



Family Structure and Socio-Economic Status as Predictor of Sports Performance among Student-Athletes of the University of Benin

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to find out family structure, socio-economic status and sports performance among student-athletes of the University of Benin. Two research questions were raised and two corresponding hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of this study was made up of 244 student-athletes of the University of Benin. The sample size was made up of 120 student-athletes and the simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts all from the University of Benin. The split half method of reliability was used to establish the reliability. Data collected was subjected to Cronbach alpha and a reliability coefficient of .75 was obtained. The questionnaire was the instrument used for this study. It was made up of two sections. Data collected were analysed using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that family structure significantly impacts student-athletes' access to training, emotional support, and performance consistency. Socioeconomic status emerged as a key determinant, with higher-income families affording better coaching, nutrition, and sports resources, positively influencing performance. It was concluded that family structure collectively influence student-athletes' sports development, highlighting the need for institutional interventions. It was recommended that Universities provide financial aid, flexible training programs, and parental education initiatives to support athletes from diverse backgrounds, ensuring equitable opportunities for sports excellence.

Keywords: Family structure, socio-economic status, sports performance.

1. Introduction

Family structure refers to the composition of a family unit, including factors such as the number of parents, siblings, and the presence of extended family. Research indicates that family structure significantly influences children's sport participation. For instance, children from families with a strong affinity for sports are more likely to engage in organized sports activities compared to those from less sport-oriented families. A study involving over 6,000 adolescents found a clear positive correlation between family sport culture defined by the importance placed on sports within the family and participation in club-organized sports (Elliott & Drummond, 2019). Families sports related socialization has a direct impact on children continued participation in or withdrawal from sports activities. Specifically, family behaviours in sports activities can influence children sports activities participation through a variety of positive supportive behaviors, such as encouragement, co-activity, provision of activity related materials and role modelling (Reimers et al., 2019). This suggests that when families prioritize athletic activities, children are more likely to adopt similar values and engage in sports themselves. Moreover, parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping children's sporting experiences. Parents who actively participate in sports or encourage their children to engage in physical activities foster a supportive environment that enhances children's motivation and performance. Similarly, Liszewski et al

(2018) demonstrated that family collaborative social control and role modeling can positively predict children's participation in sports activities. Conversely, families that do not prioritize sports may inadvertently limit their children's opportunities for participation and success in athletic endeavors.

Parental support can be categorized into emotional, instrumental, and financial dimensions. Emotional support includes encouragement and motivation from parents, which has been shown to be vital for athletes' well-being and persistence in sports (O'Rourke et al., 2014). Instrumental support involves practical assistance such as transportation to practices and games, while financial support covers expenses related to equipment and fees. Research indicated that families often make significant sacrifices in these areas to support their children's athletic pursuits (Kay, 2000). Interestingly, the dynamics of parental involvement can vary based on the family's structure. For example, single-parent households may face unique challenges in providing comprehensive support due to limited resources or time constraints. Studies have shown that parents in single-parent families often experience higher levels of stress and may struggle to balance work commitments with their children's sporting activities. This can lead to reduced participation rates among children from such families.

Siblings also play a significant role in shaping an athlete's experience. Supportive sibling relationships can enhance an athlete's engagement and enjoyment of sports. Conversely, sibling relationship can both inhibit and support athletic talent development, including the potential for negative emotions such as bitterness and jealousy from other siblings due to family shifting attention more towards the talented athlete (Tailor et al., 2021). Student-athletes with siblings who participate in sports are more likely to be active themselves, highlighting the importance of familial relationships in fostering a culture of sport within the household. Furthermore, the influence of siblings extends beyond mere participation; it can also affect performance outcomes. Athletes often look up to their older siblings as role models or sources of inspiration. This dynamic can lead to increased aspirations for success in sports as younger siblings strive to emulate their older counterparts (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008).

As children progress through their sporting journeys, family dynamics influences decisions regarding specialization in particular sports. Sports specialization focusing intensely on one sport at an early age has become increasingly common among young athletes seeking elite performance levels.

However, this trend raises concerns about potential negative impacts on family life and relationships. In families where one child specializes in a sport, time commitments can strain relationships among family members. Parents may find themselves dedicating substantial time and resources to support their specialized athlete, potentially at the expense of other family members' needs (Dorsch et al., 2016). This situation can lead to feelings of resentment or neglect among siblings who may feel overshadowed by the specialized athlete's achievements. Moreover, the emotional toll on parents cannot be overlooked. The pressure associated with supporting a specialized athlete can create stress within the family unit, affecting overall well-being (Dorsch et al., 2016). Therefore, while specialization may yield benefits for individual athletes, it is essential to consider its broader implications for family dynamics.

Inadequate physical activity (PA) can lead to decline in physical fitness and function, as well as increase in obesity among University students. More so, regular involvement in PA can improve the physical health of University students, self-awareness, and foster positive psychological emotions. The mechanism influencing sports performance among University students are highly complex and extensive, and family socio-economic status (SES) may be the most determinants. Family Socioeconomic status (SES) denotes the family's rank, level and position within the society, which possesses a degree of multidimensional and comprehensiveness and can reflect disparities in family education, income and occupation (Lou et al., 2024). Given the potential benefits of sports on general health, unequal access is a cause for worry. Dimech, and Muscat-Ingлот (2022) found that students of low SES household exhibit more screen time and sedentary behaviours than those high SES households, and by extension, involve in less sporting activities. It was argued that SES and sporting engagement and performance are inversely correlated. Lower sporting activities level among college students of low SES likewise suggests a decreased propensity for college students of low SES to participate in structured sporting activities (Dimech & Muscat-Ingлот, 2022). If this is the case, then sport is rendered increasingly a preserve of the middle class or at least of segments of the population representing higher relatives SES. Recent research findings have shown that SES disparities may be greater in organized sports (OS) than in overall physical activity (Owen et al. 2022). This discrepancy is likely to be associated with the economic resources available to families (Rittsteiger et al., 2021). Participation in OS usually requires series of fees, such as registration fees and equipment fees (Zheng, 2025). Families with high SES have

objectively better educational and economic resources to support the long-term participation in OS of students (Zheng, 2025).

1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- What is the relationship between family structure and sports performance of student-athlete in the University of Benin.
- What is the relationship between socio-economic status and sports performance of student-athletes in the University of Benin.

1.2 Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were formulated at 0.05 level of significant:

- There is no significant relationship between family structure and sports performance among students' athletes of the University of Benin
- There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and sports performance among student's athletes of the University of Benin

2. Research Methodology

Correlation research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study consisted of Two Hundred and Forty-Four (244) student athletes registered in

various sports programs at the University of Benin. The sample size of this study is One Hundred and Twenty (120) student athletes. The simple sample technique was used to select the respondents (student athlete's). This involved numbering One hundred and forty-four (144) in a piece of paper and fold, and put them in a basket in which the folded papers are turned around in the basket and one is picked at a time and the one selected is removed from the basket. This procedure was used to select One Hundred and Twenty (120) Student-athletes which is called balloting without replacement. The instrument that was used in this study, is a self-structured questionnaire. The instrument was made up of two section, section A and B. Section A deals with the demographic information such as family structure and socioeconomic Status. Section B deals with sport performance. The scale measured dedication, training and absorption. It is made up of 29 items with four choices per item and it is modified in line with Linkert scale such as strongly agree (4 points), Agree (3 points) Disagree (2) Strongly disagree (1). The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Human Kinetics and one from Education Evaluation and counselling psychology all from the University of Benin. Their corrections, criticism, modification, clarification and recommendation served as the final draft of the instrument. The Split half method of reliability was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. This involved administering the instrument to 20 student-athletes of Benson Idahosa University once. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach alpha and a reliability coefficient of .75 was obtained. Data collected was analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between family structure and sports performance among students' athletes of the University of Benin.

Table 1: Pearson Statistical Analysis on Family Structure and Sports Performance of Students-athlete

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision
Family Structure.	120	3.21	1.21	.734	0.025	Ho is rejected
Sport performance	120	3.15	1.03			

The Pearson correlation analysis presented in Table 1 examines the influence of family structure on the sports performance of student-athletes. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between family structure and sports performance, as evidenced by an r-value of 0.734 and a p-value of 0.025. Since the p-value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, suggesting that family structure significantly influences the sports performance of student-athletes. Additionally, the mean score for improved performance (M = 3.21, SD = 1.21) indicates that, on average, students perceive a moderate to high level of improvement in their sports performance due to family structure. Similarly, the mean score for the mastery of skills and techniques (M = 3.15, SD = 1.03) further supports the notion that family structure plays a role in shaping the athletic development of students. These findings highlight the importance of a supportive family environment in enhancing the skills and overall performance of student-athletes.

3. Results

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and sports performance among student’s athletes of the University of Benin.

Table 2: Pearson Statistical Analysis on Socio-economic Status of Student-athletes Sports Performance

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision
Socioeconomic status	120	3.22	1.08			
				.871	0.005	Ho is rejected
Sport performance.	120	3.25	1.13			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation analysis on the influence of socio-economic status on student-athlete sports performance. The results indicated a strong positive correlation between socio-economic status and the ability to correct errors in subsequent performances, as reflected by r-value of 0.871 and a p-value of 0.005. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, confirming that socio-economic status significantly impacts students' athletic performance. The mean score for correcting errors in future performances (M = 3.22, SD = 1.08) suggests that students generally acknowledged their ability to learn from past experiences. Additionally, the mean score for designing and implementing strategies when necessary (M = 3.25, SD = 1.13) highlights students' adaptability and strategic thinking in sports. These findings emphasize the crucial role of socio-economic status in shaping student-athletes' ability to refine their skills, strategize effectively, and enhance overall performance.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the profound influence of family background on the sports performance of student-athletes at the University of Benin. The results indicate that family structure significantly shapes the athletic development of students, emphasizing the importance of a supportive family environment in enhancing skills and overall performance. This study aligns with Smith and Johnson (2022), they noted that stable family structures provide student-athletes with emotional support, encouragement, and motivation, all of which contribute to improved athletic performance. Families that prioritize sports participation and provide a structured and disciplined environment tend to

produce athletes with better skill acquisition, mental toughness, and resilience in competitive settings. In contrast, athletes from fragmented or unsupportive family structures may struggle with consistency in training and performance due to a lack of emotional and financial support (Williams et al., 2023).

Additionally, socio-economic status was identified as a key determinant of student-athlete performance. The results suggest that athletes from higher-income families have better access to sports resources, such as high-quality coaching, proper nutrition, and advanced training facilities, all of which are critical for success in competitive sports. According to Garcia and Thompson (2024), socio-economic advantages enable young athletes to participate in elite training programs, travel for competitions, and access specialized medical and psychological support, which significantly enhances their performance. Conversely, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face financial barriers that limit their ability to participate in sports at a competitive level. These limitations may include inadequate sports equipment, poor training environments, and limited exposure to professional coaching, which can hinder athletic growth and performance (Williams et al., 2023). Dimech, and Muscat-Inglot (2022) found that students of low SES household exhibit more screen time and sedentary behaviours than those high SES households, and by extension, involve in less sporting activities. It was argued that SES and sporting engagement and performance are inversely correlated. Lower sporting activities level among college students of low SES likewise suggests a decreased propensity for college students of low SES to participate in structured sporting activities (Dimech & Muscat-Inglot ,2022).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the family structure influences the sport performance of student athletes in the University of Benin, as well as the socioeconomic status students-athletes improve sports performance.

6. Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- The University of Benin should establish a comprehensive support system for student athletes from disadvantaged family backgrounds, including subsidized access to training facilities, equipment, and medical care to help bridge the resource gap created by socioeconomic differences.
- The University's Sports Department should develop a flexible training schedule program that accommodates students from various family structures, particularly those from extended or polygamous families who may face more scheduling challenges due to family obligations.
- A financial aid or scholarship program should be established specifically targeting talented athletes from low socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring that family financial status doesn't hinder promising athletes from participating fully in sports activities

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