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THE COACHABILITY OF FOOTBALL (SOCCER) ATHLETES**

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Volume No 1 Issue No.4 December 2012

www.iresearcher.org

ISSN 227-7471

THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL "INTERNATIONAL RESEACHERS"

www.iresearcher.org

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PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOTBALL (SOCCER) ATHLETES IN THE PHILIPPINES: BASIS FOR EVALUATION OF THE COACHABILITY OF FOOTBALL (SOCCER) ATHLETES

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ABSTRACT

Coachability involves the ability to listen; willingness to try new things; and ability to adapt to change. Coachability comes into focus considering its importance in the coach-athlete interaction before, during and after any games but also in the overall performance of athletes. Based on the personality characteristics of the Manchester Personality Questionnaire Factor Version 14; this study focused on the coachability, or otherwise, of football (soccer) athletes in the Philippines. Participants were selected varsity players. Findings indicated that both male and female athletes scored high in (4) of the 14 personality traits such as rule consciousness, independence, competitiveness and conscientiousness. On the Big 5, they scored high on (2) of the 5: creativity and achievement. Results from the mean scores tested at (.05) level of significance indicated no significant difference in the characteristics of the players; and that the players showed a high degree of coachability. Implications for future research were discussed.

**Key words: Manchester Personality Questionnaire, Personality Characteristics; Football (Soccer); Coachability*

1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, as social beings, one of peoples' enduring and unavoidable concerns is interaction rooted in interpersonal relationships (Jowel & Cockerill, 2003). As people come together especially as a single unit, there is the need for mutual contact and bonding touching on many aspects of individuals lives: psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, organizational etc. For Jowet, et al., (2003) propelled by interactions, people develop feelings of closeness, such as trust and respect, thoughts of co-orientation, such as common goals, and complementary roles and tasks.

Sports, as one of the human activities that bring people together, has as one of its clearly definable characteristics, the tendency to being individuals together for a common purpose, in an atmosphere that requires leadership and submission for the ultimate realization of the aims and objectives of sporting teams and performers. No doubt, many interpersonal relationships are formed in sports whether at the theoretical or at the empirical level. Sports psychologists (Coppel, 1995; Wylleman, 2000; Wylleman, Carpenter, Weiss & Ewing, 1999 as cited by S. Jowet et. al., 2007) have over the years noted that an inter-personal relationship specific and important to sports psychology is that between the athlete and the coach. This athlete-coach relationship is fundamental in the process of coaching because its nature is likely to determine such psychological qualities like athlete's satisfaction, self-esteem and performance accomplishments (Jowett e. al., 2003). Moreover, the coach-athlete relationship is understood in terms of quality leadership on the part of the coach. Based on quality leadership, the coach is generally perceived by athletes as one who can emphasize training and instruction behaviors that enhanced and improved athletic performance; and provided positive feedback that reinforced athletes by recognizing and rewarding good performance (Chelladurai&Riemer, 1998; Serpa & Antunes, 1989 as cited by Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Gearity & Murray, 2011). The coach-athlete interrelationship dyad is also explicable in terms of empathy (Lorimer, & Jowett.,

2010); self-efficacy – individual’s belief in their “capabilities to organize and execute courses of actions required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1986 as cited by Jackson & Beauchamp, 2010); in terms of passion for the sport and for the accomplishment of goals (Lafreniere, Jowett, Villerand & Carbonneau, 2011). Also, mutual learning and observation play important role in the coach-athlete relationship (Hancock, Rymal & Ste-Marie, 2011); personality traits (Jackson, Dimmock, Gucciardi & Grove, 2011); character building (Myers, Vergas-Tonsing & Feltz, 2005); mutual reciprocity – involving the submission of the athletes (Poczwadowski, Barott & Jowett, 2006).

Although all the above cited researchers explored the athlete coach relationship, yet one discovers that it is largely a one-sided account. Since this interaction is a dyad, there must be a give-and-take element from both the coach and the athlete. It is in order to explore this essential mutuality in the relationship that this study focused on the coachability of the athletes. For a coach to perform all the above expectations, they need the co-operation of their athletes whether in individual sport or in team sport (Backer, Boen, Ceux, Cuyper, Hoigaard, Callens, Frnasen & Broek, 2011). The disgraceful outing of the French National Football Team (an otherwise very formidable team with an array of very talented world class footballers) leaving the 2010 World Cup football tournament held in South Africa early without a single point in three matches because of lack of mutual relationship between the coach and the players can serve as a case study. Eric Musselman, a former head coach of the Golden State Warriors and Sacramento Kings, California refers to coachability “as the extent that we hear and utilize outside input and influences. To produce breakthroughs, we need to be coachable”. And according to a sports researcher (Oden, Beverly www.about.com) the coachability of an athlete can be understood from the point of view of what he called “the three pillars”: ability to listen; the willingness to try new things; and ability to adapt to change. The researcher’s interest in this area of the athlete-coach relationship is fired by 1) the lack of research on this dimension of the relationship in terms of athletes’ contribution to the relationship between them and the coach. 2), to contribute to the growing research in this very important aspect of sports psychology focusing specifically on the game of football..

The game of football is a team sport, laden with rules and regulations, played by a total of 11 players (manning 11 distinct positions of play). In a competitive environment, therefore, there are 22 players. Time duration is 90 min of play and some minutes of “injury time” (injury time is left at the discretion of the referee); 30 min of extra time when necessary; and some other extra time for penalty kicks (in the event of a tie when a winner must emerge from a particular game and tournament). Football is broadly compartmentalized into three departments: Defense; Mid-field; and Attack. The defense comprises of the goal keeper and two other players; the midfield is composed of four players; and the attack (which is subdivided into wingers and strikers) has five players (two wingers and three strikers). Nevertheless, all the above arrangement of players position can and do change depending on the strategy adopted by the coach. As in other sports, the position of players can change – and this is where coachability of athletes comes into play. In the field of play, all the above actions are supervised by a central referee and two others at the side called linesmen. But crucial to the life and performance of a football team is, without prejudice to the above officials and elements of the game, the coach and the coachability of the athletes.

1.2: Research Objectives/Questions:

This study explored the coachability of football (soccer) athletes using the 14 items of Manchester Personality Questionnaire. In doing this, the researcher addressed the following:

- 1) As measured by the Manchester Personality Questionnaire, what is the personality profile of the football athletes when grouped according to gender?
- 2) Is there a significant relationship between the personality characteristics of the athletes when grouped according to gender?

1.3: Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference between the personality characteristics of the respondents’ when grouped according to gender.*

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on descriptive research design.

2.1: Participants:

These were varsity students who are actively playing the game; and are periodically engaged in the Universities athletes association of the Philippines (UAAP) games. They were fifty-five (55) in number, comprising of thirty (30) male and twenty-five (25) female soccer players within the age range of 18-25, who were readily available for the study.

2.1: Research Instrument:

The study made use of the Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ). The MPQ is a 90-item standardized questionnaire measuring 14 attributes of personality with a scale measuring socially desirable responding.

2.3: Research Procedure:

There was about 15-25 minutes interview between the researcher and the participants. The interview was based on how they perceived not just their coach but also the game of football, as a growing sport in the Philippines. All agreed that a lot has to be done for the sport to develop. Thereafter, 22 copies of the (MPQ) 14 questionnaires were distributed and the participants were asked to answer, as best they can, all the questions. 17 copies were returned answered after one week through one of the participants. 11 male athletes and 6 female athletes completed the questionnaire. Statistical measurements used to analyze data included a mean analysis and inferential statistics such as test of significant difference (t-test of independent samples).

3. RESULTS

Results obtained from the data gathered were as follows:

3.1: As measured by the Manchester Personality Questionnaire, what is the personality profile of the respondents (football athletes) when grouped according to gender?

Results obtained from the data gathered are presented in table 1 below, as the personality profile of the respondent football athletes measured by the Manchester Personality Questionnaire:

Table 1: Showing the Personality Profile of Respondents

Personality Trait	Male (SS)	Female (SS)
Originality	H (7)	HA (6)
Rule Consciousness	H (9)	H (8)
Openness to change	H (8)	HA (6)
Assertiveness	H (7)	HA (6)
Social Confidence	A (5)	LA (4)
Empathy	HA (6)	H (9)
Communicativeness	HA (6)	H (8)
Independence	H (8)	H (7)
Rationality	H (8)	HA (6)
Competitiveness	H (9)	H (9)
Conscientiousness	H (7)	H (7)
Perfectionism	A (5)	H (7)
Decisiveness	H (9)	HA (6)
Apprehension	HA (6)	H (7)

Legend: SS = sten score; H = high; HA = high average; A = average; LA = low average; L = low

Results from table 1 above shows that both male and female respondents in the study have high average scores (SS) in rule consciousness, independence, competitiveness and conscientiousness. Specifically, high scores in **rule consciousness** (9 and 8, respectively) is an indication that the respondents are ready to take risks especially during the game even to the point of breaking rules. Also, high scores in **independence** (8 and 7, respectively) show that the respondents are independent, self-sufficient and resourceful and would like to find out things by themselves, require a lot of personal space, and like to solve their own problem. The high scores recorded in **competitiveness** (9 and 9 respectively) point to the fact that respondents have a strong need to achieve and work hard to achieve goals. They are pointing out that they set challenges for themselves, play to win and need to feel they are accomplishing something. And finally, in **Conscientiousness**, the high score recorded by both male and female participants (7 and 7, respectively) indicates that the participants have a strong sense of duty and responsibility and tend to be somewhat traditional. They see values in rules and traditions and respect people in authority (specifically the coach). They also have a high degree of perseverance.

However, disparity in scores (low and high for male and female and vice versa) in other dimensions of personality as measured by the Manchester Personality Questionnaire 14 was noted as well. In personality

dimensions such as *originality, openness to change, assertiveness, and rationality*, male respondent-football athletes scored higher than their female counterparts. But in such dimensions as *empathy, communicativeness, perfectionism and apprehension*, the female respondent-athletes seemed to fare better than their male counterparts. Interestingly, both male and female respondents scored lower in **social confidence** (5 and 4, respectively). This is an indication that both are less self-assured and less socially confident.

Table 2 Profile of Respondents on the Big Five Factors

Big Five Factors	Male (SS)	Female (SS)
Creativity	H (8)	H (7)
Agreeableness	A (5)	A (5)
Achievement	HA (6)	HA (6)
Extroversion	A (5)	A (5)
Resilience	L (3)	L (3)

Legend: SS= sten score; H = high; HA= high average; A= average; LA= low average; A=average

Table 2 above shows the sten score as obtained from the respondents based on the Big 5 Factors of the Manchester Personality Questionnaire. Results indicated that both male and female respondents scored high in **Creativity** (8 and 7 respectively) and a high average in **Achievement** (6 and 6, respectively). High score here indicates the athletes are more original, less rule-oriented, more open to change, more independent of social influences, more achievement oriented and more radical even in taking risks. High achievement is associated with high academic, occupational or athletic performance.

3.2 Is there a significant difference between the personality characteristics of the respondents when grouped according to gender?

Table 3: Test of Significant difference between Personality Characteristics of Male and Female Respondents

Group	Group One	Group Two	t-value	p-value	Verbal Interpretation
Mean	7.14	6.86			
SD	1.78	1.71	0.54	0.56	(Not Significant)*
SEM	0.45	0.43			
N	30	25			

In table 3 above, t-test was used to determine whether there is any significant difference in the personality characteristics of the respondents when they are grouped according to gender. Results obtained as indicated in the table shows a p-value of $p < 0.56$ which points to the fact that there is no significant difference in the way both male and female respondent football (soccer) athletes portrayed their personality characteristics as enunciated in the Manchester Personality Questionnaires used in this study. **Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted.**

Nevertheless, there are still areas in the measured factors in tables 1 and 2 which the athletes showed some statistically insignificant difference in terms of mean score. In the factors of **empathy, communicativeness and perfectionism**, it was noted that female athletes scored higher than their male counterparts (9; 8; and 7 as against 6; 6; and 5, respectively). This shows that the female athletes are more prone to take others along, more considerate of others views, display a higher degree of humility as they are willing to apologize for their mistakes, can let others know what they think about issues, and finally have high standards, yet can seek feedback easily from others. The male counterparts are more prone to ignore others feelings in taking decisions, and are not generally high standard or feedback seekers. In the factors on **decisiveness, assertiveness and rationality**, the male respondents scored higher than their female counterparts (9; 7; 8 as against 6; 6; and 6, respectively). This is an indication that the male counterparts are more prone to look critically at people in charge, can exhibit independent opinions about issues, enjoy being in charge, can reach decisions quickly and in a logical manner. On the other hand, low scores recorded by their female counterparts indicate that on a general note they reach decisions slowly and might tend to feel uncomfortable being in charge, and are more tolerant of authority figures.

4. DISCUSSIONS

This study involved 55 selected male and female football (soccer) players, all of which are students and varsity players who are periodically engaged in UAAP (Universities' athletes' association of the Philippines) football games. The analysis and interpretation of data were based only on high and low scores. This was done in order to establish the significant relationship between the high and the low mean scores. The focus of this study is to use the Manchester Personality Questionnaire to assess the personality characteristics of selected varsity football (soccer) athletes as the basis for the evaluation of the coachability of football athletes in the Philippines. In the introduction, the researcher mentioned that coachability broadly involves athletes' ability to listen; willingness to try new things; and ability to adapt to changes. All the items of the personality characteristics of Manchester Personality Questionnaire chosen in this study quite aptly addressed what is understood as coachability in this study.

As a growing sport, still at infancy stage, in the Philippines, the game of football can develop faster and better from the viewpoint of better interaction between the coach and their players. The importance of the coachability of athletes, as an integral and essential component of the coach-athlete interaction cannot be ignored.

In focusing on the coachability of selected football athletes through assessing their personality characteristics, this study found out that among the respondent varsity players, they recorded a high score on personality factors such as *rule consciousness, independence, competitiveness, conscientiousness*. No doubt these factors can be found in a football player. For a game laden with rules and regulations, knowledge of these rules and how not to violate them will be uppermost in the mind of a qualified coach and a good player. Also, players need a lot of self-assurance and resourcefulness especially during training and during play. Since the game of football is a team sport, there is that likelihood that more than one player may be exhibiting the same skill and stamina. Attention to independence factor here will help the coach determine what is outstanding or unique in a particular player (e.g., in skill and/or stamina); time and what position of play will be good for the player and for the optimal performance of the team. No doubt too that inherent in every player and every sport is the factor of competitiveness. Without competitiveness, no player or team will proceed, in the first place, since by definition, sport is competitive. The high score in conscientiousness is an indication that players are ready to persevere and most of all obey and respect their immediate boss, the coach. This is indeed a good sign of coachability of the respondents of this study. Without mutual respect, no good result is possible in the coach-athlete interaction, no team spirit will be built and the performance of the team will definitely be affected, no matter how gifted a player may be or how very qualified a coach is. These three factors with highest scores also reflected in their scores on the *Big 5 of creativity, agreeableness and achievement*.

4.1: Limitations of Study:

This study has some limitations: the findings here cannot be generalized for two reasons: i), the study is limited to a team sport (football) and might not apply to individual sport (e.g., tennis, or boxing) ii), the game of football is still at the early stages of development in the Philippines (and more particularly in the institutions) where this study is located. Interest in the game as well as lack of facilities for such sport as football could act as hindrances for many people participating in the sport.

4.2: Implications for future research

Implications of this study for future research is that researchers can now do more on the personality characteristics of football athletes when it comes to coach-athlete relationship than on skill and some extrinsic motivations, thus bringing out the psychological dimension in the coach-athlete relationship dyad often ignored. Although this study focused on the coachability of athletes, it, however, recommends that future research can focus on the coaches themselves to explore the impact their personality characteristics (and not just their skill, knowledge and experience) can have on such factors as motivation, coachability and improved social relationship of their players.

4.3: Conclusions:

There is, therefore, the likelihood that persons with the above personality traits can easily conform to the working definition of coachability in this study: ability to listen, willingness to try new things,, and the capacity to adapt to changes. Moreover, it was also noted that the respondents had low scores in *social confidence* and in one of the Big 5, namely, *resilience*. This study recommends the aforesaid factors guide the coach in developing stamina and asking for and collaborating with sports psychologists in building the self-esteem of the players through some other psychological interventions.

*Note: This article is part of the author's work on clinical sports psychology. It is directed by the person listed above as the second author. The location of the study was at the University of Santo Tomas, Graduate School, Manila, Philippines.

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Appendix**Sample of the adapted Items from the Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) used for the purpose of this study.****Age.....Gender.....**

The following items in this personality questionnaire are designed to test how you act, think or feel in different situations. Please indicate the extent to which the items apply to you using the rating scale below:

A = never; B = occasionally; C = fairly often; D = generally; E = Always

*Please kindly tick the alphabet that applies to you after each sentence.

- 1 I have to work hard to make things happen
- 2 I am a person who originates ideas
- 3 I tend to follow rules
- 4 I am prepared to ignore rules and procedures
- 5 I prefer established methods to new approaches
- 6 I tend to challenge rules and procedures
- 7 I dislike discussing concepts and theories
- 8 I am interested in new ideas and innovations
- 9 I tend to need change to stay interested
- 10 I have strong views on how things should be done
- 11 I am inclined to look critically at people in charge
- 12 I find it difficult to mix in social situations
- 13 I tend to take control when others are uncertain what to do
- 14 I tend to ignore other people's feelings
- 15 I apologize when I have made a mistake
- 16 I keep my emotions under control
- 17 I share my problems with other people
- 18 I tend to dislike working on my own
- 19 I prefer to find out things by myself
- 20 I work best as a member of a team
- 21 I enjoy working closely with people
- 22 I take decisions without necessarily establishing the facts
- 23 I weigh up different options before taking decisions

- 24 I approach things in a logical manner
- 25 I like to win
- 26 I dislike the competitive aspect of
- 27 I dislike successful people
- 28 I tend to feel a strong sense of duty
- 29 I am apt to treat insensitively people with authority
- 30 I leave jobs unfinished
- 31 I work harder than the average person
- 32 I dislike being in charge
- 33 I take action when I see what needs to be done
- 34 I feel a need to please others
- 35 I can handle criticism without getting defensive
- 36 I take unpopular decisions without any difficulty.

Note: The above 36 items were selected from 84 (6 each for the 14 dimensions of the MPQ). The measured 14 dimensions and the items under them as used in this study are as follows: Originality: 1 and 2; Rule consciousness: 3 to 6; Openness to change: 7 to 9; Assertiveness: 10 and 11; Self-Confidence: 12 and 13; Empathy 14 and 15; Communicativeness: 16 and 17; Independence: 18 to 21; Rationality: 22 to 24; Competitiveness: 25 to 27; Conscientiousness: 28 and 29; Perfectionism: 30 and 31; Decisiveness: 32 and 33; Apprehension: 34 to 36.

The Big five: **Creativity:** originality, rule conformity and openness to change. **Agreeableness:** social-confidence, empathy and independence. **Achievement:** Independence, competitiveness, conscientiousness and perfectionism. **Extraversion:** Social-confidence, communicativeness, independence and rationality. **Resilience:** Decisiveness, empathy and apprehension