

AN OVERVIEW ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS A PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS SKILLS PROGRAM: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

To combat the decreasing levels of physical activity in many youngster , health professionals and sport science expertise calling upon the physical fitness and sport skills (Sp Sc 201) program to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to become physically active for a life time. In order to accomplish this goal in physical fitness and sport skills, it is imperative that student's attitude be considered when making curricular and program decision. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine university students attitude towards a physical fitness and sport skills program and to determine the various aspects of the program that appear to contribute to positive and negative attitudes towards university physical fitness and sport skills program in Haromaya university and Jimma university. To this end, a total of 482 students were selected to fill the questionnaires. Moreover, interview with sport science instructors and department heads of sport science were made. As per the finding of the study, students' attitude toward a physical fitness and sport skills program slightly decreased due to factors such as curriculum problems, uncomfortable class atmosphere, lack of facilities and equipments, large class size and poor self perception of students.

Keywords: Students Attitude, Physical Education And Fitness, Perception, And Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Most people have heard the age- old saying “attitude is the key to success” various quotes can be retrieved that subscribe to this philosophy. In education, research suggests that students' attitudes towards a subject lead to academic success (pop ham 2005; Royster Harris and Schoeps 1999). Concerning attitude, Ajzen and Fishbein (1992) stated that attitude is one of the significant factor that influence not only teachers but also students behavior in the

classroom. Even though teachers are believed to be the most important persons in the school with all their acts, it is obvious that students' attitude and manners are also vital for success. For most teachers or curriculum designers, distinguishing what are needed by students is a regular process of curriculum development. .

Tannrechil and Zakrajsek (1999) reported winning, success, performing well, being included, teamwork, participating and having fun are the factors which many high school and college students associate with positive physical fitness and sport skills experiences. On the other hand, negative experiences related of fitness exercise and injuries, Carlsum (1994) found student attitudes towards physical fitness and sport skills were influenced by culture (gender idolization of elite sport figures), society (family, mass media, sporting experience, skill level peers, previous physical fitness and sport skills experience, and perception of fitness), and school (teacher influence). Based on this literature, students progress through each grade over all attitudes towards physical activity decrease. This is especially not worthy, when considering the decline in physical activity that transpires during adolescence. In other words as adolescents age, attitude towards physical fitness and sport skills become less favorable and levels of physical activity decrease. Findings concluded that the most critical aspect of physical education program is learning how to present and deliver an activity in such a satisfactory way that it influences the participants involvement in positive overall manner (Armstrong ,O'Bryand , Costa, 2002). However, in order to provide meaningful physical fitness and sport skills experiences, additional research at domestic level must be under taken.

This study investigated university students' attitudes towards physical fitness and sport skills common courses. There has been also an increasing concern about the large number of unenthusiastic and/or poor attitudes that have observed in many students. The different times of curriculum changes require these questions to be answered.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Concept of Attitudes

The study of attitudes began in social psychology during the early part of the twentieth century. From the beginning the study of attitudes has been "characterized by an embarrassing degree of ambiguity and confusion" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 1). One of the earliest definitions came in 1928 when Louis Thurstone defined attitude as the "sum total of a man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats, and convictions about any specific topic" (p. 531). Shortly thereafter, Gordon W. Allport (1935) defined attitudes as, "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 810). Halloran (1967, p.14) points out that Allport's definition raises three points:

First, an attitude is a state of readiness leading the individual to perceive things and people around him in certain ways; that is to be more ready with certain categories and interpretations than with others. In their everyday lives people are often 'ready' to deal with objects and people as they meet them without having to 'stop and think' about every encounter.

Secondly, attitudes are not innate-they are learned, they develop and organized through experience. These states of readiness are relatively enduring but they are modifiable and subject to change.

A third aspect of All port's definition follows from this and that is that attitudes are dynamic .Attitudes are not merely latent states of preparedness awaiting the presentation of an appropriate object for their activation. They have motivational qualities and can lead a person to seek (or avoid) the objects about which they are organized.

Student Attitudes toward Physical Education

College Students

Mabel Alden (1932) conducted one of the earliest studies examining college students' attitudes toward physical education. Alden concluded that the top five factors which contributed to negative attitudes toward physical education were:-

- (1) Inconvenience of dressing and undressing
- (2) Not enough time for dressing which led to a feeling of untidiness
- (3) Failure of the secondary school to provide adequate skills
- (4) Not enough class time to develop skills, and
- (5) Lack of interest in class activities.

On the Other hand Hildebrand and Johnson (2001) asserted that at the college level students are more likely to participate if they had positive experience in high school. Brumbach and Cross (1965) "measured the attitude toward physical education of all the male lower division students entering the University of Oregon in September 1960" (p. 10) and found a positive relationship between the number of years in which students were enrolled in high school physical education and positive attitudes toward college physical education. The study also reported a positive relationship between size of high school and attitude towards college physical education. This latter point, however, was refuted by Campbell (1968), in a study examining the attitudes of 199 college males. Figley (1985) was interested in determining what specific aspects of previous physical education experiences led to positive and negative attitudes toward physical education. Utilizing the critical incident technique(Flanagan, 1954), 100 college students were asked to reflect upon their physical education experience and list all the aspects which led to positive and negative attitudes toward physical education. Results indicated teacher behavior, curriculum content, and class atmosphere were the top three determinants associated with both positive and negative attitudes

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to assess the current attitude of students towards physical fitness and sport skill course. To achieve this, both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used. A triangulation mixed method design was used as a major way of conducting the research.

Participants of the Study

Participants of the study were second year students who have taken the course, sport science instructors and sport science department heads.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study includes all second year students of Jimma university and Haromaya university who took the course physical fitness and sport skills in 2010/2011 academic year. 10% of students were selected to participate in this study using stratified sampling to maintain proportion sample across universities and the respective colleges. Moreover, 50% of instructors were selected by using availability sampling method.

Table1. Sport science Teachers Total Population and Selected Sample in Each University

Universities	Total no of sport science teachers in the respective universities						Sample of sport science teachers selected from each universities (50%)					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Jimma	10	100	---	--	10	100	5	100	---	--	5	100
Haromaya	9	100	---	--	9	100	5	100	---	--	5	100
TOTAL											10	100

Table 2. Student's Total Population and sample in each University in the acad. year 2010/2011

University	Total no of Second year students in the respective universities						Sample of student's selected from each universities (10%)					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Jimma	4273	84	771	16	4824	100	214	85	39	15	253	100
Haromaya	3950	86	620	14	4570	100	198	86	31	13	229	100
TOTAL											482	100

Source: Registrars of the respective universities.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

To get reliable information from the research participants, types of instrument to be used have paramount importance. Thus, questionnaire and interview were identified as pertinent tools of this study

Questionnaire

In order to elicit the necessary data, a questionnaire was constructed based on the reviewed related literature. The items of the questionnaire were mixed, both closed format question and open format. The questionnaire was prepared for students who have taken the course. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part contained four questions with regard to the general background information of the students, second part contained 16 closed ended questions stemmed on three scales, and four open ended questions.

Interview

Face-to-face structured interview were conducted with department heads and sport science instructors. The structured interview guiding questions were used in conducting the interview. It has two parts, the first part contains the background information about the interviewees, and the second part contains the interview guiding questions, for all interviewees. The interview was conducted after the necessary explanations and consensus reached among the researchers and the interviewees.

Pilot Study

Before the actual data gathering, data collection instruments such as questionnaire and interview guiding questions were piloted in Agriculture College of Jimma University to check whether they can generate the expected information from the respondents and to see their consistency to the study. Then, the instrument was checked. Finally, the instrument was improved based on suggestions and recommendations gathered.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaires were first collected, organized, tabulated, and coded in SPSS version 15. Items of the questionnaire were classified in to different tables based on their similarities for demonstrating and interpreting the results. The following statistical procedures were employed for numerical interpretation.

- Descriptive statistics like mean and percentage were used to analyze basic information and distribution of scores.
- The data collected through interview, open-ended questions and documents were summarized and analyzed qualitatively.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Background Characteristics of Instructors

Of the 10 instructor respondents, all of them were males. In terms of institution, 5 from Jimma University and 5 from Haromaya University were participated in the study. Other respondents' information such as qualification and teaching service at university level is shown in table 3.

Table 3. Academic Qualification and Teaching Service of Instructor Respondent

1	Qualification	NO.	%
	Master degree	9	90
	PhD	1	10
	Total	10	100
2	Instructor experience		
	<3 year	1	10
	3-6 years	3	30
	7-11 years	4	40
	Above 11 years	2	20
	Total	10	108

9(90%) had masters degree, the remaining 1(10%) had PhD degree. With regard to teaching experience, 1(10%) had below 3 year experience ,3 (30%) respondent had 3-6 years experience, 4(40%) respondents had 7-10 years experience, and 2(20%) instructors had eleven years experience and above.

Table 4. Characteristics of Student Respondents

No	Item	No	%	
1	Age	15-18 years	8	2
		19-21 years	256	53
		22-25years	189	39
		26 years and Above	29	6
	Total	482	100	
2	University	Jimma University	253	52.5
		Haromaya University	229	47.5
		Total	482	100

As it can be observed from table 4, 8(2%) of the respondents were 15-18 years and, 256(53%) were within 19-21 years, 189(39%) were between 22-25years old and the rest 29(6%) were 26 and above years. with regard to university representation of respondents, 253 (52.5%) were from Jimma university and the remaining 229 (47.5) were represented from Haromaya university.

Students' Responses on the Attitude towards Physical Fitness and Sport Skills Program

Table 5. Student Response on the Attitude and beliefs towards the Physical Fitness and Sport Skills Program (SP Sc 201)

No	Statement	Very useful		Not useful	
1	What is the Attitude of your colleagues towards physical fitness & sport skills program?	352	73%	130	27%
2	How do you get the importance of physical fitness & sport skills program?	386	80.1%	96	19.9%
3	Are you motivated to participate in various sport Activities?	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
		337	77%	109	23%

Note: Sp sc 201 => physical fitness and sport skill course

As shown in the above table, 352(73%) of the students do have positive Attitude towards the course sp sc 201, while only 180 (27 %) of the students belongs to negative attitude toward the course. Similarly, over 80% of the students claimed that sp sc201 course is very useful. On the contrary few students i.e. 19% were disagree with the importance of the course. With regard to motivation toward involving in various activities majority of the respondents i.e. 77% had positive response. The Response given on most of the items for this table implies

that majority of the students have showed positive attitudes and belief towards physical fitness and sport skills courses.

Table 6. Students Response about the Class Size

No	Statement	Large		Medium		Small	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	How do you rate your class size in sp sc 201?	270	56	120	24.9	92	19.1

Note: Sp sc 201 => physical fitness and sport skills

With regard to class size 56 % of the respondents claimed that the class size very large. Large class size indirectly affects the quality of the program. According to result from interview and open ended questions, the following major problems were identified in relation to large class size:

1. Large class size minimizes the equal participation of students during practical class.
2. Large class sizes aggravate the problem of sport facilities and equipments.
3. Large class size is one of the major obstacles to bring the physical, moral, emotional & psychological development of the student through physical fitness and sport skills.

Table 7. Students' Response about Sport Facilities and Equipment

No	Statement	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	Do you think that the university has sufficient sport equipments & materials to the teaching learning process of sp Sc 201?	160	33.2	322	66.8
2	Do your instructors use teaching Aids?	178	36.9	304	63.1
3	Are there well constructed sport courts in you university?	298	61.8	184	38.2

Note: Sp Sc 201=> physical fitness & sport skills

With regard to sport facilities and equipments, most of the students i.e. (66%) and (63%) belongs to negative responses on the availability of sport equipments and teaching aids respectively. On the other hand, 61% of the respondents reported positively to the availabilities of well constructed sport courts in the university. From this response one can understand that in one hand there are scarcity of sport equipment and teaching aid, on the other hand there are well constructed sports courts. Thus, the institutions should work hard to deliver sufficient sport equipments and teaching aid to facilitate the teaching and learning process of physical fitness and sport skills program.

Major Factors Affecting the Positive Attitude of Students towards the Course Physical Fitness and Sport Skills?

In addition to examining students' attitude towards physical fitness and sport skill (sp sc 201) the interest of this study was to also investigate the negative factors that affect students

positive attitude towards the physical fitness and sport skills program. Thus, the interview result and open ended questions result illustrated that the major factor affecting the positive attitude of students towards physical fitness and sport skills were:

1. Curriculum issue.
2. Large class size.
3. Lack of facilities and equipment
4. Self perception.

Curriculum issue

For all students and instructors the most overwhelming major category associated with negative incidents was curriculum content. The lack of curricular choice was frequently cited as factor relating to dislike the course sp sc 201. One instructor witnessed “students dislike physical fitness and sport skills mainly because they don’t have very much choice in what they do and lack of long time goals ”. This statement summarizes quite importantly how many students associated lack curriculum choice with negative attitude towards physical fitness and sport skills program. Other frequently cited negative incidents with related to curriculum content were warm-up running and the mile run. In relation to curriculum Luck and Sinclair (1991) also suggested that Curriculum programs meeting short term goals of improving physical fitness while failing to achieve the goal of lifelong involvement physical activity has a tendency of developing negative attitudes.

Large Class Size

The analysis of the interview and open ended questions indicated that attempting to teach physical fitness and sport skills course with large class size of students is a big challenge.

In conformity with this, Siedenton (2007) stated that physical fitness and sport skills course is in trouble, certainly part of the reason is the difficult situation many instructors face. The difficulties involve combination of class size and heterogeneity of skills as well as coed participation.

In relation to this the optimal class size ,which is targeted by Ministry of Education is 40 students with in a class (MOE,1995).The actual situation is far from what was actually targeted including the availability of insufficient sport facilities and equipments.

Lack of Sport Facilities and Equipments

The interview and open ended questions replied by instructors revealed that lack of sport facilities and equipments are challenges for the implementation of the course physical fitness and sport skills in higher education institutions. The respondents’ added, sport facilities and equipments are indispensable and the scarcity without any doubt affect the quality of the program.

In line with this, Siedonton (2007) marked that the facilities for physical fitness and sport skills program obviously affected what was taught (choice of activities) and how it will be taught (teaching method).

Self Perception

In relation to negative self perception of students associated with physical fitness and sport skill (Sp Sc 201) were lack of personal interest, low skill level and lack of competency. One of those citations from students was “well, I will just say I am not superstar basketball player. When my teacher, says everyone is going to play basketball, I always embarrass myself because I do things wrong.” In relation to this it is suggested that the development of student’s confidence in their ability to perform physical activity is the most important aspect to carry on physical activity through their life (Hidebrand and Johnson, 2001).

IMPLICATION

In the previous section the presentation and discussion of data suggest that the attitudes of student towards the course physical fitness and sport skills (sp sc 201) affected due to curriculum issue, large class size, lack of facilities and equipments, class atmosphere and self-perception. Based on these findings several implications will be offered:

- The curriculum designers need to increase the participation of students to choose some or all of their curriculum content of physical fitness and sport skills.
- The class size should be minimized as to enhance students’ equal participation.
- The findings suggested that the provision of sport facilities and equipments needs to be increase.
- The physical fitness and sport skills curriculum needs to provide students with the opportunity to become competent movers.
- The other implication is the need to provide students with alternatives forms of daily exercises and warm-ups.
- The program needs to provide students with adequate time to dress in and out during practical class.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study the following conclusions were formulated:

- The findings of this study show that students attitudes towards physical fitness and sport skills slightly decreased due to factors such as curriculum content, un-conducive class atmosphere, , dressing out, self- perception, large class size and lack of facilities and equipments.
- Large class size and lack of facilities and equipments were the top categories associated with negative experiences.
- The conclusion drawn from this study offer insights in to student’s attitude toward physical fitness and sport skills and factors which contribute to those attitudes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Depending on the findings the study, the following suggestions are forwarded:

- The class size should be minimized as to entertain the practical nature of the course.

- Providing enough equipments & facilities is very important in order to meet the target of the course.
- Instructors in the field of sport science should work hard to increase the self-perception of students towards various sport activities.
- In an attempt to combat the levels of sedentary lifestyles are threaten many of our youngsters, health professionals and sport science expertise are calling up on physical fitness and sport skills to equip student with the skills and knowledge necessary to become physically active for a life time.

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