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HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

It is a generally accepted theory that sport and physical activity are important for achieving maximum performance and enhances good life quality. About half of 100 percent of Nigeria citizens are either overweight or suffer obesity. Sport and physical activity as we know, have been identified to be very important for everyone. The two aforementioned can induce body temperature, metabolic, neural and psychology-related effects which includes an increase in the rate of metabolism and high kinetics, arising from elevated uptake of Oxygen. Partaking in Exercise also aids in improving the mental wellbeing of every partaker, mostly by improving moods and self-awareness. Engaging in activities which includes exercise can somehow improve personal well-being and standard of living keeping untimely death and diseases far away. Though, of late, interest in the role that Exercise plays in preventing and treating mental health problems have drastically increased. Without any form of physical activity and sport, there will be a sequential loss of strength, tolerance in body muscles and their ability to function appropriately will be altered. Subsequently, consistent exercise can help reduce stress as well as anxiety. Recently studies show exercise helps in dealing with depression. Engaging in physical activities religiously aids in the overall improvement fitness and health which in turn reduces the chances of having series of chronic diseases and pressures that come with life. This analysis pinpoints possible physiological processes that supports exercises and their outcomes on future living. Physical activity as well as sports are important to health and longevity. Nevertheless, in the last ten years or more, studies have emerged, shedding light into how physical activity and sports influences subsequent body-health performance.

Keywords: **Exercise, Mental Health, Sports, Physical Activity, Well-being.**

Introduction

Sport is any form of activity (physical) which is engaged competitively in accordance with sets of instructions or regulations that guides it. Also, sport can be defined as autotelic (played for their own sake) physical contests. A given sports could be played on dry ground, in water or even in the vacuum. Participation in sport entails a level of body movement and exercise. Several studies revealed that there are advantages of sport. As far back as 1950s, there has been interests in Researches on Health and Physical activities even though the health benefits of participating in physical activities were scientifically proven in the 1980s and 1990s.As far back as there has been an immense sum of scientific corroboration on how sport and physical activities positively imparts health and healthy lifestyle as a whole. Effects of frequent physical activities are specifically evident in avoiding many problems like hypertension, obesity, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and depression. According to a statement from the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace,

Individuals who partake in both physical activities and sometimes sports enjoy benefits attached to them such as developing healthy and strong bones, a well-functioning hearts and lungs and an improved cognitive function and motor skill. Engaging in sports and physical activities is useful in the prevention of fractures in the hip area in women and generally diminishes the effect of osteoporosis. Frequent engagement in physical activities can increase older people's capacity to function and can also assist them in maintaining a good state of life. The World's Health organization believes that among every four patients, one has at least a mental, behavioral or neurological disorder, and in many cases these problems are not detected nor treated. Various scholarly works has established that physical activity **plays a remedial function in handling some psychological disorders**. Researches have also established the fact that the influence of physical activities on state of depression, is positive. Also, self-confidence and self-worth, (which boosts self-esteem), derivatives from exercise, physical activities and sports. It also produces positive psychosocial outcomes in individuals and communities as a whole.

Overview of sport

Sport deals with any kind of competitive physical activity or game. It uses, nurture or enhances the skills and the physical ability of participants, while giving entertainment and enjoyment to spectators (Council of Europe, 2012). Sport is regulated by certain instructions or customs so as to ascertain fair competition, and allows for accordant pronouncement of the party emerging as the winner. Across the globe, the deciding factor that distinguishes leisure activities from sports differs across globe. However, the meaning given by Sport Accord in 2011 is the nearest to the internationally acceptable description; it proposes that for a physical activity to be referred to as a sport it must be somewhat competitive, it must not be dangerous to the participating living creature, and must not be largely dependent on "luck" element (Sport Accord, 2011).There are 8000 indigenous sports and sporting games ranging from sports that demands only two participants to the ones who requires a large number of participants engaged in either a team or individual competition. Sports are also be broadly classified into majorly physical sports (football, athletics, etc), mind sports (scrable, chess etc), primarily motorized sports (for example power boating or Formula 1)(Maguire *et al.*, 2020). Atena (2010), gave a more detailed classification of sports. He classified sports into physical, mind, competitive model sports, endurance sports, target sports, air sports, wind sports, fictional sports, athletics, skating sports, snow sports, electronic sports, goal sport, strength sports, table sports, team sports and target sports.

The three basis under which sports can be attempted are the amateur basis the semi-professional basis and the professional basis which depends on whether or not, wages or salary is paid to the participating individuals. "Grassroots sport" can be defined as nonprofessional participation in sports at the lower levels (European Commission, 2008).

Health benefits of sports

Sports can through casual or organized participation play a pivotal role in improving one's physical health, shaping one's personality and maintaining overall good health (Sports Accord, 2011).Partaking in sports makes participants healthier, fit, strong mentally, it's always fun too especially when playing in teams or with friends and families (MU Healthcare, 2020). Sports excluding the primarily mind sports involve lots of physical exercise and help to contribute towards good health by Improving cardiovascular health, lowering risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, managing weight, reducing blood pressure, enhancing aerobic

fitness, improving muscular strength and endurance, improving joint flexibility and range of motion, relieving stress, lowering risk of certain types of cancer, controlling cholesterol, warding off osteoporosis, strengthening immune system, improving sleep, providing mental health benefits and prolonging life (Insports, 2018). A sum of all above listed benefits ensures a longer, healthier and more enjoyable life. Participation in sports is equally highly beneficial to the mental and physical health of children and adolescents especially when they are organized and well-structured. Studies have also shown that an active lifestyle combined with sports provide many positive experiences in the lives of young people. Accountability, leadership, dedication and other management skills can be learned from participating in Team sports, these factors are important for mental health and help in building teamwork and effectively communicating with others to solve problems. The frequent memorization, repetition and learning of skillsets during sports enhance cognitive development. Watching one's hard work pay off and achieving fitness goals can also boost morale and self-esteem as well as encourage the individual to achieve other set goals making goal setting a rewarding and exciting learning process. Sports also helps with reducing pressure and stress; this is because exercising naturally helps to loosen up and let go of stress. interaction with team mates also aids inter-personal relationship (MU Healthcare, 2020).The Physical health benefits of sports for adolescents and children can't be over-emphasized. Children who partakes in sports developed stronger bones and muscles which in turn leads to balance and little or no physical injury. Research has shown that engaging in Physical exercise before the onset of puberty makes partakers reach peak bone mass which in turn makes children stronger and secures a substantial basis for future growth (MU Healthcare, 2020). Sporting activities assists people to attain good fitness as well as encourage healthy choices like abstinence from smoking and drinking among adolescents (DHA, 2019).

Health benefits of physical activities

Physical activity entails bodily movement that stems from the muscles of the skeleton, requiring expenditure of energy. It (Physical activity) is divided into two integral parts namely; aerobic fitness and strength and balance. Currently, it has been recommended that all individuals should perform at least 150minutes of modest physical activity or 75 minutes of intense physical activity every week (or equal combination of these each week). In cases where these recommendations cannot be met, any level of physical activity is encouraged because engaging being engaged in any form of exercise or activity that expends energy is better than being inactive. Difficulty in doing any physical activity can be overcome by gradually building up to the recommended amount and consistently practicing physical activity daily (U.S. DHHS, 2018). Physical activity tends to have both short and long-term positive effect on an individual and improve overall life's quality. Engaging in exercises or physical activities enhances good and sound health and lessens the possibilities of spreading a lot of diseases including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes type 2 etc. Regular physical activities also assists in reducing the probability of heart attack, manages weight better, prevents arthritis, reduce severity of asthma, Combats cancer-related fatigue, and lower blood pressures. Regular physical activity also aids a healthier state of mind. It improves memory and brain function of persons in all age groups, reduces feelings of anxiety and depression (PHA, 2011). Series of researches have shown that physical activity helps depression in one or more of the following ways; it can shelve away or stop unwholesome thoughts from permeating the mind, it provides one a chance for more social contact, it improves sleep patterns and lifts one's mood. Physical activity might also have effect on the levels of

chemicals such as endorphins and serotonin and other stress hormones in the brain (DHA, 2019). There are three major ways by which physical activities improves health. Firstly, Use of the body systems such as skeletal, respiratory, nervous circulatory, muscular and other systems compels them to get used to the physical activities. That is to say making use of the body systems during physical activities makes it very functional and in turn improves one's ability to make use of the body anytime its needed in everyday life. Secondly, the response of hormone to body movement during physical activity ameliorates psychological health. Thirdly, physical activity raises metabolism for many hours even after the physical activity session has ended, as a result, there is a reduction in the possibility of getting many diseases we suffer from. Body fat levels are also reduced during this period of increased metabolism. Ultimately, physical activity improves the quality of life, due to increased mental and physical functionalities and this in turn increases the longevity of those involved in it (Steakley, 2011). Findings also suggest impacts of physical activity on the severe stages of the disease. This would be consistent with observations that only the continuation of the current exercise gives a lower risk of heart disease by improving flow-mediated dilation with past exercise having no effect (Pattenbarger, 1978; Morris *et al*., 1990; Hambrecht *et al*., 2000). There may be links here to the fatty protein metabolism because the flow dilation is altered by the presence of much plasma triglycerides, in proportion to concentration (Vogel *et al*., 1997). Also, in the literature of epidemiology, there has been a consistent result in the relationship between the level of physical activity and a reduced chance of the risk of colon cancer. Although it remains uncertain whether the mechanism is systemic (medium promotes low growth) or local (elevated coli frowning).For females that do exercise regularly, there are lower chances of having breast cancer for may be at lower risk of breast cancer, and there is also chances of better maintenance of good weights (Bernstein *et al*., 1994).

Health benefits of exercise

Exercise can be described as any form of movement that propels your body to burn calories as your muscles engages in a work. The type of exercises that exists are numerous and this includes running walking, swimming, jogging, dancing etc. It has been known over the years that participating in exercise is accompanied with a number of health benefits both to the mental and physical well being of the individual, aside management of weight (Semeco, 2017). Medically, it's been shown that individuals engaging in exercise on a regular basis have as much as fifty percent lower risk of having colon cancer or diabetes type 2; thirty five percent lower risk of having heart disease and stroke and twenty percent lower risk of having breast cancer; as well as thirty percent risk of early death..

Study shows that constant physical activity helps in reducing ill health conditions as well as the risk of a number of diseases. Additionally, it ameliorates the quality of one's life. Constant engagement in one or more forms of physical activity can assist in protecting you from stroke and heart disease by raising your high-density lipoprotein (HDL), giving strength to the muscles of the heart, reducing your blood pressure, improving blood flow, reducing low-density lipoprotein (LDL) levels and increasing the working capacity of your heart. Exercise also helps reduce fat that is linked with an increase in blood pressure in the body. Diabetes that are non-dependent on insulin is also averted and controlled by exercising which reduces body fat. Exercise helps to prevent obesity also by reducing body fat through a process of building and preserving muscle mass as well as enhancing the capacity of the body to use calories. Whenever Exercise is accompanied with perfect dietary, it helps in controlling body

mass and in the prevention of obesity, which constitutes a significant risk factor for various ailments. Increase in the strength of the muscles and durability evolving from exercise enhances elasticity and carriage which in turns is helpful in the prevention of back pains. Also, constant weight-bearing exercise fosters the formation of bones and can stop many forms of bone loss associated with aging such as osteoporosis (McGowan *et al.*, 2015).

Exercise is not only about aerobic fitness and the size of muscles, according to researches on the effects of exercise on the psyche of people, it's been revealed constant physical activity can enhance mood, self-effectiveness and general mental health of an individuals. Exercising regularly has the tendency of giving an extensive sense of well-being. They make people to feel bubbly all the time, have clear memories, feel relaxed, sleep better at night day, and have a positive outlook about themselves. It also serves as a potential remedy for many frequent mental health challenges. Exercising regularly can have intense positive impact on depression, anxiety, and ADHD. Exercising also eases stress, enhances memory, aids good sleep, and boosts your overall mood and general wellbeing. Research reveals that exercise can nurse light to medium depression successfully. For instance, a modern research discovered that walking for one hour per day or running for fifteen minutes per day, cuts down the possibility of having acute depression by 26%.Apart from the ability to mitigate depression symptoms, studies have also revealed that an individual can stop relapsing by maintaining a time table of exercising. One major combatant against depression is exercise and this is for many reasons. Important among these reasons is that it enhances all the various changes happening in the body and in the brain. This includes reduced inflammation, neural growth and new activity patterns that encourage feelings of peace and well-being. Also, it helps in the discharge of endorphins – an important in the brain which invigorates people's spirit and make them feel great. Additionally, exercise gives you opportunity to have some private time to free yourself from the trouble of negative thoughts by giving you a form of distraction. (Robinson *et al.*, 2020). Exercise is a productive as well as a natural anti-anxiety remedy. It alleviates anxiety, improves mental and physical energy, and elevates an individual's well being. An effectual way to break the cycle of stress is exercise. It reduces depression, anxiety and helps to better manage stress. in addition, it is of essence to note that in order to enjoy the total health benefits of exercise to note that to enjoy the full health benefits of exercise it is important to warm-up prior to exercise. Passive warm-up has ability to raise the temperature of the body, increase body temperature without draining energy substrate storage. Passive warm-up prior to exercise maintains increased core and the muscles' temperature all through the transformation phase (that is, the time interval between the completion of the warm-up and the commencement of the exercise).

Physical activity and psychosocial health

The term psychosocial health is a multifaceted terminology that encapsulates the social, mental, spiritual and emotional dimensions of what overall healthy living entails, with each dimension contributing to who an individual is. According to Donatelle (2011), psychosocial health is the outcome of a complex interaction among an individual's history, thoughts and interpretations. It can be influenced by external factors such as family, friends and past experiences or intrinsic factors such as hormonal function, physical fitness, heredity (Faculty SFCC, 2010). Psychological health of an individual is also influenced by self esteem, maturity, and self efficacy. A psychosocially healthy person is therefore described as someone who has a sense of contentment, has ability to manage stress effectively, feels good about himself or

herself, is comfortable with other people, manages personal feelings and deals with difficulties in a positive manner, enriches the lives of others, cherishes the things that make them happy, maintains a balance between work and play, rest and activity, etc., appreciates and respect nature, has the ability to build and maintain fulfilling relationships and who is able to meet the demands of life (Donatelle, 2011).Therefore, for an individual to be described as psychosocially healthy, such a person must have good mental, emotional, social and spiritual health (Faculty SFCC, 2010). Mental health describes the "thinking" part of psychosocial health. It refers to the ability to reason, interpret, and remember from a unique and personal perspective, to intellectually process information, attach meaning, and make decisions and to think rationally with fairly accurate perceptions of events; learn from setbacks. Emotional health describes the "feeling" part of psychosocial health. It refers to one's ability to maintain control of emotions and their behavior, to handle life's challenges, build strong relationships, and recover from setbacks and to respond in a stable and appropriate manner to upsetting events. Social health describes our relationships with others and the ability to adapt to various social situations. It refers to the ability of an individual to interact in a positive manner the with people around us, either personally or in a group setting, to make friends easily and work with people in a friendly manner, to listen and express oneself when appropriate, to form healthy relationships, to act in a socially acceptable and responsible way as well as to find a best fit for themselves in society. Spiritual health describes an individual's sense of peace, purpose, connection to others, and beliefs about the meaning of life. It refers to the sense of belonging to something greater than the purely physical or personal dimensions of existence (Donatelle, 2011). Behaviors exhibited by one who is psychosocially healthy include volunteerism, social responsibility, optimism, contributing to society, connectedness with others, feeling of belonging/being part of a group, etc.

Psychosocial Disorders and Illness simply put is the absence of psychosocial health. It is commonly caused by genetics, family and macro-environment (Donatelle, 2011). Psychosocial disorders and illnesses include depression, bi-polar disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorder, personality disorder and schizophrenia. Psychosocial health in recent years has become a topic of interest partly because of the increase in suicide and other mental illness cases been reported. A recent study revealed staggering numbers of cases of psychosocial health disorders and illness. It stated that one in four adults experience a psychosocial health disorder every year, with one in seventeen resulting in serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression, or bipolar disorder. It also revealed that one in ten children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder (Faculty SFCC, 2010). Such high figures recorded have made it important to address the issue of psychosocial health. Treatmentsfor psychosocial disorders and illnesses used over time are medication (antidepressants), psychotherapy, electroconvulsive therapy and other brain stimulation therapies (Donatelle, 2011). However, studies have shown that physical activity can help in the treatment of psychosocial disorders and illness as well asin the maintenance of psychosocial health (Nieman, 2002). As early as the 1980's data regarding the impact of physical activity on children's psychosocial health already confirmed an associative, rather than a causal link in many studies (Brown, 1990).A regular jogging program over 10 to 22 weeks was been shown to reduce the need for stimulant medication in children with ADHD. The theory behind this observation holds that increased motor activity resulting from physical exertion substitutes for the stimulant effects of medication (Brown, 1982). Research also done on children with learning disabilities, although limited, shows that a program of regular

aerobic exertion over an extended time of 20 weeks leads to an increase in physical fitness and an improvement in self-esteem. However, there was no observed difference in academic performance (MacMahon and Gross, 1987). In recent times, studies have continuously shown that physical activity plays a role in psychosocial health of children and youth by helping in managing stress and anxiety in children and youth, reducing depression in children and youth, developing self-esteem, enhancing intelligence and academic performance, reducing juvenile delinquency and enhancing character development (AASP, 2021).The benefits of physical activity on the psychosocial health of youths with intellectual disabilities has been studied. Slades, (2019) Reveals that physical activity had a large positive effect on physical health and a moderately large positive effect on psychosocial health of youths with intellectual disabilities with teaching movement and sports skills appearing to be most beneficial to psychosocial health (Kapsal*et al.*, 2018). Another study on physical activity, psychosocial health and life goals among youth agreed with other prior studies and revealed that more physically active students have a better self-perceived health and fitness, lower levels of depressive symptoms and higher levels of life satisfaction. In addition, students who regularly participate in physical activity prefer less extrinsic values as life goals for their future (Piko and Keresztes, 2006; Smith, 2018). In similar manner a study on the quality of life and psychosocial health in postmenopausal women achieving public health guidelines for physical activity revealed that only 43.1% of the postmenopausal women, were meeting public health physical activity guidelines and that women achieving public health physical activity guidelines reported higher health-related quality of life on both the physical and mental component scales of the RAND-12 compared with women not achieving physical activity guidelines (Vallence*et al.*, 2010). Participating in regular physical activity has also been shown to contribute to significant improvements in psychosocial health and quality of life (QOL) in adults. The results indicated that physical activity had directly positive relationship on psychosocial health as well as quality of life while self-efficacy and physical activity mediated the influences of stress on quality of life, concluding that more physical activity may directly increase quality of life and should subsequently be taken into account in managing stress in order to promote psychosocial health among working adults (Piercy et al, 2018; Xiao *et al.*, 2019).The mechanism by which physical activity may reduce the effects of depression though speculative at best explain that psychological function is influenced strongly by blood levels of neurotransmitters such as noradrenaline, serotonin and dopamine. Depression has been associated with a depletion of neurotransmitters such as serotonin. Physical exercise increases the levels of central nervous system neurotransmitters. In human studies, circulating sympathetic amines increase two to six times over resting levels after 30 min of vigorous exercise (APTA,2021). Increased production of endogenous brain opiates, known as endorphins, can produce a morphine-like effect(Morgan, 1985; Hardman, 2001) giving the individual a natural "high" feeling resulting in improved mood and emotional states. In addition, other ways physical activity contributes to psychosocial health is by reducing stress as well as an improved ability to cope with stress, improving self-esteem, enhancing pride in physical accomplishments, increasing satisfaction with oneself, improving body image, increasing feelings of energy, improving confidence in your physical abilities and decreasing symptoms associated with depression. These benefits can be experienced even with as little a brief walk at low intensity, 10 minutes of aerobic exercise or as much as 3 times a week for 30 minutes per session at a moderate intensity or longer than 10 weeks (AASP, 2021).

Conclusion

Physical inactivity is a waste of human potential for health and well-being and its high prevalence is a cause for concern. Exercise, physical activity and sports are major potential contributors to positive health, not merely the absence of disease but contributing to the capacity to enjoy life and to withstand challenges. To maintain health and reduce your risk of health problems, health professionals and researchers recommend a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days. Increases in daily activity can come from small changes made throughout your day, such as walking or cycling instead of using the car, getting off a tram, train or bus a stop earlier and walking the rest of the way, or walking the children to school.

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