

An Investigation Into The Low Participation Of School Going Girls In Physical Education Activities In Port Loko Secondary Schools- A Case Study Of Portloko Catholic, Maforki Agricultural Islamic And Schlenker Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

It is absolutely true that secondary school girls' participation in physical Education activities in Port Loko Township is very low because they are occupied with house hold chores, they have less time to participate and enjoy physical education activities. Therefore, the participation of girls in physical education activities seeks more attention and can be maximized by providing girls relevant education and training to promote their participation for the development of the society. The main aim of the study is to find out the low participation of school going girls in Port Loko Township .There are major factors that hinder and militate against the participation of girls during physical education activities such as: The teachers, biological, cultural, social, physiological, economical, Religious factors and school factors.

INTRODUCTION

Physical Education is an essential activity to man. The ancient people like the Greeks, the Romans involved in physical activities. Even though they did not know the values derived from it as in modern life, they believed that physical activities help in the building of strength which was necessary for a man to be engaged and trained for it. All early states of the world had this aim in doing physical activities.

In the training of physical activities in those days, women were not included. They have their role of looking and taking care of the home and children. This idea of not involving women in physical education activities is a worldwide belief. They are to be protected from all harm and danger and in doing masculine activities. However, in the wake of literacy and the coming of the

industrial revolution, women began to take part in a small scale, and had developed gradually. They are employed mostly on sedentary jobs, -like the police, military, piloting etc.

In the present day, in advanced countries the idea of not involving women in masculine jobs is fast on the wane. The idea of women not doing hard jobs and physical education activities is still high in Islamic and African communities. In Sierra Leone, not many girls in schools and in the communities actively take part in physical education activities. As one moves round in Port Loko Township, one could see athletically built girls that have no interest in physical education activities. With this, it is therefore imperative to investigate the factors militating against the actual low participation of girls in physical education choosing schools as a case study.

BODY

Physical Education is an activity done in order to develop and shape an all-round personality in combining the mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of the human life. When these areas are developed it means giving the total experiences through which knowledge is obtained, skills developed. Values and attitudes formed. Through physical education, talents are formed and developed. It taps the talent of the individual. Physical Education improves on the potentials and personality development in order that the individual can improve in life.

On the economic side, physical Education can help a country in making a strong and competitive economy that can match up with problems of development and can adopt to the changing market and technical condition in the world economy. A country that engages in physical education is training its people to become sound and healthy, in terms of social, cultural and economic development. Therefore, the social, cultural, economic and moral development of a community depends on the level to which it ensures access and opportunity to all social groups without partiality.

In active learning processes, women (girls) perform self- discrimination in hard subjects like physics, mathematics, chemistry and technology. They have the belief that they are subjects for men (boys). Only a few could cope with these subjects. In this regard one can conclude that physical education is a special subject for discrimination by girls because of its rigorous demands in performance. So this is evidence for the different levels to learning acquisitions which are still major problems in our country among women and men.

Port Loko, though a city still has rural tendencies in behavior and thought that women are not men and therefore they should not do that type of education that educates them through the physical. Therefore looking at boys and girls in Port Loko city, secondary schools going girls they have little interest and access to enter schools, and they do not avail themselves provided at all levels of education, and thereby do not enjoy the benefits of education as boys do. They failed to know that “Physical, Education helps a country to create strong and competitive economy which can efficiently cope with challenges of development and can adopt to the changing market and technological condition in the global economy

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to assess the low participation of secondary school girls’ in physical education activities in Port Loko Township.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the factors that led to the low participation of secondary school girls in- physical education activities in Port Loko Township:
- To investigate the reasons for the low participation of secondary school girls in Port Loko – Township.
- To identify the effects of the low participation of the secondary school girls in Port Loko Township.
- To suggest and recommend suitable solutions for full participation of the secondary school girls in Port Loko Township.

In Sierra Leone like other third world countries, female physical Education participation is undergoing strenuously low, gender bias and poor performance. These are as a result of the society’s discrimination practices against women.

The main aim of physical Education is to develop the whole individual in physical, mental, motor skills, social skills, emotional skills, and moral aspect through physical activities. This aim is not realized by many parents who thought physical activities as more of “play and foolishness”.

Examining the syllabuses of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS), It is said that “physical education is an essential subject matter which focuses on learning in the psychomotor domain and the development of life time patterns of physical activity. Male and female students involved in physical activities develop coordination and abilities useful in work and play, develop ethical behaviors and responsibility of citizenship, self-discipline, and quality of leadership to lead activities in team sports and get opportunities to play with their peers and this contributes to higher academic and social achievements”.

Leonard 11 and Knapp maintained that “the fundamental purpose of physical education is to promote skills through selected physical activities, the establishment and maintenance of competences, attitudes, ideas, drives and conditions which enable each individual to provide satisfactory self-expression and adjustment through individual accomplishment and that contributed to group welfare, through home, Community, state, national and world citizenship experience appropriate for each individual”.

Girls in Port Loko city, secondary schools are presented with the opportunities and facilities in physical education, but are pre-occupied with house hold duties or chores, and so have less time to take part to enjoy physical education activities. In this regard, Fekede Eshete (1997) believes that, “the participation of female students in physical education seeks more attention and can be maximized by providing them access to relevant education and training to promote their participation for the development of the society”

FACTORS THAT DISTURB AND MILITATE AGAINST THE PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE STUDENTS DURING PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES.

The major factors that disturb and militate against the participation of female students during physical education activities are the following

- INADEQUATE TRAINED AND QUALIFIED TEACHERS

One of the main problems of low participation of secondary school going girls in physical education activities in Port Loko Township is that of inadequate trained and qualified teachers. From my investigation to the various secondary schools, I found out that, there are only few trained and qualified physical education teachers. Majority of the physical education teachers are not specialists in this discipline. They do not know how to encourage and

cajole girls to participate in physical education activities. As a result, secondary school girls tend to develop hatredness for the subject and decide not to participate in physical education activities.

- **BIOLOGICAL FACTOR (MENSTRUATION).**

Strenuous exercises did not negatively affect the menstrual circle, nor did menstruation significantly affect physical performance. For many years in diverse communities strenuous and rigorous physical exercises have been strongly believed to delay the menstrual circle. As a result, many girls discontinued playing active sports based on the observation of this monthly circle and its possible delay. Girls experience less physical distress associated with their menstrual cycle when they play sport. Many reports highlight the positive influence of moderate and regular physical activity on the menstrual cycle. There is no doubt that the benefits of playing sports far outweigh the disadvantages in respect of young developing female bodies. There is some correlation between strenuous physical activity and delayed menstrual cycle. For a long period of time there has been such belief that physical exercise has negative effects on menstruation and can in all way round influence girls active participation in various sporting activities.

PHYSICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL INFLUENCE

- It is argued out that the physical fitness of women in sport has always been questioned because of a variety of physiological concerns including the menstrual cycle, (Shaver 1981), reproduction, damage to genitals and breasts. There are some differences in physical and physiological aspects between male and female. These differences have no effects on female participation in different sports. Anatomical and physiological differences are quite apparent between the two sexes particularly after puberty period. Early studies argued that females should not participate in sports, due to the deleterious effects of physical exertion on the frequency of menstruation and the fact that the reproductive organs of female can be affected. These beliefs prevailed for years and later evidence began to prove these early beliefs wrong (Leunes & Nation, 1991) .Pre-adolescence (9-11 years) a stage that involves a slow but consistent form of growth. It is

a calm period just before rapid onslaught of adolescence. The body is undergoing development changes in the skeletal system, muscular system and motor development. Acceptance one's physical appearance and being able to deal with the physical changes involved with many maturity and growth is one of the most crucial development tasks common to most adolescents

- **- IN ADEQUATE TRAINED AND QUALIFIED TEACHERS**
- **PREGNANCY**

Anecdotal evidence shows that pregnancy does not hamper performance of women who choose to participate in sport throughout their lives. Leunes and Nation (1991) stated that Irwin, who was a female athlete, won an Olympic medal in diving when she was four months pregnant. Another example is that of Hays who successfully completed the world championship rodeo as a bare back rider when she was eight months pregnant. It also appears that athletes return to top form quickly rather than after having had children.

- **SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS**

Davies (1996) suggested that during infancy and childhood, children develop attitudes, which are formed through their interaction with their world. Parents and family members play a pertinent role in this regard. As the child develops, school influence becomes more important. When learners are outside the home they are exposed to different behaviors and attitudes. From primary school to senior secondary school, learners make choices, which can build or destroy them as individuals. Individuals adopt attitudes and behavioral patterns and these are internalized. Economic factor, self-concept, family are all **factors** that disturb and militate against the participation of female students during physical education activities.

In addition, It is evidently clear that the social and cultural factors are more prevalent in the Islamic and Arabic states where women are not allowed to drive, ride, a motor cycle or bicycle. As some physical education activities require the exposure of the thighs, the trunk and the face. According to Stivachitis K (1999), he clearly states that “restriction or prevention of girls from physical education participation and recreational activities is an act of discrimination and negligence that violates the enjoyment of their fundamental rights. The promotion of physical education activities for girls is an essential tool to eliminate socially constructed gender stereotype and inequality in our diversified societies..

It will interest researchers to know that the factors that are against female participation in physical education are serious issues and that some researches can be carried out on them adequately to identify them. It is against that back drop this write up focuses on the factors that are affecting the participation of female students in physical education activity in line with Schlenker secondary school, Catholic Secondary school, and Maforki Agricultural Islamic secondary school, in Port Loko Township. It is strongly believed that the Port Loko Township is dominated by Islam and Christian religions that hold very strong views for girls not to participate in physical education activities. They believed that physical education activities are meant for boys and not for girls. It is forbidden for girls from Muslim and Christian homes to let themselves

Physically naked during physical Education activities which is a very serious taboo for religious personalities.

Another reason for girls' low participation in Physical education activities is due to lack of incentives for participants and lack of medical attention in case of injuries. .It is against the above back drop that the participation of girls in physical education activities in secondary schools in the Township of Port Loko is very low.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- The study is of great importance because it serves as eye -opener to those who hold on to traditional beliefs that physical education is a foolish activity.
- The study will help those who have the feeling that physical education is not for girls.(women) to change their ideas/views.
- It will help people to understand that physical education is helpful to girls to gain energy that is so vital in child delivery.
- The study will help people to be aware that physical education helps in maintaining good health, body fit, and stamina to girls.
- It will help people be aware that girls who participate outstandingly would not only get material reward, but socially known.

Some female personalities are holding very important positions in Physical Education activities (sports) worldwide eg. .Aisha Johansen former president of the Sierra Leone football Association, females are now officiating in sporting activities nationally and internationally.

- It will let people know that it is not a just play-play activity but one that is acknowledged all over the world, and had benefited those girls who dared participated..

CONCLUSION

The result of this write up indicates that the interest of female students to participate during physical education activities was less because of biological, Economical, cultural, inadequate trained and qualified teachers, lack of motivation and scarcity of materials.

According to the result of the study, female students find it very difficult to participate in physical education, because of the factors militating against their participation in schools. In addition to that, they have less awareness for physical education subject.

Based on the findings of the study, physical education teacher did not give motivation, tutorial programs for female students. In addition to that, they did not provide equal chance for both male and female students in physical education activities.

The finding of the study indicates that all the three schools selected for the research lack the availability of sports facilities and materials.

RECOMMENDATION

Educating female students has a considerable social return. It is one of the critical path ways to promote social and economic development of the society. This must be a central concern in effort to improve learning achievements, school effectiveness, and positive attitude to PE subject, teacher motivation, education management and issues to resource allocation and availability of that create good environment where female students can participate in physical Education activities As indicated, the participation of female students was not given the due attention it deserves. To resolve these problems, it would be advisable that concerned bodies have to consider the following recommendations:

- Physical education teachers should create awareness on female students, apply student centered teaching approach in order to motivate (encourage) female students in both practical and theoretical class and strongly exercise tutorial programs.
- To increase classroom interaction. Physical education teachers have to encourage and motivate female students to develop positive attitude and to participate in asking and answering questions in PE classes/activities
- During observation, some of the existing facilities were inadequate particularly in the schools. These schools should be facilitated by using the government and the society's resource, buying sports materials, making available water supply and building cloth changing rooms.
- Department heads and principals have to orient and encourage physical education teachers to produce and utilize relevant instructional materials which are locally made to promote the teaching learning process in the field of PE.
- Scarcity of sports materials and sport fields discourage students in general and females in particular, therefore, schools should allocate budget to purchase sport materials including teachers' sports suit, to prepare intramural sport competition and should be included in their annual school plan.
- Ministry of education should evaluate the curriculum of physical education subject, increase the number of periods per week and include physical education subject in metric examination in order to increase the participation of female students in physical education class/activities.
- Further studies should be conducted in this area with all coverage of school.
 - accommodating more students and teachers
 - The ministry of education should organize seminars, workshops, and provide scholarships for physical education teachers.

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