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A New Scale Measuring Coaches' Unethical Behaviors for Comparison by Gender, Age, and Education Level of Coach

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Abstract

An effort to develop a scale measuring coaches' unethical behaviors included two phases. In the first, factor and reliability analyses were made of potential survey items meant to gather data from athletes describing coaches' behavior. In the second, select items were incorporated in a survey randomly administered to 221 male and female taekwondo competitors at a national competition in 2006, for comparison of behaviors by coach gender, age, and education. Behavior was not found to differ significantly by gender ($n = 219, t = 1.71, p > .05$), age ($n = 216, t = 1.13, p > .05$), or education ($n = 217, t = 1.60, p > .05$).

A New Scale Measuring Coaches' Unethical Behaviors for Comparison by Gender, Age, and Education Level of Coach

In coaching, a code of ethics is a tool providing a minimum standard of conduct and behavior expected of the coach as he or she develops into a professional. Many other professions, including medicine and law, also expect members to adhere to a behavior code requiring them to do their best and maintain professional standards (Ring, 1992). Codes established for coaches provide common values and guidelines for performing one's job.

It has been suggested that there is a sensitive relationship between physical education and moral education. Stoll (1995), who is with the University of Idaho Center for Ethical Theory and Honor in Competitive Sports, emphasized that "physical education and athletic programs could be harmonious in promoting the development of sportsmanlike behaviors, ethical decision-making skills, and a total curriculum for moral character development." Many studies by philosophers of sport concern the relationship of moral education and competition concepts; many conclude that a completed sports education involving both competition and development of an understanding of fair play effects a moral education (i.e., an education in moral values such as honesty, equality, justice, and respect) (Bergmann, 2000; Carr, 1998; Priest, Krause, & Beach, 1999; Singleton, 2003; Spencer, 1993). Sabock (1985) argued that sports provide students an important opportunity to develop ethical behaviors including honesty and fairness. Bergmann (2000) noted a logical relationship between physical education and moral education, one based on students' understanding of the concept of success and their acceptance of the importance of competitions. Bergmann added that, through competition, students have opportunities to compare their skills and talents to those of others, which motivates them to gain practical knowledge meeting certain standards.

As role models for athletes, coaches can help them develop fair and ethical behavior by demonstrating how these can be applied in sports. Coaches have the capacity to teach and reinforce ethical behavior by athletes and indeed are central to value development in young people, since they are role models of institutional norms (Wandzilak, 1985).

Today, however, unethical behavior exhibited in the course of coaching is decreasing respect for coaches and for sports. Too many coaches approach their duties without adequate regard for values such as honesty, objectivity, and

justice. This is so despite the fact that many sports organizations and communities have published codes of ethics that coaches are expected to uphold (American National Youth Sports Coaches Association, n.d.; American Psychological Association, 1992; Australian Sports Commission, n.d.; British Institute of Sports Coaches, n.d.; Canadian Professional Coaches Association, 2003; International Coaches Federation, 2003; Sports Medicine Australia, n.d.; Sports Coach, n.d.). Figure 1 presents a summary of the standards set out by these codes of conduct, classifying them as either a responsibility of coaches or a form of respect coaches are expected to demonstrate.

Responsibility	Respect
1. A coach should provide a healthy environment for competition and practice.	1. A coach should have respect for each athlete's being.
2. A coach should always work toward personal development, in order to continuously improve his or her job performance.	2. A coach should avoid behavior that is likely to diminish the respect afforded him or her by the society.
3. A coach should provide the media and members of the public with correct information.	3. A coach should not exaggerate his or her capabilities.
4. A coach should direct injured athletes to medical treatment and act in accord with medical professionals' instructions and suggestions.	4. A coach should encourage fair play and sportsmanlike behavior.
5. A coach should help athletes with their personal and family problems.	5. A coach should keep confidential all personal information on athletes (e.g., personal problems, family problems) and all information about the coach's job (e.g., budget, recruitment policy), unless disclosure is required by law.
6. A coach's support should extend to athletes in need, whether or not they are his or her own athletes.	6. A coach should emphasize honesty in competition.
7. A coach should work cooperatively with any expert who might contribute to the development of athletes.	7. A coach should respect the rules of competition.
8. A coach should inform athletes of how they should behave during media interviews.	8. A coach should respect written and unwritten rules of fair play.
9. A coach should not use training techniques that are harmful to athletes.	9. A coach should respect decisions of referees during competitions.
10. A coach should select equipment carefully to ensure athletes' safety.	10. A coach should
11. A coach should have the injured athlete's well-being in mind when deciding whether to permit a return to competition and should never permit return ahead of complete recovery.	
12. A coach should assign athletes appropriate responsibilities in order to contribute to their development.	
13. A coach should take a protective stance toward athletes when it comes to harmful drugs, by informing athletes about drugs' dangers.	
14. A coach of nonprofessional athletes	

should schedule practice and competitions that do not interfere with athletes' need to develop academically.	not encourage athletes or spectators to disrespect referees.
15. A coach should develop effective ways of communicating to athletes and their families their rights and responsibilities as part of the team.	11. A coach should always have his or her behavior under control.
16. A coach should emphasize education's importance to athletes, as well as sports' importance.	12. A coach should not use negative words to criticize other coaches or organizations.
17. A coach should instill in athletes the idea that winning results from good team work.	13. A coach should take responsibility in areas in which he or she feels confident.
18. A coach should always ensure that athletes receive an explanation of the objectives of training.	14. A coach should not criticize athletes publicly or act to hurt them.
19. A coach who disciplines an athlete through punishment should not, in so doing, harm the athlete's personality.	
20. A coach should always explain for athletes the objectives of any rule that will be applied.	

Figure 1. Summary of coaching behaviors mandated by various organizational codes of ethics.

When such standards are ignored, unethical coaching behaviors typically fall into four main categories, according to the United States Olympic Committee (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 1996). They are (a) offending athletes verbally or physically, (b) treating athletes inhumanely, (c) encouraging athletes' use of performance-enhancing drugs; and (d) ignoring the athletic program's educational goals. In its various forms, unethical behavior in coaching is becoming an important topic in the physical education literature. The present study's purpose was to develop a valid and reliable scale measuring the extent of unethical behavior by coaches and then to test whether their unethical behavior was associated with gender, age, or educational level.

Method

Sampling and Research Design

The study collected data in 2006 from 221 competitors in a national taekwondo championship, 86 of whom were female (38.9%) and 135 of whom were male (61.1%). The majority of the sample (76.9%) were ages 17 to 23 years. The mean length of their experience in taekwondo was 7 ± 3 years. The average age at which they began high-performance training (attending training camps and national and international competitions regularly) was 8 ± 2 years.

Instruments and Data Collection

The instrument was developed in three phases. First, from a review of the codes of ethics of the American National Youth Sports Coaches Association (n.d.), American Psychological Association (1992), British Institute of Sports Coaches (n.d.), Canadian Professional Coaches Association (n.d.), International Coach Federation (n.d.), Sports Medicine Australia (n.d.), Sports Coach (n.d.), and several Olympic committees, a pool of 48 survey items was created and subsequently analyzed.

Second, with the 48 items providing a basis, an instrument was developed that used a 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to assess perceived ethical or unethical nature of coaching

behaviors (see Table 1). This instrument was administered to a group of 18 taekwondo coaches, taekwondo players, and faculty members or instructors knowledgeable of the sport. They read each item on the instrument and circled a response. The 18 participants unanimously assigned a score of 5 to 35 of the items, so these 35 were accepted by the researcher as describing unethical behaviors (Balci, 1993). The scale was dubbed the Coaches' Unethical Behaviors Scale, or CUBS.

Table 1

Score Levels Reflected in 5-Point Likert-Type Scale

	Choice	Score Level
1	Strongly disagree	1.00–1.79
2	Disagree	1.80–2.59
3	Undecided	2.60–3.39
4	Agree	3.40–4.19
5	Strongly agree	4.20–5.00

In the third phase, the final CUBS instrument of 35 items (with 5-point Likert-type response categories) was administered to the 221 taekwondo contestants. Each item posed a scenario involving coaching behavior; respondents circled the numeral indicating how strongly they agreed that they had experienced their coaches demonstrating the unethical behavior.

Statistical Analysis

The construct validity of CUBS was evaluated using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). EFA seeks to identify a factor or factors based on relationships among variables (Kline, 1994; Stevens, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The reliability of CUBS was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and Spearman-Brown (split-half) correlation. In order to test whether coaches' unethical behaviors change with gender, age, and educational level, a t test and one-way ANOVA analysis were applied.

Findings

Factor Structure of CUBS: Construct Validity

Results of exploratory factor analysis assessing CUBS' validity showed 11 of the 35 items to have a factor loading below .45. These 11 were extracted, and the analysis was repeated with the remaining 24 items. Of these, 14 could be classified as pertaining to coaches' responsibility for athletes, for rules, and for the integrity of the coaching profession; the 14 became Factor 1. The remaining 10 could be classified as forms of respect coaches are charged with upholding (for example, respect for individuals, personalities, gender, and health). These became Factor 2.

For Factor 1, factor loading ranged from .562 to .847, while for Factor 2 it ranged from .561 to .782. Factor 1 accounted for 50.34% of variance, and Factor 2 accounted for 11.31%, so together the factors accounted for 61.65% of total variance (see Table 2).

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Communalities Variance
1	.562	.466	.533
2	.589	.424	.527
3	.761	.359	.708
4	.674	.426	.635
5	.719	.352	.641
6	.641	.426	.601

6	.841	.430	.881
7	.758	.155	.599
8	.747	.192	.594
9	.794	.328	.738
10	.833	0.61	.698
11	.811	.228	.710
12	.720	.285	.600
13	.847	.262	.786
14	.834	.281	.774
15	.777	0.46	.606
01	.211	.675	.500
02	.301	.721	.611
03	.377	.561	.456
04	.236	.667	.501
05	.131	.709	.519
06	.191	.737	.580
07	.308	.782	.706
08	0.94	.753	.576
09	.180	.752	.597

Reliability

The reliability of CUBS was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and the Spearman-Brown correlation. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicate internal consistency; for the two CUBS subscales administered to the 221 athletes, Cronbach's alpha was .78 for Factor 1 and .77 for Factor 2. The total internal consistency for the scale was .76. The Spearman-Brown correlation yielded .98 for Factor 1 and .93 for Factor 2. Total correlation for CUBS was thus .92.

Corrected item total correlations, which ranged from .63 to .87, are shown in Table 3, along with t-test scores for the items in CUBS. Statistical significance at a level of $p < .01$ was attained for each item's mean score.

Table 3

Corrected Item Total Correlations and t Scores for Items in CUBS

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	t	p
1	.67		-7,122	.000
2	.70		-8,587	.000
3	.81		-9,341	.000
4	.77		-10,376	.000
5	.79		-10,645	.000
6	.76		-10,468	.000
7	.74		-9,826	.000
8	.75		-11,786	.000
9	.86		-11,590	.000
10	.78		-9,253	.000
11	.82		-12,238	.000
12	.76		-11,763	.000

13	.87		-14,444	.000
14	.86		-9,477	.000
15	.69		-11,574	.000
01		.67	-11,814	.000
02		.74	-9,108	.000
03		.63	-12,701	.000
04		.66	-10,988	.000
05		.74	-10,084	.000
06		.68	-10,174	.000
07		.74	-12,483	.000
08		.81	-11,849	.000
09		.70	-10,783	.000

Unethical Behaviors of Coaches

Using the data from the surveyed taekwondo competitors, coaches' unethical behaviors were measured with descriptive statistics (see Table 4). As Table 4 illustrates, the athletes reported they had observed in the behavior of their coaches the 24 unethical behaviors reflected in CUBS, although the values measured for these behaviors were low. Observed unethical behavior did not, according to t-test results, appear significantly dependent on gender ($n = 219, t = 1.71, p > .05$), age ($n = 216, t = 1.13, p > .05$), or education level ($n = 217, t = 1.60, p > .05$).

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentages for Coaches' Unethical Behaviors as Indicated by CUBS Respondents

Unethical Behaviors	M	SD	%
Responsibility			
1. The coach does not deal honestly with athletes.	1.56	1.01	5.50
2. The coach does not inform athletes about harmful effects of drugs (drug abuse).	1.75	1.14	12.70
3. The coach does not build respectful, effective communication with athletes.	1.60	0.95	4.10
4. The coach encourages athletes' weight loss via means that may harm their health.	1.75	1.02	7.30
5. The coach does not provide athletes necessary information about training.	1.61	0.98	7.70
6. The coach does not continuously improve his or her professional knowledge and skills.	1.72	1.16	10.90
7. The coach does not care about honesty in competition.	1.80	1.17	10.40
8. The coach does not know the legal regulations relevant to his or her sport.	1.53	1.00	5.00
9. The coach does not have sufficient knowledge of training science.	1.73	1.16	13.6
10. The coach abuses his or her authority as a coach.	1.61	0.99	6.80
11. The coach is not honest about the			

finances of competition.	1.62	1.04	5.90
12. The coach does not prepare effective training programs reflecting athletes' ability levels.	1.84	1.11	7.20
13. The coach does not evaluate athletes' performances as they reflect established goals.	1.66	1.00	5.90
14. The coach does not provide athletes with feedback about their performances.	1.68	0.99	7.20
Respect			
1. The coach does not treat athletes respectfully.	1.39	0.95	5.90
2. The coach discriminates among athletes based on gender, religion, or language.	1.44	0.82	3.20
3. The coach curses or uses street language.	1.41	0.77	9.00
4. The coach does not respect the being of the athletes.	1.42	0.76	3.60
5. The coach is not careful to avoid harming athletes' personalities when using punishment to discipline them.	1.56	0.89	5.50
6. The coach causes athletes physical harm in the course of using punishment to discipline them.	1.61	0.95	7.70
7. The coach discriminates among athletes based on reasons other than individual merit.	1.97	1.22	15.00
8. The coach degrades athletes with insults.	1.52	0.87	6.40
9. The coach becomes publicly angry and displays violence after a defeat in competition.	1.62	1.02	8.60
10. The coach does not respect rules and referees.	1.67	1.04	6.80

Discussion and Results

The present study's purpose was to develop a valid and reliable scale measuring the extent of unethical behavior by coaches and then to test whether their unethical behavior was associated with gender, age, or educational level. CUBS is such a scale, according to the results of factor and reliability analysis (Kline, 1994; Stevens, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Data obtained with CUBS were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis that suggested the three most frequent unethical behaviors in coaching are discrimination among athletes based on reasons other than individual merit; lack of technical knowledge; and failure to offer athletes facts about harmful drug use. Coaches' unethical behaviors did not change to a significant degree with changes in gender, age, or education level, according to ANOVA and t-test results.

Addressing ethical issues is becoming a standard part of a coach's duties. Increasingly, sports coaches must be able to teach and model fair play, respect for officials, paramount concern for athletes' well-being (rather than the win-loss record), and the wise and legitimate use of power. At the same time, they must steer athletes away from harmful drug use, cheating, bullying, harassment, and eating disorders. The coach's position on these issues, reflected in his or her coaching behaviors, has enormous impact on athletes, shaping their enjoyment of sports, their attitudes toward their peers in a sport, their self-esteem, and their continued involvement in sports.

The sports ethicist's basic goal is to see individuals in sports accept a pertinent ethical code (Wuest & Bucher, 1987) and embody that code in their behavior patterns. The aim for the profession of coaching is each coach's acceptance of an ethical code for his or her sport, exhibited in daily behavior. A scale like CUBS can not only indicate the level of unethical behaviors coaches engage in, it can point the way to the most urgently needed additions to coach education and development programs.

Knowledge and skills are vital to a profession, but appropriate attitudes and behaviors—professional ethics—are just as important. Professional ethics involve written codes containing rules tailored to specific professions and founded in general moral values like honesty, equality, justice, and respect (Fain, 1992; Pritchard, 1998). Unlike in the past, a workforce today is likely to include people of various races, ages, religions, educational levels, and socioeconomic statuses. They are likely to possess divergent values (Lankard, 1991; Frederick, Post, & Davis, 1988). Inculcating a set of professional ethics ensures that, although they are very different people, members of a profession together espouse common standards and rules designed to protect both themselves and the people they serve. The changing nature of the business world has increased the need for professional ethics, the most important characteristic of which is the need for systems, structures, and management that can secure compliance.

A common understanding of sports is that they consist of various activities people pursue that lead to competition (Penney & Chandler, 2000). In fact, sports is a multidimensional phenomenon. It involves social structures (an indispensable part of human life), and it is based on long-established ethical and value systems (Whitehead, 1998). A number of sports organizations want to see the essential ethical nature of sports brought home to spectators and the society by developing athletes' and coaches' ethics (Wuest & Bucher, 1987).

Concern for ethics (or the lack of concern) will have an important role in how sports continues to develop; much of the related work will fall to coaches, who are expected to do their jobs honestly, objectively, openly, and with respect and a sense of justice, tying their work to universal values and principles (Wuest & Bucher, 1999). Coaches who may be held responsible for demonstrating ethical behaviors need, first of all, to understand their sports' particular ethical codes.

The present study was the very first research conducted in Turkey into unethical behaviors exhibited in coaching. Moreover, to date the literature worldwide has offered few studies on coaches' unethical behaviors. For this reason, further research employing various designs, with various samples, is likely to contribute to understanding of the topic.

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