

# INFLUENCE OF PARENTS SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON SELECTED KENYATTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TYPE OF SPORTS PARTICIPATION

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BY

ELIJAH GITONGA RINTAUGU  
M.ED-P.E. (KENYATTA UNIVERSITY)  
GAMES TUTOR, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.

## ABSTRACT

*The relationship between social economic status and participation in competitive sports has historical antecedents. Thus, the purpose of this paper was to establish the influence of parental SES on participation in competitive sport of university athletes. Data was collected through questionnaires from 150 randomly selected athletes as Kenyatta University. Data was analyzed through chi-square test of independent measures. Findings revealed that 86.66% of the athletes did not participate in sport while in primary school but their participation in sport begun in secondary school. Athletes with upper class background dominates in the "culture-intensive games" while middle and lower classes are over represented in the "cultural-neutral games". It is recommended that there is need to provide sports infrastructure to primary schools and parents should socialise their sibilings into sport on the basis of talent and not status quo.*

**KEY WORDS:** *SES, Culture-intensive, Culture-neutral.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Social economic status and participation in competitive sport has numerous historical antecedents. In ancient Greece, the competitors in the early games were from wealthy and respected families. These had the resources to hire trainers, coaches and had time to travel to the venues of the games (Coakley, 1986). Similarly, wealthy Romans recruited their slaves as competitors and did not allow people from lower social economic status to compete in sports (Coakley, 1986).

Within the social learning paradigm, it will be concluded that the parents will socialize their offspring into sports which are commensurate with their economic abilities (Lewko and Greendorfer, 1987). Previous studies have shown that parents of the higher class will socialize their children to "posh" sports such as lawn

tennis, table tennis and badminton (Njororai, 1996; Akpata and Gitonga 2002). Parents of both middle and lower SES will socialize their children into the common games of soccer, netball, volleyball and athletics (Dixon, 1984; Njororai, 1996; Akpata and Gitonga 2002).

In Kenya, the influence of SES and type of school on the participation in competitive sport at secondary school was reported by Akpata and Gitonga (2002). Earlier Mazrui (1987) had alluded to the dichotomy of "culture-intensive" and "culture-neutral" games to signify the choice and participation in the games of the upper and lower classes respectively.

The SES of the parent determines the choice of residence hence neighbourhood, leisure activities engaged in, the playing apparatus and even the kind of peer friends that one gets (Njororai, 1996). Children

with a lower SES background are predisposed towards team sports (from culture-neutral category) while those from upper echelons are geared towards individual or dual sports (from the culture-intensive games category) (Mazrui, 1987; Njororai, 1996).

Based on the cited studies on SES and participation in sport at secondary school level, it was apt to investigate the influence of parental SES on participation in sport of university athletes. This is considered critical as the university athletes have diverse backgrounds in terms of schooling, ethnicity and geographical locations.

### Research Questions

- ❖ Did the university athletes participate in sport while in primary and secondary school?
- ❖ Is there any influence of the parental SES on the participation in sport of the university athletes?

### Null Hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub>: Participation in sport while in primary school will not differ significantly between male and female athletes.

H<sub>02</sub>: Participation in sport while in secondary school will not differ significantly between male and female athletes.

H<sub>03</sub>: Distribution of university athletes by gender is not based on parental SES.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

#### TECHNIQUE

A total of 150 subjects randomly selected from Kenyatta University took part in the study. These comprised 65 females and 85 males with a mean age and standard deviation of  $21.92 \pm 2.15$  years respectively. They were participating in ball games (N=77) racquet games (N=23),

board games (N=14), Combat sports (N=25) and athletics (N=11). The university athletes were engaged in vigorous preparations for the 2002 biennial East Africa University Games (E.A.S.G). Some of the athletes lay for various national teams in Kenya.

### QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE STUDY

For the purposes of this study, a questionnaire, which contained 10 items, was administered to 250 athletes. Items in section A covered demographic information and participation in sport of the athletes while in primary, secondary and university, while items in section B were concerned with parental education and occupation. Social economic status (SES) of the parents was determined by using father or mother occupation (whichever was higher plus higher of either parents education level). Occupational status and educational levels were added together to provide a more discriminating index leading to classifying athletes into three main SES – upper, middle and lower (Robertson, 1973).

### DATA ANALYSIS

The resulting data were analyzed manually for frequencies using descriptive methods of percentages, tables and figures. Chi-square test of independent samples was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Due to faulty responses in some of the questionnaire, only the data of 150 subjects representing a return rate of 60% is represented in subsequent sections.

### RESULTS

Previous participation in sports of athletes while in primary and secondary school is presented in table 1 and 2.

H<sub>01</sub> Participation in sport while in primary school will not differ significantly between male and female athletes.

*Table 1: Participation in sport of the athletes while in primary school by gender.*

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
MALES	9 (10.58%)	76 (89.41%)	85	1.02
FEMALES	11 (16.92%)	54 (83.07%)	65	0.125
TOTAL	20 (13.33%)	130 (86.66%)	150	1.14

*P.05 = 3.84*

Results in Table 1 shows that 13.3% of athletes participated in sport while in primary school while 86.66% did not participate. X<sup>2</sup> did not reveal any significant differences between male and female athletes participation in sport

necessitating the acceptance of H<sub>01</sub> of the study.

H<sub>02</sub>: Participation in sport while in secondary school will not differ significantly between male and female athletes.

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

	Yes (%)	No %	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
MALES	57 (67.04%)	28 (32.94)	85	0.51
FEMALES	49 (75.38%)	16 (24.61%)	65	0.56
TOTAL	106 (70.66%)	44(29.33%)	150	1.17

*P. 05 = 3.84*

Results in table 2, show that 70.66% of the athletes participated in sport while 29.33 did not participate in sport while in secondary school. X<sup>2</sup> did not indicate any significant differences between male and female athletes participation in sport while in secondary school prompting the acceptance of the H<sub>02</sub> of the study.

The distribution of university athletes by gender and parental social - economic status is presented in Table 3.

H<sub>03</sub>: Distribution of university athletes by gender is not based on parental SES

*Table 3: Distribution of university athletes by gender and parental SES*

Gender	Upper	Middle	Lower	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
MALES	18(21.12%)	19(22.35%)	48(56.47)	85	2.74
FEMALES	11(16.92%)	27(41.54%)	27(41.54)	65	3.56
TOTAL	29(19.33%)	46(30.66%)	75(50%)	150	6.30

*P.05 = 5.99*

Table 3, shows that 85(56.67%) of the athletes were males while females constituted 65(43.33%). Athletes had parental SES as 19.33%, 30.66% and 50% as upper, middle and lower classes respectively. X<sup>2</sup> revealed significant

differences between the SES of the male and female athletes. Consequently H<sub>03</sub> of the study was accepted. The participation in sport of male and female athletes by social economic status is presented in figures 1 and 2.

FIG. 1: Participation in Sport of Male Athletes by Parental SES

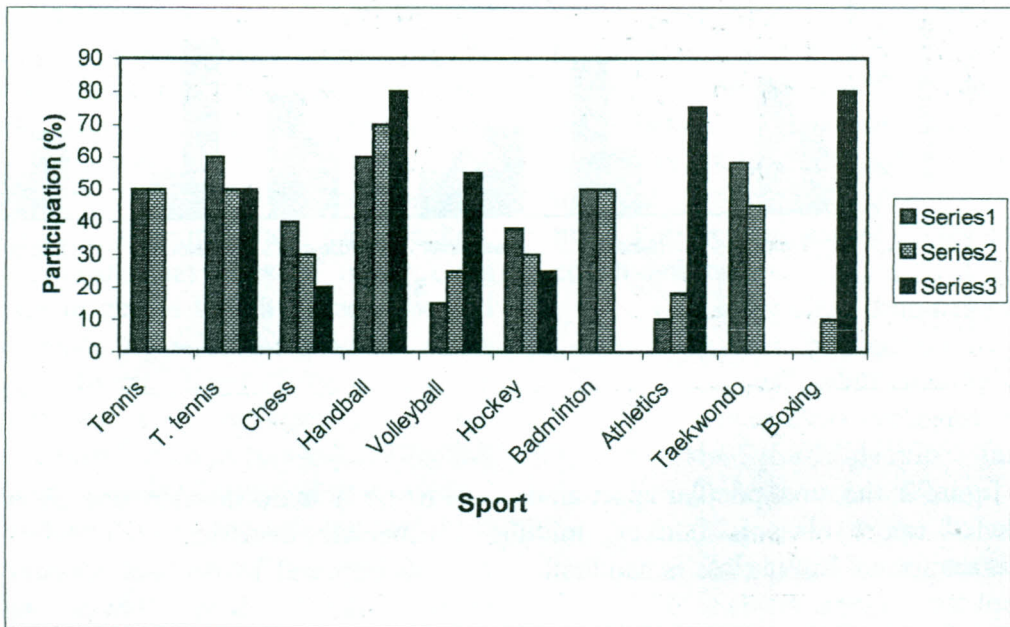


Fig 1

From Figure 1, the most popular sport among males of upper class is Table tennis, middle class is handball and lower class is boxing.

Fig.2: Participation in Sport of Female Athletes by Parental SES.

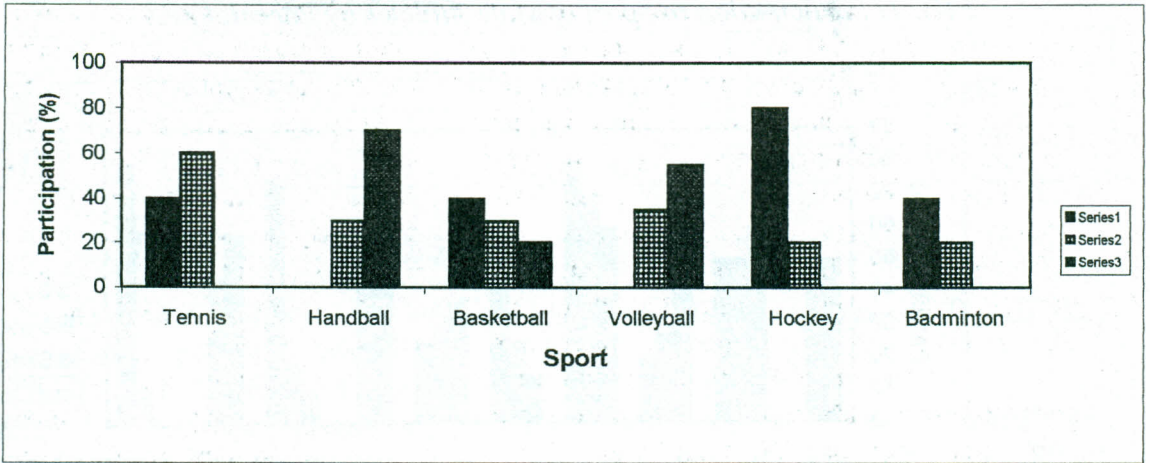


Fig. 2

From figure 2, the most popular sport among female of upper class is hockey, middle class is tennis and lower class is handball.

## DISCUSSION

Findings of the study have revealed that majority of the athletes did not participate in sports while in primary school. It is apparent that few games are offered in primary schools. These include soccer, volleyball, netball and athletics (Njororai, 1996). Nay to say few athletes participate in sports at primary school due to paucity of sports infrastructure. Indeed, only few athletes are given opportunities to participate in order to represent their school teams in external competitions starting at the zonal to national levels (Muindi, 1998). However, it is postulated that due to socio-cultural and psychological requirements boys and girls at this age engage in diverse non-organized sport during break times and even after school.

Although there are no significant differences between male and female participation in sports at primary school level, it is expected that males have a higher propensity to venture into sports earlier than girls. That is why Mazrui (1987), conceded that socialization into sport is tilted towards males as sport has always been considered

to be a male domain due to militarization especially in Africa.

As opposed to primary schools, secondary schools in Kenya have better sports infrastructure, comprehensive competition programmes running throughout the year and some secondary schools share excellent and enduring sporting traditions (Wamukoya, 1993). It is in this line that 70% of the athletes in the study took part in different sports while in secondary school. However, this is not mediated by gender differences in the participation and this requires further scrutiny among sport sociologists.

At the university level, male athletes of the lower SES participate in boxing, athletics and handball while middle class boys are represented in Tennis and Handball with the upper class boys being over represented in table tennis, tennis and badminton. It is evident that boys of the middle and lower classes are featuring in team sports while the upper class have specialized in individual or dual sports. That is why, Beashel and Taylor (1996) showed that low income may be prohibitive since it restricts the choice of activity to one involving little or no cost (i.e. team sports) while on the other hand, a higher income affords a greater range of activities (individual or dual sports).

The games with over-representation of boys from the upper class were labelled “culture-intensive games” (one has to be completely westernized to venture in) and class specific (Mazrui, 1987) and these games require expensive facilities such as exclusive localities (sports clubs), equipment and coaches (Njororai, 1996; Akpata and Gitonga 2002). These games include table tennis, cricket, swimming and field hockey. Thus it appears that boys of upper class participate in games which consolidate and are commensurate with the parental status quo such as tennis. Boys of the middle and lower classes are participating in the “peoples games” such as football, volleyball and handball or what Mazrui (1987) referred to as “culture-neutral games” i.e. one does not need to be westernised before venturing into them. Nay, these require simple facilities and inexpensive equipment. Therefore, it appears that socialization into the games at university level is class specific.

Girls of upper class are represented in the games of Hockey and basketball, middle class attracts tennis while girls of the lower class are engaged in volleyball and handball. The same findings were evident in a study involving secondary school girls athletes (Akpata and Gitonga, 2002). These patterns of participation in sports of girls mediated by social economic status is not different from those of boys and it is prudent that the socialisation continues to agitate for the maintenance of the status quo. However, it is evident that girls are not/minimumly engage in martial arts and athletics at the university level. These games are militaristic and anti-feminine. That is why Mazrui (1987) observed that the paucity of female participation in sport in Africa is due to militarization of sport. Secondly these sports are likely to create psychological dissonance and role conflict among female athletes.

## CONCLUSION

This study has established that majority of the athletes did not participate in sports while in primary school but started to participate in the sport while in secondary school. The influence of SES on the participation in sport is evident among the university athletes though punctuated with minimal gender differences. Bearing in mind the atypical nature of the study, it is concluded that:

- Upper class dominates the “posh games or “culture – intensive games” while middle class and lower class are over represented in the “people games” or “common games”.
- Majority of the athletes have lower SES backgrounds. Thus it is recommended that there is:-
  - ❖ Need to provide sport infrastructure to primary schools in Kenya to facilitate early socialization into all types of sport.
  - ❖ Parents need to take stock of talent of their siblings before they socialize them into games which are out to maintain the status quo.

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