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EDITORIAL

This issue attracts papers from many scholars. The package includes variety of topical articles on major areas of concern plus the more day to day issues in the related areas: Structured Physical Activity and Physical fitness status of hearing impaired pupils, Mental skills training programme and Amateur Athletes; Sport Education programme and Technology, Nigerian College of Education games for students socialization; Nutrition intake and Pre-school children development, Sleep deprivation and Anaemic organism; Entomology and global food and Health security Biodiversity, it's threats and approaches to conservation; Instructional resources and pupils learning mathematics as a tool for enhancing human security and Teacher's knowlege and attitudes as predictor of Secondary School Students' achievement in English Language.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

PAGES

Okunrotifa, E. B. & Okelia C. C.:

Effect of A 7-week Structured Physical Activity Programmes
on Physical Fitness Characteristics of Auditorily Impaired Pupils
in Akure School for the Hearing Impaired ----- 24301

Adebayo B. S., Oloyede A. O. & Jimoh G. K.:

Effect of Mental Skills Training Programme on Attentional
Direction of Amateur Athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State ----- 24316

Adeyinka O. T.:

Impact of Technology on Sport Delivery ----- 24326

Adeyinka O. T.:

Nigeria College of Education Games: A Panacea for Students
Socialization ----- 24337

Agboola O. J.:

An Investigation into Pre-Natal and Post Natal Nutritional qualities
on Pre-School Children Development ----- 24343

Oyeyinka A. J.:

Effect of Sleep Deprivation on Blood Profile in Rats Induced with
Iron Deficiency Anaemia ----- 24352

Adeyemi C. O.:

Entomophagy as a Means for Improving Global Food and Health
Security ----- 24363

Sabitu K. A., Lamidi T. O., & Adeleye O. J.:

Impact of Instructional Resources on the Teaching and Learning
of Mathematics to Pupils in Primary Schools in Oyo Metropolis ----- 24375

Agada A.:

Ants Biodiversity Conservation: A threat to Sustainable
Development ----- 24384

Akinsowon F. I.:

Teachers Content Knowledge and Attitude as Predictor of Students'
Achievement in English Language in Senior Secondary Schools in
Oyo Town ----- 24395

Odebode A. O.:

Mathematics Strategies for Enhancing Security in Nigeria ----- 24403

EFFECT OF MENTAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME ON ATTENTIONAL DIRECTION OF AMATEUR ATHLETES IN IBADAN, OYO STATE

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ABSTRACT

Sports competitions are usually loaded with stresses which are the processes involving substantial incongruences between demands and response capacities. Many of the non-elite athletes have entered into competitions without adequate psychological preparations which have negatively impacted on their performance in crucial competitions. Athletes therefore need psychological conditioning (mental skills training) to be able to attend to the psychological demands of competition. This study therefore examined the effects of mental skills training on attentional direction of amateur athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State. Pre-test post-test experimental design and systematic random sampling technique was adopted. Sample comprised 63 non-elite athletes while structured questionnaire adapted from Test of Performance Strategies (TOPS) was used for data collection. Parametric static of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses, at 0.05 alpha level. This study concluded that coaches and sports psychology experts should consider task outcome of performance on athletes while administering psychological interventions in order to direct attentional focus and increase arousal during performance. It was recommended that athletes and coaches should be enlightened that mental skills are acquirable, hence mental skills training should be taught to athletes the same way physical skills are taught to enhance athletes' performance.

INTRODUCTION

Various psychological factors affect athletes' performance in sports, one of which is that they may be faced with fears relating to poor performance prior to competition. To achieve desired goal of success, adequate preparation of athletes is of great importance as it is key to success. Sport being predominantly a visual activity, the ability to maintain alertness and focus attention on the most relevant visual aspects of the task is critical for success. In sport, attention and concentration are important, as a wandering mind can create mental lapses and cause mental error during performance (Parker 2000). Athletes therefore need psychological conditioning (mental skills training) to be able attend to the psychological demands of competition.

According to Ball (2002) athletes who were able to maintain attention to the task at hand do not experience high anxiety and arousal, two factors which lead to a short attentional span and hindered performance. Those who are not able to maintain their attention under pressure of competition is at an increased risk as they may misjudge the actions of their opponents and misadjust cues. (Ajayi & Ipinmoroti, 2001). According to the authors, attention can be described as the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one of what seem several simultaneously possible response objects or chains of thoughts.

Sports competitions are usually loaded with stresses which are the processes involving substantial in congruencies between demands and response capacities. Non-elite athletes hardly have opportunity of being exposed to mental skills training essential to performance. Many of these athletes have entered into competitions without adequate psychological preparations which have negatively impacted on their performance in such competitions. It is therefore pertinent that a study of this nature should be carried out to expose coaches and athletes to effective and modern psychological skills training regimen that could be of help in bringing about improvements in sports performance.

Cox (2002) noted that the ability not to react or be disturbed by distractions is achieved when athletes learn how to control their thoughts and appropriately focus their attention. Studies have also provided evidence of performance impairment as a function of not being able to concentrate in sport performance situations (Weinberg et al. 2003; Maynard & Howe, 1989). As a result, one role an athlete should perform is to keep his/her mind focused on the game and to disregard other distracting cues or thoughts. This work therefore examined the applicability of mental skills training in enhancing the performance of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo state.

METHODOLOGY

The pre-test-post-test experimental research design was adopted for this study. Participants

were assigned randomly into two groups of experiment and control. Both were exposed to pretest and both took posttest based on the dependent variables. The experimental group was exposed to mental skills training while the control group was exposed to placebo treatment (seminar on sports nutrition). Post-treatment observations were administered on both groups.

The sample for this study comprised 63 athletes drawn from three sports, athletics (sprints and throwing events), volleyball and tennis. The procedure was explained and those who showed willingness by filling the informed consent and signed accordingly were considered for the study. Systematic sampling technique was used to assign participants into control and experimental groups.

Table 1: Sample of Participants

Experimental Group		Control Group	
Sport	Number	Sport	Number
I. Athletics	05	Athletics	06
II. Tennis	05	Tennis	06
III. Volleyball	05	Volleyball	07
TOTAL	15		19 = 34

Structured questionnaire was used for the study; the questionnaire items were selected from the Test of Performance Strategies (TOPS) developed by Thomas, Murphy and Hardy (1999). The TOPS is a 64-item self-report instrument designed to measure the psychological skills and strategies used by athletes in competition and practice. The instrument is

designed on a 6 point response scale of Never (N), Rarely (R), Sometimes (S), Frequently (F), Usually (U) and Always (A).

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the researchers presented draft copies of the instrument to three lecturers in the department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Ibadan for comments and suggestions. Test re-test reliability method was adopted to determine the reliability of the instrument. The researchers collected data with the help of five trained research assistants. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument with a reliability coefficient of 0.74.

The intervention programme was fully explained to all participants who were free to withdraw from the study at any time. An informed consent form was given to each of the participants to fill and return, after which the research instrument was administered on them. The training sessions were conducted twice a week, each session lasted for ninety minutes. The completed questionnaire were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentages for the demographic data while parametric statistic of ANCOVA was used to test the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant effect of mental skills training on imagery skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State.

2. There is no significant effect of mental skills training on attention control skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State.
3. There is no significant effect of mental skills training on concentration skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates	56.123	1	56.123	4.211	.049
X01	56.123	1	56.123	4.211	.049
Main Effect	345.133	1	345.133	25.898	.000
TRMT	345.133	1	345.133	25.898	.000
Explained	401.256	2	200.628	15.055	.000
Residual	413.127	31	13.327		
Total	814.382	33	24.678		

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

The information on the gender of the participants revealed that 21 (61.8%) were male while 13 (38.2%) were female. This shows that male participants were more than the female. On age of the participants, 12 (40.3%) were between 18 and 22 years, 16 (47.8%) were between 23 and 27 years while 6 (11.9%) were between 28 and 32 years. The information on educational qualifications of the respondents showed that 15 (44.1%) were Secondary School Certificate holders, 11 (32.4%) had Ordinary National Diploma, 08 (23.5%) possessed National certificate of Education.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant effect of mental skills training on imagery skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State

Table 2: Analysis of covariance showing the effect of six weeks mental skills training on imagery skill of the participants

Table two showed the ANCOVA result on the effect of mental skills training on emotional control skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo state. The main effects of the training was statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance $[(f_{2,31}) = 25.898, P < 0.05]$. There was significant effect of training on emotional skill of the participants; hence the hypothesis was not accepted.

Multiple classification analysis (MCA) showing the direction of significant interaction effect on imagery skill

Grand Mean = 19.56 Adjusted for Independents

	Unadjusted	Eta	+ Covariates	Dev'n	Beta
Variable + Category	N	Dev'n			
TRMT					
1. Experimental Group	15	3.84		3.72	
2. Control Group	19	-3.03	.70	-2.94	.68
Multiple R Squared		.493			
Multiple R		.702			

The multiple classification analysis (MCA) reflecting the differences in treatment mean values revealed a correlation ratio (eta) of 0.70.

with unadjusted deviation of 3.84 and -3.03 respectively. The square of eta indicates the contribution of the variance explained by all categories of factor to the standardized partial regression coefficient obtained. This follows the assignment of the unadjusted deviations to each factor category by the regression of the dependent variable on the outcome variable and the parallel beta values from regression including the covariates. It accounted for 68% of the total variance for the equation.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant effect of six weeks mental skills training on attention control skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance showing the effect of mental skills training on attention control skill of the participants.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig of F
Covariates	.080	1	.080	.003	.954
X02	.080	1	.080	.003	.954
Main Effect	400.575	1	400.575	16.610	.000
TRMT	400.575	1	400.575	16.610	.000
Explained	400.656	2	200.328	8.307	.001
Residual	747.609	31	24.116		
Total	1148.265	33	34.796		

Table three presents the ANCOVA result on the effect of mental skills training on attention control skill of non-elite athletes Ibadan, in Oyo State. The main effects of the training was statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance [(F2, 31)] = 16.610, P<0.05].

There was significant effect of training on imagery skill of the participants, therefore the hypothesis was not accepted.

Multiple classification analysis (MCA) showing the direction of significant interaction effect on attention skill.

Grand Mean = 23.15 Adjusted for Independents

Variable + Category	Unadjusted		+ Covariates Dev'n		Beta
	N	Dev'n	Eta	Dev'n	
TRMT					
1. Experimental Group	15	3.72		4.03	
2. Control Group	19	-2.94		-3.18	
			.57		
Multiple R Squared		.349			
Multiple R		.591			

The multiple classification analysis (MCA) presented the differences in treatment mean values. The results showed a correlation ratio (eta) of 0.57 with unadjusted deviation of 3.72 and -3.18 respectively. The square of eta presents the contribution of variance explained by all categories of factor to the standardized partial regression coefficient obtained. This follows the assignment of the unadjusted deviations to each factor category by the regression of the dependent variable on the outcome variable including the parallel beta values from regression including the covariates which accounts 62% of the total variance for the equation.

Ho3: There is no significant effect of six weeks mental skills training on the concentration skill of non-elite athletes in Ibadan.

emotions (Ranchman, 1994).

Further still, the findings revealed a significant effect of training on imagery skill of the participants. This corroborates the findings of Hardy, Jones and Gould (1996), they submitted that imagery and mental rehearsal of tasks is beneficial for the individual seeking to improve athletic performance. Imagery intervention has been proven to be effective with collegiate athletes in all sports. Results of research indicate that individuals who were in imagery intervention had significantly greater increases in sport performance and sport competition anxiety than did the delayed control group (Lohr & Scogin, 1998). Researches have also reported that visual imagery ability was predictive of somatic state anxiety and motivational mastery imagery was predictive of self-confidence (Vadocz, Hall & Moritz, 1997).

It has been affirmed that imagery is an important component of an athlete's pre-competition regimen if they are to be successful. Jones (2001) investigated the use of imagery in elite athletes, it was noted that it helped to maintain composure during competition. In addition to using imagery to regulate anxiety, athletes can also use imagery within practice to pre-plan and rehearse emotional responses prior to competition (Horn, 2002). Adegbesan (2006) studied impact of mental skills techniques on athletes using combination of imagery, attention and concentration, relaxation, goal-setting and self-confidence. It was reported that combination of these techniques

had a significant impact on the participants. Studies by Wrisberg and Pein (1992) and Cohn, Rotella and Lloyd (1990) have also demonstrated the impact of these mental skills on athletes.

Maynard, Hemmings and Warnick-Evans (1995a; 1995b) found similar results when they employed an intervention approach with non-elite soccer players. Other intervention investigations have also found support for the use of both individual skills (imagery; Hale & Whitehouse, 1998) and multi-model psychological skill packages (goal setting, imagery and self-talk; Hanton & Jones, 2004) in changing interpretations of symptoms in elite and non-elite populations.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the mental skills training programme proved to be an effective measure of the participants' skills in these areas. By implication it means the measures are reliable and important in sports performance. This study also revealed that the mental skills training programme had significant effect on the participants. This therefore necessitates that coaches and sport psychology experts need to be aware of the critical importance of attention in athletic performance, and that the inability of athletes to attend to instructions is not always due to a lack of effort on the part of the athlete.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. It should be realized that athletes' ideal attentional states may change from moment to moment as well as situation to situation. Therefore, the outcome on task performance to be introduced to athletes should be considered while administering psychological interventions on athletes in order to direct their attentional focus and increase arousal during performance.

2. Mental skills education should be integrated into athletes' training programme. This should be well taught the same way physical skills in various sports are taught to enhance athletes' performance.

3. Coaches, sport administrators and members of technical crew should work hand in hand with sport psychologists and utilize their professional prowess to monitor, assess, evaluate, develop and recommend appropriate intervention strategies that would place athletes in good physical and mental readiness before, during and after competition to improve performance.

4. Athletes and coaches should be enlightened that mental skills are acquirable. They should recognize the relevance of mental rehearsal, imagery and concentration in the enhancement of physical performance.

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