

Original Article

Correlates of engagement in school-based extracurricular sports activities among registrants of sports leader banks

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Abstract

Promoting engagement of external coaches in school-based extracurricular sports activities (SBECSA) is valuable for positive youth development. However, the number of external coaches is insufficient. When trying to enhance recruitment and engagement of external coaches, registrants of sports leader banks are a good potential source of external coaches. Sports leader bank is an organization that registers community residents who can coach sports and introduces them to sports organizations that need coaching. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to identify facilitators and barriers associated with engagement in SBECSA among registrants of sports leader banks. Participants were 12 registrants of four sports leader banks who were not currently engaging in SBECSA as external coaches. Data were obtained through personal semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the KJ method that is one of qualitative analysis. As results, facilitators were categorized into four large (benefit, system, environment, and motivation), 15 middle, and 42 small categories and barriers were categorized into four large (burden, system, environment, and lack of motivation), 15 middle, and 44 small categories. Findings suggested some ways of improving the situation with external SBECSA coaches, such as developing the insurance system, promoting information about the characteristics of coaches, and encouraging schools to accept these coaches. Recruitment and engagement of external coaches can be promoted by enhancing these facilitators and reducing barriers.

Key Words: external coach, volunteer, facilitator, barrier, qualitative study

Introduction

The Japanese government has recommended that adolescents should engage in exercises and sports to prevent a decrease in physical fitness and enhance healthy development (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan [MEXT], 2011). In Japan, school-based extracurricular sports activities (SBECSA) have developed as one of the main opportunities for adolescents to play sports. Nishino and Larson (2003) included SBECSA among Japanese adolescents' free-time activities. MEXT reported that 64.9% of junior high school students and 40.7% of high school students engaged in SBECSA in 2009 (MEXT, 2009b). SBECSA are performed after school and on weekends, and teachers generally coach team members (i.e., their students) and manage the SBECSA.

A Japanese nationwide survey on physical fitness in 2011 conducted by MEXT (2012) revealed that those who participated in sports activities such as SBECSA in their childhood and adolescence had higher physical fitness scores than those who had not participated. Furthermore, past participation in SBECSA was positively related to high physical fitness scores at all ages for people aged 20–79 years (MEXT, 2012). Therefore, MEXT indicated that SBECSA have a cross-sectional and a longitudinal effect on physical fitness. SBECSA could contribute to not only increases in physical fitness but also to school performance. Farb and Matjasko (2012) reviewed literature on the association between participation in school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent development. In the review, they found some positive effects of extracurricular sports activities on academic performance, educational attainment, and psychological adjustment. MEXT (2008, 2009a) had clearly mentioned that SBECSA should be strongly integrated with school education in the “Course of Study”, which established curricula for education at the last revision in 2008 for junior high school and in 2009 for high school. Thus, SBECSA are important activities in school settings.

However, there are some issues in maintaining SBECSA. First, the lack of SBECSA teachers who are able to expertly coach a given sport is notable, despite the importance of expert coaching for positive youth development (e.g., performance skills, confidence, positive social relationships, and morality) (Cote & Gilbert,

2009; Stewart, Lindsay, & Trevor, 2011). The Wakayama Prefecture Board of Education (2003) reported only 38.7% of SBECSA teachers in junior high schools and 42.2% of those in high schools were able to expertly coach a sport in Wakayama prefecture in Japan. Thus, opportunities for children and adolescents to receive expert coaching in SBECSA are limited. Second, the transfer of SBECSA teachers to other schools sometimes causes the inactivity or elimination of the SBECSA (School-based Extracurricular Sport Activity in Junior High School “Nagano Model” Exploratory Committee, 2004; Nakazawa, 2011). Generally, Japanese public school teachers are required to transfer to another school once every several years. When SBECSA teachers transfer, whether children can continue with sports and receive expert coaching in SBECSA highly depends on the existence of new teachers who can adequately and expertly coach sports.

To resolve the lack of SBECSA teachers, the Japanese government has been promoting engagement of “external coaches” in SBECSA (MEXT, 2010). An external coach has been defined as a person who coaches school-based extracurricular activities and is not a teacher or supporting teacher (Sasakawa Sports Foundation [SSF], 2011). For example, human resources of external coaches could include a part-time teacher, sports club coach, leader of a social physical education program, graduate of the school in question, or parent of a student (All Japan High School Athletic Federation, 2012). In many cases, sports activities have been outsourced in some countries, especially extracurricular activities are in Australia (Macdonald, 2011; Williams, Hay, & Macdonald, 2011). External coaches standing in for and/or supporting SBECSA teachers could adequately compensate for the lack of expert SBECSA teachers and the inactivity or cessation of SBECSA because of transfer of teachers.

Nevertheless, there are not enough external coaches for SBECSA in Japan. A study revealed large differences in the number of external coaches in each region of Japan and for each type of sport (e.g., wrestling and archery) (Nippon Junior High School Physical Culture Association, 2010). In addition, research in Japan has pointed to difficulties in securing human resources of external coaches (Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education, 2008; Yamagata Prefecture Board of Education, 2010). Thus, it is important to consider how to promote recruitment of external coaches for SBECSA. Towards this end, it would be valuable to assist the engagement of people, such as community residents having the skills and desire to coach sports, who have the potential to become external coaches. However, no study has explored the views of people who have the capability to become external coaches of SBECSA.

The present study focused on registrants of “sports leader banks” in each prefecture in Japan. SSF (2011) explained a sports leader bank as an organization that registers community residents who can coach sports and introduces them to sports organizations that need coaching. Registrants of sports leader banks are considered as having a more positive attitude toward coaching than do general community residents. Therefore, registrants in sports leader banks could be among populations with high potential to become external coaches of SBECSA. In addition, the present study targeted people who do not currently act as external coaches of SBECSA—rather than people who act as external coaches—among registrants of sports leader banks. The targeted people are considered not to coach SBECSA currently because of some negative reasons. To understand why the targeted people (i.e., registrants of sports leader banks who do not do external coaching at the time) do not act in SBECSA, and how to promote becoming external coaches, are important to promote recruitment and engagement of external coaches of SBECSA. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to clarify facilitators and barriers associated with external coaches’ engagement in SBECSA among registrants of sports leader banks who were not currently acting as external coaches.

Methods

Participants and Research Procedure

The present study conducted interviews with registrants of sports leader banks. Participants were not engaging in SBECSA as external coaches in June 2011. SSF (2011) reported that there were 36 prefectural sports leader banks among all the 47 prefectural areas in Japan. The researchers sent invitation letters to 27 prefectural sports leader banks that had office addresses on their websites. The letters contained the background, purpose, and study design of the present study, and invited registrants not engaging in SBECSA to participate. One week after mailing the letters, the researcher called the sports leader banks’ offices to receive the answer regarding participation. Four sports leader banks (i.e., four different areas in Japan) agreed to participate and introduced 12 registrants. The research proposal was approved by the ethics board of Waseda University.

Interview Procedure

Before the interviews, participants were informed of the background, purpose, and design of the research and written informed consent was obtained from each participant. Sociodemographics such as age, specialized sport, experience as an external coach, and occupation were then obtained from each participant in writing. The personal semi-structured interview contained the two main topics regarding facilitators and barriers affecting

participants' ability to engage in SBECSA. Following the main topics, open-ended questions were used. Participants were asked to respond freely to the questions, and all questions were exhaustively explored. Each interview was conducted somewhere participants felt was convenient to access, such as community center or their home. Interviews took 20–50 minutes and all data were collected from June 2011 to September 2011. After the interview, participants were offered gift cards worth 1,000 yen for their participation. All interviews were audio taped with agreement of the participants.

Analysis

The KJ method (Kawakita, 1970) was used in the analysis. This method is one of qualitative analysis created by Jiro Kawakita in the 1950s. Scupin (1997) revealed adaptive possibility of the KJ method in foreign countries. First, each recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. Second, all transcribed data were divided into individual content by three researchers all expert in sports education, psychology, and coaching. Third, nearly identical content was grouped together and recorded as the “small categories” in each area. For each small category, three researchers discussed and created the titles of each category. Then similar small categories were grouped into the “middle categories”, and their similarities and differences produced the “large categories”. In a way similar to the small categories, each middle and large category was given a title. Each small category item for facilitators and barriers was designated with an initial and a number to facilitate discussion (i.e., f1–f42 and b1–b44).

Results

Characteristics of Participants

Table 1 shows characteristic of 12 registrants of sports leader banks. These registrants were not engaging in SBECSA at the time of the study. Ten participants were men and the age of all participants ranged from 34–62 with an average of 51.9 years (standard deviation = 9.0). They specialized in eight sports (badminton, basketball, cross-country skiing, judo, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball). The occupational characteristics were quite diverse. Three participants had previous experience as external coaches of SBECSA.

Table 1. Demographic and occupational characteristics of participants

No	Gender	Age	Area	Sport	Occupation	Experience as external coach
1	M	34	Tohoku/Hokkaido	cross-country skiing	company worker	no
2	M	38	Kinki	track & field	local public service	no
3	M	44	Tohoku/Hokkaido	basketball	teacher's consultant	no
4	M	52	Kanto	badminton	staff of association	yes
5	M	52	Kanto	track & field	staff of association	no
6	M	54	Kinki	basketball	doctor	no
7	M	55	Kinki	swimming	company worker	no
8	M	56	Kanto	swimming	independent business	no
9	M	62	Kinki	judo	part-time teacher	yes
10	M	62	Tohoku/Hokkaido	volleyball	-	yes
11	F	54	Kanto	basketball	company worker	no
12	F	60	Tohoku/Hokkaido	tennis	instructor	no

Facilitators

Table 2 shows the four large, 15 middle, and 42 small categories of facilitators. The large categories were (1) benefit (e.g., benefit to oneself, feeling worth, and growth of team members), (2) system (e.g., compensation, insurance system, and information), (3) environment (e.g., understanding from the school and SBECSA teacher, lack of coach, and motivation of team members), (4) motivation (e.g., coaching motivation, and love for the sport).

Table 2. Facilitators of involvement as external coaches

Large category	Middle category	Small category
benefit	benefit to oneself	f1. enhancing coaching skill
		f2. becoming life regularly
		f3. resolution of physical inactivity
		f4. being able to network
		f5. learning from team members
		f6. desire for publicity
	feeling worth	f7. contribution to society
		f8. having something worth doing
		f9. acting together with team members
		f10. pleasure in winning a game
		f11. feeling enjoyment
		f12. seeing enjoyment of team members
growth of team members	f13. seeing technical improvement in team members	
	f14. seeing personal progress in team members	
system	system	f15. having an agreement or contract
		f16. having a training session for external coach
		f17. having a trial period
	compensation	f18. getting compensation
		f19. being paid actual cost
	insurance system	f20. having an insurance system
		f21. having a comparable insurance system with teachers
	information request	f22. having information about schools that need an external coach
		f23. being requested to coach in SBECESA
	environment	understanding from the school and SBECESA
f25. the school taking a long-term view of the result of coaching		
f26. good relationship with SBECESA teacher		
having a network		f27. having a mediator
		f28. having a human network
lack of coach		f29. lack of a coach who can coach technically
		f30. being able to coach more technically than a SBECESA teacher
temporal leeway		f31. having temporal leeway
motivation of team members	f32. high motivation of team members	
motivation	coaching motivation	f33. being able to tell one's own life experience
		f34. being able to tell one's own athletic experience
		f35. being able to teach correct knowledge
		f36. desire to coach
		f37. having self-confidence to coach
		f38. disadvantage for team members through ignorance
	love for the sport	f39. love of the sport that one plays
		f40. popularization of the sport
		f41. desire to repay an obligation for the sport
		f42. being able to extend the allurements of the sport to others

Note. "f" placed in front of small category means "facilitator". Additionally, each small category was given an identical number for discussion.

Barriers

Table 3 shows the four large, 15 middle, and 44 small categories of barriers (Table 3). The large categories were (1) burden (e.g., physical burden, lack of self-confidence for coaching, temporal burden, and burden for family), (2) system (e.g., rudimentary system, lack of information, unclear status, and no request), (3) environment (e.g., lack of understanding from school and SBECESA teacher, unpleasant atmosphere of SBECESA, and inconvenient location), (4) lack of motivation (e.g., coaching motivation, and having things one wants to do other than coaching).

Table 3. Barriers to involvement as external coaches

Large category	Middle category	Small category
burden	physical burden	b1. being a physical burden
		b2. having a physical disorder
		b3. concern about own injury
		b4. feeling not young
		b5. not being able to coach boys because of low physical fitness
	lack of self-confidence for coaching	b6. not being able to coach junior high school students and above
		b7. not being able to serve as an example
		b8. not having a credential to coach
	temporal burden	b9. retirement from competitive sport
		b10. having coaching everyday
b11. business of own work		
coaching burden	b12. shortness of practice time	
	b13. lack of time	
	b14. having to engage in tasks other than technical coaching	
burden for family	b15. difficulty of coaching if it is not continuous coaching	
	b16. difficulty to coach by oneself	
concern about team members becoming injured	b17. missing one's family life	
	b18. indulging to coach once begun to coach	
system	rudimentary system	b19. concern about team members becoming injured
		b20. having responsibility for team members
		b21. inadequate connection to SBECSEA by mediator
		b22. inadequate mediation system
	lack of information	b23. lack of knowledge about sports leader bank
		b24. no indemnity when accidents occur
	lack of compensation	b25. lack of information about school or SBECSEA
		b26. not knowing that there is need for a coach
	unclear status	b27. little or no compensation
		b28. having a monetary burden
no request	b29. unclear locus of responsibility	
	b30. not knowing how far one can coach	
environment	lack of understanding from school and SBECSEA teacher	b31. not being requested to coach
		b32. lack of acceptance by school
		b33. lack of acceptance by SBECSEA teacher
		b34. poor relationship with SBECSEA teacher
		b35. lack of preparation by SBECSEA teacher to accept external coach in SBECSEA
		b36. no engagement of SBECSEA teacher with the activity
	unpleasant atmosphere of SBECSEA	b37. mismatch with parents of team members
		b38. unpleasant atmosphere toward coach in the SBECSEA
		b39. difficulty to engage in SBECSEA by oneself
	inconvenient location	b40. having one's own child in the SBECSEA
b41. existence of team member who does not want to be coached		
lack of motivation	lack of motivation	b42. long distance to school
		b43. not having coaching motivation
		b44. having something else one wants to do other than coaching

Note. "b" placed in front of small category means "barrier". Additionally, each small category was given an identical number for discussion.

Discussion

To clarify facilitators and barriers associated with engagement in SBECSEA of sports leader bank registrants not currently serving as external coaches, the personal semi-structured interviews were performed to 12 registrants of sports leader banks. As results of the present study, a number of facilitators and barriers were extracted and categorized.

There were various benefits and motivations among facilitators, such as "f1. enhancing coaching skill", "f4. being able to network", "f8. having something worth doing", and "f33. being able to tell one's own life experience". In a previous questionnaire study of secondary school teachers in Japan (Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education, 2008), teachers answered that an increase in compensation for external coaches was the most important factor in recruiting external coaches of SBECSEA. Similarly, research in Australian schools reported that outsourcing of health, sport, and physical education work was prevented by prohibitive costs (Williams,

Hay, & Macdonald, 2011). However, the results of the present study indicate that there are various facilitators for engagement in SBECSA other than increased compensation. Because of these multifarious facilitators for registrants of sports leader banks, researchers and policymakers should carefully consider what makes for effective strategies to promote recruitment of external coaches.

Regarding facilitators for the “system” category, “f20. having an insurance system” and “f21. having a comparable insurance system with teachers” were categorized. In addition, as barriers for the “system” category, the “rudimentary system” middle category included “b24. no indemnity when accidents occur”. Furthermore, participants felt some burdens such as “b3. concern about own injury”, “b19. concern about team members becoming injured”, and “b20. having responsibility for team members”. Umehara (2004) reported that accidents caused by volunteers could be subject to lawsuits. Considering results of the present and previous studies (Sports Safety Association, 2011; Japan Sports Association, 2012), an insurance system which indemnifies injuries of external coaches and SBECSA team members would increase coaches’ feelings of security and make involvement in SBECSA easy for registrants of sports leader banks. However, most Japanese insurance systems tend to target only coaches who have official qualifications, and exclude activities conducted under the supervision of schools (i.e., SBECSA). Therefore, policymakers can improve the insurance system by allowing every external coach to subscribe to the insurance system.

For “system” in barrier, “no request” — “b31. not being requested to coach” — was categorized. Notably, all 12 participants had never been requested to be a coach (not only an external coach for SBECSA) from sports leader banks since their registration, which was over 10 years in one case. This result indicates that sports leader banks are not well known by schools or have not actively worked to be involved with schools. Previous research has shown that only 17% of registrants of sports leader banks were requested to be a coach, with lack of knowledge about sports leader banks among teachers and school principals being described (Kanagawa Prefecture Center of Physical Education, 2007). Therefore, sports leader banks should be more attentive to the need for external coaches from schools, and to convey more requests from school to registrants.

Facilitator and barriers related to information were grouped in the “system” large category. They were “f22. having information about schools that need an external coach” as a facilitator, and “b25. lack of information about school or SBECSA” and “b26. not knowing that there is need for a coach” as barriers. Some registrants had no idea how and where they could actualize their desire to coach when they wanted to coach. The Kanagawa Prefectural Center of Physical Education (2007) reported that insufficient disclosure of information about external coaches disrupted teachers’ abilities to use the coach mediation system (i.e., sports leader bank). It is suggested that sports leader banks should promote information for both the receiving side of coaching (i.e., schools) and the providing side (i.e., registrants of sports leader banks).

Another facilitator, “f17. having a trial period”, emerged as a very interesting opinion. Currently, it is difficult to quit external coaching after making a formal contract with a school, even if the external coach feels there is a mismatch with the SBECSA teacher and/or team members. Therefore, a trial system in which external coaches could first match with a SBECSA teacher and team members, and then decide whether to continue could reduce the psychological barriers of external coaches first engaging in SBECSA. Such a system would also benefit SBECSA teachers by reducing barriers to using the mediation system and recruitment of external coaches. In the large category “environment” for both facilitators and barriers, the middle category for understanding from school and SBECSA teacher were extracted. Moreover, as barriers for the “burden” large category, “b14. having to engage in tasks other than technical coaching” and “b16. difficulty to coach by oneself” were categorized. These underscore the importance of preparing schools to accept external coaches as members of the school staff, and promoting SBECSA teachers’ acceptance of external coaches into the SBECSA.

For “burden” in barriers, “physical burden” and “lack of self-confidence for coaching”, such as “b5. not being able to coach boys because of low physical fitness” and “b6. not being able to coach junior high school students and above” were emerged. Some participants indicated that coaching students of all ages and at high performance levels was difficult. To avoid such a situation, the sports leader bank of Shiga prefecture provides an excellent example that possible coaching level of registrants (e.g., junior high school, high school) is specified in their web-based coach searching system for system users (Shiga Amateur Sports Association, 2012). Thus, clarifying the possible coaching level can reduce misunderstandings between registrants and teachers and aid recruitment by teachers.

The participants of the present study were disproportionately men and of an older age group. Nonetheless, registrants of sports leader banks tend to be men and aged from 40–70 years (Fukui Wide Area Sports Center, 2012; Gifu Sports Association, 2012; Shiga Amateur Sports Association, 2012). Indeed, participants of the present study were representative of the human resources composition of sports leader banks.

A limitation of the present study is that it is not clear what the degree of influence of each facilitator and barrier for registrants to engage in SBECSA is. In addition, although a lot of facilitators and barriers were identified, differences based on participants’ characteristics (e.g., age, gender, and prefecture) were not clarified. Future studies should explore the relationships among characteristics of sports leader bank registrants and the categories of facilitators and barriers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, various facilitators and barriers associated with the engagement in SBECSA of sports leader bank registrants not currently acting as external coaches were emerged. Improving the insurance system for external coaches could increase coaches' feelings of security toward their own or a team member's potential injury. Additionally, because of few requests to be a coach and poor information about schools' needs, promoting information collection from schools and providing more information for registrants are important roles of a sports leader bank. Preparation of a school in its entirety to accept external coaches is also necessary. Furthermore, clarifying the possible coaching level of registrants in the mediation system is worthwhile to reduce misunderstandings and to select appropriate external coaches. Promoting the facilitators and removing the barriers identified in the present study could contribute to promoting the recruitment and engagement of sports leader bank registrants as external coaches in SBECSA.

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