

Socio-Cultural Variables of Religion and Sports Participation among Secondary School Students in Northern States of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines some of the socio-cultural factors of religion on sports participation among secondary school students in some Northern States of Nigeria. A total of 400 students were randomly selected from eight schools as sample. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection and the reliability coefficient was computed at 0.87. Three research hypotheses were formulated and tested. Independent t-test was the statistical tool used for data analysis. Findings revealed that Muslims mode of worship, mode of dressing and their attitude to sports has significant difference as compared to Christians towards sports participation and development in Northern Nigeria. As a result of the above findings, some conclusions and recommendations were made. For example, this study is of great importance to both Christians and Muslims students alike because of the benefits derivable from participating in sporting activities which include keeping oneself physically, mentally, socially and of course spiritually fit to carry out their academic activities.

Keywords: socio-cultural, religion, sports participation, Christians, Muslims.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of religion on sports participation among secondary school students in Northern parts of Nigeria. The practice of sporting activities has become an important part of the nation's culture as well as other cultures throughout the world. While some cultures strengthen the practice and propagate sporting programmes in their communities, others do not for reasons they consider affects their religious inclinations. Islam and Christianity are religions that are alien to African cultures especially the stoppage of the killing of twins that was in practice in Africa before the coming of Mary Slessor to Nigeria and the introduction of Western Education to Africa and abolition of slave trade, (Stevenson, 1991).

Coakley (2003); Hoffman (1992) and Stevenson (1991), observed that the interaction between sports and religion has been a significant area of study for sports sociologists who have recognized the importance of religion and spirituality in athletes' lives. Accordingly, as the two religions (Islam and Christianity) were introduced to Africa and Nigeria in particular and each came with the mindset to anchor all their cultural practices on the soil of Africa. Sports-wise, Christianity warmly encouraged and recognized the relevance of sports to the well-being of their followers.

No wonder that Mohler (2010) emphasized that, sports has taken an increasingly influential role in the lives of evangelical Christians. He went further to state that, sports has the potential to give Christians a good platform for Christian witness, and also the potential to lead Christians into idolatry. On the other hand, Islam too, recognizes the impact of sports on the health of believers and encourages her followers to partake in sports as long as such participation does not run counter to Islamic acceptable laid down principles and practices. On Muslims participation in sports, one of the renowned scholar Shiek Al-Munajjid (2011) has made some statement to the questions: "what is the ruling on our body building in Islam? Are we allowed to put our bodies in structures like the wrestlers so long as we do not show it out and it is to our good? The renowned scholar among the responses stated that: "Body building aims to make the body strong and sound, which is an important and desirable goal".

Al-Munajjid went further to say that Islam is concerned with man's well-being in both body and soul, and it encourages all kinds of sports that will strengthen the body and maintain good health as well as providing relaxation and leisure, such as swimming, shooting, horse riding, sword fighting and wrestling. He also added by quoting from Hadith that, "The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer". He stated categorically

that in Islam, if the aim of sports is relaxation and maintaining good health, then sports is permissible. If it involves something “Haraam” (sinful act), such as missing prayers, uncovering any part of the “Awrah” or mixing with women and so on, then it is “Haraam” (sinful).

In Northern Nigeria, sports and its programme of activities are of integral aspect of the culture of the people and they have been practicing their indigenous sports before the advent of Christianity and Islamic religion that has now absorbed a larger number of people. The role of sports in the cultural setting and practices among these ethnic groups even though organization differs cannot be overemphasized. The importance attached to sports varies from one community to the other. For instance, while some of the communities use sports as the only means of recreation, others use it for the test of strength and development of physique among youth. On a communal level Ali (2011) asserts that, participation in sports is an effective way of grooming children into becoming individuals, and organizers in some community programmes. This paper therefore is an attempt to x-ray some of the socio-cultural indices of religion on sports participation in the Northern parts of Nigeria.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested

1. Christians and Muslims mode of worship do not significantly differ in their participation in sports.
2. There is no significant difference between Christians and Muslims dressing with regards to their participation in sports.
3. Christians and Muslims attitude do not significantly differ with regards to their participation in sports.

METHODOLOGY

The study was essentially a survey design. The population consists of all the senior secondary school students in some Northern States of Nigeria. Ten schools were randomly selected for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample forty students from each school. The study sample therefore consists of 400 senior secondary school students (both Christians and Muslims) randomly selected from ten secondary schools across Northern parts of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which consists of 15 items tailored to the research hypotheses to guide the study. The questionnaire was made up of three sections. Section A deals with the demographic data; section B deals with the attitude, mode of worship and mode of dressing of students, while section C deals with sports participation. The response pattern of the questionnaire was of the four-point Likert scale of (Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD)). Two experts in Measurement and Evaluation were engaged to ascertain the face and content validity of the instrument, and their expertise judgment and inputs were adequately incorporated. To determine the reliability of the instrument the questionnaire was pilot tested in a study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Split-half reliability method, and the index of 0.87 was obtained.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data collected for the study were analyzed using independent t-test. The analysis are shown in tables 1,2 and 3.

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of the difference between Christians and Muslims mode of worship with regards to their participation in sports (N=400)

Variables	N	X	SD	t-cal
Christians mode of worship and sports	200	9.45	7.02	7.65
Muslims mode of worship and sports	200	7.23	3.55	

P< 0.05, df = 398, critical t = 1.96

The result of table 1 reveals that there is a significant difference between Christians and Muslims mode of worship with regards to their participation in sports. The calculated t-test value of 7.65 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant with 398 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null

hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is a significant difference between Christians and Muslims mode of worship with regards to their participation in sports.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the difference between Christians and Muslims mode of dressing with regards to their participation in sports (N=400)

Variables	N	X	SD	t-cal
Christians mode of dressing and sports	200	7.41	4.10	5.68
Muslims mode of dressing and sports	200	5.25	3.40	

P< 0.05, df = 398, critical t = 1.96

The result of table 2 reveals that there is a significant difference between Christians and Muslims mode of dressing with regards to their interest in sports participation. The calculated t-value of 5.68 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant with 398 degree of freedom. So, the null

hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is a significant difference between Christians and Muslims mode of dressing with regards to their participation in sports.

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of the difference between attitude of Christians and Muslims with regards to their participation in sports (N=400)

Variables	N	X	SD	t-cal
Christians attitude and sports	200	8.60	4.35	4.76
Muslims attitude and sports	200	6.55	4.20	

P< 0.05, df = 398, critical t = 1.96

The result of table 3 reveals that there is a significant difference between the attitude of Christians and Muslims with regards to their interest in sports participation. The calculated t-value of 4.76 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant with 398 degree of freedom. So, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is a significant difference between the attitude of Christians and Muslims with regards to their participation in sports.

God for a successful and safe competition. Corroborating the above, Hoffman (1992) opined that, the use of religious rituals in sports especially the Christian players, is one area of research that has begun to receive particular attention. In line with the above, a number of investigations have been shown that the use of prayers by athletes before, during and after competition is a common and valuable practice for enhancing performance and overall wellbeing (Czech and Burke, 2003) Czech, Weisberg,, Fisher, Thompson, and Hayes (2004) Park (2000). Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon, and Templin (2000). These players engage in praying whether they win or lose,so the mode of worship or religion may or may not have an effect on people’s participation in sporting activities. All depend on skills acquisition and interest or value derived from participation in sporting activities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the study on table one has revealed that Muslims mode of worship does not encourage their participation in sports. The result is contrary to what great Islamic scholars like Sheik Al-Munajjid (2011) and SheikAttiya (2011) who said that body building aims at making the body strong and sound. That Islam is concerned with man’s well-being in both body and soul. They said further that it encourages all kind of sports that will strengthen the body and maintain good health. They emphasized that a strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer. As a general principle, Charles (1998) and Sheik Al-Manujjid (2011) have all maintained that, the Islamic mode of worship has set forth that Muslim men and women minimize casual mixing in Physical Education classes and segregated sporting activities are preferred by Muslim parents.

In trying to ascertain the influence of mode of dressing on sports participation in table two, it was discovered that Muslims mode of dressing has a significant effect on sports participation as compared to Christians. This agrees with the views of Adewunmi (2008) that, Muslim women are not supposed to wear shorts, shirts, and trousers in public places. She also reported that it is an offence for the men to expose their body parts which is in line with the Sharia Law. Similarly, Charles (1998) in support of this noted that Islam places great emphasis on modesty in dressing and behaviour for both sexes. Men and women are expected to dress in clothing that do not reveal the features of the body. He further stressed that Physical Education classes can pose certain problems for Muslim children, since such courses typically require students to wear shorts and

trunk tops. Such attire, he maintained is not permissible for Muslim women and men.

On attitude towards sports participation in table three, it was discovered that attitude of Muslims have a significant difference on sports participation from their Christian brethren. This finding corroborates with the findings of Carol (1993) and Adewunmi (2008) who reported that the negative response or attitude of Muslim boys and girls toward sports in the North is as a result of either actual or perceived restriction placed on them by their culture and religion. Conversely, Ali (2011) however is in support of Muslim parents and their children developing attitude of having similar hobbies such as playing football or wrestling games which he said can prove critical in the upbringing of a child. He further stated that, when a child and parent have bonding time due to a common hobby, a friendship is established which would allow the parent to also serve as a friends whom the child talks to.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that religion can be used to determine the extent of sports participation and development in some Northern parts of Nigeria. Islamic beliefs and practice have significant difference between Christians in terms of the development of sports in Northern Nigeria. Finally, the principles of Sharia Law runs counter to the general principles and practices that govern sports and so it does not give room for social interaction among youths of opposite sex. Also, there are certain practices in Islam that cannot be avoided in sports such as men and women interacting together, shaking of hands by opposite sex, hugging etc. These aspects deprived Muslims especially the women from participating actively in sporting activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, this paper strongly recommends that:

1. Since majority of Muslim scholars and literature supports sports participation because of its inherent health benefits, sports programmes must be designed in such a way that it does not affect Islamic mode of worship.
2. Since mode of dressing does not affect Christians in sports participation but conversely affect Muslims, sports wears should be modernized to cover all the sacred parts of the body and approve for Muslim states of the North to attract especially Muslim women into sports.
3. Students with Islamic background should develop positive attitude towards sports participation and advised to enroll into the department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, in order to acquire the knowledge and skills on the theories and practice of sports.

4. The Muslims especially the girls in particular that are into sports should be heavily rewarded to attract others into sports participation.

5. More number of Muslims (male and female) to take up jobs in the Sports Council in the Northern parts of Nigeria as coaches, trainers and sports teachers to be able encourage young Muslims wishing to go into sports because of the numerous benefits it accrues to the development of an individual and the society as a whole.

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