Youth Sport Parents and Coaches: How Do We Establish Collaborative Partnerships?

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Introduction and Literature Review

Parents and coaches are considered key facilitators of youth sport participation and development (Côté, 1999). Although experts and scholars argue that collaborative relationships between parents and coaches would enhance athletes’ experience as well as their development (e.g., Hellstedt, 1987; Smoll et al., 2011) research shows such relationships between parents and coaches are rare (Preston & Fraser-Thomas, 2016). Critically though, the desire to collaborate exists. Both parents and coaches prefer relationships where responsibility is shared, rather than either facilitator being in control of athletes’ participation and development (Horne, 2019). While determining intent exists is important, it alone is insufficient as we still lack an understanding of how to develop and sustain effective partnerships between parents and coaches. This is an important gap in need of addressing. In addition to enhancing athletes’ experiences and development, this knowledge can also improve these two key stakeholders’ youth sport experience. The purpose of this study then, is to determine how collaborative partnerships between parents and coaches in the competitive youth sport context can be formed and maintained.

Ranjan and Read’s (2004) theory of value co-creation will be used to guide the study. Value co-creation is explained by three core concepts: equity, interaction, and knowledge sharing. In seeking to determine how parents and coaches can develop and sustain collaborative relationships, the following research questions will be posed:

1. What does effective collaboration between parents and coaches in the competitive youth sport context involve?
2. How can effective collaboration between parents and coaches be formed and maintained?

Method

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 15 head coaches of youth sport programs and youth coach development experts. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to identify participants who meet the selection criteria. Snowball sampling will also be used to reach further eligible participants. Questions will be guided by Ranjan and Read’s (2004) theory of value co-creation. Examples of questions include: “what can coaches do to create greater collaboration with parents?”, and “what duties should be the responsibility of parents and coaches?” Deductive reasoning adopting a priori, thematic coding (Miles et al., 2014) approach will be conducted using Ranjan and Read’s (2004) theory.

Expected Results

We expect to find participants believe greater collaboration between parents and coaches is feasible. However, we also expect many factors (e.g., environmental factors, scheduling factors, previous experiences) to be perceived as significant obstacles to overcome in establishing collaborative partnerships. The practical implications of the study will provide sport organizations with a better understanding of how to work towards greater parent-coach relationships and collaboration. This is important for improving the service organizations provide to their purchaser (i.e., parents), the environment they establish for their employees’ (i.e., coaches), and likely benefit athletes in terms of their experience and development. Findings will also further our theoretical understanding of sport development with regards to how to enhance parent-coach collaboration between the two key facilitators of youth athlete participation and development.