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## Socio-Economic Determinants of Sports Participation among Secondary School Athletes in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the socioeconomic determinants of sports participation among secondary school student-athletes in Ebonyi Local Government Area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Twenty-one research questions guided the investigation. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, with a population of 12,845 students (6,741 males and 6,104 females) across 29 secondary schools. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample of 400 respondents was drawn through multi-stage sampling: stratification into rural and urban schools, random selection of two schools from each stratum, and purposive selection of 50 male and 50 female students per school. Data were collected with a self-developed, expert-validated questionnaire comprising two sections (demographic data and socioeconomic variables) and analyzed using statistical mean ( $\bar{x}$ ). The results revealed that socioeconomic factors significantly influenced sports participation. Key determinants included parental income, religion, school environment, parental influence, peer group influence, and the relationship with sports teachers. These factors were consistent across gender (male and female) and location (urban and rural). It was recommended that the state government, through the Ministry of Education's School Sports Division, should invest in sports facilities and equipment in secondary schools, both urban and rural. Furthermore, school management should engage qualified physical education personnel, and physical education teachers should actively encourage family support and involvement in students' sports participation.

**Keywords:** Socioeconomic determinants, Sports participation, Student-athletes, Secondary schools, Parental influence, Peer group, School environment

### 1. Introduction

Sports have long been recognized as a vital aspect of human society, encompassing recreation, competition, education, and cultural identity. Coakley and Pike (2009) define sports as institutionalized competitive activities involving skill and physical exertion, while Huizinga (2010) situates them as cultural practices that contribute to identity and community building. Caillois (2016) further emphasizes their playful and rule-bound nature, underscoring the multidimensional value of sports in shaping individual and social life.

Beyond recreation, sports participation is increasingly linked to health, personal development, and academic outcomes. Eime et al. (2010) highlight the positive impact of sports on physical and mental health, noting their contribution to health-related quality of life. Similarly, Bailey (2006) asserts that participation in sports promotes discipline, teamwork, and self-esteem in young people, while Beets et al. (2006) identify social support from peers and parents as a strong predictor of sustained involvement. This interplay of physical, social, and psychological benefits underscores the role of sports as a developmental tool.

From an educational standpoint, sports have been shown to influence learning outcomes, motivation, and classroom behavior. Chen, Chen, and Zhu (2012), through a meta-analysis, found that physical activity enhances school engagement and motivation. Weiss, Smith, and Theeboom (1996) similarly argue that sports provide opportunities for friendship formation and social acceptance, while Bukowski, Hoza, and Boivin (2000) highlight the role of peer relationships in promoting psychosocial adjustment during adolescence. These studies collectively demonstrate that the benefits of sports extend beyond the playing field into academic and social domains.

However, sports participation is not equally accessible to all students. Several socioeconomic determinants influence who participates and to what extent. Parental income is a significant factor: Edwardson and Gorely (2010) found that children from higher-income families are more likely to be enrolled in organized sports, while Eamon (2005) emphasized that socioeconomic status affects both academic achievement and engagement in extracurricular activities. Peer influence is another major determinant. Voorhees et al. (2005) observed that adolescent girls' sports participation is strongly shaped by their peer networks, and Cano-Overway et al. (2009) highlighted the role of supportive environments in building self-efficacy and resilience in sports settings.

The school environment also plays a decisive role in shaping participation patterns. Higgins et al. (2005) argued that the quality of the learning environment, including availability of facilities and supportive teachers, affects student engagement in both academics and extracurricular activities. Hardman (2008) noted that physical education teachers are particularly influential, serving as facilitators and motivators of student involvement in sports. Weiss and Williams (2004) likewise stressed that positive youth sport experiences depend largely on adult leaders who create supportive and inclusive contexts.

In Nigeria, sports are integral to student life and national development. Mshelia (2000) observed that sports within educational institutions promote unity, identity, and community building, while Saba and Agbeko (2009) reported challenges such as inadequate facilities, limited funding, and low participation rates among students. Borgers et al. (2016) further caution that organizational settings and access barriers must be addressed to foster greater inclusion in sports programs. Despite these global and local insights, there is limited research focusing on how socioeconomic factors such as parental income, religion, peer networks, and school environments shape sports participation among Nigerian secondary and university students.

This gap provides the rationale for the present study. By investigating the socioeconomic determinants of sports participation in Izzi High School, Ebonyi State, the research aims to explore how parental background, peer influence, school environment, and teacher relationships affect levels of participation. The findings are expected to extend the literature by offering context-specific insights, while also contributing to strategies that can enhance student engagement in sports within Nigeria.

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## **2. Methodology**

This study employed standard research procedures, presented under the following subheadings: Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques, Instrument for Data Collection, Validation and Reliability of the Instrument, Data Collection Procedure, and Data Analysis Method.

### ***2.1 Research Design***

A descriptive survey design was adopted to describe existing conditions without manipulating variables (Kerlinger, 2000; Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2003).

### ***2.2 Population***

The population consisted of all male and female student-athletes in junior and senior secondary schools within Ebonyi Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State. According to records from the Secondary Education Board (SEB), Ebonyi LGA has 29 secondary schools with a total of 12,845 students, comprising 6,741 males and 6,104 females.

### ***2.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques***

Using Yamane's formula, a sample of 400 students was selected through multi-stage sampling. Schools were stratified into rural and urban, two schools were randomly chosen from each, and 50 boys and 50 girls were purposively selected per school.

### ***2.4 Instrumentation***

A structured, self-developed questionnaire was used. Section A obtained demographic data, while Section B captured socioeconomic factors influencing sports participation.

### ***2.5 Validity***

Face and construct validity were ensured through expert review by lecturers and specialists in Human Kinetics and Health Education (Araoye, 2004).

### ***2.6 Reliability***

Reliability was established to determine the consistency of the instrument in measuring the intended variables. As Thomas and Nelson (2001) note, reliability is a critical component of validity, representing the stability of results when an instrument is administered on different occasions under similar conditions.

### ***2.7 Data Collection Procedure***

An introductory letter from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education granted access to schools. Questionnaires were administered directly to students with assistance from principals and games masters.

### 3. Results and Findings

This chapter deals with the presentation and discussion of the results of the study. The results are presented in line with the research questions.

#### 3.1 Research Question 1:

What social factors determine secondary school athletes' sports participation in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State?

Table 1: mean score of respondents on the social factors that determine secondary school athletes' participation in sports in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

S/N	SOCIAL DETERMINANTS	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	DECISION
1.	My religion permits me to wear any sports clothing	260	97	28	15	400	3.5	Agreed
2.	My religion allows me to attend and watch sports but not to participate	156	154	159	36	400	3.6	Agreed
3.	My religion permits females to participate in sports	248	104	37	11	400	3.5	Agreed
4.	My sports teacher encourages me to participate in sports.	213	124	35	28	400	3.6	Agreed
5.	My sports teacher encourages team work in sports	233	118	35	14	400	3.5	Agreed
6.	My sports teacher pays more attention to the talented students more than those who can't play	133	135	73	59	400	3.2	Agreed
7.	My school has adequate sports equipment and facilities	186	101	91	22	400	3.1	Agreed
8.	My school allows everyone easy access to the sports facilities and equipment	218	119	40	23	400	3.5	Agreed
9.	My school gives time to engage in sports activities	208	129	46	17	400	4.1	Agreed
10.	My friends participate in sports so i also participate	205	121	42	32	400	3.3	Agreed
11.	My friends love engaging in sports activities	248	82	47	23	400	3.4	Agreed
12.	My participation in sports has nothing to do with my friends and classmates	213	113	51	23	400	3.3	Agreed
13.	My parents engage in sports activities	107	93	100	100	400	2.5	Agreed
14.	My parents encourage me to participate in sports	142	120	93	45	400	3.0	Agreed
15.	My parents see sports as necessary for all gender	143	127	73	57	400	3.0	Agreed

Table 1 showed the mean scores of the social factors that determine sports participation of secondary school athletes in Ebonyi local Government Area of Ebonyi state. From the Table, it was observed that all 15 items had mean scores above 2.50 which indicated agreement. This means that religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group influence and parental influence were social determinants of secondary school athlete sports participation in Ebony LGA.

#### 3.2. Research Question 2:

What economic factors determine secondary school athletes sport participation in Ebonyi LGA?

Table 2: mean score of respondents on the Economic factors that determine secondary school athletes' participation in sports in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

S/N	ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS	SA	A	D	SD	N	MEAN	DECISION
1.	My parents afford the cost of sports equipment like balls, jersey and sport shoes	138	142	90	30	400	3.0	Agreed
2.	I participate in sports because my parents can afford sport equipments	99	144	96	61	400	2.7	Agreed
3.	My family residence has easy access to sports equipments and facilities	125	124	94	57	400	3.0	Agreed
4.	My parents afford the expenses of most sport equipment and facilities	145	135	89	31	400	3.0	Agreed
5.	My school can afford the cost of sport equipment and facilities	213	104	62	21	400	3.3	Agreed
6.	My school can afford to sponsor the cost of sport competitions and programmes	172	146	65	17	400	3.2	Agreed
	Grand mean						3.0	Agreed

Table 2 showed the mean scores of the Economic factors that determine sports participation of secondary school athletes in Ebonyi local Government Area of Ebonyi state. From the Table, it was observed that all 6 items had mean scores above 2.50 which indicated agreement. This means that parental income and school income are Economic determinants of secondary school athlete sports participation in Ebony LGA.

### 3.3 Research Question 3:

What social factors determine secondary school athletes sport participation by Ebonyi LGA by gender?

Table 3: mean score of respondents on the social factors that determine secondary school athletes' participation in sports in Ebonyi Local Government by Gender.

S/N	SOCIAL DETERMINANTS	Gender	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1	My religion permits me to wear any sports clothing	Male	129	49	16	6	200	3.5	Agreed
		Female	131	48	12	9	200	3.5	Agreed
2	My religion allows me to attend and watch sports but not to participate	male	95	66	20	19	200	3.2	Agreed
		female	61	86	31	22	200	3.0	Agreed
3.	My religion permits females to participate in sports	Male	114	62	20	4	200	3.4	Agreed
		Female	134	42	17	7	200	3.5	Agreed
4.	My sports teacher encourages me to participate in sports	male	105	61	15	19	200	3.3	Agreed
		female	108	63	20	19	200	3.4	Agreed
5.	My sports teacher encourages team work in sports	Male	107	68	19	6	200	3.4	Agreed
		female	126	50	16	8	200	3.5	Agreed
6	My sports teacher pays more attention to the talented students more than those who can't play	Male	68	78	30	24	200	3.0	Agreed
		female	65	57	43	35	200	3.0	Agreed
7.	My school has adequate sports equipment and facilities	Male	98	47	42	13	200	3.2	Agreed
		Female	88	54	49	9	200	3.1	Agreed
8.		Male	107	59	17	17	200	3.3	Agreed

S/N	SOCIAL DETERMINANTS	Gender	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
11.	My school allows everyone access to the sports facilities and equipment	female	111	60	23	6	200	3.4	Agreed
	My school gives time to engage in sports activities	Male	105	68	21	6	200	3.4	Agreed
		female	103	61	25	11	200	3.3	Agreed
	My friends participate in sports so i also participate	Male	106	59	19	16	200	3.3	Agreed
		female	99	62	23	16	200	3.2	Agreed
	My friends love engaging in sports activities	Male	123	45	21	11	200	3.4	Agreed
		Female	125	37	26	12	200	3.4	Agreed
	My participation in sports has nothing to do with my friends and classmates	Male	107	61	25	7	200	3.3	Agreed
		Female	106	52	26	16	200	3.2	Agreed
	My parents engage in sports activities	Male	49	52	38	61	200	3.0	Agreed
		Female	58	41	62	39	200	3.0	Agreed
	My parents encourage me to participate in sports	Male	78	63	44	15	200	2.5	Agreed
		Female	64	57	49	30	200	3.0	Agreed
	My parents see sports as necessary for all gender	Male	68	58	54	20	200	3.0	Agreed
		Female	75	69	19	37	200	2.9	Agreed
	Grand mean	Male						3.2	
		Female						3.0	

Table 3 shows the mean scores of male (200) and female (200) students in the four selected secondary schools in Ebonyi local government Ebonyi state. From the Table it was observed that all 15 items had individual mean above 2.50 which indicated that the students agreed with the items. THE Table showed a grand mean of 3.2 for male and 3.0 for females. So, similarly social factors determined sports participation between boys and girls in secondary schools in Ebonyi LGA.

Therefore, religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group and parental influence were social determinants of sports participation among secondary school athletes.

#### 3.4. Research Question 4:

What economic factors determine secondary school athletes sport participation by Ebonyi LGA by gender?

Table 4: mean score of respondents on the economic factors that determine secondary school athletes' participation in sports in Ebonyi Local Government by Gender.

S/N	ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS	Gender	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1.	My parents afford the cost of sports equipment like balls, jersey and sport shoes	Male	73	78	42	7	200	3.1	Agreed
		Female	65	64	48	23	200	3.0	Agreed
2.	I participate in sports because my parents can afford sport equipments	Male	53	79	50	18	200	2.8	Agreed
		Female	46	65	46	43	200	3.0	Agreed
3.	My family residence has easy access to sports equipments and facilities	Male	60	68	41	31	200	3.0	Agreed

S/N	ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS	Gender	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
4.	My parents afford the expenses of most sport equipment and facilities	Female	65	56	53	26	200	3.0	Agreed
		male	81	62	44	13	200	3.1	Agreed
		female	64	73	45	18	200	2.9	Agreed
5.	My school can afford the cost of sport equipment and facilities	Male	109	49	28	14	200	3.3	Agreed
		Female	64	55	34	7	200	3.3	Agreed
6.	My school can afford to sponsor the cost of sport competitions and programmes	Male	87	73	30	10	200	3.2	Agreed
		Female	85	73	35	7	200	3.2	Agreed
		Grand mean	Male					3.0	
		Female						3.1	

Table 4 above shows the mean scores of male (200) and female (200) students in the the selected secondary schools in Ebonyi local government Ebonyi state. From the Table it was observed that all 6 items had individual mean of 3.0 for male and 3.1 for females. So, similar economic factors determined sports participation between boys and girls in secondary schools in Ebonyi LGA.

So therefore, parental income and school income are all Economic determinants of sports participation among secondary school athletes.

### 3.5 Research Question 5:

What social factors determine secondary school athletes sport participation by Ebonyi LGA by Location?

Table 5: mean score of respondents on the social factors that determine secondary school athletes' participation in sports in Ebonyi Local Government by location.

S/N	SOCIAL DETERMINANTS	Location	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1	My religion permits me to wear any sports clothing	Urban	129	48	18	5	200	3.5	Agreed
		Rural	131	49	18	5	200	3.5	Agreed
2	My religion allows me to attend and watch sports but not to participate	Urban	84	68	28	20	200	3.1	Agreed
		Rural	72	84	23	21	200	3.0	Agreed
3.	My religion permits females to participate in sports	Urban	118	58	19	5	200	3.5	Agreed
		Rural	130	46	18	6	200	3.5	Agreed
4.	My sports teacher encourages me to participate in sports	Urban	102	65	19	14	200	3.3	Agreed
		Rural	111	59	16	14	200	3.3	Agreed
5.	My sports teacher encourages team work in sports	Urban	119	63	14	4	200	3.5	Agreed
		Rural	114	55	21	10	200	3.4	Agreed
6	My sports teacher pays more attention to the talented students more than those who can't play	Urban	72	81	23	24	200	3.0	Agreed
		Rural	61	54	50	35	200	3.0	Agreed
7.	My school has adequate sports equipment and facilities	Urban	146	35	13	6	200	3.6	Agreed
		Rural	140	66	78	16	200	3.0	Agreed
8.		Urban	100	70	17	13	200	3.3	Agreed

S/N	SOCIAL DETERMINANTS	Location	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
	My school allows everyone access to the sports facilities and equipment	Rural	118	47	23	10	200	3.4	Agreed
9.	My school gives time to engage in sports activities	Urban	106	68	29	6	200	3.4	Agreed
		Rural	102	61	26	11	200	3.3	Agreed
10	My friends participate in sports so i also participate	Urban	99	56	31	14	200	3.2	Agreed
		Rural	106	65	11	18	200	3.3	Agreed
11.	My friends love engaging in sports activities	Urban	152	32	9	7	200	4.0	Agreed
		Rural	96	50	38	16	200	3.12	Agreed
12	My participation in sports has nothing to do with my friends and classmates	Urban	114	58	15	13	200	3.4	Agreed
		Rural	99	55	36	10	200	3.23	Agreed
13	My parents engage in sports activities	Urban	65	66	39	30	200	2.8	Agreed
		Rural	42	27	61	70	200	2.5	Agreed
14	My parents encourage me to participate in sports	Urban	103	57	24	16	200	3.2	Agreed
		Rural	39	63	69	29	200	3.0	Agreed
15	My parents see sports as necessary for all gender	Urban	96	66	18	20	200	3.2	Agreed
		Rural	47	61	55	37	200	3.0	Agreed
	Grand mean	Urban						3.3	
		Rural						3.2	

Table 5 above shows the mean scores of urban (200) and rural (200) students in the selected secondary schools in Ebonyi local government Ebonyi state. From the Table it was observed that all 15 items had individual mean above 2.50 which indicates that the students agreed with the items in each location. The Table showed a grand mean of 3.3 for urban and 3.2 for rural. So, similarly social factors determine sports participation between urban and rural schools in Ebonyi LGA.

So therefore, religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group and parental influence are all social determinants of sports participation among secondary school athletes in both rural and urban areas.

### 3.6 Research Question 6:

What economic factors determine secondary school athletes sport participation by Ebonyi LGA by Location?

Table 6: mean score of respondents on the economic factors that determine secondary school athletes' participation in sports in Ebonyi Local Government by location.

S/N	ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS	Location	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1.	My parents afford the cost of sports equipment like balls, jersey and sport shoes	Urban	94	80	19	7	200	3.3	Agreed
		Rural	44	62	71	23	200	2.6	Agreed
2.	I participate in sports because my parents can afford sport equipments	Urban	62	95	28	15	200	3.0	Agreed
		Rural	37	49	68	46	200	2.4	Agreed
3.	My family residence has easy access to sports equipments and facilities	Urban	88	61	29	22	200	3.1	Agreed
		Rural	37	63	65	35	200	2.5	Agreed
4.		Urban	106	64	18	12	200	3.3	Agreed

S/N	ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS	Location	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
	My parents afford the expenses of most sport equipment and facilities	Rural	39	71	71	19	200	3.0	Agreed
5.	My school can afford the cost of sport equipment and facilities	Urban	112	47	8	3	200		Agreed
		Rural	71	57	54	18	200	2.9	Agreed
6.	My school can afford to sponsor the cost of sport competitions and programmes	Urban	103	61	28	8	200	3.3	Agreed
		Rural	69	85	37	9	200	3.1	Agreed
	Grand mean	Urban						3.3	
		Rural						3.2	

Table 6 above shows the mean scores of urban (200) and rural (200) students in social factors that determine sports participation in the selected secondary schools in Ebonyi local Government Area of Ebonyi state. From the Table it was observed that all 6 items had individual mean above 2.50 which indicated that the students agreed with the item. The table showed a grand mean of 3.3 for urban and 3.2 for rural. So, similarly economic factors determine sports participation between urban and rural schools in Ebonyi LGA.

So therefore parental income and school income are economic determinants of sports participation among secondary school athletes in both rural and urban areas.

### 3.7 Summary of findings

In view of the result of the data presented in this study, the following findings as summarized were;

1. Religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group and parental influence are social factors that determine secondary school athletes sports participation in Ebonyi Local government area of Ebonyi State.
2. Parental income and school income are economic factors that determine secondary school athletes sports participation in Ebonyi local government area of Ebonyi state.
3. Religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group and parental influence are social factors that determine both male and female secondary school athletes sports participation in Ebonyi Local government area of Ebonyi State.
4. Parental income and school income are economic factors that determine both male and female secondary school athletes sports participation in Ebonyi local government area of Ebonyi state.
5. Religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group and parental influence are social factors that determine secondary school athletes sports participation in both the urban and rural areas of Ebonyi Local government area of Ebonyi State.
6. Parental income and school income are economic factors that determine both male and female secondary school athletes sports participation in both the urban and rural areas of Ebonyi local government area of Ebonyi state.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Sports participation among male and female students, and among urban and rural schools Ebonyi LGA are affected by both social and economic factors in sport participation. There could be effective sports participation in schools, if there is collaboration among government, school management, parents and even the students themselves. This will create avenues for the students to be physically, mentally and socially developed to handle their day-to-day activities.

The finding based on this revealed that most of the social and economic factors were determinants of sports participation. The following factors, Religion, relationship with sports teacher, school environment, peer group, parental influence, parents income and school income were determinants of sports participation of secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

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