



## Motivation and Anxiety as Correlate of Exercise Participation among Postgraduate Students of Human Kinetics Department in Southern Cross River State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This research focused on motivation and anxiety as correlate of exercise participation among postgraduate students of Human Kinetics department in public Universities in Southern Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of this work, two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Literature review was carried out based on the variables of the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study; the population of this study was made up of 290 Human Kinetics postgraduate students in Southern Cross River State. Census sampling approach was used in selecting all the 290 postgraduate students used for the study. Questionnaire was developed and used as the instrument to collect data from the sampled subjects for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation before use. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed and tested at .05 level of significance using simple linear regression statistical tool. The result of the analysis revealed that motivation and anxiety significantly influence exercise participation among postgraduate students of Human Kinetics department in public Universities in Southern Cross River State. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that sport psychologist should continue to encourage postgraduate students to become more motivated to participate in exercise in order to maximize the full benefits associated with exercise participation.

*Keywords: Motivation, anxiety, lecturers, exercise participation,*

### Introduction

Sports are any activity that you do for pleasure and that needs physical effort or skill, usually done in a special area and according to fixed rules. Sports mean athletic activities involving physical exertion and skill of the athlete in its performance within the context of formal behaviour regulations. The significance of sports and physical activities as a method for achieving health, social, and economic objectives cannot be overstated. Over the years, more opportunities have opened up for postgraduate student to engage in sports, prompting researchers

### *Motivation and Anxiety as Correlate of Exercise Participation among Postgraduate .....*

to explore the value of participation and motivation in sports or exercise activities (Cunningham & Kwon, 2017).

The drive to engage in a sport has emerged as a primary area of interest for scholars in the domain of sports psychology. It is widely recognized that psychological elements greatly influence athletic performance. The interdisciplinary branch of sports psychology encompasses various fields like biomechanics, physiology, kinesiology, and psychology, etc. It examines how mental aspects affect athletic performance and how engaging in sports and workouts influences mental and physical well-being of people especially postgraduate students who are so engaged because of their academic workload.

Sports psychology delves into the realm of athletics, aims to identify the mental and emotional aspects that influence performance in sports, exercise, and physical activities, utilizing this knowledge to enhance athletic outcomes. Athletes and teams find motivation through intrinsic factors, including enjoyment and skill acquisition, as well as extrinsic factors like incentives, health benefits, and appearance. Additionally, psychology imparts psychological techniques designed to boost performance. Research has identified key motivations for sports and exercise participation, such as skill enhancement, leisure, learning new abilities, competition, and physical fitness. Sports psychologists are keen to investigate the fundamental reasons for individuals' engagement in sports and their dedication to ongoing participation (Deci & Ryan, 2018). Engaging in moderate physical activities and exercise is known to alleviate levels of depression and anxiety while enhancing self-esteem, mental wellness, and social capabilities.

The benefits of physical activities extend to children with learning disabilities, helping to alleviate stress, anxiety, and depression while bolstering overall academic achievement. Many researchers contend that fostering regular physical activity among children, weaving it into their routines as a strategy for maintaining good health, yields significant advantages. Continuous participation in physical activities can enhance a child's learning capacity and overall health. Every physical engagement leads to beneficial outcomes, such as improved feelings of social inclusion,

modeling proper behaviours for peers with similar challenges, showcasing common interests, and rewarding experiences (Ogabor, Ogar, Apie & Ataha, 2022).

The research conducted by Frederick and Ryan in 2018 indicated that the drive motivating individuals in competitive sports differs from that seen in those engaged in regular sports and leisure activities. Vazou, Ntoumanis, and Duda, (2017), highlighted that motivation serves as a crucial positive indicator for ongoing participation, a point emphasized by both coaches and participants. Involvement in sports for postgraduate students significantly impacts a child's development, enhancing cognitive skills, providing nutritional education, and fostering improved social awareness, (Etnier in 2017), this in turn also contributes to reducing obesity risks among children, according to Nelson, (2020).

Park, (2020), asserts that engaging in sports during student and adolescent years boosts self-worth as individual's transition into young adulthood. Moreover, females often grapple with identifying the importance of sports owing to low self-esteem, body image concerns, and apprehension about ridicule or standing out, as discussed by Logan in 2019. Participation in sports may also introduce detrimental effects on mental health, including stress, anxiety related to performance, and the fear of failure, (Gould, 2016). Despite these cognitive challenges, it has been demonstrated that, with appropriate coaching strategies and environments, children can experience enjoyment in sports from a young age. Sports programmes create avenues for children to acquire life skills, incorporating goal-setting, teamwork, communication, organization, accountability, and handling success and failure, (DeBate, 2019).

Engagement in sports helps individuals maintain fitness, enhance endurance, elevate self-esteem, provide direction, assist in weight management, efficiently organize their schedules, strengthen friendships, foster teamwork, and cultivate relationships with both peers and adults. Generally, sports or exercise leads to healthier lifestyle choices, such as steering clear of smoking or drinking, and offer additional health advantages like a reduced risk of developing osteoporosis or breast cancer later on. The journey of postgraduate students' involvement in sports has progressed

significantly, and initiatives are ongoing to encourage increased female participation. Engaging in sports and physical activities can offer a myriad of physical, mental, and social benefits for students.

While students must demonstrate relevant skills to gain interest in sports and attain fitness status, intrinsic psychological motivators are also essential for fostering these individuals' dedication to participating in organized sporting activities, because participation in sports provides participants with a host of advantages. Nevertheless, Davis (2019) has pinpointed several psychological elements that impact participation in sports. These factors include motivation, concentration (or focus), self-assurance, anxiety, and it is crucial for postgraduate students to recognize the psychological ramifications of anxiety. It is in this context that the researchers conduct this investigation in the specified research domain.

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that for adults aged 18 to 64 to enhance their cardiovascular and muscular fitness levels and to mitigate the likelihood of developing non-communicable diseases and depression, they should engage in a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate aerobic physical activity each week. Alternatively, individuals should aim for at least 75 minutes of high-intensity aerobic activity over the same period, or a suitable mix of both moderate and vigorous aerobic exercises; these activities should be performed in segments lasting no less than 10 minutes.

It has been noted that the low participation rates of postgraduate students in sports are not primarily due to a lack of interest but are instead consequences of a long-standing history of direct and indirect discrimination and stereotyping, alongside numerous other challenges students face. Students' participation in sports can be linked to various factors, including influences from school environments, workload, home circumstances, personal interests, motivation, feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress. The absence of motivational support, coupled with academic pressures and the fear of injury, has diminished the enthusiasm of some postgraduate students toward participating in sports.

Motivation is an extensive concept that includes a variety of behaviours, like many psychological ideas, motivation has been described in numerous ways, but fundamentally it pertains to both the strength and direction of behaviours. It is crucial for performance and significantly influences the skill acquisition journey. Attaining proficiency in physical skills is vital for success in sports. However, without motivation, peak performance is unlikely to manifest, and postgraduate students may lack the drive needed to exercise effectively, whether for national sporting events or any competitive situations.

As noted by Ogunjobi (2020), motivation ranks among the most intriguing and essential aspects of human psychology. It significantly impacts both sports engagement and performance. In the absence of motivation, participation may dwindle or performance levels could be minimal. Motivation can be seen as an emotional asset that unlocks the potential for learning and training, once harnessed, its effects can be remarkable. Motivation enables individuals or people to exceed their typical physical and mental limits, ensuring their contentment. It acts as a motivational force that encourages team athletes to collaborate effectively, give their utmost effort, remain loyal to their teammates, fulfill the responsibilities they have accepted, and generally contribute significantly to the sports activities in which the team participates, (Olajide, 2021).

Motivation is the foundation for all athletic effort and accomplishment, without desire and the commitment to enhance athletic capabilities, all other elements such as mental aspects, self-assurance, intensity, concentration, and feelings, hold little significance. To reach one's highest potential, the participant needs to be inspired to do everything necessary to optimize their skills and attain the set objectives. It is the inclination to pursue achievement in competition against others while adhering to a personal benchmark of excellence. Motivation serves as an inner driving force that influences every facet of actions; it also shapes thoughts, emotions, and interactions with those around.

In athletics, strong motivation is widely regarded as a crucial requirement for enabling athletes to reach their fullest potential. Nevertheless, due to its inherently intangible nature, it is a

force that can often be challenging to fully harness. Some top-tier athletes have cultivated the ability to direct their energies in highly effective ways. Ultimately, motivation revolves around the sustained focus of effort over time. Most explanations of motivation emphasize the existence of a drive to engage in and persist with an activity. A definition specific to sports describes the inclination of an individual or team to initiate and maintain involvement in their athletic pursuits.

When a team or individual faces challenges, motivation becomes crucial (Bosnar & Balent, 2019). Petz (2019) characterized motivation as a state where an individual is compelled internally by various needs, desires, or motives, which guide them toward a goal that serves as an external trigger for actions. Johnson (2021) highlighted the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, explaining that intrinsic motivation relates to the internal factors propelling individual forward, while extrinsic motivation involves external influences driving participants as they engage in activities that are means to other objectives. The reasons for participating in sports differ across gender, age groups, frequency, and duration of physical engagement.

Motivation in students stands out as a crucial element for mobilizing them and determining outcomes, consequently, grasping and navigating individuals' motivation can be a nuanced endeavour. Individuals generally steer themselves towards situations that provide comfort and joy while steering clear of experiences that cause disturbance or unhappiness. The forces of approach and avoidance within human motivation are evident. The prevailing tendency in any given moment influences the emerging motives in that direction (Iroha, 2019). Oduwumi (2021) indicated that to exhibit strong performance, one must possess not only physical and physiological strength but also robust psychological health.

Anxiety represents an emotional state characterized by a blend of feelings, behaviours, and physiological responses. Subjectively, anxiety presents itself as a distinct emotion, distinguishing it from other emotional experiences like sadness, depression, anger, or grief (Huertas, & Khoshlessan, 2017). It is marked by differing intensities of apprehension, fear, dread, or unease. On a more objective or behavioral level, anxiety is revealed through heightened activity in the autonomous

nervous system, resulting in symptoms such as an accelerated heartbeat, sweating, breathing difficulties, and muscle tension (Davis, 2019).

Anxiety is also considered a psychological state, whose effect interferes with the achievement of tasks that require focus and long periods of concentration, affecting individuals of any class, race, gender, and faith (Sandín, 2015). It also encompasses an unsettling blend of trepidation and unease that feels nebulous and quite disagreeable. The participants grappling with anxiety has heightened concerns, particularly regarding uncertainties. Additionally, individuals experiencing anxiety commonly exhibit a mix of these symptoms: rapid heartbeat, difficulty breathing, gastrointestinal distress, decreased appetite, faintness, light-headedness, excessive sweating, disrupted sleep, frequent bathroom trips, and trembling. While both anxiety and fear share these physical manifestations, the distinction lies in fear allowing individuals to pinpoint their specific fears, in contrast to anxiety, where individuals often remain oblivious to the sources of their distress (Brewer, 2019; Huertas & Khoshlessan, 2017).

Anxiety stands as a universally prevalent phenomenon that occasionally afflicts everyone. It manifests as an emotional condition characterized by feelings of dread, unease, or fear. Health professionals sometimes classify anxiety as either an emotion or an effect based on whether it is communicated by the individual experiencing it (emotion) or interpreted by an external observer (affect). The term emotion typically refers to the physiological changes and sensations that form the basis of an individual's personal experience of anxiety. Affect denotes the emotional state viewed from someone else's standpoint. Anxiety remains an abstract idea, making it challenging to articulate clearly due to its various potential triggers and varying intensities. In the opinion of the researchers, anxiety represents a state of disruption or disorganization within the body system of the participant facing participation in exercise.

Also, Pikunas (2018) asserted that anxiety in unrealistic and unpleasant state of body and mind. Anxiety can be recognized on three levels (1) Cognitive - by particular thought process, (2) Somatic - by physical response, and (3) Behavioural - by patterns of behaviour. Sport anxiety is

## *Motivation and Anxiety as Correlate of Exercise Participation among Postgraduate .....*

simply mind-body state that is marked by uneasiness, fear or worry; it is usually a conditioned response to a stimulus. The precise impact of anxiety on sporting performance depends on how an individual interprets his or her world. Sports participation especially among postgraduate students place a wide variety of stressors upon participants; it can be physically exhausting, it pitches you against superior opponents, and hostile fans might verbally abuse you.

Engaging in sports exposes participants to numerous stressors; it can lead to physical fatigue, confront stronger rivals, and face potential verbal hostility from fans. Different sports vary in their skill requirements, gameplay interactions, competitive processes, and the demands for both physical and mental training. Thus, not every sport produces the same level or type of anxiety in participants. Studies examining anxiety's role in exercise and sports, along with its connection to athletic performance, have yielded mixed and sometimes perplexing findings, primarily due to inconsistent language used and a lack of consensus among researchers regarding the true nature and definition of anxiety (Logan, 2019).

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to:

- a. Investigate how motivation influence postgraduate student's participation in exercise

To examine how anxiety influence postgraduate student's participation in exercise among postgraduate students

### **Research questions**

Two research questions were formulated to guide the study based on the objectives of the study

How does motivation influence exercise participation among postgraduate students?

To what extent does anxiety influence exercise participation among postgraduate students?

### **Null hypotheses**

Motivation does not significantly influence postgraduate student's participation in exercise

Anxiety does not significantly influence postgraduate student's participation in exercise

### **Methodology**



The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey design. Asim (2021) stated that survey research design entails gathering information that can adequately and impartially characterize pre-existing conditions. Surveys aim to assess the characteristics of the situation that is present during the time the research is conducted. The study's sample is made up of Human Kinetics postgraduate students in Southern Cross River State, comprising a total of 290 individuals drawn from the University of Calabar, University of Cross River and Arthur Javis University and some staff of University of Education and Entrepreneurship who are also postgraduate students.

The study adopted census sampling technique. The sample comprised all 290 postgraduate students from Human Kinetics departments of the four universities in the study area. For data gathering, a structured questionnaire known as the Motivation, Anxiety and Exercise Participation Questionnaire (MAEPQ) was employed. This questionnaire was segmented into two parts: Part “A” and Part “B.” Part “A” comprises questions regarding personal information of the participants, including their level, age, and gender, while Part “B” was formulated using a four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). It included twenty items assessing the study's variables. The tool was validated by specialists in Human Kinetics along with lecturers from Test and Measurement. To determine the reliability of the research instrument, the Cronbach alpha method was applied.

## **Results and discussions**

### Hypothesis one

Motivation does not significantly influence exercise participation among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in universities. The independent variable in this hypothesis is motivation while the dependent variable is exercise participation. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression analysis was used for data analysis. The result obtained from the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of motivation on exercise participation among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in public universities in Southern Cross River State (N=290)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	Std error of estimate
1	.316	.235	.233	.71411

  

Model	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Regression	82.328	1	82.328	84.246	.000
Residual	239.682	288	.842		
Total	322.01	289			

\*Significant at .05, p<.05

Dependent variable: Exercise participation

Independent: motivation

The result of analysis of data presented on Table 1 shows that the independent or predictor variable (motivation) significantly influence exercise participation among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in public universities in Southern Cross River State. However, the result of simple linear regression proved that F = 84.246 is higher than the p.value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance with 1 and 288 degree of freedom. This indicates that motivation is contributing to 23.5 percent of postgraduate students' participation in exercise within the study area.

#### Hypothesis two

Anxiety does not significantly influence exercise participation among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in universities in Southern Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is anxiety, while the dependent variable is exercise participation. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression analysis was used for data analysis. The result obtained from analysis of data is presented in Table 2

The result of analysis of data presented on Table 2 shows that the independent or predictor variable (anxiety) significantly influence exercise participation among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in public universities in Southern Cross River State. However, the result of simple linear regression proved that F = 51.262 is higher than the p.value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of

significance with 1 and 288 degree of freedom. This indicates that anxiety contributes 26.3 percent of postgraduate students' participation in exercise within the study area.

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of anxiety on exercise participation among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in public universities in Southern Cross River State (N=290)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	Std error of estimate
1	.383	.263	.262	.95086

  

Model	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Regression	97.688	1	97.688	51.262	.000
Residual	224.322	288	.704		
Total	322.01	289			

\*Significant at .05; p<.05

Dependent variable: Exercise participation

Independent variable: Anxiety.

### **Discussion of findings**

The finding obtained from analysis of data and testing of the first hypothesis in the study revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was a significant influence of motivation on participation in exercise among Human Kinetics postgraduate students in universities in Southern Cross River State. This result may stem from the students having a notably high level of intrinsic motivation, rooted in their awareness of the advantages linked to participating in exercise. Additionally, influences from external factors contribute to sparking the students' enthusiasm for engaging in various exercises they prefer. The rise in students' motivation from both intrinsic and extrinsic sources has significantly driven their participation in exercise within this region.

The results of this hypothesis align with the claim made by Ogunjobi (2020), who indicated that motivation is a captivating and crucial aspect of human psychology. Motivation significantly impacts both sport participation and performance outcomes. In its absence, participation diminishes or overall performance becomes quite limited. Motivation is an emotional asset; it serves as a

fundamental component of learning and training. Once it is unleashed, its effects can be transformative. Motivation enables athletes to surpass their typical physical and mental limits, keeping them content, (Sandín, 2015) .

This study's conclusion also corroborates Olajide's (2021) observation that motivation serves as the cornerstone for all athletic endeavors and success. Without our passion and commitment to enhancing our sports skills, other elements like mental factors, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotions hold little value. Supporting this hypothesis further is the viewpoint of Bosnar and Balent (2019), who emphasized that motivation directly affects performance levels in competitions, specifically for athletes who exert the most effort, refuse to yield, and give their best when it matters. Nothing impacts sports engagement and effectiveness as profoundly as a sudden drop in motivation. In the absence of the will to succeed, athletes struggle to endure the trials of competitive sports.

The finding from analysis of data and testing of hypothesis two in the study revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there was a significant influence of anxiety on exercise participation among postgraduate students of Human Kinetics in public universities in Southern Cross River State. The finding of this study could be attributed to the fact that anxiety often bring out the best in some individuals. The state of being anxious could propel an individual to develop more commitment towards exercise in order to avoid failure. The level of anxiety among students used for this study is positive and is contributing to increased participation in exercise among students of the department. For some students, moderate level of anxiety can serve as a motivation to train harder and improve their skills. Also, anxiety, when managed well, can heighten alertness and focus during competitive situations.

The findings of this study are in agreement with that of Huertas and Khoshlessan (2017) who opined that anxiety is an emotional state, a mix of feelings, behaviours, and physiological reactions or sensations. On the subjective side, anxiety is a unique feeling or emotion that is qualitatively different from any other emotional states such as sadness, depression, anger, or grief.

Also in support of this finding is the view of Sandín (2015) who stated that anxiety is also considered a psychological state, whose effect interferes with the achievement of tasks that require focus and long periods of concentration, affecting individuals of any class, race, gender, and religion the scholar further stressed that it also involves a feeling of fear and apprehension that is confusing, vague, and quite unpleasant. The anxious student worries a lot, especially about unknown dangers.

## **Conclusion**

This study investigated motivation and anxiety as correlates of exercise participation among postgraduate students of Human Kinetic in public universities in Southern Cross River State. The findings obtained from analysis of data and testing of hypotheses in the study revealed that there was a significant influence of motivation and anxiety on exercise participation among postgraduate students of Human Kinetics in public universities in the study area. It can be concluded that motivation and anxiety positively influence postgraduate students' participation in exercise in the study area.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Sport psychologist should continue to encourage postgraduate students to become more motivated to participate in exercise in order to maximize the full benefits associated with exercise participation
2. Sport instructors should continue to sensitive postgraduate students on possible ways to always manage anxiety positively and subsequently participate actively in various physical exercises of their choice

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*Motivation and Anxiety as Correlate of Exercise Participation among Postgraduate .....*

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