

Individual Factors Influencing First Year Students' Attitude towards Studying of Physical Education at the University of Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

Based on the UNESCO (2006), Physical Education (PE) is supposed be part of the curriculums of all institutions of learning worldwide. Unfortunately, a study by Gerald (2016) uncovered that in many institutions of learning, PE is a marginalized subject. This paper investigates the individual factors including job opportunities, prestige, gender, personal interests that impact the attitudes of first year students' towards choice of PE as a career subject at the University of Nairobi using cross-sectional survey design method with 273 students sampled. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. Some 57.6% of students demonstrated that finding a job in PE is easy, 83.3% indicated that Physical Education was far from a good-paying career while 22.9% revealed that the fear of personal injuries was one of the major reasons they avoided participating in Physical Education classes. Moreover 18.1% indicated that Physical Education classes are difficult because they involve the use lots of physical activities that need a lot of energy and 31.0% showed that due to lack of practical skills in the field, they avoided pursuing Physical Education as one of their career subject. It was recommended that the ministry of education to organize programs to improve the awareness on the benefits of Physical Education and universities to establish programs that will help enlighten the students in matters associated with careers and job market trends.

Keywords Physical Education, University, Career subject, Factors of Influence, First Year Students.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major reasons why physical education is offered as one of the career subjects in educational institutions is to help learners cultivate the right attitudes, skills, and knowledge required to live active and healthful lifestyles (Lauren et al., 2010). Physical education classes help learners have positive attitudes towards participation in physical activities. A study by Tom et al. (2015) showed that the period of transition from high school to tertiary institutions like university is often accompanied by unhealthful behavior alterations such as reduction of physical activities and sedentary lifestyle among students. The researchers demonstrated that averagely the students in higher institutions of learning spent 8 hours every day engaging in sedentary activities such as studying, watching of television, chatting, going for shopping and being with friends. Halil's (2019) study demonstrated that the attitudes of learners towards physical activities decrease with the increase of their grade levels and as they become older.

Based on the United Nation Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization (2015), all institutions of learning must make physical education a compulsory part of their curriculum. Yet, a survey by Gerald (2016) found that physical education was marginalized in many African schools due to unfavorable attitudes

and poor perceptions toward it by teachers and even students.

According to Baloka (2018), inadequate properly trained physical education professionals is one of the causes of negative attitude towards the subject. Increasing the number of having highly qualified physical education teachers is one of the myriad ways to raise its status and help improve the attitudes of learners. This can be realized if the enrolment in physical education programs in the university by students will be increased. Physical education teachers play a powerful role of shaping learners attitudes concerning physical education (Baloka, 2018).

The choice of a right career is decision that is far from easy for many first year undergraduate students since it requires a thorough process of matching their career preferences, their ability in academic performance, and the requirements of the job market while at the same time accommodating their parental wishes. **Owino** and Amolloh (2016) noted that those students who make uninformed career choices often found themselves regrettably pursuing courses they don't like and do not match their abilities; and later in life find themselves performing sub-optimally at work due to lack of self-satisfaction.

Based on Lauren et al (2010), there are very few studies that have been conducted on factors that influence the decisions of students to pursue physical education course in the university. Hence this study focused on assessing the individual factors influencing first year students' choice of physical education as a subject at the University of Nairobi.

Researchers in the field of behavioral science attributes different factors that influence choice of careers among students among them being self-desire, better pay, prestige and future prospects (Ibrahim, 2014). Lauren et al (2010) noted that attitudes of learners towards physical education are formed before transition in higher institutions of learning, in secondary school, and the kind of attitudes formed guide the learners' decisions of whether to choose physical education in the university or not.

Julius et al. (2016) also found out that individual factors such as gender, job opportunities and personal interest determine students' decision to pursue certain careers. Based on Awino and Amolloh (2016) study of factors influencing choice of History as a career subject by Bachelor of Education Arts at the University of Nairobi, individual factors have the greatest influence on students' choice of a career subject. Closely related to their findings was a study by Daniel and Samuel (2013) which showed that professional exposure to adapted physical education was an influential factor in participant's choice of the career.

The main aim of this review was thus to assess the individual factors impacting first year student's attitudes towards choice of Physical Education and sports at the University of Nairobi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey on the factors determining the degree of participation in physical education classes and sedentary behavior among students at Belgian university was conducted by Tom et al. (2015) by employing the use of snowball sampling to gather data. Using a semi-structured question guide the researchers conducted seven focus group discussions comprising of seventeen male and twenty-nine female drawn from various study disciplines, with a mean age of 20.7 ± 1.6 years. The data gathered were analyzed using inductive thematic approach. According to the research findings, individual factors like perceived enjoyment, self-discipline, time and convenience played an influential role in the students' participation in physical education classes and sedentary behavior.

A survey was conducted by Owino and Amolloh (2016) on factors affecting Bachelor of Education Arts students' choice of History as subject of study at the University of Nairobi employed the use of cross-sectional survey design and structured questionnaire to gather data. One hundred and ten third and fourth

year students of Bachelor of Education Arts for the academic year 2014/2015 were sampled and consented to respond to the questionnaires. The study found that individual factors were the greatest determinants of the students' choice of History as a career. This review set out to determine if individual factors were still the most powerful determinants of students' choice of physical education as a career subject.

A study was carried out by Julius et al. (2016) on factors influencing career choices among undergraduate students in public universities in Kenya at the University of Eldoret. A self-administered questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions was used to gather data. Targeting second, third and fourth year undergraduate students at the University of Eldoret, the study employed the use of descriptive research design and convenience sampling technique to sample two hundred and ten participants. The results of the study indicated that individual factors such as gender, job opportunities and personal interest determine students' decision to pursue certain careers.

Ronspires (2011) conducted a study to ascertain what attracted male undergraduate students in Physical Education Teacher Education program at Eastern Illinois University. Using interview and observation methods, the researcher tried to understand the students' beliefs about physical education profession and the factors that influencing them to choose to become physical education teachers. To analyze data, thematic analysis was used. The study findings indicated that the love for physical activities and sports and the opportunity to interact and work with young people were the motivating factors behind their choice of physical education as a profession.

However, a study by Aliyu Mohammed (2019) proved otherwise. By employing the use of purposive sampling techniques, Aliyu Mohammed (2019) examined 240 Physical Education major students from two Nigerian universities to ascertain the factors that influenced their career choice. The researcher used a questionnaire designed using the 4 point Likert scale. By the use of frequencies, percentages and Chi-square at a significance level of 0.05, the data was analyzed. The results of the study demonstrated that the marketability of the course did not influence the students' choice of career. The recommendation of the study was that career guidance and counseling programs should be established in higher institutions of learning.

Daniel and Samuel (2013) conducted a study on factors that influence career choice of African American students to enter the adapted physical education profession. The researchers sampled seventy male and female African American undergraduate physical education teacher education majors drawn from twenty-one colleges and universities who were randomly chosen. The researchers used a mailed survey procedure to solicit information from participants. The data collected were analyzed and reported both inferentially and descriptively. Further, the researchers conducted thematic analysis of open-ended responses. The researchers found out that professional exposure to adapted physical education was an influential factor in participant's choice of the career.

Similarly, a study of factors influencing choice of career in accounting among eighty-eight Nigerian university students from the department of Accountancy in Yobe State University using survey method by Ibrahim (2014) indicated that self-desire, better pay, prestige and future prospects had significant impact in the choice of the career of students. The recommendation of the study was that universities' programs be tailored towards the desires and interests of the students and the society. This review sought to assess the individual factors influencing first year undergraduate students' choice of physical education as a career subject at the University of Nairobi.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed the use of Cross-sectional survey design. The study sampled two hundred and

seventy-three respondents including 269 first year Bachelor of education male and female first years in the academic year 2020/2021 and two lecturers and two dean of students from the two university campuses that comprise faculty of education of the University of Nairobi. Self-reported questionnaires were used to gather required data during the weekend. The participants signed the consent forms before being allowed to participate in the study. To ensure the reliability of the data collection tools, pre-testing was carried out on twenty first year students from one of the campuses who were selected randomly and were not allowed to participate in the actual study. Split-half reliability test was used to ensure the reliability of the data collection tools. The study generated both qualitative and quantitative data. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation.

RESULTS

Demographic Data of the Respondents

Majority (57.1%) of the respondents, who took part in the study were Male while 42.9% were female. Majority (72.7%) of the students were below 20 years, 25.4% were in the age category of 21-25 and 1.6% were in the age group of 26-30. Majority of the respondents 46.9% had attained grade B in K.C.S.E, 24.9% had grade B+ and 15.5% had attained grade B- respectively in secondary school. The levels of education that had been attained by their male parents and guardians were: degree level (25.7%), diploma level (19.2%), and K.C.S.E level (16.3%). On the other hand the levels of education of their female parents and guardians were: diploma level (23.7%), degree level (20.4%), and K.C.S.E level (17.6%). The subject combinations of the respondents included: Business and Physical Education (6.5%), Mathematics and Physical Education (4.1%), Geography and Physical Education (4.1%), English and Literature (24.9%), Mathematics and Chemistry (13.1%) and Mathematics and Physics (10.2%). This clearly demonstrates that most of the students were young, below 20 years. It is a clear indication that majority of the respondents were not widely exposed in career matters. And this shows that the students required some guidance to help them make informed decisions when it came to choice of career subjects. There was also a clear indication that compared to other subjects, only a minute number of students were pursuing physical education as a career subject.

- **Responses of the students on individual factors impacting first year undergraduate students' attitudes towards studying P.E.**

Table 1 below shows the respondents' responses on the individual factors influencing first year undergraduate students' choice of P.E as a subject of study in the university.

Table 1: Individual factors affecting first year undergraduate students' attitudes choice of studying P.E.

	Individual Factors	Yes		NO	
		f	%	f	%
1.	I could have pursued PE as one of my academic subject of study but I lack practical skills in the field	76	31.0	169	69.0
2.	PE is a difficult subject because it involves a lot of physical activities	44	18.0	201	82.0
3.	I fear participating in physical activity classes due to the fear of injuries	56	22.9	189	77.1

4.	I was an active participant in PE classes back in secondary school	138	56.3	107	43.7
5.	PE is not a well-paying career	41	16.7	204	83.3
6.	It is easy to find a job in PE	141	57.6	104	42.4
7.	I used to find the activities in PE enjoyable way back in secondary school.	176	71.8	69	28.2

According to the Table 1, 69.0% of the students indicated that lack of practical skills in the field was not among the reasons why they avoided pursuing Physical Education as one of their career subjects in the university. Nonetheless, 31.0% indicated that their lack of practical skills in the field was one of their major reasons why they didn't pursue Physical Education in the university.

Majority 82.0% of the respondents disagreed that physical education was a difficult and physically demanding subject since it involves getting involved in lots of physical activities. However, 18.0% stated that physical education is a difficult subject since it involves a lot physical activities. The study found that 22.9% of the students avoided participating in physical education classes due to the fear of injuries. However, majority 77.1% stated that the fear of injuries was not a reason that could have prevented them from participating in physical education classes.

The respondents (56.3%) indicated that they participated actively in physical education classes way back in secondary school; however, 43.7% said they were never active participants while in secondary school. Majority 83.3% of the respondents affirmed that physical education is a highly-paying career; nonetheless, 16.7% indicated that physical education is not a well-paying career. More than average 57.6% of the respondents demonstrated that finding a Physical Education job was easy; on the other hand, 42.4% stated that it was difficult to get a job in physical education. Finally majority 71.8% of the respondents revealed that they really enjoyed physical education activities way back in secondary school; however, 28.2% indicated that they never used to enjoy physical education activities.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to assess the individual factors influencing first year undergraduate students' choice of Physical Education as a career subject. The literature review has demonstrated that individual factors such as skill level, passion, interest and prospect of money among other are very influential when it comes to students' choice of career. For example according to Julius et al. (2016), individual factors such as gender, job opportunities and personal interest determine students' decision to pursue certain careers. Based on the study findings, practical skills could play an influential role when it comes to choice of Physical Education as a subject of study in the university. A study by Derwesh and Al-sawi (2010) at Qatar University demonstrated that students preferred that practical content be more than theoretical content in Physical Education classes. The contents of a curriculum play a great influential role in whether students would prefer pursuing a certain course or not.

According to the study findings, majority 82.0% of the students do not see P.E as a difficult and physically demanding subject even if it has lots of physical activities. Most of the students indicated that the fear of injuries was not a reason that could have prevented them from participating in physical education classes. This indicates that majority of the students believed in their ability as far as physical education is concerned. This is in contrary with Williams (2009) who found out that females' attitude towards physical education have been painted by false perceptions that physicaleducation was harmful to them as it makes them become masculine. On averagely more than half of the students reported that they were active participants in physical education class while in secondary school. The study revealed that most of

the students used to enjoy physical education classes way back in secondary school.

Moreover, the study found that most of the students believed that P.E is a well-paying career. Only a few believed that P.E is not a well-paying career. Most students choose to pursue a career path that is lucrative and it is easy to get a job. The careers that less lucrative and less marketable attracts low enrolment. This is in consonance with the study findings by Pascual (2014) who found out that availability of jobs in the future plays an influential role in the students' choice of physical education course in the university. Self-desire, better pay, prestige and future prospects have significant influence in the choice of careers among university students (Ibrahim, 2014). Most of the students agreed that it was easier to find a job in physical education. A study by Daniel and Samuel (2013) showed that professional exposure to adapted physical education was an influential factor in participant's choice of the career.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study, the contents of a curriculum play a great influential role in whether students would prefer pursuing a certain course or not. Some students indicated that lack of practical skills in the field was not what prevented them from pursuing physical education. A small number of students showed that physical education is physically demanding since it has a lot of physical activities hence they feared participating in physical education classes due to the fear of injuries. As indicated by the students, most physical education activities way back in secondary were enjoyable. Most of the students believed that physical education was a well-paying career and it was easier to get a job in physical education.

The following were the recommendations of the study:

1. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology to increase the funding of various university courses including physical education so as to improve quality content and the quality of teaching through improved facilities and manpower to allow students to choose courses of their interests.
2. Universities should regularly adjust and tailor their physical education curriculum contents to the needs of the students and the job markets to help improve and promote positive attitude towards Physical Education in the university students. They should also ensure quality equipment and facilities for physical education are available.
3. Lecturers to motivate students to specialize in physical education as a career subject through the teaching of the content that is interesting and enjoyable and that is tailored to the needs and abilities of learners.

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