

CHILDHOOD ANTECEDENTS OF FEMALE SOCIALIZATION  
INTO COMPETITIVE SPORTS

CONFERENCE PAPER

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BEING A PAPER PRESENTED DURING THE 11TH CONFERENCE  
OF NIGERIA ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS SCIENCE AND MEDICINE  
HELD AT NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SPORT ON  
26TH – 29TH NOVEMBER, 1997.

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ABSTRACT

After the Beijing Conference in 1994, declaration and platform for action was set. Amongst the twelve critical areas of concern is the state of the girl-child which called on the government to encourage girls to participate in the social functioning of the society (Akande, 1995). Sports as an arm of social life relatively suffers deprivation of the girl-child in active and competitive sports. The focus of this study is to find out childhood antecedents of female socialization into-competitive sports.

The subject used for this study comprised one hundred and fifty sports (N = 150) women who competed during the 10th National Sports Festival (Benue 96) held at Makurdi, Benue State in April, 1996. Respondents were between ages 20 - 30 years and participated in individual, dual and team games.

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire which had fifteen items only. Two hundred questionnaire were administered and collected back during the festival. Only one-hundred and fifty copies were found useful for data analysis.

Data were analysed using frequency count and percentages. It was concluded that there is social inequality in socialization of girls and boys into competitive sports to the favour of the boys.

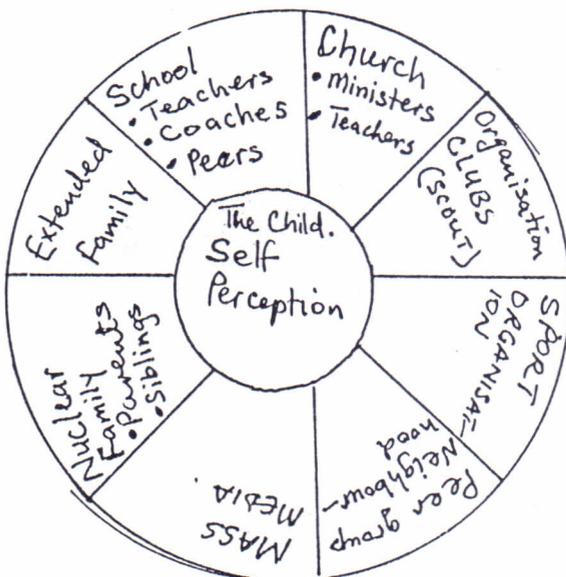
It was recommended that gender issues in sport; especially female participation in competitive sport be thoroughly researched into in our society. This will serve a framework of integrating more females into competitive sports at an early age and subsequently trained into competitive sports.

## INTRODUCTION

Socialization is the process whereby individuals learn to play various social roles necessary for effective participation in society. Since socialization is a process, there are two orientations relating sports to the process of socialization. According to Oglesby (1978) the first focuses on sport as a medium for social learning and the second is the influence of sport on childhood and adolescent social life.

The vehicle of socialization into competitive sport will usually be carried out by the family, school, church, peers, mass media, affiliation to organization like scouts. The introduction to sports is most likely to occur in the family, if the child has parents or older siblings who participated and are interested in sport activities. The opportunity to learn athletic skills and to evaluate one's perception of ability is likely to occur in early childhood among neighbourhood friends (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1983).

This chart illustrates the vehicle of socialization into competitive sports.



Sport involvement for females could be promoted by the collective influence of the family, peers, school and community.

#### METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The subjects used for this study were female athletes from sixteen states of the Federation, who participated in individual, dual and team games; during the 10th National Sports Festival held at Makurdi, Benue State, from April 11th - 20th, 1996.

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which had fifteen items. The first section was designed to obtain some demographic informations such as age, marital status, state represented, and sport type. While the second section was made up of items that relate to childhood antecedents. Two-hundred questionnaire were administered and collected back immediately during the sport festival. Only one-hundred and fifty copies were found useful for data analysis. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

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ResultsTable I: Demographic Data

1. Age Group	No	%
a. 20 - 25 years	108	72
b. 26-30 years	42	28
c. 31-35 years	0	0

2. Marital Status

a. Single	120	80
b. Married	15	10
c. Widow	12	2
d. Single Parent	3	8

3. State Represented (Region)

a. South	30	20
b. West	45	30
c. North	42	28
d. East	33	22

4. Nature of Game

a. Individual	48	32
b. Dual	66	44
c. Team	36	24

TABLE II: ANTECEDENT FACTORS5. Period of Participation in Sport

	No	%
a. Childhood	87	58
b. Adolescent	42	28
c. Adulthood	21	14

6. Introduced to Competitive Sports by

a. P.E. teachers	30	20
b. Coach	9	6
c. Parents	15	10
d. Brothers/Sisters	18	12
e. Friends	51	34
f. Location of Sports Arena	27	18

7. Restrictive Measures during Participation was offered by

a. Parents/Guardian	72	48
b. Friends	12	8
c. Brothers/Sisters	6	4
d. Society	15	10
e. Religion	45	30

8. Any history of sports participation by extended family numbers

	Yes	No
No	96	54
%	64	36

9. Do you have any competitive sport man/woman in your nuclear family that influenced you

	Yes	No
No	102	48
%	68	32

10. Are you encouraged by the society?

	Yes	No
No	72	78
%	48	52

The demographic characteristics revealed that 108 respondents (72%) were between 20-25 years, and 42 (28%) were between 26-30 years. None was found between 31-35 years.

Marital status of the athletes indicated that 120 (80%) are single, 15 (10%) married, 12 (2%) widow while 3(8%) are single parents. These figures revealed that many female athletes are single.

Female respondents represented 16 states which were classified as follows: south 30 (20%) athletes, West 45 (30%), North 42 (28%), and East 33 (22%).

The nature of game competed for by female athletes ranged from individual 48 (32%), dual 66 (44%) to team games 36 (24%). This implied that female competitor were found in almost all the games during the sport festival.

## ANTECEDENT FACTORS

Entry period into sport participation by female athletes showed that from childhood 87 (58%) participated in sport, adolescent period 42 (28%) while at adulthood level 21 athletes (14%) participated. Many female respondents were seen entry into sport at childhood period. Who introduced the respondents at each period shown above revealed that physical educators 30 (20%), Coach 9 (6%) brothers and sisters 18 (12%) friends 51 (34%) while location of sports arena attracted 27 (18%) female athletes into sports.

96 (64%) female athletes had history of sport participation by members of the extended family. While 64 (54%) indicated that none of their extended family were involved in sports.

102 (68%) respondents were influenced by competitive sport men/women in their nuclear family while 48 (32%) were not influenced at all. The above shows that family influence is an important factor in female participation in sport.

72 (48%) agreed that they do receive society support during competition while 78 (52%) disagreed. Respondents experienced more restrictive measures from payments 72 (48%) and religious/cultural point of view 45 (30%).

## DISCUSSION

According to McPherson, et al (1989) they mentioned that siblings can facilitate or inhibit socialization into sport roles. Gender and age differences among siblings suggest that first born siblings interact with and serve as role models and competitors for younger brothers and sisters.

This implies a one-way process of socialization into sport. The findings of this research agrees with the above since 64% respondents had history of sport participation by members of the extended family while 68% were influenced by competitive sport man/woman in their nuclear family.

On the contrary, as earlier mentioned by McPerson et al (1989) inhibition of female participation in competitive sport was demonstrated by parents , religious and cultural arm of the society as expressed by 48%, and 30% of the respondents respectively. In the opinion of Bujbmann and Alfermann (1995) lack of parental support is an important factor contributing to the negative or indifferent attitude of the girl child towards competitive sports. This occurs as a result of parents who themselves did not participate in sport and had a negative perception about sport. The above findings corroborates with that of Synder and Spreitzer (1993) when they mentioned that culture and not nature is the reason why so few women have been involved in sport, and that any barner that still prevent women from participating can be removed by rational intervention.

80% of the female respondents were single while 10% were married. This implied that, greater percentage of unmarried female athletes can only be found in competitive sport and at the same time be at their best when unmarried. The loss of active athletes occurs when they get married. Factors such as child birth, maternal problems and marital requirements makes them available for active sport. In the opinion

of Hargeanes (1993) traits that are often cited for being a successful and relatively lasting athlete are aggressiveness, tough mindedness dominance, self confidence, and risk taking are usually associated with males rather than females. These are factors that could be associated with low level socialization of the girl-child into competitive sport as well as early rate of drop outs. Supporting above author, Park (1994) was of the view that the place of women everywhere was inferior to that of men. Hence the perception of the girl-athlete (if made) is always seen as inferior when compared to that of the male.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance female socialization into sport, older female athletes who will serve as role model should work fiercely to integrate and ensure continuity of female participation in competitive sport.

There should be more awareness on the need for parental and societal support for competitive female athletes to get to the top. All vehicles of socialization should develop new and positive approach to encourage female participation.