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# CONSTRAINTS OF TALENT IDENTIFICATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONAL SPORTS IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Factors hindering talents in tertiary institutional sports were investigated. Variables of academic programme, parental influence, peer group influence, institution sport policy and welfare package were tested among a sample of 170 intercollegiate coaches and sport council coaches in Lagos State, Nigeria. The descriptive research design was used while a validated questionnaire designed in line with a four-point likert scale was used for data collection. Results indicated the entire five variables to be significantly perceived as factors hindering talents hunts in Nigeria tertiary institutional sports.*

## **Introduction**

Talent, is a natural ability to do something well. Talent was described by Abass (2008) as an inherent factor in an individual to perform exceedingly beyond expectation in any activity. It is certain that every human being has one or more talent(s) in him or her. Before the school age, most children are attributed with good sporting talent as they perform different physical activities in one form or the other, such as running, jumping, climbing, throwing and catching. Such children during their school ages can be discovered in the process of hunting for talented student athletes. Talent hunt in sports is the ability of a sport administrator, manager or coach to discover potential athletes among others during participation in sports. A talented athlete could be any athlete that possesses the natural ability to perform exceedingly well in any physical activity.

Before a talented athlete could be identified, there is the need for a sport administrator, manager or coach to observe such a potential athlete very well and also exhibit the act of *in loco-patentis* during their regular sport



training so as to guide the athlete in learning the fundamental skills and also train the student to be more accurate in the execution of the skills.

It is during the teaching and learning processes of the games and sporting activities that individual athletes are identified and discovered to have acquired specific skills and interests in particular games and sports.

When sports skills in the talented student are well developed and promoted by the various experts in the field of sport, to a greater achievable level, such talented students will be able to perform well in sport competitions for the school and at an advanced level of such as under 17 (U17), under 18(U18) and under 20 (U20) football competitions.

Sport in higher institutions provides the opportunity for students with superior athlete ability to cooperate at an advanced level within the framework of carefully defined educational goals so that they can reach their maximum potential (Challdurai and Danychuk, 1985) there are many values of sports in higher institutions. Babatunde (2003), postulated that athletes who represent their countries in both continental and inter-continental sport competitions in the developed countries are mostly from tertiary institutions. Most of these athletes were discovered during intramural sport competitions organized in their various institutions.

Furthermore, Onifade (1990), Okafor (1981) and Omo-osaige (1980) also reported that the values of sports in higher institutions manifest in the fact that the bulk of the athletes that represents a particular country is drawn from the higher institutions. In Nigeria, just like in advanced countries, much of our sports takes place within the context of educational institutions and as a consequence, one would expect that the bulk of our national athletes would be selected from higher institutions as obtains in advanced countries, but this is not the case. In many advanced countries, school sports are organized at various club and district levels, affording the average child the exposure to multifarious sport opportunities. Such opportunities expose them to the acquisition of many sporting skills, which can be used as a guide in channeling them to suitable and selected sports.

At the government level, the established sports councils that cater for talented sportsmen and women are still battling with infrastructural facilities and equipment inadequacy in training the rising sports stars. Sport participation by Nigerian youths is therefore a factor of opportunity in terms of time, economic disposition as well as facility and equipment availability.



The importance of sports to a nation cannot be ignored especially among the youths which serve as prime movers in diverse national issues. Apart from the established fitness and health qualities that sports offer, Fox and Matthew (1984) opined that youths need to seek stress fulfilment avenues for dissipating their excess energy which if not properly diverted may lead to social problems and increased crime rate.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Universities as centers of excellence, apart from the consumption, dissemination and creation of knowledge, are supposed to provide leadership and expertise in all fields of human endeavours, sports inclusive. Nigerian universities have produced experts in the fields of economics, politics, administration, science and technology as well as engineering but are yet to produce sizeable numbers of elite athletes that could wear the country's colour in international sports competitions. Although universities are not saddles with the responsibility of the upbringing of athletes to international standards, national athletes from universities can be better ambassadors than just anybody. Moreso, during several competitions like Nigeria Colleges of Education Games (NICEGA), Nigeria Polytechnic Games (NIPOGA), Nigeria University Games Association (NUGA), West African University Games (WAUG), Federation Internationale Sports de University (FISU) and even NSSF held across the federation, potential and skilful athletes were featured, but not many have been seen to have federation potential and skilful athletes were featured, but not many have been seen to have continuity of grooming and development to higher levels. This study therefore investigated those factors perceived to hinder talent hunts in our various tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. Are academic programme, parental influence, peer groups, institution policy and welfare package perceived as constraints to talents hunts in tertiary institutional sports?
2. Which of these factors significantly influenced talents hunts in tertiary institutional sports?

### **Methodology**

One hundred and seventy (F=63, M=107) respondents made up of 128 inter-collegiate coaches and 42 sport council coaches in Lagos State were selected. The instrument used contained 25 items with responses on a four point likert scale.



## Results

Question 1: Are academic programme, parental influence, peer groups, institution policy and welfare package perceived as constraints to talent hunts in tertiary institutional sports?

**Table 1: Chi-square Analysis of Talent Hunt Constraints**

Variable	Table X2	Cal x2	DF	Significant value	Remark
Academic Programme	5.992	14.803	2	0.001	Sig
Parental influence	7.815	23.942	3	0.000	Sig
Peer group influence	7.815	21.251	3	0.000	Sig
Institution policy	5.992	8.832	2	0.012	Sig
Welfare package	5.992	15.131	2	0.001	Sig

In table 1, the respondents view all the five variables to be constraints of talent hunt in tertiary institutions. The obtained chi-square values of all the variables are higher than the critical values. Likewise, the obtained significant values are less than 0.05.

**Research questions two:** What is the composite effect of independent variables to the dependent variable (talent hunt)?

**Table 2: Composite Contribution of the Independent Variables to the Dependent Variable.**

Multiple R	Multiple R2	Adjusted R2	Std Error of the Est.
0.508	0.258	0.245	0.4169

**Table 3: Analysis of variance**

Source of variation	DF	SS	MS	F	P	Remark
Regression	5	17.731	3.546	20.401	0.00	Sig
Residual	294	51.106	0.174			Sig
Total	299	68.837				Sig

$P < 0.05$



Table 2 shows the prediction of all the five independent variables to the dependent variable. Talent hunt was found to correlate positively with the five predictor variables. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations  $R^2$  of 0.0508, though moderately strong, and a multiple  $R^2$  of 0.258. This means that 25.8% of the variance in the talent hunt is accounted for by all the five predictor variables, when taken together. As indicated on the table, the significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $P < 0.05$  using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom ( $df=5, 294$ ). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded an F-ratio of 20.401 (significant at 0.05)  $F(5,294)=20.401$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) this implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relative contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable (talent hunt)?

**Table 4: Relative Contribution of the Independent Variable to the Dependent Variable**

Variable	$\beta$	SEC ( $\beta$ )	BETA	T-value	P
Academic Programme	-0.069	0.030	-0.122	2.291	0.0023
Parental influence	-0.123	0.030	-0.225	4.122	0.000
Peer group	-0.155	0.027	-0.300	5.758	0.000
Institution policy	0.054	0.044	0.067	1.216	0.225
Welfare package	-0.074	0.029	-0.132	2.548	0.011

$P < 0.05$

Table 4 reveals the relative contributions of the five independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The partial correlation coefficients of academic programme, parental influence, peer influence and institution policy, have negative relationships with talent hunt among the students. The positive value of the effects of institutional policy implies that the various institutions have policies that are favourable to hunting for talents among their students. Using the standardized regression coefficients to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the



explanation dependent variable, student welfare package is the most potent ( $\beta=-0.155$ ,  $t=5.758$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) followed by parental influence ( $\beta= -0.123$ ,  $t=4.122$ ,  $P<0.05$ ); peer influence ( $\beta= -0.069$ ,  $t=2.291$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), student academic programme ( $\beta= -0.074$ ,  $t=2.548$ ,  $P<0.05$ ); and institutional policy ( $\beta=0.054$ ,  $t=1.216$ ,  $P=0.225$ ) in that order.

### **Discussion**

Findings from this study revealed that the welfare package available to student athletes was considered by those coaches to be the most important factor hindering talent hunts in tertiary institutions. It was expressed that very few of those students athletes live on campus or very close to where they can train or have access to sport facilities. The study further revealed that students' accommodation hinders talent hunt.

This study further revealed that there is limited accommodation on campus for student athletes. Most of the tertiary institutions do not have adequate accommodation while some are just non-residential. This situation has led most student athletes to accommodate themselves off campus at a distance to the school sports arena and as a result they spend less time for sport practices and are much more concerned with how to shuttle to and from school.

This finding agreed with Babatunde (2001) who revealed an acute shortage accommodation for students on their campuses and that this has greatly hampered the extent to which students can have the opportunity to take part in schools extracurricular activities like sports. Respondents for this study also expressed that incentives to student athletes are inadequate; hence a hindrance to talent hunt. These findings agree with Mgbor and Obiyemi (2001) who stated that one of the factors that have helped sports in American universities to develop to their present high level is the good reward system and general care of the athletes.

The findings of the study show that students see their academic programme to be a significant constraint to attending or having time for sport activities where they can show case their talents. Morakinyo (1995) in a similar study on student athletes and academic achievement observed that a lot of criticism have been leveled against students' involvement in sports, the basis being that participation in sports adversely affects the academic objectives of the university student athletes. Coleman (1961) and Spardy (1971) observed that participation in competitive sports by students is detrimental to academic achievement. This study found that parental



influence on sports development is not quite encouraging as most parents always discourage their wards by advising them not to be involved in sports while they are in school for academic career purposes. The conservative belief is still there, that whichever students is actively involved in sports is not sound or good enough academically.

The respondents in this study revealed that the loco-parents (lecturers) even worsen the matter as some of them also believe that students who take part in sports are not serious students. Ekpenyong (1986) pointed out that some of these teachers go as far as threaten to fail students who get involved in sports.

The findings of this study agree with the assertion of Smoll (1989) and Sage (1994) that neighbourhoods and peer groups are powerful in influencing sports involvement by youths. Also this study agree with the opinion of Singh (1984) that the kind and amount of encouragement and teaching offered by peers shape the child to pursue and develop certain attributes of life-sports inclusive. Some of the respondents in this study revealed that some classmates and roommates discourage some talented athletes from further involvement.

The responses in this study show that Nigerian Universities have rigid rules on admission which does not give any waver to potential athletes. Morakinyo (1998) observed that the vision 2010 policy advised that the government should provide sports facilities for educational institutions but this has not been done. He concluded that in spite of the fact that education law of this country stipulates that for new tertiary schools to be approved, they must make provision for sports facilities and that all educational institutions should make participation in sports compulsory in the first two years of entry into such institutions of learning.

Onifade (2000) observed that universities in the United States are famous for recruiting talents from all over the world admission policy. Both admission and visa requirements are eased by institutions seeking to admit sportsmen. Nigerian universities have not fully embraced this practice which has seen the cream of Nigerian talents disappear to the United States from where they have to be coaxed into representing their country in major international competitions. It is evident that most athletes rejected by Nigerian universities get admitted into American, British and German universities to become world acclaimed stars.



## Conclusion and Recommendation

Talents that can make this country proud in international competitions are numerous among students in Nigerian higher institutions. The talented students can be nursed to become star athletes if those identified constraints can be reduced or removed completely through the following:

- χ Good welfare packages such as the provision of suitable accommodation, scholarship, and honour awards for potential/talented student athletes.
- χ Special consideration should be given to talented applicants during admission exercises;
- χ Parents should be more enlightened on the benefits of sports participation to prevent them from discouraging their wards from taking part;
- χ Negative influence from the peer group on potential athletes should be discouraged and positively eradicated.

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