Developing a Model for Choosing Coaches of Basketball National Teams

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study was to identify and to prioritize the most important criteria to choose qualified coaches for the basketball national teams in Iran based on the perspective of sport experts, managers, basketball coaches, and elite players. Method used in this research was descriptive and survey kind. 135 participants were studied through random sampling approach according to the Morgan table. After collecting the questionnaires, 110 samples were qualified for further investigations. The data was analyzed with both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Friedman test for finding the priority of criteria and analysis of variance test, using SPSS software. The order of the eight identified treats include "Personality and Cognitive Features, Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics, Social Characteristics, Managerial Skills, Scientific Knowledge and Expertise, Coaching Experiences, Demographic and Personal Characteristics, and Basketball Sport Skills". Personality and cognitive features of a coach with mean rank of 6.35 is the most important factor to choose a coach (X2= 61.39, p<0.01) among the eight main criteria. Significant differences were obvious only on the last two items including "Sport skills" and "Personal characteristics" among male and female subjects.

Introduction

One of the key variables in the domain of sports is the imperative role of a coach with highlighted responsibilities. A coach is one of the significant parts of the achievement, using his knowledge and experience to guide players towards accomplishment. It is universally accepted that the role of a coach has a huge influence on sporting success (Whyte, 2019). Coaching is an educational-training-managerial category and therefore takes into account various dimensions. An athlete may have all

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features necessary for success such as natural talent, work ethic, mental strength and interest for success, but if they do not have the right coach to bring it all together, it is quite likely they will fall short of their goals. Similarly, a team may be made up of the most talented individuals, but if they are not molded into an effective group to perform as a collective team, then they will often fail to reach their targets. The importance of a good coach is the reason athletes and teams spend a lot of time and money hunting down the best coaches. One of the problems is that it is not an exact science, as we have seen many times where a successful coach cannot adapt his approach to a new set of players or different types of individuals. Many characteristics of sport coaches contribute to the success of their players, as well as their professional reputations. The United States Sports Academy identified 17 of these traits in a survey given to high school sports coaches, and they ranked a handful of them as being more important than the rest. They include sports knowledge, motivation and communication, skill development and practice quality. Sports coaches must know the ins and outs of their sports, but those who really help their athletes and teams grow keep their knowledge up-to-date by reading trade publications, watching games, and attending clinics. The nature of sport is also different in individual and team games, which affects the coaching attitudes.

Marshall (2006) has expressed their views in the outcomes of their research that the coaches of individual-based courses have less responsibility as compared with team-based coaches. Team's success and failure is one of the most important factors in coaches' evaluation criteria, and effective coaching is closely related to the victory (Gearity, 2012). Setting objectives for the successes of the team, selection of players and their arrangement in their suitable playing posts, appropriate scheduling, monitoring the manner of task fulfillments, correction of the feeble points during work trend, proffering suitable strategies at appropriate times, and other changes in the coaching responsibilities have transfigured the process of coaching from an educational training category to an educational training-managerial category (Szabo, 2012). Every coach has a philosophy and process by which they believe will heed results. Every coach therefore has a certain set of techniques and skills. A national team coach must take the athlete's current skills and integrate them into an effective tactical and strategic plan to maximize the athlete's strengths and limit the athlete's liabilities. Knowledge allows a coach to improve the athlete or the tactical ability to organize and get the best out of a team. Being able to pinpoint the areas a team need to improve the necessary course of action is also an essential part of being a coach. This knowledge is not finite and should be regularly updated (Whyte, 2019)

Huseinagic and Hodzic (2009) performed a research in Tuzla-Herzegovina and pointed to team-based coaches as the leaders of social groups. Their questionnaire measured factors such as viewing cases, selective priorities, inciting (relationship with people), political comprehension, elation resistance and charisma, risk-taking, flexibility and quandaries resolving. Since coaching is an inseparable part of the sports sphere, the need to carry out special researches while accentuating the identification of selection paradigms of apt coaches is an essential requirement.

Coaching is one of the jobs affiliated with teaching and education. Besides parents, teachers and coaches are the most responsible creatures for education and training. Teaching and Coaching are similar responsibilities, with some difference. In coaching, the close relation between the coach and the player is stronger than the teacher and the student. Despite the mentioned difference, coaches spend more time with their players and have more effects on them. As noted by Cote and Gilbert (2009) coaches, like teachers, do not work in isolation; their effectiveness depends on individual and group interactions. To be successful, coaches have to interact regularly with their athletes, assistant coaches, parents, and other professionals. For any coach the challenge of controlling a group of young athletes can be intimidating, the strategies that form part of the process are called behaviour management. Behaviour management is a broad term used to encompass all of the strategies or activities that a person could help to use for motivating and focusing a playing group. This is very different to just simple negative reinforcement (Riches, 2013). Being able to inspire an athlete to use their talent and hunger to achieve their goals is one of the greatest tools a coach can possess (Whyte, 2019).

Coaching behavior reflects a set of values about coaching, sport and human relationships more

generally. This set of values or values framework has been termed as 'coaching philosophy' (Lyle, 2002). According to his studies, sport coaching is a culturally acknowledged practice of leadership in sport that is intended to facilitate individuals/teams to improved performance in sport competition. Sport's coaching is a process, the effect of which is dependent on the integration of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Morgan Wooten as one of the best Basketball coaches in UCLA[†] noted in his book that although the coaching philosophy is based on technical aspects, we should not forget about the educational, ethical and religious matters. Coaching philosophy comes from our player hood and finds its identity during the years of coaching. This philosophy shows your affirmation, whether winning in a game is your goal or being the winner in your whole life. Mike Smith (2005) has defined some feature of effective coaching and the most important one is as follow: "Have coaching philosophy. Know what you want from your coaching both in respect of values and of aims." Pointing to the nature of an educational works, the interaction between the teacher and the learner and the environments vary from one sport to the other. However, due to some characteristics, they can be divided in to individual and team sports; ball games and sports without the ball; aquatic and land sports etc. On the other hand, coaches can be classified due to their level of coaching. Some criteria that affect these stages are the age of learners, competition level, coaching certificates, coaching knowledge and educational degrees. For facilitating the coaching levels, Trudel and Gilbert (2006) proposed their classification on three coaching contexts including recreational sport, developmental sport, and elite sport.

Continued development for coaches is another important factor classified by NASPE[‡] (2013). This classification has three levels including beginner, intermediate and elite coaches. Coaches who are classified as "beginner" coaches are those who are either brand-new to coaching or to coaching a particular sport. "Intermediate" coaches are those who have had some coaching experience and are ready to gain more knowledge and skill working with a particular age group or sport. "Elite" coaches are those who have been coaching for a long period and are ready to pass along their knowledge to younger coaches. NASPE has discussed these levels of coaching in five sport fields including Youth/Community sport, Club sport, Interscholastic sport, Collegiate sport, and High-Performance sport. Pointing to this research, the high-performance sport coaches are suitable for national sport teams. In this respect and due to the results of NASPE, beginner coaches should have more than 5 years of experiences; an Intermediate coach is likely to have coached for more than 8 years, but needs more knowledge to improve his/her coaching practices; and elite coaches are those with more than 12 years of experiences.

"Coaching Style" is also the other significant issue to discuss. Coaching is a bilateral process, consisted of the learner and the educator. Choosing the coaching style depends on the coach's abilities and on the learner's age and sport discipline (individual or team sports). More important is the effects of coaching style in decision making, which determines the players role and responsibilities. According to Martens (2012), we can classify coaching styles in three distinct including autocratic, participative and delegated coaching. In autocratic coaching style, the coach acts as a commander. The players should obey the coach and respect the commands. This style believes that the coach is completely aware of what he says due to the experiences, knowledge and abilities he has. Delegated Coaches are less likely to make decisions. They just give the ball to their players and ask them to play. In this style, the coach gives no educational hints to the learners with less influence on them and just interferes in some essential disciplinary manners. This style of coaching is for those coaches who are lazy to fulfill their responsibilities as an educator or they are even not aware of it. Finally, in the participative coaching style, coaches ask their athletes to take part in decision-making. Coaches are aware of their duties as the main leader, but they also know that by giving this opportunity to their players, athletes will feel more responsible as a team member.

Coaching skills and characteristics are intricate and extensive. According to Lai and Palmer (2019), coaching is so complicated because coaches deal with many people having different physical and

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mental abilities; and it is extensive due to different responsibilities that coaches should fulfill such as educating, organizing, directing and decision making in competitions etc. In another work on what coaches should know and be able to do, NASPE establishes eight domains with 40 standards, accompanied by benchmarks, that provide direction for coaching educators, sport administrators, coaches, athletes, parents and the public. These domains are philosophy and ethics, safety and injury prevention, physical conditioning, growth and development, teaching and communication, sport skills and tactics, administration, and evaluation.

Pointing to the research by Marshall (2006) demographical characteristics of coaches are also important. This domain consist of the coach's age, height and weight, personal appearance, clothing and equipment, educational degree and general wisdom, religion, race, marital statute, unacceptable accent or non-native language, eloquence and speaking abilities, and lastly impressing a positive scheme of him/herself among the athletes. However, limited evidence exists on the role of coachee personality in coaching success (Stewart et al., 2008). Accordingly, the coachee characteristics of learning goal orientation, pre-training motivation, feedback receptivity, and developmental self-efficacy are recognized as important predictors of coaching effectiveness.

Coaching model and conceptual framework is the final topic to be discussed. As mentioned by Lyle (2002) in his book, the outcomes of the sport's coaching process are observable in athlete's performances and athlete-coach behaviors. However, the coaching process itself is a construct, an abstraction. The purpose of this abstraction (the conceptual framework) is to provide a mechanism for the better understanding of the observable practice. A model is usually used to describe the components of the phenomenon and the relationship between the components. A model is a representation of the relational aspects of (usually) complex phenomena by using symbols or simplified descriptions that help to conceptualize the phenomenon itself. A key feature of modeling shows that it normally embraces a set of assumptions about performance, performance enhancement, social interaction and the coaching role. Inevitable (although this is a criticism), the model is stronger in structure than function. In other words, demonstrating the model in action is problematical.

To sum up, most researches in this field concentrate on the coaching expertise knowledge or coaching experiences and their leadership techniques that coaches mainly use. However, the main objective of this research is giving a model for national basketball coaches, due to previous researches that emphasize on different characteristics and criteria of coaching, and putting them in a correct priority before designing any model based on the perspectives of male and female participants in this study.

Methods

Method used in this research was descriptive and survey kind. Two different questionnaires were used for collecting data and were distributed among 214 subjects including four groups of physical education experts, sport managers, basketball elite players, and coaches. PE experts were members of Physical Education departments in universities and mostly active in basketball field including members of the scientific board or free members whom teaches basketball courses. Sport managers in this study are those who have essential roles in selection of coaches of national and provincial or super league teams such as staff and committee members of the Federation, club managers and those responsible in basketball boards in propounded provinces. Coaches were active in three different levels including the national, provincial and super league and the definition of elite players in this research are those at the national level or the MVP players of the different clubs in the super league cup. Considering the fact that the statistical population of this research consisted of four groups, the method of sampling limited society was used to determine the volume of the statistics community (formula N) and the sampling was done randomly. Since the population consisted of 214 subjects, 135 person were randomly selected due to the Morgan table. The research variables were chosen after plenty of studies. More than 100 factors for choosing coaches are identified by different researchers and according to delphi method, 64 items were selected for this study and finally divided in to eight main category of criteria. The research instruments consisted of two questionnaires granted to subjects voluntarily for data gathering (Adibpour et al., 2020). The first questionnaire collected demographic data of the research population, in which personal characteristics were gathered such as

the educational level, age, occupation, sports background, coaching level, the current responsibility in any team, managerial background in a club, etc. The second questionnaire entitled "The determination of the touchstones of the national team coaches" contained a number of the characteristics, which were mentioned for the selection of national coaches. Respondents to the questionnaires were asked to choose the level of significance of each feature on a 5-level scale (very important, important, in-between, least important, and unimportant) compiled with 64 yardsticks for coach selection as predicative sentences in each main criteria. It should be noted that the validity and reliability of these questionnaires were previously estimated in similar researches in other sports fields (Shafiee, 2006). Eventually, the questionnaires were distributed during the super league matches among the samples in five provinces of Tehran, Esfahan, Fars, Kermanshah, and Bandar Abbas. From 135 papers, 110 questionnaires were collected with valuable information for further analysis. These data were analyzed with both descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, table of frequency, distribution table and diagrams; and inferential statistics including Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of data, Friedman test for finding the priority of criteria and analysis of variance test (ANOVA) to find the answers of research questions, using SPSS software.

Results
Demographic characteristics of 110 respondents in four groups (sport experts, administrators and managers, Basketball coaches and elite players) were examined in ten different aspects (Adibpour et al., 2020). The variables includes gender distribution, level of education, field of study, provincial distribution, age group, professional sport experiences, membership in national team, coaching experiences, level of coaching certificate and managerial experiences with the below details:
Gender Distribution: Among 110 subjects of study, the population consists of 50 male participants (mean 45.5%) and 60 female (mean 54.5%).
Level of Education: In this observation, 29.09% of the population had no university degree, mainly consisted of basketball players in the junior national teams. 42.73% had bachelor's degree and 28.18% had higher educations.
Field of Study: The collected data shows that 48.2% had studied PE in universities and 51.8% of this group studied in other fields or have not yet entered universities due to their ages as high school students.
Provincial Distribution: Pointing to the collected data, the highest percentages live in the capital city of Tehran (30%). The order for other provinces is Isfahan with 20 (18.2%), Kermanshah with 15 (13.6%), Fars with 14 (12.8%), Bandar Abbas with 13 (11.8%), and the last 15 respondents (13.6%) did not answer to this question.
Age Groups: The total populations of 110 participants were divided in to six age groups. The mean age of population was 36.43 (SD = 1.27). The youngest sample was16 years and the oldest were 74 years old.
Professional Sport Experience: According to the collected data from the questionnaires, 27.3% of the population had no professional experiences and only 10% of the total had more than 16 years of professionalism.
Membership in the National Team: According to the collected data from the questionnaires, 42.7% of the population had basketball experiences in the national teams, in which 10% of the total had more than 11 years of player hood in the national teams.
Coaching Experiences: Only one person (3.3%) from the total population had no coaching experiences and 24.4% of the population spent more than 11 years of their life in coaching.
Level of Coaching Certificates: According to the descriptive findings, 40% have got their national, international and solidarity coaching certificates. 53.4% had first, second and third degree coaching certificates; and only two people (6.7%) from the total population of this research had no coaching certificates.
Data were analyzed with inferential statistics including Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of data, Friedman test for finding the priority of criteria and analysis of variance test to find the answers of research questions, using SPSS software.

For making the collected data more practical, it was necessary to summarize all of them in one table. In order to develop a model for choosing proper basketball coaches for our national teams, the research group decided to rank the examined indexes and create a model that shows their priority. According to the main objective of this research, all the coaching indexes and criterions were ranked. These results confirmed that "Personality and Cognitive Features" of a coach with mean rank of 6.35 is the most important factor.

Table 1: Ranking the Benchmarks for Choosing Coaches of the Basketball National Teams

Chi square	Degree of Freedom	Significant Level
61.39	7	0.001
Priority	Selection Criteria	Mean Rank
1	Personality and Cognitive Features	6.35
2	Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics	5.94
3	Social Characteristics of Coaches	5.46
4	Managerial Skills	4.58
5	Scientific Knowledge and Expertise	4.4
6	Coaching Experiences	3.6
7	Demographic and Personal Characteristics	2.87
8	Basketball Sport Skills	2.81

Descriptive statistics of each criterion (Table 2) is also necessary to support the researcher in forming a practical model. According to the collected information from questionnaires, "Personality and Cognitive Features of Coaches" has the highest mean (4.518) and "Basketball Sport Skills" has the lowest mean (3.745).

**Table 2.** Descriptive Analysis of the Research Components

	Selection Criteria	Statistics		
		f	mean	SD
1	Personality and Cognitive Features	110	4.518	0.369
2	Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics	110	4.439	0.4008
3	Social Characteristics of Coaches	110	4.359	0.423
4	Managerial Skills	110	4.244	0.399
5	Scientific Knowledge and Expertise	110	4.211	0.422
6	Coaching Experiences	110	3.998	0.573
7	Demographic and Personal Characteristics	110	3.777	0.685
8	Basketball Sport Skills	110	3.745	0.733

Other information resulted from the final analysis regarding the weight and scores of selection criteria for choosing coaches of basketball national teams (Table 3) also shows that personality and cognitive traits (score = 0.79) is the most important trait and basketball sport skills of coaches (score = 0.293) is the last priority.

Table 3. Weight and Score of Selection Criteria for Choosing Coaches

Selection Criteria	Mean Rank	Weight	Mean of sub-criteria	Score of Criteria
Personality and Cognitive Features	6.35	0.175	4.51	0.79
Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics	5.94	0.164	4.43	0.72
Social Characteristics of Coaches	5.46	0.151	4.35	0.657
Managerial Skills	4.58	0.126	4.24	0.53
Scientific Knowledge and Expertise	4.4	0.121	4.21	0.513
Coaching Experiences	3.6	0.099	3.99	0.397
Demographic and Personal Characteristics	2.87	0.079	3.77	0.299
Basketball Sport Skills	2.81	0.077	3.74	0.293
Total	36.1	1	-	4.199

According to the above tables, the researcher decided to design a primary model for choosing basketball coaches based on the viewpoint of basketball elites. This model, which is the result of inferential statistics, has been presented in a step-wise form with the score for each criteria showing the importance of that characteristics.
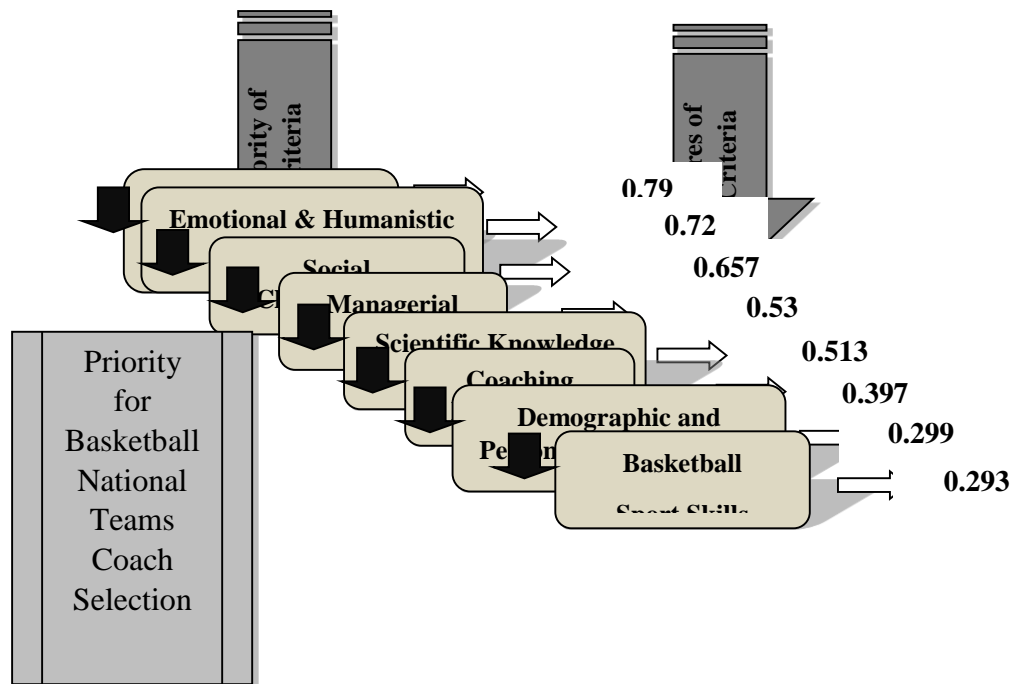
Figure 1. A Model for Choosing Basketball National Coaches based on the Score of Criteria

The above-mentioned descriptive information of the research was also examined among the male and female subjects separately (Table 4 and Table 5) to test the possibility of differentiation by gender perspectives. "Personality and Cognitive Features" is known as the first important criteria between both genders (Women = 0.803, men = 0.781). It is also clear that the first six characteristics are ranked similarly in both genders with different weights and the last two items are the discrepancy of the subjects.

Table 4. Scores of Selection Criteria for Basketball Coaches – Women's Perspective

| Criteria	Mean Rank	Weight	Mean of sub-criteria	Score of Criteria
Personality and Cognitive Features	6.39	0.177	4.54	0.803
Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics	6.36	0.176	4.49	0.79
Social Characteristics of Coaches	5.57	0.154	4.38	0.674
Managerial Skills	4.42	0.122	4.23	0.516
Scientific Knowledge and Expertise	4.2	0.116	4.19	0.486
Coaching Experiences	3.58	0.099	3.99	0.395
Demographic and Personal Characteristics	2.82	0.078	3.74	0.291
Basketball Sport Skills	2.67	0.074	3.8	0.281
Total	36.01	1	-	4.236

Table 5. Scores of Selection Criteria for Basketball Coaches – Men's Perspective

Criteria	Mean Rank	Weight	Mean of sub-criteria	Score of Criteria
Personality and Cognitive Features	6.29	0.174	4.49	0.781
Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics	5.44	0.151	4.37	0.659
Social Characteristics of Coaches	5.33	0.148	4.32	0.639
Managerial Skills	4.76	0.132	4.25	0.561
Scientific Knowledge and Expertise	4.64	0.128	4.23	0.541
Coaching Experiences	3.62	0.1005	4.008	0.402
Basketball Sport Skills	2.98	0.082	3.74	0.306
Demographic and Personal Characteristics	2.94	0.081	3.75	0.303
Total	36	1	-	4.192

According to table 4 and 5, significant differences are obvious in the last two criterions among male and female subjects. Among the male population, the chi square was 88.027 (degree of freedom=7); with significant level of $p<0.01$. These records were different among female population and the chi square was 158.242. Male subjects found the "Sport Skills" of coaches more important than their "Demographic and Personal Characteristics"; whilst female subjects reported the importance of the last two items vice versa.

Regarding the above inferential findings, the following model was designed to show the order of eight different criteria to choose basketball coaches for the national team.
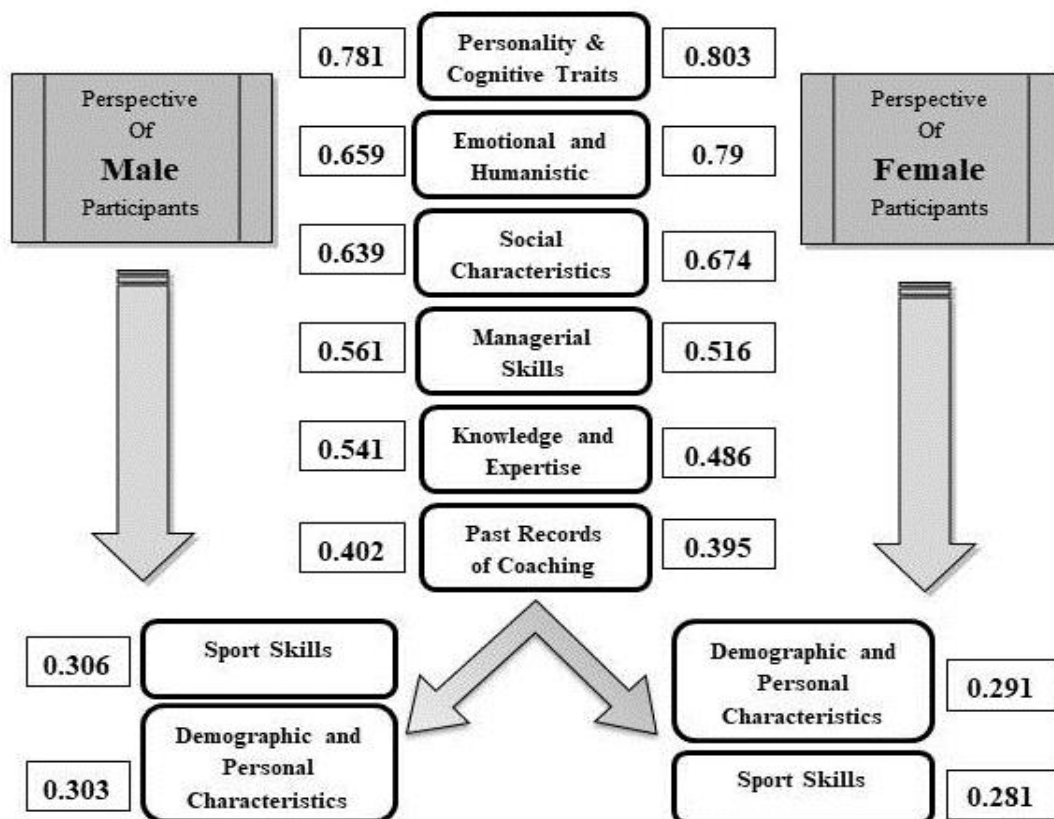
Figure 2. Criteria to Choose Basketball Coaches for the National Team

Discussion & Conclusion

Different issues affect the success of sport teams and the role of coaches is undeniable. Researches support the idea that a coach needs to acquire sets of characteristics and skills to be considered effective and worthy of this responsibility. Martens (2012) mentioned 15 characteristics that a coach ought to have; characteristics such as knowledge, familiarity with sport science, familiarity with communication skills, assessment, planning, organization, etc. Jelicic et al. (2007) has named five characteristics that play a role in the effectiveness and efficacy of coaches. These are competitiveness, self-confidence, communication, personality and kindness or compassion. Sabock et al. (2008) has studied coaching from a managerial perspective. Cote and Gilbert (2009) have changed Jelicic's five characteristics to four; competitiveness, self-confidence, communication, personality or compassion; hence Mulcahy (2018) found that great coaches are having 10 main behaviors including caring, respect, fun, passion, communication, positive, patient, encouraging, fair, listens.

Basketball Queensland (2019) discussed about the highly desirable criteria for selecting head coaches in eight items, emphasizing on current active coaches. Finally, NASPE (2013) has established 8 domains with 40 standards, accompanied by benchmarks that provide direction for coaching educators, sport administrators, coaches, athletes, parents and the public on what coaches should know and be able to do. These eight components are philosophy and morals, safety and prevention, coach fitness, development and growth, teaching and communication, tactics and sport skills, organization and management and the last one is assessment.

Regarding the Coach Selection Procedures (2020) by the National Olympic and Paralympic Committee of USA for their Taekwondo team, selecting coaches is a difficult task. The primary purpose for choosing a talented coach is to secure the best possible results for the team. A secondary purpose is to create institutional memory within the organization so that when transitions occur, it can be done as smoothly and objectively as possible. In addition, principles such as integrity, reliability, continuity, and ethical behavior are as important as other factors. In this scheme, 16 fields are under consideration including the technical acumen, sport specific experience, contemporaneous,

certification, licensing, team work, rules and regulations adherence, rules and regulations enforcement, knowledge of international rules and procedures, positive contributor, communication skills, motivational skills, organization/institutional merit, coaching merit, knowledge and understanding of athletes, and talent and skills integration with tactical planning and adjustments.

At present when a coach accepts responsibility for a basketball team there is no criteria to judge how successful this coach was. Watkins (2016) concluded that coaches should work as a team, have specific program and understand their commitments clearly. This includes, their dress, attendance, punctuality, commitments to the program and fellow coaches and other teams within the program other than their own and meeting their obligations and responsibilities such as working with children checks. On the other hand, having a strategy is the process you use to approach a problem.

A model is a more abstracted way of schematizing a process, so your strategy could be generalized to solve similar problems in other fields. Models provide representations of scientific concepts that can make the ideas more understandable to learners (Huddle, White and Rogers, 2000). Viewing systems from multiple perspectives, discovering causes and effects using model traceability and improving system understanding through visual analysis are the main advantages of a good model (Heuckmann et al., 2019).

In some countries, societies, colleges, and clubs, athletes prefer to have female coaches for women teams and male coaches for men teams due to some religious reasons or other thoughts. In a related research made by Adibpour et al. (2020), male and female basketball experts were asked to find the variables for selecting basketball coaches. This information was taken from ranking the sub-criteria in this study with 64 items questionnaire that finally resulted in to eight main criteria for selecting coaches.

Eventually, the research group of this study has tried to prioritize important criteria from the perspective of male and female coaches, managers, elite players, and sport experts. These factors were ranked based on their importance and finally a model is put forward for choosing coaches for basketball national teams. The order of the eight identified treats are "Personality and Cognitive Features, Emotional and Humanistic Characteristics, Social Characteristics, Managerial Skills, Scientific Knowledge and Expertise, Coaching Experiences, Demographic and Personal Characteristics, and Basketball Sport Skills". The findings of this study are applicable in the Basketball Federation, Ministry of Sports, National Olympic Committee and other organizations that are involved in choosing coaches. Provinces and sports clubs can also use this framework. Using this framework can prevent lobbying and probable conflicts in sports federations when dispatching national teams to competitions and assessing the performance of the dispatched coaches to sport events are other results of this research. In addition, determining the necessary standards and characteristics of a basketball coach will help administrators to justify coaches with clear goals, perspectives and knowledge.

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