

## Team and Coach Gender: The Effect of the Expletive Halftime Speech

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### Abstract

Although expletive use is considered taboo in most societies, expletives are commonly used in sports. However, the impact of expletives on coaching effectiveness has not received significant attention because of the unique nature of sports in which fierce competition is condoned and even encouraged. In the current study, the researchers aim to examine whether expletives alter the effectiveness of speeches given by coaches across genders. Collecting data from a total of 133 respondents, ANOVA demonstrated that expletive word use during halftime speeches by coaches did not play a role in diminishing the coaching effectiveness, regardless of the coach's gender and the players' gender. Additionally, male and female participants perceived expletive speech differently, and student-athletes rated the speeches as significantly more effective than the nonstudent-athletes. This study suggests practical implications for female coaches, who may consider stepping out of traditional expected roles (e.g., supportive and caring) and adopting language in coaching traditionally reserved for male coaches, given that their choice of language will not negatively impact their coaching effectiveness. However, further examination is needed for the robustness of our findings as the current study does not necessarily demonstrate an increase in effectiveness or a positive shift in perceptions from the use of expletives.

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### INTRODUCTION

Words have always held great power (Tambiah, 1968); they convey a speaker's emotions, intentions, and needs, and a listener can evaluate the speaker's personality through their choice of language (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2019). In this sense, it is not surprising that words of wisdom from philosophers or political leaders have held the power to encourage, enlighten, and motivate. Although positive words can uplift and inspire (Conley et al., 1998), it is also essential to recognize the significant impact of negative words on communication. Negative words (e.g., profanity, swearing, and expletives) are commonly used even though they are considered taboo (Bergen, 2016). The sports domain is no exception; like philosophers and political leaders, sports coaches encourage, motivate, and even challenge players and teams to compete at the highest levels through their choice of words. Some coaches use positive reinforcement by giving verbal praise and emphasizing, for example, a play that was run correctly. Meanwhile, others use intense verbal discipline to ensure their team's success, which may manifest as punishment, such as verbal scolding when mistakes are made or expectations are not met.

As the sports landscape evolves, researchers witness a groundbreaking shift in gender roles within the coaching realm (Meier, 2015). With the increase in women athletes in traditionally male-dominated sports comes an increase in women coaches for both male and female teams. For example, the National Basketball Association's (NBA) San Antonio Spurs hired Becky Hammon in 2014, making her the first woman to be recognized as a coach in NBA history (Feinberg, 2022). During the 2022 season, Alyssa Nakken became the first female on-field coach in Major League Baseball (Guardado, 2022). Additionally, in the 2021–2022 school year, there were 42% of women head coaches in women's teams in National Collegiate Athletics Association Division I, 35.6% in Division II, and 43.8% in Division III—a significant increase from the past (Megargee, 2023). However, a notable disparity remains between men who coach women and women who coach men. For example, women comprise

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3% of all men's college basketball coaching positions, whereas men comprise 60% of all women's college basketball coaching positions (Longman, 2017). This shortage of women who coach male players presents challenges to the former's ability to earn players' and colleagues' respect—not because of their lack of knowledge but because of their lack of effectiveness. However, research has demonstrated that, through differing tactics, men's and women's coaches can be equally effective. The changing gender roles in coaching are essential for understanding the current study in sports and coaching, especially concerning gender roles. The study's focus on the intersection of expletive language use and gender in coaching can be justified by showing that gender dynamics in coaching are a significant concern.

Precht examined the differences between men's and women's language types while measuring their "stance"—a linguistic term that defines how men and women express attitudes and emotions through language (Precht, 2008). Using 900,000 words common in conversations in work and social settings, Precht found that men were more likely to express more stereotypically feminine emotions and reactions when working in stereotypically female-dominated fields (e.g., nursing). Similarly, women working in stereotypically male-dominated fields (e.g., engineering) were more likely to express stereotypically masculine emotions and reactions. These results suggested that both men's and women's working environments affect them; the study also revealed that men used more expletives than women and that the use of expletives is considered a masculine trait.

Nursanti investigated how men's language in sexist jokes reflects and constructs masculine identities, focusing on the Internet as the context (Nursanti, 2022). The study identified dominant masculine identities in such jokes, highlighting men's use of language to assert social dominance and solidarity. The results showed that men's language in these jokes predominantly reinforces traditional power dynamics, with men frequently employing competitive, dominant, and sometimes derogatory linguistic features to establish and maintain their social superiority over women, implying men use expletive words (e.g., "hell," "damn") more than women.

Of course, men do not solely use expletive words (Syahidna & Roselani, 2023). Although men use more negative words than women (Dwyer, 2010; Selnow, 1985), women also swear in some instances, such as when they are in the company of female friends (Coates, 1999) and when they are college-aged (Dickens & Chavez, 2018). Precht found that women in the workplace use more negative language than women in social settings (Precht, 2008). However, they use softer and less harsh swear words (i.e., "damn," "hell") than men (i.e., "fuck," "shit"). This fact suggests that women are more sensitive to their environment than men and adjust their language based on their setting.

Precht provided insight into how men and women are more or less likely to change their words and behaviours depending on whether they are in a traditionally male- or female-dominated environment (Precht, 2008). These different responses may influence how men and women coach in sports. Sports have become more male-dominated (Knoppers et al., 2022; Pape, 2020), causing both men and women to coach with typical male emotions and reactions. For example, a woman who typically does not use harsh expletives in her everyday speech may use them when coaching because the sports domain is considered masculine. Likewise, because men are not as adaptive to their circumstances as women, they may use harsher language in settings that are considered more feminine (e.g., coaching a women's sports team).

Athletes perceive coaches differently when they use expletives because of the varied impact of stress and adrenaline production in men and women (Norris et al., 2017). Generally, expletives—or verbal aggression—can increase recipients' stress levels (Stone et al., 2009). Additionally, stress affects male and female athletes differently: when experiencing stress in sports, male athletes experience an increase in their fight-or-flight hormones, whereas female athletes experience a buffer to their ability to create adrenaline (Women, 2017). The body's release of adrenaline—or "fight-or-flight" hormones—protects people when under stress, a necessary process for preparing athletes to perform at peak levels. If using expletives increases stress, it simultaneously increases adrenaline in male athletes and buffers female athletes' ability to produce adrenaline. Further, the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation reported that women tend to pay significantly more attention to coaches' body language and tone of voice, suggesting that expletive words may affect women athletes more than male athletes.

Women are only beginning to enter more traditionally male-dominated sporting fields. Therefore, it can be assumed that not all techniques men use are best suited for women. Increasing

stress levels through intimidation and yelling motivates male athletes, but these tactics have demonstrated counterproductive effects on female athletes (Feezell, 2008; Misasi et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2020). For example, women golfers find their coaches effective "when they are very supportive, encouraging, and excellent at communication" (Berkley, 1999). Similarly, MacKinnon examined golf coaching strategies and reported that women golfers respond to coaching styles differently than men: women are different from men both physically and psychologically, so they tend to need more positive reinforcement than men (MacKinnon, 2011). Women also enjoy their sport more when they have strong personal relationships with their coaches.

Moreover, examining which factors are significant in women's coaching of men's sports teams is interesting. The literature has documented women coaching men or boys in various settings, such as high school (Blom et al., 2011; LaFontaine & Kamphoff, 2016; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Stangl & Kane, 1991) and collegiate levels (Kamphoff et al., 2010). For example, LaFontaine and Kamphoff reported that women who coached men often received negative comments from male coaches within their athletic departments and struggled to exercise authority over their players (LaFontaine & Kamphoff, 2016). The authors explained that female coaches must display masculine traits to successfully coach men's teams. In contrast, men were neither required nor encouraged to assume traditionally female attributes to be perceived as effective coaches of women's teams. Although the literature does not suggest that men are better or worse at coaching than women (and vice versa), men and women do bring different attributes to the coaching field. Then, is there an optimal coaching style (positive or critical) that works most effectively when a coach's gender does not match the team's players?

It is crucial to understand the perceived differences in expletive usage between men and women in American culture to understand the effectiveness of expletive usage across genders in coaching. Throughout history, women have been viewed as softer and quieter members of society than men (Ashmore, 2015), this perception has changed drastically over time (Bertrand, 2020), but there remain gender differences that may influence how effective men are women are perceived to be in coaching (Bermon et al., 2021; Yabe et al., 2019).

Explored coaches' communication practices regarding walk-on athletes and assessed the success of these practices from athletes' perspectives (Wachsmuth et al., 2022). The author found key themes in the coach-athlete communication dynamic using the qualitative research method with 15 current and former walk-on athletes from the University of Texas at El Paso football team. Specifically, the author examined the negative impact of coaches using expletive language toward their athletes. The results showed that the athletes perceived expletive language negatively. They felt demeaned and disrespected as well as undervalued and undermined. Thus, coaches' use of expletive language has a detrimental effect on athletes' psychological wellbeing, their perception of the coach, and overall team experience.

Howell and Giuliano measured male and female perceptions of the effectiveness of a coach's halftime speech toward male and female high school basketball teams when the speech included or excluded expletives (Howell & Giuliano, 2011). A total of 60 undergraduate students were shown a vignette that contained a scenario of a coach giving a halftime speech to a basketball team. Using a 2 (Team Gender: Male or Female) \* 2 (Expletive Use: Present or Absent) between-subjects design, the authors found that male participants perceived the expletive speech as less effective when aimed at the female team but equally effective as the non-expletive speech when aimed at the male team. This was inconsistent with the results for the female participants, who rated the expletive speech as being just as effective as the non-expletive speech when aimed at both the men's and women's teams. Men believed women would not respond well to vulgar language; women did not share this feeling, rating the speeches as equal across conditions.

However, Howell and Giuliano did not include variations in the coaches' genders. The authors claimed that, at the time, it was implausible for a woman to coach a male team (Howell & Giuliano, 2011). However, given that women such as Becky Hammon and Alyssa Nakken are now coaching men's teams, the topic is worth studying further. Much of the controversy surrounding the effectiveness of a woman coaching a men's team has little to do with female coaches' ability and knowledge and more to do with the fact that many people do not believe a female coach can effectively teach male athletes how to play a sport (Guardado, 2022). Additionally, little research exists on the impact of coaches' negative words (e.g., expletives, swearing, and profanity) in sports.

For this reason, the researchers believe a coach's gender, the gender of the team's players and whether a coach uses expletives can affect that coach's effectiveness.

The current study contributes to the existing literature on coaching effectiveness by providing insights into how expletives affect perceived coaching effectiveness. Previous studies have investigated coaching effectiveness, gender disparities in language use, and expletive language effects. However, this study integrates these aspects to differentiate the perspectives of student-athletes and nonstudent-athletes toward coaching effectiveness, adding complexity and relevance to the findings for the coaching audience. The study provides valuable and unique insights by including nonathletes in the participant pool, which helps understand how expletive language and coaching effectiveness are perceived broadly. The researchers offer practical implications for amateur-level coaches, whose audiences and athletes may have varying sensitivities and responses to coaching styles compared to those at the professional level.

Therefore, in the current study, the researchers aim to examine whether expletives influence the effectiveness of speeches given by coaches across genders; more specifically, the researchers examine whether there are differences between women coaching men's teams using expletive words and men coaching women's teams using expletive words. The researchers aim to build on the existing literature on coaching effectiveness by verifying the hypotheses below:

- H1: The use of expletive words will reduce perceived coaching effectiveness.
- H2: There is a significant difference in perceived coaching effectiveness between a female coach using expletive words and a male coach using expletive words.
- H3: There is a significant difference in perceived effectiveness between the use of expletive words by coaches of men's and women's teams.
- H4: Male and female participants perceive expletive speech differently.

## METHOD

### Participants

We used a nonprobability convenience sampling method to collect data, wherein participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2021). A total of 133 respondents from a small liberal arts college completed the survey. Participants were asked to answer demographic questions about their gender and school year and about whether they were athletes or non-athletes. Out of the 133 adult respondents (44 men and 89 women), 73 (54.8%) self-identified as student-athletes, and 60 (45.2%) self-identified as nonathletes. Among these participants, all have experience in basketball, with a minimum of one year of participation in competitions at regional, state, or national levels. Additionally, they have actively participated in basketball games over the past two years. The characteristics of the sample satisfied the inclusion criteria regarding the identity of the sports player, history of sports participation, and types of sports experiences (Junior et al., 2020; Sheykhangafshe et al., 2021)

### Design

The researchers adopted a randomized experimental design, including evidence of manipulated intervention and random assignment of research participants to groups (Remler et al., 2014). A cross-sectional design was used at only one point in time. The researchers used a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  between-subjects factorial design in this study: The first independent variable was whether participants read a vignette with or without expletives, the second independent variable was whether the team receiving the speech in the vignette was male or female, and the third independent variable was whether the coach giving the speech in the vignette was male or female. The three independent variables were classified into eight combinations of vignettes, with one of the independent variables changing in each vignette: (1) female coach, female team, no expletives; (2) female coach, female team, expletives; (3) female coach, male team, no expletives; (4) female coach, male team, expletives; (5) male coach, female team, no expletives; (6) male coach, female team, expletives; (7) male coach, male team, no expletives; and (8) male coach, male team, expletives.

### Measures

The instrument had three sections: the sets of vignettes, the speech assessment, and demographics. First, the researchers used a modified version of Howell and Giuliano's vignette. The

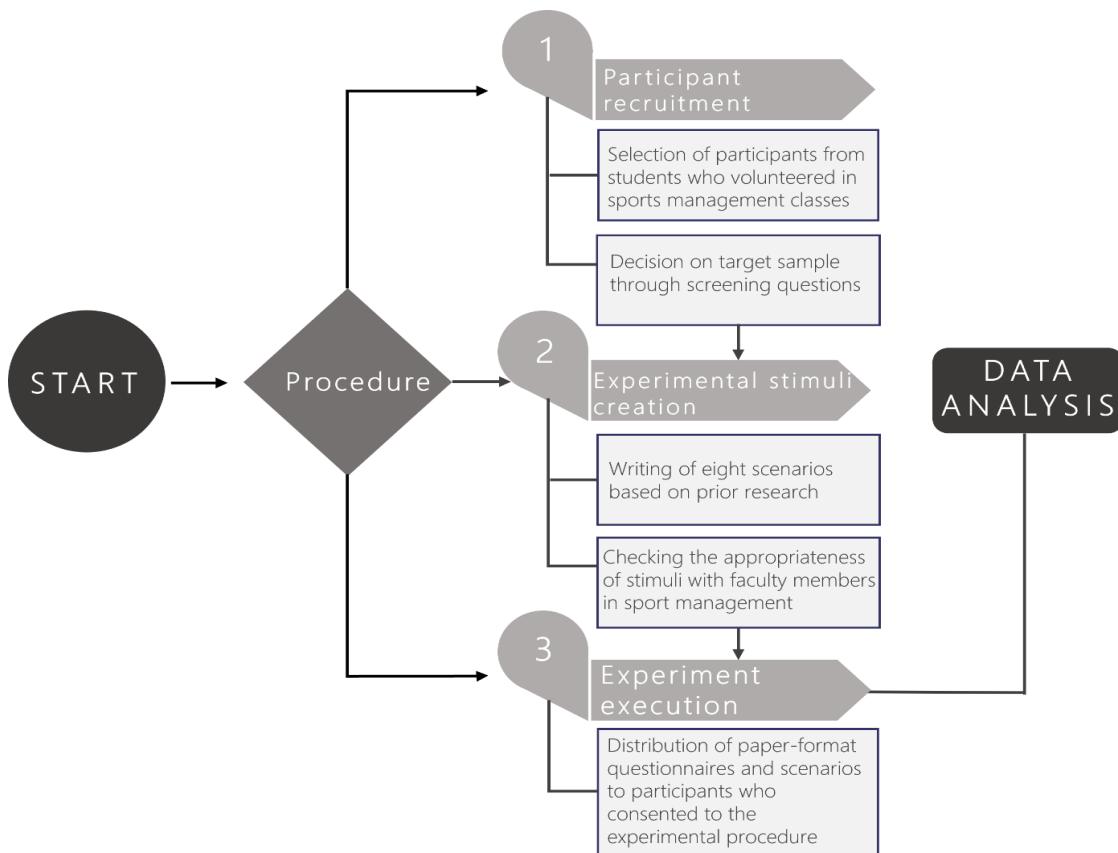
vignette included a simulation of a halftime speech a high school basketball coach gave to his or her team. The gender of the coach was distinguished in the vignette by changing the coach's name to either a stereotypical male (i.e., Walter) or female (i.e., Abigail) name. The team's gender was distinguished by using "guys" or "ladies" at the beginning of the speech. After reading one of the eight vignettes, participants were asked to fill out Howell and Giuliano's speech assessment questionnaire. This questionnaire was measured using a total of nine items. Participants responded on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very") designed to measure sports participants' speech appraisal. It included the questions "How likely is it that the team was inspired by this speech?" and "In your opinion, how convincing is the content of this speech?" The Cronbach's alpha values were greater than .85, indicating acceptable internal consistency based on undergraduate students in the United States (Howell & Giuliano, 2011).

### Procedure

The researchers attended various undergraduate classes and invited students to participate. Before administering the survey questionnaires, the researchers asked students to sign and return the consent forms. Because of potential reactivity effects, the researchers did not initially debrief the participants but encouraged them to contact them if they wanted more information regarding the study's purpose. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions by sorting the vignettes in conditions 1–8 in order and randomly distributing them to participants. Consent forms were distributed along with an attached vignette and speech assessment. Participants who agreed to participate filled out the consent forms and read one of the eight combinations of vignettes. After reading the vignette, participants filled out the speech assessment. Participation was voluntary, and participants were not incentivized to join the study.

### Analysis Techniques

To investigate a theoretical model, the researchers used the statistical package for social sciences (i.e., IBM SPSS 27) for data analysis. The researchers screened the data before testing the hypothesized model and eliminated outliers. Next, the researchers excluded responses with missing values and retained only completed responses. Following this procedure, none of the correlations were found to be greater than .85, indicating that multicollinearity was not observed in the data. The researchers used descriptive analysis to screen dataset features and report demographic characteristics. Then, the researchers analyzed the data using 2x2x2 ANOVA to scrutinize whether students' perceptions concerning styles of speech differed across genders or student types (e.g., athlete student or nonathlete student). The researchers measured effectiveness by aggregating speech assessment scores. Higher scores indicated greater effectiveness than lower scores.



**Figure 1.** Flowchart of the research design procedure

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

We examined whether the use of expletives by coaches affected their effectiveness. The researchers did not find evidence of the main effects (i.e., the use of expletives, team gender, and coach's gender). Our results revealed that the mean effectiveness scores of speeches containing expletives were lower than those not. However, the researchers found no statistical difference— $F(1, 125) = 2.135, p > 0.05$ —indicating that expletive words did not necessarily affect coaching effectiveness. Thus, H1 was not supported. Second, no statistically significant difference was found between the mean effectiveness scores of the speeches made by a female coach and a male coach— $F(1,125) = 0.002, p > 0.05$ —indicating that a coach's gender did not play a role in their perceived effectiveness. Thus, H2 was not supported. Third, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean effectiveness scores of speeches for the female team and male teams— $F(1,125) = 0.069, p > 0.05$ —demonstrating that the gender of a team did not affect coaching effectiveness. Thus, H3 was not supported. Fourth, the researchers found a significant difference between male and female survey participants regarding their perceived effectiveness of coaching— $F(1,125) = 18.211, p < 0.01$ —indicating that male and female participants perceived coaching effectiveness differently. Therefore, H4 was supported.

These results clarified several key points about the impact of expletive use on coaching effectiveness. They revealed that speeches including expletives had a slightly lower mean effectiveness score than those without expletives, although this difference was not statistically significant. This suggests that using expletives in speeches does not significantly affect a coach's effectiveness. The results also showed no significant difference in the effectiveness of speeches between female and male coaches, indicating that a coach's gender does not affect their perceived effectiveness. Similarly, the study found no significant impact of the team's gender on coaching effectiveness. The effectiveness scores for speeches to female teams were comparable to those for male teams. The findings regarding the perceptions of male and female survey participants were significant. They differed in their perceptions, with the data suggesting a notable gender-based

perceptual difference in their evaluations of coaching effectiveness. In summary, the study did not support the hypotheses that expletive use, coach's gender, or team's gender directly affects coaching effectiveness. However, a gender-based difference was found in how coaching effectiveness is perceived between men and women.

The researchers did not find evidence to support H2 and H3 regarding the interaction effects. The researchers found that speeches including expletives by female coaches were perceived as less effective than those excluding expletives by female coaches, although the difference was statistically insignificant. Similarly, speeches including expletives by male coaches were perceived as less effective than those excluding expletives by male coaches, again showing statistical insignificance— $F(1,125) = 1.808, p > 0.05$ . the researchers found that speeches including expletives directed toward the women's team were perceived as less effective than those excluding expletives directed toward the women's team. However, again, the difference was not statistically insignificant. Regarding the male team, speeches including expletives addressed to the men's team were perceived as less effective than those excluding expletives addressed to the men's team. The difference was not statistically significant:  $F(1,125) = 0.559, p > 0.05$ .

Last, the researchers attempted to determine whether there was any difference in perceptions of expletive words between student-athletes and nonstudent-athletes. The researchers included participant gender in the speech assessment and a demographic question about whether the participants were student-athletes or nonstudent-athletes. The results showed that student-athletes rated speeches across conditions as significantly more effective than did nonstudent-athletes:  $F(1,125) = 12.269, p < 0.01$ .

## Discussion

In the current study, the researchers aimed to estimate the impact of expletive words on the effectiveness of speeches given by coaches across genders. Although the literature has attempted to examine how a coach's gender, team's gender, and expletive words individually affect coaching effectiveness, few empirical studies (Bermon et al., 2021; Howell & Giuliano, 2011; Wachsmuth et al., 2022) have included these variables simultaneously. The results did not support the proposed hypothesis that there is a difference across coaching genders regarding how effective a coach is perceived when using expletives to address their team.

Our findings do not align with those of Howell and Giuliano, who found that speeches containing expletives were viewed as being less effective across all conditions (Howell & Giuliano, 2011). This difference in the findings may be attributed to the following. First, there may be a difference in how men and women were viewed in 2011 compared to 2023 when the current study was conducted. While men were historically considered to use more negative words than women, women today use negative language as much as men do (Precht, 2008). This indicates that gender roles have drastically changed, and traditional gender effects have diminished (Jacobi, 2014). More recent works, such as those of DeFrank and Kahlbaugh and Jacobi (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2019; Jacobi, 2014), did not reveal a significant relationship between gender and impression. Words once considered taboo are now accepted depending on their prevalence. Second, people may be largely desensitized to expletives and negative words because of their prevalence in everyday speech. Expletives may have been shocking and infrequently heard in the past, but this is not the case today (Bergen, 2016). Spectators at sports events often witness coaches shouting at players using expletive words during a halftime speech. Because this no longer comes as a surprise, players and spectators alike have grown accustomed to it and may even expect to hear and see it in sports environments (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2019). Third, the widespread use of expletives in media (e.g., movies, television, and music, might have made audiences less sensitive to them and changed perceptions of their appropriateness. This exposure has reduced the shock value of certain expletives across different cultures (Poggi, 2018). For example, the normalization of expletives in popular music, particularly in genres such as hip-hop and rock, has desensitized listeners (Kistler & Lee, 2009).

Regarding the interaction effects between expletives and a coach's gender, the researchers found no significant difference between male and female coaches. Male coaches are just as effective when they use expletives as when they do not, regardless of whether they are coaching a male or a female team. This may be attributed to male coaches, who comprise most sports coaches, often using expletive words to encourage and motivate players between games. The use of expletive speech does

not necessarily produce a negative impression on players, given that players often expect to hear such speech from their coach (DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2019). Similarly, female coaches are as just as effective when they refrain from using expletives in their speeches as when they use expletives, regardless of the gender of the team they are coaching. This can be explained by the fact that female coaches express more traditionally masculine traits (LaFountaine & Kamphoff, 2016) and often must prove their competence in the coaching field (Messner & Sabo, 1990) to succeed. This finding is consistent with the current trend showing an increase in women coaching. Thus, female coaches using expletives in speeches are no different from male coaches using expletives in speeches. In contrast to the traditional belief that female coaches are expected to be more supportive and encouraging (Hovden & Tjønndal, 2019), our findings show that female coaches may take on traditionally more masculine language in coaching and remain effective (Precht, 2008).

However, the researchers must be cautious in suggesting that female coaches should abandon conventional roles and embrace more aggressive language. Our findings do not show any negative effects on coaching effectiveness. Still, they also do not necessarily indicate any improvement in efficacy or favourable perception changes. Given this lack of evidence, expletives, especially in high school sports settings, require careful consideration. High school athletes are typically minors (Martin, 1994), and the developmental and educational environments at this level are distinct from those at the college level. The risks of using expletives in high school coaching include the potential for creating a negative team environment, harming coach-athlete relationships, and risking administrative or parental repercussions.

Considering the difference between high school and college athletes, it is plausible that college athletes might be more desensitized to expletive language because of their greater exposure to diverse coaching styles. They might view expletives as a normal part of sports environments. High school student-athletes, however, might be more sensitive to such language, especially if they have not been exposed to it in their previous sporting experiences. Therefore, it would seem prudent to recommend against using expletives in coaching, especially at the high school level. Additionally, using expletive words at the high school level would provoke a critical debate on whether the potential benefits of using expletives in coaching justify the risk of jeopardizing the coach's position. Future studies can further explore this topic.

Regarding expletive usage when coaching a team, there was no significant difference between expletive speech aimed at men's and women's teams, regardless of the coach's gender. Participants perceived speeches given to the men's team as equally effective in both conditions, with and without expletives. Surprisingly, the same result was found for the women's team: participants were indifferent to the speeches given to the women's team with and without expletives. This finding was inconsistent with MacKinnon's discovery that women athletes have a better relationship with their female coaches, who provide more positive reinforcement than negative feedback (MacKinnon, 2011). This discrepancy is associated with data characteristics, including period and sports level. Women's role in sports has changed significantly over the past decade, and women are being increasingly viewed as equally strong and independent as men.

Further, the team sports setting (basketball in this study) may require a coach to use more masculine language, even with women's teams, than the individual team setting (golf in MacKinnon's study) (MacKinnon, 2011). Women's team sports are equally as competitive as men's, so it is not surprising that the use of expletives directed toward women's teams does not negatively affect coaching effectiveness. Therefore, the term "benevolent sexism"—coined by Glick and Fiske, who reported that women can be offended by negative words used toward them and should be protected from those words—does not hold in today's sports world (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Although people use fewer negative words toward females (Kaye & Sapolsky, 2009), using expletives toward female athletes does not reduce a coach's effectiveness.

An interesting finding of the present study was that student-athletes rated speeches across conditions significantly more effective than nonstudent-athletes. One possible explanation for this is that expressive words increase a coach's credibility and sincerity more than words that are not expressive (Rassin & Heijden, 2005). From the perspective of student-athletes, using such words increases a coach's effectiveness (Howell & Giuliano, 2011). Student-athletes who know a coach's style may sympathize more with the coach if they motivate players using negative words. However, to our knowledge, our study is the first attempt to differentiate student-athletes and nonstudent-

athletes in the questionnaire. Further study is needed on whether using expletive words makes coaches more credible and persuasive.

The researchers must also acknowledge that our findings did not align with most initial hypotheses, suggesting that expletive words do not significantly affect the perceived effectiveness of coaching, regardless of the coach's or team's gender. When examining the potential causes for these unexpected results, several aspects of the study design and external factors should be considered. For example, using a nonprobability convenience sampling method may limit the generalizability of the results. The sample predominantly consisted of individuals from a single liberal arts college, not the broader population. Additionally, the gender imbalance in the participant group (more women than men) could have influenced the outcomes, particularly if there were gender-specific perceptions of expletive language in coaching. It is also possible that there was participant bias. The participants' experiences with sports, coaching, and language could have influenced their responses. For instance, student-athletes might perceive expletive use differently based on their experiences with coaches, which might explain why they rated the speeches more effective than nonathletes.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate how the use of expletives affects the effectiveness of speeches given by coaches of varying genders. The researchers specifically examined differences between women coaching men's teams and men coaching women's teams while using offensive language. The results showed that expletives in coaching speeches do not significantly affect a coach's perceived effectiveness, contrary to the hypothesis that expletive language reduces coaching effectiveness. The study found no substantial difference in coaching effectiveness related to the coach's gender or the team being coached. However, the results showed that male and female participants have different perceptions regarding coaching effectiveness. The researchers found a notable difference in how student-athletes and nonstudent-athletes rated the effectiveness of speeches. Despite the existence of traditional views on gender and language use in sports, the effectiveness of coaches using expletives was not perceived differently based on gender.

Although the findings suggest some practical implications, it is also important to note some limitations. First, the study included a small number of participants per cell because the researchers designed eight combinations of vignettes, which inevitably allowed for only limited responses. For example, some conditions had as few as five participants, which may have affected the significance levels of the results. Although a total sample of 133 is not small, recruiting more than the current sample size in higher education was not feasible with our limited resources. Second, there were more female participants than male participants (89 women and 44 men) in our dataset, which may have influenced the perceived effectiveness of the speeches. Though this was out of our control, future studies should strike a balance between the number of female and male participants to increase the results' robustness.

We suggest conducting follow-ups using both quantitative and qualitative research. First, additional research on the effect of expletives across the sports domain would be helpful. For example, the researchers used basketball as our case study sport; it would also be interesting to research whether there are differences in the use of expletives in "violent" sports (e.g., football and hockey) and "nonviolent" sports (e.g., baseball and volleyball). Second, future research can include data from athletes themselves to understand how they feel about the use of expletives by their coach. Finally, in-depth interviews with current or former athletes could improve the study's robustness because there were differences in perceptions of the coach's choice of words between student-athletes and nonstudent-athletes.

We found no relationship between gender, expletives, and coaching effectiveness. Expletive use may be interpreted differently depending on whether the coach of a team is male or female. Nevertheless, this study confirms past research regarding the shift in perception when men and women use expletives. This study adds to the literature on the difference in perceptions of male and female coaches and their effectiveness when using expletives in halftime speeches. Additionally, this study provides new insight into the overall perceived effectiveness of female coaches who coach male teams, a controversial topic throughout history.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

CR was the principal author responsible for the manuscript's conception, design, and drafting. HJ made major improvements to the paper by enhancing its clarity, coherence, and academic rigour through editing. BP was essential in the data analysis, result interpretation, and paper integration.

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