



Motivational Parameters of Sport Facility Usage among Exercise Participants in Ughelli Metropolis Delta State, Nigeria: A Pathway to Societal Renewal

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Abstract

Despite the dilapidated state of facilities in Ughelli Township Stadium, exercise participants continue to utilize these facilities, which might be due to some yet to be studied motivational, psychological and environmental factors. These factors, if established, can be leveraged upon towards the achievement of societal renewal through community engagement in guided physical activities (exercise). It is because sports, in general and exercise participation in particular, in standard sports facilities has been shown to possess the potential to enhance community resilience, foster social cohesion, and promote societal well-being. This study was conducted to explore the motivational parameters that influence sport facility usage among exercise participants in Ughelli Metropolis, Delta State, and connects these findings to the broader theme of societal renewal through community engagement in physical activities. A descriptive survey research design was used to assess a purposively determined sample of 74 exercise participants, and data were collected through a standardized questionnaire. The results show that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, as well as psychological and environmental elements, are central to sustained participation, even in inadequate facilities. The study concludes that enhancing sports infrastructure with appropriate extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is key to boosting community engagement in exercise and so fosters physical resilience.

Keywords: Sports Participation; Intrinsic Motivation; Extrinsic Motivation; Sports Infrastructure; Community Resilience; Societal Renewal.



Introduction

Sports and physical activities are essential components of individual and community health, serving not only to promote physical well-being but also to foster social cohesion and resilience. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the role of sports in societal renewal, revitalizing communities through health promotion, social integration, and the development of life skills (Bailey et al., 2013). In many communities across Nigeria, however, sports facilities remain inadequate, limiting the potential for physical activities to drive social change.

In Ughelli North Local Government Area, the Ughelli Township Stadium is in a state of disrepair, yet it continues to serve as a hub for recreational activities. The persistence of exercise participants in using these facilities, despite their poor condition, suggests that intrinsic motivational factors play a significant role in sustaining sports participation. This study aims to examine these motivational parameters and explore how improving sports infrastructure could contribute to broader societal renewal by fostering resilience, promoting physical health, and building social capital.

Across Nigeria, public sports facilities are characterized by chronic neglect, underfunding, and structural decay. This trend undermines the promotion of healthy lifestyles and community engagement. Ughelli Township Stadium exemplifies this crisis. It has suffered years of wear without adequate renovation or modernization, rendering its facilities substandard. Yet, it continues to draw individuals for regular physical activity.

This situation presents a paradox: why do residents continue to use dilapidated sports infrastructure when better recreational alternatives are lacking or non-existent? The answer likely lies in a complex interplay of motivational drivers, particularly intrinsic motivation and socio-environmental resilience. Existing research on sports motivation has not adequately addressed this contradiction within the Nigerian context, especially in underserved communities. A deeper understanding of what sustains such participation, despite adverse physical environments, is necessary to inform health promotion, facility design, policy interventions, and community revitalization strategies.

Research Questions

1. What is the intrinsic motivation level of exercise participants in Ughelli North LGA?
2. What is the extrinsic motivation level of exercise participants?
3. What is the usage pattern of sports facilities by exercise participants in Ughelli North?

Rationale for the Study

As global attention increasingly turns toward sustainable cities, health equity, and community renewal, sports and recreation are recognized as cost-effective platforms for social transformation. In developing nations, however, poor infrastructure, lack of maintenance, and weak institutional support hinder the realization of these potentials. This study is situated within this paradox. While infrastructural support remains low, citizen engagement in sports persists.

This study is therefore important for several reasons. First, it contributes to a growing body of empirical research that explores the motivational basis for community-level sports participation in resource-poor environments. Second, it provides evidence that can be used to



advocate for policy redirection and targeted infrastructural investments in grassroots sports. Third, it offers insight into how sports serve as a coping mechanism and catalyst for social interaction, identity formation, and psychological resilience, particularly among youth and low-income populations.

Finally, the study aligns with broader educational, health, and social development goals by providing actionable knowledge on how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors interact with facility conditions to shape participation patterns. This knowledge is essential for stakeholders including government planners, educators, urban developers, and health promotion practitioners.

Literature Review

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), provides a framework for understanding motivation in sports. According to SDT, human motivation is driven by the fulfilment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to engage in activities that are intrinsically motivated. In other words, they are likely to participate in the activities because they find the activity itself rewarding (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

Recent studies applying SDT to community sports highlight the importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining participation, particularly when external conditions (such as facility quality) are suboptimal (Ntoumanis et al., 2021). Among the exercise participants in this study, it is likely that intrinsic motivation, driven by personal enjoyment and the desire for self-improvement, plays a significant role in keeping participants engaged despite the poor condition of the facilities. This is consistent with research suggesting that environments supporting autonomy and competence help foster resilience and sustained health-promoting behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Sports are increasingly seen as tools for promoting social cohesion and community development. Through opportunities for social interaction, teamwork, and the development of life skills, sports help build more resilient communities (Moustakas, 2024). In communities facing socio-economic challenges, investing in sports infrastructure can have transformative effects, improving not only physical health but also fostering social integration and reducing crime (Sherlock et al., 2024).

Sports provide opportunities to engage marginalized populations, promote positive youth development, and address broader social issues such as unemployment. For instance, Kusier, Ubbesen and Folker (2024) emphasizes the role of sports in fostering mental health and creating inclusive environments that support diverse groups, particularly in underserved areas. These findings highlight the importance of viewing sports infrastructure as a critical component of strategies for societal renewal.

The accessibility and quality of sports facilities have been shown to significantly influence participation levels (Sallis et al., 2012). Research suggests that proximity to well-maintained facilities is associated with higher rates of participation, particularly among youth (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Conversely, inadequate facilities can serve as barriers to participation, especially for populations that are less intrinsically motivated (Eime et al., 2017).

In the case of Ughelli Township Stadium, the poor state of the facilities has likely limited participation to those who are highly motivated. However, improving the quality of the



facilities could significantly boost engagement, especially for individuals motivated by external rewards or social factors. This aligns with research highlighting the role of environmental factors in shaping health behaviours (Testa, et al., 2023).

Integrating sports into educational systems is widely recognized as a strategy for promoting holistic development among students. According to Woods et al. (2010), sports teach the skills that are essential for success in both education and life, among which are leadership, teamwork and discipline. For communities like Ughelli North, where social and economic challenges are prevalent, investing in sports infrastructure can be key to fostering resilience and social renewal. Holt et al. (2017) noted that structured sports programs provide positive youth development (PYD) opportunities, helping young people build life skills and reducing their risk of engaging in negative behaviours. This is particularly relevant in communities with limited opportunities for youth engagement, where sports can serve as a pathway to broader community renewal.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design, which is suitable for collecting data on attitudes, motivations, and behaviours of a specific population. The design was used to assess the motivational parameters influencing sports facility usage among exercise participants in Ughelli North Local Government Area, Delta State.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population for the study consisted of all regular exercise participants at Ughelli Township Stadium. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 74 participants who regularly use the facilities for exercise participation. This sampling method ensured the inclusion of individuals who are familiar with the facilities and motivated to exercise regularly despite the stadium's debilitated condition.

Research Instrument

A standardized, self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

1. Demographics: Participants' age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and marital status.
2. Motivational Parameters: Items measuring intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, autonomy, competence, relatedness, and amotivation, based on a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, Strongly Agree = 4).
3. Facility Usage: Frequency of facility usage, satisfaction with facilities, and perceived influence of facility conditions on exercise participation.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire for data collection was subjected to face validation by three experts in Exercise and Sports Sciences from Delta State University, Abraka. The experts were



requested to indicate the extent to which the items were consistent with, and relevant to answering the research questions as related to the purposes of the study. These experts established that the items on the questionnaire were comprehensive enough, free from ambiguity, appropriate, clear and capable of eliciting the information needed.

A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the instrument using the test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered on thirty (30) exercise participants that visits the Warri Township Stadium for training every Saturday. After a period of two (2) weeks, copies of the same questionnaire were administered on the same exercise participants again. The generated data on these two occasion were analyzed using the Pearson Moment Correlation, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.78. This is indicative of an acceptable reliability of the questionnaire for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over two weeks. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the 74 participants at Ughelli Township Stadium and retrieved the completed copies of the questionnaire immediately to ensure a high response rate. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to analyse the data. The research questions were addressed using these statistics to describe motivational levels and facility usage patterns.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender

Gender Frequency Percentage		
Male	45	60.8%
Female	29	39.2%

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The sample consisted of 45 males (60.8%) and 29 females (39.2%), with an age range of 10 to 30+ years. Most participants were students (63.5%), with tertiary education being the highest level attained by 54.1% of the sample.

Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Age

Age Range	Frequency Percentage	
10-20 years	43	58.1%
21-30 years	16	21.6%
30 years and above	15	20.3%

Research Question 1: What is the intrinsic motivation level of exercise participants in Ughelli North LGA?

Table 3: Intrinsic Motivation Levels of Participants

Item	Mean	SD
I engage in exercise because I enjoy it	3.31	0.72
I exercise to improve my skills	3.55	0.76
I find the activity fun	3.32	0.89
Grand Mean	3.45	0.74

Table 3 presents the intrinsic motivation levels of participants. The grand mean score of 3.45 (SD = 0.74) indicates a high level of intrinsic motivation.

Research Question 2: What is the extrinsic motivation level of exercise participants?

Table 4: Extrinsic Motivation Levels of Participants

Item	Mean	SD
I participate because others say I should	2.18	1.01
I exercise due to social pressure	1.99	1.03
I participate for rewards	2.43	1.02
Grand Mean	2.18	1.00

As shown in Table 4, the extrinsic motivation levels were low, with a grand mean score of 2.18 (SD = 1.00). This suggests that participants were not primarily motivated by external rewards or social pressures.

Research Question 3: *What is the facility usage pattern of exercise participants in Ughelli North?*

Table 5: Facility Usage Pattern

Frequency of Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Once a week	10	13.5%
2-3 times a week	28	37.8%
More than 3 times a week	36	48.6%

Table 5 shows the usage pattern of Ughelli Township Stadium. Despite the poor state of the facilities, most participants (72%) used the facilities at least three times a week.

Discussions

The findings of this study reveal that intrinsic motivation plays a critical role in sustaining sports participation among exercise participants in Ughelli North, even in the face of inadequate and dilapidated sports facilities. This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that individuals are more likely to engage in an activity when they perceive autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020). The participants in this study demonstrated high levels of intrinsic motivation. They were exercising



for enjoyment, skill improvement, and personal satisfaction, highlighting a strong internal drive despite environmental limitations. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Riddell et al. (2024), who concluded that intrinsic motivation remains a significant predictor of sustained physical activity across various populations, even when infrastructural support is minimal. Similarly, Teixeira et al. (2012) emphasized that individuals with strong intrinsic motivation are more likely to overcome external barriers, including limited access to quality facilities.

The low levels of extrinsic motivation among participants also echo observations by Malm, Jakobsson and Isaksson (2019), who noted that in disadvantaged or under-resourced communities, participation is often sustained more by internal fulfillment than external rewards or pressures. This implies that upgrading facilities alone may not suffice. Psychological support and community engagement are also needed to foster long-term behavioral change. Moreover, the high frequency of facility usage despite poor conditions reflects a broader resilience narrative in underserved populations, where individuals creatively adapt to constraints and still pursue health-enhancing behaviors (Othman, 2025). This resilience can be understood within the framework of community capital theory, which highlights how social, cultural, and human capital interact to sustain engagement and promote well-being in the absence of material capital (Coalter, 2013).

From a developmental perspective, these findings suggest that communities like Ughelli North have latent capacity for health improvement and social cohesion through sport. This capacity could be unlocked with targeted infrastructure investments and policy support. This confirms the assertions of Bailey et al. (2012) that sports participation can be used as a leverage for social transformation and educational renewal in resource-poor settings when adequately supported.

Furthermore, the role of age and education levels, where most users were young students, supports evidence from Woods et al. (2023) that youth engagement in sports contributes to both personal development and broader community renewal. Sports participation provides structure, discipline, and opportunities for pro-social behavior, especially in contexts where traditional educational and employment structures may be lacking.

Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining sports participation, particularly in environments with inadequate facilities. Improving sports infrastructure in Ughelli North could enhance participation, particularly among individuals who are less intrinsically motivated. Furthermore, enhanced sports facilities could play a critical role in fostering community resilience, social cohesion, and societal renewal.



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