

The Perceived Coach Motivational Climate and Moral Decision-Making: A Study among University Football Players

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Abstract

The paper aims to investigate the effect of perceived coach motivational climate on moral decision-making among Institutions of Higher Learning Football League Players. This paper discusses the types of motivational environments created by coaches in sports settings, particularly football competitions, and how these climates influence players' moral decision-making. This study proposed quantitative research that involves Institutions of Higher Learning Football League players as a respondent and implementing stratified sampling. Later, this study also proposes to analyse the data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 27.0) to test the hypothesis. According to the discussion, coaches are the most significant figures within a player's social context as coaches are seen as role models and authority figures, making them powerful agents in shaping players' attitudes, beliefs, and actions both on and off the field. The study is able to offer crucial insights that can serve as a guiding foundation for future research for developing an entirely new typology within the research domain. Overall, further research is needed to fully understand how specific coach motivational climate can influence player perceptions of moral decision-making and ethical behaviour.

Keywords: Perceived Coach Motivational Climate; Moral Decision-Making Drop Out University Football Players.

Introduction

As a developing country, Malaysian football has become an important sport that has attracted the government to provide significant funding and policies to foster players' involvement in football especially at the university level. According to Nasiruddin et al. (2020), universities are the most successful platform to enhance talent and lead many football players to compete in international leagues. The Higher Education Institution Football League emerged as an

important contributor to the national team's success with the presence of talented players from the university level (Muhamat Laila, 2012). However, despite the opportunity offered, players are strictly evaluated to qualify themselves to compete for national teams, leading to conflicts in players behaviours and decision-making (Turan & Cirmi, 2021). Players encounter decision-making that is influenced by their moral tendency, which is frequently influenced by a motivation created by coaches that can greatly affect their behaviours and decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. Enhancing motivation is fundamentally about a change of attitude, developing a positive 'can do' mindset and engaging in ethical behaviours that facilitate improvement. Motivation is an internal energy force that determines all aspects of our behaviour, impacting how players think, feel and interact with others (Kunvarsing, 2019).

Coaches establish a motivational climate by shaping norms, fostering effective communication, and demonstrating actions. Coach motivational climate has been identified as existing in two distinct motivational climates; one for mastery climate, where effort and the development of one's skills are encouraged, and another for performance climate, where the emphasis is on standards comparison and society recognition. This motivational climate is created by a coach capable of influencing players' moral decision-making and behaviours positively or negatively (Harwood & Thrower, 2020). Players moral decision-making involves choosing what is right based on an individual's moral values (Turan & Cirmi, 2021), as it has been determined that three different components of decision-making incorporate moral values that are considered antisocial behaviours in sports which are acceptance of cheating, acceptance of gamesmanship, and keeping winning in proportion (Mallia et al., 2019). Worryingly, there have been increasing numbers of players dropping out (Back et al., 2022). Previous studies have proven that the motivational climate of coaches is closely related to the players' moral decision-making and behaviours in the sports environment (Turan & Cirmi, 2021).

An estimated 70% of players drop out from sports due to a lack of motivation, social pressure, competitive priorities, and physical disabilities such as injuries (Jones et al., 2022). A study by Nasiruddin et al (2020), found a lack of motivational climate created by coaches has significantly affected players' motivation, leading to a decline in football performance in Malaysia. Coaches often demand a high level of performance, and excessive pressure expects players to cope with the pressure had leads players to feel stressed, dissatisfied and demotivated which causes players to feel negative experiences and contributes to poor moral decision-making (Guvendi & Isim, 2019). Furthermore, the intense pursuit of a winning mentality created by the coach in competition has led players to go through unethical moral decision-making, where they intentionally foul their opponents, resulting in the opponent being seriously injured and unable to win the competition (Soltanzadeh & Mooney, 2021).

Football players have to deal with the challenges of competitive pressure, where the personal goal may sometimes not be feasible due to injuries. According to Ahmad Shushami and Abdul Karim (2020), 84.62% of injuries occurred in football during the Malaysian Games 2018. Furthermore, Jakobsen (2021) stated that players are more likely to drop out of competitions due to the set standards for their performance that are unrealistically high or low set by coaches. Indeed, numerous football players experience a lack of motivation due to high expectations and pressure from coaches to perform their best and win every game so they can earn pride, honours, and recognition. Due to the significant benefits that players can gain

from winning, many players are encouraged by coaches to cheat to win, as nobody wants to be associated with failure (Borrueco et al., 2018). Several previous studies have emphasized that the coach plays an important role in influencing players behaviours to win the competition at any cost (Arthur-Banning et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Moreno-Murcia & Hernández, 2019; Silva Dias et al., 2018; Uzor & Ujuagu, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the main perceived coach motivational climate and the level of moral decision-making among Institutions of Higher Learning Football League.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Perceived Coach Motivational Climate

The motivational climate created by coaches refers to the player's perception of the environment created by their coach. Coaches are like team leaders who make the rules, praise players for getting better, give helpful advice and teach what is important. Coaches' motivational climate can influence how much freedom players feel to make their own choices, their confidence in their abilities, and how they handle wins and losses and can affect how players act towards each other (Kapitanski, 2022; Pérez-Romero et al., 2022; Woods & Parry, 2022). The coach's motivational climate can be categorized into different clusters based on the balance between mastery climate and performance climate (Engan & Sæther, 2018; Jakobsen, 2021).

Mastery climate focuses on a higher level of sportsmanship and long-term player performance and coaches view mistakes made by players as a natural part of learning and improvement (Castillo-Jiménez et al., 2022). Research consistently shows its benefits for players including greater enjoyment, positive development and sportsmanship (Engan & Sæther, 2018). In football, coaches provide positive feedback, acknowledge players contributions, and foster a supportive environment where players feel safe to experiment and learn from mistakes for individual growth over winning. This leads to increased motivation, improved performance, greater sportsmanship, and stronger team cohesion, ultimately contributing to both individual and team success.

In contrast, the performance climate focuses on short-term results and winning at a cost mentality and coaches encourage the players that the priority in the sports competition is the value of winning itself rather than enhancing personal progress (Engan & Sæther, 2018; Ulas et al., 2020; Van De Pol et al., 2020). In football, a performance climate focused on winning and public recognition leads to negative consequences like stress, demotivation, dissatisfaction, tendency to practice cheating and antisocial behaviours. Coaches under a performance climate often use pressure, criticism and aggression as motivational tools, creating a negative competitive experience for players in a sports setting. Therefore, it is important in this study to assess coaches' intentions and their behaviours to identify how players perceive the motivational environment that could affect player satisfaction, commitment, enjoyment and the team's overall success.

Moral Decision-Making

Participation in sports competitions offers players many opportunities for social interactions with coaches, which could lead to the development of moral decision-making (Spruit et al., 2019). Moral decision-making in sports is the process of choosing the right course of action in situations when players are confronted with ethical dilemmas. It involves situations within

the competitive context where players decisions, influenced by personal beliefs, cultural norms, and social pressure, shape the players ethical character and require players to respond in a course of behaviours aligned with their morals (Garrigan et al., 2018). Thomson et al. (2005) highlighted those players make moral decision-making by identifying the issue in the current situation, clearly defining their goals, analysing potential solutions, and considering the consequences of each option. However, players determine their decisions not solely based on their internal beliefs but also heavily influenced by the social context and pressures from the coaches.

Players make moral decision-making through processes of social learning from the coach such as imitation and modelling coaches' behaviour after observing the coach which is typically made in a social context where coach norms can influence players' behaviour and decision-making processes (Karakullukçu, 2020). However, research highlights a concerning trend of players cooperating to cheat, turning a blind eye to rule violations, due to prioritizing winning at all costs mentality (Rahal, 2018; Alemdag, 2019). The findings highlight the potential for dishonesty and unethical decision-making among players using tactics that exploit the rules to gain advantages in sports competitions. The intense pressure of today's competitive sports environment creates a powerful platform for players to develop their understanding of right and wrong in moral decision-making. However, it's important to conduct further research to fully understand the complex relationship between coach motivation, player development and ethical decision-making.

Effect of Perceived Coach Motivational Climate on Moral Decision-Making

Despite football's popularity and emphasis on positive values like hard work, teamwork, fairness, and respect for others values, the intense pressure to win has led players down a negative path. Studies have shown a rise in antisocial behaviours within the sports competition including cheating, intimidation, harassment, gamesmanship tactics and provoking opponents (Alemdag 2019; Sulistiyono et al., 2020). Coach interactions and their motivational climate significantly influence players' decision-making and behaviours on the field. Research highlights coaches are the most significant figures within a player's social context as coaches are seen as role models and authority figures, making them powerful agents in shaping players' attitudes, beliefs, and actions both on and off the field (Sipavičiūtė & Šukys, 2019).

Studies indicate that coaches who prioritize a mastery climate can create a supportive environment that fosters ethical decision-making while coaches who prioritize a performance climate are more focused on short-term results and a winning-at-all-cost mentality. The pressure to win at all costs may lead coaches, especially in high-level competition to prioritize a performance climate potentially enhancing antisocial behaviour among football players (Arthur-Banning et al., 2018). Kavussanu (2019) demonstrated players are likely to engage in antisocial behaviours when coaches create a motivational climate as players believe their coach's norms would approve the behaviours. In addition, other studies Strand and Ziegler (2010), Strand (2013), and Strand et al. (2018), it was found that coaches and players clearly understand that some gamesmanship actions are inappropriate, as demonstrated by the low scores of the items, but these actions still happen because when faced with the challenge of behaving ethically to win which many coaches and players feel that winning is more important (Strand & Slater, 2023).

Ha3: There is a significant effect of perceived coach motivational climate on moral decision-making among Institutions of Higher Learning Football League team players.

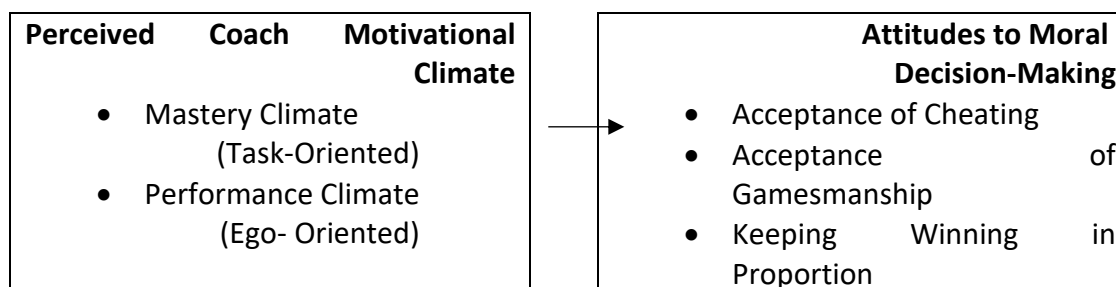


Figure 1: Framework of the Perceived Coach Motivational Climate and Moral Decision-Making

The figure shows the relationship between a perceived coach's motivational climate and moral decision-making to the player's moral decision-making. The coach's motivational climate, which refers to the coach's overall approach and emphasis in the sports environment, can significantly influence how players perceive and respond to moral decision-making.

Underpinning Theory (Achievement Goal Theory)

Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) is a psychological framework that seeks to understand how coaches play a crucial role in shaping players moral decision-making through the motivational climate they create. The theory was developed by Ames (1992) and built upon earlier work by Dweck (1986) and Nicholls (1984) highlights that coaches approach varying goal orientations based on their beliefs towards players' competence, effort, and the established criteria for evaluating success (Pintrich, 2000; Urdan, 1997). In line with the literature, achievement goal theory highlights two keys of the coach's motivational climate in sports which are mastery climate and performance climate.

Research by Halonen and Santrock (1996), highlights how coach mastery climate focuses on players efforts, skills improvement, players personal growth and fostering a supportive environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn. As a result, players have more control over their decision-making, contributing to greater well-being, and enjoyment when participating in football competitions. This leads to increased motivation, improved performance, greater sportsmanship, and stronger team cohesion, ultimately contributing to both individual and team success.

In contrast, achievement goal theory explains coach performance climate emphasizes more on winning values over players' development which potentially leads players to conduct cheating and engage in gamesmanship practice (Ring & Kavussanu, 2018; Sipavičiūtė & Šukys, 2019). Coach puts pressure on the players and makes them believe that winning is everything in sports which has led players to feel afraid of making mistakes which potentially causes players to quit (Jakobsen, 2021; Halonen & Santrock, 1996). In football, a performance climate focused on public recognition and external rewards leads to negative consequences like stress, demotivation, dissatisfaction, tendency to practice antisocial behaviours. According to the achievement goal theory, coaches under a performance climate often use pressure, criticism and aggression as motivational tolls, creating a negative competitive experience for players in a sports setting. This climate can greatly impact players' ethical decision-making.

Research Methodology

This section explains the use of methodology for this proposed study. Researchers would like to investigate the effect of perceived coach motivational climate on moral decision-making among Institutions of Higher Learning Football League players. This study will be implementing quantitative research which planning to use stratified sampling. This study will also use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 27.0) to analyze the data and hypothesis development.

Discussion

In the competitive environment of football, the influence of a coach extends far beyond tactics and physical conditioning. Coaches shape the motivational climate, which profoundly affects players' attitudes toward various aspects of the game, including moral decision-making. This paper aims to critically investigate how the perceived motivational climate set by coaches in football will effect players' attitudes to moral decision-making in football competitions. The behaviours and attitudes of coaches play a significant role in shaping the motivational climate. Coaches who prioritize winning at all costs may encourage antisocial behaviours, such as cheating, time-wasting, or even deliberately injuring opponents (Mallia, 2019). Conversely, coaches who emphasize respect, fairness, and integrity help to cultivate an ethical and positive sporting environment.

Research consistently shows that a mastery climate that emphasizes personal improvement, effort, and learning fosters more positive attitudes towards competition for moral behaviour. Football players in such climates are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour, adhere to rules, and demonstrate sportsmanship (Engan & Sæther, 2018). In contrast, a performance climate, where the focus is on winning and outperforming others, is associated with higher incidences of unsportsmanlike behaviour, cheating, and aggression (Kavussanu, 2019; Sulistiyono et al., 2020). The relationship between perceived coach motivational climate and attitudes toward moral decision-making in football is complex and multifaceted. Coaches, players, and football institutions all have roles to play in ensuring that the competitive nature of the sport does not come at the expense of moral integrity (Lamat et al., 2016). Understanding the impact of perceived coach motivational climate on moral decision-making has practical implications for coaching education and player development. Coaches should be trained not only in technical and tactical aspects of football but also in fostering a motivational climate that promotes ethical behaviours. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of perceived coach motivational climate on moral decision-making among Institutions of Higher Learning Football League players.

Significant of The Study

This study aims to make a valuable contribution to the field of research, specifically by providing benefits to Institutions of Higher Learning. The National Sports Policy (DSN) outlines the two main roles of Institutions of Higher Learning which are to encourage students to actively participate in sports activities and to provide learning opportunities for sports athletes at universities. This study will indirectly assist the Institutions of Higher Learning in the correct process of the development plan as they are responsible for supporting, improving, and continually developing university football players for international competition levels. In further development, this research will be capable of convincing Institutions of Higher Learning to monitor players performance using existing development

methods for improvement, and it can be implemented to evaluate player's professionalism and sportsmanship.

With this research, coaches will be able to pursue education in their attempts to improve team performance, promote fair play in sports, and develop professional perception toward sport participation coaching. In addition, this research will provide them with the knowledge to effectively play positive supporting roles, instead of pressuring them just for winning because sports willingness and enjoyment are also significant. Hence, this study introduces the sporting ethics that might enable coaches and players to build a more fitting moral code. Indirectly, the number of players who quit sports early due to lack of motivation as a result of pressure from coaches, universities, parents, and peers may be reduced.

The understanding of coach motivational climate and moral decision-making in sports still remain poorly understood. In Malaysia, research paper in this area of study is scarce, so this study is aimed at providing future researchers insights into refining and expanding this study. These findings contribute to the existing literature by examining the moderating factors that may affect the athlete's moral decision-making in sports participation. Therefore, the study is able to offer crucial insights that can serve as a guiding foundation for future research for developing an entirely new typology within the research domain.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The motivational climate established by coaches plays a pivotal role in shaping the ethical decision-making of football players. By fostering a mastery climate, promoting effective communication, and modelling ethical behavior, coaches can significantly enhance players' moral decision-making processes. This not only benefits the players individually but also contributes to the overall integrity and fairness of the sport. Future research should continue to explore the dynamic interplay between motivational climates and ethical behaviours, particularly through longitudinal studies that capture changes over time.

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