



Effectiveness and contribution of the Ethiopian Sport Academy (ESA) to Ethiopian National Athletics Team

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Abstract

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ESA has been taking the lions' share in shaping the success of the Ethiopian Athletics National Team through nurturing talent, providing specialized coaching, leveraging altitude benefits, fostering group dynamics, aligning with cultural norms, and producing remarkable success stories on the Ethiopian athletics. This study was focused to assess the effectiveness and contribution of ESA to the Ethiopian National Athletics National Team. The study used mixed-methods approach research design. ESA has (N = 2) campuses and sampled athletes (n = 222) were selected using proportional sampling technique. Outcome variable of the study was contribution of the athletes to the Ethiopian national athletics team. Predictor variable was effectiveness of ESA. The primary data collection instruments such as standardized questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and focus group discussion was piloted and administered to the athletes. SPSS and Nvivo software's used to process quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Structural Equation modelling (ESA) was used to analyse effectiveness of sport academy. The result of the study shows that skilled workforce, stability, availability of information, productivity, plans, resources and flexibility significantly contribution to the effectiveness of sport academy at $p < 0.05$. The effectiveness of ESA enables them to produce world class middle and long distance runners to the Olympic level. However, there are remaining works on short distance, jumping and throwing events. The study recommends ESA management to produce sprinters, jumpers and throwers aligning with their sport nutrition as well as hire professionals like f physiotherapist and sport psychologist.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Contribution, Jumping, Training centre, National team

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1. Introduction

Ethiopia is a country with a rich history of producing world-class long-distance runners, and the success of the national team can have a significant impact on the country's national pride and identity (Ford et al., 2011). The long-term athlete development is a planned, structured and progressive development of youth's athleticism to achieve elite sport success and to engage in lifelong, health enhancing physical activity (Granacher & Borde, 2017).

In line with long term athletes' development, Ministry of culture and sports as well as Ethiopia Athletics Federation have developed the road map to strengthen Ethiopian Sport Academy. Ethiopian Sport academy Addis Ababa and Asella Campus objectives are to produce the best young athletes who are physically, mentally and ethical competent at national and international competitions. Provide capacity building training to professionals in various sports. Conduct research on various sports that can contribute to the quality of the sport and disseminate the results. Serve as a knowledge centre for various sports at the national level (Ayenew, 2012). These athletes have helped the National Team achieve success in various international competitions, including the African Championships, African Games, and World Championships (Getahun, 2018).

Previous local findings reveals that Athlete Tirunesh Dibaba National Athletics Training (Firdu, 2018) and Sidama Coffee Athletics Club (Gimbo, 2016) suggests that there were other problems include lack of motivation, lack of the access quality of education,

the absences of physiotherapist and health centers, insufficient pocket money, lack of role model in the short distance and sport related injuries. Alichu Wuriro Athletics Training male 400 meters youth potential is below the standard set for regional level (Usman, 2012). Hagerselam Athletics Centre sprinters face the problem of athletes' drop-out from regular training program because of intensive training program(Getahun, 2018).

In this study, the primary purpose of the study was to assess ESA effectiveness including skilled workforce, stability, and availability of information, productivity, plans, resources and flexibility. Moreover, the contribution of ESA to national athletics team could explore numerical contributions. In Ethiopia, it is unclear whether these ESA has been successful in producing elite runners, jumpers and throwers for the National Team. Therefore, this study was focused to investigate the effectiveness and contribution of the Ethiopian Sport Academy (ESA) to Ethiopian National Athletics Team

2. Methodology

2.1. Description of Study area

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa city administration Ethiopian Sports Academy Addis Ababa Campus and Ethiopian Sports Academy Assela campus. Addis Ababa Youth Sports Academy is a recreation area in Addis Ababa, Central Ethiopia. Ethiopian Sports Academy is situated nearby to the government office Ethiopian construction design and supervision works

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corporation and the place of worship Mikada engineering and trading plc. Ethiopian Sports Academy Assela campus is found in Asella. Asella is a town in central Ethiopia. Located in the Arsi Zone of the Oromia Region 126 km south from Addis Ababa, this town has a latitude and longitude of 7°57'N 39°7'E, with an elevation of 2,430 meters.

2.2. Study design

The mixed-methods approach research design was used for this study purpose. A mixed methods research design was a procedure for collecting, analysing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem.

2.3. Population and sampling

ESA has two campuses (N = 2). Ethiopian Sport Academy Addis Ababa campus is found in Addis Ababa city administration and Ethiopian Sport Academy Asella campus, Asella town. The athlete’s population of this study was selected using proportional stratified sampling technique. Leaders from senior ESA staffs (N = 5) was selected using purposive sampling.

The target population for this study comprised the 500 registered in ESA of both campuses in 2023/2024. To ensure representativeness, a stratified random sampling method was employed, considering the heterogeneity within the population of different athletics discipline. Ayodele (2012) recommended a sample size of at least 10% of the target population for such studies. In cases where this percentage was

not achievable, the modified Yamane Taro formula (1964) was applied. The study, therefore, selected a sample of 222 athletes was taken. The selection of this sample size was based on the Yamane Taro formula, defined as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

More so, to identify the proportion of sample that would be drawn from each frame, the formula above was modified as follow;

$$nh = \frac{NhXn}{N}$$

Where,

nh= proportion of sample drawn from each stratum

Nh= Population Size in each stratum

n= sample Size

N= Aggregate population size, that is,

N= Nh1+Nh2+Nh3+-----+Nhn

Therefore, using the formula the sample size drawn for the study was now,

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{500}{1 + 500(0.05)^2} = 222$$

The study therefore involves 222 athletes found both ESA campuses. Moreover, from each athletics discipline the sample size drawn was displayed in Table 3.1 below based on Taro Yemane formula

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Table 1

Sample Size Determination

Sn	Athletics Discipline	Population Size in each stratum	Sample size $nh = \frac{NhXn}{N}$
1	ESA-AA Running	170	76
2	ESA-AA Jumping	40	18
3	ESA-AA Throwing	40	18
4	ESA-Asella Running	170	76
5	ESA-Asella Jumping	40	18
6	ESA-Asella Throwing	40	18

2.4. Outcome variable

In this study, Ethiopian sport academy contributions to National Athletics Team were considered as dependent variable of the study. This guideline was taken from IAAF. In this study content validity was used, because the questionnaire used for this purpose was taken from the published document, however it did not have specific reliability result. To be valid, modification was done to the questionnaire based on expert judgement (Harald & Wolfgang, 2009).

2.5. Predictors Variables

The outcome variable of the study was effectiveness of Ethiopian sport academy. A psychometric property of organizational effectiveness subscale includes flexibility, resources, planning, productivity, information, stability, and skilled labor. This questionnaire was used in Australian national Olympic sporting organizations. The psychometric properties of the subscales developed within each of the four quadrants composing the competing values approach, seven subscales and 56-items. A 5-likert scale questionnaire was used to measure the

perception of Athletics training centre effectiveness (Sotiriadou & Shilbury, 2021). Effectiveness of Ethiopia Athletics training centers was be taken as independent variable of the study. In this study content validity was used, because the questionnaire used for this purpose was taken from the published document, however it did not have specific reliability result. To be valid, modification was done to the questionnaire based on expert judgement (Debrah, 2012).

2.6. Source of data

This study was primary data collection instruments such as standardized questionnaire, semi-structured interview and Focus group discussion. Secondary source of data, document analysis were used.

2.7. Pilot test

Pilot test was administered on one of Addis Ababa city administration Athletics training centres (n = 30). The standardized questionnaire, semi- structured interview and focus group discussion was piloted. Cronbatch alpha level was used to test the questionnaire before administering the final

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questionnaire. The result of cronbatch alpha ($\alpha = 0.78$). The result of cronbatch alpha was acceptable, however some grammatical and alphabet was corrected. Semi-structured interview and focus group discussion pilot test was conducted then the way approaching was modified after pilot test.

2.8. Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data analysis was processed using IBM SPSS Amos 27.0 software. Then, structural equation modelling used to analyze effectiveness of

training centers to the contribution of national athletics team. Nvivo, version # 12, was used to transcribe the qualitative data thematically.

2.9. Ethical Considerations

Letter of Ethical clearance was taken from Jimma University Sport academy research and postgraduate coordinating office ref.no.: JUSA/RPG/198/2016, dated on 30/09/2016EC. Taking this ethical letter Ethiopian sport academy was communicated and data was collected.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 2
Demographic background of the participants

Variables	Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage
ESA Training Centres	Addis Ababa Campus	111	50
	Assela Campus	111	50
Athletes	Runners	154	68
	Jumpers	36	16
	Throwers	36	16
Age	U-17	222	100
Gender	Male	111	50
	Female	111	50

The above table shows that ESA has two campuses that are found in Addis Ababa campus and Assela town. Accordingly, equal numbers of athletes were selected from both ESA campuses. The majority of athlete's were runners including short distance, middle distance runners and long distance runners. In addition, few numbers of throwers and jumpers were selected from both sport academy campuses. All of athletes were under 17-years old. Equal numbers of male and female were selected.

3.2. Effectiveness of ESA

A structural equation model (SEM) generated through AMOS was used to test the relationships. A good fitting model is accepted if the value of CMIN/df is < 5, the Tucker and Lewis index (TLI), and the Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI) is > 0.90. In addition, an adequate-fitting model was accepted if the AMOS computed value of the Standardized Rootmean square Residual (RMR) < 0,05 and the Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) was between 0,05

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and 0.08. The fit indices for the model shown in the table above fell within the acceptable range: CMIN/df = 4.36, TLI = 1.2, CFI = 0.96 and RMSEA = 0.02.

Sn	Effects	β	SE	CI	P
1.	Skilled workforce ---> Effectiveness	1.00	.92	2.73	0.00
2.	Stability ---> Effectiveness	1.11	.99	2.83	0.00
3.	Availability of information ---> Effectiveness	1.27	.69	2.94	0.00
4.	Productivity ---> Effectiveness	1.02	.61	2.69	0.00
5.	Plans ---> Effectiveness	.74	.52	2.82	0.00
6.	Resources ---> Effectiveness	1.00	.49	2.84	0.00
7.	Flexibility ---> Effectiveness	1.07	.94	3.03	0.00

Table 3
Effectiveness of ESA

3.2.1. ESA availability of information Effectiveness

In this case the ESA has higher beta value on availability of information, stability and flexibility of organization. In ESA there was information availability. This implies that managers, coaches and athletes get real time data, enable employees to operate their job efficiently on time, the supporters and fans of ESA have an access to attend information from their sport academy website and Facebook account.

The finding of this study shows that Ethiopian sport academy have availability of information. Recent study shows that teams that leverage advanced analytics have shown significant improvements in their win-loss records compared to those that do not (Kahn, 1990). A report highlights how sports teams are using customer relationship management systems to analyse fan behaviour and preferences, leading to

more targeted marketing strategies and increased revenue streams (Deloitte, 2021). According to published study, teams that utilize detailed financial reporting are more likely to achieve long-term fiscal stability (Daniel, Sharienne, & Curt, 2013).

3.2.2. ESA stability effectiveness

ESA has stable financial source from Ethiopian government, consistent leadership, policy, employee retention and morale and long-term strategic planning. So they are better position to achieve their strategic goal and ensure continuity of the vision.

The study shows that Ethiopian sport academy is a stable organization. Previous study reported that financially stable organizations are better positioned to achieve their strategic goals and respond effectively to market changes (Hums et al., 2023). Research indicates that organizations with consistent

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leadership tend to have clearer communication channels and more cohesive team dynamics, which ultimately enhances organizational effectiveness (Wasim & Imran, 2010). A study highlights that organizations with clear and consistent policies are more likely to achieve their objectives because they minimize confusion and conflict (Ramesh et al., 2024). According to research conducted psychological safety—a component often enhanced by organizational stability leads employees to contribute more effectively towards achieving organizational goals (Kahn, 1990). Visionary companies that prioritize stability often outperform their competitors over time (Collins & Porras, 1996).

3.2.3. *ESA Flexibility effectiveness*

ESA was a dynamic organization due to rapid technological advancement over the course of time, adapted to change their operations during Covid-19 pandemic in implementing health policies, enhanced open communication enables the ESA to be flexible for innovative ideas and allocate the resources effectively.

The study reported that Ethiopian Sport organization was flexible organization. Previous Research indicates that organizations with a flexible structure were better positioned to navigate these disruptions (Ramesh et al., 2024). A study found that sport organizations that embraced flexibility in their decision-making frameworks were more successful in implementing strategic initiatives (Wasim & Imran, 2010). According to a report, organizations that

prioritize flexibility tend to have higher levels of innovation in their programs and services. This responsiveness not only strengthens relationships but also enhances overall organizational effectiveness (Patrik & Kristína, 2018). This dynamic approach ensures that resources are directed toward high-impact areas as circumstances evolve (Thomas, Joseph, & Elijah, 2022).

3.2.3. *ESA Resources*

ESA have world class gymnasium. Most the sprinters spent their time in the gymnasium in doing strength exercise. In this case, the athletes have an annual plan, weekly and daily plan based on the plan they have engaged in the gymnasium training. Being trained in the training has multiple advantages with regard to sport facilities. As a sprinter they are providing full sport materials including spikes, asphalt shoe, torsion shoe, full track suits and other important sport kits.

ESA recruits athletes from different place of Ethiopia, and then entered into the academy to take training for 4-year and finally graduated from the academy to join clubs and also represent Ethiopia at international sporting competitions. Ethiopian sport academy has been recruiting athletes' from different Ethiopian regions, city administration and Towns for the 2024/25 academy entry. In 2024, there were ten crew members have been recruiting the athletes in this summer. Ethiopian sport academy has been graduating athletes for the 15th year.

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In the year 2023/24 Ethiopian Sports Academy Asella Campus planned to select 360 athletes. Finally, at the end the recruitment the screening committee finalized 310 athletes. At the end of the year five athletes left the training campus due different reason and left with 305 athletes. For the year 2024/25, Ethiopian Sport Academy prepared ten committees which recruit athletes from different part of Ethiopia. Before going to the field work, the academy posted on their website so as make athletes ready for screening. For such good the Ethiopian Universities have been helping the screening through providing facilities and equipment's. Even the academy is expecting more in providing knowledge and conducting research in collaboration with the academy. The recruited athletes will be graduated after 4-year.

However, the sport academy has recruiting athletes from different corner of Ethiopia. This is the difficult job that only ESA is doing annually. This ultimate objective is to substitute the graduated athletes annually, however it tiresome of expertise coaches, transportation and other resources.

There is national demand that most of athletes were eager to join ESA. Last year there were around 13,000 athletes who registered for recruitment. The quota we had for the year 2024 was 360 athletes only. Now a day the young athletes are aware of joining and improve their performance through provision of scientific training. In that year they made screening twice one was on the site another was in ESA Addis Ababa Campus.

In 2010 GC the budget of sport academy was allocated to 68birr. Assume that this was 14-years back and how much inflation was affecting Ethiopian market. This really needs revision from the government side. The nutrition among athletics discipline such as short distance, middle distance and long distance runners, jumpers and throwers sport nutrition have to be based on the discipline. Because, each athletes consumes different calories expenditure and that spent calories have be compensated.

...800m runners request their coaches, because their training load including frequency, intensity and volume of the training vis-à-vis sport nutrition they are having in the campus does not much each other. The nature of middle distance running was very tiresome as compared to the other athletes training disciplines. To this end, the athletes have been requesting nutrition based on their type of sport and still which demands solution.

Now a day, ESA athletes have been working with athletes' manager in which the managers invited them to take part in different international competition, moreover the athletes will get rewards if they win the race and on the other hand athletes' manager will be commission from the award. Never the less, athletes coaches did not be benefited from athletes' manager. In such case, athletes coach gets

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only the salary. ESA coaches are salaried employee, but there no platform for the coach to be benefited from athletes award. This is demotivating the coaches not to extend their helping hand to the athletes. The sport academies are not benefited from the award. Sport training centers are public organization, so public organizations are non-profit organization. May be in the future the sport academies have to think over how the successful athletes have to compensate the wages that expended on them throughout four year service.

ESA displayed vacancies to hire athletes sport psychology and sport physiotherapy. Unfortunately, they could not get this expertise. Ethiopian Universities are not producing sport psychology and sport physiotherapy in the country. As a way forward, either Ethiopian sport academy teaches their staffs abroad or hiring international staffs. As far as my knowledge was concerning, teaching coaches were very cost effective than hiring international staffs in dollar.

3.3. Contribution of ESA to the National Team

Table 4

Contribution of ESA to Ethiopian National Athletics Team participation on international competition

sn	Name	Events	Participation
1	Samuel Fire	3000m steeplechase	Paris Olympic, 2024
2	Lamecha Girma	3000m steeplechase	Paris Olympic, 2024
3	Dinka Fikadu	3000m steeplechase	Paris Olympic, 2024
4	Adam Musa	100m	Cameroon, 2023
5	Abera Alemu	Pole-vault	Cameroon,2023
6	Tewodros Bogale	Discuss	Cameroon,2023
7	Abebe Lamecha	400m hurdle	African country, 2023
8	Nibret Kinde	5000m	Lukasa, Zambia

ESA has been benefited in the number of ways. First, they are representing the country being taking training in the academy and even represent their country after graduating from the sport academy. Second, after graduation from the ESA athletes have been joining different Ethiopian athletics clubs. From 28-98% Ethiopian sport clubs accepted graduates from of ESA which were graduated in different type of athletics disciplines. Particularly in Athletics

sport 2024 data, 90% of Ethiopian sport clubs athletes were the graduated from ESA.

ESA of Asella campus has been known in producing world class middle and long distance runners. ESA contributed 10-athletes for Olympic game. These athletes were participated 4-athletes in 3000m steeplechase, others in 800m and namely athlete Gemechis in Paralympic game. ESA has contributed 3-pole-vaulter represents Ethiopian in African athletics

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competition, Cameroon. The next work will be working on sprinters, throwers and jumpers in order to change the attitude of clubs and Ethiopian athletics federation.

In agreement to this study, other study confirms that financial constraints are one of the most critical factors affecting sport academies. Limited funding can restrict an academy's ability to hire qualified coaches, purchase necessary equipment, and maintain facilities. Financial limitations often lead academies to prioritize short-term operational needs over long-term developmental goals. This prioritization can hinder the quality of training programs offered and reduce the number of athletes who can be supported (Mary & MacLean, 2018).

Moreover, when resources are scarce, academies may struggle to provide scholarships or financial aid for talented but underprivileged athletes. This lack of support can limit diversity within sports programs and reduce opportunities for young athletes from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Mary & MacLean, 2018). Furthermore, inadequate facilities can lead to safety concerns for athletes during training sessions or competitions. This situation could deter potential participants from joining the academy due to fears about injury or poor conditions (Pamela, Kirstin, & Christoph, 2013).

A shortage of experienced professionals can lead to suboptimal training conditions and inadequate athlete support systems. For instance, if an academy cannot afford to hire specialized coaches for different sports disciplines due to budget constraints, it may result in a generalized training approach that does not cater effectively to individual athlete needs (Côté & Vierimaa, 2014).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness and contribution of the Ethiopian Sport Academy (ESA) to Ethiopian National Athletics Team. To this effect, participants of the study were selected from both ESA campuses in Addis Ababa and Assela campus. Both genders were equally represented. The majority of athletes were short distance, middle distance runners and long distance runners, few of them were throwers and jumpers. All of athletes were youngsters.

The study finding was reveals that ESA was effective sport organization in terms of financial stability, consistent policy, strategic plan and government fund that enable athletes, coaches, support staffs and managers to rely, attract and retain all the staffs. However, the nutrition provided was created mismatch between athletics training provided and specific athletics nutrition

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delivered. Moreover, ESA was effective to have physical facilities such as modern gymnasium and synthetic track as well as athletic equipment's including sneakers, shoes and track suits. Furthermore, in ESA there was information dissemination platform such as ESA official website, whatsapps, telegram and Gmail account. ESA effective in organizational flexibility, the organization is subjective to change based on government directions.

The finding of the study shows that ESA was contributed very few steeplechasers to Ethiopian National Athletics Team who participated in Olympic athletics sports representing Ethiopia. Moreover, few sprinters and throwers were contributed to Ethiopian National Athletics Team who participated in African athletics championships. Furthermore, ESA contributed a lot athlete to Ethiopian athletics clubs. However, ESA could not produce throwers such as javelin, shot put, hammer and discus throwers, similarly on jumping events such as pole-vaulters, long jump and triple jumpers to Ethiopian National Athletics Team who can participate on international competitions representing Ethiopia.

5. References

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4.2. Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the team of researchers draw the following recommendations:

- It is advisable if ESA management body prepare a proposal on sport nutrition specific to the athletic event and convince higher official in order to allocate sport nutrition budget for the entire athletes in the campus.
- It is good if ESA work on coaches and athletes ration, since two coaches were coached a number of athletes.
- It is advisable if ESA management body looks for Scarcity of expertise such as physiotherapist and sport psychologist, because the sport academy couldn't graduates in the country.
- It is advisable if ESA management body have to focus in produce throwers such as javelin, shot put, hammer and discus throwers, similarly on jumping events such as pole-vaulters, long jump and triple jumpers to Ethiopian National Athletics Team who can participate on international competitions representing Ethiopia.



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