

Sport & Exercise Psychology in Africa

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The purpose of this paper is to give an in-depth historical and current state of sport psychology in Africa. The first objective is to provide sport psychology context through a brief discussion of sport and physical activity in Africa. The second objective is to share the current state of sport psychology in each regional block (i.e., north, east, south and west). The third objective is to discuss research and consultancy, and lastly the conclusion. In order to achieve the stated objectives, the author reviewed academic literature and also used additional data sources such as university websites.

KEY WORDS: Sport psychology, Africa, University, Egypt.

Introduction

The African continent is the second largest (Bloom et al., 1998) and second most populous (Gerland et al., 2014) continent in the world. There are a total of 54 countries, with over 3000 languages (Bromber & Smieja, 2004) spoken across the continent. Africa is considered one of the most diverse continents in the world (Kent, 1996). It is therefore impossible to have a single view on sport, religion, politics, or any other issue that is representative of the entire African continent. The purpose of this paper is to give an in-depth historical and current state of sport psychology in Africa. The first objective is to provide sport psychology context through a brief discussion of sport and physical activity in Africa. The second objective is to share the current state of sport psychology in each regional block (i.e., north, east, south and west). The third objective is to discuss research and consultancy, and lastly the conclusion. In order to achieve the stated objectives, the author reviewed academic literature and also used additional data sources such as university websites.

Sports & Physical Activity in Africa

Historical records provide evidence that sport, games, physical activity, and the use of mental skills have always been part of an indigenous African tradition. Rock paintings that depict javelin throws, racing, and scenes of combat are some of the examples of pre-colonial mastery of physical skills and sport in Africa (Amusa & Toriola, 2012; Hirth, n.d). Scholars in African studies have linked African warfare with play, particularly the use of spear throwing, wrestling, and other related combative sports (Akyeampong & Ambler, 2002). Amusa and Toriola (2012) noted that physical culture and sport in Africa draws from cultural practices that include the Masai of east Africa, the Zulu of southern Africa, Yorubas of west Africa, and Tuaregs and Bedouin Arabs of north Africa. Indigenous games, dances, and arts were historically used to socialize and educate youth into adulthood (Amusa & Toriola, 2010). In addition, the games played a pivotal role in cultural initiation ceremonies across the African continent. One of the most cited examples is the Zulu cultural stick fight/competition in southern African (Carton & Morrell, 2012). Zulu kings used stick fighting as one of the key competition threshold and other ceremonial activities to graduate boys into adulthood (Carton & Morrell, 2012; Roux et al., 2008). Mental and family games form part of a rich African tradition. For example, the “Wari” or “Wancala” family of board games is one of the popular draughts practiced games in west Africa.

Sport & Exercise Psychology in Africa

Following independence, African governments reformed education systems to address colonial legacy in school sports and physical activity (Chepyator-Thomson, 2014). The colonial era had eroded indigenous African games and physical activities used for education. Mählmann (1988) observed that indigenous dance and ritual games were generally regarded as degenerate, debase and excluded from the missionary educational process but were used for recreational purposes. It is worth noting that at independence, African leaders turned to sport for nation building and African solidarity (Baker, 1987; Chipande & Banda, 2018). African athletes used the power of sport to showcase national heroism and also serve as international ambassadors (Baker, 1987).

Elite athletes across the continent compete for gold at major international games. Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt are some of

the most competitive countries in Africa. Sport psychologists across the continent work and travel with elite athletes in preparation and during major games. The African Society of Sport Psychology was launched at the 2013 ISSP World Congress in Beijing, China. The society is affiliated to ISSP and engages in sport psychology activities at a continental level. Professor Philomena Balo Ikulayo was elected its founding president.

Universities in Africa offer bachelor's and graduate programs in sport psychology across the continent. Similar to other parts of the world, they are mostly housed in Departments of sport science, kinesiology, physical education, sport studies and psychology. Sport studies departments are housed in the faculties of education and or health studies. Students enrolled in sport psychology programs take classes in psychology, sport sociology, sport administration, anatomy and physiology. In addition, students take practical sport courses and an internship.

Sport Psychology: North Africa

North African countries encompass the northern part of the continent. Countries include Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.

Egypt has always been a leader in psychology studies in African and the Arabian Peninsula. There is evidence of psychology studies in the 1930s including sport psychology research (Gielen et al., 1992). Sport psychology in Egypt is inspired by a historical tradition of psychology studies applied to physical education and other disciplines at the Helwan University. The university offered psychology studies as early as 1937. In addition, sport psychology in Egypt draws from paper and pencil techniques used in the United States (Salmela, 1992). Professor Mohammed Allaway is the father of sport psychology in Egypt. He got his PhD in 1964, In Leipzig, German Democratic Republic, returned to Egypt and took a position at the Helwan University, Cairo. Upon his return in 1965, the university offered three sport psychology courses to final year physical education students. He introduced masters (3 year program) and PhD (3-4 year program) sport psychology programs in 1965 and 1973 respectively (Salmela, 1992). The programs accept admissions from both men and women students. Students take courses and have to submit a thesis to graduate. In 1992, the university had graduated over 40 graduate students serving in other universities across Egypt. Most of the students are mentored by Professor Mohammed Allaway. It is worth noting that Professor Mohammed Allaway served in the ISSP Managing Council between 1977 and 1989.

Even though Helwan University campus of Cairo and Alexandria both offer sport psychology, the Cairo campus is the major center for sport psychology studies (Salmela, 1992).

One of the early sport psychology conferences in Africa was hosted in Egypt, in 1985. Members of the ISSP council graced the event and also interacted with the then Egyptian president Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak. The conference was organized and hosted by the Egyptian Society of Sport Psychology which was founded in 1975. Similar to the Helway University, Mansoura and Assiut universities established sport psychology departments housed in faculties of physical education.

Moroccan Society of Sport Psychology hosted the 1st ISSP World Congress in Africa, in Marrakech 2009. Hosting ISSP was a great sport psychology achievement for Morocco and Africa. Even though applied sport psychology practice is at infant stage in Morocco, the Centre National d'Etudes de Perfectionnement et d'Evaluation en Education Physique et en Sport (CNEPE-EPS) houses a sport psychology lab. Morocco, similar to neighboring countries such as Tunisia and Algeria, draw sport psychology techniques from France (Salmela, 1992). Consistent with other Africa countries, young academics receive sport science training (including sport psychology) across the world including from France, USA, Australia, and Germany. Professor Abderrahim Baria from Morocco served in the ISSP Managing Council from 2005 to 2013.

Other active sport psychology countries include Algeria and Tunisia. In Tunisia, sport, leisure and educations studies offer modules in sport psychology. For example, the Normal School for Masters of Physical Education and Sport (ENMEPS) is a premier institution for coaches in Tunis (Salmela, 1992). Coaches' training modules include sport psychology. The Society of Sport Psychology (STPS) was formed in 1992. The society conducts workshops and conferences in Tunisia. Similar to Tunisia, Algeria offers sport psychology mostly to coaches. Sport psychology research, programs and private practice is still at infant stage. However, there is enthusiasm that sport psychology will be offered in academic institutions.

Sport Psychology: West Africa

West Africa constitutes the 16-westernmost region of Africa. Some of the countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. West Africa is one of the most competi-

tive sport regions in the world. Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana and Ivory Coast are some of the most competitive in football at the world cup. For example, the U20 Ghanaian football team won silver and gold medals at the 2001 and 2009 U20 world cup respectively. Nigeria U20 football team won bronze and silver medals at the 1985 and 2005 U20 world cup respectively.

Nigeria has some of the most active sport psychology academic programs, sport psychology association, active consultation programs, and research. One of the early sport psychology leaders in west Africa and the entire continent was from Nigeria, Professor Philomena Balo Ikulayo (1948-2016). Professor Philomena Balo Ikulayo founded the Sport Psychology Association of Nigeria in June 1985 and also served as its first president, (Serpa & Stambulova, 2016). The establishment of SPAN coincided with the ISSP 20th anniversary in 1985.

She dedicated a significant part of her life to sport psychology consulting, research and teaching in Africa. For example, she consulted with a number of national teams including the Nigerian team at the 1988, Seoul Olympic games. She published a number books (Ikulayo, 1982b, 1990, 1991), book chapters (eg., Ikulayo, 1992), and peer reviewed journal articles (e.g., Ikulayo, 1982a; Ikulayo & Omoruan, 1984; Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011). It is worth noting that she was the first Professor of Sport Psychology in Nigeria, at the University of Lagos. She introduced graduate sport psychology programs at the University of Lagos (Serpa & Stambulova, 2016). Her former students are some of the leading sport psychologists in research, teaching and consulting in Africa. She served in the International Society for Sport Psychology (ISSP) Managing Council, first elected in 1989 and served to 2005, reelected again from 2009 to 2013, and also served two terms in the role of ISSP Vice President (Serpa & Stambulova, 2016). Professor Athanasius Amasiatu, her former student, is the current African representative in the ISSP Board elected in 2013. He is a professor of sport psychology at the University of Port Harcourt.

The Sport Psychology Association of Nigeria (SPAN) is a very active association with three categories of membership (i.e., professional, associate, and student membership). The association manages the *Nigerian Journal of Sport Psychology* and conducts national conferences and workshops. One of significant SPAN activities includes hosting the then ISSP President, Dr Robert Singer in 1987. Professor Philomena Balo Ikulayo and her Vice President Vice, Professor Teoheed Adedoja, invited the ISSP president to support SPAN activities in Nigeria. Dr Robert Singer gave a lecture, interacted with students, and the Nigerian commonwealth team. The association held one of its recent national conferences in 2018.

In Ghana, the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Cape Coast collaborated with the International Society of Sport & Exercise (ISSP) to launch the Ghana Society of Sport & Exercise Psychology in December 2018. The ISSP Vice President, Dr Tatiana Ryba was one of the officials at the launch. A number of universities in west Africa offer courses/modules and degrees at undergraduate and graduate level. All eight Nigerian universities offer sport psychology core courses for physical education students. Some universities offer sport science, physical education, and sport studies degrees and modules in sport psychology. For example, the Department of Physical Education and Sports at the University of Ghana is housed in the College of Education. The Department offers a B.A. Sport & Physical Culture studies and students in this program are required to take some modules in sport psychology. The University is in a process to offer a master's degree in sport psychology program to be housed in the School of Social Sciences, Department of Psychology (Asameng, 2014). Other active sport psychologists in the region include Professor Olufemi Adegbesan who has done significant research in sport psychology (Erlacher et al., 2011; Onyiaso & Adegbesan, 2003).

Sport Psychology: Southern Africa

Southern Africa is the southernmost 16 countries that include Angola, Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. The region's sport successes include South Africa hosting the 2010 Football World Cup and Botswana hosting the 2017 Netball World Youth Cup. The region has a rich sport psychology history in applied work, research and teaching. Professor Danie Craven (1910-1933) was one of the first coaches in southern Africa to incorporate sport psychology to coaching (Clinton et al., 2018). A former national rugby player himself, he held three doctoral degrees including in physical education and psychology (Nauright, n.d.). He offered the first sport psychology course in South Africa (Stellenbosch University) in the 1960s (Human, 2006) and arguably the first sport psychology course in Africa. Professor Danie Craven was inspired by Ernest Jokl's work in physical education. Ernest Jokl established the first two South African departments of physical education in 1935 and 1937 at the University of Stellenbosch and Witwatersrand Technical College respectively (Clinton et al., 2018). The University of Stellenbosch is currently one of the most prestigious academic institutions in Africa. Clinton and colleagues noted that other sport psychology pioneers in Africa include Ben Steyns and Justus Potgieter. Ben

Steyns was one of the most accomplished sport psychology researchers in Africa. Justus Potgieter and Ben Steyns are credited for having published the first sport psychology book in Afrikaans (Clinton et al., 2018). Potgieter started a sport psychology degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in 1969, while teaching sport psychology at the University of Port Elizabeth (Clinton et al., 2018). A number of universities in South Africa offer sport psychology programs/courses including Nelson Mandela Metropolitan, University of Johannesburg, and North West University. The South African Society of Sport & Exercise Psychology established in 2018 advocates and communicates sport psychologists' qualifications and standards to stakeholders (Clinton et al., 2018). Current sport psychology practitioners in South Africa include Clinton Gahwiler (team South Africa at the 2004 Athens Olympic games), and Maretha Claasen. Maretha Claasen is very active in private practice and over 90% of her clients are athletes. She works mostly with golfers.

The University of Botswana has strong sport psychology partnership with Michigan State University. Michigan State University Professors, Daniel Gould, Deborah Feltz, and Alan Smith have been invited to give lectures on different sport psychology topics in Botswana. The only two PhD trained sport psychology practitioners from Botswana were trained at Michigan State University. Professor Leapetswe Malete, now a professor at Michigan State University was the first Motswana PhD trained in sport psychology. He was followed by Dr. Tshepang Tshube, also trained at Michigan State University. He is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Botswana. The third candidate (Kapule David Mabuta) is currently pursuing his doctoral studies at Michigan State University under Professor Leapetswe Malete's mentorship. These researchers have continued research collaboration with colleagues at Michigan State University. The two sport psychology researchers also work with athletes at club and national level. For example, Professor Leapetswe Malete worked and travelled with team Botswana to the 2003 Abuja All Africa games. Dr Tshepang Tshube worked and travelled with team Botswana to the 2015 All Africa games, 2016 Olympic games, and the 2018 commonwealth games. Other practitioners include Kagiso Tlhabano, who worked with Dr Tshepang Tshube at the 2018 Commonwealth games and Vonile Tladi who worked with team Botswana at the 2019 All Africa games. The University of Botswana offers sport psychology degrees at undergraduate and graduate level.

In Zambia, Dr Hikabwa Dacious Chipande, trained in Norway and Michigan state university is an active sport psychology practitioner. He has worked with a number of teams including basketball and football. The University of Zambia and sister universities offer modules/courses in sport psychology.

Sport Psychology: East Africa

Countries in east Africa include Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and South Sudan. The east African region is known for middle and long distance athletic success.

The University of Dar es Salaam has a partnership with Norwegian School of Sport Sciences. Professor Glyn C. Roberts, one of the leading sport psychologists has mentored Dr. Cyprian Maro at the University of Dar Es Salaam. His mentorship has played a fundamental role in the development of sport psychology in Tanzania. Dr. Cyprian Maro is the only PhD trained sport psychologist in Tanzania. Dr. Cyprian Maro has worked with other leading sport psychologists such as the Michigan State University Professor Daniel Gould and the University of Queensland Professor Stephanie Hanrahan. Professors Daniel Gould and Stephanie Hanrahan have been invited to give lectures at the University of Dar Es Salaam. The University of Dar Es Salaam offers sport psychology courses. Other east African universities that offer sport psychology courses include University of Rwanda and Kenyatta University.

Sport & Exercise Psychology Research and Consulting

The African continent receives aid from industrialised countries in a number of areas including sport (Akindes & Kirwin, 2009), health (Gupta et al., 2018), education and research (Yamada, 2016). Aid provided to sport focused primarily on two areas, sport for development and sport development for athletic performance. A number of programs have been developed to empower marginalized communities and enhance quality of life (Akindes & Kirwin, 2009). Examples of such efforts include ex-child soldiers program in Liberia, slums of Nairobi, and the HIV/AIDS fight across the African continent (Akindes & Kirwin, 2009). Countries in Africa are plagued with lack of sport equipment and facilities, trained expertise in fields such as sport medicine, sport psychology and exercise physiology. For example, the Norwegian government has a number of partnerships in and outside sport in Africa (Admin, 2018; Hasselgård, 2015; Straume, 2012; Tembo, 2016).

The African continent is one of the least studied communities in the world. Lack of research capacity in a number of disciplines including sport psychology has widened the knowledge gap in Africa (Sawyers, 2004). Inadequate teaching and laboratory facilities, lack of trained personnel, and external assessment (Bates et al., 2014) are some of the factors leading to the

knowledge gap in Africa. Proximity of the African continent to other continents and high travel cost within Africa have also contributed to difficulties in sport psychology knowledge development. For example, conference travels from Southern Africa to Europe, North Africa, United States and Australia costs about \$1000.00 in airfare excluding accommodation and conference registrations. These high costs have discouraged young faculty from travelling and presenting their research at conferences. Studies that examined challenges faced by African universities indicate that poor remuneration, heavy teaching loads, lack of mentorship and infrastructure are some of the often cited challenges to conduct research (Marjanovic et al., 2013; Sawyerr, 2004) in sport psychology and other disciplines. Observations specific to sport psychology, Schinke, Papaioannou, and Schac (2016) noted that submissions and acceptance rates in the *International Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* favored mostly the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. The journal has a special printing section devoted to China (Schinke et al., 2016). The lack of sport psychology research in emerging countries including Africa prompted the *International Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* to launch two special issues dubbed sport psychology in emerging countries. The journal paired authors from an emerging country with an experienced author from an English-speaking country. This initiative has built network, provided mentorship and also exposed authors from Africa to publish in a global and reputable journal.

A number of authors have written on sport psychology practice and research in Africa and other emerging countries (Clinton et al., 2018; Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011; Mayowa & Adeyemo, 2013; Schinke et al., 2016; Tshube & Hanrahan, 2016). Some of the emerging themes include the need to infuse culture in sport psychology practice and research (Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011; Tshube & Hanrahan, 2017) and barriers/challenges to sport psychology practice, research and academic programs (Hagan Jr. & Schack, 2017; Quartiroli et al., 2017). Cultural discourse in sport psychology (Hagan Jr. et al., 2019; Tshube & Hanrahan, 2017) challenged researchers to broaden sport psychology theory and practice. Sport psychology in Africa has largely imported theoretical constructs and models from industrialised countries. Research used to develop mainstream sport psychology constructs and models is largely informed by cultures in the west and industrialised countries. Imported concepts have certainly enhanced sport psychology knowledge in Africa but have also led to shortfalls and mismatches in the delivery of sport psychology practice. For example, sport psychology concepts are largely developed and presented in English. In Setswana (One of the languages in Southern Africa), self-talk is translated to “*go bua ka pelo*” or speaking with

or through your heart. This translation in Setswana speaking community and culture is associated with high levels of stress, depression and or someone spacing out. An individual unable to concentrate and is spacing out is referred to as “*o bua ka pelo*” or S/he is speaking through the heart. The person’s thoughts would be wondering which leads to spacing out. In light of the example, there is need for practitioners to have full knowledge of cultural context they wish to practice.

The dilemmas and complexity in sport psychology practice requires flexibility and a broader perspective in delivering sport psychology (Danish et al., 2016). A number of studies provide evidence that cultural competence and diversity (Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011; Quartiroli, 2017; Tshube & Hanrahan, 2017) are key to sport psychology practice and research. Ikulayo and Semidara, (2011) noted unorthodox sport psychology practice in Nigeria such as chanting of songs, verbalization of incantations, psyching verses, and juju, which extend sport psychology research scope and practice models. The use and conceptualization of juju and other similar practices may not be common concepts in sport psychology mainstream syllabi. These sport psychology practices heavily rely on the client’s culture and the practitioner’s cultural competence. Ryba and Wright (2005) has challenged mainstream sport psychology to further explore the implications of culture and called for culturally underpinned sport psychology research and practice.

The African indigenous culture of physical activity rituals, survival skills, and other indigenous activities broaden sport psychology research and practice. Indigenous games, dances, and arts were historically used to socialize and train youth and are now a huge potential for elite sport. For example, Botswana’s 4 x 400m men’s relay team at the 2016 Olympic games was dealing with a number of adversities that include injuries to the team. The team had not rested any athlete between the qualifying heats and finals due to injuries. At least two relay runners in the racing team were injured. The exhaustion and injuries were taking a huge toll on the team. In order to deal with this adversity, everyone at the warm-up area watched in amazement as team Botswana sang “*tsaya thobane o ba bolaye, o ba rute molao*”, a song translated to “*discipline them with a rod*”. Olympic game finals warm up areas are always tense with an exclusive focus and concentration on relevant cues. The song was used as a coping mechanism to ward off the negative effect of injuries and challenges in the team (Foster et al., 2006; Ikulayo & Semidara, 2011). This was considered an anomaly but athletes from other African countries such Ghana, South Africa, and Senegal understood. Singing, dance, and chanting are part of African traditions, wars, and competition rituals.

Sport & exercise psychology in Africa research is published in a number of journals across the African continent. These journals include *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*; *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences*; *Lagos Journal of Studies in Physical, Health Education, Recreation, Sports and Dance*; *Journal of Nigeria Association of Sports Science and Medicine*; *West Africa Journal of Physical and Health Education*; *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development*; *African Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology and Sport Facilitation*; *East African Journal of Physical Education, Sports Science, Leisure and Recreation Management*. In addition to these journals, African scholars submit their work to journals at global level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that sport, physical activity and psychology historical development are key to inform current research, teaching, and consulting in sport psychology. There is also significant variance between different African regions in sport psychology development. For example, information on east Africa was very difficult to find. It is therefore key for Africa universities to document all their activities online for the global community to access. Universities in Africa may have programs and data that are not reflected on their websites. In addition, citations on some African published research are not available online and this has led to misinformation about programs and sport psychology knowledge in Africa. This has also created a huge challenge in properly documenting sport psychology efforts in Africa. It is therefore important for African universities to update their websites, upload their research online and develop a culture of online activity. There is need for more activity in the sport psychology organizational structure.

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