Improving Students' Enrolment in Physical Education in Senior Secondary Schools through Available Prospects and Career Opportunities in Enugu State: An Expert-Based Cross-Sectional Survey

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Abstract

This study focused on improving students' enrolment in physical education in senior secondary schools through available prospects and career opportunities in Enugu State. It was an expert-based cross-sectional survey conducted in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population for the study comprised 58 PE experts with minimum of master's degree qualification, currently working as academic staff in tertiary institutions. Using a purposive sampling technique, 50 experts were sampled and surveyed. A researcher-designed self-administered instrument titled "Students' Enrolment in Physical Education Questionnaire - SEPEQ" with a reliability index of .91 was used for data collection. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research question, while independent t-test statistics was adopted in testing the null hypothesis at $p \leq .05$. The findings indicated that overall, PE experts considered the proposed strategies such as: organizing routine seminars for all students in the junior secondary school level with strong emphasis on educating them on the available prospects and career opportunities in PE by the school authority, appropriate for improving students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in PE ($\bar{x}$=3.53; SD=.57). There was no significant difference in improving students' enrolment in PE in secondary schools through available prospects and career opportunities based on experts' socio-demographic characteristics (gender, educational qualification, and work experience - $p > .05$). In conclusion, the experts considered organizing routine seminars for all students in the junior secondary school level with strong emphasis on educating them on the available prospects and career opportunities in PE by the school authority among others appropriate. No significant difference was recorded on the appropriateness of the strategies based on socio-demographic variables. Therefore, the need for educational institutions to adopt the validated strategies for improving students' enrolment in PE in SSS becomes very essential.

Keywords: Improvement, Enrolment, Cross-Sectional Survey, Experts, Students

Introduction

Improving student's enrolment in Physical Education (PE) in senior secondary schools (SSS) remains a major concern of the educational institution in Nigeria since evidence reporting zero per cent enrolment exists (Omeje, 2017). Education is an instrument "Par Excellence" for enforcing national development, idea formulation, integration, human interaction and healthy nation (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004; Min-Soo, & Ji-Youn, 2019). As a unique area of specialization, PE plays pivotal role in human development and supports the philosophy of education in developing citizens into sound and effective individuals by ensuring equal access to available prospects and career opportunities particularly in PE (FRN,

2004; Otinwa, 2012). The Active Living Research (ALR, 2019) defined PE as a planned educational programme with organized curricula and instructional methodologies designed to develop and improve individual's sound motor skills, competences, physical fitness, desired behaviour and social attributes such as teamwork, sportsmanship, emotional balance and socially acceptable lifestyle. According to Global Advocacy Council for Physical Activity (GACPA, 2010), PE promotes individual's wellbeing, physical and mental health, prevents disease occurrence, improves social connectedness and quality of life, provides economic benefits and contributes to environmental sustainability. The above assertions are indications that PE forms the integral part of human development, career choices and other prospects which are attainable through students' enrolment in PE classes in SSS.

Unfortunately, available report indicated that there is a complete non-students' enrolment in PE in SSS in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2021; Omeje, 2017). The situation is quite worrisome as it becomes a major concern of researchers and experts in PE to validate appropriate strategies relating to complete understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in PE to improve students' enrolment in PE particularly at SSS level. A pool of studies demonstrating the significant impact of well-validated strategies in improving students' enrolment in different programmes abound (Sabrina et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2019). Specifically, the study explored the appropriate strategies to improve students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in physical education. Furthermore, the study hypothesized that there is no significant difference in improving students' enrolment in PE in SSS through available prospects and career opportunities based on experts' socio-demographic factors such as gender, educational qualification and work experience. It is one of the expectations of the researcher that the outcome of this study would form a viable framework for the adoption of well validated expert-based strategies in SSS for improving students' enrolment in PE particularly in Enugu State.

Materials and Methods

The cross-sectional survey research design was used to achieve the purpose of the study because it produces a snap shot of a population at a point in time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A similar submission regarding the design was also documented by experts (Anam & Ahueansebor, 2017; Joyce et al., 2016).

Enugu State was the area of the study which is located in the South-East zone of Nigeria with 17 Local Government Areas and six education zones via Enugu, Nsukka, Udi, Agbani, Awgu and Obollo-Afor. A good number of secondary schools exist in the state where different subjects are taught including PE (National Policy on Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2008; Post Primary Schools Management Board [PPSMB], 2019).

The population for the study comprised 58 physical education experts with minimum of master's degree qualification, currently working as academic staff in the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Federal College of Education, Ehamufu, Enugu State College of Education Technical (ESCET), and Bishop Okoye University (Departmental Academic Staff Records, 2021). Using purposive sampling technique, 50 experts were sampled and surveyed. The following eligibility criteria guided the sample selection of the subjects (a) must have a minimum qualification of Master's Degree in Physical Education, (b) must be a permanent academic staff in any of the tertiary institutions in the state, and (c) must voluntarily fill out the written informed consent form, declaring interest to participate in the study.

A researcher-designed self-administered instrument titled "Students' Enrolment in Physical Education Questionnaire - SEPEQ" was used for data collection. The SEPEQ was prepared

based on extensive literature review and yielded .91 reliability index in line with the recommendation of other experts (Antonio et al., 2020; Salmon et al. 2019). With the help of five experts, the questionnaire was constructively validated before its application in the study. The instrument which can be completed in less than fifteen minutes, was prepared using simple English language for easy comprehension and was structured into two parts: A and B. While the part A elicited the demographic information of the experts such as gender, educational qualification, and years of work experience, the part B captured indices for improving students' enrolment in PE through career opportunities and prospects with two response options of appropriate and inappropriate. With an official letter of introduction duly signed by the Head, Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, seeking permission to conduct the study, the researcher accessed the experts and also facilitated the process of data collection. The study approval was in line with the stipulated ethical principles, guidelines and regulations for conducting studies involving human subjects as established by the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). In agreement with the experts, the time and date for the collection of the completed questionnaires was agreed. This process availed the participants the ample time and opportunities to critically respond to the items of the instrument as deemed appropriate.

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze and answer the research question while independent t-test statistics was adopted in testing the null hypothesis. The results were deemed statistically significant at $p \leq .05$.

Results

Table 1

Mean Analysis of Appropriate Strategies to Improve Students' Understanding of Available Prospects and Career Opportunities in Physical Education (n=49)

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD
1.	Organization of routine seminars by the school authority for all students in the junior secondary school level with strong emphasis on educating them on the available prospects and career opportunities in PE.	3.78	.42
2.	Occasionally, sending professional physical educators by the Ministries of Education and Sports to secondary schools as delegates to educate and intensify awareness regarding career opportunities in PE.	3.55	.50
3.	The state government in collaboration with school authority arranging scholarship opportunities for PE students at the senior secondary school level.	3.51	.58
4.	Organization of workshops and conferences by the school authorities involving stakeholders in physical education and all students regardless of class level to actively participate and interact on the prospects and career opportunities in PE.	3.35	.72
5.	Planning for students' excursion and visitation by the school authority to sectors where already established physical education professionals are officially discharging their noble duties.	3.47	.65
	Cluster Mean	**3.53**	**.57**

Note: $\bar{x}$ = mean; SD = standard deviation; Appropriate Strategy $\bar{x}$ = ≥2.50; Inappropriate Strategy $\bar{x}$ = <2.50.

Data in Table 1 show that overall, PE experts considered the proposed strategies appropriate for improving students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in physical education ($\bar{x}$=3.53; SD=.57). Specifically, the PE experts above all, considered

school authority's organization of routine seminars for the students ($\bar{x}$=3.78; SD=.42), and assigning PE experts to secondary schools to raise awareness regarding career opportunities in PE as a viable strategy ($\bar{x}$=3.55; SD=.50)..

Table 2.

Summary of Independent Samples t-test showing Significant Difference in Improving Students' Enrolment in Physical Education in Secondary Schools through Available Prospects and Career Opportunities based on Experts' Characteristics (n=49)

Variables	Index	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Std.EM	t	df	p-value
Gender	Male	27	17.85	1.66	.319	0.954	47	.90
	Female	22	17.41	1.56	.333			
Edu.Qual.	M.Sc/M.Ed	42	17.76	1.61	.248	1.160	47	.72
	Ph.D	7	17.00	1.63	.617			
Years of Work	Below 5yrs	9	17.67	1.22	.408	.028	47	.12
Experience	Above 5yrs	40	17.65	1.70	.269			

Note: $\bar{x}$=mean; SD=standard deviation; Std. EM=standard error mean; df=degree of freedom.

Data in Table 2 indicates that there is no significant difference in improving students' enrolment in physical education in secondary schools through available prospects and career opportunities based on experts' socio-demographic characteristics (gender: t=.954, p–value=.90>.05; educational qualification: t=1.160. p-value=.72>.05; years of work experience: t=.028, p-value=.12>.05), since the p–values are greater than .05 level of significant at 47 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. This implies that experts' socio-demographic characteristics did not differ significantly in the appropriateness of the proposed strategies to improve students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in physical education.

Discussion

This is an evidence-based study demonstrating the appropriateness of validated strategies to improve students' enrolment in PE in SSS through understanding of available prospects and career opportunities. The outcome of the study is quite encouraging as it reflected viable strategies based on experts' views to improve students' enrolment in PE. The finding is in harmony with the previous scholars' results on the effectiveness of strategies in improvement students' enrolment in different programmes in their respective studies (Morano et al., 2020; Patrick et al., 2016; Gioia et al. 2015; Anne et al., 2014). Also, no significant difference was recorded regarding students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in PE based on experts' demographic characteristics (gender, educational qualification, and years of work experience). The implication of the finding remains that experts' characteristics did not differ significantly in establishing the appropriateness of the proposed strategies in improving students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in PE. It equally translates that appropriate strategies are essential for improving students' understanding of available prospects and career opportunities in PE. The above findings are expected as they portray the importance enlightening and sensitizing students through organized programmes, such as seminar and conferences on prospects and career opportunities in fields of study. Seminars provide a good platform to have a better understanding of PE as an area of specialization for professional development. In addition,

the role of the State Ministries of Education and Sports promoting PE is paramount as the finding emphasizes the need for the state government to collaborate with school authorities in arranging scholarship opportunities for PE students at SSS level.

Also, through seminars and conferences, PE experts interact with the students and school management with emphasis on critical concerns that will project the image of PE positively. The expected findings demonstrate the need to plan for students' excursion and visitation to sectors where already-made PE professionals are officially discharging their noble duties by the school authority. In accordance with other findings, Aina and Adedo (2013) emphasized the need to expose students to various prospects and career opportunities in different field of studies. The authors reported no significant difference in the perceived causes of students' low enrolment in science in secondary schools based on socio-demographic variables. Also, Mbamara and Eya (2015) linked non-enrolment to programs to lack of understanding of the benefits and gains in the subject area. The authors recommended the adoption of strategies as viable framework to improve students' enrolment in different subjects in schools. Also, no significant difference was recorded on low enrollment based on socio-demographic variables. Similarly, Joyce et al. (2016) indicated the need to adopt appropriate strategies that would improve students' enrolment rates in higher institutions in South Africa. The importance of exposing the prospective professionals to certain areas of useful prospects as reliable strategy for enrolment in different specialties was highlighted. The reviewed studies are similar in content in exploring enrolment in subjects in secondary schools. It is therefore plausible to attribute these peculiarities in the findings to the participants' composition and the appropriateness of the research design used in the study.

The present research records limitations. In this study, only experts with minimum of masters' degree qualification in higher institutions were sampled and studied. Hence, the findings of the study might not be a true representation and stand not to be generalized. Further studies of this kind are needed to explore the views of PE experts in secondary school in other states and Nigeria at large. This study primarily relied on questionnaire tool for data collection. Therefore, there is need to adopt other data collection approaches such as interview schedule and focus group discussion. These measures would allow the respondents to express their views and experiences in a more detailed qualitative manner. The need to explore more socio-demographic variables of the respondents is conspicuously highlighted.

Conclusion

The experts considered organizing routine seminars for all students in the junior secondary school level with strong emphasis on educating them on the available prospects and career opportunities in PE by the school authority among others appropriate. Therefore, the need for educational institutions to adopt the validated strategies for improving students' enrolment in PE in SSS becomes very essential.

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