

Institutional Factors Influencing Undergraduate Students' Attitude towards Studying of Physical Education at the University of Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to assess the institutional factors dictating the attitudes of undergraduate students towards studying of physical education at the University of Nairobi. Targeting 910 students, 273 participants were sampled. The study used cross-sectional survey design and self-administered questionnaire to solicit data from the informants. After coding, the data was analyzed by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences after its entry into the computer. Using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation, the gathered data was analyzed. Of the participants, 36.7% revealed that they didn't have formal physical education classes in their previous secondary schools. Of the student-teacher respondents, 11.0% reported that they chose to pursue physical education in the university after the first day of orientation. Moreover, 11.4% of the respondents indicated that the reason they didn't pursue PE was because it was full of physical activities that they didn't like. Generally, institutional factors such as curriculum content, facilities and scholarships plays an influential role in the students' attitudes towards physical education. This study recommended that universities to establish programs that enlightens students on the importance of physical activities and career opportunities that are available in physical education and to improve the attitude of students towards physical activities universities should make sure there is sufficient sports facilities and equipment.

Keywords: Institutional factors, Physical Education, University, Influencing, Undergraduate Students, Attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Inactivity is among the top ten leading causes of death worldwide (World Health Organization, 2015). People's ways of living including absence of physical activities is known to be associated with lifestyle diseases such as atherosclerosis, heart disease, cancer, hypertension, type 11 diabetes, stroke and obesity and overweight (Jay, 2021). Based on their lifestyles, students in higher institutions of learning are most likely to embrace sedentary behavior (Aida et al., 2020). Due to limited time resulting from pressure of class work, most university students become part of population that is at risk of adopting sedentarism (Cotton and Prapavessis, 2016). The level of sedentary behavior and physical inactivity among university students is alarming despite the recommendations by WHO to engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity due to health purposes (Aida, 2020). The influence of physical education classes play an important role in students' participation in physical activities (Aida et al., 2020) since the subject provides students with an opportunity to develop favorable attitudes, skills and knowledge that is important for leading an active lifestyle (Lauren et al., 2010).

Physical education is one of the subjects that have been marginalized in institutions of learning in many African countries. A study conducted by Gerald (2016) found that among the subjects taught in schools, especially in Kenya, physical education was the most relegated subject. Baloka (2018) found out one of the reasons why the subject was sidelined to be lack of enough qualified Physical Education personnel. Based on these studies, besides its healthful benefits, it becomes clear that increasing the number of students pursuing physical education as a career subject in the institutions of learning will help increase the number of professionals hence raising the status of the subject. Particularly Kenya is in the process of establishing a new Competence Based Curriculum where physical education is a key subject. Increasing the number of professionals in the subject will reduce the problem of insufficient manpower. However, physical education as a career subject has being a subject that attracts low enrollment in the university due to indifferent attention because of the unfavorable attitude towards it (Andanje, 2013).

Owino (2016), found out that rules and guidelines in institutions of learning shape and control students' career choices and attitudes towards certain careers. Similarly, Amolloh (2016) reported that students' decision to choose careers are impacted by factors including but not limited to college career guidelines, academic competence, peer pressure and parental will.

Aida et al., (2020) reports that lack of time, lack of suitable facilities, the trainers demands, their inability to balance studies with physical activities and not finding PE activities to be enjoyable are some of the reasons students do not participate in PE activities. Contrary, Kiyani et al., (2021) study in Pakistan found that equipment, safety, institutional policy and culture had little impact on the students' attitudes and participation in physical education classes.

McGaha and Barney (2014) study unfolded that the majority of the students made a decision to become physical education teachers mainly because they were active participants in PE and sports in former schools and that they had teachers who were role models. Similarly, a study by Amolloh and Owino (2016) noted that institutional factors including the influence of lecturers played a powerful influential role in the choice of the subject by the students.

Assessment of factors that impact students' choices to enlist in physical education programs in the university is an area of research that have been done insufficiently (Lauren et al., (2010).

The aim of this review was to examine the institutional factors influencing the attitudes of undergraduate students towards choice of Physical Education as a subject of study at the University of Nairobi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutions of learning play a powerful role in the formation of students' attitudes towards the choice of a career path. Many studies bear out and corroborate this. For example, Chumba et al., (2019) carried out a study exploring the determinants of women underrepresentation in sports at Kenyan universities. The study adopted descriptive survey design and using purposive sampling techniques, the researchers recruited 300 students who took part in the study. In collecting data, interview schedules and self-reported questionnaires were used. According to the findings of the study, 56% reported that in their institutions, the quality of fields did not measure up to the required standards; conversely, 47% showed that the number of fields in their institutions were sufficient. Moreover, of the respondents, 42% indicated that sports equipment in their college were sufficient. The study focused on women only. The current study focused on both gender.

Kiyani et al., (2021) did a study of 618 students in Pakistan assessing individual, interpersonal and organizational factors influencing their participation in physical activities. Using questionnaires, the study solicited information from the informants. The study showed that, in Pakistan, equipment, safety, institutional policy and culture had little impact on the students' attitudes and participation in physical education classes. This study finds out if the same situation applies in Kenya.

Employing the use of cross-sectional survey design, Ahmed (2019) undertook a study aimed at ascertaining the patterns of physical exercise practice among university students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. From a target of 183,784 participants, the researchers sampled 385 students from 15 universities. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Of the informants, 29.9% reported that the reason they were not regular participants in physical activity was due to time factors. Additionally, the study demonstrated that there was a decrease in the regularity of participation in physical education and sports after students' enrollment in higher institutions of learning.

Aida et al., (2020) examined the physical activity habits and determinants, sedentary behavior and lifestyle on 608 students from the University of Santiago who were sampled by the use of stratified random sampling techniques. Using questionnaires, data were collected from the students. As demonstrated by the findings, of the polled participants, 75.1% indicated that the reasons they didn't participate in physical activities was due to lack of time, 49.2% was due to lack of suitable facilities, 21.6% was due to the trainers demands, 89.7% was because to their inability to balance studies with physical activities and 33.5% was because they did not find activities to be enjoyable.

McGaha and Barney (2014) conducted a study on factors influencing PE major student teachers decisions to pursue PE as a subject of study at Harding University and Brigham Young University in the United States of America. The study adopted survey design and sampled 67 informants. The study unfolded that the majority of

the students made a decision to become physical education teachers mainly because they were active participants in PE and sports in former schools and that they had teachers who were role models; in fact, of the respondents, 88% were in the school team in their former schools. Is the situation different in African countries? A study conducted by Gerald (2016) found that among the subjects taught in schools, especially in Kenya, physical education was the most relegated subject. Baloka (2018) found out one of the reasons why the subject was sidelined to be lack of enough qualified Physical Education personnel.

Amolloh and Owino (2016) set out to investigate the factors affecting students’ decisions to pursue History as a career subject at the University of Nairobi. The study sampled 110 third year and fourth year students who were pursuing Bachelor of Education Arts of 2014/2015 academic year. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study and questionnaires used to collect data from the respondents. Findings showed that institutional factors including the influence of lecturers played a powerful influential role in the choice of the subject by the students.

From the above literature, it becomes apparent that institutional factors impacts students’ attitudes towards choice of certain career paths. Also, as demonstrated above, very few studies on institutional factors influencing undergraduate students’ attitudes towards physical education in the university have been conducted in Africa, especially Kenya, and this provided a significant gap.

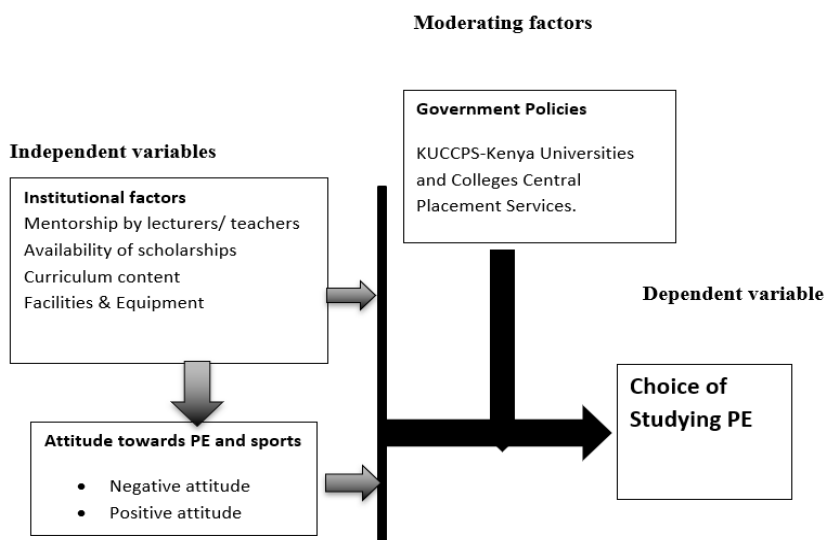
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Expectancy-value theory advanced by McLeod, (2009) guided this study. According to the theory, people’s attitudes towards a certain stimuli are the greatest determinants of the kind of responses they will have towards the stimuli. Based on McLeod (2009), the decision to select and continue working on a task is determined by someone’s confidence in their ability to succeed in the task and the perceived usefulness and importance of the task. The expectancy of success and the value placed on a task predicts engagement, continued interest and academic achievement. Since it allows the researcher to comprehend attitude and its impact on the studying of physical education as a career subject, this theory was considered appropriate for this theory. For instance, to understand whether the students at the University of Nairobi would make a decision to study physical education, their attitudes and factors influencing their attitudes towards PE must be known first.

Conceptual Framework.

Figure 1 demonstrates that the decision to study PE as a subject of choice by first year students in the university is dependent on institutional factors (mentorships by teachers/lecturers, curriculum content, facilities and equipment and institution traditions) and attitudes towards PE under the moderating variables of policies by the government and Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services (KUCCPS) who are mandated to place students in different kinds of courses based on their qualifications and interests.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher’s own model.

METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study was the 2020/2021 first year bachelor of education students at the University of Nairobi in the faculty of education which was comprised of Kenya science campus and Kikuyu campus. Kikuyu campus had 602 students while Kenya science 298 bringing the target population to 910. Using purposive and random sampling techniques, a total of 273 students were sampled to take part in the study. The study adopted the use of cross-sectional survey design and questionnaires to collect data. Split-half reliability test was the method used to make sure the data collection instruments were reliable.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data of the Respondents

The researcher went out to find the distribution of the student-teachers by gender, age, the grades attained in secondary school, their subject combination and the level of education of their parents. About the gender, of the respondents, 57.1% were male and 42.9% were female. Regarding their ages, most 72.7% were below 20 years and 27.1% were 21 years and above. This vividly shows that majority of the student-teachers needed were young and therefore needed extra help when it came to making choices concerning career issues. All the students had attained the minimum grade requirement for entry into the university: a most, 46.9% had grade B; 24.9% had B+; and 15.5% had attained grade B- in secondary school. Moreover, most of the students' parents had moderate level of education: 25.7% of the male parents had university level education, 19.2% had middle level education, and 16.3% had reached secondary school level. On the other hand, 20.4% of their female parents had university level education, 23.7% had middle level education and 17.6% had secondary level education. This is a clear demonstration that only few students came from less informed families. Also the researcher went out to find out about their subject combination. Of the polled respondents, 6.5% indicated that they were pursuing Business and PE, 4.1% indicated Mathematics and PE, 4.1% indicated Geography and P.E, majority (24.9%) indicated English and Literature, 13.1% indicated Mathematics and Chemistry and 10.2% indicated Mathematics and Physics. This findings became clear that few students chose to study physical education as a career subject compared to other subjects like English and Literature.

Participants Responses on Institutional Factors Influencing Students' Choice Of Pe.

There are many factors that influence students' decisions and attitudes towards choice of physical education as a career subject. The researcher went out to examine the institutional factors. The answers given by the informants were captured in table 1 and table 2 as shown below.

Table 1: Institutional factors influencing Physical Education and Sports

	Institutional Factors	Yes		NO			
		f	%	f	%	Mean	SD
1.	I used to have a PE teacher in secondary school	157	64.1	88	35.9	1.3592	.4807
2.	When I came to the university I was to take PE as one of my subjects but I was opted out after the orientation.	24	9.8	221	90.2	1.9020	.2978
3.	PE lessons were taught regularly way back in secondary school	87	35.5	158	64.5	1.6449	.4795
4.	In secondary school we had enough physical facilities for PE	95	38.8	150	61.2	1.6122	.4882
5.	I can't pursue PE because it had too much physical activities I don't like	28	11.4	217	88.6	1.8857	.3188

6.	I was advised by my teacher to pursue the subjects I'm studying	73	29.8	172	70.2	1.7020	.4583
7.	I chose to do PE after the first day of orientation in the university	27	11.0	218	89.0	1.8898	.3137

Of the students who were polled, majority said they used to have physical education teachers in secondary school and only few said they didn't have as shown by the mean of 1.3592 and standard deviation of .4807. Similarly, Baloka (2018) found out one of the reasons why the subject was sidelined to be lack of enough qualified Physical Education personnel. This is a clear indicator that some secondary schools didn't have physical education teachers. Teachers play a primary role in the implementation of a curriculum. Hardman (2014) noted that positive and negative attitudes on physical education and healthful lifestyle are instilled in learners at school level based on the information learners receive from teachers. The government should hire more PE teachers in secondary schools.

Some students, 9.8% said that they were to pursue physical education as a career path but opted out to pursue other subject after university orientation in the first few weeks of enrollment as also shown by the mean of 1.9020 and standard deviation of .2978. Others, 11.0% said that they made up their minds to study P.E after the first day of orientation. Similarly, of the respondents, 29.8% reported that they followed their teachers' advice to choose the subject they were studying. This show that teachers play a paramount role in the career choices made by their students. This is in agreement with Amolloh and Owino (2016) study which found that institutional factors including the influence of lecturers played a powerful influential role in the choice of the subject by the students. This underscores the importance of orientation of new students in the university. Most first year university students, since they are young and inexperienced, enter university with little or skewed information about the courses they are pursuing.

Students were asked about the regularity with which physical education classes were taught in secondary school. Majority 64.5% of the respondents admitted that PE classes were not regularly taught way back in high school and only 35.5% indicated that the classes were regularly taught. This shows that PE was sidelined in most secondary schools. Therefore, this study supports a study conducted by Gerald (2016) who found that among the subjects taught in schools, especially in Kenya, physical education was the most relegated subject.

On whether they had sufficient sports facilities, 61.2% said that they never had enough physical education facilities way back in secondary school. Of the informants, only 38.8% indicated that they had adequate and required facilities. This show that majority of learning institutions do not have required and enough facilities. This is in agreement with Luke & Sinclair (2011) study which found that the type of content of the curriculum, the conduct of the instructor and the facilities in a learning institution are determinants of students' attitudes towards PE.

Finally 11.4% of the student-teachers indicated that they didn't pursue physical education because it has too much practical physical activities. This shows that the content of a curriculum can influence students' attitudes and choices to pursue certain career paths. This agrees with a study by Aida et al., (2020) who examined the physical activity habits and determinants, sedentary behavior and lifestyle of 608 students from the University of Santiago and found that 33.5% didn't not engage in physical education because they did not find activities to be enjoyable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on examining the institutional factors influencing the attitudes of undergraduate students towards studying of physical education at the University of Nairobi. According to the findings of this study, institutional factors such as university orientation programs, prior experience with physical education in their formative school years, physical education role models including teachers, the quality of physical education and sports facilities, the content of physical education curriculum impact students' attitudes towards choice of physical education as a career subject. A good number of students said that they never used to have physical education teachers way back in secondary school. Teachers play a good role when it comes to the implementation

school curriculum. Without teachers the curriculum cannot be implemented efficiently. Majority indicated that they were influenced by their teachers to pursue the course they were pursuing in the university. Teachers and lecturers have a good ground of influencing students in matters of careers. Some said that they decided to pursue physical education because of the orientation they received upon joining university.

Orientation programs are important as they enlighten students about market trends and career.

The following were the recommendations of the study:

1. The government of Kenya to hire more secondary school physical education teachers to reduce the problem of insufficient Physical Education teachers in the schools.
2. To help them make correct choices regarding career matters upon entry into university, universities should come up with programs that offer the right career guidance and counselling to new first year students.
3. Universities should ensure sufficient and enough sports facilities are available and should come up with programs to enlighten students on the importance of physical education and activities to help them to have favorable attitudes towards the subject.
4. Universities should reduce the pressure of class work to ensure students have time to participate in physical activities to help reduce diseases associated with lifestyle.

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