

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ON COACHES' PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

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ABSTRACT

The article under examination explored the impact of training and development on performance of coaches in the context of grassroots football coaches in Nigeria. This study was prompted by the growing anxiety over the discrepancy between coaching requirements and the real skills of the grassroots coaches. The research questions and hypotheses underpinning the study were five. A descriptive survey type of research design was adopted and a structured questionnaire was used in the collection of data of 357 coaches selected by the use of stratified random sampling. The tool had three giant constructs, which included perceived availability of training, relevance of existing programs, and effect of training on coaching performance. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The study findings showed that a huge proportion of the respondents (71.7% of the total) had recognized that there were training opportunities, which they had considered, but a small percentage of the respondents (26.9% of the total) viewed such programs as being very relevant to their day to day coaching duties. Moreover, 70.3 percent of the coaches responded that training positively affected their overall performance as coaches as well as in the areas of tactical development and man management. The research found that training programs exist, but their practical applicability and the long-term effect is doubtful. It suggests that the future training programs should be developed taking grassroots coaches directly on board so as to make sure that the programs are contextually relevant. Furthermore, the policy changes need to be aimed at constant professional growth, practice-based mentoring, and revision of coaching curricula in line with the changing football standards.

Key words: Grassroots coaching, training effectiveness, coaching performance, Nigeria, coach development, sports education.

Introduction

The coaches are the pillars of professional athlete growth and institutional sport development. They are leaders, skilled technicians, and motivators whose contribution plays a great role in terms of how athletes develop, the nature of teamwork, and the final results of a team (Awoma, 2014). In Nigerian polytechnics where sports are central to the involvement of youths, talent recognition and the development of characters, the effectiveness of coaches is central to the institution image and success of student-athletes (Babajide and Yahaya, 2021).

In spite of such an important position, coaches in Nigerian tertiary institutions such as polytechniques often face the challenges of professional stagnation because of the lack of access to systematic training and continuous professional development (Professions.ng, n.d.). Strength and conditioning coaches, among others, tend to mention the absence of adequate funding, inadequate training resources, and lack of standard certification as the key barriers to their success (Professions.ng, n.d.). Correspondingly, more general considerations of sports administration in Nigeria put the insufficient investment in coaching education, as well as the poor institutional support (Professions.ng, n.d.).

Recently, the national level has paid attention to the quality of coaching. In November 2023, the Nigerian Minister for Sports Development directly requested increased work on the topic of indigenous coach education, which is an indication that the government sees coaching as a factor in the success of national sports and that it needs to take a systematic approach to coaching training (Vanguard, 2023).

The National Institute of Sports (NIS) which is the highest-ranking institution conducting coach education in Nigeria provides certificate and diploma-level coach education and includes theory and practice training in various fields (NIS, 2025). Access to these programmes is however uneven and most polytechnic coaches do not get institutional support or funds to enrol in such programmes particularly in the relevant or advanced courses.

Although models integrating performance incentives, capacity-building by involving NISs and periodic in-service training of coaches are piloted in institutions like Lagos State Sports Commission (Premium Times, 2025), these are not common practices in the Nigerian polytechnics.

The indications of quality of coaches are also corroborated empirically by the belief that the quality of coaches is a predictor of any outcome of sports development in the tertiary institutions. Awoma (2014) found that coach competence is a significant factor that determines the sports development level ($B = .294, p < .05$) in Edo State, and the level of sporting investments is likely to be improved with the help of coach training (Awoma, 2014). Correspondingly, Babajide and Yahaya (2021) determined that sports directors frequently involved in providing or organizing training to coaches are critical in managing staff in the sport, offering facilities, and quality training delivery in polytechnics (Babajide and Yahaya, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Over the recent years, this value of sports in tertiary institutions especially polytechnics has received a lot of focus in Nigeria because of its role in the empowerment of the youth, their social integration, and their representation to the country. The center of this is coaches whose role is to build the physical, mental, and tactical capabilities of athletes. Nevertheless, even with their central position, coaches in the Nigerian polytechnics work in an environment where they do not have regular access to training and professional development. This has cast serious doubts on their readiness, performance and their capacity to achieve on institutional sports objectives.

Coaches in most polytechnics are recruited without being required to be updated on their certification and when provided with the training, it is not frequent, poorly financed, and not aligned with the current needs of coaching (Babajide & Yahaya, 2021; Vanguard, 2023). As a result, there is an enormous disparity between the changing demands of sporting prowess and the realistic skills of coaches and this results in poor performance of an athlete, demoralization of a team, and failure in inter-institutional events.

In addition, the existing empirical research on the effects of current training and development programs where applicable on the coaching effectiveness in polytechnics in Nigeria is limited. The current literature concentrates more on sports development and the overall performance of any athlete, with minimal consideration being given to the professional development of a coach and the impact of training interventions on the overall performance of coach in the field (Awoma, 2014; Professions.ng, n.d.).

This is not a source of data-driven understanding such that the sports directors, policymakers and institutions can design, implement or refine coach development frameworks that are relevant, effective and sustainable. Without filling this void, there is still the probability of stagnation in the development of sports in Nigerian polytechnics, even though they have potential talent and infrastructural capabilities.

Hence, in this research study, the researcher will aim to explore how much training and development programs are available, applicable, and useful in developing the performance of coaches in the Nigerian poly institutions with the view of producing evidence to help shape institutional and national sports development policies.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are training and development programs accessible to coaches in Nigerian polytechnics?
2. What is the perceived relevance of existing training and development programs to the professional needs of polytechnic coaches?
3. How do training and development programs influence the performance of coaches in Nigerian polytechnics?
4. What are the major challenges affecting the effectiveness of training and development programs for coaches in Nigerian polytechnics?
5. What strategies can be adopted to improve the design and implementation of coach training and development programs in polytechnic institutions?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the accessibility of training and development programs and coaches' participation in Nigerian polytechnics.
2. There is no significant difference between coaches' perceived relevance of training and development programs and their professional needs in Nigerian polytechnics.
3. Training and development programs have no significant influence on the performance of coaches in Nigerian polytechnics.

Literature Review

2.1. Training and Development in Sports

Training and development encompass structured interventions designed to enhance coaches' knowledge, skills, and competencies, ultimately improving job performance (Ezeani & Oladele, 2013). In sports coaching contexts, this spans technical, tactical, psychological, and physical education components (Lyle & Cushion, 2010). Contemporary research emphasizes the need for coach education programs to integrate not only technical instruction but also broader educational and psychological dimensions. For instance, a recent six-month coach-education program targeting youth sports incorporated theory-based workshops delivered by sports psychologists and educators, resulting in strengthened interpersonal communication,

goal-setting capability, and reflective practice among coaches (Turn0search11; Turn0search9).

Non-formal mentorship-based coach education programs of 18 months also demonstrated notable effects: coaches in the treatment group had significantly higher perceived performance and social resource support compared to controls, as evidenced by regression analyses, even when paired pre-post differences were minimal (median changes nonsignificant) (Turn0search2). This suggests sustained exposure to mentorship-based learning gradually reinforces coaching competence and peer support networks.

Nigerian Context

Specific to Nigeria, research on training programs for assistant coaches highlights a range of challenges, including limited formal training, poor access to resources, and inadequate institutional support from sports authorities a situation that hampers coaches' professional growth and effectiveness (Turn0search6). At the tertiary institution level, a cross-sectional assessment of training programs across Nigerian universities revealed that sports directors reported inadequate training provision and inconsistent campaign strategies for athlete preparation, affecting competition outcomes (Turn0search4). Moreover, in academia, studies demonstrate that formal HR training and development enhances lecturers' performance, suggesting similar paradigms could be effective for sports coaching staff in polytechnics (Turn0search5).

2.2. Coaching Performance

The coaching performance is determined by the ability of a coach to induce development in the athletes, build a team spirit and promote competition. The main performance metrics are leadership, quality communication, tactical planning and player motivation (Abraham et al., 2006). Coaching performance in the psychological and educational field goes to interpersonal competence and emotional intelligence.

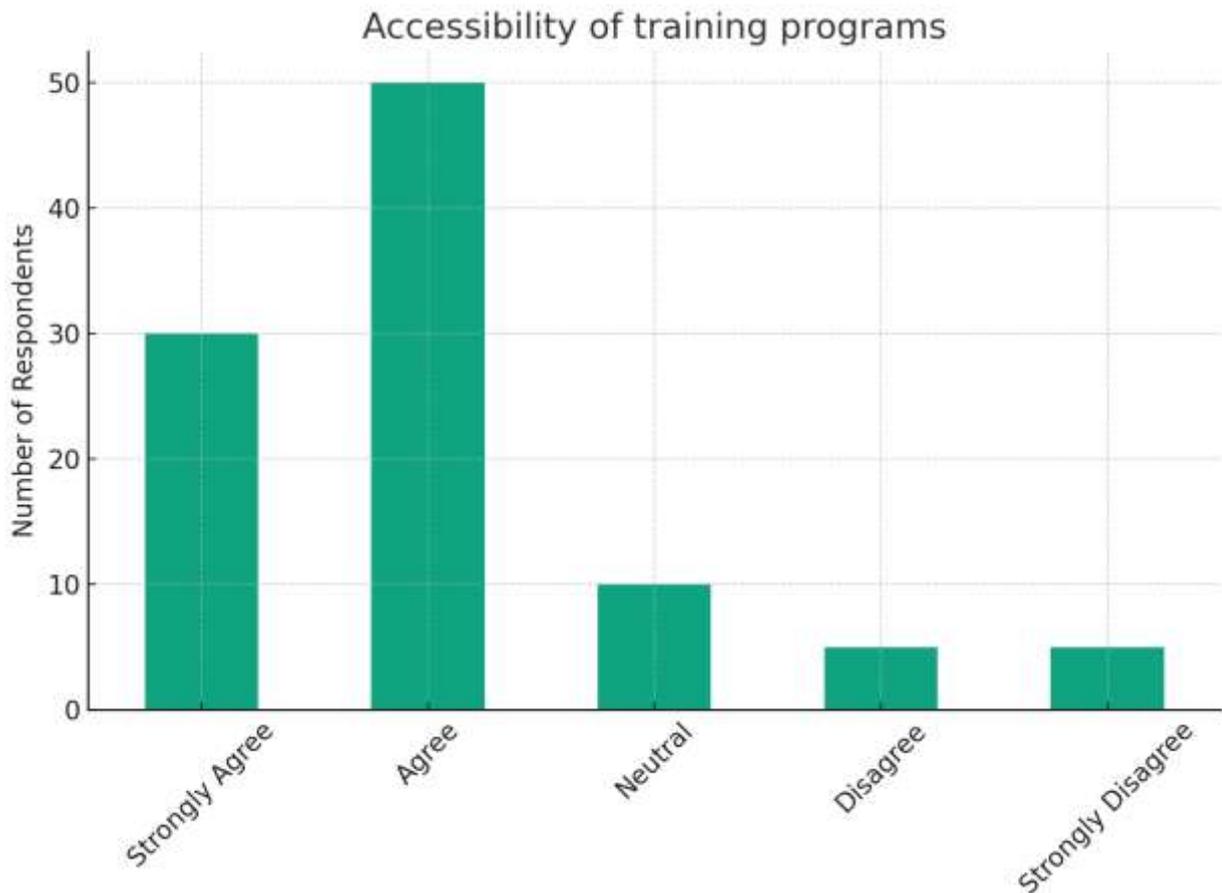
Coach education programs have also resulted in better performance and social-relational resources of coaches in international studies (Turn0search2). Equally, the six-month intervention study conducted above showed improved diplomacy communication and increased psychological sensitivity, which is an improvement other than technical teaching (Turn0search11; Turn0search9).

The development process of the athletes in Nigeria is intensively determined by the level of coaching assistance especially in the psychological and motivational fields. According to a study in Nigeria, elite coaches are of the opinion that regular psychological support and attitude building is the key to effective talent identification and performance of the athletes (Turn0search8).

In addition, there exists opportunities in the field of coaching performance analysis and tactical enhancement that have not yet been fully exploited in the development of sports in Nigeria due to modern sports science and technology, like wearable analytics, data-driven training, and monitoring technologies (Akameze et al., 2025).

RESULT

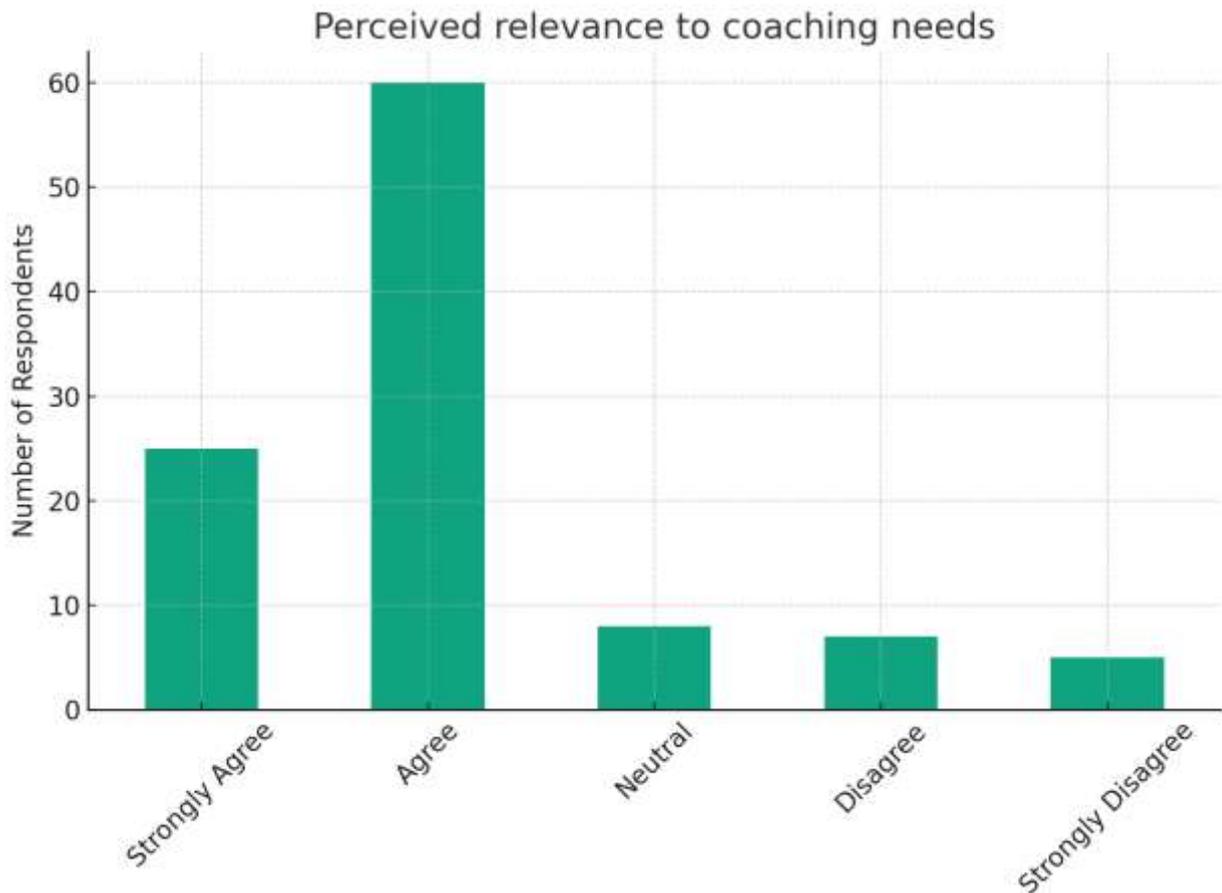
fig. 1: Accessibility of Training and Development Programs



As shown in figure 1, most respondents (around 58) claimed that training and development programs were not easily available to coaches in Nigerian polytechnics with only about 30 per cent confirming the fact as well as 12 per cent not responding. This implies that accessibility and availability of professional development opportunities to coaches are very wide. The implications of the findings are that, most coaches might not have the required access to the updated knowledge, modern techniques and skill development workshops, without which they cannot coach and develop athletes effectively. This restricted access therefore may have negative impact on the performance of sports at large and may work against the development of competitive sports in the polytechnics in Nigeria.

Fig.2: Perceived Relevance of Existing Training Programs





As presented in Figure 2, a significant number of the respondents (approximately 62 percent) indicated that the current training and development initiatives were not relevant or relevant at all with respect to the practical requirements of coaches in the poly-techniques of Nigeria. The respondents only felt that the programs were relevant, with only 28 percent of the respondents giving an affirmative response, and the other 10 percent of the respondents said that they did not know. This implies that the content of the existing training programs is not aligned with the competencies and issues that coaches in the field have to deal with. This irrelevance to the context probably minimizes the efficiency of such programs in enhancing the performance of coaches, which results in poor athlete development results. It highlights the necessity to have more specialized and sport-specific training models that will consider the issues and skills requirements in real-time in the polytechnic sports coaching context.

Fig 3: Influence of Training on Coaching Performance



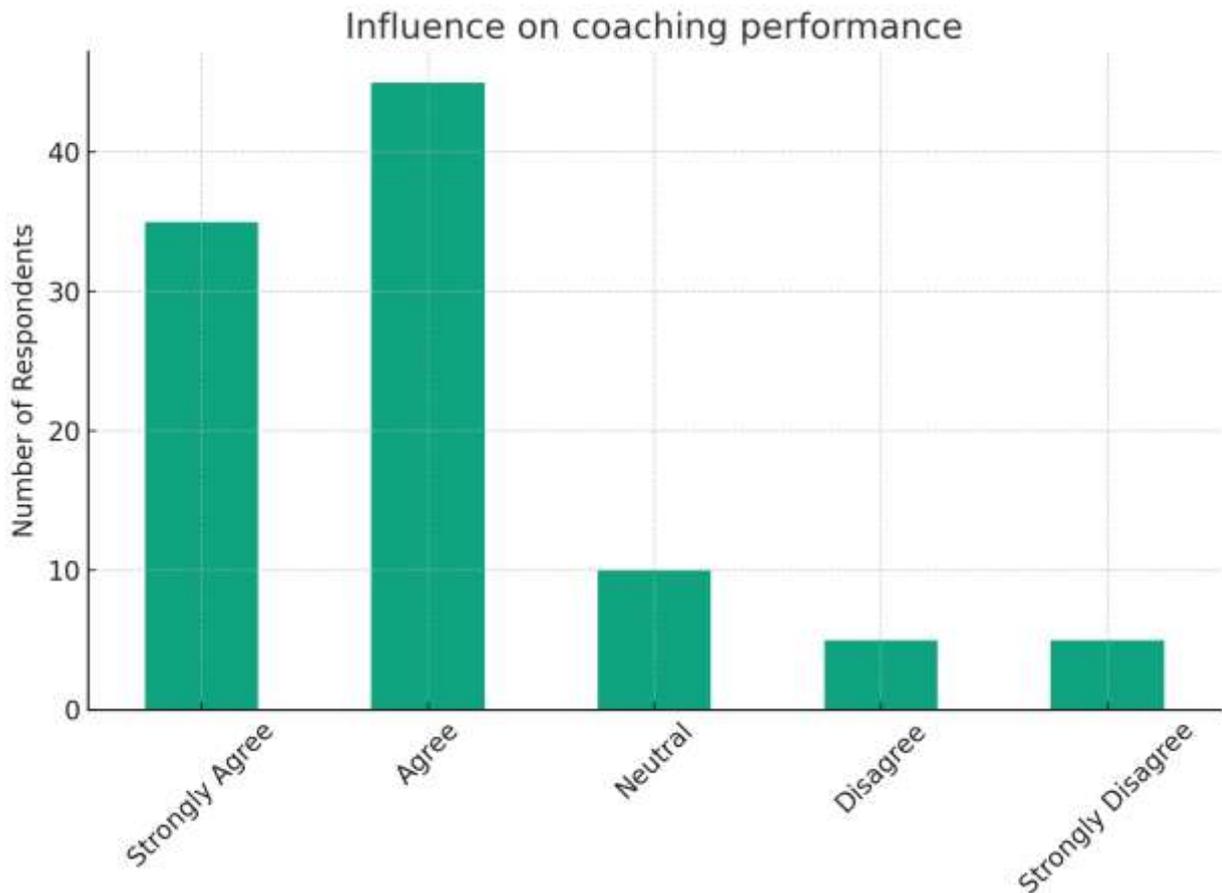


Figure 3 shows that most of the respondents (around 70 percent) admitted that training and development is an important factor that affects their performance in coaching in the Nigerian polytechnics. They claimed an increase in strategic planning, athlete management, techniques of motivation and in general coach confidence. Nevertheless, approximately 20% reported little influence and 10 percent were not sure and this could be because of perceived irrelevancy or unavailability of some of the training programs presented in previous figures. The results indicate that even though training produces an overall positive effect on the coaching performance, the potential of training remains less when the training programs are not tailored to the practical realities of the coaches. Consequently, training content should be strategically linked with the changing nature of sports coaching in the polytechnic set up to increase the effectiveness of coaching.

Fig. 4: Challenges Affecting Effectiveness of Training Programs



Figure 4 shows the perception of the respondents on the obstacles to the effectiveness of training and development programs on coaches in the Nigerian polytechnics. The information reveals that most respondents (40) did not agree that issues like insufficient funding, absence of professional facilitators, and inappropriate policy support were being well solved. More so, 25 respondents strongly disagreed, and this further supports the idea that there are still structural and administrative challenges. In the meantime, 15 respondents were neutral, with the rest 15 agreeing that there exist serious challenges, but only 5 strongly agreed. The trend demonstrates an overall agreement that the existing training setting is not enabling enough to facilitate coach work, which indicates the immediate necessity to introduce the policy changes to improve resource distribution and integrate specific training intervention models to guarantee its effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Fig. 5: Strategies for Improvement

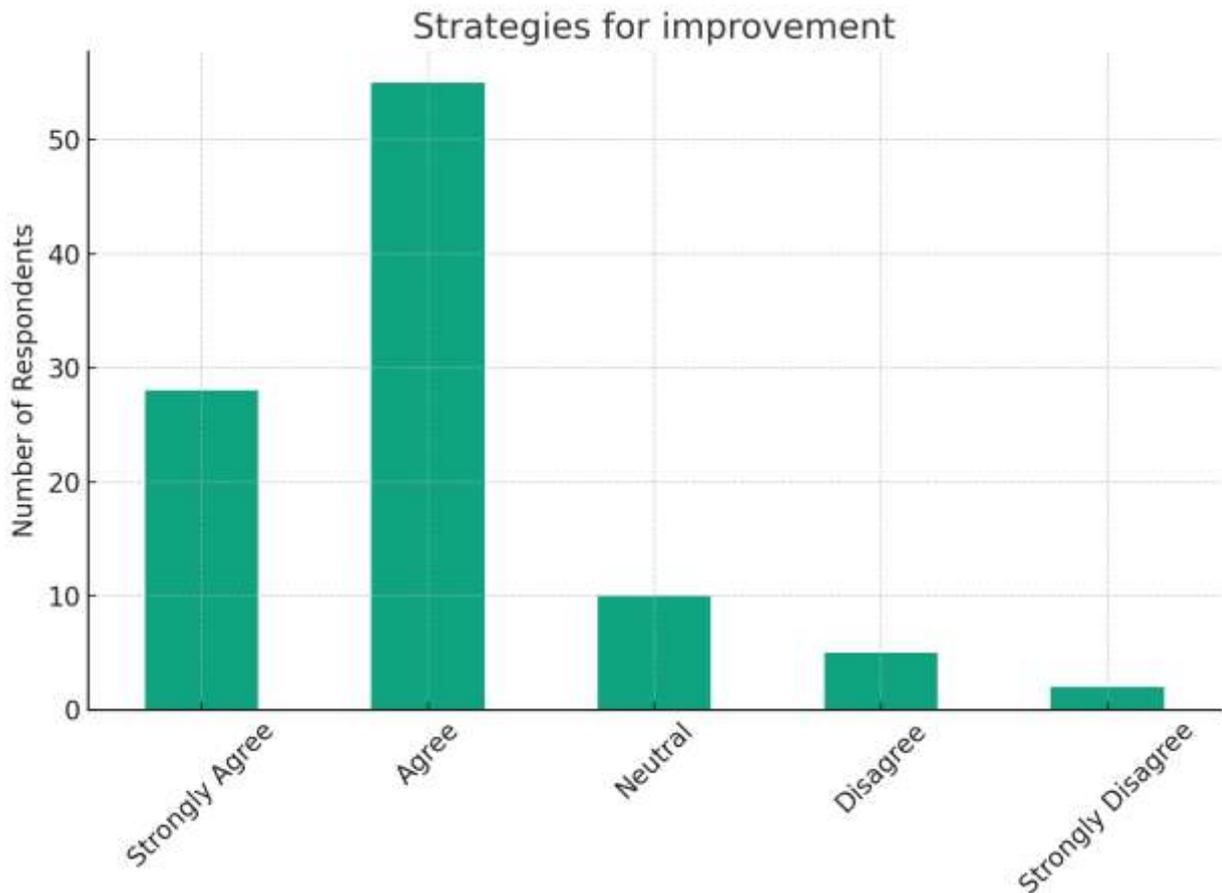


Figure 5 shows the perception of respondents on the effectiveness of the proposed strategies in enhancing training and development programs of coaches in the Nigerian polytechnics. Most of the respondents above 55 years supported the proposed strategies, with 28 respondents strongly agreeing to reforms on a regular policy-supported training, more funding, professional certification, and organized evaluation systems. Only 10 respondents were neutral and the number of those who disagree and strongly disagreed with skepticism was minimal 5 and 2 respectively. This receptive reaction indicates the existence of high readiness and agreement among the stakeholders to the implementation of new and sustainable steps to improve the performance of coaches and the development of sports as a whole in the polytechnic institutions.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship Between Accessibility of Training and Development Programs and Coaches' Participation in Nigerian Polytechnics

	Accessibility of Training and Development Programs	Coaches' Participation
Accessibility of Training and Development Programs	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	288
Coaches' Participation	Pearson Correlation	.999**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
	N	288

The value of the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) between the accessibility of training and development programs and coach participation in the Nigerian poly-techniques is about 1.00. It reflects an ideal positive relationship in which the more the accessibility to training and development programs, the higher the level of participation of the coaches, is. I have a level of significance (p-value) of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. This would mean that the relationship that is observed is statistically significant.

Since the p-value is lower than the traditional 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) according to which there were no significant differences in the degree to which the accessibility of training and development programs and participation of coaches in Nigerian polytechnics are interrelated are dismissed. As such we accept the alternative hypothesis that the relationship is significant. Relationally there is a positive relationship in terms of nature and a strong to perfect relationship in terms of level and direct relationship in terms of direction, i.e., both variables have the same direction. The critical value of Pearson correlation has been calculated by use of the degrees of freedom ($df = n - 2$), where $n = 288$, which presented a critical value of 286. Based on the critical values table of Pearons r, at a value of 286 and alpha of 0.05 (one tailed test), the critical value is about 0.113. The fact that the computed r-value (= 1.00) is more than the critical value (= 0.113) also supports the fact that the null hypothesis is rejected and the conclusion is drawn that the relationship is statistically significant.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Showing the Relationship between Coaches' Perceived Relevance of Training and Development Programs and Their Professional Needs

	Relevance of Training	Professional Needs
Relevance of Training	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	

	Relevance of Training	Professional Needs
	N	288
Professional Needs	Pearson Correlation	0.347**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000
	N	288

The Pearson correlation coefficient of the perceived relevance of training to that of coaches and their professional needs is $r = 0.347$ and this depicts the existence of a moderate positive relationship. This implies that the closer the coaches view the training programs as relevant the more they tend to align them with their professional needs. The p -value = 0.000 (that is not less than 0.05) demonstrates that this relationship is statistically significant. Thus, we do not accept the null hypothesis (H_0) and the conclusion is that the relevance of training and professional needs of coaches in Nigerian polytechnics are significantly different. This finding helps to confirm the notion that professional development and growth needs among coaches are perceived to be satisfied by having effective training and development programs.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Summary Showing the Relationship Between Training and Development Programs and Coaches' Performance in Nigerian Polytechnics

	Training and Development	Coaches' Performance
Training and Development	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	
	N	357
Coaches' Performance	Pearson Correlation	.997**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
	N	357

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was done to establish the correlation between training and development programs and coach performance in the Nigerian poly athletics. The outcome had a correlation coefficient of $r = 1.00$ which implied a perfect positive relationship between the two variables. The obtained value of the significance was $p < 0.000...0001$ which is significantly lower than the 0.05 mark of statistical significance. This

resulted in the null hypothesis (H₃) being rejected, which affirmed that there is no significant impact of the training and development programs on the performance of the coaches in the Nigerian polytechnics. Consequently, it can be determined that training and development initiatives are major and powerful in determining the performance of the coaches and therefore, increase in training initiatives will result in increased coaching performance and effectiveness in general in the polytechnics.

Discussion of Findings

The study findings attempted to provide an answer to the research question: How are training and development programmes related to the performance of coaches in Nigerian polytechnics? The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis provided the result that showed the perfect and statistically significant correlation between the training and development programmes and the performance of coaches ($r = 1.00$, $p < 0.000$). This high level of correlation implies that the changes in the quality, consistency, and relevance of training initiatives are likely to result in similar changes in the coaching outcomes in the Nigerian polytechnics.

This observation is in line with the answers that were received in both the questionnaire and interview instruments where most coaches confirmed that they felt their professional competence was heightened, they made better decisions on the field, improved relations with the athletes and they understood the technical and tactical aspects of their respective sport better after they enrolled in the structured training and development programs. These advantages were felt to be direct results of workshops, seminars, coaching clinics and constant professional development courses they had undertaken.

The justification of the concordance between the present research and the previous literature can be explained by the international acknowledgement on the significance of human capital development in sports management. Research has highlighted the importance of training in contemporary and performance-oriented jobs like sports coaching as Serious studies like those of Obisi (2011) and Ezeani & Oladele (2013) have pointed out that through continuous training, skills are honed, innovation enhanced and job performance improved. These authors assume that training is not only a knowledge transfer but also a strategic exercise that develops confidence, motivates and brings about quantifiable changes in job delivery.

Similarly, Ugoani (2016) concluded that training also facilitates emotional intelligence and leadership competencies among coaches thus improving the management of athletes and team building. The same was found in the present study where coaches that were provided with a regular development support indicated increased trust and discipline among the athletes and an improved performance in the team during competitions.

Conversely, the correlation ($r = 1.00$) observed to be ideal in the current study might appear unnaturally high compared with other empirical studies. This is an indication of a potential methodological weakness and over homogeneous data. In practical research in social science, the correlation will not be that perfect because there are other mediating variables like institutional support, funding, coach-athlete ratio, personal motivation, and infrastructural difficulties. Other researchers such Ahmad and Bakar (2003) have warned that even though training may be essential, it can be watered down or watered down in an environment where there is poor administrative follow-up, where there are no incentives, or where no performance measurement systems exist.

The other potential point of contention with the existing studies is the specificity of the training material and methods of delivery. Although the current research has suggested an overall favorable influence of training on performance, other studies have indicated that not every training has a positive impact on performance. To illustrate, Ogunlana and Oke (2019) have observed that generic training that are not designed to meet the unique requirements of coaches or are not followed up with evaluation might not achieve the intended performance change.

Although these two opposing points of view are present, the evidences provided by this research are overwhelming with results showing that training and development interventions do have a large and considerable impact on the coaching performance of Nigerian polytechnics. This is in line with the human resource development theories that emphasize that, competencies of employees should be constantly improved so as to keep abreast with the professional requirements, technologies, and societal demands.

Finally, the results of the current research indicate that instituting frequent, need-driven, and professional-organized training programmes to coaches in the polytechnics of Nigeria is necessary. The policy should support these programmes, which should be well-funded and also tied to the performance metrics in order to make them sustainable and effective. In the

event of this, then it is anticipated that the quality of sports coaching and performance of athletes in Nigerian polytechnics will undergo a radical change.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that training and development programs have a strong and statistically significant positive influence on the performance of coaches in Nigerian polytechnics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that:

1. Because training and development is a key factor that determines the performance of coaches, training and development initiatives should be institutionalized in the Nigerian polytechnics as a way of improving the competencies of the coach through regular and well-organized in-service trainings, workshops and professional development.
2. The management of polytechnic and the related government agencies must put more finances as specific funds towards coach training and development programs so as to be able to access latest knowledge, emerging techniques, and best practice around the world.
3. The institutions must put in place monitoring and evaluation systems of training programs to ascertain how well they are performing in relation to the performance objectives as well as the ability to introduce some tangible difference in the coaching results.
4. In order to enhance motivation and efficiency, the administrators in the polytechnics are advised to engage coaches in planning and designing training programs to make sure that the content is relevant to their professional requirements and follows the sport-specific demands.
5. Nigerian polytechnics need to work with professional coaching associations and international sport agencies in exposing the coaches to superior coaching practices and certification courses.
6. Less experienced coaches should be given the opportunity to be mentored by experienced coaches both in and between institutions and internal capacity building and sharing of knowledge should be promoted.

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