

EFFECT OF AGE AND GENDER ON PLANNING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Background: The coaching profession is constantly changing therefore, coaches at all levels of sport competition need to know more than just the fundamental elements in order to be successful. Specifically, the competencies in planning and conflict management skills can come in handy while physically and mentally training their athletes. This study investigated the effect of age and gender on planning and conflict resolution skills for professional practice in Benue State.

Materials and Methods: The research design that was adopted for this study was survey research design. The Population of the study consisted of all the coaches of Benue State Sports Council Makurdi. The sample comprised one hundred and sixty two (162) coaches of Benue State Sports Council who were purposively selected for the study. The questionnaire titled (EAGCPCRSPP) developed by the researcher was used for data collection in this study. The independent sample *t*-test was used to find out gender differences in planning and conflict resolution skills. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse differences in coaches' age in planning as well as their conflict resolution skills. All the analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results: Male and female coaches in Benue State did not differ significantly in their mean ratings of their planning ($p>0.05$). Result indicated that, coaches of different age range did not differ significantly in their mean ratings of planning ($p>0.05$). The findings also indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female coaches in Benue State on their conflict resolution skills ($p>0.05$). The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of coaches conflict resolution skills by age ($p>0.05$).

Conclusions: Further research however, is needed to ascertain other factors that might have an effect on planning and conflict resolution skills given their implications for sports development in Benue State.

Key Word: Age, Gender, Planning, Conflict Resolution, Coach, Professional Practice.

I. Introduction

The coaching profession is constantly changing therefore, coaches at all levels of sport competition need to know more than just the fundamental elements in order to be successful. As the prime custodians of athlete development and goals achievements, coaches require vast knowledge of all areas concerned with improving athletic performance. Specifically, the competencies in planning and conflict management skills can come in handy while physically and mentally training their athletes.

Planning is the process of thinking about the activities required to achieve a desired goal. It is the first and foremost activity to achieve desired results. It involves the creation and maintenance of a plan, such as psychological aspects that require conceptual skills. There are even a couple of tests to measure someone's capability of planning well. As such, planning is a fundamental property of intelligent behaviour. An important further meaning, often just called "planning" is the legal context of permitted building developments.

According to [1], planning has a specific process and it is necessary for multiple occupations (especially in management, business, and so on). Different types of plans help organisations achieve efficiency and effectiveness in each field. Planning holds an important relationship to forecasting, though this aspect is often ignored. Forecasting entails predicting what the future holds, while planning directs what the future should look like for multiple scenarios. Planning is a combination of forecasting and preparation of scenarios and how to react to them. It is one of the most important project management and time management techniques. Planning requires preparing a sequence of action steps to achieve some specific goal. When it is effectively done, the time and effort necessary for goal achievement is drastically reduced. Planning reveals the amount of progress made towards goal achievement and what effort needs to be put in. In recent years much emphasis has been placed on the need for planning to expand its boundaries both from a conceptual and a practice-based perspective.

As stated by [2], the effective planning process consists of more steps or phases which are grounded on confirming the common strategic direction and on defining the role of the strategic and the operative plans. In sport organizations there are four key phases, each of them

consisting of various stages during the implementation of the planning process, these phases are as follows:

- a. Pre-planning phase or preparing for planning,
- b. Formulating the strategy phase,
- c. Implementation phase and
- d. Evaluation and control phase.

Each of these phases together with the stages is equally important for the final result and that is why to the functioning of the organization itself and the realizing of the purposes.

In the highly stressful and competitive environment of elite sport (and even social sport), conflict is bound to occur. Coaches need to know the best way to understand, recognize and manage conflict in a way that results in a positive outcome. Dealing with conflict is a delicate yet necessary part of any coach's role. Ting-Toomey [3] defines conflict as a form of intense interpersonal and/or intrapersonal dissonance between two or more interdependent parties based on incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs, and/or attitudes. Vecsey [4] regard conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities. Through the years different schools of thought on conflict have been developed and applied.

In order to counteract the negative effects of conflict, appropriate conflict-handling styles have to be implemented. Conflict management is what people who experience conflict intend to do, as well as what they actually do [5]. It refers to the strategies implemented by members aimed at reducing or solving conflict. It is contended that conflict is an important theme to study in both business organisations and in close working relationships. Conflict, if perceived negatively as with the traditional approach, may impact on productivity, work performance and on job satisfaction. In close working relationships it can also be a threat to satisfaction and the endurance of interpersonal relationships. Such negative outcomes necessitate that conflict be studied empirically by gathering data on its appearance, causes, and on its emotional, cognitive motivational and behavioural aspects [6].

Personality characteristics, interpersonal needs, individual behaviour [7], organisational status [8], emotions, power, rewards, beliefs and basic values [9] also influence the planning and

conflict-handling styles applied. Apart from this, [5] also bring into the equation the possibility that the people differ in their planning and conflict management skills based on age and gender roles.

In planning, according to Ikhioya and Gloria [10], women are significantly different from men in terms of a wide variety of dimensions of career and professional success, happiness and reward. Effective result-oriented coaching, training and consulting involves both powerful content and an effective process of planning and bringing knowledge and experience to the challenge of the athletes, but also conducting the process in an open, empowering way that does not push or demand, but helps clear the pathway to success. Women are better planners in coaching and they are different in how they view life, work-life balance, family priorities, ultimate goals, integrity, wholehearted leadership, meaning/purpose, authenticity and the impact they want to make in their career.

According to Manley and colleagues [11], in the battle of the genders, recent studies have shown that women are better leaders than men who still occupy the majority of positions and thus plan better. A US consulting firm, "Zenger and Folkman", conducted a study and found that women ranked better in twelve characteristics of the sixteen studied among more than seven thousand leaders. According to this magazine, they plan better than men, and this is the most decisive competence in the management of employees.

Stereotypical old coaches are disciplinarians first and teachers second. They usually deal with their athletes in a negative manner and are open to change. Old coaches believe that their way is the only way and their experience dictates that everyone should succumb to their will. Young coaches are open to change, they plan to suit the new trend of sports and are willing to further their knowledge of the sport and are teaching the athletes with the intent that they would develop their own understanding of the concepts. In planning the sport the young coaches tend to lean towards the cooperative style of coaching as the pursuit of knowledge leads them to understand the role open communication plays in pushing the athlete to peak performance. Men and women have very different personalities and ways of working.

Furthermore, most young coaches tend to be cooperative coaches. Athletes' today coaches who are open to their ideas and values them as people. Cooperative coaching allows this

empowerment of the athletes, while keeping the overall power in the hands of the coach which is part of effective planning as coach. A prevalent trait of a young coach is the thirst for knowledge. A young coach is more open to change and adaptation than the old coach. This does not mean that the young coach is not as domineering. A young coach seeks to earn the respect of his/her athletes by demonstrating the knowledge they need to be successful [10].

Lampman [8] focused more broadly on the differences between sexes in dealing with conflict, and consider two theoretical perspectives which provide a more clear and effective way of explaining individual differences in conflict handling styles. The one perspective highlights the influence of gender role orientation and the other organisational status. Some older studies suggest that females have a more cooperative attitude to conflict handling than males [9], whilst [7] suggested that females are more competitive. The gender role perspective, according to [12] conceptualises masculinity and femininity as independent dimensions. Following this role perspective the competitive or dominating behaviour appears to be consistent with the male role. Obliging and avoiding behaviour on the other hand is more consistent with females.

It appears that while few researchers have studied the relationship between conflict-handling styles and gender roles, those who have reported masculine individuals adopting a dominating style [12] and females an avoiding conflict-handling style [9]. He further revealed that gender in general had little relationship with the variance of the conflict-management style. Gender was non-significant in all models after controlling for the personality variables. [7] came to the same conclusion a few years earlier when they stated in their study that women managers do not differ from their male counterparts in preferred conflict-handling style. Other studies such as that of [9], verified that in small family businesses most of the owners made use of the authority (dominating) style to resolve disputes. The compromising style was used to a lesser extent.

Antonioni [13] came to the conclusion that age in general had little relationship to the variance of planning and conflict-management styles. It was found that age was significantly associated with only the integrating and avoiding conflict handling styles. Therefore it is primarily the purpose of the study to establish how age and gender influences the implicit or

explicit choice of planning and conflict-handling styles of sports coaches for professional practice.

The purpose of the study therefore, is to assess the effect of gender and age on planning and conflict resolution skills for professional practice in Benue State. Specifically, the study intends to determine the effects of;

1. coach's gender on planning for professional practice.
2. coach's age on planning for professional practice.
3. coach's gender on conflict resolution skills for professional practice.
4. coach's age on conflict resolution skills for professional practice.

II. Material And Methods

Study Design: The research design that was used for this study was survey research design. Survey research design concerns itself with the present and attempts to determine the current status of the phenomena under investigation. Brinkerhoff Robert [14] stated that survey research design is used to describe, interpret, access and analyze the existing conditions as at the time of the study.

Study Location: There was a sports council in Makurdi which is a parastatal under the Benue State Government. It is known as the Benue State Sports Council, Makurdi.

Study Duration: February 2018 to February 2019.

Sample size: One hundred and sixty two (162) coaches of Benue State Sports Council.

Subjects & selection method: The population for this study consisted of all the one hundred and sixty two (162) coaches of the Benue State Sports Council (BSSC) Makurdi. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all the coaches because the coaches in the sports council are not too many to be sampled. By using all the coaches for the study, the responses obtained from the coaches will represent their ideal perception of their competencies and training needs for professional practice rather than making generalizations from a few coaches' perceptions.

Subjects & selection method: Data for this study was obtained through the administration of the questionnaire to respondents. This was done with the aid of four research assistants who were instructed on the administration of the questionnaire. These research assistants underwent a trial

version of the data collection before the actual data collection process. The questionnaire was given to the coaches prior to their training sessions after they have been briefed about the essence of the exercise. The coaches were allowed a meaningful time to completed the questionnaire and return to the researcher on the spot to ensure high return rate.

Statistical analysis

Data in this study was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

Answering the research questions was based on the following criteria

For competency, it is as follows

Response	Real Limits
Very Competent	3.5-4.0
Competent	2.5-3.49
Incompetent	1.5-2.49
Very Incompetent	0-1.49

For training needs, it is as follows

Response	Real Limits
Strongly Agree	3.5-4.0
Agree	2.5-3.49
Disagree	1.5-2.49
Strongly Disagree	0-1.49

The independent sample t-test was used to find out gender differences in coaches level of education as a coaching competency and communication skills as a training need. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse differences in level of education as a coaching competency as well as communication skills as a training need of coaches based on gender, age, and years of experience. All the analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) at 0.05 level of significance. In testing the hypotheses using t-test, p-value was used to test for significance. The hypotheses were rejected if p value is < 0.05 and vice versa.

III. Result

Table 1: t-test Comparison of Mean Rating of Competences Relating to Planning by Male and Female Coaches

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	128	3.17	.33	160	-1.46	.15	NS*
Female	34	3.26	.38				

*Not Significant

The results in Table 1 shows that the female coaches' mean rating of the competences relating to planning (M=3.29, SD=.38) was not significantly greater than the mean rating by male coaches (M=3.17, SD=.33); $t(160) = 1.46, p = .15$. Since the p -value was greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance on the Mean Ratings of Coaches' Competences Relating to Planning by Coaches of Different Age Range

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	.78	3	.26	2.28	.08	NS
Within Groups	17.94	158	.11			
Total	18.72	161				

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) shown in the table 2, indicates that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of competences relating to planning by coaches of different age range, $F(3/158) = 2.28, p = .08$. Since the p -value was greater than the stipulated 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 3: t-test Comparison of Mean Rating of Training Needs Relating to Conflict Resolution Skills by Male and Female Coaches

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	128	3.00	.37	160	-.20	.84	NS
Female	34	3.02	.40				

The results in the table 4 shows that the female coaches' mean rating of the training needs relating to conflict resolution skills (M=3.02, SD=.40) was not significantly greater than the mean rating by male coaches (M=3.00, SD=.37); $t(160) = -.20, p = .84$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance on the Mean Ratings of Coaches' Training Needs Relating to Conflict Resolution Skills by Coaches of Different Age Range

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	.02	3	.01	.04	.99	NS
Within Groups	22.24	158	.14			
Total	22.26	161				

The ANOVA result displayed in table 4 indicates that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of coaches' training needs relating to conflict resolution skills by coaches of different age range $F(3/158) = .04, p = .99$. Since the p -value of .99 was greater than the stipulated 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was not rejected

IV. Discussion

The result of the study indicated that, male and female coaches in Benue State did not differ significantly in their mean ratings of their planning competences ($p > 0.05$). This implies that, both male and female coaches in Benue State have the same competences relating to planning for their professional practice. This study is at variance with that of [10] who found out that women were significantly different from men in terms of a wide variety of dimensions of planning, career and professional success, happiness and reward. According to them, women are better planners in coaching and they are different in how they view life, work-life balance, family priorities, ultimate goals, integrity, wholehearted leadership, meaning/purpose, authenticity and the impact they want to make in their career. The difference in the findings between these studies could be as a result of socioeconomic variations in the populations or gender differences may result more from sex stereo-types than from real differences in individual performance.

In the same vein, when the result was compared among age of the coaches, result indicated that, coaches of different age range did not differ significantly in their mean ratings of competences relating to planning ($p > 0.05$). This result is unexpected in that old coaches are expected to be better game planners due to their acquired vast experience over the years in coaching. This result is also at variance with that of [15] who found that, for the most part, athletes described old coaches as being highly respected within their sports. Furthermore, the athletes granted an automatic level of credibility to old coaches who were well known or had positive reputations. When coaches have experience probably as a result of many years of coaching, it is easier to buy into what they are trying to teach. The variance in findings here

could be as a result of the gradual attrition of physiological and mental faculties as well as the mitigating effect of coach education which have definite implications for sports planning.

The findings also indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female coaches in Benue State on their conflict resolution skills ($p>0.05$). This finding however, discords with gender role expectations from the view of the researcher. Men and women are expected to endorse conflict management strategies that complement gender role expectations. There is evidence that suggests that men are more avoiding in their style of conflict management than are women. Haferkamp [16] believes that men are considered less able to manage relationships and are expected to remain calm and in control. Furthermore, many men experience anxiety in social settings, and this may make men more likely than women to avoid conflict. This finding is also in disagreement with that of [17] who found out that women are more likely to utilize a collaborative conflict resolution style and men are more likely to avoid conflict. As collaboration is generally considered more productive and avoidance more disruptive in the conflict resolution process, they suggest that women may possess more effective conflict resolution attributes than their male counterparts.

Similarly, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of coaches conflict resolution skills by age ($p>0.05$). This finding is unexpected because older coaches are expected to differ significantly from young coaches in terms of conflict resolution skills due to their experience. When handling the differences of youngsters one must be very careful of their interests, needs and intentions, especially when making decisions. This requires huge amount of patience, understanding and empathy which comes with experience. This finding disagrees with that of [18] who found that coaches differ significantly in their conflict resolution skills by age. According to him, young coaches are more prone to use the problem solving strategy while old coaches use the winner/loser strategy.

V. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of age and gender on coach's planning and conflict resolution skills for professional development in Benue State. The information obtained during the inspection of the professional literary material reveal a significant effect of age and gender on planning and conflict resolution skills of sports coaches, however, the information obtained

during the conduct of this study revealed no significant effect of these two variables on planning and conflict resolution skills of sports coaches in Benue State. Further research however, is needed to ascertain other factors that might have an effect on planning and conflict resolution skills given their implications for sports development in Benue State.

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