



Stakeholders' perceptions and recommendations of a high school leadership development programme for athletes in Singapore

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of key stakeholders of a high school athlete leadership development training programme. Participants included 36 athletes (males = 23, females = 13) from two team sports (rugby $n = 11$ and volleyball $n = 6$) and two individual sports (bowling $n = 8$ and table tennis $n = 11$), as well as four coaches representing each of these sports and four teachers. Individual interviews were conducted for coaches, teachers, and athlete leaders, while athletes took part in focus group interviews. Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyse all data sets. Results showed that the athlete leadership programme developed qualities such as responsibility, role modelling, motivation, communication, perseverance, and team unity that would help athlete leaders perform their roles and responsibilities. The results also highlighted some limitations including earlier involvement from key stakeholders, tailored training for athlete leaders, and a more effective transfer of learning.

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Introduction

Many people believe that participation in organized sport enhances the personal development of youth, including but not limited to leadership, communication, and team spirit (Falcão, Bloom, & Bennie, 2017; Gould, Carson, Fifer, Lauer, & Benham, 2009). Despite these assertions, participation in sport alone does not automatically develop a youth's leadership qualities. For example, Voelker, Gould, and Crawford (2011) found that high school team captains felt unprepared for their leadership role, partly because they were not trained on the roles and responsibilities of being a team leader. Similarly, Voight (2012) noted that most of the leadership training programmes for team captains at the collegiate level lacked clear instructions and guidance, leading to the programme's ineffectiveness. Despite the increasing trend of youth sport involvement (Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001; Koh & Wang, 2015), as well as research suggesting a need for leadership development in young people (Gould & Voelker, 2010; van Linden & Fertman, 1998), little progress has been made to teach young people how to lead. Consequently, Gould, Voelker, and Griffes (2013) suggested that sport leadership could be enhanced by teaching youth sport team captains the necessary skills to be effective leaders within their teams.

As far as athlete leadership development research is concerned, research has typically focused on adolescent and intercollegiate athletes. For example, Gould and Voelker (2010) utilized a leadership training programme with the goal of teaching current and future high school captains how to be effective leaders using a one-day workshop. Similarly, Blanton, Sturges, and