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**PROF. JOSEPHINE N. OKOLI**

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**EDITORIAL**

Journal of Innovations in Science Education (JISE) is a Publication of Association of Science Educators Anambra (ASEA). It is publishable both online and offline. The publication is twice a year. It embraces only on science education and innovative ideas. JIES provide an avenue for dissemination of research findings, innovative ideas and practices between researchers, science educators and policy makers in the form of original research, book review, theoretical and conceptual papers which will serve as an important reference for the advancement of teaching, learning and research in the field of science education.

We are grateful to the contributors and hope that our readers will enjoy reading these contributions.

**Prof. Josephine N. Okoli**  
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**SOCIO CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS ON FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN SPORT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The study explored Socio cultural implications on female participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross river state, Nigeria. Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of the female students from different departments in the, University of Calabar, Calabar. Totalling ten thousand nine hundred and sixty-five (10965) and a sample of two hundred and fifty (250) students which is (2.3%) of the population was selected for the study. A questionnaire titled “socio- cultural implications on female participation in sport questionnaire (SCIFPSQ). 16 items were used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in Human Kinetics and Health Education Department from the university. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha – method with coefficient ranging from 0.70 – 0.72. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis was used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study at .05 level of significance. The analysis revealed that culture and family play a significant role in female students’ participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State. The study among others recommended that Cultural leaders should organize competitions for females to encourage it from the grass root.*

**Keywords:** Socio cultural implications, female participation, sports.

## **Introduction**

Despite immense contributions of women to national development in Africa, they still face a number of difficulties that limit their potentials in promoting personal and collective development. Ladan (2019) opined that, for many years, society maintained a greater degree of sports competition for boys than for girls. In recent years, there have been many changes in women's participation in sports, but the rate of changes has been found to be extremely low. Adler (2018) explained that, today as in the past most female members of the society have fewer opportunities in life compared to their male counterparts as they are expected to run a home and bring up children. Women have less free time in their choice of leisure activities and they are more restricted than males.

Over a long period of time, women have demanded changes in society to give them equal status with men. Social changes have gradually given women greater opportunities to plan their own lives. Nevertheless, the battle for equal opportunities with men is still being fought. The low rate of women involvement in sports is not due to lack of interest in sports by them. Instead, it is due to the long history of direct and indirect forms of discrimination and stereo-typing that women have to contend with (Adeyanju, 2019; Ahueansebhor, Emeribe & Odok, 2023). The sport for all movement started in the mid-1970s in Europe. It was a concept being adopted to achieve a long-term objective by the council of Europe, it was aimed at encouraging the population at large to become more active while it also proclaimed the message that sports are not for the talented few. Almost twenty years later, participation in sports and recreation are justified on the assumption that they serve as mediums for developing desirable attitudes and behaviour that are essential for one's own wellbeing (Anam & Ahueansebhor, 2017a).

Alder (2018) asserted that sports for all was an attempt to extricate sport from domination by the privilege few and to declare it as an entitlement for everybody in an egalitarian society. This means that, sports for all implies equal opportunities for participation for both males and females, irrespective of age, political affiliation, gender, race or religion. According to Chinasa (2019) while this was considered to be important and the ideal, it has proved difficult to achieve in reality, particularly in relation to women. In contrast to the expectation of sport for all, women experience role conflict and this is reflected in the attitude of the general public regarding female athletic participation in Nigeria. Women's participation in sport in Nigeria has for a



long time been relatively low compared with men due to differential treatment based on socio-cultural roles and expectations (Ahueansebhor & Eyam, 2025).

Consequently, the traditional images of gender in Nigeria have often worked against women's participation in sport. This perhaps, extensively reduces already existing opportunities that are available for women in sports (Granger, 2017). An analysis of those actively involved in sports in Nigeria indicates that men constitute the greater number either as players, coaches, or as administrators. In spite of Nigeria's ethnic, culture and religious diversity, a constant theme seems to run through the society as regards the traditional place of women; her traditional place is in the home. Her ideal role is associated with child bearing, rearing and housekeeping. Nigeria is therefore classified as a society where cultural values predominate in all activities (Adeyanju, 2019).

Women have faced barriers that have discouraged their progress in the level of participation in sport. Amuche (2020) demonstrated that, throughout history, men have controlled sport, used it for their own purposes and shaped it to fit their abilities. Consequently, fewer numbers of women have participated in sporting activities than men. Ikhioya (2019), reported that, women in Nigeria universities were not active sport participants. According to the scholar, these women did not regard sport as conducive to their physical wellbeing. Nigerian society still experiences significant gender inequality in sports, despite recent international class performances by women sprinters and football players in national teams. This inequality can visibly affect the opportunities for women to participate in sport, thereby limiting their sport experiences (Megan, 2020). Pamel (2018), further showed that in most communities in Nigeria especially rural ones, cultural beliefs and attitudes had strong influences on low participation of women in sports. Besides, organization of sporting activities in most communities are usually focused on combative sports, such as boxing, wrestling, archery and shooting. Men are major participants in such sports which tend to discriminate against women. Sports participation and nonparticipation are influenced by several factors which are related to and basically hinged on socio-cultural background (Nixon, 2020).

The survival of any activities like sports is regarded as a function of socio-cultural characteristics which prevails in an organization. Sports therefore as an institutionalized social phenomenon depends largely for its continuing existence on the favourable support it receives from cultural and social forces (Sehgal, 2020).

It was stated by Rasciute, (2019) that, psycho-social and cultural factors which exert pressure on women through the immediate family, community, religion, media, peer groups and other sources of socialization to reinforce expected behaviour and teaching of gender roles. Sports is an exemplary activity which focuses attention on the gender influence by allowing for the comparison of innate against learned factors. Sports, traditionally, is defined as a male domain.

Excellence in sports is an attribute cherished for men while it is seen as a distraction for women rather than an element of healthy living. Ikulayo (2018) observed that, most developing countries, including Nigeria, have not experienced rapid changes in women's active participation in sports compared to their more developed counterparts. This is due to a number of socio- cultural factors such as religion, parent, culture, peer group, gender role, massmedia etc on religion aspect for example in northern Nigeria where majority are muslims. The Islamic religion and social expectations for public behaviour influences the choice of women in this part of the country to participate actively in sport. (Adeyanju, 2019)

Pate (2020), observed that, religious attitude as regards the free association of men and women and the exposure of parts of the body especially that of women, is a major constraints to female participation in sports. Ikulayo (2018) stated that, most societies in the late twentieth century still believed that a woman's place was in the kitchen, in care of children and in managing domestics chores. When women are at home, they may not have adequate space or time to fully participate in sports. Yan and Thomas (2021), reported that, cultural expectations shape children's physical activity patterns and gender differences in their motor performance. Giambalvo (2019) indicated that, parents' reactions and expectations towards their children create the messages or concepts of children's sex role stereotypes in physical activity. This report portends that, sex role stereotype can affect sport experiences of women. The scholar also mentioned that among various unique distractions of each single generation, Facebook remains a big distraction of current generation.(Ruseski, 2019).

Sport is an integral part of physical education which involves training of the mind and body through physical activities. It involves all form of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.

Hence, the maintenance of physically active leisure-oriented lifestyles has become

increasingly important in developed societies (Van Deventer, 2021). Involvement in sport and other sport related activities is significant as it leads to competence in the physical world of sport and can also extend to the real life situation (Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2018).

Consequently, it offers important opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing as well as cultivate cultural diversity and promote social inclusion (Taylor & Doherty, 2022). Sport is a way of life, and a means to achieving and maintaining healthy living (Li 2021). Granger (2017); Pawlowski, Downward and Rasciute (2019); and Bull (2020) noted that sports participation is an effective way of improving mental wellbeing. In contrast to the expectation of sport participation for all, women experience role conflict and this is reflected in the attitude of the general public regarding female athletic participation. Adler (2018) in his study explained that, today as in the past most female members of the society have fewer opportunities in life compared to their male counterparts as they are expected to run a home and bring up children.

Women have less free time in their choice of leisure activities and they are more restricted than males. Women's participation in sport in Nigeria has for a long time been relatively low compared with men due to differential treatment based on socio-cultural roles and expectations (Ogidan, Onifade, Ologele, 2021). Consequently, the traditional images of gender in Nigeria have often worked against women's participation in sport (Ogidan, Onifade, Ologele, 2021). In many Nigerian communities, traditional perceptions of females as inferior to males continue to prevail as many people invoke the preservation of Africa culture to justify the subordination of female. As a result, males usually dominate females in the political, religious, economic, academic and domestic spheres (Ashrafy, 2018). Female participation in sport has come a long way. Female's participation entails the provision of equal opportunity to female to take part in sports activity. It implies quantitative and qualitative participation of females in sports. Efforts have been and are being made in getting more females to participate in sports. However, a lot more effort is still required to generate greater female participation in the world of sport (LeUnes & Nation, 2018). Women and girls have traditionally been, and continue to be underrepresented as both sport participants (Borgers, Vanreusel, Lefebvre & Scheerder, 2018; Strandbu, Bakken, & Sletten, 2019; Shull, Dowda, Saunders, McIver & Pate, 2020) and in non-playing roles.

### **Statement of the problem**

Human beings live in a world where inequality reigns. This inequality manifests itself in various spheres in Nigeria and it affects the womenfolk greatly. Inequality exists in political, social, education and sports spheres; where women are being discriminated against based on their gender. Observing that, the low involvement of women in sports is not due to the lack of interest in sports by women. It is due to the long history of direct, and indirect forms of discrimination and stereo-typing as well as many other problems that women have to contend with. Women's participation in sports in Nigeria has for a long time been relatively low compared with men due to differential treatment attached to socio-cultural factors i.e parent, religion, culture, gender, peer group, mass media etc. Many have reported that, women in Nigerian universities were not active sport participants. According to them, women did not regard sport as conducive to their physical well being.

Changes can however be noticed following the advent of western education accompanied by exposure across culture and ethnic background. Review of available literature revealed that there is paucity of study on influence of social cultural factors on sport participation among students in the Universities in Calabar.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to established the socio cultural implications on female students participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar. Specifically, this study aims to investigate if:

1. Culture has a significant effect on female students participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar.
2. Family has a significant effect on female students participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What level of effect does Culture have on female students participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar.
2. How does family affect female students participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant effect culture on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar
2. There is no significant effect family on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar

### **Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey design. This survey investigated the variables of socio economic which are culture and family and female participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State and was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. Population consisted of all female students in the University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria, with an estimated population of ten thousand nine hundred and sixty five (10965). The study investigated some selected faculty in the University of Calabar such as (Human kinetics and health education, biological science, faculty of art, e t.c) were selected for this study. In a bid to arrive at proper sampling procedure, the stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used. Both inclusion and exclusion criteria were duly considered in selecting the sample for the study. Therefore, a sample of 250 students (2.3%) of the population was drawn to be used as sample of the study.

A questionnaire was used for data collection and titled “Social cultural implications of female participation in sport questionnaire (SCIFPSQ). This is a structured questionnaire constructed by the researchers. The instrument was divided into 3 sections A, B, and C. Sections A consisted of the socio-demographic data of the respondents, section B, measured the independent variables which were culture and family while section C the sports participation of students. The instrument was a modified four – point likert scale with 16 items. Respondents rated their agreement with each statement using the following options, Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The face validation of the instrument was carried out by subjecting it to thorough scrutiny and vetting by experts in Human Kinetics and Health Education. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a trial testing was carried out with lecturers outside the sample used. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to get the estimate of internal consistency of the instrument and the instrument was administered once for its computation. The reliability coefficient obtained for the 3 – subsections were 0.68, 0.70, 0.72.

## **Results**

**Research Question 1: What level of effect does culture have on female students' participation in sport**

**Table 1: Summary of descriptive statistics for the effect of culture on female students' participation in sport**

<b>Item (Culture Influence on Sports Participation)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Cultural belief restricts female participation	3.62	0.55
Traditional gender roles discourage sports	3.48	0.71
Cultural events prioritize male sports	3.41	0.78
Female sport seen as inappropriate culturally	3.56	0.59
Community discourages public female sport	3.38	0.65
Mean (Culture)	3.49	0.66

From Table 1, the cumulative mean of 3.49 indicates that students generally agree that culture has a strong negative effect on female participation in sports. The standard deviation (SD = 0.66) suggests a moderate level of consensus among respondents.

**Research Question 2: How does family affect female students' participation in sport**

**Table 2: Summary of descriptive statistics for effect of family on female students' participation in sports**

Item (Family Influence on Sports Participation)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parents prefer academics over sports	3.60	0.59
Families see sport as male-oriented	3.47	0.67
Time for chores prevents sports participation	3.52	0.61
Lack of family support for female sports	3.44	0.72
Parents don't encourage physical exposure	3.36	0.70
Mean (Family)	3.48	0.66

Table 2, the cumulative mean of 3.48 suggests that respondents generally agree that family factors hinder female sport participation. The SD of 0.66 indicates a moderate variation in responses.

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant effect culture on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State.

**Table 3: Summary of Pearson products moment correlation coefficient analysis on the effect of culture on female students' participation in sport (N = 250)**

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	Cal r	P value
Culture	4116	20096			58524	3.94	.000
Sport participation	3768	15404					

\*P < .05

The result in Table 3 above revealed that there is a significant positive effect of culture sport participation ( $r = 3.94$  ;  $P = .000$ ) with 248 degree of freedom at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant effect of culture on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Calabar Cross River State was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, this therefore implied that there is a significant effect of culture on the participation of female students in sports in University of Calabar, Cross River State.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant effect family on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar

**Table 4: Summary of Pearson products moment correlation coefficient analysis of family on female students' participation in sport (N = 250)**

Variables	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	P-value	
	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma y^2$	$\Sigma xy$	r-value
Family	3183	13384		
			81792	4.58
				.000
Sport participation	3768	15404		

\* $P < .05$

The result in Table 4 above revealed that there is a significant effect family on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State ( $r = 4.58$ ;  $P = .000$ ) with 248 degree of freedom at .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of family on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, this implied that there is a significant effect of family on female students' participation in sports in University of Calabar, Cross River State.



## **Discussions**

Hypothesis one states in a null form that there is no significant effect culture on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State. The null hypothesis is rejected, which shows that there is a significant effect culture on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State. Ngasi,(2020) opined that Sports are a structured and institutionalized activity that involves vigorous physical exertion which has the components of competition and prowess on a continuum between play and work. Chinaza (2019) reported that sports have the ability to create physical, scholarly, social and good elements of life in every one of the landmasses. It also serves as a medium of communication between nations and people through their level of participation in sports over the years, it was observed that participating in sports helps to bridge the social holes, resolve struggle and instruct individuals so that people engage in its for relaxation.

Sports becomes a significant part of the Nigerian culture and as such the ubiquity of partaking in sports has influenced political, social, financial and instructive arrangement of the country. However, effective participation in sports could be largely beneficial to the physical, mental and social well-being of an individual. Generally, the auxiliary school educational plan in Nigeria focuses on the significance of the absolute turn of events of an individual especially at the developmental stages of adolescence. Consequently, the secondary school students in Nigeria are exposed to diverse experiences in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. Both males and females in secondary schools often engage themselves in various sporting activities of their choice in order to develop their motor skills and general well-being. Apart from the facts that participating in sports is beneficial to all-round development of female students, it is also enhances unity among schools in the communities participating in sports helps to transcend cultural differences and unite people and above all it arouses the interest of secondary school students, especially the females who participate in sports without yielding to their parents advise not to engage in school sports competitions (Ruseski, 2019).

In view of the benefits of sports to humans, sports participation at secondary school level is a unique way of bringing school children of different cultural backgrounds, gender, ages and religions together. Female students who partake in sports, diversion and proactive tasks are by and large better, more sure and feel better compared to the individuals who do not. The growing contribution of sports to the realization of cultural

beliefs of a community on female participation in sports is increasing on daily basis through school sports programs. The rise of ladies in sports is to a great extent a 20th century wonders. In spite of the fact that there are no laws, which express that ladies ought not occupied with wearing exercises yet there are cultural assumptions which obstruct them from doing as such. These cultural convictions are sufficiently able to keep ladies from wandering into zones accepted to be for men as it were. Sporting activities are generally designed and integrated into the Nigerian secondary school system in order to facilitate the wellbeing of the students irrespective of their gender.

However, it is worrisome to note that female interest in sports at the optional school level in the study area is very low compared to their male counterparts due to the cultural belief that females should not be actively involved in sports (Ikhioya ,2019), Giambalvo (2019). The researchers observed that both religion and socio-cultural belief are some of the factors militating against female participation in sports. This is because some religions frown at female participation in sports because they believe that females are meant to take good care of the home. Also, the socio-cultural beliefs of female participating in sports place some term of restriction on the social interaction with their male counterpart during competitive sports likewise, parents of these young girls usually engage them in business related activities instead of allowing them to participate in sports after the school hours.

Consequently, the low level of female student's participation in sports has caused some inimical health conditions such as obesity and leaving a sedentary lifestyle due to low level of their involvement in physical activity. Some female students don't like to get involved in schools sports program simply because of dress code which sometimes exposes their bodies. The performance of female students during intramural sports is always poor due to cultural dispositions.

Hypothesis two states that, there is no significant effect family on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State. The result of the analysis reveals that the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate form accepted. This implies that there is no significant effect family on the participation of female students in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Megan (2020) that Gender roles are essential for understanding the work-home interface in a family setting. In Western societies, the home sphere, and the household chores as part of this sphere, it is assumed to be in charge of women, which could in turn affect more highly the home to work conflict of women than of men. Family obligations can keep women from pursuing sporting

activities in some parts of the world. For example, laundry, cleaning and cooking, care for children on a daily basis, shop for groceries and wash dishes women are the primary decision-makers when it comes to home decor in 62% of households (Megan, 2020). Shortage of time often results from commitments to the family, and it is also dependent on employment status, family structure, the time for raising children and caring for relatives has a negative effect on sport participation (Ruseski, Humphreys, Hallmann & Breuer, 2021). Women are more likely to participate in sport when they are younger, white, college-educated, and without young children at home (Jane & Ruseski, 2019). In US, there is only one task that men and women are equally likely to take the lead on paying bills. In 37% of U.S. households, the woman primarily pays the bills, while in 34% of households, the man does; Planning family activities is the only task that is reported as being shared equally by a majority, 52% and in households that don't share the job, women are more likely to be responsible (37%) than are men (10%) (Megan, 2020). Married women are less likely to participate in sport because household commitments reduce the amount of time available for sport participation (Ruseski, 2011). In India, Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. The varieties of role the women assume in the family are those of wife, leader, administrator, manager of family income and last but not the least important the mother (Sehgal, and Khandelwal, 2020).

Muslim women in Arab societies are less likely to take part in sport than Western non-Muslims due to the traditions of Islamic modesty in dress and requirements for women's sport to take place in a single-sex environment make sports participation more difficult for devout female adherents, lack of availability of suitably modest sports clothing and sports facilities that allow women to play in private contributes to the lack of participation (Giambalvo, 2019). Such cultural norms of women's roles and responsibilities towards the family may also be a source of discouragement from time-consuming sports practice. All these need to be addressed by empowering women in decision-making and ensure that more women participate in sports by improving their conditions.

Sport in Africa has over time been viewed as a male thing, thereby making it even more difficult to encourage adequate female participation. Traditional gender roles within the household are still common due to the prevalence and persistence of patriarchal systems. These roles put a greater burden of care work on women, which can reduce women's leisure time relative to men (Harrichurran, 2021). Thus, poor funding and limited opportunities remain the biggest challenges female athletes face in Africa

(Chinaza, 2021). Women in Africa do the lion's share of the house work, they are not valued the same as men and will typically work a day that is 50 percent longer than their male counterparts and in less than favorable conditions while a society that revolves around men, the women are the force of the economy, though they remain largely ignored (Pamel 2018). According to a survey carried out by a worker with the Economic Community of West African States, it was revealed that there are very few or even no organized sports activities for girls in countries like Lesotho, Malawi, and some others Chinaza, 2019). For example, Tirunesh Dibaba, a long-distance runner from Ethiopia, in an IWD interview with the ILO stated that, "Young women and men are not given the same attention". For women, what makes it difficult to go running is the family. The family does not allow you to run, but they also don't want you to go to school. A girl works at home, always at home. For example, the barrier of lack of parental permission to do sport. Parents feel overly worried about the safety of their daughters outside the home, with the thinking they might be assaulted. Some others would rather have their daughters beside them at home after school or simply did not believe sport should be a priority for the girl child. However, the males were free to leave home after classes to play sports in the streets and fields.

Pamel (2018) sights poor sports facilities, and inadequate funding that tend to contrive thus continue to stagnate the women's game. Valentine. (2019) discussed that; Sport associations, non-governmental organizations, local initiatives as well as the private sector can play an important role in facilitating change, supporting in-depth research on existing barriers and documenting women's interest in sport, and claiming space for playing fields for women in sport as the most obvious ideas to improve the situation.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of socio cultural and its implications on female participation in sport in the University of Calabar, Cross River State. The cultural beliefs of individuals on female participation in sport is crucial for their overall willingness to participate in the game. Family is equally a great barrier to student participation in sport as they are the ones that provide all the necessary things these students to be able to participate effectively in sport in the University of Calabar.

**Recommendations**

The study recommends that;

1. Parents should be informed on the benefits of female participation in sport.
2. Cultural leaders should organize competitions for females to encourage it from the grass root.
3. School managements at different levels must encourage females to take part in sports.

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