

**ATHLETES' PERCEIVED MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE IN SPORTS AS
PREDICTORS OF ATHLETES' SUCCESS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL ZONE OF
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Critical thinking, initiative, imaginative thought, creativity and self discipline are products of training and experience which athletes should acquire from the coaching process where the coaches are themselves creative. A decade years of athletes' performance at National Sports Festival shows that most states and the Federal Capital Territory within the zone recorded poor performance compared with their counterparts from other parts of the country. This paper, therefore, sought to investigate whether the athletes' perceived motivational climate in sport would influence athletes' success in the North Central Zone of Nigeria. Survey research design of an ex-post facto type was adopted. Eight hundred and seventy-seven out of existing one thousand, ninety-seven performing athletes were purposively drawn from six states of

North Central Zone and the Federal Capital Territory Sports Council of Nigeria as respondents. A standardized research instrument was used: Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports ($r=0.85$). Data were analyzed using Multiple Regression, and hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports accounted for 55.10% of the variance of athletes' success. Athletes' variables, dependence ($\beta =0.20$, $t = 8.25$, $P < 0.05$), integration ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 13.25$, $P < 0.05$), opportunity ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 11.64$, $P < 0.05$) and frustration ($\beta =0.46$, $t = 19.23$, $P < 0.05$) were found to be predictors of athletes' success. Athletes' success could be enhanced by giving adequate attention to Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports in the North Central Zone of Nigeria, since Athletes with strong sense of efficacy in their ability can achieve higher breakthrough in their performance.

Introduction

Providing athletes with the opportunity to practise their skills in competitive situations can help them increase their efficacy rather than prescribed curriculum being handed down from "experts". This will make them to be responsible for creating their own learning opportunities to harness their individual creativity and talents. It equally encourages athletes to virtualize the competitive process as a mechanism for building ideas through rethinking which can be an effective means for strengthening coping self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1986), Mastery experiences that perfect skills and strengthen perceived self-efficacy could reduce vulnerability to dysfunction, as well as facilitate generality. However, Roberson (2004) opined that learning skills classes may be structured in a manner, which will help athletes experience successful performance outcomes thereby strengthening efficacy and motivation.

Roberson (2004) assessed that giving athletes the opportunity to experience the information in a variety of mediums which build upon one another breaks the task of organizing and experiencing their own ideas in a sport down into smaller and manageable tasks. Subsequently, the task of developing their own idea relating to the information they have read and instruction from their coaches becomes less formidable.

Athletes become easily frustrated, with both sport related and non-sport related setbacks, particularly in cases where an athlete has

met with failure and frustration in the past, questions about personal capabilities to succeed in sport (Roberson, 2004). McCann (2004), Abass (2005) postulated that while anger and frustration may be real and appropriate responses to a bad call that could cost athlete(s) a medal, effective big coaches learn to control the impulse to vent anger during the competition. Babu (2005) asserted that our tendency to assign to the leader credit or blame for success and failures that are actually team outcomes is so strong and pervasive that we can call it the “leader attribution error”.

Ajayi (2002) opined that over-confidence has grave implications on peak performance. He further stressed that it can lead to great disappointment and great failure, which lead to frustration and frustration, can make athlete burnout. That is, feeling annoyed and impatient because they cannot do or achieve what they want.

Coaching is a powerful, synergistic relationship between a coach and a willing individual which connects at the deep, personal level of beliefs, values and vision, and which enables, through a process of discovery, goal setting, and strategic actions, the realization of extraordinary result. Martens (2005) opined that coaching is a body of knowledge, a technology and a style of relationship that focuses on the development of human potential. Equally, coaching is inter-developmental, in that, it develops both the coach and the individual being coached. A coach is committed to becoming the best possible, if he continually seeks to improve his own effectiveness. This effectiveness depends much on the ability of the coach to be creative in his approach and strategies of coaching which adversely enhance the athletes’ success.

Creativity enables human beings to get the most out of experiences and resources. Akinboye (2001) opined that creativity and innovation are the cheapest ways of getting added value from any existing assets, the ways of dynamic change, the leaps of progress and the channels of success. These help to propel organizations, catapult careers, and generate potent growth and viable outcomes. Creativity and innovation generate wealth and success. Creativity produces actionable ideas, new concepts, designs and opportunities while innovation adds value to the creative outcomes. These products of creativity influence individuals’ behaviour and can be fostered to improve his/her own society.

Athletes' success at National Sports Festival records according to individual state from 1996-2006 shows the following positions for states and Federal Capital Territory within North Central Zone of Nigeria. Plateau was 5th, Federal Capital Territory 14th, Nassarawa 16th, Kogi 18th, Kwara 19th, Benue 21st and Niger 31st out of 37th states in the country (National Institutes for Sports, 2006). Martens (2005) asserted that success in sports is the primary goal of every athlete that enters into competitions.

Learning is a permanent change of behaviour and change is at the heart of coaching. It plays a critical role in helping individuals to create, adapt to and accept change as a challenge rather than obstacle. Coaches should be greatly involved in teaching these truths, which generate self-belief of athletes to the level of expectation that can make or break performance.

Statement of the Problem

Creativity, self discipline, initiative, imaginative thought and critical thinking are products of training and experience which athletes should acquire from the coaching process where the coaches are themselves creative. Below average performance at National Sports Festival is a common phenomenon among most states and the Federal Capital Territory within the zone compared with their counterparts from other zones of the country. Some coaches use their off-season for other competitions as "mercenaries" in order to earn more money rather than going for academic and professional training that will improve their creativity fostering behavioural techniques that enhance motivational climate among athletes and improve sports performance.

Hypothesis

Athletes' independence in training, integration, opportunity and frustration management strategies as factors of Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports do not significantly predict athletes' success in North Central Zone.

Methodology

The survey research design of an *ex-post facto* type was adopted. Eight hundred and seventy-seven respondents (877 performing athletes) were purposively drawn from six states of North Central Zone and the

Federal Capital Territory Sports Council of Nigeria. A standardized research instrument was used: Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports (PMCS, by Seifriz, Duda and Chi, 1992) which was modified in line with the focus of this study. The internal validity coefficient of 0.85 was obtained for Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports. The modified instrument has the reliability coefficient of 0.74. The scale has two sections – A and B. Data collected were analyzed using parametric statistics of multiple regression, and hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Testing

Athletes' independence in training, integration, opportunity and frustration management strategies as factors of Athletes' Perceived Motivational Climate in Sports do not significantly predict athletes' success in North Central Zone. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis, and the result is as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Relative contribution of selected athletes' variables towards athletes' success in North Central Zone

Variables	Unstandardized β weight	Std. Error	Beta	T	Significant
Dependence	1.126	0.136	0.201	8.252	0.000
Integration	1.452	0.110	0.323	13.248	0.000
Opportunity	1.161	0.100	0.276	11.640	0.000
Frustration	1.865	0.097	0.457	19.234	0.000

The result from Table 1 shows that independence in training, integration, opportunity and frustration management strategies significantly contributed to athletes' success in North Central Zone. The most potent variable is frustration management strategies ($\beta = 0.46$, $t = 19.23$, $P < 0.05$), followed by integration ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 13.25$, $P < 0.05$), opportunity ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 11.64$, $P < 0.05$) and independence in training ($\beta = 0.20$, $t = 8.25$, $P < 0.05$). All these variables significantly contributed to athletes' success in North Central Zone. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. These results are in agreement with Peterson (1999), Adeyanju (2002) and Mercado (2005), that athletes need the help and support of their coaches in order to survive or to be successful.

The efficiency of coaches and athletes are usually measured by their success at the end of competition period. It is a clear fact that a dependent athlete will not be able to perform excellently without the presence of his/her coach to be motivating him/her. Mercado (2005) also stated that motor behaviour involves two important participants: the athlete and the coach, and both must improve their perspective skills. He concluded that coaches must use their judgement for what is best, but only with the understanding that full integration must be the eventual goal.

According to Roberson (2004) and Purcell (2004), providing athletes with the opportunity to practise their skills in competitive situations can help them increase their efficacy rather than prescribed curriculum being handed down from "experts". They equally stressed that this will make them to be responsible for creating their own learning opportunities to harness their individual creativity and talents.

Ajayi (2002) said that over-confidence has grave implications on peak performance while Roberson (2004) and Abass (2005) said that many athletes become easily frustrated with both sport related and non-sport related setbacks. They equally said that anger and frustration may be real and appropriate responses to a bad call that could cost athlete(s) a medal. Babu (2005) also advised that effective senior coaches should learn to control the impulse to vent anger during the competition.

Gauld and Damarjia (1998) said that these independent variables when put together would not dispute in building valuable self-confidence in achieving success. Omotayo (2005) and Martens (2005) stressed that true confidence is an athletes' realistic expectation about achieving success and the higher confidence, the easier the possibilities of breakthrough. Coaches should be greatly involved in teaching truths, which generate self-belief of athletes to the level of expectation that can make or break performance. Laughlin (2005) affirmed that belief alone will not be enough; they have to put their belief into action and action into practice. Belief and action will make athletes successful. If coaches in the North Central Zone of Nigeria are able to coach or teach convectively, they should be able to carry their athletes along in believing the truth which they will put into actions which may yield success in their profession.

Conclusion

Based on the result above and personal observation of the researchers during data collection, it was found that all athletes' based variables significantly contributed (55.10%) to the athletes' success. It was also discovered that there was a significant difference in the relative contribution of athletes' based variables of independence to the dependent with frustration management strategies being the most potent.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Athletes' successful performance could be enhanced by giving adequate attention to sports coaches' creativity fostering behaviour.
2. Athletes should be committed to training, be encouraged to find solutions to their problems and be able to decode correctly their coaches' signals and instructions at training, competitions and after. All slothful and stereo-type athletes should be disciplined to caution conflict among others.
3. Coaches should be motivated in order to serve as motivators and initiators to their athletes. There should be parity treatment between the coaches and the athletes performing the same task or competition.

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