



## THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES IN ENHANCING SCHOOL RETENTION AND REDUCING DROPOUT RATES IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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### **Abstract**

This review examines the crucial role of Physical Education (PE) activities in enhancing school retention and reducing dropout rates in Katsina State, Nigeria. The study highlights the alarming school dropout rates in Nigeria, particularly within Katsina State, and underscores the multifaceted benefits of PE beyond physical health. Economic, cultural, and institutional barriers contribute to low retention rates. This study examines the role of PE activities in fostering school retention, exploring their impact on student engagement, academic performance, and behavioural development. This study highlights challenges hindering effective PE implementation, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and cultural barriers. Additionally, strategic interventions such as policy recommendations, community involvement, and the integration of PE with other educational programs are discussed. The findings emphasise the need for improved PE policies, increased investment in PE resources, qualified instructors, inclusive programmes to create a more supportive learning environment, and greater stakeholder collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of PE activities in schools. This review concludes with recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to effectively promote PE activities as a strategic intervention in the Nigerian educational system. Strengthening PE programs can play a pivotal role in reducing dropout rates, fostering holistic student development, and improving overall educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** Physical Education Activities, School Retention, Dropout Rate, Student Engagement, Educational Policy.

### **Introduction**

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of social and economic development (UNESCO, 2021). School dropout imposes several predicaments, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, where factors such as poverty, cultural norms, and lack of engagement contribute to low school retention rates (UNICEF, 2020). Nigeria's education sector is currently facing significant challenges with regard to school retention and dropout rates. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2019), the overall dropout rate in Nigeria is about 11.9%. This alarming trend has severe consequences on the educational attainment and socio-economic development of the country. Katsina State is one of the states in Nigeria where educational challenges are pronounced; it is considered one of the states that has the highest dropout rates among the 36 states in Nigeria.

Physical education (PE) activities play crucial roles in the holistic development of students, particularly in enhancing their engagement and retention within the educational system. PE activities have the potential to significantly impact school retention and reduce dropout rates. Research indicates that active participation in physical education not only fosters physical health but also cultivates essential life skills such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience (CDC, 2010).

Studies have shown that students who engage regularly in physical activities tend to exhibit improved academic performance, higher self-esteem, and better social interactions (Bailey, 2005). These factors contribute to a positive school experience, which is pivotal in keeping students enrolled. In the context of Katsina State, where

cultural and socio-economic barriers often hinder educational continuity, the incorporation of physical education can serve as a motivational tool, encouraging students to remain in school (Owoeye & Yusuff, 2013).

PE activities have been recognised as an essential component of holistic education, contributing not only to physical well-being but also to cognitive, social, and emotional development (Bailey et al., 2019). Studies suggest that engaging students in structured PE programs can enhance their motivation to stay in school, improve academic performance, and foster a sense of belonging (Hardman & Marshall, 2020). Furthermore, PE activities provide opportunities for teamwork, discipline, and resilience, which are critical life skills that support long-term educational engagement (Sallis et al., 2016).

In the Nigerian context, the implementation of quality PE programs in schools has been inconsistent due to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and limited awareness of its benefits (Ajayi & Akinola, 2018). Despite these challenges, PE activities hold significant potential as a strategy to address the dropout crisis in Katsina State. By promoting active participation in sports and recreational activities, schools can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment that encourages students to remain in school.

This review aims to critically explore the existing literature on the role of PE activities in enhancing school retention and reducing dropout rates in Katsina State. The paper focused on identifying the most effective PE activities, strategies, and programmes that can be implemented to improve school retention and reduce dropout rates in the state. The study also highlighted the challenges faced by schools in implementing PE activities and provided recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders on how to effectively promote PE activities and integrate them as a strategic intervention in Nigeria's educational system.

### **Definition and Scope of Physical Education**

Physical Education (PE) is an educational discipline that focuses on the development of physical fitness, motor skills, and overall well-being through structured activities such as sports, exercises, and recreational games (Bailey et al., 2019). The scope of PE extends beyond physical fitness, encompassing mental, emotional, and social growth, which collectively contribute to a student's holistic development (Sallis et al., 2016). In the school setting, PE aims to instil healthy lifestyle habits, teamwork, discipline, and resilience, which are essential for long-term academic and personal success.

In Nigeria, PE is an integral part of the national education curriculum, with structured programs introduced at various levels of schooling. Despite its recognised importance, implementation challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained instructors, and limited policy support have hindered its full realisation (Ajayi & Akinola, 2018). Enhancing the scope and quality of PE programs can play a pivotal role in improving school retention rates and reducing dropout tendencies among students in Katsina State.

### **Historical Context of Physical Education in Nigerian Schools**

The introduction of Physical Education in Nigerian schools dates back to the colonial era, when British educational policies emphasised sports and structured physical activities as part of holistic student development (Hardman & Marshall, 2020). Early school curricula incorporated physical training, gymnastics, and organised games to promote discipline and fitness among students.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the government recognised PE as a critical aspect of national education policies. The National Policy on Education (NPE) outlined the integration of PE into school curricula, emphasising its role in fostering healthy living, social interaction, and cognitive development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed several reforms aimed at improving PE programs, but challenges such as inadequate funding, limited facilities, and a lack of professional PE teachers have continued to impede progress (Ajayi & Akinola, 2018).

In the context of Katsina State, traditional societal perceptions of education often prioritise academic subjects over extracurricular activities, leading to the marginalisation of PE programs. However, recent studies highlight the importance of PE in reducing school dropout rates by promoting engagement, discipline, and motivation among students (Sallis et al., 2016). Strengthening PE programs through policy reforms and increased

stakeholder involvement can significantly contribute to enhancing school retention and academic performance in the region.

### **Conceptual Framework**

**Physical Education Activities:** Physical Education Activities encompass structured exercises, sports, and movement-based programs designed to promote students' physical, mental, and social development. According to Bailey et al. (2019), PE activities enhance students' cognitive skills, self-discipline, and cooperation, all of which contribute to a conducive learning environment. Research suggests that students who actively participate in PE activities demonstrate improved school engagement and reduced dropout tendencies (Hardman & Marshall, 2020).

**School Retention:** School retention refers to the ability of students to stay enrolled in school until they complete a given level of education. UNESCO (2021) defines school retention as the capacity of an education system to maintain students' participation in learning programs. High retention rates are often linked to student engagement strategies, including extracurricular and physical education activities, which provide a sense of belonging and motivation to persist in school (Sallis et al., 2016).

**Dropout Rate:** Dropout rate is the proportion of students who leave school before completing a specific level of education. UNICEF (2020) states that dropout rates are influenced by socio-economic challenges, inadequate educational resources, and lack of extracurricular engagement. Studies indicate that structured PE activities can serve as a preventive measure against school dropouts by improving students' self-esteem, discipline, and overall school satisfaction (Ajayi & Akinola, 2018).

### **Role of Physical Education Activities in Enhancing School Retention**

#### **1. Physical Education and Student Engagement**

PE activities significantly enhance student engagement by providing opportunities for active participation and enjoyment. Engaging in physical activities helps students develop a sense of belonging and connection to their school community. According to Hardman and Marshall (2020) and Abdulbaqi et al. (2024), students who participate in sports and physical activities feel a greater sense of connection to their peers and school, which reduces absenteeism and dropout rates. Structured PE programs promote active participation, teamwork, and discipline, which enhance students' enthusiasm for learning and overall school involvement.

#### **2. Physical Education and Student Motivation**

Engaging in physical activities fosters intrinsic motivation among students. Research indicates that when students find enjoyment in PE, they are more likely to participate actively and develop a positive attitude towards physical activity. According to self-determination theory, fulfilling the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness through physical activities can enhance students' intrinsic motivation (Tendinha et al., 2021). This theory suggests that when students feel capable and connected to their peers, they are more motivated to engage in physical activities.

#### **3. Physical Education Activities and Academic Performance**

Research has shown that regular participation in PE activities improves cognitive function, concentration, and memory, all of which contribute to better academic performance (Bailey et al., 2019). Physical activities increase blood flow to the brain, reduce stress, and enhance problem-solving abilities, allowing students to perform better in their studies (Ajayi et al., 2020). Schools that integrate PE into their curriculum have reported improved academic achievement and reduced dropout rates (Sallis et al., 2016).

#### **4. Social and Psychological Benefits of Physical Education**

PE activities provide numerous social and psychological benefits that contribute to school retention. Participation in sports helps students build self-confidence, develop leadership skills, and manage stress effectively (Ajayi & Akinola, 2018). Additionally, engaging in physical activities provides an outlet for

emotional expression, reducing anxiety and depression, which are common factors contributing to school dropout.

### **5. Physical Education Activities and Reduction of Behavioural Issues**

Participation in structured physical activities helps students develop self-discipline and impulse control, which can lead to a reduction in behavioural issues. Engaging in sports can teach students how to manage their emotions and behaviours effectively (Tendinha et al., 2021). Physical activities serve as a natural outlet for stress and anxiety, contributing to a calmer classroom environment. When students engage in regular physical activity, they are less likely to exhibit disruptive behaviours.

PE activities significantly enhance school retention through increased student engagement, improved academic performance, and essential social and psychological benefits. By fostering a positive school environment where students feel connected and capable, PE programs contribute to a culture of persistence and success in education.

### **Challenges in Implementing PE Activities in Schools**

- 1. Lack of Infrastructure and Resources:** One of the significant barriers to implementing PE activities in schools is the inadequate availability of sports facilities, equipment, and trained personnel (Hardman & Marshall, 2020). Many schools in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas, lack proper playgrounds, gymnasiums, and instructional materials, making it difficult to conduct effective PE sessions.
- 2. Insufficient Funding and Policy Support:** Limited financial support from government agencies and school administrations has negatively impacted the quality and implementation of PE programs (Ajayi & Akinola, 2018). Many schools do not allocate sufficient budgetary resources for physical education, leading to poorly maintained facilities and a lack of qualified PE instructors.
- 3. Cultural and Societal Barriers:** In some regions, cultural norms and societal perceptions hinder the full participation of students, especially girls, in physical education activities (UNESCO, 2021). Traditional beliefs may discourage physical activity, viewing it as less important than academic subjects. Additionally, parental concerns regarding gender roles and safety may limit students' involvement in PE programs.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Physical Education to Reduce Dropout Rates**

#### **1. Policy Recommendations for Strengthening PE Activities**

To effectively reduce dropout rates, policymakers should prioritise strengthening PE activities within schools. This involves allocating adequate funding for PE resources, hiring qualified instructors, and ensuring that PE is a core component of the curriculum. Policies should mandate a minimum amount of PE class time per week, promoting a balanced approach that emphasises both physical activity and health education. Increased investment in facilities, curriculum integration, and the training of qualified PE teachers can significantly improve student participation and retention (Sallis et al., 2016).

#### **2. Community and Stakeholder Involvement**

Schools can collaborate with local organisations, sports clubs, and health agencies to create a more comprehensive PE experience. Community partnerships can provide additional resources, such as facilities, coaching expertise, and funding for equipment. Ajayi and Akinola (2018) stated that community engagement in school sports can create a more supportive environment for students and provide additional resources and mentorship opportunities.

#### **3. Integrating PE with Other Educational Interventions**

PE should be combined with academic and extracurricular programs to promote a holistic learning experience. Schools can integrate movement-based learning, life skills education, and health awareness programs to maximise the impact of PE on student retention (Bailey et al., 2019). By addressing both physical and academic needs, schools can foster an environment that promotes retention and reduces dropout rates.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

**Summary of Key Findings:** This study highlights the significant role of Physical Education activities in enhancing school retention and reducing dropout rates. It identifies key benefits such as improved student engagement, academic performance, and social well-being. Additionally, it outlines major challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and cultural barriers.

**Implications for Policy and Practice:** To maximise the impact of PE on school retention, policymakers must integrate PE activities into national education strategies, allocate adequate resources, and ensure proper implementation. Schools should prioritise sports facilities, train PE instructors, and create inclusive programs that cater to all students.

**Conclusion:** Physical Education activities play a crucial role in reducing dropout rates by fostering an engaging, supportive, and interactive learning environment. Addressing the challenges related to PE implementation can significantly contribute to educational sustainability in Katsina State.

**Suggestions for Future Research:** Future studies should explore the long-term impact of PE programs on students' academic and career trajectories. Further research can also assess the effectiveness of specific PE interventions tailored to different socio-cultural contexts in Nigeria.

**Recommendations:** Schools should invest in sports infrastructure, enhance teacher training in PE, and incorporate PE as a core component of the curriculum. Collaboration between government agencies, educators, and communities is essential to ensure sustainable and effective PE programs that contribute to student retention.

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