

Sporting clubs and grassroots sport development in Bulawayo Metropolitan in Zimbabwe

Jenitha Ndlovu

Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: Countries that invest in sporting clubs have not only performed well in sports, but identified talent and nurtured athletes. Zimbabwe has been no exception, sporting clubs and academies were established. This paper sought to establish grassroots sport challenges that coaches encounter in an attempt to educate, inspire and mobilise young athletes. The study is grounded on Tinning, Kirk and Evans (1993) and Green's (2005) Pyramid Sport Development Model in trying to understand issues of grassroots sport in Bulawayo. The study adopted a mixed method research design. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted to collect views and perceptions of club administrators and coaches. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data that sought to establish the role of clubs in the development of grassroots sport. Ten participants, comprising of two females and eight males were recruited. All the participants were aged between 30- 40 years at the beginning of the study. Participants were voluntarily selected while anonymity and confidentiality was ensured. Findings from the interviews indicate that grassroots sport development appear to be influenced by availability of facilities and equipment, human and financial input, attendance, and parental support among other issues. From the study, 80% of the participants indicate lack of facilities and equipment in the clubs. On the other hand, (70%) of administrators' point at the closure of youth clubs as a factor of participation. The recommendations put forward were that the government injects a special fund to resuscitate youth clubs. Sound grassroots sport development programmes and structures are likely to influence performance at Olympic Games.

Key terms: Sport, sport development, grassroots, participation, sport clubs

I. Introduction

Research indicate that the growth of sport in a country is dependent on grassroots sport programmes instituted (Tolulope, 2020). Sport development is about facilitating opportunities for participation in sport (Task et al., 2014). On the other hand, Sotiriadou, Shilbury & Quick, 2008, p.247) contend that sport development "is a process where effective opportunities, process, systems and structures are set up to enable people or particular groups and areas to take part in sport and recreation or improve their performances to whatever level they desire'. Specifically, sport development is about policies, practices and process of facilitating involvement from mass participation to elite (Hylton & Bramham, 2008; Green, 2005). Grassroots sports might be the answer to sport development as it creates a path of success from foundation to elite, more so the path begins at a younger age (Adejumo, 2017).

According to KultureHub (2020) grassroots sports is a community locally driven activity meant for recreational purposes rather achieving high levels of performance. In Denmark, it is often facilitated by small clubs and sports organizations staffed by volunteers, although sometimes a major sporting organization, such as the local basketball team, may donate facilities and support (KultureHub, 2020; Brandt & Bang, 2012). Grassroots sport is about the development of sport, players, coaches, clubs and competitions (Harris, 2019). It is the foundation and cornerstone for sport development locally, supported by the community involvement (Harris, 2019; Tolulope, 2020). In India, All Indians Football Federation (AIFF) align grassroots sport to what Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) refers to. Grassroots sport begins at 6 -12 years or earlier as long as it is safe for children to do so (Russell, 2013). In Nigeria grassroots sport involves primary and secondary school children (Segun, 2017). Supportively, Adejumo (2020) reiterate that nations that considers both recreational and competitive, recognises school sports as an important aspect of grassroots sport development. Moreover, primary schools become the conveyor belt and feed the system (Adejumo, 2020). In Denmark, the concept of grassroots sport is non-professional and works primarily on a non-profit basis (Brandt & Bang, 2012).

Furthermore, nations that have excelled at international competitions identified and nurtured talents at a tender age of 5 (Adejumo, 2017). Jaiyesinni (1998) contends that the 'catch them young' approach is the best in grassroots sport development. Notably, politician have used the expression 'catch them young' to show the role played by youths at grassroots levels (Jeroh, 2012). Eady (1993)'s pyramid of sport development begins with the foundation stage where primary school children are taught basic movement skills required in the mass participation stage, thus the catch them young approach at grassroots level. In his address at a national sport event in Nigeria, Dr Ogada observed that "there is no way we can make it at national and international levels without developing sports at grassroots levels" (Adejumo, 2020; Tolulope, 2020). Subsequently, having a pool of skilled athletes at grassroots level might deter reliance on foreign based athletes for national and international competitions (Jeroh, 2012; Adejumo,

2017; Fawole, 2020). On the other hand, Green (2005,p.234) argues that “we need to create a deep pool of athletes from which a crop of elite can develop”.

The concept of grassroots sport development in Zimbabwe is an extension of the Youth Education Sport (YES), a programme designed to impart skills to the youth through sports (Magonde & Nhamo, 2014). In this programme competitions were done in three areas Sport, Peer Education and Community involvement (Magonde & Nhamo, 2014). Through the expansion of YES, Community Sport Development Programme (CSDP) was established. The latter further add that CSDP focussed on grassroots sports development aimed at taking sport activities to the people through the ‘Sport for all’ concept. In Australia, the sport for all programmes were put in place to reach out youths at the community and school levels (Zimmerman, 2013). Notably, on its inception in 2009, CSDP covered 20 districts including urban, rural and business centres. The aim of the project was to encourage community members to form multi-disciplinary clubs/associations for the development of sports at grassroots level (Magonde & Nhamo, 2014). In Zimbabwe the Heath Streak cricket academy has four additional facilities soccer and hockey pitches, swimming pool and gymnasium (Tsengwa, 2014). Furthermore, structures were put in place to see the success of the project inclusive of all important stakeholders in grassroots sport development such as coaches, volunteers, Districts Sport Development Committees, District Administrators and District Officers (Magonde & Nhamo, 2014; Tolulope, 2020). Suggestively, Diejomah, Akarah & Tayire (2015) maintain that grassroots sport embraces all primary, secondary and community sports, hence the composition of stakeholders. In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Education, Art, Sport and Culture crafted a Sports for all policy aimed at promoting participation at grassroots level (Nhamo & Magonde, 2014). Moreover, these policies and statues are a good example of the government ‘s concern about grassroots sport development (Chalip, Johnson & Stachura, 1996; Thomas & Chalip, 1996).

In Zimbabwe and Nigeria, games play a major role in the promotion of grassroots sport. According to Moyo (2020) Zimbabwe National youth games are a deliberate strategy to develop sports at grassroots level. In his keynote address, Sports and Recreation board member Obadiah Moyo contends that games are a conveyor belt of talent from grassroots level (Moyo, 2020). Notably, Nigeria had similar games called the Youth Sports Federation of Nigeria (YSFON) (Jeroh, 2012). Furthermore, in Nigeria competitions such as Age grade football tournament, headmaster and principal’s cup are considered viable in grassroots sport development as well (Fawole,2020). Similarly, the Age Grade Football tournaments has the potential of grooming athletes for the future. Notably, Fawole(2020) observes the absence of competition and games as a blow to the development of sport at grassroots level. The recommendation put forward by the Minister of Youth Sport and Culture in Nigeria is resuscitate facilities and have strategies for grassroots sport development in place (Fawole, 2020). In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, Sports and Culture introduced National Primary School Heads (NAPH) and National Secondary School Heads (NASH) sports (Moyo, 2020)

The success of sport development at grassroots level hinges on developmental structures and programmes that are put in place, with the aim of increasing participation at foundation and mass participation levels. Once instituted the programmes are likely to enable competitive performance at all levels (Zimmerman, 2013). Notably, the ability to compete stems from effective programmes that are accessible to all athletes (Relationship, 2006). Understandably, the Sport Development Pyramid model provides a framework on how grassroots sport is implemented (Tinning, Evans & Kirk, 1993; Green, 2005). Sotiriadou, Shilbury & Quick (2008) aver that the model provides a pathway in which athletes progress from the base (foundation) to the (top) elite. The foundation is the base where catch them young approach is applicable, and stage two is the mass participation stage (Eady,1993). Stage two is the participation level where athletes are availed with opportunities of involvement for fun and leisure pursuits while competition showcases talent (Green, 2005; Sotiriadou, Shilbury & Quick, 2008; Houlihan, 2000). On the other hand, ‘Sports for all’ concept has been used to encourage mass participation at grassroots level (Zimmerman, 2013). The latter adds that the concept has been used in Australia to reach out youths in the schools, communities and rural areas. Furthermore, in Australia sports for all programmes were put in place after realisation of poor performance at the Montreal Olympics in 1980 (Zimmerman, 2013). It is with this background that the Aussies and Nigerians instituted the programme. Similarly, Zimbabwean also adopted the concept through Physical Education and Sport Policy (Circular number 2 of 1994). The aim was to promote ‘sports for all’ through the provision of grassroots sport to all regardless of gender, race and geographical location. In Zimbabwe, the Norwegian government and UNICEF supported the programme (Nhamo & Magonde, 2014). In Australia the government engaged teachers, retired athletes and set aside a special tax fund for the development of ‘Sports for all’ programmes with the aim of promoting sport at grassroots level (Zimmerman, 2013; Relationship, 2006). Green (2005) reiterates that schools receive funding to support grassroots sport activities thus a fertile ground for mass participation.

In Nigeria, availability of sporting facilities and equipment contributes to the success of grassroots sport programmes (Diejomah, Akarah & Tayire, 2015). In Australia, the ‘Sports for all’ programme were adopted as a way of promoting grassroots sport. To achieve the above, the Australian government instituted policies that allowed partnership with organisations to help build sporting facilities in both schools and communities (Relationship, 2006). It is with this background that the role of clubs in the development of sport at grassroots level was pursued.

Aim of the study

The study sought to determine the role of institutions and stakeholder involvement in the promotion of sports at grassroots level.

Objectives

1. Establish the role of parents, coaches, volunteers, officials and administrators' involvement in the development of sport at grassroots level,
2. Develop an understanding in the implementation of grassroots sports programmes, and
3. Examine factors that contribute to the success of grassroots sport.

II. Methodology

The study utilised a mixed method approach in which both qualitative and quantitative data was collected so as to have a better understanding of the problem under study. Closed ended questions were designed to solicit information from coaches while face to face interview collected qualitative data in which views and perceptions of head coaches, administrators and field officers were collected. The questions for the questionnaire were adopted and adapted from literature review and Zimmerman (2017). Section A covered stakeholder involvement and B factors that contribute to the success of grassroots sport development. The open ended interview question addressed issues to do with grassroots sports policy, recruitment procedures, role of youth clubs and other benefits that clubs offer to athletes.

Population and sampling procedures

The study was carried out in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. Focus was on the sporting clubs/academies located in the Bulawayo East district. The population comprised of all sporting clubs and academies in the district. The clubs were randomly selected and purposive sampling technique allowed for the selection of seven coaches and three administrators. Purposive sampling technique, also called judgemental allowed the researcher to choose participants who are likely to provide information and opinions relevant to the objectives of the study (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Furthermore, the choice of the sample was based on the characteristics that participants possessed on the area under study (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Data collection procedure

Firstly, the researcher sought permission to carry out the study from Bulawayo City Council who are the custodians of all sporting facilities in the city. Data collection started when permission was granted on the 16th September 2021. Secondly, appointments were made with various sporting clubs for the completion of questionnaires and conducting interviews. Prior to data collection, the researcher gave a detailed explanation on the purpose and objectives of the study to the target population and subsequently, members volunteered to be part of the study. For the purposes of anonymity participants used pseudo club names. Akaranga & Makau (2016) enunciate that the researcher has to avoid use of respondents' names and disclosing information. The informed consent form was signed thereafter. The researcher self-administered the questionnaires, collection was done on the same day after completion. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) contend that self-administration enables the researcher to address queries as they arise, ensuring good response rate and rapid completion of the instrument. Moreover, social characteristics of respondents are also elicited through the use of a questionnaire. Management, chief coaches as well as Field Officers were interviewed on the same day. Responses were written during the interview process and thereafter transcribed manually. No audio recording was done. Interviews are a social interaction that allows the interviewer to get more information from the respondents through observing other gestures and body language and more so apply probing technique. Similarly, as a search procedure, interviews helps researcher to get information that is of interest to the study (Taylor, Bogdan & De Vault, 2016).

Reliability of the questionnaire

It is important for researchers to check reliability of research instruments. The reliability of the instrument was tested using internal consistency reliability, which is measured by alpha coefficient reliability or Cronbach Alpha (Ghazali, 2016). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha index was used to measure internal consistency of the questionnaire. Internal consistency reliability looks at the correlation of all items that make up the constructs to ensure that the same concept is measured (Ghazali, 2016). According to Manerikar & Manerikar (2015) Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.7 to 0.95 are in the acceptable range. Arguably, low value indicates poor inter-relatedness of heterogeneous items and more so high value of > 0.95 suggest that some items are redundant, thus adding little or no value to the study Taber (2017). The reliability statistics is shown in Table 1 below.

Category	Number of items	Cronbach' Alpha index
Part A:Stakeholder involvement	4	0.718
Part B: Factors that contribute to grassroots sport development	12	0.843
All questions	16	0.831

A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.718 was recorded for Part A of the questionnaire which sought to examine the extent of stakeholder involvement in grassroots sport development. The recorded value was >0.7 implying that all four questions in Part A were deemed appropriate in measuring the stakeholders' involvement. Part B of the questionnaire had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.843 for factors that contribute to grassroots sport development. The value of 0.843 indicate a high degree of interrelatedness and internal consistency of the 12 questions posed for this category (Manerikar & Manerikar, 2015). Furthermore, the 16 items used in the questionnaire were tested for reliability. From table 1 above, a high level of internal consistency of 0.831 was recorded for the 16 questions set for stakeholder involvement and factors that influence grassroots sport development. The value of 0.831, implies the items used in the questionnaire were both reliable and valid in measuring the role of sporting clubs in the development of sport at grassroots level. Suggestively, it would seem the questionnaire was an appropriate instrument for use in this study.

Statistical analysis

Information gathered from the questionnaire was coded before aggregating data. The questionnaire was coded using SPSS version 23 and further analysed using descriptive statistics where mean and standard deviation (SD) showed the spread of responses. Furthermore, emerging theme patterns were grouped together for further analysis. A mean value of < 3 meant that the participants were in agreement with the statement and conversely, a value of > 3 indicated the opposite. Responses from the interview schedule were coded and common ideas grouped together and analysed descriptively.

Ethical considerations

Permission to carry out the study was granted by the Bulawayo City Council. The researcher set appointments with clubs prior to administering of both questionnaires and interview schedules. Informed consent forms were signed after members had been given a detailed explanation of the objectives of the study and more so confidentiality ensured. Pseudo names were used to identify sporting clubs.

III. Data presentation and analysis

Qn	Items/Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1	Grassroots sport requires parental support and involvement.	10	1	5	1.60	1.265	Majority were in Agreement
2	Coaches and officials play an important role at grassroots level.	10	1	2	1.10	.316	Majority were in Agreement
3	Volunteers contribute to the success of grassroots sport.	10	1	3	1.70	.823	Majority were in Agreement
4	Administrators are important stakeholders in grassroots sport programmes	10	1	3	1.20	.422	Majority were in Agreement
5	Availability of facilities and equipment ensures quality grassroots programmes	10	1	5	1.40	1.265	Majority were in Agreement

6	Schools are fertile grounds for grassroots sport.	10	1	5	1.70	1.252	90% agreed while 10 % disagreed Majority were in Agreement
7	"Sports for all "programmes promotes active involvement at grassroots level	10	1	2	1.70	1.252	Majority were in Agreement
8	Grassroots sport participation produces elite athletes	10	1	5	2.10	1.370	Majority were in Agreement
9	Youth games and other competitions are a cornerstone of grassroots sport development.	10	1	2	1.50	.527	Majority were in Agreement
10	School feed athletes into clubs, association/academies for further development.	10	1	3	1.80	1.317	Majority were in Agreement
11	Clubs get financial support from sponsors	10	1	5	2.90	1.350	40% agreed, 20% disagreed and 40% not sure
12	Investing in grassroots sport programmes creates a base of athletes for national, regional, and international competitions.	10	1	2	1.20	.422	Majority were in Agreement
13	Grassroots sport is the foundation of sport growth in a country.	10	1	2	1.30	.483	Majority were in Agreement
14	Youth clubs provide young athletes with pre-requisite skills at grassroots level.	10	1	4	2.40	1.174	Majority were in Agreement
15	Coaches are motivated to assist athletes at grassroots level.	10	1	5	2.60	1.265	Majority were in Agreement
16	Coaches and athletes get adequate support from administrators.	10	1	5	3.10	1.370	Not in Agreement(60%)
	Valid N (list wise)	10					

Mean<3.0 Agree, Mean>3.0 Disagree

From table 2, mean scores of $1.60(\pm 1.265)$, $1.10(\pm 0.316)$, $1.70(\pm 0.823)$ and $1.20(\pm 0.422)$ were recorded for parental, coaches and officials, volunteers and administrators involvement respectively, in the development of sports at grassroots level. The mean score of <3 might suggests that the majority of participants were in agreement with the statement. Tolulope (2020) observed that coaches, officials and volunteers are the most important stakeholders in grassroots sport development. Supportively, Shashank (2017) emphasises the role of coaches in the skill development of young athletes and thus, the need for administrators to ensure availability of skilled personnel. In the same vein, the role of parents was recognised by Spond sports club in the UK as crucial in grassroots sport development (Wold, 2019).

Availability of facilities had a mean score of 1.40(±1.265). The figure 1.40 is < 3.0 implying that availability of facilities is likely to be a factor in grassroots sport development. Findings from this study tally with studies carried out on the importance and availability of facilities at grassroots level. Shashank (2017) allude to a friendly environment, with infrastructure and equipment that enables fun, enjoyment, age-related and promotes quality grassroots sport development. Moreover, provision of facilities is considered key in facilitating grassroots sport development (Adejumo, 2020; Diejomaoh, Akarah & Tayire, 2015; Jeroh, 2012). Notably, the Australian government had a similar establishment in which sport facilities were made available for both schools and communities (Relationship,2006). It would seem the growth of grassroots sport is largely dependent on the availability of facilities and its use (Ekpe, 2011; Tolulope, 2020).

There were 90% and 10% coaches who agreed and disagreed respectively that schools are fertile ground for grassroots sport development. Similarly, a mean score of 1.70(±1.252) was recorded for the same question. The mean of 1.70 (<3.0) and the figure 90% seemingly indicate that school are likely to be a fertile ground for grassroots sport development (Table 2). Grassroots by definition begins at 5 years or less (Adejumo, 2017), therefore, schools might be relevant institutions for the development of athletes at grassroots level.

Data for question 7 show a mean score of 1.70(±1.252), which might imply that ‘Sports for all’ programme do promote grassroots sport activities. Relationship (2006) reiterate a similar establishment in which mass participation commonly called ‘Sports for all’ was used in Australia for the development of sport at grassroots level. In Zimbabwe, Nhamo & Magonde (2014) contend that grassroots sport is a “Sport for all” concept that is used to reach out athletes from all walks of life.

As depicted by Table 2 above, mean scores of 2.10(±1.370), 1.50(±0.527) and 1.80(±1.317) were recorded for questions 8, 9 and 10 respectively. The three means are <3.0, and might imply that coaches are in agreement with the statements grassroots sport produces elite athletes, youth games and other competitions are a cornerstone for grassroots sport development and that schools feed athletes into clubs for further development respectively. Likewise, Adejumo (2020) reports that in Nigeria grassroots sports begins in schools, athletes eventually feed clubs and other systems for further development. The findings of this study are inline with Moyo (2020) & Fawole(2020), who recognise the role of youth games in the development of sport at grassroots level and encourages the government to continuously support the concept.

Questions 12, 13 and 14 had mean scores of 1.20(±0.422), 1.30(±0.483) and 2.40(±1.174) respectively. All the three recorded means are below 3.0 falling within the agreement range. It would seem that coaches see grassroots sport as an investment in sport, more so countries that have invested in grassroots are doing well and the concept of youth clubs is highly valued for its contribution in grassroots sport. Research done in Australia and Nigeria are indicative of the role of grassroots sports in Olympic games performances (Relationship, 2006; Zimmerman, 2013; Tolupe, 2017; Adejumo, 2020).

Table 3: Factors that contribute to grassroots sport development

	% Agree	% Disagree	Mean	S.D
11.Clubs get financial support from sponsors	40	60	2.90	1.350
15. Coaches are motivated to work with athletes	70	30	2.60	1.350
16. Coaches and athletes get adequate support from administrators.	40	60	3.10	1.370

Mean<3.0 agree, Mean>3.0 Disagree

As shown in Table 3, 40% of coaches were agreeable on receiving financial support while 60% did not agree. Also a mean of 2.90(±1.350) was recorded for financial support. Although the recorded mean is less than 3.0, but closer, it might suggest that financial support is not readily available. Spond sports club had 32% coaches facing funding challenges of which 13% were considering quitting while 8% left grassroots sport completely (Wold.2019). From table 3, 70% and a mean of 2.60(±1.265) indicate that coaches agree that they are motivated to assist athletes, while 30% think otherwise. Though not significantly proven, the figures 70% and a mean score of 2.60<3.0 might suggest that coaches are willing to work with athletes. Notably, observations from Spond sports clubs in the UK show that 82% of volunteer coaches get involved in grassroots sport as a means of giving back to their community while the other 30% feel unappreciated by parents (Wold, 2019).

A figure of 40% and 60% agree and disagree respectively with a mean score of 3.10(±1.370) was shown for the statement that coaches and athletes get support from administrators. The figure of 60% and a mean score of 3.10 are seemingly suggesting that coaches and athletes are likely not to be getting the support they deserve from administrators.

Interview Analysis

An in-depth discussion was held with five administrators that comprised of head coaches, field officers and managers to get their views and opinions on institutions of grassroots sport development in Zimbabwe. The interview sought to establish issues of stakeholder involvement, grassroots sport policy, recruitment of athletes, youth centres' contribution to the development of grassroots sport. Furthermore, other benefits that clubs offer to athletes other than participation in sporting activities were discussed.

When asked the question on stakeholder involvement at grassroots level, management gave the following responses: *“Provision of resources and equipment, financial support, sourcing free venues for training and competitions”*

It would seem that stakeholder involvement is very important, one manager said grassroots sport clubs have challenges of venues and transportation of athletes for competitions. It is at this point that stakeholder involvement comes in handy in the provision of resources such as equipment, trainers, attire, transport and refreshments. In the same manner, KultureHub (2020) reiterates that grassroots sport is a non-profit sport, run on voluntary basis.

On the question of availability of club policies, administrators admitted that the document exists and gave varied reasons on its implementation. One chief coach said, it helps guide the running of the club and coming up with programmes. The other head coach raised issues of catching them young. Catch them young is a grassroots sport approach in which training of athletes begins at a young age. This is how one manager expressed it *“the catch them young enables podium athletes that represent the country”* Supportively, Adejumo (2017) reiterates that the catch them young approach emphasise the importance of grassroots sport in the attainment of good performance globally. Moreover, the implementation of the catch them young approach enables nations to have a base of athletes for international competitions (Adejumo, 2020; Green, 2005). One field officer explained that the policy empowers coaches to visit schools, offer their services especially to young athletes under the age of 14, such that those who excel upgrade for further training.

All managers gave almost the same answers on how recruitment is done. One field officer said coaches bring athletes as they voluntarily assist schools train young athletes. Besides that, schools and individual parents approach clubs for their services.

Management expressed disappointment on the closure of youth clubs centres. This is what some of them had to say *‘children are now engaged in anti-social activities, there is nothing to occupy them’* “The other reiterated *‘it is a blow to the community, youth centres were easily accessible making sure children play sport’*. To add on, the other one said *‘to become an elite athlete you should have 10000hrs of training, thus activities done at grassroots youth centres count’*. There is a widely held view that vibrant youth centres occupy and keep younger people away from substance abuse (Zililo, 2020). Notably, Sports and Recreation Commission director recommended to approach city council for the resuscitation of facilities (Zililo, 2020).

Lastly, on other benefits clubs offered, management explained that grassroots sport opens up networking synergies for athletes. During their stay at the clubs, not all athletes upgrade to elite, some get employed by companies that sponsor the clubs, others get scholarships to further their studies, while leadership skills are also developed.

IV. Conclusion

The findings of this study are premised on the fact that grassroots sports focuses on young athletes aged from five years or less. A relationship was established between clubs and schools. Clubs get athletes from schools while school require the services of clubs for grassroots sport development. Furthermore, clubs are not the only institution for grassroots sport development, school are a fertile ground for grassroots sport, and more so schools feed clubs and other systems for further development (Adejumo, 2020). The quantitative and qualitative data collected emphasised on the stakeholder involvement in grassroots sport development.

The following conclusion can be drawn from the findings of this study: sporting clubs and grassroots sport development. The implication could be that athletes who were not exposed to grassroots sport might have missed the opportunity to showcase their talent and eventually become elite and represent the country at different level. The implication of poor performance at international games could be a result of lack of grassroots sport policy in a nation. The closure of youth centres that were found in each township has impacted negatively on skill acquisition at grassroots level. Notably, excelling in sport might be closely linked to grassroots sport involvement. Another conclusion that could be drawn from the findings of this study is lack of stakeholder involvement, unavailability of facilities and funding. The study demonstrated the role of key stakeholders whose absence might negatively affect the clubs' day to day activities. An implication of this is the possibility that clubs that lack funding and facilities lag behind in the promotion of sports at grassroots level. What also came out of the study was the link between schools and clubs. The implication could be that schools that lag behind in grassroots sports development programmes might have disadvantaged athletes from acquiring prerequisite skills and exposure for further development.

V. Recommendations and Limitations

Firstly, to the government, the researcher recommends a sound grassroots sport policy that embraces schools and clubs to be instituted. The policy is likely to create synergies and strategies that might help develop sports at grassroots thereby promoting national, regional and international performances. Secondly, coaches, parents and volunteers' role need recognition for the betterment of the grassroots' sport development. Thirdly, the catch them young concept can only be viable if sport clubs are functional, equipped and accessible, thus government should put a budget to resuscitate youths centres and clubs. Lastly, clubs and schools to synchronise their operations as their roles overlap in grassroots sport development. Finally a number of important limitations need to be considered. Firstly, the study implored purposive sampling technique which might have influenced findings. Secondly, the study was confined to clubs at the eastern district of Bulawayo, making it difficult to generalise findings to other areas.

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