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Motives behind students' academic achievement and participation in sports activities: A case study of adolescents in Benin Republic secondary schools

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Abstract

Francophone students from North Africa attach more importance to academic studies than their European counterparts who are more attracted to sports and arts. To our knowledge, the attitude of learners from black African countries has not been studied. The objective of this study was to assess how students perform in Benin secondary schools when they are involved in academic pursuits and or in school sports competitions (SSC). For this purpose, two questionnaires were administered: the first one has to do with the school academic work and was addressed to 271 students who do not participate in SSC (non-sports students); the second one related to SSC was administered to 138 students enrolled in school athletic federations (student-athletes). The 271 non-sports students appeared more persistent within academic work in which they are willing to repeat in case of failure, while the 138 student-athletes tended to withdraw from the SSC in case of difficulties (their rate of amotivation, 0.13 and 0.21 respectively are significantly different). This difference shows that the students have different types of motivation in academic work and sports activities. The school implements a curriculum which is designed according to the State policy regarding training and education. It prepares for degrees which offer employment opportunities. In these conditions, students give more importance to school programmes than to sport. Indeed, they think that sport merely helps them to improve their performance in the sports disciplines they through physical education (PE) and satisfy at the same time their need for entertainment.

Keywords: Motivation, students' behaviour, school, sport.

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Introduction

Motivation can be defined as reasons for the involvement of people in some activities. There are several types of motivation which vary from one person to another not only according to circumstances, but also in similar situations. Some studies have focused on characterising the different types of motivation (Vallerand, Blais, Briere & Pelletier, 1989). Other studies have also examined how men go about it for mental reinforcement, hoping to maintain their different motivations and make their commitment real (Blenzen, Delfosse, Pieron & Cloe, 2000). Whether you are in school, sports or business or in other social sectors, people often adopt different behaviours in similar contexts.

Their behaviour depends on several factors including motivation, beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes (Chalabaev & Sarrazin, 2009).

French students behave differently regarding academic disciplines and physical activities or sports, depending on whether they are European by origin or from the Maghreb (Fontayne, Sarrazin & Famose, 2001). Studies by French researchers have shown that individuals of North African origin are implicitly evaluated more negatively than those of European origin (Dambrun & Guimond, 2004). According to Kiefer and Sekaquaptewa (2007), people associate implicitly and more strongly "men" with "mathematics" and "women" less with "mathematics", although they explicitly consider that men as well as women are equally predisposed to this discipline. These perceptions are the outcome of social beliefs that value Europeans better than Africans and men than women (Dambrun & Guimond, 2004).

A study conducted by Americans in 171 athletes including 55 black, also found that black American athletes are more motivated to athletics than their Caucasian counterparts (Gano-Overway & Duda, 2001). These results are also similar to those obtained by Wang and Biddle (2001), who showed that environmental, economic and social differences influence motivation and thus people's perceptions. The motivations are among other factors, the result of a number of beliefs that lead to observable behaviours in practice. Therefore, the perceptions of athletes or students can depend on their levels of education and also their social and cultural realities (Gano-Overway & Duda, 2001). Concerning Benin people in particular, they refer to practices related to their beliefs and traditional cultures (prayers, charms and offerings) to make sure that they are motivated in various tasks they undertake (Apovo, 2005). The importance of the use of these practices may depend on the interest they show in activities in which they engage. As academic success and victories in school sports competitions have different importance depending on the context (Nahimana, 1997), a study on the motivations of students in academic works and in school sports competitions will help to better appreciate their perceptions in these two areas. Therefore, the conceptual framework of this study gives an overview on the different types of motivations.

Motivation is a psychological process likely to influence a person to the extent of determining his/her behaviour in a given context or an activity (Famose, 2001). It can drive people to act in a particular way at some point. Thus, it is identified by a great faith in one's beliefs, an intensification of the will to do something, in order to achieve a task that one has started. It can be triggered from inner factors and beliefs (intrinsic motivation) or on the contrary, by external factors (extrinsic motivation). In all, there are two types of motivation to which taxonomy added amotivation which is nothing else than a lack of motivation in an activity (Vallerand & Grouzet, 2001).

In terms of intrinsic motivation, the researchers say that an athlete or a student is intrinsically motivated, when his or her choice is made based on the sensations and pleasure he or she feels when practising sports or during academic learning. These feelings are expressed in terms of positive emotions he or she feels during

the practice of this discipline not aiming at a substantial gain, but only for the interest he or she shows in it. According to Allen (2003), Weiss and Smith (2002), young secondary school students are involved in sport in order to join a group, a team and make friends. Intrinsic motivation can also be expressed in terms of the need for competence development and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The younger the athletes, the more they are likely to express the need for knowledge and mastery. On the other hand, they tend to be inclined to competition when there are beyond 14 years old (Weiss & Smith, 2002). In addition, a study conducted jointly in secondary schools in North America and South Korea showed that North American students are intrinsically more motivated to practise athletics than their counterparts in South Korea. This study also indicated that younger students are those who are primarily oriented toward competence development purposes (Korea, Williams & Gills, 2003).

In all, there are three types of intrinsic motivation: intrinsic motivation to knowledge, intrinsic motivation to performance and intrinsic motivation to stimulation (Vallerand & O'Connor, 1989). Intrinsic motivation to knowledge refers to the desire that drives a person who engages in an activity with the intention of acquiring new knowledge; learn more about something he or she already knows (Vallerand et al., 1989). Intrinsic motivation to perform characterises someone who performs a task related to the positive values of his culture, without referring to the achievements of others (Biddle & Goudas, 1996). It can also be considered as a success defined by reference to a benchmark of social excellence, a feat, a duty or a mission to accomplish absolutely in order to demonstrate one's competence in a discipline or a given field (Markland, 1999; Robert & Walker, 2001).

Intrinsic motivation to stimulation qualifies a subject who performs a task because of its aesthetics and for the feelings of distraction it provides. A student who experiences a particular feeling for poetry, or an athlete who engages in aesthetic sports such as gymnastics or swimming, etc., may be said to have this kind of motivation (Vallerand & Grouzet, 2001). The choice of sports activities also depends on gender. Girls are more interested in aesthetic sports than boys (Chalabaev & Sarrazin, 2009; Marsh, 1998). As for extrinsic motivation, it refers to engaging in an activity with a goal not inherent in it, but in order to gain something pleasant, or to avoid something unpleasant once the activity is completed. It is triggered by the expectation of material rewards or the desire to please someone. According to Tanimomo, Wabi and Houngan (2009), the participation of girls in Benin football championship in the first and second division is justified by an extrinsic motivation. The consequence of this type of motivation is that the lack of financial support leads to the disappearance of female football teams from the sports scene in Benin.

There are four types of extrinsic motivation: extrinsic motivation to external regulation, introjected external motivation, identified extrinsic motivation and

extrinsic motivation for integrated regulation. The extrinsic motivation for integrated regulation is not usually adopted, because it fails to differentiate it from the other extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 1991). A subject motivated by external regulation does not have the sources of control over his actions. His feelings depend on the judgment from individuals around him and are expressed in the form of expected rewards or constraints imposed by these people. The situation of a student who is forced to follow a course of study to benefit from the experiences of his senior brothers or of an athlete, who is making great efforts during his last training or workout session in the hope of being selected for the next match or a coming sport event, may be cited as an example.

Biddle, Chatzisarantis and Hagger (2001) opined that such effect proves to be precarious in long run. Introjected extrinsic motivation consists, for a subject, in accepting to perform an activity so as to avoid an unpleasant situation. He finally internalizes this activity without necessarily attaining his self-determination. This is the case of some students or athletes who accept certain tasks, saying to themselves it is better for them to do so, rather than abstain from them, because of their well-known image. These subjects accept the situation to avoid a negative feeling. Identified extrinsic motivation expresses the choice of an activity by a subject with the aim of gaining a concrete profit later. He will end up being self-determined. In this context, the researcher can cite the example of a specialist in sports who does strength training to increase his physical abilities.

Finally, amotivation can be understood as a lack of motivation. An amotivated subject sees no relationship between what he does and the results he intends to get (Brunel, 1999). He is neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated. The third goalkeeper of a professional team can find himself in this situation. A priori, he has no chance of becoming a team member in the club, but like all the other players, he is compelled to a system of regular and sustained training. Amotivation is associated with lower psychological adjustment. Thus, subjects who are its victims are so likely to drop the tasks they perform.

Various reasons can justify the involvement of a person in a social activity. But these reasons differ from one activity to another and also from one person to another for the same activity. The objective of this study was to assess the reasons why the 271 students who do not take part in sports go to school and the motives of the membership of the 138 students-athletes in school athletic associations.

People's motivations vary according to cultural, environmental and contextual factors. Thus, with reference to the work of Korea, Williams and Gills (2003) and Fontayne, Sarrazin and Famose (2001), which showed that students' motivations depend on their social background, one can assume that Benin students are extrinsically motivated in academic achievement, while they are showing intrinsic motivation in school sports competitions.

Method

Having taken into account a larger number of subjects, the researcher used questionnaire in this study as a technique for data collection. To check the level of understanding of the themes of the questionnaire by the subjects, a preliminary survey was conducted before the actual study.

Preliminary survey

This exercise involved 132 students who do not participate in school sports competitions (non-sports students) and 93 students who get trained in school sports clubs which are likely to participate in school sports championships (student-athletes). These 225 students selected from four secondary schools were learners in lower forms (former (levels) one to four). This stage allowed us to pilot the first version of the first questionnaire dealing with academic achievement with 132 students who were not athletes and that of the second questionnaire on sporting events with 93 student athletes. This preliminary survey finally allowed us to ascertain reliability of the two questionnaires, which is evidenced by the values of Cronbach's alphas values which are between 0.53-0.82 (Cronbach's alpha Test).

Final survey

Following this initial investigation, only the learners of the third and fourth forms were selected to participate in the final survey, because they have shown maturity and a better understanding of the objectives of this study. The study could have involved students of the second cycle (fifth and sixth forms) to avoid this problem, but the fact is that not all secondary schools, especially rural communities' secondary schools have classes at these levels. This is why the lower levels were finally selected.

In all, 409 students aged 16.77 ± 1.99 years old, enrolled in seven public secondary schools in the Southern regions of Benin for at least three years, participated willingly in both surveys. There were 271 non-athlete students who responded to the first questionnaire which is related to success in academic achievement and 138 student athletes who responded to the second questionnaire which has to do with achievement in school sports competitions.

The first questionnaire (Q1) on academic achievement, was designed by the researcher and was based on the questionnaire developed by Vallerand, Blais, Brière and Pelletier (1989) focusing on motivation in education (EME). The second questionnaire (Q2) which refers to sport participation, was inspired by the questionnaire of Brière, Vallerand, Blais and Pelletier (1995) focusing on the construct and validation of sport motivation scale (EMS). The respondents to the first or second questionnaires were all learners of third and fourth forms. They

were taught the same curriculum and take the same examinations. But, the 138 students who completed questionnaire 2 were enrolled in the sports clubs of their school and participate in sports training sessions in preparation for school sports championships in which they take part within the context of secondary school sports competitions.

The items on both questionnaires were designed taking into account the concerns expressed by the students interviewed during the preliminary survey. The questionnaires include the reasons why non-athletes go to school, are involved in studies and take part in assignments and examinations in the context of academic pursuit; and the motives for athletes' involvement in sports training sessions and competitions in schools.

Statistical analysis

The responses of the 409 students surveyed were plotted on a type of Likert scale with five rankings ranging from disagreement total not agreed at all, full agreement totally agreed. These ratings were assigned the values 0; 0.25; 0.50; 0.75 and 1 respectively.

The mean scores of the motives were calculated for non-sports students and for sports students as well. This helped to compare the different motives for the 271 non-sports students and the 138 student athletes to determine their motivations for academic achievement and competitions in sports activities.

In addition, the correlation coefficients of Bravais-Pearson were calculated between the sub-themes of intrinsic motivation (IM) and those of extrinsic motivation (EM) among sport students and non-sports students. This approach highlighted the links between different forms of motivation among non-athletes students in academic areas and with students in school sports competitions.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the average score of the EM of non-sports students is significantly higher than that of the IM ones (0.73 against 0.64, $p < 0.05$). On the contrary, with sport students, the average score of the EM is rather significantly lower than that of the IM (0.72 against 0.78, $p < 0.05$). As for the score of amotivation, it is significantly lower with non-sports students than with sports students (0.13 for the non-sports students against 0.21 for the sports students, $p < 0.05$). With the non-sports students, it is the sub-theme EM of identification which shows the highest score (0.83, $p < 0.05$), while with sport students the sub-theme IM of knowledge has the highest score (0.85, $p < 0.05$) (Table 1).

Table 1: Mean scores of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation with the 271 non-athlete students and 138 sports students

Sub-Themes	IM know	IM Achiev	IM Stim	EM Intro	EM Ext/Reg	EM Ident	Amot	Moy IM	Moy EM	p
<i>N/sport</i>	0.74	0.67	0.50	0.80	0.56	0.83	0.13	0.64	0.73	< 0.05
<i>Sport</i>	0.85	0.75	0.74	0.78	0.61	0.78	0.21	0.78	0.72	< 0.05

N/sport: the 271 students who are not athletes; *Sport*: the 138 student athletes; IM: intrinsic motivation; EM: extrinsic motivation; Amot: amotivation; Avg: average; p: significance level; know: Knowledge; Achiev: achievement; stim: stimulation; intro: introjections; Ext / Reg: external regulation; Ident: identification.

The correlations of non-sports students on the one hand (Table 2) and that of sport students on the other hand (Table 3) show that the sub-themes, which are the most closely and positively associated are those of IM and self-determined and/or internalized EM.

As for the amotivation, it is negatively correlated with the IM for knowledge, the introjected EM and the identified EM with non-sport students (Table 2) while its associations with the six sub-themes of the IM and EM in sports students are not significant (Table 3). The amotivation is negatively linked with the sub-themes that obtained the highest average scores with the non-sports students, that is to say, forms of motivation that are essential to attain their ultimate objective, namely the academic success; while with sports students, it is just not significant with the same sub-themes (Tables 2 and 3).

With the non-sports students, the sub-theme of the EM to external regulation is positively linked to all other sub-themes of EM and IM; while with the sport students, the same sub-theme (the EM to external regulation), except that of accomplishment, has a non-significant correlation with the other sub-themes. It is also the sub-theme that obtained the lowest score with sports students. The way the people around them judge their performance in school sports competitions does not particularly interest the sport students, while the academic success of the non-sports students is a pointer to a better future and a mark of future social acceptance.

Table 2: Correlations between the sub-themes of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation with non-sports students (N = 271)

Sub-themes	IM Know	IM Achiev	IM Stim	EM Ident	EM Intro	EM Ext/Reg
IM	0.16***					
Achiev						
IM Stim	0.41***	0.31***				
EM Ident	0.37***	0.06	0.17***			
EM Intro	0.38***	0.21***	0.25***	0.57***		
EM Ext/Reg	0.24***	0.21***	0.41***	0.18***	0.22***	
Amot	-0.11*	0.00	-0.02	-0.24***	-0.21***	0.05

IM: intrinsic motivation; EM: extrinsic motivation; Amot: amotivation; Know.: Knowledge; Achiev: achievement; Stim: stimulation; Intro: introjections; Ext / Reg: external regulation; Ident: identification. *: Significant at $p < 0.05$, **: significant at $p < 0.01$, ***: significant at $p < 0.001$

Table 3: Correlations between the sub-themes of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation with student sports (N = 138)

Sub-themes	IM Know	IM Achiev	IM Stim	EM Ident	EM Intro	EM Ext/Reg
IM	0.31**					
Achiev						
IM Stim	0.11	0.25**				
EM. Ident	0.28**	0.39**	0.21*			
EM. Intro	0.28**	0.39**	0.02	0.49**		
EM. Ext/Reg	-0.00	0.36**	0.15	0.12	0.14	
Amotiv	-0.11	-0.03	0.02	-0.12	0.06	0.12

IM: intrinsic motivation; EM: extrinsic motivation; Amot: amotivation; Know: Knowledge; Achiev: achievement; Stim: stimulation; Intro: introjections; Ext/Reg: external regulation; Ident: identification. Scores <0.170 are not significant, scores between 0.171 and 0.230 are significant at *: Significant at p <0.05; **: significant at p <0.01.

Discussion

From the results of this study, the students surveyed in Benin secondary schools, pursue their studies for material reasons. They go to school with the intention of preparing for the future, rather than the simple desire to learn. Thus, they are mostly under the control of extrinsic motivation. But they are involved in school sport associations (SSA) and participate in school sport competitions primarily to improve their practice in various sports and physical activities they chose. They are therefore mostly driven by intrinsic motivation in sport competitions. This difference in motivation between non-sports students and sport students in the academic disciplines and in sport competitions is the reason why the non-sport students are more prepared psychologically to strive in school test than the sports-students in sports activities. This can lead to the increase of dropout rates in SSA and cause problems of club size management that different officials in charge of coaching school sports often face, especially during exam periods.

This result confirms the hypothesis of this study. In fact, according to this hypothesis, Benin students surveyed, like their French-Speaking peers from North Africa, are more interested in academic disciplines than in school sport activities (Fontayne et al., 2001). For these Benin adolescents, their future at social and material levels is secured through academic success. For the reason they give more value to academic tests at school than sports activities that are pushed into the background (Nahimana, 1997).

Considering the behaviour of those adolescents, the researcher can say that at school, sports and arts are pushed to the background and regarded as leisure. Consequently, these students engage in school sports competitions for fun and to meet friends, to let off steam (Allen, 2003, Weiss & Smith, 2002) and especially

with the intention of improving their knowledge in disciplines they discovered early during physical education lessons. These results are similar to those of the work of Korea et al. (2003) and Weiss & Smith (2002) as well as the findings of Allen (2003). The latter showed that young people participate in sport for affiliation purposes. On the other hand, they differ from the results of the studies of Tanimomo et al (2009), who concluded that the dropping out of Benin women football players is firstly explained by extrinsic motives before wishing that other motivational strategies be tried for the promotion of women's football in Benin. It should be noted that the study of Tanimomo et al (2009) was carried out with the first division of women teams who participated in national championships in Benin. So, the sample is different from that of the school area and this may explain the dissimilarity of the results.

Amotivation scores are lower among the non-athletic students than with the athletic one. This confirms that Benin students surveyed pursue different objectives and show various motivations depending on whether they are engaged in academic tests or in school sports competitions. These results shed light on the cultural and environmental values of the subjects who participated in this study. In fact, in Benin and also in many other African countries, school is considered as the place where future leaders are trained from the least qualified to the most one. It is the place of competence development, knowledge acquisition, science and modernity. This is a necessary stage students must pass through whatever profession or function they aspire to.

The virtues of school are conveyed through multiple social channels and praised variously by artists to the extent that many parents regard education and hence children's enrolment at school as a long-term investment. By so doing, they spare no effort to support their children in this endeavour. They go to school with the aim of catering for themselves in future. This vision of the school pursued by the State through the Ministries of National Education is supported by teachers who daily remind students daily of the substance of this mission. In general, it is rooted in the mentality of Benin people nowadays that schooling is essential. Even for artisans, basic education is necessary, for an instructed worker is always able to better manage his work than the one who can neither read nor right. This is why the score of amotivation is lower with the non-athletic students. Conversely, sports and cultural activities are often seen as supporting activities that are reserved for the distraction of students. The outcome is that the score of amotivation is relatively higher with athletic students than with non-athletic one. Considered as entertaining activities, sports and arts are just practised after academic tests.

Conclusion

This study showed that environmental, social and cultural factors; beliefs as well as the information spread in the environment and the contexts in which students

find themselves, influence their motivations. The motivations of the non-athletic students during academic tests are different from those of athletic students during sports competitions at school. So, these students do not behave the same way when they sit for academic examinations or take part in school sports competitions. But beyond the geographical environment, the school context, or situations of exams or school sports competitions, it is the socio-cultural factors such as beliefs attached to school which is admitted as vehicles for science, knowledge and therefore factor of economic progress that determined the behaviour of students in each of the two areas they were involved.

Schooling is more valued than sports activities in Benin communities. The researcher then understood why the students surveyed in this study give more importance to academic success than victories in school sports competitions. It is therefore important for physical education teachers and coaches who are in charge of the management of school sports clubs or the training of students for school sports championships to take into account this information in the search for strategies to motivate young athletes.

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