

Coach Autonomy Support and Benefits to Athletes

Jody Langdon

Georgia Southern University

Coach Autonomy Support and Benefits to Athletes

Research has shown that the actions of coaches can impact the motivation of a student-athlete (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that when a coach meets the psychological needs of their athletes, they also have the potential to increase the self-determined motivation of the student-athletes. The three psychological needs that a coach can help to meet are the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). Engaging in coaching behaviors that support these basic needs is one means of increasing autonomous motivation. In order to engage in such behaviors, it is necessary to review current literature on the topic. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to highlight the concept of autonomy support in addition to presenting findings of research that is focused on a coach's influence on athletes.

In line with the concept of autonomous motivation, autonomy support in the coaching context involves the coach taking on the perspective of the athlete by acknowledging the athlete's feelings while providing an opportunity for choice and minimizing demands (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Coaches have the ability to influence several positive outcomes among athletes using these autonomy supportive behaviors. In fact, Occhino, Mallet, Rynne, and Carlisle (2014) noted that autonomy support can enhance sport participation among athletes, mainly by satisfying basic needs and encouraging more intrinsic motivation. Indirectly, autonomy support improves sport performance. Similar results were seen in a sample of youth swimmers between the ages of 10 and 18, whereby coaches' use of process-focused praise positively influenced competence and relatedness need satisfaction. This, in turn, influenced athletes' self-evaluations and overall development as a player.

Considering the autonomy supportive and controlling behaviors that coaches possesses, the literature base focuses mostly on how perceptions and/or behaviors influence other motivational outcomes, such as satisfaction of basic needs, behavioral regulations (motivation), and other psychological outcomes. In a cross-sectional study, Alvarez, Balaguer, Castillo, and Duda (2012) constructed a model of motivation, showing the influence that coach autonomy support has on quality engagement, through the mediation of basic need satisfaction and self-determined motivation. Similarly, Adie, Duda, and Ntoumanis (2012) found that perceived autonomy support positively predicted changes in basic need satisfaction in elite youth soccer players. Amorose & Anderson-Butcher (2015) confirmed the independent influence of perceived autonomy supportive and controlling behaviors of coaches on athletes' motivation, finding that with certain types of motivation, perceived competence, perceived autonomy, and burnout, the interaction of autonomy supportive and controlling coaching behaviors were of significant influence. This hints to the very complex nature of the coach-athlete relationship.

Although this review of the literature on the benefits of autonomy support is not inclusive of all that exists, this collection of research highlights the importance of considering the coach as an influential part of the athletes' experience. Further research is needed to determine how the coach can actually fulfill an athlete's basic psychological needs. To that end, the purpose of this study is to investigate the previous history, experiences, and philosophy of novice coaches.

References

- Adie, J., Duda, J. L., & Ntoumanis, N. (2012). Perceived coach autonomy support, basic need satisfaction and the well - and ill-being of elite youth soccer players: A longitudinal investigation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 13*, 51–59.
- Alvarez, M. S., Balaguer, I., Castillo, I., & Duda, J. L. (2012). The coach-created motivational climate, young athletes' well-being, and intentions to continue participation. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 6*, 166–179.
- Amorose, A. J., Anderson-Butcher, D., Newman, T. J., Fraina, M., & Iachini, A. (2016). High school athletes' self-determined motivation: The independent and interactive effects of coach, father, and mother autonomy support. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 26*, 1-8.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. *Journal of Research in Personality, 19*(2), 109-134.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The " what " and " why " of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227-268.
- Mageau, G. A., & Vallerand, R. J. (2003). The coach–athlete relationship: A motivational model. *Journal of Sports Science, 21*(11), 883-904.
- Occhino, J. L., Mallett, C. J., Rynne, S. B., & Carlisle, K. N. (2014). Autonomy-supportive pedagogical approach to sports coaching: Research, challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 9*(2), 401-415.