



THE ROLE AND RELEVANCE OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior. It is the science of the mind and soul. Earlier, Human Psychology was thought or meant the reading of peoples mind. However, psychology is far from mind-reading only psychology is presently seen as the science of human behavior, his experiences and activities. Sport psychology has many definitions, with many systems and methods offered by many practitioners. Some see it as positive thinking while others use techniques such as visualization and imagery to try to cause positive outcomes. Sport psychology is an interdisciplinary science that draws on knowledge from the field of kinesiology and psychology. It involves the study of how psychological factors affect performance and how participation in sports and exercise affect psychological and physical factors. In addition to instruction and training of psychological skills for performance improvement, applied sport psychology may include work with athletes, coaches, and parent regarding injury, rehabilitation, communication, team building, and career transition, conclusion and recommendations were made on the way forward to athletes such that athletes during training sessions or competition should take only the prescribed drugs dose by physicians and medical doctors.

Keywords: *Psychology, Sport, Relevance, Role.*

INTRODUCTION

Psychology is an area of study which attempts to apply psychological facts and principles of learning, performance associated human behavior in the whole field of sports (Williams, 2010). Sports psychology covers a wide spectrum of the complex study of human sporting activities. It attempts to observe areas, describe, explain and predict human behavior and its consequences in sporting situation.

Sports psychology is an applied branch of general psychology in the sense that it uses the research findings and principles developed by psychologists to improve sports skill learning and performance. The main objective of sports psychology is to develop necessary skills and competencies in the respective coaches, to enable them to understand, control and predict the behavior of athletes in sports participation at different levels (Ikulayo, 1991).

In short, you now see that sports psychology is educational, scientific and professional contributions of psychology to the promotion, maintenance and enhancement of sport-related behavior.

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History and Relevance of Psychology of Sports in Nigeria.

It is a fact that many sports participant and coaches know little or nothing about the scientific aspects of sports. It is very important for one to know the vital part science plays in the successful conduct of sports and sports performance. Most notable influence of science have perhaps been in the new sciences of psychology and sociology which in turn have considerably altered sports thoughts and practices. The scientific background and study of sports therefore is becoming increasingly important with the growing realization of the relation of physical activity and the mind (Bucher, 1998).

The Goals of Psychology

These includes the following:-

1. Reporting what really happens.
2. Explaining what happens.
3. Predicting what will happen.
4. Controlling what happens and
5. Improving the quality of live by changing what happens (Bersser, 1998).

Today, psychology has expanded to include practically all fields of human endeavor such as medicine, law, politics, industry, religion and sports to mention but a few. You might be tempted to ask, what this subject called psychology of sports is.

The Development of Psychology of Sports

The relationship between sports and psychology has a long history, psychological aspect of physical education has remained far in the background. Nevertheless, the academic study of sports psychology was comparatively a late starter. It was in the 1960s that interest developed on the scale that provided the foundation for this academic area of study. It was not until 1965 in Rome that researchers interested in sports psychology were drawn together to chart the course for the quest of psychological benefits of sports participation. This was the first international congress of the international society of sports psychology (ISSP). The sports psychology as previously mentioned is one of the new disciplines in the area of sports. Sports psychology came into being during the 1970s and developed into a legitimate academic specialty (Nickel, 2012).

Keen scientific interest in sports did not take a foothold in Nigeria until the impetus for sports psychology study was provided by pioneers such as Dr. P. B. Ikulayo, Mr. S. O. Omolabi, Dr. A. S. Sohi, Dr. A. Eleyao, Prof. Amuchie, Dr. I. Ogunhari, Dr. T. A. Adedoja, Prof. J. A. Adedeji, Miss R. Ezekiel, Prof. Ajisafe, Mr. P. D. Adebawo, Lt. Col. Akinyanju, Dr. H. O. Ololade, and Dr. A. A. Adebawo to mention but a few. Majority of them are professional from parent physical Education Association of Nigeria. They come together in 1984 to form the Sports Psychology Association of Nigeria (SPAN). The association was inaugurated a year later by then Minister of Information, Social Development, Youth, Sports and Culture, Air Commodore Sampson E. Omeruah (Rtd.). Shortly, thereafter, the SPAN was recognized as one of the 22 National Sports Associations attached to the National Sports Commission (NSC) (Nickel, 2012).

Sports Psychology Association of Nigeria seems to be in a strong position to build up the discipline and profession on a solid foundation. SPAN has rapidly developed as a national organization for the promotion of sports, gaining sufficient support to establish a certification programme for practitioners in Nigeria Universities. The professionalization of sports psychology has led to the specification of a training involving four years of preparation for first degree. A number of Masters programmes are being established, providing increased opportunities for specialized training.

The Relevance of Psychology of Sports in Nigeria

Psychological implication of sports will help in total upliftment of various aspects of sports in Nigeria, the aspects includes:-

1. That our athletes will now be mentally, physically and psychologically groomed to perform their best even under pressure (inner athletes).

2. That Nigeria coaches will now know that without sufficient motivation, an athlete will not perform well in competitions or train effectively in practice. Hence, will now employ different techniques of motivation to different athletes and skills. This awareness will surely affect the level of skills attainment.
3. That Nigeria coaches will now apply the principles of individual differences and handle athletes on individual bases.
4. That Nigerian Government and coaches will now go for modern technological facilities and equipment for easy learning of sports skills and enhanced performance. (Smith 2010).

Behavior in Sports

The era when athletes depended entirely on sports for recreation and play is over. The attainment of sports excellence has been a matter of national consciousness in recent times, because of its international significance. Many athletes now enter into sporting business with different frames of minds. Each frame of mind is different from the other, therefore, your frame of mind is actually directing you on what to do or how to act at any point in time. Behavior therefore is the response to things, action and events (stimuli) around you. In this unit, we will be discussing behaviors in sports.

Behaviors in Sports

Sports poses most serious and the most pressing problems for its success or failures. The good and bad behavior in sports has a profound effect on the world of sports. You must recognize that in sports we are dealing with two old and universal social evaluations – honor is positive, shame is negative. The same applies to Honorable and shameful behaviors in sports.

a. Positive Behavior in Sport

One of the positive behavior in sports is that of the good sportsmanship behavior. Athletes who exhibit this behavior have positive and desirable personality traits. This means that they have integrity, obedience to authority and fair play. They observed the laws of the game, respect opponent, team-mates, referees, officials and spectators, play to win or accept defeat with dignity, promote the interest of sports, reject corruption, drugs, racism, violence and other dangers to our sports development. Help others to resist corruption pressures and even denounce those who attempt to discredit sport and honor those that defend sports good reputations.

b. Achievement Behavior in Sport

Outstanding athletes (High achievers) possess high and stable personality and can perform at a high level on a consistent basis. In behavioral state terms, the successful athletes tend to be less anxious, depressed and confused. They possess more psyching vigor than the in successful athletes. High achievers have strong work athletics and are capable of training harder, getting fitter, improving the training, spending more time to learning skills. They are too ready to acclimatize where

necessary. High achieved athletes are dedicated and persistent in their effort to achieve their goals. They are attracted to the most challenging situations.

c. Aggression

In an effort to understand aggression as a behavior in sports, you may ask these questions:- Why do nations go to war? Why do lovers hurt each other? Why do athletes do the horrific things they do to each other? Everyday occurrence of violence in sports has made aggression a major concern as one of the behaviors in sports. In sports, aggression is expected to occur when an athlete's behavior inflicts harm sports itself is frustrating at times hence, sports teaches aggression and some athletes are aggressive by nature.

Aggressive behavior in sports is associated with attack or injury which may occur for one or more for three reasons:-

- i. Frustration in goal directed behavior because athletes who set unrealistic goals, place unnecessary pressure on themselves when confronted with reality. When this happens, they are frustrated and become aggressive to opponents.
- ii. Learning aggressive behavior to certain stimuli some sports coaches teach athletes to act aggressively when certain things happens during competitions. Secondly, if much violence is observed in sports, it will heighten aggressive tendencies. Therefore, aggression is not inevitable in man, hence athletes can learn not to be aggressive just as they can learn to be aggressive.
- iii. Pain-increased physical activity may make an individual more susceptible to aggression when confronted with potential aggressive stimuli such as pain and injuries (Williams, 2010).

Generally, sports administrators make stringent rules, usually enforced by officials who carefully scrutinize athletes behaviors, placing heavy penalties including ejection from the contest to stop aggression.

Drug Abuse in Sports

Perhaps one of the most perplexing developments in sports is the drug phenomenon. The increasing misuse of drugs was made if a curse and tends to threaten the existence of high-level national and international sports competitions and sports development.

Currently, the use of cryogenic drugs has become a worldwide social problem among athletes. Cryogenic drugs are "supplements" that supposedly enhance athletic performance. This illegal practice is known to be responsible for several health problems of the athletes. Uncountable lapses in performance, depression, acute anguish, irritability or confusion or even after prolonged periods of absent. Psychologically the steroid affects the brain, inducing more aggression. For example, the case of Diego Amando Maradona in soccer always come to mind (Zillman, 2013).

Crowd Behavior in Sports

In sports, the presence of significant others provide basis for hostile outburst. Collective violence has marred a lot of sports activities in the world. Presence of partisan fans is one of the basis for potential conflicts to exist, since collective behavior does not occur in vacuum. Something or someone must "trigger" or "touch off" the mass actions. The presence of ethnic, racial, political, religious, social class national and regional fans and spectators provide the tender for aggressive behavior in sports. Many fans and spectators have so oriented their minds that they expect nothing short of victory "win at all costs". If contrary to their expectation, their team loses, the intolerance leads to violence. This throws the whole field into free-for-all fight. Missiles and often dangerous weapons are used. These result to injuries and deaths.

Role of Sports Psychologists

As there are many special areas of study, so also there are many specialists in these areas. If one specializes in law he becomes a lawyer, so also one who specializes in politics becomes a politician and in education becomes an educationists. All these are different professions requiring special knowledge.

Background of Sports Psychologists

Sports psychology is a specialized field and provides service for sports development. People who specialize in sports psychology are known as sports psychologists. They are specially prepared in the scientific approach to coaching, learning and performance in sports. Sports psychologists according to Ikulayo (1991) are seen as special mind doctors. They are trained in the area of sports to understand how important the state of the mind of athletes are for excellent sports performances. In short, they obtain training in the study of the behavior of athletes to sports performance.

the sports psychologists actually train minds of the athletes to work along with the acquisition of physical skills. This is so because the harmonious functioning of the physical, mental and psychological aspects of the athletes must be emphasized at different levels of training, practice and competition (Body and Mind). The sports psychologists were exposed to different areas of psychology and sports such as psycho diagnostics, developmental psychology perception and motor skill models theories of motivation and sports, stress prevention and management sports, and mental processes personality and emotion in sports.

The Role of Sports Psychologists

All specialists have roles to play, hence, sports psychologists are no exception. Generally, the function of the sports psychologist is to enhance and promote excellent sport performance through the following major role areas. Awareness roles, guidance and mental readiness role, counseling role, skill training and programme planning role. Stress prevention and management role, motivational role and good human relation role (www. Sportsmail.com.org).

Sports psychologists take a more active role in the formation and reformation of sports policy. Sports psychologists keep the flag flying within the realm of sports development by creating the awareness of the place and importance of psychology to sports performance. This is to contribute to the body of knowledge in sports. They initiate researches in various areas of sports and finding leading to high performance and stability in athletic achievements.

Mental Readiness Role

Involvement of sports psychologists in any sports competition is likely to yield faster and better results if they develop the minds of the athletes, coaches, and other officials before competition. They ensure that most things/needs of the athletes are provided to enable them develop stable mind, such includes proper equipment and facilities, adequate training and practice, adequate food and wears, good medication, and necessary information for a very high spirit. For example the sports psychologists encourage athletes to subject themselves to medical, physical and psychological tests, before any major competition. Such test boost the mind and are basic to good sports performance (Smith, 2010).

Guidance and Counseling Role

The sports psychologists provide psychological tips to athletes. They monitor and counsel athletes and provide them with necessary guidance. Many athletes are faced with problem which affects their behavior and performance. The sports psychologists have the responsibility to identify them, and find solutions to their problems. Counseling has a great effect in shaping the attitudes of the athletes and in modifying their behavior. This is possible because the sports psychologists carry out a number of researches on the problems of athletes and sports in general. This function is very important as they must see to the progress of the athletes. In moment of gain or loss, defect or victory, frustration, depression and mental anarchy, the sports psychologists play a major role in rehabilitation of a bettered athlete through counseling and guidance.

Good Relations Role

Sports psychologists are good in the areas of personal relationship and communication skills, they possess the ability to relate to the athletes in their own individual languages and terms. When sports psychologists relate to the athletes, the athletes open up and discuss freely any emotional problems that may be troubling them. Athletic contingents have gained a great deal from their interaction with sports psychologists. Generally, sports psychologists are seen as effective communicators but there is needs for interpersonal relations to enhance sports performance (Ikulayo, 1991). They even promote cooperative goal structuring with other sports related professions to enable them perform their duties functionally, effectively and efficiently.

Skills Training and Programme Planning Role

Sports psychologists according to Williams, (2010) should work closely with the coach to have drills incorporated in the

training and competition situations that positively contribute to the self-efficiency of athletes. They see that athletes are challenged with new skills but it should be done gradually. This is to ensure that the goals for success are appropriate to the standards of the individual. They help in teaching psychological skills which are essential for excellent sports performance.

Sports psychologists generally assist coaches in organizing workshops and seminars on the application of psychological principles of sports coaching. Sports psychologists really help coaches and athletes understand what the athletes goals, priorities and expectations are; what are the team's goal priorities and expectations? What are the areas of concern? Finally, what are some plans or strategies to achieve those goals?

Stress Prevention and Management Role

Knowing and understanding the athletes will assist in the correct prediction and interpretation of their behavior. The major role of a sports psychologists is to ensure a high quality performance of an athlete's even under stress. Sports psychologists help athletes on how to cope with different problems associated with competitions such as fear of failure, success, stress, anxiety and depression, opponents aggressiveness, crowd hostility, belief in charms etc (Ikulayo, 1991).

CONCLUSION

It is the consensus of the researcher, that Amateur and professional coaches that athletes use drugs and other stimulants to gain advantage on opponent and improve their physical performance in sports, it was also understood that these drugs cannot improve the technical ability of the players but can raise temporarily their level of physical endurance. It is also believed that chronic abuse of amphetamines and other stimulants can lead to addiction and damage to the heart and other organ of the body. Also, with repeated use, an increase tolerance to these drugs develop mental disorder, therefore to suggest that the risk involved in the use of the stimulants to improve athletic performance far exceed their potential benefits in sports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the danger of addiction, embarrassment and health related problems caused to athletes who use drugs and other stimulants in sports the following are here recommended:

- i. That athletes during training sessions or competition should take only the prescribe drugs dose by physicians and medical doctors.
- ii. That athletes should read and understand the instruction before using any prescribe drugs.
- iii. That an athletes should never prescribed drugs on self-medication to other athletes, only physicians and medical doctors can prescribe drugs.

- iv. Never use a long stored drug or that which has expired because some drug contain substance which evaporate and make them even stronger than needed, while others lose their strength and become useless.
- v. That means of education and enlightenment campaign to athletes should be provided by government and sports agency so that sports men and women will be aware of the dangers of using drugs without the prescription of doctors.

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