

PATHWAYS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VARIABLES ON FOOTBALLERS' COMPETITIVE PREPAREDNESS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated pathways of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions were answered and one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 210 footballers in Rivers State Nigeria (UPH, RSU and IAUO). The sample size of the study is 105. The simple random sampling technique using 50% of the population gave the sample size. Two self designed non-cognitive instruments were used for data collection. The two instruments are Psychological Variables Scale (PVS) and Footballers' Competitive Preparedness Scale (FCPS). Face and content validities of the instruments were ensured by experts. The Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate was used to ensure internal consistency of the items. The PVS yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88 while FCPS gave a reliability estimate of 0.76 respectively. Regression analysis was used to establish the joint prediction of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness. The pathways that indicated direct and indirect effects of psychological variables were ascertained with the help of beta value (β). It was found out among others, that psychological variables predicted footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State, Nigeria. Moreso, motivation and interest have direct effect on footballers' competitive preparedness while attitude, self-efficacy and self-concept have indirect effect on footballers' competitive preparedness. It was recommended that footballers should be motivated since it has direct effect on their performance. Moreso, the coaches and club owners should endeavour to have a perspective talk with the footballers on the importance of teamwork in competition.

Keywords: Motivation, Interest, Attitude, Self-efficacy, Self-concept and Competitive Preparedness

Introduction

Every spirited sporting individual must be fit and ready to win the price or cup set by the organizers of the competition. Competition is the rivalry between two or more people in a group or as an individual that involves winning and emerging as the first or best performer.

Wikipedia (2017) reported that competition in general, is a contest or rivalry between two or more entities, organisms, animals, individuals, economic groups or social groups, etc., mainly for the purpose of search of scarce resources, territory, goods, mates, prestige, recognition, awards, group or social status, or for leadership and profit. Competition may always have designed recognition, award and prestige when completed with a winning. Competition is a tournament involving a relatively large number of participants. Competition is mostly associated with sporting activities. Sports are the type of games played indoors or outdoors as the case may be. Some of the indoor games are cue sports, table tennis, snooker, table football, squash, air hockey, gymnastics, bowling, badminton, chess, volleyball, boxing, swimming, wrestling, basketball etc. The outdoor games are running, wrestling, footballing, racing, four square, tag, hide and seek, hopscotch, jumping, spud, horse, marco polo, freeze dance and musical chairs. This study was on the outdoor form of game especially footballing. Footballers are those who are into the game of footballing for the sake of fun, exercise, recognition, prestige, and awards. Football takes into cognizance the cognitive domain, affective and the psychomotor. Footballers must be able to develop all these domains in order to satisfy spectators' expectation.

Ukwuije and Orluwene (2012: 325) reported that path analysis was developed around 1918 by geneticist Sewall Wright as a technique to assess the direct causal contribution of one variable to another in a non-experimental dataset. Oslem in Ukwuije and Orluwene (2012) saw path analysis as a graphical representation of the effects of the coefficients that measure or estimate the relative size and direction (+ or -) of various net effects between variables. They went further to state that path analysis is straight forward extension of multiple regression. In a Path Analysis, a single headed arrow ($\rightarrow$) depicts a causal relation and it stems from the cause to the effect. A double headed curved arrow ($\leftrightarrow$) shows variables that are merely correlated with each other. There are two types of variables in Path Analysis namely exogenous and endogenous variables. Exogenous variables are those variables that do not have any arrow pointing at them while endogenous variables depend on the effect on other variables. Ukwuije and Orluwene (2012: 326) opined that path coefficient shows the direct effect of a variable assumed to be a cause on another variable assumed to be an effect. Udoh in Opara and Amaeze (2016) opined that one can develop a path model based on theory or experience. Opara and Amaeze (2016) reported that structural equation model and path model can be developed based on personal experiences with the study variables, empirical/conceptual reviews or through theoretical assertions. The hypothesized causal model of psychological variables motivation (X_1), interest (X_2), attitude (X_3), self-efficacy (X_4), self-concept (X_5) and footballers competitive preparedness (X_6) respectively.

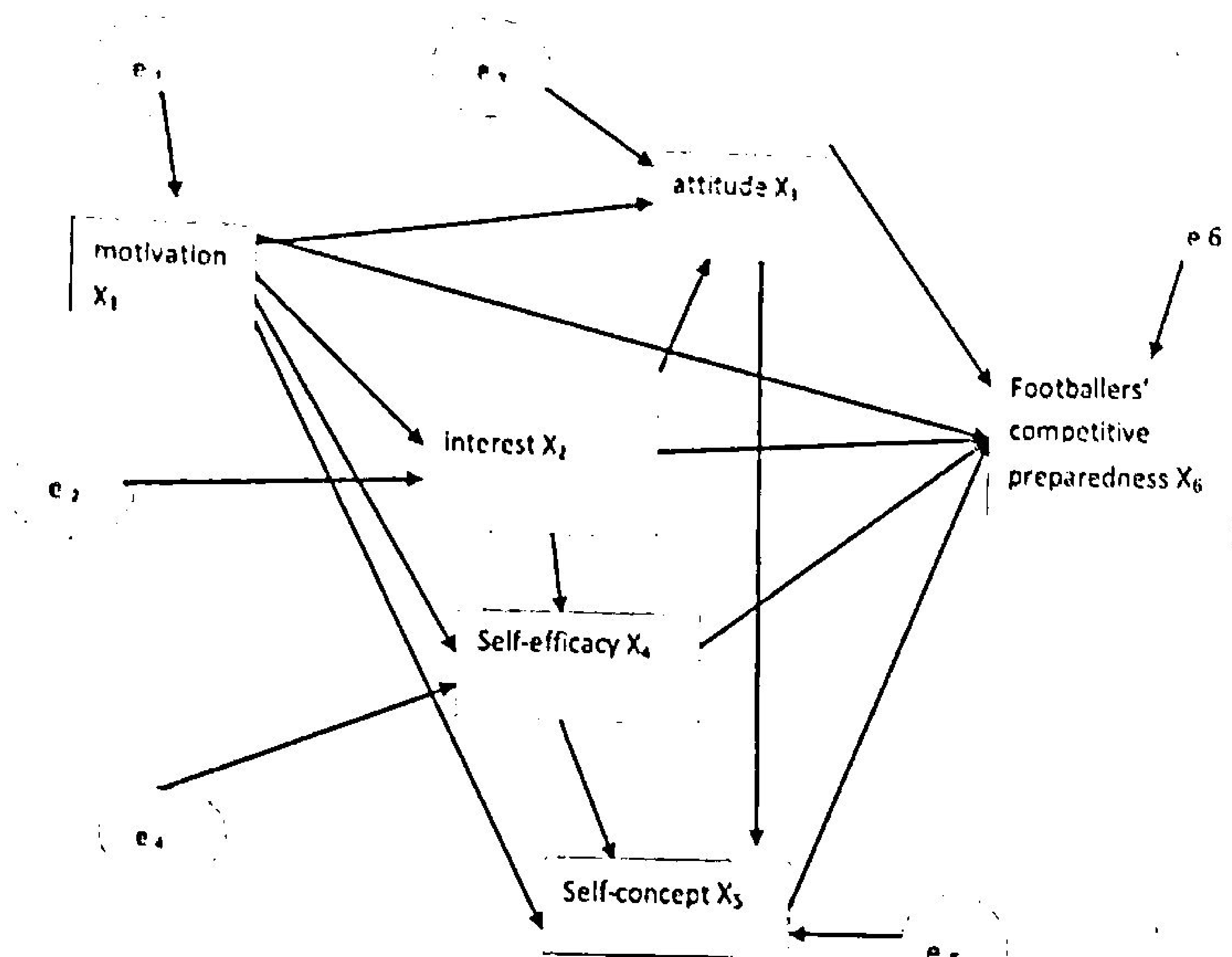


Figure 1: hypothesized causal model of independent variables X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5 on the dependent variable X_6

The hypothesized causal model gives the hypothesized structural model to be:

$$X_1 = e_1$$

$$X_2 = P_{21}X_1 + e_2$$

$$X_3 = P_{32}X_2 + P_{31}X_1 + e_3$$

$$X_4 = P_{42}X_2 + P_{41}X_1 + e_4$$

$$X_5 = P_{54}X_4 + P_{52}X_2 + P_{51}X_1 + e_5$$

$$X_6 = P_{65}X_5 + P_{64}X_4 + P_{63}X_3 + P_{62}X_2 + P_{61}X_1 + e_6$$

From the hypothesized model, it is shown that variable X_1 has direct and indirect effect on the X_6 but receives no effect from other variables, X_2 has both direct and indirect effect to X_6 with effect from X_1 , X_3 has direct and indirect effects on X_6 but receives effects from X_1 and X_2 , X_4 has direct and indirect effects on X_6 but receives effects from X_2 and X_1 , X_5 has direct and indirect effects on X_6 but receives effects from X_4 , X_2 , and X_1 , finally, X_6 receives effects from X_5 , X_4 , X_3 , X_2 and X_1 respectively.

There is this usual saying that a sound mind is a mind that is ready to assimilate. The state of a person's mind will at times determine his interest and behavior. The word psychology is gotten from two terms, namely ology (study) and psyche (soul). This simply implies the study of the soul when joined together as one word. Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia (2015) saw psychology as the study of mind and behavior or the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. The psychological variables to be considered are motivation, attitude, interest, self-efficacy and self-concept respectively. These are some of the likely psychological situations that are mostly encountered in our secondary schools.

Motivation could be internal or external quest that drives somebody to action and sustains such behaviour in order for the action to be accomplished. Denhardt, Denhardt and Aristigueta (2008) viewed motivation as what causes people to behave as they do. To them, motivation sketches the achievement and pursuit of goals. Motivation is goal oriented. That is, individuals perform an action due to the goal they want to achieve. People's action is most of the time tailored by environmental influences.

Renninger and Hidi (2002) saw interest as a psychological state of having an affective reaction to and focused attention for particular content and/or the relatively enduring predisposition to re-engage particular classes of objects, events or ideas. Interest is that inner aspect of the individual that is emotionally supportive of a particular execution of action or activity. It requires interest for somebody to be intrigued in a particular activity. If the footballers are not interested in the sporting activities that go on in the field, there is no way they will freely be active.

To Ajzen (2001), attitudes are our predisposition to react negatively or positively to some degree towards persons, objects, ideas, institutions, things, etc. Attitude is ones disposition towards a given task or activity. Footballers' attitude towards a given game could be either positive or negative. When the attitude is positive, the footballers express likes about that activity. But when their attitude is negative, the footballers express dislikes about a given activity. Ones attitude towards football is enough to display satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards footballing. The negative premonition concerning football is enough to bring about fears and worries concerning the game. Idaka (2005) made it very clear when he stated that if the attitude towards a given person is known about an object, it could be used in conjunction with other situational variables to predict and explain the reactions of such persons towards that object.

Self efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals (Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, 2016). Self efficacy cuts across every area of human activity. It influences one's footballing activities in the areas of reasoning ability, studying ability, organizational ability, intellectual ability, social ability and leadership ability.

John (2000) opined that self concept is the product of one's reflectivity, a concept of the individual of himself as a physical, social and moral existing being. There must be an overview of oneself in totality. Skidmore (2003) stressed that a person's self concept is developed early in life and affects his functions in the environment. It therefore implies that children start at early age to develop a particular value for life as they grow. Cherry

(2015) saw self-concept as the image that we have of ourselves. This is ones perception of his/herself in line with the activities before him/her.

Statement of the Problem

Researches and personal experience as a psychologist have shown that psychological variables have influence on footballers sporting performance. It therefore appears that the performance of footballers is to a greater extent the function of psychological state. Studies have revealed that footballers who are not psychologically stable are moody, disturbed, distracted, distressed, confused, restless and most of the times, lack concentration. These problems have gone a long way to misrepresent the efforts of the coaches, managers, stakeholders and administrators. The poor performance of some clubs has over the years been attributed to the footballers, coaches and the state of stadium facilities. It has gone beyond this, because, even when the footballers are very skillful and the coaches and the facilities are in optimal standard there are still poor performance recorded to a high extent. The researcher is bordered on the failure rates of footballers to perform optimally. Hence the researcher wants to establish significant pathways (direct and indirect) of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- 1) What are the parsimonious pathways of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State?
- 2) What is the parsimonious recursive structural equation model of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State?

Methodology

The correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 210 footballers in the 3 Universities in Rivers State, Nigeria (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Adjuru University). The sample size of the study was 105. The simple random sampling technique using 50% of the population gave the sample size. Two self designed non-cognitive instruments were used for data collection. The two instruments are Psychological Variables Scale (PVS) and Competition Preparedness Scale (CPS). Face and content validities of the instruments were ensured by experts. The Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate was used to ensure internal consistency of the items. The PVS yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88 while CPS gave a reliability estimate of 0.76 respectively. Regression analysis was used to establish the joint prediction of psychological variables on competitive preparedness of footballers. The

pathways that indicated direct and indirect effects of psychological variables were ascertained with the help of beta value (β).

Results

The results of the findings are presented as shown below

Research Question One: What are the parsimonious pathways of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State?

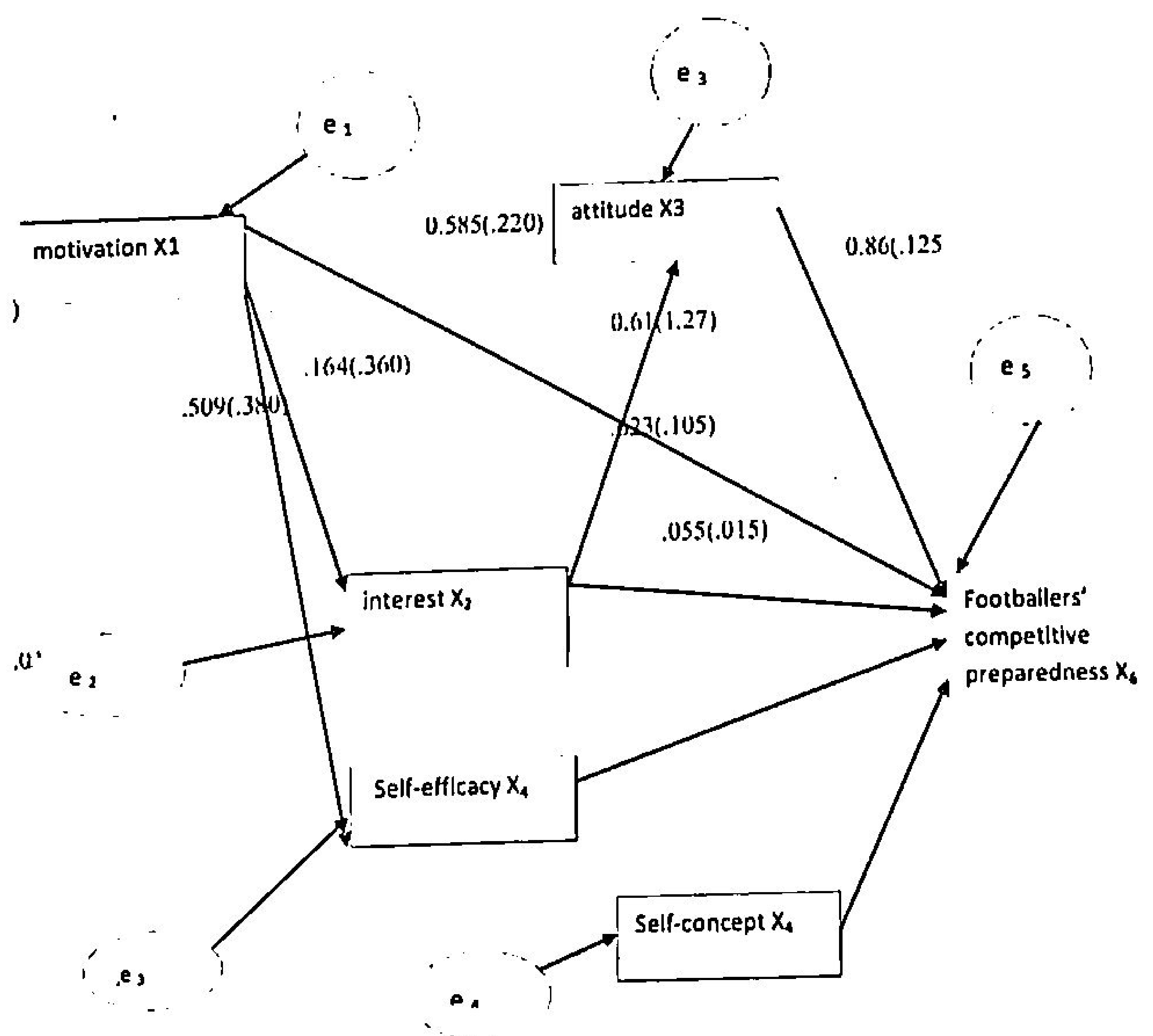


Figure 2: significant parsimonious pathways of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness

In figure 2, the values outside the brackets are the correlation coefficients that exist between the variables while the values inside the brackets are the standardized beta weight of the paths. All the paths are significant because the various beta weights are significant below the critical alpha level of 0.05. It is shown that motivation has direct effect to footballers' competitive preparedness and indirect effect through interest, attitude, self-efficacy and self-concept to footballers' competitive preparedness. Attitude, self-efficacy and self-concept have only direct effect to footballers' competitive preparedness. Interest

has direct effect and indirect effect through attitude to footballers' competitive preparedness.

Research Question Two: What is the parsimonious recursive structural equation model of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness in Rivers State?

$$X_1 = e_1$$

$$X_2 = P_{21}X_1 + e_2$$

$$X_3 = P_{32}X_2 + P_{31}X_1 + e_3$$

$$X_4 = P_{42}X_2 + P_{41}X_1 + e_4$$

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$$X_6 = P_{65}X_5 + P_{64}X_4 + P_{63}X_3 + P_{62}X_2 + P_{61}X_1 + e_6$$

Figure 3: Most parsimonious recursive structural equation model of psychological variables on footballers' competitive preparedness

The findings of figure 3 revealed that motivation is exogenous variable to footballers' competitive preparedness while attitude, interest, self-efficacy and self-concepts are endogenous to footballers' competitive preparedness. Motivation is exogenous it is not acted upon variables of the study to cause effect on the dependent variable but variables outside the study. While attitude, interest, self-efficacy and self-concepts are endogenous because they are acted by the variables of the study to cause effect on footballers' competitive preparedness.

Discussion of Findings

Causal Effects of Psychological Variables on Footballers' Competitive Preparedness

It was found that motivation, attitude, interest, self-efficacy and self-concept correlated positively with footballers' competitive preparedness. The reason for this finding may not be far from the importance of psychological variables on peoples' concentration in a given responsibility. Footballers who do not have positive psychological disposition may end up making unforeseen and foreseen mistakes in the football activity at a very close interval. Their level of articulation and concentration will be greatly altered due to poor psychological dispositions. The level of motivation from the coaches and team mates may be justifiably enough to give them enough concentration in the field of play. Without interest, incliner, self-efficacy and self-confidence it may be almost impossible for footballers to be punctual to training owing its importance to their expertise and professionalization. This could be the reason while Jude (2016) found that footballers' emotion is as important as their physical exercise. In corroboration of this study was the finding of Udochukwu (2015) who reported that affective composition of footballers is paramount for effective display in the pitch. Still buttressing the finding of the study was the investigation by Amaeze (2014) which documented that psychological variables are

major and significant in the actualization of any dream. The important role of footballers' psychology in the pitch is uncontestable because it will not only enable them overcome timidity, anxiety and irritability but will help them perform exceptionally in the pitch. Therefore, footballers' psychology is very indispensable in achieving a great height in the game of football.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that psychological variables have a significant role to play in getting footballers ready for the competition ahead of them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings it was recommended that:

1. Footballers should be constantly motivated sports loving persons both in cash and in words since it has direct effect on their performance.
2. Football clubs in Rivers State should not desist from consulting the services of guidance-counsellors in order to ignite the right attitude, interest, self-efficacy and self-concept of the footballers.
3. The coaches and club owners should endeavour to have a perspective talk with the footballers on the importance of teamwork in competition.

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