



# Psychological experiences in South African society before the 2010 FIFA World Cup from the systems psychodynamic and positive psychology perspectives

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## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Although the literature has focused some attention on the psychological effects of sport events on the psychological functioning of a society or nation, the researchers in this study believe that more in-depth research is required to understand this phenomenon fully.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to investigate some of the unconscious conflicts and dynamics, anxieties, emotions and fears in South Africa before the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the systems psychodynamic and positive psychology theoretical perspectives suggested that there might have been conflicting experiences in South Africa before the event. Whilst some members of a society may have expressed a great deal of hope that the event would have a positive effect on the psychological functioning of the society involved, others experienced unconscious fears and anxieties.

This qualitative research was an explorative attempt to analyse some of the hopes and anxieties that prevailed in South African society before the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The findings that the researchers presented in a number of themes from the positive psychology seem to support the theoretical analysis.

The findings from the positive psychology perspective seem to reflect the hopes and dreams of many South Africans before the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The participants in this study presented them in relation to developing wisdom, knowledge and innovation as well as of developing effective relationships by hosting this important event in South Africa. Thematically, they also expressed the hope of spiritual development in South African society. This included the hope that the event would create pride and social intelligence in the society, together with opportunities for reconciliation and affiliation. On the eve of the event, the spiritual awakening of the nation seemed to create national pride and an acute awareness of socially intelligent behaviour. The development of pride, nation building, reconciliation and affiliation is most successful if the nation is able to balance a 'life of enjoyment' (engaging fully in the fun of the event) with the responsibilities of a 'life of engagement', which includes creating opportunities for others.

The findings from the systems psychodynamic perspective revealed equally valuable and unique insights. In contrast to the findings from the first perspective, in which the participants had similar positive experiences, the researchers analysed the anxieties and fears from this perspective. They showed a number of significant splits in South African society. This anxiety seemed to lead to a number of splits between the visitors and the host nation. There were South Africans who were fully engaged in the event and those who were uninvolved or afraid to get too involved. There were supporters and non-supporters. There were younger and older South Africans. There were those who believed in the potential of the event to create pride and hope and there were sceptics. The researchers observed this in some participants who tried to reduce their fear and psychic pain by withdrawing into a preoccupation with their own survival and by holding onto their own identities. This emerged in people who were not prepared to leave their homes unnecessarily during the event or even to leave the country for the duration of the event.

## CONCLUSION

The researchers acknowledge that many South Africans seemed to feel more contained in the months before the event and received assurances about safety from the government, police and organisers. The researchers also emphasise the importance of conducting similar research after the 2010 FIFA World Cup in order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics and psychological processes involved in large-scale sports events.

## DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

The assumption is that South Africa will never be the same after hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup because of the enormous psychological effect the event had on the host nation. Therefore, staging the 2010 FIFA World Cup offered a unique opportunity for South Africa (Doaldson, Cornelissen, Swart & Bob, 2008). Hosting the event carries considerable prestige. In addition, the spin-offs of the tournament could advance the psychological health and quality of life in South Africa. Although South Africa's bid to stage the 2000 Olympic Games was unsuccessful, the country's earlier successful hosting of (and victory at) the 1995 Rugby World Cup prompted further sustained campaigns to host more mega-sports events like the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Labuschagne, 2008).

The effect of sport on the psyche of a nation is a theme in psychology, sociology and other disciplines. Research into this theme can create a wealth of knowledge that one can use to develop societies and nations. Therefore, it is surprising that few scholars have actually studied the psychological potential of sport as a nation builder in a fragmented society (Labuschagne, 2008). Scholars, who study the history and dynamics of sport, have accepted that sport is inseparable from nationalism and can be a powerful tool in the hands of politicians (Chandler, 1999).

The researchers conducted a literature review to analyse the assumptions of systems psychodynamics, the Tavistock model of group relations, object relations theory and the most relevant constructs in the systems psychodynamic perspective. They then described the assumptions and most relevant constructs in the positive psychology perspective in order to analyse theoretically the psychological effect of large-scale sports events on a community or country.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research approach comprised a qualitative, explorative and social phenomenological study. This research involved interviews with 24 participants. The eight participants in the young adult category consisted of four men between the ages of 20 and 27 and four women aged 23 to 30. The women and men participants represented the four race groups equally. The eight participants in the middle-aged category consisted of four men between the ages of 40 and 43 and four women aged 40 to 46. The women and men represented the four race groups equally and all the participants were married and had children.

The eight participants in the older category consisted of four men between the ages of 51 and 70 and four women aged 52 to 65. The women and men represented the four race groups equally. The eight participants in the older category consisted of four men between the ages of 51 and 70 and four women aged 52 to 65. The women and men represented the four race groups equally.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH SETTING

The researchers conducted the study using participants who worked in different South African organisations in which the researchers were consulting at the time. After the researchers finished their normal consulting processes, they approached some of the clients and colleagues to take part in the research by asking them to take part in formal interviews. However, the researchers conducted the interviews outside of the clients' work places in order to emphasise that the research had no connection to the normal consulting and working processes or the relationships that the researchers had with the participants.

### ENTRÉE AND ESTABLISHING RESEARCHER ROLES

The researchers approached clients and colleagues who talked spontaneously about the event and used the participants' interest in the topic as a point of entry to the research. These clients and colleagues were orientated towards the goals of the research and asked to take part as research participants. The researchers explained that their motivation for approaching these particular clients and colleagues was the informal discussions in which they had participated. This showed their interest in the topic and their psychological 'involvement' in the event. The researchers negotiated the boundary conditions for the interviews outside the context of their primary relationships with the participants.

### SAMPLING

The researchers' access to many South African employees in different organisations and the existence of professional working relationships with the participants led to a convenience sample. The people the researchers eventually included in the sample were either clients or colleagues of the researchers.

### RECORDING OF DATA

The researchers first orientated the participants to the goals of the research during the 30-minute formal interviews. They then explained the confidentiality of the study and that they would record the data during the interview by taking notes. During the interviews, the researchers asked participants to describe their hopes and fears for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. The researchers took field notes about the behaviour of the participants after the interviews. They stored these written documents in a secure place for later analysis.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers used the social phenomenological approach. The processing procedure firstly involved reading through all the responses a number of times to become familiar with the content. Secondly, the researchers read the responses again using Schafer's (2003) systems psychodynamic interpretive stance. The third step involved extracting examples of systems psychodynamic conflicts and anxieties as well as positive psychology themes from the data. The researchers then clustered the different examples. This revealed certain prominent themes. Finally, the researchers extracted common themes using phenomenological analysis.

### STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO ENSURE QUALITY DATA

The researchers needed to ensure reliability and validity. There are two main criteria for this: trustworthiness and authenticity.

- **Trustworthiness.** In an attempt to increase the trustworthiness of the research, the researchers looked at credibility, transferability and dependability.
- **Authenticity.** The researchers included participants from different gender, race and age groups to ensure fairness in how they obtained the different opinions. They achieved ontological and educational authenticity by assisting participants to achieve a better understanding of their social situations and developing an appreciation of the perspectives of others about the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

### REPORTING

The researchers presented the themes they identified from the positive psychological perspective. Then they presented the themes that emerged from the systems psychodynamic perspective. These themes are the unique and detailed themes that they identified in this qualitative research.



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