



Investigation of the Perceived Coaching Behavior and Competency: A Viewpoint of Female Karate Players in Pakistan

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Abstract: This study investigated how female karate players in Pakistan perceived coaching behavior and competency, focusing on how these perceptions influenced goal setting and mental readiness. The research highlighted the critical role of coaching quality in shaping athlete development, especially in culturally sensitive, male-dominated sports environments. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used. Data were collected via structured questionnaires. The study confirmed that coaching behavior and competency significantly influenced female karate athletes' goal setting and mental readiness in Pakistan, leading to improved performance. Coaches who provided motivational support, clear guidance, and individualized feedback were perceived as more competent, leading to improved psychological preparedness and performance of the players. These findings reinforced the relevance of leadership and motivation theories within female martial arts contexts. The study highlights the need for gender sensitive coaching training, increased inclusion of female coaches, and the integration of psychological support strategies for the players. It also suggests recruiting and training more female coaches, implementing athlete feedback systems, adopting holistic coaching strategies, and developing supportive policies to foster a safe and empowering environment for female karate players in Pakistan.

Key Words: Coaching Behavior, Coaching Competency, Female Karate Players, Pakistan

Introduction

Sports have become a source of empowerment and social change worldwide, especially for women. Female athletes were increasingly breaking barriers in traditionally male-dominated fields like martial arts, though many still face gender bias, limited facilities, and a lack of psychological support (Tabasum et al., 2024). In such contexts, coaches play a vital role, not just as trainers but also as mentors and motivators who guide the overall growth of female athletes (Atta et al., 2019).

Worldwide, sport has evolved into a vehicle for empowerment, individual advancement, and societal change, notably for women (Hayhurst, 2021). In recent decades, female competitors have decisively dismantled gender obstacles, earning visibility and acclaim in fields long thought male-exclusive, including martial arts (Meier et al., 2021). Nonetheless, even in the face of this achievement, many women still contend with enduring societal pressure like gender bias, limited access to rigorous training facilities, and a lack of specialized psychological support (Tabasum et al., 2024). Coaches not only play the role of mere skill trainers to serve as advisors, sources of motivation, but also advocates for the holistic advancement of female athletes (Imeson, 2017).

Like many other sports, female participation in martial arts like karate was still lower than male participation in South Asian countries (Mandakathingal, 2021). The increasing number of women entering combat sports reflects broader societal change, increased awareness of women's rights, and the recognition of sports as a tool for empowerment

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(Yang, 2025). Research suggests that in high-pressure, performance-oriented sports like karate, athlete success depends not only on physical training but also on psychological readiness, goal clarity, and the quality of coaching support (Smith & Smoll, 2017). Effective coaching, characterised by emotional intelligence, technical competency, and motivational leadership, can foster resilience, confidence, and long-term engagement among athletes (Putriani et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, women's sports participation remains constrained by deeply rooted cultural values and gender stereotypes, despite gradual progress. While male athletes received comparatively greater support, resources, and visibility, female athletes often face societal resistance, limited access to qualified coaches, and underrepresentation in competitive platforms. Nevertheless, martial arts, especially karate, have emerged as a growing avenue for female empowerment in Pakistan (Sotiriadou & De Haan, 2019). Pakistani women were now competing and succeeding at district, provincial, and even international levels, breaking stereotypes and redefining their roles in society (Bibi et al., 2024).

However, as participation increased, a critical gap in coaching support and understanding became evident. Karate, being both physically demanding and psychologically intense, requires coaches to support athletes not only in technical skill development but also in goal setting, emotional regulation, and mental preparedness. In conservative cultural contexts like Pakistan, coaches also play an essential role in helping female athletes navigate social challenges, including familial expectations and community attitudes. Unfortunately, many female athletes report a lack of psychological support, limited autonomy, and an absence of gender sensitive coaching approaches. A 2022 survey by the Pakistan Karate Federation revealed that 65% of female karate athletes believed their coaches lacked awareness of their specific developmental needs, and only 40% expressed satisfaction with their coaches' overall competency (Barker et al., 2022). Furthermore, nearly 50% of registered female karate players discontinued training after the initial phase due to a lack of support and adverse social pressure (Sarwar, 2024).

These challenges underscore the urgent need to better understand the perceptions female athletes hold about their coaches, particularly in terms of behaviour (e.g., emotional support, goal guidance) and competency (e.g., technical skill, strategic leadership). Theoretical frameworks such as Locke and Latham's Goal Setting Theory (2002) and Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) support the idea that athletes perform better when they set structured goals, feel psychologically supported, and operate in environments that promote autonomy and confidence. However, without the presence of capable and supportive coaches, these conditions are rarely met, especially for women in male-dominated sports environments.

This study aimed to investigate the perceived coaching behaviour and competency among female karate players in Pakistan, and how these perceptions influenced two key indicators of performance goal setting and mental readiness. This study focused on the motivational and psychological factors associated with a coach's perceived inspirational ability and developmental guidance by analysing female athletes using a structured quantitative questionnaire.

Material and Methods

The targeted population of this study were all the female karate players already registered in the Pakistan Karate Federation. According to the Pakistan Karate Federation (2024), there were approximately 706 registered female karate athletes in the country. This included athletes from diverse regions, both urban and rural areas. The study has focused on female players aged 16 and above who have been actively participating in karate for at least one year, ensuring a sufficient level of experience for providing valid and informed responses. The sample size was calculated using standard sampling methods. For a population of this size, a sample size of 250 participants is required to maintain a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 5%. This ensures the sample was representative of the population, capturing diversity across regions and training levels within the country. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select female karate players for the study, ensuring that each participant had an equal chance of being included.

To investigate the perceived coaching behaviour and competency among female karate players in Pakistan, the study adopted two standardised tools. The Coaching Behaviour Scale was developed by Côté et al. (1999), and the Coaching Competency Scale was proposed by Birknerová et al. (2022).

The Departmental Supervisory Research Committee of Social and Administrative Sciences at the University of Haripur (K.P.) formally approved the survey questions and was later sent to the heads of all the registered karate clubs in Pakistan. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize demographic information and key study variables, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. To ensure the reliability of the measurement scales, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each variable. Correlation analysis aids in understanding the strength and direction of relationships involving perceived coaching behavior and coaching competence. Moreover, in female karate players from Pakistan, regression analysis evaluates how various dimensions of coaching behavior predict the level of coaching competency. Statistical techniques assist in the comprehensive analysis of the data and were helpful in hypothesis testing.

Results

Table 1

Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 18	43	17.3%
	18-25	143	57.4%
	26-35	61	24.5%
	Above 35	2	0.8%
Region	Balochistan	143	57.4%
	Punjab	73	29.3%
	Sindh	33	13.3%
	KPK	0	0%
Competitive Level	Local	33	13.3%
	Provisional	26	10.4%
	National	81	32.5%
	International	94	37.8%
Current Level in Karate	Beginner	1	0.4%
	Intermediate	77	30.9%
	Advanced	18	7.2%
	Black Belt	116	46.6%

Table 2

Regression Analysis (Coach Behaviour and Goal Setting)

Model	B	SE B	β	T	P
Constant	1.024	0.102	–	10.001	< .001
Coach Behavior	0.526	0.049	.564	10.730	< .001

$R = .564$, $R^2 = .318$, Adjusted $R^2 = .315$, B = Unstandardized coefficient; SE B = Standard error; β = Standardized coefficient; T = t-value; P = Significance level

Note. Dependent Variable: Goal Setting

The regression analysis shows the relationship between coach behavior and goal setting. Some key aspects are important to understand if the association between the variables is statistically relevant or not. For instance, the value for R Square is 0.318. This shows that only 31.8% of the variance in goal setting can be explained by perceived coaching behaviour. This informs that there are other factors other than coaching behavior that affect goal setting. The value also means that the regression equation may not be able to accurately predict how coaching behavior affects goal setting. Additionally, the correlation between the variables is moderately strong, which also indicates that coaching behavior is not the only variable that affects goal setting.

In terms of regression, the p-value is less than 0.001. This indicates that the result of the regression equation is statistically significant. The regression value 0.526 means that a unit increase in coaching behavior increases goal setting by 0.526 units.

Table 3

Regression Analysis (Coach Behaviour and Mental Readiness)

Model	B	SE B	β	T	P
Constant	0.541	0.126	–	4.277	< .001
Coach Behavior	0.597	0.061	.532	9.863	< .001

$R = .532$, $R^2 = .283$, Adjusted $R^2 = .280$, B = Unstandardized coefficient; SE B = Standard error; β = Standardized coefficient; T = t-value; P = Significance level

Note. Dependent Variable: Mental readiness

The regression analysis shows the relationship between coach behavior and mental readiness. The value for R Square is 0.238. This shows that only 23.8% of variance in mental readiness can be explained by perceived coaching behavior. In this case, there is more room for inclusion of other factors other than coaching behavior that can affect mental readiness. The value also means that the regression equation may not be able to accurately predict how coaching behavior affects mental readiness. Additionally, the correlation between the variables is moderate, which also indicates that coaching behavior does not strongly affect mental readiness.

In terms of regression, the p-value is less than 0.001. This indicates that the result of the regression equation is statistically significant. The regression value 0.597 means that a unit increase in coaching behavior increases mental readiness by 0.597 units.

Table 3

Regression Analysis (Coach Competency and Goal Setting)

Model	B	SE B	β	T	P
Constant	0.488	0.088	–	5.571	< .001
Coach Competency	0.754	0.040	.765	18.689	< .001

$R = .765$, $R^2 = .586$, Adjusted $R^2 = .584$, B = Unstandardized coefficient; SE B = Standard error; β = Standardized coefficient; T = t-value; P = Significance level

Note. Dependent Variable: Goal Setting

The regression analysis shows the relationship between coach competency and goal setting. The value for R Square is 0.586. This shows that only 58.6% of variance in goal setting can be explained by perceived coaching competency. The value may not be very good. But in the context of this study, this shows that coach competency is likely to have the most profound impact on goal setting among female karate athletes in Pakistan. The correlation between the variables is strong, which indicates that coaching behavior has a strong and positive effect on goal setting.

In terms of regression, the p-value is less than 0.001. This informs that the result of regression equation is statistically significant. The regression value 0.754 means that a unit increase in coaching behavior increases goal setting by 0.754 units.

Table 4

Regression Analysis (Coach Behaviour and Mental Readiness)

Model	B	SE B	β	T	P
Constant	0.035	0.120	–	0.288	.773
Coach Competency	0.808	0.055	.681	14.621	< .001

$R = .681$, $R^2 = .464$, Adjusted $R^2 = .462$, B = Unstandardized coefficient; SE B = Standard error; β = Standardized coefficient; T = t-value; P = Significance level

Note. Dependent Variable: Mental readiness

The regression analysis shows the relationship between coach competency and mental readiness. The value for R Square is 0.464. This shows that only 46.4% of variance in mental readiness can be explained by perceived coaching competency. The value is weak and informs that there are other factors that affect mental readiness. The correlation between the variables is moderately strong at 0.681, which indicates that coaching behavior has a moderately strong and positive affect on mental readiness.

In terms of regression, the p-value is less than 0.001. This indicates that the result of the regression equation is statistically significant. The regression value 0.808 means that a unit increase in coaching behavior increases mental readiness by 0.808 units.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine how female karate athletes in Pakistan judge the behaviour and the competency of their coaches and how such judgments relate to two important psychological aspects of athlete performance: goal setting and mental preparedness. The study confirmed that coaching behavior and coaching competency which are both perceived have psychological preparedness before training and competition through a systematic approach to quantitative methodology. These findings reveal that there is a defining principle of coaching that underlines holistic, multidisciplinary learning that incorporates technical education, inspiration, emotional encouragement, and ethical counseling.

The result supports the idea that athletes who had experienced constructive, supportive, and communicative coaching think of their coaches as more skilled, which consequently contributes to their motivation to make specific goals and enhances their psychological readiness to compete. This finding highlights the importance of deliberate coaching activities in promoting the physical and psychological growth of sportsmen particularly in a society that is largely patriarchal and conservative.

The favorable associations between coaching behavior, competency, goal setting, and mental readiness indicate that good coaching is not only limited to technical skills but also to emotional support and effective communication. Not only does such coaching improve athletic performance, but also improves the confidence, focus, and stress management of athletes. This research offered valuable evidence of why competency based coaching plans should be developed to suit female karate players in Pakistan, and help lead to more inclusive and competent sports development programs.

In general, the research highlighted that empowering female karate athletes, increasing their competitive performance, and overcoming cultural issues in the Pakistani sports context was impossible without improving coaching practices and coaching competencies.

Recommendations

1. Sport's governing bodies should initiate gender sensitive coaching development programs that emphasize not only technical skills but also psychological support, communication, and goal-setting strategies tailored for female athletes.
2. Efforts should be made to recruit and train more female coaches, particularly in martial arts like karate, to enhance comfort, communication, and mentorship for female athletes.
3. Establishing athlete feedback systems can help coaches continuously improve their behavior and competency based on athlete needs and preferences.
4. Coaches should be trained to adopt holistic strategies that integrate physical, mental, and emotional development, especially considering the sociocultural sensitivities in Pakistan.
5. National and provincial sports authorities should formulate policies that promote a safe, supportive, and empowering environment for female karate players, including coach accountability mechanisms.

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