



**ASSESSING THE ROLES OF SPORT IN MITIGATING
THE RISING POVERTY AMIDST SUBSIDY REMOVAL
AMONG THE YOUTH OF EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA**

**Scholastica A. Orji¹,
Patricia C. Ngwakwe¹,
Nkechi C. Njoku²,
Patrick Eni Eluu²,
Michael Joseph Anyaeru¹,
Jude N. Nwafor⁴,
Ben N. Ohuruogu¹,
Nome Ujebe⁵,
Emmanuel O. Ogueri⁶,
Rosaline Alor⁴,
Ngozi Onuenyim⁴,
Martin O. E. Nwoba⁷,
Kenneth Adibe Nwafor⁸,
Christian O. Aleke⁴ⁱ**

¹Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki, Nigeria

²Department of Arts and Social Science Education,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki, Nigeria

⁴Department of Physical and Health Education,
Ebonyi State University College of Education,
Ikwo, Nigeria

⁵Department of Business Management & Entrepreneurship,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki, Nigeria

⁶Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education,
Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

⁷Department of Public Administration,
Faculty of Management Sciences,
Ebonyi State University,
Nigeria

⁸Department of Mass Communication,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki, Nigeria

Abstract:

Sports can be beneficial to people globally, particularly Nigerian as nation, in alleviating poverty, economic recovery and job creations. The paper assessed the roles of sport in

ⁱ Correspondence: email christian.aleke2020@gmail.com, christian.aleke@yahoo.com

mitigating the rising poverty among the youths of Ebonyi State, amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 73690 youths in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State. The sample size of the study was 125 selected using the topman method. A semi-structured questionnaire titled, "Roles of sports in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi State". Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The result of the study indicated that sports could be used to mitigate the rising poverty amidst subsidy removal among the youth of Ebonyi State Nigeria. There are entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths and there are opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that the government at all levels should organising sporting competitions at all the tiers of the government for youth's talent development and that there is a need for building facilities and equipment in all the local governments in Nigeria to enhance youth's sports development.

Keywords: sports, subsidy removal, rising poverty, mitigations, youths, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Sports can be beneficial to people globally, particularly Nigerian as nation in alleviating poverty, economic recovery and job creations amidst the backdrop of subsidy removal (Eze, 2015; Cunningham, 2024). Research has reported that the positive impact of sports in positioning the country's economy on the part of recovery and job creation is vast (Cunningham, 2024). Findings from the research analysis show that sports contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), aiding employment opportunities, and it has an indirect multiplier effect that pertains to improvements in "public health" and "reduction in crime rates" (Cunningham, 2024). The study revealed the interplay between sports and economic development and how it helps in formulating policies to promote sustainable economic growth. Sports have also contributed "0.19%, 0.31% and 0.33% to the Nigerian GDP in 2019, 2020 and 2021" respectively and this trend has continued to impact positively in the Nigerian economy as the sports market in Nigeria is increasing (Cunningham, 2024).

The term sports can be viewed to cover all forms of physical activity that promote good physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. It includes games, entertainment, recreational or competitive sporting events, as well as sports and traditional games (Vasil, 2018). European Sports Charter (2012) opined that sports are all forms of usually competitive physical activities or games which through casual or organised participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability and skills while providing enjoyment, fun and happiness to the participants. Sports in Nigeria facilitate

“physical growth and development, mental development, emotional development and social development.” On a broad scale, getting many children and adults into physical education allows them to develop essential life skills. Physical education is not solely a path to becoming an athlete; it can also instil vital life skills, such as hard work and dedication. The study reveals that this could have a wider effect on the nation by fostering a collective identity and reducing poverty via increased productivity (Cunningham, 2024).

Nigerian youth have faced numerous challenges amidst subsidy removal recently which range from the rising rate of inflation, high rate of unemployment, and increase in poverty and suffering. Subsidy removal by the current administration under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2023 is directly impacting the people’s welfare and the country’s economy leading to hardship, high cost of living and rising spate of poverty among the people especially the youths (Olisah, 2020; Yunusa, Yakubu, Emeje, *et al.*, 2023). Fuel subsidy refers to the government's effort to pay for the difference between the pump price of fuel at the petrol station and the actual cost of importation of the product. This affords the people the opportunity to afford fuel at a lower price so as to help ease the burden of its people especially lower income groups (Civic Keypoint, 2023). However, the removal of fuel subsidies is when the government no longer pay for the difference between the pump price and the actual cost of importing fuel anymore. Since the government stopped in 2023, fuel prices increased, thereby resulting in higher transportation expenses, food prices surge, and increase in general prices of critical goods and services and a decrease in the purchasing power of low-income households, and exacerbating poverty levels, especially among the youths (Yunusa, *et al.*, 2023).

Poverty has been viewed as a social condition that is characterized by the lack of resources necessary for basic survival or necessary to meet a certain minimum level of living standards expected for the place where one lives (Crossman, 2019). People in poverty conditions typically experience persistent hunger or starvation, inadequate or absent of quality education and health care, and are usually alienated from mainstream society (Yakubu, Abdullahi, Maijama, and Musa, 2023). Poverty is an ailment that is often identified among developing and underdeveloped countries like Nigeria, Ghana and many other African countries (Muman, 2016). This is so because the human and natural resources of these countries are either not adequate or are not fully developed and not properly utilized (Effiong, 2018). Therefore, there is a need for poverty eradication for sustainable development.

Research has documented the impact of sports in eradicating poverty in society, especially among the youth (Onah, 2019; UNDP, 2017). Participation in sporting activities would help in mitigating the rising poverty associated with subsidy removal among the youth. Poverty reduction is a set of measures, both economic and humanitarian, that are intended to permanently lift people out of poverty. Onah (2019) stated that poverty eradication is various strategies adopted by individuals, and private and government

organisations to reduce poverty among people in society. Sports is one of the tools proven to be useful in the reduction of poverty among people, especially the youths.

Sports programs can reduce poverty by promoting health, education and diplomacy in developing countries. The Foundation for Global Sports Development creates and supports numerous programmes around the world to uplift youths through sports. There are several important channels by which sports can influence economic development and eradication of poverty especially among youths in this subsidy-removal era. These include in the areas of; development of new talent (Ogbonnaya, 2015). Sports is all about talent. Talent is an exceptional natural ability, especially in a particular activity, such as music, or sports among others. Sporting events play a vital role in talent development. During sporting activities, talents are developed such as comedians, musicians, commentators, etc. Talent development refers to the efforts that foster learning, employee engagement, talent management, and employee development to drive organizational performance, productivity, and results. To some, talent development is an important tool for unleashing human potential (Vannier and Faith, 2019; Orji, 2014). To others, it is a set of practical capabilities for driving organizational results by creating the processes, systems, and frameworks that advance training and development strategies, succession planning, and learning opportunities. As the problem of the pandemic raged, most people lost their jobs. Most youths have found solace in sports.

According to Orji (2014), most youths who would have been roaming the streets are engaged in sports activities, especially in the Western world. This means that talent management is one of the ways of engaging youths meaningfully in the post-COVID-19. Sporting activities have engaged many youths in one occupation or the other. Most youths have found jobs in sports administration, management, sports businesses and sports equipment/facility repairs. These include in the areas of preparing sports grounds, and building of viewing centres where people will watch their favourite clubs playing in both domestic and national leagues for where they will pay. For example, in many areas both in rural and urban areas, sports centres including betting centres are lucrative.

Sports is beneficial to participants, spectators and sports lovers. As every sport has its own equipment and facilities for playing it, youths can engage in the construction of these facilities (such as swimming pools, basketball courts, handball courts, football fields and goalposts). Construction of these facilities can be self-engaging.

Sales of sports equipment and supplies is another area youths can engage in for self-reliance. There is much equipment required for sports activities such as jerseys, shotput, javelin, discus, balls, covers, and protective equipment (helmet, shin guards, gloves, etc.). Sales of equipment and supplies used in sports can be a veritable business venture for youths. Also, during sporting events and activities sports lovers and spectators may wish to eat or drink. This provides sellers especially youths with ample opportunities to make a huge sale. This means that sports events and activities can

improve the economic activities of youths amidst subsidy removal. It can also engage youths in the production and distribution of sportswear and equipment. This means that sports can help in the establishment and development of small and medium-scale businesses, especially in these difficult times.

Sports can indirectly take youths out of the street amidst subsidy removal. Youths can develop skills in repairs and maintenance of sports facilities which could be a veritable way of improving their living standard. According to Okwunaso (2019), the development of skills in the repairs and maintenance of sports equipment and facilities is another way of engaging youths in the post-pandemic era. Youths can develop skills in the maintenance and repair of sports equipment in various sporting centres such as painting, fixing lighting, plumbers and toiletries among others.

Despite all these entrepreneurship opportunities in sports, unemployment especially among youths has been one of the many challenges facing youth amidst subsidy removal. Nigeria has a very youthful population, with over 70 per cent of its population youth. Youth unemployment has several multiplier effects, especially insecurity, and social vices like drug abuse, crime, cultism, cybercrime and armed robbery. It also has the potential to lead to depression and worst-case scenario, poverty. The government's efforts at diversifying the economy towards agriculture and other critical sectors have not yielded much result. As such, sports present an opportunity that can be harnessed to tackle youth unemployment in Nigeria. It is based on this that the study examines the roles of sports in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine assessing the roles of sport in mitigating the rising poverty amidst subsidy removal among the youth of Ebonyi state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined:

- 1) The role of sports participation in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.
- 2) Entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.
- 3) Opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.

2.1 Research Questions

- 1) What is the role of sports participation in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria?
- 2) What are the entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria?

- 3) What are the opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria?

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

The design of the study is a descriptive survey research design. The study adopted the design because it enabled the research to elicit information from the respondents on the roles of sports in poverty eradication among youths of Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State because of the peculiar problem of youths' restiveness that has made the state very insecure for living and economic development.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the 73690 youths in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State (Ebonyi State Population Commission, 2023).

3.4 Sample for the Study

The sample size of the study was 125 selected using the topman method.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was semi structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was entitled: Roles of Sports in Poverty Eradication among Youths of Ebonyi state Amidst Subsidy Removal in Nigeria (RSPEYASRN). This instrument was constructed/designed by the researchers. The instrument contains 15 items. The items on the questionnaire were structured on a modified 4-point Likert scale weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) – 4, Agree (A) – 3, Disagree (D) – 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1.

3.6 Validation of Instrument

The instrument was also validated by two experts in Human Kinetics and Health Education and an expert from the Measurement and Evaluation Department unit of Science Education at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The corrections and modifications done by the experts on some items in the instrument were affected and incorporated before the distribution of the instrument.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

For the testing of the reliability of the instrument, a pilot testing was carried out using 10 athletes from 10 secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu state, after which the results were collated and analysed using the Cronbach alpha formula. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was $r = 0.89$ indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for data collection from the study.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The final copies of the instruments were distributed to the respondents with the help of 2 research assistants who were guided by the researchers on how to communicate with the respondents and deliver copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. These research assistants waited for the respondents to fill out the questionnaires and retrieved them on the spot.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using Frequency Distribution, Mean Score (\bar{x}), and Standard Deviation (SD). Only a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted while a mean score below 2.50 was not accepted.

4. Results

Table 1: The Mean Rating Roles Sports Participation in Poverty Eradication among Youths of Ebonyi State Amidst Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1.	Participation in football could help to eradicate poverty among youths.	3.01	1.1	Accepted
2.	Participation in handball could help to eradicate poverty among youths.	2.92	1.0	Accepted
3.	Participation in table tennis could help to eradicate poverty among youths.	2.73	1.0	Accepted
4.	Participation in track events could help to eradicate poverty among youths.	2.89	0.9	Accepted
5.	Participation in indoor games could help to eradicate poverty among youths.	3.10	0.8	Accepted
	Grand Mean \bar{x}	3.66		

Table 1 shows the mean rating of how sports participation could be used in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The table indicated that all the enlisted items were with the mean scores above $\bar{x} = 2.5$ the criterion for acceptance. The table also had the grand mean of ($\bar{x} = 3.66$) indicated that participation could be used in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean rating of entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
6.	Sales of sports gear could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.0	0.8	Accepted
7.	Acquisition of coaching skills could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.1	0.9	Accepted
8.	Sales of balls could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.2	1.2	Accepted
9.	Sales of sports and protective wears could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.2	1.1	Accepted
10.	Production of sports gear could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.2	1.0	Accepted
	Grand Mean \bar{x}	3.1		

Table 2 shows the rating of entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The table revealed that sales of sports tools could be used in the eradication of sports poverty among youths in Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The table also had the grand mean of ($\bar{x} = 3.1$) which indicates entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria

Table 3: Mean rating of opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
11.	Skills in the repairs of stadium lights could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.1	1.0	Accepted
12.	Skills in the repairs of toiletries in the sports centres could help in poverty eradication among youths.	2.9	0.9	Accepted
13.	Skills in the installation of sports tools could help in poverty eradication among youths.	2.9	0.8	Accepted
14.	Skills in the stitching of damaged sports tools could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.0	1.0	Accepted
15.	Skill in sports facility management could help in poverty eradication among youths.	3.0	0.9	Accepted
	Grand Mean \bar{x}	2.98		

Table 3 shows the mean rating of opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The result from the table indicated that all the items were agreed by the respondents as the opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The result from the table also had the grand mean of ($\bar{x} = 2.98$) to support the claim.

5. Discussion

5.1 Roles Sports in Poverty Eradication among Youths Of Ebonyi State Amidst Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

Table 1 shows the mean rating of how sports participation could be used in poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. Results from the table indicated that participation in football could help to eradicate poverty among youths. This result in accordance with Okwuanaso (2019) who noted that participation in football is one of the most lucrative ventures in this modern time. The result from the study also indicated that the respondents agreed that participation in handball could help to eradicate poverty among youths, participation in table tennis could help to eradicate poverty among youths, participation in track events could help to eradicate poverty among youths and that participation in indoor games could help to eradicate poverty among youths. These results are in accordance with Orji (2014) who noted that participation in field and track events (in sports) has made individual millionaires and attain global recognition. Azubuike (2018) also noted that most youths have made a living through participation in sports in both the local and international arena.

5.2 Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Sports for Poverty Eradication among Youths Of Ebonyi State Amidst Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

Table 2 shows the mean rating of entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The result from the study revealed that youths can develop entrepreneurial businesses in sports through sales of sports gear, acquisition of coaching, sales of balls and production of sports protective wear. These results are in accordance with Onah (2014) who noted that there are entrepreneurial opportunities in sports for poverty eradication especially among youths. The result from Onah (2014) validates the result of the study.

5.3 Sports Opportunities in Facility Repairs and Maintenance for Poverty Eradication Among Youths of Ebonyi State Amidst Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

Results from 3 revealed the mean rating of opportunities in sports facility repairs and maintenance for poverty eradication among youths of Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria. The result from the table indicated that entrepreneurial opportunities in the maintenance of sports facilities include skills in the repairs of stadium lights, repairs of toiletries in the sports centres skills in the installation, skills in the stitching of damaged sports tools and skills in sports facility management could help in poverty eradication among youths. These results were in accordance with Effiong (2018) who noted that skills in the repairs of sportswear could be a way of eradicating poverty among youths especially in Ebonyi state amidst subsidy removal in Nigeria.

6. Conclusion

Sports play vital roles in the development of an economy through alleviation or even eradication of poverty in Nigeria. They supply personnel needed in the nation's institutions, sports councils and recreation centres by imparting skills to them and help immensely in the development of the country, especially in this post-pandemic era. For sports to effectively perform this role well in the post-pandemic era, the government should strategize ways of staging sporting activities so as to help the youths develop their skills in sports for self-reliance.

6.1 Recommendations

From the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) The government at all levels should be organising sporting competitions at all the tiers of the government for youth talent development.
- 2) There is a need for building facilities and equipment in all the local governments in Nigeria to enhance youth's sports development.
- 3) There is a need to enhance the teaching and learning of physical education in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria to encourage the interest of youths in sports activities.

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Ethics Statement

Ethical guidelines for research were followed throughout; in particular, respondents were given written informed consent and were made to know that they were free to withdraw anytime during data collection.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Dr. Orji Scholastica Amuche is a senior Lecturer in Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a research interest in Sports Management.

Dr. Patricia C. Ngwakwe is a senior Lecturer in Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a research interest in Sports Psychology.

Dr. Nkechi C. Njoku is a senior Lecturer in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, with a research interest in Religion.

Dr. Patrick Eni Eluu is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, with a research interest in Social Studies.

Michael Joseph Anyaeru is a Postgraduate Student in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with research interest in Public Health Education.

Dr. Jude N. Nwafor is a Chief Lecturer in the Department of Physical and Health Education, Ebonyi State University College of Education Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a research focus on Public Health Education.

Dr. Ben N. Ohuruogu is a senior Lecturer in Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with research interests in Sports and Exercise Psychology.

Dr. Nome Ujebe is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Business Management & Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Science, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, with research interest in Human Resource Management.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2265-9638>

Dr. Emmanuel O. Ogueri is a Lecturer in the Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, with research interests in Health Education.

Rosaline Alor is a Lecturer in the Department of Physical and Health Education, Ebonyi State University College of Education Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a research interest in Sports Psychology.

Ngozi Onuenyim is a Postgraduate Student in Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a research interest in Physical Education and Sports.

Dr. Martin O. E. Nwoba is a Senior Lecturer in Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria with a research interest in Public Administration.

Dr. Kenneth Adibe Nwafor is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria, with research interests in Journalism and Media Studies/Public Health Communication.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4748-8694>

Dr. Christian Okechukwu Aleke is a University Lecturer in Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. His research focus is on Public Health Education, Occupational Health, and Health Promotion.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2142-5967>

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