PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN SPORTS IN TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES IN CENTRAL REGION OF KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate psychological factors that influence the training and performance of female athletes in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya. The study assessed the extent to which the coach athlete relationship, coach leadership behaviour, fear of strenuous exercises , fear of injuries resulting from training and motivation using verbal reinforcement influences training and performance of female athletes in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The target population for the study comprised female athletes in certificate and diploma teacher training colleges. The teacher training colleges were stratified into two strata; certificate teacher training college and diploma teacher training college. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 50% certificate teacher training colleges. Since there was only one diploma teacher training college, it was purposively selected. The study selected 444 (21.6%) respondents from the two randomly selected certificate teacher colleges and the one diploma training college. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to code and organize the data. The data were summarized into descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. The results were presented in the form of tables. The hypotheses were tested using Wilcoxon signed ranks test at significance level of 0.05. The study results revealed that the female athletes' involvement in training activities is influenced by the coach leadership behaviour and coach- athlete relationship. The study results also revealed that female athletes differ in their preference for male or female coaches and also youthful or elderly coaches. The fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by the coach, fear of injuries and motivation using verbal reinforcement were all found to influence female athletes' participation in training activities. As a result, the researcher has recommended training of female athletes by coaches who understand female athletes' psychological needs, having an assistant coach when a male coach is coaching female athletes, training of teachers/tutors who double as coaches on methodology that equips them with knowledge on the coach-athlete relationship and coach leadership behaviour as well as addressing the psychological factors influencing coaching of female athletes through the curriculum.

Key Words: Psychological Factors, Participation and Performance, Coaches and Female Athletes

Introduction

Female athletes have a unique way of responding to coaching behaviours (Jones, Armour & Portrac, 2004). In addition, female athletes also have specific needs that need to be understood by coaches. Without an understanding of these specific needs, various problems may arise including hostility and resentment between the coach and the athlete (Weinberg & Gould, 1995), frustration of coaches, (Jones et al., 2004), burnout (Hargreaves, 2001) and quitting from sports participation

(Stewart & Taylor, 2000). As noted by Bristow (2009), Stewart and Taylor (2000) and Pendleton (2001), there are some psychological characteristics that are crucial for coaches to understand if they ever want to get the best out of the female athletes.

Female athletes' preferences for same -sex or opposite -sex coaches have been examined and factors taken into consideration include the level of athlete's comfort in disclosure (Frey, Czech, Kent & Johnson, 2006; Weinberg & Gould, 1995), capability of being a role model (Lyle, 2007; Coakley, 2009; Laker, 2002) and the level of knowledge and ability to motivate (Frey et al., 2006). Weinberg and Gould (1995) argue that female athletes need to establish personal relationships with coaches. Indeed, female athletes need to nurture a family-like camaradie with team mates, coaches and prefer a friendly and more respectful atmosphere in which to train (Pendleton, 2001). According to Lavallee, Kremer, Moran and Williams (2004), a coach's influence will vary by such variables as age, gender, physical maturity and sporting experience.

The type of leadership behaviour displayed by the coach can have a significant effect on the performance and psychological wellbeing of female athlete (Woods, 2001; Wooldridge, 2001). As noted by Woods (2001), female athletes prefer a democratic coaching style which includes participation in decision-making. Female athletes are unwilling to follow a directive without knowing the reasons behind the directive (Selders, 2010). According to Stewart and Taylor (2000), other factors affecting female athlete's performances in sports are the athlete's perception of coaching competence and coaching behaviours. Researchers argue that female athletes who are not provided with clear positive feedback regarding their performance lack self-confidence (Cox, 1990; Wooldridge, 2001). Research generally indicates that over-bearing displays of emotions turn off majority of female athletes (Woodridge, 2001; Frey et al., 2006). Pendleton (2001) argues that coaches who believe in yelling should do it sparingly and should direct it at the group rather than the individual.

Another factor that relates to coaching of female athletes is fear of injuries. Research generally indicates that female athletes experience more fear of physical injury than male athletes (Cartoni, Minganti, & Zelli, 2005; Kontos, 2004). As noted by Kontos (2004), girls typically perceive more injury risk than boys in childhood play activities and adolescent sport participation.

In Kenya, the teaching of Physical Education is compulsory in teacher training colleges. Therefore, female athletes are compelled to be involved in sports. However, scholars and researchers have highlighted some factors that influence their training and performance in sports such as fear of injuries resulting from training, fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by coaches, the coach-athlete relationship, coach leadership behaviour, and motivation using verbal reinforcement (Krotee & Butcher, 2007; Stewart & Taylor, 2000; Lavellee et al., 2004; Wuest & Butcher, 1995). It is in the light of this situation that this study was designed to assess the extent to which these psychological factors influence the training and performance of female athletes in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the psychological factors that influence training and performance of female athletes in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya. The specific psychological factors that were assessed included fear of injuries resulting from training fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by coaches, coach-athlete relationship, coach leadership behaviour and motivation using verbal reinforcement.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

i.   To determine the female athletes' extent of preference for;
        (a) Male or female coaches
        (b) Youthful or elderly coaches
ii.   To determine if the coach-athlete relationship of female athletes influences their participation in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya.
iii.   To determine the female athletes' most preferred coach-leadership behaviour.
iv.   To find out the extent to which the following factors influence female athletes' participation in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya.
        - Fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by coaches
        - Fear of injuries resulting from training
        - Motivation using verbal reinforcement

Research Questions

i.   What is the female athletes' most preferred coach-leadership behaviour?

ii.   To what extent does the female athletes' coach-athlete relationship influence their participation in sports in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya?

iii.   To what extent does fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by coaches, fear of injuries resulting from training and motivation using verbal reinforcement influence participation of female athletes in physical training activities prescribed by their coaches?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

Ho_1 – There would be no significant difference in female athletes' preference for female or male sports coaches.

Ho_2 – There would be no significant difference in female athletes' preference for youthful or elderly sports coaches in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya.

Methodology

The research adopted the descriptive survey research design. The teacher training colleges were stratified into two strata; certificate teacher training colleges and diploma teacher training college. A proportion of 50% of certificate teacher training colleges was randomly selected using simple

random sampling technique. Since there was only one diploma teacher training college in central region of Kenya, it was purposively selected. The study sample comprised 444 female athletes; 108 from diploma teacher training college and 336 from certificate teacher training colleges in the region. The research used the questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The data were summarized into descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. The results were presented in the form of tables. The hypotheses were tested using Wilcoxon signed ranks test at significance level of 0.05.

Results

Table 1 indicates responses of female athletes' preference of male or female coaches.

Table 1: Preference for Male or Female Coaches

Variable	Not at all		Lesser extend		Very much		Missing from system		Test statistics	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	Z	Sig.
Preference for male coach	41	9.2	83	18.7	319	71.8	1	0.2	-7.753	0.001
Preference for female coach	102	23	189	42.6	153	34.5				

It is depicted from table 1 that majority of female athletes (319, 71.8%) indicated that they prefer a male coach, followed by (83, 18.7%) to a lesser extent and (41, 9.2%) who do not prefer male coach at all. To further counter-check the responses given by female athletes, they were asked to give their preference for a female coach. The results are summarized in table 2. It is noted that a higher proportion of female athletes (189, 42.6%) indicated they preferred a female coach to a lesser extent, 153 (34.55%) very much and 102 (23%) not at all.

A Wilcoxon signed ranks test examined the results of the preference for male or female coach. The results are summarized in table 2. A significant preference of one gender as coaches was found in the results (Z = -7.753, p = < 0.001).This was based on positive ranks. It is evident from the descriptive analysis that a larger proportion of the female athletes (71.8%) indicated preference for male coach than those who favoured female coach (34.5%). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in female athletes' preference for female or male sports coaches was

rejected. This implies that the gender of the coach has a significant influence with regard to coaching of female athletes. The interpretation from this finding is that to ensure effective coaching of female athletes, the teacher training colleges should hire and employ more male coaches than female coaches. The current findings regarding female athletes' preference for a male or female coach are in agreement with those by Frey et al., (2006) who concluded that female athletes prefer a male coach to a female one, citing such factors as males coach's greater level of knowledge, knowing what it takes to be successful and having more respect for him. Frey et al., (2006) further argue that since majority of coaches are men, this could help explain the female athletes' preference for male coaches.

Table 2 below shows the extent of female athletes' preference for youthful or elderly coaches.

Table 2: Preference for Youthful or Elderly Sport Coaches

Variable	Not at all		Lesser extent		Very much		Test statistics	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	Z	Sig
Preference for youthful coach	47	10.6	76	17.1	321	72.3	-9.098	0.000
Preference for elderly coach	141	31.8	179	40.3	124	27.9		

Table 2 indicates that most female athletes (321, 72.3%) very much preferred youthful coaches, 76, (17.1%) to a lesser extent and 47, (10.6%) not at all. It is evident from table 4.8 that a larger proportion of female athletes (179, 40.3%) prefer elderly coaches to a lesser extent, 141 (31.8%) not at all and 124 (24.9%) very much.

A Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used to examine the results of the preference for youthful or elderly coaches. The results are summarized in table 3. A significant preference for one set of age (youthful or elderly) as coaches was found in the results (Z = -9.098, P= 0.000). This was based on positive ranks. It is evident from the descriptive analysis that the largest proportion of female athletes 321 (72.3%) indicated preference for youthful coaches compared to those who indicated the same view for elderly coaches 124 (27.9%). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference in female athletes' preference for youthful or elderly sports coaches in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya was rejected. The finding suggests that the age difference between the female athlete and the coach has a significant influence with regard to coaching of female athletes. This implies that the teacher training colleges should hire and employ more youthful games tutors and sports coaches to coach female athletes.

Table 3 below shows the extent to which female athletes prefer male or female coaches to be their role models.

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Table 3: Preference for a Male or Female Coach as Role Model.

Variable	Not at all		Lesser Extent		Very Much		Test Statistics	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	Z	Sig
Preference for male coach as role model	71	16	122	27.5	251	56.5	-0.774	0.439
Preference for female coach as role model	76	17.1	138	31.1	230	51.8		

Table 3 shows that the largest proportion of female athletes (251, 56.5%) prefer a male coach to be their role model to a large extent, 122 (27.5%) to a lesser extent and 71,(16%) not at all. To further counter-check the responses given by female athletes, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they prefer a female coach to be their role model. It is evident from table 4 that majority of female athletes (230, 51.8%) indicated they prefer a female coach to be their role model to a large extent, 138 (31.1%) to a lesser extent and 76 (17.1%) not at all. From the results, it is thus clear that majority of female athletes in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya prefer both male and female coaches to be their role models. However, it is evident from the descriptive analysis that a larger proportion of female athletes (56.5%) indicated preference for a male coach to be their role model than those who favoured a female one (51.8%).

To test whether there was any significant difference in the extent of female athletes' preference for male or female coach as role model, a Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used to analyse the results. The results are summarized in table 4. No significant difference was found (Z= -.774, P = .439).This was based on positive ranks. This implies that there is no significant difference in female athletes' preference for male or female coach as role models. For example, from the descriptive analysis, 56.5% indicated preference for male coach to be their role model which compares very well with 51.8% who indicated the same view point for a female one. The results imply that games tutors and sports coaches of either gender should portray the right mode of training as female athletes' enumerates them as role models. This may be because besides being trained as athletes, they are also training as future games tutors and sports coaches in schools.

Table 4 below shows the extent to which female athletes were comfortable sharing their personal problems to male or female coaches.

Table 4: Extent of Comfort in Sharing Personal Problems to a Male or Female Coach

Variable	Not comfortable		Comfortable		Very comfortable		Total		Test statistics	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**Z**	**Sig**
Comfortable when sharing personal problem to	160	36	133	30	151	34	444	100	-3.970	0.000

male coach										
Comfortable when sharing personal problem to female coach	103	23.2	100	22.5	241	54.3	444	100		

Table 4 shows that a higher number of female athletes (160, 36%) were not comfortable sharing their personal problems with a male coach, 133 (30%) were comfortable and 151 (34%) were very comfortable. To further counter-check the responses given by female athletes, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they are comfortable sharing their personal problems with a female coach. From table 5, it is noted that most female athletes (241, 54.3%) indicated they were very comfortable sharing their personal problems with a female coach, (103, 23.2%) not comfortable and (100, 22.5%) comfortable.

To test whether there was any significant difference in the extent of female athletes comfort in sharing personal problems with male or female coach, a Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used to test the results. The results are summarized in table 5. A significant difference was found in the results ($Z = -3.970$, $P = 000$). This was based on negative ranks. This implies that there is a significant difference in female athletes' extent of comfort in sharing personal information to a male or female coach. For example, it is evident from the descriptive analysis that a larger proportion of female athletes (54.3%) indicated that they are more comfortable in sharing their personal problems with a female coach compared to those who indicated the same view of male coach (34%). This implies that while coaching female athletes there is need to always have a female assistant coach whenever female athletes are being trained by a male coach so that she will be able to handle their personal problems. The results also implies that the teacher training colleges should hire and employ more female sports coaches and tutors so that female athletes can have more coaches whom they can disclose their personal problems thereby ensuring they enjoy their training programs and sessions.

Table 5 below shows the extent to which female athletes feel intimidated the presence of a male coach.

Table 5: **Intimidation by Presence of Male Coach**

Variable	Not at all		Lesser extent		Very much			Total
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**
Intimidation by presence of male coach	238	53.6	136	30.6	70	15.8	444	100

It is evident from table 5 that majority of female athletes (238, 53.6%) are not at all intimidated by the presence of a male coach, 136 (30.6%) to a lesser extent, while 70 (15.8%) very much intimidated. This implies that female athletes are comfortable while being coached by male coaches and are not intimidated by their presence.

Table 6 shows the respondents' views on other aspects of coach-athlete relationship.

Table 6: Other Aspects of Coach-Athlete Relationship

Variable	Unimportant		Important		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Extent to which coaching experiences is important to you	32	7.2	412	92.8	444	100
Extent to which personal relationship with the coach is important to you	56	12.6	388	87.4	444	100
Extent to which ability to motivate of the coach is important to you	14	3.2	430	96.8	444	100
Extent to which feedback from the coach is important to you	11	2.5	433	97..5	444	100
Extent to which encouragement of the coach is important to you	14	3.2	430	96.8	444	100

Table 6 shows that majority of female athletes (412, 92.8%) indicated that coaching experience is an important aspect of coach-athlete relationship while 32 (7.2%) indicated that it is not important. This implies that to ensure good coach-athlete relationship with female athletes, games tutors and sports coaches should be knowledgeable about the activity they intend to coach female athletes. This finding is in agreement with Frey et al., (2006) results, which found that the female athletes view a good coach as one who is able to perform the skill and have more than adequate knowledge about the sport. The current findings are also in line with those of Stewart and Taylor (2000) who note that some factors affecting female athletes' performances in sports are the athlete's perception of coaching competence and coaching behaviour.

It is evident from table 7 that majority of female athletes (388, 87.4%) indicated that personal relationship with the coach is an important aspect of coach-athlete relationship while 56 (12.6%) indicated it is not important. This finding of the study suggests that games tutors and sports coaches should understand that female athletes value personal relationship with coaches and thus should create good interpersonal relationship with them. The finding also implies that while coaching the female athletes, games tutors and sports coaches should also address and relate well with them in a friendly manner.

Table 6 shows that majority of female athletes (430, 96.8%) indicated that the ability of the coach to motivate is an important aspect of coach-athlete relationship, while 14 (3.2%) indicated it as being unimportant. The finding therefore suggests that games tutors and sports coaches should motivate female athletes during coaching in order to encourage them to acquire the various sporting skills.

It is evident from table 6 that the largest proportion of female athletes (433, 97.5%) indicated that feedback from the coach is an important aspect of coach athlete-relationship, while 11 (2.5%)

indicated it as being unimportant. This implies that feedback from the coach is an important aspect of coach-athlete relationship. The finding therefore indicates that those responsible for coaching female athletes should give them feedback regarding their performance.

Table 6 also shows that the largest proportion of female athletes (430, 96.8%) indicated that encouragement of the coach is an important aspect of coach-athlete relationship, while 14 (3.2%) indicated it to be unimportant. The finding implies that for effective coach-athlete relationship, female athletes need to be encouraged to believe in what they are capable of. The finding further suggests that while coaching, games tutors and sports coaches should provide continuous encouragement to female athletes.

Table 7 below shows the extent to which female athletes prefer the following coach leadership behaviours; democratic, autocratic, social support, positive feedback and training and instruction.

Table 7: Preference for Various Coach Leadership Behaviour

Coach leadership behaviour	Not at all		Lesser extent		Very Much		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Democratic	5	1.1	68	15.3	371	83.6	444	100.0
Autocratic	335	75.5	85	19.1	24	5.4	444	100.0
Social Support	13	2.9	43	9.7	388	87.4	444	100.0
Positive feedback	6	1.4	19	4.3	419	94.4	444	100.0
Training and instruction	8	1.8	60	13.5	376	84.7	444	100.0

It is evident from table 7 that majority of female athletes (371, 86.6%) prefer democratic coach leadership behaviour, 68 (13.3%) to a lesser extent, while 5 (1.1%) not at all. The largest proportion of female athletes (335, 75.5%) does not at all prefer autocratic coaching leadership behaviour, 85 (19.1%) to a lesser extent, while 24 (5.4%) very much. In addition, most of the female athletes (388, 87.45%) prefer social support coach leadership behaviour, 43 (9.7%) to a lesser extent, while 13 (2.9%) not at all. It is also evident from table 4.13 that majority of female athletes (419, 94.4%) prefer positive feedback coach leadership behaviour, 19 (43 %) to lesser extent, while 6 (1.4%) not at all. Furthermore, majority of female athletes (376, 84.7%) prefer training and instruction coach leadership behaviour, 60 (13.5 %) to a lesser extent, while 8 (1.8%) not at all.

From the descriptive analysis, it is evident that positive feedback coach leadership behaviour has the highest percentage in terms of level of preference (94.4%) and thus   is the most preferred by female athletes in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya. It is also evident from descriptive analysis that the least preferred coach leadership behaviour by female athletes in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya is autocratic coach leadership behaviour. This implies that while coaching female athletes, it may be necessary for the coach to engage in coaching behaviours to

which female athlete is receptive. Also, since positive feedback had the highest percentage in terms of level of preference, this finding suggests that games tutors and sports coaches in teacher training colleges in central region of Kenya should reinforce their female athletes by recognizing and rewarding good performance. Further, the finding indicates that female athletes should also be involved in decision making regarding the mode of training rather than being dictated upon by the coach as the study results in deed shows that autocratic coaching behaviour is the least preferred by them.

Table 8 below shows the extent to which other psychological factors that include fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by the coach, fear of injuries resulting from training and motivation using verbal reinforcement influence female athletes' involvement in training activities.

Table 8: Influence of Other Psychological Factors on Training of Female Athletes

Variable	Not at all		Lesser extent		Very much		Total	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**
Fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by your coaches	86	19.4	229	51.6	129	29.1	444	100
Fear of injuries resulting from training	55	12.4	184	41.4	205	46.2	444	100
Motivation using verbal reinforcement	59	13.3	145	32.7	240	54.1	444	100

Table 8 shows that most female athletes (229, 51.6%) are influenced to a lesser extent by fear of strenuous exercises prescribed by coaches, followed by 129 (29.1%) who indicated that they were very much influenced and 86 (19.4%) not at all. This implies that games tutors and sports coaches should make sure female athletes are comfortable with the exercises they are undertaking during training. The finding further implies that while training female athletes the exercises should be structured in such a way that they progress from less strenuous to more strenuous.

It is evident from table 8 that majority of female athletes (205, 46.2%) indicated that their involvement in training activities are affected by fear of injuries resulting from training, 184 (42.6%) to a lesser extent and 55 (12.4%) not at all. This implies that games tutors and sports coaches should be aware that the fear of injuries affects the training of female athletes. The coach must therefore, use various strategies to enhance self- confidence in their abilities as this would reduce the fear of physical injuries. The finding further suggests that female athletes must be reassured that engaging in physical training prescribed by their coaches would not contribute to physical injuries. A research by Cartoni et al., (2004) also concluded that the fear of physical injury affects the coaching of female athletes.

It is further shown in table 8 that most female athletes (240, 54.1%) are influenced very much by motivation using verbal reinforcement, followed by 145 (32.7%) who indicated lesser extent and 59 (13.3%) who were not influenced at all. This implies that coaches should be aware that their verbal compliment is key to success in coaching female athletes. The finding further suggests that in order to motivate female athletes to be involved in training programs, those responsible for coaching female athletes should provide continuous verbal compliments in training. This piece of finding is in line with the literature by Pendleton (2001) who notes that female athletes need positive feedback as well as praise and encouragement.

Implications
Based on the findings, it is evident that there are psychological factors influencing training and performance of female athletes in sports in teacher training colleges in the central region of Kenya. Therefore, it is expected that games tutors and sports coaches should understand these psychological factors in order to ensure female athletes enjoy their training programs and sessions.

From the findings, it is also evident that female athletes have needs that have to be understood by coaches. As such, those responsible for coaching female athletes have a role to ensure they understand their female athletes' psychological needs so that they can address them effectively during training. An understanding of these psychological needs would enable those responsible for coaching the female athletes deal more effectively with athletes whom they understand rather than athletes they assume they understand.

Recommendations
In light of study findings, the following recommendations are suggested:
  i.   The study revealed that there are psychological factors that influence the coaching of female athletes. Therefore, there is need for coaches to understand the psychological factors influencing female athletes' participation and performance in sports. This could enable them to understand the many factors that influence female athletes' participation in training activities and hence be better equipped to provide them with a satisfying experience that will ensure their long-term participation in training sessions and programmes. The creation of this awareness could be done through the institutions involved in training of coaches and teachers. The institutions involved in in-service training of coaches and teachers should also create awareness on the uniqueness of the female athlete through their training programmes.
  ii.   There is need for female athletes to be trained only by coaches who have an understanding of psychological factors affecting coaching of female athletes. The coaches who lack insight on these psychological factors, or who have never been trained on how to handle female athletes before should never be allowed to coach female athletes. This is because they may have little insight into psychological factors that influence the coaching of female athletes thereby denying them the satisfaction that sporting experience is supposed to offer.
  iii. There is need for management of the teachers training colleges to always have a female assistant coach whenever female athletes are being trained by male coach. This is because according to the study results, female athletes are only comfortable sharing their personal problems to female coaches, a factor that should not be ignored during training for the sake of psychological wellbeing of female athletes. In addition, the female assistant coach, by

being a female, will also provide the much needed information in dealing with a female athlete.

iv.   There is need of training of teachers/tutors who double as coaches on methodology that equips them with knowledge on the coach-athlete relationship and coach leadership behaviour that is preferred by female athletes.

v.   There is need for Physical Education (PE) curriculum developers to incorporate the psychological factors that influence coaching of female athletes in the PE curriculum in order to enable the PE teachers /tutors to address or cater for them

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