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Original Article

Factors Influencing Female Participation in Sporting Activities at Senior High School Level in Bia West District, Western North Region, Ghana

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Participation in sporting activities comes with great benefits to both male and female students regarding mental, physical and school performance. However, involving female students in sporting activities has been a serious problem for teachers at the high school level. The current study therefore aimed at examining factors influencing female participation in sporting activities at the senior high school level in Bia West District. A quantitative descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 893 and census technique was used to select all 893 participants for the study. A questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. Frequency counts, percentages and linear multiple regression were used in analyzing the results. The finding of the study revealed that female students' participation in sporting activities was low with 325(79.7%) respondents falling below 5 days of participation in any form of sporting or physical activity. The study also revealed that motivation is the most influential factor ($\beta=0.256$) that influences female students' participation in sporting activities followed by the social role of the female ($\beta=0.218$) while physical factor ($\beta=0.157$) was the least factor that influences female students' participation in sports. In lieu of the results, it is recommended that female students be motivated to participate in sporting activities to reap numerous benefits from participating in sporting activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Sports are actions concerning physical effort and techniques whereby an individual or team contests against another or others for a reward or fun and enjoyment (Online Oxford Dictionary, 2019). Some sports require vigorous physical effort, while others require less physical demands (Online Oxford Dictionary, 2019). Physical Education (PE) provides first-hand contact with sports for most female students (Olivares et al., 2015), and is possible this first-hand experience is very persuasive of their involvement in sports in the near future (Philippou, 2015).

Participation in sporting activities comes with great benefits to both male and female students regarding mental, physical and school performance. Also, numerous studies reveal the physical wellbeing, and psychosomatic including intellectual benefits and advantages of partaking in sporting activities (Oja et al., 2015). Female students who are very active in sporting activities are shown to demonstrate higher scores in terms of pleasure, Physical well-being and mental health than others not engaging in sporting activities (Simon, & Docherty, 2014). Frequent involvement in sports is associated with quality and superior enjoyment of life (Vella et al., 2014).

Sports are a relevant medium which provides students the opportunity to achieve appropriate levels of physical activity to ensure a healthy life. It is recommended that students should engage in vigorous exercises for at least three days a week. These exercises comprise the strengthening of

muscles and bones like swimming, running or football (Craig, & Mindell, 2013).

However, involving female students in Physical Education (PE) has been a serious problem for teachers at the high school level (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). For the past century, female students have been positioned as 'the problem' and often blamed for their lack of engagement in the physical activity and sports components of physical education (Azzarito et al., 2006; Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010). Over time, it has become increasingly recognized by physical education researchers that, "the problem' is more often located in the curriculum and pedagogical contexts within which girls are expected to participate and relates to the social construction of gender through PE" (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2010, p. 204).

Despite the known advantages of participating in sports, studies show that sporting activities have reduced in Europe among all ages (Riddoch et al., 2004). Subsequent research in the United Kingdom disclosed that 55% of children aged 4 to 17 years participate in PE and school sports, but the percentage decreases when they progress from primary (ages 4–12 years) to secondary (ages 12–18 years) school (Quick et al., 2010). This trend continues around the world with global approximations revealing that 80% of children who are 13 to 15 years old do not meet the recommended threshold of physical activity, including sports (Hallal et al., 2012), and these low levels of physical activity among adolescent and children are inadequate to realize one's physical wellbeing (Rosenkranz et al., 2012).

Rich (2004) claimed that there is “a growing body of research pointing towards the continued prevalence of gender inequality and exclusion in often complex ways within the PE curriculum, structures and practices”. In particular, female students in rural and regional settings have additional factors influencing their participation in PE, such as a lack of school sporting facilities and equipment (Casey et al., 2009). Therefore, there is a need for changes in behaviours among adolescents. However, adolescents’ behaviour change is linked to their physical, cultural, economic and social setting (Tsapakidou et al., 2013).

The assertion by Tsapakidou et al. (2013) is illuminated by the Ecological Systems Theory (Davison, & Birch, 2001), which holds that progress or transformation in individual features cannot be successfully described without considering the setting in which the individual is rooted. The theory argues that change in behaviour is highly likely to happen when social, cultural, economic, and physical environments are compassionate to physical activity lifestyles (Lobstein, 2004). In line with this, Shen et al. (2018), employed the Ecological Systems Theory to confirm that the beliefs about parental social assistance explain students’ enjoyment and participation in sports. The Ecological Systems Theory is therefore employed to explain the variables used in this current study.

Researchers have disclosed that teachers and parents influence adolescents’ behaviour in participating in sports (Shen et al., 2018). Teachers must increase the drive in students to enable them to become physically active, both in physical education instructions and out-of-school environments (Gallegos, & Extremera, 2016). The enhancement of instructional tactics is useful in achieving higher physical activity levels. Some research has demonstrated the essence of physical education teachers’ training programs in enriching tutors’ motivation techniques so as to improve their students’ drive, thereby raising learners’ consciousness by being physically responsive

(Cheon et al., 2014). In the opinion of Olivares et al. (2015), parental control is more important than physical education instructors’ means of encouraging adolescents to engage in physical activities. Since parents play such an important role in their children’s development and socialization, parental involvement may be an important complement to teachers’ efforts to improve students’ participation in sports (Shen et al., 2018).

Parents’ Silva et al. (2014) and teachers’ Standiford (2013) roles in enhancing physical education among teenagers are deemed crucial. Parents’ involvement in the adolescents’ physical efforts has a direct effect on the teenagers’ physical activity levels during childhood and as grown-ups (Shen et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2014). Gracia et al. (2016) in their study’s findings revealed that friendship habits are likely to influence teenagers’ physical activity participation. A study by Jin (2014) also revealed that sports ideals, sports ability, the effects of leisure time, jobs, family support, social sports environment, construction of community sports organizations and community sports facilities influence women's participation in sports. Against this background, the present study seeks to examine stakeholders’ views on factors influencing female participation in sporting activities at the senior high school level in Bia West District.

Upon reviewing related literature, it appears a study that examines the shared views of parents and teachers together on the factors influencing female participation in sports is limited. Kay (2006) supported this assertion that, locally, there exists little evidence of shared views of parents and teachers together on the factors influencing female participation in sports. There is a need for a study that will compare, analyze and elicit views from stakeholders such as parents, teachers as well as students on factors influencing female participation in sports.

As a consequence, researchers have developed an interest in unpacking the barriers to students’ participation in sports and physical education. A

quantitative study by Akindutire and Oyeniyi (2012) showed that the lack of quality sports equipment and facilities, academic stress, and university sports policy were all significant barriers to female participation in sports at the university level. A study by Somerset and Hoare (2018) disclosed that time and cost were key barriers to participation in sports. Nevertheless, most of these studies were conducted outside the shores of Ghana as a consequence a study is needed within the Ghanaian context to determine whether similar or differing findings would be unearthed.

Bia West District is one of the districts in Ghana where minimal funds are allocated for sporting activities, particularly among adolescents in senior high schools (Bia West District Assembly, 2018). This claim is supported by the fact that the youth team which qualified for the district games at Takoradi could not partake in the games because of the lack of funds. This situation does not befit a district whose vision is to be an enviable district with an enhanced standard of living for its inhabitants, as participation in physical education and sports is one of the means of improving the lives of residents (Bia West District Assembly, 2016). In addition, Bia West District was chosen because individuals with varied cultural backgrounds, and educational levels among others attend school in the area and also boast of a youthful population whose desire for success is unyielding. Again, there have been several instances where very few individuals particularly female athletes participate in numerous events/disciplines during school sports. As a consequence, female teams forfeit end up or forgoing certain games on the grounds that these few female athletes who participate in almost all the events and disciplines are either overstretched or overused. For that reason, they become extremely tired and cannot cope with the situation any longer thereby abandoning participating in the rest of the events which is a worrying spectacle that needs to be addressed. Therefore, the current study seeks to bridge the gap in literature by examining parents, teachers and students' views on factors influencing

female participation in sporting activities at the senior high school level in Bia West District.

Research Questions

The study is guided by these main research questions:

- What is the level of SHS female students' participation in sporting activities in Bia West District?
- Which factor will significantly influence SHS female students' participation in sporting activities in Bia West District?

METHODS

The quantitative descriptive survey design was used in the study. With this design, a questionnaire was the sole instrument for collecting data from female students, their parents (either father or mother) and the teachers in the three senior high schools in the Bia West District. A census was employed to select the sample namely students, parents and teachers. A census is deemed appropriate, because, it is attractive for smaller populations (Israel, 2013). The study maintained the confidentiality of information by ensuring respondents' information given was kept private. The researcher ensured that none of the information provided was used against them or found in the public domain. More importantly, approval was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Cape Coast and the head of all three senior high schools in Bia West District prior to data collection. In addition, a consent letter was also made to be signed by students, teachers and parents while some parents who could not sign were made to thumbprint the consent form. In all 408 female students, 77 teachers and 408 parents (either mother or father) formed the sample size for this study.

The data were collected through the use of 5 5-point Likert scale questionnaire that was face and content validated by three teachers and the supervisor. The questionnaire was captured under parental influence

(3 items), facilities and equipment which detailed (6 items), academic stress factor (5 items), motivation factors (2 items), religion (3 items), Misconceptions (5 items), lack of sports skill foundation (3 items), Social role of females (3 items) and psychological factors (5 items) resulting in a total of 33 items. The data was scored based on the average of the items with an average score of 3. An average of less than 3 indicated a disagreement while an average above 3 showed an agreement. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the scales. The items formulated for the questionnaire were scrutinized to ensure that they were focused on the substance of the literature in order to maintain validity.

Experts from the Department of Physical Education, College of Education Studies of the University of Cape Coast, who are well-versed in sports and physical activities double-checked the content and face validity of the instrument to ensure that it was free of ambiguities. The frequency count and percentage were used to estimate the number of occurrences of a given variable. One-way ANOVA was used to examine the differences among stakeholders regarding their views on factors that influence female participation in sports at an alpha level of 0.05 from two tails. Linear multiple regression was used to analyse the factors that will significantly influence female participation in sports. Regression was used because it is able to predict the extent to which the independent variables affect the dependent variable

RESULTS

Level of SHS Female Students' Participation in Sporting Activities in Bia West District

The responses from the students indicated that the female students' participation in sporting activities is low according to WHO (2005). That is the total participation of female students in sporting activities during the last 7 days is low accounting for 325(79.7%) of the respondents, 60(14.7%) respondents perform sporting activities between 5 days and 7 days while only 23(5.6%) of the respondents perform sporting activities for more than 7 days. The average number of days female students participated in sports is 4 days which is low participation according to (WHO, 2005). In finding out the number of days students used to do vigorous physical activities like heavy lifting, playing soccer, netball, handball, volleyball, and fast bicycling for at least 10 continuous minutes, the researcher found out that 347(85.0%) perform this activity for less than 5 days while only 31 respondents representing 7.6% of the respondents perform these activities for more than 7 days. To find out the number of days female students used to do moderate physical activities like carrying light loads, and bicycling for at least 10 minutes, the study found out that 343 students representing 84.1% of the respondents carried out these activities for less than 5 days while only 38 respondents representing 9.3% of the students carry out these activities. Finally, 204 students representing 50.0% of the respondents walk for less than 5 days in the week, while 140 female students representing 34.3% walk 7 days or more. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Level of SHS Female Students' Participation in Sporting Activities

Level of Activity Participation	Below 5days	5 or more days	7 or more days
1. How many days during the last 7 days did you do vigorous physical activities like heavy lifting, playing soccer, netball, handball, volleyball, and fast bicycling for at least 10 continuous minutes?	347(85.0%)	30(7.4%)	31(7.6%)
2. How many days during the last 7 days did you do moderate physical activities like carrying light loads, and bicycling for at least 10 minutes?	343(84.1%)	27(6.6%)	38(9.3%)
3. How many days during the last 7 days did you walk continuously for at least 10 minutes at a time? This includes walking to school, walking from one place to another, and any other walking that you did solely for recreation, sports, exercise or leisure.	204(50.0%)	64(15.7%)	140(34.3%)
Total	325(79.7%)	60(14.7%)	23(5.6%)

Overall mean (3.6), Standard deviation (2.1)

Factors That Will Significantly Influence SHS Female Students' Participation in Sporting Activities

From the results, it can be discerned that approximately 76.8% of the variation in the factors influencing female students' participation in sports is explained by the variations in the independent variables (Parental Influence, Facilities and equipment, Academic Stress, Motivation, Religion, Misconceptions, Lack of Sport Skill Foundation, The Social Role of the Female, Psychological Factor, Biological Factor and Physical Factor). Since the F-calculated is in the region ($p < 0.05$), there is evidence from Table 3 that at least one of the independent variables influences female students' participation in sports. The regression model 1 is shown as follows:

$$FA = 1.06 + 0.191P + 0.173FE + 0.193AS + 0.256M + 0.185R + 0.188MC + 0.188LSSF + 0.218SRF + 0.178PSF + 0.171BF + 0.157PS$$

From the regression model 1, when Parental Influence (P), Facilities and Equipment (FE), Academic Stress (AS), Motivation (M), Religion (R), Misconceptions (MC), Lack of Sport Skill Foundation (LSSF), The Social Role of the Female (SRF), Psychological Factor (PSF), Biological Factor (BF) and Physical Factor (PS) are zero, the

estimated mean value of factors influencing female students' participation in sports (FA) is 1.06. The coefficient, 0.191 measures the mean change in the average value of factors influencing female students' participation in sports as a result of a unit change in the Parental Influence when the effect of Facilities and Equipment, Academic Stress, Motivation, Religion, Misconceptions, Lack of Sport Skill Foundation, The Social role of the Female, Psychological Factor, Biological Factor and Physical Factor are held constant.

Also, the coefficient 0.173 measures the mean change in the average value of factors influencing female students' participation in sports as a result of a unit change in the Facilities and Equipment when the effect of Parental Influence, Academic Stress, Motivation, Religion, Misconceptions, Lack of Sport Skill Foundation, The Social Role of the Female, Psychological Factor, Biological Factor and Physical Factor are held constant. In addition, when the effects on Facilities and Equipment, Parental Influence, Motivation, Religion, Misconceptions, Lack of Sport Skill Foundation, The Social Role of the Female, Psychological Factor, Biological Factor and Physical Factor are held constant, a unit change in the Academic Stress results in 0.193 increases in factors influencing female students' participation in sports.

In addition, the value (0.193) indicates that for every unit change in Academic Stress, the mean change in the average value of factors influencing female students' participation in sports will increase by 0.193 when the effects of the Facilities and Equipment, Parental Influence, Motivation, Religion, Misconceptions, Lack of Sport Skill Foundation, The Social Role of the Female, Psychological Factor, Biological Factor and Physical Factor are held constant etc.

Also from Model 1, Motivation appears to be the strongest predictor of factors influencing female students' participation in sports; the Social role of

the Female appears to be the next predictor of factors influencing female students' participation in sports followed by Academic Stress in that order while Physical Factor was the least predictor of the factors influencing female students' participation in sports. This means that Motivation is a critical factor regarding female students' participation in sports followed by the Social role of the female while the Physical Factor was the least factor that influenced female students' participation in sports. In conclusion, for female students to participate adequately in sporting activities, the Motivation and Social roles of females must be critically considered.

Table 2: Regression Analysis on Factors Predicting Female Students' Participation in Sports

Variable	Coefficients of predictors	Standardized Coefficients	Sig	F(sig)
Intercepts	1.055			18.961(0.00)
Parental Influence		.191	0.00	
Facilities and equipment		.173	0.00	
Academic Stress		.193	0.00	
Motivation		.256	0.00	
Religion		.185	0.00	
Misconceptions		.188	0.00	
Lack of Sport Skill Foundation		.188	0.00	
The Social Role of the Female		.218	0.00	
Psychological Factor		.178	0.00	
Biological Factor		.171	0.00	
Physical Factor		.157	0.00	

Multiple R = 0.867, R² = 0.752, Adjusted R² = 0.768, Standard Error = 0.723 Significant at $P < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

In reference to Research Question One which sought to determine the level of SHS female students' participation in sporting activities, the study's findings reveal that female students' participation in sporting activities is low according to WHO (2005). This finding is not surprising because in Ghanaian senior high school level, SHS female students have to be forced and persuaded to engage in sporting activities. The evidence is clear when it comes to inter-house sporting competition among the students. The house masters of the various houses have to apply force to select their players for various sporting activities. Some of the

reasons for female students' low participation in sporting activities may be a result of wrong or erroneous perception that sporting activities are the preserve of males. In addition, society sees female students who engage in serious sporting activities as awkward and this discourages most of the females from engaging in sporting activities. In addition, the social roles of females in Ghanaian society could account for their low participation in sporting activities. This is because in Ghanaian society small/little boys are always given football while girls are given baby toys and other items which indicates that females are to be in the kitchen and produce children. Finally, but not least, Ghanaian

society places much premium on the childbearing of females. Females who are unable to give birth within a certain period after marriage are discriminated against by Ghanaian society. One of the reasons why females feel reluctant to engage in sporting activities is that they may not be able to give birth. To increase student's participation in sports, all these factors need to be addressed.

This is because all the items measuring the number of days in which females engage themselves in sporting activities were all less than 5 days which is classified to be low according to WHO (2005). This contradicts the study carried out by Shen et al. (2018), which employed the Ecological Systems Theory to confirm that the beliefs about parental social assistance explain students' enjoyment and participation in sports. The Ecological Systems Theory is therefore employed to explain the variables used in this current study. However, the current study is in line with the following research findings:

Despite the known advantages of participating in sports, studies show that, in Europe, sports participation is reduced across all ages in the countries (Riddoch et al., 2004). Subsequent research in the United Kingdom disclosed that from ages 4-17 years, 55% of children participated in PE and school sports, but the percentage decreased when they progressed from primary (ages 4-12 years) to secondary (ages 12-18 year) school (Quick et al., 2010). This trend continues around the world with global approximations revealing that 80% of children who are 13 to 15 years old do not meet the recommended threshold of physical activity, including sports (Hallal et al., 2012), and these low levels of physical activity among children and adolescents are inadequate to realize health benefits (Rosenkranz et al., 2012).

Research evidence suggests that boys partake more regularly in sports than their female counterparts from childhood to adolescence (Craig, & Mindell, 2013; Townsend et al., 2015). Gender concerns persist in some schools, despite advancements in

physical education studies and curricula aimed at involving females in physical education. Murphy et al. (2014), advocate for policies and programs to assist teachers in implementing gender-sensitive strategies in their daily practice. In essence, the study's findings are in sync with several research findings.

Finally, to explore the extent to which the parameters; Parental Influence, Facilities and equipment, Academic Stress, Motivation, Religion, Misconceptions, Lack of Sport Skill Foundation, The Social role of the Female, Psychological Factor, Biological Factor and Physical Factors contribute to predict factors influencing female students' participation in sports. The findings revealed that Motivation appears to be the strongest predictor of factors influencing female students' participation in sports; the Social role of the Female appears to be the next predictor of factors influencing female students' participation in sports followed by academic stress in that order while physical factor was the least predictor of the factors influencing female students' participation in sports. This means that Motivation is the most influential factor in female students' participation in sports followed by the Social role of the female while physical factor was the least factor that influence female students' participation in sports. This is in sync with the first research question which asserted that all stakeholders agreed that motivation is a factor that affects female students' participation in sporting activities. Finally, all stakeholders agreed that physical factors affect female participation in sporting activities, however, the regression model indicated that it is the least factor that affects students' sports participation. The findings of the current study contradict the previous study:

New South Wales Department of Sports and Recreation (2000) research study revealed that high-class facilities lure and motivate some individuals to utilize them. The proper management of facilities and the environment around them may hitherto motivate or discourage individuals from actively

participating in sports. Onifade and Owojaiye (2010) discovered that for any successful physical education and sporting programs, the quantity and quality of facilities and equipment must be always present.

Torkildsen (2000) opined that the existence and non-existence of facilities and equipment, their handiness, quality, pricing, structure, and policy seem not to have a significant impact on involvement in recreation. Carson and Webster (2019) additionally attested that equipment and facilities are very critical in recreational centres, as they help in physical advancement, excite creativity and offer avenues for other exercises to take place. Facilities and equipment are of necessity to students and therefore are very imperative since they serve their recreational interests. Facilities like playing fields and gymnasiums entice athletes to partake in sports. Once more the call for accessibility and top-notch facilities and equipment is unavoidable. Awosika and Olusola (2014) in Onotago believed that facilities provide a platform for students to rehearse techniques learnt in physical education classes and sports festivals. This explains why facilities and equipment should always be intact throughout the year.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that SHS female participation in sporting activities was low. To this end, participating in P.E. tutorials and lessons will ultimately influence SHS female students' participation in sporting and physical activities. Therefore, SHS female students' level of sports participation would eventually increase when they partake in activities that pay attention to their capabilities.

The findings also indicated that there exist differences in views between stakeholders with respect to factors influencing SHS female students' participation in sporting activities. This means that students, parents and teachers held different views with regard to what influences a female student to

participate in sporting activities. For example, parents and students agreed that academic stress, lack of sports skill foundation, the social role of females, psychological factors and physical factors affect female participation in sporting activities while teachers disagreed with these factors. Thus, there should be conscious efforts in dealing with such factors from parents and students themselves to enable SHS female students to participate in sports.

Finally, the findings indicated that motivation is the most influential factor that influences SHS female students' participation in sporting activities. Motivation as a factor affecting female sports activities was agreed upon by all stakeholders (teachers, parents and students). If students are not motivated in physical education and for that matter find it a mind-numbing and wearisome adventure, they obviously adopt and develop negative perceptions toward it. Therefore, it is imperative to suggest that physical and sporting activity programs at the SHS level will have meaningful results when adolescents are motivated and encouraged enough to participate in physical education and sporting activities when they experience positive cognitive and affective outcomes as a result of their participation. To ensure that SHS female students are motivated to participate in physical and sporting activities, parents and P.E. tutors should support and provide avenues and opportunities for every student to realize his or her full potential irrespective of their abilities.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education through the district director of education in Bia West District should make sports participation more attractive by way of focusing on motivation and providing facilities and equipment for the various schools to increase female participation in sports. Also, Stakeholders should be educated on the debilitating effect of misconceptions to help support female students to participate in sporting activities. Finally, females

should be motivated by their parents, teachers and colleagues in Bia West District to actively partake in sporting activities since their involvement in sports keeps them fit. That is there should be incentives for females to aid them in participating in sports.

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Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The author declares no potential conflict of interest.

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Ethical Approval

Ethical clearance for this study was sought from the institutional review board of UCC (ID number: UCCIRB/CES/2020/49). Permission was also obtained from the heads of all three senior high schools in the Bia West district.

Informed Consent

Teachers, students and parents were made to sign or thumbprint consent forms prior to the data collection. They were also assured of confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Authors' Contributions

Stephen Baidoo conducted the study, collected and analyzed the data and wrote the manuscript Dr. Daniel Apaak supervised the whole work and both reviewed the manuscript.

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