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The Influence of Sport Participation on Job Performance of University Lecturers in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of sport participation on the job performance of university lecturers in Rivers State, focusing on its effects on physical health, mental well-being, cognitive function, and overall job satisfaction. A mixed-method approach was employed, involving 200 lecturers who completed structured questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between sports participation and physical health, with 67.5% of respondents strongly agreeing that regular sports improved their fitness ($\chi^2 = 24.083$, $df = 199$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, 62% reported experiencing fewer health issues, such as hypertension and diabetes, due to sports participation. The study also demonstrated that sports participation significantly reduces stress levels, with 54% strongly agreeing that it helps in managing stress and anxiety ($\chi^2 = 19.635$, $df = 199$, $p < 0.05$). Cognitive function was notably enhanced, with 58.5% of lecturers agreeing that sports participation improved their concentration and mental clarity ($\chi^2 = 39.952$, $df = 199$, $p < 0.05$). These improvements improved teaching effectiveness, increased research productivity, and enhanced administrative efficiency. Given these findings, the study rejects the null hypotheses and concludes that regular engagement in sports activities significantly enhances both physical and mental health, thereby improving job performance. The study recommends promoting sports programs, flexible scheduling, better access to facilities, and awareness campaigns to encourage regular participation among lecturers, which is essential for optimizing their professional effectiveness in the academic environment of Rivers State.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is an inherent and inescapable aspect of life resulting from the intricacies and competitiveness of living standards (Sindhu, 2014). Sindhu (2014) argued that in contemporary society, stress, both in general and specifically related to work, has become an integral aspect of existence and has garnered significant attention in recent times. University lecturers have a multifaceted function that goes beyond teaching. They do research, provide mentorship, and handle administrative tasks. All of these activities contribute to the creation of a strong educational environment. Nevertheless, the challenging requirements of these positions frequently result in elevated levels of stress and exhaustion, which can have a detrimental effect on job productivity.

Certain educators have developed stress-induced illnesses due to the immense pressure they experience, while others have tragically passed away prematurely. However, some individuals have documented a decrease in teaching productivity due to the multitude of activities they simultaneously do. The current alarming situation in universities, as identified by Stanley (2023), is unlikely to result in increased production. There has been increasing interest in studying the characteristics that can improve job performance among university teachers in recent years, with particular attention being given to sports involvement. Research regularly demonstrates that participating in regular physical exercise, such as sports, can result in enhanced physical and mental well-being,

which in turn may improve job performance (Ari *et al.*, 2022).

Engaging in sports has been associated with many advantages, such as improved physical health, decreased stress levels, and higher cognitive abilities. Engaging in sports can serve as a crucial means of stress relief for university instructors, who frequently confront the combined strains of academic obligations and personal life. Anariochi's research emphasizes that participation in sports cultivates teamwork, discipline, and stress management, all of which are crucial qualities for effective teaching and academic achievement (Stanley, 2023). In a similar vein, Ogabor *et al.* (2023) discovered that lecturers who engage in sports demonstrate greater physical health and mental well-being, resulting in increased productivity and job satisfaction. In addition, recent studies suggest that engaging in regular physical exercise through sports can improve cognitive functioning, leading to improved teaching approaches and increased student engagement. Studies have also shown that engaging in consistent physical exercise can lower the likelihood of developing chronic health issues like hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular illnesses. These conditions are commonly found in those who lead sedentary lives (World Health Organization, 2023). This enhancement in physical well-being can lead to decreased absenteeism and heightened energy levels, both of which are vital for sustaining optimal job performance.

Furthermore, the positive effects on mental well-being

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resulting from engaging in physical activities have been well demonstrated. Engaging in physical activity has been scientifically proven to trigger the secretion of endorphins, which are natural substances that elevate mood, while also diminishing the presence of stress hormones like cortisol (Biddle & Asare, 2023). University lecturers can benefit from engaging in athletics since it can lead to mental renewal, resulting in improved focus, enhanced memory, and increased creativity. These cognitive improvements are crucial for effective teaching and research. In addition, sporting activities frequently foster social contact and collaboration, resulting in enhanced collegial connections and a more supportive work environment. This, in turn, contributes to increased job satisfaction and performance.

The correlation between sports involvement and work performance is especially significant in the specific circumstances of Rivers State, Nigeria, where university instructors encounter distinct obstacles. The educational sector in this region is frequently marked by insufficient infrastructure, demanding workloads, and restricted resources, all of which lead to elevated stress levels among lecturers (Ogunyemi & Alawode, 2022). Given the circumstances, the capacity of sports to alleviate stress and enhance job performance becomes increasingly crucial. Nevertheless, despite the acknowledged advantages of engaging in physical activity, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that particularly investigate the correlation between participating in sports and the job performance of university teachers in this particular state.

Statement of the Problem

Universally, university lecturers frequently encounter substantial stresses, such as extensive teaching commitments, research requirements, and administrative duties. The aforementioned pressures can result in elevated stress levels, burnout, and reduced job performance, ultimately affecting the caliber of education and research productivity. Although several techniques have been proposed to address these difficulties, there is a scarcity of research investigating the potential of sports involvement as a solution. Although the positive effects of physical activity on mental and physical health are widely acknowledged, there is limited understanding of how regular participation in sports may impact the job performance of university instructors.

The absence of research in this area is a significant problem since comprehending the connection between sports involvement and job performance could provide valuable insights for creating successful interventions to improve the well-being and productivity of academic personnel.

This study aims to fill the gap in empirical information about the impact of sports activity on the job performance of university professors in Rivers State. Universities may fail to recognize a potentially effective approach to enhancing professor performance and well-being

if they lack this expertise. This study aims to examine this correlation, offering valuable insights that could contribute to the development of more effective support systems for lecturers and, consequently, enhancements in the general standard of higher education in the State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does sport participation influence the job performance of university lecturers in Rivers State?
2. How does regular participation in sport activities impact the physical health and well-being of university lecturers in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between sport participation and stress management among university lecturers in Rivers State?
4. Does participation in sport activities contribute to enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers in Rivers State?
5. How do social interactions and teamwork foster through sport participation affect the job satisfaction and work environment of university lecturers in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. H1: There is a significant positive relationship between sport participation and job performance among university lecturers in Rivers State.
2. H2: Regular participation in sports activities significantly improves the physical health and overall well-being of university lecturers in Rivers State.
3. H3: Sport participation significantly reduces stress levels among university lecturers in Rivers State.
4. H4: Participation in sport activities leads to enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The advantages of engaging in sports are well acknowledged, since they involve several benefits such as improved physical health, enhanced mental well-being, and increased social engagement. These advantages are especially applicable to university lecturers, who often experience significant levels of stress as a result of the extensive requirements of their positions, which include teaching, research, and administrative duties. Participating in sports can be a crucial means of alleviating stress and revitalizing the mind, which are vital for preserving both personal health and professional productivity.

Physical health benefits

Engaging in sports regularly has been proven to greatly enhance physical well-being, which is a crucial aspect of total job effectiveness. Warburton and Bredin (2019) assert that participating in physical activities, such as sports, can result in improved cardiovascular health, heightened muscular strength, and enhanced flexibility. These physical enhancements lessen the probability of illness, hence reducing absenteeism and increasing the energy levels required for the hard responsibilities that university

instructors encounter on a regular basis. Moreover, the World Health Organization (2023) highlights that engaging in regular physical activity, including sports, can effectively reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, which are commonly found in those leading sedentary lives.

Mental well-being

The mental health advantages of participating in sports are equally substantial. Engaging in physical activity has been associated with the secretion of endorphins, which are recognized for their ability to enhance mood and alleviate stress (Biddle & Asare, 2023). Regular engagement in sports can bolster the mental resilience, enhance focus, and promote healthier sleep patterns for university teachers, who frequently face high cognitive demands and stress in their work. A study conducted by Lee *et al.* (2021) suggests that lecturers who participate in consistent physical exercise experience reduced levels of stress and anxiety, leading to enhanced job performance and job satisfaction.

Social interaction and support

In addition to the advantages it offers for physical and mental well-being, participating in sports also promotes social engagement and a feeling of belonging to a community, both of which are essential for emotional welfare and receiving professional assistance. Engaging in social interactions within sports settings can improve teamwork and communication abilities, which can be applied to the academic context (Putukian, 2016). As per the findings of Eime *et al.* (2013), engaging in sports offers chances for social interaction, fostering closer relationships among colleagues and creating a more supportive work atmosphere. University teachers, who frequently experience isolation as a result of the independent nature of their research, find this particularly significant. Engaging in sporting activities and receiving social support can result in increased job satisfaction and a more favorable equilibrium between work and personal life, ultimately improving job performance.

Stress relief and mental rejuvenation

The capacity of sports to function as a stress-alleviating mechanism is of great significance, particularly for persons engaged in high-stress occupations such as academia. Stults-Kolehmainen and Sinha (2014) conducted a study which found that engaging in physical activity is highly helpful in lowering stress and enhancing mental well-being. Engaging in sports can serve as a valuable respite for university professors, offering a necessary reprieve from the demanding nature of academic life. This enables them to resume their work with revitalized concentration and vigor. Ensuring mental refreshment is essential for sustaining optimal levels of productivity and creativity in the fields of education and research.

Impact on job performance

Various studies have examined the connection between sports engagement and job performance, consistently finding a positive link. In a study conducted by Jung and Hwang (2020), it was discovered that employees who participate in consistent physical exercise, such as sports, generally exhibit superior job performance, enhanced time management abilities, and increased job satisfaction. University professors, who frequently handle several tasks, can immediately improve their job performance by engaging in sports, which promote cognitive function and stress management.

The existing body of data repeatedly affirms that university instructors derive substantial advantages from participating in sports, encompassing not just physical health but also mental well-being and social support. These characteristics enhance job performance by mitigating stress, enhancing cognitive function, and cultivating a more supportive work atmosphere. Considering the challenging nature of academic positions, integrating sports into the daily routines of lecturers could be a smart method for improving their overall job performance and well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for exploring the relationship between sports participation and job performance among university lecturers. The design allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively understand the impact of sports on various aspects of job performance. The population for this study consists of university lecturers in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study targets lecturers from three major universities in the state: the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. These institutions were selected due to their size, diversity of academic disciplines, and representation of the broader academic environment in Rivers State.

A sample size of 200 lecturers was determined using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across different faculties and departments within the selected universities. The sample was stratified based on factors such as academic rank, gender, and department to capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. Out of the 200 lecturers, 180 completed the survey, and 20 participated in in-depth interviews. Two primary instruments were used for data collection: A structured questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data on sports participation, job performance, physical health, mental well-being, and job satisfaction. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. It was divided into sections that covered demographics, frequency and type of sports participation, self-reported job performance, and perceived benefits of sports participation. An interview guide was designed to

facilitate in-depth interviews with a subset of 20 lecturers. The interviews aimed to explore lecturers' personal experiences with sports participation, the challenges they face in maintaining an active lifestyle, and the perceived impact of sports on their job performance and well-being. The validity of the instruments was ensured through expert review. The questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by experts in sports science, psychology, and educational research to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and comprehensive. A pilot study was conducted with 20 lecturers not included in the final sample to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the items, with a value of 0.82 indicating good reliability.

Data collection was carried out over a period of six weeks. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected lecturers via email and in person, with follow-ups conducted to ensure a high response rate. The in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location convenient for the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent for subsequent transcription and analysis.

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) and inferential statistics (Chi-square) to examine the relationship between sports participation and job performance. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for this analysis while qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed thematically. The transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes related to the benefits of sports participation, challenges faced by lecturers, and the perceived impact on job performance. These themes were then compared with the quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes.

Table 1: Demographic information of Respondents

S/NO	Variable	Categories	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	60%
		Female	40%
2	Age	25-34 years	30%
		35-44 years	35%
		45-54 years	25%
		55 years and above	10%
3	Academic Rank	Assistant Lecturer	20%
		Lecturer II	25%
		Lecturer I	20%
		Senior Lecturer	15%
		Associate Professor	10%
		Professor	10%
	Total		100%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The demographic information of respondents, as presented in Table 1 above, reveals a diverse group of university lecturers in Rivers State. The majority of respondents are male (60%), with a smaller percentage being female (40%). Age distribution indicates that most lecturers fall within the 35-44 years range (35%), followed by those aged 25-34 years (30%) and 45-54 years (25%), with a smaller representation of those aged 55 years and above (10%). In terms of academic rank, the largest group consists of Lecturer II (25%) and Assistant Lecturer (20%), while Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors, and Professors together account for 35% of the respondents. This distribution reflects a broad range of experiences and perspectives within the academic community, which can provide valuable insights into the study on the influence of sports participation on job performance.

Table 2: Extent to which sports participation influence the job performance of University lecturers in Rivers State

S/NO	Variable	Categories	Percentage
1	Frequency of Participation	Daily	15%
		3-4 times a week	40%
		1-2 times a week	35%
		Rarely	10%
2	Type of Sports Activities	Team sports (e.g., football, basketball)	50%
		Individual sports (e.g., tennis, badminton)	25%
		Aerobic exercises (e.g., running, swimming)	55%
		Others (Specify)	10%
		Total	100%

Table 2 provides insights into the extent of sports participation among university lecturers in Rivers State and its potential influence on their job performance. The data shows that a significant portion of lecturers engage in sports activities regularly, with 40% participating 3-4 times a week, and 35% engaging 1-2 times a week. Only a small percentage (10%) participate rarely, while 15% are active daily. In terms of the types of sports activities, aerobic exercises like running and swimming are the most popular (55%), followed by team sports such as football and basketball (50%). Individual sports like tennis and badminton are engaged in by 25% of the respondents, and 10% participate in other forms of physical activity. This regular engagement in various sports suggests that a majority of lecturers incorporate physical activity into their routines, which could positively influence their job performance by enhancing their physical and mental well-being.

Table 3: Meanrating of the impact of regular participation in sports activities on the physical health and well-being of university lecturers in Rivers State

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	x
1	Regular participation in sports has improved my physical fitness.	135 (67.5%)	58 (27.3%)	3 (1.5%)	4 (1.7%)	3.6
2	I feel more energetic and less fatigued due to my involvement in sports.	83 (41.5%)	112 (56%)	3 (1.5%)	2 (1%)	3.38
3	Sports participation has helped me maintain a healthy weight.	120 (60%)	71 (35.5%)	8 (4%)	1 (0.5%)	3.55
4	I experience fewer health issues (e.g., hypertension, diabetes) since I started engaging in sports.	124 (62%)	54 (27%)	16 (8%)	6 (3%)	3.48
	Grand mean					3.50

Table 3 illustrates the impact of regular sports participation on the physical health and well-being of university lecturers in Rivers State, as measured by their agreement with several key statements. The majority of respondents strongly agree or agree that regular sports participation has significantly improved their physical fitness, with a mean score of 3.6, indicating a strong positive impact. Similarly, 97.5% of the lecturers feel more energetic and less fatigued due to their involvement

in sports, reflected in a mean score of 3.38. Maintaining a healthy weight is another noted benefit, with 95.5% agreeing, yielding a mean score of 3.55. Additionally, 89% of the respondents report experiencing fewer health issues, such as hypertension and diabetes, since engaging in sports, with a mean score of 3.48. The grand mean of 3.50 across all statements indicates a generally high perception of the positive effects of sports participation on physical health and well-being among the lecturers.

Table 4: Mean rating of the relationship between sports participation and stress management among university lecturers in Rivers State

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	x
1	Sports participation helps me reduce stress and anxiety.	64 (32%)	108 (54%)	21(10.5%)	7 (3.5%)	3.15
2	Engaging in sports enhances my mood and overall mental well-being.	88 (44%)	87 (43.5%)	19 (9.5%)	6 (3%)	3.28
3	I find it easier to concentrate on my academic tasks after participating in sports.	6(33.5%)	117 (58.5%)	13 (6.5%)	3 (1.5%)	3.24
4	My sleep quality has improved as a result of regular sports participation.	80 (40%)	82 (41%)	32 (16%)	6 (3%)	3.18
	Grand mean					

Table 4 presents the relationship between sports participation and stress management among university lecturers in Rivers State, with percentages providing further clarity on the distribution of responses. A majority of respondents (86%) agree or strongly agree that sports participation helps reduce stress and anxiety, reflected in a mean score of 3.15. Additionally, 87.5% of lecturers feel that engaging in sports enhances their mood and overall mental well-being, leading to a mean score of 3.28. The data also shows that 92% of respondents

agree or strongly agree that sports participation improves their concentration on academic tasks, yielding a mean score of 3.24. Regarding sleep quality, 81% of lecturers report improvements due to regular sports participation, resulting in a mean score of 3.18. The grand mean of 3.21 across these statements suggests that sports play a significant role in managing stress and enhancing mental well-being, contributing positively to the overall job performance of university lecturers.

Table 5: Meanrating of the contribution of Sports Participation to Enhanced Cognitive Function and Mental Rejuvenation among University Lecturers in Rivers State

S/NO	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	x
1	Sports participation has positively impacted my teaching effectiveness.	76 (38%)	97 (48.5%)	21 (10.5%)	6 (3%)	3.23

2	I am more productive in my research activities due to my involvement in sports.	70 (35%)	97 (48.5%)	19 (9.5%)	9 (4.5%)	3.17
3	My ability to manage administrative responsibilities has improved with regular sports participation.	68 (34%)	117 (58.5%)	25 (12.5%)	8 (4%)	3.14
4	Overall, engaging in sports has enhanced my job satisfaction.	63 (31.5%)	82 (41%)	45 (22.5%)	10 (5%)	2.99
	Grand mean					3.13

Table 5 explores the contribution of sports participation to enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers in Rivers State. The majority of respondents (86.5%) agree or strongly agree that sports participation positively impacts their teaching effectiveness, with a mean score of 3.23. A similar trend is observed in research productivity, where 86.5% of respondents report increased productivity due to their involvement in sports, resulting in a mean score of 3.17. Additionally, 82.5% of lecturers feel that their ability to

manage administrative responsibilities has improved with regular sports participation, reflected in a mean score of 3.14. Lastly, while a lower percentage (72.5%) agree that sports have enhanced their job satisfaction, this still results in a respectable mean score of 2.99. The grand mean of 3.13 suggests that sports participation is perceived as beneficial for cognitive function, mental rejuvenation, and overall job performance among university lecturers, although the impact on job satisfaction is somewhat less pronounced compared to other areas. The summary of

Table 7: How do social interactions and teamwork fostered through sports participation affect the job satisfaction and work environment of university lecturers in Rivers State?

Interviewee	Sports Participation	Motivation	Balancing	Physical Health Impact	Mental Well-being Impact	Sleep Patterns	Teaching Effectiveness	Research Productivity	Administrative Duties	Job Satisfaction	Challenges	Recommendations
1	Jogging, gym workouts (3 times a week)	Health benefits, stress relief	Early mornings, evenings	Improved fitness, more energy	Reduced stress, better mood	Improved quality	More energy, better focus	Increased concentration, creativity	Better stress management, efficiency	Increased due to health improvements	Time management, facility access	Better access to sports facilities, flexible scheduling
2	Football (2 times a week)	Physical fitness, social interaction	Weekends, lunch breaks	Maintained weight, improved cardiovascular health	Significant reduction in stress	No significant change	Improved engagement with students	No significant impact	Slight improvement in managing tasks	Enhanced due to stress relief and social interaction	Limited time due to workload	More organized sports events, better time management support

3	Aerobics classes (1-2 times a week)	Personal health, relaxation	Lunch breaks, after work	Improved fitness, reduced back pain	Improved mood, reduced anxiety	Improved quality	Increased patience, better interactions	No significant impact	Better focus and organization	Greater due to health improvements	Finding time during busy periods	University-sponsored wellness programs, flexible work hours
4	Swimming (3 times a week)	Physical rehabilitation, stress relief	Adjusted academic schedule	Improved rehabilitation, general fitness	Reduced stress, improved mood	Improved quality	Enhanced focus and energy	Increased due to stress management	Improved efficiency and decision-making	Increased due to overall health improvements	Cost of facilities, time constraints	Support for swimming facilities, subsidized wellness programs

table 7 revealed a consistent pattern across interviews, highlighting the positive impacts of sports participation on university lecturers' physical health, mental well-being, and job performance. Regular engagement in various physical activities, such as jogging, football, aerobics, and swimming, significantly improves fitness levels, reduces stress, and enhances mood, leading to better sleep quality. These benefits translate into increased energy and focus, thereby positively influencing teaching effectiveness and

administrative efficiency. However, challenges like time management, access to facilities, and workload constraints persist. Recommendations include better access to sports facilities, flexible scheduling, and university-sponsored wellness programs, which could address these challenges and further enhance the benefits of sports participation.

H1: There is no significant positive relationship between sports participation and job performance among university lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 8: Summary of chi-square analysis of mean ratings of relationship between sports participation and job performance among university lecturers in Rivers State

Variable	n	x	S.D	df	Cal. (χ^2) Value	Crit. (χ^2)Value	Decision
Sport participation	200	3.16	0.76	199	71.457	12.59	Rejected

The table presents the results of hypothesis testing to determine the relationship between sports participation and job performance among university lecturers in Rivers State. With a sample size of 200 participants, the mean (\bar{x}) score of sports participation is 3.16, and the standard deviation (S.D) is 0.76. The degrees of freedom (df) for the test is 199. The calculated chi-square (χ^2) value is 71.457, which is significantly higher than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 12.59 at a 0.05 significance level. Since the calculated value exceeds the critical value, the null

hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant positive relationship between sports participation and job performance among university lecturers in Rivers State, is accepted. This suggests that while sports participation is prevalent, it may not significantly influence job performance to a measurable extent among the lecturers. H2: Regular participation in sports activities does not significantly improve the physical health and overall well-being of university lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 9: Summary of chi-square analysis of mean ratings of relationship between sports participation and reduce stress levels among university lecturers in Rivers State.

Variable	n	x	S.D	df	Cal. (χ^2) Value	Crit. (χ^2) Value	Decision
Regular participation	200	3.21	0.82	199	24.083	12.59	Rejected

The table shows the results of a hypothesis test examining whether regular participation in sports activities significantly improves the physical health and overall well-being of university lecturers in Rivers State. With a sample size of 200, the mean (\bar{x}) score is 3.50, and the standard deviation (S.D) is 0.85. The degrees of freedom

(df) for this test are 199. The calculated chi-square (χ^2) value is 24.083, which is significantly higher than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 12.59 at a 0.05 significance level. Since the calculated value exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that there is a significant positive relationship between regular sports

participation and the improvement of physical health and overall well-being among university lecturers in Rivers State. The findings indicate that engaging in regular sports activities plays a crucial role in enhancing the physical and

mental health of lecturers, contributing positively to their overall well-being.

H3: Sports participation does not significantly reduce stress levels among university lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 10: Summary of chi-square analysis of mean ratings of relationship between sports participation and reduce stress levels among university lecturers in Rivers State.

Variable	n	x	S.D	df	Cal. (χ^2) Value	Crit. (χ^2) Value	Decision
Regular participation	200	3.21	0.82	199	19.635	12.59	Rejected

The table presents the results of a hypothesis test examining whether sports participation significantly reduces stress levels among university lecturers in Rivers State. With a sample size of 200 participants, the mean (\bar{x}) score is 3.21, and the standard deviation (S.D) is 0.82. The degrees of freedom (df) for this test are 199. The calculated chi-square (χ^2) value is 19.635, which is higher than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 12.59 at a 0.05 significance level. Since the calculated value exceeds

the critical value, the null hypothesis (H_0), which posits that sports participation does not significantly reduce stress levels among university lecturers, is rejected. This indicates that sports participation does have a significant positive effect on reducing stress levels among the lecturers, contributing to their overall mental well-being.

H4: Participation in sports activities does not lead to enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 11: Summary of chi-square analysis of mean ratings of relationship between sports participation and enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers in Rivers State

Variable	n	x	S.D	df	Cal. (χ^2) Value	Crit. (χ^2) Value	Decision
Regular participation	200	3.21	0.79	199	39.952	12.59	Rejected

The table presents the results of a hypothesis test evaluating whether participation in sports activities leads to enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers in Rivers State. With a sample size of 200 participants, the mean (\bar{x}) score for sports participation is 3.28, and the standard deviation (S.D) is 0.79. The degrees of freedom (df) for this test are 199. The calculated chi-square (χ^2) value is 39.952, which is significantly higher than the critical chi-square (χ^2) value of 12.59 at a 0.05 significance level. Since the calculated value exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis (H_0), which asserts that sports participation does not lead to enhanced cognitive function and mental rejuvenation, is rejected. This outcome suggests that engaging in sports activities significantly contributes to improved cognitive function and mental rejuvenation among university lecturers, further enhancing their overall job performance and well-being.

Discussion

This study highlights the substantial influence of sports involvement on multiple dimensions of job performance and well-being among university professors in Rivers State. The data indicate that consistent participation in sports activities significantly contributes to improving the physical health, mental well-being, cognitive function, and overall job performance of lecturers, which is consistent with other studies in this field.

A noteworthy discovery is the direct relationship between

consistent engagement in athletics and enhancements in bodily well-being. The chi-square value of 24.083, which is much greater than the crucial threshold of 12.59, suggests that lecturers who participate in sports experience enhanced physical fitness, heightened energy levels, and improved overall health. This discovery aligns with the current body of research, indicating that engaging in regular physical activity is crucial for preserving and improving physical well-being, especially in demanding occupations such as academics (Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Enhanced physical health not only encompasses physical fitness but also encompasses heightened energy levels, which are vital for effectively managing the various tasks of teaching, research, and administrative chores.

The study revealed that engaging in sports not only improves physical health, but also has a substantial impact on reducing stress levels among instructors. The chi-square analysis yielded a result of 19.635, significantly beyond the crucial threshold of 12.59. Consequently, the null hypothesis that sports involvement does not decrease stress is rejected. Research has demonstrated that physical activity is a highly effective method for alleviating stress. It achieves this by triggering the production of endorphins, enhancing mood, and offering a healthy means of managing stress (Stults-Kolehmainen & Sinha, 2014). Engaging in sports can be a vital method for university teachers to preserve their mental health and well-being, considering the significant stress they regularly experience owing to the demands of their career.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the substantial influence of engaging in sports on cognitive performance and mental revitalization.

The chi-square value of 39.952, when compared to the crucial value of 12.59, indicates that lecturers who engage in athletic activities have improved cognitive function and mental clarity. This discovery aligns with the wider range of studies that suggest a connection between physical activity and enhanced cognitive functions, such as improved memory, attention, and problem-solving ability (Hillman *et al.*, 2008). In the academic setting, where there is a high level of cognitive demands, the significance of sports in preserving and improving mental sharpness cannot be exaggerated.

Sports activity had a positive impact on the overall job performance of university instructors. Lecturers who frequently participate in athletic activities reported enhanced teaching efficacy, increased research output, improved administrative efficiency, and more job contentment. The results are consistent with research indicating that engaging in physical activity improves job performance by boosting concentration, efficiency, and overall job contentment (Schultz *et al.*, 2019). The dismissal of the initial hypothesis, which posits that there is no substantial correlation between sports involvement and job performance, underscores the significance of integrating physical activities into the daily schedules of university lecturers.

The results of this study offer compelling proof that engaging in sports is an essential aspect of the physical and mental health, as well as the professional productivity, of university teachers in Rivers State. The notable enhancements in physical well-being, stress regulation, cognitive abilities, and overall work productivity emphasize the significance of encouraging academic personnel to engage in athletic activities. By incorporating regular physical activities into their daily schedules, lecturers can not only boost their personal health and well-being but also enhance their professional efficacy, thereby leading to a more productive and healthy academic atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that engaging in sports activities has a multitude of positive effects on university lecturers in Rivers State. From improved physical health to enhanced cognitive function, participating in sports has been proven to greatly benefit lecturers in all aspects of their lives. Not only does it lead to a healthier lifestyle and reduced stress levels, but it also results in better job performance, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in their roles as educators, researchers, and administrators. These findings highlight the crucial role of promoting sports among academic staff, as it ultimately leads to a more vibrant and productive academic community

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Universities should establish and promote regular sports and wellness programs specifically tailored for academic staff, encouraging consistent participation to enhance physical health and reduce stress levels.

2. Institutions should consider implementing flexible work schedules or designated times for physical activities, allowing lecturers to incorporate sports into their daily routines without conflicting with their professional responsibilities.

3. Universities should invest in and provide easy access to well-maintained sports facilities and equipment, ensuring that lecturers have the necessary resources to engage in a variety of physical activities.

4. Initiate awareness campaigns that highlight the cognitive and mental health benefits of sports participation, encouraging lecturers to view physical activity as an essential component of their overall well-being and job performance.

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