



WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SPORT: A CORRELATE OF BEING WELL TO PLAY WELL

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Abstract:

This paper is focused on participation of women in sport as a strategy of enhancing their ability to function effectively. It identified the influence of women involvement in sport on their ability to perform their role in the society. It solicited for participation of women in sport at all levels. It highlighted the benefits of women involvement in sport and strategies of motivating women into sport. It concluded by pointing out that since sport has the potential of giving women the leverage to increase their ability to function, they should be encouraged to delve into sport-related careers to enhance specialization. It explained 'being well' as the exhibition of satisfaction through effective performance of responsibility while 'to play well' is the demonstration of efficiency and high productivity. It recommended that policies which promote equity in sport participation should be implemented at all levels and opportunities for women involvement in sport should be expanded at all levels to encourage mass participation.

Keywords: women participation, being well, play well

1. Introduction

Sport has been conceptualized variously by different scholars. Watt (2004), described sport as all physical activities aimed at improving fitness, mental wellbeing and form social relationships while sport according to Choochoo (2011), is a competitive physical activities engage in by participants to improve physical abilities, skills and to provide entertainment. Earlier, Onifade (2003) posited that sport is a structure and institutionalized activity that has the components of competition and prowess on a continuum between play and work. This paper conceptualizes sport as organized physical activity which requires physical and mental exertion for exhibition of skills and wellbeing. Sport has become a cherished social activity globally. It is a valued aspect of every society and a vital instrument for national growth. Sport provides a healthy atmosphere for actualization of national potentials (Nwankwo, 2008).

Sport is gender friendly since it offers opportunity for identification and actualization of individuals' potentials and aspirations in other spheres of life. Sport impacts on every dimension of participants' life. (Nwankwo & Deema, 2016). In the words of Cohen (1993), sport itself has no gender affiliation.

It is obvious that the level of participation of women in sport is yet to afford them the required opportunity of maximally actualizing their potentials in sport. This situation is due to no fault of theirs. History has it that women were not given the opportunity of participating in early Olympics. In reaction to this, Defrantz (1993), posited "sport is our birthright" according to her sport provides individuals opportunity to set their goals and accomplish them. In agreement, Dickson (2015) asserted that sport is an entitlement for everyone which implies equal opportunity of participation for all. The deprivation of women in sport is still evident. For instance, the obvious difference in quality and size of prizes won by women in competitions involving their men counterparts speak for themselves. Monetary prizes for women in sport are lower than that of the men in the same sport (The Uni Tutor, 2017). Also, women professionalism in sport is yet to gain required recognition. The rationale for these denials and deprivations are yet to be revealed. However, women have been coping with these situations even if they negatively impact on performance and wellbeing of women especially those who are actively involved or desire to be involved in sport.

This paper is soliciting for active participation of women in sport at all levels to actualize the principle of equity. The application of this principle will facilitate effective harnessing of the enumerable benefits that accrue from sport to women in particular and the society at large. Apart from the fact that women participation in sport has the potential of affording them good health which would enable them to bear and nurture healthy and vibrant children for the society, they would contribute directly to the societal growth in various ways. Nwankwo and Deema (2016), posited that sport participation makes women more viable in the society. This assertion agrees with the fact that women really need to be in good health, (being well) through participation in sport in order to perform their role effectively (play well) in the society.

2. Significance of Women Involvement in Sport

'Being well to play well' captures the picture of the need for women involvement in sport in order to leave up to their responsibilities. Participation in sport promotes wellbeing. Wellbeing according to Dein (2009), is the general evaluation of ones quality of life. It is a positive outcome of people's perception of themselves that proves that their lives are going well (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). World Health Organization (WHO) (2017) conceptualized wellbeing as the ability of an individual to realize his potentials, cope with normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to his community. This paper conceptualizes wellbeing as an individual's overall feeling of good health, satisfaction and safety.

The phrase 'to play well' expresses the action that 'wellbeing' stimulates. It demonstrates an individual's response to 'wellbeing'. In other words, when an individual has the feeling of wellbeing (being well) he exhibits it through 'play.' Play in this context could be in its conventional concept or its application in other spheres of life. In which ever context it is used, wellbeing is a requirement for effective participation in any form of play which could enhance functionality. this paper is further advocating that women should be involved in sport at all levels to enable them develop the level of wellbeing that would enhance effective performance of their role in the society.

Women have a lot of roles to perform in the society and participation in sport at all levels would enhance their ability to function effectively. The benefit of women participation in sport cannot be overemphasized. Precisely, it among other things promotes all-round fitness, breaks monotony of daily functions, enhances sense of belonging as it elevates level of socialization and improves creativity and self-actualization among women. These attributes enables the women to play their roles well and achieve efficiency and high productivity

3. Motivation of women into sport

In order to effectively motivate women into sport, they should be appointed to serve in advisory capacities of the government. Senne (2016) observed that leadership positions in sport are skewed towards men. An acceptable percentage of sport governing boards and Federation members should be women to encourage their input at advisory level. This will have a positive impact at the participatory level.

Some women are professionals in sport administration/ management but are yet to be given the opportunity to exhibit their knowledge. If men who might not be professionals in this area have been administering/ managing sport all along, why not try women who are professionals to demonstrate their skill in sport administration/management. Most of these women have a lot to offer to the society in sport industry. If women participants are convinced that their fellow women are involved at the helm of affairs in sport, their confidence will be boosted and their performance enhanced. In the same vein, women should be motivated into sport organization, coaching and officiating to give women participants a relaxed atmosphere to compete.

Involvement of women at higher levels of sport will motivate the younger ones to be involved at the lower levels with the expectation of graduating to the higher levels. It will encourage younger women to identify role-models which they would aspire to replicate. The younger women would take sport as a career they can find fulfillment in. Most importantly, early involvement in sports would afford the girls the opportunity to socialize positively which would influence their development and make them better women.

The challenges women are facing in sport as masculinised sector can be overcome if they are properly motivated into involvement with the expectation of maximizing the benefits which are both personal and societal.

4. Conclusion

It is obvious that women have suffered a tremendous set back in sport sector due to no fault of theirs. Now that it is evident that women can function effectively, all hands should be on deck to make this a reality in order to be part of the advocacy to erase societal ugly reflection on women. Sport industry has grown and is still growing; women should not only benefit from it but contribute and be part of the success story of the industry. Women should be motivated into taking careers in sport in spite of men domination in sport-related careers as the era of men domination is phasing out. Therefore, women should take-up courses in sport-related fields that will enhance specialization in sport so that they would appropriately and sufficiently utilize the opportunities as they open-up.

'Being well' is indeed a requirement 'to play well'. In as much as being well may conventionally connote good health, it most importantly in the context of this paper include exhibition of satisfaction through effective performance of responsibilities. Involvement in sport gives women the leverage to increase their ability to function in every area of life to the satisfaction of all. 'To play well' connote efficiency and high productivity which are the outcome of involvement in sport. To play well, women need to be totally fit, creative and zealous to achieve. These attributes can be realized through involvement in sport. Women being well will definitely enhance their ability to play well.

4.1 Recommendations

- 1) There should be sponsorship for women who show interest in sport-related careers and programmes by the government, cooperate bodies, women organization, etc.;
- 2) Women who are involved in sport should be given more publicity;
- 3) Incentive for women in sport should be more attractive;
- 4) Illustration depicting the benefit of sport to women should form part of marketing strategies in sport;
- 5) Opportunities for women involvement in sport should be expanded at all levels to encourage mass participation;
- 6) Government, Cooperate bodies, Philanthropists and Women Organizations should be involved in organized campaign on the need for women involvement in sport;
- 7) Policies that promote equity in sport involvement should be implemented at all levels.

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