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## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

## DIFFERENCES OF THE ROLE AMBIGUITY IN OFFENSE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEAM SPORTS

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The purpose of this research was to investigate the differences of the role ambiguity in offense responsibilities for athletes of team sports. As sample were used 421 athletes of basketball (n=125), handball (n=106), volleyball (n=78) and soccer (n=112). We used the role ambiguity questionnaire (Role Ambiguity Scale, Beauchamp et al., 2002) and referred to the athletes' responsibilities in offense.

The correlations of items were high and ranged from .57 to .75,  $p < .01$  whereas from the one way analysis (one way, Anova) appeared some statistically serious differences in one factor of role ambiguity (ambiguity in relation to the scope of responsibilities in offense),  $F_{(3,415)} = 4,416$ ,  $p < .005$ . The volleyball and the handball athletes had more well defined roles regardless the scope of their responsibilities in offense, in relation to those of soccer. On the whole we come to the conclusion that among team sports there are not any differences in role ambiguity in offense responsibilities, except in one factor. More researches are necessary in connection to other variables.

**Key words:** role ambiguity, offense, team sports.

**Introduction**

The role ambiguity is defined as an absence of well defined information that is connected with a special role and has to do with the expectations that are related to someone's position (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek & Rosenatal, 1964). The one or the multiple roles of the person that owns that roles is described, which maybe is not enounced with perfect clearness with role attitudes (tasks or duties/ priorities of the role) or levels of performance (the criteria in which the owner of the roles will later be judged).

Later on, the Naylor, Pritchard & Ligen, (1980) declared that the role ambiguity exists in people who own roles and are uncertain of those but at the same time they really know about that uncertainty.

Recently, there was a presumption that the role ambiguity has multidimensional capacities (Singh, Verbeke & Roads, 1996). The roles are mentioned as a group of expectations related to behaviors for a position inside the social structure and it is an individual feature of the teams (Sherif & Sherif, 1969). The role model (Role Episode Model), was introduced from Kahn et al. (1964) in the acquainted project for Organizational Anxiety, in which they present also the interaction among the sender and the owner of each role.

Many researches have shown that the role ambiguity could have unpleasant consequences for the role owner. Jackson & Schuler, (1985) have found that the greatest role ambiguity has to do with the greatest disappointment of their work as well as increased anxiety, tendency to leave and diminished commitment.

Despite the obvious attempts to investigate the role ambiguity inside the teams, the published research that tried to examine this ambiguity methodically is too little.

Beauchamp & Bray (2001) using the project of Rhoads, Singh & Goodell, (1994) and Singh, (1993) as base, they explored the role ambiguity into sports in two basic borders: offense and defense.

Eys and Carron, (2001), using the theoretical model of Kahn et al., (1984) as their base, they defined the role ambiguity as a multidimensional structure that consists of ambiguity, a) in the scope of responsibilities, which refers to lack of clear information for the width of someone’s responsibilities, b) the role behaviors which refer to the behaviors related to someone’s role, for example, which behaviors are necessary to do those obligations, c) the role evaluation that refers to the lack of efficient information for the way that the roles are evaluated and appreciated and d) the role consequences of a failure to fulfill the responsibilities of a role.

In Beauchamp et al. (2002) research, in athletes of rugby was used the multidimensional role ambiguity scale (Role Ambiguity Scale, RAS), of the four dimensions of the role ambiguity, the effectiveness of those roles and the performance of those roles on offensive and defensive responsibilities. The confirmatory factor analysis using the statistic package AMOS (Arbuckle 1999) supported the structural validity of the questionnaire.

The role ambiguity functioned once again as a multidimensional structure with four dimensions of expression, in two general borders: offense and defense. The degree of perception of role ambiguity was lessened when the sports period was over. There were some differences between the veterans and the beginners at the start of the period, but not at the end of it, and on offense and defense. It is possible that up to the end of the period the new athletes would have time to take the necessary information for their role inside the team.

On 2005, Beauchamp, Bray, Fielding and Eys, examined again the relation between role ambiguity and role efficacy on sport teams. Role Ambiguity explained that the 20% of the total variance of role efficacy (offense-defense) for the individual differences but also for the team differences.

The aim of this research was to find out the differences of role ambiguity on offensive responsibilities of the team sports athletes.

**Method**

**Sample.** The sample of the research was 421 athletes (male and female) aged 13 to 37 years old (M.A= 21,4 , S.D = 4,6). The requirements of participation were the presence of the athlete at least in ten games and at least with two years of athletic experience (M.A.= 8,7 SD=4,41). In the research participated 261 (62%) male athletes and 160 (38%) female athletes of four team sports, basketball (n=125), handball (n=106), volleyball (n=78) and soccer (n=112).

**Questionnaire.** The role ambiguity questionnaire was used (Role Ambiguity Scale, Beauchamp et al., 2002) referring to the athletes’ responsibilities on offense. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items which were about four factors of the athletes’ offensive responsibilities, whereas the answers were given in a nine scale level of Likert type (1= totally disagree.....9 = totally agree).

The questionnaire was given in the middle of the fighting period 2007 before the athletes’ practice. The athletes after being informed about the purposes of this research, they voluntarily fulfilled the questionnaire inside their training ground (approximately 30-45 minutes before the start of their practice).

**Statistical analysis.** The independent variable of the research was the type of the sport and the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis was that there will be no differences in the sports in any of the questionnaire factors. For the statistic process of those data the SPSS/PC Version 11.0 was used, and correlations between the factors and the variability analysis were made.

**Results**

The results of internal consistency showed the satisfactory levels Cronbach’s alpha from .78 - .83 (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Cronbach’s alpha

	<b>Cronbach’s alpha</b>
<b>Scope of responsibilities in offense</b>	.81
<b>Role behaviors in offense</b>	.78
<b>Role evaluation in offense</b>	.83
<b>Role consequences in offense</b>	.78



In table 2 are shown the correlation among the four factors of role ambiguity for the offensive responsibilities. The correlations shown were positive high and leveled from .57 to .75.

**Table 2.** Correlations of four factors of role ambiguity ( $p < .01$ ).

	1	2	3
<b>Scope of responsibilities in offense</b>			
<b>Role behaviors in offense</b>	,75		
<b>Role evaluation in offense</b>	,64	,64	
<b>Role consequences in offense</b>	,61	,57	,59

From the one way analysis (Anova) that took place (table 3) there were some statistically major differences in one factor of role ambiguity (ambiguity in relation to the scope of responsibilities in offense),  $F_{(3,415)} = 4,416$   $p < .005$ . According to the results, statistically major differences were shown in the first factor (scope of responsibilities) with the handball and basketball athletes to have more clear roles in offense in relation to those of soccer. In all the other three factors there were no statistically major differences.

**Table 3.** The F levels for all the factors in relation to the type of the game

	F	M.O.(S.D.) Basketball	M.O.(S.D.) Handball	M.O. S.D.) Volley	M.O.(S.D.) Soccer	p
<b>Scope of responsibilities in offense</b>	4,416	7,34 (,99)	7,63 (,86)	7,63 (1,08)	7,2 (1,01)	,005
<b>Role behaviors in offense</b>	1,991	7,45 (,95)	7,60 (,88)	7,49 (1,05)	7,25 (1,02)	,116
<b>Role evaluation in offense</b>	1,848	6,93 (1,30)	7,28 (,97)	6,89 (1,24)	6,96 (1,10)	,138
<b>Role consequences in offense</b>	3,192	7,43 (1,15)	7,37 (,93)	7,46 (1,21)	7,04 (1,07)	,024

## Discussion

In this research the differences of the role ambiguity in relation to the defensive responsibilities were not studied. The reason for that was according to some older research the coaches spend more time in training – workout by referring, analyzing and teaching offensive responsibilities in relation to the defensive ones. It is also asserted that the defensive responsibilities are far more complicated from the offensive ones and full attention is needed in larger degree (Beauchamp, et al. 2003b). In the end we should mention in restriction of this research that the questionnaires were fulfilled during the time of practice and not after a game.

According to the results there were at first some satisfactory internal consistency indexes but also high positive correlations among the four factors of the role ambiguity in sports. The results are similar to previous researches (Beauchamp et al., 2005; Karamousalidis et al., 2007).

Differences among the games were not found except one factor: the ambiguity in relation to the scope of responsibilities in offense, where the athletes of handball presented smaller levels of ambiguity in relation to the athletes of soccer, as well as the athletes of volleyball in relation to the athletes of soccer; they understood better the scope of their responsibilities in offense. On the whole we can see that the athletes of handball and volleyball understood better their role in offense.

In the future we could examine important variables in relation to athletes such as athletic experience, the level of their game category, how often they practice, if they are professional or volunteer, the sex, if they start as basic or bench players, the profile of the game, if it is individual or team game, the team cohesion and the performance achieved.

Summarizing, we could say that this research points the importance and the meaning of the Role Ambiguity into the Greek sports reality. Similar researches could help the athletes, the coaches, even people that deal with exercise for life to understand how, when and why role ambiguity could burden the athletic progress

and performance. We hope that this research is only one of the attempts to this direction. Furthermore use of the questionnaire in sports grounds and comparison of role ambiguity to other factors are useful.

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