

GAMES AND SPORTS AS INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines games and sports as indicators to physical and mental development of the visually impaired individuals using the survey design. Subjects for the study were randomly selected from two schools in Oyo and Lagos States. A set of questionnaire was used to collect data from the 50 subjects surveyed. Findings from the study show significant difference between (i) the visually impaired who participated in sports activities and those who did not; (ii) in independent travelling between visually impaired sportsmen and women and those who were not. But the third finding which was not significant show (iii) different in the technique used in teaching the blind that participated in sports and their sighted counterparts. The results also highlight some adaptation procedure and strategies for teaching physical education, games and sports to the visually impaired. Suggestions on improving visually impaired persons participation in games and sports were proffered.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with varying levels of disability or handicap more often than not, are limited in their ability to physically explore their environment thus experiencing deficiencies in their development of perception. Generally, it will be noted that all learning is expressed in some form of motor response, or the other and as such the modern sports activities and physical education must provide for an environment of varied social and psychomotor experiences for all children. This according to Arheim and Pestolesi (1975), often aids children in successful accomplishment of required school programme.

Osinuga and Onyewadume (1993) state that sports performance in the usually impaired is not accorded the deserved attention in schools for the visually impaired.

Often times, the visually impaired students are exempted from participating in physical and often sports programmes of the school. This is because most of their teachers hardly had any awareness of the technicality involved in their inclusion.

In Nigeria, evidence has shown that the visually impaired students have been exempted from sports and physical education. The resultant effect of this exclusion is the adverse development in mental and physical growth and denying them the opportunity to fully realise their potentials and capabilities.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) offers a framework for understanding games and sports behaviour. Specifically, TRA ensures that an individual's behaviour is under volitional control and can be predicted from intentions (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). This theory implies that behaviour generally follow intentions and will not occur without it. People's intentions are also influenced by other attitudes towards the behaviour such as whether they feel the behaviour is important. It emphasises the "normative" belief people may have, that is, what they think other people (in particular influential people such as peers) would do in a similar situation. From this theory, it can be deduced that before the visually impaired decides to engage in sports, he/she has to consider his/her attitudes towards sports, his/her belief of what other people (for example, school authority, parents, other visually impaired persons) think about his/her involvement in games and sports.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) addresses a dynamic relationship among an individual, his or her social environment and a specific behaviour in question and in this case involvement in games and sports (Bandura, 1986). The school environment has been shown to have important influences on participation in games and sports. SLT clearly states that an opportunity to practise a behaviour do enhance self efficacy. Other means include encouragement from significant others and vicarious learning from

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those who have performed the behaviour (Green and Kreter, 1991). These offer guidelines for developing educational programmes in enhancing self efficacy towards games and sports.

The objectives of this study are

- (i) delineate the roles of games and sports in actualisation of self; and
- (ii) provide recommendation on improving visually impaired's participation in games and sports.

METHODOLOGY

The research which was based on survey design tested three null hypotheses. These are:

- (i) there will be no significant benefit in participating in games and sports by the visually impaired and those that do not participate;
- (ii) there will be no significant difference in independent travelling of blind sportsmen and women and those that do not participate; and
- (iii) there will be no significant difference in the technique of teaching sports activities to the blinds and the sighted.

SUBJECTS

Fifty randomly selected subjects from Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo and Pacelli School for the blind in Lagos. Pacelli School though a primary school was considered ideal for the study. The rationale for choosing the school was that students from this school have been exposed to games and sports at the state and national levels. This is perhaps because the school is one of the first generation of blind schools in Nigeria.

Research Instrument and Administration

The instrument used to correct data was a self constructed questionnaire and the questionnaire were pre-tested for appropriateness. All the twenty items of the questionnaire were related to the subject of the study. Consent was obtained from the school administration before questionnaire administration. The instruments were administered by the researchers and sighted students recruited and trained for the purpose of data collection. The sighted students read out the instructions to the subjects as well as the items on the questionnaire and subsequently documenting their responses.

RESULTS

The data collected during the investigation was subjected to students t-test. In essence, t-test was used to affirm the authenticity of the aforestated null hypotheses.

Hypothesis One

There will be no significant benefit in participating in games and sports by the visually impaired and those who do not participate.

Table 1 reveals the t-test of the differences between the visually impaired who participated in sports activities and the non participants. The table shows that the calculated t-value of 0.02 is less than the t-tabulated of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis Two

There will be no significant difference in independent travelling of blind sportsmen and women and those that do not participated.

Table 1: The relationship between the blind participants and those that do not participate

Group	EX	N	X	S ²	t-cal	t-tab
Participants	4212	27	156	187.4		
Non-participants	184	23	8	110.4	0.02	1.98

Table 2: The relationship between independent travelling of the blind sport participants and non-participants

Group	EX	N	X	S ²	t-cal	t-tab
Participants	2511	27	93	325.5	0.005	2.96
Non-participants	1633	23	71	892		

Table 3

Group	EX	N	X	S ²	t-cal	t-tab
Blind	345	23	15	525	3.00	0.004
Sighted	1269	27	47	577		

Table 2 shows significant difference between blind sportsmen and women and non-participants in independent travelling. From the table t -cal is less than the t -tabulated value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Three

There will be no significant difference in the technique adopted in teaching sports activities to the blind and sighted.

From the Table 3, it shows that the t -value obtained is greater than the critical value, so the hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there exists significant difference in the technique used in teaching the blind that participates in sports and their sighted counterparts.

DISCUSSION

The results from these hypotheses which were accepted unanimously shown the lackadaisical attitudes of this category of people towards sporting activities. The acceptable hypotheses are being corroborated by the level of the participation of the visually impaired in the just concluded Imo '98 where they participated only in 100 metres race only. Nonetheless, it was realised that this lacklustre participation and performance was never the making of the visually impaired but forces outside their capability. Among of her problems that are militating against the visually impaired participation are lack of public awareness, insufficient funding, shortage of qualified manpower, difficulties in adaptation/modification process and gross inadequate incentives.

The unaccepted number three hypothesis, which states that, there exist significant difference in the technique used in teaching the blind sportsmen and women and their sighted counterparts. This is so because, the technique of teaching a blind man that is engaged in sporting

activities should be different from that of a normal individual.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that games and sports played a significant role in the physical and mental development of the visually impaired. So, there is the need to encourage them to participate actively in games and sports.

School counsellors, parents, teachers, government and the society at large should endeavour to promote and reinforce all avenues by which blind students knowledge about games and sports can be enhanced. One way of achieving this is to make physical education compulsory in all schools for the handicapped, right from primary school level.

Also, separate method of instruction for teaching games and sports to blind students should be emphasised, since the findings from this study has suggested that the technique of teaching a blind man that is engaged in games and supports activities should be different from that of a normal individual.

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