to the male athletes' brothers participation in sport . this is because a bigger percentage of the female athletes' brothers were taking part in sport as opposed to the male athletes' brothers. This corroborates assertion by Lewko and

Ewing (1980) that girls are likely to be encouraged by their brothers to take part in sport.

Majority 352(55.34%) of the athletes' sisters were taking part in sport while 284(44.65%) of the athletes' sisters were not taking part in sport. For the male athletes 147(23.11%) of them were engaged in sport while a majority 173(27.20%) were involved in sport. As for the female athletes majority 205(32.23%) of their sisters were not involved in sports while 111(17.45%) did not take part in sports. The calculated χ^2 of 23.25 was significant ($p < .05$) indicating significant differences between male and female athlete' sisters' participation in sports. This is because more of the female athletes' sisters' participated in sports. This is because more of the female athletes sisters

were taking part in sports in comparison to the sisters of the male athletes.

Based on the above results, the hypothesis which states that family members participation in sports does not differ between male and female athletes in Kenyan secondary schools is rejected. This is because significant differences are evident between male and female athletes for the mother, brothers and sisters with the exception of the father. That is why Synder and Spreitzer (1973) observed that introduction to sport is most likely to occur in the family if the child has parents or older siblings who participate and/or are interested in sports activities. The influence of significant others on socialization into sport of male and female athletes is shown in table 5.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviation and t-values of Influence of Significant Others on Socialization into Sport of Male and Female Athletes.

FACTOR	GENDER	N	X	SD	Df	t-value	Sign.
Father	Male	320	1.96	.62	634	-3.75	$p < .05$
	Female	316	2.14	.62	634		
Mother	Male	320	1.79	.52	634	-6.15	$p < .05$
	Female	316	2.06	.59	634		
Brother(s)	Male	320	2.22	.67	634	-3.08	$p < .05$
	Female	316	2.37	.61	634		
Sister(s)	Male	320	1.83	.60	634	-6.74	$p < .05$
	Female	316	2.17	.66	634		
Friend(s)	Male	320	2.55	.38	634	5.42	$p < .05$
	Female	316	2.37	.42	634		
P.E. teacher	Male	320	2.24	.64	634	-6.33	$p < .05$
	Female	316	2.54	.53	634		
Coach	Male	320	2.68	.06	634	-1.87	$p > .05$
	Female	316	2.73	.06	634		

Data in table 5, show that the influence of significant others in socialization into sport of secondary school athletes is mostly by the coach, followed by friends, P.E. teachers, brother(s), father, sister(s) and the mother. The female athletes had higher mean scores for all the significant others with the exception of friends than male athletes. Therefore, it is asserted that female athletes are influenced more by significant others than the male athletes. Indeed, t-test results showed that there is significant differences ($p < .05$) between male and female athletes in the influence of significant others in specialization into sport with the exception of the coach. These findings contradicts those of Greendorfer and Lewko (1978),

Synder and Spreitzer (1978), Ipinmoroti and Ajayi (2003) observations that boys interest in sport. However, the findings of this study agree with those of Mbaabu (1997) when he indicated that female athletes had parental encouragement in their athletic efforts especially during formative years. Indeed, the lack of significant differences in the influence of the coach in socialization into sport between male and female athletes was best argued by Greendorfer (1976) when she observed that coaches must encourage players in their disposal without gender discrimination is likely to be supported in any family situations regardless of parental involvement in sport.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings of the study have shown that athletes in this study took part in sport while in primary school and came from families where members are involved in sport with differences between male and female athletes. Athletes were socialized into sport in their formative years and athletes were initiated and/or are influenced in their socialization in sport by the significant others. Based on the above conclusions, it is recommended that:

1. Female athletes need more encouragement to sustain/ continue their participation in sports. This can be done starting at family level by the parents especially the mother.
2. Family members especially parents need to have positive attitude toward sport participation. This can be translated into active sport participation. Consequently athletes (both males and females) will have adequate role models starting at family level.
3. The role of the P.E. teacher and coach in socialization into sport of secondary school athletes is immense. Thus, re-training and in servicing of P.E. teachers and coaches is urgent in order for them to continue exerting valuable influence on the socialization into sport of athletes.
4. Further studies need to dwell on how significant others directly influence socialization into sport and also how they influence socialization into sport of athletes in other levels of education and competitions.

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