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Master's Thesis of Global Sport Management

Physical Activity Experiences of African Female International Students in Korea

아프리카 여성 유학생들의 신체활동 경험

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Abstract

Physical Activity Experiences of African Female International Students in Korea

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This study explores physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea. It focuses on how their identities influence their engagement in physical activity. The study utilizes a critical race feminism and African feminism framework to examine the complex interplay between identity construction, societal context, and physical activity behaviors. The study seeks to understand physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea, to investigate the construction of African female international students' identity in Korea, and to identify the influences of identity on their physical activity experiences.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with eight African female students enrolled in a graduate degree program at a four-year university in Seoul, and those who have engaged in physical activities. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key findings related to physical activity motivation, external influences, constraints, and the construction of identity.

The findings reveal that the participants' physical activity motivations include body image perceptions, prior exposure to physical activity, stress management, and a desire to belong. External influences, such as the availability of infrastructure, specialized programs, and safe spaces, facilitate their participation in physical activity. However, they also face constraints, including language barrier, lack of a support system, financial considerations, time constraints, and unfavorable weather conditions. The participants construct their identities through societal perceptions, including the "so called" African traditional woman and the notion of the African woman in Korea. They also develop an internalized and self-understood identity, navigating their roles as modern-day African women influenced by their experiences in Korea. The impact of these constructed identities on their physical activity experiences is shaped by the

societal context, with identity playing a role in challenging stereotypes, acting as a barrier to participation, or having a non-influential effect.

Drawing upon critical race feminism and African feminism, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between identity, societal context, and physical activity experiences. The findings have practical implications for educational institutions and policymakers, emphasizing the need for inclusive environments, culturally sensitive programming, and support systems to promote the physical activity engagement of African female international students in Korea. Overall, this study sheds light on the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea, providing insights into the role of identity construction and societal context. By recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by this group, we can work towards fostering inclusive environments that promote their well-being and enhance their participation in physical activities.

Keywords: Physical activity experiences, African female international students, Critical race feminism, African feminism, Identity construction, international students, Korea

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Background of Study

There has been a significant increase in the rate of global mobility specifically individuals travelling to other parts of the world in order to access education especially at the higher institution level. This has been mostly driven by the many policies and programs fostering international relations and global development with many countries offering exchange and scholarship programs. The prevalence of this trend has resulted in a notable rise in the population of international students across university campuses worldwide. Internationalization in higher education is considered a revolutionary development of the twenty-first century (Seddoh, 2001).

By January 2022, there was a significant presence of foreign students in higher education in Korea, with approximately 152,000 students, primarily from China (Jon, Lee, & Byun, 2014). Korea has emerged as a prominent destination for higher education in East Asia, driven by its rapid economic development (Jon, Lee, & Byun, 2014). Among OECD countries, Korea has experienced the highest increase in international student enrolment, with a 15-fold growth in the past decade according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2011. Notably, the majority of international students in Korea come from the East Asian region (UNESCO, 2011). Korea ranks third

among OECD countries in terms of the percentage of international students from neighboring countries, with 75% originating from nearby nations (OECD, 2014).

International students, including African females, participate in various activities during their study abroad, including physical activity, which serves a varied of purposes such as a means to develop a sense of belonging and connect with the local community.

Physical activity is considered to be ‘any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure (Caspersen et al., 1985). Due to the broad spectrum of the definition of physical activity, an operational definition of physical activity will be used for this study. It would mean that physical activity could range from any structured forms of exercise activity (i.e. physical activity classes offered by the Sports Recreation/Kinesiology department, martial arts club, or intramural sports) or any leisure time PA (i.e. walking, jogging, basketball, soccer, dancing) done informally with friends or alone (Yoh et al., 2008). Regular physical activity has a myriad of benefits including increased quality of life, longevity, reduced susceptibility to disease especially those associated with life style choices like inactivity like hyper tension, diabetes etc.

Previous scholars that have done studies on international students have tended to focus more on acculturation and international students' psychological well-being or their attitudes towards physical activity participation (Mori, 2000).

As the decades have passed from the 1960's to the 1990's, literature concerning women in the sporting environment has grown tremendously. Yet even though there has been growth in scholarly interest concerning women and sport, the literature is still limited. One of the limitations of these publications is that they reflect a total focus on members of the dominant white or Anglo American culture. Research and publications in the areas of diverse cultures and sport have been relatively non-existent. Brooks and Althouse (1993); Jamieson (1995); Smith (1995) have made major contributions to the Mexican American and African American literature, respectively. Costa (1993) and Ligutom-Kimura (1995) introduced descriptions of the "invisible woman" in sport, the Asian American woman.

There is a scarcity of research specifically pertaining to African females' participation in the domain of physical activity (Leslie-Walker et al., 2022). And although there have been studies that have been done related to African females and adjustment to studying abroad (Maundeni, 1999). African women, despite being a significant proportion of the global population, often face marginalization and disadvantage in various aspects of society, including economic, social, and political spheres (Wing, 2000). This systemic inequality persists across different

countries, regardless of their specific location. Despite efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment, African women continue to encounter barriers that limit their opportunities and hinder their progress.

As an international student embarking on a global educational journey, I encountered a diverse range of challenges. Notably, African feminist scholar Ogunديpe Leslie (1994) highlights that prior to her experience studying in Western countries, she never identified herself primarily based on her race. In African societies, identity is shaped by various intricate factors such as age, clan, class, and marital status. However, upon studying in the US, she found herself consistently labelled as an international female student from Africa, a Black woman, a woman of colour, or a third-world woman. Additionally, she faced instances of being either questioned about her proficiency in English or celebrated and exoticized for her intelligence.

As the world becomes more global and as the trend of mobility for education increases, it is important to understand how gender and race interplay and affect the physical activity experiences of international students particularly African females for whom literature is lacking. These advances are necessary to lead to “increased understanding and dialogue” Creswell (1998) about non-western cultures and the issue of gender socialization. As suggested by Barritt (1986), the importance is in: increasing awareness of overlooked and forgotten experiences. By raising awareness and promoting dialogue, research has the

potential to enhance our understanding of others' perspectives and ultimately drive improvements in practical applications. Understanding the experiences of African women in different contexts, such as the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea, can shed light on the intersectionality of their identities and the challenges they face. By examining the unique perspectives and narratives of African women, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the complexities and nuances of their lived experiences.

Therefore, this research will contribute to studies of physical activity experiences of international students, especially those who are marginalized and or are minorities such as the African female international students in this study.

1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the physical activity experiences of African female international students. It will also aim to understand how African female international students in Korea construct their identity? It will aim to understand how the identity of African female international students in Korea influences their physical activity experiences.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea?

2. How do African female international students in Korea construct their identity?
3. How does the identity of African female international students in Korea influence their physical activity experiences?

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. African Feminism

Misunderstandings about feminism often arise due to the potential interpretation of its theoretical framework as being anti-male, anti-culture, and anti-religion (Nkealah, 2006). To address these complexities, African women writers and scholars have introduced alternative terms to describe African feminism. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) introduced the concept of stiwanism, derived from STIWA, which stands for Social Transformation In Africa Including Women. This framework advocates for an African-centered feminism that emphasizes the equal participation of African women in social transformation on the continent. Additionally, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) proposed the concept of motherism, which offers an Afrocentric perspective by placing motherhood, nature, nurture, and environmental respect at the core of its theoretical framework. Nnaemeka (2004) introduced the concept of nego-feminism, which emphasizes the importance of negotiation in understanding the struggles faced by African women. Kolawole (1997) and Ogunyemi (1996) coined the term womanism to describe the participation of African women in social transformation, asserting that it is a more fitting term than feminism (Arndt, 2002).

Consequently, there exists a range of African feminisms that are diverse, purposeful, and multifaceted, reflecting the rich scholarship on feminism in the

African context (Akin-Aina, 2011). Despite the variations, the literature on African feminism highlights core principles that stem from the positioning of African women within traditional African cultures, historical contexts, colonial legacies, and multifaceted realities. These principles of African feminism offer valuable insights into how African women construct and comprehend their identities, navigate their societal positions, and negotiate their rights and existence within patriarchal societies characterized by oppression. This becomes particularly relevant in studying African female international students as it provides a framework for analysing how they shape their identities as African women, both within their home communities and in Korea. It also enables an exploration of the contrasts between being a woman in Africa and in Korea, and ultimately how these identities influence their engagement in physical activity.

2.1.1 African Women Through History

Previous research conducted by Diop (1989), Falola and Amponsah (2012), Mbiti (1988), and Shwarz-Bart (2003) sheds light on the historical status and roles of African women, highlighting stark differences prior to the arrival of colonialists and missionaries in the 1870s. In contrast to their present-day subordinate and dependent position, African women held significant economic, religious, and political roles within African societies. For instance, among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, gender relations were based on notions of seniority, resulting in powerful positions for both women and men based on their age

(Ampofo et al., 2008). Similarly, Kikuyu women in Kenya held authority over land and were prominent food producers, playing crucial roles in the food production and processing industries. Women in West Africa took charge of trade and the exchange of goods within their communities. Additionally, women held positions of spiritual and religious authority in ancient African societies, and some even governed and administered their communities, such as the powerful women leaders in ancient African communities like Kush and Aksum (Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Shwarz-Bart, 2003).

Women played significant roles in the construction and stability of traditional African communities. While it is important to acknowledge that many cultures in pre-colonial Africa were patrilineal and patriarchal, with men holding dominant positions, women still held influence and had complementary roles to men (Midamba, 1990). African Customary Law of the time subordinated women to men, yet their contributions were highly valued. In Kenya, for instance, women did not possess political rights, but their role within the household was crucial. Husbands sought their advice on various matters, and important ceremonies and rites, such as circumcisions, revolved around women (Leakey, 2007).

The arrival of European colonizers in Africa during the period from the 1870s to the 1960s brought about significant changes in the role and status of women (Kamau, 2010). The colonialists disregarded existing social and economic structures in Africa and introduced systems that marginalized women

and made them dependent on men. By transferring men's rights to supervise land to individual legal ownership, they reinforced male dominance (Elkins, 2005). Colonialists not only deprived African women of their land but also undermined their traditional roles. Women lost control over the family and became reliant on their husbands, who worked for the colonial government. Additionally, missionaries propagated messages of female subjugation, obedience, and domesticity, reshaping women's roles (Akin-Aina, 2011; Mikell, 2011). In the post-colonial era, although many African women now have varying levels of education and work in different sectors of the labor force, traditional roles and responsibilities of African women are still often associated with childbearing, maintaining the family, and investing in their children's upbringing (Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Mwangi, 2002). According to Mwangi (2002), while a significant number of women, particularly in urban areas, engage in paid employment outside their homes, they continue to shoulder domestic responsibilities.

In certain communities in Kenya, Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, traditional marriage customs still dictate that men must pay a bride price for their wives, leading to instances where women are treated as inferior and subjected to abuse (Maundeni, 1999; Ukpokodu & Ukpokodu, 2012). Despite numerous economic and cultural transformations in Africa, women continue to be positioned as subservient and subordinate to men, with their roles primarily

associated with childbearing and domestic responsibilities. The subordination of women to men is not unexpected, considering that many African societies today adhere to patriarchal structures.

2.1.2 African Women Identity

According to Wing (2000) and Crenshaw (1991), identity formation occurs through the adoption of evolving representations and narratives that are generated and expressed through individual and social experiences. Identity is a continual process of becoming, where subjective and personal experiences interact with collective experiences. Consequently, individuals are constantly constructing themselves and embodying multiple layers of identity. It is possible for a person to identify with multiple groups, leading to the existence of multiple identities. Multiple identity refers to the phenomenon of constructing multiple identities based on the social context with which an individual is associated at any given time (Padua, 2012).

According to African feminist scholars Akujobi (2011) and Falola and Amponsah (2012), the patriarchal nature of contemporary African societies shapes the identity of African women based on traditional gender roles, such as childbearing, family maintenance, and domestic duties. In many African societies, femininity is constructed through the image of the mother, and there are stereotypes surrounding women's roles, abilities, and personal characteristics that

align with the ideal woman (Kabanyoro, 2008). Research by Heintz and Valodia (2008b) indicates that countries like Burundi, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania have high rates of women's labor force participation in Sub-Saharan Africa, exceeding 80%. However, literature on African women's social values reveals a prevalent portrayal of women as passive, receptive, and nurturing, with limited independence and status that is contingent upon being owned or controlled by men (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Kiyimba, 2013). This study aims to explore how the participants in this research understand their identities as young African women within the African context, as well as how they construct their identities as young women in Korea, where the construction and understanding of femininity may differ.

2.2. Physical Activity Definitions and Benefits

The World Health Organization (WHO) provides a definition of physical activity as any movement performed by the skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. It encompasses various activities, including leisure activities, transportation, and occupational tasks (Caspersen, Powell, & Christenson, 1985).

A more recent definition highlights the cultural specificity of physical activity, emphasizing that it involves people's actions, performances, and interactions within specific contexts and influenced by personal interests, emotions, and relationships (Piggin, 2019). However, the perception and

definition of physical activity can vary among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. For instance, Chinese international students, as observed by Yan and Cardinal (2013b), view physical activity as a way to take a break from their studies, engage in solitary activities like jogging or swimming when they seek solitude, and experience a sense of achievement through setting and attaining physical activity goals. Research has demonstrated the numerous health benefits of regular physical activity, including the prevention and reduction of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity-related conditions (Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons, 2002). Additionally, physical activity has a positive impact on mental well-being, promoting positive mood, reducing anxiety, and alleviating depression (Nieman, 2003; Palauska & Swihwenk, 2000). The most recent physical activity guidelines recommend that adults engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week (Haskell et al., 2007). However, despite the known benefits, global data shows that 31% of adults aged 15 and above are insufficiently active (Liu, Probst, Harun, Bunnett, & Torres, 2009). In the United States, physical inactivity rates are particularly high, with nearly 50% of adult females and 40% of adult males failing to meet the recommended physical activity guidelines in 2008, as reported by the World Health Organization. Moreover, studies have consistently shown low levels of physical activity among college students, with only 50.6% of students in the United States meeting the physical activity guidelines (American College Health

Association, 2012). The college years are often associated with a decline in physical activity participation (Yoh, 2009).

2.2.1 Physical Activity Experiences of Minority Women

Numerous studies conducted worldwide have consistently found that minority women exhibit higher levels of sedentary behavior and lower levels of physical activity compared to women in the majority population (Crespo et al., 2000; Sternfeld et al., 1999). This disparity in physical activity levels exposes minority women to an increased risk of chronic diseases, contributing to health disparities (Bassuk & Manson, 2005). Swedish statistics indicate that immigrant women from Southern Europe, Iran, Turkey, and Chile engage in less physical activity compared to Swedish-born women. For instance, only one out of five Turkish women exercise regularly, whereas one out of three Chilean women do so (Public, N. I, 2004). Insufficient social support is identified as a crucial factor influencing exercise participation among minority women (Eyler et al., 1998; Marquez & McAuley, 2006). A study in the United States focusing on minority women revealed that African Americans and American Indians/Alaskan Natives have the lowest levels of physical activity during leisure time (Eyler et al., 1998). Other studies have found that minority women report higher levels of physical activity during working hours compared to leisure time. However, it is

challenging to obtain a comprehensive overview when total physical activity across all domains is not considered. Brownson et al. (2005) noted this limitation in their examination of physical activity in women, concluding that although minority women are among the least active subgroups in American society, not all minority women groups exhibit lower activity levels than women in the majority population when considering all domains of physical activity (Eyler et al., 1998). This underscores the importance of studying total physical activity among different minority groups separately and avoiding generalizations. This distinction is particularly salient among various groups of minority women who often have traditional roles within the family and may be more physically active during household chores and transportation.

While there has been an increase in the number of studies examining the participation of ethnic and racial minorities in physical activity (PA) in recent years (Berg et al., 2002), the overall body of knowledge in this area remains limited. Similar to the general population, most studies have focused on the involvement of ethnic and racial minority individuals in PA in relation to their health (Crespo et al., 2000b). These studies have generally indicated that African Americans and Latinos engage in little to no leisure time physical activity, which contributes to their higher rates of obesity and health issues. Inactivity rates are particularly high among older adults, women, and those with low incomes and low levels of education. The type of PA performed may serve as a significant

predictor of participation among ethnic and racial minorities, as highlighted by Eyler et al. (2002) and Sternfeld et al. (1999). Occupational, caregiving, and household activities contribute to energy expenditure and are often perceived by many minority women as forms of exercise (Sternfeld et al., 1999). However, studies typically measure only leisure time physical activity, thereby underestimating the true levels of PA among women from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Tortolero et al., 1999).

2.2.2 Physical Activity Experiences of African Women

There is a scarcity of research specifically focusing on the physical activity experiences of African women, although some studies have touched upon this topic within the context of sport. Given that women's struggles have often been overshadowed by national movements in African nations, it is expected that there would be disparities in opportunities for women compared to men in sports. Burnett (2002) conducted interviews to explore the experiences of women in sport in South Africa. The findings revealed that, considering the reality of the majority of women living in conditions of chronic poverty, facing patriarchy, and being subjected to ideological stereotypes and structural marginalization, their presence and efforts were largely absent and unrecognized within the institutionalized domain of sport. It was important to recognize that many women felt that their responsibilities as mothers and the need to provide income for their

families left limited time for engaging in sport in their daily lives. Burnett (2002) also discussed gender ideologies that highlighted the power struggles between men and women.

According to Henderson et al. (2002), gender within different societies refers to a set of personal, social, and economic relationships that enable men to exert power over women and the services they provide, encompassing all aspects of life. The commonly attributed characteristics of women, such as being physically and mentally weak, passive, cooperative, and supportive, perpetuate this notion. Burnett (2002) suggests that the women in her study often chose to disengage from sport because the costs of involvement and change outweighed the benefits. Another article specifically addressing women and sport in Zimbabwe was authored by Maodzwa and Toohey Costa (2002). They provide an exploratory account of sport, including a historical perspective on pre-modern sport in Zimbabwe and the influence of colonialism. The authors discuss the challenges faced by women in sport and emphasize the interconnections with issues of race and class. They argue that while there may not be a clear pattern of male hegemony, women have resisted existing structures and have utilized the male-dominated sporting systems to exert their own power. Maodzwa and Toohey Costa (2002) also acknowledge the impact of colonial missionaries in supporting traditional gender roles that kept women subordinate to men. They point out that English colonists in Zimbabwe had concerns about women's

participation in sport as it did not align with socially accepted ideals of femininity and beauty. The authors note that traditional Zimbabwean culture also exhibits similar issues, where women are considered more attractive if they are overweight, with weight gain after marriage seen as a sign of happiness and contentment. This can create a paradox where women are expected to have strength and endurance for their domestic responsibilities but may not be accepted or encouraged to engage in leisure activities such as sport.

2.2.3 Physical Activity Experiences of International Students

There is a scarcity of research focusing on physical activity participation among international students, with a particular emphasis on Chinese students from China, who make up a significant portion of the international student population in the American higher education system (Yan, Cardinal, & Acock, 2013). Only one study conducted interviews with Chinese international students in Canada to explore the relationship between acculturation and physical activity (Brunette et al., 2011). The findings showed that physical activity participation can facilitate psychological acculturation and integration into the new community (Brunette et al., 2011). Physical activity can serve as a coping strategy to deal with acculturative stress and provide both physical and mental benefits (Berger, Pargman, & Weinberg, 2002). Engaging in physical activity can enhance socialization skills and contribute to maintaining cultural identity during the

transition period (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010). However, limited research has indicated that international students face barriers such as lack of social support, limited time, self-consciousness, and cultural beliefs and values that influence their motivation and participation in physical activity (Taylor & Doherty, 2005; Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007; Kahan, 2011). Several factors contribute to the low levels of physical activity among international students, particularly Asian students. These include unfamiliarity with Western approaches to physical activity programs, lack of movement skills and knowledge of equipment utilization, stereotyping of gender roles in physical activity and sports, limited access to physical education curriculum and exercise facilities in their home countries, and cultural beliefs regarding gender roles and physical activity (Yan & Cardinal, 2013; Liang, Housner, Walls, & Yan, 2012; Frisby, 2011; Brunette et al., 2011; Suminski, Petosa, Utter, & Zhang, 2002; Yoh, Yang, & Gordon, 2008). Among international students, Asian women are reported to be the least active, and cultural beliefs regarding gender roles can act as significant barriers to their participation in physical activity, as it is often considered a masculine characteristic (Suminski, Petosa, Utter, & Zhang, 2002; Yoh, Yang, & Gordon, 2008). These complex challenges faced by international students during the acculturation process contribute to their low levels of physical activity participation.

2.3 Critical Race Feminist Approach

Critical race feminism (CRF) emerged at the close of the twentieth century with the aim of addressing the legal concerns of women of color within racial/ethnic minority communities (Wing, 2007). Professor Richard Delgado, known for his work in critical race theory, developed CRF as a framework that incorporates elements from critical legal studies (CLS), critical race theory (CRT), and feminist jurisprudence (Wing, 2003). CRF builds upon the foundations of CLS by examining how the law perpetuates not only class hierarchies but also race and gender hierarchies (Wing, 2003). The term "critical" originates from CLS, a movement established by predominantly white academics in the legal field during the 1970s, which critiqued the law's contribution to unjust social hierarchies based on privilege and marginalization (Wing, 2003). While CLS primarily focused on inequality, it did not explicitly incorporate race and gender into its analysis (Wing, 2003). CRF scholars argue that CLS inadequately represents the experiences of women and people of color (Wing, 2003).

CRF also draws insights from CRT, which emerged from within CLS and aimed to address the perspectives of people of color that were often overlooked (Wing, 2003). CRT views race as a socially constructed concept rather than a biological or genetic determinant, and it recognizes racism as the use of race to establish and

maintain power differentials (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT challenges narrow approaches to social and economic justice and examines how race influences various aspects of society, including employment, education, and immigration status (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 1999, 2001). In summary, CRF is a legal framework that focuses on the experiences of women of color within racial/ethnic minority communities. It integrates elements from CLS, CRT, and feminist jurisprudence to analyze how the law intersects with race and gender to perpetuate social hierarchies. CRF advocates for a broader understanding of inequality and seeks to address the dynamics of race, racism, and power in pursuit of social and economic justice (Wing, 2007; Wing, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

While critical race theory (CRT) aimed to incorporate the perspectives of people of color, it failed to address the specific needs and experiences of women of color. Scholars such as Crenshaw (1989) identified a limitation in certain CRT perspectives, which assumed that the experiences of women of color were identical to those of men of color. Recognizing the significant differences between female and male experiences, critical race feminism (CRF) emerged as a feminist critique within CRT (Wing, 2007, 2015). In addition to CRT, CRF is also influenced by mainstream feminism, which primarily focused on addressing gender oppression faced by middle-class and affluent white women (Wing, 2003, 2015). However, CRF challenges mainstream feminism's tendency to generalize

the experiences of all women, thereby neglecting the diverse and unique experiences of women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). CRF contends that mainstream feminism often fails to recognize the intersectional realities of women of color. It rejects the essentialist notion that women of color share the same experiences as white middle-class women, which Crenshaw (1989) refers to as "identity addition" (Wing, 2003). According to CRF, patriarchy is a system in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (Wing, 2003). However, CRF criticizes mainstream feminism for overlooking the distinct challenges faced by women of color within this patriarchal structure. By highlighting the unique experiences of women of color and rejecting essentialist assumptions, CRF seeks to provide a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of gender oppression in a patriarchal system (Crenshaw, 1991; Wing, 2003, 2015).

2.3.1 Principles of Critical Race Feminism

The principles of critical race feminism (CRF) play a crucial role in understanding the experiences of women of color. Firstly, CRF emphasizes the distinct experiences of women of color, recognizing that their perspectives differ from those impacting black men, white women, and white men (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003, 2015). Secondly, CRF acknowledges the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, opposing all forms of oppression that result from the overlapping effects of these systems (Knudsen, 2005). The

concept of intersectionality, coined by Crenshaw (1989), highlights how women of color face multiple oppressive systems simultaneously, calling for a comprehensive examination of these systems. This perspective recognizes the importance of considering various aspects of identity such as ethnicity, class, age, and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1991).

Thirdly, CRF utilizes international law as a tool to combat gender violence, patriarchal systems, and social and economic oppressions faced by women globally (Wing, 2000). Fourth, CRF rejects essentialism and homogeneity, recognizing the diverse political identities of women of color. Instead of attributing a fixed essence to all women, CRF acknowledges multiple locations and identities of women (De Reus, Few, & Blume, 2005; Wing, 2000, 2003, 2007). The framework emphasizes race and gender consciousness while also acknowledging the complexity of the concept of anti-essentialism. Strategic essentialism, as proposed by Spivak (1987), allows for temporary acceptance of an essentialist position to achieve social goals for marginalized groups. Fifth, CRF is a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from legal and non-legal fields such as Black Feminist Thought (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 1997). Lastly, CRF advocates for theories and practices that challenge and combat both gender and racial oppression (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003).

Applying these theoretical principles helps recognize and comprehend the multifaceted nature of women of color's experiences. The CRF framework allows

for an understanding of the diverse positions and stories of socially and politically marginalized individuals living at the intersections of multiple identities. It centers the experiences of marginalized groups, highlighting race, gender, and other forms of oppression, and counteracting stereotypes that misrepresent these groups (Cutts, Love, & Davis, 2013).

Chapter 3. Research Method

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the research method that was used in the study. Research method is a technique, a tool for doing research and for gathering evidence or collecting data (Arthur, 2012; Kothari, 2006; Letherby, 2003). The chapter will include the research design employed for the study as well as the data collection procedure, recruitment of participants, data analysis process and finally the strategies used to validate the findings.

3.1 Qualitative Research

According to Bengston (2016), qualitative research provides insights into the human condition in different contexts and allows for an understanding of perceived situations. Qualitative research is characterized as pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Perry (1998) highlights a key distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods, noting that while quantitative research focuses on "who," "what," "how many," and "how much," qualitative research emphasizes the "how" and "why" of social interactions and the meaning assigned to them. Qualitative approaches are considered most appropriate for capturing the subtleties and complexities of individual human behavior (Robson, 2002). In this study, a qualitative approach underpinned by a case study design was deemed suitable to explore the experiences of African female international students

engaging in physical activity while pursuing higher education in Korea. Although these students share gender and race, they may come from diverse educational, social, and economic backgrounds.

Additionally, this study adopts a feminist research methodology, which falls within the domain of qualitative research design. Feminist research acknowledges that reality and knowledge are socially situated and constructed. Feminist researchers recognize themselves as socially constructed knowing selves, with knowledge shaped by their specific and partial social locations (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). Feminist research centers on women's lived experiences and everyday lives, positioning women as subjects and objects of study and acknowledging their co-creation of knowledge. Moreover, feminist research carries a political and ideological commitment to challenging the position of women, aiming to empower women and amplify their voices in discussions about social life. The analysis in this study places the physical activity experiences of African female international students at its core. The research questions focus on understanding these experiences, how the students construct their identities, and the influence of identity on their physical activity engagement. A critical race feminist research framework will guide the exploration of racialized and gendered physical activity experiences among African female international students, with an emphasis on the interplay between

identity, physical activity, Korean universities, and the broader Korean community.

3.1.1 The Background of the Researcher

The researcher has been an active participant in different forms of physical activity whilst in her home country and also after moving to Korea to pursue her master's degree. The different physical activities ranged from structured competitive sport like lacrosse to leisure physical activity like salsa dancing amongst others.

It is through the researcher's participation in the different activities that she came to realize the different dynamics that came into play for different participants especially those of a minority group and different identity or identification such as African female international students living in Korea in this study. Before coming to Korea, the researcher had never fully realized or acknowledged race or ethnicity as an important thing. She had never clearly construed an identity or even further had it influence different areas of my life. On the other hand, when she moved to Korea that is largely a homogeneous society, she was forced to acknowledge race, ethnicity and identity and its particular effect on the way she now accessed and enjoyed physical activity. For most of the activities she participated in, she was often alone and felt isolated even though she was part of team activities like lacrosse.

The researcher's own experience as a female African student participating in physical activity have sparked an interest in wanting to find out how identity influences physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered through in-depth interviews, which are recognized for their ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena and allow for probing of the interviewees (Ellis et al., 2008). These interviews are carefully designed to ensure that the research participants have the opportunity to share their stories while covering the specific aspects of the study that the researcher aims to explore (Carter & Thomas, 1996). In-depth interviews are a commonly used data collection method in qualitative research because they yield rich and insightful information. They offer flexibility, allowing for the exploration of unexpected lines of inquiry during the interview process. By engaging in in-depth interviews, the researcher gains a deep understanding of the participants' physical activity experiences within their social contexts, capturing their attitudes, awareness, self-disclosure, knowledge, and perspectives (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In qualitative research, the use of in-depth interviews allows the participants' own words and experiences to shine through, providing valuable insights (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). During the interviews, the researcher employed a semi-structured approach using open-ended questions.

This approach facilitated a deep and rich exploration of the physical activity experiences and identity construction of African female international students in Korea. It allowed for the collection of diverse meanings, opinions, and experiences, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

African females that had been living in Korea for a year or more and attaining higher education at a four-year university in Seoul were recruited for this study. They were also required to be participating in any form of physical activity as earlier defined in the study. The initial participants were contacted via email and messaging services like WhatsApp about their willingness to participate in the study after which they helped recommend other participants for the study. The interviews were conducted in person on a one-on-one basis at various coffee shops around Seoul. Participants were informed prior to the interviews about the study and their written consent was sought at the start of the interviews. All interviews were conducted in English and recorded with the participants' permission to help in further analysis. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour and a half and were carried out two to three times with each participant.

An interview guide consisting of a few semi-structured open-ended questions related to each of the research questions in the study was used to provide some direction to the participants but participants were left to share and tell their experiences how they deemed appropriate.

3.3 Participants

Eight participants were recruited for this study. All participants met the following pre-determined criterion: African, female, aged between 24 and 40 years of age, currently undertaking a graduate degree program at one of four - year universities in Seoul, stayed for a year or more in Korea and participating in any form of physical activity as earlier defined in the study.

The participants engaged in activities like yoga, walking, running, gym, football, volleyball, swimming, squash, badminton, hiking and taekwondo and so on. Six of the eight participants had been engaged in some sort of physical activity back in their home country before coming to Korea.

Two out of the eight participants were married and had left their families back home as they came to Korea. One participant had a child living with the participant's family in their home country. One participant was fluent and could ably express themselves in Korean. All participants were professionals and held jobs in their home countries and were currently on study leave during their stay in Korea. All participants were on scholarships provided by the Korean Government. All eight participants had an occasional part-time job to aid with their living expenses. The following table is the demographics of the research participants.

Table 1

Participant's Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Marital Status	Years Of Stay	Degree Program
Participant 1	28	Single	4	PHD
Participant 2	31	Single	2	Masters
Participant 3	30	Single	1	Masters
Participant 4	34	Married	1	Masters
Participant 5	36	Single	5	Masters
Participant 6	24	Single	1 1/2	Masters
Participant 7	27	Married	1	Masters
Participant 8	37	Single	6	PHD

The participants for this study were chosen through purposeful sampling, which is a commonly employed technique in qualitative research to select individuals or groups who possess rich and relevant information (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling allows for the efficient use of limited resources by targeting those who have specific knowledge or experience related to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

When using purposeful sampling, considerations such as knowledge, experience, availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to articulate and reflect upon experiences and opinions are taken into account (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1979). The selected participants are individuals who are well-informed about the

topic of interest and capable of effectively communicating their experiences and perspectives in a thoughtful and expressive manner.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data in this study was analyzed using a thematic analysis, which was chosen for its versatility in analyzing various types of data, including interview segments and life stories, as well as its focus on identifying common elements and theorizing across cases (Leech, 2002; Riessman, 2007). The thematic analysis followed a six-phase approach as described by Clarke et al. (2015). The analysis process involved becoming familiar with the data, creating initial codes to categorize the information, identifying potential themes, reviewing and refining the identified themes, defining and naming the themes, and finally writing the analysis report for the study manuscript. This systematic approach ensured a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the data.

The recorded interviews were transcribed in English and the transcripts were read multiple times by the researcher making observations and notes in the process. Codes were then generated by the researcher looking out and identifying similar information across all the transcripts. Similar codes were then grouped together to form initial themes and subthemes. Themes and subthemes were generated according to each research question. The generated themes and subthemes were reviewed to ensure that they were in line and answered the

study's research questions. The generated themes and sub themes were then explained and elaborated in a write up to show the study's findings.

3.5 Trust Worthiness

Qualitative trustworthiness refers to the rigor and credibility of the findings in qualitative research, and it involves employing specific procedures to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data (Gibbs, 2007). It is an important aspect of qualitative research and involves assessing the accuracy of the findings from the perspective of the researcher, the participants, and the readers of the research account (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In this study, the researcher employed member checks and peer debriefing as measures to enhance the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Member checks involved sharing the findings and interpretations with the participants to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. Peer debriefing involved seeking feedback and input from colleagues or experts in the field to evaluate the research process and findings. By utilizing these trustworthiness measures, the researcher aimed to enhance the credibility and accuracy of the data, ensuring that the findings were valid and representative of the participants' experiences.

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher reached out to the interview participants to ensure that their thoughts had been properly understood and put

down by the researcher. The researcher also sought clarification regarding the meaning of some parts of the data that had not been earlier understood in the first interview. The data was also shared with colleagues and other researchers to ensure that logical analysis and interpretation had been made.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1. Theme Identification

The themes and subthemes that emerged from the data collected and analysed in this study are presented in this chapter. The findings from the in-depth semi-structured interviews are therefore presented and categorized according to the research questions of the study. The themes and subthemes generated provide answers to the research questions of the study. The themes and subthemes are presented in the table below:

Table 2

Theme Identification. Themes and Sub Themes

Research Question	Theme	Sub Themes
What the experiences of African female international students with physical activity inKorea?	Motivation for physical activity participation	View of body image
		Prior exposure to physical activity
		A way to deal with stress
	External Influences during	Wanting to belong Availability of infrastructure

	physical activity participation	Unique ways to engage in physical activity
		Safe Space
	Challenges encountered during physical activity participation	Inability to speak Korean Lack of a support system It doesn't make financial sense Finding the time Unfavorable Weather conditions
How do African female international students in Korea construct their identity?	Societal Perceptions	The "so called" African traditional Woman Notion of African woman in Korea
	Self-understood Identity	
	Created Identity	Modern Day African woman Korean influenced shift
How does the identity of African female international students in Korea influence	Comparing societal context	
	Roles of identity	Challenging stereo types

their experience with
physical activity?

Identity as a barrier

Identity as non-influential

4.2. Physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea

This subchapter will explain findings related to the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea. Four main themes emerged after analysis of the collected data which were further subdivided into twelve sub themes to better explain and give detailed description and meaning to the data. The findings related to research question one are summarized in the table below:

Table 3

Physical Activity Experiences: Related Themes and Sub themes

Research Question	Theme	Sub Themes
What the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea?	Motivation for physical activity participation	View of body image
		Prior exposure to physical
		Activity
		A way to deal with stress
	External Influences during physical activityparticipation	Wanting to belong
		Availability of infrastructure
		Unique ways to engage in physical activity

	Safe Space
Challenges encountered during physical activity participation	Inability to speak Korean
	Lack of a support system
	It doesn't make financial sense
	Finding the time
	Unfavorable Weather
	Conditions

4.2.1. Motivation for physical activity participation

This theme examines the reasons for participants to start and maintain physical activity participation whilst in Korea. Participants shared that their main motivation for taking part in physical activity were linked to their: 1) view of body image, 2) wanting to belong, 3) prior exposure to physical activity and 4) a way to deal with stress. These factors are further elaborated below.

a) View of Body Image

When asked about why they participated in physical activity in Korea, all the participants mentioned and had responses that were linked to their body, appearance, body figure, weight management and maintenance as one of their

strongest reasons for them taking part physical activity in Korea. One participant was quoted saying:

I exercise because I don't want to be fat. I want to be able fit in my clothes and wear sexy dresses. I like my figure much better when I am exercising and not being able to see cellulite on my thighs. -
(Participant 1)

Another participant also commented that after her arrival to Korea, she became more body conscious. She noted differences in standards of beauty and desirable body types between Korea and her home country. She explained that back in her home country, a plump and curvy figure was glorified and desirable and that many women had that kind of figure unlike in Korea where women were considerably slimmer.

When I first arrived in Korea, I was relatively bigger than the average Korean woman you see on the street. In Kenya, the bigger the better and having curves is a nice thing and all the women around me had the same body. It was a whole different story here. All the women are small and petite compared to me. This pushed me to physical activity though in isolation at first because in places like the gym, I

used to get so many stares, I guess from being different. - (Participant 5)

Another participant that has been living in Korea for about 4 years also shared her experience saying that she had become more aware of her body, more sensitive to any weight gain and wanting to maintain a particular figure that kind of fitted in with the other women in Korea.

I think one of the most dangerous problems in Korea is something that is termed as “외모지상주의 (oemojisangjuui)” meaning that everything is look based. This is probably one of the reasons you get one of the highest rates of plastic surgery coming from Korea. Unfortunately, less. I am not about to get plastic surgery so my only resort is going to the gym and working out. - (Participant 8)

b) Wanting to belong

Participants shared that for them wanting to belong meant being able to form connections, make friends, maintain these formed bonds, and also being able to connect to what was being done by the people in the society surrounding them. They noted that many people in Korea embraced and had this physical activity culture that they hoped to become part of in a bid to belong or become

connected to the society in which they were living. This is illustrated in the excerpts below from the participants' comments:

Physical activity is a way to kill boredom, catch up and bond with my friends. -(Participant 5)

Recently, we went with my friend to jog and work out at the outdoor workout station and we met a group of other Korean students they were trying to show us how to use the machines which was really friendly and one of the closest interactions I have had with them and I feel like it just happened because we were exercising. -(Participant 4).

Living in a new place can be scary and lonely and for me physical activity is a way I can make some new friends especially outside of my lab. - (Participant 6)

Most of the participants shared that seeing others exercise in a way influenced them to pick up physical activity as a way of becoming part of the community.

Here you see most people up and about doing some sort of activity, walking alone or with their dogs, in the parks, playing or running so it got me to start. - (Participant 2).

For participants, physical activity was viewed as an effective tool for socializing especially for those who had limited or no other social opportunities.

As a Muslim, it gets kind of hard for me to make friends, most of the socialization in Korea is done through drinking meetups and gatherings which I can't be part of so for me physical activity was one of the other few spaces where I could have chance to make friends outside of class especially. - (Participant 8)

c) Prior exposure to physical activity

A greater number of participants had past exposure to physical activity and had been involved in some form of physical activity in their home countries

either starting from a young age or even as adults. This is a lifestyle that had become ingrained into their routines hence the need to continue it even after moving to Korea to pursue their higher education.

Back in Ghana, I used to walk a lot with my dog, go to the gym after work and I organized meetings at work, so I was always up and about. - (Participant 2).

I was a semi-pro volleyball player in Egypt so physical activity was not an option for me. I engaged in exercise on a daily, going to the gym and training with my team and I would even go cycling to work. I led a really active lifestyle so it was only natural for me to try and continue after coming to Korea. One of the first things I did when I arrived at the university campus here was to try and enrol in the volleyball team.”- (Participant 6)

It's like part of me. I am used to it. I started practicing at the age of 4.- (Participant 8)

It was remarked amongst many of the participants that due to their past engagement in physical activity, they were fully aware of the different health

benefits that it provided to their bodies and the importance of having physical activity in their daily lives so this greatly prompted them become involved in Korea.

When I practice sport or do any physical activity, it makes me feel healthier and more flexible. -
(Participant 7)

After exercising, I feel like I am helping my body. I am becoming more fit so that when I climb stairs, I don't feel like I am suffocating or dying. -
(Participant 3)

Physical activity activates my brain, keeps my body in shape and keeps me physically fit and flexible. -
(Participant 5)

d) A way to deal with stress

International students experience increased difficulty in adapting to life in host countries compared to their home countries. This is no exception for African female international students in Korea with many of the participants acknowledging going through so much difficulty and experiencing new challenges on a day to day basis. Participants shared that they often felt alone,

tired, struggling to cope up with the new environment and maintaining connections with their families back home.

*I am very happy with my experience in general but
mosttimes I feel sad, frustrated and fearful.*

(Participant 6)

Participants shared that taking part in physical activity played a crucial role in dealing with these everyday challenges especially stress brought about by having to adapt to a new community and ways of doing things.

*I think if I didn't exercise, I would go crazy. Life here
is so stressful, so fast paced, lonely so exercise is a
way to get out of my stressful routine and out of my
head and breathe, relax and be sane. - (Participant 1)*

*One of the things I dislike about living here is the
stress, the neglect of mental health. Koreans neglect
mental health and even foreigners learn it here I
guess. It's like part of the culture I guess. Everything
is so work oriented, performance related and
competitive. In Korea, if you are not number one, you
are nothing. I am not saying number one to ten, if
you are not number one, you are literally nothing. A
lot of stress comes from here. So for me when I go for*

my yoga class, it's a way to ensure that I am taking care of my mental health and staying in control. It stabilizes my life here. - (Participant 8)

Participants also reiterated the impact that their participation in physical activity had on elements like their mood, self-esteem, spiritual wellbeing and general enthusiasm spreading across different components of their lives. One participant had the following response when asked what she liked about physical activity and why she did it in Korea. I feel happier, more confident and capable of doing things, shared participant 7.

After exercising, I feel like I have accomplished something, I feel good about myself. It's one of the things that gives me some joy here. - (Participant 3)

In this theme, factors that help to aid the participation and enhance the experience of African female international students in Korea during physical activity are explained. These are broken down into three sub themes as follows; 1) availability of infrastructure, 2) unique ways to engage in physical activity and lastly, 3) safe space for physical activity participation.

a) Availability of infrastructure

The availability of different infrastructure was cited by participants as an enabler for their physical activity participation in Korea. Participants shared that this infrastructure was not only constrained to modern and well-equipped sporting facilities but also included other infrastructure like transport system which they described as up to date and reliable making life very convenient and easy.

A participant shared that it wasn't enough to just have a facility to practice physical activity but also things like how she would get there, the duration she would take were also considerably important and crucial for her physical activity participation. She found that in Korea she had both the facilities for her to engage in physical activity and also reliable means to be able to move around comfortably compared to her home country.

It is more convenient here than in Egypt for example in Egypt it will take me about an hour to reach the gym from work. Transport is very convenient here, I will use the subway for about 20 minutes to cover the same distance even if I had to go out of campus. - (Participant 6)

The close proximity of the facilities was also mentioned as an added advantage. It was shared that across all the participant's campuses, sport facilities for most recreational activities were available and easily accessible. This proved

very helpful to the participants to have a variety of facilities within their reach to cater to their needs without having to necessarily leave the campus.

My campus has all the facilities like walkways, courts, sports centre. You can play any kind of outdoor and indoor games. There are also outdoor stations with exercise machines that are completely free of charge. - (Participant 4)

b) Safe space

Here participants discussed that in general, Korea provided an environment where they could take part in physical activity with much ease and comfort. They explained safe space in terms of security demonstrating the safety that Korea offered them citing examples like the low crime rate, availability of CCTV cameras in almost all public spaces. They felt that as women a sense of security was especially important for them. Participants also seemed to share the same experience and feeling of insecurity regarding their home countries commenting that in their home countries, they often felt vulnerable and prone to danger. They shared that as a woman where they came from, you couldn't just exercise anywhere or at any time especially late at night and you had to be especially cautious lest some of harm happened to you for example

robbery. Korea offered a more sheltered and safe environment. This environment provided an enabling atmosphere for their engagement in physical activity without restriction of time saying that they could exercise regardless of the time and area. Some of the participants shared their experiences as below:

The country is really safe so I don't have feelings of fear or insecurity. I feel safe and protected at whatever time of the day or in whichever place. - (Participant 7)

I feel safe here. No one would harass me but this is different where I come from. It's nice that I am able to take a run or even walk at like 9pm which I would never dream of doing in Kenya. - (Participant 4)

Coming from Botswana as a woman, I would say I am glad of the day like even 4:00am, I can just walk on the street and nothing would happen to me. - (Participant 3).

Safe space was also explained in terms of Korea offering these African females an environment where they could easily express themselves and where according to participants they were afforded privacy so they could they had more

liberty to do as they pleased. Participants explained that they were able to participate in physical activity freely without any restrictions for example of clothing and take part in any activities of their choosing which provided them with enthusiasm for partaking in physical activity. Participant 6 shared that she liked the fact that in Korea she could have her own privacy and no one would try to invade this compared to when she was back in Egypt.

The privacy I have here allows me to for example wear what I want while exercising unlike when I was back home, I had to be more conscious or else I would fall victim to snide and sexualizing comments from men. - (Participant 6)

c) Unique way to engage in physical activity

Participants highlighted that Korea had a number of programs, events and activities like hiking, language exchange meetups and tour programs provided by agencies like the Korea Tourism Organization, Korea Hobby Experience were seen by participants as a major support for their physical activity participation whilst in Korea. They expressed that such programs especially gave them an opportunity to interact with the community around them, experience the culture of their host community and allowed them to meet fellow international students.

I signed up for this tour program for international students. we basically travel all over the country and get to experience Korea while doing different activities like hiking, temple stays. I think all my friends I have got are from there and it is cool to be able to go around and see all these amazing sites. -
(Participant 4)

These programs were also seen as especially special due to the unique experience they offered participants giving them a chance to explore physical activity in a dimension different from the conventional and traditionally structured activities that they were used to in their home countries. One participant mentioned that she was especially impressed by the creativity that was put into the activities that she participated in sharing that it was interesting how as she participated in physical activity, it gave her opportunity to appreciate Korean culture and see the love the Korean people had for their culture and heritage.

I love that Korea has so many activities, festivals. They try to do stuff and try to make a big deal out of it. It's nice that they are so connected to their culture and make a big deal out of it. I think almost every week, I attend some kind festival with different

themes, and they always have interesting activities like traditional games or making some kinds of crafts. It's really enjoyable and uncommon compared to where I come from. - (Participant 5).

Another participant also shared she had got the opportunity to try and learn about some new activities which was an incredible experience for her. She also mentioned how organized and well thought of the activities that she had attended had been.

I went for a running event to Sokcho and it was so fun. Most of us were international students but they were also some locals. It was a run but we also got to tour the Sokcho area and taste the food. As part of the run, we also did something called plogging so we ran and picked up trash and this was a really new and interesting concept. It was all so orderly and we started and finished on time. -(Participant 7)

Such unconventional and new activities that were provided to the participants offered them a unique way to get involved physical activity while in

Korea. They offered them an enjoyable, fun, and new way of experiencing physical activity.

4.2.3. Challenges encountered during physical activity participation

This is the third theme that emerged in response to the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea. Here the different hurdles or factors that hinder the participation or negatively affect their experiences are discussed.

a) Inability to speak Korean

The ability to communicate effectively greatly influences any individual's interaction and the way they carry out activities and live their daily lives. This is no different from African female international students living in Korea. In Korea, the language that is largely used is Korean and only a certain percentage of the population use any other language especially English that most participants were familiar with. "Everything is in Korean, the signs, the menus in restaurants, websites so it is really hard and it is such a big struggle", Participant 4.

Participants shared that they had no prior experience with the Korean language before moving to the country to pursue further studies. Only one participant could ably communicate in Korean since she had majored in Korean Literature and had all her classes in Korean. Having knowledge of the Korean language was seen as beneficial and of great advantage.

Of course, I feel like people who don't know the language have more trouble than me especially adopting to the society. Knowing the language has helped me to understand the culture, get to know and approach people and dealing with the society overall. - (Participant 8)

All the other participants narrated that all their majors were taught in English and none of them could express themselves in Korean beyond a casual greeting. This unfamiliarity with the language and inability to effectively communicate in the host community's language greatly impacted the lived experiences of the participants, physical activity being no exception. For participants that had especially joined activities that were offered on campus through the club system, shared that the activities were run only in Korean despite the campuses having international students. This was greatly demotivating for participants who felt that they did not get to make the most out of their experience. Some participants expressed that being unable to communicate in Korean had led them to quit some activities that they had originally been excited about while joining but felt that they could not cope due to the barrier caused by differences in language expertise. They constantly felt challenged and felt that this hindered them from fully enjoying the activities that they were engaged in.

I did Taekwondo for about two months, two times a week. I quit eventually because of the instructor actually. He could only speak Korean and I felt like he used to ignore us. I had joined the club at the same time with a friend. All the explanations were in Korean even though they were some foreigners in the club. Luckily we had a girl that had done Taekwondo before so as the classes would be going on, she would try to explain and we ended up having a little mini class at the back. On the days she couldn't come, we would just try to copy what everyone else was doing but as you can imagine that didn't go well. Anyway eventually I just left because what was the point and it was so annoying not being able to understand anything. - (Participant 7)

Participants felt that making friends and being able to connect with other participants was very important as they participated in physical activity. It went just beyond the other benefits like improvement of their health. They felt that their inability to speak Korean affected this and their bonding with other participants especially those that were Korean and unable to speak English. They often felt that their participation did not achieve the goal or intended outcome that

they had set out to achieve as they started their participation. Being able to make friends and connect with other participants was of utmost importance to them and when this was not ultimately achieved due to their inability to communicate in Korean, they felt that their participation in physical activity was not as beneficial.

When I started school here, I figured the quickest way for me to make friends would be through activities. The program that I am enrolled in has only international students and although there are courses that I take with some Korean students, I had not got to interact with them. I joined school during the Covid pandemic and so all my classes were on zoom so I really thought that being part of some activity would help me score some friends. I joined the badminton club at school but only like one person could converse in English. Everyone else spoke only Korean or just a little bit of English. I saw that the other participants quickly became friends and I felt left out. We had our club MT and the whole time I was just silent while everyone else was conversing and laughing and having a good time. I felt very bad and isolated. Going to play became honestly boring and I feel like if I could speak Korean, maybe my chances of scoring friends at the club would be better or maybe if I could somehow find a club where they spoke some English. - (Participant 3)

b) Lack of a support system

Having a support system was defined by participants as having people to do physical activity with and lean on in order to achieve the desired benefits of participation. They felt that it was essential to have people who they could share their enthusiasm for physical activity with or people who they could participate in activities with. Participants shared that while participating in physical activity in their home countries, they had partners with whom, they shared similar goals of participation, and this greatly contributed to their enjoyment and encouraged them as they participated in physical activity. They shared that these partners helped them in terms of accountability and consistency and offered fulfilment from participation in physical activity.

I need a partner for motivation. Back in Botswana I had my girlfriend and we used to go together to a field and run and exercise together. It would always give me that extra push and motivation and we constantly encouraged each other. - (Participant 3)

It was pointed out that as foreigners, they particularly felt that it was hard to get this kind of support system in Korea. They shared that it was quite challenging especially as foreigners to find individuals with whom they had

similarities in terms of physical activity interests and schedule.” If you want to play a group game for example, it is hard to find people who you share similar schedules with and interest. It is really hard to have this kind of group around you”, Participant 8. The absence of these partners derailed their enthusiasm and motivation for physical activity leaving them not contented.

I wouldn't say I am exactly satisfied and this is because I do it alone, maybe if I had someone to do it with for example go with for a run, maybe I would be more encouraged. - (Participant 1)

c) It just doesn't make financial sense

As compared to their home countries, participants reported that Korea had higher standards of living and this also impacted their physical surrounding their campuses, all the other activities had to be paid for. Participation in physical activity whilst in Korea proved to be more luxurious for the participants unlike in their home countries. One participant compared it to her home country saying that, “It's expensive, in Tunisia I always played within a team or club but here I have to go find a gym or even personal trainer and pay at a facility”, participant 8. All the participants were scholarship recipients and had their primary source of income as a stipend from their different programs. From the participant's narrations, the allowance ranged from around 500,000 - 1,000,000 Krw including

tax. They shared that the allowance was meagre and could not really cater to all their wants, it covered basic needs such as accommodation, food and day to day necessities.

The cost of living is quite high and we are students so you have to make sure you are living within your means and not to go overboard making sure you don't spend like you are at home. - (Participant 4)

This was a limitation in terms of activity selection for the participants and in some instances they had to prioritize with physical activity often trailing behind all their other needs. Participants felt constrained due to the price of the activities sometimes limiting even those who had been participating in about three club activities but eventually had to cut it down to one because it was strenuous financially and although she desired to continue participating in all, this was unfortunately impossible due to the prices of the activities.

The activities are also expensive especially for us students. So for example I have to pay about 90 dollars for swimming for a month and then close to 100 dollars for Taekwondo so at the end of the day, you can't keep up. I chose to just stick to swimming although I wanted to stay in my other classes. It's not

like it was free back home, but here is definitely much more expensive. -(Participant 7)

d) Finding the time

It was mentioned across all the participants that as much as they wanted and desired to engage in physical activity, it was especially difficult to create enough time for them to achieve their full desired participation levels. They found themselves juggling multiple tasks and a hectic schedule. All the participants shared that they also each had to take on part time jobs working in coffee shops, restaurants, English academies, teaching assistants and so on in order to earn extra income to support themselves. As scholarship recipients, they explained that they had to meet specific academic requirements which required and took up a considerable amount of their time leaving little to no time for physical activity.

Participant 5 narrated her experience saying, “My academic schedule is very tight. We have always have assignments and something to do so in the and you have to prioritize and physical activity for me always take second place and I also always have at the back of mind that if I don’t well, I could lose my scholarship so I spend most of my time studying

*leaving me very little time to do what I want or enjoy
any sort of leisure.*

e) Unfavourable weather conditions

Coming from countries that are tropical, participants described Korea's climate and weather as harsh and extreme. For many of the participants, the activities they engaged in most of the time required them to be outdoors. It was noted while talking to the participants that majority ran, walked, hiked and were in some way participating in physical activity while outside. Weather then seemed to pose an issue with their participation. The weather was described as intolerable for most of the year, they said that when it was hot, it was really hot and humid and when the cold conditions kicked in, one would barely want to go outside much less to run or walk. For many, coming to Korea was the first time they experienced such weather conditions. They were particularly cautious of what harm could befall them if they decided to work out in such conditions. Many expressed worries over falling sick mentioning that this is something they could definitely not afford as students with hectic school schedule and being far away from home. Participant 2 explained the effect the weather had on her health and consequently physical activity participation saying, "I have a bone condition called spondylosis that worsens when it's cold causing to get severe back pains so in the winter, I completely stop going for football training because my team trains

outside.” During periods when the conditions were harsh, levels of physical activity were observed to decrease incredibly from the discussion with the participants. Some participants expressed that they tried to continue with their usual activity regimens by making use of indoor facilities like gyms or exercising from home but they confessed that the frequency decreased and participation was inconsistent especially during the winter season. They described themselves as outside people and for them a whole some experience was got if they could perform outdoorsy activities and also in the company of other people which was denied to them when they had to do it at home by themselves. Participant 8 shared her experience as follows:

As part of my daily routine, I used to attend these meetups that had a mixture of both foreigners and locals. We would do different activities like language exchange and play different games. I normally go every Tuesday but for me when December starts till up to about April, I stop going because its honestly too cold and yes I don't walk, there is the subway and what not but still, winter puts me in some kind of mood and even while wearing thick heavy jackets, I can't seem to get used to the cold. - (Participant 2)

4.3. Identity Construction of African female international in Korea

In this subchapter, findings related to how African female international students in Korea construct their identity are discussed. The findings are divided into three major themes and further categorized into subthemes as illustrated in the table below:

Table 4

Identity Construction: Themes and Sub themes

Research Question	Theme	Sub Themes
How do African female international students in Korea construct their identity?	Societal Perceptions	The “so called” African traditional woman
		Notion of African woman in Korea
	Self-understood Identity	
	Created Identity	Modern Day African woman
		Korea influenced shift

This theme describes participants understanding of assigned identity from interactions with societal norms and cultures. It also explains the way the women look at their identity through the perceptions of others.

- a) The “so called” traditional African woman

The identity of a traditional African woman was understood to be strongly and primarily tied to roles such as being a housewife, birthing and raising children. Participants shared that in most of their societies, a woman's worth, value and femininity were evidenced by the availability of markers such as wife, home maker and so on.

In Sudan, once you grow up as a girl, you ought to get married and of course have children. If you don't do this, you are an outcast. Your place is still seen like the kitchen. You belong to the house. It is respected and highly regarded to be married with a husband and family, nothing else matters as much. You must also be submissive and listen to your husband because he is the head of the family and apparently knows better. - (Participant 7).

They also agreed that being an African woman was closely linked to oppression explaining that African women have gone through a lot of hardships in the past and continue to do so citing examples of acts of injustice like female genital mutilation that were performed against women in Africa. Such acts symbolized were performed in the name of respecting tradition, keeping culture

alive and symbolized true woman hood for African women. One participant elaborated this in the comment below:

We still have things like female genital mutilation, which is common in Egypt and some other African counties so these are all indicators of how women are being treated especially in the country side and rural areas. - (Participant 6)

Property for possession was also expressed as another identity marker from the discussion with the participants for African women. Women in the African society are not seen as wholly independent and most of the decisions they make are strongly influenced by their families especially the males in their lives like brothers, fathers and husbands. While growing up, a woman is controlled in her father's house by male figures like her father and brother and after marriage is then passed on to her husband as his property to take care of and in essence control.

We still have this tradition of bride price in Kenya where your husband pays or if you want call it gifts your family as they marry you. At the traditional wedding, they normally say we hand you our daughter. I feel like men use this premise of bride price especially to feel like a woman

belongs to them because they paid for her. Also you will find that many times as a woman you literally have no independence and in everything you do, your family and even shockingly strangers feel entitled to have a say. There is this saying it takes a village to raise a child and yes literally everyone will meddle in your business. For example, when I was moving to study, people kept telling my mum, how can you let her go to such a far place for a very long time by herself. If it had been my brother, no one would have said anything. - (Participant 5)

An African woman's identity is also strongly depicted by social behavior. This was explained in terms of dressing and in how a woman expressed herself. She was expected to be conservative and modest. An African woman is expected to dress in a certain way that is considered decent and unprovocative and pleasing to the society. An African woman is described or expected to have a calm demeanor and be silent and not be opinionated or vocal especially in response to male figures as she is considered in a way inferior and is expected to be submissive in all her expressions. One participant stressed that as an African woman, you were not allowed to wear tight, short and revealing clothes like because you would be seen as lacking good morals.

I have to be especially careful with what I wear, I have to think about my outfit like 100 times before I step out of the house because everyone is looking and judging and somehow what I wear will be seen as my character or a depiction of my morals. -
(Participant 2)

b) Notion of African Woman in Korea

Here the research participants shared views on how they felt African female international students were seen and situated within their universities and the wider community in Korea. The research participants felt that some of the conceptions that were had about them were deeply stemmed and rooted from ignorance about people from Africa. They explained that from their interactions with some individuals, little was known about Africa apart from the few negative stereotypes that were put on the internet. Little was known by them about how African people actually lived their lives. The research participants shared that they felt being African was equated to having certain kind of features especially in Korea which was a misconception as Africa is a large continent with many different kinds of people who look and appear quite varyingly. They felt that in Korea, a darker skin tone was equivalent to being African. One participant expressed that on many occasions she constantly had to explain her Africaness or how she could be African.

I come from Tunisia where we have a fairer skin tone but that doesn't mean I am not African. I am African through and through but on a daily I have to explain that oh I am African. Tunisia is in Africa and not everyone from Africa has a dark skin stone. There is a whole spectrum of looks. - (Participant 8)

Being seen as an outsider or different was mentioned amongst all the participants when asked about how they felt African women were viewed in Korea. During the interviews words like alone, lonely, outcast came up on several occasions. They expressed that they were made to feel different sharing that did not feel like part of the community owing to things like language differences. They also shared that they felt that the Korean community was particularly kind of closed up and not easily accepting of foreigners.

I don't I feel like belong but I guess this is the case for all of us here, foreigners because this is not our country, we are strangers and just guests and I feel like the community is strangers. and it's even more problematic when you don't speak Korean. - (Participant 1)

Participants shared that often times they were described using connotations such as incapable, backward, poor, underdeveloped expressing that often times they felt that their input, opinions and competencies were not as accepted, valued and trusted. They shared that this felt restricting for them and on some occasions led them to being denied opportunities or preference given to their other foreigner counterparts from other parts of the world like North America.

I feel like there's a stereotype about African countries in general that we are backward, incapable and I feel like this disadvantages me. For example, you will find it in jobs where you are hired according to where you come from and not your capability" -(Participant 3)

4.3.2. Self-Understood Identity

Many participants shared that prior to the interviews, they had not really ever given this question of identity any thought saying that yes maybe it truly did affect how they lived their lives but this was unconsciously. The discussions with the women demonstrated that they did not just see themselves as one thing but a combination of many aspects put together. Whilst talking about who they were, the women described themselves in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender,

nationality, cultural background, continent of origin, familial roles and distinguishable features. Some participants described themselves as below:

I would say I am Afro Arab. I am Arab because it's the culture I have grown up in and whose norms I am accustomed to. I am also African because of my culture and heritage and of course in a world that is now very defined by borders, I originate within the borders of Africa. I am also Egyptian by nationality. - (Participant 6)

I am a child of God. I am a mother. I am a Bantu and a Ugandan. I am proud African lady and it is things like my love of people, my kaweke (kinky textured hair), my way of dressing that make me who I am and bring out the African in me. - (Participant 4)

It is apparent and evident from the above few narratives of the characterizations that they believe make up who they are as individuals and African women.

4.3.3. Created Identity

This refers to identity or perceptions of the African women that have been created from interaction with a variety of factors and through various interactions with different norms, cultures and societies.

a) Modern Day African Woman

A role shift was described by the women saying that with the changing times and trends in the world. Women were not seen as just housewives especially in urban areas and with the rise of movements promoting women rights and gender equality. With the turn of the economy, they also shared that families now need double incomes and women are also expected to contribute to the wellbeing of their families:

Dynamics are changing and things are not as easy as before. Men for example understand that homes now require double incomes so they are getting onto the train and realizing that women just can't be kept in the kitchen. - (Participant 4)

Also, a major understanding among the participants was that an African woman nowadays is what they termed as a hustler. They explained that women find themselves having to first all of go through so many hardships in order to

succeed and they are expected and somehow juggle so many roles exhibiting the strength, hard work and tenacity that comes with being an African woman.

African women are strong, not just physically but they have a strong will whether its work, home, academic or whatever compared to men. From the stories I hear and see every day, they endure so much and go through so many things but still manage to come out on top. -(Participant 3)

The research participants also described themselves as boundary pushing and seeking to change the status quo. The women saw themselves go against negative narratives and dispositions that had long defined an African woman giving examples of women now occupying fields like science that were originally thought as for men, their pursuit of careers and in their circumstance their pursuit of higher education challenging the notion of just being defined by their familial roles like wife. They also expressed that women now exuded and displayed high levels of confidence unlike the traditional subservient African woman.

b) Korean influenced shift

A heightened sense of independence was described by many of the research participants as something that they could identify with after moving to Korea. Many of them shared that even just getting the chance to live by

themselves was a welcome change. They compared their position against those of Korean women saying they saw many girls their age renting apartments and living alone which was an okay thing in Korea unlike back home where it was taboo for a woman to live on her own, for most it was from father's house to husband's. It also gave them autonomy to make their own decisions without external influence. The participants also expressed that moving to Korea had allowed them experience certain freedoms and liberties that they didn't have back home. They felt that whilst in Korea, they were not stifled and confined within the gates of culture, religion, tradition and could live out life as they pleased most especially without judgement. They expressed having more control over seemingly small but very important issues like dressing without it being equated to their moral standards. After coming to Korea and seeing hearing some negative misconceptions about where they came from, many of the women admitted that they took on what the researcher decided to term as ambassadors. They felt a deep sense of pride about where they came from and took great pride in some of their ancestry and heritage. They felt like it was their responsibility to represent and be good ambassadors of their home countries and Africa in general.

I'm highly aware that everywhere I go in this land, I am representing not only myself and my family but I represent the country, Africa, the black race. Therefore, I always do my best to represent as well as I can." (Participant 2)

4.4. Influence of identity of African female international students in Korea on their experience with physical activity

In this subchapter, findings related to how identity of African female international students influences their physical activity participation are presented.

Table 5:

Influence of Identity on Physical Activity Experience: Themes and Sub Themes

Research Question	Themes	Sub Themes
How does the identity of African female international students in Korea influence their experience with physical activity?	Comparing societal context Roles of identity	Challenging stereotypes Identity as a barrier Identity as non-influential

4.4.1. Comparing societal context

It was established by the participants that they felt that how much or to what extent one's identity might influence an individual's physical activity experience was heavily reliant on the societal context. They noted that across

different communities, there are many differences and factors for consideration for example culture, norms, economics, class politics, education levels and so on that differ across different societies and inevitably have an effect on one's identity construction and consequently on their experience with physical activity. They also observed and commented that different aspects of your identity would affect you differently across different societies. Societies have different meanings attached to different identities and affect identity constructions differently consequently. Participants particularly shared how gender roles and meanings are constructed and assigned differently in their home countries as compared to Korea.

I used to do rhythm gymnastics in Tunisia and I would get comments like why would you do this sport, its attire is so revealing and so immoral. This used to happen to me at home but I don't think you would expect this kind of thing to happen here because a woman is not constricted to a certain type of dress code and she is more free. -(Participant2)

Where I come from, participation in sport and physical activity has been strongly affected and is influenced by gender. This is because in my culture and society where I come from there is a clear divide line between what men or women should do and physical activity is not exactly seen as

ideal for women and girls and this is seen in the activities that girls go for like netball and you will not find many doing like weight lifting. I think other societies especially maybe developed ones don't suffer from this- (Participant 7)

4.4.2. Roles of identity

This theme explains how different participants negotiate identity during and through physical activity.

a) Challenging stereotypes

This sub theme represents how the co-participants experience identity in physical activity through perceived and imposed perceptions others have of them and through perceptions they have about themselves and how they go against these imposed identities consequently influencing their physical activity experiences. Physical activity was seen as way to challenge some imposed characterizations like weak and subservient and showcase their strengths and to go against the odds. Research participants shared that physical activity was one of the ways in which they break the status quo and go against negative stereotypes.

I don't want to be seen as weak. I want to prove a point. I am strong enough to do the same activities as men so it pushes me to push my boundaries and

limits that's society puts on me. I remember the time I started running in Botswana and they were people mostly men that asked if I could do it. They called me weak but that just encouraged me to prove them wrong. - Participant 3

While some research participants shared that they embraced these preconceived notions and felt that they were advantageous to them and a bonus to them, others shared that they often felt uncomfortable and rejected such because they felt like it was a generalization that didn't apply to all of them. Participants shared that because of how they conceived their identity, this had affected them in terms of the type of physical activity they embraced or in the attitude they had towards certain types of activity. They shared that as African women, they had embraced the idea that they were meant for certain types of activities that required strength and not gentility. The women shared that their rejection of this stereotype of identity had allowed them experience and be open minded. One participant shared her experience as below:

I used to feel like yoga was meant for white girls with their bottles filled with green and red juice and would have never envisioned myself doing it. But now I know that as a black woman, this is also

something that I can enjoy and that it doesn't have to be tied down to a certain race. I am also meant for things like this - Participant 5.

b) Identity as a deterrent

Participants shared that being seen as outsiders affected how they experienced physical activity explaining that one of the most important things for them from physical activity was they thought it would be a space where they could bond with others and make friends. They said that most of their interaction was confined to other foreigners like them and they had failed to form bonds with most specially their Korean counterparts. They explained that it was probably due to their failure to communicate in Korean and the stigma that came with being a foreigner or outsider.

Participants also highlighted that being different often attracted unwanted attention to them saying that for them this came with a sense to be extra cautious in whatever they did. They shared that they felt like already they were negative misconceptions that came with their race and ethnicity so physical activity became another area where they couldn't afford to make mistakes or prove the negative stereotypes right. They shared that this often took the enjoyment out of it and demotivated them.

When I am working out at the gym, I feel overly conscious about myself because I feel like if I did something wrong or used a machine wrongly. I don't want to be embarrassed. Also people probably already think we are like backward, still live in the jungle and don't have like internet and don't know how to use technology so if I make a mistake. It's like I will prove them right. - (Participant 3)

Research participants also expressed that they felt pressured due to some stereotypes that were conceived about them and were associated with being African and black. They mentioned that they were often associated with words like athletic, strong, good at dancing.

c) Identity as non-influential

Some participants shared that their identity did not impact how they experienced physical activity and in no way played a part. They explained that they were well aware of who they were as individuals but they did not let this act as a factor or make it something to consider as they participated in physical activity. They shared that for them their participation was strictly goal oriented and internalized so they engaged in physical activity without allowing any other externalities. They remarked that they made a conscious decision not to let their identity have any influence in their physical activity experience.

I know I am African, yes but I never start to think that oh because I am African, this is happening to me. I think I became blind to it, maybe it happens but I don't care. I go for my swimming class, do my thing and leave. I do it for won pleasure so I really don't give a hoot about anything else. - (Participant 7)

For me, my motivation mainly comes from within and my ideal body type and weight so the external environment doesn't really affect me. -(Participant 1)

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

The following discussion chapter explores the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea and their construction of identity. The chapter addresses findings of the research questions that guided this study: (1) What are the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea? (2) How do African female international students in Korea construct their identity? (3) How does the identity of African female international students in Korea influence their physical activity experiences?

In this chapter, the findings from the research are presented and analysed findings from a critical race feminism and African feminism perspective to provide insights into the complex relationship between physical activity, identity construction, and the experiences of African female international students in Korea. These theoretical frameworks provide insights into the social, cultural, and historical contexts that influence the participants' physical activity experiences and identity formation. This chapter also includes the conclusion of this research and provides the limitations to this study and finally goes on to show what this research study can contribute both practically and theoretically.

5.1.1. Physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea

This qualitative study provided the opportunity to explore the physical activity experiences of African female international students whilst in Korea. The findings shed light on several important themes and provide valuable insights into the factors influencing the participation of African female international students in physical activity, as well as the challenges they face within the Korean context.

The findings indicated that African female international students' motivation for their participation in physical activity during their stay in Korea was aligned with their views on body image, prior exposure to physical activity, using physical activity as a means to deal with stress, and the desire to belong. The participants' view of body image emerged as a prominent motivation, reflecting their desire to maintain a certain physical appearance that was suited to the Korean society beauty standards.

I think one of the most dangerous problems in Korea is something that is termed as “외모지상주의 (oemojisangjuui)” meaning that everything is look based. This is probably one of the reasons you get one of the highest rates of plastic surgery coming from Korea. Unfortunately, I have also fallen victim to this. I have also in a way become obsessed with

how I look particularly maintaining a certain number on the scale. I want to be about 55kgs, no more no less. I am not about to get plastic surgery so my only resort is going to the gym and working out.” out. - (Participant 8)

This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the impact of body image perceptions on physical activity engagement (Halliwell, 2015). This finding also reinforced the distinct difference between ideal body image between the participants' societies and Korea which is line with previous researches that explain African women are generally considered more beautiful if they are big and fat. (Maodzwa & Toohey Costa, 2002).

Additionally, the participants' prior exposure to physical activity and their recognition of it as a means to cope with stress and foster a sense of belonging also contributed to their motivation to participate.

One of the things I dislike about living here is the stress, the neglect of mental health. Koreans neglect mental health and even foreigners learn it here I guess. It's like part of the culture I guess. Everything is so work oriented, performance related and competitive. In Korea, if you are not number one, you are nothing. I am not saying number one to ten, if you are not number one, you are

*literally nothing. A lot of stress comes from here. So
for me when I go for my yoga class, it's a way to
ensure that I am taking care of my mental health and
staying in
control. It stabilizes my life here. - (Participant 7)*

Previous experiences with physical activity and exercise have been shown as an enabler for physical activity among women minority groups in new communities (Eyler et al.). Findings from similar studies also show that physical activity can facilitate and promote integration into a new community and may serve as an approach to socialization enhancing an individual's capacity to interact with social groups (Brunette et al., 2011; Milroy, 2010). Physical activity can be considered as a coping strategy to deal with acculturative stress, as it is known to cause both physical and mental benefits (Berger, Pargman, & Weinberg, 2002). These motivations also align with the notions of empowerment and social connection emphasized in critical race feminism and African feminism (Collins, 2015; Wing, 2003).

The role of external influences on participants' physical activity participation, as observed in the findings, is consistent with previous studies. The availability of infrastructure, such as sports facilities and recreational spaces, was identified as a facilitating factor for their engagement (Ferreira et al., 2018). Unique ways to engage in physical activity that catered to their needs and

interests also played a positive role, suggesting the importance of tailored interventions (Shi et al., 2016). Moreover, the creation of safe spaces where participants felt comfortable and secure was crucial for their willingness to engage in physical activity (Dunton et al., 2017).

The constraints faced by the participants, as highlighted in the findings, echo the challenges encountered by marginalized populations such as international students and in this case, African female international students in Korea in accessing and participating in physical activity. The inability to speak Korean was identified as a significant barrier, limiting their interactions and understanding of the local context. Lack of a support system, financial constraints, time limitations, and unfavourable weather conditions were also reported as constraints to their participation. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the influence of language barriers, social support, financial resources, and environmental factors on physical activity engagement (Levinson et al., 2017; Haas et al., 2020). Barriers to communication, affordability, lack of time and sense of hopelessness were some of the greatest perceived barriers limiting international students during participation in physical activity (Shifman, 2012; Taylor & Doherty, 2005; Kahan, 2011). This emphasizes the importance of inclusive spaces that consider the unique experiences and needs of African female international students, as highlighted in critical race feminism (Collins, 2015). The constraints are also reflective of systemic barriers and

societal inequalities that intersect with race, gender, and class, as discussed in critical race feminism and African feminism (Collins, 2015; Wing, 2003). These frameworks emphasize the need to critically analyse the structural and societal factors that limit access and opportunities for marginalized groups.

These findings additionally resonate with research conducted on physical activity motivations among diverse populations, including women from Anglo-American backgrounds and international students (Allender et al., 2006; Deshpande et al., 2019). It is noteworthy that these facilitators are not exclusive to African female international students but are shared by international students from various backgrounds. This suggests that motivations for physical activity can be similar across different cultural groups, emphasizing the universal human desires for well-being, stress relief, and social connection. It is essential to also recognize that the experiences of African female international students in Korea also overlap with those of other Anglo-American women and international students, highlighting the shared barriers they face in engaging in physical activity in a foreign context.

These findings are consistent with research on the experiences of international students in Korea, suggesting that these challenges are shared across different cultural groups (Kim et al., 2019; Jeon et al., 2019).

5.1.2. Identity construction of African female international students in Korea

Regarding identity construction, the participants' experiences reflected a complex interplay between societal perceptions and self-understanding. The study revealed that African female international students in Korea construct their identity through various societal perceptions and internal self-understandings.

Societal perceptions, including the notion of the "so-called" African traditional woman, and the stereotypes associated with it, which were identified as influencing the participants' identities. Participants collectively shared that they felt like an African woman in the African context was associated with labels such as house wife, mother, property for possession and that her identity was strongly dipped in her social behavior such as dressing, oppression.

In Sudan, once you grow up as a girl, you ought to get married and of course have children. If you don't do this, you are an outcast. Your place is still seen like the kitchen. You belong to the house. It is respected and highly regarded to be married with a husband and family, nothing else matters as much. You must also be submissive and listen to your husband because he is the head of the family and apparently knows better. - (Participant 7)

In spite of women in Africa being educated and playing a significant role in the labour force, they are still expected to get married, have children and take care of their family and their value is solely dependent on familial roles like wife and mother (Adhunga, 2014; Clarke, 2013). This is congruent with research by (Falola & Amphonsah, 2012) which stressed that African women's roles are still closely linked to bearing children and maintaining households.

Another common sub theme that emerged from the participants' responses during the study was how the perception of an African woman in Korea also aligned with their identity. They shared that there was a general feature stereotype that was associated with being African and that they often felt like outsiders and were in most instances affiliated with negative connotations like backward, poor which felt restrictive. In line with the findings, previous studies have indicated that South Korea has foreigner hierarchies where a foreigner's social status depends on the intersection between nationality, race, occupation and gender. These hierarchies have been shown to disadvantage non-white individuals with preference predominantly given to people originating from North America, Europe and of white race (Kim, 2008; Schans, 2012; Yoder, 2011).

The participants also expressed an internalized and self-understood identity, reflecting their own beliefs, values, and aspirations.

*I am a child of God. I am a mother. I am a Bantu
and a Ugandan. I am proud African lady and it is*

things like my love of people, my kaweke (kinky textured hair), my way of dressing that make me who I am and bring out the African in me. - (Participant 4)

This demonstrates the ability to navigate multiple identities in the face of societal expectations and challenges. This finding resonates with critical race feminist theory, which emphasizes the impact of societal perceptions and stereotypes on the construction of identity (Collins, 2015). Moreover, participants discussed their own internalized identity and self-understandings, which reflected their personal beliefs, values, and aspirations. The societal perceptions of the "so-called" African traditional woman and the notion of the African woman in Korea emerged as influential factors in their identity construction. These findings resonate with critical race feminism and African feminism, which highlight the significance of societal stereotypes and the impact on individual identities (Collins, 2015; Wing, 2003). The participants also shed light on their experiences as modern-day African women and the influence of their time in Korea on their identity. The participants' discussion of constructed identities, including their internalized and self-understood identity, as well as the notion of being a modern-day African woman, reflect the agency and resistance against dominant narratives of African women. The findings are also in line with African feminism which focuses on the unique experiences and struggles of African women within their specific cultural and socio-political contexts. African feminist scholars have

highlighted the importance of recognizing the complexities and diversity of African women's experiences and challenging the limitations imposed by societal norms (Wing, 2003).

The participants' experiences of being seen as outsiders, facing stereotypes and discrimination, and feeling the need to become ambassadors can be analysed through a critical race feminism lens. These experiences highlight the impact of racialized othering and the power dynamics that perpetuate stereotypes and marginalization of African women in Korea. Literature on critical race feminism emphasizes the importance of challenging stereotypes, promoting representation, and advocating for equal opportunities for marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

5.1.3. Influence of identity of African female international students in Korea on their experience with physical activity

The findings of this study shed light on how the identity of African female international students in Korea influences their physical activity experiences. These experiences are shaped by various factors, including societal context, roles of identity, and the intersections of race, gender, and power dynamics. The roles of identity as a factor in the physical activity experiences of African female international students comes across in three distinct ways that is challenging stereotypes, perceiving identity as a barrier, and recognizing identity as non-

influential. These insights provide a nuanced understanding of how identity shapes the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea. By employing critical race feminism and African feminism as theoretical frameworks, we can delve deeper into the implications of these findings.

Societal context emerges as a key determinant in understanding the influence of identity on physical activity experiences. The participants highlighted the significance of cultural, economic, and social factors in shaping their identities and subsequently influencing their engagement in physical activity. This aligns with the principles of critical race feminism, which emphasize the importance of understanding how societal structures and norms perpetuate inequalities and shape individual experiences (Collins, 2015). African feminism further emphasizes the need to consider the diverse meanings attached to different identities in different societies (Wing, 2003). By examining the participants' experiences through these lenses, we gain a deeper understanding of how the societal context in Korea influences their identity construction and physical activity engagement. The theme of challenging stereotypes illustrates how the participants actively resist and challenge imposed perceptions through their involvement in physical activity. By engaging in physical activities that defy traditional gender roles or expectations, the participants challenge negative stereotypes associated with African women. This aligns with the principles of

critical race feminism, which advocate for resisting stereotyping and empowering marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The participants' rejection of these stereotypes allows them to embrace diverse forms of physical activity and redefine societal expectations.

On the other hand, the participants also face barriers in their physical activity experiences due to their identity as African female international students in Korea. They often feel like outsiders, struggling to form connections and friendships, especially with their Korean counterparts. This sense of being different and attracting unwanted attention hampers their enjoyment of physical activity and creates pressure to prove themselves. These experiences align with the discussions on social exclusion and the challenges faced by marginalized groups in critical race feminism literature (Crenshaw, 1991). It underscores the need for inclusive environments that foster belongingness and create opportunities for diverse individuals to engage in physical activity without fear of judgment or isolation.

Furthermore, and interestingly, some participants dissociate their identity from their physical activity experiences, emphasizing a goal-oriented and internally driven approach. They consciously separate their personal identity from their engagement in physical activity, focusing solely on their individual goals. This perspective highlights the complexity of individual experiences and the diverse ways in which identity manifests in relation to physical activity. It

underscores the agency and autonomy of the participants in navigating their identities and experiences.

Drawing from the literature on physical activity experiences of international students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, we can situate these findings within a broader context. Similar studies have highlighted the influence of societal perceptions, cultural norms, and discrimination on the physical activity experiences of international students (Yoh et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2019). By integrating critical race feminism and African feminism, we deepen our understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by African female international students in Korea.

5.2. Research Contribution

The research on the physical activity experiences and identity construction of African female international students in Korea makes both practical and theoretical contributions to the existing body of knowledge.

- The findings of this research shed light on the experiences of African female international students in Korea, providing valuable insights into their challenges, perspectives, and aspirations. This knowledge can contribute to improving cultural understanding and promoting inclusivity within educational institutions and host communities helping to create more supportive environments for international students, fostering their well-being and integration.

- There is also need for the development of targeted support programs and services that address the specific needs of this student population. By addressing these constraints, universities and educational institutions can enhance the overall experience of African female international students and promote their engagement in physical activity.
- This research also helps to validate the experiences of African female international students and promote a sense of empowerment and self-determination. It can encourage other students to challenge societal norms, overcome barriers, and actively shape their own physical activity experiences.
- The research also adds to the discourse of Critical Race Feminism and African feminism contributing to the broader understanding of the role of race and gender in shaping individuals' lives and opportunities and in how African women assert their autonomy and challenge societal expectations.

5.3. Limitations and Further Research Opportunities

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with a small sample of eight participants who met specific criteria. With only eight participants, the generalizability of the findings may be limited, and the experiences of African female international students in Korea may not be fully represented. Additionally, focusing on a specific age range and graduate degree programs in Seoul may

further restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and student populations.

Future research in this area should aim to address the limitations of the current study. One potential avenue for further exploration is the integration of quantitative research methods alongside qualitative methods. By incorporating quantitative measures, such as surveys or questionnaires, researchers can gather numerical data on variables such as frequency of participation, duration of physical activity sessions, and types of activities engaged in. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' physical activity behaviors and allow for the examination of patterns and trends among African female international students in Korea. It would also enhance the generalizability of the findings and contribute to a more comprehensive knowledge base in this research area.

5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the construction of identity and its influence on the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea. By exploring the research questions and analyzing the findings through the lenses of critical race feminism and African feminism, we gained valuable insights into the intersectionality of identity, societal context, and physical activity behaviors.

The findings revealed that the participants' physical activity experiences

were shaped by various factors. Their motivations for engaging in physical activity included body image perceptions, prior exposure to physical activity, stress management, and a desire to belong. External influences such as the availability of infrastructure, specialized programs, and safe spaces facilitated their participation in physical activities. However, the participants also faced significant constraints, including language barriers, lack of a support system, financial considerations, time constraints, and unfavorable weather conditions.

Importantly, the participants' identities played a significant role in their physical activity experiences. Societal perceptions influenced their understanding of themselves as the "so called" African traditional woman and shaped the notion of an African woman in Korea. They also developed internalized and self-understood identities, navigating their roles as modern-day African women influenced by their experiences in Korea.

Furthermore, the participants discussed how their constructed identities influenced their physical activity experiences within the societal context. Identity played a role in challenging stereotypes, acting as a barrier to participation, or having a non-influential effect. Their experiences highlighted the importance of considering the societal context, cultural expectations, and language barriers when promoting inclusive physical activity opportunities for African female international students in Korea.

Comparing the experiences of African female international students to

other Anglo-American women and international students reveals commonalities in the barriers and facilitators they encounter in their physical activity engagement. This suggests that efforts to promote physical activity among international students in Korea can benefit from inclusive strategies that address the shared challenges they face, such as language barriers, lack of social support, and limited financial resources.

However, it is important to further contextualize the experiences of African female international students, considering the intersections of race, gender, and cultural backgrounds. This enables an understanding and highlights the unique experiences of African female international students. Drawing upon the frameworks of critical race feminism and African feminism, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between identity, societal context, and physical activity experiences. It underscores the need for inclusive policies, programs, and support systems that address the unique needs and challenges faced by African female international students in accessing and engaging in physical activity.

This study provides valuable insights into the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea, highlighting the intricate interplay between identity, societal context, and participation in physical activities. By understanding these dynamics, we can work towards creating inclusive and supportive environments that promote the well-being and sense of

belonging of African female international students in the Korean context.

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Appendix

Interview Questions Guide

Demographic Information		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Country 2. Age 3. Name of university 4. Duration of study 5. Current Enrolment Status 6. Marital Status 7. Family Background 		
RQ1	What are the physical activity experiences of African female international students in Korea ?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When thinking about physical activity what comes to your mind? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. What is physical activity in your view? ii. What do you like about physical activity? iii. What do you dislike about physical activity? 2. Describe your current involvement in physical activity and how satisfied you are with it? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. What type(s) of activity (ies)? ii. How often? How long? At what intensity? How it is organized? iii. You mentioned being satisfied/dissatisfied with this level of involvement, can you tell me more about this? 3. How does your current involvement in physical activity compare to what you used to do in your home country? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. How it is similar or different? • Type • Level of physical activity done in past (any physical activity: • Duration sport /exercise / others) 4. What are the enablers and barriers to your physical activity participation in Korea? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. How are these factors different or similar from when you were living in your home country?
RQ2	How do African female international students in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you think African women are viewed in your culture? 2. How do you think African women are viewed in Korea? Are you able to identify similarities or differences? 3. What is your ethnicity and race? Why do you view yourself as such?

	Korea construct their identity?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about your experiences of learning and understanding your racial and background and how this has influenced your perception of who you are today 2. Has there ever been a time when your identity mattered? If yes, tell me about how did it make you feel? 3. What do you think makes up your identity as an African woman?
RQ3	How does the identity of African female international students in Korea influence their experience with physical activity?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think how view yourself as an African woman has any influence on your physical activity participation? 2. Do you think how others view you as an African woman has any influence on your physical activity participation?

아프리카 여성 유학생들의 신체활동 경험

Bridget Mugisha Umutoni

글로벌스포츠매니지먼트 전공

체육교육과

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본 연구는 한국으로 대학원에 유학 온 아프리카 여학생들의 신체활동 경험을 탐색하고자 하였다. 그들의 정체성이 신체활동 경험에 어떠한 영향을 미쳤는지 알아보려고 하였으며 이 현상을 이해하기 위해 비판적 인종 이론(Critical Race Theory)와 아프리카 페미니즘(African Feminism)을 적용하여 사회적 맥락, 정체성 구축, 그리고 신체활동을 선택하는 과정의 복잡성을 이해하고자 하였다.

자료를 수집하기 위해 대학원과정에 재학 중이고 신체활동에 참여하는 아프리카 여학생 8명을 대상으로 심층면담을 진행하였다. 수집된 자료는 신체활동 동기, 외부의 영향, 제약요소, 정체성 형성으로 결과를 도출할 수 있었다.

연구결과에 따르면 연구대상자들의 신체활동 동기는 신체

이미지에 대한 인식, 이전의 신체활동 경험, 스트레스 관리, 그리고 소속감의 욕구가 포함되었다. 인프라의 가용성, 전문 프로그램, 안전한 공간과 같은 외부 영향은 그들의 신체활동 참여를 용이하게 했으나 언어의 장벽, 지원 체계의 부재, 재정적인 고려사항, 시간 제약, 불리한 기후 조건과 같은 제약요소도 마주하게 되었다. 연구대상들은 아프리카 전통 여성과 한국에서의 아프리카 여성 개념과 같은 사회적 인식을 통해 자신들의 정체성을 형성하는 것으로 나타났다. 그들은 내재화된 자아 이해와 자기 이해된 정체성을 개발하며, 한국에서의 경험에 영향을 받은 현대 아프리카 여성으로서의 역할을 이해한다. 그들의 신체활동 경험에 미치는 영향은 사회적 맥락에 의해 형성되며, 정체성은 고정관념에 도전하는 역할을 하거나 참여의 장애물로 작용하기도 하였다.

비판적 인종 이론과 아프리카 페미니즘을 적용한 본 연구는 정체성, 사회적 맥락, 그리고 신체활동 경험 간의 복잡한 상호작용을 깊이 이해하는 데 기여한다. 이 연구 결과는 교육 기관과 정책 결정자들에게 신체활동에 참여하는 아프리카 여성 국제학생들의 포용적인 환경, 문화적으로 민감한 프로그래밍, 그리고 지원 체계의 필요성을 강조한다. 전반적으로, 아프리카 여학생들은 한국에서의 신체활동 경험에 대한 논의가 되었으며, 정체성 구축과 사회적 맥락의 역할에 대한 통찰을 제공한다. 연구대상자들이 직면하는 독특한 도전에 대해 인식하고

대응함으로써, 포용적인 환경을 조성하고 그들의 삶을 촉진하며 신체활동 참여를 증진할 수 있도록 노력할 수 있다.

주요어: 신체활동경험, 아프리카 여성 유학생, 비판적 인종 이론, 아프리카 페미니즘, 정체성 형성, 유학생, 한국

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