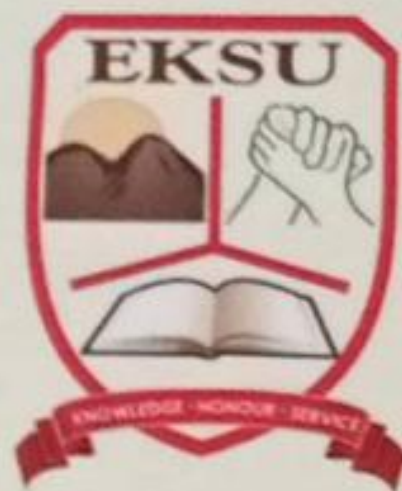


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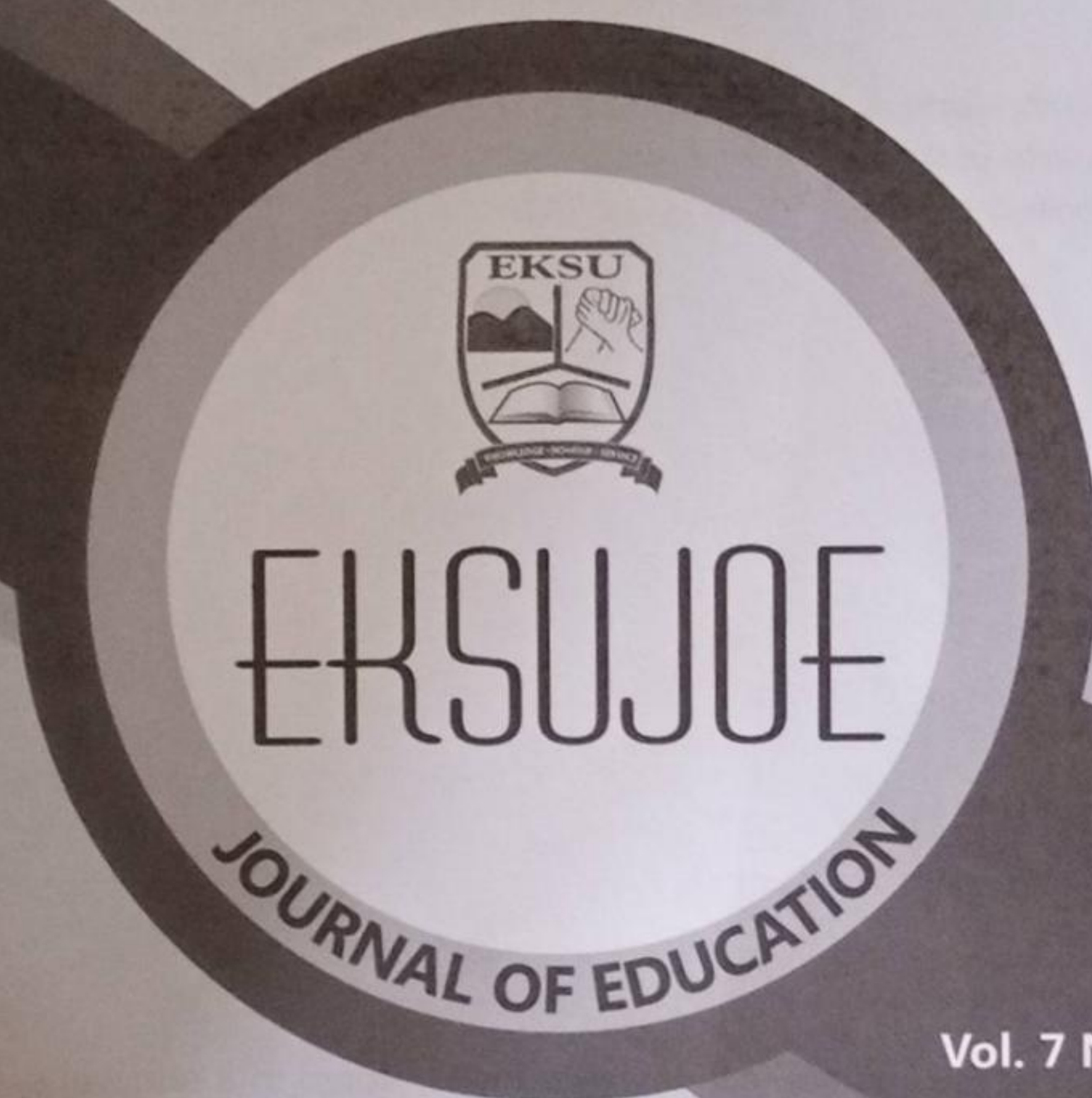
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SPORTS AS A PREDICTOR OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AMONG ATHLETES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Ajadi, M.T., Falaye E. K, and Adesoye, A.A.

Department Of Human Kinetics Education, University Of Ilorin

Abstract

This study investigated sports as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State. A descriptive research design of survey type was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprises all professional athletes and coaches (both active and retired). A multistage sampling technique involving purposive and random sampling techniques was used to select 150 respondents for the study. The research instrument used for this study was a researcher structured questionnaire of Likert rating scale format. The instrument was validated by three lecturers in the Department of Human Kinetics Education, University of Ilorin. The reliability level of the instrument was established through test re-test method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A correlation coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. The instrument was administered by the researcher and four trained research assistants. The data collected were analysed using inferential statistics of chi-square. All hypotheses for the study were tested at 0.05 alpha level. Findings from the study revealed that, marketing sports products commercialization of viewing soccer matches and participation through professionalism in sports significantly predicted socio-economic empowerment among athletes. Based on the finding of this study, the researchers recommend that government needs to create enabling environment for people to engage in selling of sports products such as selling of jersey, soccer boots as a way of economic empowerment through loan and commercialization of viewing soccer matches should be incorporated into the poverty alleviation programme of the government. There is also the need for government and other stakeholders in sports industry to educate people, especially the youth, on how they can develop a career as a result of professionalism in sports this could serve as a socio-economic empowerment among athletes

Keywords: Sports, Socio-economic, Empowerment, Predictor, Athletes

Introduction

Sports are social events that cannot be performed in isolation which serve as a societal force that provides opportunity for regular interaction among social institutions (Ajiboye, 2004). Sport is a competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the use of complex physical skills by an individual. According to Oloyede (2004), sports generally entails bringing people (participants, officials and spectators) together at the level of organization, they are usually brought together at the community, state, national and international levels through their active participation in sports. Onifade (2001) pointed out that sport is an

institutionalized competitive activity that involves active participation of athletes to compete with others in a championship which brings about winning prizes and laurels. He further observed that sports as a social institution teaches and reinforces societal beliefs, norms and values which assist in socializing athletes into major cultural and social behavioural patterns of various societies. Akinsanmi, Ogungbenro & Oloyede (2005) stressed that contemporary sport grew for the sake of excitement, amusement, strength and physical fitness. Sports is also used as an avenue to appreciate the ethical values in a country.

Success in sports sometimes brings about national impact such as prestige, status and respectability. Charfa (2016) stressed that, the contribution of sports to the growth of the nation's economy can be viewed on daily basis in terms of strengthening the social relations of people and empowerment of professional young athletes as a means of sustaining their livelihood through the money realized from sports. He further highlighted the following as the contribution of sports to the society.

- Increase in the number of sports professionals such as athletes, coaches, managers, medical staff and sport marketers.
- Increase in financial investment in sports e.g. marketing sports products, such as; selling of soccer boots, jersey, canvas and other sports equipments as a means of business enterprises that often empower people to be self reliant in the community.

Fasan (2004) observed that the growth of sport and sports marketing with the attending global economy will not only allow the government alone to contribute the largest amount of money to sports development but through active participation of athletes.

Bucher and Krotee (2002) pointed out that sports marketing is designed to meet the needs of sport consumer through exchange processes. Pitts and Stotler cited in Awosika (2005) opined that sport marketing is the process of designing and implementing activities for production, pricing, promotion and distribution of sport products such as soccer boots, canvas, jersey and other sports equipment to satisfy the needs or desires of consumers. Sullivan (2004) marketing is a continuous process by which the objectives of the sports organization or its programmes can be achieved.

According to National Policy of Sports (2009) sports as a socio-economic empowerment is the acquisition and utilization of skills on a particular sport or game that elevates an athlete to the point that he/she could be reckoned with and

which also paves way for such an athlete to be placed on the pay roll of an organization or government. Sullivan (2004) pointed out that, the fundamental aim of the sport marketing through selling of sports products is to satisfy the right and the needs of sports consumers with sports products and services that would offer benefits to them in terms of making profits.

The concept of professionalism is a commitment to appropriate conduct and competence where ethics, image, service and effort are paramount and from which excellent result from the combination of ability, insight, vision qualification and experience are observed (Smith & Stewart cited in Awosika 2005). The concept of professionalism in sports is the process by which an athlete is employed by an organization in order to earn his/her living through participation in sporting competitions that would attract money and making profit. It is however sad to note that although professionalism in sports management is almost a decade old, there are still many amateur athletes with poor skills and questionable competences in the various sports.

Charfa (2016) stressed that as the sports industry is growing in economic power, it also attracts commercial interest that can influence any private organization to partner in term of sponsoring events. The development of entrepreneurship through commercialization of viewing soccer matches on Nigeria league, English premier league, Spanish league, Serial and others are ways of empowering people in a businesslike manner (Kelly, 2008). However the economic policy programme that are geared towards self reliance for individuals are programs initiated by open apprenticeship scheme such as commercialization of viewing soccer matches and graduate employment programs which make business so easy for entrepreneurs to acquire the needed funds.

The researcher observed that sports as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment has really raised the hope of thousands of athletes both active and retired in terms of self

empowerment, improving socio-economic status by generating as income for the athletes to maintain their standard of living especially in the study area.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the enormous benefits attached to sports such as sports marketing, professionalism and commercialization of viewing soccer matches as a means of self reliance among people many people, including the elites still regard sport as nothing but mere playing and waste of time. The researcher observed that sports as an institution serve as a embodiment of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in the study area. He also observed that athletes in the study area are found of living a reckless life after retirement despite their achievement in sports. The researcher is therefore interested in investigating sports as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were generated and tested for this study.

1. Marketing of sports product will not significantly predict socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.
2. Commercialization of soccer viewing matches will not significantly predict socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State
3. Participation through professionalism in sports will not significantly predict socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine sports as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State. This study specifically investigated marketing of sports

products, commercialization of viewing soccer matches and participation through professionalism in sports will predict socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Methodology

A descriptive research design of survey type was employed for this study. The population for this study comprised all professional state athletes and coaches both active and retired within the study area. A multistage sampling technique involving purposive and random sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the study. All the 50 coaches, both retired and active were purposively selected while 10 athletes were randomly selected from 10 different games in the study area. In all, 150 respondents were systematically sampled for this study. The research instrument used for the study was a researcher structured questionnaire of the Likert rating scale format. The instrument was validated by three lecturers in the Department of Human Kinetics Education, University of Ilorin. The reliability level of the instrument was established through test re-test method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. A correlation coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. The instrument was administered by the researcher and four research assistants trained for the purpose of the study. The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistic of chi-square and all the formulated hypotheses for the study were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Hypothesis One: Marketing of sports products will not significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Table 1: Chi-square analysis of responses on whether marketing sports products could act as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Row total	Cal. χ^2 value	df	Crit. χ^2 value	Dec.
1.	Marketing of sports products such as selling soccer boots and canvas often contribute to unemployment among athletes	20	30	60	40	150				
2.	Marketing of sports product such as selling of jersey and other sports equipment usually serve as self reliance among athletes	35	50	45	20	150				
3.	Selling of sports equipment to earn a living by athlete usually empower them to be financially buoyant but not to be self reliant	27	32	53	38	150	18.92	9	16.92	Hypothesis Rejected
4.	Selling of sports equipments and other items within the stadium has contributed to greatly to the rate at which athletes become self reliant	25	35	20	70	150				
Colum Total		107	147	178	168	600				

P<0.05

Table 1 showed a calculated X^2 value of 18.92 against the critical X^2 value of 16.92 with degree of freedom (9) at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated X^2 value is greater than the critical X^2 value, the null hypothesis that stated that marketing sports product will not significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State

was rejected. This means that marketing of sports product significantly serves as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Hypothesis Two: Commercialization of viewing soccer matches will not significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State

Table 2: Chi-square χ^2 result of responses on whether commercialization of viewing soccer could act as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Row total	Cal. χ^2 value	df	Crit. χ^2 value
1.	Commercialization of viewing soccer matches is a way of enhancing social crime among youth which often hinder the athletes empowerment	15	40	60	35	150	21.34	9	16.92
2.	Commercialization of viewing soccer matches is a way of empowering athletes	10	20	49	71	150			
3.	Showing of English premier league matches and other league usually encourage athletes to get involve in social crime which often hinder self reliance through sports	35	25	55	35	150			
4.	Commercialization of viewing soccer matches can not be used to correlates with socio-economic empowerment through sports	28	33	62	27	150			
Colum Total		88	118	226	168	600			

Hypothesis Rejected

P<0.05

Table 2 revealed the calculated X^2 value of 21.34 and critical X^2 value of 16.92 with a degree of freedom (9) at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated X^2 value is greater than the critical X^2 value, the null hypothesis that commercialization of soccer viewing soccer matches will not significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State was rejected. This implies that

commercialization of viewing soccer matches significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Hypothesis Three: Participation through professionalism in sports will not significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State

Hypothesis Rejected

Table 3: Chi-square χ^2 result of responses on whether participation through professionalism in sports could act as a predictors of socio-economic empowerment

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Row total	Cal. χ^2 value	df	Crit. χ^2 value	Dec.
1.	Participation through professionalism in sports often make athletes to lose focus by choicing a career in sports	19	40	51	40	150				
2.	Professionalism in sports such as coaches, team managers usually contribute to high rate of unemployment among youth especially athletes	29	46	60	15	150				
3.	Professionalism in sports can not be used as a socio-economic empowerment because it usually makes athletes to be liability on others in the society	8	35	58	49	150	39.09	9	16.92	Hypothesis Rejected
4.	Those that choice a career in sports as a sport manager or coaches often become self reliance that enhance socio-economic empowerment	31	22	54	43	150				
Colum Total		87	143	223	147	600				

P<0.05

Table 3 revealed the calculated X^2 value of 39.09 against the critical X^2 value of 16.92 with degree of freedom (9) at 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated X^2 value is greater than the critical X^2 value, the null hypothesis that stated that participation through professionalism in sports will not significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State was hereby rejected. This implies that participation through professionalism in sport significantly serve as a predictor of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Discussion of the Findings

The result obtained from testing hypothesis one revealed that marketing sports product significantly predict of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in the study area. This result supported the finding of Sullivan (2004) who affirmed that marketing sports products such as selling jersey, soccer boots, canvas and other sports equipment often contribute to socio-economic empowerment among athletes. Similarly, Bucher and Krotee (2002) stressed that marketing sports product is usually designed to meet the needs of sports' consumers in terms of selling sports equipment at

avoidable rates with prompt profit that would enhance socio-economic status of an athletes.

The result obtained from testing hypothesis two indicated that commercialization of soccer viewing matches significantly predicts of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in the study area. This result is in line with the view of Charaf (2016) who stressed that sports industry is growing in economic power, it also attracts commercial interest that can influence any private organization to partner in term of sponsoring events. Commercialization of viewing soccer matches on Nigeria league, English premier league and Spanish laliga are ways of empowering people in a businesslike manner.

Also Kelly (2008) observed that, the economic policy programme that are geared towards self reliance for individuals are programs initiated by open apprentice schemes such as commercialization of viewing soccer matches and graduate employment programs that make business so easy for entrepreneur to acquired the needed funds.

The result obtained from testing hypothesis three indicated that participation through professionalism in sports significantly predict of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in the study area. This result tallied with the view of Smith & Stewart, (1999) cited in Awosika (2005) observed that professionalism in sports is the process by which an athletes is employed by an organization in order to earn his/her living through participation in sporting competition that would attract money making profit professionalism in sports often empowered athletes to choice a career in sports such as becoming a successful coach, professional athletes and stadium manager and lot more.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusion were drawn; it could be marketing of sport products concluded that; commercialization of viewing soccer matches and participation through professionalism in sport are all good predictors of socio-economic empowerment among athletes in Kwara State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government needs to create enabling environment for people to engage in sports marketing by selling sports products such as jersey, canvas, soccer boots and other sports equipment as a means of socio-economic empowerment by giving soft loan from banks with low interest rate.
2. Commercialization of viewing soccer matches should be incorporated into the poverty alleviation programme of the government so as to empower people in the society.
3. Government and other stakeholders in sports industry need to educate people, especially the youth on how they can develop their career to become professional in sports as this would empower them socio-economically.

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