

# Students' Physical Activities as a Health Behavior and Course Completion in Public and Private Universities in Uganda.

Asingwire Richard

Kampala International University, Uganda

Email: [asingwirer480@gmail.com](mailto:asingwirer480@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The study focused on students' physical activities as a health behavior and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda. The research was guided by Positivism Philosophy by Auguste Comte during early 19<sup>th</sup> century basing on the ideology that students perform behaviors having enough knowledge about such (efficacy) and well knowing the consequences. This is supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Health Belief Model. The study was of Quantitative in nature. The researcher surveyed the respondents by providing questionnaires for answering willingly about behaviors and life experiences as far as their physical activities were concerned. The researcher presented and analyzed the findings by using SPSS, explanations and descriptions. Coefficient significance was got and compare it with 0.05 the usual significance level to check if the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected. Scope: The study was limited to the relationship between students' physical activities as a health behavior and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda conducted in four Ugandan regions out of four, students being a unit of study. Sample size: According to the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table, since the target population was 11,000, the sample size is 370. In the study, the sample size used was 372. Thus, a sample size of 372 respondents was obtained for cross-sectional studies from each of the 6 selected Universities making 62 students from each of the 6 universities. Survey responses to students' physical activities and course completion were limited to five options measuring the students' health behavior. Responses included "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly disagree" or "Never", Responses were assigned a numerical value (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Assigning ordinal values to participation levels rather than as categorical reflected an assumption that students' involvement has a positive relationship with the study engagement. The researcher piloted to check content validity. He piloted the study in Kampala International University, a university nearer to him. This was mainly to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The researcher got involved in the University environment until he got at least 10 participants for checking the information given if it is valid. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS v 14.0 software. Using the scoring of 1 to 5 on a 5-point Likert scale response mode, the deciding rule for the level of agreement was based on any weighted average up to 2.50 or more and that was considered to be an agreement (A) with the questionnaire item while a value less than 2.50 was considered as a disagreement (D). Availability of students' physical activities was assessed by the degree of susceptibility, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, efficacy and clue to action with students whose behavior was poor and they were involved in physical activities to become healthier. This was achieved through the use of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate frequency distributions, percentages and sig. values. Sig. values assisted in interpreting data in comparison with the null hypothesis. The study revealed that there is a weak relationship between students' physical activities and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda. This is indicated by low degree of Pearson Correlation, where  $P > 0.01$ . Since significant coefficient (0.01) is less than 0.05, it is statistically significant. It implies that students' physical activities affect the course completion. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between students' physical activities and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda. The study recommended that; Students should always practice physical activities willingly. Students should always go for medical checkups. Institutions should avail physical activity space like play grounds not only for males but also for females. Time for general physical activities should be planned for. Institutions and the government of Uganda should innovate online awareness and guidelines for students as far as physical activities are concerned. The Parish level programs for the government should secure enough land for sports, put funds to organize and facilitate sports within the different parishes in Uganda.*

**Keywords:** Physical activities, health behavior, course completion, universities

## Background:

The study focused on students' physical activities as a health behavior and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda. The relationship between health and education is doubtless a close one. Globally, 1 out of 10 (20%) of the young people in university is likely to encounter at least one health behavior challenge (WHO, 2017). These behavior challenges are likely to pose a significant threat to academic performance and course completion. Half-lifetime people experience psychosocial disorders such as disorders, for example, anxiety, panic, adjustment, and depression among others that may start by the age of fourteen, and 75 percent by the age of twenty-four (WHO, 2017). Studies done in Canada and the USA have shown that student health behaviors in universities are increasing (Jellinek et al., 2015). In most of the African Countries, the scenario of student's health behavior is still a heavy challenge compared to developed nations as Africa's health-care system and education system is inadequate (Manjua, 2016). Indeed, there is evidence that undergraduate students face unique learning challenges that render them more vulnerable to anxiety (Samaha, 2016). First year university students are particularly prone to stress due to the transitional nature of university life (Elzubeir,

2017). In addition to academic requirements, relations with faculty members and time pressures are yet further sources of health behavior challenge amongst private and public universities (Schneiderman, 2005) cited in Yaribeygi, (2017). On top of all, tests, grades, competition, time demands, professional class environment, and concern about future careers are found to be major source of students behavior health challenge. Consequently, these challenges pose a considerable threat to academic performance and general decline in course completion (Sanchez, et. al 2016). University students have high rates of poor diet, long sitting hours, inadequate sleep, physical inactivity and poor performance in courses (Patterson M, 2021). The challenge is that course completion is low. One asks himself main cause of all such. Is it family background, institutional or government policies or students' physical activities? Therefore, the researcher came in to find out if there is a relationship between students' physical activities and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda.

### Methods:

*Research philosophy and theories:* The research was guided by Positivism Philosophy by Auguste Comte during early 19<sup>th</sup> century basing on the ideology that students perform behaviors having enough knowledge about such (efficacy) and well knowing the consequences. This is supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Health Belief Model. The study was of Quantitative in nature. The researcher surveyed the respondents by providing questionnaires for answering willingly about behaviors and life experiences as far as their physical activities were concerned. The researcher presented and analyzed the findings by using SPSS, explanations and descriptions. Coefficient significance was got and compare it with 0.05 the usual significance level to check if the null hypothesis was accepted or rejected. *Scope:* The study was limited to the relationship between students' physical activities as a health behavior and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda conducted in four Ugandan regions out of four, students being a unit of study. *Sample size:* According to the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table, since the target population was 11.000, the sample size is 370. In the study, the sample size used was 372. Thus, a sample size of 372 respondents was obtained for cross-sectional studies from each of the 6 selected Universities making 62 students from each of the 6 universities. The study used 18 informants (administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff). A 95% level of confidence and a 5% level of precision were used in the sample size calculation. *Target area and population:* The researcher selected respondents randomly and others purposely, according to need of the study. The study was also guided by lecturers and health workers to get the respondents. Random sampling was used to select 2 universities from each of the three regions of Uganda (Central, Western and Eastern). The researcher balanced the 3 regions while selecting the 6 universities. 62 students were selected from each of the 6 universities either males or females. The researcher collected data using Questionnaire. A review of institutional websites allowed the researcher to identify contacts of registrars and institutions' emails. An e-mail request for participation attached with introductory letter and research instruments was sent to primary contacts. When no any response, follow-ups were made through whatApp messages and phone calls later. *Questionnaire:* Survey responses to students' physical activities and course completion were limited to five options measuring the students' health behavior. Responses included "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly disagree" or "Never", Responses were assigned a numerical value (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Assigning ordinal values to participation levels rather than as categorical reflected an assumption that students' involvement has a positive relationship with the study engagement. *Instrument validity:* The researcher piloted to check content validity. He piloted the study in Kampala International University, a university nearer to him. This was mainly to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The researcher got involved in the University environment until he got at least 10 participants for checking the information given if it is valid. *Threats to validity:* students feared to reveal their negative part of life, discriminated the researcher and tried to behave oppositely, the researcher feared to move in very early hours. The researcher was too emotional and could forget to observe well. He feared to be hated and be suspected as a government spy. The researcher was harmed physically or psychologically by the students, haunted and defamed. *Reliability:* The researcher was the main data collector while studying health behaviors of the students. For this reason, he was checking consistency. It is this consistency that proved the reliability of the information given. The researcher also published the findings to see how other scholars would react. *Piloting:* The research was piloted in the University nearer to the researcher – Kampala International University. It is from this piloting that the researcher tested the validity of the research instruments with the information concerning students' physical activities and course completions. *Data analysis:* The collected data was analyzed using SPSS v 14.0 software. Descriptive statistics were used to examine relative influence of the determinants of students' physical activities. Selected factors affecting students' physical activities were ranked in order of importance and the weighted averages (WA) of the responses were computed to determine the level of agreement with the questionnaire items. Using the scoring of 1 to 5 on a 5-point Likert scale response mode, the deciding rule for the level of agreement was based on any weighted average up to 2.50 or more and that was considered to be an agreement (A) with the questionnaire item while a value less than 2.50 was considered as a disagreement (D). Availability of students' physical activities was assessed by the degree of susceptibility, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, efficacy and clue to action with students whose behavior was poor and they were involved in physical activities to become healthier. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlations. This was achieved through the use of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate frequency distributions, percentages and sig. values. Sig. values assisted in interpreting data in comparison with the null hypothesis.

**Findings:** The study revealed that there is a weak relationship between students' physical activities and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda. This is indicated by low degree of Pearson Correlation, where  $P > 0.01$ . Since significant coefficient (0.01) is less than 0.05, it is statistically significant. It implies that students' physical activities affect the course completion. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between students' physical activities and course completion in public and private universities in Uganda.

**Recommendations:** Students should always practice physical activities willingly. They should put physical activities on their daily time table as individuals to improve their health. This is because they spend most of their time either sleeping or sitting for long hours in lecture rooms. Students should always go for medical checkups, follow doctors descriptions but not waiting for body abnormalities and start physical activities then. Institutions should avail physical activity space like play grounds not only for males but also for females. Time for general physical activities should be planned for such as Galas and competitions between students of different groups. Institutions and the government of Uganda should innovate online awareness and guidelines for students as far as physical activities are concerned. Almost every student of 21<sup>st</sup> century has got a smart phone which is ever loaded with more than enough data. Institutions and the government can use such opportunity to capture students' mind and attention and use it fruitfully. The government should plan for playgrounds big enough for institutions around each community. The Parish level programs for the government should secure enough land for sports, put funds to organize and facilitate sports within the different parishes in Uganda. Such will awaken, motivate and encourage students around parishes to exercise physical activities that make their lives healthier.

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