



## Empowering University Students through Physical Fitness for Lifetime Productivity

Dominic, O. L.<sup>1</sup>, Onifade, O. A.<sup>1</sup>, Ogidan, R. J.<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Ilorin

<sup>2</sup> African Council for Distance Education [\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [rjogidan@acde-edu.org](mailto:rjogidan@acde-edu.org)]

**Abstract.** This paper reports the findings of a study that investigated 252 University of Ilorin students' awareness of the benefits of physical fitness and the need for empowering them for lifetime productivity. Data were collected using a self developed questionnaire and analysed using frequency counts, percentage and chi-square. It reports that students are aware of the benefits inherent in healthy fitness lifestyles and that they know that stress in academics can be reduced and productivity can be enhanced by maintaining a lifestyle of physical activity. Ironically, many of the students were found to be vicarious participants in sports. The students expressed need for a health and fitness facilities.

**Keywords:** Student services management, Sports, Co-curricula activities

### 1 Introduction

There is overwhelming scientific evidence highlighting the health, social and psychological benefits associated with an active lifestyle. However, physical activity remains the most underutilized low cost health resource in the world (TraviL, 2003; Adegun & Konwea, 2009). Increased exposure to western lifestyle and eating habits which are characteristics of urban African environment and decreased participation in physical activity are contributing factors to increase in health problems (Adegun & Konwea, 2009). David, (2000) defined the term 'lifestyle' as habits that people choose either voluntarily or involuntarily, which affect health habits in areas such as food (e.g. use of sugars and salts), hygiene, coping mechanisms amongst others. Lifestyle is generally considered as an individual issue and reflects the norms and values the individual holds (Shehu, 2010). There is a need for an individual

to practice a lifestyle involving keeping fit to promote optimal health and mortality.

Education, been defined as the development of an/the individual physically, mentally, socially, spiritually to promote a better individual and society does not just happen, but requires processes for empowering the individual to optimise performance in all aspects of life. A functional student will therefore be an individual that is able to perform his or her role optimally without undue fatigue or disease. Aisiku (2005) said there is a need for Altering curriculum in order to promote excellence in education and culture for the new millennium which he defined as teaching content that enables students to engage in and apply critical thinking activities and skills typically left out in general education classrooms. According to Adogbeji and Oghenetega (2006), students of tertiary institutions represent a special group of population who are in their formative years in terms of their career or occupation. Therefore, they need to learn and experience the academic on routine basis. Therefore there is need for university students to include fitness lifestyle in daily routine.

According to Kassam (1988) as reported by (Aluede,2009), the graduate of any Nigerian University would be one who considerably plays his/her full roles in the economic development of the country, participates fully and meaningfully in the social, civil, political and cultural activities of the community and one who lives a self-fulfilling and optimal life style amongst others. He emphasised that every graduate of any Nigerian universities would have been successfully empowered through quality teaching, learning and experiences, to take control over his/her own life and the overall environment. Therefore, one that is not empowered with a healthy fitness lifestyle will be at a risk for mediocrity in job performance.

From the Greek era, it has been well established that a sound mind in a sound body produces a man of wisdom and action (Lumpkin, 2002). According to Adegun (2005), the health level of an individual is determined by the type of lifestyle relating to health, so also, the activities and behaviours of an individual are pointers to his or her attainment in health. Regular physical activity and exercise with the right guidance have been proved to help maintain the functional independence of older adults and enhances the quality of life for people of all ages (Singh, 2002; Lumpkin, 2002). Enhanced physical fitness levels are thought to help an individual's mental state of mind by contributing to an improved mental thought process (Neeser, 2010).

This study seeks to answer the following questions;

1. Are students aware of the benefits of fitness lifestyle?
2. Will Healthy fitness lifestyle of University students have significant effects on academic stress?
3. Will engaging University students in fitness programme promote productivity among them?

4. What are the Physical activity and fitness lifestyle habits of University students?
5. Will there be a need for standard Health and Fitness centre to cater for University students' participation in fitness and sports programme?

## 2 Methods and Procedure

Survey method of the descriptive research was used to investigate University Students Fitness Lifestyle for a lifetime Productivity. The population for the study was the University of Ilorin Students, while the sample was randomly selected from eight faculties based at the permanent Campus using the simple random sampling technique. The Faculties included Agriculture, Arts, Business and Social Sciences, Education, Engineering, Information and Computer Science, Law and Science. A twenty-three items Self Developed Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents of the above mentioned faculties using 5-Point Likert Scale. In all, 252 copies of questionnaires were found usable out of the 280 administered to respondents. Frequency, simple percentage and Chi-square were used to analyse the responses.

## 3 Results

Most (62.7%) of the respondents were male while 62.15% fell within the age range of 21-25 years. Only 6 of the respondents were above 31 years of age. Majority (81%) of the respondents were vicarious participants, who enjoy watching football rather than participation.

**Table 1: Health and Fitness Lifestyle**

ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	U (%)	$\chi^2$
Awareness of Benefits of Healthy Physical activity Lifestyle.	498 (22.52)	1491 (67.44)	148 (6.7)	36 (1.62)	38 (1.72)	134.65*
Academic Stress and Fitness Activity Lifestyle.	508 (40.32)	431 (34.2)	176 (13.97)	102 (8.1)	43 (3.4)	71.49
Fitness Life style and Productivity Lifestyle Physical	558 (44.3)	479 (38.0)	172 (13.7)	24 (1.9)	27 (2.1)	211.37*
Fitness Activity and exercise Habits	397 (27.3)	386 (26.6)	345 (23.8)	253 (17.42)	71 (4.89)	52.77
Need for standard Health and Fitness centre	173 (30.9)	54 (42.1)	19 (17.1)	0 (0.0)	6 (9.9)	275.65

\*Significance- 0.05

### **3.1 Research question 1**

Majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that healthy fitness lifestyle is beneficial while all of the respondents indicated that engagement in regular fitness activities constitutes healthy lifestyle (100%). Most of the respondents also agreed and strongly agreed that physical activity and exercise not only prolongs life (80.9%), promotes mental health (97.7%), reduces the rate of degeneration of the body systems (75.4%) but also could reduce stress (58.3%). Therefore, students are aware of the benefits inherent in Physical activity and exercise lifestyle.

### **3.2 Research Question 2**

Majority (75.4%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that academic work is a major stressor for students while 85.3 % agreed that stress affects academic performance. Majority of the respondents agreed that when stress reduces academic performance increases (80.2%) while 58.7% and 73.1% of the respondents indicated that physical activity and exercise lifestyle can reduce academic stress and exposure of students to factors of fitness lifestyle can improve academic performance respectively. From the above, it is supported that healthy physical activity lifestyle have positive effects on academic stress.

### **3.3 Research Question 3**

Majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that fitness lifestyle promotes productivity( 82.9%), reduces medical costs (75 %), that state of mind affects productivity (90.1%), students quality after graduation determines lifetime productivity (85%) while students' exposure to social activities can lead to excellent performance (73.1%). The above indicates that fitness lifestyle of University students will promote excellent performance in their career.

### **3.4 Research Question 4**

Most (56% and 73%) of the respondents engaged in moderate exercise such as brisk walking, jogging, or swimming for 20-30 minutes, 3-5 times a week and walk for at least 30 minutes every day while 36.9% and 37% did not respectively. Only 59.1% of the respondents spent some of their leisure time participating in activities like gardening, tennis, ball games or fitness exercise. However, most of them indicated that their academic work keep them too busy for any physical activity or exercise (56.4 %), too tired after lectures to participate in any extracurricular activity (55.9%) while only 25% agreed that Physical activity/exercise is a waste of time.

### **3.5 Research Question 5**

Majority (90.1%) of the respondents agreed that there is a need for standard health and fitness centre, while only .90% respondents disagreed.

## **4 Discussion**

This study discovered that all the University students are aware of the benefits of physical activity fitness lifestyle. Regular physical activity enhances health and reduces chronic disorders and negative influence on lifestyle (Adegun, 2005). The benefits of physical activity include helping to build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, control body weight, reduce body fat, reduce feeling of depression and anxiety and promote psychological wellbeing. However most people are not inclined to participation in exercises (Adegun and Konwea, 2009). Okunneye (1996, 2002, 2006) supported that level of awareness of benefits of exercise to individuals' health is not completely lacking and that it is high especially among elites, yet they do not get involved. The problem therefore is not really awareness but participation.

Most of the University students agreed that academic work is embedded in stress and that physical fitness active lifestyle will reduce stress and improve academic performance. Hammed, Jimoh and Adesina (2006)'s study corroborated that stress is a cosmopolitan malady of every contemporary person, in the present generation and no one is free from it. They went on to say that stress from observation, affects effectiveness and even precipitate health problems. Smith and Ideho (1980) as reported by Hammed, Jimoh and Adesina (2006), pointed out that stress is as a result of an individuals' inability to cope with internal and external demands which he or she is faced with and these abounds in the university community. Since no student is spared from the impingement of stress, there is need for exposing students to physical fitness lifestyle programme not only to reduce stress but promote better learning environment.

It is supported by the University students that healthy lifestyle will promote productivity in all areas of the endeavour. Physical activity was enjoyed throughout everyday prehistoric life as an integral component of religious, social and cultural expression (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). Adegun and Konwea, (2009) commented that historically, majority of the populace in Nigeria were farmers, moving from home to farmlands near and far. People were used to hard work, intense and strenuous exertion because life depended on rigorous physical activity both in occupation and recreation. But the advent of western education that resulted to white collar jobs and pleasure seeking life had drastically reduced exposure to physical activity. They added

that the public servants are the set of people affected by the industrial revolution and urbanization which resulted to sedentarism and associated problems. This is now biting deeply into the academia itself.

The study discovered that the University students though, involve in physical activities but not in exercise and fitness programmes. Many of them are vicarious participants who are at the risks of hypokinetic diseases. Hockey (1996) found that the sedentary way of life has a negative effect on the human body and has been associated with hypokinetic diseases like hypertension, obesity, diabetes, low back pain, osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease. These disorders are highly associated with inactivity among people of all ages. Therefore for quality products, Universities need to show special concern for the health and fitness of their students.

Okunneye (2006) pointed out that once individuals secure job, they form Living pattern that is exclusive of exercise regimen and once exercise habits is not formed early enough, the practice becomes difficult at adult age, hence the need for mobilisation of University students towards healthy fitness pattern of life.

The University students concluded that there is need for a standard health and fitness Centre. When Facilities and equipment with the right atmosphere are on ground, students would be motivated to divert their pent- up emotions and aggression towards a rewarding course of a lifetime quality performance. Adogbeji and Oghenetega (2006) supported that students in tertiary institution can be motivated by peer group, facilities, and equipment, personnel, lecture schedule and so on. Griffith (2001) added that the key factor that influences participation is accessibility and mobility. When motivating provisions are made at students' reach for recreation, students will be refined in such a way that they will socialise positively and their health will be improved upon through organised fitness activities.

## **5 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that university communities should have special concern for their students, by imbibing health and Fitness culture into their programmes in order to empower their students for lifetime productivity. Adequate facilities and equipment should be provided for accessibility and mobility. Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. All Universities should develop a workable fitness programme for all categories of their students.

2. There should be forum such as symposium, seminars, workshops in the University where students would be properly educated on the beneficial effects of physical activity and fitness lifestyle.
3. Sports, Games and Aerobic Dance associations and Clubs should be inaugurated and each university student be made to register per session in any area of interest.
4. Fitness and Recreation Centres should be located in strategic areas on the campus to motivate University students towards participation.

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