

Attitude of young basketball players and their coaches towards the importance of abilities that are necessary for a coach

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Abstract:

Basketball has become especially popular, it is based on new technologies for the development of the science of sport more and more often and the success of athletes and coaches in basketball depends on lots of factors more and more often. One of the main factors is the interaction between the coach and athletes. Thus, coaches and athletes must understand each other in order to seek sport achievements. Taking into account these facts, the attitude of young basketball players and their coaches to the importance of abilities that are necessary for a real and ideal coach is analysed in the article. The questionnaire by T. Moser „Real and ideal coach“ that consists of 17 statements reflecting different abilities, which are important for the coach and his/her activity, was used in the research. 171 15–16 basketball players and 41 basketball coaches participated in the research and all the research participants were selected from the list of Lithuanian basketball sport schools randomly. The mean age of the basketball players was 15 ± 1.28 and that of the coaches – 48 ± 11.4 . The results revealed the following abilities of coaches: proper communication, keeping friendly contacts with athletes, revelation of advantages and disadvantages of pupils were more important to the young basketball players statistically reliably than to the coaches in their self-assessment. However, the coaches indicate in the self-assessment it is more important to them to prepare a good training and have good knowledge of their sport statistically reliably than to the basketball players assessing their coaches. The basketball players have a slightly different image of their ideal coach: he/she should be an example to the athletes, create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team, discover and train talents and keep friendly contacts with the athletes. Meanwhile, the coaches think an ideal coach should first have a standing and influence in the implementation of ideas, be able to prepare a training well and be psychologically stable and self-confident.

Key words: young basketball players, coaches, abilities.

Introduction

It is looked for an answer to the following question more and more often: what is the attitude of athletes to their coach – positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable one? Both sport results, aiming for the goal and the athlete's career depends on the favourable attitude of athletes to their coaches and their mutually successful interaction. The analysis of scientific literature allowed stating the coach had to understand every athlete and know his/her sport abilities; it is the only way to know the athlete seeking for sport results (Bergman - Drewe, 2000; Misasi, Morin & Kwasnowski, 2016).

Taking into account the conclusions of previous researches, Malinauskas (2004) and Hampson & Jowett (2014) state the interpersonal problems of relations in the communication between the coach and the athlete have a decisive influence on his/her professional activity. In this case, it is easier for the athlete to trust the coach when there is communication, he/she tries to help and they aim for the common goal. However, not all coaches obtain a positive attitude: it is only possible for those ones who are able to form trust-based interpersonal relations in the team, communicate with athletes properly, know them and accept them as they are (Gillbert & Trudel, 2004; Malinauskas & Bukauskas, 2005; Norman & French, 2013).

Siekanska, Blecharz & Wojtowicz (2013) state the coach must develop trust and respect-based interpersonal relations, provide assistance, encourage the personal improvement of athletes and create conditions for their revelation. Meanwhile, Mladenovic (2010) indicates in his works a favourable attitude to the coach is mostly affected by the coach's attention to the athletes's goals and ability to create a positive atmosphere satisfying the needs of every athletes, on the contrary, the athletes's attitude to the coach will be unfavourable unless he/she does it.

However, Holden, Forester, Keshock, & Pugh (2015) draw a conclusion in the recent research the coach is assessed by athletes more favourably if he/she understands their expectations, is able to react both to victories and losses properly, is able to be consistent and fair in trainings or competitions, is loyal to the team and notices

and appreciates the athletes' efforts. Meanwhile, LaVoi (2007) accentuates coaches are different from each other both in their ability to create proper interpersonal relations, leading in sport teams, results of their pupils and methods used to the coached team. For example, Mladenović (2010) supposes a favourable attitude of athletes-students to their coach is also shown by the coach's ability to create a positive environment satisfying the needs of every athlete. On the contrary, the athletes have an unfavourable attitude to the coach if he/she ignores the athletes' needs, creates a negative atmosphere and negative environment. Unless the coach is able or wants to understand his/her pupils and has frequent conflicts with them, the athletes will have a negative attitude to him/her and there will be no good results of work. According to Gilbert & Trudel (2006), it is important for the coach to be able to encourage a desire of his/her pupils to do sports, work systematically and aim for the set goal.

The coach must develop the athletes' independence and be oriented to the competition and high sport results, but he/she must also help the athletes to reach the set goals. In this case, a positive attitude towards the coach is formed and individual and team goals are aimed more successfully (Mladenovic, 2010; Holden, Forester, Keshock, & Pugh, 2015). The scientific research also confirms (Ahleberg, Mallett, & Tinning, 2008) it is important for the players how the coaches are able to strengthen the athletes' motivation and satisfaction with their sport activity and create the interpersonal relations ensuring the satisfaction of social and psychological needs of athletes. Thus, the attitude of young athletes towards their coach also depends on the coach's behaviour, acts and style of instruction and, in turn, it partially affects the athletes' achievements (Siekanska, Blecharz, & Wojtowicz, 2013). Moreover, it is noted with the research data the coach is often assessed both for his/her competence or training methodology and abilities to create favourable conditions for the athletes to do sports, a positive psychological climate and a close interaction because the communication between the coach and athletes affects the way he/she is accepted by the pupils (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; 2005). According to Ahleberg, Mallett, & Tinning (2008), the players have a more favourable attitude to the coach that encourages their participation in the decision-making, spots and regards their feelings, needs and perspectives and uses the democratic style of leading in trainings. However, if the coach uses threatening, pressure and high control too often, the attitude of players changes.

Jowett (2009) remarks the first disagreements occur if the coach ignores the athletes' needs and demands high efforts, responsibility, discipline and strict regimen in trainings or competitions. It allows supposing the research of the attitude of athletes and coaches to the importance of abilities that are necessary for a real and ideal coach is still relevant because it ensures the success of sport activities. Taking into account these facts, the aim of the research was formed in order to answer the question how the young basketball players and their coaches assess the importance of abilities that are necessary for a real and ideal coach. The search for this question and answer to it make the basis of scientific topics of the publication.

Materials & methods

Participants

In the assessment of a real coach, the young basketball players had to assess their coaches and the coaches had to assess them according to the importance of the abilities that are necessary for their activity. Moreover, when the coaches were assessing them, they had to indicate the abilities in the way they think they will be assessed by the pupils. Meanwhile, in the assessment of an ideal coach, the athletes and coaches assessed an unreal coach. The researched from basketball sport schools from all the regions of Lithuania had equal possibilities to get to the sample, i.e., they were selected randomly. The research participants were selected from the list of Lithuanian basketball sport schools (compiled on the basis of information from the website of the students' basketball league mkl.lt) randomly (according to tables of random numbers) by applying the serial principle. This principle is applied when the researched population is wide, so the groups of the researched are formed in stages, i.e., by forming groups from groups (Kardelis, 2002).

The sample of the stated research consisted of 171 15–16-year-old basketball players and 41 basketball coaches. The mean age of the basketball players was 15 ± 1.28 and that of the coaches – 48 ± 11.4 . We think it is especially relevant to choose the athletes and their coaches from this age group because the situation when coaches and athletes understand the coach and abilities, which are important for his/her activity, in their own way is more and more frequent in the system of preparation of young athletes.

Measures

The modified questionnaire by T. Moser „*Real and ideal coach*“ (Moser, 1992) that was adapted (Ruibytė & Šešelgytė, 1997) was used during the empirical research. It consisted of 17 statements reflecting different abilities, which are necessary for a real and ideal coach and his/her activity. In order to reveal the similarities and differences of the importance of the abilities, which are necessary for a real and ideal coach, the young basketball players and coaches had to assess them in a 5-point system according to the importance. Each ability was assessed with an appropriate point: from five if the ability is very important to one if the ability is absolutely unimportant. We were only interested in high ability assessment indexes (5 points) because they show the real priorities. Thus, the mean of assessments and the standard deviation were not calculated, but the percentage of basketball players and coaches assessing the ability, which is necessary for every real and ideal coach (i.e., 5 points), was calculated. In order to reveal the similarities and differences of the importance of

abilities of a real and ideal coach, all the abilities were ranked according to their importance: from the first (most important) to the seventeenth one (least important).

Procedure

All the research participants were informed about the aim and anonymity of the research and familiarized with the methodology filling instruction. In accordance with the principle of information and voluntarism, the aim of the research was explained and those ones who did not want it were able to refuse to participate in the research. In order to ensure the principle of data confidentiality (anonymity), the questionnaires were encoded. The survey procedures were performed in the sport hall an hour before the basketball championship competition for U15 and U16 boys and the researched participated in order to give an answer to the researched in case of any questions and uncertainties. The time that was necessary for the researched was given so that they answered (20 – 30 minutes).

Statistical Analysis

The statistical data analysis for used for the analysis of the research data by applying SPSS statistics for 20.0 (*Statistical Package for Social Sciences*). The reliability of the applied methodology was checked with the help of the Cronbach alpha. The obtained Cronbach alpha was 0.81. The Student t criterion was used for the comparison of percentages of answers in the both groups (young basketball players and coaches). The differences between appropriate indexes were considered statistically significant if the calculated statistical significance was $p < 0.05$.

Results

The comparative research data analysis of the modified methodology by T. Moser „Real and ideal coach“ revealed the similarities and differences of the importance of the abilities, which are necessary for a real and ideal coach, in the attitude of 15 □ 16-year-old basketball players and their coaches. The results of the research also showed some significant differences of the attitude of young basketball players and their coaches towards the importance of the abilities, which are necessary for a real coach (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the indexes of young basketball players and coaches according to the importance of the abilities that are necessary for a real coach (percentages and ranges)

Abilities that are necessary for a real coach	Young players n=171	basketball Coaches n=41	Significance of criterion t and importance level
to be tolerant and patient	33 – 15	46 – 10	-1.52; $p > 0.05$
to communicate properly	89 – 01	80 – 01	1.34; $p > 0.05$
to prepare a good training	75 – 05	77 – 02	-0.27; $p > 0.05$
to stand psychological tension	47 – 12	60 – 06	-1.52; $p > 0.05$
to keep friendly contacts with athletes	85 – 02	41 – 11	5.39; $p < 0.05$
to show the standing and influence in the implementation of ideas	29 – 16	50 – 09	-2.47; $p < 0.05$
to know the own sport	78 – 04	70 – 03	1.02; $p > 0.05$
to discover and develop talents	51 – 11	65 – 04	-1.67; $p > 0.05$
to obtain good scientific knowledge	54 – 10	40 – 12	1.67; $p > 0.05$
to be sensitive to personal and family problems	24 – 17	22 – 17	0.27; $p > 0.05$
to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of pupils	81 – 03	38 – 13	5.27; $p < 0.05$
to make changes taking into account the criticism	37 – 14	27 – 16	1.27; $p < 0.05$
to be an example to athletes	71 – 06	53 – 08	2.01; $p < 0.05$
to obtain organizational abilities	42 – 13	61 – 05	-2.23; $p < 0.05$
to be psychologically stable and self-confident	48 – 12	31 – 15	2.08; $p < 0.05$
to be a good psychologist	59 – 09	57 – 07	0.23; $p < 0.05$
to create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team	64 – 08	34 – 14	3.63; $p < 0.05$

In the assessment of their coaches, the young basketball players indicated the following abilities were very important to the coaches: to keep friendly contacts with athletes ($t(210) = 5.39$; $p < 0.05$), to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of their pupils ($t(210) = 5.27$; $p < 0.05$), to create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team ($t(210) = 3.63$; $p < 0.05$), to be psychologically stable and self-confident ($t(210) = 2.08$; $p < 0.05$) and to be an example to athletes ($t(210) = 2.01$; $p < 0.05$). However, the coaches accentuated the following things in their self-assessment: standing and influence in the implementation of ideas ($t(210) = -2.47$; $p < 0.05$) and importance of organizational abilities ($t(210) = -2.23$; $p < 0.05$) compared with the basketball players. In the analysis of the results of basketball players and coaches, it was determined both considered the ability of proper communication (89% basketball players and 80% coaches, respectively) the most important ability of the coach.

In the analysis of the results of basketball players and coaches, it was determined both considered the ability of proper communication (89% basketball players and 80% coaches, respectively) the most important ability of the coach.

Meanwhile, 85% basketball players indicated keeping friendly contacts with athletes was an important ability of the coach and it was characterized with a high assessment level and took the second place in the hierarchy of the coach's abilities. In the opinion of basketball players (81%), the ability to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of pupils (78%) took the third place in the hierarchy of the coach's abilities.

Meanwhile, the self-assessment of the coaches according to the importance of abilities is a little different: the *ability to prepare a good training* (77%) takes the second place and *good knowledge of the own sport* (70%) – the third one. However, the research data shows the ability to *be sensitive to personal and family problems* is the least important one for a real coach in the assessment of both. Taking into account this fact, it can be stated the lack of a deeper insight into the *ability to be sensitive to personal and family problems* orients the coaches to pay more attention to the improvement of the understanding of the significance of this ability.

We will discuss the results of the assessment of young basketball players and coaches according to the importance of abilities that are necessary for an ideal coach (Table 2). The results of the research allow stating both the basketball players and their coaches assess the abilities, which are necessary for an ideal coach, in different ways. For example, it is more important statistically reliably for the basketball players than for their coaches that an ideal coach *is able to be an example to athletes* ($t(210) = 4.58$; $p < 0.05$), *create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team* ($t(210) = 2.74$; $p < 0.05$), *discover and develop talents* ($t(210) = 2.31$; $p < 0.05$), *keep friendly contacts with athletes* ($t(210) = 1.96$; $p < 0.05$), *communicate properly* ($t(210) = 2.15$; $p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, after analysing the data provided by the coaches it is obvious the coaches imagine an ideal coach a little differently than their pupils.

Table 2. Distribution of the indexes of young basketball players and coaches according to the importance of the abilities that are necessary for an ideal coach (percentages and ranges)

Abilities that are necessary for a real coach	Young players n=171	basketball Coaches n=41	Significance of criterion t and importance level
to be tolerant and patient	21 – 17	29 – 17	-1.03; $p > 0.05$
to communicate properly	76 – 05	58 – 10	2.15; $p < 0.05$
to prepare a good training	59 – 09	75 – 02	-2.07; $p < 0.05$
to stand psychological tension	37 – 15	40 – 14	-0.35; $p > 0.05$
to keep friendly contacts with athletes	79 – 04	64 – 06	1.96; $p < 0.05$
to show the standing and influence in the implementation of ideas	61 – 08	77 – 01	-2.11; $p > 0.05$
to know the own sport	70 – 06	67 – 05	0.37; $p > 0.05$
to discover and develop talents	80 – 03	61 – 09	2.31; $p < 0.05$
to obtain good scientific knowledge	40 – 14	42 – 15	-0.23; $p > 0.05$
to be sensitive to personal and family problems	24 – 16	35 – 16	-1.35; $p > 0.05$
to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of pupils	68 – 07	73 – 03	-0.64; $p > 0.05$
to make changes taking into account the criticism	41 – 13	45 – 13	-0.46; $p > 0.05$
to be an example to athletes	91 – 01	54 – 12	4.58; $p < 0.05$
to obtain organizational abilities	48 – 12	62 – 08	-1.64; $p > 0.05$
to be psychologically stable and self-confident	53 – 10	70 – 04	-2.09; $p < 0.05$
to be a good psychologist	50 – 11	56 – 11	-0.69; $p > 0.05$
to create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team	85 – 02	63 – 07	2.74; $p < 0.05$

First, it is important for an ideal coach to have a standing and influence in the implementation of ideas ($t(210) = -2.11$; $p < 0.05$), be able to prepare a good training ($t(210) = -2.07$; $p < 0.05$), be able to be psychologically stable and self-confident ($t(210) = -2.09$; $p < 0.05$). The results of the second table allow stating the basketball players assess the following important abilities that are necessary for an ideal coach with high indexes: first – ability to be an example to athletes (91%), second – ability to create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team (85%) and third – ability to discover and develop talents (80%).

However, the assessment of an ideal coach reflected by the coaches is a little different: the highest point goes to the *ability to have a standing and influence in the implementation of ideas* (77%), second – *ability to prepare a good training* (75%) and the *ability to know the advantages and disadvantages of their pupils* is in the third place of the hierarchy of the abilities that are characteristic to an ideal coach.

Discussion & conclusion

To compare the results of the own works and similar works of other authors, it can be supposed coaches need lots of abilities that are equally important when aiming for a successful sport career. This statement is also confirmed with our research. However, any ability that is important for the coach's activity only becomes significant in a certain hierarchical system.

For example, Phillips & Jubenville (2009) and Moen, Federici, & Klemetsen (2014) noticed during the research the players of higher mastery were more satisfied with the competences of their coach than the players of lower mastery. It is also indicated the athletes with higher sport achievements had better interpersonal relations with their coach and the athletes with lower achievements got more criticism and a negative feedback (Siekanska, Blecharz, & Wojtowicz, 2013). However, these differences cannot be interpreted as compliant with

our data because the abilities, which are important for the coach and his/her activity, are not analysed in these works. According to Bortoli, Malignaggi & Robozza (1995) and Philips & Jubenville (2009), the athletes often assess their coaches more badly and would like to have better coaches, but the coaches think they are better than they are assessed by the athletes and they do not realize exactly what they seem and what expectations their pupils have. Our results allow agreeing with the conclusions by Bortoli, Malignaggi & Robozza (1995) partially because the young basketball players indicated it should be important for a real coach to communicate, keep friendly contacts and reveal the advantages and disadvantages of their pupils. Meanwhile, the coaches indicate in the self-assessment it is important for them to be able to communicate, prepare a good training and know the own sport. Scientific works prove, too, the style of the coach's work desired by the athletes is clearly different from the real one. The worse are the results of the team and interpersonal relations between the coach and athletes, the higher is this discrepancy (Rhind, Jowett & Yang, 2012).

Moreover, there are scientific studies proving it is especially important for the coach to realize the attitude of his/her pupils to him/her and the style of work because it improves the mutual understanding and reduces the possibility of conflicts. According to Turman (2003) and Gencer & Öztürk (2018), a favourable attitude towards the coach is the main factor when aiming for the common goal in the sport activity.

We think the latter statement is better for the explanation of our research data because coaches often have negative feelings in competitive situations of the sport activity and they do not always apply their abilities successfully. However, the goal of our work is both to reveal the assessment of a real coach by the young basketball players and coaches and their image of an ideal coach according to the importance of necessary abilities. There are similar researches revealing the attitude of athletes to an ideal coach and difference from their real coach. The answers to the first question are quite different. For example, the results of Ruibytė & Šešelgytė (1997) show the athletes think it should be the most important thing for an ideal coach he/she can be trusted in hard situations of competitions and the coaches think they should organize and control the activity of athletes properly.

Meanwhile, the research by Moser (1992) proves there are some cases when the athletes and coaches have a similar image of an ideal coach because they attribute similar abilities to them: communication, emotional stability, domination, self-confidence. There are other cases when the athletes state the didactic abilities of the coach (knowing of the own sport, ability to organize trainings properly) are more important and the coaches emphasize the psychological abilities (psychological stability, self-confidence, knowing of advantages and disadvantages). However, our research data is different from the results obtained by Moser (1992) and Ruibytė & Šešelgytė (1997) and we determined the basketball players said the following abilities should first be important for an ideal coach: to be an example, be able to create a good atmosphere and feeling in the team and discover talents. Meanwhile, the coaches have a different opinion: they think an ideal coach should first have a standing and influence in the implementation of ideas, be able to prepare a good training and know the advantages and disadvantages of pupils. We think these differences of the research data can be related with the variety of research methodologies, differences of research objects (mastery and age of athletes, individual or team sport). Grisaffe, Blom, & Burke (2003) and Trzaskoma-Bicsérdy etc. (2007) state both coaches and athletes imagine an ideal coach differently and it changes every time. The data that is similar in this aspect is also found in our research. It often depends on the coach's knowledge, base of relations between the coach and his/her team and provision of knowledge (Grisaffe, Blom, & Burke, 2003). However, we cannot confirm or deny this conclusion because we did not try to reveal the factors affecting the importance of the abilities that are necessary for an ideal coach.

Taking into account this fact, a few drawbacks of our work that could have affected the results should be indicated. One of the drawbacks of the research is related with the sample of participants because the researched belonged to one kind of sport only: these were the young basketball players and coaches. When planning similar research in the future, a higher representation of the sample should be aimed and it may be necessary to check whether the consistent patterns determined in this work are also valid for athletes of other age groups and representatives of other sports. Another limitation would be a low number of similar researches and the comparison of our results with the data of other researchers could be quite limited for this reason. As the data about the attitude of young athletes and their coaches to a real and ideal coach are contradictory, it can be supposed this issue has not been revealed enough yet and more comprehensive research is necessary. In spite of certain limitations, the results of this research can be important for coaches, athletes, sport psychologists and maybe for heads of sport teams because the research allows making a more comprehensive image about a real and ideal coach.

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