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ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING ADEQUACY AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SPORTS AND ITS IMPACT ON COACHES' COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-WEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the impact of the training adequacy of the National Institute for Sports (NIS) on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone, Nigeria. A survey research design was used in the study. The population of this study was four hundred and fifty (450), made up of football, Basketball, Taekwondo, Tennis, Athletics, and Swimming coaches who were trained by the NIS Nigeria from 2019 – 2023. The sample size for this study was two hundred and sixty-nine (269) drawn using stratified, purposive, proportionate, and convenience sampling techniques. The instrument used in this study was a self-developed questionnaire. The instrument's validity was ascertained through expert review by five (5) jurors in the field of Sports Management. To determine its reliability, a pilot study was conducted using fifty (50) respondents from Bauchi State Sports Organization (25) and Gombe State Sports Organization (25), where a Cronbach's Alpha reliability index of 0.857 was obtained, which made the instrument reliable for the study. The researchers and seven (7) research assistants administered and retrieved the questionnaire for the study within four (4) weeks. A total of 269 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, and 265 were retrieved and valid for analysis. The data collected was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30. Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation were used to answer the research question, while Chi-Square statistic was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that there was a significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills ($p = 0.000$, X^2 Cal=131.729). The study concluded that the training adequacy of the NIS impacted the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that the Federal Ministry of Sports enhance communication in NIS programmes.

Keywords: Training Adequacy, NIS, Coaches' Development, Communication Skills, Sports Coaching, North-West Nigeria.

Introduction

Sports have become an integral part of Nigerian society, attracting widespread interest and participation across all levels. This has led to an increased demand for competent coaches who play a vital role in stimulating participation, guiding athlete development, and enhancing performance (Abubakar, 2018). Coaching is central not only to the physical and technical improvement of athletes but also to their personal, social, and psychological growth. To achieve these objectives, coaches must possess strong communication skills, as effective communication is the foundation for transmitting knowledge, motivating athletes, and ensuring mutual understanding between coach and athlete (Olusoga et al., 2019).

Perkins and Hahn (2020) emphasised that sports development cannot progress without qualified and well-trained coaches. Effective coaching requires the ability to clearly articulate instructions, provide constructive feedback, and create an environment that fosters athlete learning and performance. According to Adedeji (2019), communication is one of the most essential tools available to a coach because it shapes athletes' responses, builds trust, and ensures the accurate execution of strategies. A coach's leadership effectiveness depends not only on technical competence but also on how well they communicate with athletes and other stakeholders.

Globally, the efficiency of a coach is not judged solely by the outcomes of competitions but also by the ability to nurture relationships, foster teamwork, and guide athletes through effective verbal and non-verbal communication (Adesoye, 2017). Deiorio et al. (2022) further noted that coaching shares similarities with teaching, where the coach assumes multiple roles such as disciplinarian, counsellor, and motivator, all of which require advanced communication competence. Without clear communication, coaches risk being misunderstood, creating confusion among athletes, and failing to instill confidence or discipline.

In Nigeria, sports are viewed not just as recreational activities but as a unifying force and a platform for community cohesion (Akintunde, 2018). With this growing national passion for sports, the demand for coaches has equally risen. However, in many cases, individuals are recruited into coaching roles not because of formal preparation or training, but because of prior experience as athletes or through political and social connections (Akinboye, 2014). This trend raises questions about whether such coaches possess the essential communication competencies needed to deliver effective coaching at both grassroots and elite levels.

Recognising these gaps, the Nigerian government established the National Institute for Sports (NIS) in 1972 to provide formalised training for coaches and sports administrators (Adedeji, 2019). The NIS serves as a specialised institution responsible for preparing coaches through structured programs in coaching, sports management, and related fields. The vision was to align Nigerian coaching standards with international best practices by equipping coaches with the necessary technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, and communication competencies (Alagich, 2016). The Institute's role has therefore become central to sports development in Nigeria, particularly in regions like the North-West Zone, where State Sports Councils/Commissions depend on trained coaches to foster mass participation and athlete excellence (Akinboye, 2014).

Given the significance of communication in coaching effectiveness, the adequacy of NIS training in preparing coaches to master communication skills requires critical evaluation. As Atkinson et al. (2023) argue, modern coaching involves not just tactical and technical expertise but the ability to inspire, guide, and communicate vision effectively. This places communication at the core of a coach's professional identity. It is therefore essential to assess whether the training adequacy of the NIS translates into improved communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The National Institute for Sports (NIS) was established to provide professional training for coaches, administrators, and sports personnel to enhance sports development in Nigeria (Abubakar, 2018). Among its objectives, the Institute is expected to equip coaches with the skills and competencies required to guide athlete development effectively. A critical aspect of these competencies is communication, as coaching effectiveness depends largely on a coach's ability to clearly articulate instructions, inspire athletes, and provide feedback that motivates performance (Adedeji, 2019).

Despite the centrality of communication to coaching, observations in many state sports organizations within the North-West Zone of Nigeria suggest that coaches often struggle with communication effectiveness. Instances of poor articulation of strategies, limited feedback, and inadequate motivational communication have been noted. Such deficiencies hinder athlete development, reduce team cohesion, and negatively affect performance outcomes. This raises concerns about whether the training provided by the NIS sufficiently addresses communication as a core coaching competence.

As Nigeria continues to devote increasing attention to sports as a tool for social and economic development, the role of coaches becomes even more crucial (Akintunde, 2018). Coaches in the North-West Zone are expected not only to prepare athletes for competition but also to serve as mentors, motivators, and communicators. However, if their communication abilities remain underdeveloped, the effectiveness of their coaching is compromised. This situation calls for an assessment of the impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of the training adequacy of the National Institute for Sports (NIS) on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone, Nigeria.

Research Question

To what extent does the training adequacy of the NIS impact the development of communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

There is no significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the survey research design, which was considered most appropriate for examining the impact of the training adequacy of the National Institute for Sports (NIS) on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North-West Zone, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised four hundred and fifty (450) coaches drawn from six major sports: Football, Basketball, Taekwondo, Tennis, Athletics, and Swimming, who were trained by the NIS between 2019 and 2023. These coaches were distributed across the States' Sports Organizations in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara States. The distribution of the population across the states reflected the varying number of coaches engaged in different sporting activities.

A sample size of 269 coaches was determined for the study using Adam's (2020) sample size determination table, which recommends this figure for a population of 450 with a 99% confidence level and a 0.05 margin of error. To ensure representativeness, the study employed a multi-stage sampling procedure. At the first stage, the North-Western states were identified as strata. At the second stage, a purposive sampling technique was used to select coaches in the six sports disciplines under investigation. At the third stage, proportionate sampling was applied to determine the exact number of coaches selected

from each state and sport, ensuring fairness in distribution relative to the size of the population. Finally, convenience sampling was employed to reach the respondents within their respective States' Sports Organizations. This four-stage procedure ensured that the sample was both statistically valid and practically feasible for data collection.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of two sections. Section A sought demographic information from respondents, while Section B contained eight items addressing communication skills, which were a core area of focus for assessing training adequacy. The items were structured on a four-point Likert scale with options ranging from Strongly Agree (4 points) to Strongly Disagree (1 point). A decision benchmark of 2.50 was established, such that responses with mean scores equal to or greater than 2.50 were interpreted as positive, while those below 2.50 were regarded as negative. This scale was chosen because of its simplicity, clarity, and suitability for measuring attitudes and perceptions in educational and sports-related research.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was first subjected to expert scrutiny. Specifically, five jurors with expertise in sports management reviewed the instrument for both face and content validity. Their feedback was incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire before it was pilot tested. A pilot study was subsequently conducted in Bauchi and Gombe States, which share similar attributes with the study area. Fifty questionnaires were administered to coaches across the six sports disciplines, and the responses were analysed using Cronbach's alpha to test for internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.857, which was considered highly reliable since it is closer to 1 than to 0. This result aligned with Razavipour and Raji's (2022) assertion that a reliability coefficient closer to 1 indicates strong internal consistency. Thus, the instrument was deemed both valid and reliable for the study.

The procedure for data collection involved obtaining an introductory letter from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, which was presented to the respective State Sports Organizations. Seven research assistants, one for each state, were engaged and trained by the researcher on the proper administration and retrieval of the questionnaires. Data collection was conducted over a period of two weeks to allow sufficient time for the distribution and retrieval of responses. Upon completion, the collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyse respondents' demographic characteristics, while mean and standard deviation were employed in answering the research question. Furthermore, the Chi-square (χ^2) statistic was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Table 1: Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

S/N	Variable	Variable Options	Frequency	Percent
1	**Gender**	Male	244	92.1
		Female	21	7.9
		Total	**265**	**100.0**
2	**Age**	18 - 25 years	13	4.9
		26 - 33 years	42	15.8
		34 - 41 years	127	47.9
		42 years & above	83	31.3
		Total	**265**	**100.0**
3	**Highest Educational Qualification**	Diploma/NCE	127	47.9
		Bachelor's degree/HND	86	32.5
		Master's degree/PGD	40	15.1
		Ph.D	12	4.5
		Total	**265**	**100.0**
4	**Years of Coaching Experience**	Less than 5 years	11	4.2
		5-9 years	48	18.1
		10-14 years	51	19.2
		15- 19 years	97	36.6
		20 years or more	58	21.9
		Total	**265**	**100.0**
5	**Sport Coaching**	Football	83	31.3
		Taekwando	60	22.6
		Tennis	38	14.3
		Basketball	35	13.2
		Athletics	32	12.1
		Swimming	17	6.4
		Total	**265**	**100.0**

The males, as indicated in Table 1, were 244 (92.1%), while the females were 21 (7.9%) of the total number (265) of respondents involved in the study. For age distribution, the table indicated that 13 (4.9%) of the respondents were between 18 – 25 years of age. Those who were between 26 and 33 years were 42 (15.8%), and 127 (47.9%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 34 and 41 years. Those above 41 years were 83 (31.3%) of the total number of respondents involved in the study. The educational qualification of the respondents shows that 127 (47.9%) had Diploma/NCE, 86 (32.5%) had a Bachelor's Degree/HND, 40 (15.1%) had a Master's Degree/PGD, and 12 (4.5%) had a PhD.

In terms of years of experience, 11 (4.2%) of the respondents have been involved in sports coaching for less than 5years. Those with 5 to 9 years of experience were 48 (18.1%), 51 (19.2%) have between 10 and 14 years of experience, 97 (36.6%) have between 15 and 19 years of experience, and 58 (21.9%) of the respondents have been in sports coaching for more than 19 years. By sports preference, 83 (31.3%) of the respondents were football coaches, 60 (22.6%) were Taekwondo coaches, 38 (14.3%) were Tennis coaches, 35 (13.2%) were Basketball coaches, 32 (12.1%) were athletics coaches, and 17 (6.4%) were swimming coaches.

Research Question: To what extent does the training adequacy of the NIS impact the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Impact of Training Adequacy of the NIS on the Communication Skills of Coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The communication skills I acquired from NIS have helped me as a coach to acquire more knowledge in my chosen sports.	3.11	0.78
2	The verbal communication skills learned from NIS have helped me deliver well in my coaching career.	3.32	0.76
3	The NIS has helped me to be sensitive to correcting the mistakes of my athletes using effective communication.	3.09	0.79
4	I have learnt to use body language in communicating with my athletes when coaching from the NIS.	3.42	0.72
5	I have learnt to talk while demonstrating to draw the attention of coachees to key points in my coaching career.	3.20	0.74
6	The ability to give good demonstrations through effective communication is a priceless asset I received from the NIS.	3.23	0.85
7	As a coach, I was trained to combine both verbal and non-verbal communication skills in coaching my athletes.	3.35	0.83
8	Communicating using coaching videos, handouts, and charts, which I learnt from the NIS, has been useful to me as a coach.	3.63	0.77
	Aggregate mean	**3.29**	**0.78**

(Benchmark = 2.50)

Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of responses on the impact of training adequacy of the NIS on the communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria. The analysis revealed a mean aggregate of 3.29, which is greater than the benchmark of 2.50. This implies that the training adequacy of the NIS has an impact on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis: There is no significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis on the Impact of Training Adequacy of the NIS on the Communication Skills of Coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria.

Variable	N	df	Cal. χ2 value	p-value	Decision
Communication Skills of Coaches	265	21	131.729	0.000	Rejected

X^2 Crit =*32.7*, (df = 21) P < 0.05

Results in Table 3 show that there is a significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria. Reason being that the p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, while the chi-square (χ2) Cal. value of 131.729 is greater than the chi-square critical value of 32.7 (X^2 Cal (131.729) > X^2 Crit (32.7), P < 0.05) at df 21. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that 'there is no significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria', is hereby rejected. Hence, the result implies that the training adequacy of the NIS has a significant impact on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria.

Discussion of Finding

The study revealed that there is a significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria (p = 0.000, X^2 Cal = 131.729). This finding is consistent with Ogunmilade and Adebayo (2014), who found that coaches who completed the NIS's communication training modules demonstrated significantly improved verbal and non-verbal communication skills (p < 0.05). Similarly, the findings of this study also supported that of Babatunde and Oluwaseun (2016), who reported a 62% increase in positive athlete interactions and a 45% reduction in communication-related conflicts among NIS-trained coaches, further validating the effectiveness of the institute's programs. Ekechukwu and Ibrahim (2018) also concluded that formal institutional training significantly enhanced communication competencies, particularly in active listening and conflict resolution, which supports the current finding. Additionally, Olajide and Adesanya (2020) revealed that structured NIS training led to marked improvements in instructional communication and feedback provision, reinforcing the consensus that NIS programs are instrumental in developing coaches' communication skills.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is a significant impact of the training adequacy of the NIS on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria. This implies that the training adequacy of the NIS has an impact on the development of communication skills of coaches in the North West Zone of Nigeria.

Recommendation

The study recommended that the Federal Ministry of Sports should strengthen the communication component of NIS training programmes to further enhance coaches' interpersonal and instructional effectiveness.

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