

SPORT AND PSYCHOMOTRICITY AS CATALYSTS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: ADVANCING SOCIAL INCLUSION, HEALTH PROMOTION, AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Ochor, D.C., Prof. Amasiatu, A.N. and Jonathan, R.E .

Department of Sport and Exercise Science, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Port Harcourt, Rivers State .

Corresponding Author: daniel_ochor@uniport.edu.ng

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 08 July
Accepted: 09 Aug
Volume: 3
Issue: 4

ABSTRACT

Sport has increasingly been recognized as a strategic instrument for achieving sustainable development through its contributions to social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development. However, empirical evidence on the combined role of sport and psychomotricity in fostering sustainable community development remains limited, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. This study investigated the contributions of sport and psychomotricity to sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria, with emphasis on their influence on social inclusion, health promotion, human capital development, and the mediating role of psychomotor competence. A mixed-methods cross-sectional research design was adopted. Data were collected from 348 respondents (representing an 87% response rate) selected through a multistage sampling technique using structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. The findings revealed that sport participation and psychomotor competence significantly contributed to sustainable community development through social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development ($R^2 = 0.659$, $F = 111.28$, $p < .001$). The SEM results further demonstrated that psychomotor competence significantly mediated the relationship between community sport participation and sustainable community development ($\beta = 0.251$, $p = .001$), indicating that improvements in coordination, balance, body awareness, agility, and motor competence strengthened the developmental impact of community sport. Qualitative findings corroborated the quantitative results by highlighting the roles of community sport in promoting peace, social cohesion, healthy lifestyles, leadership development, youth empowerment, and community resilience, while identifying inadequate infrastructure, insufficient government support, and limited integration of psychomotor programmes as major barriers. The study concludes that integrating structured psychomotor education into community sport programmes can significantly enhance sustainable community development. It recommends increased investment in community sport infrastructure, inclusive sport policies, and multi-sectoral partnerships to strengthen sport-for-development initiatives and accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Rivers State and similar developing contexts.

Keywords: Sport participation, psychomotricity, psychomotor competence, sustainable community development, social inclusion, health promotion, human capital development, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Sport has increasingly transcended its traditional role as a recreational and competitive activity to become a globally recognized catalyst for sustainable development, social transformation, and human well-being. Over the past two decades, international organizations, governments, and development agencies have adopted sport as an effective tool for addressing complex societal challenges, including poverty, social exclusion, unemployment, gender inequality, conflict resolution, and public health disparities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly acknowledges sport as an important enabler of sustainable development due to its capacity to promote tolerance, respect, social inclusion, education, health, and youth empowerment. More recently, the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace (2022–2024) identified community-based sport participation, social inclusion, health promotion, peacebuilding, and sustainable communities as strategic priorities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Similarly, UNESCO's Fit for Life initiative emphasizes that well-designed sport programmes extend beyond physical fitness by fostering social cohesion, resilience, equality, employability, and lifelong learning, thereby positioning sport as a multidimensional investment in sustainable societies (United Nations, 2024; UNESCO, 2024, 2026). Contemporary systematic reviews further demonstrate that sport contributes directly to several SDGs, particularly those relating to health, quality education, reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, and decent work, reinforcing its significance as an interdisciplinary development strategy rather than merely a leisure activity (Baena-Morales et al., 2025).

Complementing the developmental potential of sport is the concept of psychomotricity, a holistic discipline that integrates motor behaviour with cognitive, emotional, social, and neurological functioning. Rooted in developmental psychology, neuroscience, kinesiology, and physical education, psychomotricity recognizes movement as a fundamental medium through which individuals interact with and understand their environment. Structured psychomotor activities enhance gross and fine motor coordination, balance, spatial awareness, executive functioning, emotional regulation, body schema, communication, and social interaction, making them valuable for learning, rehabilitation, health promotion, and lifelong functional independence. Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized that psychomotor competence extends beyond physical proficiency to include psychological resilience, self-confidence, problem-solving ability, and adaptive behaviour, all of which are critical components of human capital development. Within educational and community



settings, psychomotor programmes have been shown to improve school readiness, promote active lifestyles, reduce sedentary behaviour, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and enhance psychosocial well-being across different age groups. Consequently, integrating psychomotricity into community sport programmes offers a comprehensive framework for promoting inclusive participation, healthy living, and social development by simultaneously addressing physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional needs (UNESCO & Loughborough University, 2024; Baena-Morales et al., 2025).

The convergence of sport and psychomotricity has significant implications for community development, particularly in low- and middle-income regions where socioeconomic inequalities, youth unemployment, poor health outcomes, social fragmentation, and limited recreational opportunities remain persistent challenges. In Nigeria, and particularly in **Rivers State**, rapid urbanization, environmental degradation associated with oil exploration, youth restiveness, substance abuse, unemployment, rising incidence of non-communicable diseases, and declining levels of physical activity continue to threaten sustainable development and social stability. Although Rivers State possesses enormous sporting potential, abundant youthful human resources, and vibrant community structures, the utilization of sport as a deliberate instrument for community transformation remains relatively underdeveloped. Community-based sport initiatives that intentionally incorporate psychomotor development could provide accessible and cost-effective interventions for improving physical and mental health, strengthening social cohesion, fostering civic engagement, reducing antisocial behaviour, and developing transferable life skills that enhance employability and productivity. Existing evidence suggests that sport-for-development programmes can build community capacity by strengthening leadership, volunteerism, social networks, civic participation, and local resilience when implemented within culturally appropriate and inclusive frameworks (Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016; UNESCO, 2024; United Nations, 2024).

Despite the growing international recognition of sport and psychomotricity as complementary drivers of sustainable development, empirical studies examining their combined contributions remain scarce, particularly within sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria. Most existing research has investigated sport participation, physical activity, or psychomotor development independently, with limited attention given to their synergistic effects on social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development at the community level. Moreover, few studies have explored how psychomotor competence mediates the relationship between community sport participation and sustainable development outcomes, especially in Rivers

State, where contextual socioeconomic and cultural factors may influence programme effectiveness. This lack of integrated evidence creates a significant knowledge gap that limits policy formulation, strategic investment, and the design of evidence-based sport-for-development interventions capable of maximizing community impact. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how sport and psychomotricity jointly function as catalysts for sustainable community development by advancing social inclusion, promoting healthier communities, and strengthening human capital in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings are expected to contribute to the expanding interdisciplinary literature on sport for development while providing practical evidence to guide policymakers, educators, community leaders, and development practitioners in designing inclusive and sustainable community interventions.

Statement of Problem

Although sport has gained increasing recognition as a strategic tool for sustainable development and psychomotricity has been acknowledged for its role in enhancing physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional functioning, limited empirical evidence exists on their integrated contribution to sustainable community development, particularly in low- and middle-income settings. In Rivers State, Nigeria, persistent challenges such as youth unemployment, social exclusion, physical inactivity, insecurity, substance abuse, and weak community cohesion continue to undermine sustainable development efforts despite the presence of community sport initiatives. Most existing studies have examined sport participation, physical activity, or psychomotor development in isolation, with little attention to their synergistic effects on social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development. Furthermore, the absence of an integrated theoretical and empirical framework linking sport and psychomotricity to community development outcomes has constrained evidence-based policymaking and programme design. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how the integration of sport and psychomotricity can serve as a catalyst for advancing social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development in Rivers State, thereby contributing to the growing discourse on sport for sustainable development.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do sport participation and psychomotor competence contribute to sustainable community development through social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development in Rivers State, Nigeria?

2. How does psychomotor competence mediate the relationship between community sport participation and sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. Sport participation and psychomotor competence do not significantly contribute to sustainable community development through social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. Psychomotor competence does not significantly mediate the relationship between community sport participation and sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods cross-sectional research design to examine the contributions of sport and psychomotricity to sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria. The mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among community sport participation, psychomotor competence, social inclusion, health promotion, human capital development, and sustainable community development. The study was conducted across selected urban and rural communities in Rivers State, Nigeria. The target population comprised community residents, youths, sports coaches, physical education teachers, health professionals, community development committee members, traditional leaders, and officials of relevant government agencies responsible for sport, youth, and community development. A sample of 400 respondents was determined using Cochran's sample size estimation procedure for large populations, of which 348 valid questionnaires were retrieved and analyzed, representing an 87% response rate.

A multistage sampling procedure was employed to ensure adequate representation of the study population. In the first stage, selected urban and rural Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected based on the presence of organized community sport programmes and accessibility. In the second stage, communities within the selected LGAs were selected using stratified sampling to capture geographical diversity. Finally, respondents were selected through simple random sampling. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from validated constructs in previous sport-for-development and psychomotor competence literature. The questionnaire comprised six constructs: Community

Sport Participation (8 items), Psychomotor Competence (8 items), Social Inclusion (8 items), Health Promotion (8 items), Human Capital Development (8 items), and Sustainable Community Development (8 items), measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree. Qualitative data were collected through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) involving community leaders, sports administrators, coaches, health professionals, youth leaders, and government officials, as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with community youths and sport participants to obtain in-depth contextual perspectives on the role of sport and psychomotricity in community transformation.

The research instruments underwent rigorous validation procedures to ensure their psychometric adequacy. Face and content validity were established through expert reviews by specialists in sport psychology, psychomotricity, community development, measurement and evaluation, and research methodology. A pilot study involving respondents from a community outside the study area was conducted to assess the clarity, relevance, and reliability of the instrument. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and all study constructs recorded reliability coefficients above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate Institutional Research Ethics Committee before the commencement of data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the objectives of the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 and AMOS version 29. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and address the research questions. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the contributions of sport participation, psychomotor competence, social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development to sustainable community development. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was subsequently performed to examine the direct and indirect relationships among the study variables and to test the mediating effect of psychomotor competence. Model adequacy was assessed using widely accepted goodness-of-fit indices, including the Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of

Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 alpha level. Qualitative data obtained from the Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Emerging themes were triangulated with the quantitative findings to enhance the credibility, dependability, and overall trustworthiness of the study. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence provided a robust understanding of how sport and psychomotricity function as complementary mechanisms for promoting social inclusion, health promotion, human capital development, and sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings on Community Sport Participation

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I regularly participate in organized sporting activities within my community.	4.11	0.81	Agree
2	Community sporting programmes are easily accessible.	3.86	0.93	Agree
3	Sport encourages active participation among community members.	4.28	0.74	Agree
4	Community sport activities encourage teamwork and cooperation.	4.35	0.69	Agree
5	Sport programmes improve interaction among people from different backgrounds.	4.22	0.77	Agree
6	Community sport promotes peaceful coexistence.	4.17	0.82	Agree
7	Local authorities adequately support community sports.	3.41	1.02	Undecided
8	Sport activities encourage youth engagement in productive ventures.	4.31	0.73	Agree
Grand Mean		4.09	0.81	Agree

The findings indicate that respondents generally perceived community sport participation as contributing positively to community development (Grand Mean = 4.09, SD = 0.81).

Respondents agreed that community sport activities encourage teamwork and cooperation (M = 4.35, SD = 0.69), promote youth engagement in productive ventures (M = 4.31, SD = 0.73), and stimulate active participation among community members (M = 4.28, SD = 0.74). They also agreed that sport programmes improve interaction among people from different backgrounds (M = 4.22, SD = 0.77) and promote peaceful coexistence (M = 4.17, SD = 0.82). Although respondents agreed that they regularly participated in organized sporting activities (M = 4.11, SD = 0.81) and that community sporting programmes were generally accessible (M = 3.86, SD = 0.93), they were undecided regarding whether local authorities adequately support community sports (M = 3.41, SD = 1.02). Overall, the results suggest that

community sport participation is widely perceived as a valuable mechanism for fostering social interaction, cooperation, and youth engagement, although greater institutional support from local authorities is considered necessary.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on Psychomotor Competence (n = 348)

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
9	Sport participation has improved my body coordination.	4.34	0.71	Agree
10	I have better balance because of regular sport participation.	4.26	0.76	Agree
11	Sport activities have improved my motor skills.	4.38	0.68	Agree
12	Sport enhances my body awareness.	4.29	0.74	Agree
13	Sport has improved my reaction speed.	4.17	0.82	Agree
14	I can solve movement-related tasks more effectively.	4.13	0.85	Agree
15	Sport participation improves my confidence in physical activities.	4.41	0.66	Agree
16	Psychomotor activities improve my concentration and decision-making.	4.23	0.78	Agree
Grand Mean		4.28	0.75	Agree

The results in Table 4.2 reveal that respondents generally agreed that participation in sport positively enhanced their psychomotor competence, as indicated by the grand mean of 4.28 (SD = 0.75). Respondents agreed that sport participation improved their confidence in physical activities (M = 4.41, SD = 0.66), motor skills (M = 4.38, SD = 0.68), and body coordination (M = 4.34, SD = 0.71). They also acknowledged that sport enhanced body awareness (M = 4.29, SD = 0.74) and balance (M = 4.26, SD = 0.76). Furthermore, respondents agreed that psychomotor activities improved concentration and decision-making (M = 4.23, SD = 0.78), reaction speed (M = 4.17, SD = 0.82), and the ability to perform movement-related tasks more effectively (M = 4.13, SD = 0.85). The relatively low standard deviation values (0.66–0.85) indicate a high level of consistency in respondents' opinions. Overall, the findings suggest that regular participation in sport contributes substantially to the development of psychomotor competence, reinforcing its importance in enhancing physical performance, cognitive functioning, and overall individual development within community settings.

Table 3: Mean Ratings on Social Inclusion

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
17	Sport promotes unity within my community.	4.37	0.69	Agree
18	Sport reduces discrimination among community members.	4.12	0.84	Agree
19	Everyone has equal opportunities to participate in community sport.	3.95	0.96	Agree

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
20	Sport strengthens relationships among community members.	4.34	0.71	Agree
21	Community sport encourages volunteerism.	4.08	0.87	Agree
22	Sport promotes peaceful conflict resolution.	4.19	0.80	Agree
23	Sport improves community participation.	4.29	0.74	Agree
24	Sport strengthens trust among community members.	4.16	0.82	Agree
Grand Mean		4.19	0.80	Agree

The results presented in Table 4.3 indicate that respondents generally agreed that sport plays a significant role in promoting social inclusion within their communities, as evidenced by the grand mean of 4.19 (SD = 0.80). The highest-rated statement was that sport promotes unity within the community (M = 4.37, SD = 0.69), followed by strengthening relationships among community members (M = 4.34, SD = 0.71) and improving community participation (M = 4.29, SD = 0.74). Respondents also agreed that sport promotes peaceful conflict resolution (M = 4.19, SD = 0.80), strengthens trust among community members (M = 4.16, SD = 0.82), reduces discrimination (M = 4.12, SD = 0.84), and encourages volunteerism (M = 4.08, SD = 0.87). Although respondents agreed that everyone has equal opportunities to participate in community sport (M = 3.95, SD = 0.96), this item recorded the lowest mean, suggesting that inclusiveness could still be improved. Overall, the findings demonstrate that community sport serves as an effective platform for fostering unity, social cohesion, trust, and active civic participation in Rivers State.

Table 4.4: Mean Ratings on Health Promotion

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
25	Sport has improved my physical health.	4.43	0.65	Agree
26	Sport reduces my stress level.	4.28	0.74	Agree
27	Sport improves my mental well-being.	4.31	0.70	Agree
28	Sport encourages healthy living.	4.47	0.62	Agree
29	Sport helps prevent lifestyle-related diseases.	4.25	0.76	Agree
30	Sport increases awareness of healthy behaviours.	4.36	0.68	Agree
31	Psychomotor activities improve emotional well-being.	4.23	0.79	Agree
32	Sport encourages regular physical activity.	4.49	0.61	Agree
Grand Mean		4.35	0.69	Agree

Table 4.4 shows that respondents strongly perceived sport and psychomotor activities as important contributors to health promotion, with an overall grand mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.69). The highest-rated statement was that sport encourages regular physical activity (M = 4.49,

SD = 0.61), followed closely by encouraging healthy living (M = 4.47, SD = 0.62) and improving physical health (M = 4.43, SD = 0.65). Respondents further agreed that sport increases awareness of healthy behaviours (M = 4.36, SD = 0.68), improves mental well-being (M = 4.31, SD = 0.70), reduces stress levels (M = 4.28, SD = 0.74), helps prevent lifestyle-related diseases (M = 4.25, SD = 0.76), and that psychomotor activities improve emotional well-being (M = 4.23, SD = 0.79). The relatively low standard deviation values indicate a high degree of consensus among respondents. Overall, these findings suggest that sport and psychomotor activities make substantial contributions to physical, mental, and emotional health, thereby supporting health promotion as a critical component of sustainable community development.

Table 5: Mean Ratings on Human Capital Development

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
33	Sport develops leadership skills.	4.38	0.68	Agree
34	Sport improves problem-solving ability.	4.22	0.77	Agree
35	Sport promotes discipline and self-control.	4.46	0.61	Agree
36	Sport improves communication skills.	4.29	0.73	Agree
37	Sport prepares youths for employment.	4.11	0.86	Agree
38	Sport enhances teamwork skills.	4.44	0.63	Agree
39	Psychomotor competence improves productivity.	4.26	0.75	Agree
40	Sport contributes to lifelong learning.	4.19	0.81	Agree
Grand Mean		4.29	0.73	Agree

The findings presented in Table 4.5 indicate that respondents generally agreed that sport and psychomotor competence contribute significantly to human capital development, as reflected by the grand mean of 4.29 (SD = 0.73). The highest-rated statement was that sport promotes discipline and self-control (M = 4.46, SD = 0.61), closely followed by the perception that sport enhances teamwork skills (M = 4.44, SD = 0.63) and develops leadership skills (M = 4.38, SD = 0.68). Respondents also agreed that sport improves communication skills (M = 4.29, SD = 0.73), psychomotor competence enhances productivity (M = 4.26, SD = 0.75), and sport improves problem-solving ability (M = 4.22, SD = 0.77). Furthermore, they agreed that sport contributes to lifelong learning (M = 4.19, SD = 0.81) and prepares youths for employment (M = 4.11, SD = 0.86), although the latter recorded the lowest mean among the items, suggesting that respondents perceived room for improvement in linking sport participation to employment opportunities. The relatively low standard deviation values demonstrate consistency in participants' responses. Overall, the findings suggest that sport

and psychomotor competence play an important role in developing leadership, discipline, teamwork, communication, productivity, and other transferable skills that are essential for strengthening human capital and fostering sustainable community development.

Table 6: Mean Ratings on Sustainable Community Development

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
41	Sport contributes to sustainable community development.	4.48	0.61	Agree
42	Community sport reduces youth crime.	4.19	0.82	Agree
43	Sport promotes social stability.	4.33	0.70	Agree
44	Sport strengthens community resilience.	4.29	0.73	Agree
45	Sport improves quality of life.	4.41	0.65	Agree
46	Community sport promotes sustainable economic opportunities.	4.14	0.86	Agree
47	Psychomotor programmes support long-term community development.	4.36	0.68	Agree
48	Government should invest more in community sport and psychomotor programmes.	4.58	0.55	Strongly Agree
Grand Mean		4.35	0.70	Agree

The findings presented in Table 4.6 indicate that respondents perceived sport and psychomotor programmes as important drivers of sustainable community development, as reflected by the grand mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.70). The highest-rated statement was that government should invest more in community sport and psychomotor programmes (M = 4.58, SD = 0.55), indicating strong consensus regarding the need for increased public investment in sport-based community development initiatives. Respondents also agreed that sport contributes to sustainable community development (M = 4.48, SD = 0.61), improves quality of life (M = 4.41, SD = 0.65), supports long-term community development through psychomotor programmes (M = 4.36, SD = 0.68), promotes social stability (M = 4.33, SD = 0.70), and strengthens community resilience (M = 4.29, SD = 0.73). Furthermore, respondents agreed that community sport reduces youth crime (M = 4.19, SD = 0.82) and promotes sustainable economic opportunities (M = 4.14, SD = 0.86), although the latter recorded the lowest mean, suggesting that greater efforts are needed to maximize the economic benefits of community sport initiatives. The relatively low standard deviation values indicate a high degree of agreement among respondents. Overall, the findings demonstrate that respondents viewed sport and psychomotricity as strategic instruments for enhancing social well-being, strengthening community resilience, improving quality of life, and advancing sustainable community development in Rivers State.

Table 4.7: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interview (KII) Responses on Community Sport Participation

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Current State of Community Sport Participation	Level of participation	Most participants described community sport participation as moderately active, with increased involvement during festivals, local tournaments, and community celebrations. However, participation was reported to decline due to irregular sporting programmes and inadequate institutional support.	Community sport remains an important avenue for social interaction and youth engagement but lacks sustainability due to inconsistent organization and support.
	Popular sporting activities	Football was identified as the most widely played sport, followed by athletics, volleyball, basketball, traditional wrestling, table tennis, and recreational fitness activities.	Football dominates community sport participation, while other sporting activities receive comparatively less attention.
Types of Sporting Programmes Organized	Organized programmes	Participants reported that common programmes include inter-community football competitions, youth leagues, school sports festivals, athletics competitions, recreational fitness sessions, cultural sporting festivals, and occasional sports events sponsored by government agencies, religious organizations, and private companies.	Community sport programmes are predominantly competition-oriented with limited diversity in structured developmental activities.
	Psychomotor activities	Most informants indicated that structured psychomotor programmes focusing on coordination, balance, agility, body awareness, and motor competence were largely absent from community sporting activities.	Psychomotor development is not yet systematically integrated into existing community sport programmes.
Factors Influencing Community Sport Participation	Facilitating factors	Participants identified health benefits, recreation, talent discovery, social interaction, youth empowerment, community recognition, and opportunities for competition as major motivators for participation.	Positive social and health outcomes encourage greater community involvement in sport.

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Accessibility of Sporting Facilities	Barriers	Key barriers included inadequate sporting facilities, insufficient funding, poor maintenance of infrastructure, lack of qualified coaches, insecurity, unemployment, cultural restrictions, academic and work commitments, and limited government support.	Structural, economic, and social constraints continue to hinder widespread participation in community sport.
	Availability of facilities	Respondents reported that some urban communities possess football fields, school playgrounds, and multipurpose courts, whereas many rural communities have limited or no functional sporting facilities.	Access to sporting infrastructure remains uneven across communities in Rivers State.
	Quality and accessibility	Existing facilities were described as poorly maintained, overcrowded, inadequately equipped, and often inaccessible to the public. Participants recommended increased government investment in modern community sport infrastructure and regular maintenance of existing facilities.	Improving the availability, quality, and accessibility of sporting facilities would enhance sport participation, psychomotor development, and sustainable community development.

The key informant interviews revealed four major themes: the current state of community sport participation, the types of sporting programmes organized, factors influencing participation, and the accessibility of sporting facilities. Overall, respondents acknowledged that community sport contributes to youth engagement, social interaction, and community cohesion. However, they emphasized that inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, irregular programming, and the absence of structured psychomotor activities continue to constrain the full potential of sport as a catalyst for sustainable community development in Rivers State. These qualitative findings complement the quantitative results by providing contextual explanations for the observed patterns of community sport participation.

Table 4.8: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interview (KII) Responses on Psychomotricity

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Integration of Psychomotricity into Community Sport Programmes	Programme design	Most participants reported that existing community sport programmes were not deliberately designed to develop psychomotor skills such as coordination, balance, agility, body awareness, and motor planning. They noted that psychomotor improvements occurred naturally through participation rather than through structured training.	Community sport programmes in Rivers State provide incidental rather than intentional psychomotor development, indicating the need for structured psychomotor interventions.
	Awareness of psychomotricity	Several informants indicated that coaches, community leaders, and programme organizers had limited knowledge of psychomotricity as a specialized approach to movement and holistic development.	Limited awareness among stakeholders has constrained the deliberate integration of psychomotricity into community sport programmes.
Importance of Psychomotor Development for Healthy Lifestyles	Physical health	Participants unanimously agreed that psychomotor development enhances coordination, balance, flexibility, posture, body control, and overall physical fitness, thereby encouraging lifelong participation in physical activity.	Psychomotor competence was perceived as fundamental to improving physical health and preventing sedentary lifestyles.
	Cognitive and psychosocial benefits	Informants observed that psychomotor activities improve concentration, confidence, emotional regulation, decision-making, teamwork, self-esteem, and social interaction, particularly among children and young people.	Participants recognized psychomotricity as a holistic approach that supports cognitive, emotional, and social development alongside physical health.
Psychomotor Activities Incorporated into	Common activities	Respondents identified activities such as agility drills, balance exercises, relay races, obstacle courses, skipping,	Existing community sports include several psychomotor-related activities, although

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Community Sports		coordination drills, ball control exercises, jumping activities, stretching exercises, and warm-up routines as common components of community sport programmes.	these are often implemented without explicit developmental objectives.
	Need for structured programmes	Many participants recommended introducing structured psychomotor training sessions into community sport programmes through qualified coaches, physical education specialists, and community fitness instructors. They emphasized that such programmes should target children, adolescents, adults, older persons, and individuals with disabilities.	Participants strongly supported integrating structured psychomotor programmes into community sport initiatives to maximize health, educational, and developmental outcomes.

The key informant interviews revealed that although community sport programmes in Rivers State inadvertently promote psychomotor development through activities such as agility drills, balance exercises, coordination tasks, and ball-control training, they are generally not intentionally designed to develop psychomotor competence. Participants unanimously acknowledged the importance of psychomotor development in promoting healthy lifestyles, improving physical fitness, enhancing cognitive functioning, strengthening emotional well-being, and fostering social interaction. However, limited awareness of psychomotricity among programme organizers and the absence of structured psychomotor training were identified as major challenges. Overall, respondents recommended the deliberate integration of psychomotor education into community sport programmes as a strategy for advancing health promotion, human capital development, and sustainable community development in Rivers State.

Table 9: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interview (KII) Responses on Social Inclusion

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Sport as a Tool for Community Unity	Social cohesion and unity	Most participants stated that community sport has strengthened unity by bringing together individuals from different ethnic, religious, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue common goals. Sporting competitions were reported to foster friendship, mutual respect, teamwork, and peaceful coexistence among community members.	Community sport serves as an effective platform for promoting social cohesion, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and fostering peaceful coexistence within diverse communities.
	Community engagement	Informants noted that sporting events encourage active participation of youths, adults, traditional leaders, women, and community organizations, thereby strengthening collective identity and community ownership.	Community sport enhances civic engagement and reinforces a shared sense of belonging among residents.
Reduction of Discrimination and Social Exclusion	Inclusive participation	Participants generally agreed that sport programmes have reduced social exclusion by providing equal opportunities for individuals to participate regardless of ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background. They observed that team-based activities encourage acceptance, cooperation, and mutual understanding among participants.	Sport promotes inclusiveness by creating environments where individuals interact and collaborate irrespective of social differences.
	Existing barriers	Despite these achievements, several informants acknowledged that some barriers remain, including financial constraints, inadequate facilities, cultural stereotypes, and limited opportunities for persons with disabilities and marginalized populations.	Although community sport has reduced discrimination to some extent, structural and social barriers continue to limit full inclusion of all population groups.



Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Gender Inclusion and Participation of Vulnerable Groups	Women's participation	Participants indicated that female participation in community sport has increased over time through school competitions, women's football, volleyball, athletics, and awareness campaigns. However, they reported that cultural norms and family responsibilities still discourage some women and girls from active participation.	Progress has been made toward gender inclusion, but sociocultural barriers continue to affect female participation in community sport.
	Participation of vulnerable groups	Informants observed that children, older adults, and persons with disabilities have limited opportunities to participate in organized community sports because of inadequate adaptive facilities, insufficient specialized programmes, and limited government support. They recommended developing inclusive sport policies and accessible facilities for all community members.	Greater investment in inclusive sport infrastructure and targeted programmes is required to improve participation among vulnerable and marginalized populations.

The qualitative findings indicate that community sport has made significant contributions to social inclusion by promoting unity, strengthening social cohesion, encouraging teamwork, and fostering peaceful interactions among people from diverse backgrounds in Rivers State. Respondents acknowledged that sport programmes have helped reduce discrimination and social exclusion by creating opportunities for collective participation and community engagement. Nevertheless, participants emphasized that financial limitations, inadequate infrastructure, cultural beliefs, and insufficient support for women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups continue to hinder full inclusiveness. Overall, the interviews suggest that expanding inclusive sport policies, improving access to facilities, and intentionally designing programmes for marginalized populations would further strengthen the role of sport and psychomotricity in advancing sustainable community development.

Table 10: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interview (KII) Responses on Health Promotion

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Health Benefits of Community Sport Participation	Physical health improvement	Most participants observed that regular participation in community sports improved physical fitness, cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, coordination, balance, and overall physical functioning. They further noted reductions in obesity, hypertension risk, and other lifestyle-related health conditions among regular participants.	Community sport was widely perceived as an effective strategy for improving physical health and preventing non-communicable diseases.
	Functional capacity	Informants reported that regular sporting activities enhanced body coordination, mobility, agility, and physical independence across different age groups, particularly among children and young adults.	Community sport contributes to improved functional ability and supports healthy ageing and lifelong physical activity.
	Promotion of healthy behaviours	Participants indicated that sport encouraged regular physical activity, healthy eating habits, self-discipline, and positive lifestyle choices while discouraging sedentary behaviour. Many believed that youths engaged in sports were less likely to become involved in smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, substance abuse, cultism, and other risky behaviours.	Community sport promotes healthy behavioural choices and serves as a preventive strategy against unhealthy lifestyles and social vices.
Reduction of Unhealthy Lifestyles	Disease prevention	Several respondents noted that increased physical activity through sport contributed to preventing obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity.	Sport was viewed as a cost-effective public health intervention for reducing the burden of lifestyle-related diseases.
	Psychological well-being	Participants consistently reported that regular sport participation reduced stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and emotional tension while improving happiness, self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and emotional resilience. They	Community sport enhances mental health by strengthening emotional well-being, psychological resilience, and life satisfaction.

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
		emphasized that sport provided opportunities for relaxation, recreation, and positive social interaction.	
	Social support and belonging	Informants explained that participation in sport strengthened friendships, peer support, teamwork, and community belonging, thereby reducing social isolation and improving emotional adjustment among participants.	The social environment created through community sport contributes significantly to positive mental health outcomes and emotional well-being.

The key informant interviews revealed that community sport plays a significant role in health promotion by improving physical fitness, enhancing functional capacity, and reducing the risk of lifestyle-related diseases. Participants emphasized that regular sport participation encourages healthy behaviours, discourages sedentary lifestyles and risky behaviours such as substance abuse, and contributes to the prevention of chronic health conditions. Furthermore, respondents consistently highlighted the psychological benefits of sport, including reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, alongside improved self-esteem, emotional resilience, and social connectedness. Overall, the qualitative findings demonstrate that community sport and psychomotor-related activities constitute important public health strategies capable of promoting holistic physical, mental, and emotional well-being, thereby supporting sustainable community development in Rivers State.

Table 11: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interview (KII) Responses on Human Capital Development

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Sport and Leadership Development	Leadership skills	Most participants reported that community sport has significantly contributed to the development of leadership qualities among youths by providing opportunities to serve as team captains, coaches, peer mentors, and event coordinators. These roles were said to enhance responsibility, confidence,	Community sport provides practical leadership experiences that foster responsible citizenship, confidence, and youth empowerment.



Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Acquisition of Employability and Life Skills	Civic engagement	accountability, initiative, and the ability to motivate others. Informants noted that youths involved in sports frequently participated in organizing competitions, community service activities, and volunteer programmes, thereby strengthening their commitment to community development and civic responsibility.	Sport promotes active citizenship by encouraging leadership, volunteerism, and community engagement among young people.
	Transferable skills	Participants identified several employability skills developed through sport, including time management, problem-solving, adaptability, resilience, conflict resolution, planning, organizational ability, and goal setting. These competencies were considered valuable in education, employment, and entrepreneurship.	Community sport enhances human capital by equipping participants with transferable skills that improve employability and lifelong productivity.
	Career opportunities	Several respondents indicated that sport creates opportunities for careers in coaching, officiating, fitness instruction, sports administration, event management, sports journalism, and entrepreneurship. However, they noted that inadequate funding and limited investment continue to restrict employment opportunities within the sport sector.	Sport has considerable potential to generate employment and entrepreneurship opportunities when supported by appropriate policies and investment.
	Personal development	Informants consistently reported that participation in sport cultivates discipline, self-control, commitment, perseverance, punctuality, respect for rules, and ethical behaviour through regular training and competition.	Sport promotes positive behavioural attributes that contribute to personal growth and responsible social conduct.

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
	Interpersonal and cognitive skills	Participants observed that sport improves teamwork, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and decision-making by requiring individuals to work collectively, solve problems under pressure, and make timely decisions during training and competition. These competencies were regarded as essential for success in both personal and professional settings.	Community sport strengthens interpersonal and cognitive competencies that are fundamental to effective teamwork, leadership, workplace performance, and sustainable human capital development.

The findings from the key informant interviews indicate that community sport makes substantial contributions to human capital development by nurturing leadership, strengthening civic engagement, and developing transferable life and employability skills among participants. Respondents emphasized that sport provides practical opportunities for youths to assume leadership roles, develop responsibility, and participate actively in community affairs. In addition, sport was perceived as an effective platform for acquiring essential competencies such as discipline, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, resilience, and time management, which are valuable for education, employment, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. Although participants acknowledged the employment potential of the sport sector, they highlighted inadequate investment, limited infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support as barriers to maximizing these opportunities. Overall, the qualitative findings demonstrate that sport and psychomotricity contribute meaningfully to the development of human capital, thereby enhancing individual productivity and supporting sustainable community development in Rivers State.

Table 12: Thematic Analysis of Key Informant Interview (KII) Responses on Sustainable Community Development

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Sport as a Catalyst for Peace and Community Cohesion	Peacebuilding	Most participants stated that sport has served as an effective platform for promoting peaceful coexistence by bringing	Community sport promotes peace by fostering social interaction, mutual understanding, and

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Reduction of Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour	Community cohesion	together individuals from diverse ethnic, religious, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Community sporting events were reported to encourage dialogue, mutual respect, teamwork, tolerance, and conflict resolution while strengthening interpersonal relationships.	harmonious coexistence among diverse groups within the community.
		Informants emphasized that sporting activities strengthen social bonds, increase community participation, and enhance collective identity by encouraging residents to work together toward common goals. Sporting competitions were viewed as opportunities for celebrating cultural diversity and reinforcing community solidarity.	Sport enhances community cohesion by strengthening social capital, trust, and a shared sense of belonging among community members.
		Participants consistently reported that regular participation in sport keeps young people meaningfully engaged during their leisure time, thereby reducing idleness and exposure to negative peer influences. Many believed that organized sport discourages involvement in cultism, drug abuse, violence, theft, and other antisocial behaviours.	Community sport serves as a preventive strategy against youth crime by providing constructive recreational opportunities and positive social environments.
	Character development	Respondents noted that sport instills discipline, respect for rules, self-control, responsibility, and ethical behaviour, all of which contribute to reducing deviant behaviour among youths.	Sport contributes to behavioural transformation by promoting positive values and responsible citizenship.

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
Contribution to Community Development Initiatives	Social and economic development	Informants observed that sport contributes to community development by improving public health, strengthening volunteerism, creating opportunities for talent identification, encouraging youth empowerment, stimulating local economic activities during sporting events, and enhancing community participation in development programmes.	Community sport supports sustainable development through improvements in health, social participation, local economic activities, and human capital formation.
	Capacity building	Participants indicated that community sport provides opportunities for leadership development, skill acquisition, mentoring, and community mobilization, thereby strengthening local institutional capacity and promoting sustainable grassroots development.	Sport enhances community capacity by developing leadership, organizational skills, and community participation in development processes.
Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Community Sport and Psychomotor Programmes	Government investment	Participants strongly recommended increased government funding for community sport infrastructure, regular maintenance of sporting facilities, provision of equipment, employment of qualified coaches, and inclusion of psychomotor education within community sport programmes.	Increased public investment is essential for expanding access to quality community sport and psychomotor programmes across Rivers State.
	Policy and institutional support	Informants advocated the development of comprehensive state policies that integrate sport and psychomotricity into community development strategies. They further recommended public-private partnerships, capacity-building programmes for	Sustainable community development requires coordinated policy implementation, institutional collaboration, inclusive programming, and evidence-based management of



Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Responses from Participants	Interpretation
		coaches, inclusive sport policies for women and persons with disabilities, continuous community awareness campaigns, and regular monitoring and evaluation of sport-for-development initiatives.	community sport initiatives.

The qualitative findings demonstrate that community sport plays a vital role in advancing sustainable community development in Rivers State by promoting peace, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering a shared sense of belonging among community members. Participants consistently reported that organized sport provides constructive opportunities for youth engagement, thereby reducing idleness, crime, substance abuse, and other forms of antisocial behaviour while promoting discipline, responsibility, and positive social values. In addition, respondents highlighted the contributions of sport to public health, leadership development, volunteerism, local economic activities, and community capacity building, all of which support sustainable development at the grassroots level. To maximize these benefits, participants recommended increased government investment in sporting infrastructure, the integration of structured psychomotor programmes into community sport initiatives, the training of qualified personnel, inclusive policies targeting women and vulnerable populations, stronger public-private partnerships, and the establishment of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Collectively, these findings underscore the strategic importance of sport and psychomotricity as complementary instruments for achieving sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One

H0₁: Sport participation and psychomotor competence do not significantly contribute to sustainable community development through social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4.13: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Contributions of Sport Participation and Psychomotor Competence to Sustainable Community Development (n = 348)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	0.812	0.659	0.653	0.421	111.28	0.000*

The regression model was statistically significant ($F(5,342) = 111.28, p < .001$), indicating that the predictor variables jointly explained a significant proportion of the variance in sustainable community development. The model accounted for 65.9% of the variation in sustainable community development ($R^2 = 0.659$), suggesting substantial explanatory power. Since the significance value ($p = 0.000$) was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 15: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results for the Mediating Role of Psychomotor Competence (n = 348)

Structural Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Decision
Community Sport Participation → Psychomotor Competence	0.642	0.058	11.07	0.000*	Significant
Psychomotor Competence → Sustainable Community Development	0.391	0.063	6.21	0.000*	Significant
Community Sport Participation → Sustainable Community Development (Direct Effect)	0.318	0.061	5.18	0.000*	Significant
Community Sport Participation → Psychomotor Competence → Sustainable Community Development (Indirect Effect)	0.251	0.041	—	0.001*	Significant

Significant at $p < .05$.

The Structural Equation Model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.14$, CFI = 0.963, TLI = 0.956, RMSEA = 0.057, SRMR = 0.046). The indirect effect of community sport participation on sustainable community development through psychomotor competence was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.251, p = 0.001$). Since the p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The first major finding of this study revealed that sport participation and psychomotor competence significantly contributed to sustainable community development through social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development in Rivers State, Nigeria. This

finding is consistent with contemporary evidence demonstrating that sport functions as an important driver of sustainable development by promoting health, education, social inclusion, economic participation, and community resilience (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2024). The multiple regression analysis showed that the predictor variables jointly explained a substantial proportion of the variance in sustainable community development, indicating that community sport extends beyond recreation to function as a multidimensional instrument for social transformation. Similar conclusions have been reported in recent systematic reviews, which found that organized sport enhances social capital, strengthens community cohesion, improves health outcomes, and promotes civic engagement when implemented within structured development programmes (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; Filges et al., 2024). This finding is also consistent with growing evidence positioning sport as a strategic mechanism for achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those relating to good health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2024). Recent systematic reviews have further demonstrated that well-designed sport programmes promote physical and mental health, strengthen social cohesion, reduce inequalities, prevent non-communicable diseases, and facilitate community empowerment, thereby making substantial contributions to sustainable development outcomes (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; Thurm et al., 2024). Similarly, UNESCO's *Fit for Life* initiative identifies grassroots sport as an effective strategy for addressing physical inactivity, mental health challenges, inequality, youth unemployment, and social exclusion while simultaneously developing leadership, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills among young people (UNESCO, 2024). The present findings are further supported by evidence showing that sport-for-development interventions strengthen community participation, civic engagement, leadership development, and social capital when programmes are intentionally designed to achieve developmental objectives rather than merely competitive outcomes (Filges et al., 2024; Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016). These findings also corroborate the assumptions of the Social Ecological Model, which proposes that supportive social and community environments positively influence health behaviours and well-being, as well as the Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes that investments in individual competencies and skills enhance productivity and socioeconomic development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Becker, 1993). Therefore, the significant contribution of sport participation and psychomotor competence observed in this study reinforces the growing

international consensus that community sport represents a viable, inclusive, and cost-effective strategy for promoting sustainable development, particularly within low- and middle-income countries (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2024).

The second major finding established that psychomotor competence significantly mediated the relationship between community sport participation and sustainable community development. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis demonstrated that participation in community sport significantly enhanced psychomotor competence, which subsequently exerted a significant positive influence on sustainable community development. This finding implies that the developmental benefits of community sport are not solely attributable to participation itself but are substantially strengthened through improvements in coordination, balance, agility, body awareness, motor planning, reaction time, executive functioning, and decision-making, all of which are essential components of physical literacy and lifelong functional competence (Whitehead, 2019; UNESCO, 2024). These psychomotor competencies enhance individuals' capacity to participate effectively in education, employment, community engagement, and lifelong physical activity, thereby contributing to healthier and more productive communities (UNESCO, 2024; Baena-Morales et al., 2025). The finding further aligns with recent evidence emphasizing that physical literacy and psychomotor competence constitute foundational capacities for lifelong health, psychological well-being, resilience, and social participation (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2024). Recent systematic reviews have also shown that organized sport and movement-based interventions improve psychosocial adjustment, self-confidence, emotional regulation, motor competence, and social skills among children and young people, particularly those exposed to adverse social conditions (Filges et al., 2024). Furthermore, structured sport programmes have been associated with improvements in behavioural regulation, responsibility, teamwork, and other transferable life skills that contribute to positive developmental trajectories (Almeida et al., 2025; Filges et al., 2024). These findings support the principles of the Positive Youth Development Theory, which argues that appropriately designed sport environments foster competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring while simultaneously complementing the Human Capital Theory, which recognizes psychomotor competence as an investment in individual capability, productivity, and long-term socioeconomic development (Lerner et al., 2019; Becker, 1993). Consequently, the mediating role of psychomotor competence demonstrated in this study suggests that community sport initiatives in Rivers State should deliberately integrate structured psychomotor education to

maximize developmental outcomes, improve human capital, and strengthen sustainable community development (UNESCO, 2024; Baena-Morales et al., 2025).

The third major finding demonstrated that social inclusion, health promotion, and human capital development collectively served as critical pathways through which sport and psychomotricity advanced sustainable community development. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that community sport strengthened unity, promoted peaceful coexistence, enhanced physical and mental health, developed leadership capacity, improved teamwork and communication, and reduced youth engagement in antisocial behaviours. These findings are consistent with contemporary evidence showing that community-based sport programmes promote social cohesion, improve public health, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and foster civic participation when implemented within inclusive and development-oriented frameworks (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016). Participants also emphasized that sport encouraged volunteerism, civic engagement, community resilience, and employability skills, thereby contributing to long-term community sustainability, a finding that is supported by UNESCO's recognition of sport as a driver of inclusive growth, resilience, and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2024). Furthermore, recent systematic reviews have reported that sport-based interventions improve social integration, strengthen interpersonal trust, reduce discrimination, and enhance inclusion among disadvantaged and marginalized populations (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; Filges et al., 2024). Likewise, recent reviews on Positive Youth Development have demonstrated that structured sport environments significantly enhance leadership, responsibility, youth empowerment, community engagement, and personal development when supported by intentional educational practices (Almeida et al., 2025). Contemporary scholarship further argues that effective sport-for-development programmes intentionally integrate education, health promotion, psychosocial support, and community participation into sport activities to maximize developmental impact and sustainability (Baena-Morales et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2024). Nevertheless, the qualitative findings also identified persistent barriers, including inadequate sporting infrastructure, insufficient government investment, limited awareness of psychomotricity, and shortages of qualified personnel, all of which constrain the full realization of sport's developmental potential. Similar implementation challenges have been identified in international sport-for-development literature, where inadequate infrastructure, limited institutional capacity, and weak policy coordination continue to reduce programme effectiveness, particularly in developing countries (Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016; UNESCO,

2024). Therefore, these findings underscore the need for integrated state policies that combine sport, psychomotricity, education, health, and community development within a unified framework capable of accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals in Rivers State and other comparable developing contexts (United Nations, 2015; Baena-Morales et al., 2025).

Conclusion

This study concludes that sport and psychomotricity are significant catalysts for sustainable community development in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that community sport participation, supported by psychomotor competence, significantly enhances social inclusion, promotes physical and mental health, strengthens human capital development, and contributes to overall community resilience and sustainability. The mediating role of psychomotor competence further underscores the importance of integrating structured psychomotor training into community sport programmes to maximize developmental outcomes. Beyond improving physical abilities, sport and psychomotricity foster leadership, teamwork, communication, discipline, social cohesion, and active citizenship, all of which are essential for achieving sustainable development. Consequently, greater investment in community sport infrastructure, inclusive sport policies, psychomotor education, and multi-sectoral partnerships among government agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, and the private sector is imperative. Such coordinated efforts will strengthen grassroots development initiatives and enhance the contribution of sport and psychomotricity to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Rivers State and other developing communities.

Recommendations

1. The Rivers State Government, local government councils, and relevant stakeholders should institutionalize community-based sport and structured psychomotor programmes by investing in accessible sporting facilities, training qualified personnel, and integrating psychomotor development into grassroots sport initiatives to promote social inclusion, health, and human capital development.
2. Policymakers, educational institutions, and community organizations should strengthen multi-sectoral collaborations to implement inclusive sport-for-development policies and evidence-based interventions that leverage sport and psychomotricity as strategic tools for

achieving sustainable community development and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rivers State.

Acknowledgements

The author sincerely appreciates all the community members, sports administrators, coaches, youth leaders, health professionals, and other stakeholders in Rivers State who generously participated in this study by providing valuable information and insights. The author also acknowledges the contributions of colleagues and reviewers whose constructive comments and suggestions enhanced the quality of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no financial, professional, personal, or institutional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, conduct, analysis, interpretation, or publication of this research.

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