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**Social Relationship Amongst Athletics Coaches and Athletes as A Factor  
That Hinders Athletics Activities in Eastern Region- Sierra Leone**

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**ABSTRACT**

Athletics is an exclusive collection of sporting events that involves competitive running, jumping, throwing and walking; the most common types of athletics competition are track and field, road running, cross country running and race walking. The simplicity of the competition, and the lack of a need for expensive equipment, makes athletics one of the most commonly competed sports in the world. Based on this finding, the authors suggested that inter-individual variation in performance could be explained by quantity and quality of training. Since then, there have been no reliable differences found between expert and novice performers on static, physical capacities such as visual acuity, reaction time, or memory. However, consistent differences for domain-specific information processing strategies have



been identified, thus suggesting that these differences were the result of training experience impeding athletics activities. The study showed lack of encouragement/motivation and most of the athletes approach their coaches with fear and further indicate medium relationship, no group discussion and experience sharing amongst athletes in the Eastern Region.

**KEYWORDS: Athletics, Social, Coach, Athletes, Encouragement.**

## INTRODUCTION

Social relationships means the connections that exist between people who have recurring interactions which perceived by the individuals that have personal meaning amongst each other in a social environment. This definition includes relationships between family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and other associates but excludes social contacts and interactions that are fleeting, incidental, or perceived to have limited significance [1]. It is not surprising that high levels of training or practice are required to attain better performance. Research on skill development clearly supports the relationship between training/practice and skill acquisition. Moreover, previous research has identified general rules that outline the progression from novice to expert in a given domain [2]. The simplicity of the competition and the lack of a need for expensive equipment make athletics one of the most commonly competed sports in the world. The person who engages in these activities is known as Athlete. Unlike other sports, athletics does not need expensive equipment to starts which makes it simple and one of the most commonly competed sports in the world. In other words, athletics is one of the purest of all sports, relying solely on the strengths of the Human Machine or Human Body rather than sophisticated technological implements to improve Performance [3].

Although the exact roots of Sierra Leone Athletics Association (SLAA) cannot be retraced back accurately, it is widely believed that formal Sport or Physical Health Education was introduced in Sierra Leone by our Colonial Masters which was practiced in Schools and Military Camps including the National Queens's Event held at Victoria Park at the end of every year.



Sierra Leone started to have an organized system in sport just after Independent (in 1961), which led to the establishment of the National Sport Council in 1964, that same year, the National Olympic Committee (NOC) with it code “SLE” was formed and recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, Sierra Leone was represented by three athletes for the very first time. Sierra Leone has sent athletes to compete in every summer Olympic Games since “SLE” Summer appearances 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, except for the 1972 and 1976 Games, though Sierra Leone has never won medal at Olympic but excel in all African Athletics Competitions.

The Eastern Region was included in the Sierra Leone Athletics Association Administrative due to its own potential in different sport, the Keneme, Kailahun and Kono District (three Kay’s); was known for Soccer, Volleyball, Cricket and athletics however, Eastern Region Athletics Association (ERAA) has it mandates by governing athletics activities within the region. Currently there are six athletics clubs at the moment including the three District Athletics Teams but is affected by some factors such as Social, Nutritional, Environmental and Psychological which impedes athletics performance.

Previous studies have examined the effect of social support either on physical or acculturative stress. Social support is an important resource in social environment to mediate the relationship between psychological and physical problems; people with low social support are likely to have stressful life conditions, and the lack of social support causes their psychological symptoms and physical disease [4]. Social support is defined as the comfort, assistance, well-being, and information that individuals receive from formal or informal contacts with societal organization or the other people [5].

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

When preparing for a competition, many factors can or will influence individual athletes performance, team performance and of course the final result. This paper attempts to describe social factor as a determinant that hinders athletes’ performance.



Adolescents could develop some kinds of sensitive feelings, which may impact on their health if they do not get adequate social attention from others. They may become involved in an unfortunate situation that makes them feel overwhelmed or awkward. The adolescent is still developing, could easily experience some strain to their emotion if no help is immediately available. Anxiety and depression are two main psychological disorders that often can be seen among the adolescents.

For adolescents, family support is the most important element in their lives. As part of their growth experience, adolescents usually expect a lot of things from their parents. Inadequate support from the parents will likely increase the chance of getting depression among adolescents who get into unfortunate situation with their parents. This occurs because adolescent usually become confused when they expect to get plenty of help and positive reinforcement from their parents, but it does not happen [6]. Beside family support, peer support also is very important factor for adolescents. Children can expect a lot from their friends. Peer support can be considered as an alternate method of getting social support if the adolescents receive inadequate attention from their parents.

## **INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT**

Emotional support provides exercisers with encouragement, comfort, and praise to enhance the levels of physical activity. Informational support involves appropriate program suggestions, directions, and advice from family members, friends, fitness experts or health practitioners. Companionship support provides exercisers with the availability of people such as family, friends, or exercise members. Validation involves the evaluation of exercise process which confirms feelings, experiences problems and health status compared with other exercisers [7]. They investigated the relationship between social support and physical activity with regard to age and gender differences in a sample of 105 boys and 101 girls. This study was also focused on different sources of support (e.g. family members, peers, gym teachers, coaches) and forms of support (e.g. encouragement and transportation). The findings showed that boys and girls receive different supports from family members according to age and gender. For example, older girls perceive peers, gym teachers, and coaches as more important



sources of social and encouragement are strongly related to increase in the levels of physical activity support than family member.

## **SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ACCULTURATIVE STRESS**

The importance of social support has been emphasized with respect to the sources of social support as well as different types of social support. Schaefer et al. (1981) investigated three types of perceived social support such as emotional, informational, and tangible support related to stressful life events in a sample of 100 men and women 45-64 years old. The findings showed that emotional and tangible supports have to reduce depression and informational support is related to positive morale [8].

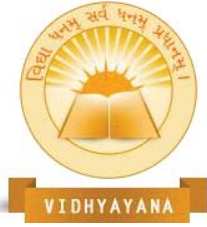
Ye (2006) surveyed the relationship between acculturative stress and interpersonal social support related to online use in ethnic social groups with a sample of 112 Chinese international students. The study disclosed that these students with high amounts of emotional and informational support from online ethnic groups have less acculturative stress such as negative feelings, perceived discrimination and hatred excluding fear social innate abilities [9]

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to address the objectives of the study, valuable information was gathered from different sources and various data gathering tools like interviews and survey guides were used to obtain relevant information. Intensive review of related literature was made to support the study with empirical knowledge in the area.

### **The research designs**

The main objective of this study was to examine the performance of athletes in within the Region and Athletics Club and their performance enhancement capability. For this study, the mixed method design of quantitative and qualitative design will be employed.



Quantitative design in this study examined the relationships between and among variables and the numeric description of trends of data so as to provide answers for the research questions and hypotheses

The Researcher used the qualitative approach to explore the behavior, perspectives, experiences, and feelings of athletes and emphasize the understanding of these elements. It is a study design of what and why subjectively.

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

### Characteristic of the study population

Characteristic of the study population were examined in terms of sex and age based on the response to the target for personal data in part of the questionnaire. The analysis and information of the data are presented in the following table:

**TABLE SHOWING ITEM 1- 2 RESPONDENT RESPOND ON SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP**

No	Item: 1-2	No. of Athletes (N=35)			
		Male	%	Female	%
1.	Are you interested in exercising with colleague athletes of the same camp?				
	Yes	20	57.14%	8	22.85%
	No	-	-	7	20%
2.	Does your family support you to continue athletic as Sports?				



	Yes	-	-	5	14.28%
	No	20	57.14%	10	28.57%

The above table indicates that out of 35 (100%) respondent of male and female 20 (57.14%) male and 8 (22.85%) of female and totally 79.99% of respondent replied that they have interest to train together. Whereas 7(20%) of female do not have interest to train together with their peers.

Item 2 in the above table out of 35 (100%) respondent replied that 5(14.28%) of female respondent replied that there is a family support to continue athletics as a sport. Whereas 20 (57.14%) of male and 10 (28.57%) of female and totally 85.71% of respondents respond that there is no family support to continue with athletics as a sport.

**TABLE SHOWING ITEM 3- 6 RESPONDENT RESPOND ON SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP**

No	Item: 3-6	No. of Athletes (N=35)			
		Male	%	Female	%
1.	Do you discuss athletes with colleague's athletics of the Eastern Region Athletics training camp?				
	Yes	17	48.57%	11	31.42
	No	3	8.57%	4	11.42
2.	Is there an athlete in your family?				
	Yes	2	5.71	8	22.85



	No	18	51.42	7	20
3.	Who push you to be an athlete?				
	Family	2	5.71	3	8.57
	Friends	5	14.28	6	17.14
	Myself	10	28.87	5	14.28
	By famous athletes	3	8.57	1	2.85
4.	Do you approach your coach without any fear?				
	Yes	5	14.28	6	17.14
	No	15	42.85	9	25.71

Item 3 According to the above table out of 35 (100%) of respondent 17 (48.57%) male and 11 (31.42%) of female and totally 79.99% of respondent respond/ relied that they discuss with each other about athletics as a sport. Whereas 3 (8.57%) of male and 4(14.42%) of female and totally 19.99% of respondents respond that they do not discuss with each other about athletics as a sport.

Item 4: In the same table above out of 35 (100%) of respondents replied that there is an athlete in their family. Whereas 18 (51.42%) of male and 7 (20%) of female and totally 71.42% of respondent replied that there is no athletics in their family.

Item 5: According to the above out of 35 (100%) of respondent 2(5.71%) of male and 3 (8.57%) of female and totally 14.28% of respond that family push them to be an athlete(s).

In the same question on the above table. 5 (14.28%) of male and 6 (17.14%) of female and totally 31.42% of respondent replied that friends push them to be an athlete (s).





In the same table in the same question. 10 (28.57%) of male and 5 (14.28%) of female and totally 42.85% of respondent respond that they push themselves into athletics. Whereas 3(8.57%) of male and 1 (2.85%) of female and totally 11.42%of respondents respond/ replied that they were incited by appreciating famous athletics.

Item 6: As indicated/ shown in the above table out of 35 (100%) of respondent 5 (14.28%) of male and 6 (17.14%) of female and totally 31.42% of respondents respond/ replied that they approach their coach without any fear.

**TABLE SHOWING ITEM 7- 8 RESPONDENT RESPOND ON SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP**

No	Item: 7- 8	No. of Athletes (N=35)			
		Male	%	Female	%
1.	What is the relationship between you and your coach?				
	Good	7	20	7	20
	Bad	-	-	-	-
	Medium	13	37.14	8	22.85
2.	Do you know official of your training camp?				
	Yes	14	40	6	17.14
	No	6	17.14	9	25.71



Item 7: As shown in the above table out of 35 (100%) respondent 7 (20%) of male and 7 (20%) 0 female and totally 40% of respondent replied that there is a good relationship between themselves and their coach. Whereas 13 (37.14%) of male and 8 (22.85%) of female and totally 59.99% of respondent replied that there is medium relationship between them and their coach.

Item 8: According to the above table out of 35 (100%) of respondent 14(40%) of male and 6 (17.14%) of female and totally 57.14% of respondent replied that they know the officials of respondents do not know the officials of the Eastern Region Athletes training camp.

## RESULTS

**Athletes Coach Relationship:** observation took place in six hours per week and one hour for each observation in different days. Concerning Coach and Athletes relationship showed bad because the trainees fear to approach Coaches.

**Group Communication & Discussion:** The information from the above item showed bad communication and discussion because most athletes sit separately or in group discussing non sporting issues.

**Coach consideration on the Athletes:** information of the above item indicated badly because the Coach did not guide the athletes according to their individual differences and did not consider their Cultural Social and Environmental aspect.

**Experience sharing between Athletes:** implied that there were six observations that took place in different days about the above item while it showed bad because the elite's athletes never shared their experiences and no one thought of experience sharing.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study revealed that athletes are not encouraged by their parents to continue athletics as sports, which indicate that athletes approach coaches with fear and athlete-coach relationship is medium in Eastern Region.



The findings showed that emotional and tangible supports have to reduce depression and informational support is related to positive morale. Alvan et al 1996). For adolescents, family support is the most important element in their lives. As part of their growth experience, adolescents usually expect a lot of things from their parents. Inadequate support from the parents will likely increase the chance of getting depression among adolescents who get into unfortunate situation with their parents. This occurs because adolescent usually become confused when they expect to get plenty of help and positive reinforcement from their parents, but it does not happen (Stice, Ragan, & Randall, 2004).

Beside family support, peer support also is very important factor for adolescents. Children can expect a lot from their friends. Peer support can be considered as an alternate method of getting social support if the adolescents receive inadequate attention from their parents (Stice et al., 2004).

The study showed that there is no good relationship, group discussion and experience sharing amongst athletes in the Region.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Coach should co-ordinate the trainees with experience and no experience athletes to share experience with each other.

The family members should support their athletes financially, morally and socially to continue enhancing athletic as a sport in the Region.

Instructors should consider individual differences for trainees and design or arrange reasonable discussion in relation to athletics interest.



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