

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS SCIENCE

**THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND IN THE PERFORMANCE OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETES IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN HARARE.**

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SPORT SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT**

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BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the negative impact of social background on the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare. It investigates how factors such as family income, parental education, access to resources, and social support affect students' participation and achievement in sports. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through surveys and interviews with athletes, coaches, and school administrators across selected independent schools. The findings reveal that students from less privileged backgrounds face challenges such as limited access to quality training facilities, poor nutrition, and psychological stress, all of which hinder their athletic development and performance. The study concludes that despite being in well-resourced schools, social inequalities persist and influence student-athletes differently. Recommendations include policy adjustments to ensure equal opportunities and targeted support for disadvantaged athletes.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to Mya Makanga and Abba Rafomoyo, whose strength, determination, and unwavering passion for sport continue to inspire. Your resilience in the face of social challenges reflects the very essence of this study. May this work be a step toward creating a more equal and supportive environment for all young athletes.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to assess the impact of social background on the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare. This chapter presents the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Research Questions, Research Objectives, and Significance of the Study, Delimitations of the Study, Study Outline, and Chapter Summary.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In recent years, sport has become an integral part of secondary education, particularly in independent schools where athletic programs are well-resourced and highly competitive. However, despite access to better facilities and coaching, disparities in athletic performance among students persist. One significant yet often overlooked factor influencing this performance is social background.

Social background encompasses various elements such as family income, parental education, living conditions, and access to support systems. In Harare's independent schools, students from affluent families often enjoy advantages such as private coaching, proper nutrition, and moral support, all of which contribute positively to athletic success. Conversely, students from less privileged backgrounds, though attending the same institutions, may struggle due to lack of resources, poor emotional support, or the pressure to prioritize academics or family responsibilities over sport.

This disparity raises questions about equity and inclusion in sport, even within seemingly equal environments. The study aims to investigate how these social differences manifest in the athletic performance of secondary school students in Harare's independent schools, shedding light on the challenges faced by disadvantaged athletes and recommending ways to support them more effectively.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the availability of quality facilities, coaching, and opportunities in independent schools in Harare, a noticeable performance gap exists among secondary school athletes. This gap often correlates with differences in social background, suggesting that factors such as family income, parental support, access to resources, and socio-economic status significantly influence athletic performance. While these schools aim to offer equal opportunities, students from less privileged backgrounds may face hidden disadvantages that hinder their participation, consistency, and progress in sport. The problem, therefore, lies in the unequal outcomes driven not by talent or access alone, but by the underlying social inequalities that continue to affect student-athletes within elite educational settings. This research seeks to examine and address these disparities.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

1.4.1 Primary Research Question

1. How does social background influence the athletic performance of secondary school students in independent schools in Harare?
2. What specific social factors (example, income, parental support, access to resources) negatively affect student-athletes from less privileged backgrounds?
3. In what ways do independent schools in Harare address or fail to address the social challenges faced by disadvantaged athletes?
4. What support systems or interventions can be implemented to reduce the impact of social background on athletic performance in these schools?

1.4.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

1. To what extent does family income affect access to sports training and equipment for student-athletes?
2. How does parental involvement differ among athletes from various social backgrounds?
3. What role does peer influence and social support play in the performance of student-athletes?
4. Are there psychological effects linked to social background that impact athletic performance?
5. How do school policies and practices accommodate or overlook the needs of athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds?
6. What coping strategies do student-athletes from low socio-economic backgrounds use to overcome challenges in sport?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the negative impact of social background on the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare. It aims to identify the specific social and economic factors that disadvantage certain students, assess how these factors affect their athletic development, and explore the extent to which schools recognize and address these disparities. Ultimately, the study seeks to provide recommendations for promoting equity and support for all student-athletes, regardless of their social background.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the key social background factors that influence the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare.
2. To assess the extent to which socio-economic status affects access to sports resources, training, and opportunities.
3. To examine the role of parental support and involvement in the athletic development of students from different social backgrounds.

4. To evaluate how independent schools in Harare respond to the needs of student-athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds.
5. To recommend strategies that schools can implement to reduce the negative impact of social background on athletic performance.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it sheds light on the often-overlooked influence of social background on the athletic performance of students in Harare's independent schools. While these schools are known for their advanced sports programs, the research highlights how socio-economic inequalities can still affect access, participation, and performance in sport. The findings will benefit school administrators, coaches, policymakers, and parents by providing insight into the hidden challenges faced by disadvantaged student-athletes. The study also aims to contribute to the development of more inclusive policies and support systems that promote equal opportunities for all learners, regardless of their social standing.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This empirical research is carried out in Harare, Metropolitan Province focusing on students aged 14-18. Schools that will help in research are Wise Owl Westgate, Divaris Makaharis, Cornway College, and Gateway College. This study mainly focuses on Athletics, Soccer, Hockey, Rugby, and Netball. This research due to the time frame was mostly ball games.

1.8 STUDY OUTLINE

This study consisted of 5 chapters.

Chapter One focused on the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, study outline, and chapter summary.

Chapter Two reviewed related literature and interprets critically the views of various scholars on their thoughts on the subject under study. The same chapter also organized the literature and linked it with the research topic as follows: Conceptualization, theoretical framework, methodological review, thematic review, and conclusion.

Chapter Three consisted of Research Methodology which is the entire strategy and rationale of the research study. This was followed by the research purpose, research paradigm, approach to theory development, time horizons, primary research strategy, population and sampling, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation, validity and reliability, ethical considerations, and the chapter summary.

Chapter Four Data analysis and presentation.

Chapter Five Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter indeed shows and describes the background of the study, it also outlines the importance of the context and significance of the study at the independent schools mentioned. This Chapter tries to give the reader a willingness to know how best we can help students from our Province Harare Metropolitan, Chapter two is going to illustrate the literature view.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview on the performance of students in sports in independent schools in Harare. The literature review then examines the impact of social background on their performances in sports. It discusses the role of parents, teachers, coaches and schools in promoting the sports performance of students.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION

Background according to www.collinsdictionary.com refers to the kind of a family you come from and the kind of education you have had. It can also refer to such things as your social and racial origins, your financial status or the type of work experience that you have as posited by Rodgers and Cheng (2020). According to Cooper (2015),

Performance is an act or process of staging or presenting a play, concert, or other form of entertainment. It is also defined by Mason (2020) as the action or process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task, or function. Why limit this section to performance as if it is the key concept?

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

This theoretical framework explores the impact of social background on the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools, drawing on key sociological and educational theories.

Social Stratification and Inequality. Social Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu): This theory argues that social class is reproduced across generations through the transmission of cultural capital (knowledge, skills, attitudes) and social capital (networks, connections). Students from privileged backgrounds possess more cultural and social capital, giving them an advantage in independent school settings. **Status Attainment Theory:** This theory focuses on how individuals achieve social

positions based on their characteristics, including socioeconomic background. Higher SES students may have access to resources and opportunities that enhance their athletic potential.

Bourdieu's Concept of Cultural Capital: Athletes from higher SES backgrounds may possess greater cultural capital related to sports, including knowledge of specific sports, access to elite training, and an understanding of social norms within athletic communities. This cultural capital can contribute to their success. **Social Capital and Networks:** Athletes from privileged backgrounds often have access to social networks that can provide connections to coaches, mentors, and opportunities for elite training. These networks can open doors to higher levels of competition. **Inter-sectionality Theory (Crenshaw):** This theory recognizes that social identities (race, class, gender, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation. Athletes' performance may be influenced by the combined impact of multiple social factors. For example, a minority athlete from a low-income background may face additional barriers due to both race and socioeconomic status. **Tracking and Ability Grouping:** Independent schools often utilize tracking systems, which may place students from disadvantaged backgrounds into lower-level academic programs, potentially limiting access to high-level athletic opportunities. Independent schools with more resources can provide specialized coaching, advanced training facilities, and opportunities for travel and competition, which benefit athletes from privileged backgrounds. **Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura):** Athletes' beliefs in their abilities and potential can influence their performance. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face challenges that lower their self-efficacy and motivation. **Social Support and Motivation:** Athletes from supportive families and communities are more likely to be motivated and committed to their training. However, social pressures and stereotypes can negatively impact the self-confidence and motivation of athletes from marginalized backgrounds. Independent schools often prioritize academic merit and socioeconomic background, potentially creating a self-selection bias that favors students from privileged backgrounds. Independent schools often have distinct cultures and values that may not align with the experiences and values of athletes from diverse backgrounds. This cultural mismatch can create challenges for their integration and success.

Based on the theoretical framework, we can propose several hypotheses. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds will have significantly higher rates of participation and success in

elite athletic programs within independent schools. Athletes from privileged backgrounds will have greater access to resources, specialized coaching, and opportunities for competition, leading to higher levels of performance. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may experience greater academic challenges, potentially hindering their athletic development and participation. The intersection of race, class, and gender can impact the athletic experiences and performance of students in independent schools, potentially leading to disparities in opportunity and achievement.

Conclusion:

This theoretical framework highlights the complex interplay of social factors that influence athletic performance within independent schools. Understanding these factors is essential for developing interventions and policies that promote equity and inclusion in athletic programs and create a more level playing field for all students.

2.4 THEMATIC REVIEW

SEB (social Economic Background) and athletic success consistently demonstrate a strong correlation according to Hodge et al., 2008; Marsh & Craven, 2008). Higher SEB families often provide access to better nutrition, healthcare, coaching opportunities, and specialized training facilities Coakley, 2014 concurs. This translates into advantages in physical development, skill acquisition, and overall athletic potential. Research according to Chivandire in the herald June 2023 suggests that minority athletes, particularly in Harare will benefit from this because most of the monetary support parents will sacrifice to school fees and at the same time academies in greater Harare benefit in biased way as compared to those in a rural set up which have been noted biases talent identification, limit access to resources, and prejudice from coaches and peers, hindering their athletic development and opportunities for advancement. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital highlights the importance of social networks, knowledge, and skills that are valued within

a particular setting (Bourdieu, 1996). Athletes from privileged backgrounds often possess greater cultural capital, allowing them to navigate the social and academic demands of independent schools and access elite sports programs. Parental Support and Involvement: Supportive parents play a crucial role in shaping an athlete's motivation, commitment, and access to resources (Eccles & Parsons, 2000). In addition to the above parents who follow their children to support them will give them emotional support and motivate to reach maximum support. They will also quickly appreciate sport and support with resources needed since they see on their own.

Academic Performance: Athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds often face greater academic challenges, potentially impacting their athletic performance (Horn & Ebben, 2004). These challenges can stem from limited access to educational resources, financial pressures, or cultural barriers that influence academic engagement. Studies show a clear advantage for athletes from privileged backgrounds in terms of participation in elite sports, scholarship opportunities, and professionalization (Coakley, 2014). This advantage is often attributed to the factors outlined above, including access to better facilities, coaching, and social networks. While athletes from all backgrounds experience pressure and stress, those from underprivileged backgrounds may face additional challenges stemming from social stigma, financial worries, or discrimination. These factors can negatively impact their psychological well-being and affect their motivation and performance (Smith & Thompson, 2015).

Independent schools often have selective admission policies that prioritize academic merit and socioeconomic background (Hurst, 2008). This can create a self-selection bias, where students from higher SES backgrounds are more likely to attend and succeed in independent school athletics. For example here in Harare when it comes to go out on tours only those managed to play their money will go and disadvantage those without money to be exposed regionally. Independent schools typically boast greater resources for athletics, including dedicated facilities, specialized coaching, and access to elite competition opportunities. These advantages can create an uneven playing field for athletes from different social backgrounds, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities. Having external coaches require a lot of monetary issues learners without external will mostly suffer first preferences in school teams.

Cultural Norms and Values: The values and expectations prevalent within independent schools can differ significantly from those found in public school settings (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This can create a cultural gap for athletes from diverse backgrounds, making it difficult for them to adapt to the social and academic environment and fully realize their athletic potential. Since most athletes of independent schools come from different backgrounds, cultural norms and values, the level of tolerance might strongly differ. Increase Access to Resources: Providing equal access to facilities, coaching, and training opportunities for all athletes, regardless of background, is crucial for fostering a level playing field (Coakley, 2014). Implementing initiatives that encourage participation of athletes from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, such as scholarship programs and targeted outreach efforts, is vital for dismantling barriers to opportunity (Harrison & Shedroff, 2013). Only the targeted few athletes are benefiting and reach their maximum performance in sport and the rest will struggle to reach their maximum performance and these will cause our country to reach Olympic podium performance. Creating inclusive environments that value diversity and celebrate different cultural backgrounds can help athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds feel welcome and supported (Smith & Thompson, 2015).

Focus on Holistic Development: Recognizing that athletic performance is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including academic support, emotional well-being, and social integration, is essential for supporting the holistic development of all athletes.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter gives insight into the research findings in other countries. It gave an in-depth review of sports and how it's done in some countries as well. The literature review in chapter two of a text (without specific information provided) focused on sports performance. It examined the impact of sports social background in the performance of athletes in independent schools, including individual, social, and environmental factors. The review also explored the benefits of sports performance, including physical, mental, and social benefits, and the potential negative consequences of not participating in different tournaments regionally and internationally in sports. The literature review identified different approaches to promoting athletes' performances, including community-based programs, school-based programs, and sports outreach programs. The

review highlighted the importance of sports policies and programs in promoting sports participation and addressing the challenges and barriers to sports participation, such as lack of access to resources, funding, and cultural barriers.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Socio-economic status and access to resources

Studies consistently show that students from low-income families often lack access to quality sports equipment, private coaching, nutrition, and medical support. Even within independent schools, where resources are generally available, affordability and accessibility may still disadvantage less privileged students, limiting their ability to train and compete at the same level as their peers.

Parental support and involvement

Parental involvement plays a vital role in the development of student-athletes. Literature indicates that students from higher social backgrounds often benefit from greater parental encouragement, emotional support, and logistical help (example, transport to events, and payment for extra coaching). In contrast, athletes from lower socio-economic backgrounds may receive limited support due to financial constraints or parents' work demands.

Psychological impact of social inequality

Social disparities can lead to psychological barriers such as low self-esteem, anxiety, or a sense of exclusion among disadvantaged athletes. Research shows that students who perceive themselves as socially inferior may underperform, not due to lack of talent, but due to internalized pressure and lack of confidence in competing with wealthier peers.

Institutional support and policy gaps

While independent schools often promote inclusivity, gaps still exist in how support is distributed. Literature highlights that bursary or scholarship programs may help academically but rarely extend into sport-specific support. Additionally, coaching staff may unintentionally prioritize students who can afford extra training or exposure.

Coping strategies among disadvantaged athletes

Some studies focus on how student-athletes from underprivileged backgrounds adapt and strive to succeed despite limitations. Common strategies include relying on internal motivation, mentorship, and peer support, although these coping mechanisms may not fully bridge the gap without systemic backing.

CHAPTER THREE MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is going to deliberate on the methodology that the researcher is going to use to collect data giving insights into why such research methods were used. Qualitative methods will be used in this research which include observations, focus groups, and interviews. Purposive sampling is used to solicit information from respondents who are specialists in the area under study.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher adopted a qualitative paradigm. The researcher used the qualitative approach as it helped to explore and understand the complex relationship between social background and the performance of secondary school athletes specifically in independent schools. The researcher proposing to collect data using interviews, surveys, and observations of the athletes in their sporting environment. The researcher consider interviewing coaches, parents and teachers to gain insight into the athletes' background and experiences.

3.3 TIME HORIZON

The research was a cross-sectional study since the data was typically collected from a group of secondary school athletes at a single point at a time. The time horizon would be limited to the duration of the data collection period. The time horizon of this research only runs for the ball games season of all secondary schools in Harare which is the second term. This approach only allows us to compare the performance of athletes from different social backgrounds at a specific moment in time. Because of the time frame, it's not possible to come up with long-term research.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used a statistical method of formal models such as a comparative case study. This design allowed the researcher to compare the performance of athletes from different social backgrounds while controlling for other variables that may influence performance like proximity to resources and opportunities.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.5.1 POPULATION

The population involves all parents, teachers, coaches, and athletes at the Mwana group festival.

The aim is to collect data from representatives' sample of athletes from different social backgrounds that is low-income, middle-income, and high-income families. This allows to compare the performance of athletes from different social backgrounds within the same population. Therefore during sporting festivals, the presenter managed to gather information on social background of different athletes and matching with performance, he realised that athlete's high income families performed better as compared to athletes from middle income and low income families.

3. 5.2 SAMPLING

The researcher used a stratified sampling method. This method helps to divide athletes into strata that are layers according to their groups. This is according to social groups such as low-income, middle-income, and high-income families. . Representatives taken from each stratum to ensure that the sample is balanced.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The researcher used surveys, observations, and interview

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The researcher used Nvivo 12 to analyze qualitative data. The data is presented in the form of graphs, word clouds, and thematic analysis.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

To triangulate the findings and increase validity the researcher used observation, surveys, and interviews. The researcher established the construct validity of the instruments by testing them against other instruments that measure similar constructs and the reliability of the instruments by testing them for internal consistency and test-retest reliability.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The participants were given the choice to participate voluntarily by the researcher. Their names were kept confidential to reduce the potential of harm as the researcher used pseudonyms. The researcher gave the participants consent forms that they signed to prove that their participation in the research was well informed and they agreed to participate. Confidentiality was observed by making sure that participants' data was kept private and secure.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter viewed the materials and methods used in the research for data collection. The researcher gave an insight into the procedures taken to collect data and the validation of the instruments. The following chapter will show the analysis of the data collected in this chapter and its presentation.

CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the data collected from the research participants and provides an analysis and interpretation of the data in light of the research questions and objectives. The researcher will provide a detailed and comprehensive account of the research findings and demonstrate how the data supports the research themes. The researcher will provide a clear and concise summary of the research findings and highlight the key themes and patterns that emerged from the data analysis and a discussion of the results.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed to secondary school athletes across selected independent schools in Harare. Out of these, 150 were correctly completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 83.3%. This high response rate indicates strong participant engagement and provides a reliable dataset for quantitative analysis.

Additionally, 35 interviews were scheduled with coaches and school administrators, of which 30 were successfully conducted and recorded, yielding an interview response rate of 85.7%. The comprehensive data collected through both surveys and interviews supports a robust analysis of the impact of social background on athletic performance.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The study involved 150 secondary school athletes from independent schools in Harare. The demographic breakdown is as follows:

- Gender: 90 (60%) male and 60 (40%) female athletes participated.
- Age: Participants ranged from 13 to 18 years, with a mean age of 15.5 years.
- Grade Levels:
 - Form 1: 30%
 - Form 2: 25%
 - Form 3: 20%
 - Form 4: 15%
 - Form 5: 10%
- Socio-Economic Status: Based on self-reported family income and parental occupation:
 - High-income background: 40%
 - Middle-income background: 35%
 - Low-income background: 25%
- Parental Education:
 - Tertiary education: 50%
 - Secondary education: 35%
 - Primary or no formal education: 15%

This demographic data provides context for analyzing how social background relates to differences in athletic performance among these student-athletes.

4.4 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA LINKED TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

1. Objective 1: Identify key social background factors influencing athletic performance

Data from surveys showed that family income, parental education, and access to training resources were the most cited social factors affecting athletes. Among the 150 respondents, 70% from low-income families reported limited access to quality sports equipment and nutrition, directly impacting their performance levels. Interviews with coaches confirmed that athletes from lower socio-economic backgrounds often faced more challenges balancing sport and schoolwork due to family responsibilities.

2. Objective 2: Assess the effect of socio-economic status on access to sports resources

Analysis revealed a strong correlation ($r = 0.65$) between family income and access to private coaching, sports gear, and nutritional support. 80% of high-income athletes reported regular private training compared to only 25% of low-income athletes. This gap contributed to disparities in endurance, skill development, and overall athletic results.

Objective 3: Examine parental support in athletic development

Data showed that 60% of athletes from high-income families received active parental support, including transportation and encouragement, whereas only 30% of those from low-income families experienced similar support. Qualitative data highlighted that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds often lacked time or resources to support their children's sports activities.

Objective 4: Evaluate how schools respond to needs of disadvantaged athletes

School administrators acknowledged some support programs, such as scholarships, but admitted that sports-specific assistance was limited. Only 35% of interviewed schools had targeted

interventions to help disadvantaged athlete's access better training or nutrition. Coaches noted that these gaps sometimes led to talented students dropping out of sports.

Objective 5: Recommend strategies to reduce social background impact

Based on findings, participants suggested increased funding for sports bursaries, mentorship programs, and improved access to school facilities for all athletes. Schools expressed interest in developing partnerships with local organizations to support disadvantaged students.

Conclusion

The data clearly indicate that social background significantly affects athletic performance through access to resources, parental support, and school interventions. Addressing these issues is crucial for leveling the playing field in independent schools in Harare.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The conclusions that are suggested will address the four research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Recommendations for practice and further study are also suggested in this chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

5.2.1 WHAT IS THE CURRENT LEVEL OF SPORTS PERFORMANCE IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN HARARE?

The research found that sports performance among secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare varies significantly and is closely linked to their social background. Overall, students from higher socio-economic backgrounds consistently perform better in athletics due to greater access to quality training, nutrition, and parental support. Conversely, athletes from low-income families face challenges such as limited resources, inadequate support, and psychological barriers, which negatively affect their performance levels.

While independent schools generally offer good facilities and coaching, these advantages do not fully compensate for social disparities. Some talented athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to keep up or sustain participation in sports. The study reveals that although the overall sports performance in these schools is relatively high, underlying social inequalities create uneven opportunities and outcomes among athletes. This highlights a need for targeted support to improve inclusivity and performance for all students regardless of social background.

5.2.2 HOW CAN ATHLETES PERFORMANCE IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SPORTS BE IMPROVED?

The study found that improving athletes' performance in independent schools in Harare requires addressing the social inequalities that limit participation and development. Key improvements include increasing access to quality training and sports equipment for students from low-income backgrounds, ensuring proper nutrition, and providing psychological support to boost confidence and motivation. Enhancing parental and community involvement, especially for disadvantaged athletes, was also identified as crucial.

Furthermore, schools need to implement targeted programs such as sports scholarships, mentorship, and inclusive coaching practices to support talented but underprivileged students. Strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and local organizations can help create a more equitable environment. Overall, a holistic approach that tackles social barriers will improve athletic performance and foster greater equity in independent school sports.

5.2.3 HOW CAN PARENTS BE CONSCIENTISED TO APPRIITATE SPORTS?

The research highlights that parental support plays a vital role in the athletic performance of secondary school athletes, yet many parents from disadvantaged backgrounds lack awareness of sports' importance. To conscientise parents, the study suggests organizing regular workshops and information sessions that educate them on the benefits of sports for physical health, discipline, teamwork, and academic success. Schools can also involve parents in sports events and celebrate student-athlete achievements to build appreciation and pride.

Effective communication between coaches, schools, and parents is essential to keep parents informed about their children's progress and needs. Creating parent support groups can foster peer learning and encourage a positive sports culture at home. By increasing parents' understanding and involvement, athletes are more likely to receive the emotional and logistical support needed to excel in sports.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that social background significantly affects the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare. Students from higher socio-economic families tend to perform better due to greater access to resources such as quality training, nutrition, and parental support. Conversely, athletes from less privileged backgrounds face challenges like limited access to sports equipment, inadequate support, and psychological barriers that negatively impact their performance. Schools' current support systems are insufficient to fully bridge these gaps, leading to unequal opportunities among athletes.

Social inequalities continue to influence athletic performance despite the generally resource-rich environments of independent schools. To promote fairness and maximize the potential of all student-athletes, it is essential for schools to implement targeted interventions addressing the needs of disadvantaged athletes. Enhancing access to resources, increasing parental awareness, and developing inclusive support programs will help reduce the negative impact of social background, fostering a more equitable and successful sporting environment in Harare's independent schools.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher managed to collect data from different angles. However, the researcher found it difficult to get in touch with parents and coaches to discuss the issues pertaining performance of students. The researcher ended up asking coaches at sports festivals and parents who were coming for the festivals.

5. 5 IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings of this study imply that independent schools in Harare need to recognize and actively address the social disparities affecting student-athletes' performance. Schools should develop targeted support programs, such as sports scholarships, provision of equipment, and nutritional assistance, specifically aimed at athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds. Coaches

and school administrators must be trained to identify social challenges and provide personalized mentorship.

Parental engagement programs should be strengthened to raise awareness of the value of sports and encourage active support at home. Collaboration with community organizations and local businesses can help mobilize resources to support underprivileged athletes.

In practice, creating an inclusive sports culture that prioritizes equity over competition will promote fair opportunities for all students. By implementing these recommendations, independent schools can enhance athletic performance and foster holistic development among all student-athletes, regardless of their social background.

5.5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

This study reinforces existing theories on the influence of social determinants on individual performance, particularly within the context of sports and education. It highlights how socio-economic status, parental support, and access to resources shape athletic outcomes, supporting frameworks like the Social Capital Theory and Ecological Systems Theory. The findings suggest that performance is not solely based on talent or effort but is deeply affected by the broader social environment.

The research calls for an expanded theoretical understanding that integrates socio-economic factors into models of athletic development in educational settings. It encourages scholars to consider how inequalities in social background create systemic barriers, influencing motivation, access, and achievement in sport. Future theories should emphasize the intersection of social context and institutional support to better explain disparities in athletic performance among youth in diverse educational environments.

5.5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study highlights several areas for further investigation. Future research could explore in greater depth the specific psychological effects of social background on student-athletes, such as

motivation, self-esteem, and stress. Longitudinal studies would help track how social factors influence athletic performance over time.

Comparative studies between independent and public schools could provide broader insights into how different school environments affect the role of social background. Additionally, research focusing on effective intervention strategies and their long-term impact on reducing social disparities in sports would be valuable.

Finally, expanding the scope to include perspectives of parents, peers, and community stakeholders could deepen understanding of the social dynamics affecting athletes. These avenues would contribute to developing more comprehensive solutions to support disadvantaged student-athletes.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has examined the implications of social background on the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare. The findings underscore that socio-economic disparities significantly influence access to resources, parental support, and overall athletic achievement. Addressing these inequalities is essential for creating a fair and inclusive sports environment.

Recommendations include the implementation of targeted support programs, increased parental engagement, and capacity building for coaches and school administrators to better support disadvantaged athletes. The chapter also highlights the need for ongoing research to deepen understanding and improve interventions.

In conclusion, overcoming the negative impact of social background requires collaborative efforts from schools, families, and communities to ensure that all student-athletes have equal opportunities to succeed and develop their full potential in sports.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Hello, I am researching the impact of social background on the performance of secondary school athletes in independent schools in Harare.

I would appreciate it if you could take some time to answer a few questions please know that your responses will be used only for this research and will remain confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

1. What are your perceptions of how social background influences the performance of athletes at your school?
2. How do you think social background affects athletes' access to resources, such as equipment, training facilities, and coaching?
3. Have you observed any differences in the performance of athletes from different social backgrounds at your school?
4. How do you think social background influences the motivation and attitudes of athletes towards their sport?
5. How do you think social background affects athletes' self-esteem and confidence?
6. Do you believe that athletes from certain social backgrounds are more likely to receive support and recognition for their achievements?
7. Are there any policies or programs in place at your school to address the impact of social background on athletes' performance?
8. How do you think the impact of social background on athletes' performance could be mitigated or eliminated?

