

Value of an effective
coach athlete
relationship
psychology essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [The Coach – Athlete Relationship](#) \n \t
2. [Organisational Structures](#) \n \t
3. [Conclusion](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Understanding the value of an effective coach-athlete relationship within the elite sport spectrum, and the use of efficient management within multidisciplinary teams

Traditionally, a coach has a prescribed number of roles, which typically includes a planned, coordinated and integrated program of athlete preparation (Baker, Horton, Robertson-Wilson & Wall, 2003; Woodman, 1993), whilst ensuring that their own and the athlete’s cognitions, feelings, and behaviours are mutually and casually interrelated (Jowett & Cockerill, 2002; Jowett, Paull, & Pensgaard, 2005). However, the modern elite head coach must acknowledge the importance of his role from a business or financial perspective (Perry, 2000). Blair (1996) suggests that the role of a manager is to maximize the output of the organization by organizing, planning, staffing, directing and controlling; and that leadership is just one aspect of the directing function. This is in line with Lyles’ (2002) more recent belief that, the role of the coach is to provide the direction & management necessary for the strategic overview of the design and implementation of the coaching process.

Bureaucracy management orientation (Weber, 1974) refers to a preference for rules and regulation. Individuals who prefer this orientation value discipline, compliance to rules, and impersonal relationships. They believe that those in higher positions have the right to make decisions. They also emphasize organisational and loyalty. However, Wren (1972) states that ‘bureaucracy was conceived as a blueprint for efficiency which would emphasise rules rather than men.’ Therefore, although there may be uses for a bureaucracy orientation within a coaching environment when referring to job description and team meetings, it clearly neglects the interpersonal relationships between team coaches and athletes. The human relations movement (Barnard, 1938; Mayo, 1933) challenged long held theories such as bureaucracy. It recognised that an organisation is made up of smaller groups, which were made up of individuals with personal motivations. This theory can be directly related to the role of the head coach and the multidisciplinary teams such as; physiologist, psychologist, biomechanist, nutritionist and lifestyle advisors, all of which are included within the elite sport infrastructure.

The Coach – Athlete Relationship

The coach athlete relationship has been conceptualized as a situation in which coaches’ and athletes’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are interdependent (Jowett, 2005; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Jowett, Paull, & Pensgaard, 2005). Coaches and athletes’ interpersonal feelings, thoughts and behaviours have been operationalized and measured via the constructs of closeness, commitment, and complementarity (Jowett & Ntoumanis, 2004).

“Closeness” refers to the emotional aspect in the dyad and is reflected by

feelings such as “liking” or “similarity” (Jowett, 2002). Jowett and Ntoumanis (2004) also included “respect” as another representative of “Closeness” as “respect” indicates acceptance in the relationship of an individual’s position in the dyad (Jowett, 2002). “Commitment” is the intention of an individual to maintain an interpersonal relationship (Rosenblatt, 1977) and therefore reflects the relational aspect of “cognitions”. The final, behavioural aspect of interpersonal relationships is denoted by “Complementarity” (Kiesler, 1997). A major advantage that typifies the 3 + 1 Cs model of the coach-athlete relationship is its emphasis on the bidirectional nature of the relationship. This bidirectionality is manifested through the construct of co-orientation (Jowett, 2005, 2007a, 2007c). This construct contains two sets of interpersonal perceptions: direct perceptions (e. g., “I trust my coach/athlete”) and meta-perceptions (e. g., “My coach/athlete trusts me”).

Figure 1: Schematic representation of the coach-athlete relationship (Taken from Jowett, 2002).

The importance of these behaviours were typified by British athletics coach Peter Stanley when discussing the coach athlete relationship;

“There’s a lot to say about the relationship between a coach and athlete. You can usually get people to do something by asking them, but you tend to get more from athletes if they have got a rapport with you. I mean it’s like the football analogy. You can have the best player in the world, but if he doesn’t like the manager and doesn’t want to play for him, then he’s never gonna give himself fully to the team. I think it’s the same for athletes’ as

well. They are never gonna give everything unless they are totally confident in, and have a rapport with, the coach.”

(Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004)

The research conducted thus far applying the 3 + 1 Cs, includes an examination of the impact of these relationship constructs on athletes' perceptions of satisfaction with performance (Jowett & Don Carolis, 2003), on athletes' perceptions of team cohesion (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004), on athletes' perceptions of self-concept (Jowett, 2008), and on both athletes' and coaches' interpersonal perceptions (Jowett & Clark-Carter, 2006).

However, previous authors have stated a lack research linking dimensions of the coach-athlete relationship to athletes' views regarding the task and ego-involving features of the coach-created climate despite the assumption that the context of interpersonal relationships has motivational significance (Ames, 1992; Nicholls, 1989).

Mageau & Vallerands' (2003) proposed motivational model of the coach athlete relationship (Figure 2) combines several established conceptual models including, Chelladurai's (1978) multidimensional model of leadership (MDML), the cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980, 1985), and extends Vallerand & Pelletier's (1985) previous motivational model.

Figure 2: The motivational model of coach athlete relationship (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003)

This model proposes a sequence in which a coaches personal orientation, context in which they operate, and personal perception of their athlete's

<https://assignbuster.com/value-of-an-effective-coach-athlete-relationship-psychology-essay/>

behaviour and motivation influence their coaching behaviours. These antecedents of the coach behaviours can be directly related to Chelladurai's (1978) MDML model in relation to the situational characteristics, leader characteristics, and team member characteristics. These characteristics can be shown to have a direct link with motivational orientation. Erle (1981) reported that a person's motivational orientation influences preferences for leadership behaviour. Consistent with theory, individuals who were task motivated preferred more training and instruction behaviour, while those who were affiliation motivated and extrinsically motivated preferred more social support behaviour.

Therefore, in accordance with the proposed model, the perception of athlete's behaviour and motivation may prove vital. However, much of the research including the MDML has been largely descriptive and provided a series of mixed results. Chelladurai (1984) & Riemer & Chelladurai (1995), have show that in certain sports and cultures athletes tend to prefer certain leadership styles, however Kang (2003) has reported that Korean basketball and track and field athletes preferred more autocratic behaviour and less training and instruction , positive feedback, and social support than American counterparts. Therefore, the importance of situational characteristics is somewhat questionable, it would seem that regardless of the situation it is the team member behaviours and motivation that is evidently more important.

In turn, coaches' behaviours in the form of autonomy-supportive behaviours, provision of structure and involvement have a beneficial impact on athletes' needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. Finally, the satisfaction of <https://assignbuster.com/value-of-an-effective-coach-athlete-relationship-psychology-essay/>

these three psychological needs determines athletes' intrinsic and self-determined extrinsic motivation. Studies (McAuley & Tammen, 1989; Tauer & Harackiewicz, 1999) concerning the validity of Deci & Ryan's (1980, 1985) cognitive evaluation theory have generally lent support to its basic premises in that, individuals high in perceived success show a high level of competence and intrinsic motivation within a sport setting. However, the application of this model may not be relevant within an already highly extrinsically orientated group, as the premises of the model are aimed towards more intrinsically motivated groups (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Frederick & Ryan, 1995).

Organisational Structures

Multidisciplinary sport science teams play a huge part within modern elite sport and often comprise doctors, psychologists, physiologists, biomechanists, physiotherapists, and life style advisers. However, in order for these multidisciplinary teams to be effective and to create a positive influence on the working environment, a climate of cooperation and collaboration needs to be actively fostered in what is potentially an environment that fosters competition and conflict (Bell, 2001; Landau, 2000). As within many professions, coaching and sport science experts tend to possess a high level of confidence within their own ability. Although this confidence is well founded and based on successful practice and extensive training, it can prove to be very challenging when experts with different opinions and experience are required to collaborate when there is no established process for integrating different expert approaches (Reid, Stewart, and Thorne, 2004). In order to avoid arising conflict within a

multidisciplinary sport science team the size of the group must be taken in consideration, as it has been shown that smaller groups of around five have the best mix of individual commitment and interpersonal collaboration (Reid et al., 2004). This has been a structure adopted by seven time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong who has credited many aspects of his performance to his sport science support team.

“ We came along and looked at every aspect of cycling. Not just the rider and the team, but every piece of equipment all the way down to the nuts and bolts. I know it sounds impossible to do but we looked at the big things, the frame, the wheels, the heart pieces, but also the little pieces and how to make the bike as light as we could, as strong as we could, and as safe as we could. The good news is that it continues to work for us.”

(Lance Armstrong, 2005)

The biomechanist has several roles within a cycling multidisciplinary sports science support team. As stated by Lance Armstrong a biomechanics team must look at the equipment used by the athlete and aim to make it as efficient as possible. This can include aspects of performance such as; aerodynamics, drafting, and equipment configuration. The riding position of the cyclist has been shown to have an important consequence on both speed and metabolic rate (Faria, 1992; Gnehm, Reichenbach, & Altpeter, 1997).

The aerodynamic advantage from a reduced frontal area when the cyclist assumes a forward crouched upper body position is well established (Capelli, Rosa, & Butti, 1993). However, when the cyclist's upper body configuration is changed from the upright to the aero position there is significant increase in

oxygen consumption, heart rate, and respiratory exchange ratio (Gnehm, et al, 1997). These aerodynamic changes can also result in a 20% decrease in drag (Kyle, 1989). Furthermore the use of drafting has also been shown to reduce air resistance and reduce energy utilization by up to 40% (Lucia, Hoyos, & Chicharro, 2000). The transfer of power from the human body to the drive train of the bicycle depends upon the crank length, longitudinal foot position of the pedal, pedal cadence, seat height, and seat tube angle (Gonzales & Hull, 1989). Therefore, ensuring that these aspects of the athlete's performance are efficient is fundamental to the role of the biomechanist, they must understand how each aspect can affect the performance of the athlete and work to develop the technique, strategy and equipment used within race situations.

Conclusion

It is evident that the coaching role within elite performance has evolved in recent years. The coach is now not only required to possess basic skill knowledge of the sport but the ability to manage and delegate performers and multidisciplinary sport science support teams. In order for the coach to attain the highest level of performance possible from their athlete they must occupy an understanding of the coach-athlete relationship. The conceptual models introduced and discussed within this report provide an outline which the coach can follow, apply, and measure in order to help achieve a successful coach-athlete interpersonal relationship. Finally, working within multidisciplinary sport science support teams is a required role of the elite coach. They must understand the complexities of elite performance and provide the services which can help to elevate and maintain performance

such as; psychological, physiological, nutritional, biomechanical, and live style advising needs. It is also essential that an elite head coach can create a climate of cooperation and collaboration whilst ensuring that a sufficient management structure is in place and that each member understands the role they are required to fulfil.