

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN COACH-ATHLETE RELATIONSHIP AND MOTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM) SHAH ALAM ATHLETES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the correlation between coach-athlete relationship and motivation among UiTM Shah Alam athletes. The participants in this study consisted of 260 athletes (130 male and 130 female) participating in different individual and team sports. The coach-athlete relationship was measured by using Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) meanwhile The Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II) was used to measure the athletes' motivation level. Pearson correlation test shows moderate linear correlation between coach-athlete relationship and motivation ($r = .32, p = .00$). Thus, this finding revealed that athletes who have a good quality of relationship with their coaches tend to be more motivated due to the power of coaches that can influence the athletes' psychological well-being and physical performance.

Keywords: Coach-athlete relationship, motivation, athletes

Introduction

Motivation is an essential concept within the field of sport that can influence sports performance and assist athletes to achieve their goals. Generally, it helps athletes to attain success that goes beyond their physical and intellectual abilities (Ampofo-Boateng, 2009). However, athletes who possess lack of motivation will exert less effort to gain the success consequently reduce their self-efficacy, intensity, and focus (Adeyeye, Vipene, & Asak, 2013). One of the approaches that may be a potential variable in understanding motivation is a coach-athlete relationship, which might influence the level of motivation (Buning & Thompson, 2015). This was supported by Ampofo-Boateng (2009), suggesting that motivation can be obtained through environmental approaches which the environmental factor, such as the relationship with the coach, can influence an athlete's motivation.

The relationship between coaches and athletes is considered to pose a great impact that can contribute to the sports performance as it involves cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects between them (Adie & Jowett, 2010). Coach-athlete relationships can be defined as an interactive process between coach and athlete, which their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are mutually and causally interdependent (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007). In addition, Jones and Turner (2006) opines that this relationship is the center of coaching and it is very important that both of them are close to one another, work and perform together due to the complexity of the features of the coaching process.

According to Jowett and Cockerill (2002), the relationship between coach and athlete serves as a platform where both of them interact with each other in a particular way for performance accomplishments, success, and satisfaction. Besides, Adie and Jowett (2010) explained that great things and positive consequences, such as motivation, can be earned if the coach and athlete are in perfect harmony. Furthermore, continuous interactions between coaches and athletes enhance the potential of the athletes to learn strategies to improve their performance and have social experiences which encourage psychological outcomes such as motivation (West, 2016). This is due to everything that is provided by the coaches, such as knowledge, experience, and expertise to the athletes, will be translated into a positive outcome which may directly or indirectly influence the motivation (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009). Apart from that, coaches also play numerous roles including a teacher, a mentor, and a leader, in which the nature of their communication with athletes can significantly influence motivation and enjoyment of athletes in their participation in sport (Buning & Thompson, 2015). Hence, most athletes make their coach as a role model in their lives, and this coach-athlete relationship is found to be an important determinant of the athletes' motivation levels (Jowett & Cramer, 2010).

In sports, athletes need to overcome many obstacles in order to achieve their success and goals. Thus, they must possess both physical and psychological strength including a higher level of motivation to become successful in their career. According to Weathington, Alexander, and Rodebaugh (2010), coaches have important roles and have significant consequences towards their athletes' motivation and effort. In order to increase their athletes' motivation level, coaches usually use strategies through positive verbal feedback, non-verbal communication and challenge their athletes. Furthermore, coaches can help players and teams in winning the competition through an encouraging environment.

Athletes who experience anxiety or low level of self-confidence often see their coaches as someone who can motivate and encourage them to put more efforts and giving the best in their performance (Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura, & Baldes, 2010).

A positive relationship promotes a clear and effective communication between coach and athlete. Generally, this interaction occurred frequently during training, competition and also during other situations in which are not directly associated with sports such as personal life (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002). Besides, this type of relationship contains verbal and non-verbal behaviors that conveyed into positive emotional states like laughing, joking, and direct eye contact. Thus, both coach and athlete enjoy spending time together on a professional level as well as on personal matters (Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014). In line with Lorimer and Jowett (2009) and Rhind and Jowett (2010), a positive relationship that exists between coaches and athletes can develop encouragement and motivation for the athletes to be more successful due to the effective, thoughtful and respectful communication that are involved within this relationship.

However, there are also evidences to suggest that coach-athlete relationship can be a source of stress and distraction to the athletes, which might prevent the athletes from displaying desired behaviors such as motivation (Jowett, 2008). In addition, numerous studies were more concentrated on the coaches' leadership styles and behaviors that affect athletes' psychological outcomes and performance (Bekiari, 2014; Buning & Thompson, 2015). Studies on motivation created by the interpersonal relationship between coaches and athletes have received less attention within the sport psychology area (Olympiou, Jowett, & Duda, 2008; Ozsaker, 2016). Therefore, there is a need for this study to identify the association between coach-athlete relationship and motivation in order to expand the knowledge regarding on this interpersonal relationship towards positive psychological outcomes and to find the consistent findings.

Methods

Research Design

The correlational research design was used to test the hypothesis in this study in its null form. This design was selected because this study was intended to determine the association between coach-athlete relationships and motivation among UiTM Shah Alam athletes. In addition, this study utilized only a single group of athletes which were UiTM Shah Alam athletes from which the data on the coach-athlete relationship and motivation were collected.

Participants

A total of 260 athletes from UiTM Shah Alam who aged between 19 to 26 years ($M = 21.23$, $SD = 1.65$) participated in this study. The participants consisted of male ($N = 130$) and female ($N = 130$) athletes and must represent UiTM Shah Alam at least once in any sports. In addition, the participants comprised of individual ($N = 123$) and team ($N = 137$) sports athletes.

Instrumentation

Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q)

The coach-athlete relationship was determined using Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) by Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004). The questionnaire was categorized as a Likert scale which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It consisted of 11 items that measured how the athletes perceived the quality of their relationship with their coaches through three interpersonal constructs which were closeness (items 3,5,8,9; for example, "I like my coach"), commitment (items 1,2,6; for example, "I am close to my coach") and complementarity (items 4,7,10,11; for example, "When I am coached by my coach, I am at ease"). The internal consistency reliability of Cronbach's Alpha reported with 0.87 for closeness, 0.82 for commitment and 0.88 for complementarity (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

The Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II)

The Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II) by Pelletier, Rocchi, Vallerand, Deci, and Ryan (2013) was used to identify the motivation level among UiTM Shah Alam athletes. The questionnaire was categorized as a Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true). The questionnaire consisted of 18 items divided into six subscales which were Intrinsic Motivation (items 2,7,13), Integrated Regulation (items 4,5,15), Identified Regulation (items 9,11,17), Introjected Regulation (items 3,12,14), External Regulation (items 1,6,16) and Amotivated (items 8,10,18). The internal consistency reliability of Cronbach's Alpha reported with 0.7 for intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, amotivated and introjected regulation meanwhile 0.8 for integrated regulation and external regulation (Manouchehri, Tojari, & Soltanabadi, 2015).

Data collection

Approval to conduct this study was obtained from Research Ethics Committee of Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam, Selangor and from UiTM Research Management Institute (RMI). In addition, the permission to collect the details of UiTM Shah Alam athletes was obtained from UiTM Sports Centre in order to get the updated details about the amount of athletes. Prior to data collection, the consent form was distributed to the participants and they were informed that the participation was voluntary and allowed to withdraw from this study at any time. Then, Demographic Questionnaire, The Coach-Athlete Relationship Questionnaire (CART-Q) and The Sport Motivation Scale-II (SMS-II) were distributed to the participants who were willing to participate in this study to measure the coach-athlete relationship and motivation respectively. Participants who finished should return the questionnaires to the researcher once all the questions completely answered.

Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the mean, standard deviation, and frequency

for demographic data such as genders, age, types of sport, coach-athlete relationship and motivation scores. Pearson correlation test was conducted to determine the correlation between coach-athlete relationships and athletes' motivation. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. The findings revealed were either to reject or to accept the null hypothesis.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation for participants' age, coach-athlete relationship and motivation scores.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Age	260	19	26	21.23	1.65
Coach-Athlete Relationship	260	1.00	3.00	2.62	.39
Motivation	260	1.67	3.00	2.40	.31

Main Analysis

In order to determine the correlation between coach-athlete relationship and motivation among UiTM Shah Alam athletes, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted, and the result was presented in Table 2. The finding of this study reported that coach-athlete relationship and motivation were linearly correlated, $r(260) = .32, p = .00$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and this showed that athletes who have a good relationship with their coach tend to be more motivated. Furthermore, this study reported that the strength of the correlation was classified as moderate as it falls between the range of .30 to .49 (Pallant, 2010).

Table 2: Correlation between Coach-Athlete Relationship and Motivation

Variables	<i>r</i> - value, <i>p</i> - value	
	Coach-Athlete Relationship	Motivation
Coach-Athlete Relationship	-	.32, .00
Motivation	.32, .00	-

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the association between coach-athlete relationship and motivation among athletes. The finding of this study showed that there was a positive significant correlation between coach-athlete relationship and motivation level. However, the strength of the relationship was in moderate correlation. This revealed that a good quality of the relationship between coach and athlete tend to motivate athletes in sports. This current finding is consistent with the previous studies that showed a positive significant correlation between coach-athlete relationship and motivation (Adie & Jowett,

2010; Joesaar, Hein, & Hagger, 2012; Jowett & Cramer, 2010; Ozsaker, 2016; Riley & Smith, 2011).

Based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a positive quality of relationship between coach and athlete is a crucial component in order to increase the motivation of athletes, which the social factor such as a coach, can influence athletes' motivation level due to his or her role as an autonomy support who can give impact on athletes' behavioral, cognitive, and affective responses (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007). According to Almagro, Saenz-Lopez, and Moreno (2010), coach's behavior that is in the form of autonomy, provided by a good structure and involvement, will positively impact the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness which consequently, nurture the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among athletes. The satisfaction of these psychological needs positively associated with a motivation level (Riley & Smith, 2011). Generally, sport involvement has been correlated to the anxiety and decrement in motivation among athletes (Riley & Smith, 2011). Thus, athletes need a social agent that can give support, encouragement and boost their motivation in order to succeed in sport performance.

Apart from parents, athletes also spend plenty of time with their coaches who play a role in athletes' development and growth, which in turn can be one of their autonomy supporter (Philippe & Seiler, 2006). Being an autonomy supportive requires coaches to take the athletes' perspective, appreciate athletes' feelings, and offer the athletes with related information and opportunities for choice, while avoiding a controlling behavior (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Under those circumstances, athletes will feel that their coaches provide them with more freedom in making decisions, alternatives, support their decisions, as well as ask for their opinions regarding skills or exercises to be done during training sessions or during competition. Definitely, athletes feel that they influence their own actions which in turn, their autonomy supportive behaviors are positively affected and nurture their motivation in sports (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). In agreement with Jowett and Cockerill (2003), having a supportive and encouraging coach was mostly effective when athletes were experience lack of motivation and low self-confident. Coaches could offer the encouragement and motivational words as well as positive feedback regarding their performance to increase the motivation level of an athlete such as "You should try harder, you can do it, and success is only achieved through hard work"; and "Don't give up on your dreams, you are nearly there". In short, a good quality of the coach-athlete relationship was linearly correlated to the athletes' motivation level.

Furthermore, the positive and close relationship between coach and athlete can reduce and prevent the development of conflict which may potentially affect the level of motivation (Jowett, 2005). It was supported by Jowett and Cockerill (2003) adding that a poor quality of the relationship can develop conflict between coach and athlete which results in the decrement of athletes' motivation level. Conflict is referred to as the experience of incompatibility between individuals (Olympiou et al., 2008). Compatibility is a very important element in the context of sport which involves with similar actions, objectives, goals, ideas, belief, and opinions between coach and athletes (Carron & Bennet, 2013). Athletes are highly motivated to accomplish their goals when they have clear objectives, and have good satisfaction regarding their actions and the given instructions from their

coach since they are able to recognize the strategies to excel in sport performance and feel that they influence their own actions. In addition, compatibility can generate chemistry, understanding, and trust in each other which results in increments in motivation level of athletes to perform successfully at a higher level not only for themselves or teammates, but also for their coach (Jowett & Nezlek, 2011). In that case, by having a close and better quality of the relationship, athletes will have a tendency to increase their compatibility with their coach. This allows them to remain focused in training and cope with the pressures during competition as well as increase their motivation in sport involvement to achieve their targeted goals without distractions such as worries and low self-confidence due to the incompatibility and conflict with their coach.

Moreover, Altintas and Bayar (2016) stated that conflict and incompatibility that occurs between coach and athlete might produce pressure and lead towards fluctuations in motivation among athletes due to the lack of desire and enjoyment in sport involvement. Clearly, the motivation level will be reduced when the athletes perform under pressure due to the actions and decisions that do not resonate with their own satisfaction and willingness. Hence, it is very important for coaches and athletes to have a good quality of relationship which consequently can generate a harmonious environment and understanding between each other, thus, boost athletes' motivation level and competitive spirit in sports (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Conclusion

The finding of this study shows that coach-athlete relationship and motivation were linearly correlated to each other. However, the strength of correlation was in moderation. Hence, athletes who have a positive and close relationship with their coaches tend to be highly motivated in sports. A good quality of the coach-athlete relationship can prevent conflict and coaches should play their role as an autonomy supporter to the athletes, and thus, nurture the motivation among athletes. In conclusion, sport managers, coaches, administrators and directors of performance should organize the appropriate activities or programs towards improving coach-athlete relationships such as team building and sharing sessions. Additionally, coaches should implement the positive and effective communication that can encourage and motivate athletes. Furthermore, an interaction that occurs frequently may lead towards compatibility, closeness and stronger relationships between them, which may consequently influence athletes' motivation level. Lastly, coaches' education and university courses in sports sciences must provide adequate information regarding interpersonal skills in coaching to promote a better quality of the coach-athlete relationship.

In order to gain more knowledge and information within this scope of the study, it is recommended for future studies to include and observe other psychological factors such as athletes' self-confidence, depression, burnout, aggression and self-satisfaction that correlated with the coach-athlete relationship. Also, by using larger samples from the general population, future studies may be able to provide more precise measures and represent overall population of athletes in Malaysia and not only representing a certain

population. In addition, it is suggested for future studies to analyze the data based on the subscales.

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