



Socio-demographic variables as determinants of Violence in Sports among Secondary School Students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Violence in sports has become a global challenge and it has greatly affected sports participation among young people. The objective of this study was to investigate age and gender as determinants of violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey study was conducted on 383 students. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the study sample. The instruments for data collection were a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Determinants of Violence in Secondary Schools Sports Questionnaire" (DVSSSQ). The face validity of the instruments was established and the internal consistency of DVSSSQ was determined using Split half (Spearman-Brown Coefficient Correlation) with indices of .724. Frequency measures and binary logistic regression were used to analyse the data. Results showed that age is a significant determinant of violence in secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone ($p=0.001$). While, gender is a not significant determinant of violence in secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone ($p=0.263$). The study concluded among others that secondary school students aged 15 years and above were 2.39 times more likely to experience violence in secondary school sports than those less than 15 years. Consequently, school sports administrators should create awareness among students on the need for and importance of avoiding violence during sporting activities and endeavour to punish offenders appropriately.

Keyword: Sports, Sports violence, Athletes, Students, Secondary school

Introduction

A fundamental social issue that has an adverse effect on sports participation is violence in sports. Violence in sports has become a global challenge and it has greatly affected sports participation among young people. According to Marwat et al. (2022) violence in sports refers to the harmful, illegal and dangerous physical course of action in respect of all the stakeholders including players, spectators, fans and other concerned ones resulting in physical hurt and injury. Joel et al. (2024) stated that sport is an essential facet of the life of many young people and they engage in it for various purposes.

The effect of violence in sports is totally against the formative nature of sports. Nwaogu (2020) stated various factors that can contribute to sports violence such as personal characteristics of the athletes or fans, situational factors such as competition, rivalry or provocation, social factors such as media coverage, rewards or sanctions. According to Ibraheem and Owoade (2022) violence at secondary school sports could take the form of hurt, fights, and misconceptions among student athletes and sports officials. While, Obilor and Miwari (2021) noted that some of the consequences of sports violence in Nigeria public secondary schools are physical injuries, truancy, psychological trauma, low self-esteem,



dropout, poor academic performance, absenteeism, delinquency, criminality and drug abuse. While, Vertommen et al., (2018) concluded that violence against young athletes in sports results in poor mental health during adulthood. Approximately 45% of young athletes experience violence from fellow contemporary athletes, with 20% experiencing physical violence, 36% experiencing psychological violence and 14% experiencing sexual violence (Institute of Statistics of Quebec [ISQ], 2024).

Nevertheless, other incidences of sports violence have also clutch media headlines in Nigeria Professional Football League. In 2015, Sunshine Stars Football Club (FC) supporters in Akure attacked James Bumkeng, a cameraman with Lobi Stars FC of Makurdi, Nigeria. Sunshine Stars FC needed to win to improve their chances of making it to a continental competition the following season after losing their previous three games against Warri Wolves FC, Kano Pillars FC, and Akwa United FC (Oludare, 2019). Also in 2017, the Nigeria Professional Football League recorded a violent scenario during the first match of the season in the fixture between FC Ifeanyi Ubah and Plateau United FC in Plateau State. The home team's supporters attacked the referees (Akpodonor, 2019). Akpodonor further reported that Kadiri Ikhana went for a league match with his team Enyimba FC of Aba in Kaduna and was attacked by hooliganism, which left him limping after his legs were seriously battered. Also, Paul Umuagu, a referee, and his two assistants were severely beaten by fans in Aba in a fixture between Enyimba FC of Aba and Heartland FC of Owerri. Although there was a draw in the game, Enyimba fans were not happy and took their dissatisfaction out on the referees. All three men were critically injured and lying on the treatment table by the time the dust settled. Due to crowd violence, the Nigerian league is overshadowed by low attendance compared to the English Premiership, La Liga in Spain, the German Bundesliga, Italian Serie A, and even the South African ABS Premiership (Akpodonor, 2019).

In Enugu State, the story of an unsafe sports environment is the same. According to Nwobodo and Udebunu (2013), friction resulted between the students of Command Secondary School and Government College both in Enugu State towards the end of a football match competition. The friction resulted in the serious injury of 15 students, while school possessions worth millions of naira were damaged. One will ask; where were the security personnel? How were the students able to get machetes and other weapons for the clash? This indicates the security challenges in most of the public secondary schools in Enugu State amongst athletes. Obilor and Miwari (2021) suggested that to address and manage sports violence, it is imperative to involve athletes in sports management, provision of adequate security, establishment of clear rules and penalties, proper education of sports officials, players and spectators, among others.

Athletes are male and female individuals who participate in sports including athletics. They are persons who compete in various sporting activities and they may be professionals or amateurs (Ming-Chiang et al., 2018). Male participation in high-contact athletics appears to be associated with an increased risk for non-sports-related aggression, such as fighting or hurting friends or peers. Furthermore, entry into aggressive sports can be associated with an increase in violent conduct among athletes.

Previous studies suggested that the characteristics and practices of specific sports teams and/or sportsmen may actually raise the risk of violence rather than just being involved in sports themselves may ameliorate or exacerbate the risk for violence (Vveinhardt et al., 2019). Such characteristics of athletes may include gender and age.

Gender refers to the cultural and societal significance of each sex within a specific society. This varies from society to society and can be changed (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2014). The concept of gender can be defined as the outer appearance of a personality



that reflects gender identification (Ghosh et al., 2015). Omidi et al. (2014) reported that psychological and verbal violence were 31.3% and 40.7% in girls, and 66% and 52.8% in boys, respectively. While, Parent and Vaillancourt-Morel (2020) reported that there were no gender differences for sexual violence, regardless of the offender, but observed that female athletes are more likely to experience psychological violence than male athletes. Mehdinezhad and Rashki (2018) and Var and Chan (2019), reported that more male students were involved in secondary school sports violence than females. Golshiri et al. (2018) identified age as one of the factors influencing verbal violence behaviour among secondary school students.

Age is a factor that is associated with sports-related violence among secondary school students. Age can be defined as the mental development or capacity of an individual, which contributes to their increase in years on earth. Vertommen et al., (2016) noted that interpersonal violence against young athletes aged below 18 experience severe psychological violence, 8% severe physical violence, and 6% severe sexual violence in different sport context. Adler (2014) reported that bullying occurs more often among younger athletes than older ones. Whille, Demissie et al. (2014) observed that both bullying and physical fighting in school occurred more often among younger students than among older students.

However, sports in secondary schools ought to be organized and conducted in a free and fair manner such that it will be a formative instrument in sharpening the lives of students positively and to discover talented athletes that can represent the state and nation in both national and international competitions respectively. Regrettably, the high rate of occurrence of violence in secondary school sports is not encouraging most students to participate in school sports. Hence, there is a need to ascertain the influence of age and gender as determinants of violence in sports among secondary school students so as to enable appropriate awareness programmes among students on the need to shun violence during sporting activities. Likewise, to the knowledge of the researchers, there seems to be no study on age and gender as determinants of violence among secondary students in the study location. The researchers therefore seek to investigate the influence of gender and age as determinants of violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate age and gender as determinants of violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. relationship between age and violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria;
2. relationship between gender and violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria;

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between age and violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between gender and violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant association between age and violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant association between gender and violence in sports among secondary



school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

Study design and setting

A descriptive survey study was conducted on 400 students. A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Participants

The participants for the study comprised all students in secondary schools within Nsukka Education Zone totalling 150,872

Sampling procedures and population

The sample size for the study was 400 secondary school students. This is in line with the suggestion of Cohen et al. (2018) that when a population size is 150,000 and above at 95 per cent confidence level (5% interval), the sample size should be 383 and above.

A two-stage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample size for the study. Stage one involved the use of a simple random sampling technique to select the secondary schools in the ratio, 1:2:1 with ten secondary schools representing I unit. This means that 20 secondary schools were selected from Nsukka Local Government Area (LGA) and 10 secondary schools from Igbo-Etiti LGA and 10 Uzo-Uwani LGA. This gave a total of 40 secondary schools which will be used for the study. Stage two also involved the use of a simple random sampling technique to select 10 (5 Junior and 5 Senior) secondary school students from each of the 40 secondary schools drawn in stage two. Junior Secondary School 3 and Senior Secondary School 3 students were excluded from the study because of their participation in external examinations which may not give them the opportunity to be used for the study. This resulted in 400 students that were used for the study. The selection was done equally from both Junior and Senior classes until the desired number of students was obtained, comprising of 211 male and 189 female.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument for data collection is a researcher-structured instrument titled Determinants of Violence in Secondary Schools Sports Questionnaire (DVSSSO). The DVSSSQ comprised of two sections namely: Sections A and B. Section A with 2 items which sought information on the socio-demographic variables (age and gender) of the respondents with dichotomous response options. Section B comprised two questions on the prevalence of violence in secondary school sports with dichotomous and polychotomous response options.

Data collection procedure



To facilitate access to the students, an introductory letter from the researchers' institutions was obtained and presented to the principals of the secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone who granted the researchers and her research assistants access to the students and their class teachers. Two research assistants who are undergraduates in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka were briefed on the procedures for the administration of the questionnaires and collection of the completed copies from the respondents. The researchers and the research assistants visited the various secondary schools selected for the study on agreed days. 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to the selected secondary schools students for them to respond to the items in the questionnaire. Every respondent given the questionnaire was encouraged to complete it on the spot of administration and return it to the researchers' or research assistants to ensure a maximum return rate and 100% of the questionnaires were returned. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 17 were discarded due to lack of completeness of information. Thus, the return rate is 95.8 per cent, and 383 copies were used for analysis.

Data analysis

The completeness of the responses was carefully examined in the returned copies of the questionnaires. All incomplete copies of the instruments were discarded. Thus, the discarded copies were not used for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed using the Internal Business Machine Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 23.0. Frequency and percentages were used to analyse the participants' socio-demographic characteristics. The null hypothesis was tested using binary logistic regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1
Proportion of Students that have Experienced Violence during Secondary School Sports in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State (n=383)

S/N	Item	Yes		No	
		f	%	f	%
1.	Have you ever experienced violence?	253	66.1	130	33.9

Results in Table 1 showed that 253 (66.1%) of students have experienced violence during secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone. Only 130 (33.9%) reported not experiencing violence during secondary school sports.

Table 2

Proportion of Students that have Experienced Violence during Secondary School Sports in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State Based on Age and Gender (n=383)

S/N	Item	Total (n=383)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Age Group			
	<15 Years	143	78 (54.5)	65 (45.5)
	≥15 Years	240	175 (72.9)	65 (27.1)
2.	Gender			
	Male	210	139 (66.2)	71 (33.8)
	Female	173	114 (65.9)	59 (34.1)

Results in Table 2 indicate that 54.5% of students aged less than 15 years reported experiencing violence, compared to 72.9% of students aged 15 years and above. While on gender, 66.2% of male students and 65.9% of female students reported experiencing violence.

Table 3

Binary Logistic Regression Showing Relationship between Age and Violence in Secondary School Sports in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State (n=383)

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p-val	OR	95% C.I. for Exp (B)	
							Lower	Upper
Age			9.637	1	0.001			
< 15 years (Ref)								
≥ 15 years	0.87	0.31	8.17	1	0.004	2.39	1.32	4.34
Constant	-0.26	0.18	2.19	1	0.139	0.77		

Note. B = standardized coefficient; S.E.= Standard Error; df=Degree of Freedom; OR/Exp(B)= Odds Ration C.I. Conference Interval.

Cox & Snell $R^2 = 0.043$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.058$.

Results in Table 3 show that the binary logistic regression full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that age significantly determined violence in secondary school sports ($df=1$; $p=0.001$). Since the p -value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that age is a significant determinant of violence in secondary school sports. The Nagelkerke's R^2 of 0.058 showed that age only explained about 6% (0.058×100) of the total variance in violence in secondary school sports. Secondary school students aged 15 years and above were 2.39 times more likely to experience violence in secondary school sports than those less than 15 years ($OR=1.32$, $Wald=8.17$, $p=0.001$, 95% CI: 1.32, 4.34).

Table 4
Binary Logistic Regression Showing Relationship between Gender and Violence in Secondary School Sports in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State (n=383)

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	p-val	OR	95% C.I. for Exp (B)	
							Lower	Upper
Gender			3.985	1	0.263			
Male (Ref)								
Female	0.68	0.49	1.91	1	0.167	1.97	0.75	5.12
Constant	-0.15	0.39	0.15	1	0.695	0.86		

Note. B = standardized coefficient; S.E.= Standard Error; df =Degree of Freedom; $OR/Exp(B)$ = Odds Ratio C.I. Conference Interval.

Cox & Snell $R^2 = 0.043$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.058$.

Results in Table 4 showed that the binary logistic regression full model against a constant only model was not statistically significant, indicating that gender did not significantly determine violence in secondary school sports ($df=1$; $p=0.263$). Since the p -value of 0.263 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that gender is not a significant determinant of violence in secondary school sports. The Nagelkerke's R^2 of 0.014 showed that gender only explained about 1.4% (0.014×100) of the total variance in violence in secondary school sports ($OR=1.97$, $Wald=1.91$, $p=0.263$, 95% CI: 0.75, 5.12).

Discussion

The present study was conducted to investigate age and gender as determinants of violence in sports among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria. The results showed that 253 (66.1%) of students have experienced violence during secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone. Only 130 (33.9%) reported not experiencing violence during secondary school sports. This finding implies that more than half of the students have experienced violence in secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone. This finding agrees with those of Omidi et al. (2014) which reported high practice of junior and senior high school students regarding violent behaviours in Isfahan Province. Similarly, Vertommen et al., (2016) It was reported that in the Netherlands and Belgium, there is a prevalence of violence against young athletes in sports. Also, Parent and Vaillancourt-Morel (2020) concluded that sports violence among Canadian teenage athletes is high. Nevertheless, violence in school sports should be discourage, because every sports competition



should take place without any form of violence to disrupt or negatively affect it. When violent activities occur in sports competitions, the aim for which the competition is organized is usually lost and the zeal and interest of the athletes or students to participate in subsequent competitions is lost. Besides, injuries, physical harm or even loss of lives which occur as a result of violence do not encourage greater participation on the part of athletes but discourage it. This, however, leads to a decrease in the level of participation which is not desirable.

Also, the results showed that age is a significant determinant of violence in secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone ($df=1$; $p=0.001$). It indicated that 54.5% of students aged less than 15 years reported experiencing violence, compared to 72.9% of students aged 15 years and above. This finding is expected and not surprising because students aged 15 years and above are teenagers/adolescents who are physically matured and they might likely be tempted to put their muscles to test during sporting events, while, most younger students would likely be timid to engage in violent during sporting events. According to Bonnie et al. (2015) this aged group have a world of their own and most of them would rarely obey instructions. It is also, a period marked by prominent maturation and changes biologically and psychologically. This finding is accordant with the finding of Evans et al. (2016) who reported that violent activities including bullying victimization and perpetration among adolescent sports teammates are influenced by age. Also, Golshiri et al. (2018) identified age as one of the factors that determine verbal violence behaviour among secondary school students.

Furthermore, the results showed that gender is a not significant determinant of violence in secondary school sports in Nsukka Education Zone ($df=1$; $p=0.263$). It was revealed that 66.2% of male students and 65.9% of female students reported experiencing violence during school sports. This finding is surprising and hence, not expected. This is because females are more composed than males and males are more aggressive during sports than females. This finding corresponded with Parent and Vaillancourt-Morel (2020), who noted no gender differences for sexual violence, regardless the offender, but reverse to the finding, they observed that female that involve in sports are often exposed to psychological violence than men athletes. Further, Var and Chan (2019), Rashki and Mehdinezhad (2018) and Omid et al. (2014) study disagreed with the current study as they reported that more male students were involved in secondary school sports violence than females. The disagreement between the following studies and the current study may be a result of differences in study location and participants characteristics.

The results from this study likely imply that more students in secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone experience violence when engaging in school sports. Also, it appears that older students are involved in school sports violence due to their age characteristics such as youth exuberant among others. Furthermore, the result also suggests that violent behaviours are not determined by gender and as such individuals engage in them out of their own will and not due to the influence of gender roles.

Conclusion

The findings from this study revealed that majority of the secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone experience violence during sports participation, and it can be deduced that most students do not know the consequences of sports violence. Furthermore, there is a higher prevalence of sports violence experience among older students compare to younger students. Likewise, the finding shows no major difference between male and female students that experience violence during school sports, notwithstanding, the composed nature attributed



to female in comparison to male. However, certain students athletes may be at greater risk for displaying violence behaviour during sporting events.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that school sports administrators should create awareness among students on the need for and importance of avoiding violence during sporting activities and endeavour to punish offenders appropriately. Also, student athletes should be involve in school sports management. Furthermore, sports venue security personnel should ensure that spectators and fans do not enter the sports venue with any instrument that can be used for violence. Likewise, athletes, sports officials and spectators should be educated on the need to promote positive value during sporting events.

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