

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

Gender as a determinant of coaches' legal duties towards athletes accomplishment in Edo State

Abdulasheed Oyakhire¹, Sanusi Mamuda², Samuel Monikhe Adodo¹, Chukwuma Sunday Lator¹

¹Department of Human Kinetics & Sports Science, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, ²Kano State University of Science and Technology, Wudil, Kano State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The study examined gender as a determinant of coaches' practice of legal duties towards athletes in Edo State. The population of the study comprised of 187 coaches in Edo State. The multistage sampling technique was used to draw the 100 coaches that were selected as the sample for this study. A Situational Judgment Test (SJT) was the instrument applied. The research instrument was validated and its reliability was tested using the Alpha statistic and reliability of 0.67 was obtained as reliability coefficient. The Fisher's exact test gave a p-value of 0.136, leading to the conclusion that there was no significant difference in coaches' practice of legal duties towards athletes based on their gender. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. It was concluded that that men are not more likely to take reasonable care of the athletes due to their preference for coaching roles. As a result, more women should be given the opportunity to coach since gender does not determine the practice of legal duties towards athletes.

Keywords: *Coaches, Athletes, Practice of legal duties, Gender*

Introduction

The role of coaches in the physical, mental and skill development of athletes cannot be overemphasized. According to Jowett (2005) there is a shift in the coaching process from just physical development towards improvement in mental and athletic performances. Murray, Lord and Lorimer (2018) reported that the rate of these developments and improvement in athletes are not just only a function of the knowledge and competences of their coaches, but also a product of the quality of the interaction between coaches and athletes. Fundamentally, the coach enables the athlete achieve levels of optimum performance that the athlete cannot achieve alone. Therefore, in this journey towards attainment of physical, mental and skill development, there is an implied relationship between coaches and athletes that is evoked.

Wylleman (2000) reported that sports is a shared experience and a complex social environment that arise from the intra and inter relationship between those involved. Therefore, as a result of this implied relationship, there is a statutory responsibility for coaches to take reasonable care of the athletes during participation in physical activities and sports. The legal duties of coaches towards athletes are well documented in the plethora of cases in

Europe, United States of America and South Africa (Oyakhire, 2021). In these countries, the law courts and their National Sports Federations are unanimous about the importance of strict practice of legal duties in the protection of athletes from both foreseeable and unforeseeable harm, and therefore a key to safe participation in sports. Davis (2008) observed that while the courts in Europe ruled that coaches owed no duty to mitigate or prevent the risks that arose from a sport, because of their inherent risks, he pointed out that these courts have also stated explicitly that coaches owed the athletes the responsibility of ensuring that the risks that are inherent in a sport were not exacerbated.

However, it has been observed that there is a gender bias with respect to which gender of coaches is more effective in the discharge of the responsibility to take reasonable care of athletes. Eagly and Karau (2002) stated that men are more often perceived to be more effective in coaching than women. Therefore, this study aimed to examine whether the gender of coaches influenced their discharge of legal duties towards athletes.

Gender and Coaching in sports

There is evidence in literature that there is still a huge gap with

Correspondence:

**Montenegro
Sport**

C. S. Lator
University of Benin, Benin City, Department of Human Kinetics and Sports Science, Ugbowo Campus, P.M.B. 1154, Edo State
E-mail: chukwuma.lator@uniben.edu

respect to the ratio of male to female coaches in the coaching profession, amidst the increasing number of female participation in sports globally. Eagly and Karau (2002) argued that female coaches were often not accepted as been effective as their male counterparts. This is indeed a stereotypical bias that continues to plague the coaching roles of women in sports even nowadays. According to Wood and Eagly (2012) a bias is widely accepted on account of a disproportionate number of a specific social group which could be gender based, race or even nationality. Female coaches are perceived to be involved with a particular role, thereby setting up a bias towards any entrant who is not a member of the social group.

In the studies of Kerr, Marshall and Sharp (2012); Swim, Walker, Turick and Judge (2021), an increase in the number of women participating in the United States intercollegiate athletics was observed, without an accompanying increase in the coaching roles for women. This gap is not unconnected to the various perceptions or views about women and the coaching profession.

Interestingly, Okaka and Omoifo (2010) opined that men still constituted a greater number of the stakeholders in sports either as athletes, coaches, referees or sports administrators. In Edo State, Nigeria, the four prominent female teams in football, namely; Edo Queens, Fortress Ladies, Brave heart Queens and Genesis Queens, had males as head coaches. Although, there is a steady increase in the appointment of women into coaching roles, this is still not adequate enough to set the anticipated balance in coaching roles as a result of the increase in women participation and contributions to sports development in Nigeria.

Method and Materials

Population of the Study

The population sample consisted of 187 coaches across the Edo State Sports Commission, tertiary institutions and registered sports clubs in Edo State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total of 100 coaches were used as sample for this study. The multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to select them as follows;

Stage 1: Purposive sampling technique was used to select the local government areas based on the availability of sports facilities and the presence of coaches. Four local government areas in Edo State were purposively and subsequently selected, out of the 18 local government areas in Edo State. The local government areas se-

lected were: Esan West, Etsako West, Oredo and Ovia North East.

Stage 2: Proportionate sampling technique was employed at this stage. 50% was chosen as the proportion to be selected from each institution or facilities where the coaches were more than 10. However, in institutions or facilities where the number of coaches was less than 10, all the coaches were selected.

Stage 3: Simple random sampling technique was subsequently used to draw out the 50% of the coaches through balloting with replacement.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a Situational Judgment Test (SJT) which was developed by Persich (2016) and was adapted to collect data of this study.

The Situational Judgment Test was employed, against the background that the practice of legal duties is situational based, implying a contextual application. Furthermore, it requires the application of a body of knowledge, in this case the items constituting duty of care, with respect to the profession from which the scenarios are drawn to give appropriate response to the items. This confers on it, the appropriateness of its use for testing practice or competence. The ratings were as follows; Strongly Agree=4, Agree= 3, Disagree=2 and Strongly Disagree=1.

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure that the research instrument measured what it ought to measure, the SJT was given to one research expert each in the field of Human Kinetics and Sports Science, and Law respectively; and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation, University of Benin, who assessed the content and construct validity of the instrument. Their respective corrections were appropriately effected in the final draft of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach alpha (α) method. The SJT was administered to twenty randomly selected coaches respectively, that participated in the 2021 Federation Cup play-off held in Benin City, Edo State, and who were not part of the sample used for this study. The data generated were analyzed using Cronbach alpha statistics and a reliability coefficient of 0.67 was obtained. This indicated that the internal consistency of the items in the instrument was good and the instrument was considered reliable.

Table 1. Fishers exact test of difference in Coaches Practice of legal duties towards athletes based on their Gender

	Strongly Disagree	Practice Category			Total	
		Disagree	Agree			
Gender	Male	4	66	6	76	
	Female	0	19	5	24	
	Total	4	85	11	100	
Chi-Square Tests						
		Value	df	Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
	Pearson Chi-Square	4.165a	2	0.125	0.119	
	Likelihood Ratio	4.730	2	0.094	0.125	
	Fisher's Exact Test	3.513			0.136	
	Linear-by-Linear Association	4.123b	1	0.042	0.064	0.042
	N of Valid Cases	100				

Note: a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .96. b. The standardized statistic is 2.031.

Method of Data Collection

The research instrument, SJT, was administered by the researchers and three trained research assistants to the respondents. A duration of one week, and for some of the respondents on national assignments at the time of collecting the data for this study, a two-week duration was given by the researchers to enable the respondents complete the SJT. Upon the completion of the instrument (SJT), it was retrieved from the respondents accordingly by the researchers and the research assistants.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in coaches' practice of legal duties based on their gender.

The results in table 1 shows the descriptive and Fisher's exact test of difference in coaches practice of legal duties towards athletes based on their gender. The frequency of responses is as follows; male (strongly disagree= 4, disagree= 66, agree= 6) and female (strongly disagree= 0, disagree= 19, agree= 5).

However, the Fisher's exact test shows a p-value of 0.136 at 0.05 alpha levels. The p-value of 0.136 is greater than the alpha level. This reveals that there is no significant difference in coaches' practice of legal duties towards athletes based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

Discussion

This study sought to find out the differences in coaches' practice of legal duties based on the gender of coaches. The findings show that practice of legal duties of coaches irrespective of gender was low. The Fisher's exact test analysis showed that there was no significant difference in coaches' practice of legal duties based on their gender. The finding of this study was in agreement with the findings of the study of Bon (1996) who stated that gender only nominally differentiated male and female coaches and had no significant impact in their practices.

However the finding of this study is in disagreement with the study of Newell (2007) who opined that female coaches were more active in the instruction of athletes and supervising trainings. Furthermore, Murray, Lord and Lorimer (2018) noted that female coaches were perceived to be more empathic towards athletes. Although, Manley, Greenless, Thelwell and Smith (2010) reported that based on initial impressions, athletes perceive female coaches to be less competent than male coaches.

A cursory look at coaches' gender and practice of legal duties to athletes shows Mirsafian (2016) stating that the standard upon which coaches are evaluated with respect to their duty to take reasonable care of the athletes are; sequential planning of the activity, ensure the use of appropriate equipment, provision of warnings and instruction where necessary, appropriate supervision of athletes, provision of appropriate conditions to the athlete, warning about the risks of the activity, provision of post injury care, offer appropriate activities, keeping records as appropriate, and abiding by the appropriate rules and regulations. It is important to state that these items have become the legal duties of coaches towards athletes.

According to Partington (2016), coaches are the principal supervisors of any organized physical activities and participation in sports; thereby placing them in a position of the Greek maxim of loco parentis. The importance of practice, which has been operationally defined in this study to mean how coaches carry out the items of their legal duties towards athletes, cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the prevalence of many foreseeable risks as a result of participation (Miles & Tong, 2013).

Chepyator-Thomson's (2005) revealed that cultural beliefs and practices still defined Kenyan women's roles in sports despite their inestimable contributions to the development of sports in

Kenya. In the study of Mohammedinejad (2014), male coaches were reported to have more knowledge about the supervision of athletes, instructing athletes and training, facilities and equipment as well as warning the athletes about risks. However, Newell (2007) opined that female coaches were more active in the instruction of athletes and supervising trainings. No doubt, from the assertions above, it is therefore discernable that gender could be a factor in the practice of legal duties by coaches. More importantly, Bon (1996) had earlier stated that male coaches were just nominally different from female coaches, and this difference did not really have significant impact on their practices.

Also, with respect to the coach-athlete relationship as equally is related to the study, the major objectives of the coach-athlete relationship are enhancement of sports performance and the well-being of the athlete (Jowett & Poczwadowski, 2007). According to Jowett and Shanmugam (2016), athletes form many relationships in the course of their active career, however, amidst all these relationships formed, their relationship with their coaches forms the epicentre, and this is because of its potential to initiate development and success. Furthermore, the coach-athlete relationship forms the basement of the responsibility to take reasonable care of the athlete. Davis, Jowett and Tafvelin (2019) asserted that a coach-athlete centered approach to coaching has a proclivity to serve as an avenue for the creation of the assurances, motivation, satisfaction and support for the sporting experience and performances of the coach and the athlete.

Against this background of the importance of adopting a coach-athlete centered approach in coaching, there is a need for coaches to ensure that the athletes are well protected from injuries or loss, that has the capacity of punctuating the goal of optimum performance of the athlete as well as the expectations of the coach, whence there is a need to take reasonable care of the athlete.

It must be unconditionally stated that everyone involved in the business of sports coaching, has a responsibility to ensure that participation is both pleasurable and memorable, especially for younger participants and athletes. This responsibility to ensure memorable and pleasurable participation is nested within the scope of coaching responsibilities, because of their proximity to the athletes on one hand, and the factors that could predispose the athletes to unforeseeable harm, on the other hand.

Based on the result from the Fisher's exact test analysis, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in coaches' practice of legal duties based on their gender was therefore retained, leading to the conclusion that there was no significant difference in coaches' practice of legal duties as a result of their gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that coaches' practice of legal duties was low for both male and female coaches. Also, gender does not create any difference in the practice of legal duties amongst coaches.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. More women who have interest in coaching should be encouraged to take up careers in the coaching profession, so as to sustain the increase in the participation of women in sports.
2. As against the popular bias that men were more effective in coaching roles than women, as such the reason for their preference for coaching roles should be abrogated because gender had no influence in coaches' discharge of their duty to take reasonable care of athletes.
3. There is need for a review of coaching education in Nigeria, to enable coaches understands their duties towards athletes, as

well as strengthens their practices.

4. As part of the coaches' certification programme, provision should be made for a course on sports law, where these coaches are educated on legal liability in sports; so as not to fall victim of any legal offence as regards the practice of their duty of care to their athletes.

Received: 01 August 2022 | **Accepted:** 09 September 2022 | **Published:** 15 January 2023

References

- Bon, M. (1996). Ženski rokomet v sloveniji: trenutno stanje in perspective. (Slovenia: Female handball in Slovenia – current state and perspectives). *Trener rokomet*, 3(2), 54-60.
- Chepyator-Thomson, J. A. (2005). African women run for change: Challenges and achievements in sports. In J. A. Chepyator-Thomson (Ed.). *African women and globalization*, 239-257. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Davis, L., Appleby, R., Davis, P., Wetherell, M., & Gustafsson, H. (2018). The role of coach-athlete relationship quality in team sport athletes' psychophysiological exhaustion: implications for physical and cognitive performance. *Sports sci*, 36(17), 1985-1992. Doi: 10.1080/02640414.2018.1429176.
- Davis, T. (2008). Tort liability of coaches for injuries to professional athletes: Overcoming policy and doctrinal barriers. *University of Missouri-Kansas City Law review*, 76(3).
- Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109, 573-598.
- Jowett, S. (2005). The coach-athlete partnership. *Psychol*, 18 (7), 412-415.
- Jowett, S. (2017). Coaching effectiveness: the coach-athlete relationship at its heart. *Curr Opin Psychol*, 16, 154-158. doi:10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.05.006
- Jowett, S. & Poczwardowski, A. (2007). Understanding the coach-athlete relationship. In S. Jowett & D. Lavallee (Eds.), *Social Psychology in Sport*, 3-14. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Jowett, S. & Shanmugam, V. (2016). Relational Coaching in Sport: Its psychological underpinnings and practical effectiveness. In R. Schinke, K.R. McGannon, B. Smith, *International Handbook of Sport Psychology*. Routledge.
- Kerr, G., Marshall, D. & Sharp, D. M. (2012). Women in coaching: A descriptive study. Retrieved March 22, 2022, from http://www.coach.ca/sportleadershipsportif/2006/presentations06/research/0_Marshall_women.pdf.
- Manley, A., Greenless, I., Thelwell, R.C. & Smith, M.J. (2010). athletes' use of reputation and gender information when forming initial expectancies of coaches. *International journal of sports science & coaching*, 5(4), 517-532. DOI: 10.1260/1747-9541.5.4.517.
- Mohamedinejad, A. (2014). *Assessment of coaches' knowledge regarding their legal duties toward athletes*. An unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the doctoral school of sport sciences, Semmelweis University, Budapest.
- Miles, A. & Tong, R. (2013). Sports medicine for coaches. In R. L. Jones & K. Kingston (Eds.), *An introduction to sports coaching: Connecting theory to practice*. 177-196. Routledge.
- Mirsafian, H. (2016). Legal duties and legal liabilities of coaches towards athletes. *Physical culture and sport studies and research*. 69, 5-14. DOI: 10.1515/pcssr-2016-0002
- Murray, P., Lord, R. & Lorimer, R. (2018). The influence of gender on perceptions of coaches' relationships with their athletes: A novel video-based methodology. *The sport journal*
- Newell, B. (2007). *The relationship of coaches' leadership styles and gender to performance outcomes and academic performance in college basketball*. An unpublished Master's thesis submitted to Humboldt State University.
- Okaka, R.O. & Omoifo, E. O. (2010). Nigerian women and participation in sports. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development*, 15 (1).
- Oyakhire, A. (2021). *Coaches' Knowledge of Duty of Care to Athletes in the management of sports injuries in Benin metropolis*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria
- Partington, N. (2016). Sports coaching and the law of negligence: implications for coaching practice. *Journal sports coaching review*, 6, 1.
- Swim, N. M., Walker, K. B., Turick, R. & Judge, L. W. (2021). The Role of Coach's Gender on Coaching Self-Efficacy for Division III Female Student-Athletes. *Journal of Athlete Development and Experience*, 3 (1), 1.
- Wylleman, P. (2000). Interpersonal relationships in sport: Uncharted territory in sport psychology research. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 31, 555-572.