

Improving Motivation of Student-Athletes in the Off-Season

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to learn what motivates college athletes to stay in shape and work out during the off season. Information was collected through a written survey called the Training Motivation Survey (TMS). The survey was completed by 15 female soccer players at a Division III school. Survey responses resulted in retention of null hypothesis one, which compared motivation in the on and off seasons. Null hypothesis two was rejected; however, results suggested that various people provide different influences on motivation across seasons. Responses also yielded information about what techniques athletes find motivating or not in the on and off seasons. Useful information from the study that the researcher could use to improve coaching and training results included learning that the coach's behavior has an effect on the players' motivations in the on and off season, that providing workout packets for the players helps to motivate players, and that providing self-motivational skills for the individual athlete is beneficial.

Future research should be conducted using larger samples and samples of athletes in a variety of sports and programs. Findings from such studies would help coaches determine the most effective ways to offer effective training for their student athletes throughout the school year.

CHAPTER 1

INDRODUCTION

Overview

Motivation is of key importance for student-athletes as it influences their commitment to conditioning/training both during the season and in the off-season, and ultimately their team's success. It is essential that student athletes continue the conditioning/training that they experience during in-season play during the off-season so that they are prepared for successful play during the next season. Student-athletes' choices regarding maintaining conditioning/training through the off-season are affected by and related to motivation. The literature suggests that there are different types of motivation, and different ways to motivate athletes (Pedscaleuz, 2010; Taylor, 2009; & Mahoney, 2011). There also are varied factors that impact student-athletes' motivation such as their home-life/upbringing, their coaches, the environment, and their teammates.

Coaches are one of the many factors that influence student-athletes' motivation, and there is a variety of strategies that can be employed by coaches to help improve the student-athletes' motivation. Of particular interest to this researcher was how coaches can provide different strategies for their players and for their teams to help them train to stay in shape throughout the on and off-seasons. Research such as that reported by Tutko, Lyon, & Ogilvie (nd) and Taylor, (2019) suggests that different strategies may help keep teams motivated during the off-season.

The researcher's experiences as a former student-athlete and her current role as coach of a collegiate women's soccer team sparked her interest in the issue of increasing and maintaining student-athletes' motivation. Literature related to the motivation of student-athletes suggests that coaches have an important influence on their student-athletes' motivation to work out and stay in

shape during the on and off-seasons (Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Miller, & Carpenter, 2009; Taylor, 2019; Weathington, Alexander, & Rodebaugh, 2010).

Motivation can be different across the on season and off season and across student athletes. Different interventions may be used by coaches and others to help athletes stay motivated during both the on and off season, such as workout packets, support of family members, and awarding playing time. The researcher concluded that it would be beneficial to learn how these influences on motivation are viewed by athletes and how to utilize each most effectively.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine what motivates college athletes to stay in shape and work out during the off-season. The Training Motivation Survey (TMS) was developed by the researcher to investigate this question with Division III female soccer players.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis tested follows:

H01: mean ratings of motivation in the off season=

mean ratings of motivation in the on season

H02: mean ratings of influence of significant persons in the off season=

mean ratings of influence of significant persons in the on season

Information about perceptions of influences on motivation in both seasons was also solicited and described

Operational Definitions

Dictionary.com (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/motivation?s=t>) refers to motivation as “providing with a reason to act in a certain way, and “having a strong reason to act or accomplish something.”

Key words that are associated with motivation include inspiration, drive, ambition, initiative and determination. Dictionary.com refers to inspiration as, “the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative”; drive as, “an innate, biologically determined urge to attain a goal or satisfy a need”; ambition as, “a strong desire to do or to achieve something, typically requiring determination and hard work”; initiative as, “the ability to assess and initiate things independently”; and determination as, “firmness of purpose; resoluteness.”

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERTURE

This literature review examines how student-athletes' choices regarding maintaining conditioning and training through the off-season relate to their motivation. Section one defines and discusses the importance of motivation in student-athletes. Section two describes factors that affect student-athletes' motivation for their athletic participation. Section three reviews strategies to help improve motivation in student-athletes.

Importance of Motivation in Student-Athletes

Motivation is of key importance to student-athletes. There are different types of motivation, and different ways to motivate, so operationally defining it is challenging but important. For example, one definition according to Dictionary.com is "it is the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way." Dictionary.com also refers to it as "the general desire or willingness of someone to do something." As described in Pedscaleuz (2010), "Motivation research can be understood as the study of how thoughts and beliefs are related to actions and behaviors" (p. 23). Key words that are associated with motivation include inspiration, drive, ambition, initiative, and determination. All these words reflect important components of motivation for student-athletes. Pedscaleuz explains that motivation is the foundation that student-athletes need to help them improve and develop their skills. Sports motivation requires having confidence and focus to improve performance on the sport in which the student-athlete is involved.

Influences that are important for student-athletes to remain motivated to improve their athletic performance include such traits as accepting accountability, being happy/ joyful, being

respectful, and having passion. Many types of influences involving motivation are positive ones. An important component of motivation is generating positive emotions associated with effort and goal achievement (Taylor, 2019). The factors influencing motivation should come from within the student-athlete, from the coaches and teammates, and from the school environment. When positive factors and contributors come from many different sources, the student-athlete is more likely to remain motivated. According to Taylor, “It's difficult to be highly motivated all of the time on your own. There are going to be some days when you just don't feel like getting out there. Also, no matter how hard you push yourself, you will work that much harder if you have someone pushing you” (p.1).

Performing well athletically can help a student-athlete to stay motivated. A student-athlete is more likely to remain motivated when the student and/or his or her team are successful. If the student-athlete is successful, then that student will be more motivated both on and off the field. “Motivation will also influence the level of performance when you begin a competition” (Taylor, 2009, p.1). Taylor explains that competition will increase a player’s motivation to achieve higher levels of success.

“Student-athletes’ academic and athletic roles both require commitment, time, energy, and effort. Managing and balancing these multiple roles not only impacts student-athletes’ use of time, but also their overall college experience” (Mahoney, 2011, p. 1). Time management is a major skill that student-athletes need to master during the season and out of the season. Organization can provide motivation for student-athletes because it can reduce stress for them while also providing structure. Organization helps student-athletes balance their multiple roles, thus increasing their success on and off the field/ athletic arena.

Factors Affecting Motivation

Many factors influence student-athletes' motivation. Among these factors are their home-life/upbringing, their coaches, the environment, and their teammates.

Home Life

Student-athletes' upbringing is a major contributor to motivation and may vary due to the kind of support and structure they received from home. Athletes' home-life can involve the type of household the student-athlete experienced or is experiencing, the family members who have and/or are raising them, and individuals who lived in or currently are living in their home, such as parents, caretakers, siblings, cousins, and pets. "Positively, sports influenced relations among peers, authority, and family when those in the athlete's sphere of influence held a healthy involvement in the athlete's life" (Hicks, 2018, p. 9). The home-life of the student athlete must be supportive. Hicks further states, "Even if the parents, family members, or others within the sphere of influence cannot be physically present at each game or competition, it is important for the emotional wellbeing of the student athlete that he or she knows that someone is supporting them" (p. 9).

Coaches

Coaches play an essential role in student-athletes' motivation, and it is important that the coaches are aware of their influence. Coaches can affect their student-athletes' motivation directly and indirectly. Wilson and Smith (2007) noted "Those student-athletes, who perceived that their coaches had great expectations of them and gave minor criticism, were inclined to persevere" (as cited by Amran, 2013, p.1). Amran explains that coaches' having high

expectations for student-athletes and requiring that their players demonstrate accountability indicates how committed they are to their teams.

Additional evidence of the importance of the coach-athlete is offered by Weathington, et al. (2010) who state, “The coach-athlete relationship is an important determinant of athlete stress and motivation levels” (p. 1). These authors further state, “Physical educators and coaches have critical roles in the motivation of their athletic participants, and even a coach’s indirect behavior may have significant consequences for participants’ motivation, mood, and effort” (p. 5). It is important that coaches are aware that their actions and moods will affect their players’ motivational mood and effort towards training.

Weathington, et al. (2010) discuss the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for student-athletes. They state

Both intrinsic motivation, which arises from doing a certain activity for personal pleasure and satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation, which arises from external outcomes, can be significantly affected by coaching behaviors. For example, coaches frequently use strategies such as challenging players, verbal feedback, and nonverbal communication in an effort to increase their athletes’ motivation levels (p. 5-6).

Strategies such as those described by Weathington, et al. (2010) may help improve the student-athletes’ motivation, but they also might hurt the student-athletes’ motivation. It is important for coaches to be aware of the actions that affect student-athletes’ motivation, and recognize when, how, and with whom to use them to have beneficial results.

Every coach should have a “toolkit” of strategies to improve team members’ motivation during the off-season. These strategies can vary throughout the years. Research cited in this paper suggests that to increase motivation in athletes, coaches need to understand and care about what is best for the individual team members and the team. Strategies which address the needs and characteristics of particular teams and athletes should be implemented.

Teammates

Chemistry, or the quality of relationships between and among individuals on sports teams, influences student-athletes’ motivation. Nelson (1992) explains that it is important for coaches to hold players accountable to train during the off-season and that players demonstrate accountability among one another. Coaches often assign captains who help to communicate the importance of high expectations and emphasize accountability among the players. It is essential that team captains are individuals whom team members respect. Captains can assign more responsibility to players they have identified as able to assume an increased leadership role. By having respected captains on a team as well as positive chemistry amongst the team members, student athletes likely will have increased motivation to train. Nelson reflects that “The coach may well prepare the team physically, technically and psychologically and plan team methods and strategies in practice sessions. But the team captain and the other players are entirely responsible for putting these things into practice in the game.” (p. 13).

Strategies to Help Improve Motivation in Student-Athletes

Many studies, such as those reported by Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2006) and Miller and Carpenter (2009), have examined strategies related to improving student-athletes’ motivation. These studies have involved athletic departments, coaches, captains, teammates

and/or individual student-athletes. Results suggest that every student-athlete is unique so some strategies that effectively motivate some teams and players may not work for others.

Self-Determination

Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2006) conducted a study involving self-determination. The goal of the study was to examine the link between a perceived coaching behavior, namely the degree to which athletes perceived their coaches to exhibit an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style, and athletes' motivational orientation using self-determination theory as a framework. This study included a cross-sectional survey that was administered during a regularly scheduled training session. Male and female college athletes answered questionnaires which demonstrated that an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style may be an effective motivational tool. Surveys such as those described in the literature cited above could be used by coaches to learn if an autonomy-supportive interpersonal style might be a motivational tool for their athletes.

Positivity

A positive motivational perspective can be beneficial for teams and individual players. "The altruistic motivation of coaches is often overlooked by critics when so much focus is dedicated to the negatives" (Miller & Carpenter, 2009, p. 9). It frequently happens that when a coach does not have a successful record, society will focus on negative features, emphasizing what the coach is doing wrong, rather than focusing on positive features and building on those features.

Miller and Carpenter (2009) discuss the concept of altruistic leadership. They state, "Altruism is defined as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's well-being" (p. 9). They explain that altruistic leadership exists within the coaching profession.

Examples of altruistic leadership include coaches' behaviors such as staying late to help an athlete meet his/her goals, giving up free time to travel to tournaments that would be beneficial to the athletes, or taking time away from other duties to discuss an athlete's personal problems. Miller and Carpenter maintain that these are familiar behaviors to coaches at all levels, and that these behaviors build player motivation. If coaches offer both focused time and effort in support of their athletic programs, it is likely that many players will appreciate these efforts and find them motivating.

Setting Goals

To have a successful athletic program, goals are needed for the student-athlete, and for the team. The student-athlete has to enjoy the sport in order to continue to grow and develop within it. At some point, enjoyment of the sport may have to become a goal for the individual.

Student athletes frequently are able to increase their personal motivation to succeed in their sport when their coaches provide strategies that support their team members to attain specific personal or team goals. Coaches must select strategies adapted to the goals and characteristics of individual teams. For example, if a team goal is to be well prepared for the next season, coaches might offer team-workouts and conditioning activities for the team to do during the off-season that directly relate to the goal. Taylor (2009) maintains that it is up to the athlete(s) to put in the effort to achieve those goals. "It's easy to say that you want to be a successful athlete. It is much more difficult to actually make it happen" (p. 1).

At the Division Three level in the sport of soccer, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rules state that coaches cannot make off-season team workouts mandatory for their student-athletes. Therefore, coaches must count on team captains and players to remain motivated and train sufficiently during the off-season (Stubberman & Cooper, 2018). While

coaches cannot require Division Three athletes to complete the workouts offered for them, they can encourage the athletes by providing models and rationale for the athletes to continue to train to reach previously established goals in preparation for the next season.

At the Division Three level regarding the sport of soccer, there are certain rules and regulations provided by the NCAA. Once the teams' regular fall season is over, coaches are not allowed to make any workout mandatory for the student-athletes. They can provide workout packets, enable students to work with the strength and conditioning coach, and provide skill videos for students to follow although they cannot require to make the student-athlete to use them. It is against NCCA rules for coaches to make these types of activities mandatory for student- athletes or to threaten them with removal from the team if they do not participate in them during the off-season.

Core Values

Miller and Carpenter (2009) conducted a study involving Ohio State University coach Tressel, and his philosophy about motivation. "The responses from coach Tressel indicated the importance he places on the ultimate motivation to give care and show concern for student-athletes' well-being" (p. 10). Coach Tressel provided core values for his team. "The core values included excellence, education, leadership, innovation, respect for the individual, and integrity" (p. 10). Tressel's core values were not all about the sport. One of these core values was education. He emphasized that the student-athlete has to implement these core values to stay motivated.

Tressel (as cited by Miller & Carpenter, 2009) suggests that all sports teams have some basic core values that are similar. Tressel emphasizes that the team has to believe in the core values provided by the coach and follow through with them in order to stay motivated and to be

successful. Further, Tressel maintains that a caring and compassionate environment motivated by the ultimate desire to improve other's well-being could be established through coaches' consideration of his teams' feelings and emotions.

Self-Evaluation

A strategy that coaches could offer their team to promote motivation and related goal setting is use of the AMI questionnaire cited above. "The instrument was designed to (a) assist coaches in assessing and improving the athletic motivation of their athletes, (b) help the athlete understand his own attitudes, (c) promote personal growth, and (d) serve as a research instrument in studying sports programs" (Amorose, & Anderson-Butcher, 2006, p.1). In the studies in which the AMI questionnaires were used, the questionnaires were completed by the athletes and sent for scoring. Reports were prepared for the coach and for the individual athletes. "These reports outline presumed strengths and weaknesses of the athlete relative to his own appropriate norm group, suggest probable behavior of the athlete in various sports situations, and offer suggestions for dealing with the 'problems' unearthed" (p. 3). The AMI questionnaire provides feedback about the players' attitudes and how to adjust their motivation, if needed, through changes in their attitudes and behaviors. It is a self-evaluation for the student-athletes as well as for the coaches.

Conclusion

This review of literature has discussed the importance of motivation in student-athletes, factors that affect motivation, and strategies to help improve the student-athletes' motivation. The coaches' relationships with their teams are among the many factors that influence student-athletes' motivation. Coaches can provide a variety of strategies for their individual players and teams that enhance motivation of the student-athletes. Research such as that cited in this paper

suggests that a variety of strategies may help keep teams motivated during the off-season. Developing effective motivational strategies for off-season training is worthwhile because if players remain motivated during the off-season, they are likely to be successful college student-athletes.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This study was conducted to determine and draw comparisons between what motivates student-athletes to work out and stay in shape during the on and off-season. The design that was used in this study was descriptive and the sample was a purposive convenience sample. Data were collected using a survey for the student-athletes. The survey, designed by the researcher, was constructed based on the researcher's review of literature and interest in understanding how to best motivate her team to stay in shape during the off-season.

Participants

For this study, participants consisted of 15 female student-athletes from the women's soccer program at a small liberal arts college. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 21 years old. They expressed interest in this study because they wanted to offer ideas on how coaches might motivate them as players.

Instrument

Information was collected through a written survey called the Training Motivation Survey (TMS). A copy of the TMS is located in Appendix A. The TMS was developed by the researcher based on the review of literature regarding sport motivation that is presented in Chapter II. Initial items on the TMS provided descriptive information, whereas items added subsequently generated responses that enabled comparison of factors respondents perceived as affecting motivation during the on and off-seasons. Items on the TMS asked respondents to

provide short answers or ratings about what motivates them to work out in the on and off-seasons. These are summarized and compared in Chapter IV

Procedure

The researcher met with the head women's soccer coach at the college at which she is employed to present the research project and seek approval to administer the survey to her student-athletes. Following approval of the project, the researcher implemented the following actions.

To collect data, the researcher met with the 15 female student-athletes in a classroom located on their college campus. The researcher informed the students that their participation was voluntary. She reviewed the instructions for taking the survey, and asked participants to respond to all items. Participants completed the survey individually, giving their surveys to the researcher as they were completed. Surveys were coded with numbers to ensure confidentiality of responses to all but the researcher. This procedure took about 30 minutes.

After collecting all the surveys, the researcher recorded the responses to enable her to compare data involving the student athletes' on and off-season motivation. Results of the descriptive analyses and comparisons follow in Chapter IV. Consideration of strategies for coaches to use to influence student-athletes' motivation during the on and off-season are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study examined how players whom the researcher coaches on a college soccer team defined motivation and what motivated them to train both in the on and off-seasons. A survey called the TMS was developed and administered to players, who were asked to answer questions about influences related to their motivation to train and perform athletically. Summaries of their responses and the results of the hypotheses tested by the study follow.

Defining Motivation

Item one on the TMS asked respondents “What is your definition of “motivation” as it relates to the sport of soccer?” A tally of responses is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Tally of Player Definitions of Motivation

Definitions of Motivation (n=15 respondents)	Number of replies reflecting each definition
Desire to work hard towards a personal goal	13
Desire to help the team	1
Love of the sport	1

Motivators

Item two on the TMS asked each participant to list the top three things that motivate them to stay in shape in the off-seasons. The responses were summarized into five main categories: (want

playing time, the team, for myself or love of the game, improvement, and coaches) and the frequencies which they were reported are tallied in Table 2. Column four presents the total frequencies with which each option or category was cited.

Table 2
Tally of Responses indicating what three things most motivate participants to stay in shape in the off-season

Responses	Most Motivating	Second most motivating	Third most motivating	Total Frequency or Response
Want playing Time	2	3	0	5
The Team	1	5	2	8
For Myself/ Love of the Game	4	2	7	13
Improvement	3	2	1	6
Coaches	1	0	2	3
Other (being healthy; friends)	5	2	2	9

Item three on the TMS asked respondents to rate their motivation to work out in the on and off-season from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extreme) and to explain why these ratings differed or did not differ across seasons. Descriptive statistics of these ratings follow in Table 3. These statistics indicated that the mean ratings and ranges in ratings of motivation to work out were similar

across the on season (mean = 8.87, range = 5-10)) and the off-season (mean = 8.10, range = 6-10).

Table 3

Descriptive statistics regarding ratings of motivation to work out in the on and off seasons

Ratings of Motivation to work out	n	Mean	s.d.	Range
On season	15	8.87	1.684	5-10
Off season	15	8.10	1.312	6-10

Results of a t-test for paired samples which compared these mean ratings of motivation for the on and off-seasons follow in Table 4.

Overall, nine respondents rated their motivation in the on-season motivation as higher than their motivation in the off-season (by one to three points; ratings ranged from seven to 10), three rated it the same (all rated both as 10 out of 10) and three respondents rated their motivation as higher in the off-season (two by two points and one by just one point). However, the t-statistic of 1.564 indicated that for this sample size, the mean difference in the ratings of motivation across seasons of .77 was not large enough to meet criteria for statistical significance ($p < .14$). Therefore, null hypothesis 1, that respondents' mean ratings of motivation in the off- and on seasons were equal, was retained.

Table 4

t	df	Sig. (2- tailed) (p)	Mean Difference	s.d.	SEM	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
1.564	14	.14	.767	1.898	.490	-.284	1.818

As noted in Chapter I, information about influences on motivation in both seasons also was solicited and summarized to help the researcher understand more about how coaches can encourage motivation and develop effective conditioning plans.

In describing why their motivation levels differed in the on to off-season (if they did), participants gave reasons including differences in workloads, variation in the types of workouts, and job requirements between seasons. Three respondents also indicated their motivation levels did not differ across seasons as they always want to improve. Two respondents noted that having games in season impacts their workout plans as they had to work around the team's game schedule.

Item 4 on the TMS asked respondents to list three ways they remain motivated to stay in shape during the off-season. These responses are tallied in Table 5 below and included having a workout packet, doing ball work, having accountability, teammates, the avoidance of getting out of shape, love for the game, fear, playing time, and improvement.

Table 5

Tally of replies describing how participants stay motivated to stay in shape in the off-season

Ways I stay motivated to stay in shape during the off-season	Frequency of responses
Teammates	10
Myself/ Love for the game	9
Improvement	4
Workout Packet	3
Accountability	3
Avoid getting out of shape	3
Fear	1
Playing Time	1
Ball Work	1

Item five inquired about who motivates athletes during the on and off seasons and how they do so. It provided respondents with a list of likely motivators and allowed them to add other people who motivate them as well. Table 6 summarizes the ratings given to each potentially motivating person and summarizes the most common ways those people motivated respondents in both the on and off-seasons.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics regarding others' influence on athletes' motivation in the on and off seasons

Motivator	Season	Mean Rating 1= not at all to 10=very much	s.d.	Range	Top three ways each of the following people help you stay motivated
Coach(es)	In	8.867	2.066	4-10	Push me Provide positive feedback Provide resources
	Off	6.867	2.386	2-10	Check-in meetings Provide what I need to work on Provide resources
Teammates	In	9.200	.405	4-10	Hold me accountable Want to stay healthy Support me
	Off	8.333	1.988	3-10	Always checking in Push me I don't want to let them down.
Parents	In	6.467	.755	1-10	Check-in on me Supportive Encouraging.
	Off	6.333	2.992	1-10	Work out with me Supportive Encouraging
My Opponents	In	8	3.071	1-10	Push me Wanting revenge Competition
	Off	6.4	2.798	1-10	Remembering them from previous years Competition
Myself	In	9	1.254	6-10	Having goals Wanting to play Wanting to better myself.
	Off	8.8	1.146	7-10	Wanting to play Competition Wanting to improve
Other Siblings	In	10	-	-	Role model Vocal encouragement Come to games
	Off	10	-	-	Watching them play Seeing them love the game

Other (Best friend)	In	9	-	-	Supports me Helps me understand my mistake Honest
	Off	9	-	-	Pushes me to do more Honest Supports

Five paired samples t-tests were computed to compare the mean ratings of the impact of the five kinds of people on motivating the respondents across seasons. The results follow in Table 7 and indicated that the mean ratings of the helpfulness of coaches, teammates, and opponents for keeping the athlete respondents motivated in the on and off-seasons were all statistically significantly higher for the on-season. Mean ratings of the impact of parents and selves on motivation also were also higher for the on-season, but not statistically significantly higher than those for the off-season. Based on these results, null hypothesis 2, which posited that the mean ratings of the influence of significant persons on motivation would not differ for the on or off seasons, was rejected.

Table 7

Results of Paired Sample t-tests comparing mean ratings of the helpful impact of Coaches, Teammates, Parents, Opponents and Self as Motivators in the On and Off seasons

Supportive Role	Mean difference	s.d.	SEM	95% Confidence interval	t	df	Significance (2 tailed) P *= significant
Coaches	2.000	2.104	.543	.835-3.165	3.681	14	.002*
Teammates	.867	1.457	.376	.060-1.674	2.303	14	.037*

Opponents	1.600	1.805	.466	.601-2.599	3.434	14	.004*
Parents	.133	2.031	.524	-.991-1.258	.254	14	.803
Myself	.200	1.207	.312	-.468-.868	.642	14	.531

Participants noted that the people rated were supportive in varied ways which are summarized below in Table 8. It was notable to the researcher that individualized meetings, competition, and internal desire to improve were cited as motivating factors during both the on and off-seasons.

Table 8

Summary how people motivate players in the on and off seasons

Person	Top 3 ways helps in season	Top 3 ways helps off season
Coach	Provides individual meetings Pushes players in practice Has accountability/ expectations	Provides individual meetings Provides positive feedback Provides workout plan
Teammates	Supportive/ encouraging Accountability on one another Competition	Accountability on one another Checking in with one another Supporting one another
Parents	Coming to games Check in phone calls Providing encouragement	Wanting to know about progress Having positive attitudes Checking in
Opponents	Competition Wanting to win against them Wanting to be better	Knowing that they're training too Remembering prior games vs. them Competition
Self	Wanting to improve	Wanting to improve

	Wanting to push my teammates Want to get playing time	Wanting to beat my opponents Wanting to keep the role on the team
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Two One-Way Analyses of Variance also were computed to compare the mean ratings of the influence of the five types of people who might motivate the player respondents differed significantly in the on and off-sport seasons. These results follow in Table 9. Despite the low p values in table 9, post-hoc testing (Scheffe) indicated that only the mean difference of 2.73 between the mean ratings of teammates (9.200) and parents (6.467) during the on-season was large enough to be determined statistically significant ($p < .039$). This finding suggested that the respondents' team has a larger impact on motivation than parents during the college soccer in-season.

Table 9

Results of One-Way Analyses of Variance comparing Five Peoples' Mean Influences on Athlete's Motivation in the In and Off-seasons

Season	Comparison	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Significance (p)
On	Between groups	76.080	4	19.020	3.619	.010
	Within groups	367.867	70	5.255		
	Total	443.947	74			
Off	Between groups	78.587	4	19.647	3.541	.011
	Within groups	388.4	70	5.549		

	Total	466.987	74			
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Item 6 on the TMS asked respondents to rate methods used by coaches to motivate players during the on and off-seasons from one (not at all) to 10 (very helpful) and to describe what about each method was or was not helpful to them. Participants were able to add other motivational techniques to the list if they applied and were told to leave items blank if their coach never used them. These responses are summarized in Table 10 and suggested respondents found workout packets more motivating when provided in the off-season (mean=9.4) than in the on-season (mean=5.625). Coaches providing drills that challenged the respondents' skills during the in-season was rated as most motivating (mean=9.857). Interestingly, the motivational technique rated lowest was coaches' providing a captain/leadership role on the team for the respondents in the on-season (3.571). Berating them in the off season was also rated as low in effectiveness (mean=3.556).

Table 10

Descriptive statistics summarizing perceptions of motivational methods used by coaches in the in and off-seasons

Method used by Coach	Season	N	Range	Mean	s.d
Gave workout packet:	<i>In</i>	8	0-10	5.625	4.274
	<i>Off</i>	15	7-10	9.400	1.121

Criticized me using examples that suggest I am not meeting expectations intentionally:	<i>In</i>	12	1-10	5.500	3.631
	<i>Off</i>	10	1-9	4.400	2.875
Berated me for a mistake, I know not to make:	<i>In</i>	13	0-10	4.308	3.728
	<i>Off</i>	9	0-10	3.556	3.321
Told me, she knows I am trying my best:	<i>In</i>	13	2-10	7.077	3.201
	<i>Off</i>	13	1-10	6.923	3.427
Provided one v. one sessions of skill work:	<i>In</i>	12	7-10	9.417	1.084
	<i>Off</i>	11	0-10	7.000	4.195
Assigned me workouts to do alone:	<i>In</i>	9	0-10	6.111	3.586
	<i>Off</i>	9	2-10	8.444	2.744
Gave me a captain/leadership role	<i>In</i>	9	0-10	4.889	4.567
	<i>Off</i>	8	0-10	5.625	4.470

Gave me drills that challenged my skills:	<i>In</i>	14	8-10	9.857	.535
	<i>Off</i>	14	1-10	8.643	2.530
Gave me easy but sufficient workouts to supplement on my own or not as I chose:	<i>In</i>	9	0-10	6.111	3.855
	<i>Off</i>	10	0-10	6.100	3.635
Let me select my own workouts:	<i>In</i>	10	0-10	4.600	3.950
	<i>Off</i>	11	0-10	4.909	4.134
Gave me an assistant captain/leadership role	<i>In</i>	7	0-10	3.571	4.315
	<i>Off</i>	7	0-10	5.429	4.577

Finally, item 7 on the TMS asked athlete participants to rate how much a list of items motivated them to train to stay in shape in the on and off-season from one (not at all) to 10 (very much). Those descriptive statistics follow in Table 11.

Table 11

Descriptive statistics of ratings of motivators for staying in shape in the in and off seasons

	Season	N	Mean	Range	s.d.
Appearance	<i>In</i>	15	8.6	3-10	2.41
	<i>Off</i>	15	9.1	5-10	1.62
Maintaining position	<i>In</i>	15	9.4	6-10	1.24
	<i>Off</i>	15	2.3	6-10	1.39
Maintaining play time	<i>In</i>	15	9.4	6=10	1.24
	<i>Off</i>	15	9.5	7-10	0.99

Please parents	<i>In</i>	14	7.5	5-10	1.91
	<i>Off</i>	14	7.0	3-10	2.15
Please coaches	<i>In</i>	15	8.7	6-10	1.68
	<i>Off</i>	14	9.0	6-10	1.66
Please teammates	<i>In</i>	15	9.0	6-10	1.31
	<i>Off</i>	15	8.7	6-10	1.59
Attain future athletic goal (like Olympics or professional sports job)	<i>In</i>	10	2.1	1-6	1.85
	<i>Off</i>	10	2.1	1-6	1.85
Impress peers	<i>In</i>	15	5.5	1-10	3.00
	<i>Off</i>	14	5.4	1-10	3.11

Results suggested that players were not very motivated to maintain their position during the off-season (mean = 2.3), and low ratings were given to attempting to attain future aspirations in sports beyond college (mean= 2.1 for on and off-seasons). Maintaining play time and pleasing coaches appeared to be relatively motivating in and off-seasons, however, which is useful for coaches to know.

Connections to the literature and implications of these findings for coaching are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to learn what motivates college athletes to stay in shape and workout during the off season. The researcher developed a survey referred to as “The Training Motivation Survey” (TMS) to investigate this question with Division III female soccer players whom she coached. Response to short answer items and items which solicited ratings on the TMS provided descriptive information and comparisons of how various people and factors affect athletes’ motivation during the on and off seasons. Results are reviewed below.

The study compared student athlete motivation and the impact of influences on their motivation across the on and off seasons. Results yielded statistics which failed to reject hypothesis one, that *mean ratings of motivation in the off season would be the same as mean ratings of motivation in the on season*. Results yielded statistics that led to the rejection of null hypothesis two, which posited *the mean ratings of influence of significant persons would be the same in the on and off seasons*.

In fact, all of the influential people were noted to be more motivating in the on season, and three types of influential people, coaches, teammates and opponents, were rated as significantly more motivating in the on season as in the off season.

Implications of Findings

Results of this action research can inform coaching practices and help improve the motivation of student athletes to work out all year. It was interesting to note that participants reported statistically equal levels of motivation to work out during the on and off season. Participant’s ratings were positive and similar across the on-season (mean=8.87, range 5-10) and

the off-season (mean = 8.10, range = 6-10). Results indicated that for this sample size, the mean difference in motivation across seasons was not large enough to meet criteria for statistical significance, thus hypothesis one was retained.

Comparisons of the impact of various people on participants' motivation in the on and off season indicated that all individuals were more influential on student athletes' motivation during the season, but mean ratings of the impact of parents and selves on motivation were not statistically significantly higher for the on versus the off-season. However, the influence of coaches, opponents, and teammates were significantly higher in the on seasons, so null hypothesis two, which posited that the mean ratings of the influence of significant persons on motivation would not differ for the on or off seasons, was rejected.

Survey responses about the impact of various motivational techniques indicated that coaches can motivate their athletes in different ways and each athlete reacts differently to motivational tools and/or techniques and people. Therefore, coaches need to identify the techniques that will work best for each individual and for the team. The data gathered in this study yielded information that may suggest techniques that are perceived as effective such as providing workout packets during the off season and techniques that are perceived as generally ineffective such as the coach criticizing the athlete(s).

Theoretical Consequences

The results of this study support multiple theories discussed in Chapter II. For example, Pedsclcauz (2010), explained that motivation is the foundation that student-athletes need to help them improve and develop their skills. Sports motivation requires having confidence and focus to improve performance on the sport in which the student-athlete is involved. Being motivated

requires athletes to use good time management in the on and off season. Coaches should support training procedures and routines which are likely to help student athletes balance training and academic demands. Coaches play an essential role in student-athletes' motivation. As Wilson and Smith (2007) noted in Amran, 2013, "Those student-athletes, who perceived that their coaches had great expectations of them and gave minor criticism, were inclined to persevere" (p. 16).

Threats to Validity

Several issues posed threats to the validity of the study's findings. One major threat to validity was the small sample size that was used in the study. The study used a sample of 15 participants, all of whom played the same sport. This small, limited sample could impact use of data for other coaches, because they may have a larger roster size with more diverse athletes.

Another threat to internal validity was that the researcher was associated with the team. The researcher was the assistant coach for the team. Because the researcher was associated with the team as assistant coach, this relationship may have affected the truth of the responses and/or participation of student athletes in the study. Because the players knew the assistant coach was going to be reading their responses, they may not have been comfortable providing candid responses.

The instrument used in this study (the TMS) was created for this study and not for any other study. Because there was no piloting of the TMS, which could have helped ensure the reliability and validity of the items and conclusions based on responses to the items, results should be interpreted with caution.

Similarities/Differences

Other studies reviewed for this study have suggested that every student-athlete is unique so strategies that effectively motivate some teams and players may not work for others. The results of this study revealed that different types of people in the lives of student athletes such as coaches, teammates, and parents can have an impact on their motivation and the effect of that influence can vary across the on and off seasons.

Amorose and Anderson-Butcher (2006) conducted a study involving self-determination which was similar to the current study. Their study also involved a survey called the Sport Climate Questionnaire (SCC), which was similar to the TMS, but which concentrated on the coach's motivation, emphasizing how the coach's behavior could motivate their athletes. Findings from the study suggested that an interpersonal coaching style which is supportive of autonomy may be an effective motivational tool for coaches to use with their athletes. These findings relate to findings from this study by suggesting that coaches can behave in ways to motivate their teams.

Miller and Carpenter (2009) conducted a study involving Ohio State University coach Tressel, and his philosophy about motivation. Tressel is an American college football coach, who coached at Ohio State for 10 years. This study focused on core values and goal settings that may help student-athletes to stay motivated. Coach Tressel believed that setting goals for the season would help his student-athletes remain motivated. This study related to the TMS, because certain players suggested that setting individual and team goals would help them stay motivated.

Future Research

Several refinements to this study should be made to glean more valid information from future research regarding athletes' motivation to train. One suggestion is to have a larger sample size, including teams from varied sports and from different types of schools or organizations.

A second suggestion for future research is to have a researcher who is not associated with the team conduct the studies. The responses of players who participated in this study were anonymous, but the researcher read their answers to survey questions. Having a researcher who is not associated with the team would help decrease perceived demand characteristics of items or bias in answers or how they are interpreted

Future research should ensure that survey questions are piloted and refined to obtain more specific information about what motivates athletes in the on and off seasons. Perhaps administering the survey during each "season" would be helpful as the data could be collected in real time versus retrospectively.

Finally, once coaches determine certain interventions can be effective and improve motivation using results of surveys like the TMI, future studies might implement them systematically to determine whether using particular techniques indeed impact motivation, effort, and performance in the sport.

Conclusion

This study conducted to determine what motivates college athletes to train and workout during the off season. The research hypothesis that motivation would differ across seasons was not supported (the null was retained), but the researcher did discern information about the

individuals who motivate athletes and their influence in the on and off season. Results suggest that coaches, teammates and opponents were more motivating in the on season than the off season to a significant degree, hence null hypothesis 2 was rejected. Survey responses indicated that players were motivated during the on and off seasons almost equally, and certain individuals helped them stay motivated during the on and off season. Overall, findings both supported and refuted the researcher's observations and experience and findings in the literature. Future refinement of the assessment tool to make it more concise and experimental comparisons of the effect of particular motivational techniques would help clarify what methods coaches can use most effectively to improve motivation in the on and off seasons of their sports.

Based on the results of this study, further research should be conducted using refined surveys and larger samples of athletes who play a variety of sports in different types of programs. Results of such studies may help coaches determine how best to motivate players to train effectively throughout the year to enhance their development as student-athletes.

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APPENDIX A

Training Motivation Survey

Please complete the following items to help me understand what motivates you to train for your sport.

Part 1

1. What is your definition of “motivation” as it relates to the sport of soccer?

2. Please list the top 3 things that motivate you personally to stay in shape in the off season? (a=the most, b=the second, c=third).
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

3. Rate your motivation to work out in the on and off season from 1=not at all to 10=extreme and please state why they differ or not:
On-Season rating: _____ Off-Season rating: _____
Why do they differ (or not)?

4. List 3 ways you stay motivated to stay in shape during the off-season?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

5. Please fill in the following table according to the instructions

On a scale from 1= not at all to 10=very much, please rate how much each of the following people help you stay motivated to train and improve at your sport in the on and off season.

Then list 1-3 ways (HOW) they help you train and improve in each season.

(Feel free to add other people who help you stay motivated/improve in either season and how they do so in the blank rows at the bottom of the table):

Who	<u>When</u>	<u>How much</u> Rate 1-10: 1= not at all 10=very much	<u>How?</u> Please list the top three ways each of the following people help you stay motivated?
Coach(es)	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.

Who	<u>When</u>	<u>How much</u> Rate 1-10: 1= not at all 10=very much	<u>How?</u> Please list the top three ways each of the following people help you stay motivated
Teammates	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.
Parents	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.

Who	<u>When</u>	<u>How much</u> Rate 1-10: 1= not at all 10=very much	<u>How?</u> Please list the top three ways each of the following people help you stay motivated
My Opponents	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.
Myself	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.

Who	<u>When</u>	<u>How much</u> Rate 1-10: 1= not at all 10=very much	<u>How?</u> Please list the top three ways each of the following people help you stay motivated
Other	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.
Other:	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.

Who	<u>When</u>	<u>How much</u> Rate 1-10: 1= not at all 10=very much	<u>How?</u> Please list the top three ways each of the following people help you stay motivated
Other:	In season		1. 2. 3.
	Off Season		1. 2. 3.

6. Directions: On a scale from 1= not at all to 10=very, please rate the items below which coach(es) have done to try to motivate/help you in both the in- or off-season AND indicate what about each was helpful to you or not. If you have other helpful or detrimental examples for either season, please add them in the lines at the bottom labeled "OTHER". **LEAVE ITEMS BLANK IF YOUR COACHES HAVE NOT TRIED THEM.**

Method Used By Coach	Season	Rating and explanation	
		Please rate how helpful this technique was at this time of the season indicated <u>Rate 1-10:</u> 1= not at all 10=very	Please give a brief reason for your rating:
Gave workout packet:	In season		
	Off season		

Method Used By Coach	Season	Rating and explanation	
		Please rate how helpful this technique was at this time of the season indicated <u>Rate 1-10:</u> 1= not at all 10=very	Please give a brief reason for your rating:
Criticized me using examples that suggest I am not meeting expectations intentionally:	In season		
	Off season		
Berated me for a mistake, I know not to make:	In season		
	Off season		

Told me, she knows I am trying my best:	In season		
	Off season		
Provided one v. one sessions of skill work:	In season		
	Off season		
Assigned me workouts to do alone:	In season		
	Off season		
Gave me a captain/leadership role:	In season		
	Off season		

Gave me drills that challenged my skills:	In season		
	Off season		
Gave me easy but sufficient workouts to supplement on my own or not as I chose:	In season		
	Off season		

Method Used By Coach	Season	Rating and explanation	
		Please rate how helpful this technique was at this time of the season indicated <u>Rate 1-10:</u> 1= not at all 10=very	Please give a brief reason for your rating:
Let me select my own workouts:	In season		
	Off season		
Gave me an assistant captain/leadership role	In season		
	Off season		

Other	In season		
	Off season		
Other	In season		
	Off season		

7. Please rate from 1-10, (1=not at all to 10=very much), how much the following things motivate you to train to stay in shape in both the In and Off season for your sport. Please add others if they apply.

	How much this motivates me to train to stay in shape (1=not at all to 10=very much),	
	In-Season	Off-Season
Appearance		
Maintaining position		
Maintaining play time		
Please parents		
Please coaches		
Please teammates		
Attain future athletic goal (like Olympics or professional sports job)		
Impress peers		
Other (fill in):		
Other (fill in):		
Other (fill in):		

Thank you for completing this survey!