

EXAMINING COACHES' PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF EXERCISE AS PUNISHMENT

OBJECTIVE

Despite the well-documented detrimental outcomes associated with punishment use and evidence that it is not an effective method of behavior modification, exercise is still used to punish athletes (e.g. pushups after poor performance). The study aimed to document coaches' perspectives on their use of exercise as punishment for athletes.

PARTICIPANTS

Semi structured interviews were conducted with eight interuniversity coaches (four males and four females) who had between 15 and 35 years of sport experience as athletes and coaches.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 All eight participants reported using exercise as punishment and thought it was a beneficial practice.

A A few coaches admitted that despite previously using exercise as punishment frequently, their use of this tactic had diminished throughout their coaching careers.

2 The coaches claimed that their preference for punitive strategies was informed by their exposure to punishments when they were competitive athletes themselves.

3 Coaches claimed they used exercise as punishment based upon a belief that it was less detrimental to an athlete's well-being than yelling or other punitive tactics.

FINDINGS

1 Coaches believe that using exercise as a punishment can:

- A** Help athletes to learn that they have behaved inappropriately and avoid behaving in a similar manner in the future.
- B** Create feelings of camaraderie when athletes are punished as a group, successfully bringing them closer together.
- C** Motivate the athletes to improve their performance.
- D** Encourage positive developmental outcomes for athletes such as mental toughness and resilience.

Researchers have found that although coaches recognize the critical role, they play in fostering positive youth development, most coaches are not adequately informed about how to engage in developmentally appropriate sport practices.

2 The coaches in this study also emphasized a lack of awareness regarding alternative strategies to manage athlete behavior, apart from the use of benching and yelling, which are also punitive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research might explore potential educational initiatives to enhance coaches' awareness of athletes' reported responses to punishment. This education could also address disciplinary strategies as alternatives for punitive methods.

Future research would benefit from exploring athletes' perspectives. There may be qualitative differences in how exercise as punishment is perceived by different groups (coaches vs athletes, males vs females, individual vs team sport, different levels of competition).

RESSOURCE



Sport'Aide provides guidance to the various players in the sporting environment, on both an elite and a recreational level.

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