

# The Effect of Sports-Based Interventions on Schoolgirls' Education - Edugirls Project

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## ABSTRACT

This essay explores how sports can empower girls, concentrating on the Huracán FC EduGirls Nigeria Project. Based on empowerment theory, this study investigates the many aspects of empowerment and how they relate to girls' involvement in sports. The paper provides a thorough analysis of the EduGirls Nigeria Project, explaining its conception, process, and results while emphasising the project's revolutionary influence on participants' football abilities, personal development, and academic accomplishments. Using a combination of personal and quantitative data, the study provides convincing insights into the effectiveness of the project by showing that participating girls had excellent academic outcomes, increased football abilities, and exceptional engagement rates. In addition, the project's recognition by community stakeholders and ability to help participants go to secondary education highlights how important it is to support girls' empowerment and holistic development over the long term. In essence, this article presents a nuanced exploration of the transformative potential of sports-based interventions in empowering girls and fostering their holistic development, particularly in low-income communities. Through a holistic approach that integrates sports, mentorship, and educational support, the Huracán FC EduGirls Nigeria Project exemplifies a promising pathway towards gender equality and educational growth.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Girls, Sports, Nigeria, Education, Holistic Development, Huracán FC EduGirls Project, Soccer, Gender Equality, Youth Empowerment.

## INTRODUCTION

Sports is one of the most popular activities in the world and is accepted by people of all ages, genders, abilities, and races. Sports is defined as all forms of sports activities that are usually competitive, through leisure or organized participation, aimed at using, maintaining, or improving sports abilities and skills while providing participants and spectators with entertainment (Fish and Magee in Daniel, 2015). The popularity of sports stems from its benefits, not only at an individual level but also at the national or societal level (Mwisukha, Gitonga & Wanderi, 2017). Numerous scientific findings have shown that sports enhance the physical fitness and health of participants. Since the benefits and importance of sports to the physical fitness of an individual cannot be underestimated, it is understandable that many of those who win medals at both national and international sports competitions are mainly youths, an ideal age for developing an interest in sports.

Participation in sports can also lead to increased empowerment, particularly for women. According to the UNDP (1993) as cited by Abisha and Masocha (2015), participation in various processes that affect one's life enhances influence and control, thus promoting empowerment in economic, social, and political terms. Women involved in sports can ascend to leadership positions at various levels, challenging gender inequalities within the sports community. According to Blackmon (2010), young individuals who participate in physical activities have higher grades and are more likely to graduate high school and college, which could be attributed to the mental sharpness gained by regular exercise. Furthermore, sports serve as a socializing agent that empowers women, offering opportunities to interact with diverse individuals and find positive role models, supporting the social capital theory (Chauraya and Mugodzwa's, 2009). Despite these benefits, female participation in sports, especially soccer, faces significant challenges, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Soccer is

predominantly male-dominated, presenting barriers that hinder female involvement. This paper explores the role of sports, specifically soccer, in empowering girls to become self-aware, academically proficient, and confident individuals. By addressing gender disparities in sports participation, this study highlights the potential of sports-based interventions to promote holistic development and gender equality among youth.

EduGirls Nigeria Project is a transformative initiative that empowers girls aged 8 to 14 in Ota, Ogun State, by combining education and extracurricular activities like sports. The program, which is intended for girls from low-income homes, incorporates sports to improve leadership, teamwork, and confidence. This decision is based on research showing how important sports are for promoting empowerment and breaking gender stereotypes. EduGirls shows how sports not only help people develop their physical abilities but also provide a platform for personal development by fusing theory and practice. This enhances educational outcomes and challenges social norms surrounding gender roles.

The structure of this article is as follows: First, we provide a detailed explanation of what constitutes sport and its role in learning. Next, we explore the barriers to girls' participation in sports and the benefits of engaging in sports within the school environment. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is then discussed, focusing on Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) and the Sport Education Model. Following this, we introduce the EduGirls Nigeria FC, detailing its conception, launch, and development. The methods section covers the intervention design and data collection techniques employed in the study. The results section presents the findings, highlighting the outcomes of the EduGirls project. A thorough discussion on the limitations of the project follows, addressing the methodological, contextual, and practical challenges encountered.

## **Research Objective**

To evaluate the impact of sports-based interventions, specifically soccer through the EduGirls project, on the academic performance, empowerment, and overall development of schoolgirls in Nigeria.

## **Research Hypothesis**

Participation in soccer significantly improves the academic performance, empowerment, and overall development of schoolgirls in Nigeria.

## **What is sport?**

The Cambridge Dictionary defines sport as a game, competition, or activity that requires physical effort and ability and is performed or done according to rules, for fun and/or as a career. Team sports include football, basketball, and hockey (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., "Sport"). Sports is crucial to the healthy development of a child. They constitute a crucial aspect of early child development. In addition to physical skills and abilities, sports are important for children and adolescents as they can implant core values and skills, including teamwork, adherence to rules, respect for others and for themselves, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Sport and Development Organization (SDO), 2016). A number of international conventions have addressed the right to access and participation in sports and play, dating back to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, safe play is a child right as outlined in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international treaties.

## **The Role of Sport in Learning**

Sport plays a crucial role in enhancing academic and career performance among girls. Research indicates that girls who engage in sports activities are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue postgraduate degrees, and achieve higher earnings in their professional careers (Women in Sport, 2016). Furthermore, cooperation in sports has been connected to upgrades in memory and the advancement of fundamental characteristics, for example, discipline and determination, which contribute to improved scholastic execution (Hillman et al., 2008, as cited in Muhammad, 2023). Additionally, genuinely dynamic young ladies will generally encounter better well-being results and, by and large, prosperity, prompting more significant levels of confidence and

body certainty (Women in Sport, 2016). These constructive outcomes of sports cooperation stretch out into adulthood, where people who were dynamic during their early stages are bound to carry on with better and more joyful existences. Thus, integrating sports and physical activity into educational settings not only promotes academic success but also fosters holistic development and lifelong well-being among girls (Women in Sport, 2016).

### Gender Issues in Sports: Barriers to Girl Participation

Gender concerns in sports stem from society's gender dynamics. The literature (Leaman, 1986; Lopez, 1987, as cited by Kremer, Trew, and Ogle 2005) highlights a significant link between masculinity and physical activity, resulting in sports that are largely male-oriented because many men see it as a space to assert or reaffirm their masculinity. Adler, Kless, and Adler (1992) discovered that men prefer games that are highly intricate, competitive, rule-laden, large, and goal-oriented, whereas women choose small, intimate group activities that prioritise enjoyment over competition. This pattern is supported by Canadian youth sports research, which shows that male engagement in team sports is twice as high as female participation, while female participation in individual sports is 50% greater (Valeriotte and Hansen, 1988). Colley et al. (1987) explain this pattern to gender stereotypes, noting that sports regarded as acceptable for girls are often unique, which is why more girls gravitate towards them. Below are some barriers girls face in participating in sports:

1. **Body Image Concerns:** Research indicates that a significant barrier to girls' participation in sports is body image dissatisfaction. According to Youth Sport Trust, Women in Sport (2017), previous research has shown girls between the ages of 11-14 years old, one in four of them are unhappy with their body image, and there is a high potential that the number increases when they reach 14 to 16 years old to one in every three girls.
2. **Prioritization of schoolwork:** Physical activities are mostly prioritized by girls between the ages of 14 and 16 over their schoolwork. School-related commitments and academic pressure can hinder their participation in sports activities, highlighting the need for encouragement and support to maintain an active lifestyle (ACHPER Victoria, 2023).
3. **Low Confidence and Fear of Being Watched:** Girls who engage in physical activity at school often cite low confidence and discomfort with being watched as significant barriers, particularly during the ages of 14–16 years. These feelings of self-consciousness and fear of judgement can deter girls from participating in sports and physical activities (ACHPER Victoria, 2023).
4. **Gender Constraints and Expectations:** Societal gender norms and expectations can negatively influence adolescent girls' involvement in sports. Research suggests that girls may face gender-related constraints and stereotypes that discourage their participation in traditionally male-dominated sports or physical activities. These gender biases contribute to the under-representation of girls in sports and can act as barriers to their engagement (Carey, 2017).

### Benefits of Girls Playing Sports in School

Extracurricular activities are important for student's overall development because they provide opportunities for growth, exploration, and personal enrichment outside of the classroom (TutorRoll, 2024). Participation in athletics, arts, community service, and leadership projects supplements academic studies and helps students develop important skills including communication, teamwork, leadership, time management, and problem-solving. These activities also promote personal development by allowing kids to explore their interests, gain confidence, and form a sense of identity and purpose. Furthermore, extracurricular activities encourage social interaction and networking, which fosters a sense of belonging and community. These activities enrich students' educational experiences by exposing them to a diverse range of interests and opinions. Balancing academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities is critical for kids' well-being and development. The following are the benefits of girls participating in sports. According to the Women's Sports Foundation (2009), as quoted by Oakland High School Athletics (2024), females who participate in sports reap various benefits. Some of these benefits include:

1. Girls who engage in sports experience heightened levels of self-esteem and pride in themselves as they overcome challenges and achieve personal goals through athletic endeavours.
2. Participation in sports fosters the development of math skills among girls, as they learn to strategize, analyze data, and make calculations in the context of sports activities.
3. Sports provide girls with opportunities to cultivate leadership skills, such as communication, decision-making, and teamwork, which are essential for assuming leadership roles both on and off the field.
4. Collaborative participation in sports teaches females the value of teamwork, cooperation, and mutual support, developing a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among teammates.
5. Research indicates that females who participate in sports are more likely to achieve academic success and graduate from high school than those who do not play sports.
6. Teenage female athletes are less than half as likely to become pregnant as female non-athletes (5% and 11%, respectively).
7. Sport teaches females goal-setting, strategic thinking, the pursuit of excellence in performance, and other achievement-orientated behaviours—all of which are key qualities for job success.

## Theoretical Framework

The EduGirls Nigeria project was built on two foundational models: Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and the Sport Education Model. EduGirls Nigeria's project methodology is based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which posits that observational learning allows one to develop an idea of how a new behaviour is formed without actually performing the behaviour oneself.

### Bandura Social Learning Theory (SLT)

A rising number of experts see Social Learning Theory (SLT) as an essential component for fostering desired behavioural change and managing natural resources sustainably (Jeffrey & Muro 2008). The premise of this idea is that social interactions offer us useful lessons. People autonomously learn comparable behaviours by seeing the acts of others. They absorb and copy other people's behaviour after watching it, especially if their observations are gratifying or include rewards linked with the observed behaviour. Bandura defined imitation as the actual duplication of observed motor activities (Bandura 1977). Many of the key notions of traditional learning theory serve as its foundation. This theory is often referred to as a bridge between behaviourist and cognitive learning theories since it considers attention, memory, and motivation. In this sense, Bandura contends that direct reinforcement cannot explain all forms of learning; therefore, he included a social component to his theory, stating that people might learn new abilities and behaviours by observing others. This theory lays out three fundamental criteria for mutual learning, emphasising the need for observation, imitation, and social contact in the learning process. Bandura proved that cognition plays a part in learning, and over the last 30 years, social learning theory has become more cognitive in its understanding of human learning; these ideas are confirmed by Newman's assertion that cognition plays a central role in understanding human learning (Newman B.M. & P.R, 2007). SLT supports the idea that girls can use sports as a means of empowerment in this study. Girls who play sports see role models, engage with their peers, and emulate actions that foster resilience, teamwork, and leadership. This practical application is demonstrated by the EduGirls Nigeria Project, which uses sports as a medium for behavioural and cognitive learning. Through the integration of sports into the curriculum, the program promotes empowerment by allowing participants to develop their confidence, learn life skills, and reevaluate their positions in their communities. Through group learning experiences, this application of SLT shows how relevant it is for bringing about social and behavioural change.

### Sport Education Model

According to Siedentop, Hastie, and van der Mars (2011), the foundation of the Sport Education Model is providing students with a real sports experience that has been modified for the classroom. SE is promoted as



an approach that aligns sport, as one of the appropriate content forms for physical education, with current educational trends in curriculum, whereas traditional approaches to physical education have focused on sport skill acquisition in decontextualised settings (Alexander, online 2008; Brooker, Kirk, Braiuka, and Bransgrove, 2000). The model incorporates several distinct components from different sports, such as preseason stages, competition and championship tournaments, consistent teams, data collection, and celebratory events, into the physical education curriculum (Siedentop, et al., 2011). Following Vallerand's 2007 hierarchical model of motivation, encouragement of fundamental psychological needs leads to higher levels of self-determined motivation. As a result, the Sport Education Model's features and performance standards provide students with a setting where their needs can be met, potentially leading to more self-determined behaviour on the part of the students (Sinelnikov, Hastie, & Prusak: 2007). According to Wallhead, Hagger, and Smith (2010), the model is thus centred on activities that promote autonomy, where students are granted a great deal of autonomy in choosing their assignments for class. Furthermore, these activities give students the chance to enhance their relatedness and socialisation skills because of the required degree of interaction between them (Carlson & Hastie, 1997). Additionally, prior research (MacPhail, Gorely, Kirk, & Kinchin, 2008) has demonstrated that students using this model tend to perceive themselves as more competent (Spittle & Byrne, 2009). The conventional approach to teaching games, on the other hand, is predicated on direct instruction (Metzler, 2011). The fundamental psychological needs of the individuals may be impeded in this model since decisions are solely made by the teacher. Research has demonstrated that the Sport Education Model undoubtedly affects students' social and self-improvement (Hastie, Martinez and Calderón, 2011; Wallhead and O'Sullivan, 2005). Be that as it may, the conventional model of game-based learning depends vigorously on controlling students' ways of behaving, which might sabotage their feelings of relatedness, capability, and independence (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, and ThøgersenNtoumani, 2009). In like manner, various explorations have found that, in physical education, the conventional model is irrelevant to the satisfaction of essential mental requirements and self-decided inspiration (Perlman, 2011; Wallhead and Ntoumanis, 2004). Research suggests that the Sport Education Model improves student satisfaction and enjoyment (Gutiérrez et al., 2013; Kinchin et al., 2004; MacPhail et al., 2008; Perlman, 2010; Wallhead and Ntoumanis, 2004). Several research have also suggested that the Sport Education Model could support students' plans to participate in extracurricular sports (Wallhead et al., 2010; Wallhead, Garn, and Vidoni, 2013).

### **Understanding Empowerment:**

The idea of empowerment, which places personal control over one's life and destiny, is fundamental to playing sports. A wide range of abilities and qualities are included in empowerment, such as the capacity for goal-setting, self-worth, and problem-solving. [++][+] Researchers such as Zimmerman and Rappaport showed the processes that lead to empowerment by underscoring the importance of critical thinking, community involvement, and resource accessibility (Zimmerman, M. A., & Rappaport, J., 1988). [++][+] Empowerment theory stresses the importance of agency, in which people actively take part in the process of making decisions and exercise control over their surroundings. [++][+] Empowerment is complex and includes various parts of both individual and group agency. [++][+] In explaining the importance of self-sufficiency and determination, Zimmerman's highlights the ability to exercise control and influence over one's life decisions for personally advantageous reasons. [++][+] According to Rappaport, empowerment is a dynamic strategy, which places individual control over one's life and future, this is essential to playing sports. [++][+] Abilities and characteristics such as goal setting, self-actualisation, underscoring one's talents, and community involvement are contained in empowerment. [++][+] Empowerment allows people, organizations, and communities to take control of their own lives. These definitions show how empowerment is shaped by social, cultural, and environmental elements and is contextually anchored. This dynamic is demonstrated by the EduGirls Nigeria Project. The program gives girls the opportunity to question gender norms by including sports in its curriculum, which promotes self-assurance, teamwork, and a sense of agency over their futures. This link between empowerment and sports emphasises how active participation results in noticeable improvements in individual and group agency, especially in under-represented areas.

### **EduGirls Nigeria FC: Conception, launch and development**

In 2022, Brace-Up The Young, a non-governmental organization in Nigeria, developed a girls-only focused programme, named "EduGirls Nigeria Project" to empower school girls from low-income backgrounds in

Ogun state low-cost schools to improve their learning outcomes and academic achievements while playing football. The project aimed to achieve a remarkable 30% improvement in these incredible young individuals' literacy and numeracy skills within the first year of the EduGirls Nigeria project. The project was submitted to The Huracan Foundation in Argentina, which became interested in it and funded it with an initial grant of \$2,000, transforming its name to the Huracán FC EduGirls Nigeria project (The Huracan Foundation, nd, "Huracan FC EduGirls Nigeria"). Additionally, the observer is most likely to model the behaviours of people that are most like themselves. This concept provides the core rationale behind the programme's use of football coaches and the BTY team. Soccer is included to enable girls to challenge the Nigerian belief that soccer is a male-only sport. Young female mentors, male 'coaches,' are recruited from Ogun and Lagos states.



Figure 1. Shows a cross-sectional photo of EduGirls Project participants, project leader, coach, and volunteer before a training session at St. Michael Primary School, Ota, Ogun State, in 2023.

### Intervention design

The primary objectives of the EduGirls Nigeria project were to enhance academic performance, physical health, and socio-emotional skills among schoolgirls by providing regular football training, academic support, and mentorship sessions. These objectives align with the project's theory of change, which posits that structured sports-based interventions can empower girls, improve their academic outcomes, and foster holistic development. The EduGirls Nigeria project comprised two weekly structured sessions, each incorporating a blend of football activities, literacy sessions, and mentorship overseen by the team coach. The project aimed to benefit approximately 50 girls from St. Michael Primary School, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria (see fig. 1 and 2). Recruitment of participants was conducted through a football screening session in December 2022, where participants voluntarily participated within the school premises. Football training sessions included soccer drills and friendly matches between teams A and B, promoting teamwork and physical activity. Literacy sessions aimed to improve reading and numeracy skills, while mentorship sessions, led by prominent female leaders, focused on developing essential life skills such as leadership, cooperation, and problem-solving. The intervention enlisted the participation of a football coach, two volunteers, and the project lead. Before commencing their roles, the coach, project leader, and BTY team underwent rigorous training sessions facilitated by BTY faculty and The Huracan Foundation project leaders. These training sessions, spanning a minimum of 250 hours, aimed to equip the team with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver the program.

Participants of the EduGirls Nigeria Project are schoolgirls between the ages of 8 and 14 from Ota, Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State. Although relatively close to Lagos, one of Nigeria's mega-tech cities, Ota exhibits a blend of rural and urban characteristics, with a large portion of the population living in semi-urban conditions. They are mostly from low-income earning families, with most of the parents of the girls engaging in menial jobs, petty trading and rural farmers, reflecting a broad pattern of similar economic

conditions for low-income communities across Nigeria. Parental consent for participation was obtained from the parents and the school was duly informed of the project and the girl's participation. Culturally, a large percentage of the girls belong to the Yoruba ethnic group common in Southwestern Nigeria, though there is also a notable presence of Igbo participants from the southeastern region, adding diversity to the project. This mix of ethnic backgrounds enriches the cultural fabric of the project, emphasizing the project's broad appeal across different ethnic groups in Nigeria.



Figure 2. Shows a cross-sectional photo of EduGirls Project participants before a training session at St. Michael Primary School, Ota, Ogun State, in 2023.

### Data collection

Quantitative and qualitative data like observations, surveys, training attendance, and school attendance were collected throughout the project duration, spanning from December 2022 to December 2023, at St. Michael Primary School. The data collection processes are

- In December 2022, baseline data was obtained through surveys to measure participant reading and numeracy abilities. Additionally, endline observations were carried out to assess the participants' initial physical and social abilities.
- Data was collected on a monthly basis from January to November 2023. Training attendance was documented weekly to measure football participation, while school attendance records were collected regularly to analyse overall school engagement. During each training session, participants' performance was carefully evaluated and documented. In addition, class teachers provided termly academic results in reading and numeracy at the end of each school term in March, June, September, and December.
- Throughout the project, continuous participant observations were made during training sessions to collect qualitative data on the participants' progress and interactions. Participants provided qualitative thoughts through informal interviews and oral input before, during, and following training sessions. Follow-up surveys were conducted quarterly to assess changes in literacy, numeracy, and other developmental variables.
- Final surveys were done in December 2023 to assess the project's impact on literacy, numeracy, and general development. Endline surveys were administered to assess progress in physical, social, and intellectual skills. Final interviews were held with the girls and their teachers to get precise feedback on the project's outcomes.



Quantitative data sources used include attendance records, performance indicators, quarterly academic results, and survey responses. Qualitative data was gathered from observations of the participants and their spoken responses, providing a complete picture of the project's impact. This data-gathering method provided a detailed assessment of the EduGirls project's success in empowering girls and improving their academic performance.

## RESULTS

The EduGirls Nigeria FC initiative was designed with clear objectives and an execution strategy to assess the impact of sports-based interventions, particularly football, on the academic performance, empowerment, and overall development of Nigerian schoolgirls. This section describes the noteworthy outcomes that were seen, demonstrating the effectiveness of the theory of change. The project aims to boost school and training attendance, improve reading and numeracy, and foster important life skills including teamwork, cooperation, and leadership. Throughout the project, significant results were observed in the mission of empowering schoolgirls and improving their academic outcomes, some of which are:

1. An increase of 18% in literacy and 25% in numeracy among the participants shows the positive influence of sports-based intervention on the schoolgirls. Participating in football activities allowed the girls to improve their physical and mental talents, which improved their academic performance. This link between playing football and academic achievement emphasises the project's many benefits and its function in promoting participants' overall development.
2. Successful facilitation of the transition of 20 of the participants to secondary school education after the completion of their primary school. These girls made noteworthy academic progress, indicating the project's long-term effects on their chances for growth and aspirations for further study.
3. The school girls engaged in over 122 football training sessions. These training sessions provided an essential platform for improving their football talents and were crucial in helping the participants strengthen their cooperation, teamwork, and mutual support in addition to their skill set.
4. Apart from conducting training sessions, the project hosted three football-friendly matches. These games gave the girls a chance to show off their abilities, but they also fostered a sense of friendly rivalry and solidarity within the team. These kinds of encounters are quite helpful in helping individuals gain self-assurance and a sense of community.
5. Nine non-football sessions, each featuring group mentorship sessions led by prominent female leaders from within and outside the host community. The purpose of these mentorship sessions was to teach the girls important life skills and values, such as problem-solving, cooperation, leadership, communication, and teamwork.
6. EduGirls Nigeria project also awarded junior secondary school scholarships to seven deserving participants with financial challenges (see fig. 3). Due to this, the awarded girls were able to pursue further education, which created new chances for both intellectual and personal development.
7. Relevant soft skills were developed by the participants because of the five mentorship sessions that were held as part of the project. The mentorship goals were to improve the girls' mental toughness and establish a supportive environment for learning both on and off the pitch by emphasising skills like problem-solving, communication, leadership, collaboration, and teamwork.
8. The project's creative strategy for enhancing girls' education won praise from "Caring Community Creators", a CSR arm of a Nigerian insurance firm and Head of Female Coaches for the Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area's (where the community is located), Ogun State provided more evidence of the project's significance and efficacy. This acknowledgement confirmed the project's efforts to empower schoolgirls through sports-based interventions by highlighting its significance and influence within the community.



Comparative analysis of the theories earlier used and our observed data shows that:

1. The project aligns with the empowerment theory by providing emotional and educational support to girls, promoting their personal and academic growth. Our focus on low-income girls emphasises the importance of developing skills and knowledge to boost self-efficacy. Girls who participated in the project demonstrated improved academic performance and self-esteem, supporting the empowerment theory that education can lead to greater self-efficacy and personal growth. The project furnished the girls with the skills they needed to dream and work towards a better future than their current socio-economic situation.
2. The initiative is in line with the Social Learning Theory, which shows the inclusion of mentors, a coach, and project team members who serve as role models, demonstrating that success and leadership are achievable irrespective of one's background or gender. Project surveys conducted show that girls' aspirations and perspectives on education and community roles have improved. The girls have started to challenge conventional gender norms, as shown by their increased participation in activities such as football, which was traditionally dominated by boys in the school previously. This supports the Social Learning Theory, which underlines the influence of role models on positive behaviour.



Figure 3. shows a cross-sectional photo of the project leader, Obasanjo Fajemirokun, with the seven girls who were awarded a junior secondary school scholarship at St. Michael Secondary School, Ota, Ogun State, in 2023.

### Limitations of the Project

Through sports-based interventions, the Huracán FC EduGirls Nigeria Project has achieved great progress towards empowering schoolgirls. Nonetheless, a number of constraints could affect the project's results' generalizability, efficacy, and durability. Among them are:

1. **Sample Size and Generalizability:** The project included 50 girls from a single school, St. Michael Primary School in Ota, Ogun State. Owing to its limited sample size, this study cannot be generalised for all Nigerian school girls.
2. There were constraints in collecting data, such as relying on self-reported data through surveys and participant observations, which could lead to bias. Also, the data was collected within only one year and hence does not capture long-term trends.
3. The absence of a control group means one cannot attribute positive changes in literacy, numeracy, and similar characteristics entirely to the project; other factors may have affected the results.

4. **Subjective Measures:** While quantitative data on literacy and numeracy were gathered, several outcomes linked to personal growth, self-esteem, and collaboration were subjectively evaluated through observations and feedback. It is difficult to depend on such measures because the tools used were mainly observations from the coaches as against quantitative ones that quantify literacy and numeracy.
5. **Socioeconomic Factors:** The participants are from low-income families, which may have presented additional problems such as restricted access to resources, parental support, and extracurricular activities. The girls' ability to completely benefit from the program may have been further limited by the absence of parental support or understanding of sport as a developmental tool, which may have hampered motivation. These factors can have an impact on both participation and outcomes.
6. **Cultural Barriers:** In Nigeria, football has always been a game for boys, which may have influenced low participation among girls. The deeply rooted gender norms can only be changed through broad cultural interventions other than what is being proposed for this project.

## CONCLUSION

EduGirls Nigeria project's findings highlight the important influence that sports-based interventions have on girls' overall academic development in Ota, Ogun State. Participants' football abilities and personal qualities, such as self-confidence and self-esteem, significantly improved as a result of their active participation in football practice and games. The participant's experiences were further enhanced, and their overall growth was aided by the project's holistic approach, which included non-football activities including mentorship sessions, educational sessions such as literacy sessions for the participants off the pitch, and acknowledgement from community stakeholders. The participants' observed increases in literacy and numeracy of 18% and 25%, respectively, demonstrate the potential benefits of sports-based activities for improving educational results. These findings offer useful results concerning the ability of sports-based interventions to enhance the well-rounded development and self-determination of girls, specifically those living in underprivileged communities. Projects like EduGirls Nigeria have the ability to make a significant difference in the lives of young girls and their communities by identifying and meeting the different needs of participants through a combination of mentorship, physical training, and educational support. Moreover, funding inclusive sports engagement in education institutions for girls fosters a better future for them. In order to promote education and peace for girls, stakeholders are urged to embrace sports as a creative and participative method (Ifere, Ruhamah, 2024). Though the initiative did well in some respects, it had some drawbacks, like methodological limitations such as a small sample size as well as depending upon self-reported information, which may have impacted the reliability and generalisability of findings. Furthermore, contextual and practical factors, such as variable levels of cultural beliefs and socioeconomic factors, created considerable hurdles. Future research should address these limitations by using more robust procedures, such as greater sample sizes and a mixed-methods approach that triangulates data from numerous sources. We may get information on the outcomes of sports interventions on education and emotional growth by the use of long-term assessments. Moreover, future interventions should benefit from a more complete approach that incorporates family and community engagement to support the favourable effects reported. Expanding the scope of mentorship to include a broader range of role models, as well as incorporating technology to better track progress, could improve the effectiveness of such programmes. The project's progress in this area can help future studies follow it up and also help in promoting gender equality and positive growth through sports at large.

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