



## LEADERSHIP SKILLS AMONG SPORTS MANAGERS IN EBONYI STATE

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### Abstract

The study focused on the examination of the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study was anchored on system theory. The population and sample size of the study was 141 sports managers from Ebonyi State ministry of youths and sports. Instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation for research mastions and T-tes and Anova for hypothesis. The result from the study revealed that sports managers possess conceptual, political and technical skills in sports management in Ebonyi State. Based on this, the study recommended there is need for sports managers to improve on their skills for sports management in the state, cooperate bodies should join the Government of Ebonyi State in enhancing sports development in Nigeria and there is need for sports improvement through the employment of sports professionals in Ebonyi State

**Keywords:** Sports, Sports management, leaderships, skills

### Introduction

Leadership in sports is vital to sports development. Sports have become established entity that exert great influence on social, political and even the economic environments of any nation and that of individuals. Sport refers to physical or recreational activities for competition, entertainment or for physical wellbeing (Mangan, 2014). It includes all forms of physical activities or games which through casual or organised participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability and skills while providing enjoyment to participants, and in some cases, entertainment for spectators. Blamires, (2016) noted that sport is mental and physical because, it involves articulations and skills as well as physical exertion. Azubuiké (2015b) stated that sport refers to all forms of organised physical activities aimed at improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels. Sports in the context of this study is defined as games, exercise, and plays performed by individuals or group of individuals with rules and regulations for competition purpose and for personal wellbeing. Such games, exercise and plays may be competitive but may encourage social integration, socialisation of the participants, youth empowerment and socio-economic development.

Many great nations and societies of the world have realized that participation in sports is the key to a healthy development of their citizens, and have used it to develop their young ones in attaining a success that science, religion and politics have failed to achieve. Sporting activities have as well permeated the Nigerian society just as many other societies in the world in all aspects of societal life including politics and religion. Awosika (2003) described sports as a symbol that has become a unifying factor in Nigeria and views it as an essential ingredient for nation building, which cuts across all barriers of ethnic, religious or social life of people, and has served as a medium for the development of the youths. These highlight the relevance and importance of sports to national development. However, for the realisation of effective and sustainable sports development in the country, there is need for quality leadership in the sports administration.

Leadership is the concerted action or effort of one or more persons who sit in control of the loyalty of a group of people or followers. According to Azubuiké (2016) leadership is a process of influencing other peoples' decision and behaviour. He further noted that leadership is a process of influencing group activities towards goal setting and goal achievements. Rouse (2014) posited that leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals



to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization. Leadership involves making sound decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals. Leadership in sport is an important function of management which helps to maximize efficiency and to achieve sports development. A good sports leader initiates action and effectively sees that they are attained. Ogbonnaya (2015) stated that the role of sports leaders such as administrators and coaches is ensuring excellent sports performance. Ogbonnaya (2015) further noted that leadership skills needed by sports leaders (coaches) include;

1. Conceptual skills
2. Political skills
3. Technical skills

Conceptual skill refers to the ability to think creatively and understand complex and abstract ideas. Using a well- developed conceptual skill set, coaches and sports administrators can look at their sports organisation as a holistic entity, to see the interrelationships between its divisions, and to understand how the firm fits into and affects its overall environment. A skilled sports leader or manager sees the sport organization as a whole and the relationship among the parts that make up the whole organization.

Political skills which include skills in; motivation, commitment, compensation, delegation of power, efficient communication between administrators and subordinates (athletes) among others. In line with the above, Urinya (2015) opined that creating teamwork among athletes, organizations, and clients is something that a leader should be able to do well. Urinya (2015) went further to state that sports managers must be leaders, motivators, and organizers.

Furthermore, Technical skill also refers to the specified knowledge, technicalities, competencies and resources used in achieving sports goal (Ezecha, 2011). Effective sports development can only be actualised when all these leadership skills enumerated are jointly used by the sports leaders in the sports organisation (Ebonyi State Ministry of sports). It is based on this that the study examines

leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State.

### Statement of the Problem

Despite the skills needed by sports managers and coaches in sports development in the country, it appears that in Ebonyi State, managers and coaches do not adopt these skills needed for sports development. Failure in adoption of effective skills by sports managers in sports development in the state may lead to brain drain of athletes, talent migration, underutilisation of the few sports equipment and facilities in the state and increment in unemployment in the state.

Ebonyi State is one of the states in Nigeria with no specific sport to boast of such as football, handball, cricket etc. Unlike other states in Nigeria, Ebonyi State does not have even a football club like Imo State that has Heartland Football Club, Abia state has Enyimba Football-club and Abia Warriors football clubs, Enugu State has Rangers Football club while Anambra State has Ifeanyi Uba Football Club, Gabros International Football clubs of Nnewi among others.

From 2010 till date, the State has been at the bottom of the medal table of sports in the Nigerian sports festivals (Ogba, 2015). This means Ebonyi state is lagging behind in terms of sports development. The reason for this poor sports development in the state could be attributed to the type of leadership skills among sports administrators and coaches which has to be empirically investigated. It is based on this that the researcher sought to examine leadership skills and in sports management in Ebonyi State.

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to find out leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study seeks to find out:

1. Conceptual skills in leadership among sports managers in Ebonyi State
2. Political skills in leadership among sports managers in Ebonyi State
3. Technical skills in leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State

### Research Questions

The following research question guided the study

1. What are the conceptual skills in leadership among sports managers in Ebonyi State?



2. What are the political skills in leadership among sports managers in Ebonyi State?
3. What are the technical skills in leadership among sports managers in Ebonyi State?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were specifically tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on gender
2. There is no significant difference in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on marital status
3. There is no significant difference in leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on educational qualification

### Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. The population for this study was 140 comprised of all the sports administrators in the thirteen Local Government Areas and the Ministry of Sports in in Ebonyi. The instrument for

data collection was a self-structured questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering the instrument on twenty (20) sports administrators in Delta State who were not part of the real respondents for the study. The Cronbach Alpha co-efficient was employed in estimating the internal consistency of the instrument. The overall reliability coefficient was  $r = 0.96$ . This was because according to Ogbazi and Okpala (2015), if the correlation coefficient obtained for an instrument is up to 0.60 and above, the instrument should be considered good enough to be used for the study. Data collected were analysed using using the SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Science) model version 20. A criterion mean of 2.50 was set for decision making. A mean from 2.50 and above was adjudged as agree on the question while a mean below 2.50 was adjudged disagree as the decision rule. T-test and Anova were used to test the hypotheses for the study. Hypotheses test below 0.05 was adjudged significant while any result above 0.05 was adjudged not significance

### Presentation and analysis of result

This chapter presents the result of the analysis of the data collected. The results of the study are hereby presented in tables below, according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.



#### 4.1 Research Question 1: What are the conceptual skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State?

**Table 1: Conceptual Skills Among Sports Managers in Ebonyi State**

| S/N | Conceptual skills  | $\bar{x}$        | SD          | Decision |
|-----|--|------------------|-------------|----------|
| 1   | Sports managers set vision and strategy  | 3.6<br>4         | 0.48        | Agreed   |
| 2   | Sports managers Contextualize problems   | 3.0<br>7         | 0.49        | Agreed   |
| 3   | Sports managers have creative thinking   | 2.6<br>7         | 0.96        | Agreed   |
| 4   | Sports managers often formulate effective course of action                                   | 3.5<br>3         | 0.50        | Agreed   |
| 5   | Sports managers always formulate new ideas   | 2.5<br>3         | 0.98        | Agreed   |
| 6   | Sports managers possess skills to formulate good policies and tactics for wining their games | 3.2<br>5         | 0.82        | Agreed   |
| 7   | Sports managers have policy implementation skills  | 2.7<br>9         | 0.86        | Agreed   |
| 8   | Sports managers possess critical thinking skills   | 3.4<br>6         | 0.65        | Agreed   |
| 9   | Sports managers possess effective decision making skills                                     | 3.1<br>0         | 0.97        | Agreed   |
| 10  | Sports managers make plans for organising sporting activities                                | 3.6<br>2         | 0.48        | Agreed   |
|     | <b>Grand mean</b>  | <b>3.1<br/>7</b> | <b>0.42</b> |          |

Table 1 shows the mean scores of conceptual skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State . From the table, it was indicated that sports managers set vision and strategy ( $\bar{x}$ =3.64;  $\pm$  0.48) Sports managers Contextualize problems ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.07  $\pm$  = 0.49), Sports managers have creative thinking ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.67  $\pm$  0.96), Sports managers often formulate effective course of action ( $\bar{x}$ =3.53;  $\pm$  0.50), Sports managers always formulate new ideas ( $\bar{x}$ =2.53;  $\pm$  0.98) , Sports managers possess skills to formulate good policies ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.25;  $\pm$  0.82), Sports managers have policy implementation skills ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.79,  $\pm$  0.86), Sports managers possess critical thinking skills ( $\bar{x}$ =3.46;  $\pm$  0.65), Sports managers possess effective decision making skills ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.10;  $\pm$  0.97), Sports managers make plans for organising sporting activities ( $\bar{x}$ =3.62;  $\pm$  0.48)



**Research Question 2:** What are the political skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State?

**Table 2 Political Skills among Sports Managers in Ebonyi State**

| S/N | Political skills   | $\bar{x}$   | SD          | Decision |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 11  | Some Sports managers in Ebonyi State are autocratic  | 3.01        | 1.04        | Agreed   |
| 12  | Sports managers in the always have good organisational skills  | 2.72        | 1.12        | Agreed   |
| 13  | Sports managers in the often use sensitive and supportive approach in solving the problems of the athletes | 2.67        | 0.96        | Agreed   |
| 14  | Sports managers in the are willing to accept responsibility  | 2.76        | 1.12        | Agreed   |
| 15  | Sports managers in the s often listen to the complaints/suggestions of the athletes                        | 2.93        | 1.01        | Agreed   |
| 16  | Sports managers in the s know how to manage the image of their organisation                                | 2.63        | 0.99        | Agreed   |
|     | <b>Grand mean</b>  | <b>2.79</b> | <b>0.70</b> |          |

Table 2 shows the mean scores of political skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State . From the table it was indicated that some Sports managers in the are autocratic ( $\bar{x}$ =3.01;  $\pm$  1.04), Sports managers in the always have good organisational skills ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.72;  $\pm$  1.12), Sports managers in the often use sensitive and supportive approach in solving the problems of the athletes ( $\bar{x}$ =2.67;  $\pm$  0.96), sports managers in the are willing to accept responsibility ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.76;  $\pm$  1.12), Sports managers in the s often listen to the complaints/suggestions of the athletes ( $\bar{x}$ =2.93;  $\pm$  1.01), and that sports managers know how to manage the image of their organisation ( $\bar{x}$ =2.63;  $\pm$  0.99). The result showed that the respondents agreed in all the items as the political skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State

**4.3 Research Question 3:** What are the technical skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State?

**Table 3: The Technical Skills among Sports Managers in Ebonyi State**

| S/N | Technical skills  | $\bar{x}$  | SD         | Decision |
|-----|---|------------|------------|----------|
| 17  | Sports managers in the usually use improvised materials in the training of athletes | 3.0        | 0.7        | Agreed   |
|     |   | 5          | 2          |          |
| 18  | Sports managers in the are often innovative   | 3.0        | 0.7        | Agreed   |
|     |   | 7          | 2          |          |
| 19  | Sports administrators makes plans for optimal performance of athletes               | 3.1        | 0.6        | Agreed   |
|     |   | 2          | 7          |          |
| 20  | Sports administrators often design ways of pairing athletes                         | 2.7        | 0.57       | Agreed   |
|     |   | 6          |            |          |
| 21  | Sports managers often improvise sports equipment                                    | 2.8        | 0.7        | Agreed   |
|     |   | 5          | 4          |          |
|     | <b>Grand mean</b>   | <b>2.9</b> | <b>0.3</b> |          |
|     |   | <b>7</b>   | <b>8</b>   |          |



Table 3 shows the technical skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State s. From the table, it was indicated that the respondents agreed that sports managers in the usually use improvised materials in the training of athletes ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.05;  $\pm$  0.72), Sports managers in the are often innovative ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.07;  $\pm$  0.72), Sports administrators makes plans for optimal performance of athletes ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.12;  $\pm$  0.67), Sports administrators often design ways of pairing athletes ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.76;  $\pm$  0.57), and that sports managers often improvise sports equipment ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.85;  $\pm$  0.74). The table also had the grand total of ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.97;  $\pm$  0.38) to support the claim. This means that the respondents agreed in all the items as the technical skills among sports managers in Ebonyi state.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in leadership skills among sports managers in a Ebonyi State based on gender

**Table 4: Summary of t-test in the Gender Difference in Leadership Skills Among Sports Managers in Ebonyi State**

| Variables         | Gender | N  | Mean   | SD     | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|-------------------|--------|----|--------|--------|---------|---------|----------|
| Conceptual Skills | Female | 55 | 3.0218 | .29420 | 3.449   | 0.001   | S        |
|                   | Male   | 85 | 3.2682 | .47364 |         |         |          |
| Political Skills  | Female | 55 | 2.9727 | .28102 | 2.507   | 0.013   | S        |
|                   | Male   | 85 | 2.6725 | .85776 |         |         |          |
| Technical Skills  | Female | 55 | 3.0000 | .00000 | 0.677   | 0.500   | NS       |
|                   | Male   | 85 | 2.9553 | .48929 |         |         |          |

S = Significant, NS = Not significant

Data in Table 4 show that there is significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents on leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State in relation to conceptual skills ( $t = 3.449$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ), political skills ( $t = 2.507$ ,  $p > 0.013$ ) and technical skills ( $t = 0.677$ ,  $p < 0.500$ ), The table showed no significant result, therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between male and female in leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State was not rejected



## Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on marital status

**Table 5: Summary of ANOVA in the Leadership Skills Among Sports Managers in Ebonyi State Based on Marital Status.**

| Variable          |                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F-value | p-value | Decision |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Conceptual Skills | Between Groups | 4.711          | 2   | 2.356       | 15.491  | .000    | S        |
|                   | Within Groups  | 20.834         | 137 | .152        |         |         |          |
|                   | Total          | 25.546         | 139 |             |         |         |          |
| Political Skills  | Between Groups | 15.542         | 2   | 7.771       | 19.887  | .000    | S        |
|                   | Within Groups  | 53.534         | 137 | .391        |         |         |          |
|                   | Total          | 69.076         | 139 |             |         |         |          |
| Technical Skills  | Between Groups | 3.569          | 2   | 1.784       | 14.720  | .000    | S        |
|                   | Within Groups  | 16.608         | 137 | .121        |         |         |          |
|                   | Total          | 20.177         | 139 |             |         |         |          |

S = Significant, NS = Not significant

Data in Table 5 show that there is significant difference in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on marital status in relation to conceptual skills ( $F = 15.491$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), political skills ( $f = 19.887$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and technical skills ( $f = 14.720$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). The table showed a significant result. Therefore, the hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on marital status was not accepted.



### Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on Educational qualification

**Table 6: Summary of ANOVA in the Leadership Skills Among Sports Managers in Ebonyi State Based On Educational Qualification**

| Variables         | Source of Variance | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F-value | p-value | Decision |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Conceptual Skills | Between Groups     | 9.458          | 3   | 3.153       | 26.652  | .000    | S        |
|                   | Within Groups      | 16.088         | 136 | .118        |         |         |          |
|                   | Total              | 25.546         | 139 |             |         |         |          |
| Political Skills  | Between Groups     | 16.764         | 3   | 5.588       | 14.528  | .000    | S        |
|                   | Within Groups      | 52.312         | 136 | .385        |         |         |          |
|                   | Total              | 69.076         | 139 |             |         |         |          |
| Technical Skills  | Between Groups     | 3.996          | 3   | 1.332       | 11.197  | .000    | S        |
|                   | Within Groups      | 16.181         | 136 | .119        |         |         |          |
|                   | Total              | 20.177         | 139 |             |         |         |          |

S = Significant, NS = Not significant

Table 6 showed the differences in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on Educational qualification in relation to conceptual skills ( $f = 26.652$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), political skills ( $f = 14.528$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and technical skills ( $f = 11.197$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The table showed that there is a significant difference in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on Educational qualification. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is significant difference in the leadership skills among sports managers in Ebonyi State based on Educational qualification was not accepted.

### Conclusions

Leadership entails behavioural process of influencing the activities of organized individuals and group toward specific goals and the achievement of those goals. Sports managers and administrators who are able to adopt effective leadership qualities according to athlete's preferences can promote and motivate athletes to optimal performance. Most sports managers failed to consider the needs of their players. A positive relationship in between sports managers and athletes has been widely recognized as an intermediary to drive for success and satisfaction in sports settings.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. There is need for sports managers to improve on their skills for sports management in the state
2. Cooperate bodies should join the Government of Ebonyi State in enhancing sports development in Nigeria.
3. There is need for sports improvement through the employment of sports professionals in Ebonyi State
4. Government of Ebonyi State should make adequate plans for adequate training and retraining of sports managers in the state for sports development





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