



The Evaluation of Performance Indicators of Coaches in Football Development

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Received: 06 October 2019

Accepted: 19 November 2019

Published: 01 December 2019

Abstract

This study sought to evaluate the performance indicators of coaches in football development. The statistical population of the study consisted of the coaches of Iranian First Division football clubs in 2017-18. In this regard, the research method is descriptive-survey in which the data obtained from a questionnaire were analyzed running SPSS software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were also used to analyze the collected data. The results revealed that behavioral and training components, team maintenance and promotion, team and individual management, and technical and educational skills were significantly correlated with football development. However, only background and experience component has no significant correlation with football development. Given the significant correlation between the performance indicators of coaches with football development, it is suggested that the Iranian Football Federation and football clubs use these indicators in selecting their coaches and hence pave the way for football development.

Keywords: Football; Coaches; Performance Evaluation; Football Development

How to cite the article:

A. Rizvandi, M. Taghipour Gharbi, M.R. Esmaeili, F. Ashraf Ganjooe, *The Evaluation of Performance Indicators of Coaches in Football Development*, *J. Hum. Ins.* 2019; 3(4): 246-252, DOI: 10.22034/jhi.2019.105764.

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1. Introduction

Among aerobic sports the most popular one tends to be soccer. Football is undoubtedly the most attractive and popular sport all over the world. This sport has undergone various changes, from a simple sport to an industry and commerce and has established itself alongside other existing industries and professions [1]. Transforming football from a sport to an industry extensively depends on its growth and development. The development of football is not only limited to famous countries such as England, Spain, Italy and Germany, but also Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea have managed to take important steps in the economic development of their football with proper management in this respect [2]. Football development has a bulk of revenue streams with it, including buying and selling players, hiring expensive coaches, television

broadcasting, ticket sales, off-field advertising, and sportswear advertising, and so on. It should be noted that the higher the football development, the higher the revenues will also be [3]. In addition, the tendency for this sport has increased over time and has made numerous changes to it, so that professional football in recent years is not comparable to the past. Today, multi-million dollar transactions for player transfers, the existence of sponsors with huge capital, buying and selling professional club equipment, multi-hundred million dollar deals around the globe, gaining huge revenue from broadcasting competitions and putting clubs on the stock market, all play a large role in the development of football industry [4].

In addition to the aforementioned factors, many other contributing factors affect the development of football, including player motivation, timely salary, remuneration, quality of players, quality of

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referees, and coaches who are responsible for leading teams. Like the top manager in an organization, the coach is a vital element in the management of football teams because it makes some executive and strategic decisions which affect the performance of the team. The coach coaches the players, motivates them, chooses them for each competition, and decides on the tactics and strategies of the team game [5]. Black (2011) states that coaches are the central and most important element of sports teams [6]. Among the three factors of athlete, coach and spectator, coach in team leadership is a strong organizer and the foundation of any progress [7]. Martens (2004) states that coaching is an occupation being different from other jobs in the community and that what is expected of a coach is to deliver good and kind people to the community [8]. Coaches have been considered as one of the key pillars of any team's development and formulation and no one can overlook their significant role in player performance [9].

Given the professionalism of the league and the development of football in clubs, the selection and evaluation of coaches is still raised as an issue to be taken into account. This has led club teams to questioning the coach as soon as the team fails in a domestic or international game and is immediately dismissed, which is very much a concern in Iranian football [10]. However, the cause of the loss of that team may not be the coach and other factors might be involved in its failure [11]. On the other hand, the results of research by Santos et al. (2017), Ramazaninejad et al. (2017) and Hosseini et al. (2014) indicate that coaching change does not result in the amelioration of the team outcomes [10,12,13]. Ramezanejad et al. (2017) studied eight seasons of Iranian Premier League games from 2001 to 2014. The results of their research showed that teams that have changed their coaches per season have dropped by an average of 2.83 positions compared to the previous season, compared to teams that have not changed their coaches whose positions have improved by an average of 1.19 [10]. This problem is due to the lack of qualifications and evaluation of a qualified coach in the field of football, and there are no specific criteria, and that coaches are constantly and consistently evaluated by external (media and spectators) and internal (managers of clubs and sports teams) forces [5]. Accordingly, their performance and results are always monitored. Therefore, the research question is, what indicators and criteria help in better selection and evaluation of coaches? How human resources are selected and appropriately evaluated in organizations paves the way for success and efficiency [14]. Football teams are no exception, and coaching the coach is an important principle for teams. The success or

failure of sports teams is to a great extent up to the coaches. Therefore, the selection of expert coaches with appropriate characteristics and criteria can guarantee the success of sports teams [15]. This in turn indicates the importance of standards and criteria for selecting coaches for sports teams. The pivotal role of sport coaches in clubs and sports teams has made them the main focus of sports teams [13]. Coaches will also play an important role in the success of athletes through their knowledge and background and experience. Coaches influence the progress of players and provide the basis for better results, which lead to better results for teams [16]. Better results can also benefit fans and attract sponsors' support, thereby contributing to the development of football [17].

There exists a dearth of research to evaluate the performance of coaches in Iran. The total of the studies in Iran and abroad can go under the rubric of three general categories: (1) research on the selection criteria and characteristics of national and club coaches [9,15,18]; (2) research on the relationship between coaching or coaching leadership styles and some athletic performance and behavioral indicators [2,3,19]; and (3) research related to the dimensions of performance appraisal of coaches [8,9]. It should be noted that the focus of this research is exclusively on the work of latter group and attempts to examine its relationship with football development.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) introduces coaching skills and knowledge required of soccer coaches include specialized sports skills, physiology and anatomy, sports psychology, first aid, communication skills, movement learning principles, training principles, statistical analysis, and theoretical knowledge of football. AFC also recognizes the roles of a coach as: organizing, modifying, encouraging, training, teaching and planning, and believes that it must use its knowledge to be able to play those roles in the coaching profession [18]. Darwishi (2014) describes the characteristics of a successful coach as sports knowledge, motivation for success, and the ability to convey thought [1]. Ismaili (2013) considers the attributes of a successful and effective coach to be listening, leading, being a teacher, guiding, being an advisor and being a role model [20]. Moreover, Toohey et al. (2018) attributes a coach to giving feedback, encouragement, reward, solving problems, opportunism, ambitious, and performance improvement [6]. He believes the coach should be able to help the team succeed with his skills in the above areas. Martens (2004) identifies the characteristics required for a coach in 15 cases, including knowledge of sports science, use of the best coaching style, prioritization of goals and programs, motivation, ability to transfer thought, familiarity with communication skills, familiarity

with the principles of encouragement, use of motivational skills, organization and training planning, evaluation of his/her activities and players and executed programs, familiarity with the principles of skill training and learning of players [8]. An efficient and effective coach is a person who is capable of changing outcomes, successful implementation, and positive psychological reactions in a team [21]. Coaches need to pay attention to both the performance of sports skills and the psychological skills of individuals and teams [22]. Me'mari, et al. (2012) also identified technical, operational, leadership and communication skills as the most important skills required by coaches [11]. Vali et al. (2015) also identified the most important indicators of evaluation from the perspective of soccer coaches as personality traits, social, managerial and technical skills. Cunningham also defines the coaching performance appraisal system in six sections: (1) sport performance results, (2) team performance, (3) ethical behavior, (4) financial responsibility, (5) quality of recruitment and selection of players, and (6) athletes' satisfaction with designing and formulating the exercises [23]. Given the different characteristics used in evaluating coaches in different studies, in order to evaluate coaches' performance indicators among the factors mentioned above, five factors including behavioral and training characteristics, team maintenance and promotion, background and experience, team and individual management, and technical and educational skills were identified and used for research.

2. Methodology

This research is applied in terms of the objectives and is descriptive-survey in terms of methodology.

Moreover, data collection instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire. The statistical population of this study includes coaches present in the First Division Iranian Football League in 2017-18. Due to the limited number of the population (50 persons), sampling was done in total and the sample size was equal to the population size.

Library and field data collection methods were used for data collection. The method of collecting library information was obtained by studying first-hand sources such as articles and theses as well as books related to the field of research. This information was then used to create a research questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study has 5 components for assessing the performance indicators of trainers. The first component of this questionnaire is the behavioral and training characteristics that indicate the individual characteristics of the coaches. The second component is the maintenance and promotion of the team, which refers to the results achieved by the coach. The third component is the coaching background and experience. The fourth component is team management, which refers to the coach's psychological, managerial, and leadership skills. The fifth component is the coach's technical and educational skills, which refers to the coach's technical abilities and ability to convey his concepts. The component of football development also refers to the coach's ability to understand his position in football development as a key component. It should be noted that the validity of this questionnaire was confirmed by 10 sports management professors who had studied football. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine its reliability, as follows:

Table 1. Reliability of the research questionnaire

Components	Number of items	Reliability
Behavioral and training skills	۴	۰/۹۰۱
Maintenance and promotion of the team	۴	۰/۹۰۰
Background and experience	۴	۰/۹۰۲
Team and individual management	۴	۰/۹۰۰
Technical and educational skills	۴	۰/۹۰۳
Football development	۴	۰/۹۰۱
Total	۲۴	۰/۹۰۷

As shown in table 1, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the research components were greater than 0.7, indicating the appropriate reliability of the research instrument.

In order to collect information, the Iranian Football League Organization was contacted and the research questionnaires were provided to the coaches. All questionnaires were filled in completely without any problems and analyzed

using descriptive and inferential statistics. SPSS software was run for analysis.

3. Results

After performing statistical analysis, the descriptive information of the sample under study is as follows: As it can be seen in table 2, the majority of coaches are in the age group of 30 to 40 years.

As illustrated in table 3, the positions of the coaches present in this study are listed.

Table 2. Age information of coaches

Variable	Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency percentage
Age	Less than 30 years	6	12	12
	30-40 years old	34	68	80
	41-50 years old	8	16	96
	More than 50 years old	2	4	100

Table 3. Coach Position in the team

Variable	Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency percentage
Position	Goalkeeper coach	19	38	38
	Fitness coach	1	2	40
	Assistant coach	14	28	68
	Coach	16	32	100

Table 4. Coaching background and experience

Variable	Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency percentage
Work background and experience	Less than 5 years	11	22	22
	5-10 years	19	38	60
	11-15years	14	28	88
	16-20 years	4	8	96
	More than 20 years	2	4	100

As shown in table 4, nearly 80% of the participants in this study had more than 5 years of coaching background and experience.

Then, in order to investigate the relationships among the variables and determine the appropriate statistical tests, Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (K-S) test was used to check the normality of the data.

Given the results of K-S test and that the significance level of all components is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the research data have non-normal distribution. Therefore, nonparametric Spearman correlation test was run to investigate the relationships between variables.

Table 5. K-S test results for normality test

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (K-S) test		
	statistic	Degree of freedom	Sig
Behavioral and training characteristics	0.172	50	.001
Maintenance and promotion of the team	.181	50	.001
Background and experience	.162	50	.002
Team and individual management	.155	50	.004
Technical and educational skills	.233	50	.001
Football sport development	.193	50	.001

According to the results of table 6, there is a direct and significant correlation between football development and all coaching performance measures at 95% significance level except for background and experience. Correlation coefficients between football sport development and behavioral and training characteristics, team maintenance and promotion, team and individual management, and technical and educational skills were 0.438, 0.506, 0.514 and 0.717, respectively. Football development is highly correlated with the technical and educational skills of coaches.

Linear regression was used to investigate the relationship between research components and football development.

According to the results of the regression test, the research components all had a significant correlation with football development except for the component of background and experience and that the performance indicators of coaches were able to explain 18% of the variance of football development.

Table 6. Spearman correlation test

Components	Behavioral and training characteristics	Maintenance and promotion of the team	Background and experience	Team and individual management	Technical and educational skills	Football sport development
Behavioral and training characteristics Significance	,	0.654 0.001	0.402 0.004	0.450 0.001	0.291 0.040	0.438 0.001
Maintenance and promotion of the team Significance	0.654 0.001	,	0.661 0.001	0.674 0.01	0.471 0.01	0.506 0.01
Background and experience Significance	0.402 0.004	0.661 0.001	,	0.345 0.014	0.164 0.256	0.136 0.347
Team and individual management Significance	0.450 0.001	0.674 0.001	0.345 0.014	,	0.725 0.001	0.514 0.001
Technical and educational skills Significance	0.291 0.040	0.471 0.001	0.164 0.256	0.725 0.001	,	0.717 0.001
Football sport development Significance	0.438 0.001	0.506 0.001	0.136 0.347	0.514 0.001	0.717 0.001	,

Table 7. The results of Regression test

Model	Regression coefficient	Standard error	t-statistic	Sig
Behavioral and training characteristics	0.421	0.119	1.588	0.012
Maintenance and promotion of the team	0.499	0.240	3.021	0.004
Background and experience	0.131	0.152	2.320	0.125
Team and individual skills	0.511	0.248	2.180	0.035
Technical and educational skills	0.712	0.187	5.474	0.001
R	0.426			
R ²	0.181			
F	918.520			

Table 8. Results of variance test

Model	Mean squared error	Degree of freedom	Mean squared error	F	Sig
Regression	671.297	5	134.259	918.520	0.000
Error	6.578	45	0.146		
Total	677.875	50			

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results, there was a significant correlation between the evaluation indices of the coaches and football development; however, background and experience had no significant correlation with football development. The results of the study by Santos et al (2017), Nadzalan and Karim (2017), Farahani et al. (1395), Tahmasbizadeh (2014), and Taks et al. (2014) research on sport and football development show that coaches have an unrivaled role in the development of sports especially in football [25]. In this respect, Santos et al. (2017) believe that

football development has a wide variety of sectors [12]. Coaches are an important part of the development of sports. Therefore, it is quintessential to have a clear plan in place so that the training and duties of coaches can be tailored to the development of football. Studies carried out by Panko and Mosewich (2017) also show that soccer coaches do not have the necessary training to teach many aspects of professional sports ethics and cannot give some feedback on some of their athletes' behaviors [21]. Therefore, the dimensions identified in this study can be used to determine the criteria for planning coaching training in the Iranian Football Federation.

Among the factors in this research, technical and educational skills is most strongly correlated with football development. The results of the study by Rouhani et al. (2013) and Me'mari et al. (2012) are consistent with this research finding. Rouhani et al. (2013) considered technical skills as the most important factor in evaluating coaches. On the importance of technical and educational skills, Moradi and Zargar (2015) believe that how coaches convey concepts is crucial in shaping the creative atmosphere in football teams [26]. The results of the study by Tahmasebizadeh (2014) on football growth and development indicators emphasize the importance of quality coaching and the creative atmosphere in the team's technical staff. Also, Ether et al. (2019) believe that coaches need to have different training in order to get better results and improve team performance in order to best communicate with different personality types of players. Kazemipour et al. (2015) also consider coaching technical skills as one of the main indicators of football developed worldwide [18]. Meanwhile, Karim and Nadzalan (2017) argue about the importance of technical skills for football development, in countries where the technical knowledge of football is lower, it is essential to use the knowledge of world-class instructors and coaches to develop football in developing countries such as Malaysia [2].

Team and individual management also had a significant correlation with football development. The results of the study by Sahebkar, et al. (2014), Rouhani et al. (2013), Hosseini et al. (1396) and Extrand et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of managerial skills. Takes et al. (2014) believe that the system of professional club in football has made coaches more in need of managerial skills. Gammelsater (2013) also found that leadership and management skills are essential attributes of coaches because many of a team's communication needs to be controlled by the coach, and the absence of this control can lead to reduced team performance [27].

Retaining and promoting the team is another factor associated with football development. It is difficult to get the top position, but it is harder to stay up there (Ismaili, 2013) [20]. In the Iranian Football League, one of the challenges facing coaches is to achieve the ideal result and promote the team's position (Hosseini, 2014) [13]. However, there are many other problems besides the issue of coach that lead to the team's lack of success, such as club management, club financial potential, fans, playing field and other factors, however, in general, Iranian clubs and football teams consider coaches as the main factor in the failure of the team [10]. Hosseini et al. (1396-2017) and Hadavi et al. (2013) showed that coach substitution has not helped teams in football leagues achieve better results. Therefore,

clubs and football teams should give coaches ample time and opportunity and demand clear and specific goals from the coaches, given the club's material and human potential.

The coach's behavioral and training characteristics are also associated with football development. In his research on performance indicators of soccer coaches, Hosseini (2014) concluded that coaches 'behavioral and training characteristics are the most important factor in coaches' evaluation. Yang et al. (2018) saw coaching as the key to team success, believing that techniques and tactics can be communicated by anyone, but it is coaching behavioral traits that motivate players to follow the coach and bring valuable result [19]. Furthermore, Kazemi and colleagues (2015) considered coaching personality and character to be an important factor in shaping football culture and believe that coaching can convey many of the values and ethics of sports to players through their attitudes, behaviors, and personality [18]. On the lack of significant correlations between background and experience with football development, it is argued that it may have been due to the low work experience of the participants (60% of participants under 10 years of coaching) and young participants (80% of participants under 40 years).

Eventually, it can be said that coaches play a decisive role in growth and development in all disciplines, and that identifying performance evaluation criteria of coaches can help decision making, goal setting, planning, and investment of sports federations and sport clubs to develop it.

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