

Perception of Nigeria Professional Football Players on Collective Collapse of Football Teams

Isaac Akinloye, Oyewumi & Blessing, Lydia Oluwatunbi

Department of Physical and Health Education
Lagos State University, Nigeria

Abstract

The major causes of collective collapse have been reported to include: inappropriate behaviour, failure of the role system to function properly, negative communication within the team, a change in the tactics of the opposing team, and goals being scored by opposing team (Jern and Näslund, 2009). Perception on collective collapse in team sports, conceived in terms of negative psychological momentum when players on a team suddenly perform below the expected level was investigated in the study wherein two hundred (200) football players served as respondents and were selected through stratified random sampling method. The descriptive survey research method was adopted to carry out this study among Nigerian Premier League Football Teams. A self-developed and validated questionnaire was used to elicit the desired information on players' perception of coaches' personality. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages and the inferential statistics of Chi Square (X^2) were used. Hypotheses were accepted or rejected at 0.05 level of significance. Result from the analysis indicated that respondent's perceived coach's leadership style and personality trait as significant on collective collapse among football teams in the Nigerian professional league. The study provides a team perspective on negative psychological momentum as well as tentative proposals for avoiding collective collapse. It was recommended that coaches need to acquire scientific understanding of how the differences in personality types and leadership styles impact sports team performance before, during and after competitions as well as continuing professional training that evolves empowerment in the areas relevant to preventing collective collapse including negative thinking, negative emotions, and negative emotional contagion.

Keywords: Perception, Professional Football Players, Collective Collapse, Football Teams

Introduction

In team sports, sudden and unexpected shifts in performance can sometimes be observed. A football team may be ahead 3-0 after 70 minutes of play, only to lose by 3-4 when the final 20 minutes have been played. This can be termed collective collapse when such an outcome is due to the sudden underperformance of the players of the team originally in the lead.

The plausibility of this scenario necessitated the theoretical models of group dynamics, cohesion, and coaching as the bases of the framework from which to create a new operational definition for teamwork, something previously missing from this field of research. Teamwork is hereby defined as all members of a sports team having a shared and deeply imbedded understanding of team identity, team philosophy, individual roles, and performance outcome goals.

Apitzsch (2006) has suggested that collective collapse occurs when, in a match of considerable or decisive importance, the majority of the players on a team suddenly perform below their expected level after the team has had a good or normal start, or when they underperform from the very start. The following is a summary of various theoretical perspectives on collective collapse discussed earlier by Apitzsch (2006). The performance of an athlete is strongly affected in psychological terms by the person's thoughts and emotions, and by the context at hand. It thus appears reasonable, in investigating the phenomenon of collective collapse within team sports, to examine not only the overt behaviour but also the cognitions and affects associated with it. A cognitive approach that could be taken is one based on Janis' (1982) conception of groupthink, or the tendency of a group to act primarily in accordance with normative pressures rather than on the basis of more relevant considerations.

Carron, Hausenblas, and Eys (2005) maintained that groups endeavouring to solve a crisis, which the initial stages of a collective collapse indeed represent, are particularly vulnerable to groupthink. Players on a football team leading by 2-0 towards the end of a match may feel, for example, that the match is already won and behave accordingly. This can mean their becoming more passive in their play and failing to put the effort needed into the game, allowing the opposing team to catch up. Taking an affective approach as a team member, regardless of whether the emotions involved are positive or negative in character, often results in emotional contagion. Emotional contagion results when the player's emotions are transferred to the other members of the team. Kelly and Barsade (2001) noted that strong emotions can markedly affect the cohesion, commitment, and performance of a team. Tickle-Degnan and Puccinelli (1999) found negative moods and emotions to be more readily transferred from one member of a team to another than positive moods and emotions are.

Cacioppo and Gardner (1999), emphasizing connections between emotions and cognition and the strong effects that emotional processes have on how one thinks, noted that persons who are worried or afraid tend to devote greater attention to what are regarded as dangers or threats. Thus, a negative mood on the part of various members of a team, or of the team as a whole, can increase the probability of bad performance.

Totterdell's (2000) finding that when members of one team become happier, members of the other team tend to become less happy appears to have direct bearing on collective collapse. For example, when a football team is leading by 2-0 and the opposing team

makes a goal, this can put the team in the lead in a bad mood and improve the mood of the opposing team. One behavioural approach to analyzing this concerns the rationality of group members. Bion (1961) introduced the concepts of workgroup (a rational group) and basic-assumption group (an irrational group) to describe what can happen in a small-group setting.

The workgroup aims at what is most rational for the group's existence and the tasks the group is to perform. The members of a workgroup tend to be fully aware of their goals, to be organized appropriately, and to cooperate with one another in order to achieve their goals as effectively as possible. The basic assumption group, in contrast, is characterized by ineffectiveness and contradictory behaviour. Although no group can be completely rational or effective, the aim should be to keep irrational behaviour at a minimum. The workgroup of a football team consists, in a broad sense, of the 20-25 players who constitute the squad and, in a narrower sense, the 11 or so of these who tend to play regularly during a match.

Collective collapse has not received much attention in the sport psychology literature (Cox, 2006; Tenenbaum & Eklund, 2007; Weinberg & Gould, 2007) or in books specifically devoted to team sports (Carron, Hausenblas, & Eys, 2005; Lidor & Henschen, 2003). However, a number of terms in general use are related to collective collapse, such as psychological momentum, critical moments, choking, slumps, and mistakes. Psychological momentum can be either positive or negative, in accordance with the definition suggested by Taylor and Demick (1994) of its being "a positive or negative change in cognition, affect, physiology, and behaviour caused by an event or series of events that will result in a commensurate shift in performance and competitive outcome". A multidimensional model proposed by Taylor and Demick (1994) is one of three different models that have been suggested as serving to explain psychological momentum, which refers to a chain of events that starts with a precipitating event which lead to changes in cognition, affect, and physiological arousal, and thus to changes in behaviour, performance and outcome that can be either positive or negative. In terms of that model, both opponent factors and what the team members experience can moderate the strength and the effects of psychological momentum. The precipitating events leading up to it can be of crucial importance. The negative momentum of the one team can also precipitate positive momentum on the part of the other. Thus, a goal in football scored by the trailing team can result in negative momentum for the team in the lead. The other two models proposed to explain psychological momentum are the Antecedents-Consequences Model (Vallerand, Colavecchio, & Pelletier, 1988), which only deals with positive psychological momentum, and the Projected Performance Model (Cornelius, Silva, Conroy, & Peterson, 1997), which considers psychological momentum as primarily a way of describing performance shifts. Collective collapse can be incorporated into the Multidimensional Model of Taylor & Demick (1994) through its being seen as representing negative psychological momentum at the team level.

A variety of researchers (e.g., Baumeister, 1984; Carlstedt, 2004; Coward, 2006) have addressed issues related to collective collapse. Carlstedt (2004) maintained that sport psychologists and sport experts in general are unable to explain the phenomenon of a

was designed in line with Likert four point Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of sports psychology who assisted in content and construct validities and face validation. Reliability of the instrument was established through test-re-test method. Data collected were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). A reliability value of $r = 0.79$ was obtained, this showed that the instrument was reliable hence; it was adopted for data collection. A total of two hundred (200) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents with the help of eight (8) research assistants. The questionnaire that contained five question items on each variables of the study were distributed and collected on the spot to prevent loss of the questionnaire. The inferential statistics of Chi-Square (X^2) was used to test all hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Players in the Nigerian professional football league will not perceive coaches leadership style as having significant impact on the collective collapse of football team.

Table 1: Chi-square Analysis on Perception of Coaches' Leadership Style Impact on Collective Collapse Among Professional Football Teams in the Nigerian League

Df	Ls	Calculated X^2	Tabulated X^2	Remarks
18	0.05	141.05	28.869	Significant

The calculated Chi-square of 141.05 is greater than the tabulated Chi-square of 28.869 hence hypothesis I is rejected. This implies that players in the Nigerian professional football league believe that coaches' leadership style will have a significant impact on the collective collapse of football teams in the Nigerian professional league.

Hypothesis 2: Players in the Nigerian professional football league will not perceive coaches personality traits as having significant impact on collective collapse of football team.

Table 2: Chi-square Analysis on Perception of Coaches' Personality Trait Impact on Collective Collapse Among Professional Football Teams in the Nigerian League

Df	Ls	Calculated X^2	Tabulated X^2	Remarks
18	0.05	675.4	28.869	Significant

The calculated Chi-square of 675.4 is greater than the tabulated Chi-square of 28.869 hence hypothesis II is rejected. This implies players in the Nigerian professional football league believe that coaches' personality trait will have a significant impact on the collective collapse of football teams in the Nigerian professional league.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one states that coaches' leadership style will have no significant effect on the collective collapse in team sports among football teams in Nigerian professional league. The calculated Chi-square (X^2) of 141.05 is greater than the tabulated Chi-square of 28.869 hence hypothesis I is rejected. This implies that players in the Nigerian professional football league believe that coaches' leadership style will have a significant impact on the collective collapse of football teams in the Nigerian professional league. This result shows that coaches' leadership style will have a significant impact on collective collapse in football teams in the professional league. The result from this finding is in line with results of Glantz (2009) who suggested that leadership style in an organization is one of the factors that play significant role in enhancing or retarding the interest and commitment of the individuals in the organization. Thus, Glantz (2009) emphasizes the need for a manager to find and fix his leadership style.

Chelladurai (1990) indicates reciprocal relationship between the coaches' behaviour and the athletes' satisfaction and performance, he specifies that the coaches' actual behaviour is also heavily influenced by the athletes' happiness and their performance outcomes. Zaccaro, Blair, Peterson and Zazanis, (1995) found that leadership actions that persuade and develop subordinate competency beliefs may be as critical a determinant of collective efficacy as the group's prior performance experiences, if not more so.

Westre and Weiss, (1991) examined the relationship between athletes' perceptions of their coaches' behaviours and athletes' perceptions of their team's cohesion and found that athletes who perceived that their coaches employed a more democratic leadership style and provided higher levels of social support, positive feedback and training and instruction, as well as perception and reports of higher level of cohesion.

Hypothesis two states that coaches' personality trait will have no significant impact on the collective collapse in football teams in the Nigerian professional league. The calculated Chi-square of 675.4 is greater than the tabulated Chi-square of 28.869 hence hypothesis II is rejected. This implies players in the Nigerian professional football league believe that coaches' personality trait will have a significant impact on the collective collapse of football teams in the Nigerian professional league. This finding of the study shows that coaches' personality trait was perceived as having a significant impact on the collective collapse of football team in the Nigerian professional league. This finding correlates with that of Glantz (2009), who stressed that of Wright and Noel (1996), who explained that the impact of personality and abilities on individuals' performance of their jobs; opined that personality affects performance indirectly by influencing motivation. In other words, this mean that people with certain personalities are more motivated in some jobs or organizations. Motivation in most cases lead to an increased level of athletics performance.

This finding of the study also corroborates Chelladurai's (1990) findings in the direction of positive relationship between process and product. He operationalized process to be coaches' personality and effort and the players and their athletic performance as the product.

Conclusion

In conclusion it was discovered that coaches' leadership style will have a significant impact on the collective collapse in team sports among football teams in the Nigerian professional league. It was observed that Coaches' personality trait could also have a significant impact on the collective collapse in team sports among football teams in the Nigerian professional league.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the results obtained in this study and they include:

1. The Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) should make coaches understand how the differences in personality types impact footballers' performance before, during and after competitions.
2. Varying leadership and personality types should be adopted by coaches in order to ensure top class performance and sustainability among their athletes.
3. Coaches should also understand how to motivate athletes in promoting optimal sports performance including psychological empowerment that affords the ability to cope with varied exigencies of top rated performance.
4. Various leadership approaches should also be used by coaches while training or managing individual athletes.

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