

Role of training programs approved by the Iraqi Athletics Federation on the performance of Iraqi coaches

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of training programs approved by the Athletics Federation on the performance of coaches in Iraq and also to develop a model for evaluating the performance of athletic coaches. A cross-sectional study was carried out. A total of 60 experts from the Athletics Federation participated in the study. To collect data, a modified questionnaire by Mohammadi (2016) was used. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by sports management professors and its reliability was higher than 0.7. In order to analyze the research data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 22) was used, and to perform structural equations and model presentation the AMOS software was used. Based on the results of the exploratory factor analysis, eight factors were identified, which in order of priority included technical skills, management skills, classroom teaching techniques, motivational skills, individual and moral characteristics, sport characteristics and work experience, emotional and human characteristics and social characteristics. Also, the results of the structural equation modeling test showed that all factors were statistically significant ($p = 0.001$) and the research model had a good fit. Regarding the results of the research, it was concluded that for coaches to perform more successful, technical and management skills should be given more importance than other factors. The role of athletics programs in training coaches is also very important. Therefore, developing the capabilities of coaches is not possible without using a system of monitoring and evaluating performance.

KEYWORDS

Training programs; Coaching performance; Athletics federation

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, human resources are an important and inseparable part of the organization. These important elements can make an organization successful or lead to its failure. In a broader view, the assets of each organization are evaluated based on the capabilities of human resources (Zadegan, Mohammad & Jafar, 2001). Strategic goals and planning in the organization are all carried out by human resources, which are a strategic resource. In addition to the fact that people are considered as human resources of the organization, human resource training is an important factor in development and a kind of profitable investment from the point of view of successful and forward-looking organizations (Taghavi & Mohammadi, 2006).

Sport has long been associated with people in various forms. Some play sport professionally and earn a living this way. Some people go to sports from time to time and some people in the community are also interested in sports (Roger & Richard, 2001). In fact, the main key to all these activities are coaches. Coaches can make a team successful by being aware of the existing conditions, having technical and professional knowledge, and making smart and timely decisions. The role of the coach is one of the main and most colorful roles in sport fields and disciplines. This is because it is of utmost importance for the success or failure of a team to have a coach in the team who can give the right instructions in a timely manner or, if necessary apply punishment (Honari et al, 2013). Coaches are always evaluated by the external environment (media and spectators) and the internal environment (managers of clubs and sport teams). This shows that coaches are not only evaluated in terms of their performance and coaching skills, but also in terms of the behaviors they display (Adams, 1997). For this reason, it is very difficult to choose a competent and skilled coach and it is necessary to choose a person with appropriate characteristics and criteria for these issues.

A needs assessment provides an effective plan which increases the success rate of coaches in meeting the needs of the organization and its work. When it comes to coaching, there is always a lot of discussion and theory in research and researchers have developed many personality traits for a successful coach. Dowdell (2010) considers knowledge of the rules of the sport, the ability to motivate, to make the right decision, familiarity with the early stages of sport injuries, the ability to analyze the skills of players as the qualities and characteristics of a successful coach (Dowdell, 2010). In his research, Rainer (2004) identified the characteristics needed for a successful coach: adequate knowledge of sport science, application of the right coaching style, prioritization of goal-oriented planning, strong motivation and perseverance, information transfer capability and friendly communication (Rainer, 2004). Clutterbuck & Spence (2017) state in their study that a good sport

coach should not only have the necessary skills in various scientific and practical aspects, but should also have an active presence in his field of sport and contribute his experiences. He must also be a good psychologist. If he does not know why his players suddenly suffer from mental and physical loss and do not attend the training sessions seriously, he will not be successful in his work (Clutterbuck & Spence, 2017). Therefore, assessing the educational needs of educators is important and requires research and analysis.

If organizations always want to get the best out of their human resources, they must think about planning, developing actions and creating a platform for proper training of their human resources. This is one of the basic actions in all organizations (Bazargan, 2002). Organizations should design a program according to the conditions of the existing system and appropriate for the employees of their organization, which not only utilizes resources and facilities but also does not waste a lot of time and money. This means that an effective educational program can meet the needs and hope of getting the desired result in all respects (Zadegan, Mohammad & Jafar, 2001). Usually, performance management is the most important element for planning and foreseeing organizational development programs in terms of human resources (Gunaratne & Plessis, 2007).

An important issue that is considered by most researchers is the assessment and evaluation of the performance of various sectors of the sport industry (Nejad et al., 2013). Coaches are always one of the most important human resources that play the most important role in achieving the success of organizations. Sometimes the head coach of a sports clubs can affect the entire performance of the club with a small decision (Talebpour et al., 2014). The personal performance and behavior of coaches are always under the microscope of club managers, athletes and the media because the coach is always and in all actions a key nut for successes and failures. In fact, if the coach is aware that his performance, behavior and ways and methods of communication are measured, he can gauge the opinions of others against his performance and take more effective steps to improve (Reza, 2002).

Athletics is considered the basic and mother sport of sports. This sport consists of 24 disciplines consisting of doubles, jumps, throws and tens. Athletics is perhaps one of the most important sports. From the point of view of public sport, it is the most common sport and with 48 items (24 items for men, 24 items for women) and is the sport with the most medals in the Olympics (Mohammad, 2003). The growth and development of this field is only possible through an educational program. As one of the most talented countries in the field of athletics, Iraq does not have an approved training program to train coaches and provide training solutions.

The sport of athletics in Iraq has its own fans because it is among the most expensive sports with the fewest facilities available to all sections of society, but unfortunately, due to the political and

economic views that have always been focused on the sport industry in Iraq, all eyes are on the popular field of football, and individual sport such as athletics have faced a decrease in the attention of Iraqi sports managers and officials. Therefore, the researchers of this study have tried to study athletics in Iraq, so that the results of this research can be used to improve athletics management as a first step and to develop athletics in Iraq as a next step. In practice, the results of this research will be very valuable and useful for planning a training program approved by the Athletics Federation and the performance of Iraqi coaches, and also will help the federation managers to design an appropriate training program to improve the performance of the coaches. Therefore, according to the presented materials, the position of this sport and the existing capacity in Iraq to win points and achieve professional goals, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role of training programs approved by the Athletics Federation on the performance of coaches in Iraq and to develop a model for evaluating the performance of athletic coaches.

2. METHODS

The present study was descriptive in terms of purpose, a survey in terms of data collection and in terms of implementation, it was a qualitative research. The study population consisted of 12 experts of the Iraqi Athletics Federation, including chairman and vice-chairman of the Athletics Federation committees, 10 university professors working in the field of curriculum development, 10 specialists and experts familiar with the affairs of the Athletics Federation, 15 athletics coaches, 13 elite athletes with a history of participating in national teams. So, a total of 60 experts in the field of athletics in Iraq were selected as the statistical population and the sample was considered equal to the research community. First, interviews were used to identify the factors and components of the educational program. After identifying the effective factors in evaluating the performance of athletics coaches and collecting opinions, a questionnaire with 91 items in eight dimensions (management skills, technical skills, social characteristics, individual and moral characteristics, emotional and human characteristics, sports characteristics and work experience, motivational skills, and classroom teaching techniques) with the five-point Likert scale (very low = 1, very high = 5) was designed and distributed. The survey method was used to assess the content validity of the questionnaire. In this method, the questionnaire was distributed to 10 experts whose qualifications were assessed. These individuals were coaches, managers and players who had at least a bachelor's degree and had worked as coaches or players for national or club teams in the past. They were asked to examine the

characteristics of coaches' evaluation and to give their opinion on how accurate and close these characteristics are to them. In order to ensure the relevance and continuity of the questionnaire in relation to the topic of the study, the questionnaire was modified in several steps with the opinion of relevant professors and experts. To confirm the reliability of the research questionnaire, it was distributed to 30 participants of the research sample and the reliability value of the questionnaire (0.86) was reported, which according to the value of this coefficient, the questionnaire has appropriate reliability. Regarding to statistical analysis, Bartlett's test of Sphericity and Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test were used to determine the adequacy of the sample. The Friedman test was also used to prioritize the identification factors in the evaluation of athletics coaches. Consequently, model fit indices were used to determine the appropriateness of presenting a model of effective factors in the evaluation the performance of track and field coaches. To analyze the data in the present study, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 22) was used, and in order to perform structural equations and model presentation the AMOS software was used.

3. RESULTS

In this study, the exploratory factor analysis method was used to identify and determine the main factors in evaluating the performance of track and field coaches. Also, for the appropriateness of the number of the research samples, the KMO criterion was used, and to confirm the correlation of the variables (items), the Bartlett's test was used.

Table 1. Findings from the Bartlett and KMO tests

Test		Quantity
KMO		0.896
The Bartlett test	Chi-square value (χ^2)	78.18855
	Degrees of freedom	4095
	Significance level (p)	0.001

The results of Table 1 indicate that the number of research samples is sufficient for factor analysis. Also, based on the results of Bartlett's test ($p = 0.001$, $\chi^2 = 78/18855$), there is a high correlation between the items and it is appropriate to conduct further steps of factor analysis. Subsequently, the results obtained from the factor analysis of the components separately with the amount of factor loading were reported for each factor according to Table 2, based on which the factor loads, the degree of importance and the effectiveness of each item can be observed.

Table 2. Components of educational programs

Factor	Percentage of variance of the agent	Item	Factor load
Management skills	12.34%	Ability to form discipline in sports settings	0.561
		Application of effective management and leadership methods to guide coaches	0.767
		Evaluation of the performance of managers and coaches on a monthly basis	0.721
		Direct supervision and control over the implementation of sports activities in line with the goals	0.664
		Using personal expertise to create interest and influence in athletes	0.645
		Creating a system for evaluating athletes' satisfaction with the coach	0.689
		Ability to identify the needs and expectations of coaches	0.733
		Ability to use reward and punishment systems in special situations	0.574
		Ability to make timely decisions when faced with injury	0.702
		Having full knowledge and awareness of a variety of techniques, sports tactics and techniques	0.639
		Ability to coach in all different age groups	0.639
		Ability to plan the work by the instructor	0.654
		Organizing decision-making in the coaching job	0.657
		Ability to evaluate coaches in the sports environment	0.793
		Management methods of coaching resource power in sports environment	0.671
		Paying attention to the words of the coach's subordinates to sports affairs in the sports environment	0.760
		Paying attention to the principle of consultation in a sports environment	0.721
Familiarity with specialized sports sciences such as physiology, nutrition, biomechanics	0.751		
Having a valid coaching degree (Grade 1, 2, 3)	0.686		
Ability to apply their knowledge in practice	0.802		
Familiarity with current laws and regulations	0.756		

Technical skills	9.48%	Familiarity with the basics of first aid and sports pathology of corrective movements	0.824
		Relative familiarity with authorized and unauthorized supplements to guide trainers	0.720
		Ability to plan and design short-term and long-term aerobic exercise	0.756
		Having the desired physical readiness to attend training and show skills	0.686
		Relative proficiency in a foreign language	0.620
		Having up-to-date study and knowledge about athletics	0.678
Social characteristics	9.31%	Respect for athletes and clients	0.715
		Strictness towards athletes to do exercises	0.739
		Ability to communicate and respond to sports forums and the media	0.697
		The ability to work with others and tolerate people	0.825
		Ability to motivate coaches to achieve maximum ability	0.718
		Not using offensive and obscene words to coaches	0.4
		Instructor chronology for the instructor to attend training sessions	0.639
		Being respected and accepted by coaches, officials and people	0.705
		Membership in international and world forums	0.599
		Having high self-confidence for coaching	0.605
Individual and moral characteristic	8.10%	Having a creative, dynamic and innovative mind in performing training programs	0.614
		Hard work and perseverance to achieve predetermined goals	0.692
		Ability to teach and convey key concepts	0.684
		Confidentiality, trustworthiness and the stone of patience for all coaches	0.721
		Having a professional attitude towards coaching and personal interest	0.687
		Ability to control stress and relax coaches during the match	0.701
		Having an attractive appearance and a suitable type	0.576
		Having a positive thinking spirit and transmitting it to coaches	0.658
		Having communication skills with coaches	0.628

		Ability to communicate and convey messages with coaches	0.718
		Having sincerity towards all coaches	0.714
		Having piety in coaching	0.744
		Being honest with coaches	0.727
		Coordinating behavior with coach knowledge	0.718
Emotional and human characteristics	8.04%	A sense of camaraderie and tolerance with coaches	0.676
		Having love for people	0.744
		Avoiding despair and hopelessness	0.742
		Being honest in the work of a coach	0.808
		Coach futurism	0.669
		Knowing how to prioritize tasks by the coach	0.747
		Enemy antagonism coach	0.648
		Having a passionate spirit and being a lively coach	0.747
		Sensitivity to cleanliness and cleanliness	0.757
		Mutual respect with coaches	0.768
Sports characteristics and work experience	6.01%	Having a history of participating in prestigious leagues	0.723
		Participating in national teams during sports	0.746
		Having different championship titles in sports	0.771
		Having athletic experiences in sports environments	0.623
		Achieving success in athletics	0.744
		Having a coaching record in sports teams	0.848
		History of winning championships during coaching	0.771
		Having a coaching record in various sports teams	0.729
Classroom teaching techniques	8.62%	Having sufficient and appropriate knowledge of athletes and students	0.705
		Full knowledge of the content of teaching by the instructor	0.830
		Ability and full knowledge of conveying concepts to athletes	0.906
		Awareness of the purpose of teaching and teaching cognition, content, method	0.871
		Having expertise, ability and management in the sports environment	0.829

Based on the values of factor loads related to the factor and the variance of factors, the table above (Table 2) shows that the predictive power of this model based on the total cumulative variance

of the factor is equal to 60.34%. As can be seen, there are eight factors as effective factors in evaluating the performance of athletics coaches of the Sports Federation.

Next, Friedman test was used to determine the priority of evaluation factors of athletics coaches of the sports federation.

Table 3. Factors influencing the evaluation of athletics coaches

Statistics	Number	Chi-square (χ^2)	Degrees of freedom	Significance level (p)
Result	60	37.792	7	0.001

Based on the results of the Friedman test and after determining the statistically significant difference ($p = 0.001$) between the effective factors in the evaluation of coaches, Table 5 shows the factors which were prioritized from the perspective of the coaches.

Table 4. Friedman test ranking

Rank	Factors	Average rating
1	Technical skills	5
2	Management skills	4.87
3	Classroom teaching techniques	4.79
4	Motivational skills	4.69
5	Individual and moral characteristics	4.28
6	Sports characteristics and work experience	4.19
7	Emotional and human characteristics	4.15
8	Social characteristics	4.03

Finally, based on the eight factors identified in the evaluation of the performance of athletics coaches, a model was designed to evaluate the performance of coaches according to these factors Table 5.

Table 5. Indicators of performance evaluation model of athletic coaches

Paths of the instructor performance evaluation model	Standard regression coefficients	T value	p value
Management skills ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.811	1	0.001
Technical skills ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.908	16.406	0.001
Social characteristics ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.782	11.767	0.001
Personal and moral characteristics ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.639	9.495	0.001
Emotional and human characteristics ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.739	10.765	0.001
Sports characteristics and work experience ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.779	15.363	0.001
Motivational skills ---> Evaluate the performance of coaches	0.779	11.928	0.001
Classroom teaching techniques ---> Evaluate the performance of instructors	0.86	12.888	0.001

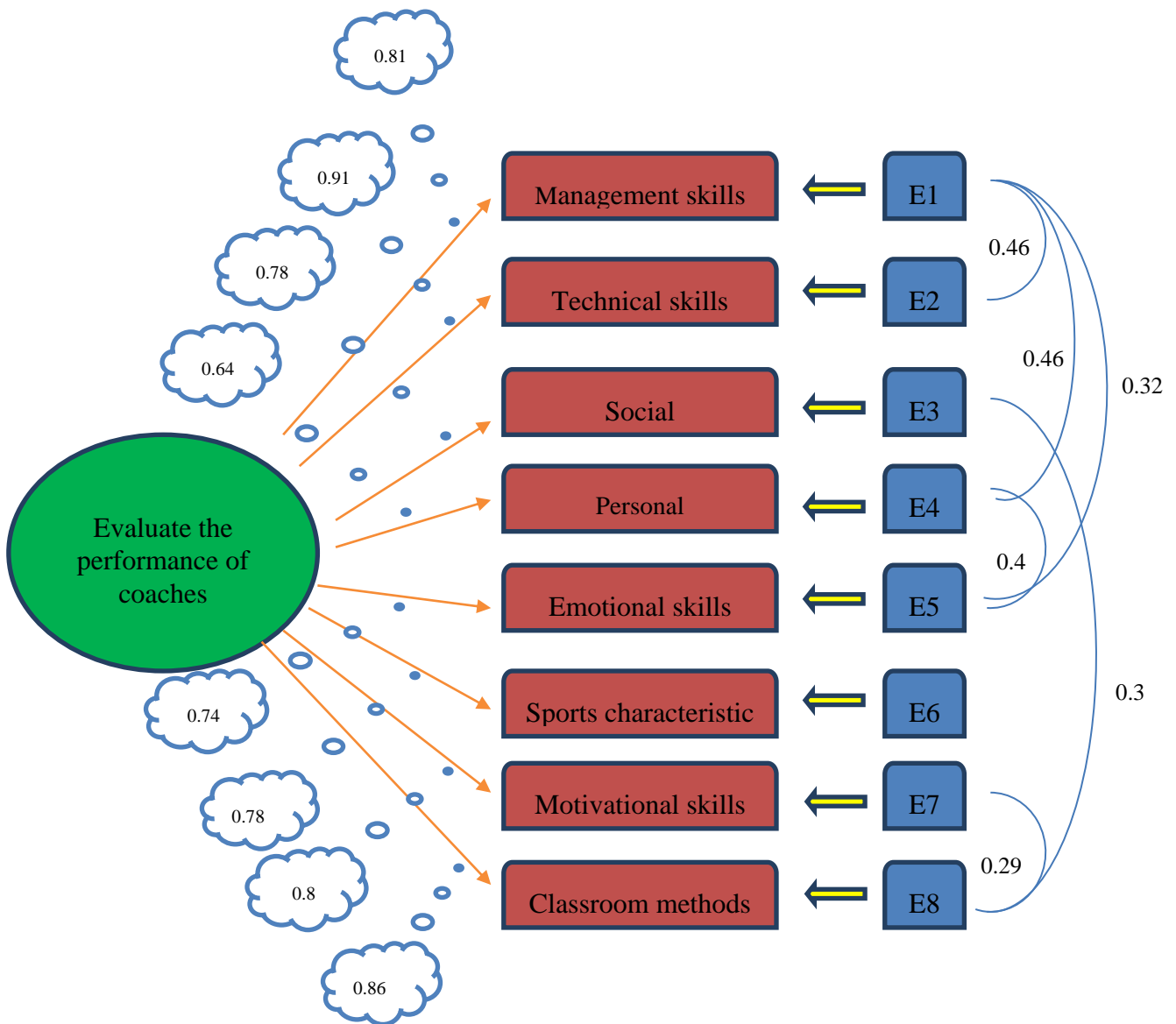


Figure 1. Model for evaluating the performance of coaches of the Athletics Federation

According to Table 6, the fit indices of the model have an acceptable and desirable value and the research model is approved. The mean square root of the estimation error (RMSEA) is 0.058 and the CFI is 0.992.

Table 6. Introduction of indicators and acceptable values for each indicator

Fit indicators	Indicator values	Acceptable values	Interpretation
Chi-square (χ^2)	24.250	---	---
Degrees of freedom	14	---	---
Covered surface Chi-square (<i>p</i> value)	0.068	Greater than 5%	Optimal
χ^2/df	1.732	Amount between 1.0 to 3.0	Optimal
RMSEA	0.058	Less than 1.0	Optimal
Index (AGFI) adapted CFI	0.992	More than 0.9	Optimal
NFI	0.982	More than 0.9	Optimal
GFI	0.992	More than 0.9	Optimal

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of training programs approved by the Athletics Federation on the performance of coaches in Iraq and to develop a model for evaluating the performance of athletic coaches. After analyzing the opinions of experts in the form of a questionnaire, the results showed that there are eight factors that evaluate the performance of the athletics coaches of the federation (management skills, technical skills, social characteristics, individual and moral characteristics, emotional and human characteristics, sports characteristics and work experience, motivational skills and classroom teaching techniques). These results are consistent with the findings of Shafiee (2007), Ebrahimzadeh (2008), Nejad (2013), Bradley et al. (2001), Kavussanu (2008), Mir et al. (2013) and Memary et al. (2013) in terms of evaluating the performance of coaches in various sports.

Based on the eight factors identified in the evaluation of the performance of athletics coaches, the researchers designed a model to evaluate the performance of coaches according to these factors. The results of the model showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between management skills and technical skills, personal and moral characteristics and emotional and human skills ($p < 0.05$). The research model also showed that there is a statistically significant relationship, between social characteristics and classroom methods and teaching techniques ($p < 0.05$). Also, a positive and statistically significant relationship between individual and moral characteristics and emotional and human skills ($p < 0.05$), and also between motivational skills and classroom teaching techniques ($p < 0.05$).

Based on the findings of the exploratory factor analysis, out of 91 items, 17 items were in the first factor (management skills) because most of the items concern behavioral and managerial skills, such as planning ability, organization in decision making, power resource management methods. In this factor, the coach uses the ability to manage the exercise program to achieve the set goals. This process refers to planning, organizing, leading and supervising. In general, the study and comparison of indicators that explain the team management factor, shows that indicators such as goal setting for each athlete and the whole team, creating discipline in training and competition, determining the duties of athletes, the ability to control team marginal issues, developing short-, medium- and long-term plans, proper planning in competition and rest seasons, choice stability in decision-making, and assertiveness and honesty are important in evaluating the performance of coaches and shows the managerial competencies of the coaches.

Making quick and correct decisions in coaching is very important, especially during competitions. In terms of time planning, the coach must set the training schedule and specify the goals of the year and the season of the competition before the start of the season. It seems that one of the factors for the success of players in teams is good management by coaches at high levels and the key to success in competitions is good management and leadership.

Based on the exploratory factor analysis and according to the items, the second factor was called "technical skills". It shows the ability of the coach in training and educating athletes. The indicators of this factor are consistent with the findings of Shafiee et al. (2007), Barber & Eckrich (1998), Monazami (2009), Hamidi & Mehmari (2014) and Rouhani et al. (2013). This factor has the ability to attract and select talented athletes, creativity and initiative in training programs, training and introducing leading athletes (player development), ability to teach tracking techniques to athletes, ability to convey technical points to athletes, pointing out weaknesses and strength of the players in the right way is important to evaluate the performance of athletics coaches.

Based on the results, the items of the third identified factor evaluating the performance of coaches, are often related to the work and professional behaviors of coaches, such as the ability to communicate and respond to sports and media, punctuality to attend training, respect and esteem. Acceptability and membership in groups are related to various internal and external forums, which were introduced as "social characteristics". The indices of this factor were consistent with the findings of Nejad (2012), Nasiri et al. (2009), Barber & Eckrich (1998), and Szymanski (2000). The fourth factor in evaluating the performance of athletics coaches included items such as physical attractiveness and appropriate type, ability to control stress, coach's love for athletes, honesty and piety at work, good morals and role models. The coach was introduced under the heading of

"individual and moral characteristics". This result is consistent with the findings of Barber & Eckrich (1998) and Khosro et al. (2009). Among the identified factors, "piety in coaching" and "honesty of coach towards coaches" had the highest operating loads, while "attractive appearance and appropriate type" had the lowest operating loads. This shows that this index is less important in assessing coaches' individual and moral characteristics.

The fifth factor identified in this study is named as "emotional and human characteristics" due to the fact that most of its constituent indicators refer to the friendly behaviors of the coach with athletes and other coaches. This finding is consistent with the results of Barber & Eckrich (1998), Nasiri et al. (2009), Monzami (2009), and Dehghan (2010). Among the indicators of this factor, "being honest in the work of the coach" and "mutual respect with the coaches" were considered the most important in evaluating the performance, and on the other hand, "the hostility of the coach" and "sense of friendship and tolerance with coaches" were the least important. The results also showed that the indicators of the sixth factor evaluating the performance of coaches, include history of membership in national and club teams, having championship titles and experience in sports teams. According to these indicators, the sixth factor was named "sports characteristics and work experience". The indices of this factor are consistent with the findings of Szymanski (2000), Shafiee et al. (2007), Khosro (2009) and Reza (2001). The results showed that coaches' experiences, records and results can be one of the most effective factors in evaluating a coach in different sports. The seventh factor in evaluating the performance of coaches according to the indicators of this factor, which refers to the coach's ability to recognize motivation and motivate athletes, has been introduced as "motivational skills". Finally, based on the findings of the eighth and last exploratory factor analysis, where most of the explanatory variables relate to factors such as coaching abilities in training, transfer of concepts and management of the sports environment, entitled "classroom teaching techniques" was introduced.

In the other part of this research, as can be seen, "coaching technical skills" is the most important factor in evaluating the performance of athletics coaches from the respondents' point of view. Larson (1990) list the characteristics of a successful and efficient coach, which are as follows:

1. know the techniques, methods, tactics and rules of your sport.
2. be able to analyze the players' skills.

According to the identified indicators, in the factor of technical skills, it can be said that the respondents are well aware of the job competencies of the coach and know that in the world of sports, coaches should develop and improve their technical characteristics. On the other hand, all those involved in sports, such as managers, the media and the athletes themselves, must examine and judge

the technical competencies and skills of the coaches and avoid as much as possible, examining other non-performance related characteristics. In fact, the technical strength of the coach is an accepted indicator for those involved and specialists in sports management and psychology. It also seems that this factor provides a good platform for the growth and promotion of professional and technical level of athletes, and paves the way for individual and team success. Of course, the training and development of athletes also depends on the professional and technical ability of the coach. One of the interesting points based on the results is the ranking of "sports characteristics and work experience" of coaches in the sixth place. Perhaps it can be said that the amount of experience of a coach as one of the indicators of successful performance of coaches is not a good criterion and is detrimental to the work of coaches. Another point is that experience does not always mean the technical quality of coaches at a good level, because there are young and novice coaches in various sports who have been able to show their competencies and abilities well at the coaching level. Finally, according to the results of human emotional skills, the social characteristics of coaches were in the last priority of the criteria for evaluating the performance of athletic coaches.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In a general conclusion, it should be stated that training programs should be at the top of the affairs of the Iraqi Athletics Federation. For more success, technical and management skills should be given more importance than other factors. However other components should not be neglected or considered worthless. It can be said that the role of the coach in cultivating sports talents is not and will not be hidden from anyone, and their role is so important that sometimes the fate of a team and athletes depends on their decisions. Of course, educators must always seek to raise and update information and expand their circle of science and knowledge. As important as it is to train and increase the ability of athletes and discover talents, coaches must always seek to deliver useful athletes, first behaviorally and then practically. Coaches' own training programs are doubly important. Expanding and strengthening the capabilities of coaches will not be possible without using a performance appraisal system. This assessment can have many beneficial aspects, whether for the organization, the athletes, or the coaches.

Since there is no accurate information about the effects of the training programs of the Iraqi sports federations, and no research has been conducted in this regard, this study is limited to the generalization of the results and is therefore recommended for research. In the future, the evaluation factors of athletics coaches at the national level and in different age groups will be examined and the results will be compared.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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