

ANALYTICAL STUDY OF FEMALE ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF MALE AND FEMALE COACHES OF THE CAPITAL CITIES OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to explore the male and female coach experiences of the sport girls of provincial and national capital cities of Pakistan who have represented cities of Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Islamabad regularly in various sports activities at Inter-collegiate, Inter-University and other national competitions conducted at different places, to analyze the gender difference which may be a mediating factor for relationship effectiveness between athletes and coaches. Ironically, with the increase in participation of female athletes and sports that has developed reasonably during last two decades, there has been a drastic decrease in the number of female qualified coaches over the past 10 years. The purpose of this study was to determine female athletes' perceptions and experiences of being trained by male and female coaches. The semi-structured interviews revealed four major themes: discipline and structure, co-ordination and co-operation, democratic and autocratic, and coach preference. It was found significantly as most of the participants stated a preference for male coaches, yet differences were found when comparing various coaching qualities, and are discussed in regards to overall sport experiences.

INTRODUCTION

The scholars of Physical Education have described the coach-athlete relationship as of profound effect on an athlete's satisfaction, performance, and quality of life (Green leaf, Gould, & Dieffenbachia, 2001) and several factors may influence this relationship. The Sindh University sports girls from 1996, during most of the Inter-university competitions did not perform well as expected. It is due to conflict with the coach, receiving inaccurate technical information, the coach's inability to handle selection controversy, and lack of focus on team climate played significant

roles in lower-level performances. The trust, friendship, and feedback from the coach had a positive impact on the performance of athletes who met or exceeded expectations. Athletes experiencing burnout have cited the coach as a negative influence due to the coaches' lack of belief in the athlete, extreme pressure, and unrealistic expectations (Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997). The studies made by Stewart and Taylor (2000) found those athletes' perceptions of coaching competence and coaching behaviors were contributing factors to performance.

Several studies have described effectiveness of the impact of gender on the coach-athlete relationship. Athlete preferences for same-sex or opposite-sex coaches have been analyzed and factors taken into consideration have incorporated level of knowledge and ability to motivate, (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994), level of athlete's comfort in disclosure and capability of being a role model (Lirgg, Dibrezzo, & Smith, 1994) and the research work found that female gymnast and swimmers ranked female coaches as superior in the coaching qualities relating well to others and understanding athletes' feelings, which is one of the most important rated qualities keeping in view socio cultural tradition of Pakistan, where as no difference was found among other characteristics. Conversely, a strong sex bias favoring male coaches was found in female college basketball athletes who rated males as more knowledgeable, more likely to achieve future success, more desirable to play for, and having a greater ability to motivate as shown in Table No. 1.

Although female athletic participation has increased with the passage of time, and there has been a decrease in the number of female coaches over the past thirty years in Pakistan. The percentage of females coaching college teams has dropped as much as 50% between the mid-1970's and early 1980's (survey report). Similarly, male coached 80% of college teams in 1972 while women coached only 20% of teams in 1990 where as at present Pakistan has hardly 1% trained female athletes for national contests, which is discouraging in the process of the development

of girl sports competitions at national as well as international levels.

Studies suggest that although male and female athletes share many attributes such as the desire to win, willingness to sacrifice time and energy, and enjoyment of competition, athletes need to be coached differently. The factors that are necessary to be considered includes training methods, coaching philosophy, motivational tactics, communication style, and ability to relate on a personal level. The majority of research has explored the impact of coach gender on the female athlete has been conducted quantitatively and used for hypothetical coaches (Franklin & Babbitt, 1998). The present study utilized a qualitative approach to explore female athletes' experiences with actual male and female coaches. Further, Carron and Bennett (1977) noted the importance of gaining the athlete's perspective of coach-athlete compatibility.

METHOD

Twenty sports girls under study of national repute from each capital city were selected randomly to work on this issue. The total numbers of participants in this investigation were hundred female athletes. All athletes had represented and participated in Basketball, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Track & Field, Swimming, Gymnastic, Cricket, Hockey and Badminton. These athletes were chosen for this study as a purposeful sample because they had the potential to provide a rich description of the experience of being coached by both male and female and had a recent memory of this experience.

PROCEDURE

Before initiating the present study, interview was conducted to clarify the interviewer's personal experiences of having a male coach and to explore potential prejudices, and themes from this interview included preference for organization, winning attitude, and enjoyment of the game.

Semi-structured interviews were then employed to collect information about the athletes' experiences and perceptions of

having both male and female coaches. All participants were invited to participate in the study by personal or telephone contact, and those expressing interest were interviewed. Participants were informed that involvement was voluntary, and were advised of the ability to terminate participation at any time. To ensure confidentiality, the participants were informed that given-name would be used for actual names and team affiliations. The interviews were conducted in person and lasted approximately forty minutes in length. After the interview, participants were given an opportunity to review the transcript and suggest changes. The participants suggested no changes.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The questions placed to the participants intended to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of being coached by men and women. The interviewer initially gathered information about coach history, as well as the sport and level of competition. Participants were then asked questions related to differences or similarities experienced with each coach in training methods, encouragement and motivation, personal relationships, level of sport knowledge, and the coach preferred. (Appendix- A)

RESULTS

Table- 1 gives a description of each participant and her history of having both male and female coaches. All participants played at the college/ university and province level and have played competitively for at least two years. It is important to note that thirty of the participants' experiences of the female coach were from college side; and four major themes emerged from the interviews such as Discipline and Structure; Personal Relationships; Democratic and Autocratic, and Coach Preference.

A) DISCIPLINE AND STRUCTURE

The majority of participants indicated that male coaches were more structured and organized. They expressed that the male coaches were much more together, knew structure; knew exactly where they needed to be, and what time trainee needed to start. The differences were notably significant in the practice setting.

The male coaches would develop practice plans and execute every detail needed to make them work. The male coaches were seen as being harder on the athletes and "expected more" from the players than the female coaches. The males tended to coach from an authoritarian perspective and enforced the concept of "no excuses, and set the rule and were going to stick with the set rule. Many of the athletes felt there would be more consequences to face in practices under the male coach if they did not pay attention or were not serious. Some of the athletes in this study responded favorably to the male coaches' disciplinary tactics, as it aided in keeping them focused; however, it was revealed that the male coach was also considered to be strict as compare to female coach.

Almost half of the participants felt that the female coaches' actions were not systematic and non-authoritative. The female coaches tended to run late at times and would not get the players prepared for the game. Practices were not structured, nor on a time schedule. These athletes perceived that the female coaches had a harder time trying to accomplish tasks in practice, and did not have similar discipline compared to experiences with the male coaches.

It was observed that with the female coach had different stuff everyday. It would take her five minutes to explain what they were supposed to do and then it wouldn't really work very well and the athletes under training just look at each other. Female coaches were more likely to forget details in practice, such as not keeping score of games, which may have led to lack of motivation during practice. Participants indicated that female coaches would consider individual situations instead of sticking to certain rules and consequences. For example, if an athlete was late to practice, a male coach would have a set rule regarding this behavior and if any player broke the rule, regardless of the reason, she would have to face the consequences. However, a female coach would listen to the athlete's reason and then decide what type of consequence the player should face.

B) CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION

All of the participants felt that female coaches had a greater ability to relate to them and expressed that the female coaches know sometimes what female athletes going through, different life cycles and stages of their living time, and can relate to how girls change differently than boys. The participants indicated that the female coach understand easily to deal with the athletes and could sympathize with them when it came to girl matter. The female coaches had a greater tendency toward being friends with the players and getting to know them more than the male coaches did. The majority of athletes stated that the female coach was more comfortable, and likes to know trainee rather than having to be stern. This sometimes caused problems because the female coach would develop emotional ties with the players and would construct feelings of whom she liked and did not like. This made a difference in some of the participants' experiences because the coach would characterize a couple of players as being similar to the way the female coach played and worked in college or university. So people with different work ethics were considered different. The players began to see differences in coaching as favoritism; and the mistakes made by some players would be overlooked, but similar mistakes would be made into 'an issue' with other players.

The athletes did experience a lot of positive feedback and encouragement from the female coaches. Many of the participants believed this came naturally from the female coaches. One athlete stated, in general, to have a female athletes is comfortable at encouraging and motivating as observed, females are more encouraging; and felt the bond shared with the female coach that helped to motivate and encourage for desired performance. The female coaches were more inclined than the male coaches to produce statements to encourage players. Female coaches often tended to first point out the positive tasks the athletes did before expressing what could be improved.

The co-ordination and co-operation between the female athletes and male coaches were very different from the relationships with female coaches. It has been experienced that

male coaches intimidated many of the female athletes. The female players knew that they could discuss anything about the sport and certain tactics with the male coaches, but nothing outside of practice or the game could be discussed. Whereas the athletes felt a variety of issues could be discussed with the female coaches. Some trainees stated, "If they had a personal problem with any male coach, they wouldn't say anything about it. There was no shared bond with him, like the one she had with the female coach. If something were bothering a player, the male coach would simply punish the player for not paying attention. In similar situations with a female coach, it was felt that she would have inquired about her fitness, and would have known something was bothering her and if it was not serious, would have encouraged for play or practice.

Almost fifty percent of the athletes indicated the biggest difference between the relationships with the male and female coaches came from a lack of encouragement and positive reinforcement. The males tended to correct and point out the mistakes more often and hesitated to use compliments as motivation. Athletes expressed that their male coach always told them about what wrong they were doing. After a while in practice, he could compliment them for getting through nicely.

C) DEMOCRATIC AND AUTOCRATIC

The mentality of the male coach compared to the female coach was a major theme throughout the interviews. The males seemed to be more aggressive and demanding. The males' mentality was for all out attempt to get it and they only wanted to win, which made practices hard and strict.

With female coaches, a more laid back approach was utilized. The tone was much lighter and practice proceeded in a more calm and non-aggressive fashion. The female coach athletes had enforced and always directed to get things done in a lighter tone and wanted them to do as she wanted, but could be playful at the same time. The pressure of doing something wrong or making a mistake and having to face consequences was not as prevalent with

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a female coach. Only one of the participants had a positive outlook towards this mentality, as athletes explained, they may not had to work hard as they did with the males, but the end result was the same.

D) COACH PREFERENCE

When asked the athletes under study which coach they preferred the most, almost all participants responded favorably toward the male coach for various reasons. The athletes believed that to be a good coach, he / she must have respect from the players; have ability to control the team, and to enforce discipline, the key elements in gaining the respect of players, and some coaches command respect because they know how to make athletes respect them. Along with respect, the female athletes viewed a good coach as one who was able to perform the skill and have more than adequate knowledge about the sport. They further stated that males assumed to know more about the basics and the fundamentals and everything that's required for a successful team. The female athletes considered an ideal coach to be a good leader, teacher, friend, and motivator and, in a way, challenge players to become better-physically, mentally, tactically, and technically, to teach athletes prepare for any kind of obstacles that they may be confronted with; teaching them basics like discipline, punctuality, getting to practice on time, dealing with other people, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. Almost half of the female participants believed that a coach should be a good example and help in the teaching lessons of life, along with coaching skills.

CONCLUSION

Concluding, it was found that female athletes' experiences of having female and male coaches and comparison demonstrated that two- third of the female athletes under study preferred a male coach, as men were reported to be more detailed in instruction and planned, the women were more lenient disciplinarians. This finding coincides with Masin's (1998) results, which found that 75% of female athletes preferred male coaches because of more perceived organization to acquire skill development for competitions, and expressed a positive perception of the discipline enforced by the male coaches. The studies showed benefits of co-

ordination and co-operation in terms of need for warmth, understanding, and a sense of humor with the players in considering athletes' feelings and female coaches rated significantly higher than male coaches in demonstrating these qualities that female athletes were more inclined to disclose personal information to a female coach, as Simmons (1997) in earlier studies also found that female athletes were more inclined to disclose personal information to a female coach and many of the athletes experienced these traits from female coaches, were better at relating and to establish a friendship and athletes also expressed a desire to bond with the coach, not indicating favoritism to be shown toward any player.

Further, many female athletes thrive on self-satisfaction and the belief they are capable of doing a certain task or drill, and can best achieve this through encouragement from the coach. The present findings indicated that female coaches were viewed as more encouraging and motivating through a greater use of positive feedback. From this work it was understood that female athletes tended to be more acceptable of the male coaches' mentality than that of the female coaches' mentality, as most of the participants approved the authoritarian style of coaching utilized by the male coaches. Women may prefer this style of coaching due to cultural expectations of men in authority positions, male dominance in women's sports, or the lack of female coaches as role models. The female athletes also expressed a preference for male coaches, citing factors such as a greater level of knowledge, which may lead to achieve success. Similarly, since men have held coaching positions for a longer period of time, athletes may have more confidence in their knowledge levels and coaching abilities. Since the majority of coaches have been male, this could help to explain the female athletes' preference toward male coaches, and other factors that may influence athletes' perceptions of coaches such as the success of the team; personal attributes like age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and athletes' level of skills and abilities may also impact athletes' experiences with coaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) In order to enhance women's coaching skills the administrative authorities of Pakistan Sports Board, Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, Universities, and Higher Secondary Boards have to undertake serious efforts to engage and motivate the national youth nation

- involving them in Sports Academies sponsored by them in coordination with national federations to acquire targeted goals bringing laurels to our nation in the field sports providing well trained and qualified female coaches at national and international organizations world over.
- The local Coaches having outstanding performance and command on their game may be provided short and long term training abroad as is being provided to teaching faculty to advance their technical skills to impart training to athletes and local female coaches.
 - The appointment of female coaches in Schools, Boards and Universities must be made considering their qualification and societal limitations with attractive salaries as being provide abroad.
 - Universities and Higher Education Commission, Islamabad must conduct refresher courses and workshops at least twice a year assigning vigilance committee to assess the performance of the refresher courses training and workshops. The experienced resource persons are invited from Pakistan and abroad to provide advanced skills to trainees.

TABLE NO: 1
MEAN DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF FEMALE ATHLETES

Coaches	Peshawar City N = 20 M & F		Lahore City N = 20 M & F		Karachi City N = 20 M & F		Islamabad City N = 20 M & F		Quetta City N = 20 M & F	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Basketball	75	25	90	10	95	05	85	15	60
Volleyball	80	20	95	05	100	00	90	10	70	30
Cricket	95	05	100	00	100	00	100	00	90	10
Hockey	90	10	95	05	100	00	90	10	70	30
Badminton	100	00	100	00	95	05	100	00	90	10
Swimming Gymnastic	20	80	40	60	10	90	15	85	00	100

The table shows that the body contact games like Swimming and Gymnastic the female athletes feel more relaxed with female coaching while the percentage of male coaches in other games is higher than the female coach.

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