

## Perceived Contribution of Team Support to Psychological Satisfaction of Kenya's University Rugby Players

**BY**

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the levels of universities rugby players' satisfaction in relation to team support, i.e. media, medical, teammate, fans and university community. A survey research design was used and data was collected through a self administered questionnaire from (n=91) participants drawn from 7 universities registered in the Kenya Rugby Union (KRU).The resulting data was analyzed for means, standard deviations, while statistical t-tests and F-tests was used to test the hypothesis. The results showed that the players expressed more than average (2.5) response towards support from media, fans and medical attention. They however reported varied levels of satisfaction with teammates and university community support. Between private and public universities, public universities had higher means with team support.

**Key words:** Satisfaction, Rugby, University.

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### **Introduction**

Rugby as a sport has witnessed tremendous worldwide growth and development. The sport continues to attract much attention both locally and internationally; for instance, Rugby players in Kenya are famous and renown the world-over for their flair, pace and sheer athleticism (Ollows, 2009). According to Sriboon (2001), the overall experiences of sports players in universities in relation to the departments of sports, the personnel, the programmed activities as well as the sports-

related support services provided by the universities are important. Rugby is indeed a popular sport in Kenyan universities. Students engage in rugby both as players and supporters, many players and followers admire the discipline in the game. According to Ollows (2009), rugby is not only a big show; it is a popular movement of massive proportions. It keeps important social values alive such as team spirit, solidarity, respect and fair play.

According to Singh and Surujlal (2006), trends indicate that it is rare for university sportsmen and women to qualify to join national teams for international assignments. Additionally, Munayi, Njororai and Asembo (1998) observed that sports fields in the various universities are hardly used to the maximum by the students due to lack of incentives. Low levels of player satisfaction are a likely explanation for this poor image (Jones, 2006). In order for the university students in Kenya to benefit from participation in rugby, the issue of player satisfaction with support services is crucial. In the current study, team support (TS), was evaluated as a variables determining player satisfaction.

Sullivan and Gee (2007) define athlete satisfaction as a positive affective state that results from a complex evaluation of the structures, processes and outcomes associated with the athletic experience. Athlete satisfaction with a sport is important for several reasons including the link between satisfaction and performance, importance of the athlete to athletic programs and the relationship between satisfaction and other constructs like cohesion and leadership. In all these reasons, the assumption is that a satisfied athlete performs better, and is more cohesive in a team, and contributes to more able leadership.

Sport in Kenyan Universities is not appropriately recognized. This apparent lack of recognition in the university structure has led to disorganization and lack of efficiency in the way sports and games departments are run (Munayi *et al*, 1998). Litaba, Njororai and Mwisukha (2005) have additionally decried the minimal participation of students and staff in sports in Kenya's universities and have cited the constraining factors to be limited incentives, funds to run sports and specialized technical personnel. Other constraints include inadequate equipment and facilities, crowded academic timetables, the 'pay-as-you eat' policy and limited recognition by the universities. However, the students' views on the extent of their satisfaction with the team support services and conditions for sports participation are yet to be determined empirically

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent of satisfaction among university rugby players with regard to team support rendered by Kenya's universities and to find out whether team support varied from private and public universities.

### **Literature Review**

Satisfaction is the act of fulfilling a desire or need or appetite; the contentment one feels (Jones, 2006). Satisfaction can also be understood as the fulfillment or gratification of a desire, need or

appetite (Unruh, 1998). In sport science satisfaction is seen as the sense of achievement and the fulfillment of a need and the dimensions that should be included in the taxonomy are identified from in-depth analysis of the questionnaire items in the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire designed by Singh and Surujlal (2006). The taxonomy includes 5 distinguishable dimensions which constitute the major sources of satisfaction from team support namely: media, teammate support, university community support, fan support and medical support.

Although community members, students, staff and fans are not directly involved in the affairs of a team, they play a significant role in how well the team or athlete performs through their implicit and explicit support for the team (Altahayneh, 2003). This support, in turn, affects the level of satisfaction experienced by the team or athlete. The vital role that fans play in the performance of a rugby team has been demonstrated in the findings of extensive research (Carron, Hausenblas & Eys, 2005; Kotzee, 2002). When the performance of a team is good, the team is buoyed by the fans to perform better. This ultimately increases the satisfaction experienced by the athletes both with their own performance as well as with the fans.

It is generally accepted that the mass media have become some of the most powerful institutional forces in society. Although we all use the media in different ways, the media is responsible for directing attention and shaping cultural attitudes and values (Horine & Stotler, 2004). Most aspects of life in contemporary societies have an impact on the media and, reciprocally, are influenced by the media. How the media represent a social group gives important clues to understanding their social status, social values, norms, and attitudes toward that group. Thus, according to Holstein (2010) and Meir (2009), the dominant electronic and print media narratives about elite male rugby players helps to define, normalize, influence and reflect mainstream societal beliefs about them. The media brings the rugby players under public scrutiny, thus exerting pressure on them to succeed. This has an influence on the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by the athletes (Singh & Surujlal, 2006; Young, 2006). Consequently, this affects their performance which determines the level of satisfaction experienced by the athlete.

According to Schaaf (2003), medical support in terms of injury prevention, injury rehabilitation and illness prevention provided by an organization influences the level of satisfaction experienced by the rugby players. Traditionally, the prevention of injuries and illness had been the responsibility of the coach (Unruh, 1998). Today, that responsibility lies with trained medical personnel provided by the universities or contracted by the organization. How competent and professional the medical staffs are perceived to be by the player influences their level of satisfaction.

The support that the organization provides in terms of monetary resources to the athlete is a likely source of the athlete's satisfaction (Gitonga, Njororai & Mwisukha, 2004). The satisfaction that players experience with any form of financial support that they receive is analogous with the satisfaction that employees experience with their pay. If the pay is in accordance to the output and performance of the employees, it is highly likely that the employee will be satisfied. Similarly, rugby players are likely to be satisfied with monetary rewards that reflect their outputs or performance (Jones, 2006; Schaaf, 2003). Some universities provide scholarships or bursaries, particularly for members of the less-privileged social classes that make attending a university possible (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). Research conducted by Amorose & Horn (2000) indicated that

scholarships, in some instances, resulted in increased motivation. It can consequently be concluded that increased motivation leads to better performance resulting in greater satisfaction among university rugby players. On the other hand, scholarships can be perceived as a controlling factor which binds players to the university. It would be prudent to identify factors that may bind players to the respective universities as is the case in the research carried out by Amorose and Horn (2000). Media support and medical support are important to athlete satisfaction yet not well developed within the sports fraternity in Kenya. It is important to investigate how rugby players in Kenyan universities perceive team support in these areas. None of the cited studies has mentioned a comparison between student athletes from private universities and those from public universities. This study addressed this issue in terms of comparing satisfaction levels both collectively and individually among Kenya universities rugby players.

### **Methodology**

**Research Design:** A descriptive survey research design was used in this study and the target population comprised of all Kenya Rugby Union (KRU)-registered members of University rugby teams drawn from the public and private universities in Nairobi. These universities were made up of 3 public universities (Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Kenyatta University (KU) AND University of Nairobi (UON) and 4 private universities (African Nazarene University (ANU), Daystar University (DU), Strathmore University (SU0 and United States International University (USIU) in the 2009/2010 season.

### **Instrumentation**

A modified version of the athlete satisfaction questionnaire (ASQ) developed by Riemer and Chelladurai (1998) was used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two parts with Part A containing items on demographic information like age, name of university and playing experience while Part B contained items on team support. The Players were requested to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied), to 5 (Extremely Satisfied). Test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability index of the questionnaire. A reliability index of 0.86 was found using the spearman's rho correlation of coefficient. The administration of the questionnaire was done during physical training at the various university training grounds of the teams

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained were subjected to editing and was presented using tables, percentages, means and standard deviations. The hypotheses focusing on comparing satisfaction levels of rugby players in public and private universities were tested using a t-test at 0.05 level of significance while the other hypothesis on rugby players' satisfaction across various satisfaction factors and across the universities was tested using one-way ANOVA Tukey HSD post hoc test was used for further tests after significant F-ratios.

## Findings and Discussion

### Extent of Player Satisfaction

The first objective of the study was to determine the extent of satisfaction of rugby players with regard to five specific pre-determined team support factors, namely media, teammates, university community, fans and medical support. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** Mean scores and standard deviations on extent of player satisfaction with team support.

Team Support	Mean scores on a 1-5 scale. ( Standard Deviations in brackets)							Sub-factor Means
	ANU	DU	SU	USIU	JKUAT	UON	KU	
Media support	1.77 (0.73)	2.77 (0.93)	3.54 (0.66)	3.08 (1.35)	2.62 (0.77)	2.85 (0.80)	3.08 (1.5)	2.82
Teammates support	2.70 (0.95)	3.62 (1.04)	3.77 (0.83)	4.0 (0.79)	4.46 (0.66)	4.08 (0.64)	4.70 (0.48)	3.90
University community	1.85 (0.55)	3.0 (0.91)	3.62 (0.65)	3.15 (0.95)	2.15 (0.69)	3.0 (0.91)	2.46 (1.39)	2.75
Fan support	3.38 (1.04)	2.85 (0.80)	3.77 (0.73)	3.38 (0.98)	3.69 (1.25)	3.69 (0.75)	4.08 (0.86)	3.55
Medical support	3.38 (0.77)	3.08 (1.36)	2.92 (0.95)	3.69 (1.08)	3.08 (0.95)	3.0 (1.08)	2.69 (1.32)	3.12
Mean	2.62	3.12	3.52	3.46	3.23	3.32	3.42	3.23
Standard deviation	1.07	1.04	0.81	1.09	1.18	0.95	1.42	1.08

Table 1 shows the distribution of sub-factors of team support namely, media support, university community support, teammate support, fan support and medical support, with mean and standard deviations. High levels of mean satisfaction with teammate support and fan support were reported as 3.90 and 3.55 respectively. Comparatively smaller mean satisfaction values for university community support (2.75) and media support (2.82) were noted. Support from fellow students in the form of teammates and their fans appeared to be more prominent than support from the media and the university community.

Strathmore University reported a mean score of 3.54 (SD=0.66) for media support response which was the highest while ANU with mean score of 1.77 (SD=0.73) was the lowest comparatively. On teammate support, all the three public universities reported mean scores above 4, that is, JKUAT (4.46; SD=0.66), UON (4.08; SD=0.64) and KU (4.70; SD=0.48), while USIU which is a private university reported a mean of 4 (SD=0.79). The other universities reported mean scores below 4, while ANU reported a mean of 2.70 (SD=0.95). The reported means for university community support indicated Strathmore with mean score of 3.62 (SD=0.65) being the highest and ANU (1.85; SD=.94) and JKUAT (2.15; SD=0.69) recording comparatively lower mean scores. On fan support,

KU reported the highest mean satisfaction of 4.08 (SD=0.46), with Daystar recording the lowest mean satisfaction of 2.85 (SD=0.80); all the other universities reported mean scores between 3.38 and 3.69. Lastly, on medical support, mean scores ranged from 2.69 (SD=1.32) for KU which is the lowest to 3.69 (SD=1.08) for USIU which is the highest. All the other five universities fall within this range

As shown in Table 1, Strathmore University recorded the highest mean of 3.52 (SD=0.44), while ANU recorded the lowest mean score of 2.62 (SD=0.42) for team support. This is a reflection of high level of player satisfaction with Team Support in Strathmore University than in all the other universities. USIU, with a mean score of 3.46 (SD=0.61) and KU with a mean score of 3.42 (SD=0.68) respectively for Team Support, could also be considered reasonably high levels of satisfaction with team support.

Overall, the university rugby players are satisfied with team support that they receive especially teammate support, fan support and medical support. However, in two areas, media support and university community support, the player satisfaction is only slightly above average of 2.5. The support for some of the findings of the study are found in studies of Carron *et al* (2005) and Holstein (2010) who observed that positive contributions by fans and the media are instrumental in enhancing player satisfaction. Equally, Singh and Surujlal (2006) asserted that the media affects performance which ultimately determines levels of satisfaction experienced by the athletes. The athletes from different universities satisfaction are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Means on the universities level of satisfaction with team support.

University	ANU	DU	SU	USIU	JKUAT	UON	KU
mean	2.62	3.12	3.52	3.46	3.23	3.32	3.42

Results in Table 2 show that Strathmore University (m= 3.52) and USIU (m= 3.46), had higher levels of mean satisfaction with Team Support compared to all others. ANU (m= 2.62) was the least satisfied with Team Support of all the 7 universities. The other universities were moderately satisfied with Team Support, KU (m= 3.42), UON (m= 3.32), JKUAT (m= 3.23) and DU (m= 3.12). For all universities' teams, the extent of satisfaction with media support, support by fans and promptness of medical attention was almost the same. The players expressed more than average mean (2.5) on these sub factors. However, there were significant differences in the levels of satisfaction amongst the players on support from teammates and university community support. Overall, public universities had higher means depicting satisfaction with team support. Amorose and Horn (2000) assert that the media and medical support are key to athlete satisfaction. The university community including faculty members and administrators could be a large source of support for rugby sport. Lack of medical support for rugby teams may lead to injuries and this may discourage players from this highly contact sport. As in the study by Unruh (1998), the results provided insights into the differences in satisfaction among the university sport teams emphasizing the type of university as a determinant in differences. Other contributing factors to lack of satisfaction could be lack of competitive culture, limited high profile competitions, historical

background of the university and continued emphasis on amateurism in university sport among the universities studied.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study set out to determine the levels of player satisfaction among rugby players in Kenya's universities. Teammate support, fan support and medical support stood out as more favoured by the rugby players. Players however were only marginally satisfied with support from their university community and the media. All university rugby teams had overall means over the 2.5 average although ANU was proportionally lower than all the other universities. On media, Strathmore and KU recorded higher satisfaction while ANU was very low and needs to reexamine this area. On teammate support, JKUAT, KU, UON and USIU had high satisfaction but ANU still lagged behind. On university community support KU and ANU were below the average of 2.5 while the rest were only marginally satisfied. On fan support, KU was most satisfied but all the others were moderately satisfied. For medical support, all were above the 2.5 average mark but below 3.7. There was significant difference in means for media, teammate and university community support mainly due to the low scores by ANU. Based on the conclusions of the study the need for universities to spend more financial resources in providing facilities and equipment in order to satisfy the ever-rising numbers of students participating in rugby. Secondly, provision of scholarships to deserving sportsmen is already practiced in some universities in Kenya although it needs to be adopted as a university policy by the ministry of Higher Education for promoting sport and motivating the players. Future studies on player satisfaction in all other major sports like athletics, basketball, hockey, football and volleyball will be worth

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