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Competition Experience of the Coach and Team Performance in the Kenyan National Soccer and Volleyball Leagues

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Abstract

Purpose: The objective of the study was to establish whether past competition experiences of the coach predicted team performance in the Kenyan national soccer and volleyball leagues.

Methodology: The study adopted Cross-Sectional survey design. The population of the study was 53 head coaches handling teams in the Kenyan national soccer and volleyball leagues. Census sampling was used to pick the 53 coaches for the study. Data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire for the coaches. The coaches' questionnaire was divided into sections which captured demographics and academic background. The study used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22) for data analysis. Chi-Square and Fisher's Exact test was used to show whether competition experience had an effect on the team's performance. Data was presented using tables

Findings: For soccer, Chi square and Fisher's Exact Test results showed that coaches past competition experience had a significant effect on team performance ($\chi^2 = 30.292 \leq p_{0.05} 9df$). The fisher's exact test had a p value of 0.003 which was also less than 0.05 confirming that

there was a significant relationship between soccer coaches' past competition experience and team performance. For volleyball, Chi square and Fisher's Exact Test results showed that volleyball coaches past competition experience had a significant effect on team performance ($\chi^2 = 23.910 \leq p_{0.05} 9df$). The fisher's exact test had a p value of 0.008 which was also less than 0.05 confirming that there was a significant relationship between volleyball coaches' past competition experience and team performance.

Recommendations: Policy makers such as team managers, owners and other stake holders in sports to consider more experienced coaches. They should consider coaches who have long period of coaching experience as well as coaches with a long period of competition experience. This is because coaching knowledge comes from observations and experiences of other coaches. Team managers, owners and other stake holders in sports should also consider coaches with past playing experience from recognized local clubs. This will enhance team performance.

Keywords: *Competition Experience, Team Performance, National League, Coach*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Coaching is a multifaceted and mammoth undertaking which encompasses the principles of maximizing team or player performance. It also involves cognitive activities that enable decision making in the midst of dynamic situational factors and environmental setups (McAlpin & Vaagenes, 2016). Coaches' experience on the other hand refers the number of coaching years in the Kenyan national soccer premier league or the Kenyan national volleyball division one league teams. A review of literature attests to the importance of coach competition experiences and player's perception of the coach competence in team performance (Baker et al., 2013; Bar-Bar-Eli et al. 2011; Grace, 2014; Grundel et al., 2013).

Grundel et al. (2013) observed that in addition to developing through coaching experience, coaches' previous participation in sports as a player could be an added advantage. There is also the possibility that earlier participation as a player amplifies the expansion of skills essential for the expert coach. Bar-Bar-Eli et al. (2011) further, noted that there could be differences between skilled and less-skilled players in some coaching components like; perception, knowledge, and decision-making and that could have some role in the development of a professional coach (Baker et al., 2013).

Despite the crucial role coaches play in developing children as Players, there is limited investment in children coaching (Bloom, Falcao & Caron, 2014; Rankin-Wright & Lara-Bercial, 2018). Hence, it is not farfetched to conclude that professional coaching is temporal and unstructured across many countries in the world. Thus, a need for studies on how different coaching education parameters and attributes influence performance in the local competitive sports. There is ample literature on the influence of physical and psychological coach education performance factors on the performance of teams in competitive sports. However, evidence to support the technical and tactical aspects of coach education on performance is limited. Thus the technical and tactical Coach Education indicators marked for this study were academic status, coaching experience, coach past playing experience and the professional qualification.

According to the review of related literature on the coach education, coach competence influences team performance in competitions (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017) and due to this realisation, sport federations have been reported to have channelled substantial amount of resources to professionalize sports coaching by developing both the ascribed and acquired coaching skills for their coaches (Duffy et al., 2011; Taylor & Garratt 2010; Trudel et al., 2010). Again, existing literature on determinants of essential coach education parameters have tended to focus more on the physical and psychological coaching than on the technical and tactical coaching factors (Kao et al., 2017; Myer et al., 2015; Mach et al., 2010; Chelladurai, 1990). According to available evidence, research on the technical and tactical coach education influence on sport performance in competitive sports is scarce. Keatlholetswe and Malete (2019) in a study aimed to predict performance in sports used the national soccer league team, and the discussion of findings was more focused on psychological coaching than technical and tactical coaching education. It is interesting to note that while many studies on coach attributes are available, most of them focused on the psychological coaching aspects. Nevertheless, anecdote evidence indicate that many sports practitioners appreciated the role of technical and tactical coaching education on performance of teams in competitions.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Sproule and Nash (2012), coaching role is enormous and complex and many factors determine performance of teams in competitions. Like, Cassidy and Kidman (2010) observed, there is little or no knowledge of coach qualification indicators and team performance in most developing countries. According to Fentahun, 2012; Musau, 2015; Pasia, 2012; Santos, 2017, both academic and professional qualification influence performance in the areas of medicine, teaching and engineering. Grace (2014) posited that educating coaches is an integral part of satisfying and promoting the eminence of coaching in sports and a build-up in the coaches' competence.

In Kenya, like in many parts of the world, sport is a highly structured industry and boasts of competitive leagues and tournaments. Kenya has representation in competitions at regional, continental and world competitions in various sport disciplines for both gender (Science of sport, 2014).

Many factors influence performance of teams in the competitions, among them being coach academic and professional qualification and the players' perception of coach competences (Vella, Oades & Crowe, 2013). At present, there is scarcity of research on the aforementioned performance indicators in competitive sports. Knowledge of such aspects of performance would promote discourse on factors vital in enhancing team performance, help in formulation of policies for the different aspects of team performance and stimulate further research in coach education and player attitude on their coaches. Therefore it is necessary conduct a research on the indicators of team performance, especially the education status, competition and playing experience of the coach and the perception of players on their coach competence and their effects on the team performance in competitions.

This study, sought to explore whether the coach academic and professional qualification, the coach competition and playing experience and the players' perception of their coach competence could predict performance of team in the Kenyan soccer and volleyball leagues.

Soccer and volleyball disciplines were selected for their long-standing competitive national league. Moreover, the performance in these disciplines have been encouraging at the regional, continental and international level (Science of sport, 2014).

The Agape volunteers 2010-2020 edition reported that proper sport coaching in Kenya lacked, making it essential to set up a coach education program (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2015) more so on the technical and tactical coaching attributes. Further review of literature attests to a dearth of studies on the academic status, professional qualifications, coach experience and their past playing experiences on the team performance in sport competitions not only in Kenya but in the rest of the world. After all, in Kenya, there is lack of a structured coaching education program for any sport. In order to provoke coach education practice in Kenyan, there was need for a scientific study on whether coach academic and professional qualification predicts performance of teams in competition.

This study was established to determine whether the coach academic status and their professional qualification, their past playing and competition experiences predict performance of teams in the Kenyan soccer and volleyball national leagues. The study also aimed to explore whether the players' perception on coach competence influenced team performance in the said leagues.

Hence, the independent variables were coach academic status and professional qualification, past playing and competition experience, and the players' perception of the coach competence while the dependent variable was the ranking of teams in the respective leagues with the intervening variables being age, gender and sport.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To establish whether past competition experiences of the coach predicted team performance in the Kenyan national soccer and volleyball leagues

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H0: The coaches' past competition experience does not significantly predict team performance in the Kenyan soccer and volleyball leagues.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the experiential learning theory that stipulates that learning process involves creating knowledge from inquisitive and by transforming experiences (Cherry, 2019). The theory advocates for holistic approach in learning by underscoring the influence of cognition, environmental factors, and emotional experiences in the learning process. According to the experiential learning theory, grasping and transforming experiential theoretical models can explain the processes of knowledge creation which are basically in two models. The two models in turn produce four learning cyclic modes that include grasping experience made by concrete and conceptualization, reflective observation and transforming experience which involve active experimentation. Proponents of experiential learning theory argue that concrete experience provides knowledge that serves as basis for reflection, from which assimilated information form abstract concepts. Then, through the active and continuous testing of concepts, new theories about the world are developed to produce new ideas that are further tested and process begins again. According to the experiential learning theory, learning process can start at any point (Marin, 2015).

For purposes of this study, past playing and coaching experiences of the coach continually generate personal experiences that keep changing with times and situations. By the virtue of its continuous and cyclic knowledge generation learning process, experiential theory was to back this study. Accordingly, through the coaching process, the coach gathers new knowledge which he/she conceptualizes and package for players needs during practice and competition. As the approach of this theory is holistic, it then applies to the holistic nature of coaching, which is a blend of the physical, technical, tactical and psychological coach education. Thus justifying the relevance of studying the following specific aspects of the coach education on the team performance in competitions; coach academics status, professional qualifications, past playing and competitive experiences as well as the players' perception on the coach competences. The current study focused on the technical and tactical aptitudes of the coach education on the team performance in competition which have not been a focus of research in many realms of sport performance so far.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Based on the experiential learning theory a conceptual framework linking the variables of this study was generated. The conceptual framework shows how the variables interact to bring out the outcome which was the ranking of teams in the respective National Leagues. The independent variable was coaches' competition experience while the outcome in the league ranking was the dependent variable.

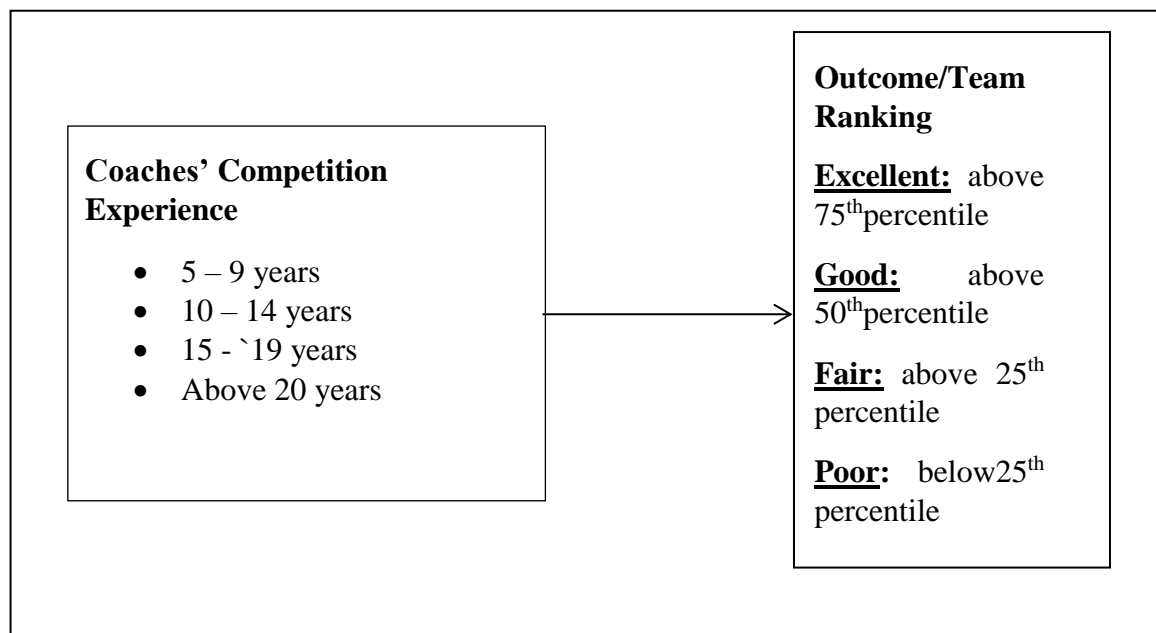


Figure 1: Coaches' Past Playing Experience and Team Performance

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Coach Past Playing Experience and Team Performance

The past competitive experience of a coach is a motivation factor because it influences character, attitude and formulation of the strategy by coaches (Duarte et al., 2014; Gilbert & Rangeon, 2011). Together with the professional experience past competitive experience of the coach add to knowledge for content delivery in coaching. According to (Carter and Bloom, 2009) coaches have been able to scale professional rank in coaching based on the learnt skills learnt in competitive coaching. Therefore, coaches acquire coaching knowledge in different ways (Vergeer & Lyle, 2009). Equally, coaches who are involved in regular competition consider themselves more knowledgeable and better managers which motivate and propels their team to perform better than teams of less experienced coaches (Barros et al., 2010; Manley et al., 2010).

Servant leadership a philosophy held by leaders including coaches helps in improving understanding of players and building interpersonal relationship which in turn influences overall performance of teams in competitions. The experience gained during competitive coaching together with the learnt interpersonal communication skills enables the coach to influence players' attitudes and thoughts by creating a conducive environment for learning and growth (Doveon Won, 2019; Lesika et al, 2019).

Therefore, coaches who are former players show greater confidence as their playing history serve as a good source of knowledge. They apply techniques in their team during training which boosts team confidence and performance. Their experience as a player make them understand the stress and emotions that come with competitions and are able to effectively manage the team. Thus, past playing experience serves as an advantage in delivering on the task because the combination of the experience as a player with the coach formal preparation tends to increase the efficacy of the coach

(Duarte et al., 2014). It would therefore be interesting to confirm whether coach past playing experience can predict performance of teams in competition.

A further review of literature attest coaches develop skilled capabilities through years of involvement in coaching and the past playing experience boosts the skills necessary to be an expert coach. According to Bar-Eli et al., (2011) skilled athletes make better decision, have better perception and knowledge that plays a great role in the making of a coach. In a study to considered the decision-making of gymnastic coaches to determine whether competency improved with increasing experience Vergeer and Lyle (2009) found that more skilled coaches showed more extensive and complex decision-making strategies and possessed higher number of statements and a deeper focus of attention when compared with less-skilled coaches. This supports (Schinke *et al.* 1995) assertion that besides developing through coaching experience, the coach growth could occur if they spent substantial time as an athlete. It is possible that participation as an athlete augments development of coaching skills although no studies have corroborated these assertions. Bar-Eli et al., (2011) opined that differences between skilled and less-skilled athletes are perception, knowledge and decision-making which impacts for a prospective coach.

Coach playing history and coaching experience are a rich source of knowledge besides other informal and non-formal learning situations. It was reported that young coaches find learning by doing the most exciting part of coaching as lessons learned this way do not fade away easily (Erickson et al., 2008; Timson-Katchis & North, 2008; Lemyre et al., 2007; Schempp et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2007; Abraham et al., 2006; Gilbert et al., 2006; Irwin et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2004; Jones et al., 2003; Cushion et al., 2003). Coaches expertize in their profession is as a result of sharing ideas with similar minded people and observing how they work by engaging them closely in the coaching situation (Lemyre & Trudel, 2004). Coaches who have been players showed greater confidence in their coaching since past playing serves as a source of coaching knowledge. Their past playing experience make them understand the stress and emotions that come with competitions and help them handle teams effectively (Araya, Bennie & O'Connor, 2015). Therefore, past playing experience is an added advantage in achieving their coaching objective.

It was observed that a mix of involvement as a player with formal schooling readiness generally build training adequacy of the coach (Duarte et al., 2014). However, many teams tend to recruit former professional players as their head coaches even without a formal coaching qualification. In the process of playing, players gain better decision making skills and are able to perceive playing situation better when they become coaches. Bar-Eli et al., (2011) asserted that a coach who spent considerable amount of time as player, develop better coaching skills compared to coaches without playing experience because they gain adequate knowledgeable about the sport, hence Rynne (2014) claimed that many former elite players are optimized during their superior training as players. From the previous literature, there was converge of ideas that past playing experience determine the personal choice for coaching responsibilities. The question still lingers whether the past playing experience determine the quality of a coach. The answers lie in studying whether past playing experience can predict performance of teams in competitions, which was the aim of this study.

The previous playing experience of a coach was emphasized as the motivation for good team performance as it was reported to influence factors like character, motivation and strategy (Jowett, 2017). Carter and Bloom, (2009) noted that coaches are able to scale the professional ranks based on their skills and not necessarily, their experience as previous players. This attests that there are

different sources of coaching knowledge. Manley *et al*, (2010) discoursed that more experienced coaches’ foster good coach-player relationship, which greatly influenced success of a team. In a study of expert coaches from several individual and team sports (Nash & Sproule, 2012) reported formal education, playing experience, professional experience, mentoring, interactions with high-level Players, ongoing education and personal commitment in coaching as sources of coaching knowledge. Mesquita, Ribeiro, Santos and Morgan (2014), similarly reported learning by doing as the most important source of coaching knowledge. The concurrence on experience and practice as a source of coaching knowledge that creates a basis to believe that specific coaching attributes are essential in predicting teams’ performance in competitions. Unfortunately, there exists no empirical evidence currently to confirm the assertions. This was partially a basis for this study, which was to establish whether coaching experience predicts teams’ performance in competitions.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted Cross-Sectional survey design. The population of the study was 53 head coaches handling teams in the Kenyan national soccer and volleyball leagues. Census sampling was used to pick the 53 coaches for the study. Data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire for the coaches. The coaches’ questionnaire was divided into sections which captured demographics and academic background.

The study used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 22) for data analysis. Information was organized and presented using descriptive statistics and was analyzed at 0.05 significance level. Chi-Square and Fisher’s Exact test was used to predict coach academic status on the team’s performance. Data was projected in figures and tables and relevant discussions were made.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Coaches’ Competition Experience

Table 1 shows the experience of coaches in the national leagues competitive.

Table 1: Competitive level of Coaching

	Sport Coached		Total
	Soccer	Volleyball	
School team	3(8.8%)	2(10.50%)	5(9.4%)
Collage team	10(29.40%)	4(21.10%)	14(26.40%)
Local club	15(44.10%)	10(52.60%)	25(47.20%)
Other	6(17.60%)	3(15.80%)	9(17.0%)
Total	34(100.0%)	19(100%)	53(100%)

The study showed that 3(8.8%) of the soccer coaches and 2(10.50%) of the volleyball coaches had the highest competitive level of coaching as primary and secondary school level. In addition, 10(29.40%) of the soccer coaches and 4(21.10%) of the volleyball coaches had the highest competitive level of coaching as college level. Further, 15(44.10%) of the soccer coaches and 10(52.60%) of the volleyball coaches had the highest competitive level of coaching as college level. In addition, 6(17.60%) of the soccer coaches and 3(15.80%) of the volleyball coaches had the highest competitive level of coaching as college level

4.2 Coach Competition Experience and Team Performance

The findings on the coaches' past competition experience and team performance were presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Soccer Coaches' Competition Experience and Team Performance

	Above 75th Percentile	Above 50th percentile	Above 25th percentile	Below 25th percentile	Total
5-9 years	3(8.8%)	10(29.4%)	8(23.5%)	3(8.8%)	24
10 - 14 years	2(5.9%)	4(11.8%)	1(2.9%)	0	7(20.6%)
15 - 19 years	2(5.9%)	0	1(2.9%)	0	3(8.8%)
Total	7(20.6%)	14(41.2%)	10(29.4%)	3(8.8%)	34(100%)

Findings on the soccer coaches' competition experience revealed that 61.8% of the teams managed by coaches with varying experiences were ranked above the 50th percentile and 38.2% ranked below 50th percentile. According to the findings, coaches with experience of 9 years and below formed the bulk of the teams in both levels of performance 38.2% and 32.3% of the teams that were ranked above, and below 50th percentiles respectively. The findings further indicated that coaches with below 9 years' experience had the majority of the teams (32.3%) ranked below 50th percentile. However, the coaches with below 15 – 19 years' experience in competition had most of their teams (5.9%) ranked above 50th percentile.

Table 3: An analysis of the Soccer Coaches' Competition Experience and Team Performance

	Value	Df	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.292	9	0.000	0.001
Fisher's Exact Test	26.412			0.003
N of Valid Cases	34			

Table 3 presented analysis of the soccer coaches' competition experience on team performance. Chi-square test produced $\chi^2(1, N = 34) = 30.292, p < .05$, which was in the rejection region. Fisher's exact test p value of 0.003 confirmed that the difference was significant and therefore there was compelling evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4: Volleyball Coaches' Competition Experience and Team Performance

	Above 75th Percentile	Above 50th percentile	Above 25th percentile	Below 25th percentile	Total
5-9 years	3(15.8%)	3(15.8%)	3(15.8%)	2(10.5%)	11(57.90%)
10 - 14 years	0	1(5.3%)	1(5.3%)	0	2(10.5%)
15 - 19 years	5(26.3%)	0	1(5.3%)	0	6(31.6%)
Total	8(42.1%)	4(21.1%)	5(26.3%)	2(10.5%)	19(100%)

Findings on the volleyball coaches’ competition experience revealed that 63.3% of the teams managed by coaches with varying experiences were ranked above the 50th percentile and 36.8% ranked below 50th percentile. According to the findings, coaches with experience of 9 years and below formed the bulk of the teams in both levels of performance 31.6% and 26.3% of the teams that were ranked above, and below 50th percentiles respectively. The findings further indicated that coaches with below 9 years’ experience had the majority of the teams (26.3%) ranked below 50th percentile. However, the coaches with below 15 – 19 years’ experience in competition had most of their teams (26.3%) ranked above 50th percentile with only 5.3% of the teams being ranked below the 50th percentile.

Table 5: An Analysis of the Volleyball Coach Competition Experience and Team Performance

	Value	Df	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.910	9	0.001	0.006
Fisher's Exact Test	15.930			0.008
N of Valid Cases	19			

Table 5 presented analysis of the volleyball coach competition experience on team performance. Chi-square test produced $\chi^2(1, N = 19) = 18.19, p < .05$ which was in the rejection region. Fisher's exact test p value of 0.008 confirmed that the difference was significant and therefore there was compelling evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

5.0 DISCUSSION

H0: The hypothesis that past competition experience of the coach does not significantly influence team performance in the Kenyan soccer and volleyball leagues was rejected

These findings resonated well with Cushion and Partington (2016) who noted that over the years, it has been proven that coaching knowledge comes from observations and experiences of other coaches. The findings also agreed with Resende, Sarmiento, Falcão, Mesquita and Fernández (2014) who indicated that coaching experience provides the possibility of achieving excellence in coaching through different pathways. Barros *et al.* (2010) also asserted that experienced coaches consider themselves more knowledgeable in planning, evaluation and team training and players as well consider them to be better managers and therefore possibly motivate and propel the team to better performance.

Table 2 showed that soccer coaches with less than 9 years of experience were placed in lower percentile than coaches with 15 to 19 years of experience. Further Table 3 also showed that soccer coaches with less than 9 years of experience were placed in lower percentile than coaches with 15 to 19 years of experience.

Coaching experience is very fundamental in determining a good coach. The long-term successful coaches are usually ‘developers’ of their players, very analytical and creative in their approach. Effective with their players and team leaders, they are also skilful in their relationships with the team’s management. These findings agreed with Mielke (2007) who indicated that that the years as head coach and the experience as assistant coach are fundamental to a good performance on high level, especially in football. These findings were in also in agreement with Boardley (2018) who established that past coaching experience plays an important role in success of a team. The

authors also emphasize that past experiences can be used to predict the future performance of a team, including players' behaviour. Coaching efficacy is defined as the extent to which coaches believe they have the capacity to affect the learning and performance of their Players based on coaching experience. Boardley (2018), Vergeer and Lyle (2009) further argued that the coaches' experience influences one of the most important aspects of the training, the decision making process which is a key component in determining team performance in competition

6.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the Findings

Findings showed that out of 7 (20.6%) of the soccer coaches with teams that were ranked above 75th percentile 4 (11.8%) had more than 10 years of coaching experience. In addition, all the teams that were ranked below 25th percentile had coaches below 9 years' of coaching experience. Further most volleyball teams that were ranked above 75th percentile had coaches with 15 years to 19 years' of coaching experience. Further coaches with 15 – 19 years' of coaching experience had only one team below 50th percentile while coaches with 5 – 9 years' of coaching experience were the only coaches with teams below 25th percentile.

For soccer, Chi square and Fisher's Exact Test results showed that coaches past competition experience had a significant effect on team performance ($\chi^2 = 30.292 \leq p_{0.05, 9df}$). The Fisher's exact test had a p value of 0.003 which was also less than 0.05 confirming that there was a significant relationship between soccer coaches' past competition experience and team performance.

For volleyball, Chi square and Fisher's Exact Test results showed that volleyball coaches past competition experience had a significant effect on team performance ($\chi^2 = 23.910 \leq p_{0.05, 9df}$). The Fisher's exact test had a p value of 0.008 which was also less than 0.05 confirming that there was a significant relationship between volleyball coaches' past competition experience and team performance.

6.2 Conclusion

In addition, coaches coaching experience had a significant effect on team performance in both soccer and volleyball teams. The study also concluded that coaches' competition experience had a significant effect on team performance in both soccer and volleyball teams.

6.3 Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Team managers, owners and other stake holders in sports to consider more experienced coaches. They should consider coaches who have long period of coaching experience as well as coaches with a long period of competition experience. This is because coaching knowledge comes from observations and experiences of other coaches. Team managers, owners and other stake holders in sports should also consider coaches with past playing experience from recognized local clubs. This will enhance team performance.

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