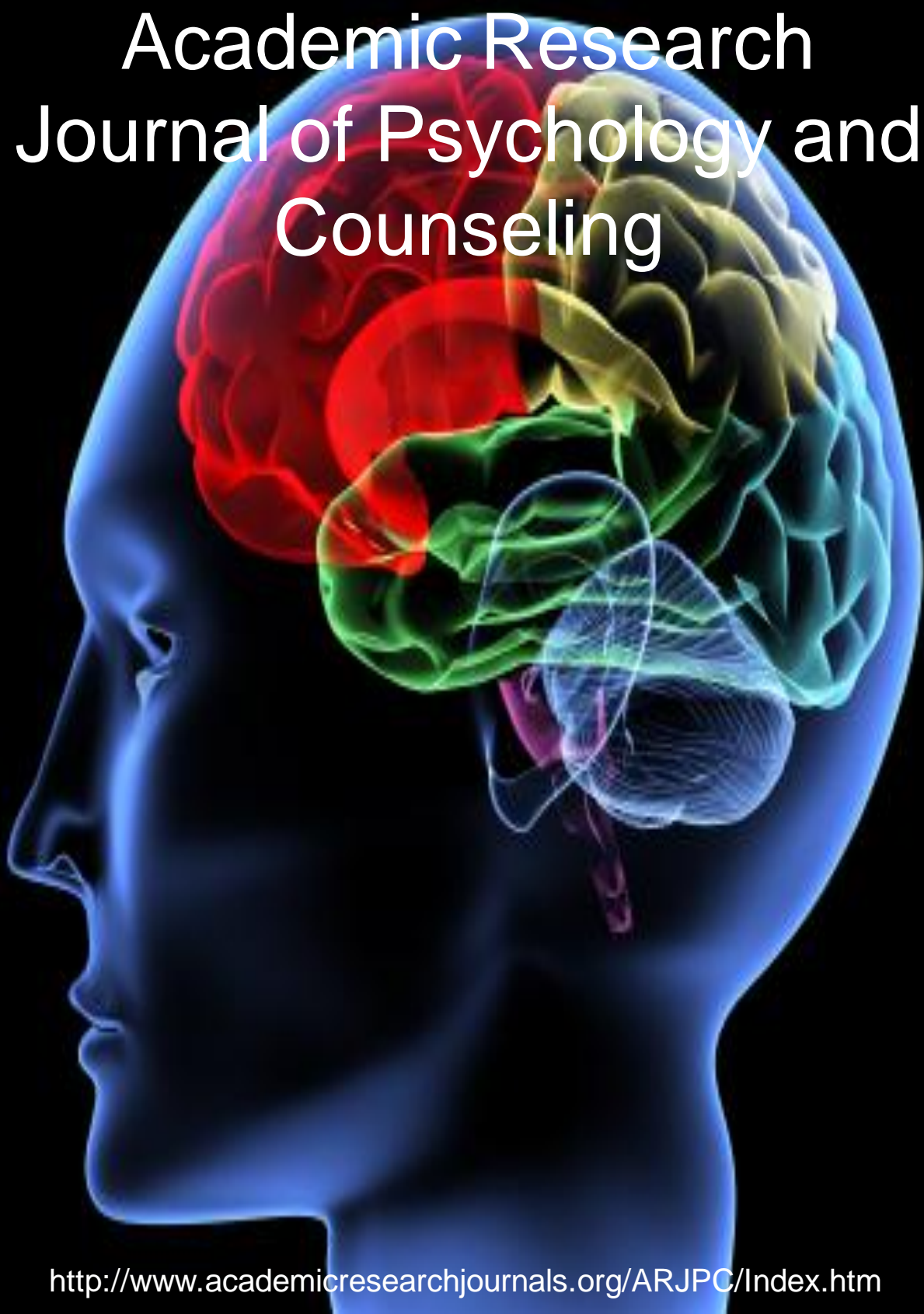


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# Academic Research Journal of Psychology and Counselling

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*Full Length Research*

# Andromache for psychologists: What can we learn from antiquity?

**Dr. Greta Sykes**

Institute of Education, London. Email: G.Sykes@ioe.ac.uk

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The place of women in society is a useful indicator of the extent of equality in that society suggests Wilkinson (2005). Concerns about stagnant (the West) or rising levels of inequality experienced by women globally requires that we look carefully at models of societies in the past and the historical development of male and female power and status differences. The negative impact of low status or lack of power on wellbeing has been sufficiently illustrated by Oliver James in 'Affluenza' (2007). Engels' (1972) essay on 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' brought about a revolution of thinking at the turn of the previous century regarding the place of women in society. Anthropologists, historians, archaeologists and psychologists have since then engaged in debates and research to explore the contribution antiquity made to our understanding of gender roles and a male dominated world by querying the assumption that human societies have always been controlled by men. Goddesses, Angels, witches – which identity do we choose to regain the power and status we deserve? In this essay I explore some of the key points that are made by researchers of inequality leading to the proposition that being in charge of inner – reproduction and sexuality - and outer - occupying territory in society –space is the only way that women shall regain power and control as equals to men. Finally interventions and strategies are suggested that can assist psychologists to use their awareness of an empowering epistemology to guide families towards better mental and emotional health.

**Key words:** feminism, matriarchy, patriarchy, antiquity, psycho-social factors, taken for granted knowledge, wellbeing and mental health.

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## INTRODUCTION

Revelations pertaining to the sexual exploitation of girls here in the UK have shocked the public. Local authorities had to come to terms with the fact that under their very eyes the grooming of girls was taking place over a period of years. Recent research suggests that the level of underreporting of crimes against women is at 70%. These facts bring to our attention how fragile the rights of girls and women are in spite of the achievements of

feminism and anti-discriminatory legislation. Exploring the present nature and extent of equality for women seems therefore to be imperative. Equal pay and equal employment opportunities are vital aspects of equality, however, they do not necessarily translate into equal power and control or, for that matter, a vision of future goals to be aimed for. When we face the reality of women today it does not seem too farfetched to suggest that only

a seismic paradigm shift and a reinvigorated epistemology can lead us out of the present impasse which has not changed noticeably during the last thirty years.

In a recent parliamentary debate politicians Jenny Willcott, Elizabeth Truss and Chi Onwurah expressed concern that the 'pinkification' of toys for girls was adding to gender inequality in careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Fine, New Scientist (N. S.) 31.3.14). The gendering of toys for profit is easy to spot when you go into a toyshop. Pink is for girls, other colours are for boys. Action toys, construction sets, vehicles and all manner of weapons are presented for boys to choose from, whereas toys signifying domesticity and beautification are in the girls department, polarising children's interests into stereotypes. While boys' toys prepare them for action, power and the occupation of space, girls' toys prepare them for domesticity. As psychologists we are aware of the powerful influence of early learning and should therefore be concerned about any return to inequality through the backdoor of consumerism and toyshops.

### Women around the world

Inequality for women is a less visible problem in developed countries where women form half of the workforce and therefore can be economically independent. Yet, low paid workers are mainly female (the latest statistics puts them at 22% lower on average than men). In the corridors of power inequality is unmistakable. In the UK House of Parliament there are only 148 women out of a total of 650 MPs.

During 2014 the German Parliament passed legislation specifying that 30% of staff in top boardroom positions must be women from 2016. The perceived need for such an initiative is a clear indication that just under a hundred years after women got the vote in Germany gender equality has not been achieved. In an analysis of why so many women have failed to maintain their top position the commentators come to the conclusion that women tend to be hired when major problems such as cuts in staffing have to be executed. Unsurprisingly such work entails much conflict, strain and blame. It was argued that men can hold on to their position because of the male network around them which women tend not to have (Die Zeit, 22.11.14). In other words power and the networks of control remain largely out of women's reach. This is also visible in our own profession where a low ratio of men to women during initial training nevertheless produces a higher ratio of men in positions of power.

Globally discrimination, inequality and violence towards women are ubiquitous. Women at American universities face the threat of rape on a daily basis. Female genital mutilation takes place even here in the UK. In India every

fifth woman becomes a victim of rape. In Nigeria the Islamic group Boko Haram abducted over two hundred and seventy young females. Most of them have not been seen since. Women captured by the IS Islamic state are sold for the equivalent of £27 into prostitution. Continuing practices of misogyny take place in Saudi-Arabia where women are not allowed to move about without the permission of a male member of the family. In February 2015 a conference entitled 'Women in Society' at Qassim university (Saudi-Arabia) included not a single female participant. Women are not allowed into Mosques together with men. In Jerusalem women are not allowed to pray at the Wailing Wall. Every day women who attempt to pray at the wall are harassed and arrested by police. In many Islamic countries women have to hide their hair and even their face.

### Women in the UK

The widespread use of women to sell consumer goods from chocolate to motorcars goes hand in hand with a stereo-typing of male and female roles, creating subliminal messages about what is expected, in terms of such personal things as body size (size ten), personality (airhead) and preference for macho men. Macleod comments (N. S. 14.2.15):

"Our preferences are personal and flexible, shaped by factors such as our environment, social status and economic prospects. It is time to question the stereo-types and rewrite the rulebook (p42)."

Role models act as indicators in a society for the type of prospect a young woman may aspire to as she grows up. While the TV screens present men in action roles both in politics and on the football pitches. They occupy large spaces, whereas women are usually portrayed in small spaces, such as the home or the garden. The notorious predominance of young men working in the city of London stock market briefly reached media attention after the market crash in 2008, when it received criticism regarding the testosterone driven risk behaviour that may have added to the collapse of the banking system. The struggle to include women bishops has nearly torn the Church of England apart. Nevertheless, the first woman bishop was appointed in December 2014. The Nobel prize given for excellence since 1901 has been awarded to men 94.5 % of the time. This means only 47 women received it. Even in countries that espouse the rights of women to equality the aim to fulfil that demand has yet to be achieved. Neff et al (2007):

"Despite gains made by the women's movement over the last few decades, inequality in the power and status accorded to males and females is still a prevalent part of our cultural and social landscape (p 682)."

### Are women different by nature?

Claims that women are different from men and therefore cannot achieve the same roles as men are refuted by girls' educational success. The 2014 GCSE results show that girls have pulled ahead of boys in every subject apart from maths. The poor achievements of gender equality in academic science were highlighted in the Psychologist (December 2014). A new report on women in the sciences indicates that the mathematically intense sciences showed that women were underrepresented in university course and post graduate programmes. In 2011 women received only 25% of GEEMP (geoscience, engineering, economics maths computer science) Batchelor degrees. The results of the report apparently suggest somewhat complex trends of certain movements towards egalitarian experiences. Valian, professor in psychology at Hunters College, CUNY comments:

"(The report) ignores the wealth of experimental data showing that both men and women underrate women and overrate men in professional settings... the subtle daily examples in real life where women's professional contributions are not recognised – including the failure to invite them as keynote speakers at conferences and data showing that female and male students are sensitive to cues indicating whether they will be welcome in a field (p905)."

In the year of 1915 when Albert Einstein developed the theory of relativity a woman called Amalia Noether developed one of the most pertinent theorems about the hidden rules of nature: Symmetries give rise to conservation laws. However, hardly anyone is familiar with her name, although her achievements when described are praised as highly as Einstein's. She worked at Goettingen University but received no financial remuneration for her efforts.

Epidemiological studies (Wilkinson, 2005) in the developed countries have revealed the type of factors that determine our lives, once material privation has declined. These include the nature of early childhood experience, the amount of anxiety and worry we suffer, the quality of our social relationships, the amount of control we have over our lives and our social status. Our health and wellbeing is determined by these psychosocial factors which impinge on the way we think, feel and act. Fine (2010) comments:

"...those gender gaps can close or even disappear depending on social context, place and historical period... we are still at the beginning of the journey of understanding how the brain enables the mind... The sheer complexity of the brain, together with our

assumptions about gender, lends themselves beautifully to over-interpretation and precipitous conclusions (p 900)."

Rather than speaking of nature we need to study the cultural, psychosocial context in which women live and how the social construction of their relative powerlessness has come to be the dominant paradigm in society, often expressed in their economic status and the lack of space they inhabit. Similar to institutional racism institutional sexism lives on subtly in the minds of people without them necessarily being aware of it. However, when language is used it is likely to contain the unconscious perceptions that determine the continuation of the paradigm of powerlessness.

### Economics and culture

Epidemiological studies make the causes of discrimination transparent by showing clear links between poverty and lack of rights.

"Although rich countries have continued to get richer, measures of wellbeing have ceased to rise. Since the seventies there has been no increase in average wellbeing despite rapid increases in wealth" (Wilkinson, 2005 p6).

The differences between the 70s and 2014 are poignantly visible in our high streets. There were no nail studios or hairdressers at every street corner. Shoe shops offered comfortable shoes and very few high heels. In a restless culture of competition women endure pain to have body parts puffed up, tugged, cut off, enlarged or minimised. Ever higher heels and shorter skirts are offered in shops. At the recent Cannes film festival women without high heels were not allowed to walk on the red carpet.

"Most of the evidence behind this interpretation has to do with the indication that more unequal societies have a more aggressively male culture... "More unequal societies are tougher, more competitive, dog-eats-dog societies" (Wilkinson 2005, p219).

Wilkinson argues that whether a society is more 'clannish' with strong family ties leading to honour killings, vendettas and the sacrifice of dishonoured women "or whether they are closer to the social breakdown found in the concrete jungle of modern urban societies it is easy to see why they are unlikely to lead to improvements in the status of women. When competition between men is intensified, women lose out" (Wilkinson, 2005, p219).

### Gender, sexuality and economics

One of the cornerstones of discrimination through the

ages since antiquity has always focused on women's reproductive and sexual capabilities. Graves (1955) describes how women ruled in ancient Greece. Men were unaware of their role in reproduction. The fertility of women was seen as akin to the fertility of nature generally, empowered by earth, sun, wind and water. Women's sexual behaviour was then their own property.

Price (Brunel University) found in a study that a correlation exists between female economic independence and acceptance of promiscuous behaviour:

"As the gender pay gap has decreased in the UK and other Western countries, women have become more financially independent; the relative costs of promiscuity versus pair bonding have gone down..." (Macleod, NS 14.2.15, p45).

Boak (2013) describes how women came under increasing scrutiny during WW1 for perceived sexually immoral activities involving French prisoners of war and prostitution to gain an income.

"The war had, however, challenged bourgeois standards of sexual behaviour, and the hyperinflation further eroded the belief in a woman's chastity before marriage which would provide for her economically and in which the paternity of any inheriting offspring had to be beyond doubt" (Boak, 2013, p219).

At no point in history has male sexuality ever been an issue for debate; however those same entitlements in relation to women run like a destructive current through history and societies from the time of ancient Greece to the attacks on women in many countries today. Currently five women are killed daily in Turkey by mainly male family members. Thus, male dominated society assumes ownership of a woman's sexuality, a fact that has been interpreted by Marxist researchers as being indicative of the economics of private property, leading in turn to the monetarisation of people, artefacts and values.

The correlation between economic independence and sexual and reproductive freedom for women stands in sharp contrast to the perception of woman as empty vessel for the production of offspring who are to inherit wealth and possessions. To achieve this focus a woman's sexuality needs to be annulled in favour of her role as mother of her husband's children. Her sexuality needs to be possessed by a man. The BBC film of Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* illustrates this situation very well. Henry chosers his women on the basis of his perceived need to have a son. If she cannot deliver one, he is found another woman. She does not count as a person, instead she is an empty vessel designed for procreation and his property to dispose of, if not required.

Throughout history speculations and definitions of women's role and place in society have maintained an ambivalence whereas the role of men as ruler, chief,

captain of industry or otherwise person in command with its associated aspects of power, territory and respect have acquired a position of 'taken for granted knowledge' (Kelly, 1993). Robertson in his article 'How power affects the brain' calls the resultant emotional fallout the 'winner effect' (The Psychologist, March 2013):

"Even small induced power levels increase hypocrisy, moral exceptionalism, ego-centricity and lack of empathy for others (p187)."

Not surprisingly we are witnessing such behaviour regularly in the media and politics, as well as at work. Rather than being innate factors the behaviour that arises out of such emotions is socially induced and maintained to the disadvantage of women and ultimately of men as well. A self-perpetuating vicious cycle of corrosive expectations is thus installed. The effect of the current stalemate in achieving the goal of equality can be seen in the global crisis of the environment, the neglect of nature and the catastrophe of families, mainly women and children, having to flee from war zones. The voice of women has been largely silenced. The result is an on-going crisis of morality in which 'taken for granted knowledge' guides our governments in day to day decisions, which deny the past as well as the future. In order to envisage the future we need to know the past. It is therefore not enough to ask for equal pay and equal work opportunities women.

Instead it is necessary to regain a vision of women's inherent strength. We need to build on an epistemology of power and control and become vigilant about stratagems that attempt to place women in a 'quiet corner' in society. We need to learn to occupy large spaces, literally and metaphorically outside the domestic sphere. We need to learn from history and the examples of powerful women it offers. There is no better place to begin this task than by studying the ancient Greek myths. The most famous is the Orestia which offers insight into how a matriarchic/matristic society changed into a patriarchic/patristic one. So examples from Aeschylus and Homer will need to suffice here.

### **Matriarchy, myth and classical antiquity**

Myths are early human narratives told and retold by later generations changing them in their course and interpreting them to fit their perspective on society. Warburg (2011) declared in his study of Indian mask dances:

"The fairy story-like thinking of these dancers is a step on the way towards our natural science knowledge... It is, if you will, a Darwinism through a mythical relationship (p 35)."



Thus, myths from antiquity can be viewed as early forms of philosophy and sociology that can guide human behaviour. The concept of a matriarchy has been understood by Marxists as synonymous with an egalitarian type society, not a society ruled by women. For the sake of the deliberations in this essay this meaning has been adopted.

“True myth may be defined as the reduction to narrative shorthand of ritual mime performed on public festivals” (Graves, 1955, p12).

From Robert Graves exploration of the Greek myths Jung developed his theory of the archetypes and the collective unconscious. He declares what was myth in Greece began as ritual in Egypt, thus residing his psychology within the Vygotskian social construction of reality. The initiative to an entirely new epistemology of gender relations came from Bachofen in Switzerland in 1861 and Lewis H. Morgan (1877), the founder of American anthropology. Since then the debate over the existence or nonexistence of early matrilineal societies has raged and enraged successive generations of anthropologists, ethnographers, historians and psychologists. Bachofen contributed a ‘unique creation of a mythology in our time’ (Wieacker in: Wagner-Hasel, 1992). Johann Jakob Bachofen’s ‘Das Mutterrecht’ showed that in the codes of Roman law vestigial features can be recognised of a matrilineal order of inheritance” states Campbell in his Foreword to Marija Gimbutas’ ‘The Language of the Goddess, 1989).

Morgan, basing his explorations on Bachofen’s extensive work defined the model of family he found as based on consanguinity in which each child has several fathers and mothers. Such early societies had no knowledge of how procreation took place and lived in polygamous and polyandrous groups. Robert Graves described how women were revered for their power to procreate. Ownership of children for the sake of inheritance was unknown for thousands of years. Out of the wealth of studies that exist in the field Aeschylus’ Oresteia stands out as offering a short guide into the spirit of the Greek mind at the cusp of change from matriarchy to patriarchy. For him civilisation is the ultimate product of conflict between opposing forces, such as the Olympian forces over the chthonic, the Greek over the Barbarian and the male over the female. Zeitlin comments:

“But the male-female conflict subsumes the other two, for while it maintains its own emotive function in the dramatization of human concerns, it provides too the central metaphor which ‘sexualises’ the other issues and attracts them into its magnetic field” (Zeitlin in Wagner-Hasel, 1989, p225). Engels (1972) declared the struggle

between matriarchy and patriarchy as the first class struggle in human history.

The Oresteia traces the evolution of early Greek civilisation by placing the polis at the centre and endowing it with the power to coordinate human, natural and divine forces. The events follow a straightforward story: Woman rises up against male authority. By slaying her husband and choosing her own sexual partner she shatters the social norms of the patriarchic/patristic culture. Her son slays her in allegiance with father/husband. In turn he is pursued by the Erinyes. After the matricide Orestes’ ritual rebirth takes place at the ‘omphalos’ (womb) in Delphi. At an earlier stage Omphale was queen of Lidia in Asia Minor. She was dressed in lion skin and carried an olive-wood club, as can be seen on a Roman mosaic in Spain from the third century. Over the course of time, the ‘omphalos’ was appropriated by the rising patriarchy, when Apollo received it as a birthday gift. Thus, Orestes is reborn from the male.

“Cross-cultural ethnographical data confirms that one of the most consistent themes of puberty rites is, in fact, the notion that the first birth from the female is superseded by a second birth, this time from the male” (Zeitlin, 1989, p243).

As Aeschylus plays proceed Clytemnestra, the female principle in the first play, rebels against the masculine regime by asserting her sexuality. By the time when the last play is enacted her representatives, the Erinyes become mere archaic, primitive creatures, whereas the male principle is portrayed in the young god Apollo, champion of society, conjugality and progress. The shift from matrilineal to patrilineal society has been concluded.

In the story of Andromache the famous departing scene between her and Hector Homer includes Andromache speaking seven verses with advice on military tactics (Iliad, fourth song 433-439):

“Stand your people near the fig tree where it is easy to move up and down to the town and the wall that can be climbed...(Pomeroy, 1975). Later researchers often omit these seven verses on the grounds that a woman could not have given military advice. Andromache (whose name means ‘the one who fights men’) was, nevertheless, in a very good position to give such advice due to the reign of women at the beginning of the Trojan War. Only by keeping those same verses in the text can Hector’s reply of refusing her advice and telling her off be understood.

An example from a society that continues to live along matrilineal gender relationships are the Minangkabau in Sumatra. Minangkabau women cook and wash up, the

surprised visitor found out. However, they are the ones who own the land and the rice fields. Their daughters inherit the wealth from their mothers. When a wedding takes place the bridegroom moves into the family home of the bride and from then on belongs to her family. The men only have caretaker roles. They hold meetings, but the decisions have been previously agreed by the women.

The above offers a brief glimpse of the powerful roles women can hold or have inhabited in antiquity, when they were revered and participated at all levels of society. They are indicative of the postulation that human society and perceptions of gender and sexuality have evolved, similar to nature, through stages and that myths play an important part in informing about our anthropological past. The assumption that Abraham and the patriarchic form of social organisation has reigned since the beginning of human existence needs to be discarded. The ancient myths suggest an affirmation of women as full and equal persons and built into a revitalised epistemology to inform a more assertive and powerful paradigm within which to view the place of women.

### What psychologists can learn from antiquity

The current situation concerning gender equality has been stagnating for years and in some parts of the world is arguably deteriorating. Despite gains made by the women's movement over the last few decades, inequality and low status still dominate the lives of most women.

One is tempted to argue that psychology ought to be in the forefront of exposing the 'frontiers' in our minds, yet it is not. To quote an example the divisional journal of Educational and Child Psychology last included a paper on gender inequality in 1993. Liz Kelly's article 'What are little girls and little boys made of, the gendering of childhood' (vol 10(3) p12-21) studied young children and their experience with toys. Kelly declares that there has been a long tradition in psychology to take male behaviour as the norm, as a kind of 'taken for granted knowledge' which includes 'gendered responses to children.

Girls toys are "small, familial and can be played with quietly in a confined space" (Kelly, 1993, p13).

"When these resources are structured through dichotomous gender stereo-typing it makes play between boys and girls problematic...the outcome of these social processes are gendered psychologies, aptitudes and perceptions..." (Kelly, 1993, p13).

The implication of Kelly's findings indicate that as

psychologists we urgently need awareness training of the gendered psychology in our workplaces, our offices, the classroom we enter, the work and play that is offered to children and the attitudes and perceptions of teaching and support staff. The 'taken for granted knowledge' is the invisible frontier in our heads and in our language that continues to make inequality in our society into an accepted and acceptable paradigm. Shifting it will require a constant questioning of 'taken for granted knowledge' and substituting it with language and actions that free women from all forms of subjugation, be it verbal, emotional, intellectual or spatial. We have to actively seek to participate in command and decision making domains in society. We will have to work to come out the 'quiet corner' ourselves and support girls and female teaching staff in our schools to do the same. Our work should include raising awareness of the need for women to own their bodies, both in terms of reproduction as well as sexuality. Our own perception of ourselves as being powerful, being in control of our inner and outer space, being visible and being heard can then to be translated into actions, behaviours and a language that can give hope and confidence to our clients, be they families and children, work colleagues or organisations. The vision of the strong and confident behaviour of Andromache could lead us on the way.

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## Full Length Research

# Relationship between Perceived Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being among Student Athletes

<sup>1</sup>Chimezie Benedict Nwankwo, <sup>2</sup>Benard Chibuike Okechi and <sup>3</sup>Prince O. Nweke

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. Email: [nwankwoemeize@gmail.com](mailto:nwankwoemeize@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. Email: [chibuokenikem@gmail.com](mailto:chibuokenikem@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Email: [nweke.prince@live.com](mailto:nweke.prince@live.com)

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The relationship between perceived self-esteem and psychological well-being was explored among a sample 350 student athletes from Ebonyi State University; Abakaliki, South East, Nigeria. They were randomly selected for participation aged 18-30 years with mean age of 24 years. Using the person correlation and the t-test of significance, results showed that perceived self-esteem and psychological well-being were related and student athletes with high self-esteem have high psychological well being while their counterparts with low self-esteem have low psychological well being. The implications of these findings for sports performance and longevity were discussed.

**Keywords:** Athletes, Youth, Perceived self-esteem, Psychological well being, Student athletes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Generally, youth athletes should participate in sports for social development, physical development, and moral development and for overall psychological well being. Stake holders in youth ports should consider sustenance and continued involvement of youths in sports while planning their programmes. Building the self-esteem of youth athletes to reflect positively on their psychological well being should be of paramount importance to stake holders so as to align with the current vision of sports as having departed from being a mere exercise to being a lucrative venture. The global role of sports towards development of youths seem to align with major concern of applied-sports psychology on how to sustain interests of athletes, improve their performance, build their self-esteem and improve their psychological well being (Cox,

2002; Murray, 1997).

Ensuring high level of psychological wellbeing among youth athletes should be a joint effort of all stakeholders to ensure corresponding impact on global health and well being (Ryff, 1995). Sports as a major aspect of work and physical activity involve brain activation, physical health and combination of other factors to improve the psychological well being of athletes (Decix, 2008).

Several researchers have conceptualized psychological well being variously as: major aspect of health, education, sports and industries, Briner (2012); combination of positive affective states to impact positively on individuals social life, positive functioning and optimal effectiveness for improved health, well being and behaviour (Decix, 2008); and the combination of

feeling good and functioning effectively (Huppert, 2007). "A life and well", "feeling good" have been popular slogans by athletes and other stake holders in the sports and exercise sector. This could mean that psychological wellbeing by implication of its definition is not devoid of being capable to function, feeling happy, being satisfied and being able to attract social support from others.

Consequently, psychological well-being seems to be related to better physical health and normal cognitive functioning. Hence, athletes with high and positive psychological wellbeing tend to be active, agile, strong and emotionally stable to ensure proper display of skills during performance. Research also reveals psychological wellbeing as a dynamic concept, multifaceted concept and health related behaviour with social subjective and psychological dimensions (Ryff, 1995). However athlete's psychological wellbeing could help them to realize their potentials, cope with sports stress, and work productively and fruitfully so as to make meaningful contributions to their profession.

Also psychological well-being refers to individual's self-evasion of their ability to fulfill life aspirations such as support relationships, sports, music and work (Ryan, 2008; Ryff, 1989). The relationship between sport participation and psychological wellbeing seem to show that sedentary living is a major cause of poor quality of life, disability and death in many countries.

Hence, research show that important physiological and psychological changes occur during training and exercise (Biddle, Fox and Beutcher, 2000). Within sport psychology research over the past decade, there seem to have been steady increase in studies conducted with samples of competitive athletes in which well-being explicitly has been assessed as one variable. These studies have examined well-being from a variety of views and foci, including self-determination and need satisfaction, achievement goals, team cohesiveness and romantic relationship (Blanchard, Amiot, Perreault, Vallerand, and Provencher, 2009; Jowett & Cramer, 2009; Miller & Hottman, 2009; Podlog, Lochbaum and Stevens, 2010; Reinboth & Duda, 2006; Ridnour & Hammarmeister, 2008; Ryan & Bargman, 2003; Smith, Ntoumanis & Duda 2007, 2010; Smith, Ntoumanis, Duda & Vansteenkiste, 2011; Solberg & Halvari, 2009; Stephen, Bilard, Ninot & Delignieres 2003; Vansteenkiste, Nouratidis, & Lens, 2010).

The increased interest in including the construct of well-being in studies has likely been stimulated by the understanding that a high level of psychological functioning, adaptive short-term responses of emotions and long term affects among athletes are crucial to perform optimally in high pressure environment over time (Jones, Meiyen, McCarthy, and Sheffield, 2009; Lundquist & Kentta, 2010). Moreover, well-being likely helps athletes deal with the diverse challenges they face during their sporting career.

Indeed, a great majority of sport psychology interventions implemented and evaluated within sports psychology, focus on obstacles athletes face, but are actually designed to directly or indirectly increase competence of the athlete's well-being (Williams, 2009). Studies have also revealed that elite athletes with long, successful sports careers are characterized by a range of attributes related to well-being including, a hopeful and positive view developed skills to cope with both major and minor life challenges, and high levels of mental and emotional health (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; Gould, Diffenbach & Moffett, 2002; Morgan, 1985). These findings provide support for the importance of self-esteem and various aspects of well-being for athletes in the context of competition as well as outside the milieu of sports.

Many athletes and performers often wrongly determine their self-worth by how successful they feel about their sport. When an athlete performs well or feels successful he or she can feel good about him or herself. However the opposite is also true, despair and how self-esteem results when this person does not perform well or view him or herself as a failure. When he or she performs well there is usually increase in self-esteem and this results to a better performance in subsequent performances. Athletes are especially vulnerable to this problem of attaching self-esteem to one's performance because you are judged by how well you perform. This is likely because, society sends subtle signals that you must achieve in your sport to feel worthy as a person and that is the trap that many athletes fall into; because they are externally controlled and probably have low psychological well-being.

In addition, if you are perfectionist, it does not help your self-esteem because you have such high expectations and are always so critical and hard on yourself. If you fall into this trap, your emotions, and how you feel about yourself, are heavily influenced by the perceptions of your performance, which can naturally vary from day to day. Thus one day you have self-esteem and the next day it erodes you due to what you think is a poor performance or practice, athletes with poor well-being are trapped in such problems. Even if he or she had a flawless performance, if he or she did not get a good reaction or the reaction he or she expected, he or she would feel like a failure. Specific to student athletes, Crawford (2007), noted that like their non athletes peers, the level of students athletes purposeful involvement in campus life and associations with faculty and peers enhanced their academic experiences. According to Crawford, student-athletes acknowledge that positive association with faculty and peers were instrumental in enhancing both their academic and athletic experiences.

Athletes with good self-esteem are more prone to getting over failure and engaging in new activities to help them forget, those who have low self-esteem find it

difficult to shake off feelings of disappointment and bitterness related to failure. Athletes with low self-esteem and poor well being find it difficult to recover from the distress of failure in any performance. Even criticisms are addressed in different ways: people with low self-esteem are more sensitive to the intensity of discomfort caused by criticism, as well as how long it lasts. How success is dealt with is also different; quite often, athletes with low self-esteem fall into anxious happiness, which results in a difficulty to enjoy the good times and cheer up for positive reasons, because they have poor value for self, as well as the happiness felt at that moment, these people also perceived its precariousness and prepare awaiting disappointment. Therefore we can see that these people do not only feel uncomfortable when facing failure in performance but also when facing success and social consequences of it.

In addition to the feeling of anxious happiness, they may also experience cognitive dissonance (an internal contradiction to do with the negative feelings they are experiencing and the reality that surrounds them) and anxiety because they can foresee other situations in which they will be forced to guarantee success thus, keeping up with the expectation that others may have of them (Smith, Ntoumanis, Duda and Vansteenkiste, 2011). In other words, student's athletes with low self-esteem, even if they love success and the gratifications that come with it, also fear it because it contradicts their self-image and exposes them to situations in which they have to test themselves over and over again. A higher opinion of yourself is related to looking for ways to develop your personality and take risks whilst low self-esteem generates defense strategies and attempts to avoid any uncertainty. This is why student athletes with good well-being and high self-esteem want to succeed and those with low self-esteem are focused on their fear of failure.

The consequences are that high self-esteem improves well-being and makes an athlete want to explore new and different levels with greater conviction and making some mistakes along the way, whilst low self-esteem and poor well being male athletes limit themselves to levels where they feel safe and run hardly any risks of making mistakes. Self esteem is the regard you hold for yourself. All individual have a self-concept if you like yourself concept (who you think you are), then you have self-esteem, your self-esteem if healthy, leads you to develop self confidence. Self-confidence is the belief in your ability to perform a given task yet one can have self-confidence and in his or her ability and self-esteem to have well-being. Self-esteem can be defined in numerous ways, most commonly self-esteem is seen as one of the basis of two psychological processes; evaluation and effect (Mruk, 2006).

Evaluation accentuates the role of cognition, while affect emphasizes the role of feelings as they pertain to

self-esteem. As much, Mruk (2006) identified four basic ways that self-esteem is defined.

1. As a certain attitude
2. Based on discrepancy
3. As a psychological response a person holds toward himself or herself and
4. As a function of personality.

In the attitudinal definition, it involves positive or negative cognitive, behavioural, and emotional reactions. When people base their self-esteem on discrepancy, they are measuring the difference between what people see as their ideal self and their perceived self. The closer these two percepts are, the higher their self-esteem is thought to be. The psychological response a person holds towards him or herself is described as feeling based rather than attitudinal alone.

However, in the function of personality definition, self-esteem is viewed as part of a system that is concerned with motivation or self-regulation, or both. While there are numerous different definitions for self-esteem, even outside this spectrum, the listed definition covers the broadest range of definition. Self-esteem and well-being are much related factors in the development and performance of student athletes, low self-esteem results to poor well-being and consequently poor sports performance.

One solution to the problems of low self-esteem and poor well-being and self-concept is positive and frequent family involvement. Ochoa, Lopez, and Emler (2007), found a link between open communication between parents and adolescents positive family self-concept, which in turn related to positive academic self-concept and good self-esteem. Positive family communication is key in helping adolescents maintain a positive high self-esteem. Self-esteem is important when studying mental well-being because:

- It has close association with emotional stability and adjustment,
- Low self-esteem features in many forms of mental illness and
- Low self-esteem is associated with poor health behaviours. It is therefore regarded as both an indicator of well being and as a marker for recovery.

Young adults with low psychological well-being may encounter lower levels of happiness, satisfaction, and self-esteem, while experiencing high level of distress (Amato, 1994). Similarly, adolescents who possess low psychological well-being or psychological distress may also exhibit characteristics of low levels of happiness and self-efficacy, along with high levels of depression (Flour & Buchanan, 2003). Furthermore, they may view social

problems as being more serious than other students (athletes) (Wilkinson, 2004). Athletes with low psychological well-being tend to form less than desirable self-evaluations which significantly affect their happiness and satisfaction.

Psychological well-being has to do with how individuals self-evaluate and their ability to fulfill certain aspects of their lives, such as relationship, support, and work as well as sports and physical activities. (Amato, 1994, Flouri and Buchanan, 2003); Knoester, 2003; Roberts and Bengtson, 1993; Wilkinson, 2004). Individuals with low self-esteem struggle to make decisions and often put them off: when faced with more than one choice, people with low self-esteem block up and let others decide for them. This does not happen because these people are in-willed or because they are not able to make the decision themselves, but rather because they simply do not feel confident about their worth and capabilities therefore they avoid making choices, thus their behaviour is affected by an excessive fear of failure. In this sense, the risk they run is letting themselves be over influenced by their environment (parents, friends and companions) concerning both mundane, everyday choices and extreme, important choices regarding their lives such as what to study, what career to follow, how to live and so on.

Despite its conceptual elusiveness, well-being has been defined as encompassing people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives. Some other terms have been used interchangeably with well being, such as life satisfaction and quality of life. Previous existing research in adolescents has identified a number of significant factors associated with well-being. These include demographics (e.g) Jirojanakul et al 2003, personality such as emotional stability, general confidence, and self-esteem and life events. It may be important to emphasize that personality construct like high self-esteem have been shown to act as protective factor against psychopathology in young people McGee and Williams (2000) in a longitudinal study focusing on adolescents found that low self-esteem significantly predicted problem eating patterns, suicidal ideation and substance use. Previous researches on the association between well-being and personality in adolescents has also shown that there is a high association between self-esteem and well-being Wilkinson (2004). In a study of 222 high school students in the USA, Dew and Huchner found that well-being forms significant positive associations with self-esteem measures ( $r=0.15-0.62$ ,  $P<0.05$ ).

Regarding the association between well-being and self-esteem in student athletes, on which the present study is focusing on, the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2005), has offered a theoretical explanation. In particular Fredrickson (2005) proposed that positive emotion broaden people's momentary

thought-action repertoires and these in turn serve to build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical to intellectual resources to social and psychological resources". Self-esteem may influence human behaviour in uncertain situations, life events, social relationships, goal shaping and motivation; self-esteem could be regulating well-being levels. Therefore, attempts have been made in this study to bridge this gap in knowledge through meaningful contribution to knowledge.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

This study bothers on the following statement of problems:

- Will perceived self-esteem significantly correlate with psychological well-being of student athletes?
- Will high self-esteem significantly correlate with psychological well-being of student athletes?
- Will low self-esteem significantly correlate with psychological well-being of student athletes?

## HYPOTHESES

To this effect, the following hypotheses will be tested:

- Perceived self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being of student athletes.
- High self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being among student athletes.
- Low self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being among student athletes.

## METHOD

### Participants

Three hundred and fifty (350) participants drawn from 100 level to 400 levels student athletes in the department of psychology, faculty of social sciences and Humanities, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, south East of Nigeria took part in the study. 100 student athletes also participated from 100 levels, 100 students athletes also participated from 200 level, and 50 students athletes participated from 300 level while 50 students athletes participated from 400 level (final years students). The participants were randomly selected across board in the

faculty auditorium before training during the just concluded 2014 faculty of social sciences and Humanities week. Three hundred (300) were males, while fifty (50) were females. 76.4% of the participants were single, 23.6% were married. All the participants were undergraduates who reported having GCE/WASC as their highest qualification and they are all literate. Their age ranged from 18-30 years, with a mean age of 24 years. All the respondents volunteered to participate in the study as they have been representing their levels (classes) and psychology department during inter-class, in-departmental and inter-faculty sports competitions.

### Instruments

A questionnaire was used for data collection. It consisted of two (2) parts. Part A comprised questions eliciting demographic information such as gender, marital status, age, experience, educational qualification, department and level. The second part B contained measures of variables of interest: perceived self-esteem and psychological well being. Self-esteem scale (SES). Rosenberg self-esteem scales (Rosenberg, 1965). Rosenberg self-esteem scale is a 10-item scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) to measure the degree to which people believe in their personal qualities and evaluate themselves to reflect agreement or disagreement. It is a four point likert format scale ranging from strongly agrees (1) to strongly disagree (5). The items are scored both directly and reversely according to the positivity and negativity of the items to reflect high and low self-esteem. Some of the items of the scale include: "I feel I am a person of worth", "on the whole I am satisfied with myself", "At times, I think I am no good at all", "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure". The first two items are directly scored while the last two items are reversely scored.

The scale has a reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) of .80 and a test-retest reliability of .74. for the purpose of this study, a Cronbach's alphas of .85 was obtained. Psychological well-being scale (PWBS) the psychological well-being scale was developed by Ryff and Dupuy (1995) to measure some aspects of psychological well being. PWBS is a 42 item scale on a 6 point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1). It was designed to measure the following aspects of psychological well being: Autonomy, personal growth, Environmental mastery, self-acceptance, purpose in life and positive relation. The authors reported reliability alpha of the scale to range from 0.71-0.74 and the internal consistency for the psychological well being scale to be 0.87. For the purpose of this study, a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .89 was obtained.

### Procedure

The participants of the study were student athletes drawn from all the levels of students (100-400) of psychology department, Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki, South East of Nigeria. After seeking the consent of the faculty director of sports in the faculty of social sciences and Humanities Auditorium during faculty week briefing, He gave his consent for the researchers to explain to the student athletes the rationale of the study. The aim and rationale of the research were explained to them, three hundred and eighty (380) copies of the questionnaires were distributed using random sampling techniques with the help of research assistants and they filled out the questionnaires. The student athletes were motivated to fill the copies of the questionnaire within a space of thirty (30) minutes before going out for their training. Three hundred and seventy (370) copies of the questionnaires were returned, twenty (20) copies were discarded due to wrong filling while the remaining three hundred and fifty (350) copies were used for statistical analysis.

### Design/Statistics:

A cross sectional survey research design was adopted for the study, while the Pearson product moment correlation and the t-test of significance was employed as tool of analysis in this study.

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis 1:** Self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being of student athletes.

Table 1 shows that since the calculated t-observed value of 0.745 for self-esteem and psychological well-being measure of student athletes is greater than the t-critical of 0.190, the first hypothesis which states that self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being was confirmed and stands accepted.

**Hypothesis II:** High self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being among student athletes.

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 6.537 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.87 at 0.5 at probability level of significance. This indicates that there exists a significant difference between High self-esteem student athletes and low self-esteem student athletes on their psychological well being. Hence, student athletes with high self-esteem have significant relationships with



**Table 1:** Test of relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being of student athlete

Variable	N	DF	r-observed	r-critical	remark
Self-esteem	350	698	0.745	0.190	Significant
Psychological well being	350				

**Table 2:** Test of relationship between high self-esteem and psychological well-being among student athletes

Source of variation	N	X	SD	DF	t-Calculated	t-Critical	Sig
High self-esteem	232	125.88	11.73	348	6.537	1.87	S
Low self-esteem	118	117.81	9.74				

**Table 3:** Test of relationship between low self-esteem and psychological well being of student athletes

Source of variation	N	X	SD	DF	t-Calculated	t-Critical	Sig
Low self-esteem	118	117.81	9.74	348	1.189	5.345	Ns
High self-esteem	232	125.88	11.73				

psychological well-being because they are more inclined to better psychological well-being than their counterparts with low self-esteem. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that high self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being of youth athletes was confirmed and stands accepted.

**Hypothesis III:** low self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being of student athletes.

Table 3 reveal that the calculated t-value of 1.189 is less than the t-critical value of 5.345 at 0.5 probability level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant relationship between low self-esteem and psychological well-being of student athletes. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that low self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well being was disconfirmed, and stands rejected.

## DISCUSSION

This study sort to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among student athletes. The student also aimed at finding the relationship between high and low self-esteem and psychological well being among youth athletes.

It was hypothesized that there would be statistical significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being among youth athletes. Also, it was proposed that high self-esteem will have statistically significant relationship with psychological well-being of

student athletes. It was also hypothesized that there will be statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being.

The results of the study reveal that self-esteem has a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being of youth athletes. This reflects the perception that as self-esteem improves, so does psychological well-being. This finding is in line with several researches that have found similar relationships (Ryff, 1995; Huppert, 2007; Williams, 2009, Morgan, 1985). The result of this study also supports the findings of other researchers that self-esteem is important when studying competence, coping strategies and mental well-being because it is regarded as an indicator of psychological well being (Amato, 1994; Wilkinson, 2004; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003).

The finding of the study supports broaden-and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2005) for theoretical explanation. Positive emotion broadens athlete's momentary thought-action repertoires to build their enduring personal resources. The results of the study also supported the second hypothesis which states that high self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well being. Self esteem and well being are very significant related factors in the development, competence building, skill acquisition and performance of student athletes. This research supports results of other researchers from a variety of inclinations (Miller & Hottman, 2009; Jowelt & Gramer, 2009). However, the result of this study did not support the third hypothesis which states that low self-esteem will have significant relationship with psychological well-being. The result of this study countered the third hypothesis because low

self-esteem results to poor psychological well-being and consequently poor sports performance. Hence, athletes with low self-esteem and poor psychological well-being find it difficult to cope with sports stress (Crawford, 2007).

Consequently, self-esteem and psychological well-being seem to be related to better physical health, normal cognitive functioning, positive sports attitude and behaviour with normal and progressive sports performance. Therefore, encouraging athletes to adopt high self-esteem will help to boost their psychological well-being which will also contribute positively to their active and functional performance.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has numerous implications for sports psychologists, athletes, coaches and stakeholders in sports towards sports participation, administration and performance. It has been implicated in this work that self-esteem is crucial for strong psychological well-being of athletes. Therefore, if sports psychologists, coaches, athletes, parents and other stakeholders in sports want to ensure profitable and progressive sports venture in Nigeria, they should give positive consideration to Self-esteem level of athletes vis-à-vis their psychological well-being. Also, selection of athletes should be purely based on competence, emotional stability, coping strategies, self-esteem level and level of psychological well-being among other vital factors.

### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Despite the contributions of this study, it is not devoid of limitations arising from several aspects of the work that are not perfect. The use of questionnaires that the participants should fill may not guarantee authentic responses because most of the responses may be biased. Another limitation of the study is the type and nature of participants who are only undergraduate student athletes who may not give out the best in terms of exposure and experience in sports. Also, limiting the study in one university may limit the generalization of the findings.

### RECOMMENDATIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH

Future researchers studying self-esteem and well-being among student athletes are therefore encouraged to carefully consider the conceptual issues emphasized in this study in order to improve and enable continued progress in this research field. Research on self-esteem and well-being should encompass all levels of athletes and all categories of athletes for improvement of sports

skills and optimum performance.

Stakeholders in sports administration and performance should give positive considerations to self-esteem and psychological well-being of athletes during selection training and competition to ensure proper commitment, longevity and progressive performance among athletes.

### CONCLUSION

In this study, the topic perceived self-esteem and well-being among student athletes was addressed and the correlation between self-esteem and well-being clearly shown with emphasis on the need to improve the well-being of student athletes. It is concluded that the sport psychology research on well-being and self-esteem among student athletes must be given optimal attention as many studies on well-being have not been explicitly on sports and athletes. Researchers investigating athlete's well-being on a global level should adopt established base on sport psychology. At the contextual sports level it is concluded that the knowledge level of what constitutes sport-related well-being and self-esteem is presently shallow. Therefore, it is important to note that future qualitative research is warranted to enable the exploration of sport related self-esteem and well-being in a greater depth.

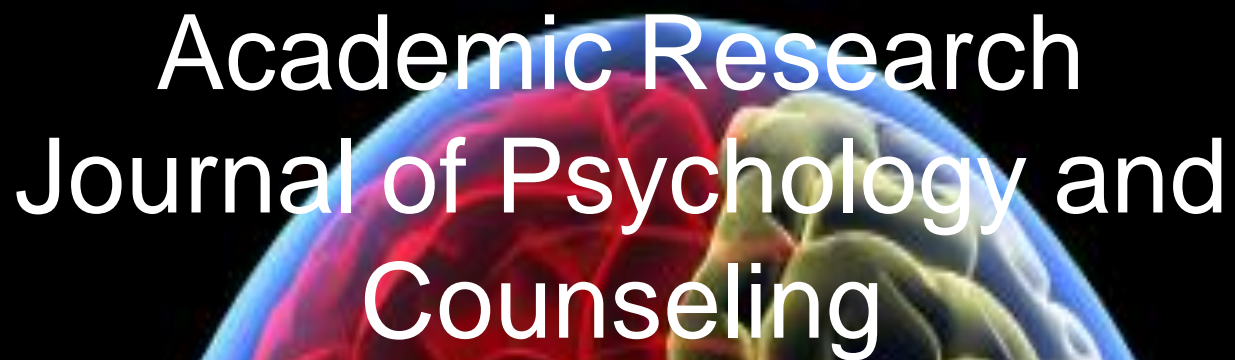
An increased understanding of self-esteem and well-being in athletes is needed, this knowledge could potentially address aspects of challenges in sports that constitute obstacles, so as to facilitate student athletes' possibilities to flourish and use their full potentials as both humans and athletes. Moreover an increasing body of evidence suggests that interventions geared towards increasing positive affective state may enhance well-being and health over time, which facilitates adaptive long-term coping resources.

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