

Student-Athletes' Perceptions of Coaches' Coaching Competency in Kenyan Universities: The Case of Kenyatta University

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<https://doi.org/10.62049/jkncu.v5i1.421>

Abstract

Coaching competency is essential in sports, encompassing the skills, knowledge, and abilities coaches need to support athletes' technical, cognitive, strategic, and psychosocial development. Understanding how athletes evaluate their coaches is important for improving coaching practices and enhancing overall performance. This study explored student-athletes' perceptions of coaching competency at Kenyatta University, specifically assessing perceived competency levels among athletes in individual sports (Taekwondo and Swimming) and team sports (Soccer and Volleyball). It also examined differences in perceptions based on sport type and gender. An analytical cross-sectional design was used, involving 150 student-athletes who completed a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Results showed that female athletes rated their coaches higher in game strategy and motivation, while male athletes rated their coaches higher in technique and character building. Athletes in individual sports generally rated their coaches higher across all competency domains than those in team sports. However, no significant differences were found based on gender. The study recommends expanding research to include athletes from other universities and examining additional variables such as duration of participation, coach athlete gender dynamics, and athletes' team roles to better understand their influence on coaching competency perceptions.

Keywords: Coach, Student-Athletes, Coaching Competency, Individual Sport & Team Sports

Introduction

Coaching competency is the skills, knowledge, and abilities that a coach possesses in order to effectively mentor and support individuals or teams in accomplishing their objectives (Jones, R. L., Bailey, J., & Thompson, A. 2013). In the realm of sports, factors such as conduct, proficiency, effective coaching, and individual style play pivotal roles in nurturing athletic abilities. While an athlete's performance is typically influenced by their technical, tactical, physiological, and psychological/sociological traits, external elements like coaching also exert significant impact.

To unlock their full potential, athletes require guidance from a skilled and accountable coach who fosters their mental, physical, tactical, and technical development (Manzoor, 2018). As asserted by Sucipto et al. (2017), capable coaches possess the ability to educate athletes based on their expertise, attitude, and technical proficiency within the relevant domain. Proficient coaches utilize a spectrum of coaching methodologies, encompassing motivation, strategic gameplay, character enhancement, and the application of effective training techniques during athletic sessions (Mu'ammal et al., 2022). The dynamics between athletes and coaches operate as a two-way street, wherein the attitudes of both parties intertwine, influencing how athletes perceive and assess their coaches and their conduct (Jowett, 2017). Notably, the evaluation process of athletes is influenced by three main categories of variables: situational factors, encompassing aspects like the sport's nature, level of competition, and team environment, as well as individual differences between coaches and athletes, including gender, age, attitudes, motives, and goals.

Several studies have examined how athletes' gender influences perceptions of coaching competency. Findings suggest that male and female athletes may perceive coaching competency differently. Studies by Kassim, (2018) in Malaysia and Üzümlü, (2018) with elite players in Turkish league found out that athletes' gender among elite players in a Turkish league had significant impact on the perception of their coaches' competencies. In contrast to this study, Kassim et.al (2020) found out that there were no significant differences in coaching effectiveness between male and female athletes. These studies show that there is unclear degree of similarities or differences between genders in their coaching preferences.

The type of sport in which an athlete participates has also been found to influence coaching competency perception. Team sports and individual sports often have distinct coaching dynamics (Kassim, 2018). Research indicates that athletes participating in team sports may prioritize coaches who excel in team management, motivational strategies, and effective communication to foster team cohesion. In contrast, athletes in individual sports may value coaches who provide personalized training plans and demonstrate a deep understanding of the sport's technical nuances (Oh & Yoo 2023).

The level of coaching competency varies based on sport. The type of sport in which an athlete participates has also been found to influence coaching competency perception (Kassim, 2018). Team sports and individual sports often have distinct coaching dynamics. A study by Kassim, (2018) in Malaysia found out that coaching effectiveness was higher in individual sports than in athletes who were in team sports athletes.

Universities are strategically positioned to foster athletes' development, cultivate technical expertise, offer support services for national teams, and furnish top-notch training facilities (Wagdy, 2021). As noted by Lim et al. (2013), annual sports competitions among higher education institutions serve as a platform for identifying and nurturing talented athletes for the nation. Consequently, each higher education institution typically boasts a cadre of sports coaches tasked with preparing their teams for these tournaments. However,

a pertinent concern arises regarding the competency level of university coaches in cultivating potential athletes for national representation.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of coaching competency in shaping the development and performance of student-athletes, there is a dearth of comprehensive research addressing the perception of coaching competency among student-athletes in universities, including Kenyan Universities, in fact there is no study that has been conducted in this area in Kenya. In an effort to address this issue, this study was designed to obtain some empirical evidence about the capability of coaches in Kenyatta University. Specifically, it focused on student-athletes' perceptions of the competency of coaches in Kenyatta University.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to establish the student-athletes' perception of coaches' coaching competency in Kenyatta University.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objective:

1. To find out the differences in coaches' coaching competency as perceived by students-athletes in selected demographics factors (type of sport and gender) in Kenyatta University.

Research Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following hypothesis

Research Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses:

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between student-athletes' perception of their coaches' coaching competency in individual and team sports in Kenyatta University.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference between male and female student-athletes' perception of their coaches' coaching competency in Kenyatta University.

Significance of Study

This study was significant because it will contribute to the body of knowledge on coaching competency in Kenya and beyond especially for educational purposes in coaching programs and sports management courses. Further, the study may provide valuable insight on the level of coaching competency in universities in Kenya and how the coaching competency is different based on type of sports and gender. Moreover, the examination of student-athletes' perspectives on coaching competency, particularly within Kenyatta University, could introduce a valuable dimension to the coaching assessment process. Armed with this insight, the evaluator, typically the director of sports and games, gains deeper insights into coaches' behaviors, personalities, and their rapport with student-athletes. This knowledge could foster a better understanding among coaches regarding the perceptions of student-athletes regarding their competency. Furthermore, such a study may shed light on areas where coaching proficiency can be enhanced, thereby enriching the overall sports experience for student-athletes. Additionally, it could inform the design of

coach training and development initiatives, addressing specific areas pinpointed by student-athlete feedback.

Methodology

The study utilized analytical cross-sectional research design. The analytical cross-sectional design in this study aimed to depict the present perception of coaching competency among student-athletes, considering both gender and the type of sports they participate in. The research approach was quantitative, focusing on numerical data analysis.

Target Population

The target population for this study was 150 student-athletes in Kenyatta University who participated in team's sports (Football and Volleyball) and individual's sports (Swimming and Tae-kwo-Do).

Sampling Technique

This study used purposive sampling to select sports discipline in Kenyatta University. The sports that were selected are the ones with full time coaches. Further the study used census sampling technique to select athletes in the specified individual and team sports Kenyatta University.

Sample Size

The sample size was 150 student-athletes who participated in Team sports (Volleyball and Football) and Individual sports (Swimming and Tae-kwon-Do) as shown in table 1 and 2

Table 1: Sample size according to selected individual sports

Sports	Total students-athletes
Tae-kwon-Do	30
Swimming	40
Total	70

Table 2: sample size according to selected team sports

Sports	Total Students-Athletes
Soccer	40
Volleyball	40
Total	80

A questionnaire was used for this study. It consisted of two sections. Section A of the questionnaire gathered the demographic characteristics of the participants with respect to gender, year of study and type of sport they participate in while section B assessed the student-athletes' perception of their coaches' coaching competency and consisted of 24 items categorized in 4 subscales. The questions were derived and adopted from coaching competency scale (CCS) developed by Meyer et al., (2006).

Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the Department of Recreation and Sports Management. Research authorization was subsequently sought from the Director of Sports and Games at Kenyatta University, along with ethical clearance from the Kenyatta University Ethics Review Board (KUERB). Participants in the field were informed about the study and the necessary requirements and procedures for participation. The participants were requested to fill the informed consent form and only those who were voluntarily willing were involved in the study. To ensure confidentiality of the data, the questionnaires were coded for the purpose of anonymity of the participant and were not shared with any other person besides the researcher.

Results Presentation and Analysis

The study's sample size of the study comprised of 150 student- athletes in Kenyatta University. Of these, 40 athletes were from the soccer team, 40 from swimming team, 40 from taekwondo team and 30 athletes from the volleyball team.

Out of the 150 questionnaires issued, 93 were filled out and returned to the researcher resulting in a 62% response rate which was established sufficient considering a survey response rate of 50% and above is deemed good in many circumstances.

Student-Athletes' Perception of Their Coaches' Coaching Competency Based on Gender

The study examined the differences in perception based on gender across four dimensions of coaching competency: motivation competency (MC), character building competency (CBC), game strategy competency (GSC), and technique competency (TC). The difference was established by analyzing the mean ranks and sum of ranks for male and female student-athletes and the results are as indicated in table 3.

Table 3: Student-athletes' perception of their coaches' coaching competency based on gender

	What is your gender?	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
MC	Male	49	46.57	2282.00
	Female	44	47.48	2089.00
	Total	93		
CBC	Male	49	48.81	2391.50
	Female	44	44.99	1979.50
	Total	93		
GSC	Male	49	46.58	2282.50
	Female	44	47.47	2088.50
	Total	93		
TC	Male	49	47.70	2289.50
	Female	44	45.19	1988.50
	Total	93		

As indicated in table 3.6, Male respondents had a mean rank of 46.58 and Female respondents had a mean rank of 47.47. this results show that female student-athletes ranked their coaches higher in terms of game strategy competency similarly Female respondents rated their coaches higher in term of motivation competency with a mean rank of 47.48 compared to Male respondents who had a mean rank of 46.57.however male respondents rated their coaches higher in terms technique competency and character

building competency with mean rank of 47.70 and 48.81 respectively compared to female respondents who had a mean rank of 45.19 in technique competency and mean rank of 44.99 in character building competency.

Student- Athletes' Perception of Their Coaches' Coaching Competency Based on Type of Sports

The study examined the differences in perception based on Type of sport across four dimensions of coaching competency: motivation competency (MC), character building competency (CBC), game strategy competency (GSC), and technique competency (TC). The difference was established by analyzing the mean ranks and sum of ranks for individual and team sports and the results are as indicated in table 4

Table 4: Student-athletes' perception of coaches' coaching competency based on type of sports

	Sport category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
MC	Individual sport	38	65.43	2486.50
	Team sport	55	34.26	1884.50
	Total	93		
CBC	Individual sport	38	65.72	2497.50
	Team sport	55	34.06	1873.50
	Total	93		
GSC	Individual sport	38	65.79	2500.00
	Team sport	55	34.02	1871.00
	Total	93		
TC	Individual sport	38	68.20	2523.50
	Team sport	55	31.90	1754.50
	Total	93		

As indicated in table 3.7, Student-athletes who participated in individual sports rated their coaches higher in all coaching competency categories with mean rank of (MC-65.43, CBC- 65.72, GSC- 65.79 and TC - 68.20) compared to their athletes who participated in team sports with mean rank of (MC-34.26, CBC- 34.06, GSC- 34.02 and TC -31.90). These results would be attributed due to the fact that in individual sports, athletes typically receive more personalized attention from their coaches due to the one-on-one nature of training and competition. Coaches may focus solely on the development and improvement of a single athlete, tailoring training programs, feedback, and support to meet their specific needs and goals unlike in team sports where athletes often receive less personalized attention from their coaches due to the collective nature of training and competition. Coaches divide their focus among multiple athletes, coordinating team practices, strategies, and game plans. This collective approach may result in less individualized attention for each athlete, with training programs and feedback aimed at benefiting the team as a whole rather than focusing solely on the needs and goals of individual athletes.

Difference in Student-Athletes' Perception of Coaching Competency Based on Gender

In establishing the potential significance differences in student-athletes' perception of coaching competency based on gender, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. The results are as presented in Table 5

Table 5: Difference in student-athletes' perception of coaches' coaching competency based on gender

Test Statistics ^a				
	MC	CBC	GSC	TC
Mann-Whitney U	1057.000	989.500	1057.500	998.500
Wilcoxon W	2282.000	1979.500	2282.500	1988.500
Z	-.165	-.708	-.163	-.464
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.869	.479	.871	.643

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

As indicated in table 4.9, the p-values of each variable (MC, CBC, GSC, TC), were relatively large: 0.869 for MC, 0.479 for CBC, 0.871 for GSC, and 0.643 for TC. The p-values for all variables were greater than the typical significance level of 0.05, suggesting that there is no significant difference in coaching competency between gender based on this non-parametric test. Therefore, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}): There is no significant difference between male and female student-athletes' perception of their coaches' coaching competency in Kenyatta University.

Difference in Student-Athletes' Perception of Coaching Competency Based on Type of Sports

To establish the potential significance differences in student-athletes' perception of coaching competency based on Type of sport, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. The results are as presented in Table 6

Table 6: Difference in Student-Athletes' Perception of Coaches' Coaching Competency based on Type of Sport

Test Statistics ^a				
	MC	CBC	GSC	TC
Mann-Whitney U	344.500	333.500	331.000	214.500
Wilcoxon W	1884.500	1873.500	1871.000	1754.500
Z	-5.606	-5.780	-5.765	-6.596
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. Grouping Variable: Sport category

As indicated in table 6 all p-values of (MC, CBC, GSC, TC) were found to be .000, indicating that they are less than 0.001. The significant p-values (< 0.001) indicated that there was statistically significant difference in coaching competency scores across different sport categories for each variable (MC, CBC, GSC, TC).

Coaches in individual sports consistently received higher competency rankings compared to coaches in team sports, highlighting the distinct differences in coaching effectiveness between these two sport categories. Therefore, the study rejects the null hypothesis (H_{01}) There is no significant difference between student-athletes' perception of their coaches' coaching competency in individual and team sports in Kenyatta University.

Discussions of the Results

Student-Athletes Perceptions of Coaches' Coaching Competency Based on Gender

This study established that female student-athletes ranked their coaches higher in terms of game strategy competency and in terms of motivation competency. However male respondents rated their coaches higher in terms technique competency and character-building competency (Table 3). Further inferential statistics revealed that the p-values for all variables were greater than the typical significance level of 0.05, suggesting that there was no significant difference in coaching competency between genders (Table 5). The findings of this study suggest that despite differences in how male and female student-athletes rated their coaches in terms of specific competencies (such as game strategy, motivation, technique, and character building), these differences did not reach statistical significance. In other words, although there were variations in perceptions, they were not significant enough to conclude that there was a real difference in coaching competency between genders. This means that, both male and female student- athletes perceived their coaches' competency the same. Based on these findings, one could argue that coaches are not displaying evident signs of gender bias in their training approaches. Instead, it seems they are tailoring exercises and coaching methods based on the athletes' energy levels and physical capabilities, rather than being influenced by gender stereotypes.

These findings conform to a study by Kassim, et al. (2020) which established there were no significant differences in coaching effectiveness between male and female athletes ($p > 0.05$) in Malaysia. These findings may indicate that female athletes have equal expectations for their coach on a technical and behavioral level to male athletes in terms of coaching competency. However, the findings contradict a studies conducted by Kassim, (2018), and Üzümlü, (2018). The studies revealed that the gender of the athletes had a significant impact on their perception of their coaches. Consequently, in general, female athletes perceived their coaches to be more effective in terms of technique, character building, and motivation compared to their male counterparts, while a study by Salman, (2019), found a statistically significant difference between female and male participants in favor of men for all dimensions of the questionnaire based on gender ($p < 0.05$). According to these results, male athletes found their coaches more successful in motivation, strategy, technique and character building compared to the female athletes.

Student-athletes' Perception of Coaches' Coaching Competency based on Type of Sports

The results established that Student-athletes who participated in individual sports rated their coaches higher in all coaching competency categories compared to their athletes who participated in team sports (Table 4). On statistical difference in coaching competency based on type of sports, the study finding revealed that all p-values of (Motivation Competency, Character Building Competency, Game Strategy Competency, Technique Competency) to be .000, indicating that they were less than 0.001 (Table 6). This difference was statistically significant, with p-values indicating a clear distinction in coaching competency scores across different sport categories. These results would be due to, in individual sports, athletes typically receive more personalized attention from their coaches due to the one-on-one nature of training and competition. Coaches may focus solely on the development and improvement of a single athlete, tailoring training programs, feedback, and support to meet their specific needs and goals unlike in team sports where athletes often receive less personalized attention from their coaches due to the collective nature of training and competition. Coaches divide their focus among multiple athletes, coordinating team practices, strategies,

and game plans. This collective approach may result in less individualized attention for each athlete, with training programs and feedback aimed at benefiting the team as a whole rather than focusing solely on the needs and goals of individual athletes.

These findings align with prior research, such as the study by Kassim (2018) on athletes' perceptions of coaching effectiveness in team and individual sports in Malaysia, and Veljkovic et al. (2016) on differences in athletes' perceptions of coaching behaviors in individual and team sports. Both studies concluded that athletes in individual sports tend to perceive higher coaching effectiveness compared to those in team sports.

However, there are also studies, such as the one conducted by Lim et al. (2013), which found that athletes from team sports rated their coaches higher across the board than athletes from individual sports. This discrepancy in findings underscores the subjective nature of athletes' perceptions of coaching effectiveness, which can be influenced by various factors including individual experiences, biases, and personal preferences.

The variation in findings may be attributed to perceptions of coaching effectiveness being inherently subjective and can be influenced by individual experiences, biases, and personal preferences. Athletes' perceptions may be influenced by factors such as their relationship with their coach, past experiences with coaching, and their own performance outcomes.

Summary of the Finding

Level of Coaches' Coaching Competency as Perceived by Student-Athletes Based on Gender

This study established that female student-athletes ranked their coaches higher in terms of game strategy competency and motivation competency. However male respondents rated their coaches higher in terms technique competency and character-building competency. Further, the study found out that there was no significance difference in coaching competency with regards to student-athlete' gender.

Level Of Coaches' Coaching Competency as Perceived by Student-Athletes Based on Type Of Sport

The results established that Student-athletes who participated in individual sports rated their coaches higher in all coaching competency categories compared to their athletes who participated in team sports. On statistical difference, the study found out that there was significant difference in coaching competency with regards to type of sports, where athletes who participated in individual sports perceived their coaches for competent than those in team sports.

Conclusions of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn.

- With regards to gender differences, male and female student-athletes perceived their coaches coaching competency the same hence concluding that gender of athletes did not contribute on how they perceived their coach as competent.
- A significant difference in coaching competency exists based on type of sports hence concluding that athletes in individual sports perceive their coaches more competent than those in team sports

Recommendations of the Study

- The current study was conducted using student-athletes in one University. A study involving student-athletes in other universities from all over the country may provide a closer reflection of the coaching competency in Universities in Kenya.
- The study only focused on the student-athletes' gender and type of sports they participated in. There is need to investigate more variables such as duration of participation, coach-athlete gender mismatch, role of athlete in the team such as captain, starter and non-starters on how the variables influence their perception of coaching competency.
- The current study focused on student-athletes in Kenyatta University. There is need to know how student-athletes in Universities, Secondary schools and elite athletes perceive their coaches' competency in Kenya.
- The current study focused on athlete's perception of coaching competency. There is need to know how coaches perceive themselves as competent and compare their perception with athletes.

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