

THE SPORTS MANAGERS' PERCEPTION OF COACHES'- ATHLETES RELATIONSHIP IN ENHANCING THE PLAYERS OF KWARA STATE SPORTS COUNCIL PERFORMANCE IN COMPETITIONS

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Abstract

Sports performance is determined by many factors among which the coach-athlete relationship is very important. The coach and the athlete interaction is unique with the goal to bring about successful performance outcomes and satisfaction. The athletes' perception of the coach-athlete relationship has motivational significance. If the coach-athlete relationship is sync, successful outcomes can be accomplished. Therefore, coaches should create positive coach-athlete interaction which will allow the coach to gain insight into the thoughts and emotions of their athletes. The study was a correlational study that assessed sports managers' perception of the coach-athletes relationship in enhancing their performance in competitions. The population for the study comprised the coaches of all the 25 sports in Kwara state sports council Ilorin. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two coaches from each sport and a total of 50 coaches were selected for the study. The coach-athlete relationship questionnaire (CART-Q) was used to elicit information on closeness, commitment and complementarity from the respondents. Three hypotheses were generated for the study and inferential statistic of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Keywords: Perception, coaches' performance, athletic relationship

Introduction

Sports performance is determined by many factors. According to Serpa (1999), and the trends from literature, the coach-athlete relationship is an important factor affecting sport performance. The coach and the athlete interaction is unique with the goal to bring about successful performance outcomes and satisfaction. Sharon, Gory and Lauren (2016) quoting olympiou, Jowett and Duda (2008) suggested that an athlete's perception of the coach-athlete relationship has motivational significance. If the coach-athlete relationship is Sync, successful outcomes can be accomplished (Coe,1996). Kenow and Williams (1999) recommended that coaches should create positive coach-athlete interaction which will allow the coach to gain insight into the thoughts and emotions of their athletes. Phillips and Jubenivile (2009) stated that the coach-athlete relationship is important to both groups performance and both must evaluate the other to enhance performance.

Coach-athlete relationships have been defined as an interconnection of emotions, thoughts and behavior (Jowett and Ntoumarus, 2003). The coach athlete relationship is intentionally developed through appreciation and respect for each other (Potrac, Jones & Armour, 2002), is both dynamic and complex, (Jones & Wallance 2005) and requires discovering and fulfilling's needs of both the coach and athlete (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Numerous authors suggest that an effective coach-athlete relationship is necessary for a successful coaching outcome (lafreniere, Jowett, Vallerand, & Carbonneau 2011; shields, Gardner, Bredemeiver & Bostro 1997). Factors that contribute to the coach-athlete relationship include, but are not limited to: planning and designing the coaching engagement, building and maintaining trust, building credibility (Mageau & Vallerand 2003; Rezania & Lingham 2009a)

The relationship between a coach and athlete according to Davar and Robert (2014) quoting Dansereau et.al (1995) has similarities with the relationship between a supervisor and an employee in an organizational setting. Similar to a supervisor, a coach has formal authority and may utilize both influence without authority and influence with authority when engaging with the athletes. This ability to employ both formal contractual and informal influence gives that the coach and the athletes some degrees of control over the type of relationship, or exchange that will exist between them. In the process of organizing their roles, the type of influence the coach employs affect the interpersonal exchange relationship between a coach and his/her athlete. The norm of reciprocity indicates that when the coach offers the athletes more latitude in things like decision making and signals the coach trust, respect, and support for the athlete, the athlete may then feel obligated to reciprocate with behaviors that would fulfill the coach expectations.

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Gould, Lauer, Collins and Chung (2007) examined the coach-athlete relationship by interviewing ten American football coaches who have all received awards for their abilities to facilitate their “personal development”. In the interviews, these coaches emphasized the importance of communication (i.e. having open lines of communication with their athletes, possessing clear expectations, and holding their players accountable). These coaches also avoided using punishment or criticisms that were directed towards their players characters or personalities, and showed that they cared, trusted, and respected their players as people. These ways of communicating paralleled the relationship maintenance strategies labelled as positivity, openness, and assurance (Stafford and Canary, 1991). Additionally, research examining coaches behaviors consistently has shown that supportive and encouraging coaches were likely to have a positive influence on their athletes development (Coatsworth and Conroy, 2006). This supportive coaching was particularly effective when their athletes were less confident about themselves (Smith and Smoll, 1990). Thus, the use of maintenance strategies in sport has been indirectly associated with positive outcomes.

However, not all relationships are effective and some coaches take negative tactics in their approach to the athletes. Those approaches lead to inadequate coaches-athletes relationship (Martens, 1987, Smoll & Smith, 1989). These coaches tend to be strict, regimented and even militaristic. Ironically, they tend to be labeled as successful coaches but only seek to have their ambitions realized. They do not care if their athletes are injured, depressed or even burned out (Williams & Krane, 2015; Anshel, 2012; Murphy, 2005; and Cox, 2012; Smoll & Smith, 1989; Jowett & Cockerill, 2002). These negative coaches are arrogant and may even betray the athletes trust despite its importance in the relationship (Ryan, 1996).

Recent researches have developed a clearer understanding of important features of successful coach-athlete relationship. Jowett (2001), Jowett and Cockerill (2002) and Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) have explored the reciprocal nature of such relationships giving particular emphasis to affective, behavioural and cognitive factors. These researches focused on how coaches and athletes influence each other and the interdependency that is evident. Initially, Jowett and others highlighted the three key constructs used to examine coaches-athlete relationship are closeness, commitment and complementarity and can be determined by the coach-athlete relationship questionnaire (CART-Q) (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2001). Research studies have found that high scores within these areas are associated with higher levels of performance and personal treatment, higher levels of team cohesion and lower levels of role ambiguity in team sports and motivation of athletes participating in team sports.

Closeness: refers to feelings and perceptions that appears to be a functions of interpersonal factors such as liking, trust and respect. Open channels of communication, voicing of needs, effective problem-solving, acceptance and appreciation characterize closeness. Importantly, such qualities as trust and respect have been associated with successful coaching (Janseen & Dale, 2002). while their absence is linked to less harmony and less support (Douge, 1999).

Commitment: appears to reflect oneness of thought between coach and athletes, and is defined as an intention to maintain and optimize relations (Jowett et.al, 2005). When performances fall below expectations, commitment can guard against retaliation by promoting accommodation, and this is characterized by flexibility when change is necessary. A lack of commitment has been shown to be linked to criticism, communication breakdown and a lack of common goals (Jowett, 2003).

Predictors of Commitment to the coach: Training student-athletes to attain high levels of performance is one of the most important responsibilities of a coach (Oliver, Hardy & Marland, 2010). Training has the potential to draw a desired set of athlete’s attitudes and behaviors, and provides student-athletes the context to learn knowledge and skills for a specific purpose (Stein, 2001). Training is an intentional activity to transfer the expertise, information, and also modify the attitude and behaviors aligned with the organizational goals (Brown & McCracken, 2010). Training is expected to influence job safety, self-importance, job satisfaction and commitment (Bartlett, 2001).

The effect of training on student-athletes role-behavior and performance could be mediated by commitment. Student-athletes perception of the training they receive may contribute to the commitment to the coach. In addition, training may empower the student-athletes to work independently, participate in decision-making with other team members and work in the team. Bishop, Dowscott, Goldsby and Cropanzano (2005) assert that the “level of support employees receive from an entity predict the level of commitment they have for that same entity.

Information sharing is another responsibility of the coach (Lyle, 2002). Student athletes look to their coach for cues and information regarding what to do and how to do it. Coaching skills are firmly grounded in communication abilities including listening, feedback, and information sharing (Goleman, Boyatzis&McKee, 2002). Communication is necessary for establishing and sustaining trust, and establishment of psychological contracts (Rousseau and Greller, 1994). Information sharing reflects the extent to which coaches participate in the mentoring/coaching role to foster each student-athletes learning and development.

The effect of information sharing on the student-athlete’s role-behavior could be mediated by commitment to the coach. Student-athlete’s perception of the way the coach shares the necessary information may contribute to the commitment to the coach. In formulation of a theoretical model for the study of Coach-athlete relationship, commitment provides a useful prototype. Rezania and Gurney (2014) citing Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualize commitment as a construct with three related dimensions. The affective dimension reflects the emotional aspect and encapsulates identification and involvement in the relationship, the continuance dimension relates to perceived cost to leave the relationship, and finally the normative dimension relates to the feeling of obligation to the relationship based on the congruence in values and norms.

Complementarity: The third ‘C’ reflects a positive working environment where coach and athletes work together to attempt to improve performance. Jowett et.al (2005) suggested that complementarity has been found to relate to both high level performance and greater satisfaction with the relationship.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were generated from this study:

1. Coaches’ closeness with the athletes has no significant relationship with their performance in competition as perceived by sports managers
2. Coaches’ commitment has no significant relationship with athletes’ performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.
3. Coaches’ complementarity has no significant relationship with athletes’ performance in competition as perceived by sports managers.

Methodology

The research design used in this study was a correlational study because the study tried to find out the relationship between two variables that is, the relationship between the coach and the athletes in enhancing their performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers. The population for the study comprised the coaches of all the 25 sports in Kwara state sports council, Ilorin. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select two coaches from each sport and a total of 50 coaches were selected for the study. The instrument used to collect data from the respondents was the coach-athletes relationship questionnaire (CART-Q). The instrument measure affective, cognitive and behavioral interpersonal aspects in the coach-athlete relationship such as closeness, commitment and complementarity. Three research hypotheses were generated for the study and the inferential statistic of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Coaches’ closeness with the athletes has no significant relationship with their performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.

Table 1: Relationship between coaches’ closeness with athletes and their performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.

Variable	Mean	Std	Significant	Cal.r-val	Remark
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Coaches closeness with athletes	10.75	2.57	.000	0.46	Sig
Athletes performance in competitions	8.15	1.86			

Table 1 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between coaches closeness with athletes and their performance in competitions, with ($r=0.46$; $P<0.05$). This positive relationship implies that the more closer the coaches with the athletes, the better their performance in competitions.

Ho2: Coaches commitment has no significant relationship with athletes' performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.

Table 2 Relationship between coaches' commitment and athletes' performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.

Variable	Mean	Std	Significant	Cal.r-val	Remark
Coaches commitment	11.88	2.18	.001	0.65	Sig
Athletes performance in competitions	8.15	1.86			

Table 2 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between coaches commitment and athletes performance in competitions with ($r=0.65$; $P<0.05$). This positive relationship implies that when coaches' shows greater commitment to the training programs of the athletes, their welfare conditions, etc. the athletes' performance will certainly improve in competitions.

Ho3: Coaches complementarity has no significant relationship with athletes' performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.

Table 3: Relationship between coaches' complementarity and athletes' performance in competitions as perceived by sports managers.

Variable	Mean	Std	Significant	Cal.r-val	Remark
Coaches complementarity	10.44	2.38	0.57	.000	Sig
Athletes performance in competitions	8.15	1.86			

Table 3 reveals that there is a significant positive relationship between coaches complementarity and athletes performance in competitions with ($r= 0.54$; $P<0.05$). This positive relationship implies that when coaches create a positive working environment where the coach and the athletes work together will in no small measure improve athletes' performance in competitions.

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one (Ho₁) which reveals a significant positive relationship between coaches closeness with the athletes and their performance in competition is in agreement with the submission of Janssen and Dale, (2002) who both revealed that open channels of communication, voicing of needs, effective problem-solving, acceptance and appreciation characterize closeness. They stated further that qualities as trust and respect have been associated with successful coaching. While their absence is linked to less harmony and less support (Douge,1999).

The result of hypothesis two (Ho₂) that equally reveals that when coaches show greater commitment to the training programs of the athletes and their welfare conditions, the athletes performance will certainly improve in competition. This finding is in line with the opinion of Jowett et.al, (2005) when they stated that commitment appears to reflect oneness of thought between coach and athletes, and is defined as an intention to maintain and optimize relations. When performance fall below expectations, commitment can guard against retaliation by promoting accommodation, and this characterized by flexibility when change is necessary. A lack of commitment can lead to communication breakdown and a lack of common goal (Jowett, 2003).

Training has the potential to draw a desired set of athletes' attitudes and behaviors', and provides student-athletes the context to learn knowledge and skills for a specific purpose

(Stein,2001). Lyle, (2002) affirmed that information sharing reflects the extent to which coaches participate in mentoring/coaching role to foster each student-athletes' learning and development.

Finally, the finding of hypothesis three (Ho₃) which also reveals a significant positive relationship between coaches complementarity and athletes performance in competitions is in line with the submission of Jowett et.al (2005) which stated that complementarity reflects a positive working environment where coach and athletes work together to attempt to improve performance. Jowett et.al (2005) also suggested that complementarity has been found to relate to both high levels of performance and greater satisfaction with the relationship.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions were drawn from the study. A significant positive relationship exist between coaches' closeness with athletes, coaches' commitment and coaches complementarity and athletes performance in competitions. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested: The coach must open channels of communication where the athletes can freely discuss with their coaches on ways to improve their performance in competitions, coaches must be committed to training the athletes as well as their welfare as these will empower the student-athletes to work independently in other to improve their performance and the coach must always create a positive working environment where coach and athletes work together to improve their performance.

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