

## Health and Anti-Aging Benefits of Sports among Women of Siavonga District, Zambia

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**Abstract:** This article is based on the study whose focus was on women's perceptions of health and anti-aging benefits of sports among Women of Siavonga District in Zambia. It provides a basis for the need to intensify the promotion of women involvement in sports. The study was guided by two objectives: i) to establish the types of sporting activities women engaged into; and ii) to establish the health and anti-aging benefits of sports to women in Siavonga district of Zambia. The study used qualitative methods and collected data from 20 women. While 5 of the women lived a sporting life in their traditional community, 15 others were not involved actively in traditional sports of the community. Data was analyzed thematically according to emerging themes. Findings indicated that women played a number of games which were enjoyed by both women and men while others were single sex. Furthermore, while 75% of the sporting identified sporting activities were psychomotor, 25% were cognitive oriented. The cognitive activities included chiyato, nsolo, zindanda and draft and these were what women enjoyed. The anti-aging benefits, as perceived by women, included women's ability to continue looking younger than their age and accepting defeat in a game. These factors kept their blood pressure at easy and ever smiling faces. However, the women did not realize that sports made them look younger than their unsporting friends. The study concluded that sports had anti-aging properties and recommended that women should continue engaging themselves in traditional games which are cheaper to run.

**Keywords:** Traditional Games, Siavonga, Anti-Aging

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Most diseases that women suffer from are preventable, treatable and beatable through sports activities. The benefits of Sports among Women can never be overemphasized. In 2006–07, poor diet-related ill health cost the USD5.8 billion. The cost of physical inactivity was USD0.9 billion. Smoking cost was USD3.3 billion, alcohol cost USD3.3 billion, overweight and obesity cost USD5.1 billion (Scarborough et al, 2011). Many chronic diseases share common behavioral risk factors such as tobacco smoking, unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity and alcohol use (WHO, 2002). Aging causes structural and functional deterioration of almost all physiological systems, even in the absence of apparent disease, resulting in reduced independence and increased incidence and progression of chronic diseases in older adults. It is estimated that up to 80% of heart diseases, stroke and type 2 diabetes and over a third of cancers could be prevented by eliminating those shared risk factors (WHO, 2008).

### 2. LITERATURE

Women and sports seem to be increasingly becoming beneficial to them and their community. Studies by (Tom, 2010 and Liw, 2001) have mentioned that women engage themselves into sports at different

levels. They add that the older the woman becomes, the less the physical engagement into sports. The duo cited martial arts, athletics and games like hockey, basketball and baseball to be games women retire from and contract to less physical games. Other scholars adds that such characteristics automatically affect the women's standing in the society and personal attributes like positions, statuses, leadership as they go behind the active sports. Their positions and strategies might also be influenced by environmental factors, such as weather, the opponent, and the audience or sporting community in their society. It is for this reason that other scholars noted that, "The ongoing interaction and the game progress may then change the environment, individuals, and relationships" (Gill and Williams, 2008: 242).

Another ongoing interaction process of sport teams is social support. Shumaker and Brownell (1984: 13) define social support as "an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient". According to Brewer (2009, p.76) "social support is the coping resource that has been tied most frequently to sport injury". However, social support also plays a major role in important group dynamic issues, like group cohesion. Gill and Williams (2008) cite Rosenfeld and Richmann (1997), who developed a model that includes three broad types of social support. Those three types involve direct assistance (tangible support), advice (informational support), or encouragement (emotional support) (Gill and Williams, 2008). Social support might help athletes to improve self-efficacy and provide them with a feeling of security and belonging. Especially, athletes who suffer a serious injury experience a cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally challenging situation (Loutsch, 2007).

The female indulgency into sports shows that it makes them live a health life and they become responsible of their own actions. A study was conducted in the United States using a nationally representative sample. Findings of the study indicated that adolescent females who participated in sports tended to become sexually active later in life, have fewer sexual partners, and, when sexually active, make greater use of contraception than their non-athletic counterparts (Brady and Khan, 2002). Other findings indicated that sports are generally good for girls and that participation in sports functions as a developmental resource for adolescent girls in ways that positively influence their lives and enables them to live a health and responsible life.

Fredricks and Eccles (2006) asserts that whereas in individual sports youths are setting personal goals, and might even be in competition with the other group members to achieve them, in team sports, youths have to work together and collaborate to reach the same group objectives. Working together enables them to develop a positive attitude towards life. The group composition in team sports might also be more homogenous than in individual sports because a much as one member fails to make it, they relax and pick up their friend and continue with sports life. For skills level and physical development reasons, youths are usually on a team with same age and same sex peers because they find it easy to work together without intimidation. Finally, more cohesion and stronger ties between group members are likely to occur in team sports than in individual sports, as team spirit is needed for the team to work. Such spirit continues even when they get older, the sorts men and women tend to be social in the community since they perceive a loose or a win as a motivating factor to their next decision in life. For this reason, the group dynamics, positive or negative, might have a stronger impact on youths and their older life in this context than in individual sports (Marsh and Kleitman, 2003).

Overall, our results underlined the more intensive nature of peer relationships in team sports compared to individual sports. The more homogenous and cohesive groups in team sports might be a context particularly suited for positive peer interactions and friendships formation, and this is likely to be reflected in peers' adjustment in life even after they retire from sports. In support of this idea, compared to individual sports, Marsh and Kleitman (2003) found evidence of stronger links between team sports and youths' academic and psychosocial outcomes. Kacks, et al., (2002) added that older people with sports background tend to be reserved and enjoy 'social sports' which is more of sports for interaction and entertainment. Furberg and Thune (2003) concludes that this makes them live a longer life than the colleagues who are not involved in sports. In doing so, their life expectancy is extended because of the psychological relaxation which they attain throughout their life time.

In a study conducted by Wen, Wai and Tsai et al., (2011) indicated that thirteen cohort studies presented data on life expectancy in physically active individuals compared to that in physically

inactive control subjects. All studies reported a higher life expectancy in physically active subjects which ranged from 0.43 to 6.9 additional years (mean  $\pm$  one standard deviation, men:  $2.9 \pm 1.3$  years, women:  $3.9 \pm 1.8$  years). Eleven studies considered confounding factors that could affect life expectancy, such as body mass index, blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular and lung diseases, cancer, smoking, or alcohol consumption. The findings then justified that sports was an anti-aging agent in the world of today with the many diseases which surround us.

Other studies by Reimers, Knapp and Reimers, (2012) revealed numerous prospective cohort studies on all-cause mortality in physically active and physically inactive persons, estimates on life expectancy in relation to physical activity indicate additional years of life in active subjects: the conservative estimate of the net increase in life expectancy with physical activity is about 2–4 years but presumably even greater because of the positive influence of physical activity on major risk factors for mortality. The study later concluded that there were positive indications that sports contributed to the body maintenance of its subjects and their age was compromised or they looked younger than their friends who were not involved in sports.

Further, a greater life expectancy is not associated with more years of being frail and depending on assistance. In contrary, Nusselder et al (2008) noted that not all individuals involved in sports realized the importance of the activities they do to their health being and life at all. He further indicated that some sportsmen and women were active in sports for the sake of loving the game and having fun yet they only realized that they never caught certain diseases like stroke and obesity among others during their life time after interacting with a sports psychologist. Their age and life expectancy were actually extended unknowingly.

Reimers, Knapp and Reimers (2012) observed that the few data available on life expectancy in athletes who were much more physically active than the average individual are inconclusive. All studies proved an increased life expectancy in endurance athletes ranging between 2.8 to 8.0 added years. This gain is probably higher than that found for persons performing vigorous physical activity in the cohort studies. In team sports and other sports disciplines, life expectancy may fall below or be above that of the control groups. Life expectancy was therefore related to the nature of social activities an individual got involved into and that brought about anti-aging factors. A sport was therefore, the best medicine for the old growing groups of people in our communities.

### **2.1. Aim**

The aim of the study was to establish the sporting activities women engaged into as health and anti-aging remedies in Siavonga district of Zambia.

### **2.2. Objectives of the Study**

- Establish the types of sporting activities women engaged into in Siavonga district of Zambia.
- Establish the health and anti-aging benefits of sports to women in Siavonga district of Zambia.

## **3. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

A case study design was used and employed qualitative methods of data collection from a population of 20 women. 5 of the women lived a sports life in their traditional community and 15 others were not actively involved in sports. Interviews were conducted which also included demonstrations and observation of the games. The respondents were purposively sampled because they were the ones who had such initiatives of having traditional sporting activities in their local communities which they used to keep themselves fit and active. Data was analysed thematically and presented according to emerging themes in line with the respondents' views on the benefits of sports on health and as an anti-aging remedy.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1. Forms of Sporting Activities in Siavonga District**

The first objective sought to explore the types of games available in Siavonga District as known by women. It was established that women knew a number of sporting activities which were in the community as presented in Table 1 below.

**Table1.** Sporting activities in Siavonga District as Identified by women

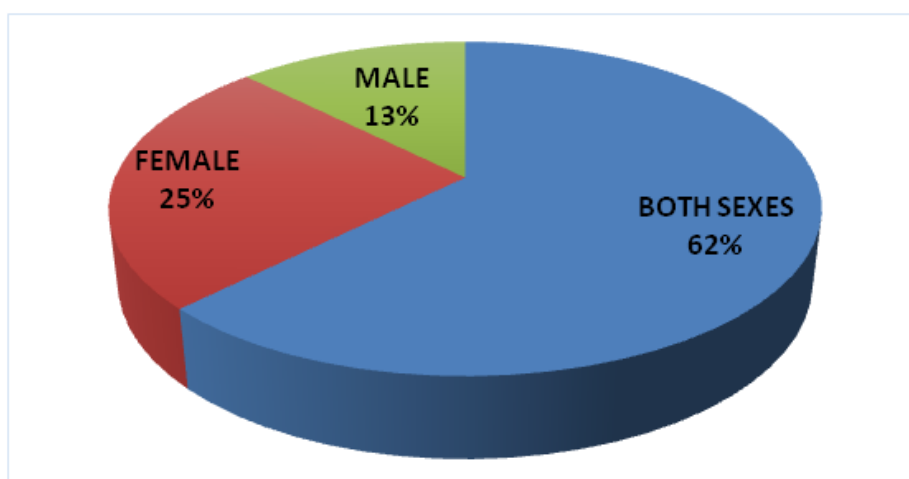
	Tonga names of sports/games	English names (common names)
1	Kuyubana	hide and seek
2	Masabe	A form of dance
3	Bola Iyamaulu	Football
4	Bola Iamanza	Netball
5	Wayida	Jumping game (wider)
6	Kalambe	Touch
7	Sala ngoyandamobola	Partner choosing
8	Kujikilila	Cooking related games
9	Kubumba	Molding
10	Mulabalaba	Calculative game
11	Chiyato	Throwing game
12	Zandanda	Puzzle game
13	Kuzuzana	Running
14	Kuhyana	Dancing
15	Kulwana	Wrestling
	Draft	Draft

The study also sought to identify the composition of sexes involved in the games. The findings were summarized in Table 2 below:

**Table1.** Sex composition of participants in each identified game

	Tonga names	Possible English names	Gender	Both sex
1	Kuyubana	hide and seek		Both
2	Masabe	A form of dance		Both
3	Bola Iyamaulu	Football	Males	
4	Bola Iamanza	Netball	Females	
5	Wayida	Jumping game (wider)	Females	
6	Kalambe	Touch		Both
7	Sala ngoyandamobola	Partner choosing		Both
8	Kujikilila	Cooking related games	Females	
9	Kubumba	Molding		Both
10	Mulabalaba	Calculative game		Both
11	Chiyato	Throwing game	Females	
12	Zandanda	Puzzle game		Both
13	Kuzuzana	Running		Both
14	Kuhyana	Dancing		Both
15	Kulwana	Wrestling	Males	
16	Draft	Draft		Both

The study also sought to establish the types of sports activities that women participated into. The findings were condensed into a pie chart as presented in figure 1 below:



**Figure1.** Sports Activities that women Participated in

It was evident from Figure 1 above that women had more games to play in the community than men did. However, more games were played together as female and men. It was also established that few games were played by men and women in the community out of the many games listed above.

The sporting activities enjoyed by men and women were further divided according to the domain of knowledge and skills which are used in were used in their execution. These games were cognitive and psychomotor in nature. Figure two presented the findings based on the domain of knowledge:

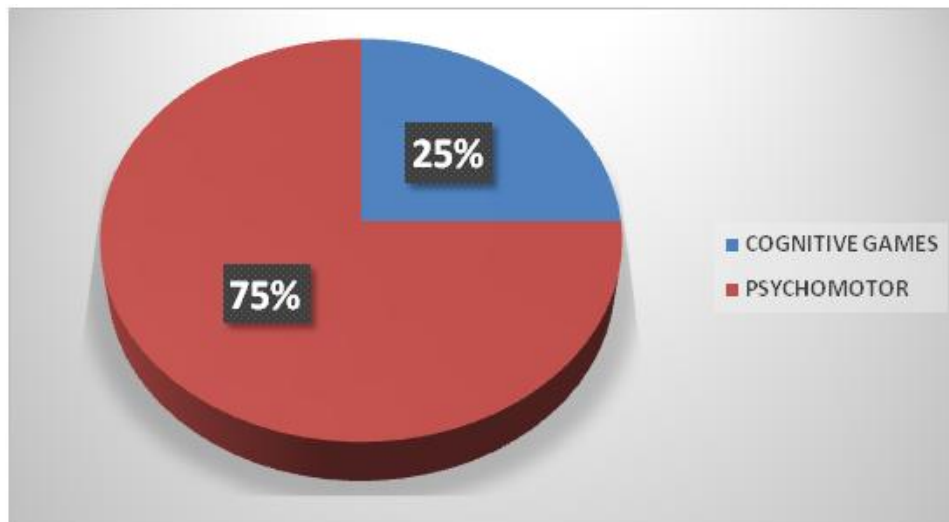
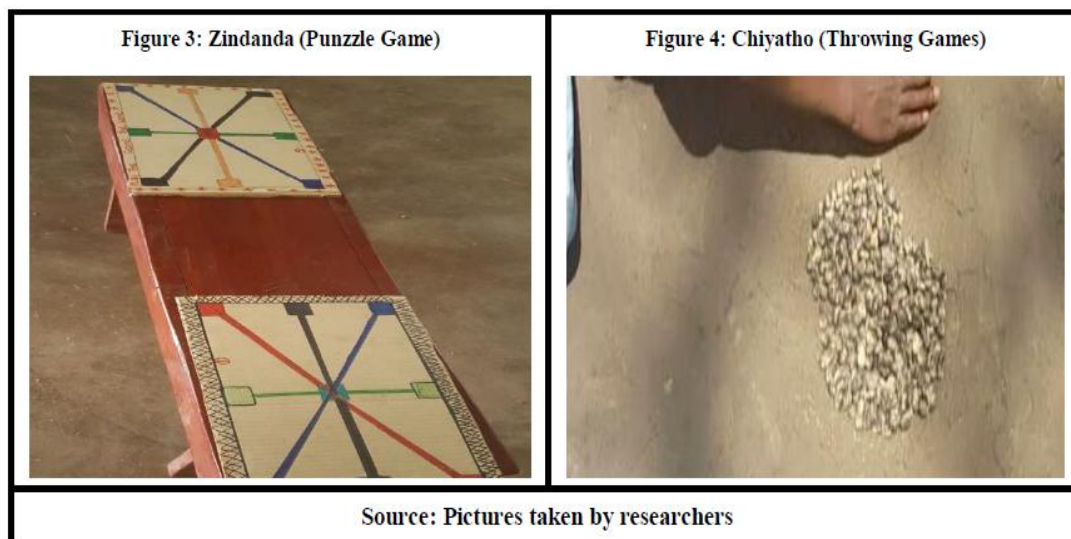


Figure 1: Categories of games based on the domains of knowledge

The findings as shown in figure 2 above indicated that 75% of the sporting activities identified in Table 1 above were psychomotor while 25% were cognitive oriented. The cognitive activities included chiyato, nsolo, zindanda and draft and these were what women enjoyed.

Some sporting activities/games are shown in below:



These were the popular games which were enjoyed by the women in their traditional setting. The games were also being taught to the children who were found enjoying them at the time of the research.

#### 4.2. Anti-Aging and Health Benefits of Sports to Women in Siavonga District

Findings from the women revealed that the games they participated in were usually played from home and with the children. That reason for that was to pass time and be kept active. Responded further alluded to the fact that they played participated in playing games in the afternoons and that was after attending to all their house chores. As one responded retorted: *“We play these games when we are relaxing as friends in this compound. This helps us to remain active in our lives since we no longer play running games.”*

The study further revealed that games made women escape stressful moments. One responded reaffirmed to this argument as follows:

*“I don’t know the last time I had stress of thinking about someone or some situation because I always spend time in sporting activities such as ‘nsolo’ and ‘chiyato’. These two games always keep me thinking of my next move.”*

Similarly, another woman said: *“as much as we spend our time engaging ourselves into sports, we actually forget about our problems in homes which can make you have stroke.”*

The respondents mentioned that the sporting activities they engaged into made them become mentally and physically fit. One respondent said, *“People think that ‘nsolo’ and ‘chiyato’ are simple games and they don’t make someone become fit yet we are fit.”* Another respondent said that,

*“People think being fit it is having muscles and a big chest or sweating all day. When we are calculating our next move, we engage into serious mental activities and there is endurance.”*

The findings indicated that women stopped engaging themselves into much of the physical games and they retired to mental games with age. The youthful and unmarried women were the ones who engaged themselves into physical games and later also retired to less physical and cognitive games like the older and married women.

The findings of the study are supported by Brady and Khan(2002) who indicated that adolescent females who participated in sports tended to become sexually active later in life, have fewer sexual partners, and, when sexually active, make greater use of contraception than their non-athletic counterparts. The dual also indicated that sports are generally good for girls and that participation in sports functions as a developmental resource for adolescent girls in ways that positively influence their lives and enables them to live a health and responsible life beyond their peers of the similar age.

Further findings from some respondents also established that they did not know that the sporting activities they engaged into like nsolo, chiyato and zindanda were good for their healthy. They complained of being tired after the game with long time of thinking and calculating. Later, they appreciated that they gathered together and played the games whenever they were free. These findings were amplified by Nusselder et al (2008) who noted that not all individuals involved in sports realized the importance of the activities do to their health being and life at all. He further indicated that some sportsmen and women were active in sports for the sake of loving the game and having fun yet they only realized that they never caught certain diseases like stroke and obesity among others during their life time after interacting with a sports psychologist. Therefore, their age and life expectance were actually extended unknowingly.

A participant was quick to mention that sports have anti-aging properties when she said *“I always admire how young and energetic my friend looks regardless of the fact that we were both born in the same year.”* Other respondents added another factor. A young lady explained that,

*“My grandmother usually frequents the hospital due to her painful legs, back and the whole body and yet my friend’s grandmother who has been actively engaged in sports activities like ‘masabe’ dances still goes to the fields from morning to sunset and is physically strong.”*

The findings are supported by Reimers, Knapp and Reimers (2012) observed that the few data available on life expectancy in athletes who were much more physically active than the average individual are inconclusive. All studies proved an increased life expectancy in endurance athletes ranging between 2.8 to 8.0 added years. This gain is probably higher than that found for persons performing vigorous physical activity in the cohort studies. In team sports and other sports disciplines, life expectancy may fall below or be above that of the control groups. Life expectance was therefore related to the nature of social activities an individual got involved into and that brought about anti-aging factors. Sports were therefore, the best medicine for the old growing groups of people in our communities.

The response from another participant was that,

*“sports activities such as help me accept defeat when I lose and teach me how to work hard in life to avoid losing, because when you lose the others usually comfort you and council you to accept the outcome by doing so I am always looking for the positive side of life .”*

During the interview one lady submitted that, “*sports bring unity, happiness and sports are a general stress reliever.*” On the other hand another elderly woman expressed her anger that,

“*It is wrong for a married woman to go around jumping and playing all sorts of games, women are supposed to stay home and maintain the house unlike involving herself in useless things.*”

The findings of the study agree with Wen, Wai and Tsai et al., (2011) who indicated that thirteen cohort studies presented data on life expectancy in physically active individuals compared to that in physically inactive control subjects. All studies reported a higher life expectancy in physically active subjects which ranged from 0.43 to 6.9 additional years (mean  $\pm$  one standard deviation, men:  $2.9 \pm 1.3$  years, women:  $3.9 \pm 1.8$  years). Eleven studies considered confounding factors that could affect life expectancy, such as body mass index, blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular and lung diseases, cancer, smoking, or alcohol consumption. The findings then justified that sports was an anti-aging agent in the world of today with the many diseases which surround us.

### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that women were engaged into several sporting activities and they played with males at times. Few were played by women. Women as they grew older, they retired from psychomotor activities into cognitive sports which were nonphysical. The study concluded that some women who were involved in these activities were not aware that the activities had health benefits and anti-aging properties. Traditional games were necessary to help the rural communities in being health since they were not a cost to run and implement. The study recommended that women can be better involved in traditional games in their compounds by sensitizing them on the significance of the various games on their health. This way reduce of the diseases they die from as a result of not being active and maintain their age.

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