

MANAGEMENT OF SPORTS INJURIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETES IN NSUKKA LGA, ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate the management of sports injuries among secondary schools athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study while the instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The population comprised student athletes, games masters and sports council staff in the area. The sample size for the study was 242 respondents. A self developed Sports Injuries Management Questionnaire (SIMQ) was the instrument for data collection. The SIMQ was face-validated by three experts. Four research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The research questions were analyzed using percentage while chi-square was the statistical tool for testing the hypotheses. The results showed among others that: the causes of sport injuries among student athletes included insecurity at sports venues and inadequate sporting facilities were the major causes of sports injuries. The extent of treatment given to the injured athletes indicated majorly withdrawal from the field; athletes left to cater for themselves; immediate first aid and parents/guidance take care of their words. Problems militating against management of sports injuries were, but not limited to lack of adequate funding; inadequate equipment; poor medical personnel and poor training pitches. Some identified measures for improving management of sports injuries included making funds available. The two hypotheses were accepted.

Keywords: Management, Sports, Sports injuries and athlete.

Introduction

Management of sports injuries is a vital aspect of sports organization and administration in the schools which involves careful planning, organizing, controlling and coordinating of sports events to ensure the safety of athletes that take part in various activities for a successful competition and goal achievement. Management entails working with people and utilizing available resources to achieve set goals, which in this case is to ensure proper treatment and rehabilitation of injured school athletes. According to Bernard (2001) management of sports injuries involves putting adequate measures in place for the safety of athletes and successful sports competition at all levels. Aborie (2002) defined management of sports injuries as proactive measures by sports administrators and organizers towards safeguarding the psychological and physical well-being of athletes before and during competitions. Management of sports injuries entails proper planning by sports organizers in ensuring proper handling of unforeseen events during sports competitions (Ugwanyi, 2005; Rechel, Yard, & Comstock, 2008). In a similar view, Olawole (2005) stated that management of sports injuries is the measure being taken to ensure safety of athletes before, during and after competitions. In this study, management of sports injuries is defined as the effective steps taken by Nsukka Local Government Area to ensure proper protection of secondary school athletes that represent it in organized athletic competitions bearing in mind that injuries may occur there-in.

Injuries are usually unforeseen occurrences. According to Yost (2002), an injury is any physical harm or damage to an individual while performing in any activity in the environment. In the same vein, Ojobo (2004) defined sports injury as any kind of damage or hurt sustained by an athlete while participating in sports activities or competitions. The definition of sports injury by Ojobo was adopted in the present study.

Sports have been defined in various ways. Aborie (2000) conceptualized sport as an aspect of physical education in which individuals acquire knowledge and skills in different events in order to develop mentally, physically and socially. In his own view, Rick-Wilkerson (2008) stated that sport is an activity that one does for pleasure which needs physical efforts or skills usually done in special area and according to fixed rules. In this study, sport is defined as physical activity requiring physical effort

and skills performed by students according to fixed rules in special areas otherwise called pitches. How sports are organized among others may make athletes prone to injuries.

Many factors may be responsible for sports injuries. According to Scribe and Burke (2006) lots of injuries are caused by improper management, supervision, poor facilities and equipment, lack of skills by athletes and poor coaching methods by officials. Thus, sports and games which are not well organized and managed are likely to expose athletes to various injuries. Evans (2008) opined that the responsibility of ensuring proper management of sports injuries lies in the hands of the sports organizers which include the Local Government sports council, Head teachers and Games masters of schools, coaches and athletes themselves. They represent the key players in the effective management of sports injuries, before, during and after competitions. Adequate sports organization requires putting in place, proper measures for ensuring availability of facilities, equipment, sports personnel and sound medical arrangement to guarantee the safety and well-being of athletes. This is not only to ensure the safety and fitness of athletes, but also to serve as a motivational factor to them.

The researchers' observation and experience has shown a regrettable situation where student-athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area seem not to be properly treated when they sustain injury while participating in competitions. According to Kambouris (2011), there are lots of cases of poor management of sports injuries among athletes in many sports organisations. Also, sports officials and athletes in a number of councils often complain of medical neglect by Local Government sports councils on issues involving injuries during sports meets in secondary schools. These and other factors may lead to poor motivation, frustration and loss of interest in participating in sports among student-athletes.

An athlete is a sportsman or woman who takes part in an organized athletic competition or events (Bernard, 1991). On the other hand, Evans (2008) stated that a student athlete is an individual selected to represent an institution or school in an organized athletic competition. He further described student athletes are students who represent their schools in local government, state and national organized sports competitions. In this study, student athletes are defined as secondary school students that represent their schools in organized sports competitions beyond intramurals

In the past, some student athletes had either lost some academic years or dropped out of school due to negligence of injuries sustained during sports meets by the local government are not only very discouraging, but counter-productive. It kills the morale and enthusiasm of potential talents to be encouraged to help the council win laurels in both state and national organized sports competitions. It is against this backdrop that the researchers undertook to identify sports injuries are managed among athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area.

Research questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study

1. What are the causes of sports injuries among secondary school athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area?
2. What is the extent of treatment given to injured athletes in secondary school in Nsukka Local Government Area?
3. What are the problems militating against effective management of sport injuries among secondary school athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area?
4. What are the measures to be adopted to improve management of sport injuries among secondary school athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

1. Management of sports injuries among secondary schools athletes in Nsukka L.G.A. was not significantly dependent on category of sports staff (P.E. teachers and sports council staff).
2. Management of sports injuries among secondary schools athletes in Nsukka L.G.A. was not significantly dependent on category of respondents (Staff and Student-athletes).

Methods

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. According to Springer (2010) the design allows the quantitative description of phenomena through collection and analysis of valid data. He described the design as one of the best most straightforward designs in education for the purpose describing what is. The population for the study consisted of 242 respondents which included; 12 zonal sports office staff, 200 student-athletes and 30 games masters and mistresses in the secondary schools

in the Local Government area. The entire population was used in the study, hence, no sampling. However, only 240 correctly filled copies of the questionnaire were used for data analysis. The face validity of the instrument was established by five experts in the Department of Health and Physical Education, UNN. Reliability of the instrument was established using Kuder-Richardson K-R 20 formula. A reliability coefficient of .79 was obtained and the instrument was considered reliable enough for the study. Data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) batch system. Percentages were used to answer the research questions, while chi-square statistic was used to verify the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Responses on causes of sports injuries among secondary school athletes (N = 240)

S/N	Items	f	%
1	Insecurity at sports venues	240	100.00
2	Inadequate sporting facilities	238	99.16
3	Lack of skill by athletes	225	93.75
4	Poor coaching in sports	220	91.66
5	Ignorance of the rules of the game	200	83.33
6	Use of illegal drugs	180	75.00

Table 1 shows that (240, 100%) of the respondents indicated that insecurity at sports venues was the major cause of sports injuries among secondary school athletes. This was followed by (238, 99.16%) respondents who indicated that inadequate sporting facilities were a serious causative factor of injuries among athletes. The table also shows that (225, 93.75%) of the respondents indicated that lack of required skills by athletes was one of the major causes of sports injuries, followed by (220, 91.66%) respondents who agreed that poor coaching in sports was a factor in the causes of sports injuries among secondary school athlete. While (200, 83.33%) of the respondents indicated that ignorance of the rules of the game by student athletes was a causative factor in sports injuries among them. The table also showed that (180, 75%) of the respondents agreed that use of illegal drugs was one of the causes of sports injuries among secondary school athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area.

Table 2: Responses on care of injured athletes (N = 240)

S/N	Items	f	%
7	Withdrawal of the athlete from the field	240	100
8	Athlete left to care for himself	238	99.16
9	Immediate first aid care is given to athletes	235	97.91
10	Parents and guardians take care of their wards	230	95.83
11	Take athlete to hospital	150	62.50
12	Pay medical bill of athlete	100	41.66

Table 2 show that all the (240, 100%) respondents indicated that withdrawal of the athlete from the field was the most appropriate care of the injured athlete. This was followed (238, 99.16%) of the respondents who indicated that the injured athlete was left to care for himself while (235, 97.91%) of the respondents agreed that the injured student athlete is given immediate first aid care. The table also showed that (230, 95.83%) of the respondents agreed that the parents their words. The table also showed that (150, 62.50%) of the respondents indicated that the athlete is taken to the hospital for care while only (100, 41.66%) of the respondents indicated that the Local Government Area paid medical bill of the injuries student athlete.

Table 3: Problems militating against the management of sports injury among students' athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area (N = 240)

S/N	Items	f	%
13	Lack of adequate funding	240	100
14	Inadequate facilities/equipment	239	99.58
15	Poor medical personnel	238	99.16
16	Poor training pitches	235	97.91
17	Poor planning of sports competitions	230	95.83
18	Poor motivation of the council	218	90.83

Table 3 shows that all the respondents (240, 100%) indicated that lack of adequate finding was the major problem militating against effective management of sports injuries among student athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area. This was followed by (239, 99.58%) respondents who indicated that inadequate sporting equipment facilities also was a major inhibiting problem against effective management of sports injuries. The table showed that (238, 99.16%) of the respondents agreed that poor medical personnel was a serious problem against management of sports injuries, (235, 97.91%) indicated that poor training pitches affected management of injuries while (230, 95.83%) of the respondents indicated that poor planning of sport competitions was one of the major problems of effective management of sports injuries among student athletes in the area. while (218, 90.83%) of the respondents indicated poor motivation of the social as a problem affecting effective management of sports injuries in Nsukka Local Government Area.

Table 4: Measures for Improving Management of Sports Injuries Among Student Athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area (N = 240)

S/N		f	%
19	Making funds available for organization of sports	240	100
20	Ensuring proper planning of activities	239	99.58
21	Providing adequate security in sports venues competition	238	99.16
22	Ensuring the use of qualified games masters	236	98.33
23	Ensuring medical fitness of athletes	235	97.91
24	Providing facilities and equipment	230	95.83

Table 4 shows that all the respondents (240, 100%) indicated that making funds available for organization of sports is one of the most effective measures for improving management of sports injuries among student athletes in the Local Government Area. This was followed by (239, 99.58%) of the respondents who indicated that ensuring proper planning of activities is an effective measure while (238, 99.16%) indicated that providing adequate security in sports competition venues is also an effective measures. The table showed that (236, 98.33%) of the respondents agreed that ensuring the use of qualified games masters, (235, 97.91%) on ensuring medical fitness of athletes and (230, 95.83%) of the respondents who indicated that providing adequate equipment facilities are effective measures for improving management of sports injuries among students athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area.

Table 5: Summary of chi-square values on management of sports injuries depending on category of staff (P.E. teachers and Sports council staff)

Mgt. of sports injuries	χ^2 cal	χ^2 critical	P	df	Decision
Causes of sports injuries	1.35	3.70	.05	30	NS
Care of injured athletes	2.27	3.70	.05	30	NS
Problems against mgt. of sports injuries	2.05	3.70	.05	30	NS
Measures for improvement	.97	3.70	.05	30	NS

NS= Not Significant

The chi-square analysis shows that the calculated χ^2 values for causes of sports injuries ($\chi^2 = 1.35 < 3.70$, $p < .05$), care of injured athletes ($\chi^2 = 2.27 < 3.70$, $p < .05$), problems against management of sports injuries ($\chi^2 = 2.05 < 3.70$, $p < .05$) and measures for improvement ($\chi^2 = 0.97 < 3.70$, $p < .05$) were less than the critical χ^2 value. This shows that responses on management of sports injuries among athletes in Nsukka Local Government Area were not significantly dependent on the category of staff (P.E. teachers and sports council staff). This implies that the null hypothesis of no significance difference is not rejected.

Table 6: Summary of chi-square values on management of sports injuries depending on category of respondents (staff and student-athletes).

Mgt. of sports injuries	χ^2 cal	χ^2 critical	P	df	Decision
Causes of sports injuries	.87	3.51	.05	40	NS
Care of injured athletes	1.65	3.51	.05	40	NS
Problems against mgt. of sports injuries	1.81	3.51	.05	40	NS
Measures for improvement	.76	3.51	.05	40	NS

NS= Not Significant

Data in table 6 show that the calculated χ^2 values for causes of sports injuries ($\chi^2 = .87 < 3.51$, $p < .05$), care of injured athletes ($\chi^2 = 1.65 < 3.51$, $p < .05$), problems against management of sports injuries ($\chi^2 = 1.81 < 3.51$, $p < .05$) and measures for improvement ($\chi^2 = .76 < 3.51$, $p < .05$) were less than the critical χ^2 value. This implies that the null hypothesis of no significance difference is not rejected.

Discussions

Findings of the study show that insecurity at sports venues is one of the major causes of injuries among student athletes. This is because; insecure sports venues expose the athletes to injuries of different kinds. Eri (1990) indicated that poor training of athletes on the rules of a game constitute serious problems and can lead to severe injuries during sports participation. Emenike (1992) noted that one way of ensuring injury-free sports organization is to ensure the safety of the environment in which athletes operate. Inadequate facilities and equipment also contribute in causing injuries during sports meets. Most often, lack of required facilities exposes athletes to the use of improvised resources. This finding agrees with O'niel (2002) and Yost (2002) that the use of inappropriate facilities, poor pitches are potential factors for causing injuries in the playing ground. As indicated, poor coaching in sports as well as the athletes' disobedience to game rules, lack of skills and use of performance enhancing drugs lead to sports injuries.

The study revealed that the extent of care given to the injured athletes were immediate withdrawal from the field, application of first aid and often taking the athletes to the hospital. In as much as the above efforts are seen to be fair and just, it is just not enough. The result from the table revealed that the athletes are left to cater for themselves through their parents and guardians who are made to pay the medical bill in the hospitals. This situation does not motivate athletes and their parents and is therefore seen to be counter-productive. Onuchukwu (2003) stated that abandoning athletes to their parents in the face of injuries demoralizes not only the athletes but also their parents and guardians. Hence, the participating athletes get less motivated to continue representing their schools or local government in sports competitions.

The findings on research question 3 revealed that lack of adequate funding is the major problem facing adequate management of sports injuries. The above finding is in agreement with the views of Oyewusi and Ogundari (2002) who asserted that adequate funding and medical personnel are very necessary in sports competitions to ensure proper attention to injured athletes at any point. They also opined that effective planning and coordination is necessary to ensure safety and proper management of sporting events in schools. Straus (2008) stated that lack of facilities, inadequate fund as well as poor planning constituted major problems in managing sports injuries during athletic events.

Findings of the study also revealed that all the identified measures are very critical and important in ensuring effective management of sports injuries among student athletes in the area. The findings show that measures to be taken in order to improve the management of sports injuries among student-athlete include; ensuring proper funding, providing adequate equipment/facilities, proper planning, use of qualified personnel, fitness of the athletes and guaranteeing the security of venues. According to Kambouris (2011) measures to be taken in order to improve the management of sports injuries include; adequate preparation of the athletes, provision of required equipment and facilities at sports venues, ensuring the presence of medical personal and ensuring that the athletes play according the rules and regulations of the games. Onuchukwu (2003) and Rick –Wilkerson (2013) stressed that adequate security management at venues, ensuring the physical, mental and psychological fitness of the athletes and standard officiating during sports competitions help to prevent the occurrence of sports injuries.

Furthermore, the chi-square analysis revealed that the respondents share common view with regard to the management of sports injuries among secondary school athletes in secondary schools in the Local Government Area, therefore, the null hypotheses were accepted as stated.

Conclusion

The study of the management of sports injuries, especially, at the secondary school level is very important now in order to motivate more young ones to participate in sports without the fear of being dumped when injury occurs. Employment of qualified games masters/mistresses is paramount in order to ensure adequate training of the athletes on the skills and rules of the games, and equally ensure the adequate provision of facilities and equipment for the athletes. Also, proper management of sports injuries among secondary school athletes will increase the number of young talents that represent the country at international competitions, with long years to make positive impact before retiring from active sports.

Recommendations

1. State government should make more funds available to the Local government councils for proper organization and management of sports.
2. Local government councils should endeavour to cater adequately for the welfare of their athletes during and after competitions, especially, when there are injuries.
3. Incentives should be provided for both the athletes and the Local government council staff in order to motivate them.
4. Government should ensure adequate training of the games masters/mistresses through periodic seminars and workshops.
5. Finally, athletes caught using performance enhancers should be banned from participating in sports related activities.

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