

**DETERMINATION OF ATTRIBUTION-SPORT PERFORMANCE
PATTERN AMONG SCHOOL LEVEL NETBALL PLAYERS**

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

**DETERMINATION OF ATTRIBUTION-SPORT PERFORMANCE PATTERN
AMONG SCHOOL LEVEL NETBALL PLAYERS**

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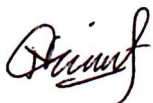
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Kajian Penentuan Corak Penyifatan- Prestasi Sukan dalam Kalangan Pemain Bola Jaring Peringkat Sekolah.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini telah dijalankan dengan objektif untuk menentukan corak penyifatan prestasi sukan dalam kalangan pemain bola jaring peringkat sekolah selepas menang dan kalah sesuatu perlawanan. Dua puluh empat orang atlet sekolah perempuan yang sihat fizikal, berumur dari 13 hingga 17 tahun dari Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Putera, Kota Bharu telah dipilih untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Para peserta terdiri daripada pemain bola jaring yang mewakili sekolah dalam perlawanan bola jaring peringkat negeri. Skala Dimensi Bersebab-II (CDS -II ; McAuley , Duncan , & Russell, 1992) versi yang telah diubah suai dan disemak telah digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk menilai corak penyifatan prestasi sukan selepas sesuatu perlawanan. CDS -II membolehkan para peserta untuk menerangkan sebab-musabab mengenai sesuatu acara melalui empat dimensi sebab dan akibat: (a) Asas Penyebab (dalaman - luaran), (b) Kestabilan (stabil – tidak stabil), (c) Kawalan Peribadi (dikawal secara peribadi - tidak dikawal secara peribadi) dan (d) Kawalan Luaran (dikawal oleh orang lain - tidak dikawal oleh orang lain). Peserta diminta memberikan pendapat mereka mengenai prestasi mereka dalam sesuatu perlawanan, kemudian para peserta menjawab 12 soalan yang berkaitan dengan sifat-sifat dimensi yang telah ditetapkan. Jawapan dibuat dengan membulatkan nombor pada 9 titik Skala Likert dari 1 (sangat tidak berkaitan dengan anda) kepada 9 (berkait rapat dengan anda). Soal selidik akan dijalankan sebanyak empat kali.

Ujian ANOVA untuk pengukuran berulang telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa peserta mengaitkan prestasi mereka yang berjaya kepada sebab-sebab luaran, tidak stabil dan tidak terkawal dan mereka mengaitkan prestasi yang kurang berjaya kepada sebab-sebab dalaman, stabil dan terkawal. Terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan ($p < 0.05$) dalam sebab-sebab yang diberikan oleh semua peserta merentasi dimensi Asas Penyebab selepas menang dan kalah dalam sesuatu perlawanan. Walaubagaimanapun tiada perbezaan yang signifikan ($p > 0.05$) ditemui dalam dimensi lain. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pemain bola jaring perempuan peringkat sekolah mengaitkan persembahan mereka dengan sebab-sebab luaran, tidak stabil dan tidak terkawal apabila memenangi perlawanan.

Determination of Attribution-Sport Performance Pattern among School Level Netball Players.

ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken with an objective to determine the attribution-sport performance pattern among school level netball players after winning and losing a match. Twenty four physically healthy female school athletes aged from 13 to 17 from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Putera were recruited to participate in this study. The participants consisted of netball players that represent the school in the state competition. Modified version of the revised Causal Dimension Scale-II (CDS-II; McAuley, Duncan, & Russell, 1992) was used in this study to assess the attribution-sport performance pattern immediately after the match. The CDS-II allows the participants to make causal attributions about an event along four causal dimensions: (a) Locus of causality (internal-external), (b) Stability (stable-unstable), (c) Personal control (personally controllable-not personally controllable) and (d) External control (controllable by others-not controllable by others). Participants first responded to a question regarding their opinion regarding their performance in the match with the team. The participants then answered 12 questions related to the dimensional properties of their attribution. Responses were made by circling a number on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly unrelated to you) to 9 (strongly related to you). The questionnaire was administered four times.

Repeated measure ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The result of the study revealed that the participants attributed their successful performances to external, unstable and uncontrollable causes and they attributed their least successful performance to internal, stable and controllable causes. There was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the attributions all participants gave for winning and losing the match for the locus of causality dimension. While there were no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) found in the other dimensions. In conclusion, it is seen that female school level netball players attribute outcomes to external, unstable and uncontrollable causes when winning the match.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Sport psychology is a branch of psychology applied in sport settings. It concerns with the psychological factors that affect performance and participation in sport and physical activity and the psychological effects of performing and participating in sport and physical activity (Williams & Straub, 1993). For high performance sport, the main aim of sport psychology is to develop psychological strength for performance enhancement. The athlete must be psychologically prepared to face mental discomfort, resulted from the stressful effects of training related issues such as training in isolated places, monotonous training, possible tensed interpersonal relations and conflicting states in order to be successful in a competition.

Sports psychology is seen so important to performance at the top level of sport that most elite sporting clubs and individuals employ sports psychologists to work with them. In competitive sports, the opponents usually enjoy the same level of skillfulness. Thus, it is only the differences in mental and psychological preparation as well as motivation that will determine the winners. With regard to the maintenance of mental health, which has been within the scope of sport psychologists and appears to bear a close relationship with optimal performance, a variety of psychological factors may play a role. Examples of psychological aspects that may affect sport performance including anxiety, mood, confidence, motivation and attribution.

Attribution concerns with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior. According to Heider (1958), a person usually make two attributions which are internal attribution, the inference that a person is behaving in a certain way because of something about him/herself, such as attitude, character or personality, and external attribution, the inference that a person is behaving in a certain way because of something about the situation he or she is in. According to the social cognitive view, individual's perceptions of the events are the major determinants of their emotions, expectations and provocations toward similar events in future (Hardy, 1997; Bakhshi Jahromi, 2008). Individuals' inferences of their success or failure are an important factor which determines their forward-looking behavior and expectations of their performance (Weiner, 1990). Previous studies have identified four major causes which have been used to account for success and failure. These include ability vs. inability, effort vs. lack of effort, task difficulty vs. task simplicity, and luck (either good or bad) (Forsyth, 1982). According to Weiner (1972), attributions may be classified in two dimensions which are locus of control/causality (internal-external) and stability (stable unstable). Ability and effort are internal causes because they originate from within and are subdued by the individual, whereas difficulty of the task and luck during performance are defined as external factors (Seligman, 1979). Moreover, both ability of the athlete and difficulty of the task tend to be stable factors, whereas effort and luck are unstable factors (Bukowski & Moore, 1980; Meyer, 1980).

Research has shown that different people attribute different sources to their successes and failures (Forsyth, 1982; Bar-Tal, 1978). Despite the variations in athletes' attributions after successes and failures, they typically refer to external causes after failures but to internal sources after successes (Forsyth, 1995). For example, winners usually perceive ability and effort as the reasons for their success, while losers made

attributions mainly to luck and difficulty of the task. In team environment, individuals search to explain not only the reasons for their own performance, but also causes related to their team's performance. Evidence suggests that members of teams make considerably more team-referent attributions than self-attributions, regardless of competitive outcome (Gill, Ruder, & Gross, 1982).

Various studies have been done to determine the attribution pattern of athletes after winning or losing the match. For example, Bird and Brame (1978) and Gill (1980) found that winners used more internal team attributions than losers, whereas Gill et al. (1982) reported that winners made significantly more unstable and controllable attributions. More recently, Greenlees et al. (2005) examined the effects of both objective team performance (winning/losing) and subjective perceptions of team performance. They found that objective performance predicted the locus of causality and stability dimensions, with winners making more internal and stable attributions than losers. Additionally, individuals who perceive that their team's performance was successful believe that the cause was stable. González-Boto et al. (2006) found that the frequency of endorsements for each of the causal attributes differed in their study between winners and losers, with winners perceiving ability and effort as the reasons for their success, while losers made attributions mainly to luck and difficulty of the task. In terms of dimensionality the analyses indicated that winners chose reasons that suggested more internal locus of control than losers, but no clear differences appeared in terms of stability, because both stable and unstable factors were perceived as important regardless of whether the performance was successful or unsuccessful.

Some scholars believe that the attributional contrasts play a self-serving role (eg: Covington, 1981). For example, by attributing their success to internal and personal factors, the athlete will strengthen their self confidence and self worth. On the other

hand, the unsuccessful athlete attribute their failure to external factors like others' influence, circumstances and task difficulty in order to avoid harms and enhance their self respect. When athletes think they are unable to account for their weak performance, their failure may result in loss of motivation, in self-satisfaction and in contentment of the learning environment. However, when coach encourages the athletes to attribute failure to controllable factors, they may avoid the harmful consequences of failure (Forsyth, 1995). Weary and Arkin (1981) view outcome-related attributions as strategic self-presentations and suggested that social norms were among several variables influencing the nature of causal judgments strategically presented to others. Weary-Bradley (1978) made a similar observation and view attributions as public self-presentations designed to maximize public esteem. Depending on the circumstances, these esteem needs could either encourage people to accept personal responsibility for negative outcomes or encourage them to deny such responsibility. In other words, people may attribute losing outcomes in sport to internal factors because they are expected to do so or because they want to avoid being seen as "excuse makers" by coaches, teammates, fans, or the media. Such internalization need not be motivationally detrimental, because attributions that appear counter offensive along one dimension (e.g., locus) may actually be defensive along other dimensions (e.g., stability, control).

In this research, we seek to determine attribution style of school level netball players following success or failure outcomes in a match. It has been suggested that a norm encouraging acceptance of personal responsibility and discouraging externalization of failure exist in sport. Thus, it will permit attributors to present themselves in a socially acceptable manner regardless of whether their team won or lost the match. Second, in the case of success, such an attribution would apply that winning was due to a relatively stable factor that was under personal control. Thus future success would be expected,

and persistence as well as intensity would be maintained in subsequent practice session and games (Weiner, 1985). Finally, in case of failure, the use of unstable, uncontrollable attributions would apply that success was possible in future and would minimize negative emotional reaction (eg: feeling of shame and/or hopelessness). As a result one would again expect effort to be maintained at a high level (Weiner, 1985).

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

General objective

- To determine the attribution-sport performance pattern among school level netball players.

Specific objectives

- To determine the attribution-sport performance pattern after winning a match.
- To determine the attribution-sport performance pattern after losing a match.

1.3 Significance of Study

Since causal attributions can either increase or decrease the motivation, the results of the present study have the potential to help coaches to be aware of the importance of the attribution style in performance in order to create more positive and productive experience for athletes. This research also will uncover potential motivational strategies to increase the probability of future successful performance. This study may also help the athletes to alter their attributions in order to present themselves in a socially acceptable manner regardless of whether their team won or lost the match.

1.4 Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There are no significance differences in attribution-sport performance pattern among school level netball players after winning and losing a match.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_A)

There are significance differences in attribution-sport performance pattern among school level netball players after winning and losing a match.

1.5 Conceptual Definition

A number of terms are repeatedly used throughout this thesis. These terms and their conceptual definition are set out below. Some of the definitions are also mentioned in the main text of this thesis.

Sport psychology :

The scientific study of people and their behavior in sport and exercise activities

(Weinberg and Gould, 1995, p.8)

Attribution :

The process people go through in order to identify the causes for their own behavior, the behavior of others, and the causes of various life events (Weiner, 1985).

Internal Attribution :

The inference that a person is behaving in a certain way because of something about the person, such as attitude, character or personality (Heider, 1958)

External Attribution :

The inference that a person is behaving a certain way because of something about the situation he or she is in (Heider, 1958)

Anxiety :

The cognitive concerns/worry and autonomic responses that accompany a stressful situation, particularly when the perceived situational demands exceed the individual's perceived ability to meet those demands and successful performance in the activity is important to the individual (Lazarus, 1991; Spielberger, 1966).

Sport confidence :

The belief that an athlete possesses about his or her ability to be successful in sport in general (trait sport confidence) and in specific sport competitions (state sport confidence) (Vealey, 1986).

Mood :

A set of feelings, ephemeral in nature, varying in intensity and duration, and usually involving more than one emotion (Lane and Terry 2000, p.17)

Motivation :

The direction and intensity of effort (Weinberg and Gould 2007, p. 51)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Importance of Sport Psychology in Sport Performance

Sports psychology is a branch of psychology that seeks to understand the psychological and mental factors that are affecting performance in sports, physical activity and exercise. Sport psychology is applied to enhance individual and team performance. In the past 30 years, sport psychology has grown tremendously as a science and a profession. Sport psychology has played a significant role in the understanding, training and ultimately the use of mental skills for peak performance. Understanding the psychological factors that accompany successful athletic performance is a high priority for applied sport psychology. Regular and systematic application of sport psychology cannot make a better athlete in an absolute sense. For example, sport psychology does not alter muscle fiber composition or affect the athlete anaerobic efficiency but it can help the athlete to perform at a level closer to their absolute potential on any given day.

In general, sport psychology is intended to help athletes compete as close to 100% of their potential as possible. Psychological techniques can help athletes to control and minimize the negative effects associated with a number of common psychological issues such as anxiety, confidence and concentration which directly affect the performance. Some of the most important skills taught are goal setting, relaxation, visualization, self-talk, awareness and control, concentration, confidence, using rituals, attribution training, and periodization (Hanson-Utley et al. 2008). Athletes who handle this psychological pressure most effectively, will likely be the one who will perform closer to his or her inherent potential and subsequently win the race. As such, the role of

sport psychology is to provide athletes with the necessary tools and strategies to address these psychological factors as they arise and thus minimize their negative impact over performance.

2.2 Attribution

Attribution refers to individual's perceptions of the causes of events. According to the social cognitive view, individual's perceptions of the events are the major determinants of their emotions, expectations and provocations toward similar events in future (Hardy, 1997; Bakhshi & Jahromi, 2008). Attribution or making causal explanations for behaviors are a basic and common human tendency. Understanding what causes things to occur in the world provides perceivers with some capability to foresee the consequences of events and with knowledge to guide their own behavior. Sport psychologists seek to identify the domains of these attributions in sport and to help the individuals to maintain or change their attributions in order to achieve or maintain desirable performance. An attribution is the inference that an observer draws from the causes of a behavior. Individuals' inferences of their success or failure are an important factor which determines their forward-looking behavior and expectations of their performance (Weiner, 1990). According to Heider (1958), a person can make two attributions, which are internal attribution and external attribution. Internal attribution is the inference that a person is behaving in a certain way because of something about the person such as attitude, character or personality. External attribution is defined as the inference that a person is behaving a certain way because of something about the situation he or she is in.

There are four sets of attributions for people's successes and failures which are ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty. Ability and effort are internal factors as they come from inside the person while luck and task difficulty are external attributional factors. Weiner termed these two notions of internality and externality as locus of causality which is one of the main attribution dimensions. The other aspect is called stability, that is, whether the factor is stable or it may be changed. Later, Weiner introduced a third dimension he called controllability which refers to the elements either within people's control or out of their control (Weiner, 1986). In brief, ability is an internal and stable factor and the learner does not have a direct control over it. Whereas, effort is regarded as an internal and unstable factor and the learner has a lot of control over it. Task difficulty is an external and stable element and beyond the control of the learner while luck is considered as an external and unstable element that learner has little control over it. The following figure shows the four sets of attributions:

Figure 2.2: The Four Main Elements of Attribution

		Locus of Causality	
		Internal	External
Stable Stability	Ability	Task Difficulty	
Unstable	Effort	Luck	

Adapted from Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach (M. Williams and R. L. Burden, 1997)

In sport psychology, there has been a decline in the frequency of published studies featuring attributions as the primary topic of interest (Biddle, 1999). This is despite attribution theory being a popular topic in the 1970s and one of the 'hot topics' of the 1980s (Biddle, 1999; Biddle, Hanrahan & Sellars, 2001). The initial and most consistent interest in attributions in sport psychology is to determine the difference in individual athlete's explanations after winning and losing. Early research indicated that winners were likely to attribute their positive outcomes to more internal, stable, and controllable factors, while losers were likely to attribute their negative outcomes to more external, unstable, and uncontrollable factors (Bukowski & Moore, 1980; Roberts 1975; Spink & Roberts, 1980).

2.3 Theoretical Framework of Attribution

Founded by Fritz Heider (1944) and further developed by Bernard Weiner (1985), attribution has become a focus of psychology (e.g., Cox, 1991; Santamaria & Furst, 1994). Generally speaking, research in attribution examines the process people go through in order to identify the causes for their own behavior, the behavior of others, and the causes of various life events (Santamaria & Furst, 1994; Weiner, 1985). According to Heider (1944, 1958), causal attributions are inferences as to why something happened. The one framework that has had the most influence in sport psychology is Weiner's attributional theory of motivation and emotion (Weiner, 1985, 1986). A foundation for the theory is the proposition that individuals search for explanations for outcomes or behaviors that generate positive or negative emotions. Thus, for example, a team that gets scored against may conclude that the problem was lack of effort. On the other hand, another team may attribute making a succession of

steals to the timing and quickness of their defense. The explanations in both situations are examples of causal attributions made by individuals about their teams.

In research exploring individual level of attributions, Weiner (1972) suggested that the four most commonly cited attributions are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Ability and effort are internal causes because they originate from within and are subdued by the individual whereas difficulty of the task and luck during performance are defined as external factors (Seligman, 1979). Moreover, both ability of the athlete and difficulty of the task tend to be stable factors, where as effort and luck are unstable factors (Bukowski & Moore, 1980; Meyer, 1980). Although other causes also appear in sport and exercise settings, these four factors commonly emerge among sports participants (Roberts & Pascuzzi, 1979; Kimbrough, Marrs, & White, 2003). Later, however, Weiner (1985) suggested that not all causal attributes could be categorized by these four variables and that perhaps dimensions more general in nature should be used. Three dimensions were suggested which are locus of causality, stability and controllability. Locus of causality refers to the extend to which causes are seen to have been influenced by the individual or other sources. Stability explains causes which vary over time and controllability is used to rate whether an outcome is controllable or uncontrollable by either the individual or others. The stability dimension relates to how the person thinks he/she performs when placed in the same or similar achievement situation. Locus of control has been linked to affective responses of success and failure experiences, and the controllability is related to an individual's emotional reactions to the success or failure (White, 1993).

2.4 Attribution and Athletes

Hamilton et al. (2000) conducted a study to examine the causal attributions for most successful and least successful performances made by male high school track athletes in two different age categories. A total of 36 male high school track athletes were randomly selected to participate. All participants were current members of the school's track team. Participants were asked to recall the most successful and least successful performances of their track careers and then complete the revised Causal Dimension Scale (CDS-II; McAuley, Rejeski, & Russell, 1985). This scale assesses the causal dimensions of locus of causality, stability, and controllability for the open-ended causal attributions that subjects assign to a particular outcome. This study suggests that there are no differences between male freshmen and seniors when making causal attributions; however, there are differences indicated between least successful and most successful performances from all participants.

González-Boto et al. (2006) in the study of attributions for success and failure in Spanish team sport players revealed that participant reported ability and effort as the predominant contributing factors for success while mainly external factors were blamed for defeat, with no marked differences between the different sports. Data in this study also indicated that ability and effort were always the reasons given for successful outcomes in athletes from different competition levels, while losers showed a higher variability in their causal attributions. Thus, difficulty was the factor rated higher by individuals competing at a national level in the three sports, while luck and effort was reported at the regional and local level. In terms of dimensionality, the analyses indicated that winners chose reasons that suggested more internal locus of control than losers, but no clear differences appeared in terms of stability, because both stable and unstable factors were perceived as important regardless of whether the performance was

successful or unsuccessful. This finding is consistent with previous research in American softball players (White, 1993) and elite Polish athletes (Dabrowska, 1991), which also suggested an internal attribution for success and a higher importance ascribed to effort and abilities by successful athletes.

Asra Askari et al (2011) conducted a study to compare coaches' and athletes' causal attributions after success and failure. 50 coaches (25 males and 25 females) and 50 athletes (25 males and 25 females) were selected randomly. A modified version of Attribution Style questionnaire (Khodaverdi, 2005) was used to collect the data. They found that the athletes' most fundamental attributions for success were God's will (30%), effort (29%), interest and motivation (12%). Their most fundamental attributions for failure included lack of effort (28%), mischance (11.5%) and lack of interaction with others (11%).

In regards to individual sports, Mc Auley and Gross (1998) studied the attributions made by college students enrolled in physical education skills classes. Participants in the study competed in a table tennis match against the member of the same sex and completed a Causal Dimension Scale, CDS-II (Russell, 1982), following the match. They concluded that winners' attributions were more internal, stable, and controllable than losers; however, both winners and losers made attributions that were internal, unstable, and controllable. As for team sports, Ross and Sicoly (1979) examined intercollegiate basketball teams and found that subjects attributed responsibility for the game outcome to the actions or inaction of their teammates rather than to members of the opposing team. When it comes to looking at differences between team and individual sports, Tenenbaum and Weingarten (1983) found that the attributions of winners and losers from both individual and team sports yielded virtually the same results.

McAuley (1985) examined causal attributions in women's intercollegiate gymnastics. Participants also completed the Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982) in this study. A multivariate analysis of variance revealed more internal, stable, and controllable attributions for gymnasts who received high marks from the judges and also perceived their performance as more successful. However, gymnasts who perceived their performance as unsuccessful and also received a low score made attributions that were internal, controllable, and unstable.

Santamaria and Furst (1994) looked at the causal attributions made by elite long distance runners recalling their most and least successful races of their careers. The results indicated that runners gave more internal attributions for their most successful race than their least successful race, thus suggesting a self-serving bias in attribution making. A significant difference was also found on the personal control dimension where runners gave more personally controlled attributions for most successful races. There was no significant difference found on the stability or external control dimension.

As previously suggested by Leith and Prapavessis (1989) in a study on Secondary School Canadian athletes, elite players are more consistent in their attributions of causality because they have more experience of their own and others' abilities. They also are probably better at assessing problems and successes. Moreover, less expert, and possibly younger, athletes appear to be unable to distinguish between the relative contributions of personal effort and ability to their failures. This finding coincides with the report by Santamaria and Furst (1994) of significant differences along the dimensions of locus of causality and controllability in American distance runners of different ages, with adolescent runners regarding their less successful performances due to unstable, changing causes when compared to adults who made relatively stable attributions regardless of performance outcome.

Although it has been generally found that there is a tendency to make internal attributions following success and external attributions following failure, this claim is not always supported in sports settings. McAuley and Gross (1983) did not find any locus of causality dimension (internal/external) difference in relation to competitive outcome following a tennis table match, but clear differences appeared in stability and controllability. Observation of attributions made by winner and losers in squash and racquetball tournaments also suggested an absence of differences in the locus of causality, but more stable and controllable attributions for winners (Mark, Mutrie, Brooks & Harris, 1984). Furthermore, Grove, Hanrahan and McInman (1991) found that winning outcomes were attributed to more stable and controllable causes than losing outcomes by competitors in a basketball league and even a higher external control for winning athletes than for losing athletes has been reported in wrestlers (De Michele, Gansneder & Solomon, 1998). However, there have been a few exceptions to this finding. Thus, gymnasts who scored high and perceived their performance as successful made more internal, stable and controllable attributions (McAuley, 1985) and attribution for success in softball players was generally internal (White, 1993). Moreover, high school track athletes appear to attribute outcomes to more controllable, internal and stable causes when recalling their most successful performance (Hamilton & Jordan, 2000).

Frequently, researchers have concluded that persons attribute their success to internal factors and attribute their failures to external factors. For example, Iso-Ahola (1977) noted that after failure, Little League baseball players viewed the failure as "determined by environmental stimuli that do not take anything away from the individual's capabilities," whereas success was viewed as due "to the team's own natural conditions and capabilities" (p. 293). Duquin (1977) found that over 90% of boys and

girls who were successful in games in their physical education classes attributed the success to internal causes, whereas only 60% of the children who did poorly attributed their loss to internal causes. Roberts (1978), however, found evidence for asymmetries in the use of causal attributions among Little Leaguers when they were explaining their own individual performance, but he found no evidence of this asymmetry when the boys were explaining the team outcomes.

2.5 Gaps in research involving attribution and athletes

Much of the research on causal attribution in sport seems to have mostly examined college students or adults. There seems to be a lack of information on the attribution made by adolescents. Biddle (1993) says there is a need for examining the developmental trends of attribution for children and adolescents playing sport. White (1993) was one of the first who attempted to uncover some of the developmental differences in attribution making. White compared the causal attributions of junior varsity softball players and adult recreation softball players. She found that ratings on the stability dimension varied significantly as a function of age. The junior varsity players perceived positive outcomes to be due to more stable causes than the adult softball players.

It has to be noted also that, although much is known about causal attribution for successful and unsuccessful performance, the studies have been mostly conducted in the United States and English Speaking countries, and there is relatively little descriptive research in other countries with a different sports culture (Dabrowska, 1991). If cultural variations are not considered, theoretical perspectives may be misleading.

Besides, McHugh, Duquin, and Frieze (1978) presented an excellent review of attributional research and sex differences. From cumulative or individual research findings, McHugh et al. find that in general, women and girls have low beliefs in their own ability and lower expectations of success than males. A more frequently found attribution pattern for women is one of externality. This pattern is characterized by attributions to external factors such as luck and task difficulty regardless of outcome. A number of studies have found that females make greater use of luck attributions (an external attribution) than males for both success and failure. The pattern of luck attribution implies that, at least within traditionally masculine areas, women take less responsibility for and feel less pride in their success and less shame about their failures. Thus, women employing this attributional pattern would experience relatively little affect and would not be confident of future successes. This study is attempted to prove this finding by McHugh et al.

The available research suggests that women are expected to do more poorly than men at numerous tasks. These expectations directly affect the performance of women. Furthermore, these conclusions by McHugh et al. are possible explanations for assumed differences in causal attribution by female athletes, but there has not been conclusive evidence that such assumed differences actually exist. It is important to note that, due to a dearth of attribution research for female athletes, much of the attribution research cited by McHugh et al. was conducted on female nonathletes.

2.6 Importance of Attribution

The importance of studying attribution has been based on the premise that attributions are related to persons' expectations about how they will do in the future, and to a person's affective response to the outcome of an achievement task (Weiner et al., 1971). Dweck and her associates have noted that children's beliefs about the causes of their failures are related to their responses to frustration in achievement settings (Dweck, 1975; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973) and in social interaction (Goetz & Dweck, Note 1). These notions suggest that understanding children attributions for success and failure may have important implications for understanding their behavior in achievement settings, particularly because attributions may influence their conceptualizations of their social world and their self-concept.

Attribution pattern also captures the essence of positive thinking and optimism, characteristics that can become important companions on the journey towards peak performance. Failures are a natural part of the learning process. The person who used to experience failure usually has a great spirit to success. They learn from their mistakes and failure to achieve success. An important assumption of attribution theory is that people will interpret their environment in such a way as to maintain a positive self-image. They will attribute their successes or failures to factors that will enable them to feel as good as possible about themselves. When the learners success in academic, they are likely want to attribute the success to their own efforts or ability, but when they fail, they attend to attribute their failure to factors which they have no control such as luck. The basic principle of attribution theory as it applies to motivation is that a person's own perceptions or attributions for success or failure determine the amount of effort the person will expend on that activity in the future.

Besides, research involving attribution and athletes also help to increase the coaches' awareness about their roles in helping the athletes to achieve optimal performance. For example, because of the high degree of egocentrism in causal attribution (Leith & Prapavessis, 1989; McAuley, 1985), the athletes are likely to attribute his or her success to internal factors, when the win may actually be due to a lack of skill or effort on the part of the opponent. Similarly, following a loss athletes are likely to blame transitory and external causes, such as bad luck, for defeat. When this happens the coach must encourage successful athletes to maintain proper motivation and to help the unsuccessful athletes to attribute outcome to factors over which they have control, such as ability and effort (Leith, 1990). Furthermore, since causal attributions can either increase or decrease motivation, the coach must be aware of the importance of the attributional process in order to create more positive and productive experiences for the athlete and to increase the probability of future successful performance. Usefulness of this line of research is in the finding of motivational strategies for athletic performance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

Twenty four female school athletes aged from 13 to 17 from Kelantan Sport School (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Putera) were recruited to participate in this study. The participants consist of netball players that represent the school in the match.

3.2 Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for the participants were: (a) female, (b) aged from 13 to 17 years old, (c) active in sport (school athletes), (d) participate in the netball match, (e) physically healthy and (f) participation is voluntary.

They were excluded from this research if they are not school athletes and did not participate in the netball match.

3.3 Sample Size Calculation

The sample size was calculated using G*Power Version 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et al., 2009) with the power, alpha level and effect size of 0.80, 0.05 and 0.25 respectively. Thus the total sample size for this study is 24 participants.

3.4 Research Design

The research design used to determine the attribution-sport performance pattern among school level netball players is a survey based design. Survey research is defined as a method of descriptive research used for collecting primary data based on verbal or written communication with a representative sample of individuals or respondents from the target population. Survey research also considered as social scientific research and focuses on people, the vital facts of people, and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations and behavior (Kerlinger, 1973).

3.5 Measurement Instrument

Measurement instrument used in this study is Modified version of the revised Causal Dimension Scale-II (CDS-II) questionnaire. Details description of the questionnaire are presented below.

Demographics Data

A demographic information form is used to assess participants' personal information such as age, race, position in sport and completed years of sports participation.