

# The Relationship between Coaching Competency, Coach-Athlete Relationship, Players Commitment and Team Performance on Higher League Football Clubs in Ethiopia

Dagnachew Nigeru Kebede<sup>1\*</sup> Kanhaiya Kumar Singh<sup>2</sup> Tesfaye Desalegn<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Sports Academy, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

<sup>2</sup> PHD, Assistant Professor, Sports Academy, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

<sup>3</sup> PHD, Assistant Professor, Sports Academy, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

**Abstract** – The main objective of this research , to analysis about the relationship between coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship, team performance and very important player's commitment on higher league clubs in Ethiopia. The total numbers of football clubs are 32. The clubs has be divided into two divisions (division A=16 clubs and division B=16 clubs). From the two division clubs, six clubs each (n=12) were selected by application of stratified random sampling techniques. In each football clubs, there are 25 players (n=400). From the total of 25 players in each club, 13 players randomly selected. Quantitative research approach correlation design was used. Besides, for order to collect the necessary data, a standard questionnaire as a major data collection method used. The questionnaire was adapted from the Coaching Competency Scale (CCS), Coach-Athlete Relationship Maintenance (CARM) and sport commitment (SC). The items 24, 28 and 25 respectively, and rated on five-point agreement Likert scale. Pilot test conducted to check whether it works in the Ethiopian context and questionnaire focus on the application of the item, feasibility and adequacy of items explained in the objective of the study. The questionnaire reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha for confirmation of the internal consistency of the scale and between items on each factor. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Both descriptive and inferential statistics, 1 sample t-test, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple linear regressions used to analyze the data. The results of the study were revealed that the mean value of coaching competency (3.57), Coach-athlete relationship (3.42) and Players commitment (3.7) was significantly higher than the mean test value. Finding of the research that Ethiopian league football clubs coaching competency, relationship in team members and coach and players' commitment seems above average by football players as perceived. The finding of one sample t-test indicated that the mean value of team performance (41.50) was significantly lower than the mean test value. This result shows that team performance is below average. The Pearson correlation coefficient value demonstrated that there was statistically significant positive correlation between coaching competency and team performance ( $r = .492, p < 0.01$ ), coach-athlete relationship and team performance ( $r = .484, p < 0.01$ ) and players' commitment and team performance ( $r = .347, p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis value showed that there is a significant contribution of the variables to team performance  $F_{(3,152)} = 23.314, P < 0.001$ . But the contribution of players' commitment to team performance was found to be not statistically significant. Thus, Ethiopian higher league football club coaches should be given great consideration to develop the coaching competency and coach-athlete relationship rather than players' commitment.

**Keywords:** Coaching Competency, Coach-Athlete Relationship, Players' Commitment, Team Performance, Higher League and Football Clubs.

## INTRODUCTION

Football is one of the most leading among team sports and that is why it has been one of the most acceptable part of the world today (Pedersen &

Thibault, 2014). In the endorsement and downgrading of football leagues, it is feasible to assume, for instance, that the coaching competency of coaching is a diverse, energetic and compound activity that encompasses many roles and requires

many skills (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010). The performance of a team depends to a great extent on the quality of the coaching skills of the coach (Jin & William, 2012). However, deficiencies in the quality of coaching competency will affect the performance and psychological well-being of the players (Horn, 2008).

In other words, Behan (2016) suggested that the coach-athlete relationship has significant impact on the elements of team performance. Likewise, the very core of the sport coaching profession is the improvement of the individual performance (Lyle & Cushion, 2010); as such a healthy relationship here is vital to the achievement of any athletic potential. Team performance in football is dependent on the quality of the coach-athlete relationship maintenance (Jowett Kanakoglou, & Passmore, 2012). However, existing evidences regarding the quality of coach-athlete relationship is still limited.

In connection with this, another key significant problem that has been given limited consideration is the perception of players' commitment that has a great factor headed for being successful for team performance (Scanlan, Chow, Sousa, Scanlan, & Knifsend, 2016). The study found out that long-time application of Scanlan et al. (2016) sport commitment model represented that a theoretical framework to examine commitment and explain why players continue involvement in their sport, since they can exert a strong influence on match outcomes and have relatively high levels of team performance. There are a controversial research reports regarding coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment in relation to team performance (Kebaili & Suissi, 2016; Pedreno et al., 2015; Wang & Straub, 2012). This implies to be investigated.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment to team performance on higher league football clubs in Ethiopia.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The coaching quality of the coach in relation to character building and motivation of athletes might have significant factors and very determine the team performance (Nicholas et al., 2014). However, these researchers have ignored the technique and game strategy-competency considered as an impact on the successful performance of the team. Even though, the coach in determining the quality and performance of a team and coaching football experience, surprisingly little research exists that identifies optimal coaching competency that influence the effectiveness of the team performance (Mahmoodreza, Alireza, & Zahra, 2013). That is why the coaching competency of higher league football clubs in Ethiopia requires to be investigated.

Jowett, Broin & Palmer (2010) discovered that managing the existence of conflict, support every

athlete, adopt openness, advice, positive and motivated athletes in a functional coach-athlete relationship leads an impact on team performance. However, Jowett et al., (2010) were not revealed that the social networks are not considered as a dimension of the coach-athlete relationship and that had a gap by taking it has an impact on team performance. Moreover, Forough, Rasool, Shahram, & Behzad (2014) revealed that players' commitment has an impact on the level of team performance. However, the authors were not briefly stated the standardized dimensions of players' commitment towards team performance.

From the above one can understand that, there is a very little research study that harmonized the relationship of coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment towards team performance in Ethiopian football performance context. Therefore, it seems mandatory to carry out an investigation in the aforementioned variables to see how the variables potent in determining team performance of football clubs in Ethiopia.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answers the following specific questions.

1. What is the general level of coaching competency Coach-athlete relationship, Players commitment and team performance in Ethiopian higher league football clubs?
2. Is there a significant relationship between Coaching competency, Coach-athlete relationship, Players commitment, and team performance in higher league football clubs?
3. To what extent coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship, and player commitment predict the team performance of higher league football clubs in Ethiopia?

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

#### General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the relationship between coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment to team performance of higher league football clubs in Ethiopia.

#### Specific Objectives

In line with the general objective, this study is organized under the following specific objectives:-

1. Determine the general level of coaching competency Coach-athlete relationship, Players commitment and team performance in Ethiopian higher league football clubs.

2. Examine the relationship between coaching competency, Coach-athlete relationship, and Players' commitment to team performance of higher league football clubs in Ethiopia.
3. Investigate whether coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment predict the team performance in Ethiopian higher league football clubs.

#### **Significance of the study:**

To the knowledge of the researchers, this study is the first attempt to link team performance and coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment, to the context of Ethiopia mainly intended to bridge the research gap, it is hoped to be important in different ways. Firstly, it may have a great contribution to add new ideas to their existing knowledge of the coaching staffs related to coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment of those clubs in the past and currently facing towards being successful in team performance. Secondly, the research will serve as a reference for players, coaches, team leaders, club supporter associations, researchers, football federations and the community at large who would like to pursue further studies from a new perspective and outlook of football clubs towards success in team performance in the league situation from the respective regions.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

**Research Design:** This study applied quantitative research approach. Based on the main objective of the study correlation design was employed. In this section, the researchers focused on detecting and describing relationships among variables. All of the techniques covered here are based on correlation. Correlation techniques are often used by researcher engaged in non-experimental research designs. Unlike experimental designs, variables are not deliberately manipulated or controlled-variables and are described as they exist naturally. These techniques can be used to explore the association between pairs of variables (correlation), predict scores on one variable from scores on another variable (linear regression) and predict scores on a dependent variable from scores of a number of independent variables (multiple regressions).

**Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques:** The target population of this study was all players of the football clubs that are currently competing in the Ethiopian higher league clubs. The total number of this football clubs are 32. Based on the ranking provided by the EFF, the total of 32 higher league football clubs is divided into three groups; highest ranked clubs (Group A), medium ranked clubs (Group B) and lower ranked clubs (Group C). Out of these three groups, two clubs each (n=12) was selected by using a stratified random

sampling technique from different regional higher league participant football clubs. In each football club, there are different number of players (n=259). From the total number of players in each selected group football club, 13 players were taken by employing random sampling technique, 156 players were selected to fill in the questionnaires. Totally, there are 156 players taken by employing a proportional stratification sampling approach to obtain fair representation of players from these higher league football clubs and participated in this study.

#### **DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS**

**Questionnaire:** The data collection instruments designed by adapting items from standardized questionnaires from researchers (Nicholas et al., 2014) that already checked the validity based on related literature from the international standards after extensive review of the literature like Coaching Competency Scale (CCS) adapted from the American context was used to measure the level of CCS. This instrument consisted of 24 items and was categorized into four major themes based on their purposes to address issues such as: motivation, game strategy, technique and character building.

This study also provided initial validity evidence for multidimensional measures of the coach-athlete relationship derived from the Coach-Athlete Relationship maintenance Questionnaire (CARM-Q) by (Rhind and Jowett, 2012) was used to measure the level of coach-athlete relationship maintenance and it appears to have appropriate high reliability and validity. This instrument consists of 28 items for players.

This research included up to date and valid assessment instrument to advance research in sport commitment, the Sport Commitment Questionnaire-2 (SCQ-2). This instrument consisted of 58-item. But the researchers were used only five feasible factors for measuring the players' commitment (sport enjoyment, other priorities, personal investments, social constraints and Mastery Achievements) all had included on the instrument vis-à-vis 25 items that was adapted from SCQ-2 (Scanlan et al., 2016). The three questionnaire items were answered with a five-point agreement Likert-type scale, which ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. When the items are worded positively and reverse scoring used for negative items.

#### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

The first purpose of this study was to determine the level of coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship, players' commitment and team performance. To do this, one sample of t-test computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Level of Coaching Competency, Coach-Athlete Relationship, Players Commitment and Team Performance**

Variables	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Test Value	Sig
Coaching competency	3.57	.791	8.977	155	3	.001
Coach-athlete relationship	3.42	.521	10.156	155	3	.001
Players' commitment	3.72	.474	19.008	155	3	.001
Team performance	41.50	13.85	34.720	155	48	.001

As indicated in Table 1 the results of one sample t-test demonstrated that the mean value of coaching competency (3.57) was significantly higher than the mean test value which was 3. This result shows that Ethiopian higher league football clubs coaching competency seems above average as perceived by football players. Similarly, the results of one sample t-test revealed that the mean value of coach-athlete relationship (3.42) was significantly higher than the mean test value which was 3. This result shows that Ethiopian higher league football club's coach-athlete relationship seems above average as reported by players. On the other hand, the results of one sample t-test shown that the mean value of players' commitment (3.72) was significantly higher than the mean test value which was 3. This result shows that Ethiopian higher league football clubs players' commitment was at above average level. The results of one sample t-test indicated that the mean value of team performance (41.50) was significantly lower than the mean test value which was 48. This result shows that Ethiopian higher league football club team performance is below average as perceived by players.

The second purpose of this study was to examine whether there exist a significant relationship between coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship, players' commitment and team performance. To attain this Pearson correlation coefficient was computed and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Relationship between Coaching Competency, Coach-Athlete Relationship, Players' Commitment and Team Performance**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Coaching competency	3.57	.791	1			
2. Coach-athlete relationship	3.42	.521	.570**	1		
3. Players' commitment	3.72	.474	.310**	.505**	1	
4. Team performance	41.50	13.85	.492**	.484**	.347**	1

As indicated in Table 2 the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient demonstrated that there was statistically positive significant correlation between coaching competency and team performance ( $r = .492, p < 0.01$ ). This shows that as coaching competency increases team performance also increases too. Similarly, there was a statistically positive significant correlation between coach-athlete relationship and team performance ( $r = .484, p < 0.01$ ). This shows that as coach-athlete relationship boost team performance also amplified too. Correspondingly, there was a statistically positive significant correlation between players' commitment and team performance ( $r = .347, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that as players' commitment increases team performance also enhanced too.

In the same way, statistically significant positive correlation was observed between coaching competency and coach-athlete relationship ( $r = 0.570, p < 0.01$ ). This shows that as coaching competency increases coach-athlete relationship increases. Similarly, there was a statistically significant relationship between coaching competency and players' commitment ( $0.310, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that as coach competency increases players' commitment increases too. Likewise, there was a statistically significant positive correlation observed between coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment ( $r = 0.505, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that as coach-athlete relationship increases players' commitment increases too.

The third objective of this study was to investigate whether coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment predict team performance. To achieve this, regression analysis performed and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table3: Regression Analysis of Coaching Competency, Coach-Athlete Relationship and Players' Commitment on Team Performance**

Variables	B	Beta	t-value	sig
Coaching competency	5.528	.316	3.860	0.001
Coach-athlete relationship	6.339	.238	2.646	0.009
Players commitment	3.764	.129	1.657	0.100

Dependent variable: team performance

As indicated in Table 3 the results of regression analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant contribution of the variables to team performance  $F_{(3,152)} = 23.314, P < 0.001$ . But the contribution of players' commitment to team performance was found to be not statistically significant.

The direct effect of the variables to team performance was determined using beta coefficients and the effect of coaching competency to team performance was ( $\beta = .316, t = 3.860, p < 0.001$ ). The effect of the coach-athlete relationship to team performance was ( $\beta = .238, t = 2.646, p < 0.009$ ). The effect of players' commitment to team performance was ( $\beta = .129, t = 1.657, p < 0.100$ ).

The independent contribution of each of the variables to the variance of team performance was also calculated and the contribution of coaching competency to the variance of team performance was .155 to the total  $R^2$ , which was 0.315. It is 49.21 % of the total  $R^2$ . The independent contribution of coach-athlete relationship to the variance of team performance was .115 to the total  $R^2$ , which was 0.315. This is 36.51 % of the total  $R^2$ . The contribution of players' commitment to the variance of team performance was .045 to the total  $R^2$ , which was 0.315. This is 14.29% of the total  $R^2$ . The composite score of the independent variable together, accounted for  $R^2$  was 31.5 % of the variance in the dependent variable.

## DISCUSSIONS:

The first purpose of this study was to determine the level of coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship, players' commitment and team performance. To do this, one sample of t-test computed and the results of one sample t-test demonstrated that the mean value of coaching competency was significantly higher than the mean test value. This result shows that Ethiopian higher league football clubs coaching competency seems above average as perceived by football players. In relation to this, the data which has been found from the present study is compatible with research findings such as;(Chiu et al, 2014; Jin& William, 2012). Similarly, Nicholas, (2014) stated that coaching competency is a very determine the team performance.

The results of one sample t-test demonstrated that the mean value of coach-athlete relationship was significantly higher than the mean test value. This result shows that the relationship between the coach and players in Ethiopian higher league football clubs seems above average as perceived by football players. Likewise, Rhind & Jowett (2010) argued that effective coach-athlete relationship maintenance is very essential for the successful performance of the team.

The results of one sample t-test demonstrated that the mean value of players' commitment was significantly higher than the mean test value. This result shows that the players' commitment in Ethiopian higher league football clubs seems above average as perceived by football players. Coupled with, Pedreno et al. (2015) revealed that different

challenging issues happen throughout the coaching in any sport, viz., player commitment is one of the most prominent challenges and significance for the football team performance.

The results of one sample t-test demonstrated that the mean value of the team performance was significantly lower than the mean test value. This result shows that the team performance in Ethiopian higher league football clubs seems below average as perceived by football players. Regarding team performance, influenced by many factors and most of these factors interact with each other.

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient demonstrated that there was a statistically positive significant correlation between coaching competency and team performance. This shows that as coaching competency increases team performance also increases too. In line with this finding, Chiu et al., (2014) confirmed that there was a positive and significant relationship between coaching competency and team performance. All of the findings made by the above authors showed that, there is a positive and significant relationship between coaching competency and team performance. In favor of the above findings, Nicholas et al., (2014) added that there was a positive and significant relationship between coaching competency and team performance.

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient demonstrated that there was a statistically positive significant correlation between coach-athlete relationship and team performance. This shows that as coach-athlete relationship increases team performance also increases too. In line with this finding, Behan, (2016) the quality relationships between the coach and players affects the successful coaching and may lead to success in team performance.

And the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient demonstrated that there was a statistically positive significant correlation between players' commitment and team performance. This shows that as players commitment increases team performance also increases too. In line with this finding, Pedreno et al., (2015) found that players commitment to be the strongest predictor of team performance.

The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient demonstrated that there was a statistically positive significant correlation between coaching competency with coach-athlete relationship and player's commitment; correspondingly, there was also a statistically positive significant correlation between coach-athlete relationship and players' commitment. This shows that as coaching competency increases, the coach-athlete relationship also increases and the coach-athlete relationship increases, the players' commitment also increases too. In line with this

finding, Scanlan et al., (2016) Player's commitment can increase with recurrent and positive interactions with a coach and the quality of the coach. In accordance with, the quality of the coach-athlete relationship has been directly and indirectly linked to players commitment and coaching competency (Isoard-Gautheru, Trouilloud, Gustafsson, &Guillet-Descas, 2016).

The results of regression analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant contribution of the variables to team performance. But the contribution of players' commitment to team performance was found to be not statistically significant. In support of this finding, Nicholls and Perry (2016) claim that the dimension of the coach-athlete relationships are more important contribution to the coaching process vis-a-vis a fundamental impact on team performance.

### CONCLUSIONS:

Based on the major findings of the study, it was concluded that coaching competency, coach-athlete relationship in this study had positive impact on team performance, whereas their effect on team performance during players commitment remained inconclusive., The most recurrent and persistent for team performance was coaching competency, in this higher league level coaches were offering the standard dimensions of coaching competency (motivation, technique, game strategy, and character building training). Besides, the coach-athlete relationship was also the second most prominent impact on team performance to football leagues. Ethiopian higher league football coaches has competence enough on the perspectives of players and players have strong affiliation with their football coaches. Mostly, the coaching competency and the coach-athlete relationships are perhaps the most important attributes to possess on the road to excellence of team performance. However, this study finding pointed out that the players commitment was discovered having insignificant role in affecting on the team performance without considering other factors of football coaching. Moreover, the team performance in Ethiopian higher league football clubs seems below average as perceived by football players.

The application of results of the present study based on precise research data from the higher league football clubs in Ethiopia can improve team performance through greater coaching competency of the coach and optimal choice of strategic tasks for maintaining the relationships between the coach and players.

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#### **Corresponding Author**

**Dagnachew Nigeru Kebede\***

Research Scholar, Sports Academy, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia