



Perceptions of Coaches' Behavior and Self-perceived Competence among Japanese Adolescent Football Players : The Effect of Coaches' Expectancy

メタデータ	言語: English 出版者: 北海道教育大学 公開日: 2015-12-22 キーワード: 作成者: 安部, 久貴 メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://doi.org/10.32150/00006363

Perceptions of Coaches' Behaviour and Self-perceived Competence among Japanese Adolescent Football Players

— The Effect of Coaches' Expectancy —

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思春期の日本人サッカー選手における自己有能感水準と 指導者の指導行動認識の関係性

— 指導者の期待の影響 —

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in perceptions of coaches' behaviour between Japanese adolescent football players with high and low self-perceived competence. In addition, this study examined the effect of coaches' expectations on players' self-perceived competence level. Eight players were selected two teams by self-perceived competence level, four of whom demonstrated high and four of whom demonstrated low self-perceived competence. Interviews were conducted to investigate the players' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour. Additionally, two coaches hierarchically ranked their players' football ability. Results showed that the players' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour differed depending on whether they were high or low self-perceive competence players. Results also showed that the coaches' ability ranking of the players did not correspond to the players' self-perceived competence level. These results indicated that the players' initial self-perception seemed to mediate the impact of coaches' expectations on the players' perceived competence.

1. Introduction

In sport settings, a coach's behaviour seems to have a powerful effect on athletes' perceptions of physical competence. Self-perceived competence is related not only to motivation for participating in sports (Weinberg & Gould, 2007) but also self-concepts such as global self-esteem (Ebbeck & Stuart, 1993; Ebbeck & Stuart, 1996; Ebbeck and Weiss, 1998). Hence, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between coaches' behaviour and athletes' perceived competence.

A limited amount of research has examined the relationship between coaches' behaviour and athletes' perceived competence level with the Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS) and questionnaires that modified the CBAS in sport settings (Allen & Howe, 1998; Black & Weiss, 1992; Horn, 1985). Black and Weiss (1992) reported that more frequent praise and praise plus information following successful performance and more frequent encouragement and encouragement plus information after undesirable performance were associated with higher levels of perceived competence. Allen and Howe (1998), however, revealed that more frequent praise combined with information was positively related to perceived competence, whereas greater perceived encouragement plus instruction was negatively associated with perceived competence. Furthermore, the results of Horn's (1985) research indicated that athletes who received frequent reinforcement and non-reinforcement in response to successful performance attempts reported lower in perceived physical competence. In contrast, they found that players who received more frequent criticism after unsuccessful performance scored higher competence perceptions. Although the

results of each study were not consistent, it is clear that the types and frequency of feedback coaches provide to their athletes have an effect on players' perceived competence level. Thus, coaches' expectancy toward each player may influence players' self-perceived competence level.

Horn et al. (2001) stated that there are four steps in a self-fulfilling prophecy, or expectancy theory. At first, coaches form expectations about athletes, and secondly, these expectations affect coaches' behaviour toward each player. Thirdly, athletes' perceptions of differential treatment affect athletes' performance and psychological development such as self-concept. In the last step, athletes' behaviour conformity reinforces the coaches' original expectation.

Previous research has examined the expectancy theory with systematic observational systems such as the CBAS (Horn, 1984; Rejeski et al., 1979; Sinclair & Vealey, 1989; Somolon, 1998; Solomon & Kosmitzki, 1996; Solomon et al., 1998). Most of the research focused on the first two steps of the expectancy theory, and it was revealed that differences in a coaches' expectations caused a difference in the quantity and quality of coaching behaviours between high- and low-expectancy players. For example, although the existence of the expectancy theory has not been made clear at the lower competitive level (Horn, 1984; Rejeski et al., 1979), at the university or elite level, high-expectancy players received more instruction and praise (Solomon et al., 1998) and more specific and evaluative feedback (Sinclair & Vealey, 1989).

Solomon et al. (1996) extended their research to examine athletes' perceptions of differential treatment. They reported that high-expectancy athletes received more feedback, and they also perceived their coaches more positively

compared to low-expectancy athletes in university-level athletics. Additionally, it was also revealed that high-expectancy athletes perceived that their coaches treated them more favourably compared to low-competence players, whereas low-expectancy athletes perceived more negative interactions with their coaches compared to their high-competence counterparts in adolescent athletics (Wilson & Stephens, 2007).

Moreover, Wilson and Stephens (2005) examined the influence of coaches' expectations on athletes' perceptions of performance causation, which was directly related to athletes' psychological characteristics such as self-esteem (Weiss et al., 1990). Inconsistent with the expectancy theory, they revealed that coaches' expectations did not influence athletes' perceptions of the cause of their performance. They reported that there would be differences among players in susceptibility to the effects of expectancy.

With regard to the effects of coaches' expectancy on athletes' perceptions of competence, the expectancy theory might be mediated by competence information sources that athletes' use to evaluate their own competence. Previous research revealed that the age and gender of athletes were related to differences in preference for competence information sources (Horn & Weiss, 1991; Horn et al., 1993). Significantly, they reported a progressive decline in preference for adult feedback to judge performance and an increased preference for peer comparison among 8- to 13-year-old children (Horn & Weiss, 1991). From early to late adolescence (i.e., 14 to 18 years), the preference for competence information source changed from evaluative feedback from peers to a self-comparison process, internal information, and self-determined performance standards

(Horn et al., 1993).

In addition, it was reported that psychological characteristics influenced the preference for competence information sources (Horn & Hasbrook, 1987; Weiss et al., 1997). Specifically, children with internal perception of control showed greater orientation toward the use of self-determined standards and peer comparison as primary means of evaluating their own competence (Horn & Hasbrook, 1987). Weiss et al. (1997) extended Horn and Hasbrook's (1987) study by investigating the relationships among children's ages, individual psychological characteristics, and sources of competence information. They reported that the preferences for competence information that children used to evaluate their physical competence were related to age and psychological characteristics. Significantly, children higher in perceived competence and self-esteem and lower in trait anxiety used self-referenced and parental evaluation to evaluate ability, whilst children lower in perceived competence and self-esteem and higher in trait anxiety used social comparison and evaluation.

Initial self-concepts such as high or low self-perceived competence level may also influence the effects of coaches' expectations on each athlete's perceptions of competence. According to Swann (1987), people are basically motivated to verify their self-conceptions, which is called self-verification theory. Significantly, Swann et al. (1987) investigated both positive and negative self-concept individuals' cognitive responses to favourable and unfavourable feedback. Results showed that those with positive self-concepts who received favourable feedback considered the feedback as particularly self-descriptive, whereas those with negative self-concepts who received unfavourable

feedback considered the feedback as mainly self-descriptive. In addition, Swann and Read (1981) found that individuals who perceived themselves as likable remembered more positive statements, whilst those who saw themselves as unlikable remember more negative statements when they listened to another person making a series of positive or negative statements. The results of this research seemed to indicate that coaches' feedback was selectively interpreted and retained by athletes consistent with their initial self-concepts. That is, the effect of coaches' expectancy on athletes' self-perceived competence may be mediated by athletes' initial level of self-perceived competence.

Collins and Stukas (2006), who investigated the effects of personality feedback from psychotherapists to clients, revealed that attitudes toward therapists may determine how people respond to feedback. They reported that positive attitudes lead to greater acceptance of self-consistent and self-inconsistent feedback, whereas participants with negative attitudes seemed to reject even self-consistent feedback. That is, attitudes toward the sender of the feedback seemed to mediate the effect of self-verification.

With regard to athletes' attitudes toward coaches, Smith et al. (1983) examined the relationships between coaching behaviours and children's attitudes. Results showed that coaching behaviour accounted for about 50% of the variance in attitude toward the sport and the coach. Additionally, it was also reported that mistake-contingent technical instruction was positively related to liking the coach and the sport, whilst punishment was negatively linked with disliking the coach. Moreover, Smith and Smoll (1990) reported that children with low self-esteem responded most positively to highly

supportive and instructive coaches and most negatively to poorly supportive and instructive coaches.

These coaches' behaviour, however, which have a positive effect on players' attitudes toward their coaches, may differ between Eastern and Western cultures because preferred leadership behaviours are different between these two cultures. Chelladurai et al. (1987) examined the existence of cultural differences in preferred leadership in physical education classes for Japanese and Canadian university students. Specifically, it was revealed that Japanese students preferred a greater degree of socially supportive and democratic leadership than Canadian students. Moreover, Chelladurai et al. (1988) extended the study to the university competitive level and reported that Japanese athletes preferred more autocratic and socially supportive leadership, whereas the Canadian athletes preferred more training and instructional behaviour. In general, Eastern cultures insist on the fundamental relatedness of human beings to each other, whilst Western cultures neither assure nor value such relatedness among individuals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, the results seem to reflect cultural differences.

In order to investigate the relationship between coaches' behaviour and athletes' self-perceived competence, this study focused on the relationship between athletes' perceptions of coaches' behaviour and the effect of coaches' expectancy on Japanese adolescent male football players. The primary purpose of this study was to identify whether players with high and low self-perceived competence perceived their coaches' behaviour differently. Furthermore, this study examined whether coaches' expectancy, which is based on coaches' judgement of

players' ability, corresponded with players' level of self-perceived competence.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Thirty-four Japanese male football players aged 13–15 years were initially screened for self-perceived football-related competence. They came from teams of different age groups, Under 14 (U-14) and Under 15 (U-15), from one local club. From this, four players were selected from each team, two who demonstrated high self-perceived competence and two who demonstrated low self-perceived competence. U-14 had 21 players, and U-15 had 13.

Each team had been independently trained by two different male coaches. One coach was 55 years old with four years coaching experience and trained U-14 for nine months. The other coach was 40 years old with 20 years coaching experience and trained U-15 for two years and three months.

A coding system for quotation attributions was used to guarantee the participants' anonymity. The capital letters HC were used to indicate a high-competence player, and LC was used to indicate a low-competence player.

2.2. Instrumentation

2.2.1. Players' Self-perceptions of Competence

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to select two high- and two low-competence players from each team. Nicaise et al. (2006) modified Hater's self-perception of competence measure to gauge students' perceived physical competence in a physical education context. He reported that the items that he used possessed strong face validity, and in reliability, the alpha coefficient of

the measure was .89. Thus, their questionnaire was adopted by substituting 'soccer' for 'physical education', making the questionnaire specific to competence in football, and then utilised as the competence questionnaire in this research. The specific items included (a) 'How good do you think you are in football?' (not good at all to very good); (b) 'Are you satisfied with your performance in football?' (not at all to very much); (c) 'How skilled do you think you are compared with your teammates?' (not good at all to very much); and (d) 'Are you self-confident in football?' (not at all to very much). Participants were requested to respond to each item on a seven-point scale, and the mean score of the four items indicated each player's self-perceived competence score, with higher scores reflecting higher perception of competence. This questionnaire was translated from English into Japanese by the author, and the accuracy of the translation was checked by another Japanese researcher.

2.2.2. Interview Guide

Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview, which was conducted by the author in Japanese. Each interview began with several questions requesting background information (e.g., How old are you? When did you start playing football? How long have you been with this team? Where is your position in a game?). After this series of questions, the interviewer focused on how players' perceived their coaches' behaviour in training, during games, and in off-the-pitch situations because Cote et al. (1995) revealed that coaches have an important role in developing athletes, not only in training and competition situations but in organisational situations. At first, the players were asked to describe their perceptions of

their coaches' behaviour after playing well in training situations. Then they were asked to explain how they felt about their coaches' reactions by answering the following questions: How does your coach react to your performance when you play well in training sessions? How do you feel when you see and hear these coach's reactions in training sessions? After these questions, the players were also asked to describe their perceptions of their coaches' behaviour after playing badly in training situations. Then they were asked how they felt about their coaches' reactions by answering the following questions: How does your coach react to your performance when you play badly in training sessions? How do you feel when you see and hear these coach's reactions in training sessions? Then the players were asked some structured questions about in-game situations. With regard to off-the-pitch situations, the following questions investigated how the coaches interact with their players during off-the-pitch situations and how the players feel about their coaches' behaviour: How does your coach interact with you in a situation that is not directly related to training and games? How do you feel about these behaviours?

2.2.3. Coaches' Ranking of Players' Ability

At the end of the research, each team's coach was asked to rank their players football ability hierarchically from most able to least able, based on their team's overall ability level. In other research (Rejeski et al., 1979; Sinclair & Vealey, 1989; Solomon et al., 1996; Solomon et al., 1998), ability rankings were utilised as a measure to reflect the coach's expectancy for each player. These were completed independently.

2.3. Procedure

One Japanese local-level football club was contacted and invited to participate in this study. Ethical approval for the study was given in accordance with university procedures. As all the participants were minors, consent was sought from each participant's parents. Permission was given for participants to take part in all phases of the study.

The first part of the data-collection process involved the players completing the competence questionnaire, which took less than one minute to complete. From the results of the questionnaire, four high- and four low-competence players were selected from the club. Then, the selected players were asked to take part in interview sessions, which focused on the players' perception of their coaches' behaviour. The schedule of the interview sessions were designed to fit with each team's and player's schedule. All interviews were conducted in a conference room, and each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Following completion of the interview sessions, the coaches were asked to rank each player's football ability. The players and coaches were guaranteed that all information would be treated confidentially and that all ratings would remain anonymous.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis guidelines that were suggested by authors such as Strauss and Corbin (1998), Cote et al. (1993), and Cote and Salmela (1994) were followed for data analysis. In order to organise and interpret the interview transcripts, the research was done using the cut-up-and-put-in-folders approach, which was proposed by Bodgan and Biklen (1982, cited in Cote et al.,

1993).

The primary purpose of the analysis was to identify differences in perception of coaches' behaviour between players with high and low self-perceived competence. Several processes played important roles in analysing the interview transcripts. The first step of the analysis involved dividing the interview transcripts into meaningful pieces of information called *meaning units* (MU) and creating tags that adequately represent the information included in each MU. The second step of the analysis involved listing and comparing the tags derived in the first step to form sub-categories. Tags with similar meanings were gathered together to create distinct sub-categories, which were referred to as *properties* (Cote et al., 1993), and a label that described the substance of the topic was created for each property. Third, those properties were compared to organise them into larger and more inclusive categories. Next, the categories were grouped together as components. Finally, after identification of the MU, properties, categories, and components, the similarities and uniqueness of each property were re-analysed to find the dimensions for each property. Providing dimensions for properties was useful for comparing how players with high and low self-perceived competence perceived their coaches' behaviour because dimensions locate the property along a continuum or range (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

2.5. Credibility of the Data Interpretation

In addition to rigorous data analysis methods, other measures were adopted to ensure the quality and credibility of the results. Shenton (2004) recommended developing familiarity with the culture of participating organisations before the first data collection. Prolonged

engagement between the investigator and the participants enables researchers to gain an understanding of an organisation and to create a relationship of trust. Hence, the author joined the club's training and game sessions as an observer one month before starting the data collection to become familiar with the culture of the club and to establish a good relationship with each player.

Secondly, triangulation (Shenton, 2004) was applied to ensure the credibility of the data analysis. Three researchers were involved in the data analysis process. The three investigators reached a consensus on dividing the text of each interview into specific meaning units. Moreover, all of them agreed on the inclusion of each meaning unit in a specific property, as well as the content of the categories and components.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Profile of Selected Participants

Four high self-perceived competence players ranged in age from 13 to 15 years ($M = 13.8$, $SD = 1.0$), and the ages of the four low self-perceived competence players also ranged from 13 to 15 years ($M = 14.0$, $SD = 0.8$ years; see Table 1). The high self-perceived competence players' football experience ranged from four to eight years ($M = 6.3$, $SD = 2.1$) and the football experience of the low self-perceived competence players ranged five to eight years ($M = 6.8$, $SD = 1.3$; see Table 1).

3.2. Players' Self-perceptions of Competence

The U-14 players ($n = 21$) ranged in their perceived competence from 5.8 to 1.8 ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.1$). The two players who scored 5.8 and 5.5 in self-perceived competence were chosen as HC1 and HC2, and the other two players who

Table 1 Descriptive profile, players' self-perceptions of competence and coaches' ranking of players' ability of the high and low self-perceived competence players.

Participants	Age (year)	Team	Football Experience (year)	Players' Self-perceptions of Comptence	Coaches' Ranking of Players' Ability
HC1	13	U-14	5	5.8	9 th
HC2	13	U-14	8	5.5	10 th
HC3	14	U-15	8	5.3	7 th
HC4	15	U-15	4	4.3	3 rd
LC1	14	U-14	5	2	18 th
LC2	13	U-14	7	1.8	8 th
LC3	15	U-15	7	1.5	1 st
LC4	14	U-15	8	2	5 th

scored 2.0 and 1.8 were selected as LC1 and LC2 from U-14 (see Table 1). The U-15 players (n = 13) ranged in their perceived competence from 5.3 to 1.5 (M = 3.1, SD = 1.0). The two players who scored 5.3 and 4.3 were chosen as HC3 and HC4, and the other two players who scored 1.5 and 2.0 were selected as LC3 and LC4 from U-15 (see Table 1).

3.3. Interviews

The interviews elicited 192 meaning units. From the data analysis process, three components emerged: training situations (MU = 90), game situations (MU = 73), and off-the-pitch situations (MU = 29).

3.3.1. Training Situations

Concerning the high self-perceived competence players (see Figure 1), the 'Training situations' component contained 'Playing well' and 'Playing badly' categories, and each category consisted of three properties: 'Feedback type', 'Feedback frequency', and 'Players' response/feeling'.

In the 'Playing well' category, 'Feedback type' was composed of three dimensions labelled 'Praise', 'Instruction', and 'No response'. In

addition, 'Feedback frequency' was composed of two dimensions labelled 'Seldom praise' and 'Sometimes no response'. Furthermore, the 'Player's responses/feelings' property was made up of 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions.

In the 'Playing badly' category, 'Feedback type' was composed of four dimensions labelled 'Instruction', 'Criticism', 'Criticism plus instruction', and 'Nonverbal criticism'. In addition, 'Feedback frequency' was composed of two dimensions labelled 'Often instruction' and 'Seldom criticism', and the 'Player's response/feeling' property was made up of only the 'Positive' dimension.

In the case of the low self-perceived competence players (see Figure 2), the 'Playing well' and 'Playing badly' categories were also composed of the 'Training situations' component, and each category consisted of three properties labelled 'Feedback type', 'Feedback frequency', and 'Players' response/feeling'.

In the 'Playing well' category, three dimensions labelled 'Praise', 'Instruction', and 'No response' were included in 'Feedback type'. 'Feedback frequency' was made up of two dimensions labelled 'Sometimes praise' and 'Seldom praise', and 'Player's response/feeling' consisted of

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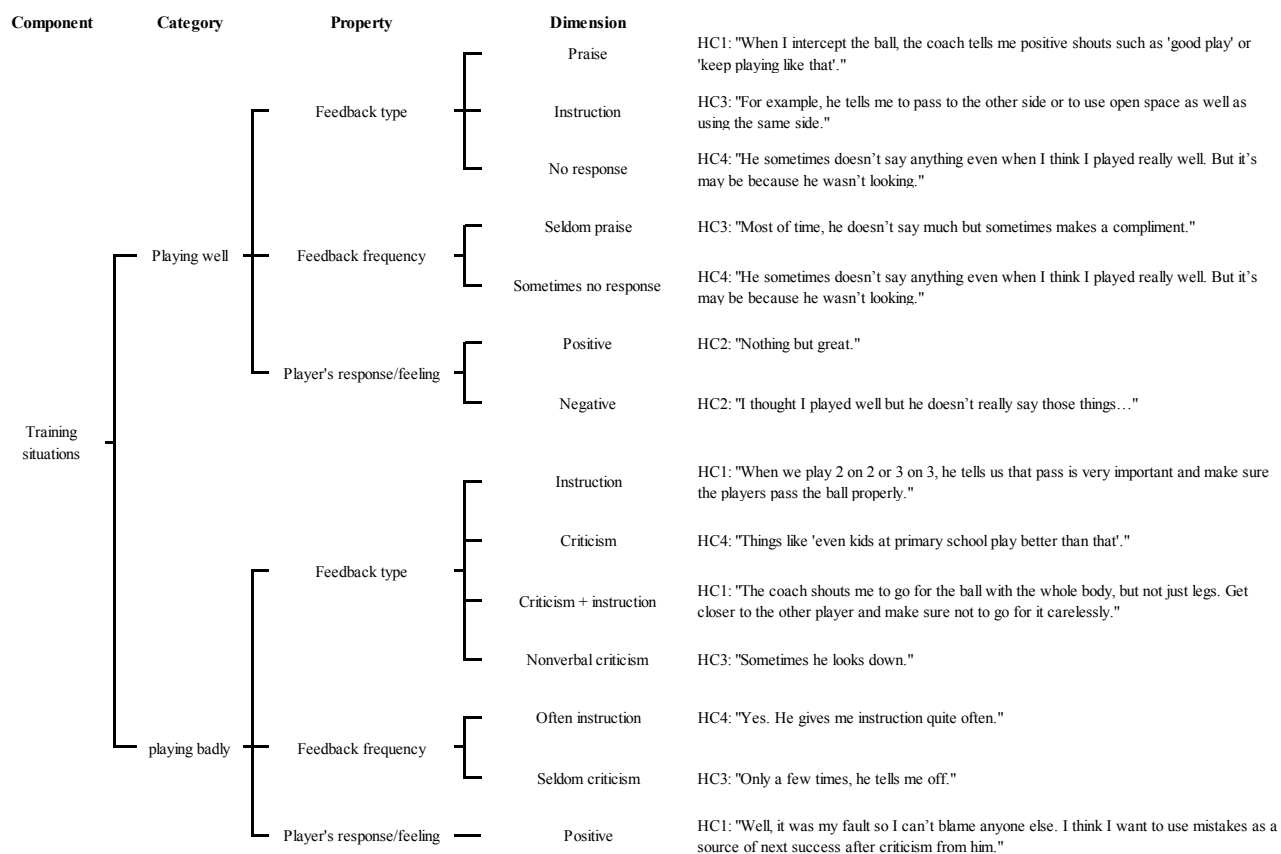


Figure 1 The high self-perceived competence players' perceptions of coaches' behaviour in 'Training situations'.

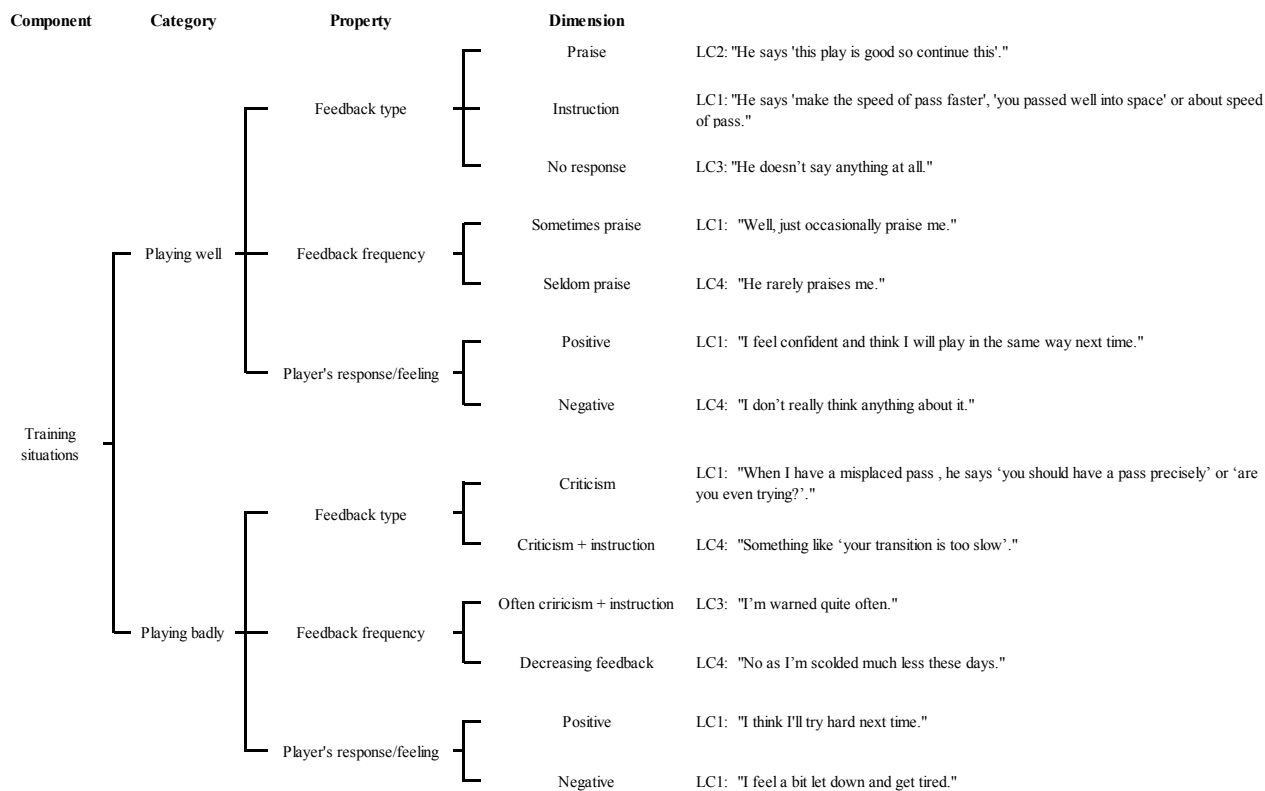


Figure 2 The low self-perceived competence players' perceptions of coaches' behaviour in 'Training situations'.

'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions.

In the 'Playing badly' category, the 'Feedback type' property included two dimensions labelled 'Criticism' and 'Criticism plus instruction'. 'Feedback frequency' was composed of 'Often criticism plus instruction' and 'Decreasing feedback' dimensions, and 'Player's response/feeling' consisted of both 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions.

The results showed that in the 'Playing well' category, the high and low self-perceived competence players perceived their coaches' behaviour in similar ways except for minor differences in the 'Feedback frequency' property. With regard to the 'Player's response/feeling' property, both the high and low self-perceived competence players showed 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions.

On the other hand, in the 'Playing badly' category, only the high self-perceived competence players perceived the 'Instruction' dimension in the 'Feedback type' property. Specifically, the high self-perceived competence players perceived 'Often instruction' and 'Seldom criticism' dimensions, whereas the low self-perceived competence players perceived 'Often criticism plus instruction' and 'Decreasing feedback' dimensions in the 'Feedback frequency' property. In addition, the high self-perceived competence players showed only 'Positive' dimension in the 'Player's response/feeling' property, whereas the low competence players showed both 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions in the same property.

3.3.2. Game Situations

With regard to the high self-perceived competence players (see Figure 3), 'Game situations' consisted of 'Playing well' and 'Playing badly' categories, and each category was

composed of three properties named 'Feedback type', 'Feedback frequency', and 'Player's response/feeling'.

In the 'Playing well' category, the 'Feedback type' property included three dimensions labelled 'Praise', 'Instruction', and 'Silence'. Moreover, 'Often praise' was the only dimension of the 'Feedback frequency' property, and 'Positive' was the only dimension for the 'Player's response/feeling' property.

In the 'Playing badly' category, 'Feedback type' consisted of three dimensions labelled 'Instruction', 'Criticism', and 'Criticism plus instruction'. In addition, 'Feedback frequency' was composed of only the 'Often instruction' dimension, and the 'Player's response/feeling' property was made up of both 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions.

In the case of the low self-perceived competence players (see Figure 4), the 'Game situations' component was composed of two categories, 'Playing well' and 'Playing badly', and each category consisted of three properties labelled 'Feedback type', 'Feedback frequency', and 'Players' response/feeling'.

In the 'Playing well' category, 'Feedback type' was made up of four dimensions labelled 'Praise', 'Instruction', 'No response', and 'Criticism plus instruction'. The 'Feedback frequency' property was composed of two dimensions named 'Often criticism plus instruction' and 'Seldom praise', and 'Player's response/feeling' consisted of 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions.

In the 'Playing badly' category, the 'Feedback type' property included two dimensions labelled 'Criticism' and 'Criticism plus instruction'. In addition, 'Feedback frequency' was composed of 'Often criticism plus instruction', 'Decreasing criticism', and 'Decreasing feedback' dimensions, and 'Player's response/feeling' consisted of only

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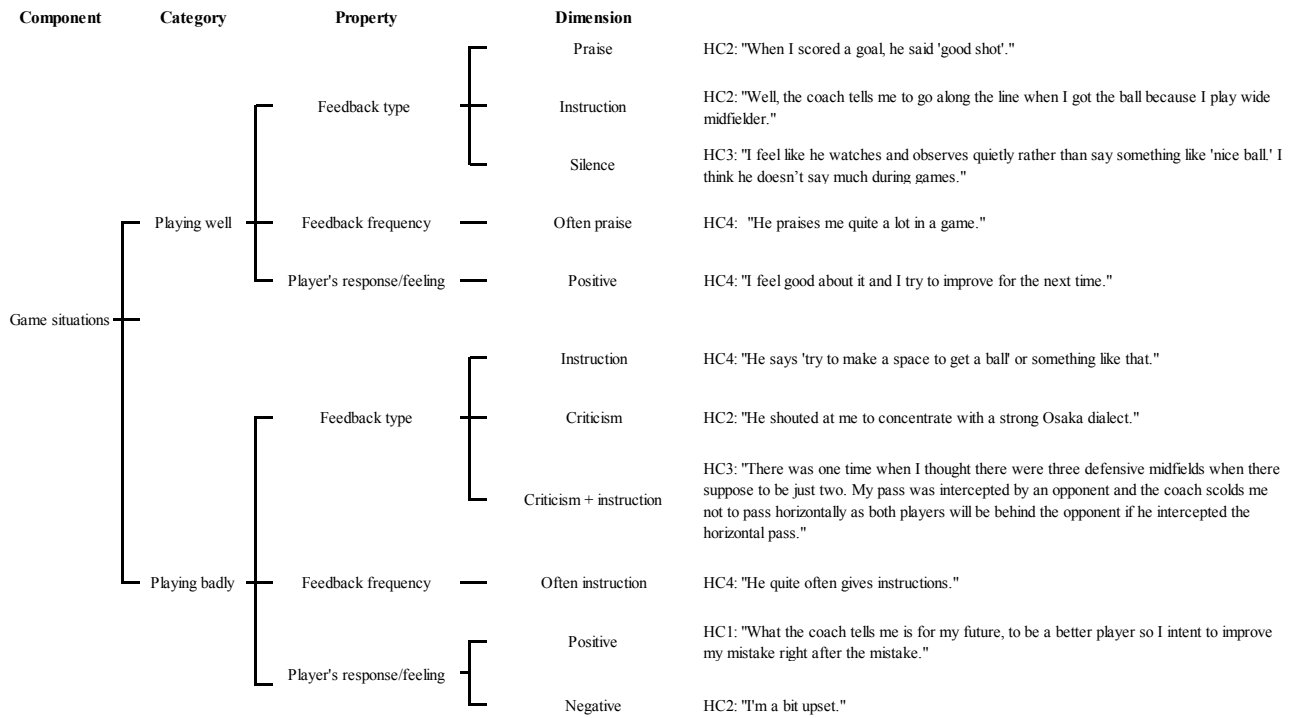


Figure 3 The high self-perceived competence players' perceptions of coaches' behaviour in 'Game situations'.

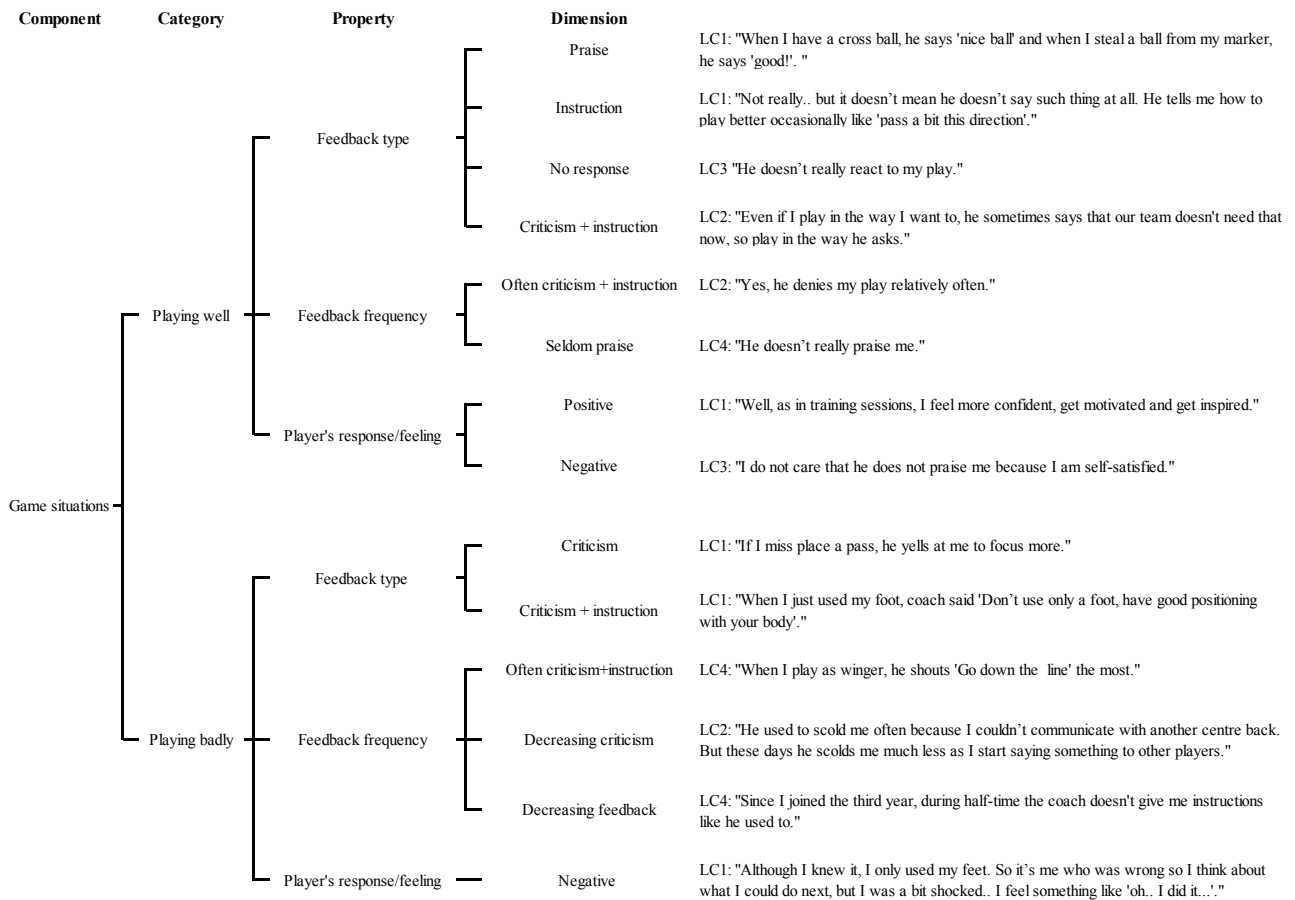


Figure 4 The low self-perceived competence players' perceptions of coaches' behaviour in 'Game situations'.

the 'Negative' dimension.

The results showed that in the 'Playing well' category, only the low self-perceived competence players perceived 'No response' and 'Criticism plus instruction' dimensions in the 'Feedback type' property. The low self-perceived competence players also perceived 'Often criticism plus instruction' and 'Seldom praise', and they showed both 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions in 'Player's response/feeling' property. In contrast, the high self-perceived competence players perceived 'Often praise' in 'Feedback frequency' property and showed only the 'Positive' dimension.

Regarding the 'Playing badly' category specifically, only the high self-perceived competence players perceived the 'Instruction' dimension in the 'Feedback type' property, and also they perceived the 'Often instruction' dimension in the 'Feedback frequency' property. On the other hand, the low self-perceived competence players perceived 'Often criticism plus instruction', 'Decreasing criticism', and 'Decreasing feedback' dimensions in the 'Feedback frequency' property. Additionally, the high self-perceived competence players showed not only 'Negative' but also 'Positive' dimensions, whereas the low self-perceived competence

players showed only the 'Negative' dimension in the 'Player's response/feeling' property.

3.3.3. Off-the-pitch Situations

The 'Off-the-pitch situations' component consisted of one category named 'Communication with coach', and the category was composed of three properties labelled 'Communication content', 'Communication frequency', and 'Player's response/feeling' (see Figures 5 and 6).

In the case of the high self-perceived competence players (see Figure 5), the property of 'Communication content' included two dimensions labelled 'Related play' and 'Non-related play'. Additionally, 'Communication frequency' was composed of three dimensions named 'Often', 'Sometimes', and 'Seldom', and also both 'Positive' and 'Negative' dimensions composed the 'Player's response/feeling' property.

With regard to the low-competence players (see Figure 6), the 'Communication content' property consisted of one dimension labelled 'Related play'. Moreover, 'Communication frequency' was composed of two dimensions named 'Seldom' and 'Not at all', and the 'Player's response/feeling' property contained only the 'Negative' dimension.

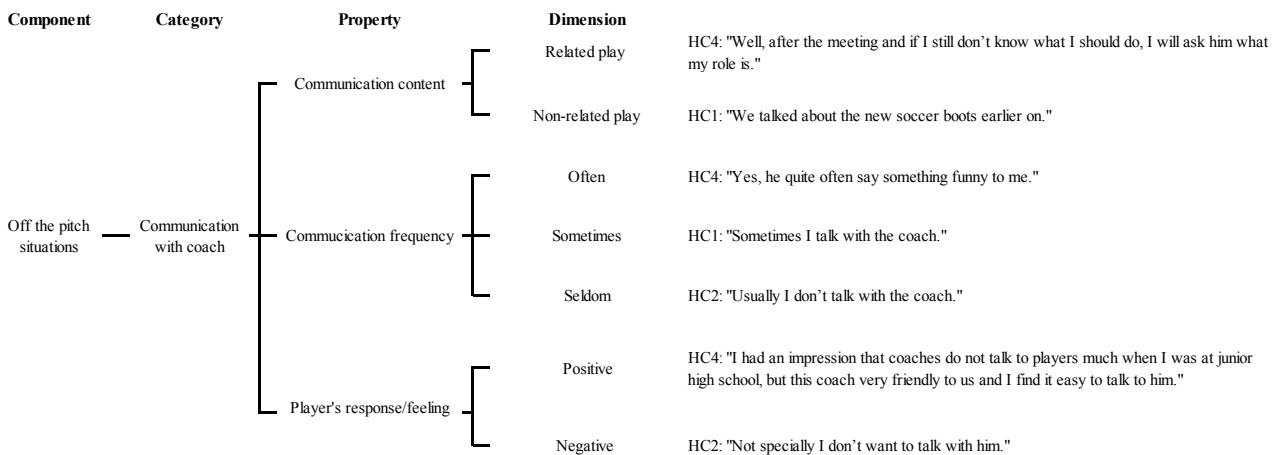


Figure 5 The high self-perceived competence players' perceptions of coaches' behaviour in 'Off-the-pitch situations'.

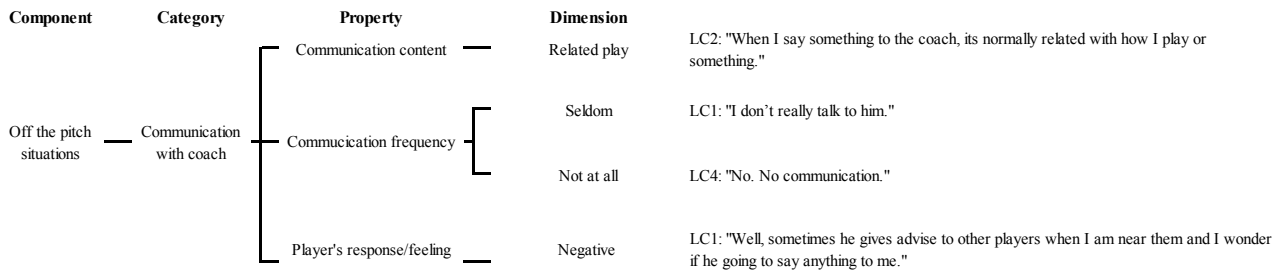


Figure 6 The low self-perceived competence players' perceptions of coaches' behaviour in 'Off-the-pitch situations'.

The results showed that only the high self-perceived competence players perceived the 'Non-related play' dimension in the 'Communication content' property. In addition, the high self-perceived competence players perceived not only the 'Seldom' but also the 'Often' and 'Sometimes' dimensions, whilst the low self-perceived competence players perceived the 'Seldom' and 'Not at all' dimensions in the 'Communication frequency' property. In the 'Player's response/feeling' property, the low self-perceived competence players showed only the 'Negative' dimension, whereas the high self-perceived competence players showed not only 'Negative' but also 'Positive' dimensions.

3.4. Coaches' Ranking of Players' Ability

The coach who trained U-14 ranked 21 players in football ability from highest (1) to lowest (21), and in the same way the U-15's coach ranked his 13 players from first to thirteenth. With regard to the high self-perceived competence players, HC1 and HC2 were ranked ninth and tenth in U-14, and HC3 and HC4 were ranked seventh and third in U-15, respectively (see Table 1). Concerning the low self-perceived competence players, LC1 and LC2 were ranked eighteenth and eighth out of 21 players, and LC3 and LC4 were ranked first and fifth out of 13 players (see Table 1).

The results showed the coaches' ability

ranking of the players did not correspond with the players' self-perceived competence level.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate how the perception of coaches' behaviour differs between players with high self-perceived competence and those with low self-perceived competence. In addition, the relationships between the coaches' ability ranking of the players and the players self-perceived competence levels were also examined. Findings revealed that there were differences between the high and low competence players' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour. However, findings also revealed that the coaches' ability ranking of the players did not completely correspond to the players' self-perceived competence levels.

These results did not support the expectancy effect of the coaches' judgement of the players' ability on the players' perceived competence level. The results, however, seem to be partially consistent with the results of Wilson and Stephens's research (2005), which showed limited effects of coaches' expectancy on athletes' causal attributions, which are related to perceived physical competence and self-esteem (Weiss et al., 1990). Interestingly, although the expectancy theory was not supported in this study, the results showed that the low self-

perceived competence players frequently perceived negative feedback such as criticism followed by instruction during training and game in which they played poorly. In addition, the low self-perceived competence players frequently perceived criticism followed by instruction even after good performance in games. In contrast, the results showed that the high self-perceived competence players perceived not only negative feedback but also positive feedback such as instruction with high frequency after poor performance in both training and game situations.

The self-verification theory might offer an explanation for these findings (Swann, 1987). That is, the low self-perceived competence players may be likely to accept negative coaches' behaviour such as criticism followed by instruction as self-consistent feedback, whereas the high self-perceived competence players may be likely to select positive coaches' behaviour such as instruction and retain it because of self-consistency of the self-view and feedback.

Judging from one salient difference in perception of their coaches' behaviour, players' attitudes toward their coaches seem to mediate the self-verification theory as Collins and Stukas (2006) argued. In off-the-pitch situations, the results showed that the high self-perceived competence players communicated with their coaches about a greater variety of topics more frequently than the low self-perceived competence players. Moreover, the high self-perceived competence players felt positive or responded positively to communication with their coaches, whereas the low self-perceived competence players perceived only negative feelings or responses to communication with their coaches.

Generally, Japanese culture insists on the fundamental connectedness of individuals to each other (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and Japanese athletes prefer socially supportive leadership because of their cultural predisposition (Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai et al., 1988). Socially supportive leadership behaviour correlates with the CBAS Perceived Behaviour Scale of general communication (Cumming et al., 2006). Thus, the difference in perception between the high and low self-perceived competence players of general communication with their coaches in off-the-pitch situations may have led to the difference in the players' responses and feelings toward communication with their coaches, namely their attitudes toward their coaches.

Moreover, because it was reported that mistake-contingent technical instruction was significantly related to athletes' positive attitudes toward their coach (Smith et al., 1983), the high self-perceived competence players who perceived instruction after playing poorly would show positive attitudes toward their coaches. In training situations, in fact, the high self-perceived competence players showed only positive responses or feelings to their coaches after poor performance.

Collins and Stukas (2006) reported that positive attitudes toward the sender of feedback lead to greater acceptance of feedback, whilst people with negative attitudes were more ready to reject feedback. Therefore, the player's attitude toward their coaches mediated the self-verification theory. As a result, the coaches' ability rankings of the player did not totally correspond with the players' self-perceived competence in this study, which was unexpected.

Player responses used to evaluate their

competence should be looked at more closely as they may explain these results. Using the comments of LC3 may help because LC3 scored the lowest self-perceived competence, whereas the coach ranked LC3 as the most able player on the team. For example, LC3 mentioned, 'I do not care that he does not praise me because I am self-satisfied'. Even after he scored a great goal, LC3 said, 'I do not think I performed well.'

These comments would mean LC3, who was 15 years old at the time, used a very high internalised or self-determined performance standard as an alternative source to the coaches' feedback to evaluate own competence. Horn et al. (1993) reported that self-comparison or internal information was used as a competence source by late-adolescent athletes. However, it was revealed that athletes who were judged by coaches as high-ability athletes showed a higher level of internal perception of performance control regardless of players' self-perceived competence level (Wilson & Stephens, 2007). In addition, internal perception of performance control was associated with the use of internal criteria such as self-determined performance standards, even in early-adolescent athletes (Horn & Hasbrook, 1987). Therefore, it is possible to think that LC3 set a very high standard of internalised or self-determined performance to evaluate his own competence, and LC3 estimated his own ability to be less than his coach' judgement of his ability. As a result, the players' self-perceived competence did not reflect the coaches' judgement of the players' ability.

A possible limitation of the study was the quality of the coaches' ability ranking of the players, which was used to evaluate coach expectancy. In previous research, coaches' perceptions of their athletes' ability was used as

an index of coach expectancy (Rejeski et al., 1979; Sinclair & Vealey, 1989; Solomon et al., 1996; Solomon et al., 1998). However, it was reported that coaches' perceptions of players' ability was stable over the course of a season, whereas coaches' perceptions of potential improvement changed over the time, and these two expectations led to different feedback patterns (Solomon, 1998; Solomon & Kosmitzki, 1996). This study assessed local football clubs, which did not compete at the elite level and in which individual improvement is considered primary. Thus, improvement rankings rather than ability rankings may more accurately reflect the coaches' expectancy for each player in this study.

It is important to keep in mind that the actual behaviour of coaches toward their players was not measured in this study, meaning that whilst perception of the coaches' behaviour differed between the high and low self-perceived competence players, it remains unclear whether the coaches actually behaved differently toward individual players. In future research, observation of the actual coaches' behaviour toward each of their players should be included in the design of the study to understand how players perceive actual coaching behaviour and what kinds of factors influence players' perceptions of their coaches' behaviour. It would be useful to identify what kind of coaching behaviours effectively enhance players' self-perceived competence.

In conclusion, the present study revealed the differences in perceptions of coach behaviour between high and low self-perceived competence players, but those differences did not reflect the coaches' judgment of their players' ability.

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