

Perceived Influence of Goal Setting and Imagery use on Sports Performance among Team Sport Athletes in Kogi State University

Olowoleni, V. B.¹, Adegbesan O. A.², Ayodele, K. B.

¹Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,
Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State, Nigeria

²Department of Human Kinetics,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Correspondence

Olowoleni Victor Ben

victorolowoleni@gmail.com

+2348163843619

Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the perceived influence of goal setting and imagery use on sports performance among team sport athletes of Kogi State University, Anyigba. Sport motivation involves boosting explosive movements, reaction, and agility. Goal setting and Imagery were the motivational strategies studied. Survey design was adopted for the study. 120 respondents (40 each) from the 3 teams that represented the school at NUGA 2022 were randomly selected but purposively assigned. Three instruments; the Motivation Goal Setting Questionnaire ($\alpha=.81$) the Sport Imagery Ability Questionnaire Manual (SLAQ) ($\alpha=.74$) and the Athlete's Subjective Performance Scale ($\alpha=.80$) were used to collect data for the study. Percentage and mean were used to analyze demographic data while PPMC was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Findings of the research showed that both goal setting ($r=.878$) and imagery use ($r=.830$) were not significant in influencing sports performance among team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba. It is concluded that team sport athletes in Kogi State University do not practice goal setting and imagery techniques. It is recommended among others that adequate competent and professional hands should be put in positions of decision making and training of athletes which would help set proper goals to get optimum performance.

Key words: athletes, goal setting, imagery, sports performance, team sport

Introduction

The aim of every group, organization and as small as intercollegiate sport, is to achieve their aims and objectives. Sport motivation involves boosting explosive movements, reaction, and agility. Motivation boosts athletes participation in physical activities enabling the achievement of optimal human performance (Terry et al., 2014). When athletes perform below par, strategies to psych them should be employed as it helps to bring the desired

performance. The fuel that triggers athletic performance is motivation (Boniwell, Osin & Sircova, 2014). It is the mental process that initiates, guides or sustains an athlete's behavior (training, approach to competition, managing adversity, and performance). However, without motivation athletes cannot achieve optimum performance because there might be no drive to train effectively during sessions in preparation for game or competition (Crust & Clough 2006). When an athlete and the coach can select areas on which to focus in training – setting proper goals in the right environment - the ultimate result is likely to be improved (Bandura, 2013). Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are the two types of motivation. Intrinsic (internal/self) motivation refers to athletic behavior that is driven by internal or personally meaningful rewards (opportunities to explore, learn, and actualize potential). Extrinsic (external) motivation refers to athletic behavior that is geared towards earning external rewards or to avoid punishment. Athletes that are intrinsically motivated participate in sport for the enjoyment of playing their sport, the challenge of competition, improving on personal performances, skill improvement and exploring their potential among others. Extrinsically motivated athletes participate in sport for motives such as external rewards (trophies, scholarships, media attention, accolades) or to avoid negative consequences (being benched, falling out of favor with coach, disapproval of parent). Intrinsically motivated athletes typically concentrate on skill improvement and their growth as athletes while extrinsically motivated athletes tend to focus on the outcomes of athletic contests. Motivation is an essential part of sports performance. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation combined together form the best kind of motivation and encourage goal setting and working hard to reach that goal. The right motivation is absolutely essential whether an athlete is playing for recreation or for competition. It arouses, maintains arousal levels and shows that every desired goals could be achieved. As long as an athlete stays motivated, challenges can be taken on with a greater certainty of attainment of success.

A goal is simply something you are trying to accomplish; it is the object or aim of an action. Although, goals can function at an unconscious level, the goal setting process represents the deliberate establishment and refinement of goals and the evaluation of goal progress. The concept of goals and the practice of goal setting is well known and established within the sphere of competitive sports where performance enhancement is the objective (Roberts & Kristiansen, 2012). It is necessary therefore, to understand goals as they have such a broad function in affecting the thoughts and behaviors of athletes to whom participation, performance and productivity are important. Goal setting is a mental training technique that can increase an individual's commitment towards achieving a personal goal. Goal setting is widely regarded as the most popular basic sport psychology technique and is an integral part of any mental training program designed to maximize athletic potential (Burton & Weiss, 2008 and Mackenzie, 2007). It is arguably the bedrock of athlete and coach education from a psychological perspective and supports or underpins many other strategies, such as confidence building and enhancing motivation. Creating more specific and ambitious goals lead to more performance improvement than easy or general goals (Bandura, 2013). It is well established that goals facilitate performance through motivational effects. The application of goal setting to sport suggests that goals influence task performance in four main ways; they direct attention to the task, promote increases in effort, encourage persistence in the face of failure, and facilitate the promotion of new task-relevant strategies (Olowoleni & Ayodele, 2020; Bandura, 2013; Roberts & Kristiansen, 2012 and Daude, 2010). Proper goal setting technique boosts motivation but it is also important to interact and involve athletes in the creation of goals (Daude, 2010). Goals individuals or teams adopt, give meaning to their behavior and energize their actions which reflects the intent to strive and provide a structure through which they can interpret performance-related information. Goal setting is seen as an important component

of personal-development and athletes' performance, as it helps them achieve their desired level of performance step wisely (Bandura, 2013). Higher motivation leads to effective interaction and visualization of goals when goals are rightly set (Olowoleni & Ayodele, 2020). Goal setting plays a huge part in helping athletes achieve optimal performance as the goal-setting process helps them understand where their performance is currently at, and also where they want to improve, and how they go about it. Employing proper goal setting techniques results in higher motivational states that results in attainment of goals, optimum performance and satisfaction.

Imagination is the ability to call to mind things that are not actually present to the senses. It enables us to explore the past, the future and the potentially possible. Imagery is also called visualization or mental rehearsal. Most people experience activities visually (hyperphantasia) while to some visual imagery is completely absent (aphantasia). With purpose use of imagery, athletes are able to create and recreate experiences in their minds to seem like reality (Cox, 2011). Imagery uses all senses (visual, tactile, auditory, gustatory, olfactory) for sports participation to achieve optimum performance (Parnabas, Parnabas, & Parnabas, 2015). It is making use of all senses by creating a mental picture of what an athlete wants to achieve. When athletes achieve a state of flow they can easily create a picture of tasks before competition. Imagery is also a tool that can help athletes to maintain a vision of what they would like to achieve in their sport through improving performance in motor tasks (Di Corrado et al., 2019). Athletes also use imagery to assist them in setting their daily goals, as well as stay motivated during tough training sessions. Jose and Joseph, (2018) concluded that athletes can use imagery to replace physical practice when they cannot physically practice due to fatigue and injuries and still achieve excellent performance. From studying how the best athletes use imagery, it is inferred that imagery is most beneficial when it is; vivid and detailed, incorporates all senses (see, feel, hear, smell, and taste), occurs in "real-time" and has positive focus (Cumming & Williams, 2012). Imagery as a motivational strategy is beneficial for physical and psychological athlete's performance. Employing the right motivational strategy sets the basis for attainment of goals. It is usually assessed in relations of its mental and emotional characteristics, as well as motivational competence (Cumming & Williams, 2012). Due to the gains of imagery, it is, nowadays, included in numerous mental skills line-ups, in addition to physical preparation.

Statement of Problem

Satisfaction and accomplishment in sport is achieved when individual and team – long and short term – goals are met with very little physical effort but high precision. Motivation and motivational strategies have been employed throughout literature in enhancing performance. It has been seen that when the right techniques are put in place, winning is inevitable (Olowoleni & Ayodele, 2020; Adegbesan et al., 2019; Bandura, 2013). Proper goal setting, positive reinforcement and imagery techniques have proven to provide optimum performance. They have been proven very efficient in team sports. Kogi state university has proven to prefer team sports to dual/individual sports as evident in the last concluded NUGA in Lagos (NUGA, 2022). The university and fourteen (14) others were bottom of the NUGA 2022 medals table at 58th position. Team sports needs closer supervision and monitoring to be able to inculcate proper motivational strategies. It is on this premise that the researcher aims to find out the influence of goal setting and imagery use on sports performance among football, handball and volleyball athletes.

Research Question

What is the level of goal setting and imagery use among team-sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested;

Ho₁ Perception of goal setting will not significantly influence the performance of team-sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba.

Ho₂ Perception of imagery use will not significantly influence the performance of team-sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba.

Methods

Survey research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised all team-sport athletes of Kogi State University, Anyigba. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 120 athletes who associated with team-sports (football, handball and volleyball). Athletes were purposively selected but randomly assigned but also limited to the athletes and the 3 team-sports that featured at the NUGA 2022. Three standardized instruments and a checklist were used to collect data for the study. The first instrument was the Motivation Goal Setting Questionnaire ($\alpha=.81$) which is a 30-item questionnaire scored on a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 5 (almost always). The instrument was validated to reflect sports participation as “job” was replaced with “sport”. The second instrument was the Sport Imagery Ability Questionnaire Manual (SIAQ) (Williams & Cumming, 2014) a 15-item questionnaire scored on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (very hard to image), to 7 (very easy to image). SIAQ reliability was $\alpha=.80$. The rating from SIAQ is a combination of how well the athlete can see the image and feel the image. The third instrument was the Athlete’s Subjective Performance Scale (ASPS) (Nahum et al., 2016) a 6-item questionnaire scored on a 10-point scale from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (fully satisfied). The check list was used to check the available staff strength and qualifications for the sports. Three (3) research assistants were lectured on the direction of the study and method of administering the instrument. The instruments were administered to the athletes in their hostels and when they came for trainings over the course of two (2) weeks. The questionnaires were retrieved on the spot to ascertain a high number of return. Descriptive statistics of percentages and mean were used to analyze demographic data while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level

Results

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Athletes

Item	Variable	N	Percentage (%)	Mean
Age	15-18years	19	15.83	21.4 years
	19-22years	57	47.5	
	23-26years	43	35.83	
	27-30years	1	0.83	
Gender	Male	62	51.7	
	Female	58	48.3	
Level	100L	24	20	
	200L	46	38.3	
	300L	36	30	
	400L	14	11.7	
	500L	0	0	
Sport participation	0-2years	23	19.17	
	3-5years	72	60	
	Above5years	25	20.83	

Table 1 showed that the age range that participated in the research was 15-30 years with most respondents falling within the 19-22 years category. There were more males (62) than females (58). All levels (100-400) excluding 500 level were part of the study. It also showed that most athletes (72) had participated for about 5 years in sports. There were equal numbers of handball, football and volleyball players.

Table 2: Pearson (r) Analysis showing relationship between Goal Setting and Sports Performance among Team-Sport Athletes of Kogi State University

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. R-Val	Crit. R-val	Decision
Motivation Goal Setting	120	2.0406	.05703	118	.878	.087	Ho ₁ Rejected
Sport Performance	120	120	2.1806	.36076			
P>0.05							

Table two reveals that the calculated r-value .878 is greater than the critical r-value is .087 at 119 degree of freedom. This result implies that the hypothesis which states that goal setting will not significantly influence the performance of team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba is retained. This implies that goal setting is not practiced or it does not account the performance of team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba.

Table 3: Pearson (r) Analysis showing relationship between Imagery Use and Sports Performance among Team-Sport Athletes of Kogi State University

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. R-Val	Crit. R-val	Decision
Sport Imagery Ability	120	2.0033	.0404	118	0.830	0.087	Ho ₂ Rejected
Sport Performance	120	2.1806	.36076				
P>0.05							

Table three reveals that the calculated r-value .830 is greater than the critical r-value is .087 at 119 degree of freedom. This result implies that the hypothesis which states that imagery use will not significantly influence the performance of team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba is retained. This implies that team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba does not account the performance of team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba. A mean of 2.0033 also shows that team sport athletes in Kogi State University do not practiced imagery techniques.

Table 4: Check List

Item	Variable	N
Designation	Coaches	5
	Director	1
	Grounds men	2
Qualification (Sports Related)	M.ED/PhD	0
	B.Sc.	1
	Diploma	1
	WAEC	4
	No Cert.	2

Table 4 was a checklist that sought to find out the staff (sport personnel) strength in the institution. It was found out that a total of 8 staff were in charge of football, handball and volleyball games in the university. There were 5 coaches and 2 grounds men all under a director. However, maintenance of the courts was carried out by the department of works of the university. Based on qualifications, 2 had no certificates (casual staff), 4 possessed West African Certificate Examination (WAEC) a certificate that is given after the successful completion of secondary education. One staff possessed a Bachelor degree and one possessed a diploma.

Discussion

Athletes in football (40), handball (40) and volleyball (40) across the levels in Kogi state university were part of the study. The age range was from 15 - 30 years old. There were more males (62) than females (58). Most athletes had participated for at least 3 years (80.83%) in their sports. It was also observed that out of the 8 personnel in charge of football and handball, only 2 had a Bachelor's degree and Diploma in courses related to exercise and performance. Findings from this study showed that there were neither enough nor qualified persons at the helm of the sports (football, handball and volleyball). This was also found out to be same across other sports from interview with the university management and sports council.

The research question that sought to find the level of goal setting and imagery use among athletes in Kogi State University athletes was answered with the data on table 2 and 3, goal setting (mean = 2.0406) and imagery (mean = 2.0033) showed that team-sport athletes or their coaches do not employ or seldom use goal setting or imagery techniques to enhance performance. They believe in rigorous physical training sessions. This disagrees with literature which is of the opinion that goal setting and imagery are good techniques that help athletes perform at their peaks (Daude, 2010; Jose, & Joseph, 2018). The disagreement from the finding of this study is linked to unqualified and inadequate personnel (coaches, trainers, administrators) at the helm of affairs in sports due to inadequate education, awareness to psychological techniques. From literature it is seen that in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive the control of sports is solely in the hands of the government as corruption has so taken over most democratic governments in Africa that sports and sporting events are at the discretion of politicians (Chiweshe, 2014).

Hypothesis one which states that the perception of goal setting will not significantly influence the performance of team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba was retained. This implies that goal setting does not account the performance of team sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba. This disagrees with existing literature which states that ultimate result is achieved when an athlete and the coach isolates areas on which to focus in training and also create specific and ambitious goals there is an improvement in

performance (Bandura, 2013). It also disagrees with findings from literature (Olowoleni & Ayodele, 2020; and Roberts & Kristiansen, 2012) that the application of goal setting to sport influences task performance in that it directs attention to the task, increases effort, persistence in the face of failure, and facilitate the promotion of new task-relevant strategies. Findings from this study may be due to location, facilities and inability to set proper goals by athletes and their coaches. From the study it is clearly seen that the three team-sports in the university studied, have only 5 coaches who also lack qualifications nor have knowledge of psychological techniques. This shows that there would not be efficiency in the execution of task as well as assessing innovative methods in sports, as it is important to interact and involve athletes in the creation of goals (Daude, 2010).

The second hypothesis stating that the perception of imagery use will not significantly influence the performance of team-sport athletes in Kogi State University Anyigba was also retained. This finding does not agree with previous research, that athletes can use imagery to replace physical practice when they cannot physically practice due to fatigue and injuries and still achieve excellent performance (Jose & Joseph, 2018). The finding also showed that motivational benefits of imagery that boosts sports performance (Cumming & Williams, 2012) was not harnessed. Lack of equipment, facilities and trained psychologists would have made up to this disparity.

Conclusion

Goal setting plays a huge part in helping athletes achieve optimal performance. The goal-setting process helps them understand where their performance is currently at, and also where they want to improve, and how they go about it. It is concluded from the study that Kogi State University Anyigba team-sport (football, handball and volleyball) athlete's perception of proper goal setting techniques and imagery use to enhance sports performance is almost non-existent. Literature shows that goal setting and imagery are good psychological strategies that boosts athletic performance but it does not influence performance among athletes in the study area. It is also concluded that athletes in Kogi State University lack adequate and qualified personnel at the helm of sports.

Recommendations

Based on observations and findings from this study, it is recommended that;

1. Motivational strategies should be adopted by athletes and teams to help boost performance in intercollegiate and national competitions.
2. Funds and grants should be made available to train coaches and athletes on modern psychological techniques to boost performance.
3. Adequate competent and professional hands should be put in positions of decision making and training of athletes which would help set proper goals to get optimum performance.

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