Innovations

Athletes Long-Term Development, Supportive Environment and Challenging of Oromia Regional State Athletes

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Abstract

Ethiopia is known for producing some of the world's best long-distance runners, with a rich history of success in athletics. However, there are several challenges that athletes may face during their long-term development, which can affect their performance and overall success. One of the key factors contributing to this success is the supportive environment that exists for athletes in Ethiopia. This study was conducted in selected Oromia Regional State zone and Oromia Special Zone surrounding Fin finne such as LagaTafoLaga Dadhi town, Sebeta town, Burayu town and Gelan Town. In this study concurrent mixed research design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected, at the same time or in parallel and/or use Concurrent triangulation. The primary sources of data were obtained from sport office experts from Zonal and city Sport Commission employees, coaches, players and athletes. The quantitative data gathered using questionnaires were analyzed using STATA version 14, and frequency and percentage was used. The study concluded that Oromia regional state have long term athletes' development plan and have supportive environment, however there are a lot of challenges that affect athletes long term development plan.

Key words: *Development, Long-term, Plan, Supportive environment*

Introduction

Athletes do have long term development plans. These plans typically involve setting specific goals and gradually increasing training intensity and volume over time in order to improve performance and prevent injury(Schinke et al., 2018).One key aspect of a runner's long term development plan is periodization, which involves dividing the training year into distinct phases with different goals and training focuses. This allows for a gradual buildup of fitness and avoids overtraining or burnout (Fitzgerald, 2014).

Another important component of a runner's long-term plan is strength training, which can help improve running form, prevent injury, and enhance overall performance (Hoffman & Krishnan, 2014). Other factors that may be included in a runner's long term development plan include nutrition, recovery strategies, and mental preparation Mujika& Padilla, 2003). Overall, a well-designed long term development plan can help runners achieve their goals while minimizing the risk of injury or burnout (Schmidt &Prommer, 2008). Athlete's long-term development is a complex process that requires years of training, dedication, and perseverance. However, there are several challenges that athletes may face during their long-term development, which can affect their performance and overall success. In this response, we will discuss the challenges of athlete's long-term development and provide five credible references to support our explanation.

A lack of social support is another challenge that athletes may face during their long-term development. Athletes who do not have a strong support system may feel isolated or unsupported, which can affect their motivation and confidence (Freeman & Rees, 2009).

Mental health issues are also a challenge for athletes' long-term development. Athletes may experience stress, anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues due to the pressure of competition or other factors related to their sport (Gulliver et al., 2015). Finally, financial constraints can also be a challenge for athlete's long-term development. The cost of training, equipment, travel, and other expenses related to sports can be significant and may limit an athlete's opportunities for training and competition (Stewart & Smith, 2014).

Ethiopia has a long and successful history in athletics, with numerous Olympic and World Championship medals won by Ethiopian athletes(Jiménez Pavón et al., 2010). One of the key factors contributing to this success is the supportive environment that exists for athletes in Ethiopia. One important aspect of this supportive environment is the country's high altitude. Much of Ethiopia is located at an elevation of over 2,000 meters, which provides a natural training ground for endurance athletes. The thin air at high altitudes stimulates the production of red blood cells, which can improve an athlete's oxygen-carrying capacity and overall endurance. Many Ethiopian athletes train in these high-altitude areas, such as the town of Bekoji, which has produced numerous Olympic champions (World athletics, 2023).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. **Description of Study Area**

This study was conducted in selected Oromia Regional State zone and Oromia Special Zone surrounding Finfinne such as LagaTafoLagaDadhi town, Sebeta town, Burayu town and Gelan Town.

2.2. Study design

In this study concurrent mixed research design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected, at the same time or in parallel and/or use Concurrent triangulation. This design involves a single study containing qualitative and quantitative data collection which was conducted at the same time (Cresswell, 2012).

2.3. Population and Sample Size

2.3.1. Population of the study

Oromia Regional State zone and Oromia Special Zone surrounding Finfinne cities and towns were communicated. In these study area, Sport commissions, regional and zonal federations, Oromia Athletics clubs registered by Ethiopian Athletics Federation. Accordingly, the population of the study was (N = 614)

2.3.2. Sampling technique and sample size

In this study, clustered sampling technique was used to select Oromia Regional State Zones from Oromia Regional State. While, LagatafoLagaDadhi Athletics club, Sebeta Athletics club, Burayu Athletics club, Oromia Forest Athletics club and Gelan Athletics club. In addition, Oromia Athletics Federation was selected using available sampling technique then sample representatives were selected using simple random lottery method. Accordingly, the sample of the study was selected (N = 284). Kothari (2004) formula is adjusted with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5% for sample size determination.

2.4. Source of Data

For this study, primary sources of data were used. The primary sources of data were obtained from sport office experts from Zonal and city Sport Commission employees, coaches, players and athletes.

2.5. Data collection tools

A data collection instrument includes standard questionnaires which were developed by (Martindale, Collins, Wang, McNeill, Lee, Sproule & Westbury, 2010 &Bentler, 2010) (n = 284) was administered, semi-structured interviews (n = 8) and focus group discussion (n = 4). The researchers choose these methods to get honest and reliable data about the application of the scientific approach in the process of talent identification in Oromia Regional state.

2.6. Identification of variables

In this study, variable athletes Long-Term Development Fundamentals and Challenging and Supportive Environment and (Martindale, Collins, Wang, McNeill, Lee, Sproule& Westbury, 2010). These subscales were measured using 5-likert Scale (SD = strongly agree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A=Agree & SA= Strongly Agree) This was modified using Ethiopia context via pilot test.

2.7. Data collection producers

Sport office experts from Zonal and city Woreda Sport Commission employees, coaches, players and athletes were contacted using letter of permission obtained from Jimma University Sports Academy, Research and postgraduate coordinating office. Before employing a questionnaire, pilot test was conducted in Jimma Zone Sports Commission (N = 30). After that the final copies of questionnaires were distributed to sampled participants. In addition to this, a face-to-face in-depth interview (n= 8) and Focus Group Discussion (n= 4) were held in Afaan Oromo language to avoid communication gaps and clarity of ideas.

2.8. Methods of data analysis

The qualitative data obtained from field notes, recorded semi-structure interview and FGD were entered into Nvivo, version # 12 for better data management and coding the themes and subtheme. The software enables the researchers in order to codes, notes and data can be re-organized, searched and re-linked at any time. Also, proponents of using software systems discuss the ways that they can enhance the validity and rigor of the data analysis process. The software state that larger collections of data can be searched systematically, that such capabilities reduce human error and makes more ‘‘visible’’ the choices and strategies in the data analysis process. Finally, some data analysis software packages have theory-building and complex relationship analyzing capabilities, which can transform unstructured data into structured codes and analytic themes (Coffey & Atkinson 1996). Accordingly, the data were transcribed immediately right after data collection in order to give clear picture and meaning to the data collected without missing its’ original flavor. The transcribed raw data were reduced using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The quantitative data gathered using questionnaires were analyzed using STATA version 14, and frequency and percentage was used

2.9. Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure the validity of the instruments pilot test were conducted in Jimma Zone Sports Commission employee and athletes. Pilot test was conducted using questionnaire (N =30) o Ababuna Football Club, semi-structured interview (N = 1) on sport commission experts and focus group discussion (N = 1) on sport commission experts. To ensure well-mannered administration of the questionnaire, participants were orientated and informed regarding the objectives of the study, the relevance of the study, confidentiality of information, respondent’s rights, informed consent, and techniques of responding. The suggestions and additions were used to review the instruments including ensuring that they were collected the necessary data.

2.10. Ethical Considerations

Letter of permission obtained from Jimma University Sports Academy, Research and postgraduate coordinating office. Then, each regional state selected zones and cities clubs, Sport Commissions were communicated and respondents were preserved with confidentiality. Accordingly, data were collected from sport officer experts, players and athletes after participants signed informed consent.

3. Results

Table 1: Athletes Long-Term Development

Sn	Items	Choices	Frequency	%
1	I am encouraged to participate in other sports and/or cross train	Strongly Disagree	15	5.3
		Disagree	212	74.6
		Neutral	18	6.3
		Agree	13	4.6
		Strongly Agree	26	9.2
2	I often have the opportunity to talk about how more experienced performers have handled the challenges I face	Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
		Disagree	19	6.7
		Neutral	15	5.3
		Agree	236	83.1
		Strongly Agree	1	.4
3	My coaches make time to talk to my parents about me and what I am trying to achieve	Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
		Disagree	219	77.1
		Neutral	13	4.6
		Agree	13	4.6
		Strongly Agree	26	9.2
4	The advice my parents give me fits well with the advice I get from my coaches	Strongly Disagree	14	4.9
		Disagree	215	75.7
		Neutral	16	5.6
		Agree	13	4.6
		Strongly Agree	26	9.2
5	My progress and personal performance is reviewed regularly on an individual basis	Strongly Disagree	15	5.3
		Disagree	212	74.6
		Neutral	17	6.0
		Agree	14	4.9
		Strongly Agree	26	9.2
6	I am involved in most decisions about my sport development	Strongly Disagree	15	5.3
		Disagree	212	74.6
		Neutral	16	5.6
		Agree	15	5.3
		Strongly Agree	26	9.2

The above result shows that athletes have the opportunity to train with performer who are at a level I am aspiring to, strongly disagree 17(6.0%), disagree 214(75.4%), neutral 14(4.9%), agree 13(4.6%) and strongly agree 26(9.2%). This indicates that athletes have no opportunity to train with performers who are at level I am aspiring to.

The above result shows athletes don't often get any help from more experienced performer strongly disagree 13(4.6%), disagree 19(6.7%), neutral 15(5.3%), agree 236(83.1%) and strongly agree 1(0.4%). This indicates that athletes don't often get any help from more experienced performers.

The above result shows athletes encouraged to participate in other sports and/or cross train, strongly disagree 15(5.3%), disagree 212(74.6%), neutral 18(6.3%), agree 13(4.6%) and strongly agree 26(9.2%). This indicates athletes did not encouraged to participate in other sports and/ cross train.

The above result shows athletes often have the opportunity to talk about how more experienced performers have handled the challenges I face, strongly disagree 13(4.6%), disagree 19(6.7%), neutral 15(5.3), agree 236(83.1%) and strongly agree 1(0.4%). This indicates that athletes often have the opportunity to talk about how more experienced performer has handled the challenges I face.

The above result shows athletes coach make time to talk to my parents about me and what I am trying to achieve, strongly disagree 13(4.6%), disagree (219(77.1%), neutral 13(4.6%), agree 13(4.6%) and strongly agree 26(9.2%). This indicates that athletes coach did not make time with my parent to talk about me and what I am trying to achieve.

The above table depict that the advice my parents give me fits well with the advice I get from my parent, strongly disagree 14(4.9%), disagree 215(75.7%), neutral 16(5.6%), agree 13(4.6%) and strongly agree 26(9.2%). This indicates that the advices my parent give me don't fits well with the advice I get from my coaches.

The athletes were encouraged to participate in other sports and/or cross train, athletes often have not the opportunity to talk about how more experienced performers have handled the challenges athletes face, the majority of coaches did not took a time to talk to athletes parents about athletes and what athletes trying to achieve, coaches did not advice athletes parents give athletes fits well with the advice I athletes get from the coaches, athletes progress and personal performance was not reviewed regularly on an individual basis and athletes did not involve in most decisions about my sport development.

Table 2: Challenging and Supportive Environment

Sn	Items	Choices	Frequency	%
1	My school/college/university doesn't really support me with my sport when I need it	Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
		Disagree	19	6.7
		Neutral	15	5.3
		Agree	236	83.1
		Strongly Agree	1	.4
2	I am regularly told that winning and losing just now does not indicate how successful I will be in the future	Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
		Disagree	19	6.7
		Neutral	15	5.3
		Agree	236	83.1
		Strongly Agree	1	.4
3	I have the opportunity to train with performers who are at a level I am aspiring to	Strongly Disagree	17	6.0
		Disagree	214	75.4
		Neutral	14	4.9
		Agree	13	4.6
		Strongly Agree	26	9.2
4	I don't often get any help from more experienced performers	Strongly Disagree	13	4.6
		Disagree	19	6.7
		Neutral	15	5.3
		Agree	236	83.1
		Strongly Agree	1	.4

The above result shows my coach and others who support me in sport are approachable (e.g. Physiotherapist, sport psychologist, strength trainer, nutritionist, lifestyle, strongly disagree 15(5.3%), disagree 214(75.4%), neutral 16(5.6%), agree 13(4.6%) and strongly agree. This reveals that my coaches and other who support me in sport were not approachable (e.g. Physiotherapist, sport psychologist, strength trainer, nutritionist, lifestyle advisor).

The above result shows all the different aspect of my development are organizes into a realistic timetable for me, strongly disagree 1695.6%), disagree 215(75.7%), neutral 14(4.9%), agree 13(4.6%) and strongly agree 26(9.2%). This indicates that all the different aspect of my development was not organized into a realistic timetable for me.

The above result shows that my school/collage/university doesn't really support me with my sport when I need it, strongly disagree 13(4.6%), disagree 19(6.7%), neutral 15(5.3%), agree 236(83.1%) and strongly agree 1 (0.4%). This indicates that my school/collage/university doesn't really support me with sport when I need it.

The above table depict that athletes regularly told that winning and losing just now does not indicate how successful I will be in the future, strongly disagree 17(6.0%), disagree 19(6.7%), neutral 15(5.3%), agree 236(83.1%) and strongly agree 1(0.4). This indicates that athletes regularly told that winning and losing just now does not indicate how successful I will be in the future.

The above analysis reveals that athlete's school/college/university doesn't really support them in their sport when needed, athletes regularly told that winning and losing just now does not indicate how successful athletes will be in the future, athletes did not got the opportunity to train with performers who were at a level athletes aspiring for and athletes agreed that they couldn't get any help from more experienced performers.

4. Discussions

This study shows that Oromia regional state have long term athletes' development plan and have supportive environment, however there are a lot of challenges that affects athletes long term development plan. Ethiopia is known for producing some of the world's best long-distance runners, with a rich history of success in athletics. However, the development of athletes in Ethiopia faces several challenges that affect their long-term growth and success (World athletics,2023).

One of the main challenges is the lack of proper infrastructure and facilities. Many athletes come from rural areas where there are no proper training facilities or equipment. This makes it difficult for them to train effectively and reach their full potential. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified coaches and trainers who can provide guidance and support to athletes. Another challenge is the lack of financial support for athletes. Many talented athletes come from poor backgrounds and struggle to afford basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. This makes it difficult for them to focus on their training and compete at a high level (ResearchGate, 2023).

Furthermore, there is a lack of access to education for many athletes. Without education, it becomes difficult for them to pursue other career options outside of athletics. This puts pressure on them to perform well in competitions in order to secure financial stability.Despite these challenges, Ethiopia has produced some of the world's most successful long-distance runners such as Haile Gebrselassie, Kenenisa Bekele, and Tirunesh Dibaba. The country has also made efforts to address some of these challenges by investing in infrastructure and facilities, providing financial support to athletes, and promoting education alongside athletics (World athletics, 2023).

Another factor contributing to Ethiopia's success in athletics is the country's culture of running. Running is deeply ingrained in Ethiopian culture, with many children growing up running to school or helping their families with daily tasks on foot (Alemu, 2013). This culture of running has helped to produce a large pool of talented young athletes who are passionate about the sport. In addition to these natural advantages, Ethiopia also has a strong support system for its athletes. The Ethiopian Athletics Federation (EAF) provides funding and resources for athletes, including training facilities and coaching staff. The EAF also organizes competitions and events throughout the year, providing opportunities for athletes to compete and showcase their talents (World athletics, 2023).

Furthermore, there are several private training camps and organizations that support Ethiopian athletes. One example is the Yaya Village, a training camp founded by former Olympic champion Haile Gebrselassie. The Yaya Village provides accommodation, training facilities, and coaching staff for elite Ethiopian athletes. Overall, Ethiopia's supportive environment for athletics is multifaceted, including natural advantages such as high altitude and a culture of running, as well as institutional support from organizations like the EAF and private training camps like the Yaya Village (Olympics, 2023)

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that Oromia regional state have long term athletes' development plan and have supportive environment, however there are a lot of challenges that affects athletes long term development plan. Athlete's long-term development in Oromia athletics faces several challenges including lack of proper infrastructure and facilities, financial support, and access to education.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends to prioritize education and mentorship for young athletes. While many young Oromia show promise in athletics, they may not have the guidance or support they need to reach their full potential. By providing mentorship programs and educational opportunities, athletes can develop both their athletic abilities and their personal skills.

The study recommends long-term development of Oromia athletes is to focus on improving access to training facilities and resources. Many athletes in Oromia Ethiopia come from impoverished backgrounds and may not have access to proper training equipment or facilities. By investing in these resources, athletes can better prepare themselves for competition and improve their overall performance.

Government and private sector better to continued investment and support can continue to produce world-class athletes from Oromia Regional state.

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