SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CONFORMITY OF BASKETBALL PLAYERS

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Abstract

The subject of present research was relations between basketball players' social characteristics and their conformity toward coach and club management. Study aim was to explore the relationship between basketball players' social characteristics and their conformity toward coach and club management. Sample of examinees was consisted of 113 adult basketball players. Research instruments were modified social questionnaire SSMAXIP (Hošek, 2004), and modified conformity scale (The Conformity Scale, Mehrabian, & Stefl, 1995). Internal reliability of the conformity scale was α=.74. Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation was used in order to examine significance of relations between social characteristics and conformity of basketball players. This analysis has shown that significant relationships between the majority of social characteristics and conformity toward coach and club management of basketball players do not exist, indicating that some outer factors contribute to players' high conformity.

Keywords: conformity, basketball players, coaches, club management

Introduction

Social characteristics of basketball players are part of the specification equation of success in basketball. Therefore, basketball players' success depends, to some degree, on their social characteristics. Expressions such as: size of basketball player's hometown, family material status, parents' support, educational status, environmental impact etc., certainly has influence on a basketball player's quality (Vučković, 2008). On the other hand, sport sociologists and

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basketball coaches agree in opinion that social relationships between players, coaches and club management must be clearly defined in every sport team. The most common attachment of socialization process is conformity (Koković, 2000, p. 82). Conformity is one's adjustment to attitudes, opinion and behavior forms, and to a certain group standards. Conformists easily adapt to sport team and club discipline. They are favourite players of authoritarian and persistent coaches. Uncertain, intellectually unformed, frustrated, authoritarian persons with lower group social status are more susceptible to conformity.

Marjanović (1995) has researched conformity of 40 girls and 40 boys, students of Belgrade high schools utilizing Asch's technique. Analysis of variance has shown that degree of conformity is significantly higher in gender homogenous groups than gender heterogeneous ones. The highest degree of conformity was noted among males in regard to instructed male subjects, following by girls in regard to instructed female subjects, then those girls in regard to instructed male subjects and the least degree of conformity was present at males in regard to instructed female subjects. Atkinson (2002) has investigated for three years reasons why Canadian women undergo tattooing. He concluded that one of the main reasons for that is pressure from social environment. Conducting a research on 149 students, Niemand (2006), based on 11 item Lickert scale, found that women were bigger conformists than men in terms of life and racial prejudices. He stated that majority of authors came to the conclusion that women were bigger conformists. Joksimović and Maksić (2006), were examining value orientations among 628 adolescents, and they measured degree of conformity by scale that pertains statements of inevitability to accept opinions of majority, importance of group fitting and adjustment to demands and expectations made by others. Positive relationship between conformity and altruistic value orientation was explained by student-conformists' desire to be popular and accepted. Conformity was more evident among students whose parents had lower educational level. Such parents insist on respect for authority and adoption of conformity values.

Research of conformity indicates that players newcomers, quickly adjust their behavior to older players and the team leader (Carron, 1980). Younger adolescents and their parents have great expectations from coaches (Martin, Jackson, Richardson, & Weiller, 1999). They think that coaches should be educated, competent, ambitious, hard working, etc. Authors conclude that young players have low level of conformity because: a) their relatively short sport experience and b) parents' involvement in sport activities. Sherman, Fuller and Speed. (2000) explored attitudes of Australian athletes about "coach's preferable behavior". Amongst other things, authors concluded that female athletes have more tolerance for coach's autocracy, in other words they were bigger conformists than male athletes. After talks he had with doped athletes, Mendoza (2002) claimed that certain percentage of athletes used doping because they have seen other athletes used it too. Jowett and Cockerill (2003) made analysis of relationships between Olympic medal winners and their coaches, and they consider athletes' readiness for complete concordance with coach's training rules and principles indicator of "positive conformity", because such relationship had led to success. Humara (2002) concluded that in the selection of athletes, as an addition to assessment of an athlete's past performance and bio (physiological) data, administrators should make greater use of psychological assessments, including the Athletic Motivation Inventory (AMI) and the Profile of Mood States (POMS). He underlines affiliation and conformity as possible predictors of sport performance, for example an athlete with lower conformity and affiliation could achieve poor results in team sports or if that athlete was coached by autocratic type of coach.

In their research Vučković and Gadžić (2009), noted significant differences in conformity degree between first and second league players in 3 out of 8 given assertions. No differences were found between "outside" and "inside" players or younger and older players in any of the given assertions. Results indicate that basketball players of Bosnia and Herzegovina are highly inclined to conformity.

Definitely, a number of research have shown high degree of conformity among players. However, there are discrepancies about the strength of relationships between athletes' social characteristics and their conformity toward coach and club management (Wildman, 2006).

The Study aim was to determine relationships between basketball players' social characteristics and their conformity toward coach and management.

Methods

Participants

At the end of league competition in season 2005/2006, three best ranked teams from 3 competition levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina were identified. Precisely, sample was consisted of 38 basketball players from first league of Bosnia and Herzegovina (highest competition level, professional players), 37 basketball players from first league of Republic of Srpska (second competitive level, semi-professional players) and 38 basketball players from second league of Republic of Srpska (third competition level, amateurs). Consequently, sample included 113 players in total (M=24.2 years, SD=5.06).

Instruments

Research instrument applied in the present research were *ad hoc* adjusted social questionnaire SSMAXIP (Hošek, 2004). This adjusted questionnaire contains 13 items. Questionnaire was developed with purpose of assessing social status of athletes. Some items were scored with 3-point ordinal scale (e.g. I grow up in family which was: 1 – poor, 2 – average financial status, 3 – rich), while others were scored with 5-point ordinal scale (e.g. I finished: 1 – elementary school, 2 – three years secondary school, 3 – four years secondary school, 4 – two-years-faculty, 5 – four-years-faculty). Beside this questionnaire in this research was used modified conformity scale (*The Conformity Scale*, Mehrabian & Stefl, 1995). Internal reliability of modified conformity scale was α=.74.

Procedure

The poll conduction has been done in morning hours, before any training activities. Author and his two assistants, coaches of examined teams, attended the poll procedure in specifically chosen room within gymnasium. Statistical procedures were computed using computer software SPSS 16. Results aquired from questionnaire for social factor assesment originate from ordinal level of measurement, therefore examinees were ranked based on their responses to specific items. Conformity degree assesment test was comprised of two subtests. The first subtest estimates conformity toward a coach, and second one conformity with respect to the club management. Total score for an examinee on both subtests was obtained by addition of results. Examinees were ranked in accordance to achieved score on subtests, meaning that results were shown on ordinal scale. Since the aim of this study was to determine degree of association for variable groups, social factors on one side and conformity on the other side, authors utilized Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation

Results

Mean value of conformity, on a five-grade Lickert's scale indicates high degree of basketball players' conformity toward coach and club management (Table 1).

Table 1

Basketball players' conformity toward coach and club management

Assertions ↓	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
LEADER	113	4.19	1.08
CONSPL	113	4.49	.90
COASTR	113	3.82	1.24
COAIDE	113	3.80	1.23
MANRES	113	4.07	1.16
MANBEN	113	3.77	1.14
MANWOR	113	2.69	1.49
OPIMAN	113	3.22	1.24

From table 2, it is noticeable that only one item, ''support from mother during player's career'' (SFMDPC) has significant negative correlation with player's conformity toward club management. Other items: ''family wealth'' (FAMWEA), ''family numerousness'' (FAMNUM), ''family relations'' (FAMREL), and ''support from father during player's career'' (SFFDPC) have no significant relations with player's conformity, neither toward coach, nor toward club management.

Table 2

Relations between basketball players' social characteristics (''family factors'') and their conformity toward coach (CONCO) and club management (CONCM)

Assertions ↓		CONCO	CONCM
FAMWEA	Correlation Coefficient	-.012	-.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.896	.625
FAMNUM	Correlation Coefficient	-.008	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.931	.172
FAMREL	Correlation Coefficient	.062	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.515	.981
SFFDPC	Correlation Coefficient	-.068	-.140
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.476	.138
SFMDPC	Correlation Coefficient	-.082	-.303**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.388	.001

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 shows existence of significant relations for "quality of former coaches" (QFORCO) item with basketball player's conformity toward coach and club management, furthermore, item ''socio-political ambient where basketball player developed'' (SPAMBD) has significant relation with basketball player's conformity toward club management. Items ''quality of gymnasiums for training'' (QGYMTR) and ''number of training session per week'' (TRSEWE) have no significant relations with player's conformity toward coach and club management.

Table 3

Relations between basketball players' social characteristics (''socio-political factors") and their conformity toward coach (CONCO) and club management (CONCM).

Assertions ↓		CONCO	CONCM
QGYMTR	Correlation Coefficient	.011	.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.911	.143
QFORCO	Correlation Coefficient	.224*	.223*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.018
TRSEWE	Correlation Coefficient	-.053	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.576	.455
SPAMBD	Correlation Coefficient	.075	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.428	.001

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

From table 4, it is clear that none of the items of ''educational factors'': ''player's education'' (PLAYED), ''father's education'' (FATEDU), ''mother's education'' (MOTEDU) and ''player's current educational aspirations'' (CEDUAS) have significant relations with player's conformity toward coach and club management.

Table 4

Relations between basketball players' social characteristics (''educational factors'') and their conformity toward coach (CONCO) and club management (CONCM).

Assertions ↓		CONCO	CONCM
PLAYED	Correlation Coefficient	-.130	-.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.171	.365
FATEDU	Correlation Coefficient	-.058	.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.542	.904
MOTEDU	Correlation Coefficient	-.088	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.353	.603
CEDUAS	Correlation Coefficient	.148	-.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.117	.760

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Discussion

Within the area of former Yugoslavia, in the last thirty years, there exists strong coach cult of personality. Credits for extraordinary results, that league and national teams from the area of former Yugoslavia achieved in recent past, for the most part were granted to coaches, hence respect and conformity of domestic players toward them is quite understandable. Basketball players' conformity toward club management is of somewhat lower intensity than the one toward coach. However, significantly lower degree of conformity toward club management has been expected because that structure, mainly, has no great deal of knowledge about "basketball expertness".

The relationship analysis between Family factors and basketball players' conformity toward club management leads to conclusion that there is no significant relation between these two investigated domains. Thus, it could be said that wealth and family numerousness where player grew up, family interpersonal relationships, father's and mother's support during career had no influence on current player's conformity toward coach and club management.

With reference to Socio-economic factors and players' Conformity toward coach and club management, situation is a little bit different. Quality of former coaches and socio-political ambient where basketball player developed, were significantly related to player's conformity toward coach and club management. It seems that coach's high quality inevitably creates conformist behavior amongst players. The same applies to the socio-political ambient where a basketball player had developed. In contrast to those findings, quality of gimnasiums for training and number of training session per week were not significantly related to player's conformity toward coach and club management. The analysis of relations between Educational factors and player's Conformity toward coach and club management, clearly indicates that player's conformity has not been influenced by their education level nor their parents' level of education. This result is surprising considering some studies found that more educated people were less conformists (Koković, 2000; Narimani and Ahari, 2008). Generally, it can be surmised that investigated basketball players' social characteristics had no influence on their conformity toward coach and club management.

The most renowned North American sport sociologist, Albert Carron, in a number of his studies (Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002; Carron, Beauchamp, Bray, & Eys, 2002; Carron, Eys, Bray, & Beauchamp, 2003; Carron, Eys, Beauchamp, & Bray, 2005) claims that team success, among other things, requires player's conformity toward coach. Making comparison between successful and non successful American teams at the Atlanta Olympic Games, Gould et al. (1999) have researched causes of failure for unsuccessful teams. Besides a lack of team cohesion, experience and mental preparation, authors suggest that low degree of conformity contributed to poor results, as well. Athletes who were not ready to comply completely with a coach and his program, achieved poor results. In their research about athletes' inclination to individualism or collectivism, McCutcheon and Ashe (1999) concluded that those "individualists" were persons who devalue collective effort directed to success, underrate importance of team relations and prefer high degree of personal autonomy and self-sustaining. Narimani and Ahari (2008) compared football forward and defense players in some sociological characteristics, that supposedly have an impact on team success. They claimed that defense players were bigger conformists than forward players. Reason for that, they see in lower education level of defense players. In his research of social characteristics of adult basketball players, Vučković (2008) concluded that "outside" players had higher education level than "inside" players. Hence, it was to be expected that "inside" players were bigger conformists ("Higher education and intellectual level persons are bigger individuals, thus less conformists" ; Koković, 2000, p. 83).

The most important results of present research were: a) basketball players of Bosnia and Herzegovina have high degree of conformity toward coach and club management and b) there are no significant relationships between the majority of basketball players' social characteristics and their conformity toward coach and club management. Conformity toward coach was bigger than the one toward the club management. High degree of conformity toward coach is desireable in team sports and this research finding was expected. Surprising (and disappointing!) were players' attitudes that approve interference of club management in coach's professional and educational work. It would be very interesting to apply questionnaire used in this research on basketball players from other European countries. Such comparisons would provide an answer to the question whether Bosnia and Herzegovina basketball players' high degree of conformity was justified. Secondly, weak association of basketball players' social characteristics with their conformity toward coach and club management indicates that some outer factors were responsible for high level of players' conformity. That is surprising as well, because many authors claim that athletes' conformity is higly under influence of social factors. However, it seems that primary condition of players' conformity could be coach's quality (his management style, knowledge, experience, reputation, etc.). Pressure from a group should not be underestimated too, because it result in one's conformity.

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