Factors Influencing Attendance and Academic Performance Among Student-Athletes in the Obuasi Municipality, Ghana

Joseph A. Yawson, Daniel Apaak, and Stephen Baidoo

ABSTRACT

The present research examined variables affecting senior high school student-athlete attendance and academic performance in Obuasi Municipality of Ashanti Region. For the study, a descriptive survey design was used. 203 student-athletes who compete in games and track and field events at two public senior high schools made up the sample size. All of the student-athletes in form three and form two were surveyed using a census method. To collect information from the study’s participants, a questionnaire was used. According to the results of the multiple regression analysis, personal characteristics had the highest correlation with student-athlete academic performance (r=0.28), followed by coaching factors (r=0.27), and school factors (r=0.22). The recent investigation also showed that no factor predicted attendance of student-athletes (F (1,201)=2.005, p=0.158, R2=0.359. It is recommended that authorities in senior high schools in the Obuasi municipality should ensure that Student-athletes are not affected by influences from school, other teachers, and coaches as it can impact their academic performance. Student-athletes should be encouraged and motivated to learn as their own activities can affect their academic performance.

Keywords: absenteeism, academic-performance, attendance, student-athletes.

I. INTRODUCTION

If many of the pupils are consistently absent, teaching and learning cannot proceed without disruption. Students who are irregular in their attendance have been shown to cause many issues in the community and are likely to face the full force of the law in addition to falling behind academically (Hocking, 2008). School attendance policies, the sort of teacher handling a subject, the subject’s perceived difficulty, and whether or not the student has access to notes are just a few of the many factors that affect student absenteeism (Credé et al. 2010). Nevertheless, a student’s motivation and intellect level may influence whether they choose to attend class (Arulampalam et al., 2012). Absenteeism can result from deficiencies in instruction, such as the use of bad teaching techniques by a teacher, but pupils who are not academically strong may not be able to notice this abnormality (Barlow & Fleischer, 2011). One of the contributing causes of pupils’ poor academic performance in schools is absenteeism. But the real question is whether student athletes’ involvement in athletics can be considered one of the root causes of their low academic performance.

According to Grimit (2014), playing sports encourages student-athletes to attend class regularly, which improves time management. Giving pupils the chance to participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, encourages them to study hard so they have time to take part in other school activities (Crutcher, 2018). Similarly, Burnett (2000) contends that many student-athletes who plan to attend college demonstrate academic progress in order to be eligible to participate in sports. Students that take part in school sports programs are more active in other school activities and achieve academically higher results (Stephens, & Schaben, 2002).

Many studies in this field focused on the relationship between athletic activity and academic achievement (Broh, 2002; Singleton, 2016). Student-athletes, especially those in senior high schools, are expected to do better in athletics and attend class frequently to perform well in the classroom because it is important to assess their performance in both areas (Grimit, 2014). Given the importance of sport in education, student-athletes must both attend class and play sports in order to improve their academic performance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Student athletes face a variety of difficulties, time constraints and physical/emotional stress are the two that are most frequently mentioned, according to research from the literature (Feldpausch, 2013; Gentsch, 2014; Göktas, 2005; Kissinger & Miller, 2009; Morgan, 2005; Simiyu, 2010; Thomas, 2008). According to Göktas (2005), the most significant problem student-athletes have is the capacity to successfully juggle their academic work with athletic
endeavours. Manning (2012) thinks that despite the demands placed on them during athletics, student-athletes are superior to non-student-athletes because they commit a significant amount of time to participating in the athletic activities in addition to class work and are given enough time to meet their personal and social needs. Apart from efficiently matching the time needed to address a number of events unique to student-athletes, at the same time, they must manage other aspects of life (Kissinginger & Miller, 2009).

In a similar vein, Morgan (2005) found that after taking part in athletics programs, student-athletes repeatedly complained about not having enough time for their studies. According to Feldpausch (2013), university athletes, despite their maturity, struggle, to balance academic and athletic commitments and find enough time to perform in both the classroom and on the field. Additionally, time responsibilities and physical exhaustion were cited as the most common challenges faced by student-athletes in UK institutions (McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004). Again, Aries et al. (2004) found that student-athletes struggle to find enough time to study and earn decent grades in a study that included 521 students from an Ivy League university and 353 students from a college. According to them, the players grumbled about finding time to study in order to become academically sound, even though the majority of student-athletes graduated with grades comparable to those of non-athletes. In an interview, Singer (2008) stated that football players struggle with time management because they prioritize playing football above attending class.

In their study, Humphrey et al. (2000) found that time was the most major source of stress for 40% of male athletes and 50% of female athletes. The participants said that they did not have enough time to engage in both academics and athletics and excel in both simultaneously. In a related study, Geiger (2013) found that time restrictions brought on by the difficulties of participating in sports had a negative impact on student-athlete academic outcomes. Godfrey (2010) found that the time commitment required for sports involvement is a major barrier to student-athlete academic success, making it difficult to devote enough time to studying for high grades. According to Simiyu (2012) student-athletes struggle to study, because of the emotional and physical strain that competitions during athletics cause. According to Godfrey (2010), time constraints make it difficult for student athletes to deal with their personal and emotional struggles while little attention is paid to their physical and psychological recuperation, which makes it difficult for them to focus on their schoolwork.

However, Thomas (2008) countered that because it is more difficult to measure the emotional strain experienced by student-athletes during their season is not more severe than the physical strain. Time restrictions are not the only factor affecting student-athletes’ academic performance; Geiger (2013) found that general tiredness from practice and competition might also have an impact. When student-athletes must spend more time on academics after participating in sporting events, Feldpausch (2013) claims that they experience physical and emotional exhaustion. This is due to time restrictions. After participating in sports, student-athletes were too physically and emotionally exhausted to focus on their academic work, (Godfrey & Satterfield, 2009).

According to Thomas (2008), if suitable measures are not taken, the increased physical and emotional stress brought on by playing sports over the years of school can impact a student-athlete’s ability to concentrate on their studies. He concluded that the physical and emotional strains placed on student-athletes can cause them to experience constant fatigue, make it difficult for them to complete assignments, let them sleep during class, make them miss class so they can rest, have reduced focus, and have mental gaps. Additionally, according to Papanikolau et al. (2003), student-athletes find it difficult to focus on their studies because of the psychological and physical demands that participating in sports places on them. Due to their obligations to their sports, student-athletes only have a few hours each day to focus on their schoolwork.

According to the above-mentioned criteria from earlier studies, the student-athlete’s participation in athletic activities is impacted by time restraints and emotional stress. Lang et al. (2008) examined variables influencing first-year university students’ attendance and identified unavoidable variables including illness and family obligations. Personal characteristics, which included gender, age, prior topic knowledge, interest in the subject, motivation, peer influence, and social life, were also found as important determinants. Time spent in class, the difficulty of the materials, how they affected exam performance, how the lessons were taught and recorded (Kottasz, 2004), and the ability level of the students (Van-Wallbeek, 2004) were all recognized as course-related variables.

According to Carodine et al. (2001), student-athletes should have access to some services. As soon as students are accepted into schools, orientation should be the first service provided to them. The second service is career and life skills development, where institutions talk to student-athletes about their lives after their athletic careers. The researchers cited Etzel et al. (1994) career planning and placement model, which identifies the five most important requirements for professional growth. Understanding job interests and related skills, creating a career vocation, having awareness of work-related values, and a lot of other things are among them.

Another service was recognized by Carodine et al. (2001) as a barrier to personal success for athletes (becoming champions or life skills). The goal is to encourage high-quality athletic experience, academic growth, and ultimately a successful personality. The curriculum calls for dedication to both academics and athletics, as well as to the growth of the self and one’s profession. The final service is a partnership between academic support for athletes and instructional personnel to make sure that student-athletes are not left behind in athletics. This program also covers academic counseling and performance evaluation of student-athletes. The two should collaborate to make sure that because student-athletes are aware of the academic requirements, they are not left behind in their academic studies. The academic board and sports teachers are supposed to play these duties in senior high school sports in Ghana in order to support student-athletes in maintaining their eligibility in their academic studies. The final service is academic support, which includes mentoring programs, tutoring, and support for students with disabilities (Carodine

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.24018/ejeda.2023.4.2.638
et al., 2001).

Although the aforementioned variables may have an impact on a student-athlete’s attendance intention, Dickerson (2008) highlighted demographics, coach behavior, and teacher behavior as variables impacting academic achievement. The current study is focused on these variables. According to Lang et al. (2008) similar traits can affect a student athlete’s decision to attend classes in addition to individual considerations including drive, interest in the subject, prior knowledge, and peer pressure.

Studies have been done to determine how student athletes’ participation in sports and attendance at classes relate to one another (Lang et al., 2008; Van Wallbeek, 2004). Unavoidable circumstances like illness, exhaustion following exercise, injuries, and other individual factors were among the problems found. Athletes, according to Humphrey et al. (2000), need to strike a balance between their involvement in sports and their academic performance. As a result, they run the risk of sleep deprivation, fatigue, stress, and other detrimental conditions that may prevent them from attending classes on a regular basis. However, there is a gap in the research on the factors that affect student-athletes’ senior high school attendance and academic achievement.

The relationship between academic achievement and engagement in sports is well-covered in Ghanaian literature. These studies showed that athletic engagement affects academic achievement. Apaak (2016) argued that female student-athletes are more negatively impacted than their male counterparts. In comparison to non-student athletes, student athletes outperform them in academic performance, according to other studies. Consequently, participation in athletics has no impact on student-athletes’ academic achievement (Hammond, 2017). Although researchers have continuously looked at connections between sports participation and academic performance and sports participation and attendance, the current study will close a gap in the literature by looking at factors influencing attendance and academic performance among student-athletes in Ghana in a single study.

A. Research question
1) What are the factors influencing attendance among SHS student-athletes in the Obuasi Municipality?
2) What are the factors influencing academic performance among student-athletes in the Obuasi Municipality?

III. Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design in the form of a quantitative approach.

A. Participants and Samples

The participants for the study were student-athletes in public senior high schools in Obuasi Municipality of the Ashanti Region. A total of 203 student-athlete were selected to take part in the study. The student-athletes selected participated in events like soccer, netball, volleyball, table tennis, handball, badminton, and athletics (tracks and field). The partakers were between the ages of 16 years and 18 years. The selected athletes were in SHS2 and SHS3 respectively. Census sampling, a sampling technique that implies that every item in the population is selected to take part in the study (Taherdoost, 2016) was adopted.

B. Instrument

A questionnaire that examined factors influencing attendance and academic performance of student-athletes was used. Some of the questions were adapted from Dickerson’s (2008) questionnaire that was used to measure factors affecting academic performance among student-athletes. This questionnaire measured demographics of the participants, type of sport-played, major subject studied, coaches’ and teachers’ perceived attitudes, time management and student-athlete’s attitudes. The instrument was reported as moderately reliable with an alpha of 0.541 (Dickerson, 2008). Items that measure coaches’ attitude such as “academic quality is a priority of my head coach” was reworded as coaches move from class to class to ensure that student-athletes are present”. On other teachers’ factors, the questions were structured differently. For instance, teachers on this campus treat athlete better than other students was framed as “some teachers are not friendly with student-athletes. The present questionnaire measured demographics, factors influencing attendance of student-athletes and factors influencing academic performance of student-athletes. The instrument was organised into three sections. Section one was made up of demographics and involves items on gender, age, level of study, sport played, hours spent on studying, number of hours spent on participating in sports and course of study. This comprises questions 1–7 in the study. The second section focused on factors influencing attendance of student athletes and was grouped under three factors-student-athlete factors, coaches’/sports teachers’ factors and other teachers’ factors. Each factor comprised five or six statements and were made up of questions 8–20. Items 21–35 measured factors influencing academic performance of student-athletes. These items were constructed from the review of the related literature (Filsinger, 2012; Francois, 2013; Lumpkin & Flavor, 2012; O’Bryan, 2010). The preamble to each factor apart from the items on the demographics reads “Please, tick [V] the option that best reflects your view on each of the following statements relating to factors that influence academic performance among student-athletes, on the rating scale: Strongly Disagree (SD=1), Disagree (D=2), Neutral (N=3), Agree (A=4), and Strongly Agree (SA=5).” The collected data were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the scales’ reliability.

IV. Data Collection Procedure

Ethical procedure was followed in the conduct of the study since the study involved human beings. Again, approval of the study was done by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Cape Coast before data was collected. An introductory letter from the University of Cape Coast was sent to the headmasters and copied to the heads of the department, Physical Education, and class tutors in the schools to enable easy access to the student-athletes. During the collection of the data, the principal investigator administered the questionnaire. The Physical Education
The teachers in the two schools were tasked to assist in administering the questionnaire to avoid instances where students would discuss the questions and produce the same responses. In addition, they helped to collect the questionnaires back after completion. In effect, all the questionnaires were retrieved the same day after the student athletes have completed them. It took the students not more than 30 minutes to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered within two weeks from October 5th to 20th 2020 to ensure that all student-athletes participated in the study. The COVID-19 safety protocols were strictly adhered to which included spacing the students in the course of answering the questionnaire, sanitizing the hands of the students before papers were given and after collecting the papers and ensuring that all the participants wear masks.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

After initial screening, the data were then entered into Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Cronbach Alpha was then used to test the reliability of the scales. Data were analysed using frequencies and percentage counts for the demographic information. However, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess if the independent variables of athletes’ personal factors, teachers’ factors and coaches’ factors predicted the dependent variable, attendance of student-athletes. This was conducted by following the steps explained by Cronk (2017).

Again, factors influencing academic performance among SHS student-athletes in the Obaasi Municipality was analysed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis to assess if the independent variables of athletes’ personal factors, teachers’ factors and coaches’ factors predicts the dependent variable, academic performance -athletes.

VI. FINDINGS

For the demographic information of the participants, the results revealed that the respondents were mostly males (66.5%), with 55.2% above 18 years while 60.1% were in their final year. Besides, it was identified that 22.2% played football while the majority of the students offered other courses as electives (34.6%). On the number of hours spent doing homework, 47.8% spent 0-3 hours while 29.6% spent the same hours participating in sports from Monday to Friday.

Research Question One, this question was to determine if the independent variables of athletes’ personal factors, teachers’ factors, and coaches’ factors can predict the dependent variable, attendance of student-athletes.

To determine whether athletes’ personal factors, teachers’ factors, and coaches’ factors can predict the attendance of student-athletes, a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis was conducted. At model one when personal factors were entered, the result was not significant at (F (1,201) =2.005, p=0.158, R2=0.359. The addition of teachers’ factors and coaches’ factors did not make any impact on student attendance with p=0.545 and 0.385 respectively. See in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Regression</th>
<th>Regression</th>
<th>Regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal factors</td>
<td>-0.99**</td>
<td>-0.11**</td>
<td>-0.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ factors</td>
<td>0.04***</td>
<td>0.02**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School factors</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: **p<0.005.

Research Question Two, again Multiple Regression analysis was performed to determine if independent variables, athletes’ personal factors, teachers’ factors, coaches’ factors, and school factors can predict the dependent variable, academic performance among athletes. In the first model, when personal factors were entered, the following was reported: (F (1,201) =61.175, p<0.001, R²=0.233 and explained 23.3% of academic performance. In the preceded model, teachers’ factors were added and explained an additional 8.1% of academic performance making the total variance to be 31.4% (F (2, 200) =23.675, p<0.001, R²=0.081). Coaches’ factors introduced in the third model, was significant (F (3, 199) =17.718, p<0.001, R²=0.056 while the fourth model coaches’ factors reported significant figures at (F (4, 198) =12.126, p=0.001, R²=0.036. However, teachers’ factors were not significant in the final model (β=12, p=0.053). The highest predictor of academic performance was personal factors with (β=0.28) followed by coaches’ factors (β=0.27) and school factors (β=0.22). See in Table II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Regression</th>
<th>Regression</th>
<th>Regression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal factors</td>
<td>0.33***</td>
<td>0.39***</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ factors</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ factors</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School factors</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² Change</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ***p<0.001, **p=0.001.
VII. DISCUSSION

This study aimed at examining factors that impact attendance and academic performance among senior high school student-athletes in the Obuasi Municipality. Based on the analysis performed, it was found that none of the factors; athletes’ personal factors, teachers’ factors, and coaches’ factors can predict the attendance of student-athletes. Therefore, student-athletes are not influenced by any of the mentioned factors to attend classes regularly. In similar studies, Cuffe et al. (2014) hypothesised that when students participate actively in sports it decreases absence with the effects propelled by decreases in unexcused absents, with a significant decline in truancy among male student-athletes. Astin (1999) extols that the more students are involved with sports at school, the more they engage in academic activities and become positive members of the school community. Eccles and Barber (1999) propounded that students’ who participate in high school sports have lower dropout rates and higher rates attendance rates in universities than those in other school programmes.

The current study has demonstrated that although there could be external influences from coaches and other teachers and internal factors such as athletes’ personal factors, none of them predicted the attendance of the student-athletes in Ghana. For example, on personal factors, items such as “I manage my time better during competition seasons than non-competition seasons” and “I spend more time thinking about my class than my sport” show that students were more focused on academic work when participating in sport. Arguably, the attitude of other teachers who are likely to exclude student-athletes from their classes for lateness due to participation or attending training sessions was not significant enough to predict the academic performance of the student-athletes. Manning (2012) contends that student-athletes are uniquely compared to non-athletes because, despite athletic demands, they devote a significant amount of extra time to athletic activities in addition to regular classwork and allocating adequate time to meet personal social needs. This indicates that most of the student-athletes are more conscious of other activities going on in the school and therefore, obey all rules and regulations. They are likely to attend classes and obey all the rules and regulations in the school which protect them from being affected by school factors. On the part of other teachers, they are likely to dislike student-athletes because most of them failed to attend classes after training and participation. Although, Kissinger and Miller (2009) proclaimed that effectively matching the time demands required the need to address the numerous activities exclusive to student-athletes are usually too much to handle and leaves student-athletes vulnerable to mental and physical suffering, the present study showed that these factors do not affect the attendance of the student-athletes.

Therefore, school authorities and other stakeholders should refrain from activities that prevent student-athletes’ intention to attend class after participation. Student-athletes should be motivated by other teachers and coaches to attend classes even if they are influenced by any of the personal factors.

The findings from the study again showed that personal factors, coaches’ factors, and school factors influence the academic performance of student-athletes. This supports the conceptual framework which postulated that demographic factors, coaches’ factors, teachers’ factors, and student-athletes’ factors can influence the academic performance of student-athletes.

The current research supports the attribution theory which states that powerful forces have influence on student learning (Gaiser, 2015). Regarding this, student-athletes become satisfied if they are motivated to attend class by external forces (coaches, school, and other teachers) after participation which can lead to improved academic performances. Personal factors or athletes’ factors support the claim that students who value themselves and feel good perform better as they work harder to obtain good grades. They are hopeful and believe in their abilities and as a result are unlikely to stop schooling (Daniels & Leaper, 2006).

The present study partially supports Dickerson (2008) who identified demographics, coach’s behaviour, and teacher’s behaviour as factors influencing academic performances. The present study has added school factors as one of the factors influencing academic performance of student-athletes. Three items were used to measure this factor that relate to the help offered by the Head of Physical Education and other teachers willing to help student-athletes to accomplish their academic performances.

Personal factors, although exclusive to the individual, can affect the academic performance of the student-athlete. This is true because some of the student-athletes will encounter challenges in balancing sports participation with other activities. From the literature, Feldpausch (2013) opined that athletes at the university level although matured have issues with balancing academic and athletic motivation and have been challenged with finding the right amount of time to succeed in the class and on the field. Hence, senior high school students who are mature as university students can also be confronted with similar issues. The above stated factors are personal and therefore, are likely to impact the academic performance of a particular student-athlete who cannot find the right amount of time to participate and attend classes.

It has been established that time management is cited as a reason for student-athlete academic success by parents, teachers, and coaches alike. Because student-athletes are perceived to have little time to waste, they are forced to budget their time in order to complete assignments and projects for their classes. Students who are kept busy and active in school activities develop a sense of school engagement. (Macaluso et al., 2013). Disengagement with the school appears to be one of the primary reasons for dropping out of school, and schools that do not engage students have been warned that it will result in a high dropout rate, branding the school as a dropout factory (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

On coaches’ factors which were measured with items that relate to how coaches can help student-athletes to succeed academically such as “coaches ensure that we close from training early,” “coaches advice athletes who do not attend classes,” etc. affected their academic performance. This seems to explain that the more coaches and sports teachers are concerned about the overall well-being of their athletes, there is the likelihood that they can perform better in exams.
and other academic pursuits. This finding is supported by Dickerson (2008) who concurs that, athletes felt their coaches were involved and concerned about their academic performance.

In the study, teachers’ factors which were measured with items such as “some teachers drive me from class.” “some teachers insult me for attending training” etc. affect the academic performance of student-athletes. In an instance where a teacher usually drives a student-athlete from class, the student is likely to miss most of the concepts that will be taught resulting in the inability to perform better at the end of the exams. This will lead to poor academic performance in the long run.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

The study had limitations that can be used to guide future research. For starters, the fact that only one municipality out of a total of 261 local metropolitan, municipal, and district assemble in Ghana makes extrapolating the findings difficult. Future research should concentrate on selecting many districts from various regions of Ghana to participate in the study. Besides, the study employed questionaire as the tool for gathering the data which implies that the responses were predetermined by the researcher. With a study of this type which intends to examine students’ perception of factors influencing attendance and academic performance, a qualitative approach should have offered them the opportunity to freely express their views. Notwithstanding, in using such an approach, only few participants could have been interviewed considering the time frame. Therefore, the quantitative approach paved way for many participants to be reached within that short period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the study’s findings and conclusions:

1) School authorities should assist student-athletes in the Obuasi Municipality to attend class regularly although, they were not affected by other teachers’ factors, personal factors, and coaches’ factors. If possible, interference from the schools and teachers that prevent student-athletes from attending school should be minimized.

2) Authorities in senior high schools in the Obuasi municipality should ensure that Student-athletes are not affected by influences from school, other teachers, and coaches as it can impact their academic performance. They should be encouraged and motivated to learn as their activities can affect their academic performance.

REFERENCES


Crutcher, B. (2018). An examination of athletic participation and academic achievement among high school students in a Midwest, catholic high school [Doctoral dissertation], University of Missouri-Colombia.


