



Sport Education: A Panacea for Improving Socio-Economic Background and Out-of-School Problems in Nigeria

Ochor, Daniel Chinonso

Department of Sport and Exercise Science, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Port Harcourt Rivers State.

ochordaniel@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores the comprehensive issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria, examining its causes, social implications, and potential solutions. Despite the official policy of free and compulsory primary education, Nigeria remains home to a significant portion of the world's out-of-school children, with approximately 10.5 million children aged 5-14 years not attending school regularly. Key factors contributing to this crisis include socio-economic challenges, cultural norms, and inadequate educational infrastructure. Poverty and economic hardship force many children into labor instead of education, while cultural biases often limit girls' access to schooling. The social implications of this phenomenon are profound, leading to increased rates of child labor, early marriage, and societal instability. Children who remain out of school are more susceptible to exploitation and are deprived of opportunities for personal development and future economic independence.

The study emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address these issues. One promising solution highlighted is the integration of sports education into the school curriculum. Sports can engage children, promote physical and mental health, and improve academic performance by making learning environments more dynamic and appealing. Additionally, community-based sports programs can serve as a bridge to reintegrate out-of-school children into formal education. By providing financial support, such as scholarships, and ensuring access to basic needs like nutrition and healthcare, these programs can alleviate some socio-economic barriers. The study calls for collaborative efforts from government, non-profits, and private sectors to implement sustainable sports education initiatives and address the underlying causes of the out-of-school crisis in Nigeria.

Keywords: Out-of-school children, Socio-economic challenges and Sport education

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, Nigeria has had a number of difficult but frankly predictable socio-economic challenges including extreme poverty, insecurity, unemployment (especially amongst the youth), and far too many children out of school. According to UNICEF one in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria. According to the United Nations, out-of-school children refer to children who are yet to be enrolled in any formal education, excluding pre-primary education. The age range for out-of-school children is 6-11 years. Out-of-school children are school-age children that are supposed to be in schools but are not in schools due to parental and governmental failures to provide accessible quality education for them.

Even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, the report by UNICEF suggest that about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61 percent of 6-11 year-olds regularly attend primary school and only 35.6 percent of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education. This is in line with the findings of the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) who reported in 2022 that: "Nigeria has about 20 million out-of-school children. Globally, the organization submitted that there are 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide (who) are still out of school. The organization also revealed that India, Nigeria and Pakistan have the highest figures for out-of-school children globally" (Raliyat, Umma, & Aisha, 2022).

This has made our dear country Nigeria the home to more out-of-the-border children who do not attend school than any other country in the world. This alarming fact underpins the need for effective and innovative responses to tackle school disengagement and its social, economic consequences; Sports education, for example, is a good strategy that can not only help you to grow your skill level in sports but also leads the way of change personally as well society wise.

Sport education offers a way to integrate academics/learning as kids are active. It not only can help with overall health by including additional physical fitness (which has benefits for more than just your waistline, remember), but it also teaches discipline and working as part of a team or leading one — all important skills in the military that carry over to life outside of service. These are skills which can help bridge the pathways for out-of-school children — whose numbers have swollen to a jaw-dropping 105 million in India during Covid-19 lockdown periods alone, and sway them towards re-engagement

with formal education. There is evidence from research that participation in sport (overall) has a positive relationship with the regular attendance and academic performance of children ((Olajide, 2023). Sports education could also bring economic stimulus- inducing jobs and commerce which would promote growth within the community. Sports industry properly maintained creates employment from coaches, trainers to health professionals also contributes positively around economic activities like sports equipment manufacture or event management etc. As Njoroge and Muthoni (2022) put it, we can count the multiplier effect of sports in education; for example as has been seen with Kenya a hugely successful economic booster shot at institutions that had not opened their doors to clear pathways for so many recuse missions.

In addition, sports in society have a great ripple effect on aspects of social cohesion and community development. Sports facilities, for example can become social integration centres to unite the neighborhood disparate entities and fight endemic crime. Programs like "Channels Kids Cup" in Nigeria show that sport can be helpful for keeping young people more deeply engaged and focused on the right path, rather than wandering into criminal or antisocial territory. It is these kinds of initiatives that not only enhance the quality of life for people but also contribute to an overall healthier and stronger community.

Given what is possible with sports education, there is so much that it can do to help Nigeria tackle the socioeconomic and educational challenges facing her. The investment in sports education thus by ensuring that the population of young people has an alternative to engage, can manage sport as a development dependent income and hence build solidarity for a more unified society. Policymakers, educators and community leaders can play key roles in working towards a new dawn for Nigerian society by acknowledging sports.

Socio-Economic Challenges and Out-of-School Issues

The factors here in Nigeria especially, can be extremely hard based on the socio-economic landscape and so these educational challenges too. Nigeria, one of the continent's largest economies remains faced with high poverty levels alongside high rates of unemployment and inadequate educational infrastructure but has aggressively pursued its regulated opposition model leading into irregular polls. These socio-economic challenges combined with the high rate of out-of-school children, in turn result to an endless cycle of poverty and prevent Nigeria from completely realising its developmental potential. Unicef stated that Nigeria has more out-of-school children globally than any other country with about 10.5 million of kids within ages bracket of five – fourteen not in school. This story speaks to larger issues — broad social and economic troubles that need attention without further delay.

In Nigeria, educational disengagement is mainly driven by poverty. Families also lack financial resources for schooling related costs — uniform, books and transportation. These costs are still too high for many families, despite the fact that primary education is free and mandatory. According to a report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), about 40 per cent of Nigerians are within the poverty bracket which is directly related to children not being able to go to school as a constant difficulty. This in turn leads to children from low income families to have no option but to work instead of receiving an education so they can help their family regarding finances.

Cultural practices and gender disparities, besides economic restraints, which are an inescapable variable in the state of existence for most Nigerians largely contribute to some exacerbation on out school rates. Cultural norms in many Nigerian communities emphasized early marriage of girls and made them responsible for tending to their homes rather than going to school. This cultural prejudice translates to an extreme gender disparity in the access of education for students, particularly applicable at rural stratum. Similarly, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has also reported that girls are highly over-represented in out-of-school groups; many either never enroll or drop-out early due to these societal detractions. This difference is not just a challenge to achieve gender equality, but it also hampers national development overall.

In addition, the nature of schooling and its learning milieu play an important role in determining school attendance and dropout. A lot of schools in Nigeria are ill-equipped with infrastructures and facilities, no enough needful classrooms to accommodate all students neither do they possess teaching materials for the needed courses. The NBS said more than 60 percent of public primary schools in were without access to water and nearly half lacked toilet facilities. These substandard conditions not only make it difficult for children to learn but also discourage regular attendance. As a result, the standard of education in Nigeria remains anything but average resulting to poor learning outcomes and an alarming number of out-of-school children.

There is not one solution to these educational problems and the governments' policies have proved insufficient in solving them. While there have been steps to increase education, through initiatives such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, a lack of adequate funding and poor governance are hindering implementation. The absence of capable monitoring and evaluation mostly exacerbate these problems, leading to stall in development progress. New studies, such as Okoro and Okoro (2021) have shown that educational policy implementation should be more stringent in order to make sure the required resources reach their target beneficiaries for positive results.

The socio-economic and out-of-school issues that pervade Nigerian schools cannot be tackled without adopting a holistic method of addressing what goes on in school or its root causes. This should involve targeting poverty alleviation programmes, community mobilisation to address cultural factors that thwart education and a massive investment in educational infrastructure and the professional development of teachers. Moreover, emphasis must be paid to strengthen the governance and accountability mechanisms within education sector minimizing policy-action gaps. Nigeria can address all these challenges holistically, thus making a comprehensive system of integrated and inclusive education that caters to the human capital development needs for such socio-economic growth.

Social implication of out-of-school children in Nigeria

Social implications: The social consequences of out-of-school children in Nigeria are enormous and multi-dimensional, impacting not only the individuals mentioned but also society at large. These have further implications in terms of poverty, higher crime rates, lower economic growth potential and/or productivity advancement; they aggravate gender disparities at the same time as contributing to poor health outcomes through malnutrition which can then proliferate across generations with regards access to education.

For one, the existence of so many out-of-school children contributes to poverty. Education is essential for economic mobility, it can provide individuals with skills and knowledge necessary to get a job or advance the well-being of their families. Low-income jobs are very precarious, and without education they will probably be living their whole lives working like a slave. Excluded from any academic life that engages with society as it is today. The education. Deprivation option was set to yes in both of the above R scripts, allowing us to exploit world-wide estimates from the World Bank for each country-year; one year extra schooling raises future earnings by approx. 10% per additional school year (World Bank, 2020) highlighting an economic price tag on Educational deprivation and a potential predictor factor going forward at national-level life expectancy analyses. InnerText[Paragraph Title] Subnational Analysis Background

Secondly, high crime rates correspond with a lack of education. Children not in school particularly those in towns are more at risk of committing crime as job opportunities for them are limited and they lack direct supervision. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria, a greater proportion of young people engage in crime where fewer children go on to school. This does not only pose a threat to public safety but third and final it exerts huge pressures on the justice system and law enforcement agencies (NBS, 2022).

Another significant social implication of this is the very limited socio-economic progress. After all, a skilled workforce is necessary to compete in the world economy and drive innovation. Large groups of uneducated people have a negative impact on the human capital development of a country, and this makes it difficult for foreign (and thus private) investors to intervene. This stagnation impacts overall economic growth and holds down the potential for Nigeria to reach Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2023).

They enaggage many out-of-school children, including mostly girls and this contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequality. Cultural norms along with economic hurdles hinder the chance to enroll go for school by majority of girls resulting in a big gender gap. UNESCO also asserts that girls suffer disproportionately from school exclusion in Nigeria reducing their future prospects and tends to limit them into traditional gender roles. In addition to the potential for harm felt by individual women, this gender imbalance ultimately holds back society in aggregate terms too —impeding productivity and social advancement (UNESCO 2023).

In addition, the more education an individual has obtained, poor health outcomes are also closely related. Education has been shown to influence health behaviors and access to healthcare services, such that educated individuals are more likely than their uneducated counterparts to make informed health choices. Those who are not in school are less likely to learn critical health facts and may be more prone engaging in risky behaviors. Furthermore, maternal and child health also suffer as mothers with education are more likely to have their children immunised or cater for the nutritional well-being of her offspring (UNICEF 2023).

A major social implication is the intergenerational cycle of educational deprivation These children-of-poor-illiterate-family are more likely to remain out of school, and so continuing cycle poverty lacking opportunity. This cycle feeds into the disadvantage of families and communities in which they are trapped, it does not allow social mobility or breaking inequality (UNICEF 2023). Out-of-school children in Nigeria have social implications which are implicated on poverty levels, crime rates, economic development, gender equality and as well has consequences for health outcomes as well it effect intergenerational educational attainment. It requires a holistic approach which should go beyond only policy reform, include society character and demand changes with the immediate programme to guarantee access of quality if education to all children. With this, Nigeria can harness the untapped energy of its youth and build a more equal as well as prosperous society.

The role of sport education in improving socio-economic background and out-of-school problems in Nigeria

Sports have a much broader role in education than just teaching students the importance of physical health. Incorporating sports in the educational routine builds character, teamwork and leadership qualities which are important for all walks of life. A key benefit of sports is that it has the power to break such barriers and function as a springboard for social change across race, caste, class or gender by fostering inclusion and community building.

One of the important advantages that education furnishes to sport is discipline along with time management. We need to practice regularly in the sports we participate, follow rules and always strive better than yesterday. These habits, fostered in the playing field are seamlessly integrated into their academic pursuits by teaching them to plan and balance themselves properly. One study conducted by the American College of Sports Medicine (2020) found that students who are constantly active have significantly better academic performance and parallel levels of concentration and motivation.

Sports also inculcate the virtues of teamwork and cooperation amongst individuals Teamwork is essential in most sports, collaborating towards a mutual interest creates bonds over time and respect. Teamwork Each Flak Sack IIs comes with a STUDENT MOBILITY PROGRAM: EARTHLING USA / REST OF PLANET Ditto -- Great for cell phones, iPods and other small electronics This team-spirit is another thing found in educational applications where working on group projects or learning from someone else's experience is pretty much standard fare. A study published last year in the Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology found that high school students who participated on a sports team are more likely to have advanced social skills, which can translate into improved behavior both within the classroom and outside it.

In conclusion, skills for being a good leader can be learned through involvement in sports. Some of the players find their leadership role from sports junk as a captain or in play-times if they supervise junior cricketers. They learned how to lead from the front, inspire others and take a calculated decision under stress. Share on Pinterest Students who play sports can learn lifelong leadership qualities from coaches and mentors. New research published in the Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies (2021) shows that such skills may transfer to their behavior in middle school, high school or college. Read More

In addition, sports help in fitness promotion and dealing with the unhealthy lifestyles that accompany modern educational facilities. It builds their cardiovascular health, improves muscle strength and overall endurance that further helps in the holistic development of students. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), physical activity is a valuable method reducing common chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension that are occurring increasingly in young people all over the world [1].

Additionally, sports have the ability to integrate and build social cohesion. Able to function as a forum for students across disciplines, where they can work together and compete with one another. It's the act of engaging with another that does just as much to cross borders and norms, develop a sense of unity and identity. This remains a crucial achievement and has established precedence for sports as being an integral tool in promoting social inclusion, respectability, dignity of persons with disability (Special Olympics, 2020), regarding that the Special Olympic movement showed how much good participation in sports can do; demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt just exactly what means making society more inclusive using sport.

Moreover, sports offer an alternate route to success for students who are not academically inclined. Several gifted sportsmen also have been granted scholarships plus underwriting that enable them to receive a training - which they might not otherwise obtain likelihood. It helps in the growth of individuals, and also to develop a matured dynamic workforce. The fact that student-athletes graduate at higher rates and have more career success than their non-athlete counterparts has been well-documented by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2021).

Economic Benefits of Sports Education

In order to enhance lives of individuals, sports education contributes greatly from economic stand point both at micro and macro level benefiting not only the community but overall economy. The benefits range from job creation to productivity increases, entrepreneurship facilitation as well the fostering of a healthier workforce. Incorporating Sports Education into the Curriculum not only enhances self and societal development but also impacts on economic enhancement at various Fronts.

In the first instance, sports education generates employment in different sectors. There are a vast variety of roles one can undertake within the sports industry from coaches right through to trainers, physical education teachers and even into something completely different like becoming a Sports Psychologist or Administrator. This includes a number of related support services that include sports goods manufacturing event management and facility maintenance. The sports sector is an inducer of labour as millions around the globe are employed in jobs related to sport (ILO, 2021). Sporting programs which can be used to generate gainful employment opportunities abounds in Nigeria, it could contribute its quota towards reducing high unemployment rate specifically among the youth.

Another economic advantage of sports training increased productivity. When it comes to sports education, physical activities play a vital role as regular exercise reduces absenteeism and boosts cognitive function while promoting better concentration in children. This increases productivity in both educational settings and at the workplace. A study by the World Economic Forum (WEF) added to this discussion, finding that consistently active employees are more productive and take fewer days off sick than less-active colleagues (WEF, 2022). Sports education helps a culture of physical activity develop in children from an early age, making them more able to contribute positively to the workforce and consequently helping economic growth.

It would also be adding to the economy of a given location by hosting sports events and activities. Organizing sports competition results in participation of athletes, fans and tourists which further raises the need for accommodation as well house food outlets, transportation hubs etc. This sudden increase of visitors can help small businesses in the area and have a trickle down affect for local economic representation. This results in reduced economic output and a loss of family-oriented events, such as community sports programs and school competitions that drive families out into the public where local vendors can benefit. Investment in sports education and infrastructure at the community level can help us realize the true impact such events have on economics.

Besides, sports education could draw in investment and sponsorships from public as well the private space. In a practice often intended to attach corporate brand names with sports teams, companies make donations in exchange for marketing benefits. That investment can be ever more extensive — not only facilities, but equipment and scholarships to make sure the highest quality sports education is available for everyone. Nigeria is not left out, as educational corporate partnerships can go a long way to creating sports programs that will be profitable for students and the economy. The global sports sponsorship market is said to be worth more than \$50 billion and that investment in sport education can also hold enough liquidity. (Deloitte, 2021)

Additionally, in the future it will be economically relevant to educate people about sports and a healthy workforce. A healthier community is less likely to have long-term illnesses, which lowers the cost of healthcare and improves quality of life across population groups. For example, physical activity has been found to reduce your risk of obesity and conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. Incorporation of sports in the education system enables kids to build up from an early age, which helps them grow with good habits that can contribute towards a healthy society and aid in building productive economy. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), lack of exercise contributes significant budget costs in millions every year worldwide relating with healthcare expenditures and work-time loss production (WHO, 2020).

Lastly, social participation and a community learning environment are developed in sports education—key components of economic sustainability. They provide perks like I mentioned earlier: sports programs unite people from different backgrounds and that only promote social interaction within the areas or communities. That level of togetherness can usher in cooperative attempts for better infrastructure, safety and business support within their localities. Cohesive communities are more likely to be resilient and can better cope with economic hardships. Sports education has the potential to unite disparate communities across Nigeria and create a sense of common purpose.

Sports education provides economic benefits on a large canvas throughout its characteristics. Sports education is a way to contribute towards economic development by creating jobs, increasing productivity and stimulating local economies, attract investment; promote healthy workforce and foster social cohesion. For us, this is one of the other fundamental reasons why investing in sports education is important: to create a society that grows and thrives through learning such as sport.

Case Studies and Success Stories in Sports Education

The utility of sports education in fulfilling the goals of social and economic development has been proven worldwide. There are numerous case studies and success stories indicating that connecting need of human bodies with the games can dramatically change people's lives not only created learning but also to reduce risk in communities and economic development. Notable examples include:

Case Study 1: The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation in South Africa

The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation is the key partner that supported in using sport to combat social issues on a local level in South Africa. Their "Sport for Good City" program is in Cape Town and features youth engagement through team sports. Read more: The program is centered on curbing gang violence, enhancing educational outcomes and fostering social cohesion. Laureus (2020) reported a 25% increase in school attendance by those who are part of the program, and lesser involvement with gangs and criminal activities. This case study provides an example of how a sports education program can function to generate safe youth environments, increase positive behaviors and therefore contributing to the enhancement educational participation.

Case Study 2: The Impact of Physical Education on Academic Performance in Finland

One of the best performing educational regimes in the world, Finland boasts extensive principles underpinning physical education (PE) within its curriculum. Finnish schools have longer recesses that feature physical activity... and if we know what is best for us, so should too. Indeed, even less can be said for physical education (PE) than the time used promoting sports and exercise because research by the University of Jyväskylä showed that students attending regular PE classes were doing better at school academically while also experiencing higher levels of well-being compared to their counterparts with a smaller dose from physical activity (University of Jyväskylä 2018). The success story is a case in point as to the role of physical activity in cognitive development and how sports education can contribute effectively towards academic excellence.

Case Study 3: The Right to Play Initiative in Rwanda

In Rwanda the Right to Play initiative endeavours uses sports and a Play-based learning environment to enhance education of children in post-conflict areas. By developing structured sports activities, the program shifts its focus toward life skills (ex. teamwork, leadership and conflict resolution). McGill University assessed that children improved social skills, self-esteem and did well academically when involved in Right to Play activities (McGill University 2019). This case study highlights the transformative potential of sports education to foster safe and inclusive communities, supporting peace-building efforts in post-conflict settings.

Success Story 1: The Nigerian Football Federation's Youth Development Programs

The Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) have in Nigeria as part of its youth development programs, created channels for identification and nurturing young talents in football. These programs offer a structured training, educational support and global exposure. Several Nigerian footballers who have found success in the top-flight, including Kelechi Iheanacho and Victor Osimhen, are products of such programmes. Their success stories, besides showing the prospects of sports to create opportunities in career building; also displays how education through sports can influence personal and national pride (NFF, 2021).

Success Story 2: The Growth of Women's Sports in Nigeria

The rise of women's sports in Nigeria | Moral messages and agitations for gender equality even at the pinnacle of global sporting events serves to underscore how relevant sport education is in defying gender norms. We have the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) in place and girl-child basketball programs at the grassroots level while some states of the country run athletics competitions for girls within their domains. Successes of Nigerian female athletes such as Blessing Okagabare in Athletics and Asisat Oshoala in football have led more young girls to take interest. These milestones have shattered ceilings and led to increased recognition for female athletes, in turn paving the way to positive societal change (NWFL, 2022).

Success Story 3: The Harlem Children's Zone's "Healthy Harlem" Initiative

Healthy Harlem: A Health and Wellness Initiative That Builds on the Strengths of Churches by The New York Academy of Sciences 2 followers Over eight years, a sophisticated public-research partnership has emerged between scientists at Columbia University in collaboration with their colleagues from Community Pediatrics Programs under title brand "Tell Us Your Healthy Living" targeting pediatric asthmatic illness (one clinical programs is Central Harlem Pediatric Asthma Project aka CHPAP Staller Center for Mind Body Medicine) to integrate physical activity and health living into children life (and hopefully other family members). It consists of after-school sports, fitness classes and nutrition education. Children in Healthy Harlem had greater physical fitness gains, lower obesity reduction rates and better academic results, compared to children who did not participate (Columbia University 2017). The story of success in this report clearly demonstrates that Sport for Development, when integrated and complemented intelligently with holistic health interventions, can positively contribute to the physical welfare and academic achievement of children in marginalized populations.

Addressing Out-of-School Problems through Sports Education

Sports education as an engagement tool

Sports education has the potential to act as an important hook for out-of-school children. While the raw appeal of sports can pull in children who may have been otherwise uninterested in traditional educational methods. Organised sports programs can be great for testing out learning through play, which is especially good for very young children. According to a study conducted by the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, sports programs can improve school attendance and decrease dropout rates via the creation of fun-filled and supportive learning environments (Laureus, 2020).

One of these promising approaches for the implementation is "Street Child World Cup" initiative. The program is built around football and offers street children education, life skills training among others. The initiative also allows children to go back to school and learn important attributes such as teamwork, discipline, strategy (Street Child United 2021).

Enhancing academic performance and cognitive development

It was found that there is a connection between increased participation in sports and enhanced academic performance. Exercise helps the brain functions in order than students can pay attention, concentrate and remember more at school In an exhaustive review by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), students who were physically active nearly always did better in school too, with higher grades, better attendance rates and decreased disruptive classroom behavior compared to sedentary children.

Sports education is strongly inherent in the Finnish school system, where students routinely outperform their international peers on popular tests such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). Trending A study of the Finnish model proven that incorporating physical education to a daily school activities can result in significant changes both on students' physical health and academic achievement (University of Jyväskylä 2018)

Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers

Poverty: Poverty easily remain the largest barrier confronting education in Nigeria. Indeed, sending a child to school proves costly for many households who must make the youth work instead. Sports education programs can also help with this problem of financial pressure by offering scholarships, sponsorships and rewards. CalRVDA and CalMutual's shared commitment to improving the general welfare of children in our home state: besides closing a wide diversity gap, modernizing classrooms with Project Learn efforts could provide youngsters at safer exits out-of-school-time But these people haven't been ignored— just had their backs attended for some handfals!

Kick4Life program in Lesotho, where football is used to address vulnerable children with both on-the-field support and off-the field amenities such as education, healthcare and vocational training This wider-reaching approach has seen hundreds of children taken from the street and placed back into school (Kick4Life, 2021).

Promoting Gender Equality

Sport can be an important tool to provide girls with a complete education and give them the confidence they need to go out and attend school. Girls in Nigeria are also limited from going to school as a result of cultural practices and gender biases which have become norms oscillating parts the nation. In this context, sports can disrupt these norms by allowing girls to outperform themselves, develop their self-confidence and gain social recognition.

For girls living in the US who have access to a program called "Girls on the Run" (which incorporates running, but mainly life skills training), there is good evidence this boosts their self esteem and academic engagement. Other initiatives in Nigeria, such as the "Educate a Girl" initiative, also employ sports to promote retention for girls and educational continuation (Girls on the Run 2020).

Building Social Cohesion and Reducing Violence

Physical education can enhance social harmony and weakened intensity lowers is helpful to rooted out violence factors of society. In many communities in Nigeria, the prevalence of crime links to drugs by virtue of gang formations could be ameliorated through sports for children. Healthy competition-sports are a great way to use up some extra energy and aggression, knowing the 'rights' of kicking/shooting or hitting another body from within this context.

A key example of that is the "Sport for Development and Peace" initiative, spearheaded by none other than the United Nations to leverage sports as vehicle for peace-building in conflict-ridden regions. Sports programs can contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding and reconciliation when they bring children from different backgrounds together, increasing interactions among many groups becoming a bridge for reducing tensions (UN, 2021).

Creating Pathways to Professional Opportunities

In addition, sports education can provide pathways to professional opportunities and a viable career option for many children. Young athletes also have access to a future where they can find work in sports and out of poverty. In addition to this, sports industry also has a lot of jobs in its closet in the form of coaching and training, management or marketing side.

Many prospects from the NFF youth development programs have ended up as professionals either on home soil or abroad. The programs not only foster athletic accomplishments, but also build on educational opportunities and personal growth (NFF, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Tackling the problem of out-of-school children in Nigeria demands novel and versatile strategies; sports education is a viable one. By using sports to engage children we are able to tap into the natural attraction young people have towards physical activity and further incentivize them to come in, participate and complete their schooling. Exception 3: Investing in sports education, means investing not only the good health of others but also the larger socio-economic development of communities and nation. It opens doorways to employment, delivers more united communities and a human better educational experience.

As demonstrated by successful case studies and initiatives around the world, sports education has the potential to rouse out-of-school children back into school life thereby revolutionizing their lives as well as Nigeria's future. It is, therefore, imperative to implement sports education as a palliative approach of solving out-of-school issues in Nigeria through incorporating sport activities into curriculum content development and coaching programmes; developing pliable community-based initiatives that promote gender equality among school children, commercializing the vocation chain with incentives by training impactful coaches who are advocates for developmental goals ensuring that more stakeholders get involved throughout progress monitoring stages while also campaigning for policy imperatives if needed be leveraging on technology platforms and focusing programs across various life skills spectrum attained over time which will foster national unity.

Suggestions

To effectively leverage sports education as a means of addressing the out-of-school problem in Nigeria, the researcher suggests the following:

1. Include sports lessons in the daily school timetable to help students get regular exercise. Such an approach can increase cognitive development, boost academic performance and ensure that students find school more interesting. This is exemplified nicely in a Finnish model that weaves lots of physical education into the school day.
2. Develop organized sports programs for the community that not only incorporate children whose school hours are out, but also encourage them to get up and participate. And, these programs can be used as a bridge to get out-of-school children back into school. Most importantly, these programs could also be organized and run by community centers, local sports clubs or NGOs.
3. Offer scholarships with the sole aim of promoting women in sports. This could serve the dual purpose of further contesting existing gender stereotypes, and also inspiring girls to attend school. Programs should work to cultivate a supportive and inclusive atmosphere where girls are provided the opportunity – as well as skills — for triumph. These programmes can be modified to suit the Nigerian narrative and used as tool in achieving gender equality.
4. Invest in training for coaches and educators to achieve the ability to integrate sports with education, that will create a conducive environment for all children. Training should include sports along with life skills, and leadership as well as how to make it a sporty self inclusive positive environment.
5. Launch advocacy programs to influence national policy and advance regional reforms that promote sports education. Policy makers need to recognize that sports education has a role in addressing the out of school issue and use resources accordingly. Advocacy efforts should be to the effect of getting sports education mainstreamed within national educational strategies and budgets.
6. Leverage technology and media to popularize sports education among masses. You could take training material, success stories and best practices online. The campaigns on social media platforms are also able to raise awareness and excite local communities which can lead to more children participating in sporting programs.
7. Sports instruction should be focused on life lessons and enhancing the skill of teamwork, leadership, discipline, resolution of conflict etc This skills can never be overemphasized as it is very important for the growth of a child and how he able to overcome lots of things in life. It is essential that programs include life skills in sports activities to have the most impact.

REFERENCE

American College of Sports Medicine. (2020). *The Impact of Physical Activity on Academic Performance*. Retrieved from [ACSM](#)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). *The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance*. Retrieved from [CDC](#)
- Columbia University. (2017). *Healthy Harlem Initiative Evaluation*. Retrieved from [Columbia University](#)
- Deloitte. (2021). *Global Sports Sponsorship Market*. Retrieved from Deloitte
- Girls on the Run. (2020). *Impact of the Girls on the Run Program*. Retrieved from [Girls on the Run](#)
- International Labour Organization. (2021). *Employment in the Sports Sector*. Retrieved from ILO
- Jacob, O., Chinwuba, M., & Ayoko, V. (2022). Out of school children in Nigeria: Causes, social implications and way forward. *Journal Title*, 5(1), 82–91.
- Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies. (2021). *The Role of Sports in Leadership Development*. Retrieved from JLOS
- Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology. (2019). *Social Skills Development Through Team Sports*. Retrieved from JSEP
- Kick4Life. (2021). *Transforming Lives Through Sport*. Retrieved from [Kick4Life](#)
- Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. (2020). *Impact Report*. Retrieved from [Laureus](#)
- Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. (2020). *Impact Report*. Retrieved from [Laureus](#)
- McGill University. (2019). *Evaluation of Right to Play Programs*. Retrieved from [McGill University](#)
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Crime Statistics: Reported Offences by Type and State*. Retrieved from [NBS Nigeria](#)
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria: Executive Summary*. Retrieved from [NBS Nigeria](#)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2021). *Student-Athlete Graduation Rates and Career Outcomes*. Retrieved from [NCAA](#)
- Nigeria Women's Football League. (2022). *Promoting Women's Sports in Nigeria*. Retrieved from [NWFL](#)
- Nigerian Football Federation (NFF). (2021). *Youth Development Programs*. Retrieved from [NFF](#)
- Nigerian Football Federation. (2021). *Youth Development Programs*. Retrieved from [NFF](#)
- Njoroge, P., & Muthoni, J. (2022). Sports as an Economic Catalyst: Lessons from Kenya. *African Development Review*, 34(3), 289-304.
- Okoro, C. & Okoro, O. (2021). *Educational Policy Implementation in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects*. *Journal of Educational Research and Development*, 10(3), 212-225.
- Olajide, K. (2023). The Impact of Sports on Academic Performance in Nigerian Schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 15(2), 115-130.
- Special Olympics. (2020). *Promoting Inclusion through Sports*. Retrieved from [Special Olympics](#)
- Street Child United. (2021). *Using the Power of Sport to Change the World*. Retrieved from [Street Child United](#)
- UNESCO. (2023). *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Retrieved from [UNESCO](#)
- UNICEF. (2022). *Education in Nigeria*. Retrieved from UNICEF
- UNICEF. (2023). *Education in Nigeria*. Retrieved from UNICEF Nigeria
- UNICEF. (2023). *Education in Nigeria*. Retrieved from UNICEF Nigeria
- UNICEF. (2023). *Education in Nigeria*. Retrieved from UNICEF Nigeria
- United Nations (UN). (2021). *Sport for Development and Peace*. Retrieved from [UN](#)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2023). *Global Education Monitoring Report*. Retrieved from [UNESCO](#)
- University of Jyväskylä. (2018). *Physical Activity and Academic Performance*. Retrieved from [University of Jyväskylä](#)
- University of Jyväskylä. (2018). *Physical Activity and Academic Performance*. Retrieved from [University of Jyväskylä](#)
- World Bank. (2020). *Returns to Education: The Economics of Investment in Education*. Retrieved from [World Bank](#)
- World Economic Forum. (2022). *The Economic Benefits of Physical Activity*. Retrieved from WEF
- World Health Organization. (2020). *Physical Activity and Economic Impact*. Retrieved from [WHO](#)
- World Health Organization. (2022). *Physical Activity Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from [WHO](#)

Abdullatif, A. A., & Lawal, B. Z. (2024). *Evaluating the Donor Organizations' Impact on School Administration with Reference to Primary Education in Katsina Education Zone, Katsina State of Nigeria*. 4(2), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.59298/nijre/2024/42212608>

Raliyat, H. Umma, A. & Aisha, A. (2022) As Out-Of-School Children Scourge Worsens: Nigeria Risks Losing out on Literate, Skilled Workforce. *Leadership* <https://leadership.ng/as>