

PRINT SPORTS-MEDIA REPORTAGE AS CORRELATE OF SELECTED PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF NIGERIA NATIONWIDE LEAGUE FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN OYO STATE

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ABSTRACT: *Most football players in the Nigeria Nationwide League (NNWL) exhibit low confidence with very little effort at rebounding from setbacks resulting from negative print sports-media reportage. Previous studies have established linear relationship between sports and the media, but have focused more on print sport-media reportage of European leagues and the first and second divisions of the Nigerian League with little attention given to the NNWL. This study, therefore, examined the extent to which print (newspaper) sports-media reportage correlate with the psychological profile (confidence and reboundability) of NNWL football players in Southwestern Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Media Agenda Setting and Narrative Image Theories. The study adopted the descriptive design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Oyo, State. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to select all the (57) male NNWL football clubs in Oyo State, Nigeria, and all the 2,508 players were used in the study. Psychological Profile Questionnaire with two sub-scales of Modified Sports Confidence test ($r=0.87$), and Reboundability in Sports ($r=0.83$) Scales; as well as Sports-Media Reportage ($r=0.94$) questionnaires were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product moment correlation, and Multiple regression at 0.05 alpha level. Recommendations were made based on results of the finding.*

KEYWORDS: Print Sports-Media Reportage, Psychological Profile, Nationwide League, Football, Football Players, Oyo State, Nigeria, Confidence, Reboundability

INTRODUCTION

Consistent findings indicate that, football and the mass media enjoy symbiotic relationship. Soccer and the media have become so associated and intertwined that it has become difficult to discuss football in recent times without acknowledging its relationship with the media. As a result of this intricate connection, the study of sports-media has become a central theme within the sociology of sports in recent years (Abdullahi, 2012; Dziubinski, Jankowski, Leanartowics, Murrmanu and Rymarczyk, 2012; Coakley, 2004; and Becks and Bosshart, 2003).

Documented evidence also shows that, sports-media have become one of the most powerful institutional forces in society that propel football and football players. They have grown to become powerful in shaping opinions and

reinforcing ideas about the game. The sports-media have made football an important social institution, and with entertaining stimuli, sell it. Acosta (2002) in Morakinyo and Agu (2009) pointed out that, competitive sports survival and development is contingent upon the media's cooperation. It is for this reason that, sports must enjoy good relationship with the media. How the media represent a social group like a football team gives important clues to our understanding of their social status, social values, norms, and attitudes.

Sports-media in the views of Steen (2007) covers writings and reports about amateur and professional sports. Sports-media in the print medium provides detailed previews of upcoming events and post-game analysis in addition to extensive updates of game scores, player statistics and team standings.

In Nigeria, the dominant print sports-media narratives about the domestic football league and the football players help to define, normalize, influence, and reflect societal beliefs about them. Soccer is made attractive through the instrumentality of the sports-media. The efficiency of the sports-media in reporting football gives fans uninterrupted opportunities to support their teams. The sports-media gather, process, interpret and publish relevant sports news items needed by both participants and fans. The transmission of values and entertainment functions is even more relevant in the Nigeria sports-media industry as more people rely on the sports-media for sports updates (Daramola, 2005). As a result, a lot of people are now interested in knowing more about soccer. Fixtures, dates, times and places of matches have become matters of interest to football players and fans. They equally raise questions about past ones and even the plans for the future. Thus, information and mass awareness have become primary in solving this quest for information and knowledge. The sports-media fill this responsibility gap as they report these activities and provide the necessary information needed to all interested parties.

Observations however indicate that, the Nigerian sports-media focus little attention on domestic football league issues especially, the NNWL. The coverage that does exist is often dominated by European and international football leagues to the detriment of local talent and football development. This is at the expense of Nigeria's home-bred professionals. The scanty news we get about the domestic league clubs and players are scraps from daily newspapers which are not enough to make any statement about the teams. This indicates that, the Nigerian sports-media reportage has been lopsided, representing mostly the views of European stars, or the elite. This has led to further entrenchment of media imperialism (Ifediba, 2011 and Whannel, 2002) whereby we are continuously buffeted with sporting activities of foreign countries. The result is that, the domestic stars especially the NNWL are denied effective voice and representation in the sport-media.

Since the media do affect the way in which the masses think and act, influencing their

behaviour both positively and negatively, the continuous proliferation of foreign football events and competition on Nigeria's local sports-media could seriously jeopardise the chances of football development in Nigeria. Regrettably, the impact of this one-sided sports-media representation both in shaping the behaviour of the domestic league football players and sports in general, have not been adequately researched and documented. This research, in acknowledgement of these facts, examined print sports-media reportage as correlate of selected psychological profile of Nigeria Nationwide League (NNWL) football players in Southwestern Nigeria with particular focus on confidence, motivation and reboundability because of their centrality in soccer performance.

Statement of the Problem

Empirical studies have established linear relationship between sports and the media (Fremlin, 2008 and Rutledge, 2007). Observations however, indicate insufficient and inadequate domestic print sports-media attention on the domestic football league, especially Nigeria Nationwide League (NNWL). The dominant print sports-media narratives available are lopsided, concentrating more on the dissemination of European football news to the detriment of local talents. The real issues that impact Nigeria's domestic football league, especially NNWL football players are often neglected, and when mentioned are sometimes described with disparaging negative labels. The print sports-media's persistent focus on the negativity in the league has continued to feed pessimism leading to poor perception and erroneous acceptance, thereby making people feel the domestic league, especially NNWL football players are not good enough. This often has the unintended consequence of undermining confidence in the domestic league football players and the domestic league itself. The result is that, the NNWL football players are discouraged and denied effective representation in the domestic print sports-media.

Given the established profound relationship between sports and the media, it is surprising that no attempt has been made to examine whether print sports-media reportage

has significant correlation with the psychological profile of domestic league football performers, especially the NNWL. This study was undertaken to find out whether there is significant correlation between print sports-media reportage and the selected psychological profile (confidence, motivation and reboundability) of the NNWL football players. These variables have been proved to be very important in soccer performance and an understanding of their correlation with print sports-media reportage

would be helpful in getting the print sports-media to pay adequate attention to the NNWL and to be more positive in their reportage so as to help in improving the fortunes of the NNWL soccer players.

Hypotheses

There will be no significant relationship between the psychological profile of NNWL football players in Southwestern Nigeria and print sports-media reportage (newspaper).

Table 1: Psychological Profile of NNWL Football Players in Southwestern Nigeria and Print Sports-Media Reportage (Newspaper)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	r	P	Remark
Psychological Profile	71.6555	11.1085	2508	.747**	.000	Sig.
Newspaper	14.9553	2.7267				

Sig. at .01 level

Table 1 revealed that there was a positive significant correlation between Psychological Profile of NNWL football players in

Southwestern Nigeria and print sports-media reportage ($r = .747^{**}$, $N = 2508$, $p < .05$). Null hypothesis not accepted.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that there was positive significant correlation between Psychological Profile of NNWL football players in Southwestern Nigeria and print (newspaper) sports-media reportage. This indicates that, positive sports-media reportage by the print sports-media boosts the psychological profile of NNWL football players, while negative reportage by the print sports-media debilitates the psychological profile of NNWL football players. NNWL football players monitor sports news and reports in the print sports-media and what they read have implications on their psychological profile. When they read positive reports about themselves in the print sports-media their confidence level will be significantly enhanced.

This finding is in tandem with the assertions of Alao (2014) Thulfiqar (2009) and Wernecken (2000) who asserted that positive sports reporting in newspapers does have significant positive effect on the psychology of athletes. They hold that positive print sports-media narratives about soccer players enhance their confidence and encourage them to better performance in competitive situations and that

negative print sports-media reportage also impacts negatively on the confidence of the players. This finding is also in consonance with Hypodermic Needle theory, Media Agenda Setting theory, Cultivation theory and Narrative Imagery theory which state that, what we read in the newspapers shape our social reality.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that domestic print sports-media should focus more attention on the success stories of the NNWL football players. They need to ensure that NNWL stars are constructed as role models for young people. By giving elaborate coverage to the NNWL football players, sports-media can help to popularize the lower leagues as people get to read, hear and see them.

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