

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



# Running' with the Devil: A Study on Athletes' Compensation and Turnover Intention

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## ABSTRACT

**Background.** Athlete's performance in sporting events is influenced by several factors. One of them is how fair the compensation system is implemented. The proper compensation will motivate the athlete to perform better. Otherwise, it will be a loss for the team. **Objectives.** The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of compensations on sports achievements of South Sulawesi athletes at PON XIX 2016 in West Java, Indonesia. **Methods.** This research employed a qualitative stance with semi-structured interviews on 100 athletes as respondents who were participated during the PON XIX 2016 event. **Results.** This paper' findings suggest that there are several major themes emerged in regard to this particular topic, they are 1) unfair treatment; 2) cognitive dissonance; and 3) turnover intention. **Conclusion.** To conclude, this study was strengthening the importance of the proper compensation system implementation in order to have such effective talent management within an organization. This research brings such theoretical and practical implications. For theoretical implication, this research fills the gaps in present research. Moreover, for practical implications, it is expected that the decision makers in sport committee or sport organization should be able to maintain their athletes by providing them a fair compensation.

**KEYWORDS:** *Sport Event, Athlete's Motivation, Compensations, Performance, Talent Management, Turnover Intention*

## INTRODUCTION

Within organization context, according to some literatures (1-4), every organization's member has some significant considerations for example the interest and/or goal arise once such a member partaking into the organization. On one hand, job expectation for instance having an adequate income especially sufficient amount of money for living is becoming one of main reasons by some organization's members. Nonetheless, on the other hands, some members identify that money becomes less priority rather than some factors such as high appreciation from organization received by the members and so on (5). Through such reasons above, this study then suggests that the organization, in order to successfully reach both the goals from

organization and its members, top management of organization should be able to acknowledge member's motive and also be able to provide the job satisfaction for organization's members. Compensation such as compensations as well as lots of kinds of beneficial facilities are also considered as the supportive tools in increasing members' satisfaction.

Compensation is regarded as one of the key factors in motivating the members inside the organization. This is because, through the offering of motivation based on the compensation reward, the members of organization are positively expected to provide better job performance, in other words, the members are able to acquire higher level of performance in

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work and eventually reach far beyond the job targets that have been set earlier. Some literatures show that if the members of organization have no compensations or less compensations rewarded based on their performances, there will be less motivation exists around the members and this could be seen on the decreasing on hardworking or happiness level of the members (5-7). Based on this phenomenon, Stone (8) suggests that offering the appropriate quantity of compensations for the members, especially those who have scores above the average level of job performance, is important given the fact that such compensations will be turned into tool that boost confidently the hardworking eagerness of the members that may be later increase their employment productivities. Furthermore, compensations are seen as one of the motivation tools for the members that are received outside the fixed salary and are scientifically supposed to be a reward for members' recognition award onto their better job achievements (9).

Additionally, the job determination outcomes that have been completed by organization's member which consequently affect the value of organization members, organization environment, and the organization at a whole are advised by some scholars as the achievement. Likewise, in the context of sports, the achievement is also considered as the aftermath of hard efforts accomplished by an athlete who has reached a goal which has been set before (10). In other words, by completing utterly all the tasks that has been assigned, the athlete can be defined as a success athlete.

Moreover, in Indonesia, there is a great and well-known sports event called *Pekan Olahraga Nasional* (PON) or the National Sports Week. This sports event is regularly hold once in every 4 years and well contributed by all participants who are from all over provinces in Indonesia. One of the participating provinces in Indonesia is Sulawesi Selatan, which in 2016 has successfully reached the 12<sup>th</sup> ranking at PON XIX event with 63 gold medals achievement. The athletes of Sulawesi Selatan in this the 19<sup>th</sup> national sports event however has less successful achievements rather than the previous 18<sup>th</sup> one. This can be identified based on the ranking that has been diminished for 5 levels from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> PON ranking and such result was far beyond what

the target has been prepared which was the 10<sup>th</sup> ranking (11).

Additionally, in accordance with the medals achievement at such PON XIX, the athletes of Sulawesi Selatan shows a declination of achievements level and this study pinpoints that such issue has been triggered by some factors including compensations reward (12, 13). Based on the literature found from the online national newspaper named Tirta.id, this study discovers that the number of compensations received by the athletes of Sulawesi Selatan is smaller than other provinces. In detail, this study finds that on one hand, Sulawesi Selatan province offers one hundred million Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) compensations reward for the athletes who gain gold medal, on the other hand, the capital city of Jakarta, Riau, as well as Jawa Timur, Jawa Barat, and Aceh sequentially proposes IDR 200.000.000, 225.000.000, 215.000.000, 275.000.000, and 250.000.000 (14).

In regard with the information above, this study finds that there should be several major issues that need to be addressed, the smaller number of given compensations for the Sulawesi Selatan's athletes compared those who are from others provinces which may finally lead to the downfall of athletes' achievements of Sulawesi Selatan. This problem, if it is remained unsolved, then Sulawesi Selatan's athletes would consider to move to other provinces, which offered a better compensation. Also, this problem will make the practice of hijacking athletes from other provinces become more prevalent (14).

In sum, this study then suggests that there is an issue arises among Sulawesi Selatan's athletes in PON XIX particularly the decrease of performance which is reflected in current PON ranking and as such this study aims to put a great highlight on how the compensations which offered by the province government of Sulawesi Selatan affect the achievements level of the athletes especially during PON XIX 2016.

**Literature Review.** Compensation is considered as motivation activity which provides encouragement for individuals e.g., organization's members in order to optimally execute the tasks given by the organization and consequently those receive the compensation are eager to deliver better job performance and achievement within organization they are attached.

Based on the research of Zia-Ul-Islam et al. (15), compensation is (1) a form of motivation designed as money or payment for the individuals who achieve higher performance; as well (2) the recognition form of organization to its members' performance and contribution.

The primary goal offering compensations is basically to motivate members of organization to do their tasks better in job and achieve a good job performance. Deutscher (16) suggests that the application of such compensation system, by the organizations, is aimed to mainly escalate the productivity of members and to maintain those high-performance members to be more loyal in the group.

According to Frandsen (17), the indicators of compensation can be divided into two groups, namely:

a) Material compensations. Compensations money-formed: Bonus, Commission, Profit share, and Compensation for a remuneration program that may include future payments, such as Retirement and Contractual payments. Also, the compensations may in the form of social security. This may include but not limited to construction of official homes, medical insurance, membership, subscribe to a newspaper or magazine for free, sick leave that still gets salary, moving costs and award for educational or training program to develop knowledge.

b) Non material compensations, which may come in the form of title award, honors or medals, certificate of appreciation, compliment award, and authorization legally of job attribution usage.

The form of compensation is strongly associated with the particular needs of these individuals, or in this case are athletes. If these athletes' needs are revolving around the physical dimensions, then it would be fair to argue that the form of compensation are best given in the physical form. This is in line with previous literatures, for example according to Thibault Landry, Schweyer, and Whillians (18), organizations must be able move beyond salary and traditional cash rewards in motivating, attracting, and retaining talents. This may include such support for talents' psychological needs.

Achievement is the result of someone's efforts which completed in many types of particular fields and eventually provide positive values on him/herself, environment, and the organization in which he/she involved. Furthermore,

achievement in sports field is the maximum determination that achieved by an individual athlete or an athlete group or team through the implementation of ability and skills to complete tasks which have been targeted both in training and competitions over the application of robust and rational evaluation parameters.

Pawoko, Wibowo, and Hamidah (19) propose that there are four aspects of training need to be considered and trained carefully by the athletes, namely physical, technical, tactical, and mental training.

Physical condition: an element or basic ability that must be possessed by every athlete to achieve a sports achievement. Physical condition describes the body ability of an athlete. Therefore, to excel more, an athlete has to be in good physical condition i.e., such physical condition determines an athlete performance.

Technique: an athlete must be able to master the technique of the sport based on such athlete's physical condition. In order to master the technique, it requires continual exercise, and whatever target has been set hence can be achieved.

Tactics: physical and technical conditions are the elements that are vital for implementing and executing the tactics or strategies in the field. There are two types of tactics or strategy implementation, namely individual and group or team tactics.

Mental: Every coach and athlete must have a strong in term of mental. This is due to having a strong mentality, individual is able to make a better decision.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was carried out in the Indonesia during the year of 2019. In this study, the population was all athletes from South Sulawesi that partook in particular sports within PON XIX (2016), West Java. Sampling technique in this study is purposive sampling with some particular considerations and the sample in this study is 100 athletes of South Sulawesi from particular sports and who had contributed in PON XIX in West Java Province.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted on 100 respondents over a period of 3 months between December 2020 and February 2021 in South Sulawesi Province. In these interviews, respondents described various aspects of their

personal perception on the compensations, what motivate them in their performance, what are their working preferences, and personal experiences (20) during the National Sports Week 2016.

The entire interview recordings consist of 251 hours of interview, accompanied with 552 pages of transcribed text. The data was then imported into the NVivo software package for coding. Also, to ensure interviewees' anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned and all identifying detail was removed from the transcripts.

A qualitative research design was employed as it was significantly match with the research question and also to comprehend the lived experiences of athletes during the event and an understanding of the meanings of compensations roles in improving athletes' performances. The interviews took 2 to 2.5 hours. These interviews were all recorded by tape recorder and mobile phone as a backup plan. Interviews were also transcribed manually in order to capture the essence of the quotes.

In each interview, researchers asked several topics concerning the readiness of the athlete's personal perception on their achievement during the sport event and as the interview went by, it seems that there was negative perspective among the athletes regarding their compensation for their participation in the sport event. The collected data are classified into several. Interview sessions were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and there was no problem encountered. All data were translated, transcribed, within the six weeks of data collection. In analyzing data, the researcher firstly read and re-read the data as an effort to engage with the rich and complex data. While reading these various emerged themes, data saturation is reached. The process of data analysis and emergence of themes was iterative. Initially the researcher analyzed the data to understand the procedures and policies regarding athletes' perception on their fair compensation. The data were coded and thematically analyzed using the NVivo computer software.

## RESULTS

Komite Olahraga Nasional Indonesia (KONI) or Indonesian National Sports Committee is an organization that manages sports championships in Indonesia and one of the sports events held for one week that coordinated by KONI is known as Pekan Olahraga Nasional (PON) or the National

Sports Week. PON is a national sports festival in Indonesia which is held every four years and is attended by the athletes from entire provinces in Indonesia. Based on the results of a meeting of members of KONI in Jakarta (27/4/2010), West Java Province was chosen to host the PON XIX in 2016 in Bandung.

The 2016 PON XIX contingent of South Sulawesi Province participated in 39 sports in 10 cities in West Java, consisting of 323 athletes, 77 coaches, 23 mechanics, 26 managers, 32 extra officials and 132 committee members. Thus, there are 613 people in total for the 2016 PON XIX Contingent of South Sulawesi Province.

**Table 1. Percentage of Respondents by Gender**

Gender	Quantity	Percentage
Male	63	63
Female	37	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Data processed, 2021

**Table 2. Percentage of Respondents by Sports**

No.	Sports	Total	Percentage
1	Fencing	9	9%
2	Weightlifting	1	1%
3	Athletics	3	3%
4	Motorcycle racing	1	1%
5	Basketball	8	8%
6	Badminton	3	3%
7	Cricket	4	4%
8	Rowing / Crew	14	14%
9	Hockey	4	4%
10	Judo	6	6%
11	Karate	6	6%
12	Kempo	2	2%
13	Surfing	4	4%
14	Archery	2	2%
15	Rock climbing	1	1%
16	Martial arts	2	2%
17	Synchronous pool	5	5%
18	Gymnastics	8	8%
19	Soccer	5	5%
20	Sepak takraw	11	11%
21	Tarung Derajat (Boxer)	1	1%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Data processed, 2021

In order to answer the research question in this study, eagerness and strong effort as well as proper analysis method are needed to solve such question in this study. In doing so, this study initially presents, an overview of the South Sulawesi athletes' characteristics, namely:

Based on the [Tables 1 and 2](#), this study denotes that the majority gender of athletes is male athletes or 63% of 100 sample. Additionally, the largest number of athletes is from rowing as much

as 14% of 100 athletes whereas the smallest number of respondents (athletes) is from weightlifting, motor racing, rock climbing, and Tarung Derajat with 1% each of 100 South Sulawesi's athletes contributed in PON XIX events.

Based on the research findings, there are several factors (themes) emerged on the research question, which eventually deteriorating their motivation to perform better. These factors are: 1) unfair treatment; 2) cognitive dissonance; and 3) turnover intention. These factors will be elaborated in the following section.

**Unfair Treatment.** All the respondents claimed that they were treated unfairly despite of their loyalty, dedication, sacrifice and the most of all are their medal achievement during the sport event. It is commonly known that the financial readiness among provinces is varied. High reputable provinces such as DKI Jakarta, West Java, East Java, Riau and Aceh are compensating their athletes more than any other provinces. Despite of their different achievement during the event, all the respondents, regardless of their sports, conveyed their concerns on the unfair treatment as illustrated by the following quotes:

"It is hard to compete with someone who is fully supported by their team. I really mean it, fully supported, the contingent ensure that the athlete is provided everything he/she needs in order to perform to be the best. Therefore, the athlete will be able to focus on their training and winning (Respondent #30, Fencing, Male)".

"We know that each province has different financial ability. But at least can just the government put some standards on the compensation? (Respondent #88, Gymnastics, Female)".

**Cognitive Dissonance.** From the athlete's perspective, this situation put them in a perplexed situation. On the one hand, the athletes were asked to give their best in order to contribute to the province' reputation. However, as mentioned earlier, the athletes argued that the compensation for their contribution are not adequate. This is best exemplified by the following excerpts from Respondent #1 (Karate, Female).

"You know, it is difficult to be focus on winning while you still thinking about your upcoming monthly installment to pay your motorcycle".

It also can be seen that there was a low level of trust among athletes toward the officials, as was no transparency, particularly to those who are in strategic level. Many athletes argued that the promised compensation amount has not been fully paid, this situation made them believe that the fund have been corrupted by some of the officials.

"I would like to believe and stay loyal in this team, but it is just hard to do. The athletes are suffering while the officials just sitting there and enjoying our sweats and sacrifices. I do not know how they can live in peace, buying new house... while my bonus has not been paid fully" (Respondent #3, Athletics, Male).

We seek in vain to change this unfair situation, but we just stayed in quandaries, like running with the devil. The more you run, then you are the devil in the organization. Other people will judge us as materialistic athletes. We feel helpless and we do not know what to do (Respondent #92, Athletics, Female).

As a consequence, it is not a surprise that majority of the respondents have their intention to leave or move to other team/opposing provinces for financial security reason. This will be elaborated in the following theme.

**Turnover Intention.** Due to the majority respondents' perception on the inadequate amount of compensation, this eventually led them to think about resigning with their current team. Respondent #86 (Soccer, Male) illustrated this statement by mentioned that: "I do not mind to join any other team as long as the pay is great". Also, by Respondent #21 (Badminton, Female) who confessed that "it is okay for me to move to other team even though it is hard to start over again and again".

Also, finding from this study confirms and at the same time filling the gap from previous work of Simiyu Njororai (21). It argues that the unfair treatments (feeling betrayed by the officials) as experienced by the respondents and unbalance financial ability would become impetus of a massive movement to another team/group. However, their study only focused on the Africa and Middle East region.

## DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine how the influence of financial and non-financial compensations received by South Sulawesi athletes on athletes' sports performance in South

Sulawesi Province at PON XIX 2016 in West Java. Moreover, the results of this research provide a new understanding that for how to manage the human resource management, for in this case is the sport athletes. The results of this research also indicated the fact that by implementing the proper compensation system, then this practice is fostering and motivating the athletes themselves in reaching their potential achievement. This showed that a sport organization or team need to constantly develop their competencies in talent management.

Providing compensations is one of the main things that is important for an organization to pay attention to, it can be a separate motivation for South Sulawesi athletes to provide maximum performance to exceed achievement targets. If the athletes do not get the amount of compensations according to the performance and achievements they have provided, the athletes will tend to be discouraged because there is no high motivation as the trigger.

The significant effect of the results of this study is because many athletes agree that the financial and non-financial compensations, they receive from the training preparation stage to the competition have an effect on their level of sporting achievement, which is a form of motivation for them to achieve. achievement targets that were targeted earlier.

Based on one of the compensation theories contained in previous section, the results of the research match the theory according to Stone (8), that compensations are one way of motivating in the form of material, which is given as a deliberate impetus to workers (athletes) so that there was great enthusiasm in increasing the productivity of his work/performance.

The ability of an organization to develop its human resource understood that this organization must also have such professional compensation system in order to improve its athletes' performances. Fail to do so will bring several negative impacts in the long term (22, 23). Also, it is discovered that the uneven distribution of financial readiness among provinces has created movement of sporting talent from less paying to higher paying provinces (22, 23).

Athlete movement is seen as an activity in the HR field as a positive activity, but for a sports organization, athlete movement cannot merely be seen as a beneficial thing, especially for the host

organization. From a coaching perspective, is this transfer normal and professional? Why did something like this happen? Are there any other rational reasons or purely financial reasons? Or do sports activities no longer uphold the value of sportsmanship by justifying any means, including hijacking athletes from other provinces who are willing to pay more?

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, it was found that due to unbalanced financial ability among provinces, then the compensation varied. This creates such problems among athletes. These problems may include trust issues between athletes and officials and also the increasing number of turnover intentions.

Therefore, it is suggested that in creating a high level of trust, top level management of the sport committee should be able to be more transparent in their financial condition. Also, to implement a fair compensation system. By doing this, then it is expected to build a high level of trust among athletes and officials as argued by Gomes et al. (10) and Simiyu Njororai (21).

Provincial sport committee should pay more attention to the type and sum of compensations that will be given to their athletes. This can be done by providing compensations in relate with the achievements their athletes reached and empowering all coaching and training institutions and/or facilities so that the future or successor potential outstanding athletes will always be available and be more loyal with the team primarily avoiding such potential athletes left to the other team or province.

For further research, the investigation should be able to develop better research results by analyzing other factors that may have effect to increase the sports performance of South Sulawesi athletes i.e., other variables that are found however not explored more detail in this study, show the indication of their effect in some results of this study. This paper acknowledges several limitations, as there are limited numbers of participants and organizations; therefore, it is difficult to provide an insight for a result generalization and as a representation of the bigger picture. Further research may benefit a quantitative research, with time series data may benefit the topic in the future.

## APPLICABLE REMARKS

The findings of this study could be beneficial for provincial government as the only policymakers in developing their own performances and reputation in the national scale sports events. This study also offers such insight in order to create performance-based equal pay

among athletes nationally. This is aimed to minimize the problem of the hijacking practices from one province to other.

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