Gender gap in Social Environment of Leisure-time Physical Activity of University Students in Southwest Geo-political Zone of Nigeria

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Adesoye, A. A.∗, Obiyemi, O. O.2, Ibraheem, T.O.3, Ajibua M.A.4

1,2,3 Dept. of Human Kinetics, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
4 Sport Centre, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Leisure-Time Physical Activity (LTPA) has been identified as key to individual and community development. Despite its enormous benefits, LTPA has continued to decline among people of all ages in Nigeria. A review of literature indicated that more than half of university students in Nigeria are inactive. Research evidence has confirmed that males are more active than females. The objective of this study was to investigate gender related social environmental differences of LTPA of university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. For this study the descriptive survey was used. All the students in public-owned universities in South-west Geo-Political Zone were used for the study. The study used multistage sampling technique. The sample size for the study was 2,867 which is 10 % of male and female students in semi-final and final classes in the universities selected for the study. A self-constructed instrument tagged, 'Leisure Activity Questionnaire (LAQ)' was used to collect data. The instrument for the study was subjected to pilot testing during which it was administered twice within two weeks. The reliability of the instrument was carried out using Cronbach’s Alpha

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Keywords: Gender, Social Environment, Leisure, Physical activity
statistics. The data collected from respondents were analyzed using inferential statistics (t-test) to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. The results showed that there was significant gender related differences in social environmental attributes of LTPA of male and female university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

Introduction

Leisure-Time Physical Activity (LTPA) has been identified as key to individual and community development. It is now a great contributor to physical, physiological, psychological, social and mental well-being of individuals which cumulatively add up to form the level of growth and development in the society. This foregone tallies with Tolkilden (2005) who posited that the wealth of a nation is not determined by activities done in the hours of work, but by those done during leisure time. In the same vein, Edington and Chiu (2013) stated that the blending and promotion of LTPA can hold great promise of enriching the lives of the individual and community. Thus, the values accruable from regular participation in LTPA have attracted the attention of nations, international organizations and advisory groups to continue to advocate for active lifestyle as an instrument for achieving healthy living.

Despite the confirming evidences of the benefits of regular participation in LTPA, it has continued to decline among people of all ages in Nigeria. In the study conducted by Talabi, Ajayi-Vincent, Adesina and Aribamikan (2010) they demonstrated that it is no longer part of our daily life to be physically active. Mirmiran, Ghanbarian and Azizi (2011) established that urbanization and new technologies worldwide have brought comfort and convenience and made people inactive. A review of the prevalence of LTPA in Ghana and Nigeria was carried out by Akarolo-Anthony and Adebamowo (2014) and they discovered about 27% to 57% of Nigerians were physically inactive. Based on Akarolo-Anthony et. al (2014) study, one can deduced that lesser percentage of these Nigerians who are engaging regularly in LTPA are females. In other words, greater percentage of females in Nigeria are inactive. Research studies conducted elsewhere outside Nigeria gave credence to this deduction that males participate more in LTPA than females (Mota, Santos & Rebeiro, 2008; Oliveira, Lopes, Rostila, Werneck, Griep, Ponce & Faerstein, 2014; Wang and Wang, 2015). Comparing the daily LTPA practice habit between males and females, Health Behaviour in School Aged Children 2009/2010 Survey report revealed that in all countries, it is boys who participate in LTPA than girls (Botelho, Ferrao & Agula, 2013). As reported by Brown and Mielke (2016) boys are more active than girls in 137 of the 146 countries for which data are available. Also, World
Health Organization (WHO) global estimates certified that the prevalence of physical inactivity is 35% higher in women than men. The data on LTPA available from 34 low-income countries and middle-income countries show that the mean time spent in LTPA is almost twice as high in men than women. The reason advanced for this is that females encounter more barriers (e.g. lack of time due to multiple roles, negative self-perception, perception of safety, environmental access, gender stereotyping etc.) than males (Bengoechea, Spence & McGannon, 2005; Botelhog, Ferrao & Agula, 2013; Blanco & Ordonez-Villalobos, 2016). The foregone shows the likelihood of great gender inequality in LTPA of Nigerians and this may portend strong implications for development.

In the context of gender, identity theorists maintained that individuals pursue behaviours that are consistent with their gender identity (i.e., the degree to which they embrace masculinity and/or femininity) and avoid behaviours that violate the meanings associated with their gender identity (Sun & Kyle, 2012). Gender has powerful influence in the lives of people and the society. It is a dividing line in many activities undertaken by human beings, LTPA inclusive. According to Deepthi (2013) gender affects many aspects of life including access to resources, methods of coping with stress, style of interacting with others, self-evaluation and expectations of others. LTPA takes up a significant part of the gender socializing processes. To this end, social agents navigate males to rational and physical directions and females to effective and aesthetic ones (Lissitsa, Galily & Chachashvili-Bolotolin, 2010).

Therefore, the need to overcome gender inequality in LTPA should be a thing of concern for LTPA professionals. This is because it has been established that both males and females have positive physical, physiological, psychological, social and mental responses to regular participation in LTPA. Vasickova, Froflik, Fromal, Chmelik & Wasowic (2013) affirmed that overcoming gender differences should be an essential part of health policy in every society to help improve LTPA behaviour among the people.

Socio-ecologists have long discovered that males and females are in different social groups and therefore exhibit different characteristics which are determined by intrapersonal, social and physical environments (Bandura, 2001; Sallis & Owen, 2002). This may have informed the recommendation of Alla (1997) that various strata/subgroups of Nigeria population should be understudy to identify the enablers and barriers of LTPA, to engender effective interventions and policy development.

University students constitute an important subgroup of Nigeria population. They are the future of the nation, irrespective of gender. They form the fulcrum or lever for national development. It is believed that positive health behaviours learnt during university period can be sustained throughout adulthood stage of life. Thus, university setting can be seen as the best avenue to achieve equal gender partici-
pation in LTPA because male and female students are exposed to the same learning environments. The university is the laboratory consciously established to set the pace for all-round development of the child.

Existing research findings have affirmed that social environment is a key factor influencing regular participation in LTPA (Bandura, 2001; Sallis & Owen, 2002). However, little is known about the social environmental attributes influencing LTPA of male and female university students in Nigeria. Social environment in which individual lives influences his or her behaviour by shaping norms, enforcing patterns of social control, providing or not providing environmental opportunities to engage in particular behaviours, reducing or producing stress and placing constraints on individual. Social reliance and social support are key elements of social environment and they exert an influence over behaviour such as LTPA (Foley, 2005).

This study intends, therefore, to understudy the gender gap in social environmental variables of LTPA of university students in Southwest Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. It is believed that the knowledge of these key factors among university students has the potential to guide intervention strategies particularly in school-based setting where male and female students are taught together.

**Statement of the Problem**

It has been reported that more than half of university students in Nigeria are inactive resulting to cardiovascular disease risk factors. It has been found that regular participation in LTPA helps to reduce chronic diseases and conditions. Several research studies have confirmed that males participate more in physical activities than females (Silberelse & Pavlova, 2015; Andersen & Wold, 2015) and, therefore, enjoy benefits of LTPA than the female students. To ensure gender equity in LTPA, it is important that factors responsible for these gender differences are identified. It has long been espoused that social reliance and social supports from parents, peers, lecturers, coaches and significant others are needed to help improve regular and gainful LTPA among undergraduate students (Bandura, 2001). However, it appears there are no documented evidence on the social environment of LTPA of university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The knowledge of social environmental factors that influence male and female participation in LTPA will assist in facilitating interventions and programme planning that will not only lead to gender equity, but will assist in improving LTPA of university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.
**Objective of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the gender related social environment differences of LTPA of university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

**Research Question**

Is there significant gender related difference in social environment (social support from parents, peers, coaches, lecturers, significant adults and family size) for LTPA of university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria?

**Research Hypothesis**

There is no significant gender related difference in social environment (social support from parents, peers, coaches, lecturers, significant adults and family size) of LTPA of university students in Southwest Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

**Research Design**

The descriptive survey design was used for this study. A descriptive survey is designed basically to provide an accurate portrayal of the characteristics of a particular individual, situation, or group (Ahmed, 2013).

**Population of the Study**

The population for this study was all the public-owned universities in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The total population of university students in the Geo-Political Zone was 219,664 (Ajibua, 2016).
Sample and Sampling Technique

For the purpose of this study, multistage sampling techniques was used. There were six states in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. All the states in South-west were involved in the study. There were 8 state-owned universities, while the Federal government owned 6 universities.

Stage one: Out of the 14 public-owned universities (State and Federal) in South-west Nigeria, 50% (4 State and 3 Federal universities) were randomly selected for the study using stratified sampling technique.

Stage two: 50 % of the faculties/schools/colleges in various universities earlier picked were randomly selected for the study using fish bowl sampling technique.

Stage three: 50 % of departments in each of the faculties/schools/colleges selected were randomly selected for this study using proportionate sampling technique.

Stage four: All the semi-final and final year students in the departments selected from the universities were purposely selected for the study because they are expected to be more accustomed to the LTPA culture in their various universities. The students were arranged in two discrete groups (male and female) according to their listing on their various university registration lists. This process was adopted to move from general to specific and from wide to small but representative constituent. The total sample population was 28, 469 university students. The researcher used 10 % of the sample population for the study. The sampled female university students’ population in final and semi-final classes were 15,114 with 10% totaling 1,511, while their male counterparts were 13, 355 with 10% totaling 1,356. The sample size for the study was 2, 867 university students. The total number of wider population in each of the discreet groups being represented were divided by the size required to arrive at the frequency interval used in picking 10% respondents from each university selected for the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a self-structured and validated questionnaire labelled, ‘Leisure Activity Questionnaire (LAQ)’ to collect data on social environmental characteristics that may determine LTPA of university students. The questionnaire was designed through the information sifted from literature review and based on 4-point Likert scale technique, that is 4-Strongly Agree (SD), 3-Agree (A), 2-Disagree (D), 1- Strongly Disagree (SD).
Validity of the Instrument

Validity indicates the degree to which instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Kotharic, 2004; Kendra, 2011). Oliver (2010) considers validity to be compulsory for all types of studies. Thus, the drafts of the questionnaire were given to five (5) experts in Physical and Health Education and Test and Measurement for content and face validation. The corrected draft was then used to produce the final questionnaire used for the study.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument for this study was subjected to a pilot test during which it was administered twice within two weeks’ interval using the “test-retest method”. Twenty (20) university students from the Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji, Arakeji were selected randomly to fill the questionnaire. Two weeks later, the same twenty (20) randomly selected students were made to fill out the same questionnaire. The reliability test was carried out using the Cronbach’s Alpha statistics which helped to measure the reliability and consistency of the instrument. The result showed that Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.94, which is reliable for the study.

Procedures for Data Collection

The researcher employed the services of six (6) research assistants who helped in administering the questionnaire to the respondents. The assistants undergone one-day training before embarking on the assignment. It is believed that all respondents cooperated in filling the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected from the respondents.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using inferential statistics (t-test) was used to analyze hypothesis formulated for the study.
Results

For the purpose of the study the inferential statistics (t-test) was used to test the differences.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant gender related difference in the social environment of LTPA of university students in South-west of Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences in social environmental factors</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-3.552</td>
<td>2728</td>
<td>.000**</td>
<td>-.821</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key:* * Not Significant, ** Significant, If *P*<0.05, there is significant difference.

The table 1a above shows the summary on the gender difference in social environment LTPA of university students. The result shows that sig.(2-tailed) is less than 0.05. The outcome of the study therefore indicates that significant gender differences exist. This means that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in LTPA of university student in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Who influences you the most to participate in LTPA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Parents</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73(5.7%)</td>
<td>190(14.7%)</td>
<td>383(29.7%)</td>
<td>396(30.7%)</td>
<td>248(19.2%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39(2.7%)</td>
<td>110(7.6%)</td>
<td>565(39.2%)</td>
<td>414(28.8%)</td>
<td>312(21.7%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Lecturers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95(7.4%)</td>
<td>161(12.5%)</td>
<td>413(32%)</td>
<td>268(20%)</td>
<td>353(27.4%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44(3.1%)</td>
<td>122(8.5%)</td>
<td>482(33.5%)</td>
<td>543(37.7%)</td>
<td>249(17.3%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Peers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54(4.2%)</td>
<td>81(6.3%)</td>
<td>303(23.4%)</td>
<td>475(36.8%)</td>
<td>378(29.3%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19(1.3%)</td>
<td>77(5.3%)</td>
<td>465(32.3%)</td>
<td>527(36.6%)</td>
<td>352(24.2%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv. University Coaches</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>133(10.3%)</td>
<td>97(7.5%)</td>
<td>336(26%)</td>
<td>458(35.5%)</td>
<td>266(20.6%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45(3.1%)</td>
<td>163(11.3%)</td>
<td>437(30.3%)</td>
<td>462(32.1%)</td>
<td>129(9.0%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v. Other significant individuals</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>155(12%)</td>
<td>144(11.2%)</td>
<td>463(35.9%)</td>
<td>321(24.9%)</td>
<td>207(16%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103(7.2%)</td>
<td>237(16.5%)</td>
<td>462(32.1%)</td>
<td>509(35.3%)</td>
<td>129(9%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Which of your parents influence you most to participate in LTPA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Mother</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76(5.9%)</td>
<td>128(9.9%)</td>
<td>411(31.9%)</td>
<td>349(27.1%)</td>
<td>326(25.3%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66(4.6%)</td>
<td>82(5.7%)</td>
<td>618(42.9%)</td>
<td>402(27.9%)</td>
<td>272(18.9%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Father</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89(6.9%)</td>
<td>163(12.6%)</td>
<td>367(28.4%)</td>
<td>394(30.5%)</td>
<td>277(21.5%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54(3.8%)</td>
<td>124(8.6%)</td>
<td>436(30.3%)</td>
<td>559(38.8%)</td>
<td>267(18.5%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Your parents have time to participate in LTPA on regular basis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51(4%)</td>
<td>240(18.6%)</td>
<td>519(40.2%)</td>
<td>343(26.6%)</td>
<td>137(10.6%)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29(2%)</td>
<td>142(9.9%)</td>
<td>630(42.8%)</td>
<td>390(27.1%)</td>
<td>249(17.3%)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Which of the under-listed describe your family size?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Small size</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25(1.9%)</td>
<td>119(9.2%)</td>
<td>317(24.6%)</td>
<td>412(31.9%)</td>
<td>417(22.8%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54(3.8%)</td>
<td>117(8.1%)</td>
<td>508(35.3%)</td>
<td>432(30%)</td>
<td>329(22.8%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Large size</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>219(17%)</td>
<td>184(14.3%)</td>
<td>408(31.6%)</td>
<td>304(23.6%)</td>
<td>175(13.6%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91(6.3%)</td>
<td>177(12.3%)</td>
<td>549(38.1%)</td>
<td>389(27%)</td>
<td>234(16.3%)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork 2016.
In response to the question, “who influence you most to participate in LTPA?” in table 1b above, male (48.9%) and female (50.5%) students agreed that their parents influence them most to participate in LTPA. This shows that female students are influenced by parents to participate in LTPA than male students.

Also, male (47.4%) and female (55%) students show that they were supported to participate in LTPA by their lecturers. This indicated that female students received supports from their lecturers to engage in LTPA than their male counterparts.

Though both male (66.1%) and female (60.8%) students agreed that their peers influence them most to participate in LTPA, but male have higher percentage than female students.

University Coaches were also considered as a source of influence for university students’ participation in LTPA. The findings in table 1b show that male (56.1%) and female (42.1%) students were influenced to engage in LTPA. It can be concluded that female students are less motivated or supported to participate in LTPA by University coaches.

In an attempt to find out which of the parents’ support students most to participation in LTPA, the results in table 1b show that male (52.4%) and female (46.8%) students agreed that their mothers supported their involvement in LTPA. This revealed that significant number of male students’ mothers were more disposed to encouraging them in LTPA than their female counterparts. In contrast to the mothers’ disposition about LTPA, fathers were in support of male (55.8%) and females (57.3%) engagement in LTPA. Again, the results indicate that male (58.8%) and female (52.7%) students were of the opinion that their parents have no time to participate in LTPA.

Lastly, the students were requested to describe their family structure. The results revealed that male (54.7%) and female (52.8%) agreed that there were living in small size household, while only (40.2%) male and (43.3%) female respectively agreed to live in large size household.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the gender related social environmental differences of LTPA of university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. In table 1a, the hypothesis that there will be no significant gender related differences in social environment of university students was rejected. It indicates that significant gender differences exist in social environment of LTPA of male and female university students in South-west Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. In the light of Hum (2016) study, there were significant differences in social environmental
resources by gender. Shepherd (2002) earlier remarked that social support was a stronger predictor of LTPA for females than males, but according to Oygard and Anderssen (1998) males are more exposed to greater numbers of social systems that influence and encourage LTPA participation than females. Caplan (2009) and Kirby, Levin and Inchley (2011) giving credence to the earlier studies said social experiences and context for males and females are different, thus highlighting the importance of social support in LTPA.

Table 1b shows that there were supports from parents to encourage female undergraduate students in LTPA than their male counterparts. This is in contrast to Raudsepp (2009) study which demonstrated that males are better supported and more influenced to participate in LTPA than females. The reason that may be advanced for this results is that male students are involved in sports and games that require expensive equipment which parents may not be able to afford due to the economic recession in Nigeria. In contrast, females are commonly involved in aesthetics and domestic activities that may require no equipment at all but rather emotional support to participate in LTPA (Adeyanju, 2011; Okwonkor, 2012). This position must have led to the belief among male students that they were not supported by their parents. Provision of financial support for the purchase of equipment and access to LTPA is a major factor in motivating people to participate in LTPA. Hutchinson and Brooks (2011) stated that parental attitudes, expectations and encouragement such as provision of financial support can determine whether or not adolescents will engage in LTPA or sedentary lifestyles.

The data in the study show that female students were more supported by their lecturers to participate in LTPA than male students. This revealed an improvement in the attitudes of university lecturers towards their students’ participation in LTPA. It the past, it was reported that lecturers exhibited apathy towards students’ participation in LTPA (Akpmomodaye & Jeroh, 2004). They frown at any activity they deemed will be barrier to academic excellence among students - sport and physical activities are regarded as part of these activities. The current support for female students to participate in LTPA should be encouraged as it may serve as lever for gaining support for male students’ engagement in exercise in the future.

Congruent with previous studies the results show that fathers encourage university students to participate in LTPA more than their mothers. Bandura (2006) in an Estonia study acknowledged that father modelling of and logistic relations and predictions were positively related to adolescents LTPA. A study carried out by Raudsepp (2009) agreed with this position that fathers provide explicit LTPA modelling to males and logistic support to females. Also, Kirby, Levin and Inchley (2011) showed that for both gender, fathers were the most significant family member influencing LTPA of adolescents.

The data in table 1b shows that parents have no time for participation in LTPA. Parental involvement in LTPA assists in motivating children and adolescents to
engage in LTPA (Haase, Steptoe, Sallis & Wardle, 2004). Hannsmen, Koivula and Uutela, (2000) have shown that active parents have positive influence on active children and adolescents. Another study found that the frequency of parent’s involvement has positive association with their children engagement in outdoor LTPA (Kwan, King-Dowling & Cairney, 2015). Rickwood and Foisy (2014) therefore, suggested that there is urgent need to mentor LTPA to young generation by parents through living active lifestyle. Lack of modelling from parents has been identified as one of the major causes of decline in LTPA among adolescents (Haase, Steptoe, Sallis, Wardle, 2004).

Additionally, the findings show that both female and male students have supports from their peers to engage in LTPA. However, the data revealed that peer support for males ranked higher than that of female students, which has also corroborated the study carried out by Kirby, Levin and Inchley (2011) which reported that males have higher peer support in LTPA than females. The results further indicate that peer group support ranked highest among social supports resources which include parents, teachers, coaches and other significant individuals. It confirmed the study of Akande (2011) who posited that peers supersede parents as model in LTPA. It also upheld Olabanji (2014) who maintained that peer group is the most socializing agent in LTPA among students. It has been expressed that by observing peers, individual may form ideal of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information may serve as a guide for action (Bandura, 2001).

The results specify that male students received support from university coaches to engage in LTPA more than their female peers. Coaches are the lifeblood of LTPA programme in the university setting. They are critical to LTPA in the sense that other indices of LTPA programme are themselves passive. It is only the action of the coaches that can make them active. In other words, the effective utilization of other resources (equipment, facilities etc.) is a function of coaches’ capability (Alla, Ajibua & Amasiatu, 2016). Therefore, unfriendly and negative behaviour on the part of coaches may dissuade students from participation in LTPA. It has been observed too that most coaches and sport administrators in universities in Nigeria are males, living no opportunities for female coaches to be models to female students. It is thus important that female coaches are employed in universities to serve as models to female students.

The support from significant/special individuals in the society has been found to help increase participation in LTPA. Table 1b revealed that students did not perceive support from significant individuals in the society as an influencing factor to participate in LTPA. Contrarily, Hutchinson and Brooks (2011) opined that psychological and emotional well-being of adolescents such as university students may be improved through participation in LTPA when there are supportive influences from significant leaders in the society. Conversely therefore, not having significant
individuals may lead to reduction in LTPA among youth particularly females.

This study indicates that majority of university students lives in small size family. Research has found that the number of children in a family can influence participation in LTPA. In their separate studies Ellis and Rademarcher (1986) and Smith and Biddle (2008) found that the presence of siblings was related to active behaviour perhaps because, there are more familial active play when a family has more siblings. It thus follows that children in large family with more siblings are likely to participate in active activity than those in small family size. Historically, Nigerians are known to live in extended family system; new development in terms of westernization of our culture has led to more families adopting nuclear family system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, there are significant gender related differences in the social environmental variables influencing participation of male and female university students in LTPA. The study discovered that peer group, coaches, lecturers are rated higher than parents as LTPA social support resources for university students. The implication is that coaches and lecturers in the universities should be giving the tool to act in loco parentis to students in LTPA while in school. On the whole, it can be concluded that gender differences in LTPA is dependent on social environmental dimensions. Thus, one can hypothesize that equality in LTPA between male and female students is achievable if they are given the same social environmental supports.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1) There is need for gender equality in LTPA as this will generally help improve LTPA among university students in Nigeria particularly female students.

2) There is need for awareness of the importance of LTPA to human health among Nigerians. To this end, parents, lecturers, university coaches and significant individuals should be made to know that both male and female students have much to benefit from active lifestyle.

3) Parents should devote time for participation in LTPA as model for the younger ones for personal health benefits.
4) There should be gender balance in the recruitment of male and female coaches in universities in Nigeria to provide models for male and female students.

5) There is need for more researches on LTPA to find out the influence of individuals’ behaviours and physical environments on LTPA of university students.

References


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*Address for correspondence:*

Adesoye, A. A.
Dept. of Human Kinetics,
University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
E-mail: alayodeajibua@gmail.com