

Athletes' Perception of Coaches' Behavior and Skills About Their Sport

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Abstract

This study examined the perception of athletes' about their coaches' behavior and skills in terms of knowledge and skills, fairness and coaches' characteristic features. The research was conducted by using relational survey method. The subjects of the study were 95 females and 180 males from different sports. Both team sports athletes such as football, volleyball, basketball, handball and individual sports such as karate, taekwondo, wrestling, kickboxing voluntarily involved in the study.

Perceived Coach Attitudes and Behaviours Scale (PCABS) which was developed by Uzum et al. (2018) was used to assess perceived coaches' knowledge and skills, fairness and characteristic features by athletes. The scale was composed of 24 items and 3 sub-dimensions (*Characteristic Features, Skills and Knowledge, Fairness*). Uzum et al. (2018) reported the internal consistency for subscales of PCABS ranging from .56 and .88. For the purpose of this study the reliability of two sub-scales of the PCABS was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha=.83$ for knowledge and skills; $\alpha=.81$ for characteristic features of coaches). The data was analyzed by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Tukey's Post-Hoc Analysis and Pearson Correlation analysis. The level of significance for the study was set at $p<.05$.

The results of the study showed that the sub-dimension of characteristic features of coaches had the highest mean average. There were statistically significant differences between male athletes and female athletes in both dimensions of characteristic features of coaches and knowledge and skills ($p<.05$). Further analysis indicated that females scored higher than males in both dimensions. With regard to the level of coaching either professional or amateur, perception of characteristic features of coaches had higher scores in professional level than amateur ($p<.05$). Moreover, correlational analysis revealed that there was negatively significant correlation between age of the coaches and knowledge and skills dimension ($r=-.13$). On the other hand, the variables such as age of athletes, year of sports performance, level of education, type of sports and the coaches' gender, marital status, education level of coaches, amount of time spent with the athlete did not show any significant relationship ($p>.05$).

Keywords: coach, athletes, character, knowledge and skill, fairness, perception, behavior

1. Introduction

In sports organizations which have humans at their center, mid-level and top-level managers, coaches, trainers and athletes are performing their duties as amateurs and professionals. Especially, athletes are trying to maintain sporting lives under severe conditions and keeping constant communication with their coaches (Uzum, 2017). The coach is being defined as the person who will help the athletes to elevate their performances to the highest level that they can get. Coaches should be able to use their creativity and know-how on the athletes just as an artist (Yakupoglu, 1997). The relationship between coach and the athlete creates the opportunity to maximise physical, mental and social/emotional development of the athlete (Krotee & Bucher, 2007).

In terms of the career development of the athletes, the coach can be considered as the person who has a fairly important role on improving the potential of the athlete. A coach should be able to apprehend how the athlete feels in a training setting, during and after competition or in cases of winning and loss and always be able to establish a healthy relationship with the athlete (Karakoc et al. 2011).

Main problems which were noted in studies regarding the relationship between the coach and the athlete are pointed as: the tension between the coach and the athlete, difficulties that were faced in frequent coach changing cases, tension among the coaches, coaches who are unable to play their role, coaches who are not incentive enough, untrustworthy coaches, inconsistent behaviours of the coach, disrespectful coaches, coaches that don't take part in psychological skills, overexpecting coaches, insufficient number of the female coaches, coaches who don't know and understand the athletes, cheater coaches, coaches who are focused on the team instead of the individuals, coach's lack of technical capacity, coach's stand regarding nourishment, coaches' inability to support during injury periods, and coaches with immature

communication skills (Teatro, 2014; Gearity, 2012; Gilbert & Trudel, 2004; Woodman & Hardy, 2001; Kenow & Williams, 1999; Chelladurai, 1984; Smith, Smoll & Curtis, 1979; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976).

Some of the athletes mentioned that they are having problems because of the coach's dissatisfaction and lack of control, and emphasized that these problems are having a negative effect on their performances in the course of time (Pensgaard & Ursin, 1998). Holt & Hogg (1999) have found that the athletes who attended Women's Soccer World Cup Finals experienced stress about communication with the coach. Dugdale et al. (2002) pointed out in their study on New Zealander athletes that one of the biggest problems the athletes are facing during international big games is the coach behaviours. Champbell & Jones (2002) stressed that circumstances such as group interaction, poor communication, and unfavorable coach behaviors etc. have a negative influence on their performances. In their study which was made on professional Rugby players, Nicholls et al. (2006) uttered that the players are facing problems originated from coach behaviours like training contents, unfair team selection, and tactical mistakes. It was spoken out by O'Neil & Steyn (2007) that the South African endurance events athletes are trying to enhance their performances by competing with their own efforts and the coaches don't have much effect on their performances. Besides these studies conducted on the athletes, there are also studies in literature towards determining the problems which the coaches are facing. Levy et al. (2009) conducted a longitudinal research about coaches' organisational stressors and ways to cope. Coaches were made to keep a diary that they wrote about the problems they faced for 28 days, and it was observed as a result of the study that the coaches were affected by administrative problems, work overload, competition atmosphere, athletes, team atmosphere and non-organisational stressors. In another study, Tharp & Gallimore (1976) observed basketball coaches in training and competition environments. In the wake of the study, it was emerged that the dominant behaviours of the coach during training are scolding, rudeness, rough communication, and encouragement.

When coach behaviours are examined in terms of genders, it's seen that time to time the athletes are having some problems based on gender issues. In a study named "Women in Sports and Their Problems" which was written by Yaprak & Amman (2009), women athletes have pointed that they experienced the danger of harassment before, during or after attending sports, and mentioned the negativities of working with a male coach constantly. Another important matter regarding gender is the coaches' lingo towards the athletes (Yüksel, 2014). For example, for coaches to address passive male players as "girls" or to use sentences that would evoke feminine characteristics both involve the insulting the women and driving the males in this state towards violence (Tükenmez, 2009).

Unethical behaviours -which exist within the profession of coaching as they were aforesaid- diminishes the respectability of coaching, therefore, the respectability of the sports. At this point, international sports committees and unions published a manifesto called "*Code of Ethics for Coaching*" to guide the coaches for practising their profession in the direction of universal values such as respect, honesty, objectivity, and justice (Tuncel & Büyüköztürk, 2009). What's expected from the coaches is for them to act in accordance with these universally accepted and embraced values (Güvendi et al., 2016). In this context, expectations of the athletes from the coaches can be sorted like this ; (Competing and winning – Motivating the athlete – Behaviours and attitudes at loss – Approaching the athlete – Having organising skills – Instructiveness – Occupational expertise). These expectations are especially important for underage athletes. Because, the needs of the groups which form the sports youth setups happen to be different than the adults'. The coaches should take these needs in consideration and should have the attributes that were listed below by going through an extensive education:

1. Knowledge of Sports (Field of Sports Knowledge)
2. Knowledge of General Culture
3. Professional Knowledge of Instructiveness
4. Suitability of Personal and Characteristic Features (Sunay, 1998)

Studies which were conducted with purpose of defining the negative behaviours of the coaches observed by the athletes are important on account of presenting both athletes' point of view on the coaches and behavioral profiles of the coaches towards the athletes, and coaches' ability to make up for their lackings by reviewing their attitudes regarding the athletes (Karakoc et al, 2011). Also, it's an unavoidable fact that the sportive efficiency scales up by determining negative coach behaviours and taking precautions in order to eliminate them. From this point forth, this study was exercised with objective of individual and team sports athletes to evaluate the attitudes and behaviours (*characteristic features, knowledge-skill level, fairness*) of coaches in Turkish leagues.

2. Method

This study was conducted with regard relational survey method which is one of the general screening models in accordance with the purpose.

2.1 Study Group

Target population of the study also constituted the sample group. 275 athletes (180 male, 95 female) who are actively

continuing their sportive careers in Turkish leagues for team sports branches such as soccer, volleyball, basketball and individual sports branches like karate, taekwondo, wrestling, kickboxing.

2.2 Data Collecting Tool

“Perceived Coach Attitudes and Behaviours Scale” (PCABS) which was developed by Üzüm et al. (2018) was applied for this study as data collecting tool. For this study, Cronbach’s Alpha internal consistency values of the scale that consists of 24 items and 3 sub-dimensions were determined as “Characteristic Features sub-dimension, $\alpha=0.81$ ”, “Knowledge and Skills Accumulation sub-dimension, $\alpha=0.83$ ” and “Being Fair sub-dimension, $\alpha=0.58$ ”. As for Cronbach’s Alpha internal consistency value of the total scale; it was found as $\alpha=0.79$. The items were evaluated over 5 categories and the numerical counterparts of these categories were graded as; Never=1, Rarely=2, Occasionally=3, Usually=4, Always=5. The data were collected by using face-to-face interview method. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 20 and 23 were formed the Characteristic Features sub-dimension. Knowledge and Skills sub-dimension was composed of items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22 and 24 while Being Fair sub-dimension composed of items 5 and 12. On the scale, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 20 and 23 were graded backwards.

2.3 Below are the Psychometric Features of the Measurement Tool

On the Characteristic Features dimension, what kind of impression coaches are leaving on athletes characteristically -as a result of reflection of some of the coach’s characteristic features (blaming, self-seeking, threatening, violence, status, irresponsibility, inconsistency, miscommunication etc.) on the work life- is being measured.

On the Knowledge and Skills Accumulation dimension, how the coaches’ backgrounds of knowledge and skills (technique, tactic, planning, training etc.) about the focused coaching area are being perceived by the athletes while the coaches are practising their profession is being evaluated.

As for the Being Fair dimension, how the fairness level of the coaches’ way of behaving to their athletes is being perceived and whether some of the specialities that the athletes have (gender, being the star athlete etc.) have an effect on the coaches’ fair behaving pattern or not are being tested (Üzüm et al., 2018).

2.4 Data Analysis

For this study, approximately 400 questionnaire forms were handed to the participants with face-to-face interview method. 329 of these forms were given back and 275 of them that were considered to be filled properly were assessed. In order to analyse the data at hand, first of all, Normality tests such as Shapiro Wilks, Kurtosis and Skewness were employed and it was decided to use parametric tests of hypothesis by establishing that the groups are normally distributed. Accordingly applied analysis were: percentage (%) and frequency (f) analysis for determining the distribution of the participant’s demographic data, Independent Sample t-test to compare two groups, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for more than two groups, and Pearson Correlation test to confirm the relationship between ungrouped data.

3. Findings

Findings about demographic attributes of the participants were shown at Table 1 as a result of the conducted analysis.

Table 1. Demographic Attributes of the Participants

		f	%	Total
Gender	Male	180	65.5	275
	Female	95	34.5	
Branch	Team	152	55.3	275
	Individual	123	45.6	
League	Amateur	164	59.6	275
	Professional	111	40.4	

Arithmetic means and standart deviations of the answers which the athletes gave to the sub-dimensions of “Perceived Coach Attitudes and Behaviours Scale” were presented at Table 2.

Table 2. Mean and standart deviation of the sub-dimensions

Sub-dimensions	Characteristic Features	Knowledge and Skills Accumulation	Fairness
Arithmetic Mean	3.81	3.43	2.36
Standart Deviation	0.44	0.36	1.09

When Table 2 is examined, athletes perception of coach behaviours and attitudes scores were aligned as; Characteristic Features (3.81 ± 0.44), Knowledge and Skills Accumulation (3.43 ± 0.36) and Fairnes (2.36 ± 1.09).

Table 3. Comparison of the Sub-dimensions Regarding Gender

	Gender	n	Mean	Sd	t	P
<i>Characteristic Features</i>	Male	180	3.76	0.46	-2.47	0.01
	Female	95	3.90	0.38		
<i>Knowledge and Skills Accumulation</i>	Male	180	3.39	0.38	-0.09	0.03
	Female	95	3.49	0.32		
<i>Fairness</i>	Male	180	2.55	1.08	0.52	0.00
	Female	95	2.02	1.04		

*P<0,05

Table 3 shows that there are significant differences between the gender and characteristic features ($t = -2,47$; $p < 0.05$), knowledge and skills accumulation ($t = -0.09$; $p < 0.05$) and fairness ($t = 0.52$; $p < 0.05$) sub-dimensions. When the means investigated, it can be seen that mean of the females are higher than males for characteristic features (3.76 ± 0.46) and knowledge and skills accumulation (3.49 ± 0.32) sub-dimensions, and lower for fairness sub-dimension (2.02 ± 1.04).

Table 4. Comparing the Sub-dimensions Regarding Classification Variable

	Classification	n	Mean	Sd	t	P
<i>Characteristic Features</i>	Amateur	164	3.77	0.45	-1.81	0.04
	Professional	111	3.87	0.21		
<i>Knowledge and Skills Accumulation</i>	Amateur	164	3.42	0.35	-0.60	0.54
	Professional	111	3.44	0.37		
<i>Fairness</i>	Amateur	164	3.42	1.10	1.11	0.26
	Professional	111	2.27	1.8		

*P<0,05

Examinations of the Table 4 present that there is a significant difference between classification and characteristic features ($t = -1.81$; $p < 0.05$) for the benefit of the professional league coaches (3.76 ± 0.46).

Table 5. Relationship between the age of the coach and sub-dimensions

		Characteristic Features	Knowledge and Skills Accumulation	Fairness
<i>Age of the Coach</i>	Correlation	-0.02	-0.13*	0.03
	Significant	0.71	0.02	0.53

*P<0,05

It can be seen at Table 5 that there is a low level negative directed relationship between age of the coaches and the knowledge and skills accumulation sub-dimension ($r = -0.13$).

It wasn't established that there is significant relationship in conclusion with the statistical analysis on variables such as the athletes' age, years of sportive career, sports branch, and the coaches' gender, marital status, level of education, amount of time spent with the athlete ($p > 0.05$).

4. Discussion

According to the analysis -which was conducted to determine how coaches who practices in Turkish sports leagues as amateurs or professionals are perceived by the athletes on characteristic features, knowledge and skills accumulation, and being fair sub-dimensions it can be seen that the highest coach attitudes and behaviours score perceived by the athletes is on Characteristic Features sub-dimension. It was in turn followed by Knowledge and Skills Accumulation and Being Fair sub-dimensions (Table 2). When the literature regarding the subject is examined, it can be noted that there are similar results. On his study, Moen (2014) emphasized about characteristic features that nondemocratic coach behaviours are affecting the performance of the athletes in a negative way. Güzelöz et al. (2015) explained with their research on soccer players that technical knowledge level of the coaches are considered to be inadequate by the athletes. Boardley et al. (2008) sorted the coach behaviours which motivates the athletes as character, technical knowledge and game strategy. When all these results interpreted together, it can be said that the characters of the coaches are more important than their knowledge and skills accumulation from the athletes' point of view.

After assessing the matter with respect to gender variable it was noted that women athletes are being affected by coach behaviours such as characteristic features and knowledge and skills accumulation of the coaches, and have higher scores than male athletes (Table 3). This result can be accepted quite natural if it was kept in mind that 91% of the coaches who were evaluated within the scope of our study are male. Because, according to the literature, it's known that female athletes generally favor to work with male coaches (Martin et al., 2001). Also women athletes prefer to interact more with their team-mates and coaches in order to improve themselves and increase their performances. For this reason, women are able to establish stronger emotional bonds with their coaches by creating more sincere communication than men (Sienska et al., 2013). This attention of female athletes towards their coaches aren't left unanswered and women are being motivated by getting more positive feedbacks and praises compared to men (Felak, 2011). Based on these results, we can say that

coaches in Turkey are qualified enough to meet the expectations of female athletes and there is a healthy communication between them, and female athletes are not being subjected to positive discrimination by male coaches.

It's seen that there is a significant difference between classification variable and characteristic features sub-dimension in favor of the professional league coaches (Table 4). Bai & Dana (2013) noted that the coaches in Iran Professional Football League displays above averaged positive attitudes and behaviours. Türksoy (2008) found in his study with professional football players in Turkey that the instructive and educational behaviour score average is high. Granger & Rhind (2014) observed that professional Rugby league coaches have high coaching skills. In accordance with these results, it's safe to say that professional league coaches exhibit more positive behaviours on characteristic features dimension compared to amateur league coaches. Because, professional league coaches feel obligated to show positive attitudes and behaviours for they are being constantly pursued by high level athletes, managers, media and millions of sports viewers.

When the relationship between the coach's age and sub-dimensions examined, a negative oriented low level significant correlation between age and knowledge and skills accumulation sub-dimension was found (Table 5). According to this result, knowledge and skills scores of the coaches in Turkish leagues decrease as their age increase. It's noted that 54% (n=148) of the coaches who were evaluated in this study are 40 or above years old and majority of the coaches in this age group (n=70) are high school graduates. Therefore, coaches who are high school graduates are older and have lower scores on field knowledge and skills dimension compared to the ones graduated from a university. Tatlıcı & Kırımoglu (2008) indicate that coaches experience emotional burnout syndrome as they get older. We can also mention a similar situation in our study. Which means, we can say that the older coaches feel emotional burnout syndrome and become desensitized to follow new developments about the field. And this might cause them a lack of knowledge and skill. In their study, Güvendi et al. (2016) established that the coaches between 20-24 years old get higher scores than the ones between 31-35 years old and stressed that it arises because of the younger coaches' openness for improvement and efforts to prove themselves on the field.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

According to the findings of this study for evaluating the behaviours of the amateur and professional coaches who practices in Turkish Leagues by the athletes whom they work with; we can say that the athletes are not negatively affected by the coaches' characteristic features in general. Especially, female athletes evaluate the characteristic features and knowledge and skills of the coaches in a positive way. Professional league coaches display more favorable and positive characteristic behaviours compared to amateur league coaches. We can also say by looking at the results of this research that the coaches don't update themselves on knowledge and skills sub-dimension as they get older. Thus, it's suggested for older coaches to be taken for on the job training in regular basis and to follow new developments about their field. Also it's recommended to researchers for further similar studies about the subject to investigate the general profiles of the coaches in Turkey with regard to branches.

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