

# Influence of Sports Participation on Academic Performance among Afe Babalola University Student-Athletes

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**Abstract**—The web created by sport in academics has made it difficult for it to be separated from adolescent educational development. The enthusiasm expressed towards sport by students in higher institutions is quite enormous. Primarily, academic performance should be the pride of all students but whether sports affect the academic performance of student-athletes remain an unknown fact. This study investigated the influence of sports participation on academic performance among Afe Babalola University student-athletes. Ex post facto research design was used. Two groups of students were used for the study; Student-athlete (SA) and Regular Students (RS). Purposive sampling technique was used to select 224 student-athletes, only those that are regular in the university sports team training were considered and their records (i.e. name, department, level, matriculation number, and phone number) were collected through the assistance of their coaches. For the regular students, purposive sampling technique was used to select 224 participants, only those that have no interest in sports were considered and their records were retrieved from the college registration officer. The first and second semester examination results of the two groups were compared in 10 general study courses without their knowledge, using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation. Out of the 10 compared courses, 7 courses result showed no significant difference between students-athlete and regular students while student-athletes perform better in 3 practically oriented courses. Sports role in academics is quite significant. Exposure to sports can help build the confidence that athletes need especially when it comes to practical courses. Student-athletes can perform better in academics if the environment is friendly and not intimidating. Lecturers and coaches need to work together in order to build a well cultured and intelligent graduate.

**Keywords**—Academic performance, regular students, sports participation, student-athlete, university sports team.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SPORTS nowadays have become embedded in several areas of our life be it culture, religion, and academics. Participation in sports in the higher institution has also been remarkable over the years with a series of competitions both national and international. One of the challenges that student-athletes at Afe Babalola University has is being able to combine academics with sports. Parents, guardians, lecturers, and other stakeholders in the University system have a different notion of the influence of sports on academic performance.

The usual thought that leads to set back in participation in

sports at a higher institution is whether sports as an activity has a positive impact on other endeavours in life, including academics [1], [2]. Students that participate in sports are exposed to a series of training which add to their knowledge especially towards becoming a better student. It is wrong to assume that sports hinder or promote academic performance without a logical reason or observation of both student-athletes and regular students. Not all students will graduate with good results in the University even though they might work hard and hate sport, at the same time all athletes are aspiring to have a good grade, so the notion that sports are the reason why student-athletes fail is not a justifiable one.

Participating in sports can help improve the physical fitness level of the student, promote his level of discipline and knowledge through exposure to rules and regulation guiding their games as well as providing an avenue for socialization and self-discovery. Most University management understands the need for sports and that is why you can hardly see any University without one or two sports facilities. The controversy has always been to what extent can students participate in it and it will not have a negative influence on their academics. Sports can be very challenging with a lot of training and activities for the student-athletes to the extent that even outside the field, they continue to strive to become a better athlete through mental training, and this kind of enthusiasm if diverted towards their study, they will perform at their optimum capacity. This implies that student-athletes if properly guided, can perform better in their academics.

Afe Babalola University has in a lot of ways demonstrated that sports play a role in national integration, conflict resolution, and intellectual development, but the balance between academics and sports is the responsibility of the lecturer, the coaches, and most importantly the student involved as well. There have been cases of lecturers resentfully making a poor decision for some potential athletes by advising such students to stop participating in sports if they want to have a good grade. Often time some will intentionally fix their test during inter-collegiate sports to discourage some students from participating in it. It is important to understand that student-athletes are not just athletes but a unique population of young adults who lead stressful lives influenced by the unique demands of their lifestyles [1]. It is important not to lead them into frustration, if not such students may eventually not do well in either their academic or sports activities and this will affect their future.

Today, adolescents hardly participate in competitive sports,

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the more reason why obesity is on the increase. In one study, it was found that, even in their unstructured time, fewer than 2% of girls and 6% of boys were physically active during any given school day [3]. For a student to keep up with his or her academics in higher institutions, it is paramount to take care of his or her health, and sports are an avenue to keep the mind and soul together. The result of sports is not just for the period of participation alone but even in the nearest future, its evidence reflects in the posture the individual display. This is the reason why universities all over the world including Afe Babalola University provide sports facilities for their students, so that even during their leisure period they can use them wisely.

Some higher institutions prefer to spend more money on security hoping to reduce thugs and hooligans within the environment, instead of spending money on building adequate sports facilities to engage such students to divert their excessive energy on sports. Combining academics with sports can be a huge task if the student-athlete is under a series of pressure but it can be enjoyed at the same time if the environment is friendly. Sports can influence a sense of coherence or a personal orientation that expressed the way the individual responds to stress in life [4]. Sports will continue to motivate some students because being on a team provides them with a sense of belonging, it is also being used by some students to provide perks or peak experiences that counteract the fear of not being able to survive in life outside of sports [5]. This research work looks at the Influence of Sports participation on academic performance among Afe Babalola University student-athletes.

### *Research Question*

What influence does participation in sports have on academic performance among student-athletes of Afe Babalola University?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a lot of literature and research work on physical activities and their benefits, but the argument here is not that physical activity is not good but the fact that it may affect the academic performance of student-athletes. To be a member of a university sports team is quite challenging and student-athletes need to combine being a student and an athlete within the same environment, time, and duration with other regular students. A study was also conducted to find out the relationship that exists between academic achievement and few other variables associated with school sporting activities [6]. Students were giving at least one hour daily to participate in school sporting activities. In the end, it was discovered that school sporting activities have a positive influence on academic performance and they also improve student-athletes' memory and concentration level. Similarly, sports participation's effect on academic performance both at the individual and institution level was also researched [7]. 254 Arkansas School districts participated in the research and data such as financial reports and report cards were retrieved from the Arkansas Department of Education. The results illustrated

that participation in athletics at the district level does not have either a positive or negative effect on their academics, although at an individual level it was discovered that the participant may have benefited academically. Also, an active participant in extracurricular activity was studied to find out if in any way it hinders their academic activity [8]. Data were retrieved from the Educational Longitudinal study 2002. A two-stage sampling process was used to select 15,362 students from 752 different schools. It was discovered that active participation in extracurricular activity has a positive effect on academic activity. It also increases their sense of belonging and commitment to school activity. Adolescent physical activity was also researched in relation to their school engagement and academic grades [9]. The duration of the research was over a year in order to observe the students even in their next class. The results indicated that students that are involved in at least 2 extracurricular activities are more committed to their academics and also have more sense of belonging towards their school. The academic results of athletes and non-athletes were compared in a study carried out in Kansas High Schools [10]. 139,349 students took part in the research, and they were between grades 9-12. A total of 62,297 active student-athletes were involved. The participant results were collected from the education department and used as data for comparison between student-athletes and regular students. After separation of results for adequate comparison, they found out that student-athletes performed better than regular students.

In another research, the test score of regular students and student-athlete were compared [11]. A total of 186 student-athletes took part in the study of which 125 were male and 61 were female. Questionnaires were filled by all the participants; at the same time, their results were compared as well. Although the researchers concluded that there was no significant variation in their score, it was observed in the questionnaire that regular students study frequently than student-athletes. Another study was also carried out comparing the result of student-athletes competition season and off-season results [12]. The research was more concerned with the time student-athletes spent doing sports, whether or not it affects their results negatively or positively. The researcher found out that there was no significant difference. Also, research was carried out to find out if there is a relationship between sports participation and academic performance among a group of youth [13]. The youth were from two mid-Atlantic high schools. 1,317 youth participated in 2014 while 1,500 youth took part in 2015. They were all between grades 9-12. Their results were used as data and it was retrieved using their identification number. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between sports participation and academic performance. In conclusion, it is definitely difficult to say whether student-athlete might have problems in their academic pursuits or not, but one thing is certain, being a student-athlete is quite demanding and not an easy task.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was an ex post facto research design. Two groups of students were used for the study; student-athletes (SA) and regular students (RS). Students that belong to one of the university sports teams were considered as student-athlete and their records (i.e. name, department, level, matriculation number, and phone number) were collected through the assistance of their coaches. The details are shown in Table I.

TABLE I  
STUDENTS-ATHLETE SPORTS

S/N	Sport	Male	Female
1	Athletics	18	15
2	Badminton	5	3
3	Basketball	14	13
4	Chess	9	8
5	Football	32	26
6	Scrabble	5	5
7	Swimming	13	10
8	Table Tennis	5	4
9	Tennis	6	5
10	Volleyball	15	13
	Total	122	102

For the regular students, a record book was provided at each college office. The books were kept with the college registration officers, for students that do not participate in any sports to fill. Students were requested to fill in the following details in the book during their 2018/2019 first-semester college registration.

- Name
- Department
- Level
- Matriculation number
- Phone number
- If given a better opportunity, would you like to participate in any sport at all?  
Yes  No

After 4 weeks of registration, Table II shows the data retrieved.

TABLE II  
REGULAR STUDENTS DATA

S/N	College	Ticked "YES"	Ticked "NO"
1.	Engineering	38	69
2.	Law	27	38
3.	MHS	32	37
4.	Science	22	49
5.	SMS	45	58

From Table II, only students that show no interest in sports were considered. That is those students that ticked "NO", in the record book, indicating that even under better circumstances; they will still not participate in any sport.

#### Procedure

A total number of 448 students took part in the research. All

the participants had no idea that their results were being monitored. For the student-athletes, purposive sampling technique was used to select 224 students from various sports teams. Only those that are regular in the training were considered. For the regular students, purposive sampling technique was used to select 224 regular students. Only those that ticked "NO", in the record book (above) were considered, that is, students that are not interested in sport. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select ten general studies course results offered by 100L, 200L, and 300L students in the University. The details of the selected courses are shown in Table III.

TABLE III  
DETAILS OF SELECTED COURSES

Course code	Course title	Unit	Semester
GST 111	Communication in English	2	First
GST 113	Logic, Philosophy & Human Existence	2	First
GST 115	Library Study Skill and ICT	2	First
GST 114	Nigeria People & Culture	2	Second
GST 118	History & Philosophy of Science	2	Second
GST 120	Society, Culture & Health	2	Second
GST 201	Peace & Conflict Studies	2	First
GST 203	Government & Political Institution	2	First
GST 212	Introduction to Entrepreneurship	2	Second
GST 301	Practical Entrepreneurship	2	Second

#### Data Analysis

The result of the first and the second semester of the student-athletes and regular students were compared in the general study course. The results were obtained from the Information and communication technology unit of the University through the help of the detailed information retrieved from the participants at the beginning of the session. 448 students' first and second-semester results for the 2018/2019 session were compared using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation.

### IV. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

#### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

TABLE IV  
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER

Gender	SA	RS	Total
Male	122	92	214
Female	102	132	234
Total	224	224	448

The findings of the study as indicated in Table IV revealed that 234 of the respondents were female while the male accounted for 214 respondents.

The findings of the study, as shown in Table V, revealed that the college of engineering had the highest proportion with a frequency of 94 and followed by students from the College of Social and Management Sciences (SMS) with a frequency of 91. The least proportion was the College of Sciences, accounting for 83 students.

TABLE V  
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY COLLEGE

College	SA	RS	Total
Engineering	62	32	94
Law	34	56	90
MHS	32	58	90
Sciences	42	41	83
SMS	54	37	91
Total	224	224	448

TABLE VI  
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL

Level	SA	RS	Total
100	126	132	258
200	74	70	144
300	24	22	46
Total	224	224	448

The findings of the study as shown in Table VI revealed that 100L students have the highest population with a frequency of 258 and followed by 200L students with a frequency of 144. The least frequency was accounted for by the 300L students with 46 respondents.

#### Research Question

What influence does participation in sports have on academic performance among students of Afe Babalola University?

TABLE VII  
INFLUENCE OF SPORTS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Courses	SA		RS		Remark
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	
GST 111	21.58	11.8	20.96	10.68	N. S.
GST 113	21.56	8.54	20.18	8.53	N. S.
GST 115	44.16	16.44	40.30	14.30	SIG.
GST 114	28.56	14.38	28.01	14.24	N. S.
GST 118	28.14	16.14	26.13	18.32	N. S.
GST 120	35.16	8.64	34.15	9.34	N. S.
GST 201	20.16	16.12	20.65	14.38	N. S.
GST 203	21.56	11.10	22.01	12.01	N. S.
GST 212	41.75	15.14	38.25	16.35	SIG.
GST 301	42.95	14.52	36.15	16.63	SIG.

From Table VII, out of the 10 courses compared, 7 courses' results showed no significant difference between students-athlete and regular students while students-athlete perform better in Library Study Skill and ICT (GST 115), Introduction to Entrepreneurship (GST 212), and Practical Entrepreneurship (GST 301).

#### V. DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the influence of Sports on academy performance among Afe Babalola University students. The research question is concerned with whether participation in sports will influence academic performance among students of Afe Babalola University. The result of students that do not participate in sports and those that participate were compared. The finding of the research question as shown in Table VII indicated that out of the 10 courses' results that were

compared, 3 were significant. That is students that participate in sports had a better grade in 3 courses. The only justified similarity that existed among those three courses is the fact that they are practically oriented courses. This, therefore, means that the exposure to practical experienced by student-athletes during sporting activities have a significant influence on their result. This result corroborates the finding of [14]; they discovered that introducing sports to students can give them such skills as teamwork, self-discipline, sportsmanship, leadership, and socialization. When students participate in sports they become better students as they are exposed to more rules and regulations. If the psychosocial climate of sport at school serves to improve athletes' task motivation, athletic identity, and personal autonomy, then this will lead to a positive relationship between sports and academics [15]. This is to attest to the fact why a lot of departments within the university put their practical courses in high esteem. They see such courses as a means of identifying the potentials of their students. It is also seen as a means of mentoring their students towards life after school as far as such a profession is concern. Some of the initiative and creativity develop through sports are not for their sports skill and fitness alone, they can be easily transferred to better use in their academics as well. Being part of an organized school team, practicing several times per week, and representing the school competitively will promote self-esteem, self-concept, and social capital within the student and develop a strong level of school connectedness [16].

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Student-athletes are exposed to physical activities and have shown that it can improve their academic performance especially in the area of practical courses. In sports student-athletes are given goal-oriented activities, which develop their confidence and motivation and allows them to transfer such knowledge to other areas of life including academics and this surprisingly can even develop some learning strategies for study, which will improve their overall performance academically. Sports organizers and coaches in higher institutions must consider the fact that academics are the primary objectives of their athlete and must be ready to assist them in some little ways they can. Task-mastery activities should be encouraged as it will give the student-athletes control over their training and helps to develop self-identity.

It is certain that student-athletes enjoy strength and fitness through regular exposure to sporting activities but they also enjoy good health and this can help them to withstand academic pressure like prolong reading or countless assignments. The benefits of higher institution sporting events is quite impressive and students at one point or the other need to be involved be it indoor or outdoor sports. Management of Higher Institution sports must endeavour to provide adequate facilities and equipment for their students. The school sports program must be made compulsory for all students as this can also improve their time management and other skill which will eventually be useful in other areas of their academics.

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