

SPORTS PARTICIPATION PERCEPTION AND SELF-CONCEPT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KENYA

CONTACT RESEARCHERS:

Dr. Wilson Kiptala
Department of Educational Psychology
Moi University
P.O. Box 3900 – 30100
ELDORET – Kenya
Email: wilkiptala@yahoo.com

Prof. Isaac Njuguna Kimengi
Department of Educational Foundations
Moi University
P.O. Box 3900 -30100
ELDORET – Kenya
Email: kin7559@yahoo.com

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RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Dr. Wilson Kiptala

Prof. Isaac Njuguna Kimengi

Prof. Hezborn Kodero

Dr. Richard Okero

Sarah Kiptala

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine sports participation perception and self-concept among secondary school students in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya. The study was guided by the perception theory of Kurt Lewin as espoused by Smith. The basic proposition of this theory is that every object (student) exists in a field (school) of forces (curricular and co-curricular) that move it, define it or give it a degree of stability and substance. The research objectives of the study were: to examine the relationship between students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept and to examine the relationship between gender, co-curricular participation perception and self-concept. The ontology was realist/objectivist and the epistemology was post-positivism. The research method was quantitative. The research design was ex-post-facto. A total of 72 volleyball players and 124 football players participated in the study. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The data was collected using a Likert scaled questionnaire. Data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, t-test, Pearson r and a two way ANOVA at $p > .05$ level of significance. The major findings of the study showed that: (98%) of the participants had a highly rated self-concept, the results further revealed that there was a significant relationship between co-curricular participation perception and self-concept, [$r(195) = .22, p = .002$]. Based on the findings it was recommended that since sports participation accommodates the less endowed students to succeed in sport, there was need to use it to enhance the students' well being, it was also recommended that schools need to provide sufficient opportunities for co-curricular participation as it helps improve the self-concepts of the students. The study showed that there was need to explore on a theory that can guide sport participation in school.

Introduction

Sports participation and games provides an environment for amusement, recreation, good health, biological development, freedom of expression, career building, income generation, prestige, skill acquisition, reduction of stress, cognitive, and numerous social benefits (Rintaugu, 2005). These ideals are in agreement with the UN Resolution 58/5 of November 2003, which called on governments to use sport as a means to promote formal education, health, development and peace. Consequently, the year 2005 was considered the International Year for Sport and Physical Education. Furthermore, sports can be used to work towards a number of development goals, including; human development; improving public health and well being, supporting education and leisure activities, social development; promoting stability, tolerance, social inclusion and community building, economic development; fostering investment and employment opportunities and political development; promoting peace and respect for the rules of democracy (Sever, 2005).

Research studies have recognized that athletic ability alone is not likely to predict participation and it is concluded that the social system (educational institutions e.g., secondary schools in this case) must provide support and opportunity for participation before that talent can be translated into active sport involvement (Rintaugu, 2005; Jackson & Strigas, 2004; Kenyon & McPherson, 2005). Indeed, personal attributes, significant others and socialization situations are associated with becoming involved in physical activity and sport (Ipnmoroti & Ajayi, 2003; Kenyon & McPherson, 2005). Therefore, the results of the combination of these influences appear to imply that participation in physical activity and sports may be determined by the attitudes, perceptions, values and beliefs of those most closely associated with the development of the individual (Dixon, 2004).

According to Darling, Caldwell and Smith (2005) the social significance of high school sports has been approached in research by many positions; the developmental theory emphasizes the 'socializing' or 'character building' effects of the athletic participation while the zero-sum theory stated that athletic participation diverts attention from academic work. They viewed the student society as a finite system in which commitment to academic, athletic, or social values represents a loss to the other two. Others (Matano, 1992; McNally, 2003; Newman, 2005; Ogi, 2005; Okunbor & Mybor, 2005; Bulinde, 2006) argue that the two student cultures are casually linked and that athletics positively affects grades. Several reviews of empirical studies of the effects of sports participation (Arnoldy, 2005; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Guest & Schnider, 2003; Tucker, 1999; Croxton, Chiacchia & Wagner, 2006; Klomsten, Skaalvik & Espines, 2004) reported that the most commonly studied outcomes are; academic achievement, educational and occupational aspirations and attainment, self-concept and popularity. For example, Otto and Win cited in Muniu (2009) found that sports participation of male students in the senior year of high school was positively related to the educational and occupational aspirations after controlling for the socio-economic status, Intelligence Quotient (IQ), and school grades. In a prior study according to Otto as cited by Muniu (2009) sports participation in high school positively affected educational attainment, occupational status, and income 15 years later.

However, (Tucker 1999; Croxton et al. 2006; & Klomsten et al. 2004) carried out a study on students' self-concept and sports participation, the results revealed that participation in school sport impacted favourably upon the descriptions and ideas used to determine their self-concepts. More specifically, students' self-concepts were described in positive terms which consisted of descriptions of their attributes, qualities and skills. Besides, these descriptions were fairly stable over time. Furthermore, increasing evidence indicates that student's failures in basic school subjects as well as their misguided motivation, lack of academic and sport involvement characteristics are due to unhealthy perceptions of the self and the world (Rehman, 2001). Many students for example have difficulty in school, not because of low intelligence or poor eyesight, but because they have learned to consider themselves unable to do academic work (Rehman, 2001). Consequently, from the foregoing statement, it can be stated in reference to this study that some Kenyan students from some secondary schools may have perceived themselves as unable to do academic work; yet co-curricular participations is the only option to demonstrate their success.

Research studies by Dongfang, Simon and Shin (2003) that sought to investigate male and female basketball players goal orientation, perceived motivation, perceived ability and the source of sports confidence, reported that male participants recorded a higher perceived ego climate, perfection of skills and physical performance factors of sports confidence than their female counterparts. Consequently, this finding is significant to the current study as sports participations increases with the levels of self concept. Besides, a study on African volleyball players was carried out by Morakinyo (2003) to understand academic status of African elite volleyball players revealed

that 53.3% had obtained academic certificates, while 46.7% had not. Also 80% of the respondents wanted to further their education, while 20% were not interested. According to the current researcher, the players were satisfied because they had an option to demonstrate their success, therefore implying that their sport self-concept was relatively positive therefore contributing to their learning outcomes.

Bulinde (2006) undertook an analysis of the demographic factors affecting achievement goal orientation and satisfaction among Kenyan volleyball league players. She found out that task oriented players were more satisfied than ego oriented players. Consequently, this opened a gap for the current study that the perception of the students of their self-concepts ought to be known. Moreover, it was found that apart from gender, other demographic factors (the intelligence (IQ), class level, type of school, teacher qualification and experience, age and facilities) under the study did not influence players' goal orientation. This statement has implications for the current study as demographic factors have been hypothesized to contribute to the students' self-concepts and academic performance. Consequently, this finding is significant to the current researcher that it is possible that the expected extraneous variables may not have an effect on the rest of the variables other than gender that is included in the study.

Although education is divided into two parts; curricular activities and co-curricular activities in Kenya, many researchers like Ongonga et al. (2010), McInally (2003) and Newman (2005) have observed that participation in co-curricular activities is not fully supported by most schools and the contribution of it to the students' self-concept and academic performance have not been clearly articulated to the educators, teachers, students and even parents. Yet, the experiences and opportunities provided by secondary schools through curricular and co-curricular participation also influence students' development. Furthermore, direct interaction with the school curriculum in schools such as the degree of success or failure in various subject matters and the degree of encouragement provided for academic effort influence self-growth, educational aspirations and values of students. Besides, no research has addressed itself to the impact of co-curricular participation on academic performance and looked at it from the perspective of enhancing the self-concept for better performances in both academics and sports, as well as providing opportunities to the less endowed academically student to succeed. Nonetheless, success and failure in life largely depend on the levels of self-concept of the individual concerned. Furthermore, the more the students discover this level and its relationship to the world, the more they know themselves. Moreover, such knowledge provides them with a measure of internal stability and security. Consequently, there was need therefore, to undertake a study that would take into perspective students' perceptions because they are directly involved in the educational process.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate sports participation perception and self-concept among secondary school students in the Rift Valley Region of Kenya. There were two specific objectives pursued in the study. These were:

1. To examine the relationship between students' co-curricular participation perception and self-concept.
2. To examine the relationship between gender, co-curricular participation perception and self-concept.

Methodology**Participants**

The participants of this study were described by their gender and by the class in which they were learning at the time of data collection. A total of 200 participants, 98 females and 102 males, from secondary schools responded to the Modified Self Description Questionnaire (MSDQ), however only 196 (98 females and 98 males), had complete data that was used in the analysis. The average class size for Kenyan secondary was between 40 – 60 students. The size of the schools ranged from 200 to 1200 students. All the secondary schools are located in Rift Valley Province and are recognized nationally among the Eight Provinces.

Instruments and procedure

Students responded to a Modified Self Description Questionnaire (MSDQ) developed by the researchers. Beside the demographic information of gender section, the second section of the questionnaire comprised of 20 items used to measure the students' self-concept. These sections were Likert type which provided the respondents with a series of statements to which they could indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement. These sections were modified from a PSDQ (Physical Self Description Questionnaire) developed by Marsh (2001). The participants, who were co-curricular participants, completed the questionnaire in class during lunch hour and games time. It took participants approximately 40 to 50 minutes to respond. All participants were proficient in both spoken and written English.

Data Analysis

The participants' responses were coded and categorized into information that could answer the researchers' questions and objectives, and then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Therefore, descriptive themes based on the research questions were developed. Then, the data was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using the Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). In addition, this allowed the researcher to establish students' sports participation perception and self-concept. To examine whether the themes were significantly different based on class and gender, independent samples tests were computed for each category.

Findings of the Study

Gender and Class of the Participant

The participants of this study were described by their gender and by the class in which they were learning at the time of data collection. This information is reported in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Description of Student Participants by Gender and class

Class	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Form 1	17	8.7	21	10.7	38	19.4
Form 2	24	12.24	14	7.14	38	19.4
Form 3	42	21.4	28	14.3	70	35.7
Form 4	15	7.7	35	17.9	50	25.5
Total	98	50	98	50	196	100

Co-curricular Participation of the Student Participants

The participants were also described in terms of their co-curricular participation – volleyball and football and class. This information is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 1.2: Description of Participants by Co-curricular Participation and Class

Class	Co-Curricular Participation					
	Volleyball		Football		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Form 1	18	9.2	20	10.2	38	19.4
Form 2	16	8.2	22	11.2	38	19.4
Form 3	24	12.24	46	23.46	70	35.7
Form 4	14	7.1	36	18.4	50	25.5
Total	72	36.7	124	63.3	196	100

From the demographic data presented in Table 1.2, it appeared that football was a much more popular co-curricular activity than volleyball in secondary schools in Rift Valley region.

Co-Curricular Participation Perception and Self-concept.

The second research question raised in this study was: Is there a relationship between students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept? The question was answered by testing the null hypothesis which states that; there is no significant relationship between students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept. To answer this question, the participants were asked to respond to a 50 item questionnaire (see Appendix C, section II - Co-curricular participation perception section). In addition, the participants responded to a 20 item questionnaire (see Appendix C, section II – self-concept section). The responses were scored and the results were analyzed using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and reported in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Correlation between Co-curricular Participation Perception and Self-concept

	Perception	self-concept
Perception	-	.22
Self-concept	.22	-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From Table 4.5, the analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between co-curricular participation perception and self-concept. The Correlation coefficient $r(195) = .22$, $p = .002$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected that, there is no significant relationship between students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept. From this result it can be concluded that the more students participate, the more their co-curricular participation perception and self-concepts develops.

4.6 Students' Gender, Co-curricular Participation Perception and Self-concept

The fifth research question raised in this study was: does gender influence students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept? The question was answered by testing the null hypothesis; there is no significant relationship between gender (male or female) and students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept. To answer this question, the participants were asked to respond to the demographic data section of the questionnaire, items 4 and 5 (see Appendix C, section I). In addition, the participants responded to a 50 item questionnaire (see Appendix C, section II - Co-curricular participation perception section) and a 20 item questionnaire (see Appendix C, section II). The responses were scored and the results are presented in Table 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13.

Table 4.9: Description of Gender and Co-curricular Participation Perception

Gender	N	Perception	
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	98	2.06	18.16
Female	98	2.07	18.75
Total	196	2.07	18.42

The result of analysis in Table 4.9 indicates that female students have a more positive perception of participating in co-curricular activities than their male counterparts. To test whether the mean scores of the two groups of respondents were significantly different, independent sample t-test was conducted. The analysis of the results revealed that gender has no significant effect on students' participation in co-curricular activities, $t(194) = -.45$, $p = .654$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, that there is no significant relationship between gender and students' co-curricular participation perception. From this finding it can be concluded that gender has no significant relationship with co-curricular participation perception.

Table 4.10: Description of Gender, Co-Curricular Participation and Self-concept.

Gender	Co-curricular /Self-concept								
	Volleyball			Football			Total		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Male	31	85.00	5.08	67	88.09	7.14	98	87.11	6.69
Female	41	88.78	7.53	57	88.46	7.92	98	88.45	7.92
Total	72	88.15	7.62	124	88.15	7.63	196	87.79	7.34

From the results of analysis in Table 4.10, it was revealed that co-curricular activities seem not to influence self-concept of the students. It was also revealed that gender seem not to affect students' self-concept. But, gender and co-curricular activities seem to influence students' perception of their self-concept.

The above findings are further illustrated by use of Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Students' Self-concept and Training.



To test whether gender and participation in co-curricular activities have a significant effect on students' self-concept a two way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted and the results are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 ANOVA on gender and training of students by teachers

	Gender	Co-curricular
Gender	-	3.24
Curricular	1.36	-

a. R Squared = .028 (Adjusted R Squared = .013)

From the results of the analysis in Table 4.11 it was revealed that gender and participation in co-curricular activities statistically have no significant effect on the students' perception of their self-concept $F(1,196) = 3.24, P = .073$ and $F(1,192) = 1.36, P = .245$ respectively. Therefore, the null hypothesis; there is no significant relationship between gender, participation in co-curricular activities and students' perception of their self-concept, was rejected. Consequently, it can be concluded that gender and participation in co-curricular activities does not influence students' perception of their self-concepts. Furthermore, these findings revealed that gender and participation in co-curricular activities have no interactive effect on teachers' perception of students' participation in co-curricular activities $F(1,192) = 2.80, P = .096$.

Table 4.12: Students' Gender, Co-curricular Participation Perception and Self-concept

Gender	Self-Concept					
	Average		High		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	0	0	98	50	98	50
Female	4	2	94	48	98	50
Total	4	2	192	81	96	100

From Table 4.12 of the total 196 respondents 192 (98%) had a highly rated self-concept. This finding indicates that participation in co-curricular activities impacts positively on the wellbeing of the participants.

Table 4.13: Description of Gender and Self-concept

Gender	Self-Concept		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	98	87.11	6.69
Female	98	88.46	7.96
Total	196	87.79	7.34

From the analysis in Table 4.13 it was revealed that female students have a more positive self-concept than male students. To test whether the mean scores were significantly different, independent sample t-test was conducted. The results of the analysis indicated that gender has no significant effect on students' self-concept; $t(194) = -1.286, p = .200$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted and concluded that gender does not influence the self-concepts of the students participating in co-curricular activities in Rift Valley Region.

Discussion and conclusions

This study contributes to the limited interdisciplinary research on students' sports participation perception and self-concept. More importantly is the contribution to the limited available research on the impact of sports participation on students' self-concept in Kenya.

Students' sports Participation Perception and Self-Concept.

The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between students' co-curricular participation perception and their self-concept. The Correlation coefficient, $r(195) = .22, p = .002$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding is similar to the findings cited by

(Tucker, 1999; Croxton et al., 2002; Klomsten et al., 2004) that reported that participation in school sport impacted favourably upon the descriptions and ideas used to determine students' self-concepts. More specifically, students' self-concepts were described in positive terms which consisted of descriptions of their attributes, qualities and skills. Besides, these descriptions were fairly stable over time. These findings are also similar to the findings by Fejgin (1994) who reported that students who are more involved in high school competitive sport have higher grades, a higher self-concept, higher educational aspirations, a more internal locus of control and fewer discipline problems.

Students' Gender and Self-concept

The findings revealed that students' co-curricular participation perception towards their self-concepts fell within the researcher's three categories of perception in varying percentages. It was found that of the total 196 respondents, 0% respondents had a low self-concept, 4 (2%) had an average or some self-concept and 192 (98%) had a high self-concept; this finding indicates that participation in co-curricular activities impacts favourably upon their self-concepts.

The mean scores were compared and they revealed that female students had a more positive self-concept than their male counterparts. This finding disagrees with Koivula (1995) finding that sports and its ideology was presented as a proof of men's masculinity. Moreover Maritim in Bulinde (2006) posited that the perception of boys with regard to their ability to learn was higher than that of the girls, which also disagrees. These findings are also contrary to the findings cited by Klomsten et al., (2004) on self-concept and sports participation among adolescents which reported that boys scored higher on physical self-concept and appearance than girls. These findings further disagreed with Olukayonde cited in Nyakweba (2005) which had investigated sex differences in self-concept among secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria. He administered the Paris-Harris self-concept scale and 147 items general questionnaires 1380 (552 girls, 828 boys). The boys were hypothesized to have a higher self score than the girls. It was found out that the total self-concept score had a mean of (M=58.19, SD: 10.06, Median 59.47). The hypothesis that boys would have a higher self-concept score than the girls was supported. The mean score was higher for boys (M=59.11, SD=10.01) than for girls (M=56.82, SD=9.96). Moreover, the study also noted that boys participated more in sports activities which contributed to the development of positive self-concept. These findings agree with Bledsoe in Misigo (1998) that reported that girls had significantly higher averages in self-concept than boys and that the correlation between self-concept and academic performance was positive for girls.

Furthermore, the inferential statistics indicated that gender has no significant effect on students' self-concept. Similar findings were revealed by Gabelko, (1997), and Amezcua and Pichardo (2000) that regarding gender differences in self-concept, there is no evidence of such differences existing. This findings are contrary to Fejgin (1994) and Tucker (1999) who reported that students who are more involved in high school competitive sports have higher grades, a higher self-concept, higher educational aspirations, a more internal locus of control and fewer discipline problems. It is also contrary to Olukayonde cited in Nyakweba (2005) who showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between gender and self-concept.

When the co-curricular participation perception and self-concept was analyzed, it was found that a very high rating of 98% (see Table 4.12) of the students had favourable self-concepts, significantly influencing their co-curricular participation perception positively. This implied that students participating at national competitions in football and volleyball had very high confidence

level in themselves and in tasks related to sports participation. This could well mean that some kind of defense mechanism could be taking place that the students want to demonstrate that they can compensate their poor performances in class in sports.

According to the results of the study there was a significant relationship between co-curricular participation perception and the self-concepts of the participants. This could well mean that schools need to provide sufficient facilities for learners to participate in sports as a way of boosting the confidence levels of the students. It is the view of the researcher that co-curricular participation in secondary schools is a valuable educational experience. Moreover, students' academic objectives are much more than many educators realize. Furthermore, participation helps develop basic values such as self-concept, self-esteem, self-confidence and competitive spirit; besides, participants learn the value of teamwork and experiences how to win and how to lose. Consequently, students need to experience success or failure.

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