

Full Length Research Paper

A study of the benefits and roles of sports in secondary education from the perspectives of teachers and students

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Sports are important in educational institutions as it supports academic objectives. However, it has been viewed in two different perspectives in schools as far as their contribution to academic performance is concerned. Some consider sports to have positive effect on student-athletes' academic performance while others views it as a hindrance to academic success and a waste of students' precious time. The purpose of this study was to document the benefits of sports in secondary schools and the role of sports in secondary education from the perspectives of teachers and students. Stratified random sampling method was used to select 24 secondary schools, 500 students and 32 games-teachers for the study. The study revealed that participation in sports is generally beneficial to students in secondary schools like making them physically fit and healthy. The study further revealed that sport supports educational objectives in the schools by improving the level of discipline, helping in character development, improving students' rationality and objectivity in thought and is also responsible for high retention rate in schools, all of which boost academic performance. It is recommended that the government embark on a range of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs to ensure that students participate in sports both at school and at home. Secondly, all students should be encouraged to take pride in achievement and reach full potential, both as students and as athletes. Finally, Schools should diversify sports activities to ensure that all students' needs in sports are catered for.

Key words: Sports, education, games, secondary schools, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of sports to the educational process in educational institutions cannot be overstated. Many researchers like Updyke and Johnson (1970), Matano (1992), McInally (2003) and Newman (2005) among others have showed that participation in sports and other sport related activities have a positive correlation with academic performance among students.

A number of benefits can be reaped from participation in sports. Seaton *et al* (1965), Durojaie (1976), and John and Campbell (2001) note that participation in sports, which enhances physical fitness, contributes to good health.

Individuals who actively participate in sports exhibit increased vigor and alertness than those who do not (Ekperigin and Uti, 1982; Weinberg and Gould, 1995). Weinberg and Gould's (1995) study revealed that

Olympic medallists, unlike non-medallists, internalize their mental strategies to the extent that they react automatically to adversity. Ekperigin and Uti (1982) and McInally (2003) concur that sports promote greater strength, flexibility and endurance as well as coordination and confidence.

According to Ekperigin and Uti (1982) physical activity leads to good body physique or posture, that is, a balanced development of the whole body, the strength and fitness of all muscles. Sports being a physical activity help students to cooperate and work with others under the same rules and regulations towards a common goal. While commenting on re-introduction of sports in Afghanistan, Arnoldy (2005) observes that sports can be used as a vehicle for creating a safe space, and an entrance into the public sphere.

In emphasizing the role of sports, Seaton *et al* (1965) and Helms and Turner (1992) indicate that muscular effort is seen as one of the best antidotes for emotional stress. Exercise is associated with reduced state of anxiety, depression, reduced stress indices and beneficial

emotional effects across all ages and both sexes (Hinzen, 1994). Sigmund Freud believe that play serves to resolve, channel or rid the child of inner conflicts and anxieties (Mohan, 1992). Rhodes and Tracy (1974) state that play provide acceptable channels for cathartic release as well as serving as a means of both externalizing the child's conflicts and communicating his feelings about them to others. Erik Erickson, a psychologist, notes that play is one of the major functions of the ego and its development, therefore through play the child is able to advance to new developmental stages and to deal with life experiences, which the child attempts to repeat to master or to negate. In play the child makes up for frustrations and defeats in the real world (Faw and Belkin, 1980). Sports are also meant for enjoyment or for fun. Sigmund Freud believed that children are motivated by a pleasure principle, that is, they tend to seek pleasurable rather than painful experiences (Mohan, 1992). In the Kenya primary schools education syllabus it is spelt out that all teachers should be cognizant of the golden rule of sports, that of satisfaction from participation (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, an educationist, believe that the aim of physical process of education is essentially moral – to develop perseverance, courage and self-control while Quintillian, the celebrated Greek orator and rhetorician of the first century, notes that play reveals children's bent and moral character (Rusk and Scotland, 1979). Clarke (1977) contended that sports should gradually lead to a sense of order and self-control. In Kenya, sports and recreation activities are seen as good ways of spending leisure time in a socially acceptable way and as a method of reducing time spent in imbibing intoxicants or engaging in crime and other anti-social activities (Republic of Kenya, 1998).

Thus, play improves discipline among students by making them conscious of the meaning and value of rules, order and structure (Helms and Turner, 1976; Republic of Kenya, 1989). Student-athletes are less likely than non-athletes to have discipline problems within the school (Newman, 2005). According to Weinberg and Gould (1995) athletes have better personality than non-athletes. In their research, they found out that those who play team sports as compared to non-athletes exhibit less abstract reasoning, more extroversion, more dependency and less ego strength while those who play individual sports as compared to non-athletes display higher levels of objectivity, more dependency, less anxiety and less abstract reasoning. Still, other researchers have noted that athletes are more independent, more objective, and less anxious than non-athletes Cox (1998).

Play acts as pre – exercise for skills to be used later in life. According to Pre-Exercise Theory of Play, play serves to develop the mind and body for later life (Helms and Turner, 1992).

Hus'en and Postlethwaite (1994) observe that through play children practice language thereby developing it.

This is in consonance with Krogh (1994) assertion that play is the background from which good verbal development comes and which is associated with the richness of the environment. Loefflet et al (2008) observes that girls who engaged in ice hockey were most likely to be retained in the education system thus avoid drop out. He also noted that students who participated in high-level ice hockey performance got financial aid in form of scholarships at the higher secondary and post-secondary levels. Arnold (1968) posits that sports promote good health and that there is a positive relationship between average health, adjustment and exceptional academic achievement on one hand and on the other hand a relationship between low organic fitness and low scholastic achievement even when potential ability was above average.

In the Kenyan curriculum, sports are included formally through a subject called Physical Education and allocated one period of forty minutes in the lower secondary section and two periods in the upper secondary section. Less formally, every school is expected to have a games department and a games teacher. Various stakeholders in schools use two different ways of looking at sports. The first position emphasizes that schools exist primarily for the pursuit of academic excellence and should focus on the transmission of formal education. For this reason, though sports are fun, they are not an important aspect of education. The other perspective suggests that experience gained through sports in terms of personal development is a vital part of the educational process. Therefore, the former believe that students' participation in sports interfere with academic programmes in schools while the latter maintain that it is important as part of school curriculum. In many parts of Africa, many parents feel that without sports formal education can still succeed hence it is not uncommon for parents to object to their children participation in sports saying that they sent their children to school to study and not to play.

A study done in Maryland, USA at Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts showed that students who participated in sports performed better in academic work than their non-athlete counterparts. This was attributed to high level of discipline, hard work ethic and good health among student-athletes. The study also revealed that the center was well equipped with sports facilities that increased access to sports activities, a factor that is seriously lacking in many secondary schools in Kenya.

In spite of the role of sports as evidenced in the literature, in Rachuonyo, a District in Kenya, it has not been taken seriously as evidenced in the South Nyanza District Development Plan (DDP) of 1989 – 1993 and Rachuonyo DDP of 2002 – 2008 in which establishment of a number of sports facilities was proposed but to date none has been constructed. At school level, most head-teachers are reluctant to offer adequate support to students in sports while many teachers are simply unwilling to encourage students' participation due to

Table 1. General Benefits of Sports to Students

Benefit of Sports	Frequency	Percentage
Improving physical fitness	206	81.74
Enjoyment of participation	104	41.27
Improving agility/activity	22	8.73
For good health	184	73.01
Acquiring certificates for future use	164	65.08
Socialization with others	102	40.48
Release of tensions that develop during school day	54	21.43
Self confidence outside sport situations	28	11.11
Good use of leisure time	56	22.22
Development of talents	48	19.05
Independent thinking	32	12.70
Keeping away from immoral activities	50	19.84
Appreciation of one's limitations and potentials	39	15.58
Preparation for future life	38	15.08
For prestige	78	30.95
Developing positive attitude towards authority	22	8.73
Developing a sense of responsibility	18	7.14

Source: Field Data

negative attitude. Furthermore, though the Kenya government made Physical Education (PE) compulsory and examinable at school level in the year 2002, there is virtually no inspection on implementation of this important curriculum, which compounds the problem. Before the review of the syllabus in the year 2002, PE was optional hence very little emphasis was put on it in schools. As previous studies have showed the benefits of sports in academic achievement, it is quite important to undertake this study reveal the role of sports in education especially at the secondary School level.

The purpose of the study was to document the benefits of sports generally to students in secondary schools and the role of sports in secondary education from the perspectives of teachers and students. The specific objectives of the study were:

- 1) To find out the general benefits of sports to students in secondary schools.
- 2) To find out the role of sports in secondary school education.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design and was conducted in Rachuonyo district, Kenya. Rachuonyo district was selected because the study intended to cover an area with a large number of secondary schools with a mix of students with varied ethnic backgrounds. The total number of secondary schools in Rachuonyo district was 71.

Purposive sampling method was used to come up with 24 sample schools since the schools in Rachuonyo District are of different types. This comprised 33.08 percent

percent of the total population. Five boys', five girls' and fourteen co-educational schools formed the sample of the study. Among these schools seven were boarding, nine day and eight both boarding and day schools; twenty-one public and three private schools; eleven provincial and thirteen were district schools. Stratified random sampling method was used to select 24 secondary schools, 500 students and 32 games-teachers for the study. The study was limited to football, volleyball and track events in athletics, which were selected purposefully. Student-athletes' questionnaire, games-teachers' interview schedule and verification table for sports facilities were used to collect data. Secondary data was collected from sports and academic documents in schools and District Sports Office. Questions regarding student participation, frequency of attending tournaments and the parents' attitudes towards students' active participation were asked.

RESULTS

General Benefits of Sports to Students in Secondary Schools

The first objective of the study was to find out the general benefits of sports to students in secondary schools. In the study, student-athletes were asked to give the benefits that accrue from their participation in sports. The responses, frequencies and percentages were as shown in Table 1.

From Table 1 above, 81.74% of the student-athletes mentioned improvement of physical fitness as a benefit that result from participation in sports. The student athletes

stated that due to participation in sports they believe that they have a higher capacity to do both physical and non-physical activities, than their non-athlete counterparts.

The study also revealed that student-athletes are generally healthier. Table 1 shows that 73.01% of the student-athletes who completed the questionnaires mentioned good health as a benefit that come from participation in active sports. Games teachers also noted that non-athletes visited the hospital more frequently than the student-athletes. Majority of the students particularly noted that they feel healthier during sports seasons as compared to off seasons when schools are not very serious with sports.

The student-athletes who completed the questionnaires noted that participation in sports help them to develop their sports talents.

Nineteen percent of the student-athletes mentioned that the more they participated in sports the better they performed in the sports activities. They noted that with more rigorous exercises and more devoted coaches they were able to do better in inter-school competitions, a sign of improvement of their personal skills in the sports. They, therefore, recommended that more time should be devoted to sports to enable them develop their talents fully. Others are agility, speed and reaction time all of which result from sport participation. From Table 1, 8.73% of the students specifically mentioned agility as a benefit of sports. It was also revealed that participation in sports improves students' prestige and fame.

Thirty one percent of the students, 81% of them being male student-athletes, and 53.13% of games-teachers mentioned this as a benefit of participation in sports. The study showed that mainly male student-athletes value prestige as a consequence of participation in sports, which is manifested in the level to which they are valued by their colleagues as regards their strength, body physique, and achievements in sports. Cox (1998) posits that the positive relationship of strength to 'prestige traits'...may be regarded as evidence of the role of physical prowess in the adolescent value system. About half of the student-athletes suggested that one motive of participation in sports is simply enjoyment of participation or, put in another way, for fun.

The study revealed that students who actively participate in sports tend to be more forceful and assertive in thought as was observed by 28.13% of the games-teachers interviewed. Arnold (1968) refers to the former as somatonia, which is a temperamental correlate of those who are strong and physically able, which is marked by a liking for physical adventure, exercise, a tendency towards aggressiveness, directness, assertiveness and action. The latter, which he calls cerebrotonia, are marked by a predominance of restraint, inhibition and desire for concealment and such individuals, he noted, are often over reactive, apprehensive

and uncertain of themselves in social situations.

From the survey, 15% of the student-athletes mentioned that sports provide a practice field for future life, which is life after school. For example, learning to work as a team teaches students social skills that will help them grow as people not just as sportsmen. Some students mentioned that they hope to take up sports as a career in future and possibly earn a living from the sports.

From Table 1, 19.84% of the students maintained that participation in sports keeps them away from idleness, which results into immoral activities. Put in another way, some of the students noted that sports participation helps them make good use of leisure time. The games-teachers interviewed mentioned that most of those students who do not participate in sports have a lot of free time which they spend idling leading to temptations of engaging in immoral activities like drug taking and illicit sex among others.

Also 65% of student-athletes concurred that they are motivated to participate in sports because they acquire certificates, which may help them after school like gaining admission to higher institutions of learning or in securing employment. The students noted that they do strive to excel in sports competitions in order for their talents to be recognized and certificates awarded which may be of benefit in future.

Sports, especially team sports, provide a great opportunity for students to socialize hence it is an excellent forum where togetherness is fostered. Forty and a half percent of the student-athletes mentioned socialization with others as a benefit of sports. The students and games-teachers alike noted that during sports organized internally or inter-schools sports students interact with those from other environments, which is important in educational process. Sports enhance social competence in that, as students participate, they develop ability to get along with and be accepted by their colleagues, teachers and others they interact with. Through sports they are able to gauge their social competence through the responses they receive from other people through either approval or disapproval of their behaviour. Sports have socio-cultural functions and are therefore important during various cultural celebrations. Examples of such sports are wrestling, running contests, cycling, tug of war and football. This is concurrent with Rowan and Littlefield (2008) idea that sports is not separate from society, but part of the society. They maintained that sport is increasingly coming to take the characteristic of a religion in which it functions as a context where the members of a local community or country celebrate or worship a representation of themselves. From Table 1, it can be deduced that most students participate in sports for the sake of physical fitness, which in turn improve their health status. Majority

Table 2. Role of sports in education

Role of sport in education	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage
Developing hard work ethic	201	80.40
Regular attendance of school	175	70.00
Creating self esteem and self confidence	171	68.40
Developing communication skills	162	64.80
Refreshing the mind	150	60.00
Help students learn their potentials and weaknesses	124	49.60
High retention rate in school	105	42.00
Developing good time management	100	40.00
Transmission of values, norms and knowledge of society	89	35.60
Eradication of frustrations, fear, confusion and insecurity	83	33.20
Developing longer concentration span	81	32.40

Source: Field Data

of them are also motivated by the certificates they acquire when they excel in sports since the certificates become very important after school in that they are able to secure jobs or places in colleges using them. Many students also tend to take part in sports so as to have an opportunity to go for outings and interact with students from other schools.

Role of Sports in Secondary School Education

The second objective of the study was to investigate the role of sports in secondary school education. In the study, student-athletes were asked to identify the role that sport play in secondary school education. The responses, frequencies and percentages were as shown in Table 2.

The study revealed that sports play a number of roles in the educational process in secondary schools. According to 68.75% of the games-teachers interviewed sports supports academic objectives and are therefore valuable due to their ability to create self-esteem and self-confidence in the students, factors that enable them to improve in their academic performance. Confidence, they noted, is important in academics in that it facilitates concentration such that the student's mind is free to focus on the subject at hand. Confidence also enable students to set challenging goals and to pursue them actively. A games-teacher noted that most of the student-athletes are confident thus do not need constant reinforcement or support in the classroom to perform well, which is in line with Weinberg and Gould (1999) idea that confidence increases effort thus how much effort one expends and how long she will persist in pursuit of that goal depends largely on confidence.

The study also found out that through sports students develop ability to use the official languages used in the schools, that is English and Kiswahili, as a medium of

communication since they practice using the languages during sports. This was mentioned by 64.80% of the student-athletes. The students transfer this attribute to the classroom thus they have higher understanding of what is being taught as well as high ability to respond to questions asked in class. Krogh (1994) supports this idea by noting that play is the background from which good verbal development comes and which is associated with the richness of the environment. This view is also held by Hus'en and Postlethwaite (1994) who noted that through play children practice language thereby developing it. A games-teacher, who is also a teacher of English, confirmed that students with more developed language tend to do well in academics since they have higher levels of comprehension.

Seventy percent of the games-teachers concurred that since student-athletes are generally healthier than their non-athlete counterparts, they tend to be more regular in school, which enables them to improve in their academic work. The study found out that student-athletes generally miss fewer academic lessons as compared to non-athletes, which makes them do better in class. In support of this fact, Arnold (1968) argues that there is a relationship between average health, adjustment and exceptional academic achievement on one hand and on the other hand a relationship between low organic fitness and low scholastic achievement even when potential ability was above average.

Data in Table 2 indicates that 49.60% of the student-athletes noted that they come to learn about their potentials and weaknesses, which is important in different settings including academics. In competitive sports students are aware that there is a possibility of losing thus games-teachers do train students to win graciously and to accept defeat without much complaint. This attribute is carried over to the classroom situations, which is a healthy way of avoiding frustrations caused by unsati-

satisfactory academic performance. Frustrations caused by academic work cause poor academic performance since it makes students to lack concentration and focus thus participation in sports is important in revealing to students their potentials and weaknesses which reduces frustrations.

The study revealed that sports serve as a mechanism for the transmission of values, norms and knowledge of the society, which leads to social harmony. Through interaction with students from different ethnic backgrounds during sports, students learn to appreciate other people's cultures hence leading to social harmony in the society. This consequently leads to national integration, an important goal of education in Kenya and many other countries. Twenty four percent of the student-athletes observed that after engaging in the rigorous academic work, they take part in sports so as to refresh their minds in readiness for more academic work. Sport is therefore regarded as the best antidote to a fatigued mind caused by excess academic work. Lopiano (2005) has the following advice for students:

Study in the morning as the mind is fresh.
After you return home from school, play for about one to two hours as the mind is tired.
Then you can study again. So friends, always remember the proverb, "All study and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (p.1).

Fifty three percent of the games-teachers also observed that sports provide a respite from the rigorous academic work. The study concluded that participation in sports enables students to rid off stressful situations derived from the rigorous academic work, which is in line with Schwartz (1990) view that cardiovascular training potentially reduces cognitive stress. About thirteen percent of the games-teachers observed that through participation in active sports student-athletes develop skills like critical thinking, problem solving and creativity, which are very essential in the educational process.

Results of the study also shows that when students participate in sports, they are able to release such feelings as frustration, fear, confusion and insecurity which they either acquire in school or they come with from home which are great deterrents to academic success of students. It was also noted that students who participate in sports develop more emotionally than those who do not.

Fifty nine percent of the games-teachers mentioned higher and longer concentration span during class work as a benefit that accrues from participation in sports. They noted that majority of student-athletes are able to concentrate in class for longer periods of time since they have higher resistance to fatigue. Furthermore, they are able to focus on the most relevant cues in their environment and are free from distractions, which enable

them to be more attentive in class and improve in their academics.

The study also found out that those students who actively participate in sports generally have better personality traits that are related to academics like high level of objectivity and reasoning ability. This attribute was mentioned by 60.80% of the student-athletes who completed the questionnaires. These two when combined with confidence and being more outgoing, a teacher noted, enables the students to acquire a lot of knowledge since they become more inquisitive. In this study it was also revealed that taking captainship in team games inculcates in the student-athletes leadership qualities, an objective of education in Kenya. Forty six point nine percent of the games-teachers noted that team games captains develop leadership qualities thus they are always selected to be school prefects. These students also end up taking leadership positions in various spheres of life after school since they are aggressive, outgoing and take initiative in various situations.

Sport was also found to play a crucial role in development of hard work ethic among students, which is potentially transferred for use in many other non-sporting settings like in academic work. Seventy eight percent of the games-teachers and 80.40% of the student-athletes acknowledged that those who actively participate in sports work hard in different settings and through this they as well strive to get good grades in academics. Through sports students also develop good time management, which is important in all educational settings. It was also found out that participation in demanding physical activity like in sports foster desirable traits of character. Thirty four percent of the games-teachers noted that those who participate in sports are generally of good conduct, governed by moral principle. In sports such phrases as 'fair play' and 'sportsmanship' instills moral practices to the students not only in sports but also in the student's life in general. This view has been supported by Morgan (1974) who noted that the common phrase 'it's all part of the game' represents a light-heartedness in the face of mischance which, when taken together with a real interest in the game and a real desire to win, is an aid to sanity, realism and civilized behaviour while 'fair play' embodies an important moral concept which transcends the rules of the game.

The study revealed that student-athletes are less likely than non-athletes to have discipline problems within the school, an attribute that enables them to perform well academically. Games-teachers were asked to rate on a Likert-scale ranging from 1= Strongly disagree to 4= Strongly agree their understanding of the level of discipline of their student-athletes. The responses over all games-teachers were as indicated in Table 3.

The mean was 3.03, which is high while the standard deviation (SD) was 0.47 as shown in Table 3. Discipline has been found to be an important prerequisite to students

Table 3. Games-teachers' response on student-athletes' disciplines level

	SD	Response		
		D	A	SA
Score	1	2	3	4
Frequency	0	3	25	4
Mean		3.0313		
Standard Deviation		0.4741		

Source: Field Data

students' academic success and therefore sports should be emphasized in schools to enable students acquire this attribute.

Through games-teacher's pieces of advice student-athletes tend to have a higher retention rate in school compared to non-athletes. Seventy one point eight percent of the games-teachers observed that they are responsible for high retention rate of student-athletes because they do communicate to the students the need to stay in school. The games-teachers emphasized that as opposed to most of the other teachers, they are more popular with students, which is manifested in the fact that most students approach them in times of problems for assistance. On the other hand, 42% of the student-athletes noted that they find life in school enjoyable due to sports, which make them have positive attitude towards school. When games-teachers were asked to express their opinion regarding practices that might help improve academic performance of the student-athletes, they responded in a variety of ways. Forty seven percent of the games-teachers observed that they asked their student-athletes about their classes and how they were fairing on with the academic work while 37.50% asked student athletes what could be done to improve their grades. Furthermore, 7 games-teachers (21.90%) made occasional phone calls home concerning the student-athletes' academics.

Games-teachers were also asked to rate their influence on development of values and behaviours of their student-athletes. A Likert-scale with response options including 'to a great degree' (4), 'to some degree' (3), 'not much' (2) and 'not at all' (1) was used. Results revealed that games-teachers perceived that they have considerable influence over the behaviours of their athletes ($M=3.1563$, $SD=0.5741$). Twenty five point six percent of the student-athletes noted that their games-teachers boost their academic performance due to their ability to serve as role models. The study revealed that student-athletes do imitate their games-teachers in the belief that the latter's actions are examples of acceptable and proper conduct and ethics as well as trying to impress the games-teacher in the subjects taught by the games-teacher. Student-athletes also strive to be at least as successful as their games - teachers. Forty eight percent

percent of the students also mentioned that through their games-teachers they are able to get books and other reading materials as well as assistance on how to use these materials. This is in consonance with Schwartz (1990) idea that coaches have a crucial role including providing student-athletes with reading materials, communicating to them the need to stay in school, reinforcing the significance of always pursuing excellence and helping student-athletes to rely on their inner strength.

This study also found out that while in the field, games-teachers take the role of counselors to their students by assisting them remove emotional problems accumulated in and outside play grounds which may negatively affect their academic well-being. The games-teachers in the process share with such students their anxieties which is both relieving and reassuring which is in line with Cox's assertion that coaches and students who participate in sports form more compatible dyads (pairs) than those between other teachers and the rest of the students (Cox,1998). From the students' questionnaire students were asked if they thought their games-teachers cared about their academic success. Out of the 250 student-athletes who completed the questionnaires, the mean answer for this question was 3.12 on a 4-point scale. This was evidence that those students who participate in sports are more likely than those who do not to perform well in academic work. However, from the study it does not mean that all students who participate in sports are better than the non-athletes in academic work but that participation boosts academic performance.

DISCUSSION

The study found out that there are many benefits that accrue from participation in sports. From the responses, it was concluded that physical fitness is the greatest benefit of sports to students with 81.74% of the students mentioning it. It was also revealed that through sports students develop ability to work for long periods, their bodies become flexible as well as being stronger than those who do not participate in sports. The students also noted that through sports they become healthier since

their body organs operate more effectively. Students, particularly boys noted that through participation in sports they develop a feeling of pride, which is manifested in the way other people value them. Students also develop their sporting talents as they participate in sports, which is important for their future life since some of them hope to take up sports as a career.

Some students mentioned that they participate in sports simply for enjoyment or for fun. Emotional development, socialization and avoiding immoral situations were also cited as benefits of sports. Those who participate in sports were also found to be more responsible and have more positive attitude towards authority.

These views are supported by Updyke and Johnson (1970) who observed that there are four parameters of physical fitness that results from participation in sports. One, circulo-respiratory capacity, also called circulatory fitness, which allows one to persist in strenuous tasks for periods of some length. Secondly, the muscular endurance which involves the capacity to persist in localized muscular effort, thirdly, flexibility which means the functional capacity of the joints to move through a normal range of motion and lastly, muscular strength which is measured by the maximal amount of force that a muscle or muscle group can exert.

This is further in concurrence with Arnold's view (Arnold, 1968) that sustained vigorous exercise improves the functioning of the neuro-muscular, cardio-vascular, respiratory, digestive and excretory systems. The same views have been expressed by Lopiano (2005) who asserts that as little as four hours of exercise a week may reduce a teenage girls' risk of breast cancer by up to 60% while at the same time it is necessary in laying down bone mass which causes osteoporosis.

The second objective of the study was to find out the role of sports in secondary school education. The study revealed that sports play a crucial role in education including creating self-esteem and confidence, ability to develop language which make students understand and communicate ideas more effectively as well as being more regular in school due to good health. High retention rate in school was also cited as a benefit of sports thus fewer student-athletes drop out of school. One of the objectives of education in Kenya is transmission of cultural heritage and it was found out that sport serves as a mechanism for the transmission of values, norms and knowledge of the society thus leading to social harmony. Sports also refresh the minds of students after rigorous academic work to prepare them for further academic work. Sports also lead to high discipline, which is a prerequisite to academic success as well as enabling students to concentrate in academics for long periods thus improving their academic performance. It was also noted that student-athletes have better personality traits that are related to academics like objectivity and high reasoning ability. It was also revealed that students who

take captainship in team sports develop strong leadership qualities, which is an objective of education in Kenya. Student-athletes were also found to develop hard work ethic, which is potentially transferred to classroom situations thus enabling them to do well in academics. Games teachers play roles like communicating to students the need to stay in school hence student-athletes have higher retention rate, they influence development of good values and behaviors, act as role models, counselors and provide reading materials to student-athletes.

These sentiments are supported by Weinberg and Gould (1999) who state that confidence increases effort thus how much effort one expends and how long he would persist in pursuit of that call depends largely on confidence.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two major conclusions based on the findings of the study.

The first objective was to find out the general benefits of sports to students in secondary schools. The study concluded that participation in sports is generally beneficial to students in secondary schools like making them physically fit and healthy. The second objective was to find out the role of sports in secondary school education. The study concluded that sport supports educational objectives in the schools, for example, improving the level of discipline, helping in character development, improving students' rationality and objectivity in thought and is also responsible for high retention rate in schools, all of which boost academic performance.

Three key recommendations emanate from the study:

- i. The government should embark on provision of a range of developmentally appropriate community sports and recreation programs that are attractive to all people especially in the countryside to ensure that students participate in sports both at school and at home.
- ii. All students should be encouraged to take pride in achievement and reach full potential, both as students and as athletes.
- iii. Schools should diversify sports activities to ensure that all students' needs in sports are catered for.

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