

EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ATHLETE SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF PAHANG STATE HOCKEY PLAYERS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, athlete satisfaction has emerged as a critical component in promoting optimal performance and overall well-being in sports. Understanding the variables that contribute to athletes' satisfaction is essential, particularly in the context of youth and state-level athletes. This study investigated athlete satisfaction among Pahang State hockey players to enhance understanding of the factors influencing athletes' well-being. The study utilized a quantitative research design, employing the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ) to assess satisfaction levels among 46 Pahang State hockey players aged 18–23. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze overall satisfaction, while an independent samples t-test examined gender-based differences, ensuring a comprehensive data analysis. The descriptive statistics revealed a notably high level of satisfaction among the participants. The independent samples t-test disclosed no statistically significant gender-based differences in athlete satisfaction ($p > 0.05$). Thus, the authors recommend prioritizing the maintenance of robust task-involving features within the social environment to enhance athlete satisfaction and address fundamental needs conducive to overall well-being. Furthermore, the necessity of avoiding downplayed should be emphasized. This study contributed valuable insights for optimizing athlete satisfaction, with implications for enhancing athletes' holistic development in sports. It is recommended for future researchers to expand the scope of this study by incorporating a larger sample size from different regions or sports disciplines to gain a more comprehensive understanding of athlete satisfaction.

Keywords: *Athlete satisfaction, Pahang State hockey players, gender differences*

INTRODUCTION

In organisational psychology, perceiving justice is essential to generate adequate satisfaction in the work environment and with the supervisor's work (Matteson et al., 2021). Furthermore, satisfaction is an integral part of sports participation. Athletes' performance decreases without satisfaction. Athlete satisfaction, which influences performance and long-term participation, is critical in sports. Satisfaction reflects an athlete's positive emotional state based on their experiences, which significantly affect their commitment to the team and overall team dynamics (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1997; Khorram, 2023). Satisfied athletes tend to remain dedicated and actively contribute to team goals. Cho et al. (2021) emphasised that perceived coach justice is a relevant aspect of improving athlete satisfaction and performance. Players who perceive that the coach's decisions in interactions and reward distribution procedures are just reinforce their level of satisfaction with the coach and the group environment (Lamat et al., 2016; Lopez et al., 2021).

As such, understanding and promoting the perceptions of justice within coaching practices and reward systems are key to optimising the athlete satisfaction level and team success in competitive sports environments. Factors that negatively affect an athlete's experience and well-being influence a low athlete satisfaction level. Athletes who are dissatisfied with their sport exhibit decreased motivation, performance, and overall happiness (Ahmad et al., 2020). This dissatisfaction might also result in burnout, which has potential behavioural, emotional, physiological, and psychological consequences (Chang et al., 2020). Dissatisfaction with performance, motivation, and dysfunctional personality traits can undermine athletes' perceptions of accomplishment. Conversely, athletes with less fatigue, lower overload levels, and different motives are better equipped to demonstrate their skills (Markati et al., 2019). This situation underscores the importance of fostering high satisfaction levels through fair coaching practices and supportive team environments to enhance athlete well-being and performance in competitive sports.

Recent research has explored the differences in athlete satisfaction between genders, highlighting the complex influences of coaching styles and psychological factors. A meta-analytic review by Kim and Cruz (2022) investigated how transformational leadership from coaches affects player satisfaction and commitment. The findings revealed that female athletes experienced a more significant positive impact from transformational leadership compared to male athletes. This indicates that female athletes may thrive under coaching methods that prioritize inspiration and personal growth. Moreover, studies have examined the variations in performance anxiety between male and female athletes. Evidence suggests that female athletes tend to experience higher levels of performance-related anxiety than their male counterparts, which can affect their overall satisfaction and performance in sports. Recognizing these psychological aspects is essential for creating targeted interventions that cater to the distinct needs of both male and female athletes, ultimately improving their satisfaction and well-being in sports environments. Therefore, this study examines the level and gender differences of athletes satisfaction among Pahang State hockey players.

Research Objectives

- To assess the level of athlete satisfaction among Pahang State hockey players.
- To investigate gender-based differences in athlete satisfaction among Pahang State hockey players.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Raimundi et al. (2024) highlighted the influence of gender disparities on athlete satisfaction levels. The researchers highlighted the varying levels of happiness experienced by male and female athletes. This disparity can arise from inequitable treatment, discrepant compensation, and varying degrees of assistance and resources allocated to male and female athletes (Suárez, 2023). Female athletes frequently report lower satisfaction levels owing to gender discrimination, limited advancement opportunities, and inadequate support from teams, coaches, and regulatory agencies. Parnabas et al. (2015) stated that male athletes frequently demonstrate higher performance levels than female athletes, and highlighted the variations in satisfaction between them. Hence, recognising and addressing these differences in gender-based athlete satisfaction are key to mitigating gender-based disadvantages in sports.

Perceptions of coaching effectiveness and team dynamics demonstrate gender differences in athlete satisfaction (Kim & Cruz, 2016). For example, female athletes respond more positively to supportive leadership styles, while male athletes might prefer different approaches (Kim & Cruz, 2022). These reports underscore how gender influences satisfaction levels and shape athletes' views on leadership and their commitment to their sport. Sports organisations seeking to enhance athlete retention and performance should recognise and address these factors. Organisations that implement tailored strategies that consider individual and gender-specific preferences in leadership and team dynamics can create supportive environments. In such environments, athletes feel valued, supported, and motivated to effectively achieve personal and team goals.

Higher satisfaction correlates with an enhanced willingness to commit effort and sacrifice towards achieving organisational goals and values. Due to its growing popularity and potential effect on national sporting achievements, field hockey is important in Malaysia. In this context, the factors influencing player satisfaction within this team sport must be thoroughly understood. From a theoretical perspective, lower player satisfaction levels negatively affect team performance, which hinders the Malaysian competitive edge in international tournaments (Contreira et al., 2019). As such, this study aims to examine athlete satisfaction levels and explore potential gender differences among hockey players in Pahang, Malaysia, including the nuances that might vary across genders. The results potentially provide insights that can inform strategies to enhance player satisfaction, foster team cohesion, and strengthen Malaysian field hockey achievements on domestic and global scales.

Ha1: There is a significant difference in athlete satisfaction between genders among Pahang State hockey players.

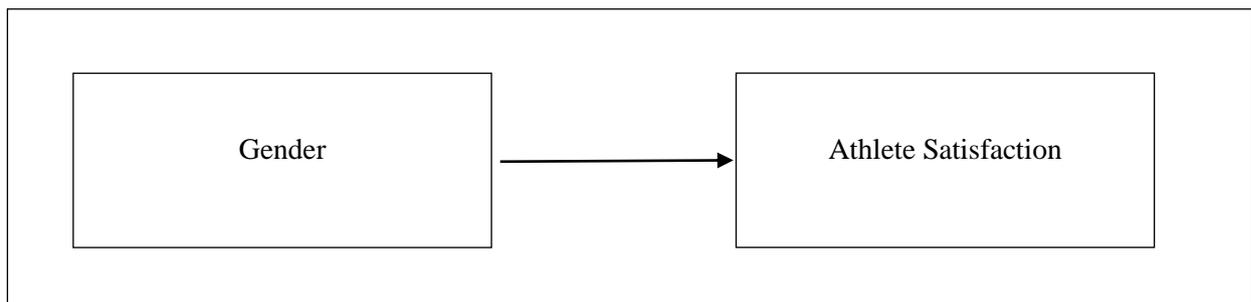


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Difference in Athlete Satisfaction Between Genders Among Pahang State Hockey Players.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study used a questionnaire survey to determine the athlete satisfaction level and gender-based athlete satisfaction among Pahang hockey players. The researcher conducted a pilot study involving 30 hockey players to evaluate the questionnaire item validity and reliability. This preliminary study was essential to ensure questionnaire consistency, as measured by Cronbach's alpha value. The reliability assessment was based on the interpretation of Cronbach's alpha according to Chua (2006) guidelines. The pilot study results facilitated the adjustments required before the full-scale questionnaire distribution.

The final sample consisted of hockey players (23 males and 23 females) who represented Pahang in the Malaysian Games (SUKMA). Athlete satisfaction was measured using the 42-item Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire (ASQ) (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1998). The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The data were analysed, with the athlete satisfaction levels assessed using descriptive statistics and an independent *t*-test, to compare athlete satisfaction between genders. The analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29), which provided descriptive statistics and significance testing to determine any gender-based differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the interpretations of the Cronbach's alpha values. Table 2 demonstrates that athlete satisfaction was > 0.9 , which implies a high value (Chua, 2006). This result confirmed instrument reliability.

Table 1 Interpretation of the Cronbach's Alpha Value

Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
0.90–1.00	Very high
0.71–0.89	High
0.30–0.69	Moderate
0.00–0.30	Low

Table 2 The Cronbach's Alpha Value for Athlete Satisfaction

Construct	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Athlete satisfaction	42	0.928

Table 3 presents the mean score categorisations that represent the athlete satisfaction levels (Moidunny, 2009). Table 4 demonstrates that the participants reported an impressive mean score of 4.79, which indicates a very high athlete satisfaction level.

Table 3 Interpretation of the Mean Score

Level	Mean score
Very low	1.00–1.80
Low	1.81–2.60
Medium	2.61–3.20
High	3.21–4.20
Very high	4.21–5.00

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Athlete Satisfaction

Variable	Mean	Level of interpretation
Athlete satisfaction	4.79	Very high

Athlete Satisfaction Level

The mean score in this study demonstrated a high level of athlete satisfaction. This result coincided with Günel and Duyan (2020), who reported a high satisfaction level among athletes in Turkey. The current work demonstrated that Pahang state hockey players who benefit from substantial support and resources from their coaches, teams, and organisations typically expressed higher satisfaction. This result underscores the importance of effective support systems and resources in enhancing athlete satisfaction and overall performance in competitive sports. Kim et al. (2020) supported the idea that equal treatment and respect enhances athlete satisfaction levels, which improves performance and reinforces team cohesion. Furthermore, a supportive and inclusive team culture fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie. De

Backer et al. (2021) stated that integrating comprehensive support systems and equitable treatment strategies is crucial to cultivate an environment where athletes can thrive. These elements increase individual satisfaction and performance and strengthen team unity and resilience. Therefore, sports organisations should prioritise these practices to sustain athletes' success and well-being.

Potential gender differences in athlete satisfaction were examined using an independent *t*-test. The results revealed that athlete satisfaction levels between the male and female participants were not statistically significantly different. Table 5 demonstrates that the statistical analysis yielded a *p*-value exceeding the predetermined significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ ($p > 0.05$). Furthermore, the descriptive analysis revealed that male hockey players reported lower satisfaction levels than their female counterparts.

Table 5 Gender Differences in Athlete Satisfaction

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	p-value
Athlete satisfaction	Male	23	4.79	.236	-1.95	44	0.846
	Female	23	4.80	.246			

Gender Differences in Athlete Satisfaction

The results revealed non-significant differences between the male and female Pahang hockey players. This result aligned with Sáez et al. (2021), who reported non-significant gender differences in athlete satisfaction in the Philippines. The result indicates that the Philippines organization might have implemented gender-neutral policies and practices, which ensured equal opportunities for advancement, training, and competition for male and female players. This approach has enabled athletes to benefit from standardised performance evaluations and feedback mechanisms. Thus, players receive equal recognition and constructive feedback, which contribute to their overall satisfaction. Keyser-Verreault et al. (2024) supported this idea, where they reported that organisations that implement gender-neutral policies in sports environments frequently enhance athlete satisfaction through fair treatment and equal opportunities for advancement across genders. These results underscore the importance of equitable policies in sports organisations, which enhance athlete satisfaction and cultivate a positive and inclusive environment conducive to overall team success.

CONCLUSION

The results aid the design of comprehensive human development initiatives that might include physical activities and athletes' mental and emotional health statuses. Psychological aid, career guidance, and life skills training increased the athletes' satisfaction and enabled self-improvement. Accordingly, coaches and sports administrators can use the athletes' high satisfaction levels to replicate and improve training activities. The factors that led to the reported satisfaction levels can be effectively applied to other teams and sports, which would promote better athlete welfare. The improbability of the randomly observed gender differences in the athletes' satisfaction indicated the training and support framework efficiency. This result demonstrated the need for continual enhancement and enactment of policies that accommodate all athletes, regardless of gender, to provide a favourable environment.

The results provide a basis for investigations of the antecedents of athlete satisfaction in various settings and sports. Research can examine additional demographic factors, the effects of other coaching modes, and the subsequent long-term benefits of high athlete satisfaction on performance and retention. At the same time, the scope of this study can be expanded by incorporating a larger sample size from different regions or sports disciplines to gain a more comprehensive understanding of athlete satisfaction. These implications enable sports organisations and policymakers to develop environments that produce athletes who are satisfied and foster national sports programme growth and sustainability.

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CONFLICT OF INTREST

We, the authors of this article, declare that there is no conflict of interest related to this study.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Mohamad Firdaus Ahmad conceptualized the research framework, supervised the study, and refined the manuscript. Siti Sumaiyah Naimah Mohd Sharif contributed to research design, data collection, and analysis. Nur Syazwani Zulaikha Safwan led the writing, managed data organization, and served as the corresponding author, coordinating research activities and communications. Cassandra Gilbert supported the literature review, contributed to data interpretation, and assisted in manuscript editing. Najmi Hayati was involved in reviewing the final manuscript for accuracy and clarity.

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