

Identification of Athlete Transfer Problematic Experiences toward the Social Adaptation Ability in Female Futsal Athletes

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Abstract Background: Transfers between clubs do not constantly occur successfully. Things that affect athletes' performance involve not only technique, tactics, and physique, but the psycho-social aspect which is also very influential for talent development. **Purpose:** This study tried to identify problematic experiences faced by female athletes during transfer periods from one club to another and identify psychological skills that contribute to successful social adaptation. **Design/methodology/approach:** The research sample included 24 female futsal athletes who had played in the highest futsal league in Indonesia (aged 17-31 years; average = 24 years, SD = 3.04) and had joined numerous different clubs (coach range 3-8; average= 4, SD= 1.47). These athletes underwent semi-structured interviews about their experiences embedded during the transitions between clubs. This research applied a qualitative approach to identify the problematic experiences of the samples and their adaptability skills during the transfer periods. **Results and Conclusion:** (1) the athletes found it easier to adapt to their new clubs as their mutation rates increased, (2) the research identified four components of problematic experience with coaches, three components of problematic experience with teammates, one component of problematic experience with study, four components of problematic experience with the club, and three components of problematic experience with family.

Keywords Problematic Experiences, Futsal, Club Transfers, Social Adaptation, Psycho-Social

1. Introduction

Sport is any activity that involves the brain, body, and emotions in a holistic and systematic way to stimulate, cultivate, and develop physical, mental, cultural, and social capacity [1]. Sports have several types, including individual and team sports. When seen from the career of a team sports athlete, athlete transfer between clubs is one of the keys to success in his team. This transfer can impact both the athlete and the team. However, the influence of a new connection brought about by a club transfer is still overlooked in modern sports psychology [2].

Athlete transfers are essential to note and study [3]–[6] and are one of many policies that can be used to get the desired medal in a sports championship [7]. In China, there is a study on transfer policy in the context of the development of elite/ amateur sports written by Tien Chin Tan et al. in 2019. Although transfer policies might be helpful, they can sometimes have unexpected consequences. Consequently, the support of the groups or people engaged in this process is necessary for transfer policies to function [3].

Transfers have varied degrees of success, ranging from entire success to catastrophic failure. This result may be discovered by concentrating on the athlete experience evaluation, which is one of the most important components of analyzing transfer outcomes and staff member assessments. In reality, players frequently assess themselves while determining the success of a move.

Each athlete has the right to make a transfer [5], for various reasons, such as changing the location of education or employment, following his or her spouse, or simply for the athlete's welfare. However, its implementation often causes problems, one of which is problems in social adaptation during the transition period (the beginning of joining the new club). Transfers themselves can change the relationship of the athletes to their sporting environment.

Adaptation is a set of psychosocial steps that influence the athlete's engagement with the new environment. Adaptation is the process by which an unfamiliar environment is transformed into a familiar and intimate scenario that may be explored in depth via the world of athletes and athletes [2], [8] meaning that adaptation in transfers, the environment influences the athletes, as well as the athletes significantly adjust their surroundings to reestablish a sense of balance. Studies on adaptation in athlete transfers have been widely conducted, for example, studies by [8]–[11]. Because of the fluid nature and ambiguity of the interaction among athletes and their environment, their adaptation version illustrates the notion of players as active participants in their surroundings. This adaptability might result in incompatibility in a variety of unsettled conditions, eventually leading players out of the dynamics of the sports system [12]–[14].

Athletes' careers or experience is one of the critical factors in the success rate of a team sport [15]. Many loyal athletes spend all their careers at the same club, but few move from one club to another through a process that we often call athlete transfers [16]. This transfer is a significant event in most professional team sports [6].

Athlete quality is also one of the essential features that determine the failure or success of a sports team [17]. The variety of factors contributing to the athletes' performance, along with the financial limitations inherent in the club, has turned the selection of athletes into a complex issue [6], so many clubs take the instant way by carrying out athlete transfers. Athlete transfers often aim to make the quality of the team stronger so that the team will have a greater chance of winning [4].

Game experiences and personality influence the athletes' quality [18]. If this transfer is successful, it can be attributed to positive development, positive well-being, and successful sports performance development [19], [20]. Conversely, a problematic experience in a new environment can lead to almost no contact with the rest of the athletes, thus bringing a series of demands that are usually rated as an athlete stress trigger [21]. Not only with athletes but many environmental components, such as poor interaction with coaches, also cause adaptation problems in

athlete transfers [22].

Transfers can also be seen in various frameworks of social psychology that have explored the dynamic features of life transformations [23]. The worst impact caused by transfers is that they interfere with the athlete's development, for example, when an athlete experiences a reduction in playing time, Transfers may thus be defined as a process of change triggered by their separation, with the goal of achieving a new continuous fit between the individual and their present environment [3].

Adaptation in transfers carried out by athletes can be linked to an athlete's skills because, in this study, the necessary transfers are psycho-social adaptation processes, so researchers call them social adaptation skills [24]. Thus, social adaptation abilities are the capability developed throughout transfers to effectively adapt to unfavorable events [16].

The hypothesis in this study claimed that psychosocial processes require specific skills. This is due to the fact that adapting efficiently and successfully accomplishing mutations are competences in the distinctiveness of the sports environment. Meanwhile, this study aimed to uncover difficult situations encountered by athletes while transferring from team to team, as well as psychological abilities that lead to success in performing social adaptation skills. To achieve this goal, researchers designed a qualitative study that identified valuable inter-team transfer experiences by interviewing athletes who had moved between numerous clubs.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used a qualitative research approach, including semi-structured interviews. [25], [26] claim that qualitative investigations should exhibit "methodological coherence," which necessitates continuity as evidence across research topics, epistemological, and ontological perspectives. This epistemological viewpoint is founded on a self-organized human ontology centered on the notion of human beings as generating their settings and conditions, in their uniqueness, by selecting what is significant to them among several options [27], [28]. This perspective also points to experiential analysis as one of the pillars of a dormant understanding of how people construct situations and conditions for themselves [13]. This viewpoint may be achieved by examining what is carried in context along with what is relevant to the individual.

This study used purposive sampling techniques to determine the sample, who were 24 female futsal athletes who had played in Indonesia's highest futsal league and had experienced changing clubs at least 3x. Before starting the interview process, the researcher explained the purpose and benefits of this study to each participant. After all, participants were given details about the research and requested to fill out an informed permission letter stating their willingness to participate.

The interviews were conducted individually using semi-structured interview guides. The interview guide was conceptually oriented on the athlete's chronology, incorporating every move from team to team to enable an in-depth comprehension of the nuances of individual experiences concerning specific features of each team's environment.

The interview guide in this study duplicated the guidance proposed by [29], [30] which included (1) the opening question; (2) preliminary questions aimed at attracting the attention of participants and introducing topics and explaining their relevance to research; (3) key/core questions, focused on answering research objectives such as “do you think this experience of switching clubs poses a problem for you?” and “What valuable experience did you find when you went through the transfer process?”; (4) transition questions about moving from one club to another, such as, “Compared to before is there a difference in the change in experience now with previous experience?”; (5) closing/ending inquiries that required participants to participate on the entire debate and argue over the study's key topic, which in the end, the researcher asked for the athletes to rate their transfer experiences, and whether they considered that the transfer was successful or problematic (Conclusion of the whole). The interview guide included a set of experience domains and aspects that were mirrored in six essential primary introductory inquiries, as follows:

Table 1. Key Introductory Questions

| No | Question |
|----|---|
| 1 | What would you say about your relationship with the coach? |
| 2 | How would you characterize your friendship with your teammates? |
| 3 | How would you refer to this process of being apart from your family? |
| 4 | What was your overall impression of the club? |
| 5 | What words would you use to characterize adjusting to the coaching style? |
| 6 | How did you adjust to the coaching benchmarks? |

3. Results

Among the 24 interview results with the female futsal athletes, the researchers only selected the data that showed problematic situations during a club transfer. Therefore, the analyzed data consisted of 24 problematic experiences cases with teammates, 29 problematic experiences cases with coaches, 12 problematic experiences cases with family, 6 problematic experiences cases with study and 22 problematic experiences cases with the club. Each recognized experience (i.e., if something is valuable and what has been done) was classified into broader categories. The age of the athletes in this study was 24 ± 3.04

(mean \pm SD). The average of the athletes who performed a club transfer was 4 ± 1.47 (mean \pm SD). The researchers then summarized the various sorts of bad encounters that players had while transferring from team to team. They reported upon the adaptability skills/adaptation processes implemented by athletes in these situations according to their experience. Below are the results of interviews conducted by the researchers:

3.1. Valuable Problematic Experiences with Teammates

The analysis results regarding the valuable problematic experiences are grouped into three sub-categories: negative assumptions about others, respect, and emotions.

Negative Perceptions of Others

In other instances, athletes sought to withdraw because they didn't feel welcomed by their new teammates in their new club. *“I feel that this new team of mine has a group within this group. Some athletes want to get along and play with their groups or close friends on and off the field.”*

Respect

There have been reported cases of athletes seeking respect, even arguably “respectful mad”, as expressed by athletes: *“I was a ‘new person’ on the team, and knowing there were athletes who stood out before I was, those athletes wanted to be respected. However, he felt compelled after I was on this team and did not accept my presence.”*

Language

As Indonesia is rich in cultures, tribes, and nations, there are differences in speaking accents that sometimes lead to problematic experiences. For example, Javanese people are smoother and softer in speaking, while Sumatrans speak more firmly and high-pitched. So, there is often miss communication between athletes. Javanese athletes consider that they are often hit by snaps, anger, and harsh words from their teammates who are originally from Sumatra.

“I feel like I am often yelled at in communicating on the field, which makes me upset and emotional and disrupts my game on the field.”

3.2. Valuable Problematic Experiences with Coaches

This category comprises bad situations resulting from the coach's expectations and management style. The problematic experience of the coach and athlete relationship is explained as follows: inequality/favouritism, obeying orders, difficulty combining sports and other lives/problems with his personality, reduced playing time, lack of structured training and pressure to perform well.

Inequality/favouritism

Some athletes highlighted inequality that hampered their

adaptation process, such as *“The coach has a personal relationship with his athletes and those he treats as the favourites on the team. Of course, the coach wants the best for his favourite athletes.”*

Obeying Orders

The athletes admitted that in order to adjust to a new team environment, they created a unique approach to following commands or directions. Some athletes described troubling experiences with complying to or accepting instructions, as well as finding reasoning to defend their sentiments and egos. An athlete said, *“I’m a critical person, so every time a coach instructs me to do something I do not like or can’t, I’ll be stubborn and don’t want to do it instantly. This attitude is one of the reasons the coach doesn’t trust me, so the coach chooses athletes who can follow his instructions. Thus, my playing time was reduced. I thought I couldn’t do it because it was beyond my ability, feeling forced to have the skills that the coach wanted.”*

Reduced Playtime

The athletes reported that reduced playing time caused negative upsets in line with emotional reactions such as anger, crying, and frustration. These feelings make the athletes less self-confident, have high anxiety, and reduced motivation. *“I was a mainstay or core athlete in my last team, but I am now in a higher-level team that gives me new challenges. Even the competition is tougher to become an athlete in the starting list. Unfortunately, I am the person who harbors a sense of disappointment, which makes me feel frustrated and declines my self-confidence.”*

3.3. Valuable Problematic Experiences with Study

This problem provides a general theme related to difficulty of combining sports and other lives:

The Difficulty of Combining Sports and Other Lives

This difficulty occurs when athletes have to choose between their achievements or studies. This study also examined female athletes who have a menstrual period every month. They consider the period was distracting and made them more sensitive.

“I am a female student and also a professional athlete in the sport of futsal. There are times when I will go to training, which is the same time as going to college. Even if it is not at the same time, I have to practice futsal for approximately 3 hours, then 8-12 hours I spend on lectures. I feel really exhausted because of my little rest time.”

3.4. Valuable Problematic Experiences with Family

This problem provides a general theme related to distance, lack of family time, and family support conflict.

Distance

Some athletes experienced problematic feelings regarding distance from family. *“I feel a sense of longing for being away from my family. I had to go around Indonesia depending on the host of the match. Even when I was in the Training Center (TC) for almost two months, I couldn’t go back home because I had to focus on training.”*

Lack of Family Time

There are some players who did not have much time to interact with their families.

“Every time I move to a better club, there is a consequence that I have to train harder with a higher training frequency. With these demands, my free time is very limited, so my opportunities to contact my parents and even meet my parents are also very limited. This disturbed my mind while practicing...”

Family Support Conflict

One athlete felt he did not get support from his parents because he often made transfers.

“My parents think I have potential in the academic field and expect me to continue my studies at a higher level. Because I often made club transfers, it made me not settle in one place, eventually limited and disrupted my opportunities to continue my studies. That’s why my parents did not support me in the transfers among clubs...”

3.5. Valuable Problematic Experiences with Club

Lack of Facilities

Bad club facilities affected the adaptability of the athletes. *“The club does not have its own futsal field, so it has to rent a standard field for training. But the problem is that the rented field is far from the athletes’ dormitory or lodging place, increasing fatigue.”*

Lack of Support

The lack of support in this case, was due to a lack of funds or budget. For professional women’s clubs in Indonesia, getting sponsorship from well-known companies is still difficult. *“I once travelled between islands by land, spending two days and one night. Whereas at the previous club, I got good transport, took a flight, and left long before the game, so I had a good rest period before so as not to feel excessive fatigue.”*

Late Salary

Some athletes reported that they had experienced salaries being paid late by club management. *“I have an experience where the club is in arrears for giving my salary until the competition is over it has not been paid... yes about 3-5 months my salary has never been paid for that long...”*

Pressure to Perform

Some athletes reported that the club’s management had high targets and thought highly about results without thinking about the athletes’ performances. *“I am now in a higher-level team than my previous one that is not targeting champions. I have a target for the champion in this new team, making me adapt quickly to the existing pressures.”*

3.6. Adaptability Skills

The researchers summarized the types of adaptability actions (what they do or their responses) and the related skills athletes use during the move from club to club. Below is a conceptual act of adaptability to athletes’ problematic experiences during club transfers:

Table 2. Types of Actions and Skills Adaptability of Futsal Athletes in Mutated Clubs

| Problematic experiences | Adaptability measures | Adaptability skills |
|---|---|---|
| Coach | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced playing time. • Difficulty combining sports & other life domains. • Obeying orders • Inequality/favouritism between athletes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to balance between sports and other domains of life using challenges for progress • Knowing the motivations for sports participation (intrinsic, competitiveness). • Willing to be disciplined. • Willing to interact. • Willing to accept the challenge (sense of involvement). • Accepts the challenge of moving forward. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline. • Interpersonal skills. • Motivation/confidence. • Think positive. • Goal setting. • Self-organization. • Self-confidence |
| Teammates | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative presumptions towards others. • Language • Respect/seniority. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect each other • Willingness to interact with teammates • Understanding each other in communication and being able to distinguish which shouting or yelling is intended for the good of the team. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal skills |
| Study | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Difficulty of Combining Sports and Other Lives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time discipline • Willingness to never give up and always be passionate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High motivation • Willingness to always develop |
| Clubs/Teams | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities and logistics are lacking. • Lack of support. • Late salary. • Pressure to perform (target is too high, and only thinking about results). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the hard moments with positivity • Willingness to step out of the comfort zone • Communicate and be patient • Accept challenges to develop | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive thinking. • Motivation/Confidence |
| Family | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance • Lack of Family Time • Family support conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for their own developments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-discipline, motivation/confidence |

4. Discussion

This study aimed to identify problematic experiences faced by athletes during the transfer period and identify the psychological skills contributing to achieving success in social adaptation skills. However, the purpose of this study is not to just test hypotheses, but rather to develop unique knowledge (facts) out of athletes' psycho-social abilities. Some of the points obtained in this study were: (1) as the transfer rate of athletes increases from other clubs, it is easier for athletes to adapt to new clubs; (2) and in this study, researchers succeeded in identifying various problems, namely four components of problematic experience with coaches, three components of problematic experience with teammates, four components of problematic experience with the club, and two components of problematic experience with family.

Based on these results, this study supports several previous researches stating that as athletes often make transfers between clubs, their adaptation process becomes easier [31], [32]. Athletes arrive at a new team with expectations of what is doable and what might be accepted. For example, inequality or favouritism among athletes manifested by the coach is one of the aspects that some athletes cannot accept [16]. As a result, the difficulties of transferring at a greater team involve frustration tolerance over acceptable standards and receptivity or the capability to absorb and apply new information. Frustration, tolerance, as well as openness to new experiences, are associated with the athlete's personality [33], [34]. These aspects play a decisive role in players' adaptation to the constraints of transfer. When people perform well in these areas, they appear to be at ease when confronted with this sort of issue, despite the fact that they've never faced one before.

Another study that validates the results of this investigation is the research conducted by [2] which reveals that athletes' perceptions of fundamental psychological necessities fulfillment often serve to moderate their relationship with the manager. The coach's leadership style influences how athletes adapt to their new club. Nevertheless, it all comes back to the athlete's personality, whether to move forward to accept new things or stay on what has already been achieved. Quoting from the results of interviews that researchers conducted, some participants revealed that they did not want to obey the orders of their coaches. They considered that the direction of their coach was not the right thing for them, so the athlete was not in line with the pattern of play that the coach gave.

In addition to the research conducted by [35], [36] regarding sports performance, the relationship among colleagues in a team affects the adaptation process, which is a framework for understanding how relational teammates impact one other through mutual incentives. As a result, it is critical to cultivate excellent connections among teammates in order to assist players to deal with stress, stimulate skills and abilities growth, adapt through

transfers, and strengthen social ties so that the club's vision and goal may be realized ideally and well.

A club/organization has a variety of cultures and values, each of which has its characteristics. Thus, the club/organization plays a vital role in developing talent concerning inter-club transfers [37], [38]. Thus, the environment in which athletes play or train can significantly affect their development. In this study, researchers found that athletes who were generally motivated and had positive thoughts could adapt during club transfers even though they had to endure many challenges.

Family is the first place for developing identity, social and cultural skills, and language [39]. Since they were born, humans learn almost everything by imitating the habits or behaviours of the adults around them [40]. In other words, the family becomes the main determining factor in forming human character early on [41]. Furthermore, the interactions among individuals within the family have a mutually binding nature. The relationship between them can be strong or weak, depending on the interaction [42]. In sports, a family plays an essential role in socializing the individual into sport [43].

Meanwhile, relationships or bonds established in the family will affect the individual's psychology in dealing with various problems that arise in the new environment (related to his exercise practice) [44]. Support, encouragement, motivation, and positive things from the family can improve the athlete's psychology in solving these problems [45]. However, too strong a bond can lead to an athlete's dependence on the family [46]. A great desire to meet, accompanied by the need for moral support, can cause athletes to have difficulty solving the problems that occur [47]. This condition often happens when a new athlete adapts to a new environment (club or organization) [48]. The athlete loses control of himself and feels dependent on his family. As a result, athletes feel longing and want to go home quickly, thus affecting the process of social adaptation skills [49].

From the various problems described above, this research obtained some points about the actions taken by athletes to solve the problems they face. The points include balancing sports and other domains of life, using challenges for progress, recognizing the motivations for sports participation (intrinsic competitiveness), being willing to be disciplined, interact, accept challenges (sense of involvement), and accept challenges to move forward.

Ultimately, these actions provide solutions or results that encourage athletes' adaptability capabilities. Athletes' adaptability to new environments can be seen by increasing athletes' skills in terms of discipline, interpersonal, motivation/self-confidence, positive thinking, goal setting, self-organization and self-confidence according to the challenges being faced.

Many things limit this kind of qualitative study; namely, the results of these findings take work to generalize. Then when the interview was conducted, the researcher did not

know whether the thing said was the honest answer. The participants' semi-structured interviews involved retrospective memories and were thus subject to memory bias (forgetting of the memory).

5. Conclusions

In Conclusion, this qualitative approach has identified some problematic experiences that force athletes to overcome adaptation by developing specific actions. The study showed that as the rate of transfer of athletes from club-to-club increases, it becomes easier for athletes to adapt to their new clubs. For future study, the researchers recommend selecting a more varied, experienced, and broader representative of population sample.

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