

Psychological Skills Training Assessment on Combat Efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel Deployed to Combat Terrorism

K. O. Sennuga¹, I. A. Oyewumi², Ogunkoya S. Adeniyi³ and B. O. Osiyale⁴

¹Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria

²Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Lagos State University, Nigeria

^{3,4}Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria

¹kensennuga@gmail.com, ²akinloyeakinloye@yahoo.com, ⁴osiyalebabatundeolabisyi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Essence of Psychological Skills Training (PST) and fighting Terrorism: The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychological skills training assessment on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. The subjects for the research were two hundred and forty (240) military personnel both male and female from the rank of private to Master warrant officer (MWO) selected through simple random sampling techniques from Garrison command and 81 battalion both under 2, Mechanized division of the Nigerian army. The research instrument was a self-structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.86. The descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage was used for demographic data while inferential statistics of multiple regressions was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. The results of the research showed that, motivation, concentration and self-confidence were significant in the training and combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. It is therefore suggested that, the services of professionals in sport psychologist should be employed and co-opt in the training of military personnel to ensure these predominant challenges.

Keywords: Assessment; Efficiency; Psychological Skills Training; Military Personnel; Terrorism.

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the major challenges that faced the Nigerian nation. Nigeria has witnessed unprecedented level of insecurity and terrorism and in particularly the issue of Boko Haram which has been on the increase since 2009 till date across most northern and central Nigeria leading to enormous loss of over 40,000 death and properties worth billions of naira. Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes northern politics has been seized by a group of corrupt, wicked and false Muslims. The original intent of the sect was to wage war against this category of people and the

Federal republic of Nigeria so as to create “pure Islamic state governed by Sharia law”. According to nation newspaper report of December 8, 2011 cited Boko Haram on June 16, carried out massive bomb attack on Force headquarter, Abuja. Boko Haram also bombed united nation house in Abuja on August 26, killing over twenty people and on April 14, 2015 carted more than two hundred Chibok girls which up till date just few over a hundred of them were able to rescued. Militant in the southern eastern part of the country (MEND) also contributed in no small measure to the insecurity challenges facing the country. They mastermind several bomb attacks in the country including October 1st 2010 when two bombs exploded near the eagle square Abuja venue of the Nigerian 50th anniversary celebrations, killing many and injuring several others to mention a few. Very recently the Fulani herdsmen have been attacking the people of Kogi, Benue, Jos, and all other nearby villages killing and maiming the innocent people. More so, the recent attack of bandits has created confusion and disorganization in the life of people of Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina States killing, raping while thousands had left to seek refuge in nearby states.

It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian army metamorphosed overtime, to evolve a dynamic and professional armed force that would withstand the test of time. Nigerian army-initiated policies to increase the military personnel participation in physical activity by creating environment that encourage an acceptable level of physical fitness in the whole division of the Nigerian army. The policy which is primarily a statement of how Nigeria perceived her national interest and how she intends to safeguard such. It is clear that, this involve preservation of Nigeria’s independence, unity and territorial integrity

from both internal and external aggressions. It is pertinent to note however that before an individual can be enlisted into the Nigerian army, they must possess certain level of military acclaimed fitness. Training is of the essence in the attaining the military goals. The training content in the military profession are general among the recruited military personnel in Depot Nigerian Army, Zaria. After the six months training, soldiers are deployed to different corps. The training of each corps depends on the goals and achievement of each corps. The infantry corps is a multidisciplinary corps with emphasis on weapon handling, drill practice and skills development. It also has additional comprehensive training in first-aid to rescue colleagues and community members who fall victims. The combat support unit training corps strictly professional emphasis on weapon handlings, drill practice, bridge construction and mine lying. The combat support affiliated unit based their training on their specialized professional areas and emphasis on weapon handlings. Consequently, military personnel are faced with serious military challenges that require medical and psychological attention which affect their behavior, training and performance. Failure to bring into being these attentions correctly leads to ill health which accompanying poor performance.

Psychological Skill Training (PST) is an educational approach to mental training that refers to systematic and consistent practice of mental or psychological skills for the purpose of enhancing performance, increasing enjoyment and achieving great sport and physical activity self-satisfaction (Ryba, Stambulova, & Wrisberg, 2005). Psychological skills training such as maintaining and focusing concentration, regulating arousal levels, enhancing confidence and maintaining motivation also need to be systematically practiced. Sports psychologist is a helping profession that will help in total uplifting of various aspects of training and performance in the Nigerian army. Similarly, to physical skills, sport psychologist will help the personnel in teaching the psychological processes such as motivation, maintaining and focusing concentration and enhancing confidence which are essential to enhance physical and mental readiness to cope with challenges of terrorist insurgence. By training, the sport psychologist provides physical and social environment that encourages and enables safe and enjoyable physical activity (i.e. providing time within the training days for unstructured physical activity which will help the military personnel develop the knowledge, attitudes, motor skills and behavioral skills.

More and more sport psychology consultants are transferring their skills to a variety of business and work environments working with different professionals; such as astronauts, physicians, military officers, armed forces, police officers, firefighters, and even dancers. Along these lines many corporations have hired successful sport psychologist to train their employees about becoming more mentally tough and staying motivated. Mental training is an ongoing process that needs to be integrated with physical practice over time, but mental training during recruitment and training situation is rarely effective. However, in this situation, the military personnel engage in intensive mental skills training, such training is not likely feasible in most situations but might be possible with dedicated highly experienced military personnel and with the assistant of sport psychologist. Although some military personnel are born with certain physical and psychological skills, and some possess exceptional physical skills, but skills can be learned and developed depending on the experiences they have, through hard work, to develop their talents to become a winner. The effectiveness of PST is closely tied to the quality of the relationship between military personnel and the sport psychologist (Petitpas, Gises & Damish, 1999). The time needed for practicing mental skills varies according to what is being practiced and how well it is to be learned. Sport psychology consultants typically start with some group sessions to explain general principles and their philosophy. If military personnel become more proficient, they may be able to integrate the mental training more with physical training and may need fewer special training sessions. Once military personnel have effectively integrated a skill into physical practice, they try it during stimulated organized training before using it during actual operation (Vealey, 2007). Although, PST is an ongoing process, military personnel's first exposure to PST in a formal program should last 3-6 months. This study

therefore, investigated psychological skills training assessment on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant joint contribution of motivation, concentration, and selfconfidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.
2. There is no significant relative contribution of motivation, concentration and selfconfidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.
3. There is no significant relationship between motivation, concentration and selfconfidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.

Methodology

Descriptive Survey research was adapted for this study. The sample for this study comprised two hundred and forty (240) military personnel from the rank of private to master warrant officer (MWO) in 2, Mechanized division of the Nigerian Army; the respondents were selected from Garrison Command and 81 Battalion through simple random sampling techniques. The research instrument for this study was a self-structured questionnaire which was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents while section B consist of twenty structured questions based on the variables under study using four-point Likert scale rating summation of strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD). The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by experts in the field of sport psychology and educational psychology. Cronbach's Alpha (α) was used to estimate the reliability coefficient of 0.86 via test-retest method after an interval of 2 weeks with the aids of five (5) research assistants. All the questionnaire forms were returned and used for the analyses of the study. Data were analyzed using multiple regressions.

Table 1: Variation of Male against Female Military Personnel

Rank	Garrison Command		81 Battalion		Total Number		Percentage %
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Private Soldier	40	05	40	05	80	10	36
L/CPL	28	02	18	02	46	04	24
CPL	20	03	21	02	41	05	18
SGT	14	01	11	04	25	05	12
WO	10	Nil	10	Nil	20	Nil	8
MWO	2	Nil	2	Nil	04	Nil	2
TOTAL	114	11	102	13	216	24	100

Table 1 revealed that 90 (36%) were private soldier, 50 representing (24%) were lance corporal, 46 respondents (18%) were corporal, while 30 of the participants (12%) were sergeants, and 20, (8%) were warrant officers, also 4 representing (2%) were Army warrant officer.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant joint contribution of motivation, concentration and self-confidence on efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.

Table 2: Shows the joint contribution of the three independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variables

Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	1768.385	3	589.452	21.475	*000
Residual	6752.279	.237	27.448		

Total	.240
-------	------

Table 2 showed a multiple regression analysis of PST Assessment on joint contribution of motivation, concentration and self-confidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat Terrorism i.e. terrorism. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation $R=.644$ and multiple R^2 is .588. This implies that the three variables when taken together contributed 58.8% to the combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. Furthermore, this table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded F -ratio 21.475 at 0.05 significant levels. This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent contribution is discarded.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relative contribution of motivation, concentration and self-confidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.

Table 3: Multiple regression showing relative contribution of motivation, concentration and self-confidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		Significant
	B	Standard Error	β	T	
Concentration	1.644	.464	.503	4.87	.000
Motivation	1.126	.297	.520	6.23	.000
Self-confidence	1.222	.320	.543	8.95	.000

Table 3 presents the coefficient showing relative contribution of each of the three independent variables to the dependent variable. It is expressed as concentration ($\beta=.503$, $t=4.87$; $p<0.05$). Motivation ($\beta=.520$, $t=6.23$; $p<0.05$) self-confidence ($\beta=.543$, $t=8.95$, $p<0.05$) on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. The above table shows that three independent variables made significant contribution on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. In terms of magnitude of contribution, self-confidence made the most contribution, follow by motivation and concentration respectively.

Hypothesis Three: Correlation Matrix between motivation, concentration and self-confidence on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism.

Result shows that efficiency is positively related to level of concentration ($r=.464$; $p<0.05$), motivation ($r=.297$, $p<0.05$) and self-confidence ($r=.320$, $p<0.05$), but motivation is not found correlated with concentration ($r=.297$, $p<0.05$). Also, motivation was found with no correlation with either self-confidence or concentration.

Discussion

The findings obtained from table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between joint contribution of self-confidence, motivation and concentration on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. The three variables contributed 58.8% to the acceptability. It is also evident that F-ratio 21.475 of the three variables influence combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel deployed to combat terrorism. Self-confidence is characterized by a high expectancy of success. It can help individual to arouse positive emotions, facilitate concentration, increase effort, focus strategies and maintain momentum. Confidence is a critical determinant of performance. Many people have the physical skills to be successful but lack confidence in their ability to perform these skills under pressure. Research indicates that the factor most consistently, distinguishing highly successful from less successful is confidence (Jones & Jerdy, 1990, Vealey, 2005). Psychological skills intervention is the process of using mental skills to establishing self-confidence in military personnel. Involvement of military personnel in any operation both internal and external is likely to yield faster and better results if they develop the self-

concepts of the personnel before the operation. It is essential that military personnel have the self-confidence necessary to meet these requirements, primarily, thus must involves trusting the ability of the military personnel to perform the necessary physical and mental tasks. It also involves recognition of personal responsibilities for making choices and decisions, and for clarifying one's value and goals. Self-doubt undermine performance, they create anxiety, break concentration and course indecisiveness. Individuals lacking confidence focus on their shortcoming rather than on their strengths, distracting themselves from concentrating on the task at hand. Athletes and coaches inevitably discuss the critical role that self-confidence or lack of self-confidence played in their mental success or failure.

Motivation is a key variable in both learning and performance in sport and exercise contexts. Edward and Ryan, (2000) have developed a general theory of motivation called selfdetermination theory. This theory contends that people are motivated to satisfy their general needs, the needs to feel competent, autonomous, and social connected or belongings. How these motives are fulfilled leads to a continuous of motivation. The more a sport psychologist can provide for these needs, the greater participant motivation will be. Hagger and Chat zisaranti, (2007, 2008) summarized the research that has employed self-determination theory to predict exercise behavior. The studies generally indicate that participants who display autonomy in the exercise behavior (Standage, Sebire & Honey, 2008) and have strong social support system exhibit stronger motivation and enhanced exercise adherence. When attempting to enhance motivation, one needs to consider both situational and personal factor. Often when working with military personnel who seem to lack motivation, sport psychologist immediately attributes this lack to the military personnel's personal characteristics of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Both extrinsic and intrinsic motives are important in the military to improve their performance. Intrinsic motives for taking part in military operations include excitement, fun, love for action, and the chance to demonstrate and improve skills. Extrinsic motives can come in the form of trophies, award, prizes, instant promotion, and less tangible rewards such as praise, hand shake with the Commandant and Chief of Army Staff etc.

Concentration is one of the psychological challenges in sport performance. The ability to concentrate on the required tasks is an essential component of performance excellence. Concentration eliminates distraction in order to direct one's energies to the tasks at hand. This requires alertness, involvement, and presence at the right time. In essence, the temporary loss of focus can spell defeat. A study by Bell and Hardy (2009) provides information regarding exactly where to focus. Specifically, they found that an external focus (outside the body) was better than an internal focus (on the body). Evidently, the more you focus on yourself or things near you, the poorer the performance. Maintain focus over long time periods is not an easy task. The difficulty of maintaining concentration throughout a competition is the risk of losing concentration due to fatigue. Hatzigeogradis, Stuart & Biddle (2008), reiterated that our body has strong psychological responses to whatever emotions we are experiencing. Negative thinking appears to be more prevalent than positive thinking in military training and performance (Greenshields, 2011). Some constantly exhibits negative thoughts thereby creating loss of concentration. Staying focused for an entire operation is often the key to victory and losing that focus is the ticket to failure. It is critical to concentrate during military operation even through adverse, weather conditions and irrelevant thoughts. Experienced and well-trained military personnel are known to focus their attention and maintain that focus throughout military operation.

Conclusions

The study showed that self-confidence, concentration and motivation are significant on combat efficiency among Nigerian Army Personnel to combat Terrorism. The sport psychologists will instill confidence in military personnel and develop some level of concern to military personnel needs and desires. These will stimulate and encourage the personnel to achieve higher level performance at the right time.

Recommendations

Nigerian Army should initiate policies to increase military personnel participation in physical activity by creating environment training in the whole divisions of the Nigerian Army. The Defense Headquarters should employ the services of professional sport psychologist and co-opt in the training of military personnel to ensure these predominant challenges.

References

- Bell, J. & Hardy, J. (2009). Effects of attentional focus on skilled performance in golf. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 21, 163-177.
- Greenshields, F. (2011). Get rid of negative thinking. How to make your thinking positive, self growth.com; an outline improvement community. Retrieved from [http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Getrid of negative thoughts. How to make your thinking positive. Html](http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Getrid%20of%20negative%20thoughts.%20How%20to%20make%20your%20thinking%20positive.%20Html). On the 3rd Nov. 2011.
- Hagger, M. & Chatzisarantis, N. (2007). Editorial: Advances in self-determination theory research in sport and exercise. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 8, 597-599.
- Hagger, M. & Chatzisarantis, N. (2008). Self-determination theory and the psychology of exercise. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 1, 79-103.
- Hatzigeorgadis, A., Stuart, J.H. & Biddle, T. (2008). Negative self-talk during sport performance; Relationship with pre-competition anxiety and goal performance discrepancies. *Journal of sport behavior*, 16, 143-149.
- Petitpas, A.J., Giges, B., & Danish, S. (1999). The Sport Psychologise-athlete relationship: implications for training. *The Sport Psychologist*, 13, 344-357.
- Ryba, T., Stambulova, N., & Wrisberg, C. (2005). The russian origin of sport psychology: a translation of an early work of a. c. puni. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 17, 156-169.
- Standage, M., Sebire, S., & Loney, T. (2008). Does exercise motivation predict engagement in objectively assessed bouts of moderate-intensity exercise? A self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Sport and exercise Psychology*, 30, 337-352
- Vealey, R. (2007). Mental skills training in sport. In G. Tenenbaum & R. Eklund (Eds). *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (3rd edition, 287-309). New York: Wiley.