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EFFECT OF SELF-AWARENESS ON SKILL PERFORMANCE OF YOUTH SOCCER PLAYERS IN MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the effect of Self - awareness on skills performance of youth soccer players in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. one objective was raised, while two research questions were answered and one hypothesis was tested. The theoretical framework of this study was grounded in the CASEL model. The literature review was organized around the one core components of social-emotional learning (SEL) as outlined by the Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The Pre – test, Post – test, control group design was used for this study. The population for this study was 475 youth soccer players in Maiduguri. A purposive sampling technique was used to select ten (10) teams with the total number of 233 youth soccer players. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select a sample of seventy-two (72) players who were randomly assigned equally to each of the two groups using the fish bowl method. The instruments that were used for this study were the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) which was adapted and modified from Zhou and Ee with 5 items and a self-developed score sheet for recording sport performance which was structured on the modified four point Likert type scale of 1-5 (1 point), 6-10 (2 points), 11-15 (3 points) and 16-20 (4 points). The reliability of the instrument was determined using split-half technique and coefficient alpha of r = 0.84 was obtained. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean and standard deviation to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and also answer the research questions, while the null hypothesis was tested using inferential statistics of independent sample t-test for hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that, there was significant effect of self-awareness on skills performance among Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri $t = 10.969$, $df = 70$, $p < 0.001$ after 6–weeks training. Based on the results of this study, it was recommended among other things that Sport psychologists should draw up a comprehensive SEL training programmes tailored specifically for youth soccer players in Maiduguri. These programmes should be designed to enhance self-awareness with a focus on experiential learning activities and regular practice sessions integrated into the existing training regimen

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Athletic activities are inherently complex and involve crucial processes to achieve success. Training for these activities requires individuals to develop skills necessary for survival, recreation, and competition. Youth soccer players who develop realistic self-appraisal (self-awareness), are on a path to success both academically and later in life.Tupekar (2021) highlights that self-awareness involves understanding one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires. This awareness is essential for personal growth, job satisfaction, and improved relationships. Tupekar's research on self-awareness and empathy in college athletes found that athletes exhibited higher self-awareness compared to non-athletes. Self-awareness, a key component of workplace emotional intelligence, involves recognizing one’s emotions and their effects. People with high self-awareness are more effective in their roles, manage their lives well, and direct their positive feelings toward task accomplishment.

Self-awareness plays a crucial role in the success of sports psychology interventions and is linked to both development and performance excellence. It aids athletes in enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem, taking greater responsibility for their actions, and making more informed decisions. Beyond sports, self-awareness is important for various aspects of life, including education, work, and family

dynamics. Cumming (2015) defines self-awareness as the understanding and perception of one's own strengths and weaknesses, thoughts, emotions, behaviours, motivation, habits, values, and beliefs. It involves recognizing one's emotions, thoughts, and values and understanding their influence on behaviour (Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Accurate self-assessment of feelings, interests, values, and strengths is essential for maintaining a grounded sense of self-confidence (Levesseur, 2015).

Self-awareness encompasses the comprehension of one's emotions, values, and personal goals. It involves an accurate evaluation of one's strengths and limitations, a well-founded sense of self-efficacy and optimism, and a growth mindset that fosters learning through effort. High self-awareness requires recognizing how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interrelated (Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017). For athletes engaged in extreme sports, being aware of one's physical limits and spatial positioning—such as navigating waves, obstacles, and board movements—is crucial. Self-assessment, or the ability to review one's performance and recognize strengths and weaknesses, is vital for an athlete's development (Kulman, 2018). Ferrell (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of social-emotional learning outcomes in challenge course programmes using an experimental design with a sample of 1,401 students. The study indicated that challenge course programmes might positively impact the core social-emotional learning (SEL) competency of self-awareness. This research contributes to a framework for evaluating programme outcomes across educational and therapeutic settings. The domain of self-awareness includes understanding one's emotions, personal goals, and values, along with accurately assessing strengths and limitations, maintaining a positive mindset, and having a strong sense of self-efficacy and optimism (CASEL, 2017).

Self-awareness involves an in-depth understanding of oneself, independent of external influences. It is central to personal and social perception and self-meaning. It enables individuals to recognize their thoughts and emotions and to have a clear understanding of their personality, strengths, and limitations, fostering confidence and optimism. Developing self-awareness helps athletes manage their thoughts and emotions effectively, contributing to their overall emotional intelligence and success.

In sports, while situational awareness is frequently emphasized, self-awareness is equally important for consistent high performance. It allows athletes to understand their reactions to various situations and stimuli, potentially enhancing their ability to handle challenges and prevent adverse outcomes. Despite its significance, many athletes may not recognize the need for self-awareness or be unwilling to engage in the necessary development work. Self-awareness requires time away from athletic activities and involves practices such as meditation, game reflection, and the use of measuring tools to gain a deeper understanding of oneself. Unlike immediate performance impacts, self-awareness develops gradually, which may discourage some athletes due to the lack of instant results. Skills performance anxiety, or 'choking,' is a common issue that can be exacerbated in young athletes whose self-awareness is still developing (Truesport, 2016).

Singh, Prakash, Punia, and Kulandaivelan (2017) conducted a cross-sectional study with 273 female inter-university football teams, examining the relationship between pre-competitive anxiety and performance levels. The study found that decreased pre-competitive anxiety (PCA) was associated with improved performance, revealing a moderate negative correlation between PCA and performance. Self-awareness has become a prominent concept in management for its benefits; research shows that clear self-perception enhances confidence, creativity, decision-making, communication, and leadership effectiveness. However, self-awareness remains rare despite widespread belief in its prevalence. Eurich (2018) identified key insights about self-awareness, including the existence of two types of self-awareness, the hindrances posed by experience and power, and the fact that introspection does not always increase self-awareness.

Franco, Marias, Cangas, and Gallego (2010) investigated mindfulness applications with secondary school students using a group comparison design and found significant improvements in academic performance and self-concept, alongside increased anxiety states. Studies reveal two main categories of self-awareness: internal and external. Internal self-awareness involves understanding one's values, passions, and impact on others, leading to higher job and relationship satisfaction and reduced anxiety and depression. External self-awareness involves comprehending how others perceive us, enhancing empathy and perspective-taking, and improving leader-employee relationships (Eurich, 2018).

Self-awareness encompasses the ability to assess one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths accurately while maintaining a solid sense of self-efficacy (Payton et al., 2008). In educational contexts, teachers need to recognize their attitudes, limitations, and how these factors affect their teaching and relationships with students (Yoder, 2014). Millar, Oldham, and Donovan (2011) found that coaches often misremembered the instructions given to athletes, indicating a need for improved coach self-awareness. This study revealed that coaches overestimated their instruction accuracy, reflecting a disconnect between perceived and actual instructional practices. The findings align with Morgan (2006), which showed that elite youth soccer coaches often lack awareness of the consequences of their behaviours. Self-awareness ranges from low to high levels, affecting thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Highly self-aware individuals experience emotions more intensely, self-evaluate more accurately, and regulate themselves more effectively compared to those with lower self-awareness. Okpara and Edwin (2015) found that self-awareness positively correlates with net profit and return on investment in the Nigerian banking sector, though its relationship with market share was weaker.

Self-awareness is a critical component of workplace emotional intelligence. Yeung (2009) suggests that becoming emotionally intelligent starts with developing self-awareness. Goleman (1998) popularized emotional intelligence as a valuable management tool, leading to further research. Freedman and Everett (2004) observed that emotional intelligence is crucial for sustaining high performance. Self-awareness includes recognizing one's emotions and their effects, leading to more effective job performance and better relationships. Emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence are key competencies. Emotional self-awareness involves understanding how feelings impact performance, while accurate self-assessment includes recognizing strengths and weaknesses and being open to feedback and learning. Self-confidence reflects a strong sense of personal worth and capability (Goleman, 1998).

In sports, self-awareness is essential for effective performance. Research in various regions has shown that self-awareness as part of emotional intelligence contributes to improved sports performance. However, there is limited evidence of such studies in Africa, particularly Nigeria. Experimental research on self-awareness often involves manipulating attention and cognition through distraction or focus strategies. In sports psychology, self-talk is a technique to enhance self-awareness by linking the 'I self' and 'me self' and aiding in the development of motivational thoughts, feelings, and self-monitoring (Buck, 2013). Positive self-talk helps athletes replace negative processes with positive ones, raising self-awareness and improving performance through preparation and psychological readiness (Buck, 2013). Goleman (2004) emphasized that self-awareness is crucial for regulating thought processes in sports, where rapid decision-making is essential. Self-awareness and goal setting are closely linked, as performers need to understand their strengths and limitations to manage goals effectively.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a Pre-test, Post-test, Control Group quasi experimental design. This design was chosen because it effectively facilitates the comparison of participant groups and assesses the extent of change resulting from treatment or interventions (Shuttleworth, 2009). In experimental designs, individuals are randomly assigned to at least two groups: one group receives the intervention, while the other does not. The effectiveness of the intervention is evaluated by comparing outcomes between these two groups. The Pre-test, Post-test, Control Group design is advantageous, as noted by Thomas and Nelson (1990), for its capacity to manage internal inconsistency factors such as maturation, history, instrumentation, testing, selection bias, statistical regression, and experimental mortality. Kothair and Garg (2014) further explained that this design involves selecting two areas, measuring the dependent variable in both areas for a consistent time period before introducing the treatment, then measuring the dependent variable again in both areas after the treatment is introduced to determine any changes. This approach is deemed suitable for the current study, which investigates the effect of Social Emotional Learning on the sport performance of youth soccer players in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.

Population and Sample

The study's population included all 20 registered youth soccer clubs affiliated with the Borno State Football Association, totaling 475 individuals. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select ten teams, encompassing 233 players. From this selection, a proportionate sampling technique was

utilized to choose 72 football players. These players were randomly assigned to two groups using the fishbowl method. In this method, 72 pieces of paper, cut to shape, were prepared, with 36 labeled 'E' and 36 labeled 'C'. The papers were placed in a container and thoroughly mixed. Participants were then drawing a paper from the container with one hand; those who drew papers marked 'E' were assigned to the experimental group, while those who draw papers marked 'C' were assigned to the control group. This process ensures an equal distribution of participants between the experimental and control groups, and is conducted without replacement to maintain the integrity of the random assignment.

Research Instrument

The instruments employed in this study included the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ), which was adapted and modified from Zhou and Ee (2012), and a custom-designed score sheet for recording skills performance. The score sheet used a modified four-point Likert scale with the following scoring: 1-5 points (1 point), 6-10 points (2 points), 11-15 points (3 points), and 16-20 points (4 points). The SECQ consists of 25 items, modified to incorporate demographic information about the respondents. It is organized into two sections: Section A gather demographic information, while Sections B addressed the intervention variables self-awareness.

The questionnaire utilizes a modified four-point Likert scale with response options: Strongly Disagree (SD) worth 1 point, Disagree (DA) worth 2 points, Agree (A) worth 3 points, and Strongly Agree (SA) worth 4 points. Respondents were instructed to mark the option that best reflects their view for each item. To validate the instrument, a draft of both the questionnaire and the training manual was reviewed by the researcher's supervisors and other experts from the Department of Physical and Health Education at the University of Maiduguri. Their feedback was meticulously considered and used to enhance the instrument's quality. To determine the reliability coefficients for this study, the instrument was pilot-tested with 20 male football players from Mari Strikers FC in Maiduguri using the split-half reliability technique. The data were then analyzed using the Cronbach alpha reliability test, yielding an overall reliability index of r = 0.84.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were employed to characterize the demographic features of the respondents. To address the research questions, the mean and standard deviation were calculated. Inferential statistics were used to test the null hypothesis: independent t-test was conducted for hypothesis. The independent t-test was to compare the means of the two independent groups (Experimental and Control) to determine if there is a significant difference between them. All tests were performed at a 0.05 level of significance.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Analysis and Results

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of the Respondents n1=36; n2=36

			Control group		**Experimental Group**	
S/No.	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	15-17 yrs.	2	5.6	4	11.1
		18-20 yrs.	22	61.1	18	50.0
		21-24 yrs.	12	33.3	14	38.9
		Total	**36**	**100**	**36**	**100**

Results in table 4.1 which is on age distribution reveals that majority of the participants, 22 out 36, fall within the age range of 18-20 years which accounts for approximately 61% of the total sample for the control group. For the experimental group, majority of the participants, 18 out of the 36 falls within the same age bracket of 18-20 years which accounts for 50% of the total sample. This balanced age distribution suggests that age-related factors are unlikely to introduce significant bias in the study's

findings, ensuring that both groups are at similar developmental stages, which is crucial for assessing the impact of Self-Awareness among youth soccer players in Maiduguri.

Research Question One: What is the level of Self-Awareness among youth soccer players in Maiduguri as measured by SECQ?

Table 4. 2: Self-Awareness (SA) Competence among Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri

n1=36; n2=36

S/No.	Construct	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Self-Awareness	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	I know what I am thinking and doing	1.83	0.811	1.94	0.791
2	I understand why I do what I do	1.83	0.561	1.83	0.561
3	I understand my mood and feelings	2.11	0.919	1.78	0.76
4	I know when I am moody	1.81	0.822	1.92	0.77
5	I can read people's faces when they are angry	1.61	0.838	1.63	0.843
	Sub grand mean	**1.838**	**0.7902**	**1.82**	**0.745**

The result of Self-Awareness revealed that, the mean scores and standard deviation for experimental group $\bar{x}$ 1.82 (±0.75) and shows $\bar{x}$ 1.84 (±0.79) for control group. This indicates a lower level of self-awareness among players who received SA interventions.

Research Question Two: What is the skill performance of youth soccer players in Maiduguri?

Table 4. 3: Skills Performance of Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri n1=36; n2=36

Skills	Experimental Group				Control Group			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Heading	2.05556	.753826	3.3889	.64488	1.97222	.654047	2.1111	.62234
Jogging	1.9444	.86005	3.2222	.59094	1.97222	.774084	2.2778	.70147
Dribbling	1.8611	.68255	2.9722	.50631	1.66667	.632456	2.0833	.76997

Table 4.3 compares the performance of players in the control group and the experimental group across three key soccer skills: heading, joggling, and dribbling.

The mean score for heading in the Experimental group Pretest is $\bar{x}$ 2.06 (±0.75) and Post test was $\bar{x}$ 3.39 (±0.64) while the Control group Pretest $\bar{x}$ 1.97 (±0.65) and Post test shows a mean score of $\bar{x}$ 2.11 (±0.62). This substantial difference in mean scores indicates that players in the experimental group, who likely received targeted training or interventions, performed much better in heading compared to those in the control group.

For joggling, the Experimental group Pretest mean score is $\bar{x}$ 1.94 (±0.86), whereas the experimental group Post-test achieves a higher mean score of $\bar{x}$ 3.22 (±0.59), while Control Group mean score is Pretest $\bar{x}$ 1.97 (±0.77), Post-test Control Group is $\bar{x}$ 2.28 (±0.70). The experimental group outperforms the control group in joggling, as evidenced by the higher mean score and lower standard deviation, suggesting more consistent performance among the experimental group players.

The result of dribbling, indicate that the Experimental group Pretest has a mean score of $\bar{x}$ 1.86 (±0.68), while the experimental group Post-test mean score is $\bar{x}$ 2.97 (±0.51), and the Control Group Pretest mean score is $\bar{x}$ 1.67 (±0.63), while the Post-test Control mean score is $\bar{x}$ 2.08 (±0.77). The experimental group shows a higher mean score for dribbling, though the difference is less pronounced compared to the other skills. The higher standard deviation in the experimental group indicates greater variability in dribbling performance.

Overall, the results indicates that the experimental group, which presumably underwent specific training interventions, shows superior performance across all measured soccer skills compared to the control group. The most significant improvement is observed in heading, where the experimental group's mean score is more than double that of the control group, suggesting that targeted training or interventions have a positive impact on players' performance. The joggling skill also shows marked improvement in the experimental group, with a higher mean score and more consistent performance (lower standard deviation), indicating that the interventions helped improve both the skill level and consistency among the players. While dribbling shows improvement in the experimental group, the higher variability in performance suggests that individual differences among players might have influenced the results more in this skill area.

On the skills performance of youth soccer players in Maiduguri, as indicated by the result, shows that the experimental group consistently scored higher than the control group in heading, joggling, and dribbling, as demonstrated by the higher mean scores and, in most cases, lower standard deviations. These findings highlight the importance of structured training programmes in enhancing the athletic abilities of young soccer players, leading to improved performance on the field.

HO_1. There is no significant difference in skill performance between the experimental and control groups after 6- weeks of self- awareness training among Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri.

Table 4.4 Summary of Independent Samples t-test on the Difference in Skill Performance between the Experimental and Control Groups after 6–weeks of Self-awareness Training among Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri n1=36; n2=36

Pre-test								**Post-test**								
Gp	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**	**t-val**	**df**	**P-Val**	**Gp**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**	**t-val**	**Df**	**P-Val**	**Effect Size**
EXP	36	1.82	0.2287	.03803	-.260	70	0.795	EXP	36	2.817	.26349	.04392	10.969	70	<0.001	2.621
CTR	36	1.8389	.30917	.05153				CTR	36	2.0389	.33405	.05567				

$\overline{x}$ = 2.82, SD = ±0.26, df = 70 t-val = 10.969, p < 0.001

Table 4.4 shows the result of independent t-tests comparing self-awareness scores between an experimental group (EXP) and a control group (CTR) before and after an intervention. Pre-test results show that the experimental group had a mean score of $\overline{x}$ 1.82 (SD = ±0.228, while the control group had a mean score of $\overline{x}$ 1.839 (SD = ±0.309). The t-test yielded a t-value of -0.260, with 70 degrees of freedom, and a p 0.795, indicating no statistically significant difference between the groups (t(70) = -0.260, p = .795).

Post-test results indicate that the experimental group had a mean score of $\overline{x}$ 2.817 (SD = ±0.263), whereas the control group had a mean score of $\overline{x}$ 2.039 (SD = ±0.334). The t-test yielded a t-value of 10.969, with 70 degrees of freedom, and a p <0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference between the groups (t (70) = 10.969, p < .001). The effect size is (Cohen d = 2.21) indicating a huge influence of treatment on the treatment group. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant effect of Self-Awareness on skill performance between the experimental and control groups after 6-weeks of training among Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri is hereby rejected at 0.05 level of significance. The intervention had a significant positive effect on the scores of the experimental group, with the differences between the groups being statistically significant (p < .001).

DISCUSSION

The study determined the effect of Self-awareness on skill performance of youth soccer players in Maiduguri Borno State, Nigeria. The significant difference in skill performance between the experimental and control groups after 6-weeks of self-awareness training among youth soccer players in Maiduguri underscores the importance of this particular social-emotional competence in enhancing on-field performance. This result corroborates the findings of Okpara and Edwin, (2015) who reported that self-awareness, as a fundamental aspect of social-emotional learning (SEL), involves recognizing

one's own thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. In the context of soccer, players with a high level of self-awareness are better equipped to understand their strengths and weaknesses, regulate their emotions during matches, and make effective decisions on the field. The experimental group, which received SA interventions aimed at enhancing self-awareness, demonstrated a significant improvement in skill performance compared to the control group. This suggests that the SEL interventions effectively facilitated the development of self-awareness among the players, leading to tangible benefits in their soccer skills and overall performance.

In contrast, the control group, which did not receive the SEL interventions targeting self-awareness, did not show the same level of improvement in skill performance. This highlights the specific impact of SEL interventions on enhancing self-awareness and its subsequent influence on on-field performance among youth soccer players. These findings have practical implications for soccer coaches, trainers, and programme administrators. By incorporating SEL interventions focused on self-awareness into training programs, coaches can help players become more attuned to their thoughts, emotions, and actions, thereby enhancing their ability to perform effectively during matches. Moreover, fostering self-awareness among youth soccer players contributes to their holistic development beyond the sport. Players who possess a high level of self-awareness are more likely to exhibit greater self-confidence, resilience, and interpersonal skills, which are valuable attributes both on and off the field. The significant effect of self-awareness on skill performance among Youth Soccer Players in Maiduguri highlights the importance of integrating SA interventions into soccer training programes. By promoting self-awareness among players, coaches can empower them to better understand themselves, regulate their emotions, and make informed decisions during matches, ultimately leading to improved performance and holistic development. The finding is in line with the findings of Tupekar **(**2021) on self- awareness and empathy characteristics of college going sports person found that Players of different sports discipline were found to have more self-awareness as compared to students who are not playing any other games. The study also aligns with (Buck 2013) finding that most researchers involved in experimental studies of self- awareness have manipulated attention and cognition through strategies of distraction (e.g., intense, absorbing movies, challenging math problems, complex motor behaviours) and heightened focus on the self (e.g., mirrors, self – relevant prompts, concentration and focus).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. The study has provided compelling evidence for the effectiveness of Self - Awareness (SA) interventions in enhancing the competence and performance of youth soccer players in Maiduguri. The experimental group, which received SA interventions, exhibited significantly higher SA competence across various constructs compared to the control group after 6 weeks of training. Moreover, the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group in key soccer skills such as heading, joggling, and dribbling.

Coaches should implement structured self-awareness training modules within the coaching curriculum, including reflective exercises, mindfulness practices, and goal-setting strategies. Coaches should encourage players to develop a deeper understanding of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, fostering greater self-awareness both on and off the field. Sport psychologists should draw up a comprehensive SEL training programmes tailored specifically for youth soccer players in Maiduguri. These programmes should be designed to enhance self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, with a focus on experiential learning activities and regular practice sessions integrated into the existing training regimen.

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