



## Perceived Hindrances Experienced by Sport Coaches in South Africa

by

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*The purpose of this study was to examine perceived hindrances encountered by sport coaches in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. A total of 224 sport coaches (122 males and 102 females) were purposively recruited to participate in this study. An exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the factor structure of the Perceived Hindrance Scale. The results of this study indicated the following as major hindrances encountered by sport coaches: "Lack of support systems for women players", "Lack of support for women coaches from superiors", "Low salary", "Lack of opportunities for promotion", "Difficulties with parents/spectators" and "Lack of job security". Recommendations on strategies to overcome these perceived hindrances are discussed.*

**Key words:** coaching, hindrances, occupation.

### Introduction

Sport coaching is a highly visible occupation and the benefits associated with coaching make it an attractive profession (Wuest and Fisette, 2012). These benefits include the financial rewards, opportunity to work with athletes, prestige and recognition, satisfaction associated with giving the best of oneself, enjoyment, the social status achieved from coaching and the excitement of winning (Lyle et al., 1997; Surujlal and Nguyen, 2011; Wuest and Fisette, 2012). Although the benefits associated with coaching are well documented in literature, the Barriers Model of Occupational Choice postulates that individuals – in this case, coaches – may also experience numerous external obstacles or hindrances to their entry into the occupation (coaching) or subsequent satisfaction of their needs (Everhart and Chelladurai, 1998). These hindrances have been identified in the literature as including harassment, long working hours, burnout, homophobia, pressure to win, job insecurity, discrimination, lack of informal

networking and social support (Demers, 2004; Everhart and Chelladurai, 1998; Kamphoff, 2010; Kerr and Marshall, 2007).

Another obstacle relates to family–work conflict. This conflict is more prevalent for female coaches than their male counterparts (Bolorizadeh et al., 2013). A plausible reason could be that women perform multiple roles, i.e. coach, wife, *loco parentis*, mother, and so forth. Kerr and Marshall (2007) further demonstrated that female coaches with children are more likely to experience the role conflict. For instance, Kamphoff (2010) revealed how one female coach left coaching because she could not give her children the time, attention, and energy they needed and deserved. This could be attributed to the fact that childcare is typically not provided during training, travel, and competition schedules (Kerr and Marshall, 2007). In fact, sport organisations view family responsibilities as being outside of their control and interest (Kerr and Marshall, 2007). Consequently, female coaches

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have to juggle family and work demands simultaneously due to societal expectations (Eagly and Carli, 2007). As a result, the extraordinary amount of time and effort required to be effective as a coach could be seen as an obstacle to normal social life (Everhart and Chelladurai, 1998), thus resulting in female coaches jettisoning the coaching profession. Any factor that decreases the number of people entering the sport coaching profession is of great concern, particularly as the number of sport participants increases (Kerr and Ali, 2012).

Despite scientific literature being replete with overwhelming information on hindrances to sport coaching in other countries (Everhart and Chelladurai, 1998; Kamphoff, 2010; LaVoi and Dutove, 2012), very little is known about the impediments encountered by sport coaches in South Africa. Although inadequate resources, job insecurity, pressure from fans, media, and management have been reported as leading factors for the exodus from the coaching profession (Singh, 2001; Surujlal and Nguyen, 2009; Surujlal et al., 2004), these factors seem anecdotal as there is hardly any available study which has primarily examined the hindrances faced by sport coaches in South Africa. Thus, the present study attempted to fill the void in the literature as such information could help sport organisations to design strategies that could help to retain sport coaches in the country. Therefore, the present study was carried out to ascertain perceived hindrances experienced by sport coaches using exploratory factor analysis.

## Material and Methods

### Participants

A total of 224 sport coaches (122 males and 102 females) from the Gauteng Province of South Africa participated in this study. The participants represented a variety of sports: soccer ( $n = 87$ ), athletics ( $n = 45$ ), netball ( $n = 44$ ), cricket ( $n = 19$ ), rugby ( $n = 12$ ), swimming ( $n = 10$ ), boxing ( $n = 4$ ); three coaches did not indicate their sports. Forty-five per cent of the coaches were in the 18–25 years age group, 30% in the 26–35 years age group, 20% in the 36–45 years age group, 4% in the 46–65 years age group and 1% older than 65 years of age. Concerning employment status, 67% of the participants were volunteers, whereas 33% were paid.

### Research instrument

The Perceived Hindrance Scale (PHS) developed by Kamphoff and Gill (2008) was used to collect data. The questionnaire was comprised of 34 items measured on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all a hindrance*) to 9 (*completely a hindrance*). The instrument measures the following five subscales: minority/gender bias (e.g., “Racial/ethnic minority coaches are discriminated against”, “Racial/ethnic minority coaches are treated unfairly”), gender issues (e.g., “Lack of support for women coaches from superiors”, “Lack of support systems for women players”), nature of coaching (e.g., “Having to do a lot of training”, “Unfavourable working hours”), conflicts with others (e.g., “Coaching interferes with social life”, “Difficulties with parents/spectators”) and professional issues (e.g., “Low salary”, “Lack of job security”). Participants were asked to rate the most important hindrances in their coaching profession. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.95 was obtained for the entire questionnaire in the current study. This alpha value was higher than the benchmark level of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

### Procedures

Prior to data collection, permission to carry out the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg and the Gauteng Sports Council. The principal researcher and fieldworkers administered the questionnaire to the participants. Participants were informed through a cover letter that their participation would remain anonymous and their responses would be confidential. The participants were identified at different coaching courses and seminars. In most instances, the questionnaires were completed under the supervision of the principal researcher and the fieldworkers prior to, or after, the coaching courses/seminars. In some instances, participants completed the questionnaire in their own convenient time and returned it to the principal researcher and fieldworkers at a pre-arranged time.

### Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages) were used to analyse the data. The Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the scale. In addition, an exploratory factor analysis

using the principal component analysis (PCA) was also employed to examine the factor structure of the PHS. According to Pallant (2011), the PCA groups items into meaningful factors and reduces a large number of related variables to a more manageable number (Pallant, 2011). All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

## Results

Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data was assessed for factor analysis. The

correlation matrix revealed the presence of coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .886, exceeding the recommended value of .60 (Kaiser, 1974), and the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2 = 3845.612$ ;  $df = 561$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ) provided sufficient evidence that the data were suitable to proceed with factor analysis. A minimum eigenvalue of 1 guided the extraction of factors. Table 1 presents the factor analysis on the PHS to sport coaching.

**Table 1**

*Factors analysis on the Perceived Hindrance Scale*

Factors	Factor loading	$\bar{x}$	SD
<b>Minority/Gender Bias (Eigenvalue = 11.60, % of Variance = 34.11)</b>			
Racial/ethnic minority coaches are discriminated against	.87	3.92	2.64
Racial/ethnic minority coaches are treated unfairly	.85	3.62	2.50
Lack of role models for racial/ethnic minority coaches	.64	4.51	2.71
Lack of support for racial/ethnic minority coaches	.61	4.43	2.71
Men hiring only men	.46	4.67	3.13
Affirmative action has created extra hassles	.43	4.72	2.92
Women coaches are treated unfairly	.42	4.67	2.76
Female players prefer male coaches	.34	4.03	2.81
Male coaches do not accept female coaches	.32	4.55	3.13
<b>Gender Issues (Eigenvalue = 3.52, % of Variance = 10.35)</b>			
Lack of support for women coaches from superiors	.83	5.35	2.89
Lack of support systems for women players	.80	5.39	2.93
Lack of training programmes for women coaches	.79	4.94	3.03
Perception of homosexuality among women coaches	.62	4.29	3.01
Women coaches are discriminated against	.54	4.69	3.05
Lack of role models among women coaches	.54	4.68	3.00
Women coaches are perceived to be unattractive	.42	3.88	2.93
Perceptions of women coaches as unfeminine	.30	3.96	2.83
<b>Nature of Coaching (Eigenvalue = 1.89, % of Variance = 5.56)</b>			
Having to do a lot of training	.83	4.06	3.03
Unfavourable working hours	.83	4.09	2.94
Coaching takes too much time	.75	4.28	3.02
Pressure to win	.66	4.55	2.98
Public scrutiny of life	.41	4.65	3.31
Lack of opportunities for promotion	.38	5.13	3.02
Difficulties with alumni	.35	4.68	2.85
<b>Conflicts with Others (Eigenvalue = 1.39 % of Variance = 4.07)</b>			
Coaching interferes with social life	.71	4.42	3.01
Difficulties with parents/spectators	.51	5.10	2.70
Time spent travelling to competitions	.51	4.47	2.97
Coaching means working evenings and weekends	.48	4.66	3.13
Coaching conflicts with family commitments	.35	4.89	2.96
Hassles with media	.31	4.15	2.90
<b>Professional Issues (Eigenvalue = 1.28, % of Variance = 3.76)</b>			
Low salary	.81	5.23	3.16
Lack of job security	.73	4.89	3.07
Other professions are more attractive	.48	4.73	3.18
Difficult to obtain an entry coaching position	.49	4.70	2.90

In terms of mean ranking, the major hindrances experienced by sport coaches were "Lack of support systems for women players" ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 2.93$ ); "Lack of support for women coaches from superiors" ( $M = 5.35$ ,  $SD = 2.89$ ); "Low salary" ( $M = 5.23$ ,  $SD = 3.16$ ); "Lack of opportunities for promotion" ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 3.02$ ); "Difficulties with parents/spectators" ( $M = 5.10$ ,  $SD = 2.70$ ) and "Lack of job security" ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 3.07$ ).

## Discussion

This study examined hindrances experienced by sport coaches using a Kamphoff and Gill's (2008) scale. The results provide some evidence for the validity of the PHS based on principal component analysis and internal consistency testing of the subscales. The results further show that the overall scale had higher alpha value, demonstrating that the PHS is a reliable tool for assessing perceived hindrances to coaching in the South African context. Five factors, namely, *minority/gender bias*, *gender issues*, *nature of coaching*, *conflicts with others* and *professional issues* were identified through factor analysis. Factor 1, *minority/gender bias*, was comprised of 9 items and accounted for 34.11% of the variance. Factor 2, *gender issues*, consisted of 8 items and explained 10.35% of the variance. Factor 3, *nature of coaching*, comprised 7 items which accounted for 5.56% of the variance. Factor 4, *conflicts with others*, had 6 items and accounted for 4.07% of the variance and Factor 5, *professional issues*, consisted of 4 items accounting for 3.76% of the variance. The results of the PCA revealed the presence of the above five factors with Eigen values exceeding 1, explaining a total of 57.85% of the variance. All five factors exceeded the recommended minimum of 0.30 which is considered as the benchmark for factor loadings (Hair et al., 2010). Consequently, all items were retained.

Overall, this study found the lack of support for women players and coaches to be major hindrances encountered by sport coaches. This finding is congruent with a study undertaken by Norman (2008) wherein it was reported that female coaches were isolated and not supported by their governing bodies. In her qualitative study, Norman (2008) further contended that one of the female coaches was overlooked for

promotion although she was the most qualified woman coach in her sport.

Low salary was also reported as a major obstacle for sport coaches. This echoes the finding of Kamphoff (2010), who stated that meagre salaries had an impact on sport coaches' decisions to leave the coaching profession. The issue of such a salary amongst sport coaches in this study could be attributed to the fact that the majority of sport coaches (44%) had no coaching qualifications, and previous research (Surujlal, 2004) had demonstrated that most of the sport federations in South Africa based their compensation systems on coaching qualifications and often favour qualified coaches. Therefore, this study recommends that sport coaches need to be encouraged to attend coaching courses so that they can earn a reasonable salary which might motivate them to stay in coaching for longer periods. Demers (2004) further argued that a good salary as an incentive would also motivate them to coach on a full-time basis. Although monetary incentives are important for the coach, other rewards which could motivate them to stay longer in coaching should also be introduced (Surujlal, 2006). These may include transport allowances and medical insurance.

Lack of opportunities for promotion was identified as another important setback to the sport coaches. A similar finding was reported by Kamphoff (2010), in whose study it was indicated that most of the sport coaches left the coaching profession for promotion opportunities in other professions. Therefore, this study suggests that a promotion system should be in place that could encourage such coaches to stay in their profession for longer periods. Sport coaches further indicated that they experienced difficulties with parents/spectators, probably because the majority of them were coaching children. This result is in agreement with that of Reade and Rodgers (2009), who found that dealing with parents, was a major challenge for sport coaches who coached young children.

Consistent with a view expressed by Reade and Rodgers (2009), the results of the present study demonstrate that sport coaches in South Africa are not given the necessary tools to deal with parents effectively. According to Weinberg and Gould (2007), negative behaviour in youth sport will never be completely

eliminated; however, what can be done is to educate parents about their role in sport. This could be achieved by inviting parents to attend club meetings with a view to informing them about the team rules, the coach's philosophy, and the roles played by parents, coaches, and athletes (Weinberg and Gould, 2007). Informing parents about the responsibilities the coach expects them to fulfil should be the most important part of the meeting (Smoll et al., 2011), and this might prevent conflict between parents and coaches. More positively, the meeting might strengthen the coach-parent relationship, thus resulting in high levels of sport participation among children.

Another important hindrance which emerged from this study is the lack of job security. The literature indicates that there is a high turnover of sport coaches in South Africa, particularly in soccer and rugby (Surujlal, 2004). In order to enhance the job security of sport coaches, it is recommended that their contracts are equally binding for both the coaches and the sport clubs (Surujlal et al., 2004). This will afford security for both the coach and the sport club for a specific period of time. The suggestions that coaching interferes with social life, takes too much time and conflicts with family commitments were, however, not supported by the results of the present study. Our results contradict those of Kamphoff (2010), who found time constraints and family commitments to be major hindrances to sport coaching. These discrepancies could be explained in the light of the fact that most of the sport coaches (71%) in the present study were single. Consequently, it is possible that since they were unmarried they might not have gained a firm grasp on future social and family commitments (Everhart and Chelladurai, 1998).

### Acknowledgements

The financial assistance of the University of Johannesburg and CATHSSETA towards this study is gratefully acknowledged.

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An unexpected finding in this study is that discrimination was perceived as the least hindrance in coaching. This finding is inconsistent with findings of a study conducted by Kamphoff (2010), who reported that most of the sport coaches were discriminated against; and, that, in some way, the homophobic atmosphere had an impact on the decision of lesbian coaches to leave coaching. A possible explanation for the observed finding could be that since the majority of sport coaches (63%) were inexperienced, it is possible that they might have not yet experienced discrimination in their coaching careers. Another plausible explanation is that such coaches could have regarded discrimination as something that they could surmount in their future career (Everhart and Chelladurai, 1998).

### Conclusion

The results of this study highlight the perceived hindrances encountered by sport coaches, which include lack of support for women coaches and players, inadequate salary, lack of opportunities for promotion, difficulties for working with parents/spectators and job insecurity. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are proffered. First, female coaches, who are role models, should be invited to discuss challenges facing female athletes and coaches, respectively, and how they can be addressed. Second, coach-parent meetings should be organised regularly by teams as this will minimise conflicts between coaches and parents, thus maximising children's participation in sports. Finally, a sport association for coaches should be formed. This will ensure equitable salaries and guarantee that the needs of the sport coaches are well catered for.

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