Perception and Utilization of Sport Psychology Services among Athletes of Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State of Nigeria

Mayowa Adeyeye and Adeyemo Kehinde

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Lagos.

Corresponding Author: Mayowa Adeyeye

Abstract
This study sought to investigate how athletes of tertiary institutions in Lagos state perceived sport psychologist and the levels at which their service is utilized, thereby drawing the attention of tertiary institution authorities and other stakeholders to the usefulness and importance of sports psychologist in the attainment of optimal performance in sport and also to help them attain their aims of winning in any competition using sport psychology principles. The sample used for this study was two hundred and ten (n-210) athletes selected from six federal and state tertiary institutions in Lagos state of Nigeria which included University of Lagos Akoka, Lagos State University Ojo, Yaba College of Education Yaba, Federal College of Education Akoka, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Ijinkin, and Lagos State Polytechnic. The descriptive survey design was used and the respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique. Perception and Utilization of Sport Psychology Service Questionnaire (PUSPSQ) was used to elicit opinion from respondents. The test retest reliability value obtained for the instrument using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was 0.86. Data was analysed using frequency counts and percentage for demographic data while Chi-square was employed in determining the level of significance between the hypothesized and observed values at .05 alpha level. The result of the findings revealed that athletes did not know whom a sports psychologist is leading to the lack of employment opportunity for the sport psychologists in Nigeria.

Keywords: perception, utilization, sport psychology, tertiary institutions.

INTRODUCTION
One of the major contributory factor to excellent in sports performance is psychology. Sport psychology is the branch of sciences involving science of psychology applied to sportsmen/women in athletic situations (Gould, 2008). The sports psychologists endeavour to assist in stabilizing the emotion of the athletes so that inspire of all the problems associated with competition they are still able to cope and perform well through psyching processes. With the expansion of opportunities for athletes in the developing world of sports, many athletes have expanded their search for ways to enhance their performance. This means not only working to maximize physical skills, but also striving to master mental skills so that optimal performances can result.

Many athletes would agree that optimal sports performance involves just as much, if not more, of a mental component than a physical one. Furthermore, it is often the case that when two athletes or two teams of athletes with similar physical abilities match up against one another, the deciding factor in who comes out victorious may depend on who is stronger mentally. Hence, the job of sport psychologists may be important to many athletes, as it is these professionals who are specifically trained to work with athletes on developing the mental skills necessary for improved performances.

While some athletes view sport as a business, others may participate in sport for the sheer enjoyment, for health reasons, to be a part of something, or to improve their personal development. Athletes who have these motivations for engaging in sport may also be interested in working with sport psychologists, as they may wish to maximize their human potential in sport and in life. Although there is an increasing demand for sport psychology services, it is still evident that many sport practitioners (i.e. athletes, coaches) view sport psychology skeptically (Wrisberg & Martin, 1994). Because sport psychologists are in a “helping profession,” some contend that stigmas may be attached to anyone who seeks their assistance. For example, Ravizza (2008) suggests that a “shrink” image is connected with some athletes’ perceptions of sport psychology and that because of such an image, athletes may hesitate to seek their services. While research with elite level athletes who have previously worked with sport psychologists has revealed that athletes at this level highly value such services (Gould, 2004), little is known about perceptions of sport psychology held by athletes at other levels.

Furthermore, due to the paradox that seems to exist, the increased interest in sport
psychology and the hesitancy of athletes and coaches to seek these services, it seems important to extend research to better understand how athletes view the practice of sport psychology.

Nigeria has produced many experts both at masters degree and doctoral level in sports psychology over the years. However observations shows that in the past few years, the services of sports psychologist with the purpose of enhancing sport performance, individual countries employ sports psychologist. There is an adage which says “charity begins at home”, if the universities could not make use of the services of these experts one wonders where and how they want the sport psychologist trained in these universities to be utilised. In the recent concluded NUGA held in University of Benin, although a lecturer from the department of Human Kinetics and Health Education was appointed as a team manager even though, the work of a team manager is different from the roles and responsibilities of a sports psychologist.

In Nigeria, various sports competitions exist among various higher institutions, the purpose of which is to foster unity among member schools. For instance, university students take part in Nigeria University Games (NUGA), colleges and polytechnics take part in Nigeria Polytechnic Games (NIPOGA) and others Nigeria Colleges of Education Games (NACEGA) respectively, individual schools strive for excellence and the winning edge which they never realised except by the use of mercenaries which negate the principles and the purpose for which such competition is established.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
It was observed that despite the availability of sports psychology graduates that abound in the country, most tertiary institutions in Lagos state do not engage the services of these professionals. By doing this, athletes in these institutions are denied the opportunity of benefiting from the services of sport psychology which could have helped the athletes to take care of some psychological problems like surgery at sport venues, using of mercenaries, depression among loosing teams, anxiety, burnout, inability to manage success and failure which is likely to affect their performance while representing their universities as observed by Adeyeye (2012) and if sport psychologists have been engaged, thus the researchers investigated the athletes perception of a sport psychologist and their level of utilization of sport psychology services before, during and after competitions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
The study would assist tertiary institutions authorities and other stakeholders in sport administration in Nigeria to understanding the importance of sport psychology services in the preparation and management of their athletes if enhanced and sustained excellent performance in sport is to be achieved. Furthermore, it would help in the area of employment opportunities for sport psychologist in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The only challenge encountered during this study was untimely retrieval of research questionnaire due to vacation of some tertiary institutions that were within the scope of study which brought about delay in coding and analysis of data generated from the respondents.

METHODOLOGY
The sample size involved two hundred and ten (n=210) athletes who were selected from six state and federal tertiary institutions in Lagos state. The tertiary institutions comprised of three federal tertiary institution (University of Lagos, Yaba College of Technology and Federal College of Education Akoka) and three state tertiary institutions (Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos State Polytechnic Ikorodu and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Ijanikin). Athletes were selected based on the number of sports available in the institution after adequate consultation with the institutions sports units. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study.

Perception and Utilization of Sport Psychology Service Questionnaire (PUSPSQ) consisting of two variables to which the participants were asked to tick the options of their choice in four-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively, this was intended to rate the athletes’ perception and utilization of sport psychology services. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by some experts from cognate unit of this study who assisted in content and construct validity.

Test-retest method was used for reliability of the instrument, a correlation co-efficient value of 0.86 was obtained. 210 copies of questionnaire was administered by the researcher through the assistance of two research assistants after an approval from the institutions sport directors. Out of the 210 copies of questionnaire only 175 were correctly filled, returned and coded for analysis. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage was used to analyse data while inferential statistics of Chi-square (x) was used to test all hypotheses at .05 alpha level.

RESULT
The demographic data revealed that by sex, 110 (62.8%) were male while 65 (37.2%) were female. Based on age, 92 (52.5%) of the respondents fell within 19-25 years, 41(23.4%) of the respondents fell
within 26-30, 22 (12.5%) of the respondents fell within 31-40 while 20 (11.6%) fell within 41 and above. In marital status, the data revealed that 90 (51.4%) of the respondents were male single, 56 (32%) were female single, 20 (11.4%) were married male while 9 (5.2%) were married females. As regards the educational background, it revealed that 10 (5.7%) of the respondents have being to one tertiary institutions or the other while 165 (94.3%) were secondary school educated.

The data analysis of the responses of the participants are shown below.

Table 1: Chi-square Result of the perception of sport psychology services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Calculated (X^2)</th>
<th>Critical (X^2)</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of sport psychological services</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.48</td>
<td>31.41</td>
<td><em>S</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2\) Cal. Value = 12.48 < Crit. \(X^2\) value = 31.41, df 15 p<0.05

Table 1 above showed that calculated value of 12.48 was lower than the critical value of 31.41 at 0.05 alpha level. This implies that there is no significant level of perception of sport psychology services among athletes of tertiary institutions in Lagos state.

Table 2: Chi-square Result of the utilization of sport psychology services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Calculated (X^2)</th>
<th>Critical (X^2)</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of sport psychological services</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>22.29</td>
<td><em>S</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(X^2\) Cal. Value = 15.6 < Crit. \(X^2\) value = 22.29, df 15 p<0.05

Table 1 above showed that calculated value of 15.6 was lower than the critical value of 22.29 at 0.05 alpha level. This implies that there is no significant level of utilization of sport psychology services among athletes of tertiary institutions in Lagos state.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception and utilization of sport psychology services. Relatively little is known about athletes perception and utilization of sport psychology services. Many of the studies conducted have shown increase in receptivity, but little has been found on perception (Martin 2007). Martin (2008) and Ranza (2000) suggest that high-performance athletes are apprehensive about sport psychology services because they feel that it is primarily for people with severe psychological problems, a previous research indicates that there is need for sport psychology services in any team if optimal performance is to be attained (Gould 2010). Anderson (2011) negated the findings that there is no significant level of effective utilization of sport psychology services among athletes.

The work of Mellisa (2012) on intercollegiate perception on sport psychology consultation which looked at different factors surrounding the non consultation of sport psychology identified lack of knowledge of the usefulness of sport psychology support the findings that there is no significant level of perception of sport psychology services among athletes.

CONCLUSION

In line with the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn that there was no level of perception of sport psychology services among athletes of tertiary institutions in Lagos state. There was also no level of utilization of sport psychology services for the attainment of optimal performance during competition as this may be one of the reasons why Nigerians are not doing well in sport since some of the country’s contingents are recruited from different tertiary institutions. There is lack of employment opportunities for the sport psychologist because the athletes did not understand what a sport psychology does so they do not worry to have one.

RECOMMENDATION

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

- Sport psychology programme should be run in all tertiary institutions in Lagos state and other institutions outside Lagos to help create more experts in the field
- Organisers of inter-collegiate games should make it compulsory for every team to attach to their team at least one psychologist.
- Sport psychology should be included in the school curriculum and make compulsory for all the athletes representing their institutions in one game or the other.
- The country’s sport governing council should have a psychology department if the dream of world recognition is to be achieved

REFERENCES


Mellisa (2012). Knowledge and perception of sport psychology services among athletes of tertiary institutions. The sport psychologist, 201-218

